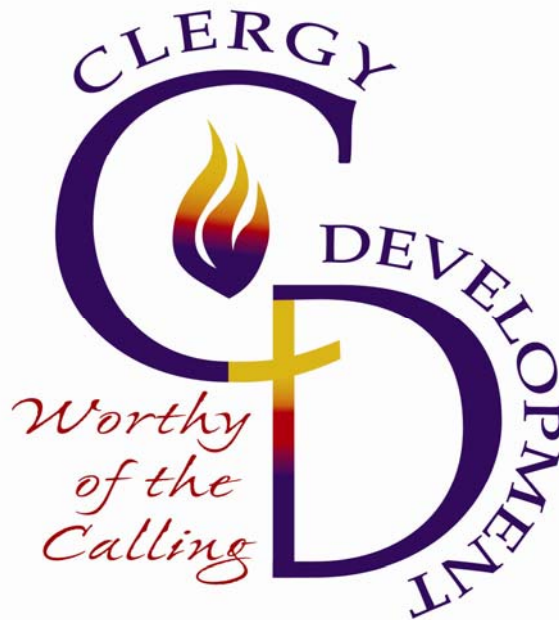


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Faculty Guide

# Telling the New Testament Story of God



Clergy Development  
Church of the Nazarene  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-333-7000 ext. 2468; 800-306-7651 (USA)  
2005

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The **Modular Course of Study** is an outcome-based curriculum designed to implement the educational paradigm defined by the Breckenridge Consultations. Clergy Development is responsible for maintaining and distributing the Modular Course of Study for the Church of the Nazarene.

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**Principal contributors** for each module are listed in specific Faculty Guides.

## Series Foreword

### **A Vision for Christian Ministry: Clergy Education in the Church of the Nazarene**

The chief purpose of all persons—indeed, all of the creation—is to worship, love, and serve God. God has made himself known in His deeds of creation and redemption. As the Redeemer, God has called into existence a people: the Church, who embody, celebrate, and declare His name and His ways. The life of God with His people and the world constitutes the Story of God. That story is recorded principally in the Old and New Testaments, and continues to be told by the resurrected Christ who lives and reigns as Head of His Church. The Church lives to declare the whole Story of God. This it does in many ways—in the lives of its members who are even now being transformed by Christ through preaching, the sacraments, in oral testimony, community life, and in mission. All members of the Body of Christ are called to exercise a ministry of witness and service. No one is excluded.

In God's own wisdom He calls some persons to fulfill the ministry of proclaiming the gospel and caring for God's people, in a form referred to as the ordained ministry. God is the initial actor in this call, not humans. In the Church of the Nazarene we believe God calls and persons respond. They do not elect the Christian ministry. All persons whom God calls to the ordained ministry should continue to be amazed that He would call them. They should continue to be humbled by God's call. The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene states, "we recognize and hold that the Head of the Church calls some men and women to the more official and public work of the ministry." It adds, "The church, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, will recognize the Lord's call" (*Manual*, Church of the Nazarene, paragraph 400).

An ordained Christian minister has as his or her chief responsibility to declare in many ways the whole Story of God as fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. His or her charge is to "tend the flock of God . . . not under compulsion, but willingly, not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:2-3, NRSV). The minister fulfills this charge under the supervision of Christ, the chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:4). Such ministry can be fulfilled only after a period of careful

preparation. Indeed, given the ever-changing demands placed upon the minister, “preparation” never ceases.

A person who enters the Christian ministry becomes in a distinct sense a steward of the gospel of God (Titus 1:7). A steward is one who is entrusted to care for what belongs to another. A steward may be one who takes care of another person or who manages the property of someone else. All Christians are stewards of the grace of God. But in addition, in a peculiar sense a Christian minister is a steward of the “mystery of God,” which is Christ, the Redeemer, the Messiah of God. In all faithfulness, the minister is called to “make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel” (Eph 6:19, NRSV). Like Paul, he or she must faithfully preach “the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (Eph 3:8-10, NRSV).

In fulfilling this commission, there is plenty of room for diligence and alertness, but no room for laziness or privilege (Titus 1:5-9). Good stewards recognize that they are stewards only, not the owners, and that they will give an account of their stewardship to the master. Faithfulness to one’s charge and to the Lord who issued it is the steward’s principal passion. When properly understood, the Christian ministry should never be thought of as a “job.” It is ministry—uniquely Christian ministry. No higher responsibility or joy can be known than to become a steward of the Story of God in Christ’s Church. The person who embraces God’s call to the ordained ministry will stand in the company of the apostles, the Early Fathers of the Church, the Reformers of the Middle Ages, the Protestant Reformers, and many persons around the world today who joyfully serve as stewards of the gospel of God.

Obviously, one who does not recognize, or who understands but rejects, just how complete and inclusive a minister’s stewardship must be, should not start down the path that leads to ordination. In a peculiar sense, a Christian minister must in all respects model the gospel of God. He or she is to “shun” the love of money. Instead, the minister must “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness.” He or she must “fight the good fight of the faith” and “take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called” (1 Tim 6:11-12, NRSV).

Hence, the Church of the Nazarene believes “the minister of Christ is to be in all things a pattern to the flock—in punctuality, discretion, diligence, earnestness; ‘in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left’ (2 Cor 6:6-7)” (*Manual*, Church of the Nazarene, paragraph 401.1). The minister of Christ “must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, <sup>8</sup>but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, <sup>9</sup>holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching . . . able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.” (Titus 1:7-9, NASB).

In order to be a good steward of God’s Story one must, among other things, give oneself to careful and systematic study, both before and after ordination. This will occur not because he or she is forced to do so, but out of a love for God and His people, the world He is working to redeem, and out of an inescapable sense of responsibility. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the attitude one brings to preparation for the ministry reveals much about what he or she thinks of God, the gospel, and Christ’s Church. The God who became incarnate in Jesus and who made a way of salvation for all gave His very best in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son. In order to be a good steward, a Christian minister must respond in kind. Jesus told numerous parables about stewards who did not recognize the importance of what had been entrusted to them (Mt 21:33-44; 25:14-30; Mk 13:34-37; Lk 12:35-40; 19:11-27; 20:9-18).

Preparation for ministry in Christ’s Church—one’s education in all its dimensions— should be pursued in full light of the responsibility before God and His people that the ministry involves. This requires that one take advantage of the best educational resources at his or her disposal.

The Church of the Nazarene recognizes how large is the responsibility associated with the ordained Christian ministry and accepts it fully. Part of the way we recognize our responsibility before God is seen in the requirements we make for ordination and the practice of ministry. We believe the call to and practice of Christian ministry is a gift, not a right or privilege. We believe God holds a minister to the highest of religious, moral, personal, and professional standards. We are not reluctant to expect those standards to be

observed from the time of one's call until his or her death. We believe Christian ministry should first be a form of worship. The practice of ministry is both an offering to God and a service to His Church. By the miracle of grace, the work of the ministry can become a means of grace for God's people (Rom 12: 1-3). One's education for ministry is also a form of worship.

The modules comprising the Course of Study that may lead a person to candidacy for ordination have been carefully designed to prepare one for the kind of ministry we have described. Their common purpose is to provide a holistic preparation for entrance into the ordained Christian ministry. They reflect the Church's wisdom, experience, and responsibility before God. The modules show how highly the Church of the Nazarene regards the gospel, the people of God, the world for which Christ gave His life, and Christian ministry. Completing the modules will normally take three or four years. But no one should feel pressured to meet this schedule.

The careful study for which the modules call should show that before God and His Church one accepts the stewardly responsibility associated with ordained ministry.

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## Contents

Series Foreword .....	iii
Introduction.....	viii
Lesson 1: Why Study the New Testament? .....	1-1
Lesson 2: Historical, Social, and Religious Settings of the World of Jesus .....	2-1
Lesson 3: The Life of Jesus.....	3-1
Lesson 4: The Teaching of Jesus .....	4-1
Lesson 5: Introduction to the Gospels .....	5-1
Lesson 6: The Gospels of Matthew and Mark.....	6-1
Lesson 7: The Gospels of Luke and John.....	7-1
Lesson 8: A History of the Study of the Gospels....	8-1
Lesson 9: Historical, Social, and Religious Setting of the 1st-Century, Greco-Roman World ...	9-1
Lesson 10: The Life of Paul .....	10-1
Lesson 11: The Teachings of Paul.....	11-1
Lesson 12: Acts: The Gospel to the Nations .....	12-1
Lesson 13: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians.....	13-1
Lesson 14: Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians .....	14-1
Lesson 15: Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians .	15-1
Lesson 16: Philemon, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus..	16-1
Lesson 17: Hebrews and James .....	17-1
Lesson 18: 1 and 2 Peter, Jude.....	18-1
Lesson 19: 1, 2, and 3 John .....	19-1
Lesson 20: Revelation .....	20-1
Resources .....	(contained in the Student Guide)

## Introduction

### Intended Use of This Faculty Guide

This Faculty Guide serves as an instructor's guide for teaching principles of *Telling the New Testament Story of God* to adult learners who are preparing for ordination in the Church of the Nazarene. The content is based on intended outcomes defined through the collaborative process conducted at Breckenridge, CO, USA, between 1990 and 1997. The materials prepare the pastor-teacher to present the topic by providing background reading, lesson plans, lectures, instructions to the teacher, and teaching resources for each class session. In most lessons complete lectures, questions for guided discussions, and defined learning activities are provided.

The pastor-teacher who will lead this module should hold a master's degree. Ideally, the pastor-teacher should have participated as a student in a module using this material prior to teaching the material to others. This faculty guide assumes that the pastor-teacher has some basic understanding of the Bible.

It is further assumed that learners participating in a module using this material will be high school graduates and be adult learners beyond the traditional college age. Learners are assumed to be motivated to learn, and to have adult life-experiences. No prior college classroom experience is assumed on the part of the learners.

### Acknowledgments

Every module is the accumulation of effort by many people. Someone writes the original manuscript, others offer suggestions to strengthen the content and make the material more easily understood, and finally an editor formats the module for publication. This module is not different. Many people have contributed to this module. Every effort has been made to represent accurately the original intent of the principal contributors.

#### Principal Contributor

The principal contributor for this module is C. Jeanne Serrao. Dr. Serrao holds a Ph.D. from Claremont Graduate University. She is currently associate professor of religion at Mount Vernon Nazarene University in Mount Vernon, OH, USA.



Previously, Dr. Serrao has taught at Azusa-Pacific University, Trevecca Nazarene University, European Nazarene College, and for the Methodist Course of Study on New Testament, Claremont, California. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Dr. Serrao has been actively involved in Christian ministry serving as an associate pastor, youth pastor, children's pastor, and a Christian school administrator.

### **Responder**

Each module was reviewed by at least one content specialist to ensure that the content did not represent a single, narrow view or opinion. The responder provided suggestions the principal contributor could integrate into this module.

Dr. Roger Hahn was the responder for this module. Dr. Hahn is currently serving as the academic dean of Nazarene Theological Seminary. He is a noted teacher, writer, and pastor.

Dr. Hahn is the editor for the Nazarene Centennial Initiatives, a project to create and publish religious textbooks with a Wesleyan-Holiness perspective.

## **Revision History**

*Third Quarter 2005, Revision 5, the current version*

- **Module guides** edited for gender inclusiveness

*Fourth Quarter 2004, Revision 4,*

- **Revision of the Faculty Guide Introduction**
- **Keying *Telling the New Testament Story of God to Discovering the New Testament: Community and Faith***

*First Quarter 2004, Revision 3,*

- **Module title** changed from *New Testament History and Literature* to *Telling the New Testament Story of God*

*Fourth Quarter 2003. Revision 2,*

- **Copyright** was transferred to Nazarene Publishing House

*Fourth Quarter 2002. Revision 1,*

- **The Lesson Overview, Introduction, Body, Close format** was established
- 

## **Intended Outcomes for the Module**

*The Manual, Church of the Nazarene, and the International Sourcebook on Developmental Standards for Ordination* define educational preparation for ordination. Additionally, each region of the International Church of the Nazarene has developed

educational guidelines to qualify educational programs for ordination offered within their region.

The USA Region *Sourcebook for Ministerial Development* defines outcomes for the overall ministerial development program. The module assists candidates in developing these skills. Other modules in the program may also address the same outcomes. The specific outcomes that relate to this module are:

- CN8 Ability to identify the literary structure of the New Testament
- CN9 Ability to identify the genre and basic thrust of each New Testament book
- CN10 Ability to summarize the significant events of Jesus and Paul
- CN11 Ability to identify the significant elements of the message of Jesus and Paul
- CN12 Ability to describe the impact of the historical background of the New Testament on the message of Jesus and Paul
- CN13 Ability to chronologically order the significant events and persons of the New Testament
- CN14 Ability to identify and describe the major theological concepts of the New Testament
- CN15 Ability to describe how the Bible came into being up to contemporary translations
- CN16 Ability to identify the steps of historical, literary, and theological analysis used in exegesis

## About This Module

A module is composed of two major works—a Faculty Guide and a Student Guide. Both are necessary for the whole body of information and learning activities pertaining to the module topic. You will need a copy of both.

We have tried to design this module to be flexible and easy to adapt to your situation. You as the instructor will need to be familiar with the information, activities, questions, and homework that are provided in both works. In some cases you may need to modify the illustrations or questions to meet the needs of your group of students.

### Rationale

Telling the New Testament Story of God is a foundational module for understanding the setting and message of the New Testament. This module will introduce the student to the New Testament biblical literature, Bible study methods, and the environment of the Early Church. Special attention will be given to

the political, cultural, religious, and geographical setting, the literary genre, and the meaning of the text in its original cultural, historical, and literary context.

#### **Notes from the Original Author**

Lessons 13-19 deal with Romans and the letters to the first-century church. These lessons contain only limited lecture material so the instructor and the students can spend more time directly with the scripture. Read key passages together. In small groups or in directed discussions, talk about what the scripture actually says and help students discover how the scripture applies to their own situations today.

#### **Module Development**

One reason for developing this module is for the benefit of extension education. We understand that teachers all over the world are called upon to teach courses not in their area of specialty, but they teach them because they want to see pastors trained and leaders developed for the church. Extension education is basic to rapid church growth. We want to provide this as a resource for extension educators. If it helps others along the way, that's fine too.

Another reason for developing this module is to equip indigenous faculty. We believe a class like this is best taught and contextualized by someone from within the culture of the students. Many fine teachers, who are leaders in our churches around the world, do not have higher degrees in theology but have the skills to teach a module like this effectively. We want to set them free to do so, and in so doing, to actually improve the module and make it more dynamic and meaningful for their context than it would have been had we held onto it and insisted on teaching it ourselves.

## **About This Faculty Guide**

*Note: It is critical to remember that active participation by the learners will enhance their learning. That means you will not be an information giver. This module is not about you. The focus of the module is helping students learn. Your role is to design an environment in which your students will learn. Sometimes you will give lectures. At other times you will guide discussions or assign your students to work in groups. These kinds of activities keep the participants actively involved in the learning process. Learning is a team activity.*

The faculty guide has been written to guide an instructor as he or she prepares to teach this module. It contains complete lesson plans and resources to provide a solid educational design for the topic. You will need to prepare for each lesson well in advance of the meeting time. Often there are background reading suggestions for the instructor, or you may know additional reference materials you want to interject into the lesson. Questions intended to be answered or discussed by the students are in italic type.

**A two-column format was chosen for the faculty guide.** The right-hand column contains the content of lectures, descriptions of activities, and questions to

keep students involved. The left-hand column is to give suggested instructions to you, the teacher. It also contains examples you can use to illustrate concepts in the lectures. Whenever possible you should use examples from your own experience and from your students' real-life context.

Large white space has been left in the left column to allow you to write notes and personalize the faculty guide.

**The faculty guide has three major components:** the Faculty Guide Introduction, the Lesson Plans, and the Teaching Resources. The Introduction and Lesson Plans are in this document and the Resources are contained in the companion student guide. You are reading the Faculty Guide Introduction now. It provides a teaching philosophy for adult learners, background information for organizing the module, and ideas about conducting the lessons.

**Each section of the faculty guide is numbered** with a two-part page number. Page 5 of Lesson 3 would be numbered "3-5." The first number is the lesson number and the second is the page number within the lesson. Each resource sheet is numbered for the lesson in which the resource is first used. The first resource page for Lesson 2 is numbered "2-1."

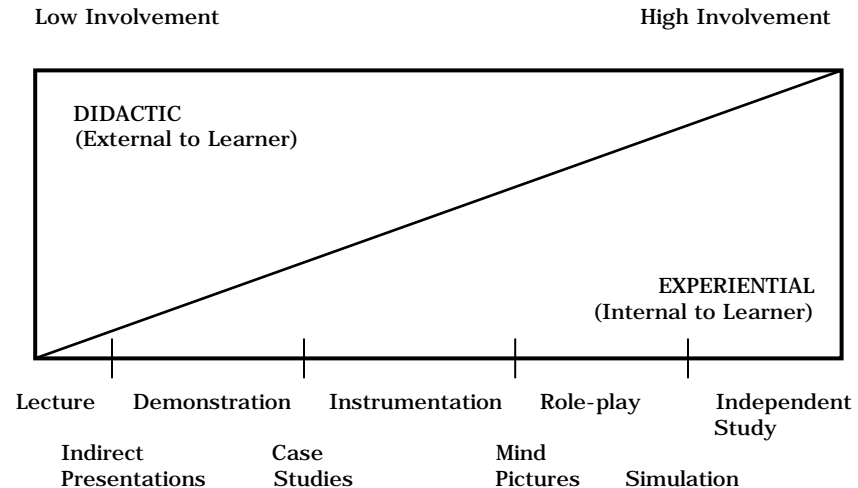
**The Lesson Plans are complete in themselves.** They contain an Overview, Introduction, Body, and Close. The Lesson Overview provides you with a planning tool for preparing and conducting each lesson.

*The Lesson Introduction* should get participants' attention, orient them to the place this lesson holds in the overall module, define the intended objectives, and prepare them for the learning activities.

*The Lesson Body* is the core message of the lesson. The key is to keep the learners actively involved. Even in lectures, ask questions that prompt learners to think about the content, not just hear the lecture.

The following chart shows a continuum of learner involvement in different teaching methods. Lecture requires the least learner involvement, and independent study requires the most learner involvement.

## METHODS CONTINUUM



A variety of learning activities are used to present information and allow learners to experiment with their new knowledge. Each learner has a set of preferred methods of learning and has different life experiences that can color or filter what one actually learns. A variety of learning activities help adults adapt to the learning task—by hearing, by doing, by reading, by discussing, or by combinations of these. The learners should have opportunities to test and clarify their new learning by talking with the instructor and other participants, and applying new knowledge in real or contrived situations as soon as possible.

*The Lesson Close* provides a time for answering questions, reviewing the information, connecting this lesson to future lessons, making assignments, and punctuating the finish. The close does not provide any new information but gives a sense of closure to the lesson.

**Homework assignments** are important learning activities. They provide the student with an opportunity to synthesize classroom learning. Working on these assignments also extends the learning experience beyond the time constraints of class time.

The student—especially the adult student—needs frequent and timely feedback about his or her learning. While interaction with other students helps the learner refine what he or she is learning, feedback from the

instructor is also critical to the quality of learning and ultimately to his or her persistence in the Course of Study.

It is your responsibility as the instructor for this module to provide students with timely responses to homework assignments in order to enhance the learning process. Reviewing and responding to homework will also provide you with critical information about what your students are learning and whether or not the teaching-learning process is succeeding.

Since these modules are preparing the learner for ordination rather than leading to a university degree, a letter grade may not be appropriate. Your response to the learners' assignments should be thoughtful and in most cases it should be written. Its purpose will always be to refine and enhance the learning of the student.

**Teaching Resources** are reproduced in the student guide. Each resource sheet is numbered for the lesson in which the resource is first used. The first resource page for Lesson 2 is numbered "2-1."

You must determine how each resource will be used in your context. If an overhead projector is available, transparencies can be made by replacing the paper in your photocopier with special transparency material.

The student guide for this module contains the series foreword, acknowledgments, syllabus, copies of all resources, lesson objectives, and assignments. A copy of the student guide should be made available to each student.

**Recommendations for printing.** You may print this faculty guide if desired. The introduction and lesson plan segments are formatted for printing on both sides of the paper. The resource pages of the student guide should be printed on one side for use as transparency or handout masters.

## About the Student Guide

The Student Guide for this module contains the series foreword, acknowledgments, syllabus, all resources, lesson objectives, and assignments. The Student Guide should be made available to each student in either hard copy or electronic format—CD or floppy disk.

Each resource sheet in the Student Guide is numbered at the top for the lesson in which the resource is first used. The first resource page for Lesson 2 is numbered “2-1.” In the Faculty Guide, in the left-hand column, you will be informed when to refer to the appropriate resource.

The first page for each lesson

- Reminds the student of the assignments that are due
- States the learner objectives
- Gives the homework assignment instructions
- Sometimes includes relevant quotes

For each lesson, there are several support pieces, which we have called simply “resources.” They help guide the flow of the lesson. Some resources are basic outlines that guide the student through a lecture. Others direct small-group activities. For some lessons, data/statistic resources are given. And for some modules homework assignment information resources are included.

You must determine how each resource will be used in your context. If an overhead projector is available, then transparencies can be made by replacing the paper in your photocopy machine with special transparency material. They also can be used as part of a PowerPoint presentation.

The instructor may photocopy resources to use for his or her own lecture outlines. There is space to add notes from the Faculty Guide, from a textbook, or from the additional suggested readings. Add in your own illustrations too!

**Recommendation for printing.** For student use it would be best to print the Student Guide on one side of the paper.

## Suggested Meeting Schedule

The module lessons are designed to last 90 minutes each. Each lesson is complete in itself with an opening, a middle, and a closing. They are sequential. Each lesson assumes the learners have mastered material presented in previous lessons. The lessons can be grouped in a variety of ways to accommodate the schedules of your learners.

When lessons are taught in the same meeting, instructors will need to adjust homework assignments

because participants will not have time between lessons to prepare homework. It is very important for the instructor always to be looking ahead and planning for upcoming lessons.

Here are three suggestions (out of many) for ways the meetings can be organized.

1. **Resident campus:** The class can meet two days—or evenings—a week for 90 minutes. Present one lesson per meeting time. Total time: 10 weeks.
2. **Extension education:** The class can meet one day—or evening—each week for 3 to 3½ hours. Present two lessons per meeting with a break period between lessons. Participants will need to travel to a centralized location for meetings, so make it worth their time. Total time: 10 weeks.
3. **Intensive module:** The class can meet five consecutive days for 7 to 8 hours per day. Present two lessons in the morning with a break period between lessons, and two lessons in the afternoon with another break period between the lessons. Participants must complete reading assignments before arriving at the module site, and written assignments can be submitted 30 to 60 days following the class meeting. Total meeting time: 1 week. Elapsed time including reading and written assignments: 2 to 3 months.

The module is divided into 20 lessons. The progression of these lessons can be seen in the chart below. Space is given for you to fill in the dates when your class sessions will meet.

Date	Lesson
	1. Why Study the New Testament?
	2. Historical, Social, and Religious Settings of the World of Jesus
	3. The Life of Jesus
	4. The Teaching of Jesus
	5. Introduction to the Gospels
	6. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark
	7. The Gospels of Luke and John



	8. A History of the Study of the Gospels
	9. Historical, Social, and Religious Setting of the 1st-Century, Greco-Roman World
	10. The Life of Paul
	11. The Teachings of Paul
	12. Acts: The Gospel to the Nations
	13. Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians
	14. Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians
	15. Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians
	16. Philemon, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus
	17. Hebrews and James
	18. 1 and 2 Peter, and Jude
	19. 1, 2, and 3 John
	20. Revelation

## Recommended Textbooks

Each module within the Modular Course of Study is intended to be textbook independent. This does not imply that the modules are textbook irrelevant, or that the module content cannot be enriched by selecting and requiring that students study a textbook along with the lessons provided in this faculty guide.

If these modules are adapted for use outside of the English-speaking countries of North America, a specific textbook may not be available in the language of the students. Therefore, the module does not rely on one textbook. The instructor may select any doctrinally sound textbook available to the students.

The following textbook is recommended and optional reading assignments from this text have been included in the homework assignments for each lesson.

Varughese, Alex, ed. *Discovering the New Testament: Community and Faith*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005.

## Optional Video Series

### **That the World May Know**

This series of video lessons was produced by Zondervan Publishing House in cooperation with Focus on the Family and hosted by Ray Vander Laan. The series was taped on location in the Holy Land. The best current source for the purchase of this series is Christian Book Distributors (CBD). It is also available from Zondervan and Focus on the Family.

Although the videos offer archaeological research, this series is not intended to be a definitive cultural and geographical study of the lands of the Bible. No original scientific discoveries are revealed here. Its purpose is to help students better understand God's revealed mission for their lives, by allowing them to hear and see His words in their original context.

In an independent review conducted for Modular Course of Study, the series was recommended as a supplemental source of information for those teaching the course of study on *Telling the New Testament Story of God*.

The reviewer had some reservations concerning the series. The reviewer noted the host was not always careful enough to maintain accuracy in some of the details, and he was often too simplistic in his present-day applications of information. This simplicity may have been due to the scholarly level of the audience that traveled with the host as the series was taped.

The reviewer continued to say that in spite of these weaknesses the series provided a supplemental introduction to the land of the Bible for those who had not had the privilege to visit the Holy Land personally.

The video series is optional. Time in some lessons is provided to show the videotapes. If you choose not to use the series, you will need to provide additional content, learning activities, and discussions to fill the allotted time.

## A Hidden Agenda

### **Hidden curriculum issues . . . because the way we teach teaches**

In each session, there are certain methodological and environmental things to consider.

**First**, consider the classroom arrangement. Whenever possible, the room should be arranged to encourage a sense of community. Either the group should sit in a circle or around a table. If the group is very large, chairs can be arranged for easily moving into clusters for discussion.

**Second**, consider how you present yourself as teacher. Standing behind a lectern with your students facing you in rows says you are above the students and have something to give them (although in a very large group this standing to teach may be unavoidable). Sitting as part of the circle makes the teacher a co-learner at the same level as the students. Speak naturally. Pay close attention to your students, and value the things they share. Learn their names. Encourage participation. Remember that you are modeling for them, and the way you teach will teach them far more than the words you say.

**Third**, invite the Holy Spirit's presence in the classroom. Do this each time the class meets.

**Fourth**, the sharing-of-stories activity does more than help the students begin to reflect on their own Christian experiences. It is a way to build community between the students. This is more than an exercise to be checked off. It is vital to set the tone of your intentional community.

When meeting times exceed 90 minutes, consider adding break times. The break between segments is an important time for community building. Remain available to the students during this time. Consider offering coffee or tea during this time as a way to encourage fellowship.

## Journaling: The Key to Spiritual Formation

Journaling is a major assignment of each module in the Course of Study. It is the integrating element that helps draw spiritual meaning and ministerial application from the content of each module whether the module concentrates on content, competency,

character, or context. It ensures that the “Be” component of “Be, Know, and Do” is present in every module in which one participates. What is journaling and how can it be meaningfully accomplished?

*The Syllabus contains this explanation of journaling. Journaling provides the spiritual formation component for the module and is an integral part of the learning experience.*

*Have students read the journaling section during the Syllabus review in Lesson 1 and emphasize that journaling is an assignment for each lesson in the module.*

*When giving assignments in each lesson, assign journal writing each time the group meets.*

### **Journaling: A Tool for Personal Reflection and Integration**

Participating in the Course of Study is the heart of your preparation for ministry. To complete each module you will be required to listen to lectures, read books and articles, participate in discussions, and write papers. Content mastery is the goal.

An equally important part of ministerial preparation is spiritual formation. Some might choose to call spiritual formation devotions, while others might refer to it as growth in grace. Whichever title you place on the process, it is the intentional cultivation of your relationship with God. The module work will be helpful in adding to your knowledge, your skills, and your ability to do ministry. The spiritual formation work will weave all you learn into the fabric of your being, allowing your education to flow freely from your head through your heart to those you serve.

Although there are many spiritual disciplines to help you cultivate your relationship with God, journaling is the critical skill that ties them all together. Journaling simply means keeping a record of your experiences and the insights you have gained along the way. It is a discipline because it does require a good deal of work faithfully to spend daily time in your journal. Many people confess this is a practice they tend to push aside when pressed by their many other responsibilities. Even five minutes a day spent journaling can make a major difference in your education and your spiritual development. Let me explain.

Consider journaling time spent with your best friend. Onto the pages of a journal you will pour out your candid responses to the events of the day, the insights you gained from class, a quote gleaned from a book, and an ‘ah-ha’ that came to you as two ideas connected. This is not the same as keeping a diary, since a diary seems to be a chronicle of events without the personal dialogue. The journal is the repository for all of your thoughts, reactions, prayers, insights, visions, and plans. Though some people like to keep complex journals with sections for each type of reflection, others find a simple running commentary more helpful. In either case, record the date and the

location at the beginning of every journal entry. It will help you when it comes time to review your thoughts.

It is important to chat briefly about the logistics of journaling. All you will need is a pen and paper to begin. Some folks prefer loose-leaf paper that can be placed in a three-ring binder, others like spiral-bound notebooks, while others enjoy using composition books. Whichever style you choose, it is important to develop a pattern that works for you.

Establishing a time and a place for writing in your journal is essential. If there is no space etched out for journaling, it will not happen with the regularity needed to make it valuable. It seems natural to spend time journaling after the day is over and you can sift through all that has transpired. Yet family commitments, evening activities, and fatigue militate against this time slot. Morning offers another possibility. Sleep filters much of the previous day's experiences, and processes deep insights, that can be recorded first thing in the morning. In conjunction with devotions, journaling enables you to begin to weave your experiences with the Word, and also with module material that has been steeping on the back burner of your mind. You will probably find that carrying your journal will allow you to jot down ideas that come to you at odd times throughout the day.

It seems we have been suggesting that journaling is a handwritten exercise. Some may be wondering about doing their work on a computer. Traditionally, there is a special bond between hand, pen, and paper. It is more personal, direct, and aesthetic. And it is flexible, portable, and available.

With regular use, your journal is the repository of your journey. As important as it is to make daily entries, it is equally important to review your work. Read over each week's record at the end of the week. Make a summary statement and note movements of the Holy Spirit or your own growth. Do a monthly review of your journal every 30 days. This might best be done on a half-day retreat where you can prayerfully focus on your thoughts in solitude and silence. As you do this, you will begin to see the accumulated value of the Word, your module work, and your experience in ministry all coming together in ways you had not considered possible. This is integration—weaving together faith development and learning. Integration moves information from your head to your heart so that ministry is a matter of being rather than doing.

Journaling will help you answer the central question of education: “Why do I do what I do when I do it?”

Journaling really is the linchpin in ministerial preparation. Your journal is the chronicle of your journey into spiritual maturity as well as content mastery. These volumes will hold the rich insights that will pull your education together. A journal is the tool for integration. May you treasure the journaling process!

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### Commentary Series:

Critical Commentaries on the Greek Text (For those who read Greek)

- *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*
- *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*

Commentaries on the New Testament with Greek References (Those who read English only can use these with no problem.)

- *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*
- *Word Biblical Commentary*
- *The Anchor Bible*
- *Sacra Pagina Series*
- *The Wesleyan Bible Commentary*
- *Beacon Bible Commentary*
- *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*
- *Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*
- *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*

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<http://wesley.nnu.edu/>

## Lesson 1

# Why Study the New Testament?

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:20	Why Study the New Testament?	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 1-1 Resource 1-2 Resource 1-3
0:45	Definitions of Terms Related to the Bible	Lecture	Resource 1-4
0:55	Formation of the New Testament Canon	Lecture	Resource 1-5 Resource 1-6
1:15	Interpretations of the New Testament	Small Groups	Resource 1-7
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Elwell, Walter A. and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998, 19-35.

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# Lesson Introduction

(20 minutes)

## Welcome

*Refer students to the Syllabus in the Student Guide.*

*Ask the students to follow along as you read the Course Description.*

New Testament History and Literature is a foundational class for understanding the setting and message of the New Testament. This class will introduce the student to the New Testament biblical literature, Bible study methods, and the environment of the Early Church. Special attention will be given to the political, cultural, religious, and geographical setting, the literary genre, and the meaning of the text in its original cultural, historical, and literary context for the purpose of discovering the principles of truth to be applied to our contemporary setting. It provides the basic groundwork for understanding future Course of Study classes in biblical studies, church history, theology, and practices.

## Class Overview

*Review Syllabus, Class Schedule, and Course Requirements carefully. Stop after each section and ask for questions. Make sure that all questions are answered.*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

At the end of this lesson, participants should

- know the difference between the Old Testament, Apocrypha, and New Testament
- classify and list the books of the New Testament
- understand basic terms used in New Testament study
- explain why the New Testament canon is trustworthy
- give an overview of how the Bible was originally written and how the English Bible developed

## Orientation

*Ask a leading question to get the students thinking about the topic.*

*What is the difference between studying your Bible and reading it as devotional literature?*

*Why is it important to study the New Testament and not just read it devotionally?*

## Lesson Body

### Lecture/Discussion: Why Study the New Testament?

(25 minutes)

*Prior to the beginning of this first lesson students should be contacted and instructed to read chapter 1 of Discovering the New Testament if you are planning on using the textbook as part of the assigned reading.*

*Refer to Resource 1-1 in the Student Guide.*

*Share a recent article or report.*

*Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, Encountering the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998). 20. References to this text will be abbreviated as ENT in the future.*

*This point will vary depending on where this course is taught.*

*Suggested answers: knowledge of right and wrong, basic morality, civil laws, quoted in literature.*

#### The Bible: A Big Investment

**People have died for the Bible.**

Not only were the early Christians martyred, but William Tyndale, a 16th-century priest, was executed for translating the Bible into English. In the 20th century Bible smugglers endangered their lives and Christians living in Muslim countries were persecuted and killed. A recent *Christianity Today* magazine has a story of a young boy whose family was killed because they would not deny their Christianity. The little boy was thrown in the fire and left for dead.

**More copies of the Bible have been printed than any other single book.**

No one traveling in Africa or Latin America can bring enough Bibles to fill the demand. Even in North America, where Bibles are not scarce, more copies are sold than any other book, including “best sellers.”

**The Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, has deeply affected the world we live in.**

*What are some ways you see that the Bible has affected your world?*

#### The Old and New Testaments

**The Old Testament** is the Scripture God gave to the Israelites. It is a testimony to God’s creation of the world and humanity, the human fall into sin, and God’s attempts to reconcile them with himself.

**The Old Testament Apocrypha** is a collection of books written from about 200 BC to AD 100 which contain valuable historical and religious information. They were not accepted into the Jewish canon or by the Protestant churches as divinely inspired. Roman Catholics and some Eastern Orthodox churches do recognize them as Scripture. We will be referring to some of these books, especially 1 and 2 Maccabees, as we review the intertestamental history.

*Refer to Resource 1-2 in the Student Guide.*

**The New Testament** is a testimony of God's reconciliation through Jesus Christ and the creation of His reconciling community, the Church.

- **The Gospels:** Matthew, Mark, Luke, John  
These four Gospels tell the story of Jesus' life on earth in four different versions, or from four different viewpoints.
- **History:** Acts  
This book is the only real "history" book in the New Testament and traces the development of the Early Church from Jesus' ascension to Paul's imprisonment in Rome (ca. AD 30–65).
- **Letters:**
  1. **Pauline:** Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon  
Paul's letters were sent to churches and individuals to help them understand what to believe, how to live out this belief, and how this faith related to their community.
  2. **Johannine:** 1, 2, and 3 John  
These three rather short letters of John were sent to churches and an individual (Gaius) encouraging them to be strong in the faith.
  3. **General (Catholic):** Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude (1, 2 and 3 John are also usually considered General Epistles.)  
General Epistles are sometimes called Catholic (meaning universal) Epistles or letters. They were written by various Christian leaders to an unspecified audience, perhaps several different churches. They emphasize the superiority of Christianity over Jewish traditions, call for Christians to act out what they believe, and warn against false teachers.

- **Apocalyptic or Book of Hope:** Revelation of John  
The Revelation of John is an entirely different book which uses Jewish apocalyptic language and symbols of the period to encourage the early Christians to endure persecution, because God has already won the war.

## Why Study the New Testament?

Refer to Resource 1-3 in the Student Guide.

ENT, 22-25.

Conduct this as a guided discussion, allowing the students an opportunity to respond and interact.

Possible answers:  
God is present in it and through it.  
The Bible's words are God's words.

Possible answers:  
Our response to this book determines the whole course of our life and death. It gives meaning to life. It is a means of grace.

This point needs to be contextualized for areas outside of Western cultural literacy. Or it could be used to show how Jesus and the New Testament have influenced Western thinking.

(New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 1.

Dr. Walter Elwell and Dr. Robert Yarbrough have suggested three reasons why we should study the New Testament.

Let me briefly state these reasons and let's discuss their importance:

1. It mediates God's presence and God's truth.

*What does this statement mean?*

*What do you think about the statement that in the Bible God has given us absolute truth, applicable anywhere, anytime?*

2. It is of ultimate personal significance.

*What does this statement mean?*

*Why is this an important reason to study the New Testament and proclaim its truths?*

3. It is foundational to Western cultural literacy.

- Jaroslav Pelikan, in his opening statement to *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture*, says:

Regardless of what anyone may personally think or believe about him, Jesus of Nazareth has been the dominant figure of the history of Western culture for almost twenty centuries. If it were possible, with some sort of super-magnet, to pull up out of that history every scrap of metal bearing at least a trace of his name, how much would be left? It is from his birth that most of the human race dates its calendars, it is by his name that millions curse and in his name that millions pray.

- Jesus and the New Testament have engaged the minds of many of the western world's great thinkers. Some like the Early Church fathers (Ignatius, Clement of Rome and Clement of



Alexandria, Origen, and Augustine) have positively tried to interpret the New Testament and apply its teachings to their own situations. Others, seeing historical Christianity as undesirable, like Voltaire (a French skeptic who dared ask the question: “How can a good God, allow suffering?” and opposed the intolerance and bigotry he saw in the historical Christianity of his time) and Nietzsche (a German thinker who wanted to counter the slave mentality and morality he saw exemplified in the New Testament), have developed philosophies challenging their understanding of the teachings of the New Testament.

- New Testament teaching influences us today.

*What are some concrete ways we find New Testament teachings in our everyday lives?*

## Lecture: Definitions of Terms Relating to the Bible

(10 minutes)

We will define the terms we will be using so we are all working from the same definition in our understanding and usage.

*Refer to Resource 1-4 in the Student Guide.*

**Revelation:** By revelation we mean God’s self-disclosure to humanity through His words and actions. This revelation is recorded in the Bible and is based on historical events. Biblical history is best described as a theological understanding of historical events that happened to or around God’s people.

*See 2 Tim 3:16.*

**Inspiration:** When the term “inspiration” is used it means the involvement of God in the process of communicating His revelation (self-disclosure) and usually refers to its written form. Inspired, or “God-breathed,” means the Holy Spirit worked in and through the minds and hearts of His people to produce a trustworthy account of God’s truth. There are three main theories of inspiration:

- Dictation (Verbal Inspiration): God dictated every word to the human writer. There was no actual involvement of the person (except in a mechanical sense) in the thought process of putting the ideas in written form.
- Guidance of the Holy Spirit (Dynamic Inspiration): Human writers recorded their understanding of God’s self-revelation in their own language and for their specific culture under the direct guidance of

the Holy Spirit. The Bible is totally and completely inspired (plenary inspiration) because it is the result of a dynamic relationship between God and the human writers.

- **Influence of Tradition, Religious Practices, and Biases:** Some Christians believe inspiration is the process of human writers recording their understanding of God's revelation under the influence of their religious traditions, biases, and religious thinking. This theory does not generally include the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is a purely rationalistic theory.

**Authority of Scripture:** Protestant tradition regards Scripture as the only source of the Church's beliefs and practices. This *sola scriptura* principle was adopted by Martin Luther in the Reformation. Our own Wesleyan tradition is based on this, but also recognizes that historic Church tradition, human reason, and human experience are very important to the interpretation of Scripture. We recognize that the Bible has authority because God is the "author." The Bible is the record of His self-disclosure.

**Hermeneutics:** This is the art of biblical interpretation. The technical study of hermeneutics covers the rules and principles used in the practice of biblical interpretation. The goals of hermeneutics are: (1) to discover the historical context and meaning of the passage for the original audience and (2) to translate the content of that original meaning for the contemporary audiences.

**Exegesis:** This is the process of bringing the meaning "out of" the biblical text by the modern reader. Exegesis is part of the hermeneutical process.

## Lecture: Formation of the New Testament Canon

(20 minutes)

*A papyrus sample would be helpful here to show the class.*

Where does the term "Bible" come from? It comes from the port of Byblos in Lebanon. Byblos was known to be an important place for the shipment of papyrus. *Byblos* in the old Greek language originally meant the inner bark of the papyrus plant. Papyrus bark was striped into long pieces, pressed to get the water out, dried in a crisscross pattern, and used for paper in the ancient world. So *byblos* came to be associated with books and then became a specific book, the Bible. The very earliest copies of the New Testament were written on this kind of material.

## The Canon of the New Testament

**Definition of Canon:** The word “canon” comes from the Greek term *kanon* which originally meant a “reed” used for measuring. Eventually it came to mean “a standard” and, in literature, it described a list of works that could be attributed to a certain author.

- The canon of the New Testament is an authoritative collection of books recognized by the Church as the standard for belief and practice.
- Because the New Testament was written by at least nine different people (some apostles, some not, some eye-witnesses, some not), the question of the canonicity of a New Testament book cannot be decided totally on authorship.
- Nor can the canon be decided solely on the church’s acceptance of the books. Some of the books were widely accepted, some were received with hesitation, and some were not accepted at all by some of the early churches.
- The only true criterion for canonicity is “inspiration.” Tenney suggests three ways inspiration can be demonstrated.

*Refer to Resource 1-5 in the Student Guide.*

1. **Intrinsic Context:** The central subject is Jesus Christ.
2. **Moral Effect:** Reading and following the principles of these books will effect transformation in a person’s life.
3. **Historic Testimony of the Church:** This indicates the value the community of faith has placed on these books down through the centuries.

## Authority of the New Testament Message

**Internal Testimony:** The New Testament itself testifies to the authority of the message.

- References indicating the Old Testament is the Word of God: 2 Tim 3:15-17, 2 Pet 1:20-21, Heb 8:8, Acts 28:25.
- References which talk about the teachings of Jesus as “a word of the Lord”: 1 Cor 9:9, 13-14, 1 Thess 4:15, 1 Cor 7:10, 25.
- References to the fact that certain information was received directly from God, by divine revelation: Gal 1:1, 12, 1 Thess 2:13.
- References that acknowledge Paul’s letters as authoritative: 2 Pet 3:15-16.

*Refer to Resource 1-6 in the Student Guide.*

*Merrill C. Tenney, New Testament Survey, revised by Walter M. Dunnell (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 404-5.*

**External Testimony:** The Early Church fathers and leaders recognized the canonicity of the New Testament books.

Tenney, *New Testament Survey*,  
405-9.

- **Informal Witnesses:** By informal we mean the casual use of the books of the New Testament by Early Church fathers. These quotations testify to the existence and authority of the books at the time of the writing by the Early Church fathers.
  1. The earliest document to quote any of the books of the New Testament was 1 Clement, written from Rome to the church in Corinth and is usually dated about AD 95. It contains allusions to Hebrews, 1 Corinthians, Romans, and the Gospel of Matthew.
  2. Ignatius of Antioch in Syria (AD 116) knew all of Paul's letters, quoted Matthew and possibly John.
  3. Polycarp of Smyrna (AD 150) knew Paul's letters, Matthew, and quotes from 1 Peter and 1 John and alludes possibly to Acts.
  4. The *Didache* (AD 100-150) used Matthew, Luke, and many other New Testament books in its attempt at a catechism or discipleship course.
  5. By Irenaeus' time (AD 170) there was no question the books of the New Testament were authoritative. The growth of Gnosticism and other heresies forced a flood of apologetic literature that continued until the time of Origen (AD 250). This literature carefully outlined which books were orthodox and which were not.
  
- **Formal Lists:** These are the official lists of New Testament books accepted by groups of Christians or Church Councils. Examples include:
  1. Canon of Marcion (AD 140). This canon was developed by Marcion, an Early Church heretic, who was "anti-Jewish" and selected books that would be free from Jewish influences. His New Testament canon consisted of Luke and 10 letters of Paul, all except the Pastoral Epistles.
  2. Muratorian Canon (fragment copy from about AD 170). This early orthodox canon included: 4 Gospels, Acts, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Romans, Philemon, Titus, 1 and 2 Timothy, Jude, 1, 2, and 3 John, Revelation. It did not mention James, Hebrews, or Peter's letters.

- **The Councils:** An “official council” was a formal discussion by delegates of the church. The earliest council we know of which dealt with the issue of canon is the Council of Laodicea (AD 363). This council decreed only canonical books of the New Testament should be read in the church. The extant document contains a definitive list, but most scholars do not think it is genuine. They think it was revised based on later council decisions. The earliest council listing the present 27 books of the New Testament was the Third Council of Carthage in AD 397, which is usually cited as the date for the closing of the New Testament canon. The Council of Hippo in AD 419 gave the same list.

#### **Conclusion:**

The canon, then, is not the product of any one person’s arbitrary judgment, nor was it set by councilor vote. It was the outcome of the use of various writings that proved their merits and their unity by their inward dynamic. Some were recognized more slowly than others because of the smallness of their size, their remote or private destination or anonymity of the authorship, or their seeming lack of applicability to the immediate ecclesiastical need. None of these factors mitigates against the inspiration of any one of these books, or against its right to its place in the authoritative word of God.

*Tenney, New Testament Survey, 111.*

## **Small Groups: Interpretations of the New Testament**

(10 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 1-7 in the Student Guide.*

*Divide the class into three small groups, assigning each group two particular interpretations to define and contrast. Then have them come back together and discuss their ideas.*

Contrast the following interpretations of the New Testament:

- The New Testament as personal devotional literature
- The New Testament as great literature
- The New Testament as providing a political agenda

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Ask if there are any questions concerning the material in this lesson.*

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson.

- know the difference between the Old Testament, Apocrypha, and New Testament
- classify and list the books of the New Testament
- understand basic terms used in New Testament study
- know why the New Testament canon is trustworthy
- have an overview of how the Bible was originally written and how the English Bible developed

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Read the introductory sections to the Bible and New Testament found in any good study Bible. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible (with Apocrypha)* is suggested. It is a *New Revised Standard Version* with extensive historical, cultural, and geographical notes as well as very adequate maps. Also consider the *Reflecting God Study Bible* which is a *New International Version* with a commentary and resources.

Look up the Council of Jamnia (AD 90) and Council of Carthage (AD 397) in an encyclopedia or on the Internet to learn about the background, sponsorship, and decisions of these councils. Write a one-page paper.

Memorize the Books of the New Testament in order and be able to spell them correctly.

*This is an optional assignment. You can require the students to do this reading or allow them to decide.*

Read chapters 2 and 3 of *Discovering the New Testament*.

Write in your journal. Include your reflections on why you want to study the New Testament and a discussion on the following questions:

- How would you explain to a layperson how a certain book got into the New Testament?
- Do you think the Church would ever “open” the canon again to include another letter by the Apostle Paul which may be found in the future by archeologists? Why or why not?

## Lesson 2

# Historical, Social, and Religious Settings of the World of Jesus

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Historical Setting	Lecture	Map of Palestine during the time of Jesus Resource 2-1 Resource 2-2 Resource 2-3
0:40	Jewish Life: Social and Religious Setting	Lecture	Resources 2-4—2-9
1:15	Influences	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Elwell, Walter, and Robert Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998, 39-68.

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Third edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, 3-53.

**Harris, Stephen L.** *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction*. Fourth edition, New York: McGraw Hill, 2002, 36-39, 58-63, 76-93.

**Perkins, Pheme.** *Reading the New Testament*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988, 35-45.

**Tenney, Merrill C.** *New Testament Survey*. Revised by Walter M. Dunnott. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992, 3-115.

**Varughese, Alexander, ed.** *Discovering the New Testament: Community and Faith*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005, chs. 2 and 3.



# Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

## Accountability

*On a clean piece of paper, have the students write out the names of the New Testament books. Then have them exchange their paper with another student to check each other's list.*

*Collect homework, 1-page papers. You need to evaluate the papers, giving your critique of the thoughts and presentation of ideas.*

*Evaluation does not mean giving a letter grade as grades are not the measure of completing this module. Completion is based on attendance, participation, and showing competence in the ability statements.*

## Orientation

*Ask a leading question to get the students thinking about the topic.*

*How does history help us to understand people we know?*

**Think of a specific situation where knowing the history altered your perception of the situation.**

*What would have happened if you did not know the history?*

*What questions came to mind?*

*Have you ever been in a social setting where you felt "out of place" and unsure of what was expected of you?*

*Have you ever visited another country or associated with people of another culture or ethnic group? What were the questions running through your mind?*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced*

**At the end of this lesson, participants should**

- **understand the historical events that led up to the Jewish messianic expectations in the first century.**

*organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

- **understand the setting for the “hellenization” of the Jews, especially Diaspora Jews (Jews outside of Palestine)**
- **understand some of the customs and practices of first-century Jews**
- **understand the religious setting of first-century Jews and be able to identify the differences among the major Jewish religious groups of the first century**
- **be able to use this historical, social, and religious data as a basis for interpreting the New Testament**

# Lesson Body

## Lecture: Historical Setting

(30 minutes)

*Have a large wall map of the ancient Mediterranean area to refer to during this lecture.*

*Refer to Resource 2-1 in the Student Guide.*

*Read Ezra 1:2-4; 6:3-5.*

*Read Ezra 4:1-5.*

### 539 BC—Persian Empire

Persia conquered Babylon in 539 BC and Cyrus, the Persian king, proclaimed freedom to the Jews in Babylon and allowed them to return to Palestine from Babylon. This marks the beginning of Israel's post-exilic history.

The return of the Jews to their homeland took place in stages. Some returned immediately; others waited and returned at a later time. The main reason for the delay was that the economic prospects were much better in Babylon than in the devastated land of Israel. So the return continued over the next 200 years, and some never returned to their homeland.

The first group of homecoming Jews was led by Shezbazzar in 538 BC and they began the rebuilding of the Temple.

A second group, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, continued the rebuilding program. Zerubbabel was the last surviving heir to the throne of David and in 520 BC he was made governor of Judah by the Persian government. The Samaritans who occupied the Jewish homeland were a Jew/Gentile mixture of people, the result of people the king of Assyria transported to the Northern Kingdom of Israel to replace the Jews exiled after the fall of Samaria in 722/721 BC. They offered to help rebuild the Temple but Zerubbabel would not allow them due to their religious syncretism. Because of this the Samaritans opposed the building of the Temple and the animosity that developed lasted into the first century AD.

The arrival of Haggai and Zechariah from Babylon brought new energy to the Jews living in Jerusalem. Because of their challenge to continue rebuilding, the Temple was completed and dedicated in 515 BC. Joshua was appointed as the high priest.

Jerusalem was repopulated and the walls rebuilt. The arrival of Ezra and Nehemiah between 500 and 450 BC brought reformation to the religious and civil life of the people.

- Nehemiah was a layperson, a cup bearer in the palace of the Persian king, Artaxerxes. With the permission of the king, he returned to Palestine and rebuilt the walls and the gates of the city of Jerusalem in 52 days. He restored civil life to the Jews returning from Babylon. In 445 BC, he became governor of Judah.
- Ezra, a priest, attempted to restore the religious life of the Jews. He called for religious loyalty to the covenant laws given by Moses and set new rules and regulations to guide the religious and secular life of the Jews in Palestine. As high priest, who enforced the observance of the Jewish law, he was the first in a long line of rabbis instrumental in forming and preserving Judaism.

Under the Persian rule, the Jews enjoyed relative peace and economic and political stability.

### **334-332 BC—Greek Empire**

Alexander of Macedonia (the Great) began his conquest of the Persian Empire in 334 BC and completed it in 332 BC. He extended his rule over three continents and created the largest empire ever known to this point.

The death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC resulted in the vast empire being divided into four areas; two concern Palestine:

- The Ptolemies ruled in Egypt. They captured Jerusalem in 320 BC, but their policies created no real problems for Jews. This was a peaceful reign.
- The Greek General Seleucus ruled in Asia and Syria. Later this part of the Greek Empire would conquer Palestine and chase the Ptolemies out.

Alexander the Great's conquest of Palestine changed the way people would live and think by beginning the process of "hellenization," the imposition of Greek culture and language on the east. The term comes from "Hellen," the Greek word for a person of Greek origin or culture. The Jews began to adapt Jewish faith to Greek thought and practice. The Greek Septuagint (usually abbreviated LXX, a translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek and the "Bible" for most of the early Christians) and the Greek New Testament are a direct result. Also, Jewish teachers like Philo compared great Jewish leaders, like Moses, to the Greek philosophers. They wanted to show that Hebrew thought was as enlightened as Greek thought.

## 198 BC—Seleucid (Syrian) Empire

Antiochus III (the Great) defeated the Ptolemies and took over the land they administrated. He treated the Jews well by providing financial assistance to rebuild from the war and exempted them from taxes for three years.

Hellenistic culture was welcomed by the Jewish upper class. They saw economic and political advantage and were eager for assimilation. Jason, the high priest, tried to set Jerusalem up as a Greek city-state. He had a gymnasium built under the patronage of Hermes and Hercules. Because Greek sporting events were done in the nude, there were even attempts to reverse circumcision. The desire on the part of the rich to be “Greek” was very strong. The poor, on the other hand, opposed hellenization, seeing no advantages and only corruption of their religious rituals and beliefs. Because of this stance, the term “poor” also carried the meaning of pious or holy people by the first century AD.

### Jewish Religious Crises

- Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) in 175 BC decided to promote Greek culture and customs throughout the empire. He banned Judaism and killed or sent into slavery Jews who resisted. He erected an altar to Zeus in the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem.
- In 168 BC, Antiochus ordered the desecration of the Temple in Jerusalem. In December he offered a pig on the altar and took holy vessels and money from the Temple treasury.

*Read 2 Macc 5:15-16 (Desecration); 6:1-9 (Crisis and Desecration); 7:1-7 (Torture of the Faithful).*

## 167 BC—Maccabean Period and the Hasmonean Dynasty

*Refer to Resource 2-2 in the Student Guide.*

Mattathias was a priest with five sons (John, Jonathan, Judas, Simon, Eleazer) who revolted in 167 BC, when Antiochus IV required Jews to offer pagan sacrifices. Mattathias killed another Jew who stepped forward to offer pagan sacrifice. After this, he and his sons fled to the hills.

Judas the Maccabee (which means hammerer) was the third of Mattathias’ sons. He succeeded his father as the leader of the revolt and conducted guerrilla warfare against opposing Jews (hellenized) and Syrians. Wearing the Syrians down with his continual hit-and-run raids at night, he liberated Jerusalem in 164 BC. The Liberation of Jerusalem in 164 BC is celebrated by the Festival of the Dedication referred to in John

*Read 2 Macc 8:5-7 (“Guerrilla” Warfare).*

10:22, known today as “Hanukkah.” This feast celebrated the purification and rededication of the Temple after Judas the Maccabee liberated Jerusalem.

The Jewish kingdom that developed after this revolt was the Hasmonean Dynasty (134-63 BC). This dynasty of priest-kings traced their roots back to Mattathias.

- Their capital city was Jerusalem, which became the center of religious, political, and economic life.
- The Jewish sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees developed and flourished during this time. We will discuss these groups later on in the course.
- One of the most powerful Hasmonean kings was John Hyrcanus, who expanded the borders of the Jewish nation. He destroyed the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerazim in the process of conquering Samaria. This action only added to the hostility between the Jews and Samaritans, begun several hundred years earlier in Zerubbabel’s time. Samaritans continued to maintain distinct national and religious identity even after being conquered by the Jews.
- In 63 BC, internal struggle for power within the Hasmonean family led to the occupation of Palestine by the Roman Empire.

## **63 BC—Roman Rule of Palestine**

### **Pompey Captures Jerusalem in 63 BC**

*Refer to Resource 2-3 in the Student Guide.*

The rivalry between the two sons of longtime Hasmonean ruler Alexander Jannaeus weakened the Jewish Dynasty, so Pompey came in with Roman legions and captured Jerusalem in 63 BC. Antipater, the Hasmonean king’s minister and power behind the throne (Herod the Great’s father), was given a political position with the Roman government because of his help to the Romans. The Hasmoneans were allowed to rule Jerusalem until Herod the Great.

In addition to the land of Palestine, Pompey added the Decapolis (which means “10 cities”) on the eastern frontier of Palestine as a buffer between the Roman Empire and the Arabian steppe.

### **Republic Fell Apart and Caesar Became Emperor**

Shortly after this time, the Roman Republic was torn apart by strong men trying to gain power. Julius Caesar became emperor and Rome united the then-known world in several ways.

**Government:** Provided one central government with local governors bound to Rome by oaths. These oaths were pledges of loyalty to the emperor which, if broken, meant death for the local rulers.

**Road System:** There was a saying at that time: “All roads lead to Rome.” These roads were built for military purposes but facilitated trade and dissemination of ideas for a very large area.

**Language:**

- **Latin:** This was the native language of the Romans and was generally spoken by Roman citizens, merchants, and soldiers.
- **Greek:** The common, unifying language of the Roman Empire was Koine (meaning common) Greek. It was the language of trade, was used in many government offices, and was the everyday language of many people. For most Diaspora Jews, Greek was their common language.
- **Ethnic Languages:** Each ethnic group had its own dialect or language. The Jews had two:
  - Aramaic:* This language came originally from the seminomadic Arameans. It flourished after the exile and during the Persian and Hellenistic periods. It was exclusively a language of Jewish and Samaritan populations.

*Hebrew:* In first century AD, Hebrew was exclusively the language of the INDIGENOUS Jews of Palestine. It was not spoken much in the north (Galilee). Although Hebrew was read in the Galilean synagogues, the discussions on the Hebrew Scripture were most likely conducted in Aramaic or Greek. Most archeological evidence for Hebrew comes from central and southern Palestine.

**Herodian Period (63-4 BC)**

This period begins with Antipater II (63-37 BC), father of Herod the Great. He became procurator of Judea in 47 BC for his military support of Julius Caesar.

Herod the Great (37-4 BC) is the most famous king in this lineage but probably inherited and/or learned his astute political ways from his father.

- He was the “King of the Jews” and ruled over Judea, Idumea, Perea, and Galilee.
- He was part Jew and part Idumean, and more Hellenistic than most Jews. Primarily due to his loyalty oath required by Rome but also because of

his natural inclinations, he had total loyalty to Rome. He was deeply hated and feared by the Jews for this.

- He was a regional king or “puppet” king for Rome. He also had the fortune of ruling during an era of economic prosperity.
- He was a passionate builder. He began the rebuilding of the Temple (20 BC-AD 63). He also made the city of Caesarea Maritima into a comfortable Roman city, building a theatre and other civic buildings. Later Roman rulers, like Pontius Pilate, preferred to live in Caesarea and come to Jerusalem only when their presence was necessary. Herod built many palaces for his enjoyment as well as fortresses for defense.

After his death around 4 BC, Herod’s kingdom was divided between his three sons:

- Archelaus was given Judea, Idumea, and Samaria.
- Herod Antipas received Galilee and Perea.
- Philip ruled the land north and east of the Jordan.

We will look more closely at these later rulers in Lesson 9.

## Lecture: Jewish Life: Social and Religious Setting

(35 minutes)

### Significant Changes in Jewish Lifestyle and Religious Life During the Babylonian Exile: 597/587—539/8 BC

*Alexander Varughese, Beyond Eden: An Outline of the Story and Faith of the Biblical Communities (Mount Vernon, OH: Mount Vernon Nazarene University, 2002), 82.*

*Refer to Resource 2-4 in the Student Guide.*

Several significant changes happened to the Israelites during the Babylonian exile. When they were in Israel they were members of 12 different tribes, but during the exile this covenant community established their identity as members of the tribe of Judah and became known as “Yehudites” or Jews.

They adopted the language of Babylon, Aramaic, which became the official language of Judaism for the next 600 hundred years at least.

They took the initiative to preserve the sacred writings, and the beginning of the process of canonization of the Old Testament Scriptures began, which was completed in AD 90 at the Council of Jamnia.

They adopted a commercial way of life, i.e., merchants and bankers, in contrast to the agricultural way of life they had in Israel.



They organized small-group assemblies for the purpose of reading and studying the Law and for prayer. This was the beginning of the synagogue as a religious institution. Synagogues later became centers of religious education and worship in Israel.

### **Jerusalem Became a Pilgrimage City**

Because of the exile, the phenomenon of Diaspora Judaism became dominant. Most Jews were living outside of Palestine and Jerusalem, but according to the Jewish law, every Jewish male was required to visit Jerusalem three times a year. This meant Jerusalem became a pilgrimage city with (during the early part of the first century AD) a year-round population of around 25,000, which would swell to 200,000 or more during festival days.

*Refer to Resource 2-5 in the Student Guide.*

*Display, or have students find charts in their Bibles, of the Temple.*

Even with the rise of the local synagogues, the Temple remained the religious center of Judaism until AD 70.

- The Temple area, including the large Court of the Gentiles, was 26 acres or 108,000 square meters.
- The outside court—outside the walls of the main Temple area—was the Court of the Gentiles. Here was where the buying and selling of animals for sacrifice took place, as well as the exchange of money from Roman to Temple money, so people could pay their tithes, etc. This was the only place Gentiles, who had not become Jews through circumcision and observing all the other rituals laws, could come to pray to Yahweh. It was generally a noisy and difficult place to pray.
- The Women's Court was inside the walls but at the opposite end from the holy of holies. In this court were the alms boxes, storage rooms for wine, oil, and wood, as well as the consulting rooms for those taking a Nazirite vow and for those suspected of leprosy.
- Through the Great Gate or Nicanor's Gate the ritually pure Jewish man could proceed to the Court of the Israelites. From this court the men would bring their sacrificial animals and food to the priests, who would take the sacrifices into the Court of the Priests. These two courts were not separated by a wall, so the men could view everything that happened in the Court of the Priests.
- The Court of the Priests contained the altar for sacrifice, the laver for water purification, and probably slaughtering rooms.
- The holy place and the holy of holies was housed in a tall cubical building at the back of the Court of

the Priests. In the holy place were the altar of incense, the menorah (lampstand), and the table of showbread. Behind a curtain was the holy of holies. This most holy place was entered only one time a year (during Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement) by the high priest, to offer a sin sacrifice for all the people.

- The Temple layout not only reveals zones of holiness or purity but also indicates the hierarchy of the Jewish society. The closer one could get to the holy of holies, the higher one's status.

The synagogue was the *local* center since the third century BC. It preserved study and observance of Old Testament law. Some scholars think it became a community center, school, and civil law center in the first century AD.

*Refer to Resource 2-6 in the Student Guide.*

The Synagogue Service Order reminds us that many early Christians attended synagogue services.

- Singing a Psalm
- Reciting the Shema and Blessings (Deut 6:4-9)
- Reading from the Law
- Reading from the Prophets
- Sermon
- Blessing by the President of the Synagogue (This was usually the person or relative of the person who gave the money for the building.)
- Priestly Blessing (Num 6:24-27)

*What similarities do you see between our modern-day worship services and this ancient synagogue service order? What differences do you see?*

## Annual Feasts/Festivals

Another very important aspect of Jewish religious life during this time was the annual feasts or festivals. "Religious" Jewish men were expected to come to Jerusalem three times a year to participate in these events. There are seven main events and several of these follow one after another.

*Refer to Resource 2-7 in the Student Guide.*

The **New Year festival**, or **Rosh Hashanah**, came in September or October depending on the Jewish lunar calendar. It was also called the **Feast of Trumpets** since trumpets were used to announce the beginning of the New Year. This festival also coincided with the end of the grape and olive harvests.

Ten days after the New Year celebration came the **Day of Atonement** or **Yom Kippur**. This was not a feast but a serious time of reflection on one's faithfulness to

God. During this time the high priest entered the holy of holies and offered a “sin offering” for all the people.

**Feast of Tabernacles** or **Booths** came five days after the Day of Atonement. This was a celebration of the fall harvest and a time when the Jews remembered the days in the wilderness when they lived in tents or booths. This festival lasted eight days with eating, visiting, and even sleeping outside under a brush arbor. Many Diaspora Jews who came for the New Year festival would stay until the end of this feast, over three weeks.

The festival of **Hanukkah** came in December and was a celebration of the liberation of Jerusalem by Judas Maccabeus and the rededication of the Temple in 164 BC. During this time lamps were lit to remind the people of the miracle of the oil. There was only enough sacred oil for the lamp stand in the Temple for one day, but God caused the oil to last eight days until more sacred oil could be made. So this festival also lasts eight days.

The festival of **Purim**, which comes in either February or March depending on the lunar calendar, remembers the Jews’ deliverance in the time of Esther. During the first century this festival was not celebrated in Palestine. It developed in Babylon and had a wild, carnival-type flavor to it. The Jewish leadership in Jerusalem felt it was much too wild. We do not find this festival referred to in the New Testament, but it does become very important and prominent to the Jewish people during the middle ages and even in the modern era, especially during the time of Hitler.

The feast of **Passover** comes in March or April, again depending on the lunar calendar. It is a celebration of freedom from slavery and a time to remember the Exodus from Egypt. It was a very important and significant feast during the first century.

The feast of **Pentecost** was celebrated in May or June. It came 50 days after Passover, and thus the name *Pente* or 50. Its religious significance is the remembrance of the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai. This festival also coincided with the end of the wheat harvest.

## Important First-Century Jewish Beliefs

In addition to the festivals, as well as the Temple and synagogue worship, there are several significant general beliefs of the Jews during this first century AD.

First, the Law was a framework for Jewish life and was the legal basis for regulation of activities in Palestine. Second, the Jews believed keeping the Law (God's revelation to Moses on Mount Sinai) was the basis for receiving God's covenant blessings. Those who did not keep the Law could expect God's wrath. So blessings were associated with being good and disaster with being bad. Therefore, like we do today, they struggled with why bad things happen to good people.

*Pheme Perkins, Reading the New Testament (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 35-45.*

They also believed God will create a new order of things and deliver His people. The apocalyptic book *The Assumption of Moses* was written at the end of first century BC. Its apocalyptic language sounds much like Mark 13:24-27.

## Political and Social Conditions

*Refer to Resource 2-8 in the Student Guide.*

There were luxurious palaces and villas in upper Jerusalem for the high priests and the wealthy. The palaces and villas of the wealthy were built of brick or concrete, had tile floors, a central atrium (court), open-hearth kitchen, oil lamps, plumbing and heating, inside toilets, walls with murals, and floors of mosaics. They were in "upper" Jerusalem because the sewage flowed downhill. So the lower on the hill you were, the smellier and less desirable your location.

The common people usually lived in lower Jerusalem or in the towns. They lived in homes made of sun-dried brick and stucco, floors of hard earth or stone, and mud-plastered, flat rooftops used for sleeping in hot weather and to dry or store food. They slept on mats and had no plumbing or inside toilets. These were two-level apartments or houses with the upper level for people and the lower level for animals.

During the first part of the first century Palestine was peaceful and prosperous. A common Roman proverb of the time was: "Peace to Rome and quiet to the provinces."

Rome protected Jewish privileges. Jews were allowed to pay Temple tax in lieu of public works taxes. Rome also issued a decree protecting the sacred Torah scrolls even from Roman soldiers and leaders. Jews were allowed to observe the Jewish Sabbath and were exempted from military service. This last exemption was probably in the interest of the Romans as well as the Jews. What Roman centurion would want men in his troop who had to eat special foods, prepared in special ways, and could not eat with the rest of the

men because they were unclean; or required time off for Sabbath and festival celebrations?

## **Jewish Religious Roles, Parties, and Sects**

*Refer to Resource 2-9 in the Student Guide.*

### **Religious Roles**

Three main roles need to be understood, as they are referred to over and over again in the New Testament:

The **high priestly families** in Jerusalem were collaborators with the Romans to some degree, because their positions were political appointments. They had the delicate position of being the Jewish religious leaders who presided over Jewish religious and civil cases, based on the Law, but had also to make Rome happy with their decisions. Rome was primarily concerned about rioting, so a priority for these high priestly families and leadership would be NOT to cause or incite riots.

The **Levites** were the priests for Temple service. Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, was a Levite. Generally these priests took turns serving in the Temple and were farmers or artisans the rest of the time.

The **Scribes** were teachers and interpreters of the Law. They were generally called "Rabbi" and had disciples. They were laypeople.

### **Parties**

The two main parties during this time were the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Those in the roles just described could be either a Pharisee or a Sadducee, but the priests tended to be Sadducees and the scribes tended to be Pharisees.

**Pharisees**, which means "separated ones," included both priests and laypeople. They developed the oral law that was later codified in the Mishnah around AD 200.

The Pharisees described the oral law as a "fence" around the Torah that helped to prevent inadvertent breaking of the Law of God. For example: A tailor was not to carry a needle on the Sabbath (oral law), because he might accidentally use the needle and "work" on the Sabbath, thus breaking one of the Ten

Commandments (Torah). They also believed in angels, spirits, and bodily resurrection.

The **Sadducees** came mostly from priestly families and the wealthy. They opposed the oral law of the Pharisees and their belief in angels, spirits, and resurrection. They tended to collaborate with the Romans. They only accepted the Pentateuch as authoritative. The Prophets and the Writings we include in the Old Testament were considered good literature but not authoritative religiously. This party disappeared after AD 70 when the Temple was destroyed, since the Temple was the center of their religion.

### Sects

In addition to these two main parties there were several smaller sects. The two largest and most well-known of these are the Essenes and the Zealots.

The **Essenes** withdrew from society either physically or socially to maintain their pure religion. They saw most of Israel's history as unfaithful to God and especially the first-century Temple religion. It is thought the Qumran Community, which existed during the time of Jesus, was Essene and that perhaps John the Baptist belonged to or was influenced by some kind of Essene sect.

The **Zealots** were so called because of their zeal for the Law. They advocated rebellion against non-Jewish rulers as a sign of loyalty to Yahweh. According to their understanding, there was no legitimate king of the Jews except God. Many of these people suffered death and torture for their beliefs. One of Jesus' disciples, Simon the Zealot, is identified with one of these groups (Mt 10:4). These people were considered very dangerous because of their tendency to incite riots, a number-one prohibition by Rome.

## Guided Discussion: Influences

(10 minutes)

*If there is little time for discussion, encourage students to write their thoughts on these ideas in their journal.*

*What is the importance of Alexander the Great, the influence of the Greek Empire and hellenization on the first century AD and the New Testament?*

*How did the hellenization of the rich contribute to Antiochus IV's efforts to stamp out Judaism?*

*Why did observance of the Law become so important?*

*Which roles, parties, or sects would you classify Jesus in? Why?*

*In what ways was Jesus similar to these groups you have identified? In what ways was Jesus different?*

## Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

### Review

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson.

- understand the historical events that led up to the Jewish messianic expectations in the first century.
- understand the setting for the “hellenization” of the Jews, especially Diaspora Jews (Jews outside of Palestine)
- understand some of the customs and practices of first-century Jews
- understand the religious setting of first-century Jews and be able to identify the differences among the major Jewish religious groups of the first century
- be able to use this historical, social, and religious data as a basis for interpreting the New Testament

*Have we accomplished our objectives?*

### Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Make a timeline for the intertestamental history of Palestine (540 BC—AD 1).

Read the Gospels of Luke and John. Sketch out a chronology of Jesus’ life from each of these. Compare the two, looking for similarities and differences.

Read chapter 5 in *Discovering the New Testament*.

*This is an optional assignment. You can require this reading or allow the students to decide.*

Write in your journal. What difference will it make in your ministry and preaching to know the cultural and historical events related to the Bible?



## Lesson 3

# The Life of Jesus

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	Who Is Jesus?	Lecture	Resource 3-1
0:15	When Did He Live?	Lecture	Resource 3-2
0:25	<i>Where Jesus Walked</i>	Video	VCR Resource 3-3
1:10	Homework Comparison	Group Activity	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Elwell, Walter, and Robert Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998, 118-35.

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Third edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, 63-75.

Maier, Paul. *First Christmas*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1971.

Perkins, Pheme. *Reading the New Testament*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988, 51-77.

Tenney, Merrill C. *New Testament Survey*. Revised by Walter M. Dunnnett. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992, 203-20.

Varughese, Alexander, ed. *Discovering the New Testament; Community and Faith*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005, ch. 5.

## Instructor Preparation

*Video: Where Jesus Walked is available through Gateway Films, Vision Video (1-800-523-0226 or online at [www.visionvideo.com](http://www.visionvideo.com)). It is item no. 99381 and sells for \$12.99 at this writing.*

**You will need to secure and set up for the video:**  
*Where Jesus Walked.*

# Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

## Accountability

*In pairs, have the students share their time lines.*

*Collect the timelines now and collect the Gospel reports after the group activity.*

*Return homework.*

## Orientation

*Ask leading questions to get the students into the topic.*

*Why is it important to know where and when Jesus lived?*

*Of what value is a "historical" understanding of Jesus?*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

**At the end of this lesson, participants should**

- **know the chronology of Jesus' life**
- **understand Jesus' life and ministry in its original setting**
- **use this historical data as a basis for interpreting Jesus' teachings**

# Lesson Body

## Lecture: Who Is Jesus?

(10 minutes)

### **The General Nature of the Gospels: Our Main Source for the Life of Jesus**

Modern biographies usually begin with an account of the subject's childhood years, and then progress consecutively through adolescence and adulthood to show how the mature person has developed in response to the various influences of early life and environment.

The Gospels are primarily a witness to Jesus. Their main emphasis is the last week of Jesus' life. This is prefaced by the reports of Jesus' teaching and accounts of a few events from the three years before His death. There is no real discussion of His childhood and adolescence.

### **The Gospel Material Was Preserved**

*Refer to Resource 3-1 in the Student Guide.*

**Oral Tradition:** The events and teachings of Jesus were passed on from one generation to the next through memorizing the stories. We know that in oral societies today, peer monitoring for accuracy is continual. They allow room for different perspectives and points of view but are intolerant of inaccuracies or deliberate skewing of information.

*We will talk more about Q later in another lesson.*

**Written Tradition:** In the case of the stories of Jesus, there was an early commitment to writing. These took different forms: miracle stories, pronouncement stories, sayings and parables, instruction for disciples, sayings collections (Q and Gospel of Thomas), and passion narratives. It is difficult to know which of these forms was primarily written and which were oral, because all we have at this point in time are the written copies of documents.

### **Roles of Jesus Found in the New Testament**

**Teacher.** Jesus was called "Rabbi" by His followers and disciples, both men and women (Lk 8: 1-3). The term Rabbi during time was not a technical designation indicating special schooling for this position as it came

to mean later on in Judaism. But it does denote a teacher with students or disciples, which was also characteristic of the scribes of the first century.

**Healer.** Jesus was also a healer, not just of diseases, but also of demon possession. His miraculous powers showed authority over both the physical and the spiritual worlds.

**Lord.** Quite remarkably, Jesus was also called Lord or Master by His followers. These terms indicate that His authority was recognized. Lord or Master was a term commonly used for people of importance, but also was the name used for God since the Jews were prohibited from using God's name, Yahweh. For example, note Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-6 where Jesus calls himself the Lord of the Sabbath.

*Read these passages.*

**Miracle worker.** Matthew 12:27 tells us Jesus is not the only miracle worker who drove out demons. But He was significantly different in that He did not charge for His miracles! His miracles were often used to help people "hear" what He had to say. Reasons for His miracles can be found in the three different Greek words used and translated "miracle" in English.

- *Dunamis—power:* They witnessed to Jesus' power and thus established Jesus as the Messiah.
- *Semeia—sign:* They were signs that in Jesus the kingdom of God had come.
- *Tepas—wonders:* Their purpose was to teach the wonders about who Jesus is and what the kingdom of God was about, not to entertain.

Miracles can be categorized into these types:

- provision (Lk 9:10-17, 5:1ff.)
- healing (Mk 5:21-43)
- destruction (fig tree, Mt 21:18-22)
- authority over the physical world (calming of the Sea, Mk 4:35-41)
- authority over the spiritual world (Mt 9:1-8)
- New creation miracles which are exorcisms (Mk 5:1-20) and resurrection (Jn 11:38-44)

*Read select portions of these passages.*

**Messiah and Savior.** Jesus is acknowledged as the Messiah in John 1:41 and 4:25. He never used the title for himself because of the possibility for it to be misunderstood. "Christ" which is Greek for "Messiah" is used so often in the New Testament, that some people think it is Jesus' last name. However, since it was not commonly used for "Messiah" before Jesus' time, the Christian community was able to give this word the special meaning of "Messiah" which Jesus came to be.

*Read these passages.*

Jesus is specifically referred to as Savior in Luke 2: 11, John 4:42, and 2 Timothy 1:10.

## Lecture: When Did He Live?

(10 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 3-2 in the Student Guide.*

*Paul Maier, First Christmas (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1971), 69-81.*

### Date of Jesus' Birth: Historical Issues to Consider

Several historical events give us clues as to when Jesus was born.

We know it had to be before Herod the Great died in 4 BC since he was still king approximately two years after Jesus' birth when the wise men arrived in Judea.

Luke tells us Mary and Joseph came to Bethlehem because of a census, decreed by Augustus when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Here we have our first problem, since secular historical data tells us Quirinius was made governor of Syria in AD 6-7 when he finished the census. In trying to harmonize these issues some scholars suggest Quirinius may have finished his census in AD 6-7 when he was made governor of Syria. But he may have been given the commission much earlier and that is the time to which Luke is referring.

Another historical event is the appearance of the Christmas star. There are several explanations of the star, including the belief that it was a miracle star just for that occasion to those who believe. Others think it is just a story and there is no historical substance to it. A middle road suggests God worked through the naturally occurring phenomenon, which was being interpreted by these eastern wise men or pagan priests according to their traditions. A possible reconstruction from the history of astrology is:

- 7-6 BC—A conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn happens which would indicate the birth of a king according to their traditions.
- 5 BC—Comet, Williams No. 52
- 4 BC—Nova or Comet, Williams No. 53

Following these events in the heavens it would have taken the magi westward over a period of two years. The astrological significance of these events would lead the magi to inquire in the palace for the birth of a king, which is what they did.

Another historical consideration comes from the Scripture itself. Luke 3: 1, 23 tells us Jesus was about 30 years old in the 15th year of Emperor Tiberius'

reign. The official date of him becoming Emperor is AD 14, but he had been sharing power since AD 11. This later date is likely the date Luke used. So Jesus was baptized in AD 24-25 and born in 6 or 5 BC before Herod the Great's death in AD 4.

The current numbering system for the Gregorian calendar was developed by Dionysius Exiguus, or "Dennis the Small." He based the calendar on what he thought was the date of Jesus' birth, which occurred 532 years earlier. He miscalculated the birth of Jesus by at least 4 years. Therefore we have Jesus born between 6 and 4 BC (Before Christ!). Also, there was no concept of zero, so that also removes 1 more year from the calculations when crossing over from BC to AD.

### Dates of Jesus' Ministry

Luke indicates Jesus began His ministry about AD 24-25. Traditions say His ministry lasted one to three years. So His death and resurrection would have been no later than AD 29-30 and perhaps as early as AD 27-28.

## Video: *Where Jesus Walked*

(45 minutes)

Refer to Resource 3-3 in the Student Guide.

**Watch only the first half of the video.** The second half is a visitor's tour, rather than a biblical tour.

As you watch the video, write notes on where the events took place and some of the geographical significances of those places. After the video, we will discuss what notes you have taken and you will share with each other your insights.

Answer key:

- *Announcement of His Birth: Nazareth in Galilee*
- *Birth: Bethlehem in Judea*
- *First House: Bethlehem*
- *Flight: Into Egypt*
- *Childhood: Nazareth in Galilee*
- *Baptism: Judea in the Jordan River*
- *Mount of Temptation: Judean Wilderness*
- *Ministry: Galilee (Cana, Capernaum, Mount Beatitudes, Mount Tabor), Samaria and Jerusalem (Pool of Bethesda, Gethsemane) and Judea (Bethany and Jericho)*
- *Death and Resurrection: Jerusalem in Judea and Galilee*

## **Group Activity: Homework Comparison**

(15 minutes)

*Divide the class into groups of two to three students to compare their homework assignment on Luke and John.*

**Discuss the differences and similarities in Luke and John's chronologies.**

*Why the similarities? Why the differences?*

*Collect homework papers at the end of this activity.*



# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson.

- know the chronology of Jesus' life
- understand Jesus' life and ministry in its original setting
- use this historical data as a basis for interpreting Jesus' teachings

*Are there any questions concerning today's lesson?*

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Read the Gospels of Mark and Matthew. Make note of where they are similar and different. *What is the nature of the sections that are similar? What is the nature of the sections that are different?*

Using your notes from Luke and John write out the similarities between all four Gospels, the similarities between Matthew, Mark, and Luke (Synoptics), the differences between the Synoptics and John and the differences between all four Gospels.

Write in your journal. Include your reflections and insights from this lesson and from your reading and study.

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## Lesson 4

# The Teaching of Jesus

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide Resource 4-1
0:20	The Teaching of Jesus	Lecture	Resource 4-2 Resource 4-3
0:50	How Did Jesus Teach?	Small Groups	Resource 4-4
1:15	Teachings of Jesus	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Drane, John. *Introducing the New Testament*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986, 112-57.

Elwell, Walter, and Robert Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998, 137-51.

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Third edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, 104-12.

Perkins, Pheme. *Reading the New Testament*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988, 78-90.

Tenney, Merrill C. *New Testament Survey*. Revised by Walter M. Dunnnett. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992, 220-26.

# Lesson Introduction

(20 minutes)

## Accountability

*Begin the lesson with students reporting on their findings from their homework on comparing Luke and John, Mark and Matthew. Write their responses so the whole class can see under the following categories:*

- *Similarities between all four Gospels*
- *Similarities between the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke)*
- *Differences between the Synoptics and John*
- *Differences between all four Gospels*

*Summarize the class findings using the chart, Resource 4-1 in the Student Guide.*

*Return and collect all homework.*

## Orientation

*In what situations and under what teaching methods do you learn the most? Do you learn more from object lessons, illustrations, or straight lecture?*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

**At the end of this lesson, participants should**

- **understand the authority with which Jesus taught**
- **understand Jesus' teaching in its original setting**
- **know the theme and methods of Jesus' teaching**

# Lesson Body

## Lecture: The Teaching of Jesus

(30 minutes)

### Jesus Had Authority

One of the first things noticed by the people who listened to the teaching of Jesus was that He taught with authority. Greek has a couple of words translated “authority” in English, but they imply different things.

Refer to Resource 4-2 in the Student Guide.

From Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (2nd ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

The Scriptures say Jesus had *exousia*, a Greek word meaning:

- Freedom of choice or right to act
- The ability, capability, or power to do something
- The authority, absolute power, warrant to do something

But in the Scripture it is also clear Jesus did not have role authority, *huperokee*, which is a place of earthly superiority or prominence. This term is used in 1 Tim 2:2 when Paul exhorts Timothy and his church to pray for kings and others in “authority.”

Matthew 7:29 tells us Jesus taught “as one having authority.” This was in contrast to the scribes who would say, “According to Rabbi so and so, this would be interpreted this way.” The people noticed Jesus spoke as one who knew what He was talking about. He spoke as one who had the power to understand life and had the right to explain it to us.

Read these passages.

Luke also addresses the issue of Jesus’ authority in several different passages.

- He speaks with authority (power): 4:32
- He acts with authority: 4:36
- He forgives sins with authority: 5:24
- He gives His disciples authority: 9:1-2

In Luke 20:1-8 His authority is questioned by Jewish leaders, but the question was insincere, designed to trap Jesus into something they could twist into blasphemy, His power was God’s power or that He was God. So Jesus answers with a question that would put them in a delicate position about John the Baptist, who was executed by Herod.

## Kingdom of God Is the Central Theme: Mark 1:15

Mark and Luke use the phrase “kingdom of God,” which probably reflects a primarily Hellenistic audience. Matthew uses primarily “Kingdom of the Heavens,” with “Heavens” being an alternative term for “God.” This reflects the Jewish practice of avoiding using the name of God for fear of breaking the commandment found in Exodus 20:7, “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.”

What did Jesus mean by kingdom of God? Many Christians and church theologians have assumed Jesus was talking about the Church or community Jesus’ followers would form. In English, when we use the term “kingdom,” we think of a territory ruled by a king. But the Greek word translated into English as “kingdom” (*basileia*) “more often means the activity of a king rather than the territory he rules. And the Aramaic word which most scholars think Jesus himself used (*malkutha*) certainly has that meaning. So we are justified in supposing that Jesus was talking about what we might call ‘the kingship of God,’ rather than his ‘kingdom.’” Therefore the phrase kingdom of God, means God’s reign or rule. It does not indicate a territory God rules over. It indicates Jesus was not so concerned about a “new society” as about the quality of life and the relationships people have with each other and with God.

*From John Drane, Introducing the New Testament (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986), 113.*

In Jesus’ teachings, the kingdom of God is both future and present.

**Future:** Mark 14:25—The promise of final salvation is coming. Jesus is coming back to have fellowship with His people and to bring ultimate salvation and justice.

**Present:** Luke 17:20-21—When Jesus was questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus responded that the kingdom of God “does not come visibly” because the kingdom of God is within or among you.

In Luke 11:20, as well as other places, the implication is that the presence of the kingdom of God depends on the presence of the King. So the kingdom of God is wherever the presence of Jesus is present.

## What Did Jesus Teach through His Life/Roles?

### Compassion and Justice issues

Through the several roles Jesus took on, His values of compassion and justice were demonstrated. As a *miracle worker* He demonstrated, not only His ability to heal, but His compassion for the masses. Most miracle workers of His time charged a fee for their services, but Jesus did not. He healed freely.

Some passages in the New Testament talk about Jesus as a *revolutionary deliverer*, champion of the peasants, or a spokesperson for the poor. Mary's Magnificat in Luke 1:46-55 is a prime example. This shows His concern for justice and the condition of the poor.

Jesus is also portrayed as a *prophet* to judge unrighteousness. In John 9:39 (NIV), Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." Here the indication is that unrighteousness is not just wrong actions (as thought by the Pharisees), but it begins in the inner person, those who are blind because they choose to be.

### Jesus Is the Savior

The Apostle Paul tells us the Resurrection is God's definitive word on who Jesus is. He is the center of Christian faith.

First Corinthians 15:3-6 is an early creed which Paul tells us all Christians were taught: Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, and He was raised on the third day. *But* it doesn't stop there. The creed goes on to say the resurrected Jesus appeared to the Twelve and to 500 believers at one time! Yes, Jesus' teachings and life are very important, but the confirmation of Jesus and His mission came with the Resurrection.

This issue of resurrection was not an easy one for everyone to understand in the first century. The Sadducees and Greco-Romans did not believe in the resurrection of the body. For the Greco-Romans the idea of the resurrection of the body was ludicrous, since they believed the body was a prison of the soul, which was freed at death. Why would anyone want to return his or her soul to a bodily prison? Paul had to spend a lot of time helping new Gentile Christians understand Jesus' resurrection and their own. There

See Luke 20:27-40.

See 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

See Acts 23:6-8.

were, of course, the Pharisees who believed in the resurrection. Jesus' resurrection is described in the sense that they understood resurrection.

## Theological Issues: Jesus' Roles in Salvation and God's Agent of Salvation

Refer to Resource 4-3 in the Student Guide.

Four very significant terms are used in the New Testament to elaborate and define Jesus' roles in salvation.

The first title to discuss is **Messiah**. Jesus never directly used this term to describe himself because it was so colored by the contemporary understanding of an apocalyptic, political deliverer of the Jewish people. The Messiah was seen as a "king," so it was a contradiction in terms for Him to be "anointed" and to "suffer." In Luke 24:26 the resurrected Jesus used the term "Christ" and reinterpreted the role of Messiah as Suffering Servant.

Jesus uses the phrase **Son of Man** in describing His role in judgment. It is also used in relationship to Jesus' death and resurrection.

- Judgment—Mt 25:31-32
- Death and resurrection—Lk 9:22

Jesus as the **Son of God** is declared by

- God's witness—Mk 1:11, 9:7
- John's witness—Jn 1:14
- God's Peace Child—Jn 3:16, Rom 8:3
- Through the Son of God we become sons/daughters of God—Rom 8:14-15

The most common title for Jesus in the New Testament is **Lord**. This title is used in relation to

- Jesus' suffering and exaltation—Phil 2:6-11
- Prayer and confession are made to Jesus, our Lord—1 Cor 16:22
- And this term, which is also used of God in the Old Testament, refers to the exclusiveness of sovereignty—1 Cor 8:6

## Small Groups: How Did Jesus Teach?

(25 minutes)

Through parables Jesus illustrated what He meant by the kingdom of God and its value in our lives. Generally these parables have one main point, but some of them have more than one lesson to teach. Mark 4:11-12 seems to suggest Jesus told the parables deliberately to hide the meaning of what He was trying to say. This is so contrary to what we know of Jesus



and His teaching that it must be interpreted in light of a parallel passage, Matthew 13: 13. Matthew indicates Jesus taught in parables *because* the people just had difficulty understanding. This would lead us to interpret the *so that* in Mark as a description of the consequences rather than the purpose of Jesus' teaching in parables.

*Refer to Resource 4-4 in the Student Guide.*

*Divide the class into two groups. Each group is to take one of the two sections.*

Let's look at the parables in depth to discover more of Jesus' teachings about the kingdom of God.

Each group is to:

- Tell what the passage is talking about
- Identify the main points or principles being taught
- Suggest a modern application of these principles

You will have about 15 minutes for discussion and then we will come back together and discuss the passages in the order given below:

#### **Parables are the language of faith**

- Mk 4: 11—They reveal the mystery of the Kingdom.
- Mt 13—The Parables of the Kingdom (Lk 4: 1-33)
- Lk 15—The Parable of the Lost Sheep, Coin, Son
- Lk 10: 25-37—The Good Samaritan (love your neighbor)
- Jn 15—Vine and Branches (abiding in Christ)

#### **Wisdom in the Sayings of Jesus**

- Mt 13: 52—Things old and new
- Mt 25: 1-13—The wise and the foolish
- Mt 5: 17-48—The old and new covenant, Sermon on the Mount, fulfilling the law, murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, eye for an eye, love for enemies

## **Guided Discussion**

(10 minutes)

*Which teachings of Jesus seem most unique?*

*Why?*

*What questions do you have as a result of this lesson?*

## Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

### Review

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson.

- understand the authority with which Jesus taught
- understand Jesus' teaching in its original setting
- know the theme and methods of Jesus' teaching

*Have you accomplished these objectives?*

*Any comments about this lesson?*

### Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Read the introductory material to the Gospels, which you can find in any study Bible. Write down what you find out about the content of the Gospel, the form of the Gospel, the trustworthiness of the Gospel accounts and why the Gospels were written.

*This is an optional assignment. You can require this reading or allow the students to decide.*

Read chapter 4 in *Discovering the New Testament*.

Write in your journal. What title of Jesus speaks to you? Why?

## Lesson 5

# Introduction to the Gospels

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Introduction to the Gospels	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 5-1 Resource 5-2 Resource 5-3 Resource 5-4 Resource 5-5
1:15	The Gospels	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Blomberg, Craig L. *Jesus and the Gospels: Introduction and Survey*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1997, 107-8.

Drane, John. *Introducing the New Testament*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986, 160-72.

Elwell, Walter, and Robert Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998, 69-76.

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Third edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, 76-108, 113-205.

**Tenney, Merrill C.** *New Testament Survey*. Revised by  
**Walter M. Dunnnett.** Grand Rapids: Wm. B.  
Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992, 137-47.

**Varughese, Alexander, ed.** *Discovering the New  
Testament: Community and Faith*. Kansas City:  
Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005, ch. 4.

# Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

## Accountability

*Call on two to three students to share one thing they learned from their reading of the introductions to the Gospels.*

*Return and collect all homework.*

## Orientation

*Ask a leading question to get the students thinking about the topic.*

*Why was it necessary to have written Gospels? What purpose do they serve?*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

**At the end of this lesson, participants should**

- **understand the genre and purpose of the Gospels**
- **appreciate the trustworthiness of the Gospels**
- **discover the core content of the Gospels**

# Lesson Body

## Lecture/Discussion: Introduction to the Gospels

(65 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 5-1 in the Student Guide.*

*Assign each group two of the passages.*

*If you have a small class you may not need to use all the references.*

*List findings of students for all to see on a whiteboard, blackboard, or overhead; you can use a transparency of Resource 5-1.*

*Refer to Resource 5-2 in the Student Guide.*

*Rest of lecture adapted from ENT, 72-76, and Craig L. Blomberg, Jesus and the Gospels: Introduction and Survey (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1997), 107-8.*

### The Content of the “Gospel”

The content of the preaching message about Jesus as our Savior is referred to as the *kerygma*. It consists of factual information about John the Baptist, Jesus and His life and ministry (especially His death and resurrection), and the meaning of these events for Christians and the Church.

Divide into groups of two to three: Find “factual information” from these passages. Select one person to report your finding to the class. You have 10 minutes to work together.

- Acts 10:34-43
- Acts 2:22-28
- Acts 2:29-36
- Acts 3:17-26
- Acts 4:8-12
- Acts 5:29-32
- Acts 7:44-53
- Acts 13:21-31
- Acts 13:32-41
- 1 Cor 15:3-7

### Reports

We will make a list of your findings as each group reports.

*What is recurring and what is not covered about the story of Jesus?*

The Apostles’ Creed is an example of how the Church eventually summarized the *Kerygma*.

Ewell and Yarbrough, in *Encountering the New Testament*, summarize the *kerygma* as God’s offer of salvation; the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; the call to faith in light of the coming judgment.

### The Form of the “Gospel”

Justin Martyr in AD 155 calls them “Memoirs.” The Gospels fit best into the ancient form of biography but are really a new subdivision of this form.

## The General Nature of the Gospels

Refer to Resource 5-3 in the Student Guide.

Modern biographies usually begin with an account of the subject's childhood years, and progress consecutively through adolescence and adulthood to show how the mature person has developed in response to the various influences of early life and environment. They are generally very psychological, sociological, or show how history influenced the development of the person they are writing about. The Gospels are very different from this.

Scholars have looked for some term other than history or biography to characterize the form or "genre" of the Gospels. Some have suggested "aretalogies," Greco-Roman accounts of the life of a Greek hero who was usually the child of a god and a human virgin. Other scholars prefer the language of theater and refer to Gospels as dramas, "comedies" (having a good ending) or "tragedies" (usually ending in the death of the hero). Some emphasize the use of the Old Testament and characterize the gospels as *midrash* or commentaries on the Old Testament.

None of these suggestions account for the majority of the features of a Gospel. Blomberg writes:

An increasing number of scholars, therefore, recognize that the list of traits setting the Gospels apart from *modern* biographies does not distinguish them nearly so much from *ancient* Greco-Roman biographies or Greek and Jewish 'historiography' (history-writing).

Ancient writers were more highly selective, ideological, and artistic in narrating the great events of their day or the lives of key individuals. There are unique features of the Gospels, to be sure, generally related to the unique events they narrate and the distinctive nature of the person of Jesus of Nazareth. But this makes them no less historical or biographical by the convention of their day. Perhaps it is best, then to refer to the Gospels as *theological biographies*.

From *Jesus and the Gospels*, 107.

The four Gospels are primarily witnesses to Jesus. Their main emphasis is the last week of Jesus' life. This last week is prefaced by the reports of Jesus' teaching and accounts of a few events from the three years before His death. There is no real discussion of His childhood and adolescence, and especially on how these influenced what He became. They are

testimonies to who Jesus was—from the very beginning of His life.

## Why the Gospels Were Written

The Gospel authors were evangelists and so they were primarily concerned with how to deliver the message about Jesus to their own contemporaries, and secondarily, writing a biography.

*Refer to Resource 5-4 in the Student Guide.*

## The Gospels Are Selective Accounts

Incidents in Jesus' life are used as appropriate illustrations to explain theological points. They incorporate incidents heard in the preaching of apostles. For instance, Papias, an Early Church father, claims Mark's Gospel is taken from the preaching of Peter.

Some of the details we would like to know (i.e., details of His childhood, what He looked like) are not relevant to "winning other people to faith in their Lord." So the Gospel writers did not include them.

## Each Story Is Told for a Reason

Generally we refer to this as the theological content or perspective of the writer.

To understand the stories we must always try to relate them to the purpose of the author or to the theology of the author. It is impossible to get a picture of the simple Galilean, because as far back as we can go, Jesus is making great claims for himself and telling men and women how they should relate to God. Because these are selective accounts we can discover some things about the author and audience, by comparing what they have selected as important with the other Gospels, especially Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These three Gospels tell the story of Jesus in roughly the same order and repeat large sections of material found in the others.

*If there is time, assign the Mark, Luke, and John passages to small groups and let them discover what the writers said and report this to the class.*

How do the writers themselves describe what they are doing?

**Mark 1:1:** *"The Beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ."*

Gospel = *euangelion* = Good News.

"Gospel" is an old English word which means Good News.



### *Beginning*

This is the first stage in the development of the message. This story was an integral and important part of Mark's own experience as a Christian. It was the first stage in the development of the message to which he and others had responded and committed their lives.

**Luke 1:3-4:** *Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*

He writes so his readers may know the full implications of the Christian message they had heard so often.

**John 20:30-31:** *Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name"*

John gives us the story of Jesus so we might BELIEVE and have LIFE!

**Matthew** is not so direct in telling us why. He begins with *A record of the genealogy of the Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham (1: 1)*. Later on in this chapter he says, *This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. (1: 18)*.

His apparent reason is to give a detailed and accurate account of the life of Jesus for a Jewish Christian audience. This brings out the important point that when these Gospels were being written the eyewitnesses were beginning to die and the church was exploding in growth. The best way to get the accurate story of Jesus out to the most people was to put it in written form.

## **The Trustworthiness of the Gospels**

Where did the evangelists get their information? What were their sources?

1. Accounts from living eyewitnesses, including themselves
2. Old Testament Texts—*testimonia*  
These are lists of Old Testament passages the Messiah would fulfill when he came. The people of Qumran kept such lists and so did other Jewish

*Refer to Resource 5-5 in the Student Guide.*

groups. Matthew, John, and Paul use Old Testament quotations extensively. It may be that collecting the passages was one of the earliest literary activities in the Christian Church. They were assembled for the convenience of Christian preachers to support their claim that Jesus had fulfilled the Old Testament promises concerning the Messiah.

3. Words of Jesus: *logia*

These are collections of sayings of Jesus. They were collected for different purposes and occasions. There were probably several different collections used in different areas of the Roman Empire. We have some later collections such as *The Gospel of Thomas*, which was written in Egypt in the Coptic language in the 2nd or 3rd century AD. And we have references—to other works, which do not exist today—that refer to collections of the sayings of Jesus such as Papias' *Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord*. Around AD 130-140 Papias, the bishop of Hierapolis, wrote this five-volume book, where he says he compiled the *logia* in the Hebrew language.

Matthew and Luke have large sections of the teachings of Jesus which are absent in Mark. Matthew and Luke had access to a *logia* Mark did not.

- Scholars call this *logia* “Q” coming from the German word *Quelle*, which means “source.” The debate has long been whether it was an oral or written source. Scholars are divided on this, but many lean toward a written document that circulated among the early Christians.
- In the fall of 1999 Claremont Graduate University, under James M. Robinson, published the results of a long-term project in the reconstruction of this collection of sayings. John Kloppenber has also published results of this “reconstruction.” These reconstructions are based on comparisons of the teaching materials in the Canonical Gospels, Gospel of Thomas, and other literature of the first and second centuries. Both James Robinson and John Kloppenber believe there was a written document containing the sayings of Jesus which has not yet been discovered.

## Guided Discussion

(10 minutes)

*Why was it necessary to have written Gospels? What purpose do they serve?*

*What terms would you use to describe the genre of the Gospels? Why?*

*What difference would it make if archeologists discovered the written document "Q" sometime in the future?*

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson.

- understand the genre and purpose of the Gospels
- appreciate the trustworthiness of the Gospels
- discover the core content of the Gospels

*Do you have any questions?*

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Read Matthew and Mark in two different translations. Fill in the outline from Resource 5-6 and Resource 5-7 on Matthew and Mark. Consult study Bibles and commentaries for information. Use the most current information available.

*This is an optional assignment. You can require this reading or allow the students to decide.*

Read chapters 6 and 7 in *Discovering the New Testament*.

Write in your journal. What is your favorite Gospel? Why?

## Lesson 6

# The Gospels of Matthew and Mark

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	Exegesis: Learning to Ask the Right Questions	Lecture	Resource 6-1 Resource 6-2
0:35	Gospel Discovery	Guided Discussion	Resource 5-6 Resource 5-7
1:05	Unique and Special Passages in Matthew and Mark	Small Groups	Resource 6-3
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Blomberg, Craig L. *Jesus and the Gospels: Introduction and Survey*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1997, 115-38.

Drane, John. *Introducing the New Testament*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986, 181-84, 188-92.

Elwell, Walter, and Robert Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998, 77-96.

**Harris, Stephen L.** *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction*. Fourth edition, New York: McGraw Hill, 2002, 118-76.

**Perkins, Pheme.** *Reading the New Testament*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988, 203-28.

**Tenney, Merrill C.** *New Testament Survey*. Revised by Walter M. Dunnott. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992, 149-72.

**Varughese, Alexander, ed.** *Discovering the New Testament: Community and Faith*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005, chs. 6 and 7.

# Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

## Accountability

*Ask the students what versions they read from. What was the one they liked best?*

*Return homework.*

*Resources 5-6 and 5-7 on Matthew and Mark will be used later in class. You may or may not want to collect them after the Guided Discussion.*

## Orientation

*Ask a leading question to get the students thinking about the topic.*

*When you are asked to give advice on or interpret a situation you have not been a part of or witnessed, what are some of the questions you need answers to before you give an answer?*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

**At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to**

- gain a basic understanding of the elements of exegesis
- understand the genres, purpose, and content of Matthew
- understand the genres, purpose, and content of Mark

## Lesson Body

### Lecture: Exegesis: Learning to Ask the Right Questions

(30 minutes)

*Lecture adapted from C. Jeanne Serrao, Holiness and Sexual Ethics in Paul (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Service, 1996), 219-21.*

*Refer to Resource 6-1 in the Student Guide.*

Proper Bible study does “exegesis,” which means to “read out” of the text the meaning of the scripture. The Bible was written many years ago and in different cultures from our own. Sometimes the meaning of the text is very straightforward and simple to understand, but many times there is danger of reading a verse “out of context” because we do not understand or take into consideration the historical and cultural setting of the passage.

There are many ways to “do exegesis,” but this method was developed to give you an easy way to remember the most important questions to ask about your text.

#### Who?

This question reminds us that we need to identify both the person(s) speaking and the listener(s). If these are different from the author and the reader(s), then these must also be identified. Try to answer the question first from your text and secondarily from commentaries: “Who are they and how can they be described?”

#### The speaker/author’s point of view

Read the chosen text and identify who is talking. It may be a “narrator” and thus the only “Speaker/Author” is the author. There may be one or several people speaking. If so describe each one. Most times clues about the author are found in the first few verses of the book. Rarely are there any clear descriptions of the speakers or the author. So look “between the lines” for any clues.

We can learn more about the speakers and author by looking at their choice and arrangement of words, treatment of the subject matter, use of evidence, argumentation, and control of emotion to see how the author/speaker tries to persuade his or her audience to believe something or believe it more profoundly.



### **The listener/reader's point of view**

Here we focus on the audience. The type of audience affects the arguments, tone of voice, and word choices the speaker chooses to use. Different audiences can account for differences in style by the same author/speaker. Look for clues in the text which will tell you to what kind of audience the speakers or author is talking.

### **Cultural considerations**

Sometimes the text and our own understanding of how things work are not enough. This is why we go to books which tell us what has been discovered about the general customs, authority structures, relationships (marriage, friendship, employment), and commerce (agricultural/urban) in the first-century world. The combination of this data with actual descriptions of these things we have read in the text will give us a clearer picture of everyday life and the people we are trying to understand.

### **What?**

#### **What does the text say?**

Make a simple outline of the text you are studying. Identify the major events or points of teaching and then list a couple of minor points which help to describe the event or point of teaching.

Identify the form and style of writing/speaking: Is it a story? A warning? A lecture? A sermon? A poem? A hymn? Don't worry about using "correct" style terms at first. The important thing in your first look at the text is to identify what the author/speaker is trying to do. Consult your commentaries for their description of the form or style of writing/speaking.

Pick out two to three key words in your text and look them up in a biblical dictionary. Check a couple of commentaries for ideas on key words as well as for studies on those words. How does the study of these words help you understand what the author/speaker is trying to say?

## **Where?**

### **What is the geographical setting of the text?**

Look for clues in the sections right before and after your text for the geographical setting. Is a town or city name mentioned? Are there animals or crops talked about? Try to answer the question, “How does this geographical setting affect how the people would have heard/read your text?”

Read the introductory sections to your specific book in commentaries and New Testament introductions, and find out if the author or audience would have been familiar with the geography of your text. How would they have understood the text from their geographical perspective?

## **When?**

Here we are not so much after a date as we are concerned about the historical setting and what the text came before or after.

Look for clues in the sections right before and after your text for the historical setting. Is a political or civil event mentioned? Is a ruler mentioned? Try to answer the question, “How does this historical setting affect how the people would have heard/read your text?”

Read the introductory sections to your specific book in commentaries and New Testament introductions and find out if the author or audience would have been familiar with the history of your text. How would they have understood the text from their historical perspective?

## **Why?**

The why question has three parts:

- Why did the speaker say what he or she did?
- Why did the author include this section in the book?
- Why is it important for us today?

Step back mentally from the Who? What? When? Where? questions and answers, and think about what you have learned in the process. What is the central point of the passage and why is it important in each of the three situations above? This is creative thinking time!

## Follow These Principles

Refer to Resource 6-2 in the Student Guide.

Adapted from Patricia Gundry, *Woman Be Free* (Grand Rapids: Suitcase Books, 1977), 58-59.

Comment on the context of Matthew 18:20.

Always interpret a verse in agreement with its context. That is, the meaning of the part must be consistent with the whole.

When interpreting a passage, consider the customs and events when it was written. Interpret a text in the light of its probable meaning for the persons to whom it was written. In reference to Matthew 18:20, two to three witnesses were required in court.

Interpret a passage in the light of all other Scripture. Do not use an obscure passage to disprove one with clear and obvious meaning, and do not interpret a passage in such a way as to make it deny what we know to be true of God from other Scripture. For example, the interpretation of 1 Tim 2: 15 must be in light of Jn 3: 16.

Interpret a passage according to the best use of the original language. John 21: 15-17 uses in Greek the two words *phileo* (friendship love) and *agapao* (committed love). Most of our English translations translate them all as "love," which misses the point of the conversation between Jesus and Peter. Jesus asks His questions the first two times using *agapao*, and the last time using *phileo*. Peter answers Jesus' questions all three times with *phileo*. The point of the story was that Jesus gave up His stronger word, *agapao*, and used Peter's word, *phileo*, questioning that Peter was even His friend.

If there is a principle set forth in the passage, do not interpret or apply the passage in such a manner as to deny or reverse the principle. Interpret social teaching in line with doctrinal teaching in the text. Ephesians 5:21-28 has the principle stated in 5:21.

## Guided Discussion: Gospel Discovery

(30 minutes)

*The instructor should involve the class as a whole in answering the five hermeneutical questions discussed above.*

*Each student was to have Resources 5-6 and 5-7 completed. They should contribute information based on what they found.*

*If possible, write out answers on an overhead using transparencies of Resources 5-6 and 5-7.*

*You have suggested answers to these questions here in this portion of the Faculty Guide, which can be used as summaries of the class findings from Scripture and previous lecture notes. But the emphasis should be on discovery.*

## **Matthew**

Matthew is usually characterized as a Jewish-Christian Gospel. In art and literature its symbol has been the Lion, representing Christ's kingship as "the lion of the tribe of Judah." The Lion is the symbol of royal authority and strength.

**Who?** (This question is NOT obvious in Scripture)

- Author: Matthew, a disciple of Jesus, former tax collector, Jew.
- Audience: Christian Jews in Syria, Diaspora Jews.

**Where?** (This question is NOT obvious in Scripture)

- Author: Antioch in Syria.
- Audience: Syria.

**When?**

- AD 60-70 (Some scholars date Matthew after the fall of Jerusalem, 70 to 80's).
- Before the destruction of the Jewish Temple.
- Written during the first Jewish Rebellion and increasing tension between Rome and the Jewish people as well as between the Jews and Jewish Christians.

**What?**

- Outline of Matthew.
- Jesus the Messiah is the fulfillment of prophecy. See 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14-16; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:53-54; 27:9, 35.
- Characteristics: Jewish-Christian; systematic arrangement; gospel of the Kingdom; church gospel; Hebrew poetic form, parallelism; use of Old Testament quotations.

**Why?**

- To show Jesus was the promised Messiah.
- To preserve what Matthew remembered of what Jesus said and did.
- To encourage these Christian Jews in the midst of Roman/Jewish tensions as well as Jewish/Jewish-Christian tensions.

*Talk through an outline of Matthew from any study Bible or commentary.*

## Mark

Mark is the fast-action gospel which seems to want to get the facts down so they can be preserved and passed onto the next generation. In art and literature it has been symbolized by the Ox, the Bull, or the Calf. These represent Christ's patient work, service, and power.

### Who?

- Author: Mark was a disciple of Peter, but not necessarily of Jesus because of his age. He wrote down Peter's recollections and was striving for accuracy. His version is not a strictly chronological narrative.
- Audience: Christian Gentiles and Jews in Rome, Diaspora Jews.

### Where?

- Author: Rome.
- Audience: Rome.

### When?

- Late 50s to early 60s AD.
- Written before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (Some scholars date Mark after the destruction of the Temple, 70s).
- Written before the Jewish Rebellion, because relations between Romans, Christians, and Jews are fairly good.

### What?

- Outline of Mark.
- Theme: Jesus the Supernatural, Suffering Servant and Conqueror.
- The supernatural nature of Jesus as the Son of God: 1:24; 2:5, 8-10; 3:11; 5:7, 26-27, 40-42; 6:39-44, 47-48.
- Characteristics: Messianic Secret which means Jesus tried to keep His Messiahship a secret until His death and resurrection; realism, action, Peter's Influence, historical mode, vivid detail, little of Jesus' teachings, no genealogy or infancy stories.

### Why?

- To show Jesus as the supernatural Son of God.
- To preserve what Peter remembered of what Jesus said and did.
- To give an accurate account of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, who He was and the impact He made on those who came in contact with Him.

*Talk through the outline of Mark from any study Bible or commentary.*

## Small Groups: Unique and Special Passages in Matthew and Mark

(20 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 6-3 in the Student Guide.*

*This section of the class is designed to give the students a chance to identify where special and unique passages come from in the New Testament. Divide the class into groups so each group or individual takes one of the passages.*

*Allow about 5 to 10 minutes for study and 10 to 15 minutes for reports.*

Briefly answer the five hermeneutics questions for the specific passage. Since in class we have just answered the questions for the whole book, concentrate specifically on the passage itself.

Each group/individual will report to the class. Read the passage out loud first, then give the answers to the five questions, and close with what you think is the most important application of this passage for our contemporary society/church.

- Mt 1:18-25: The angel announces Jesus' birth to Joseph.
- Mt 2:1-12: The wise men from the east
- Mt 5:3-12: The beatitudes
- Mt 6:9-13: The Lord's Prayer
- Mt 28:18-20: The great commission
- Mk 13:1-37: Signs of the End of the Age or "The Little Apocalypse"
- Mk 16:15-18: The Great Commission (Note: 16:9-20 is not included in some early manuscripts. What does this suggest about how to treat this passage?)

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson.

- gain a basic understanding of the elements of exegesis
- understand the genres, purpose, and content of Matthew
- understand the genres, purpose, and content of Mark

*Do you have any comments concerning today's lesson?*

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Read Luke and John in two different translations. Fill in the outline from Resource 6-4 and 6-5 on Luke and John. Consult study Bibles and commentaries for information. Use the most current information available.

*This is an optional assignment. You can require this reading or allow the students to decide.*

Read chapters 8 and 9 in *Discovering the New Testament*.

Write in your journal. Reflect on a verse in both Matthew and Mark that stood out to you during the study of the two books.

Journal Check: Be prepared to show your journal to the instructor during the next session. The instructor will not read it in detail, nor will it be handed in. Your journal will be briefly inspected to note regularity and quality of organization and entries.

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## Lesson 7

# The Gospels of Luke and John

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	Gospel Discovery	Guided Discussion	Resource 6-4 Resource 6-5
0:35	Unique and Special Passages in Luke and John	Small Groups	Resource 7-1
0:55	Four Gospels Compared	Guided Discussion	Resource 7-2
1:10	Holy Week	Small Groups	Resource 7-3
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Blomberg, Craig L. *Jesus and the Gospels: Introduction and Survey*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1997, 140-75.

Drane, John. *Introducing the New Testament*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986, 184-88, 192-97.

Elwell, Walter, and Robert Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998, 97-115.

Harris, Stephen L. *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction*. Fourth edition, New York: McGraw Hill, 2002, 178-235.

**Perkins, Pheme.** *Reading the New Testament.* New York: Paulist Press, 1988, 229-54.

**Tenney, Merrill C.** *New Testament Survey.* Revised by Walter M. Dunnnett. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992, 173-201.

# Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

## Accountability

*Ask the students what versions they used for reading Luke and John. Ask for their opinion about the different versions.*

*Return homework.*

*Resources 6-4 and 6-5 will be used during this lesson and can be collected later if you wish.*

## Orientation

*Have you ever heard four different people give their "eyewitness" account of an event?*

*Why is there such a difference?*

Today we will compare four very different people and how they recorded the life of Jesus.

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to

- understand the genres, purpose, and content of Luke
- understand the genres, purpose, and content of John
- understand the major comparisons between the Gospels

# Lesson Body

## Guided Discussion: Gospel Discovery

(30 minutes)

*The instructor should involve the class in answering the five hermeneutical questions for Luke and John.*

*The students were already to have completed Resources 6-4 and 6-5 and be prepared with answers.*

*Write responses on an overhead using transparencies of the two resources.*

*Suggested answers have been provided here in the Faculty Guide.*

### Luke

Luke is usually characterized as the Gentile Christian Gospel concerned for the common person. It is symbolized in art and literature by a man or a man's face representing Christ's humanity, His human sympathy, wisdom, and character.

#### Who?

- Author: Luke, a traveling companion of Paul, a well-educated Gentile, a doctor, and close friend of Paul. He was with Paul near the end of his life.
- Audience: Gentile Christians, "Most excellent Theophilus." Luke's explanation of Jewish practices, geography, and the use of Greco-Roman names for places suggest this.

#### Where?

- Author: Rome, especially if written during Paul's imprisonment there (Debated: Greece [Achaia], Caesarea, Alexandria).
- Audience: Unknown, could be Rome, Philippi, or Antioch but author could have had a wider audience in mind.

#### When?

- Late 50s to early 60s AD (some scholars who date Mark later would also date Luke as later because of the seeming dependence of Luke on Mark's chronology, AD 70-80).
- Before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70

- Before the Jewish Rebellion (AD 66-70), so relations between Gentiles and Jews are fairly good. Christianity would still be considered a part of Judaism and therefore treated as a *religio licita*, or legal religion.

*Talk through the outline from a study Bible or commentary.*

#### **What?**

- Outline of Luke
- Theme: Jesus is the Son of Man. He is the Universal Savior, not just the Jewish Messiah.
- Luke highlights social concern, concern for the poor. Individuals and women are highlighted along with a few more details of Jesus' childhood. The use of some medical and technical terms suggests Luke, the physician, although there is some debate as to whether the terms he uses are all that technical. Luke also emphasizes prayer and poetry. Luke is part one of a two-volume work with Acts.
- Luke's purpose: He wants Theophilus to know faith in Jesus rests on historical facts that stand up under the most severe scrutiny and are founded on first-hand testimony.

#### **Why?**

- To show: the universal nature of God's dealings with the world; Jesus as Savior of the World; the events of the early life of Jesus and His mother, Mary
- Special emphasis on the place of women in Jesus' ministry; the work of the Holy Spirit (continues on through Acts, which is the second volume of Luke's two-volume work on the beginnings of Christianity).

#### **John**

John is characterized as the theological or reflective Gospel because it tends to dwell on the meaning of Jesus' life and His divinity. This Gospel is symbolized in art and literature with an eagle. This symbolizes Christ's deity and His soaring heavenliness.

#### **Who?**

- Author: John, the son of Zebedee, one of the 12 apostles. Modern scholars debate this on the basis that this author is too theological and mystical, the words of Jesus are not in the same order as the other Gospels, and his Christology is too well developed.

Compare Paul's Christology (Rom 8: 31-39, Phil 2: 1-11) which was written much earlier. Paul's

Christology is every bit as developed as John's Gospel suggests.

*What do you think?*

- Audience: Jewish and Gentile Christians in Asia Minor

#### **Where?**

- Author: Ephesus was John's "headquarters" in the last part of his life. But if the author is not John, his location could be anywhere outside of Palestine.
- Audience: Asia Minor in the region around Ephesus and the area of the seven churches named in Revelation.

#### **When?**

- AD 80-90
- After the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.
- There is tension between the Gentiles and Jews.
- There is tension between the Jews and Christians because the Christians include Gentiles in their community.
- The Jewish Council of Jamnia took place around this time in AD 90. It was at this council the Jewish leaders closed the Jewish Canon, our Old Testament Scriptures, in response to the rise of Jewish Christian literature. Non-Christian Jews were distancing themselves from Christianity. The closing of the canon was to identify what was "Jewish" and what was "heresy." John's reference to the "synagogue of Satan" in Revelation 2:9, as well as his use of the term "the Jews" to identify those against Jesus, and his emphasis on the Jews' unbelief reflect the fact that Christianity was now seen as totally separate from Judaism.

#### **What?**

- Outline of John
- Theme: Jesus is the Son of God. Therefore He is "God Incarnate" and existed before creation.
- It is a theological Gospel and reflects on the human Jesus; the preexistence of Jesus; and the contrasts of: light and darkness, life and death, belief and unbelief; and the generic adversaries of Jesus and the Christians are called the "Jews" and sometimes the "world."
- Purpose: He is writing in order that readers might believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing have life in His name (Jn 20:31).

*Talk through the outline from a study Bible or commentary.*

### Why?

- To emphasize the divine glory of Jesus.
- To describe the divine qualities and essence of Jesus.
- Jesus is a unique, divine messenger. He is not just one of the prophets; He is God.
- Jesus is the answer to humanity's deepest needs.
- 

## Small Groups: Unique and Special Passages in Luke and John

(20 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 7-1 in the Student Guide.*

*Divide the class into groups so each group or individual takes one of the passages. There are many special passages in these two Gospels, so your students or you may have to choose your favorites.*

*While the students are working, check the students' journals to see if they have been faithful to the assignment. Assure them you will not be reading the specific entries.*

Briefly answer the five hermeneutical questions for the specific passage. Since in class we have just done the questions for the whole book, concentrate specifically on the passage itself.

When your group reports to the class, read the passage out loud first, then give the answers to the five questions, and close with what you think is the most important application of this passage for our contemporary society/church.

- Lk 1:5-25: The announcement of John's birth to Zechariah
- Lk 1:26-56: The announcement of Jesus' birth to Mary (includes Magnificat of Mary)
- Lk 1:57-80: Birth of John the Baptist (includes the Benedictus of Zechariah)
- Lk 2:1-20: Birth of Jesus and the adoration by the shepherds
- Lk 2:21-38: Circumcision and presentation of Jesus in the Temple (includes the Nunc Dimitus of Simeon)
- Lk 10:25-37: The parable of the Good Samaritan
- Lk 15:1-32: The parables of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, and Lost Son
- Lk 24:13-25: Jesus and the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus
- Jn 1:1-18: John's prologue (In the beginning was the Word.)
- Jn 3:1-21: Jesus and Nicodemus: the new birth (includes Jn 3:16)
- Jn 4:4-42: The Samaritan woman at the well
- Jn 11:1-46: The raising of Lazarus from the dead
- Jn 13:1-20: Jesus washes the disciples' feet
- Jn 14:16-17 and 16:12-15: The promise of the Holy Spirit
- Jn 17:1-26: Jesus' high priestly prayer
- The "I Am" Passages found in various places in John:

6:35 ff.	Bread of Life
8:12	Light of the World
10:7-9	Door (Sheep gate)
11:25	Resurrection and the Life
14:6	The Way, the Truth, and the Life
15:1-15	The Vine

## Guided Discussion: Four Gospels Compared

(15 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 7-2 in the Student Guide.*

*Dates will vary with texts, but are close for those who favor early dates and the priority of Mark. Review these basic issues which were "discovered" in the two previous lessons.*

*Allow students to interact and add their own ideas or opinions.*

## Small Groups: Holy Week

(15 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 7-3 in the Student Guide.*

*Divide the class into four groups and assign each group a Gospel. Have them summarize in outline form what their Gospel says about each day of Holy Week.*

*If their Gospel does not talk about the day, just have them write "no comment."*

*Then as a class, start with Sunday and the Matthew group and have them list what happened on Monday. Then have the Mark group add to that, then the Luke group, and so on.*

*For Monday, start with the Mark group, and since there is no Luke or John comments, then go to the Matthew group. For Tuesday, start with the Luke group, then have the Matthew and Mark groups add.*

*Follow this pattern so each group gets to start twice.*

*Suggested answers have been provided here in the Instructor Guide.*

### Sunday:

- The Triumphal Entry  
Mt 21:1-11; Mk 11:1-10; Lk 19:29-44; Jn 12:12-19

### Monday:

- Jesus cleanses the Temple  
Mt 21:12-13; Mk 11:15-18

### Tuesday:

- Jesus teaches in the Temple  
Mt 21:23-23:39; Mk 11:27-12:44; Lk 20:1-21:4
- Jesus anointed at Bethany  
Mt 26:6-13; Mk 14:3-9; Jn 12:2-11

### Wednesday:

- The plot against Jesus  
Mt 26:14-16; Mk 14:10-11; Lk 22:3-6

### Thursday:

- The Last Supper  
Mt 26:17-29; Mk 14:12-25; Lk 22:7-20; Jn 13:1-38
- Gethsemane  
Mt 26:36-46; Mk 14:32-42; Lk 22:40-46
- Jesus' arrest and trial  
Mt 26:47-27:26; Mk 14:43-15:15; Lk 22:47-23:25; Jn 18:2-19:16



**Friday:**

- Jesus' crucifixion and death  
Mt 27:27-56; Mk 15:16-41; Lk 23:26-49; Jn 19:17-30
- Jesus' burial in Joseph's Tomb  
Mt 27:57-66; Mk 15:42-47; Lk 23:50-56; Jn 19:31-42

**Sunday:**

- The Empty Tomb at Jerusalem and other Resurrection appearances  
Mt 28:1-8; Mk 16:1-8; Lk 24:1-10; Jn 20:1-9

## Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

### Review

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson.

- understand the genres, purpose, and content of Luke
- understand the genres, purpose, and content of John
- understand the major comparisons between the Gospels

*Do you have any questions?*

### Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Look up Gospel, Synoptic Gospels, Synoptic Problem, Gospel of Matthew, Gospel of Mark, Gospel of Luke, and Gospel of John in an encyclopedia or Bible handbook. Write down what you find out about the theories for the development of the written Gospels. Which Gospel was written first? How do the Gospels relate to each other? Which Gospel was written last?

Write in your journal. Reflect on which of the Gospel writers you most identify with.

## Lesson 8

# A History of the Study of the Gospels

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	A History of the Study of the Gospels	Lecture	Resources 8-1—8-6
0:40	The Quest for the Historical Jesus	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 8-7—8-10
1:10	Jesus	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

This lesson will need to be adjusted and contextualized especially for relevance for the various cultural settings.

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Blomberg, Craig L. *Jesus and the Gospels: Introduction and Survey*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1997, 73-111, 179-87.

Drane, John. *Introducing the New Testament*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986, 198-212.

Elwell, Walter, and Robert Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998, 169-90.

**Harris, Stephen L.** *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction*. Fourth edition, New York: McGraw Hill, 2002, 98-110.

**Johnson, Luke Timothy.** *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996, 1-27.

# Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

## Accountability

*Call on two to three students to share one significant thing they learned from the homework.*

*Return and collect homework.*

## Orientation

*Ask a leading question to get the students thinking about the topic.*

*When you are trying to understand a situation, does it help you to hear different versions of what happened?*

*Why? Or why not?*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

**At the end of this lesson, participants should**

- **gain a perspective on how Western scholars and the Church have understood the development of the Gospels**
- **understand the historical problems in getting a historical view of the earthly Jesus**
- **trace the issues and conclusions on these problems suggested by Western biblical scholars**

## Lesson Body

### Lecture: History of the Study of the Gospels

(35 minutes)

*Adapted from ENT, 170-77.*

*Refer to Resource 8-1 in the Student Guide.*

#### Ancient and Medieval View of the Gospels

Augustine, who lived from AD 354 to 430, composed a work titled *The Harmony of the Gospels* in which he went through a lengthy catalog of problematic passages to explain them. He concluded that:

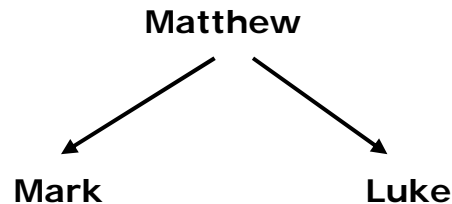
- Matthew was the first Gospel written and Matthew the apostle wrote it.
- John Mark had the apostles Peter and Matthew as his sources and abbreviated Matthew's Gospel.
- Luke and John were written independently or perhaps with some knowledge of Matthew and Mark.

#### Source Criticism

Augustine's view prevailed until the last 200 years. Scholars then began analyzing the literary relationships between the four Gospels. They borrowed the methodology of source document theory and developed several progressive theories on how the Gospels developed. This is called "source criticism."

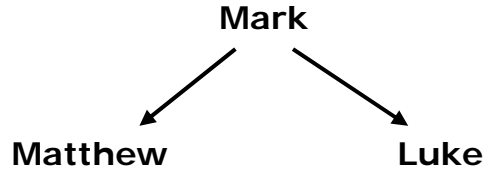
*Refer to Resource 8-2 in the Student Guide.*

J. J. Griesbach wrote *Synopsis of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke*. He introduced the idea of the "Synoptic Gospel" (Synoptic=with one eye), meaning these three Gospels seemed to follow the same outline or told the story of Jesus from roughly the same viewpoint. He still believed Matthew was the first Gospel and Mark was an abbreviation of Matthew.



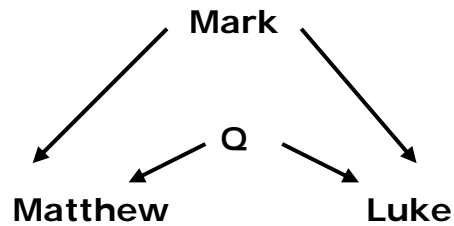
Next came the "Synoptic Problem": Why were there so many similarities between Matthew, Mark, and Luke AND why were there so many differences? Scholars were to develop theories and models to explain the similarities and differences from this point on.

The first theory to follow was the “Marcan Hypothesis” or the “Priority of Mark” which says Mark wrote his gospel first and Matthew and Luke used Mark as their “outline” or primary source for the order of events. This basic model is still the prevailing view.



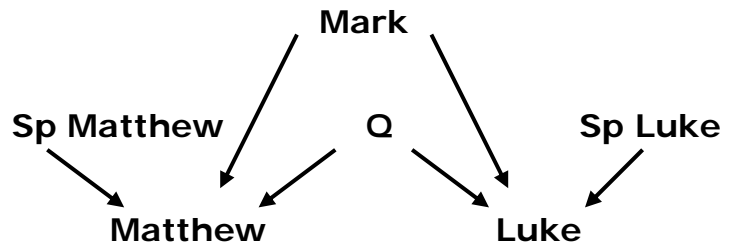
In 1863, H. J. Holtzmann added another source which was eventually called “Q,” for the German word “Quelle” meaning “source.” This source contained the material (approximately 230 verses) Matthew and Luke have in common which is not found in Mark. So the Marcan Hypothesis took shape as a two-source hypothesis—Mark and Q.

Refer to Resource 8-3 in the Student Guide.



In 1924 B. H. Streeter wrote *The Four Gospels: A Study in Origins*, where he proposed a four-document theory: Mark, Q, Special Luke, and Special Matthew. Special Matthew and Special Luke stand for the documents, oral tradition, eyewitness accounts, etc., each of these authors had that the other authors did not have access to or did not choose to use. This has become a standard theory for sources of the Gospels.

Refer to Resource 8-4 in the Student Guide.



### Form Criticism

In addition to source criticism, another methodology which has influenced the study of the Gospels is form criticism. This is a study of the small units of text such as proverbs, parables, and miracles stories gathered

Refer to Resource 8-5 in the Student Guide.

together to form the documents or oral tradition used in the writing of the Gospels.

Form criticism, coming primarily out of German scholarship, has its own special terminology. These terms are used in many commentaries today and it is important to know what they mean.

- *Formgeschichte* (German=form history) or form criticism: An attempt to discover the forms of the small units of the text “gathered together” in the development of the Gospel texts as we know them today.
- Pericope: An isolated, independent unit of text studied by form criticism.
- *Sitz im Leben* (German, translated “situation in life”) or original life setting: The pericopae were analyzed as to their original life setting, or the setting in which these units took the shape or form they have in the Gospels. According to form criticism most of these units were developed in the context of the life of the Early Church where they were recited and memorized. So they were not developed directly in the context of the life of Jesus.

The fundamental presupposition of this perspective was that the Gospel writers were compilers of the stories, sayings, and events of Jesus’ life, not authors with a purpose in mind.

Martin Dibelius wrote *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (1919) or later in English, *From Tradition to Gospel* which was the first major work in form criticism of the Gospels.

Rudolph Bultmann wrote *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (1921), in which he radicalized Dibelius’ work, leaving very little of the Gospels that went back to Jesus. He traced most of the Gospel stories to the “myth-making” instincts of the early believers.

## Redaction Criticism

Another methodology that has affected the study of the Gospels is redaction criticism. A redactor is an editor or author who puts together a story for a purpose. This methodology helped us to see that the four different Gospels are four different versions told from four different perspectives for at least four different purposes.



This criticism also developed among German scholars and was begun by some of Bultmann's students: Hans Conzelmann (*Theology of St. Luke*, 1954) and Willi Marxen (*Mark the Evangelist*, 1956). As a result the following term is often used in commentaries and books on the Gospels.

*Redaktionsgeschichte* (German=history of editing) or redaction criticism is the study of the redactors (compilers, writers, editors) of the Gospels.

Redaction criticism contrasts with form criticism in several different areas:

- Form criticism viewed the Gospel writers as simply compilers of tradition; while redaction critics recognized the Gospel writers were authors with their own agendas and theology.
- Form criticism was concerned with small units of tradition; while redaction criticism was concerned with large units of tradition.
- Form criticism did not develop adequate theological intent for the writers; while redaction critics point out the theological intent of the individual authors.
- Form criticism was concerned with one *Sitz im Leben*: the Early Church. Redaction criticism was concerned with three different settings: Jesus' life, oral period of the Early Church, the Gospel writer and his circumstances.

## 21st Century Scholarship

There is no one dominating theory today on the Gospels, except that Mark was most likely written first and that one of the sources for Matthew and Luke was a sayings source identified by scholars as "Q."

*Refer to Resource 8-6 in the Student Guide.*

Some of the current theories include:

- **Structuralism:** Underlying all expression and narrative is a structure common to all human minds. When we understand this "deep structure" we can understand the "real" meaning of a story. This has become such a complicated and esoteric method that it has had very little appeal.
- **Narrative Criticism:** This method sees the Bible as a literary production, not just a collection of folk tradition. It focuses on literary techniques, plot, structure, ordering of events, dramatic tension, and intended impact on the reader.

- **Reader-Response Theories:** These theories say the meaning of the text does not lie in its words or in the historical setting of its words, but in its relevance to contemporary cultural circumstances. The setting or culture of the reader provides the context of meaning for the reader.
- **Rhetorical Criticism:** This method identifies the techniques of discourse or argumentation (rhetoric) used by the author or speaker in the text to communicate to his or her readers.
- **Deconstructionism:** This method says a text has no objective meaning and becomes whatever the individual reader takes it to mean. The reader provides the context. Very close to the reader-response theories.
- **Sociological Criticism:** A new field of study which has only been delineated in the 1990s, although it has been used in different ways since the 1970s. It includes those who study the social backgrounds of the Bible times through archeology and texts as well as those who attempt to use sociological and cultural anthropological “field” methods and models to understand the ancient cultures.

## Lecture/Discussion: The Quest for the Historical Jesus

(30 minutes)

### Discussion

*Have you ever been “warned” about a person before you met him or her?*

*Have you had someone tell you unbelievably good things about a person before you met him or her?*

*What happened when you met that person?*

*How did the prior knowledge affect that meeting?*

These are just some of the issues considered by scholars in trying to discover the “real” or “historical” Jesus.

### The Real Jesus

*Adapted from ENT, ch. 12, 182-90.*

Before the 18th century the Gospels were seen as divinely inspired books that contained no errors. But this did not mean scholars were not aware of the differences and chronological issues of the Gospels.

- Thoughtful believers were aware some of the accounts differed and in some places, like the trial and resurrection accounts, it was very difficult to work everything out.
- They concluded, however, the different versions only meant the events were being looked at from different angles and emphasizing different things.

Refer to Resource 8-7 in the Student Guide.

The Enlightenment brought a rationalistic spirit to scholars in European Universities. They took the following viewpoints.

- The Gospels were not the story OF Jesus, but stories ABOUT Jesus, written by people who did not know Him. Some Gospels were written about 100 years after Jesus died.
- The real, historical Jesus was “buried” in a mass of myths, legends, and edited accounts and therefore had to be rediscovered.
- The Gospels were not “divinely” inspired. Everything had to be “proven” true on rational “scientific” grounds to be accepted.
- “Historical” was defined as excluding the supernatural. So the Virgin Birth, Resurrection, divine healings, exorcisms, and predictive prophecy were not to be considered in a “historical” investigation.

Refer to Resource 8-8 in the Student Guide.

The “Search for the Jesus of History” or the “Quest for the Historical Jesus” are the names given to this “historical” investigation that has continued over the last 200 years.

These “historical” Jesus critics wanted to write a life of Jesus as He really was, not as some people wished He had been, like the Christ of faith. They wanted to use tools of “scientific” Bible study, which by definition could not investigate the supernatural. So they “set aside” the question of the supernatural. Two major works of this type are D. F. Strauss’ *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (1835) and E. Renan’s *Life of Jesus* (1863).

In 1906 Albert Schweitzer, the famous African missionary, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, scholar (earned three doctorates in medicine, theology, and philosophy), and a recognized organist, surveyed over 200 “lives of Jesus” in *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*. He concluded none of them had found the historical Jesus but their work was only a reflection of their own preconceived ideas. “They had taken Jesus out of his own time by transporting him into our times and had modernized him beyond recognition.” Without the model of the ancient culture as described in the

ENT, 183.

New Testament, the only way these “historical Jesus” critics could “see” Jesus was in their own modern terms.

As a result of Schweitzer’s book, another German scholar, Rudolph Bultmann, called the historical Jesus a “presupposition” of New Testament theology. By that he meant we could not prove anything historically about Jesus, but we must believe He lived or the New Testament and Christianity do not make any sense. He said the important thing was THAT Jesus was and not WHAT Jesus was. Furthermore, he said we must take the early Christian “myths” and “demythologize” them by translating them into acceptable 20th century categories, so modern people could believe them. This aspect of his work has become the most famous and most controversial.

Bultmann’s students ushered in the post-Bultmannian era, accusing Bultmann of modern “gnosticism” because he proposed a system of faith which had no historical basis. They set out on a new quest for the historical Jesus, again using “scientific” tools. Two of the major works from this period are Gunther Bornkamm’s *Jesus of Nazareth* (1956) and James M. Robinson’s *A New Quest for the Historical Jesus* (1959).

During the last 20 years of the 20th century, scholars developed many more theories about the historical Jesus.

- These views of Jesus include Jesus as a political change agent, a Greek preacher, a zealot, a magician, a moralistic prophet, a confused Galilean peasant, a Marxist atheist, a Greek hero, and a Hellenistic sage.
- A third quest for the historical Jesus developed in the 1980s and 90s with E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (1985); James Charlesworth, *Jesus Within Judaism* (1988); N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (1996); and Ben Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus* (1990). It emphasizes that Jesus was a Jew and we can best understand Him and His teaching in the light of first-century Judaism. So there is an increased examination of the diversity of first-century Judaism and rigorous use of historical criteria to determine the “authenticity” of the Gospels.

## Real Words of Jesus

This quest to find the “real” words of Jesus followed the pattern of the quest for the historical Jesus. At first

See Harnack, "What Is Christianity?" 1900.

Refer to Resource 8-9 in the Student Guide.

Adapted from ENT, 186. Other resources: D. G. A. Calvert, "An Examination of the Criteria for Distinguishing the Authentic Words of Jesus," *New Testament Studies* 18 (1971): 209-18; Robert H. Stein, "The Criteria for Authenticity," in *Gospel Perspectives: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels*, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT, 1980-86), 1:225-63.

there were many topics scholars could agree on that Jesus taught, such as the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the infinite value of the human soul.

Then in the 1950s came a renewed attempt to find what Jesus really said. Over the years 25 criteria were developed to decide what Jesus really said. Example criteria include:

1. Multiple Source Attestation: A saying found in more than one place in the Gospels is said to be authentic.
2. Palestinian Environment: A saying that fit first-century Palestine is said to be authentic.
3. Aramaic Language: A saying that is awkward in Greek and makes better sense in Aramaic is said to be authentic.
4. Dissimilarity: A saying which is different from the beliefs of first-century Judaism or early Christianity is said to be authentic.
5. Embarrassment: A saying which would be an embarrassment to the Early Church is said to be authentic, since they would not have made it up.
6. Consensus of Scholars: A saying is said to be authentic if most scholars agree.
7. Multiple Forms of Statement: A saying is authentic if it is found in more than one form in the Gospels.

These are just a few of the criteria. As you can see, some make more sense than others. But it was on the basis of these criteria that the sayings of Jesus were judged as authentic or not.

In 1986, over 70 scholars banded together in a group called the *Jesus Seminar* whose intention was to answer the question: What did Jesus really say? They circulated papers among themselves and met twice a year. They developed a voting method to decide what Jesus said by dropping a plastic bead in a bucket for each verse they were considering. The red bead meant: "That's Jesus!" The pink bead meant: "Sure sounds like Jesus!" The gray bead said: "Well, maybe!" and the black bead meant: "There's been some mistake!"

They produced a book in 1993 called *The Five Gospels* with the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas being the fifth one. They color-coded the text with the results of their votes. The outcome indicated they thought only 18 percent of the words ascribed to Jesus were actually spoken by Him. In contrast to most scholars they have deliberately publicized their thoughts to the mass

media, giving the impression that they speak for mainstream New Testament scholarship.

## Criticisms of the Jesus Seminar

One of the outspoken critics of the Jesus Seminar is Luke Timothy Johnson. In his book *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels*, Johnson criticizes the seminar as a group of people “self-selected on the basis of a prior agreement concerning the appropriate goals and methods for studying the gospels (historical-critical) and the figure of Jesus (non-eschatological and non-mythical, a kind of Eastern holy man who speaks in short, profound statements).”

(San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 2.

He states they are not representative of New Testament scholars today because, other than Claremont Graduate University, there are no representatives from major graduate New Testament faculties. He goes on to say that because they assume the Gospels are not accurate histories but narratives from “traditional materials with literary art and theological motives” the whole process is “biased against the authenticity of the Gospel tradition.”

*Ibid.*, 3.

*Ibid.*, 4.

*Ibid.*, 5.

Furthermore, Johnson says Robert Funk, the seminar’s founder, “does not conceive of the Seminar’s work as making a contribution to scholarship but as carrying out a cultural mission”—liberty for the laity from the Church’s control of the Bible.

See Funk’s keynote address reported in the Seminar’s publication *Forum* 1/1, 1985.

Johnson’s specific critique of the *Jesus Seminar’s* scholarship in *The Five Gospels* is:

- Lack of “discernable demonstration or even argument.”
- Does not consistently follow the criteria it established.
- Uses cut-and-paste method of choosing what to consider and what not to consider.
- “Shares the same literalism and historical positivism that characterize fundamentalism.”

*The Real Jesus*, 25-26.

## Constructive Evangelical Presuppositions

As a response to these attempts to understand the historical or real Jesus, evangelicals have articulated some constructive presuppositions to guide in our quest to understand the historical Jesus.

The first and most important is to accept the Bible as reliable and trustworthy. It is at least a picture of Jesus

Refer to Resource 8-10 in the Student Guide.

written by His contemporaries and not some modern reconstruction of what someone thought Jesus was.

Second, begin with the presupposition that the Jesus of History and the Christ of faith are the same person.

Third, acknowledge that historical research does not need to dismiss the supernatural to be accurate. We must carry on our study with the presupposition of God's involvement in the process.

## **Guided Discussion: Jesus**

(15 minutes)

*Is there a way to put faith and research together and analyze the "historical" Jesus? Why or why not?*

**Discuss some of the 21st-century methods of studying the Gospels. Which ones help the understanding of the New Testament? Which ones hinder it? Why?**

## Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

### Review

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson.

- gain a perspective on how Western scholars and the Church have understood the development of the Gospels
- understand the historical problems in getting a historical view of the earthly Jesus
- trace the issues and conclusions on these problems suggested by Western biblical scholars

*Do you have any question?*

### Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Make a timeline of the life of Jesus and the Early Church from 4 BC to AD 100. Consult study Bibles, Bible dictionaries, and handbooks, or the suggested internet websites (see Bibliography) for information.

Read an encyclopedia article on the myths of the Greeks and Romans. Identify the major Greco-Roman gods and goddesses and what areas of life they were responsible for. Look up mystery religions of the Greeks and Romans and identify the most popular ones. What kinds of things were people looking for in these mystery religions? Write a two-page paper.

Write in your journal. Reflect on who Jesus is to you. What is important to document? What should be accepted by faith?



## *Lesson 9*

# **The Historical, Social, and Religious Setting of the 1st-Century, Greco-Roman World**

## *Lesson Overview*

### **Schedule**

<b>Start Time</b>	<b>Task or Topic</b>	<b>Learning Activity</b>	<b>Materials Needed</b>
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	Historical Setting of the 1st-Century, Greco-Roman World	Lecture	Resource 2-3 Resource 9-1 Resource 9-2
0:25	Public, Social Climate of the 1st-Century, Greco-Roman World	Lecture	Resource 9-3
0:40	Social and Religious Setting of the 1st-Century, Greco-Roman World	Lecture	Resource 9-4 Resource 9-5 Resource 9-6 Resource 9-7
1:10	The 1st-Century, Greco-Roman World	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### **Suggested Reading for Instructor**

Bruce, F. F. *New Testament History*. Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1980, 7-55, 247-364, 291-304, 337-49.

**Drane, John.** *Introducing the New Testament.* New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986, 17-25, 255-58.

**Elwell, Walter, and Robert Yarbrough.** *Encountering the New Testament.* Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998, 193-207.

**Gundry, Robert H.** *A Survey of the New Testament.* Third edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, 29-81.

**Harris, Stephen L.** *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction.* Fourth edition, New York: McGraw Hill, 2002, 40-56, 63-75.

**Perkins, Pheme.** *Reading the New Testament.* New York: Paulist Press, 114-34.

# Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

## Accountability

*In pairs have the students examine each other's time line.*

*Call on one student to read their report.*

*Return and collect homework.*

## Orientation

*Ask a leading question to get the students thinking about the topic.*

*If you were going to start a worldwide organization, what would be the characteristics of an ideal setting to start this organization in?*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

**At the end of this lesson, participants should**

- understand the historical events and public, social climate of the first century and their impact on the spread of Christianity
- understand the social and religious settings of the first century and their impact on the spread of Christianity
- understand the setting for the development of the Early Church
- use this historical, social, and religious data as a basis for interpreting the New Testament

## Lesson Body

### Lecture: Historical Setting of the 1st-Century, Greco-Roman World

(20 minutes)

Refer back to Resource 2-3 in the Student Guide.

#### Herodian Period (63 BC—AD 66)

##### Antipater II (63-37 BC)

As we begin this section we will briefly review the end of the historical overview we discussed for the setting of the life of Jesus.

Antipater II was the father of Herod the Great. His official title was “ethnarch,” which means a local governor or prince of Palestine. He was given this position in 47 BC because of his military support of Julius Caesar. The Hasmonean kings continued to take care of the more Jewish issues and serve as high priests, but they were no longer recognized as the only power in Palestine.

Julius Caesar, also because of Antipater’s support, made Judaism a *religio licita* (legal religion), which meant Jews had freedom of religion, did not have to make pagan sacrifices, they could keep the Sabbath, and their Torahs were sacred and could not be desecrated by even a Roman ruler. This religious privilege was extended to Christianity as long as it was recognized as part of Judaism, probably into the 70s and 80s.

During this time the ruling power of the Jews was divided between client kings (Antipater) and high priests (former Hasmonean king). Rome appointed both of these positions during the 1st century AD. So not only were the “kings” appointed by a pagan empire, but also the Jewish high priests were appointed by the Romans.

##### Herod the Great (37-4 BC)

Refer to Resource 9-1 in the Student Guide.

Again, by way of review, remember that Herod was called the “King of the Jews” when Jesus was born. His kingdom included Judea, Idumea (Edom), Perea, and Galilee.

His vicious personality was known even to the Roman emperor. Augustus Caesar said of him: “It is better to be Herod’s pig (hus) than his son (huios)” (notice the play on words in Greek). This comment came as a result of Herod’s actions toward his own family members. He drowned his son-in-law, assassinated two of his sons, strangled his wife, had his eldest son executed five days before his own death, and left orders that upon his death all the leaders be executed so there would be mourning in the land at his funeral.

Herod ruled under Octavian or Augustus Caesar (31 BC-AD 14) who decreed the census at the time of the birth of Jesus. Augustus Caesar was somewhat of a moral reformer, making laws that encouraged marriage, and having children, and discouraged adultery and divorce.

### **Kingdom Divided between Three Sons After Herod’s Death around 4 BC**

You will remember that Herod’s kingdom was divided between his three sons.

*Refer to a map of first-century Palestine or maps in study Bibles.*

**Archelaus** ruled from 4 BC to AD 6 over Judea, Idumea, and Samaria. He was a ruthless ruler, whose tyrannical rule incensed the Jews and the Samaritans, so Archelaus was deposed and exiled to Vienne in the Rhone Valley.

*See F. F. Bruce, New Testament History (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1980), 24-25.*

**Antipas** ruled over Galilee and Perea from 4 BC-AD 39. After Archelaus’ exile he also ruled Samaria, Judea, and Idumea. He was an astute politician like his father and he maintained his position with his own army. Herod Antipas was known for his “slyness,” love of women, and the building of Sepphoris and Tiberias in Galilee. Jesus called him “that sly fox” and he is also the one who beheaded John the Baptist.

**Philip** ruled from 4 BC to AD 34 over a small area west of the Upper Jordan and a larger area east of the Jordan. He rebuilt and enlarged a small town, Paneion, and called it Caesarea or Caesarea Philippi. He also rebuilt Bethsaida as his winter residence, and called it Julias after Augustus’ daughter Julia. He was a moderate and tolerant ruler who ruled mostly Gentiles and so did not have as many of the Jewish problems as his brothers did.

*See Ibid., 25-26.*

These three Herodian kings ruled under Emperor Tiberius (AD 14-37), cited in Luke 3: 1 as ruling at the time of Jesus’ baptism.

### **Agrippa I (AD 37-44)**

*See Acts 12:19-23.*

After Herod Antipas died, King Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, ultimately became king over all Palestine.

He ruled under Emperors Caligula (AD 37-41), who tried to erect a statue of himself in the Temple in Jerusalem in AD 41; and Claudius (AD 41-54), who expelled all Jews from Rome for “disturbances” at the instigation of a man named “Chrestus,” which many scholars think may be a reference to “christos,” or Christ in Greek.

### **Agrippa II (AD 44-66)**

King Agrippa II followed, ruling over Palestine and having the power to appoint the high priest.

*See Acts 26:28.*

He shared power with Felix from 52 to 60, the Roman governor of Judea whose wife was Drusilla, a great-granddaughter of Herod the Great, and with Porcius Festus from 50 to 62 who followed Felix, the Roman governor of Judea. He is the king to whom Paul gave his defense and who said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?”

### **First Jewish Revolt and Destruction of Jerusalem (AD 66-70)**

*Refer to Resource 9-2 in the Student Guide.*

The end of the Herodian dynasty coincided with the beginning of the first Jewish revolt. The emperor of the revolt was **Nero**, who ruled Rome from AD 54-68. He is also the emperor who, in AD 64, blamed the fire of Rome on Christians and brought about the first organized persecution of Christians.

But Nero died before the revolt ended and **Vespasian** was called back from his fight with the Jews to become emperor in 68. He ruled from 68 to 79 and was in power during the destruction of Jerusalem and the burning of the Temple.

When Vespasian died, **Titus** became emperor and ruled from 79 to 81. Titus’s claim to fame was that he was the Roman general who conquered and destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70.

**Emperor Domitian** ruled from 81 to 96 and is credited with decreeing the first official persecution of the Christians throughout the Roman Empire.

From the Council of Jamnia in AD 90 on, the Jews identified themselves as separate from Christians. They closed or confirmed the Old Testament canon and became a religion of the Law (Torah) because the Temple was destroyed. So this persecution by Domitian did not include the Jews, since Judaism was still a *religio licita*.

The emperors of **Nerva** (AD 96-98) and **Trajan** (AD 98-117) continued to carry out similar policies, but there was also growing unrest among the Jews during this time.

It was during the reign of **Emperor Hadrian** (AD 117-138) the second Jewish War occurred under the rebel leader Bar Cochba, a messianic zealot who fought the Romans AD 132-135. This rebellion led to the destruction of Jerusalem, again. It was rebuilt as a Roman city with a temple dedicated to Jupiter. Hadrian expelled the Jews from Jerusalem and banned them from ever entering the city again. He renamed Judea as Palestina and Jerusalem as Aelia Capitolina in AD 135.

## Lecture: Public Social Climate of the 1st-Century Greco-Roman World

(15 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 9-3 in the Student Guide.*

### Social Classes

In the Roman world there was a sharp contrast between the rich and the poor. There was a small middle-class, and the slaves were at the bottom as far as status was concerned. The slaves' quality of life depended greatly their masters. Some slaves of aristocratic households enjoyed what we might call a "wealthy" lifestyle; however, they were not free to do as they pleased.

Slaves outnumbered the free and this was a cause for concern. Many feared the possibility of slave riots. The Roman class system was very explicit and complicated, but basically there were the aristocrats, the freedmen, and the slaves. Economically, there were primarily two classes, rich and poor. But some self-made merchants and tradespeople could be considered an economic "middle-class."

Jewish society had minimal extreme poverty—except during time of famine and revolt—and was basically a two-class system with chief priests and leading rabbis in the upper class. Farmers, artisans, and businesspeople made up the broad middle class. Tax

collectors became wealthy but were despised as collaborators with the Romans, extortionists, and oppressors of the poor.

The *Am ha-Aretz*, people of the land, or common people, were the largest group in this Hellenistic, Jewish society. They worked hard to make ends meet, had little political power, and tried to please God the best they could.

When we look at the Pauline letters we discover a mixture of social statuses. Christians were both Jewish and Gentile but they also included different occupations, genders, and economic levels.

- Craftspeople, traders, and merchants, like Paul and most of the apostles, seem to predominate. Unlike the Gentiles, the Jews felt it was honorable and important to learn a trade, or “to work with one’s hands.” Every Jewish boy was taught a trade whether or not he used it during his life.
- We find references to both slaves and masters, like Onesimus and Philemon.
- There were also wealthy Christians, with perhaps Theophilus being an example of a patron for Luke. There were, of course, others who had homes big enough in which to host Christian churches. And there were the poor, probably exemplified best by the widows mentioned in Acts 6:1. Widows without adult children to support them would ordinarily be destitute. The Early Church looked after the needs of these women.
- Counted among the Christians were public officials like Erastus (Rom 16:23). They were probably not a large percentage of the Christian Church, but certainly an influential part.
- Especially contrary to Jewish practice, we find women were actively involved in the Early Church. The Gentile world more readily accepted the role of women in the religious sphere because religion to them could also be a private event, hosted in homes. For the Jews, religious practice was almost always a public event in the synagogue or Temple worship. Priscilla was a prominent Jewish-Christian woman who, along with her husband Aquilla, was probably exiled from Rome during the time of Nero. Priscilla was actively involved in discipling Apollos.

## Entertainment

Gladiatorial shows in the arena were very popular, which usually ended in the death of men and animals. Violence in entertainment is not a new thing.



Sports heroes were winners of the chariot races and Olympic athletes.

Theater shows took place during the day, usually during the “siesta time” of the early afternoon because without electricity, it was very difficult to see at night! Interestingly, actors were not considered good marriage material. “A senator, or his son, or his grandson, or his great-grandson, by his son, or grandson, shall not knowingly or with malicious intent become betrothed to, or marry a freedwoman, or a woman whose father or mother practices, or has practiced the profession of an actor.”

*From Women's Life in Greece and Rome: A Source Book in Translation [WLGR], eds. Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 188.*

Music and literature were highly honored and supported by wealthy patrons.

### **Business and Labor**

Trade guilds with patron deities functioned like trade unions, with benefits for widows and orphans and burial. Some regulated working days and hours. They provided a welcome place for workers who had to live away from their hometowns and extended families.

Industry was limited to small, local shops and home industry. Apparently Paul would work with other tent-makers or leather-workers in their local shops to pay for his room and board as he evangelized.

Compared to overland caravans, shipping was expensive and risky. But sometimes it was the only way to transport goods and people.

Agricultural practices were quite highly developed and included fertilization, seed selection, use of pesticides, and crop rotation.

All kinds of modern banking services were available, and interest rates varied from 4 to 12 percent.

### **Science and Medicine**

Jews were not interested in science during this period. They were an occupied people with no time or money for interests outside of providing food, clothing, and shelter for their families.

In the Greco-Roman world medicine, surgery, and dentistry were widely practiced, but there was no anesthetic.

Among the Greeks and Romans mathematics and astronomy were highly developed.

## **Lecture: Social and Religious Setting of the 1st-Century, Greco-Roman World**

(30 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 9-4 in the Student Guide.*

### **Everyday Life Issues in Roman Palestine**

#### **Meals**

Romans tended to eat four meals a day, perhaps reflecting a more urban lifestyle.

Most Jews ate two meals a day, one at noon and one at night, reflecting a more rural lifestyle or one in which the men worked away from home for most of the day.

The main meal for both groups was at night. This night meal usually took two to three hours to eat and was combined with long conversations. After all, there was not much else one could do after it got dark, with no electricity and only oil lamplight to see by.

The common people ate largely a vegetarian diet with meat only rarely. The wealthier one was, the more often one could afford meat. For the common people meat came to be associated with religious feast days when the food was provided by the wealthy. This is perhaps an important social background to the “strong and the weak” in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 8. The strong being the wealthy who did not associate eating meat with religious festivals, and the weak being the poor whose few times of eating meat were at pagan religious festivals.

The people of this period sat for informal meals and reclined on cushions at formal meals.

#### **Clothing and Styles**

The men wore tunics extending to the knees with a belt or sash at the waist and a scarf on the head. They would wear a cloak for warmth. Togas were reserved only for Roman citizens to wear. It was illegal for a non-Roman to wear one.

Women wore a short under-tunic and a colored, outer tunic extending to the feet, and sometimes cosmetics, earrings, and nose ornaments. Married women covered their head with a veil when they went out in public. Non-Jewish males kept their hair short and they

shaved. Jewish men grew beards and longer hair. Women's hair was generally kept long and worn in a bun after marriage. Some prostitutes and hetaerae (mistresses or female entertainers) would cut their hair short.

Refer to Resource 9-5 in the Student Guide.

### The Family

As we mentioned earlier, Caesar Augustus was somewhat of a moral reformer. He recognized there was a low birth rate and high divorce rate among Greco-Romans, and especially among the aristocrats. He felt this was endangering the power and influence of the ruling class, so he enacted the Augustan Social Laws:

From WLGR, 180-81.

*Ibid.*, 181.

*Ibid.*, 181.

*Ibid.*, 181.

- “In 18 BC, the Emperor Augustus turned his attention to social problems at Rome. Luxury and adultery were widespread. Among the upper classes, marriage was increasingly infrequent and, for couples who did marry, childlessness was common. Augustus was interested in raising both the morals and the numbers of the upper classes in Rome, and in increasing the population of native Italians in Italy. He enacted sumptuary laws, laws against adultery, and laws which encouraged marriage and having children.”
- “The law against adultery (*lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*) made the offense a crime punishable by exile and confiscation of property. Fathers were permitted to kill daughters and their partners in adultery. Husbands could kill the partners under certain circumstances [e.g. when he finds him in his own house] and were required to divorce adulterous wives.” Augustus eventually had to invoke this law against his own daughter, Julia. He exiled her to the island of Pandateria.
- “The Augustan social laws were badly received, and the emperor, years later, modified them. The *lex Papia Poppeae*, enacted in AD 9, softened slightly the rigidity of the earlier legislation (*lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*).” The law was named after the two consuls of that year, both bachelors. The laws were never officially repealed, but they were never really successful either.
- There were prizes for marriage and children. “He [Augustus] laid heavier assessment upon the unmarried men and women and on the other hand offered prizes for marriage and the begetting of children. And since among the nobility there were far more males than females, he allowed all [free men] who wished, except senators, to marry freedwomen, and ordered that their offspring should be held legitimate.”

In Palestine and among the Jewish population the extended family was the basic unit with large nuclear families.

Deformed and many female babies were unwanted and many were exposed—left outside the walls of the city for animals to kill and eat—or killed and disposed of upon birth. An early Christian compassionate ministry was the collection of these children and the forming of orphanages.

Jewish male babies were circumcised and named on the eighth day. Non-Jewish babies had to be recognized as legitimate by the father before being named.

There were no family surnames, but individuals were identified by the name of their father (Simon the son of Zebedee), occupation (Simon the Tanner), or other designation (Simon the Zealot).

The average marriageable age for Roman women was 12, with their husbands ranging between 30 and 50 years old. The concern here was that all the children born to this woman would belong only to the husband. Wives were chaperoned whenever they left the house.

Average marriageable age for Jewish women was 13-14 years old with their husbands ranging between 25-50 years old. Engagements, which were sometimes referred to as “marriage,” could take place as much as 10 years earlier. Note the difference between Matthew 1:24-25 “married,” and Luke 2:5 “engaged,” on the relationship of Joseph and Mary at the birth of Jesus. Jews generally waited until after the woman menstruated, because the Jewish value shifted slightly from chastity (although this was also a very important issue) to the ability to have children. So they would be concerned that the woman was “normal.”

Roman husbands had the power of life or death over their wives and children. Examples from law: “The offspring then of you and your wife is in your power, and so too is that of your son and his wife, that is to say, your grandson and granddaughter, and so on. But the offspring of your daughter is not in your power, but in that of its own father” (Patria potestas—the power of the father.) This father’s right of life and death also extended over any man who committed adultery with his daughter.

*Ibid.*, 192.

## Morals

The Greco-Roman gods were guilty of every type of immorality and as such were not high moral examples. This was in stark contrast to the God of the Jews, who demanded a very high level of morality.

Acceptable Greco-Roman sexual practices included: Temple prostitution as part of worship, use of street prostitutes and hetaerae (educated and talented women who entertained at banquets), bisexuality, and pederasty (men and boys had sexual relationships generally as part of the mentoring process of bringing the boy into his station in society).

This was in stark contrast to the Jewish sexual practices of the first century. Temple prostitution, bisexuality, and homosexuality were abhorrent to the Jewish mind. Sex outside of marriage was prohibited for both respectable Greco-Roman and Jewish women, but there are conflicting views on whether it was considered proper for a Jewish man to have relations with a prostitute.

Slavery: Slaves had no rights and could be abused or murdered at will. Runaway slaves could be punished by branding or death

## Competing Religions and Philosophies

Jews were known as abstainers from the imperial cult, but their religion was admired by many during this period of time. The ancientness of its Scriptures and traditions was highly admired. And the sense of community characterized by the synagogue was not found anywhere else in ancient Greco-Roman religion.

Refer to Resource 9-6 in the Student Guide.

## Religions

**Greek and Roman Mythology:** This was an ancient tradition which colored the identity and understanding of the Romans, but it was not a vital part of people's lives by the first century. The chief god was Zeus (Greek name) or Jupiter (Roman name). In Lystra Barnabas was called Zeus, probably because he was the oldest and Paul was called Hermes because he was the chief spokesperson (Acts 14: 12).

**Emperor Worship:** This was required by the state, of all persons—except for Jews because of the special position of their religion as a *religio licita*—but was more of a political acknowledgment than a source of hope. The emperor was the chief priest for the worship

of the Roman gods and so emperor worship was intertwined with the Greek and Roman mythology. They believed dead emperors became deities, and eventually living emperors (Caligula) declared themselves deities to be worshiped.

***Mystery Religions:*** These were more informal religious groups which met the need for personal involvement, salvation, afterlife, health, and welfare. Greek, Egyptian, and Oriental in origin, these religions featured secret initiation, baptism, and blood sprinkling for purification, trances (spirit possession), “tongues,” and sacramental meals. Because of the similarities in worship styles and practices, Christianity was sometimes lumped with the mystery religions in pagan literature.

***Superstitions:*** Astrology and magic were practiced by all classes and by both Jews and Greco-Romans, and probably some Christians, although they were not considered proper for a good Jew or Christian to practice.

### **Philosophical Schools**

***Neo-Platonism*** was the prevailing philosophy that served as a foundation for the different schools of the first century. The two main ideas that affected their worldview were:

- Mind over body. The mind could control the body and its desires.
- Body (matter) is not important and only houses the soul, which is always looking for a way to go back to the “forms,” the essence of what is. This is why the bodily resurrection the Pharisees and the Christians advocated was so undesirable for the Greco-Romans. They could not understand why anyone would want to have a resurrected body, when the goal of the soul was to escape the body.

***Epicurean School:*** The motto of the Epicureans was: Withdraw from society and don’t worry about it. They sought to avoid pain and seek pleasure that endures throughout life, the serenity of the soul and intellectual pleasure. A famous Epicurean slogan is, “Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.” Although the “pleasure” usually associated with Epicureans is “sensual pleasure,” the most accurate understanding of this group is seeking “pleasure” which endures, such as serenity of the soul and intellectual pleasure. Overeating and drinking too much ultimately produces pain, so these are not truly something to be sought after. Moderation in these things brings true pleasure.

Refer to Resource 9-7 in the Student Guide.

***Stoic School:*** The duty of the stoic was to remain in society and put up with life. Their philosophy had a sense of fatalism as in the song: “Que sera, sera,” what will be, will be! To be content a person must conform to nature and maintain harmony and balance in life. The modern idea that we cannot control our circumstances, but we can control our attitudes would be a good stoic idea. But above all, the stoic would say that to be happy one must: Do your duty!

***Cynicism:*** The cynic steps outside the boundaries of society and judges it from without. These people lived a simple life on the fringes of society, and rejected the comforts of affluence and prestige. Many of the famous cynics were wealthy men who gave up their wealth as a protest against society. The term “cynic” means “dog,” a dirty, despicable animal, not your pet poodle! Many cynics called attention to their message of cultural and social critique by antisocial behavior, such as urinating in public.

***Skepticism:*** The skeptic, like the stoic, remains in society, but suspends judgment on society. A skeptic believes absolute truth is unattainable because reason cannot penetrate into the true meaning of things. It can only understand what they appear to mean. A good skeptic slogan would be: Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

## Guided Discussion: The 1st-Century

(15 minutes)

*What differences do you see between the pagan religions and philosophies of the first century and Christianity?*

*What similarities do you see?*

*Where do you think misunderstandings would develop in the communication of the gospel to these pagan Gentiles?*

*Do we have any similar problems in our modern situation? If so, what? If not, why not?*

*How would you characterize the political and social atmosphere of the 1st century AD?*

Relate this to the Jewish concept of Messiah, Joseph’s decision to return to Nazareth rather than Bethlehem, the death of John the Baptist, Peter and Paul’s deaths in the mid 60s.

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson.

- understand the historical events and public, social climate of the first century and their impact on the spread of Christianity
- understand the social and religious settings of the first century and their impact on the spread of Christianity
- understand the setting for the development of the Early Church
- use this historical, social, and religious data as a basis for interpreting the New Testament

*Do you have any comments?*

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Read:

- Acts 9: 1-31, 11: 19-30, 13: 1-28: 31
- Gal 1: 11-2: 21
- Rom 15: 22-29
- 1 Cor 16: 1-9

Construct a chronology of Paul's life from these scriptures.

Read chapter 12 in *Discovering the New Testament*.

*This is an optional assignment. You can require this reading or allow the students to decide.*

Write in your journal. Reflect on the questions discussed in this lesson.



## Lesson 10

# The Life of Paul

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	Paul's Ministry: Christianity in an Urban Environment	Lecture	Resource 10-1
0:10	Chronology of Paul's Life	Class Project	Resource 10-2
0:30	Historical and Literary Issues for Paul's Life and Ministry	Lecture/Small Groups	Resource 10-3 Resource 10-4 Resource 10-5 Resource 10-6
1:10	Paul's Life	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Bruce, F. F. *New Testament History*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1980, 234-46, 265-90, 305-36, 350-67.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977, 475.

Drane, John. *Introducing the New Testament*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986, 247-52, 266-88, 294-302, 328-38.

**Elwell, Walter, and Robert Yarbrough.** *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998, 253-58.

**Everts, Janet Meyer.** "The CH Timeline." *Christian History Magazine* 14 (1995): 30-31.

**Harris, Stephen L.** *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction*. Fourth edition, New York: McGraw Hill, 2002, 303-11.

**Perkins, Pheme.** *Reading the New Testament*. New York: Paulist Press, 135-47, 162-63.

**Stowers, Stanley.** *Letter-Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986, 49-173.

**Varughese, Alexander, ed.** *Discovering the New Testament: Community and Faith*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005, ch. 12.

# Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

## Accountability

*Call on two to three students to share what they have experienced in their journaling time.*

*Return homework.*

*The chronologies will be used later in the lesson and can be collected at that time.*

## Orientation

*When was the last time you wrote a letter?*

*What kind of letter was it?*

*Have you ever written a letter with the intent of teaching or correcting someone?*

*How difficult is that?*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

**At the end of this lesson, participants should**

- **develop a chronology for Paul's life**
- **understand the historical, geographical, social, and literary setting for Paul's life and ministry**

## *Lesson Body*

### **Lecture: Paul's Ministry: Christianity in an Urban Environment**

(5 minutes)

Judging from the Gospel stories, the Jesus Movement had a rural beginning. Jesus and His disciples came from a rural, agricultural, and fishing society in Galilee. The settings of the parables indicate these social backgrounds. Currently, a rather large Roman city, Sepphoris, is being excavated about four miles from Nazareth. This has caused some scholars to rethink how “rural” Galilee really was. But the background of Jesus and His disciples is in sharp contrast to where the Apostle Paul grew up and ministered.

*Refer to Resource 10-1 in the Student Guide.*

*Refer to a large wall map or have students refer to a map in their study Bibles.*

Paul, a Diaspora Jew, grew up in Tarsus, Cilicia: Here are some major characteristics of this city.

- It was a busy commercial city on the Southeast coast of Asia Minor.
- It was a regional Roman capital, which meant Roman officials and their families would live in the city, and Roman officials from Rome would come and go periodically, bringing news and ideas from different parts of the Empire.
- It was on a major road used for trade and moving military personnel. Information from far-off places would move right through town on a regular basis.
- It had a world-class university which specialized in Greek philosophy and rhetoric. Although we have no indication that Paul went to this university, it would not be surprising for him to have a higher common knowledge of these subjects. In fact, his writings give indication of his knowledge of the use of rhetoric.
- Greek language and culture predominated in Tarsus, but it also contained a Jewish community which was characteristic of many of the cities Paul evangelized.

Paul's “field training”—or we might call it internship—was done in Antioch, Syria. This city has many similarities to Tarsus.

- It was in a similar cultural area to Tarsus
- It was also on the major trade route
- The Church community in Antioch first consisted of Jews, perhaps Jews converted at Pentecost. Then

Gentiles were converted and became a part of the Christian community, even before Paul got there.

- The Bible tells us the disciples were first called “Christians” there (Acts 11:26). Perhaps this was a name to distinguish them from the Jewish community who did not accept Jesus as Messiah, since Gentiles were also a part of the Church.
- After Paul’s “field training” he and Barnabas were sent out as missionaries by the church in Antioch.
- One of the earliest observations was that the church was growing fast in urban areas and the gospel was spreading to the surrounding areas through the communication networks already in place. This was perhaps because of the ability to reach more people quickly with the gospel and perhaps also because those who moved to the cities were more open to learning new things and change in their lives.

## Class Project: Chronology of Paul’s Life

(20 minutes)

*Have the students use their homework to put together a combined/class chronology.*

*Write the chronology on an overhead or whiteboard. Include ideas and responses from all the students.*

*After the class has put together the class chronology have them refer to Resource 10-2 for comparison.*

*This is a chronology given by the writer of this module. There is room for differences of opinion.*

From the information you gathered in your homework we will attempt to put together a single chronology.

We may find many differences between your individual work but hopefully we will come to some agreement.

6 BC	Paul’s birth
28-30	Public ministry of Jesus
33	Paul’s conversion
33-36	Paul in Arabia—being taught by revelation of Jesus Christ
35 or 36	Paul’s first postconversion visit to Jerusalem
35-44	Paul preaches in Cilicia
44-46	Paul invited to Antioch, Syria, by Barnabas—famine in Palestine
46	Paul’s second visit to Jerusalem
47-48	First missionary journey with Barnabas to Cyprus and Galatia
49	Jerusalem Council
49	Jews expelled from Rome by Claudius because of the “Chrestus” riot
49-52	Second missionary journey with Silas through Asia Minor and Greece
52	Third visit to Jerusalem and a visit to Antioch
52-55	Third missionary journey—Ephesus
55-57	Third missionary journey—Macedonia, Illyricum, and Achaia
57-59	Fourth visit to Jerusalem, arrested and imprisoned at Caesarea under Felix

59-60	Appears before Festus and King Agrippa and appeals to Caesar; voyage to Rome
60-62	Under house arrest at Rome
62-64(65)	Released, journeys to Spain?
64	FIRE in Rome
64 (67)	Paul returns to Rome and is martyred under Emperor Nero

*Some students may have included a fifth missionary journey.*

## Lecture/Small Groups: Historical and Literary Issues for Paul's Life and Ministry

(40 minutes)

### Debate in Dating Paul's Life

*Adapted from Janet Meyer Everts, "The CH Timeline," Christian History Magazine 14 (1995), 31.*

Debate in the dating of Paul's life revolves around a perceived difference between events recorded in Acts and similar events recorded in Paul's letters.

*Refer to Resource 10-3 in the Student Guide.*

Acts records five trips of Paul to Jerusalem:

- Acts 9:26, right after his conversion
- Acts 11:29-30, to bring money for famine relief
- Acts 15:2-4, to attend the Jerusalem Council
- Acts 18:22, after his second missionary journey
- Acts 21:17, final visit when he is arrested

Paul's letters record only three trips to Jerusalem:

- Gal 1:18, right after his conversion
- Gal 2:1, to attend a council
- Rom 15:25/1 Cor 16:3, final visit when he was arrested.

The debate comes in the middle of Paul's life: Which Acts visit is mentioned in Galatians 2:1-10? There are two positions.

- One side assumes Paul is referring to the Acts 15 Council in Jerusalem in Gal 2:1-10, and Paul's understanding of the outcome of the Jerusalem Council is very different from what Luke reports in Acts 15.
- The other side thinks Gal 2:1-10 refers to the famine relief visit in Acts 11:29-30 when an informal Jerusalem council took place. This would place Peter and Paul's confrontation in Antioch before the "formal" Council of Jerusalem in AD 49 and would not necessarily reflect a difference in understanding of the Jerusalem Council decision.

*Which one makes more sense to you and why?*

Both positions are well accepted by scholars.

## Background Issues to Understanding Paul in His Context

Jewish/Gentile Christianity: we find four different but related views of the relationship of Judaism, Christianity, and Gentiles stated or reflected in the New Testament. These views all existed at the same time, bringing conflict and misunderstanding to the Early Church. Some of these views were more prevalent at different times than others.

### Raymond Brown's Four Types of Jewish/Gentile Christians

- Gentiles must become Jews after becoming Christians: This was the position of Judaizers who seemed to follow Paul wherever he went. They felt all Christians should keep all the Jewish laws including circumcision and diet.
- Gentile Christians are viewed as Gentiles living within Israel who must compromise so as not to offend Jews: This was the position of James and sometimes of Peter.
  1. They were to eat no meat offered to idols.
  2. They were to keep from sexual immorality (Jewish definitions).
  3. They were to avoid eating blood and meat from animals with blood inside of them.
- Gentile Christians are not under the law: This was the position of Paul. By law he meant Jewish dietary laws and practices. Paul further believed Jewish Christians were not required to abandon their Jewish heritage in churches inside or outside Israel.
- Jesus has replaced Judaism: This was the position of John and the author to the Hebrews. This idea was taken from Jesus' words in Mark 2:21-22, "You can't put new wine in old wineskins." In John and Hebrews Jesus replaces the Temple, Temple worship, and major Jewish feasts. Jesus is better than anything offered in Judaism, so why stay with the good, when you can have the best?

*Refer to Resource 10-4 in the Student Guide.*

*The position on the left is the most conservative and the position on the right the most liberal.*

*From Perkins, Reading the New Testament, 162-63.*

*See Lev 17-18 and Acts 15:28-29.*

*See Gal 2:10-14.*

*See Rom 9:4-5.*

## The Art of Letter-Writing: Possible Models for Paul's Letters

As mentioned before, Paul grew up in a town known for its rhetoric. An extension of rhetoric, which usually refers to the spoken word, is the letter.

The typical letter of this period generally followed this pattern or form:

*In groups of two to three have the students outline one or two of Paul's shorter books according to this pattern.*

*Refer to Resource 10-5 in the Student Guide.*

*You should decide which books you want the students to work with and assign each group a different combination of books.*

*Allow 5 to 10 minutes for the groups to work together.*

*Adapted from Stanley Stowers, Letter-Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 49-173.*

*Refer to Resource 10-6 in the Student Guide.*

*Depending on time available, read sections from the New Testament that illustrate the different types of letters.*

Salutation (From/To)  
Prayer or Expression of Thanks to God (or gods)  
Body  
Advice or Exhortation  
Closing Farewell

In addition to the form of the letter, several documented types of letters were studied in the universities. Paul seems to incorporate elements from many of these types in creating his own type of a Christian pastoral letter. We will look at these types more in depth later in the course as we talk about each of Paul's letters.

**Letter of Friendship:** Ancient traditions asserted that friendship required the sharing of all things between socially and morally equal people, including affection and companionship. When being together was impossible, friendly letters were said to provide a suitable substitute for actual companionship.

No actual letters of friendship are given in the NT, but language from friendship letters is used: "absent in body, but present in spirit" (2 Cor 5:3), "Sharing in one another's feelings" (Phil 2:17-18), and "letter writing as a conversation" (1 Cor 10:15).

**Letter of Praise and Blame:** Praising and blaming were fundamental activities through which the social construction of the ancient world was maintained. We refer to these types of societies as honor and shame cultures. Those who give praise and blame are trying to locate each person and thing in their proper place by bestowing honor and causing shame.

No pure letters of this type are in the NT, but Paul makes significant use of praise in his thanksgivings. Praise and blame in 1 Cor 11:2, 7, 22, and 1 Cor 13 is comparable to passages in Greco-Roman literature that praise virtues.

**Letter of Exhortation and Advice:** There are seven subtypes isolated in this area in ancient literature. Exhortation can be defined as strong encouragement,



which included not only telling the person what he or she is doing right, but also what he or she needs to change in his or her life. These styles are used quite extensively by Paul. They range from letters which provide a model of behavior, to giving a specific course of action, from gentle blame to rebuke and reproach, as well as consolation.

1. *Paraenetic* Letters (Exhortation and Dissuasion): In a sample letter Libanius illustrates the essential characteristic of providing a positive model of behavior which the reader is either explicitly or implicitly urged to imitate. The author's own behavior may be given as an example. *Paraenesis* concerns those basic and unquestioned patterns of behavior sanctioned by honor and shame. It is not supposed to teach anything new.

Exhortation plays a major role in all the letters of Paul and the Pauline school, except Philemon. First Thessalonians is an excellent example of a *paraenetic* letter.

2. Letters of Advice: Advice differs from paraenetic letters, when a specific course of action is called for. Paraenesis only seeks to increase adherence to a value or to cultivate a character trait.

Paul very skillfully mixes paraenesis and advice in 1 Corinthians. Advice is found especially in 7-8 and 10-14.

3. *Protreptic* Letters: No theorist ever defined the *protreptic* letter in antiquity. It was neither a recognized type nor a widely used kind of letter. Nevertheless, it is important for those who have an interest in early Christian letter writing. *Protreptic* writings are those exhortations to take up the philosophical life. *Protreptic* works urge the reader to convert to a way of life, join a school, or accept a set of teachings as normative for the reader's life.

In both form and function, Paul's letter to the Romans is a *protreptic* letter.

4. Letters of Admonition: The gentlest type of blame was admonition. It is the instilling of sense in the person being admonished, and teaching him or her what should and should not be done. The writer constructively criticizes certain aspects of the reader's behavior.

Admonition is used very consciously and explicitly in the letters of Paul. Second Thessalonians 3:6-12 admonishes certain people in the community and 3:15 urges members to admonish one another.

5. Letters of Rebuke: Rebuke was considered harsher than admonition. Rebuke was directed at fundamental flaws of character or a basic pattern of “immoral” behavior. The rebuker tried to shame the sinner into stopping the misbehavior and often explicitly called for a change to an honorable way of life.

Paul uses rebuke in his letter to the Galatians (1:6-10, 3:1-5, 4:8-10). His expression “I am amazed” and his denunciation of them as “fools” are characteristic of rebuke.

6. Letters of Reproach: Reproach was a harsh blame that only the sternest sort of philosopher considered morally beneficial.

Letters of reproach seem absent from the corpus of early Christian letters. Paul contrasts the gentleness of his own teaching to harsher methods (1 Thess 2:6-7) and the Pastoral Epistles argue against harsh and quarrelsome teachers (2 Tim 2:23-26).

7. Letters of Consolation: Consolation was very important in the Greco-Roman world. It had an important place in both the philosophical and the rhetorical traditions. Consolation proper contains traditional materials such as quotations from the poets, examples, precepts, and arguments against excessive grieving. Giving consolation was considered one of the philosopher's chief functions.

Like many complex paraenetic letters, 1 Thess contains a consolatory section (4:13-18). Paul's call for the Thessalonians to stop grieving is a formulaic expression in consolatory literature. Like Paul, writers of consolations eased the sting of death by calling it sleep.

**Letter of Mediation:** The basic purpose of these letters is for one person to make a request to another person on behalf of a third party. Letters of introduction, which were very important to those who traveled and needed hospitality, are included in this category.

Letters of introduction are mentioned several times in the New Testament: Acts 9:2, 18:27, 1 Cor 16:3, 2

Cor 3: 1-2. Philemon is an intercessory letter on behalf of a runaway slave.

**Accusing, Apologetic, and Accounting Letters:**  
These are technical and nontechnical letters of petition, prosecution, and defense.

There are technically no letters of this type in the New Testament. But Revelation 1-3 does seem to be a recounting of Christ's evaluation or judgment of the seven churches in Asia Minor. This style would fit best under this category.

## **Guided Discussion: Paul's Life**

(15 minutes)

*What are the major periods in Paul's life and what did he accomplish during those times?*

*What are the major influences or characteristics of Paul that allowed him to do what he did in his life?*

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

*Do you have any questions concerning today's lesson?*

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

*You may want to divide this homework and assign different sections to different groups or individuals.*

Read and record what is said about:

**God:** Rom 11:33-36, 16:26-27; 2 Cor 1:3-22, 5:18-6:4; Acts 14:15; 1 Tim 1:17, 6:15-16;

**Evil:** Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 7:5; 2 Cor 11:12-15, 12:7; Eph 2:2, 6:10-16; 1 Tim 3:7, 15; 2 Tim 2:26, 4:18

**Human Condition:** Rom 2:15, 3:1-20, 23-28, 12:2; 1 Cor 9:27, 15:35-46; 2 Cor 4:16, 5:8; Gal 4:1-9; Eph 2:1-5, 4:17-18; 2 Tim 2:24-26, 3:13-17; Acts 17:28-29

**The Law/law:** Rom 3:10-11, 21-31, 7:12, 14; Gal 2:16, 3:24, 5:13-14, 6:2; Eph 2:15; Col 1:13-14

**People of God:** Acts 13:17; Rom 8:16-21, 9:4-8, 11:1f; 2 Cor 11:22; Gal 3:8-9, 4:4-5; Phil 2:15

**Revelation/Scripture:** Eph 3:4-9; Rom 15:15-16, 16:25-26; 1 Cor 3:10; Gal 2:6-9; Acts 24:14; 2 Tim 2:10, 3:16-17

**Messiah/Christ:** Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20; 1 Tim 3:16

**Redemption:** Rom 3:24-25, 5:7-8, 8:23; Eph 1:1-14; 1 Tim 2:6

**Cross:** 1 Cor 1:18-23; 2 Cor 13:4; Gal 3:13-14, 5:24, 6:14; Eph 2:16; Col 1:20, 2:14

**Resurrection:** 1 Cor 15:14; Acts 13:34-37, 24:15-21; Rom 4:24-25, 8:11; 2 Tim 2:8

**Church:** Eph 1:22-23, 2:11-16, 4:15, 5:22-23; Rom 12:3-5; 1 Cor 12:1-31; 2 Cor 11:2

**Ethics:** Eph 1:4, 4:1, 5:1; 1 Cor 3:17, 13:13; Phil 2:5-11; 1 Thess 4:11-12; Titus 2:7-14, 3:1-14

**Last Things:** Rom 2:1-11, 8:15-23, 13:11-14; Phil 3:17-4:1; 2 Thess 1:5-10

*This is an optional assignment. You can require this reading or allow the students to decide.*

Read chapter 10 in *Discovering the New Testament*.

Write in your journal. Imagine Paul has just written you a letter concerning your ministry. What would it say? How would you react?

## Lesson 11

# The Teachings of Paul

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	The Teachings of Paul	Lecture	Resource 11-1 Resource 11-2
0:20	Paul's Theology	Lecture/Class Project	
1:10	Paul's Ethical Principles	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Bruce, F. F. *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977, 475.

Drane, John. *Introducing the New Testament*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986, 247-52, 266-88, 294-302, 328-38.

Elwell, Walter, and Robert Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998, 253-58.

Everts, Janet Meyer. "The CH Timeline." *Christian History Magazine* 14 (1995): 30-31.

Harris, Stephen L. *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction*. Fourth edition, New York: McGraw Hill, 2002, 303-11.

**Varughese, Alexander, ed. *Discovering the New Testament: Community and Faith*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005, ch. 10.**

# Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

## Accountability

*Return homework.*

## Orientation

*Record the responses on an overhead or whiteboard where they can be saved for reference during the first lecture.*

*How do Jesus' message and Paul's message differ?*

*How are they alike?*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

**At the end of this lesson, participants should**

- **identify the major points of Paul's theology**
- **understand the questions Paul was facing in his ministry**

## *Lesson Body*

### **Lecture: The Teachings of Paul**

(15 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 11-1 in the Student Guide.*

*Materials adapted from ENT, 258-68.*

#### **Which Letters Did Paul Write?**

Over the last 200 years, scholars have been examining and dissecting Paul's letters in the New Testament.

Right now most scholars agree Paul wrote: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon. These books seem to "fit" Paul's historical situation and his theology.

There is less agreement on Ephesians, Colossians, and 2 Thessalonians, with some scholars making the argument that these books reflect a more developed church with needs in the area of organization and the second coming of Christ.

Many scholars, including evangelical scholars, do not think the Pastoral Epistles—1 and 2 Timothy and Titus—were written by Paul because the language, content, and style are so very different from his other letters. They argue these reflect an older, more established church.

The argument has its merits, but it is also important to point out that one major reason these books are so different from the others is they were written to people in leadership and administrative positions—not to congregations or lay members of congregations—as all of Paul's other letters were. The fact they reflect an older, more established Church may be because Paul is addressing second generation leadership, who must lead the Church through the next phase of its development. Language, style, and content tend to change depending on the audience and the reasons for writing.

Whether one thinks Paul wrote all 13 epistles or not, it is still scholarly responsible to draw on all 13 books for Paul's theology. Even those who deny Paul's authorship of some of the books, say whoever wrote these books belonged to the "School" or way of thinking of Paul. So Paul's theology is recognized as consistent through all the books traditionally assigned to Paul.



## Paul's Gospel and Jesus' Gospel

On the issue of the differences between Paul's gospel and Jesus' gospel there are basically two main viewpoints.

### The Rationalistic Viewpoint

*Refer to Resource 11-2 in the Student Guide.*

Which says:

- Jesus taught a simple ethical spirituality, or called for political or social revolution.
- Paul transformed the simple, gentle Jesus into an idealized divine man.
- This position does not acknowledge Jesus as the divine Christ and further argues Jesus did not see himself as divine either. Jesus is described as a sage, reformer, or revolutionary, but not as the divine Son of God. They would say it was Paul who "mythologized" the human Jesus and transformed the simple, ethical message of Jesus into the story of a divine human who came to die for our sins.

### Orthodox Christianity Viewpoint

- Acknowledges there are differences between Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God and Paul's of the risen Christ. But the differences are incidental to the fact that God was manifesting himself in the ministry of Jesus.
- Paul and Jesus are not identical in their message, but they are complementary.

*Refer to the responses the students gave at the beginning of class to the orientation questions.*

*Ask if they have any changes or additions they would like to make.*

## Lecture/Class Project: Paul's Theology

(50 minutes)

*Have the students report their findings to each topic. If more than one student worked on a topic, have each give a report on that topic before going on to the next topic.*

*Write down the information on an overhead or whiteboard as the student is reporting. Adding additional information from the other students as they report.*

*After the students have given their reports, add any information in this section that was missed.*

*Encourage the students to take notes as you write out the information.*

*You can make copies (handouts) of the information in this section if you choose.*

## **GOD is to be feared, loved, served, and worshiped.**

God is at the center of Paul's theology. Of the 1,300 times the New Testament uses the word "God," over 500 of them are in Paul's writings.

- God is all-wise and all-knowing (Rom 11:33-36, 1 Cor 1:21, 24, 2:7; Eph 3:10).
- God is worthy of all praise and glory forever (Rom 16:27, Gal 1:5, Eph 3:21, Phil 4:20, 1 Tim 1:17, 2 Tim 4:18).
- God is faithful (2 Cor 1:18) and commands that the gospel be made known to all (Rom 16:26).
- God comforts the distressed (2 Cor 1:3-4), raises the dead and rescues from deadly peril (2 Cor 1:9-10), and establishes believers in their faith and gives us His Spirit (2 Cor 1:21-22).
- God is the creator and sustainer of creation (Rom 1:25, Col 3:10, Acts 14:15-17).
- God is the King of Kings, immortal, invisible (1 Tim 6:15-16).
- God is one: versus polytheism (1 Tim 6:15, Rom 3:30, Gal 3:20).
- God is personal and accessible: versus stoicism/fatalism (2 Cor 1:3-4, 10, 21-22).
- God is concerned with social morality and personal ethics: versus Roman and Greek mythology (Rom 1:18-2:11, 12:20-21).
- God is more than a spirit experienced through rites of worship, ascetic denial, or mystical sensuality: versus mystery religions (2 Cor 5:18-6:4, 6:16b-18).

## **EVIL**

- Paul does not speculate on the origin of evil, but does acknowledge that under the ultimate rule of God (1 Tim 3:15), evil exists, orchestrated by the devil or Satan, mentioning the devil 5 times and Satan 10 times (1 Cor 7:5, 1 Tim 3:7, 2 Tim 2:26).
- The devil/satan is a personal, powerful, malevolent being with subservient underlings, human and angelic (Eph 6:11-12, 2 Cor 11:14-15, 12:7).
- Evil, mentioned by Paul 43 times, is real and influential, but passing, and will not triumph (2 Tim 4:18, Eph 6:10-16).

## HUMAN CONDITION

- Human beings were created in God's image—we are God's offspring (Acts 17:28-29).
- Each person has an outer nature (body) and an inner nature (mind, soul, heart) (2 Cor 4:16, 5:8). The body can be controlled by the mind or the inner person (1 Cor 9:27).
- Human beings have physical bodies here on earth, but they will be transformed into spiritual bodies in heaven (1 Cor 15:35-46).
- Each person has a conscience (Rom 2:15) which may be spoiled by sin (1 Cor 8:7, 1 Tim 4:2).
- No one is righteous within oneself (Rom 3:1-20).
- Human beings can be good or bad depending on whom they belong to (2 Tim 3:13-17).
- All have sinned (Rom 3:23-28), and naturally follow the passions of the flesh (Eph 2:1-5). They are held captive by the devil, but can escape with God's help (2 Tim 2:24-26).
- Each person has a mind which has been darkened by sin (Eph 4:17-18) but can be renewed by God (Rom 12:2).
- Christians are adopted by God and therefore become His children, not just His servants (Gal 4:1-9).

## THE LAW

- "The Law" or the Old Testament is authoritative for all (Rom 3:31, 7:12, 14, Gal 5:13-14, 6:2) and emphasizes that all are lost (Rom 3:10-11, quoting Ps 14:1-3). It condemns legalism which believes one is saved by the merit of one's good works and points to the need of forgiveness (Rom 3:23-24, Col 1:13-14). Therefore it points to Christ (Rom. 3:21-24, Gal 3:24).
- "The law" or the Jewish dietary or circumcision customs are definitely not necessary for salvation. Paul characterizes this use of the term as a legalistic misrepresentation of the Old Testament. The Law rightly understood requires salvation by faith, wrongly understood requires salvation by works (Rom 3:28, Gal 2:16, Eph 2:15).

## PEOPLE OF GOD

- Paul does not see himself as the founder of a new religion. He sees the Church as a continuity with the true Jews, a remnant truly following God's will. The foundation of Paul's gospel is on the covenant God made with Abraham (Acts 13:17, Rom 9:4-8, 11:12; 2 Cor 11:22, Gal 3:8-9).
- As people of God we are children and heirs of God, no longer servants or slaves (Gal 4:4-5, Rom 8:16-21, Phil 2:15).

### **REVELATION AND SCRIPTURE**

- Paul was called to reveal the gospel or the mystery of the gospel and lay the foundation for the Gentiles' faith. God gave him special grace for this task (Rom 15:15-16, 16:25-26; 1 Cor 3:10, Gal 2:6-9).
- Christ is the awaited Messiah, the word of salvation itself (2 Tim 2:10).
- Gentiles were co-heirs of God's covenant favor with believing Israel (Eph 3:4-9).
- These ideas were also held by Christ, other apostles, and Old Testament Scripture (Acts 24:14, Gal 2:6-9).
- All Scripture is inspired by God and useful for correcting and instructing people so they might be equipped for the ministry God has for them (2 Tim 3:16-17).

### **CHRIST/MESSIAH**

- Messiah: Paul uses the Greek translation of Messiah, "Christ," close to 400 times.
- Christ is one with God, yet willingly humbled himself by taking on human form and enduring the shameful cross (Phil 2:6-11).
- Christ was integral in creation and even now upholds the created order (Col 1:15-20).
- Christ came in human likeness, vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, proclaimed to the nations, believed in all over the world, and taken up in glory (1 Tim 3:16).
- "God was in Christ" (2 Cor 5:19).

### **REDEMPTION**

- Christ died for us when we were still sinners (Rom 5:7-8, 1 Tim 2:6).
- "Redemption" refers to the paying of a price, or "ransom" for the release of prisoners from captivity. It has rich Old Testament associations with the liberation of God's people from Egypt. It is both a present event (forgiveness of sins) and a future event (heavenly inheritance of believers) (Rom 3:24-25).
- Redemption is also a future event and will involve all of creation including our bodies (Rom 8:23).
- We are redeemed by the blood of Christ which means we have forgiveness of sins, an inheritance in Christ, and have received His Holy Spirit as a pledge of our coming redemption (Eph 1:7-14).

### **THE CROSS**

- Punishment reserved by the Roman overlords for the most despicable crimes. Jews in Jesus' day

interpreted Dt 21:23, “anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse,” to refer to crucifixion and thus this proved to them Jesus was not the Messiah, but was cursed by God (1 Cor 1:18-23, 2 Cor 13:4).

- Paul turns this around to say Christ became a “curse” for us so blessing might come to the Gentiles (Gal 3:13-14).
- The Cross became a symbol of the means by which God in Christ atoned for sins (Eph 2:16, Col 1:20, 2:14).
- The Cross is also the means by which believers walk in the footsteps of Christ. It is an inspiration and effective agent in “killing” the sinful nature and its passions and desires (Gal 5:24, 6:14).

### **RESURRECTION**

- He refers to resurrection at least 60 times in his letters (2 Tim 2:8).
- Paul says the Christian message stands or falls with the truth of Jesus Christ rising bodily from the dead (Acts 13:34-37, 1 Cor 15:14).
- There will be a resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous before judgment (Acts 24:15-21).
- Jesus’ resurrection means we have victory over sin which is the ultimate cause of death (Rom 4:24-25).
- Jesus’ resurrection means we will also be resurrected (Rom 8:11).

### **THE CHURCH**

- He uses the term over 60 times in his letters.
- The Church is the Body of Christ (Eph 1:22-23, 4:15, 5:23).
- The Church is the one body God created out of two: Jew and Gentile. It emphasizes unity and interdependence (Gal 3:28, Eph 2:11-16, Rom 12:3-5).
- The Church as a social entity means the believers are to live humbly and exercise their gifts for the sake of others in the body of Christ and for the extension of the kingdom of God (1 Cor 12:1-31).
- The Church is connected to Christ, the bride of Christ, and so must be holy and pure (2 Cor 11:2).

### **ETHICS**

- We are to be imitators of God and Christ (Eph 5:1, Phil 2:5-11).
- Our conduct is regulated by God’s presence in our lives and His purpose in saving and calling us (Eph 1:4, 4:1, Titus 2:6-10).
- We are the temple of God and as such we must keep ourselves holy (1 Cor 3:16-17, Titus 2:14).

- Our ethics are also a means of witness. We are to meet the minimum expectations of a “decent” person in our society (1 Thess 4: 11-12, Titus 3: 1-14).
- Above all, love is the crowning virtue (1 Cor 13: 13).

#### **LAST THINGS**

- The future has profound implications for how life is to be lived now (Rom 2: 1-11, 8: 15-18).
- Creation itself is waiting and longing for redemption (Rom 8: 19-22).
- When Paul talks about the Parousia (appearing) of Christ it includes final judgment (2 Thess 1: 5-10).
- The Holy Spirit is a sign of the end of the age which believers are already enjoying. The Holy Spirit is a “seal” of the inheritance and adoption believers have and enables them to call God, “Abba” (Rom 8: 15-17).
- Paul’s view of the end times means we must live in a state of readiness for Christ’s return as well as continue to spread the good news of salvation to everyone who will hear it (Rom 13: 11-14, Phil 3: 17-4: 1).

### **Guided Discussion: Paul’s Ethical Principles**

(15 minutes)

*What are some of Paul’s ethical principles?*

*How would you apply them to Christian living today?*

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Can you

- identify the major points of Paul's theology?
- understand the questions Paul was facing in his ministry?

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

**Read Acts in two different translations and look for answers to the five hermeneutical questions in Resource 11-3.**

*This is an optional assignment. You can require this reading or allow the students to decide.*

**Read chapter 11 in *Discovering the New Testament*.**

**Write in your journal. If you could sit down and talk to Paul, what topic would you want to discuss? Why?**

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## Lesson 12

# The Gospel to the Nations

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	The Development of the Earliest Church	Lecture/Guided Discussion	Resource 11-3 Resource 12-1
0:45	The Missionary Efforts of the Early Church	Lecture/Guided Discussion	Resource 12-2
1:10	Acts	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Drane, John. *Introducing the New Testament*, New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986, 219-34, 236-42.

Elwell, Walter, and Robert Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998, 209-49.

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Third edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, 295-338.

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Third edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, 277-301.

Perkins, Pheme. *Reading the New Testament*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988, 255-69.

**Tenney, Merrill C.** *New Testament Survey*. Revised by  
**Walter M. Dunnnett.** Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans  
Publishing Co., 1992, 231-329.

**Varughese, Alexander,** ed. *Discovering the New  
Testament: Community and Faith.* Kansas City:  
Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005, ch. 11.

# Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

## Accountability

*Ask the students which of the five questions was the most difficult to find information for.*

*Ask what sources were the most helpful.*

## Orientation

*Ask a leading question to get the students thinking about the topic.*

*If you were going to tell the story of the beginning of the Church, how would you do it?*

*How is Acts similar to and different from the Gospels?*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

**At the end of this lesson, participants should**

- gain an understanding of the author, audience, date, and place for Acts
- see how Luke constructed his history of the Church by looking at the main sections and paralleling the lives of Peter and Paul
- gain an appreciation of why Acts was written

## Lesson Body

### Lecture/Guided Discussion: The Development of the Earliest Church—Acts 1-12

(40 minutes)

*Involve the students as you answer these questions. Ask them what they discovered in doing their homework. Fill in information they may have missed.*

*Write their responses so the whole class can see them. You can make a transparency of Resource 11-3 for this purpose.*

*Refer to Resource 11-3 in the Student Guide.*

*Read these references.*

*From Howard Clark Kee, Understanding the New Testament (5<sup>th</sup> ed., Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), 188.*

#### Who?

##### Author: What do we know about him?

- Technically, Acts is anonymous since Luke does not give his name.
- Tradition, since the AD 100s, has always suggested Luke, the Greek physician who accompanied Paul (Col 4: 14). Luke is also mentioned in Phile 24 and 2 Tim 4: 11.
- Eusebius, an early Church historian, wrote in his “Ecclesiastical History” that Luke was from Antioch and he was the author of Luke/Acts.
- The “we” passages which begin in 16: 10 and go through 20: 4-6 eliminate Paul’s other companions as the possible author. However, “we” is sometimes used in narratives of that time by authors who were not present, but wished to give a more dynamic, immediate feel to their story, so this evidence is not conclusive, but adds to the other evidence we have.
- The medical terms used are also not definitive, but suggestive of Luke, the physician. Also the cultured, Greek writing style points to Luke. Howard Clark Kee says, “The complexity of the sentences, the acknowledgment of predecessors in the field, the expression of purpose by the writer, and the address to the patron are all literary conventions of the time. Luke is making a bid to have his books regarded seriously by the sophisticated of his day.”
- Virtually all scholars agree the same author wrote Luke and Acts since the style and language are identical in Luke and Acts and the addressee is the same—Theophilus. However, they do not all agree it was Luke.

### To whom was it written?

- Theophilus: In Acts 1:1, Luke addresses Theophilus and reminds him of Luke's first book about Jesus, the Gospel of Luke.
- Luke 1:3 refers to "most excellent Theophilus" while Acts 1:1 uses the simple name as if he is continuing a story.
- Theophilus can be translated: "Lover of God" or "Friend of God" since "philus" is the Greek word for friendship love. So some suggest Luke may be referring to someone or anyone who loves God.
- The term used in the Gospel of Luke, "Most excellent," would ordinarily be used of a Roman of High Rank.

### When Was It Written?

Three suggestions from Drane are:

*From Drane, Introducing the New Testament, 236-38.*

#### **AD 95-100, or later**—Position of PHEME PERKINS

- Acts 5:36-37 refers to Theudas and Judas and 21:38 mentions an Egyptian troublemaker. Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* 20.5.1 seem to describe the same events and it was not published until AD 93. So this section of Acts could not have been written until after AD 93.

Drane's argument against this position is that there is no evidence that Luke read Josephus as his description is different from Josephus'.

- Acts may have been written in the second century to counteract the heretic Marcion who thought Paul was the one true interpreter of Jesus.  
Drane's argument against this is that Acts does not seem to have second-century concerns.

#### **AD 62-70**—Position of AJITH FERNANDO, F. F. BRUCE, J. A. T. ROBINSON, and T. W. MANSON

*Read Acts 28:30-31.*

- The fact that Acts ends abruptly with no mention of Paul's death is the strongest argument for this date. The question is, "If Acts was written after Paul's death, then why no word of it?"  
Drane's argument against this is simply that Paul is Luke's hero and he wants to portray him triumphantly.
- There seems to be a generally favorable attitude toward the Roman government in Acts. We know this changed in AD 64 with Nero's persecution and other organized persecutions of the Christians.

Drane's argument against this is that Acts is simply remaining true to the spirit of the age in which the events took place.

- There is no hint of the Fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. It seems Luke would have wanted to include this, as it would have been a vindication of his position on Judaism.

Drane's argument is that we cannot know what would be in the mind of an ancient author or what he might be expected to write in a given situation.

- There is no mention of the books of Paul, so Acts must have been written before they were collected and circulated as a group. Acts must have been written earlier than 2 Peter.

#### **AD 80-85—Position of John Drane and Norman Perrin**

*Refer back to Lesson 8 and the dating of the Gospel of Luke.*

- If we date Mark's gospel AD 60-65, then Luke must have been written after that as he incorporates Mark's material. In Acts 1:1 he refers to Luke as the book he wrote first.

The argument against this is that the prologues to Luke and Acts could have been added later and so the main body of the books were originally written and circulated earlier.

- Acts seems to reflect an "early catholicism" which sought to give the impression that the Early Church had a largely uncontroversial existence, indicating the Gentile Christianity was dominant. Paul's letters reveal much controversy in contrast.

The argument against this is that if Luke is writing a counterhistory to Roman history, then he would recount the battles as they were won. He is showing the development of the Church as God designed it.

*Which dates do you see Acts best fitting in?*

#### **Where Was It Written From and To Whom?**

- Place of composition: Anyone's guess and has been:  
Ancient traditions: Achaia, Boeotia, Rome  
Modern attempts: Caesarea (H. Klein); Decapolis (R. Koh); Asia Minor (K. Löning)
- Destination: Even more unknown: Written to Gentiles in a Gentile setting.

## What Is Acts? How Is It Composed?

The key verse and major outline of Acts is found in Acts 1:8.

- Witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria is found in Acts 1: 1-12: 35
- Witnesses to the ends of the earth is found in Acts 13: 1-28: 31

*From Stephen L. Harris, The New Testament (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Pub. Company, 1988), 182.*

There are 10 major sections, with five in each of the two halves of the Book of Acts.

### First half

- Prologues and account of the Ascension (1: 1-11)
- Founding of the Jerusalem Church (1: 12-2: 47)
- Work of Peter and the apostles (3: 1-5: 42)
- Persecution of the “Hellenist” Jewish Christians and the first missions (6: 1-8: 40)
- Preparation for the Gentile mission: the conversion of Paul and Cornelius (9: 1-12: 25)

### Second half

- First missionary journey of Barnabas and Paul: the Jerusalem conference (13: 1-15: 35)
- Paul’s second missionary journey: evangelizing Greece (16: 1-18: 21)
- Paul’s third missionary journey: revisiting Asia Minor and Greece (18: 22-20: 38)
- Paul’s arrest in Jerusalem and imprisonment in Caesarea (21: 1-26: 32)
- Paul’s journey to Rome and his preaching to Roman Jews (27: 1-28: 31)

## Peter and Paul: Parallel Stories

*Adapted from Perkins, Reading the New Testament, 264.*

Not only does Luke divide the book into two parts, describing the Church’s witness to “Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria” and “the ends of the earth.” But he also has a main character or “hero” for each of these sections: Peter for the witness nearby and Paul for the witness faraway.

Notice how carefully Luke tried to parallel these two “giants” of the Early Church. The careful writing is part of what scholars are referring to when they talk about Luke’s style as “cultured Greek.”

*Refer to Resource 12-1 in the Student Guide.*

*Display the resource (transparency) and talk through the parallels.*

## Lecture: The Missionary Efforts of the Early Church

(25 minutes)

*Begin by allowing the students to suggest some answers to these questions. Then fill in the gaps with ideas presented here from Drane and Pheme Perkins.*

*Refer to Resource 12-2 in the Student Guide.*

*From 238-42.*

*From 260-63.*

### Why Was Acts Written? What Is Its Purpose?

*Ideas from Drane, *Introducing the New Testament**

- To show that Christianity is a faith with the potential to change the world.
- To show that Christianity can have a good relationship with the Roman government.
- Luke claimed to be the first historian and tells his story in the style of the first-century, Greek historians. The speeches we find are typical of ancient methods of telling history. The Church was a developing institution which needed to know its origins and history. Luke provided this in an orderly and well-researched manner.

*Ideas from Perkins, *Reading the New Testament**

- Acts is not just a “church history” in the sense of a collection of events that happened to Christians in the past.
- Acts is a “story” in the sense that it tells of how God’s providence worked through apostles Peter and Paul to bring into being the church and traditions which Luke and his readers have inherited.
- Acts as “salvation history”: The Gospel of Luke told the story of how the Savior came to earth, died, and was resurrected. Acts shows the role of the church in salvation. It begins with Pentecost, then people from different nations hear the good news and accept it. They join together in a fellowship to hear the teaching of the apostles, share fellowship meals, and pray together. Emphasis on the Holy Spirit would confirm to Luke’s readers that the history of the church is God’s doing.
- Acts is also a “counterhistory.” Luke goes to great pains to emphasize the connections between the Christian story and the larger world of events in Roman history. His references to various Roman governors in different provinces, the death of Herod (Gospel of Luke), and the famine under Claudius are part of this pattern. Roman historians would have argued their own history was divinely guided, that they had been destined to rule the civilized world. Luke presents the Christian reader with a counterhistory. The Roman world is the larger context within which God’s providence is working to spread the news of salvation to all peoples.



According to Luke, the Church, not the Roman Empire is the “Divine event.”

## How the Story of Acts Develops

The Church develops with two major emphases.

- **Evangelism:** Witnessing signs of God’s power, people from different nations hear and accept the Good News.
- **Nurture:** Members of the Christian community shared all things in common.

### Peter dominates chapters 1—12

- He is the preacher at Pentecost (2).
- He heals, speaks before the Sanhedrin, judges Ananias and Sapphira, is miraculously delivered from jail twice, and is the first one to preach to the Gentiles when he preaches to Cornelius and his family.
- He is prominent at the Jerusalem Council (15) and sides with Paul and Barnabas.
- Other leaders during this time include: Stephen the first martyr (6 and 7); Philip the evangelist to Samaria (8); and James, the patriarch of the Jerusalem Church, head of the Jerusalem Council and half-brother of Jesus (15).

### Paul dominates chapters 13—28

- Paul’s initial appearance takes place as he persecutes the Church in Acts 8: 1-3, but he has the Damascus Road experience and begins his ministry in Acts 9.
- His first missionary journey was with Barnabas (13-14). They went to Cyprus, Pamphylia, Pisidia, Galatia, and Antioch in Syria. It ends with their participation in the Jerusalem Council (15).
- The reason for the Jerusalem Council was the ongoing debate on whether circumcision was necessary for the Gentiles’ salvation: 15: 1-2. Conclusion (15: 19-20): James as the head of the Jerusalem Church is the spokesperson. He summarizes the feelings of the Jerusalem Church:
  - We should not make it difficult for Gentiles who have become Christians.
  - But they must follow ancient Jewish rules for Gentiles who live among the Jews (Lev 16—19). He summarized these rules as:
    1. Abstain from food polluted by idols.
    2. Abstain from sexual immorality. (Follow Jewish sexual standards.)

3. Abstain from meat of strangled animals and from blood.

Rationale: Jewish Christians can have table fellowship (Communion) with Gentile Christians who keep these three rules and not be condemned by their leadership for leading “unclean” lives

- Paul and Barnabas split company over a disagreement on taking John Mark with them on the second missionary journey (15:36-18:21) because he had deserted them on the first journey. Paul takes Silas with him to Syria, Cilicia, Pisidia, Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Jerusalem in Judea. They strengthened the churches in Syria, Cilicia, and Pisidia and established the church in Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia.
- Paul’s third missionary journey (18:22—21:16) begins at his “home” church in Antioch of Syria, then he goes on to Cilicia, Pisidia, Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Judea. Paul basically encourages the churches he had already visited and collects the money for the needy Christians in Judea. But he spends two years in Ephesus, his longest continuous ministry in one place.
- When he returns to Jerusalem to bring the offerings from the Gentile churches for the poor church in Jerusalem, he is arrested. After two years in jail in Caesarea Maritima, he eventually travels as a prisoner by boat to Rome, where the story of Acts leaves him under house arrest while still continuing his ministry (21:7-28:31).

## Guided Discussion: Acts

(15 minutes)

*What principles do we find coming out of the Jerusalem Council that we can apply to the Church today?*

*Why do you think it was important for Paul to revisit the churches he had started?*

*Would knowing the date of the writing of Acts affect how you would interpret it? Why or why not?*

*Do you agree with Luke that the best way to tell this story is to focus on two major characters? Why or why not?*

*How would you tell the story?*

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

- Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Did you
- gain an understanding of the author, audience, date, and place for the Book of Acts?
  - see how Luke constructed his history of the Church by looking at the main sections and paralleling the lives of Peter and Paul?
  - gain an appreciation of why Acts was written?

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Read Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians in two different translations. Fill in the outlines as found in Resources 12-3 and 12-4.

*This is an optional assignment. You can require this reading or allow the students to decide.*

Read chapters 13, and 14 pages 231-244 in *Discovering the New Testament*.

Write in your journal. Reflect on insights you have gained about the Early Church.

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## Lesson 13

# Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	The Art of Letter-Writing, Romans and Corinthians	Lecture	Resource 10-6
0:10	The Letter to the Romans	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 12-3
0:40	1 and 2 Corinthians	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 12-4
1:10	Salvation by Faith	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Drane, John. *Introducing the New Testament*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986, 313-27.

Elwell, Walter, and Robert Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998, 273-96.

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Third edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, 359-89.

Harris, Stephen L. *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction*. Fourth edition, New York: McGraw Hill, 2002, 318-31, 336-45.

Perkins, Pheme. *Reading the New Testament*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988, 168-73, 175-90.

Tenney, Merrill C. *New Testament Survey*. Revised by Walter M. Dunnitt. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992, 296-309.

Varughese, Alexander, ed. *Discovering the New Testament: Community and Faith*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005, ch. 13 and 231-244.

# Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

## Accountability

*Ask the students if there were any sections of the Resources that were hard to fill in.*

## Orientation

*Ask a leading question to get the students thinking about the topic.*

*When you have to communicate with someone about a certain subject, how do you decide what form that communication will take? Phone, in person, e-mail, letter?*

*What other things affect your choices in communication and presentation?*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

**At the end of this lesson, participants should**

- **gain an understanding of the types of letters written in the first century**
- **know the purpose and main content for Paul's letters to the Romans and Corinthians**

## *Lesson Body*

### **Lecture: The Art of Letter-Writing, Romans and Corinthians**

(5 minutes)

In Lesson 10 we briefly studied Stanley Stowers' review of the types of letters learned in school and used by literate people of the first century. As we go through these sections on the letters of Paul, as well as the General Letters, we will review some of these types of letters and how they are used in the specific letters we are studying. The following are types reflected in Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians.

#### **Letters of Friendship**

*Refer to Resource 10-6 in the Student Guide. Suggest that they might want to add information to the notes that they already had.*

Ancient traditions and proverbs asserted that friendship required the sharing of all things between socially and morally equal people, including affection and companionship. When being together was impossible, friendly letters were said to provide a suitable substitute for actual companionship. Friendship in the first-century world was possible only between equals. So letters between male and female, slave and free persons, or people of different classes would not be considered "friendship" letters. The "family" letters were not "friendship" letters, but were used to maintain family relationship when the family was separated.

Although there are no letters of friendship in the NT, some letters employ language from the friendly letter tradition. The phrase "absent in body but present in spirit" occurs in 2 Cor 5:3, 10:1-2; Col 2:5; and 1 Thess 2:17. The theme of "longing to be with the loved one" appears in 2 Cor 1:16; 1 Thess 3:6-10; Phil 2:22; 2 Jn 12; 3 Jn 14. The following may also be related to the friendship genre: "yearning for the loved one," Phil 1:7-8; "sharing in one another's feelings," Phil 2:17-18; "letter writing as a conversation," 1 Cor 10:15.

#### **Letters of Praise and Blame**

Praising and blaming were fundamental activities through which the social construction of the ancient world was maintained. Praise legitimated and effected social structures and the societies, constructions of reality. In a society where there is deep agreement about "the way things ought to be," those who give



You will need to spell "epideictic" for the students.

praise and blame work to locate each person and thing in their proper place by bestowing honor and causing shame. Some philosophical groups and Christians might challenge the accepted structure of honorable and dishonorable behavior, but they did not challenge the system of honor itself or the process of praise and blame through which the system was sustained. Letters of praise and blame, then, are perhaps the most basic and most ideal of the types. The ancients defined one of the three departments of rhetoric, *epideictic*, as the speech of praise and blame that demonstrated the honorable and shameful.

Although no pure letters of praise exist in the NT, Paul makes significant use of praise in certain parts of his letters. He characteristically includes a word of praise for the recipients in his thanksgiving (Rom 1:8, 1 Thess 1:3, 2 Thess 1:3-4, and Phile 1-4). In 1 Cor 11, Paul balances praise and blame in the service of giving advice (cf. 11:2, 17, 22). Chapter 13 of the same letter is comparable to passages in Greco-Roman literature that praise virtues. Six of the seven letters in Revelation 2-3 mix praise with something else, such as blaming, threatening, consoling, or promising. In good epistolary form they begin with praise and then turn to blaming or threatening.

## Letters of Exhortation and Advice

**Letters of Advice.** Advice differs from *paraenetic* letters, which we will discuss in the next lesson, when a specific course of action is called for. *Paraenesis* only seeks to increase adherence to a value or to cultivate a character trait. Advice calls for action.

Paul very skillfully mixes *paraenesis* and advice in 1 Corinthians. Advice is found especially in 7-8 and 10-14.

**Protreptic Letters:** No theorist ever defined the *protreptic* letter in antiquity. It was neither a recognized type nor a widely used kind of letter. Nevertheless, it is important for those who have an interest in early Christian letter writing. *Protreptic* writings are those exhortations to take up the philosophical life. *Protreptic* works urge the reader to convert to a way of life, join a school, or accept a set of teachings as normative for the reader's life.

In both form and function, Paul's letter to the Romans is a *protreptic* letter.

## Letters of Mediation

One person makes a request to another person on behalf of a third party. These may be divided usefully but somewhat artificially into letters of introduction and other kinds of intercessory letters. Sometimes the purpose is to reestablish a broken relationship or to petition someone in authority on behalf of the third party.

Since travel and hospitality were extremely important in earliest Christianity, it is not surprising that letters of introduction are mentioned several times in the NT (Acts 9:2, 18:27, 1 Cor 16:3, and 2 Cor 3:1-2). Philemon is an intercessory letter on behalf of the runaway slave Onesimus.

## Lecture: The Letter to the Romans

(30 minutes)

*Involve the students as you answer these hermeneutical questions. Ask them what they discovered in doing their homework. Fill in information the students may have missed.*

*Write their responses so the whole class can see them. You can make a transparency of Resource 12-3.*

*Have students refer to Resource 12-3 that they did for homework.*

*Adapted from ENT, ch. 18.*

**Type:** Romans is a protreptic letter in that it is exhorting the Romans to take up the Christian life. It is also epideictic, in that it uses “praise and blame” to locate ideas and people within their proper place in the Christian worldview.

### Who?

#### **Author:**

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, who is a converted Jew.

#### **Audience:**

Christian Church in Rome, most likely made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Paul has never been to this church, but knows a few people whom he greets at the end of the letter.

### When?

About AD 57, near the end of Paul’s 3rd missionary journey. It is a very mature letter, the result of Paul’s thinking and experience over his Christian life and ministry.

## Where?

### Author:

Paul was in Greece, probably Corinth.

### Audience:

Readers were in Rome. Paul commends Phoebe as the person who carried his letter from Corinth to Rome. Her home church was Cenchrae, a small town eight miles from Corinth (16: 1).

### Rome:

Rome was the capital city of the Roman Empire. It was the city where the emperor lived and is called “the greatest city of classical antiquity in the west.” This city controlled an empire which included approximately 100 million people.

ENT, 275.

Christianity probably came to Rome first with Jews who heard Peter’s preaching at Pentecost in Jerusalem. According to Suetonius, Emperor Claudius evicted Jews from Rome in AD 49 because of “disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus.” Scholars have interpreted “Chrestus” to refer to “Christ.” Apparently the Jewish community was rioting over the issue of Christ as the Messiah as early as AD 49.

## What?

Paul was concerned about the health of the church in Rome. Until Peter and Paul get there, because of their imprisonments, we don’t hear of a prominent Early Church leader being in Rome.

We find Paul’s personal hopes and aims recounted as well as his passion to see his Jewish kinsmen accept their Messiah (9-11). Paul is also interested in getting their support for his mission to Spain (15:24).

The Letter to the Romans is a summary of Paul’s gospel or theology for a group of people, some of whom knew Paul, but most of whom did not know him. So Paul has to be as clear and comprehensive in this letter as he can, since he was writing to people who had not heard him preach before. Most of Paul’s other letters are follow-ups to his personal ministry.

*Have the students look at an outline of Romans from any commentary on Romans.*

## Why?

Paul starts out defining the problem as sin—Romans 1: 19-3: 20. He begins with the obvious sins of the

*Read highlights from this passage.*

Gentiles, but then includes the Jews and their sins as well.

*Read highlights from this passage.*

The hope for sinners is justification by faith in Jesus Christ rather than good works—Romans 3:21-8:17. This goes counter to the common religious ideas of both the Gentile and Jewish populations.

*Read highlights from this passage.*

Paul tells them the redemption by grace involves the whole created order, both seen and unseen. God assures the victory—Romans 8:18-11:36.

*Read highlights from this passage.*

True to form, Paul does not just leave the audience with generalized theological statements; he gets down to the basics and describes how we should live as Christians—Romans 12:1-15:13.

### **The Importance of Romans**

*From Stanley Stowers, A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1994).*

Paul's letter to the Romans has greatly influenced the development of Christianity and some scholars claim it was instrumental in the development of Western individualism.

St. Augustine (354-430) found new life and freedom from the bondage of his sins and desires when he read Romans.

Romans 1:17 convinced Martin Luther (1483-1546) that salvation was by faith and not by works of penance. He then helped to set in motion the Protestant Reformation in Germany and it spread across Europe.

*From The Works of John Wesley, 14 vols. (3rd ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991 (1872)), 1:103.*

On May 24, 1738, John Wesley in England attended a church meeting and listened as the leader read from Luther's preface to his Romans commentary. Wesley reported, "While he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt that I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation: And an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

The Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968) wrote his commentary on Romans (1919) that helped to break the dominance of liberal theology for a while and begin the neo-orthodoxy movement in theology.

Although Romans is not truly a "systematic" theology, it is Paul's major work on what he believed and why he believed it. The principles Paul gives us in this book are vital for understanding many of his other letters, which

seem to be much more occasional in the sense that they are addressing very specific problems and issues.

## Lecture: 1 and 2 Corinthians

(30 minutes)

*Involve the students as you answer these hermeneutical questions. Ask them what they discovered in doing their homework. Fill in information the students may have missed.*

*Write their responses so the whole class can see them. You can make a transparency of Resource 12-4.*

*Have students refer to Resource 12-4 from their homework.*

These two books give us our first encounter with Paul's letters that deal with specific problems in a church.

**Types:** Paul uses friendship terms common to the friendship letters, but these letters are primarily a mix of letters of exhortation, advice, and praise and blame. Paul is anxious to help this primarily Gentile congregation understand the Christian lifestyle.

Through praise and blame of certain persons and actions as well as direct advice, Paul is helping this congregation to understand what is proper and acceptable for a Christian.

They are also *paraenetic* in that Paul spends a lot of time reminding them of what he had already explained to them when he was with them.

### Who?

**Author:** Paul, the apostle

**Audience:** Christian Church in Corinth, both Jews and Gentiles. But probably mostly Gentiles.

### When?

About AD 55/56. Midway through Paul's third missionary journey.

### Where?

Paul probably wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus and 2 Corinthians on the road to the church in Corinth

**Corinth** was the largest city in first-century Greece and the capital of the Roman province of Achaia.

- Corinth was an important city of commerce and social interchange. Most shipping heading to or from Rome passed through Corinth because it was located on a narrow isthmus—3.5 miles wide—where cargo was unloaded from large ships, transported across the isthmus, and loaded onto another ship.
- Corinth also controlled the two harbors: Cenchreae leading to Asia and Lechaeum to Italy.

- It was a city of “self-made” people, descendants of the initial colonists who had turned it into a thriving city in two generations.
- It was also notorious for its immorality, especially in the early years of the colony. Its Greek culture exhibited a low sexual morality compared to Jewish standards. Their socially-accepted morality included temple prostitution as well as use of street prostitutes and *heterae*, female entertainers for banquets.
- Corinth had a large community of Diaspora Jews, which grew larger after the Roman emperor, Claudius, expelled Jews from Rome in AD 49.

## What?

We have only two of the letters sent to Corinth; it seems at least four were written by Paul.

Outlines of these books reveal the varied nature of the issues Paul deals with. It is only possible in this class to introduce you to the variety of subjects covered in these two letters.

*Go over outlines of these books found in commentaries on 1 and 2 Corinthians.*

## Why?

**1 Corinthians:** Paul tells the church they are divided as a result of listening to human wisdom rather than divine wisdom (2: 1-16). They think they are divided because they each have what they think is the truth, along with a champion of their position (parties of Apollos and Paul). Paul calls them “worldly, mere infants in Christ” (1 Cor 3: 1) and urges them to follow the “foolishness of the gospel.”

Specific Issues in 1 Corinthians:

- They were tolerating open immorality in their church community (5: 1). This seems like a simple issue to us. But when we consider the morality standards most of these Christians were coming from, it took some time for them to understand and adjust to the high (Jewish) sexual standards set by Paul.
- Paul answers specific questions on marriage, divorce, and celibacy (7). Most of his comments here need to be seen within the context of 7:26 (present crisis) and 7:29 (time is short). Paul’s seeming negativity on marriage has to do with the fact that the church community is in some kind of crisis, and he expects Jesus to return at any time. So they need to be focused on getting as many

people into the Kingdom as possible, not on settling down and having a family.

- Paul also answers specific questions on diet, idolatry, and personal Christian freedom (8-10). His basic thought here is that these issues are not important. If what we do hinders people from coming into the Kingdom or weakens their resolve to remain Christians, then we should adjust our actions.
- Paul answers their questions about worship, spiritual gifts, and congregational order (11-14). Here he is encouraging them to bring some order to their worship style. Their worship style was probably reflective of the mystery religions many of them had been a part of before becoming Christians. Paul does not condemn their worship style, but he does encourage order which probably reflects his concern that seeking Jews would be offended by the wildly expressive worship of this particular church, thus not having an opportunity to come into the Kingdom. Throughout Paul's address of these internal issues of this church we see expressed his evangelistic or missionary concerns. Nothing else is more important than getting people to know Christ as their Savior and/or Messiah.
- Paul also answers questions about resurrection and the age to come (15). These are recurring themes whenever there was a dominant Gentile contingency. Resurrection was just not a part of the Gentile worldview and so was very difficult for them to understand.

**2 Corinthians:** Paul's theme is "The way to glory is the way of the cross." The Corinthians saw Christ as a way to better themselves, a way to power and affirmation by peers. Paul taught them about the constructive outcome of suffering and that his suffering is evidence that his ministry is legitimate.

**Specific Issues in 2 Corinthians:**

- Paul has to defend his apostolic authority because the Corinthians were setting aside his teachings, even though he was the founder of the Corinthian church.
- Paul is encouraging the church to be generous in giving money for the Jerusalem church (8-9). He commends them for being very excited about the project at first and encourages them by comparing what the Macedonian churches had done to what they could do.
- Paul appeals for complete reconciliation (6: 1-7: 4). He says he has not withheld his affection from them, but they have withheld theirs from him.

## **Guided Discussion: Salvation by Faith**

(15 minutes)

*Why do you think Paul emphasizes salvation by faith versus salvation by works?*

*For Paul, what is the relationship between good works and salvation?*

*Discuss this statement and its implications for our contemporary setting:*

*If what we do hinders people from coming into the Kingdom or weakens their resolve to remain Christians, then we should adjust our actions.*

*Discuss questions students have over the material presented.*



# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson.

- gain an understanding of the types of letters which were written in the first century
- know the purpose and main content for Paul's letters to the Romans and Corinthians

*Have we achieved our objectives?*

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Read Galatians and 1 and 2 Thessalonians in two different translations. Fill in the outline for each as found in Resources 13-1 and 13-2.

*This is an optional assignment. You can require this reading or allow the students to decide.*

Read chapter 14 pages 244-247, and chapter 16 in *Discovering the New Testament*.

Write in your journal. Reflect on issues contemporary churches have today that are similar to Corinth and how Paul might address them.

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## Lesson 14

# Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	The Art of Letter-Writing, Galatians and Thessalonians	Lecture	Resource 10-6
0:10	The Letter to the Galatians: Letter of Rebuke	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 13-1
0:40	The Letters to the Thessalonians	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 13-2
1:10	Growing Christians	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Drane, John. *Introducing the New Testament*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986, 286-92, 303-08.

Elwell, Walter, and Robert Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998, 296-303, 328-34.

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Third edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, 344-58.

**Harris, Stephen L.** *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction*. Fourth edition, New York: McGraw Hill, 2002, 316-18, 333-36, 358-61.

**Perkins, Pheme.** *Reading the New Testament*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988, 130-54, 164-68.

**Tenney, Merrill C.** *New Testament Survey*. Revised by Walter M. Dunnitt. Grand Rapid: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992, 267-73, 281-86.

**Varughese, Alexander, ed.** *Discovering the New Testament: Community and Faith*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005, 244-247 and ch. 16.

# Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

## Accountability

*Ask the students if they discovered anything interesting in their homework.*

*Write the responses on a whiteboard or overhead..*

## Orientation

*Ask a leading question to get the students thinking about the topic.*

*What are some of the issues new Christians face in our time?*

*How do these issues relate to their "cultural conditioning" and knowledge of the Bible?*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

**At the end of this lesson, participants should**

- **gain an understanding of the purposes and uses of letters in the first century**
- **know the purpose and main content for Paul's letters to the Galatians and Thessalonians**

## Lesson Body

### Lecture: The Art of Letter-Writing, Galatians and Thessalonians

(5 minutes)

Refer to Resource 10-6 in the Student Guide.

Again we will briefly review the types of letters learned in school and used by literate people of the first century. We will expand on the types reflected in Galatians and 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

#### Letters of Exhortation and Advice: Additional Types

**Paraenetic Letters (Exhortation and Dissuasion):** In a sample letter, the ancient scholar Libanius illustrated the need to provide a positive model of behavior the reader is either explicitly or implicitly urged to imitate. The author's own behavior may be given as an example. *Paraenesis* concerns those basic and unquestioned patterns of behavior which are sanctioned by honor and shame. It is not supposed to teach anything new.

Exhortation plays a major role in all the letters of Paul and the Pauline school, except Philemon. Second Thessalonians is an excellent example of a *paraenetic* letter.

**Letters of Admonition:** The gentlest type of blame was admonition. It is the instilling of sense in the person who is being admonished, and teaching what should and should not be done. The writer constructively criticizes certain aspects of the reader's behavior.

Admonition is used very consciously and explicitly in the letters of Paul. Second Thessalonians 3:6-12 admonishes certain people in the community and 3:15 urges members to admonish one another.

**Letters of Rebuke:** Rebuke was considered harsher than admonition. Rebuke was directed at fundamental flaws of character or a basic pattern of "immoral" behavior. The rebuker tried to shame the sinner into stopping the misbehavior and often explicitly called for a change to an honorable way of life.

Paul used rebuke in his letter to the Galatians (1:6-10, 3:1-5, and 4:8-10). His expression "I am amazed" and

his denunciation of them as “fools” are characteristic of rebuke.

**Letters of Reproach:** Reproach was a harsh blame that only the sternest sort of philosopher considered morally beneficial.

Letters of reproach seem absent from the corpus of early Christian letters. Paul contrasts the gentleness of his own teaching to harsher methods (1 Thess 2:6-7) and the Pastoral Epistles argue against harsh and quarrelsome teachers (2 Tim 2:23-26).

**Letters of Consolation:** Consolation was very important in the Greco-Roman world. It had an important place in both the philosophical and the rhetorical traditions. Consolation proper contains traditional materials such as quotations from the poets, examples, precepts, and arguments against excessive grieving. Giving consolation was considered one of the philosopher’s chief functions.

Like many complex paraenetic letters, 1 Thess contains a consolatory section (4:13-18). Paul’s call for the Thessalonians to stop grieving is a formulaic expression in consolatory literature. Like Paul, writers of consolations eased the sting of death by calling it sleep.

## Lecture/Discussion: The Letter to the Galatians: Letter of Rebuke

(30 minutes)

*Refer students to Resource 13-1 that they completed as homework.*

*Involve all the students in the discussion and exploration of the hermeneutical questions. Fill in information the students may have missed.*

*Write responses on the overhead as they are given.*

The Letter to the Galatians is unusual among Paul’s letters because of the “harshness” of his tone. We don’t have any other letters to this church or group of churches, but can assume Paul tried, reminding them of what he had taught them and giving them strong advice, but none of that had worked. This is a church that had known conversion and the filling of the Holy Spirit, but was now caught up in legalism (3:3). It no longer understood the freedom that comes in the Spirit.

### Who?

**Author:** Paul, the apostle

**Audience:** Jewish and/or Gentile Christians who were being persuaded or had been persuaded by “Judaizers” to trust in the law for salvation.

## Where?

**Author:** Paul, probably wrote from Ephesus during his third missionary journey.

**Audience:** There are two main theories on the exact location for the audience.

*North Galatian Theory:* This theory currently has the least support.

- Some scholars think Paul is referring to the ethnic area, the “Galatian country” of Acts 16:6.
- This area is located in the central highlands of Anatolia where tribes of Celts had settled in Hellenistic times. Paul’s “O Galatians” in Galatians 3:1 means, “O Celts,” or “O Gauls.”
- Roman roads connected the three small cities in this area to cities like Sardis and Paul’s hometown, Tarsus.

*South Galatian Theory:* This is currently the predominant theory.

- Acts 13:13-14:25 lists the names of several cities Paul visited in the South Galatian area during his missionary journeys: Perga, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra.
- The Galatian letter was written to give guidance on issues that came up after Paul and Barnabas were there. Galatians 1:11 and 4:13 indicate that Paul preached to these people. In 4:11, Paul comments he fears he has wasted his efforts on these people.
- The arguments for it being the audience location include:
  1. South Galatia is the location of the cities Paul ministered according to Acts and Paul’s letters. It is also the location of the largest cities in Galatia.
  2. Paul was sick when he went to Galatia (4:13). North Galatia would not have been a good place for him to go in this condition. It was considered wild and uncivilized.

## When?

AD 52-55 during his third missionary journey.

## What?

**Thesis:** Salvation comes only through faith in Christ (2:15-21).

**Conclusion:** Maintain your freedom in Christ (5:1-12).

*Adapted from Perkins, Reading the New Testament, 165.*

*Outline: Other outlines can be found in commentaries on Galatians.*



*If you have time you can have the students do a hermeneutical study on these verses.*

**Ethical Applications:** Defines what freedom in Christ is not (5:13-21), and what it is (5:22-6:10).

**Special Passages:**

2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."

3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

5:22-23: Fruit of the Spirit

**Why?**

To remind them salvation by faith brings freedom and not bondage.

To clarify the issues being confused by the Judaizers, that Christians had to follow the dietary and ritual laws of Judaism to please God.

To reestablish Paul's authority and thus the authority of his gospel in their minds.

To remind them they are all one and equal because they have been baptized in Christ.

**Lecture/Discussion: The Letters to the Thessalonians**

(30 minutes)

*Refer students to Resource 13-2 that they completed as homework.*

*Involve the students in the discussion and exploration of the hermeneutical questions. Fill in information the students may have missed.*

*Write responses on an overhead as they are given.*

**Types:** Friendship terms, praise used in introductory thanksgiving. Uses elements of paraenetic, admonition, and consolation letters.

**Who?**

**Author:** Paul is the unquestioned author for 1 Thess, but some question his authorship of 2 Thess due to slightly different vocabulary, more formal style, and reference to "the lawless one."

Those who do not think Paul wrote 2 Thess would have the letter written by someone in the "school of Paul" sometime late in the first century. However, the changes in Paul's vocabulary, style, and reference to the "lawless one" can also be explained by a shift in his purpose based on the response he received from his first letter.

**Audience:** Gentile Christians in Thessalonica

## Where?

**Author:** Paul wrote from Corinth

**Audience:** Gentile Church in Thessalonica, in Northern Greece (Macedonia).

- This proud, Greek city was founded by Cassander in 315 BC. He was one of Alexander the Great's generals.
- Thessalonica enjoyed special privileges because it sent troops to fight with the Roman ruler Octavian, who won the Roman civil war in 42 BC.
- Legally the Thessalonians were allowed to govern themselves, but in reality their elected officials were bound to Rome by an oath of allegiance.
- Religion: As was true of most Greek cities, Thessalonica had worshipers of many different gods. The "state" religion was the Hellenistic ruler cult or emperor worship. Mystery religions: The Dionysiac mysteries were the most prominent
- They were concerned with the ascent of Dionysos from the underworld and so reflected a strong interest in what happened after death.
- They looked after the burials of their members.
- They did not believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead.
- Egyptian mystery cults of Serapis and Isis were popular in this city. The cult of Isis offered claims of salvation and eternal life. Humility, confession of sin, and repentance were a part of their initiation.
- Asklepios (healing god) was worshiped in Thessalonica along with Zeus, Aphrodite, and Demeter in temples, which included temple prostitutes.
- Some of the issues the common people prayed to the gods about were justice, health, beauty, relief from taxes, protection from natural disasters, safety, and wealth.

## When?

AD 50-52—Assuming Paul wrote both letters.

Acts 18: 12 tells us Gallio was proconsul over Achaia when Paul was in Corinth. Since he was proconsul for only a short period of time, it is possible to date Paul's stay in Corinth.

**Thesis:**

**1 Thessalonians:**

- God's call to a life of holiness—4: 1-12.

*Consult outlines from commentaries on 1 and 2 Thessalonians.*

- Resurrection and the need to prepare for the parousia—4: 13-18, 5: 1-11.
- Christian relationships and attitudes—5: 12-24.

## 2 Thessalonians:

- Teaching on the preparation and nature of the parousia—1: 3-2: 12.
- Stand firm in the gospel of salvation and sanctification—2: 13-17.
- Warning against the rebellious idle and how to deal with the disobedient—3: 6-15.

## Special Verses:

- 1 Thess 4: 1-3: How do we please God?
- 1 Thess 4: 3: It is God's will that you be sanctified.
- 1 Thess 4: 3-8: What does holiness "look like" in our private/intimate lives?
- 1 Thess 4: 9-10: How does holiness affect our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ?
- 1 Thess 4: 11-12: What does holiness "look like" to those outside the church?
- 1 Thess 4: 15-18: How does Paul describe the *parousia*, or second coming of Christ?
- 1 Thess 4: 16-18: Description of the parousia
- 1 Thess 5: 1-11: What does Paul say about the timing or date of the second coming of Christ?
- 1 Thess 5: 23-24: Sanctification benediction
- 2 Thess 1: 5-10: How does Paul describe the *parousia*, or second coming of Christ?
- 2 Thess 2: 1-12: What does Paul say about the timing or date of the second coming of Christ?
- 2 Thess 2: 16-17: Encouragement benediction
- 2 Thess 3: 6-15: What is Paul's attitude toward the "idle" and how should they be treated?

## Why?

### 1 Thessalonians:

- Paul wants to help these Greek Christians understand persecution is part of being a Christian. In their former life, problems were associated with "wrongdoing" as defined by their pagan culture.
- Paul encourages the believers by praising their faith and by reminding them of his instructions.
- Paul encourages them by giving them insight into the last things, an issue their city was very concerned about, but viewed in a very different way than Christianity did.

*If you have time you can have the students do a hermeneutical study of these verses.*

*Discuss the first century principles and their application to the 21st century.*

## **2 Thessalonians:**

- This letter is similar to 1 Thess in its content, but narrows the topics to those Paul understands them to be dealing with specifically: Nature of and preparation for the parousia.
- Paul corrects a misunderstanding about the end times. Apparently some in the church thought the end times had already come. He also gives a strong warning against the “ataktoi.” This Greek word is best translated “the rebellious idle.” Paul has taught that Christians need to prepare for the end times. These idle Greeks were following their ancient teachings of fatalism and so felt there was nothing to be done to prepare for the end.

## **Guided Discussion: Growing Christians**

(15 minutes)

Compare the issues of these growing Christians in Galatia and Thessalonica with new and growing Christians of today.

*How are they similar? How are they different?*

*What principles can we apply to our current time?*

*Discuss questions the students have over the material in this lesson.*

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson.

- gain an understanding of the purposes and uses of letters in the first century
- know the purpose and main content for Paul's letters to the Galatians and Thessalonians

*Do you have any comments?*

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

**Read Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians in two different translations. Fill in the outlines found in Resources 14-1—14-3.**

*This is an optional assignment. You can require this reading or allow the students to decide.*

**Read chapter 15 in *Discovering the New Testament*.**

**Write in your journal. Which one of these three books—Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians—speaks to issues you are facing in your spiritual walk?**

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## Lesson 15

# Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	Letter to the Ephesians	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 14-1
0:20	Letter to the Philippians	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 14-2
0:30	Letter to the Colossians	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 14-3 Resource 15-1
0:45	The Mark of the Beast	Video on Ephesus	Video/Video Player
1:15	Guiding Principles	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Drane, John. *Introducing the New Testament*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, San Francisco, 1986, 339-42, 343-50.

Elwell, Walter A., and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998, 307-20.

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Third edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, 392-408.

**Harris, Stephen L.** *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction*. Fourth edition, New York: McGraw Hill, 2002, 348-52, 361-65.

**Perkins, Pheme.** *Reading the New Testament*. Second edition, New York: Paulist Press, 1988, 154-58, 191-202.

**Tenney, Merrill C.** *New Testament Survey*. Revised by Walter M. Dunnnett. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992, 319-29.

“The Mark of the Beast,” Lesson 4 of Volume 5 of *That the World May Know*, a videotape series produced by Zondervan Publishing House in cooperation with Focus on the Family and also available from Christian Book Distributors (CBD).

**Varughese, Alexander, ed.** *Discovering the New Testament: Community and Faith*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005, ch. 15.



# Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

## Accountability

*In pairs have students evaluate each other's outlines.*

## Orientation

*Ask a leading question to get the students thinking about the topic.*

*What kinds of things would you be thinking about if you were Paul sitting in prison?*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

**At the end of this lesson, participants should**

- **gain an understanding of the types of letters written in the first century**
- **know the purpose and main content for Paul's letters to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians**

## Lesson Body

### Lecture/Discussion: The Letter to the Ephesians

(15 minutes)

*Refer students to Resource 14-1 that they completed as homework.*

*Involve all the students in the discussion and exploration of the hermeneutical questions. Fill in information the students may have missed.*

*Write the responses on an overhead for all to see.*

Paul writes this letter from prison in Rome. He wants to reassure the church and remind them of his teachings. He does not deal with specific church problems, so it may have been a circular letter written to a group of churches in the Ephesus area.

**Type:** Primarily a *paraenetic* letter. Paul is writing to remind the Ephesians of what he taught them when he was with them.

#### Who?

**Author:** There are two primary theories on authorship

1. Paul, the apostle (traditional position)—Eph 1:1  
The arguments for this position are:
  - Paul is named in verse 1 as the author.
  - The differences in vocabulary and terms reflect a change in Paul's thought and style and do not necessarily require the author to be a different person.
2. Pauline School: The arguments for this position are:
  - There are some differences in vocabulary.
  - Some terms have a different meaning in Ephesians than they do in other Pauline writings.
  - The style is different.

**Audience:** Church in Ephesus and perhaps the surrounding area of Asia. Most likely a circular letter since Paul does not seem to deal with the problems of a particular church. Five ancient copies lack the words "In Ephesus" in 1:1, but the title says: "To the Ephesians."

#### Where?

**Author:** Paul wrote from Rome in prison.

**Audience:** Lived in Ephesus:

- This was a prosperous commercial city.
- It was the capital city of the Roman province of Asia.

- The temple to Artemis (Diana, mother goddess) was the largest building in the city. The artisans and others who served this temple had a strong influence in the city.
- Other cults included: Cybele, Sarapis, Emperor cult.
- It was a major port city of Asia Minor.

### When?

**Traditional author:** During Paul's Roman imprisonment, around AD 60-62.

**Pauline School:** Later in first century as it provides a summary of Paul's teaching in Asia Minor.

### What?

**Theme:** Christ is the Head of the Body, His Church.

#### Brief Outline:

- Re-creating the Human Family of God—What God Has Done—1:3-3:21.
- Re-creating the Human Family of God—What God Is Doing—4:1-6:20.

#### Special Verses:

2:11-22: Unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ

3:4-20: Prayer for holiness

4:11-16: Spiritual gifts and growth

5:21-33: Christ and the Church as a model for marriage

### Why?

To encourage those who had once worshiped the pagan gods but were now Christians by reminding them of Paul's teaching.

Paul's emphasis on the supremacy of Christ was important in a city of many gods.

Paul ends with exhortations on how they should live, what their lifestyle should look like in their particular situation.

*Consult an outline from a commentary on Ephesians.*

## Lecture/Discussion: Letter to the Philippians

(10 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 14-2 that the students completed as homework.*

Philippians is unique in Paul's writings, as it is the only letter written to primarily Roman Gentile Christians whom Paul has personally disciplined. Paul is writing to them while in prison in Rome, their mother city. He

*Involve all the students in the discussion and exploration of the hermeneutical questions. Fill in information the students may have missed.*

*Write the responses on an overhead for all to see.*

wants to assure them his chains have served to advance the Kingdom and he is in prison only because of Christ and not for any other reason.

**Types:** Friendship letter, *Paraenetic* letter

## Who?

**Author:** Paul's authorship has rarely been contested.

**Audience:** Church in Philippi. Gentile Christians, most likely the grandchildren of Roman war veterans who settled there on land grants from the Roman emperor for their war service.

## Where?

**Author:** Paul was in a Roman prison.

**Audience:** City of Philippi in Macedonia

- Philippi is nine miles west of the port city Neapolis on the Via Egnatia, the major east-west commercial highway.
- It was a busy, Roman administrative center.
- It was a Roman colony since 42 BC and populated by Roman war veterans. The people had certain civic and tax privileges.
- The people spoke both Latin and Greek.
- The city had a library and theatre.
- The Acropolis (sacred high ground) had temples for Isis, Sarapis, and the Mother Goddess.

## When?

AD 60-62 while Paul was in prison in Rome

## What?

**Main Purpose:** Express Paul's pastoral concern for them. He felt they needed reassurance that the gospel they believed in was marching on to victory, in spite of Paul's imprisonment.

### Special Verses:

1:21: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

2:5-11: Kenosis passage. Christological poem.

3:7-11: Considers all things loss compared to knowing Christ.

4:8-9: What to think about: whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable.

*Consult the outline in a commentary on Philippians.*

4: 13: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

4: 19: "And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

### Why?

Paul wants to express his pastoral concern for the readers whose mother country has Paul in prison.

Paul wants to identify the enemies of the gospel. They include Rome, false teachers, and troublemakers in the church in Philippi. For the latter he wanted to point them to Jesus Christ. He called for a healing and unity in the Body of Christ.

Paul also reminded them of his high Christology. Jesus was not just a human, but divinity itself.

## Lecture/Discussion: Letter to the Colossians

(15 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 14-3 that the students completed as homework.*

*Involve all the students in the discussion and exploration of the hermeneutical questions. Fill in the information the students may have missed.*

*Write the responses on an overhead for all to see.*

Colossians is a letter which uses friendship terms, but, like Ephesians, is primarily a *paraenetic* letter which reminds the church of what Paul taught when he was with them.

**Types:** Friendship letter, *Paraenetic* letter

### Who?

**Author:** Paul, the apostle. Colossians and Ephesians are very similar in content, but scholars think Paul wrote this shorter letter. Those who do not think Paul wrote Ephesians say someone in the Pauline school used Colossians as an outline or model and added to it.

**Audience:** Gentile and some Jewish Christians in Colossae. The town is made up of Phrygians, Greeks, and Jews. Epaphras (founder of the church), Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, and Onesimus are church members named in Scripture.

### Where?

**Author:** Paul was in prison in Rome.

**Audience:** Church in Colossae, located 100 miles southeast of Ephesus in the district of Phrygia and was subject to many earthquakes. It was not a large city and was near Laodicea, which is another city in this area, mentioned in the Revelation of John.

## When?

AD 60-64 while Paul was in prison in Rome.

## What?

*Consult an outline in a commentary on Colossians.*

Colossians is similar in content to Ephesians.

*Refer to Resource 15-1 in the Student Guide.*

*Read or have students read the Ephesians section and then the Colossians parallel in the same versions. Talk about the similarities and differences.*

*From Perkins, Reading the New Testament, 195.*

### **Ephesians**

1: 1-2  
1: 15-17  
2: 5-6  
3: 1-13  
4: 17-32  
5: 19-20  
5: 22—6: 9  
6: 18-20  
6: 21-22

### **Colossians**

1: 1-2  
1: 3-4, 9-10  
2: 12-13  
1: 24—2: 5  
3: 5-14  
3: 16-17  
3: 18—4: 1  
4: 2-4  
4: 7-8

### **Special Verses:**

1: 15-20: Hymn on Christ as the image and fullness of God

3: 1-17: Rules for holy living

3: 18-4: 1: “Household code” rules for Christian households: wives, husbands, children, fathers, slaves, and masters

## Why?

To assure the Colossians and Laodicians (Col 4: 16) of Paul’s interest and care.

To refute false teaching and teachers who are misleading some in the church.

To make assertions about Jesus Christ as the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all Creation, and the one in whom all things hold together.

The Colossian heresy included legalism (salvation based on works) and asceticism (harsh treatment of the body as a means of earning God’s favor).

### **Special Verses:**

*If you have time you can have the students do a hermeneutical study of these verses.*

*Discuss the first century principles and their application to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

Colossians 1:9-17  
Colossians 2:13-15  
Colossians 3:1-3  
Colossians 3:14-17

## **Video: The Mark of the Beast**

(30 minutes)

*You need to cue the video in advance to Lesson 4 of Volume 5. Complete information for the video series is given in the Introduction to this Faculty Guide.*

*You need to preview the video before showing it to the class.*

We are going to watch a video on Ephesus, a first-century city. In many ways it could be called the New York City of its day. Christians were treated as second-class citizens unless they bore the “mark” of the pagan beliefs.

Pay close attention to the cultural and archaeological information.

## **Guided Discussion: Guiding Principles**

(10 minutes)

*What principles do you see Paul presenting in these books?*

*How could they be applied today?*

*Discuss questions students have over the material presented.*

## Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

### Review

*Call on one student to give a brief summary of Ephesians.*

*Call on a different student to give a brief summary of Philippians.*

*Call on another student to give a brief summary of Colossians.*

### Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

*This is an optional assignment. You can require this reading or allow the students to decide.*

**Read Philemon, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus in two different translations. Fill in the outlines found in Resources 15-2—15-4.**

**Read chapter 17 in *Discovering the New Testament*.**

**Write in your journal. Reflect on what it would mean to your church to have a general superintendent write a personal letter to them. What kind of a letter would it be?**



## Lesson 16

# Philemon, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	Letter to Philemon	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 15-2
0:25	Letters to Timothy	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 15-3
0:50	Letter to Titus	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 15-4
1:10	Guiding Principles	Lecture/Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Drane, John. *Introducing the New Testament*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986, 342-43, 351-55.

Elwell, Walter, and Robert Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998, 320-25, 334-43.

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Third edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, 390-92, 409-17.

Harris, Stephen L. *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction*. Fourth edition, New York: McGraw Hill, 2002, 352-53, 366-69.

Perkins, Pheme. *Reading the New Testament*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988, 147-50, 281-92.

Tenney, Merrill C. *New Testament Survey*. Revised by Walter M. Dunnott. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992, 318-19, 333-43.

Varughese, Alexander, ed. *Discovering the New Testament: Community and Faith*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005, ch. 17.

# Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

## Accountability

*Ask the students if they found anything especially interesting in their study for this lesson.*

## Orientation

*Ask a leading question to get the students thinking about the topic.*

**The letters we are talking about today are written to individuals, all leaders in the church.**

*If you were Paul, writing to individuals in leadership, what changes in style, content, or vocabulary would you make in contrast to a letter that would be read to the whole church? Why?*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

**At the end of this lesson, participants should**

- **gain an understanding of the types of letters written in the first century**
- **know the purpose and main content for Paul's letters to Philemon, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus**

## Lesson Body

### Lecture/Discussion: Letter to Philemon

(20 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 15-2 that the students completed as homework.*

*Involve all the students in the discussion and exploration of the hermeneutical questions. Fill in information the students may have missed.*

*Write responses on an overhead for all the students to see.*

Philemon is a unique letter of Paul in that it is a pure letter of mediation. It is the first one we have encountered in which Paul addresses an individual, and it is the only letter Paul writes to an individual who is not an “overseer” or someone with pastoral authority over more than one church.

**Types:** Friendship letter, *epideictic*, letter of mediation

#### Who?

**Author:** Paul, the apostle

**Audience:** Philemon, a man of means with a home big enough to host the Christian meetings. He owned slaves, one of which was Onesimus, who ran away.

#### Where?

**Author:** Paul is in Rome in prison.

**Audience:** Philemon, Gentile Christian in Colossae; Onesimus is called a Colossian in Colossians 4:9.

**Cultural Note:** According to Roman law a slave could seek refuge at a religious altar and the person presiding over the altar could act as a mediator on the slave’s behalf. Since Onesimus was converted under Paul, Paul became the “priestly mediator” with his master.

#### When?

AD 60-64

#### What?

Main purpose of the letter is to ask Philemon to accept Onesimus as a brother in Christ. Paul knows what society would demand, but he urges a new Christian relationship (15-16). Paul could command Philemon to accept Onesimus, but he chooses not to (8-9).

*Consult an outline in a commentary on Philemon.*

## Why?

Onesimus, a runaway slave, was converted under Paul. Paul felt the right thing for Onesimus to do was to return to his master and straighten things out. Most likely Onesimus was a slave because he or his family owed money to Philemon.

Paul writes to urge Philemon to treat his slave with mercy, as he is now a fellow believer.

## Lecture/Discussion: Letters to Timothy

(20 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 15-3 that the students completed as homework.*

*Involve all the students in the discussion and exploration of the hermeneutical questions. Fill in information the students may have missed.*

*Write the responses on an overhead for all to see.*

1 and 2 Timothy, along with Titus are referred to as the Pastoral Epistles. 1 and 2 Timothy are written to Paul's "son" in the faith and an able early leader, who organized and trained leadership in the churches Paul started. These Pastoral Epistles are unique in that they are letters written to individuals in administrative leadership over several churches or groups of churches.

**Types:** *Paraenetic* letters

## Who?

### Author:

- Paul, the apostle, is the traditional author.
- Pauline School: Many scholars today view these letters as products of a later age, so the author would be an unknown Pauline disciple. This is based on differences in style, vocabulary, and content.
- Argument for Paul: Due to the drastically different audience of these Pastoral Epistles (administrative leadership), it should not be surprising that Paul's style, vocabulary, and content is different from the letters he sent to individual congregations.

**Audience:** Timothy, pastor of the church in Ephesus, Paul's "son" in the faith is the traditional audience. If these letters were written later, then they would have been written most probably to young pastors.

## Where?

### Author:

- Paul in Rome, where he waited in prison for his execution.
- Anonymous author's place of writing unknown.

**Audience:** Ephesus in Asia Minor for Timothy, otherwise unknown location.

## When?

AD 60-64 for Paul as author  
Late first century, early second for unknown author.

*Consult outlines in commentaries for 1 and 2 Timothy.*

## What?

These are handbooks for church leaders and discuss issues of qualifications for leadership, as well as the organization and administration of the churches.

## Special Verses:

*If you have time you can have the students do a hermeneutical study of these verses.*

*Discuss the first century principles and their application to the 21st century.*

- 1 Tim 2: 1-7
- 1 Tim 3: 1-7
- 1 Tim 4: 1-3
- 1 Tim 4: 12: "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity."
- 1 Tim 4: 13-16
- 1 Tim 6: 6-12
- 1 Tim 6: 10: "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil."
- 1 Tim 6: 12: "Fight the good fight of the faith."
  
- 2 Tim 1: 8-12
- 2 Tim 2: 3-7
- 2 Tim 2: 3 "Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus."
- 2 Tim 3: 14-17
- 2 Tim 3: 16-17: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."
- 2 Tim 4: 2: "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction."
- 2 Tim 4: 7: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

## Why?

To encourage Timothy/pastors in face of opposition from false teachers.

To give Timothy/pastors a list of priorities for the local church: prayer, worship, high standards for leadership, sound teaching, and care for the church members.

## Lecture/Discussion: Letter to Titus

(20 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 15-4 that the students completed as homework.*

*Involve the students in the discussion and exploration of the hermeneutical questions. Fill in information the students may have missed.*

*Write the responses on an overhead for all to see.*

*See information on 1 and 2 Timothy.*

*Consult an outline from a commentary on Titus.*

Titus is also a Pastoral Epistle written to a person Paul left in charge of organizing and training leadership for young churches.

**Type:** *Paraenetic* letter

### Who?

**Author:** Paul, traditional author or anonymous Pauline disciple.

**Audience:** Titus who is overseeing several other pastors on the island of Crete. Paul had left him to finish church organization and leadership training. If these letters were written later, they would have been written most probably to overseers of young churches.

### Where?

**Author:** Paul is probably at Nicopolis, a port city about 140 miles northwest of Corinth. This is where he wants Titus to join him.

**Audience:** Titus is in Crete.

Unknown author/audience's location is unknown.

### When?

- AD 52-60, sometime during Paul's last missionary journey, before his arrest in Jerusalem.
- AD 60-64, if it is placed during the period of Paul's supposed travel to Spain, which took place, according to some scholars, between his two Roman imprisonments.
- Late first century, early second century for anonymous writer.

### What?

**Special Issues** in Titus include

- Qualifications for elders
- Instructions for various age and gender groups

**Special Verses:**

2: 11-13: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness . . . and to live self-

controlled . . . while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

### Why?

The purpose is to give Titus practical direction until Paul’s aides, Artemas and Tychicus, arrive.

Paul lists his qualifications for elders in 1:6-9, so Titus has an “objective” standard in choosing leadership as well as Paul’s authority for the qualifications

Paul also gives Titus special instructions for his churches (2:1-2; 2:3-5; 2:6-8; 2:9-10).

## Lecture/Discussion: Guiding Principles

(15 minutes)

*Have a student read 1 Timothy 2:11-15 from a translation appropriate to your context.*

How do we interpret 1 Tim 2:11-15?

This passage contains the key verses—along with 1 Cor 14:33b-36—for those who do not believe in the ordination or leadership of women in the Church.

The meaning seems plain enough. The problem is that it contradicts what we know of Paul’s practice and beliefs in other letters. Those who do not believe in the ordination of women accept the apparent meaning of verse 12 over the examples and passages in Acts (i.e., 1:14, 2:14-17, 18:26, 21:9) and Paul’s letters (i.e., Gal 3:28, 1 Cor 11:5, Rom 16:1,7) that indicate other practices and beliefs. But they do not accept the plain meaning of verse 15 over the statements found in Paul’s writings (i.e., Gal 2:16, Rom 1:16-17).

This type of “selective” interpretation is not consistent or acceptable. We have to find a way to understand the passage that is consistent with all other Scripture, or admit we do not know what the author had in mind.

There are two main interpretation problems in this passage: (1) the role of women in the church and (2) how women are saved. The passage says plainly that women are to keep silent and not to teach or have authority over a man, and that a woman will be saved through childbearing, provided she continues in faith, love and holiness with modesty.

The interpretation of this passage is made even more difficult because of the divided opinion of scholars on when the passage was written and by whom.



If Paul did not write this passage, as many scholars believe, then perhaps this reflects the practice of the later, more established Church, which was anxious to establish its status and be considered respectable in the eyes of society. However, even if we relegate this passage to a later period, that does not relieve us of how to interpret this passage in the light of all other Scripture.

The one thing that seems to be true is this passage was written for a specific situation at a specific time. This position at least illumines verses 11 and 12, but verse 15 continues to remain a mystery in light of the plain teaching of other scripture on salvation.

The interpretation principle which best helps us to interpret this passage is to interpret obscure passages in light of those with clear and consistent meaning.

Thus, although we do not understand the circumstances in which Paul or the author of 1 Tim was writing, we do not interpret the passage to bar all women from speaking, praying, or teaching in church and we do not condition a woman's salvation on whether she has had a child or not.

Immediately after this passage in 1 Tim 3 there is a listing of the qualifications of bishops and deacons which emphasizes their need to be mature Christians. Considering the lack of educational opportunity for women in the first century, perhaps the problem Paul is addressing in 1 Tim 2: 11-12 is their lack of education on religious issues and knowledge in general.

Verse 15 may be contextually understood in light of the hope of each Jewish woman (since the Fall) to be chosen as the mother of the Messiah. Thus, the mother of the Messiah is saved through the child she bears.

These suggestions are only guesses as to what the author was trying to say in these very obscure passages.

*What principles do you see Paul presenting in this passage?*

*How could they be applied today?*

*Discuss questions students have over the material presented.*

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

*Call on different students to give brief summaries of each of the books studied today.*

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

*This is an optional assignment. You can require this reading or allow the students to decide.*

**Read Hebrews and James in two different translations. Fill out the outlines found in Resources 16-1 and 16-2.**

**Read chapter 18, and chapter 19 pages 312-315 in *Discovering the New Testament*.**

**Write in your journal. Imagine Paul was your mentor. What are the things for which you would like him to give you advice? What do you think he might say?**

## Lesson 17

# Hebrews and James

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	Letter to the Hebrews	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 16-1
0:45	Letter of James	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 16-2
1:10	Faith and Works	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Drane, John. *Introducing the New Testament*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986, 412-34.

Elwell, Walter, and Robert Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998, 347-60.

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Third edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, 421-36.

Harris, Stephen L. *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction*. Fourth edition, New York: McGraw Hill, 2002, 375-83.

Perkins, Pheme. *Reading the New Testament*. Second edition, New York: Paulist Press, 1988, 270-79, 296-99.

**Tenney, Merrill C.** *New Testament Survey*. Revised by  
**Walter M. Dunnnett.** Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans  
Publishing Co., 1992, 116-28, 264-67, 355-64.

**Varughese, Alexander, ed.** *Discovering the New  
Testament: Community and Faith*. Kansas City:  
Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005, ch. 18 and  
312-315.

# Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

## Accountability

*Ask the students to give their impressions of the differences between Paul's letters and the two letters for today.*

## Orientation

*Ask a leading question to get the students thinking about the topic.*

*What types of issues do we as human beings find very hard to disagree with family members on and still remain a close family unit? Why?*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

**At the end of this lesson, participants should**

- **gain an understanding of the types of letters written in the first century**
- **know the purpose and main content for the General Letters, Hebrews and James**

## Lesson Body

### Lecture/Discussion: Letter to the Hebrews

(40 minutes)

Hebrews and James (as well as 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, and many add 1, 2, and 3 John) are called General Letters, General Epistles, or Catholic Epistles because their audience is not specific.

Most probably they were written to a certain type of people—Jewish Christians for Hebrews and James—but not to a certain local church. “Catholic” in this context means “universal” or general and does not refer to the Catholic Church as a specific denomination. “Epistle” is an old English word for “letter” and does not mean anything beyond that.

*Refer to Resource 16-1 that the students completed as homework.*

*Involve all the students in the discussion and exploration of the hermeneutical questions. Fill in information the students may have missed.*

*Write responses on an overhead for all to see.*

Hebrews resembles a sermon or speech to which a letter closing is added (13:22-25). Its style and oratory are remarkable as well as the author’s grasp of the Jewish traditions and rituals.

#### Who?

##### Author:

- Tradition claims Paul as author although his name is not found in the oldest extant (existing) manuscripts. But very few current scholars would accept this position.
- Some of the names suggested for the author of this letter are:
  - Barnabas, a companion of Paul
  - Luke because of the good style of Greek
  - Clement of Rome (suggested by Origen)
  - Apollos (suggested by Martin Luther)
  - Sylvanus, companion of Paul
  - Philip
  - Priscilla
- Probably the best suggestion was by Origen: “Only God Knows.”

*Spend time looking at the scripture passages given.*

The author's characteristics which we can discern from the text itself include:

- He or she was a second-generation Christian, not an eyewitness of Jesus (2:3).
- He or she was not an early leader (13:7).
- He or she uses Platonic thought.
  - (1) The material world is imperfect and changing, a copy of the true world (7:18-19, 8:5, 9:23,

10:1).

(2) Humans have access to the divine through the mind and reason (5:12, 13:15-16).

(3) Education of the soul-milk (elementary teaching) is for the immature. The soul seeks to be mature or perfect (5:12-6:3).

- Emphasis on the cultic ritual of Judaism which is inferior to what Christ has provided (7:22, 28; 8:6; 9:10-11; 13:9).

**Audience:** Jews, who believed in angels. This would indicate Pharisaic beliefs (1:1; 2:9; 16). They were very familiar with the Old Testament as indicated by the many quotation from the Psalms, 2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles, and Deuteronomy (1:5-14). They had heard of salvation as it was announced by Jesus, but it was delivered to them by eyewitnesses who personally knew Jesus (2:3).

### Where?

**Author:** Jewish Christian community. Location is unknown.

**Audience:** Jewish Christian community. Location is unknown.

### When?

AD 40-60. Before the first Jewish revolt, but during a time of increasing tension between Jews and Romans, as well as between Jews who accepted Jesus as Messiah and those who did not.

The audience has faced persecution, but none had yet died for their faith. References to the cultic ritual of the Temple also seem to indicate the letter was written before the destruction of the Temple in AD 70.

Some scholars think Hebrews was written much later, sometime between 80 and 100 AD. These scholars emphasize the Greek thought, style, and language of the book. They point out how the writer emphasizes that neither the Tabernacle nor the Temple in Jerusalem was intended to be permanent. Instead they are copies of the heavenly realities (9:23-24)

In either case, it was during a period when the Jewish Christians were undergoing extreme pressure to turn away from Christianity and go back to their old Jewish ways.

*Consult an outline from a commentary on Hebrews.*

## What?

Hebrews is a General Epistle with no specific audience named, nor do we know who wrote the letter for sure. It does not follow the regular form of a letter. Rather it seems to be a sermon adapted to the letter form.

It follows the form of alternating from doctrinal teaching to practical application and exhortation (2: 1-4).

The author is “legitimizing” Jesus as the promised one, Messiah, prophet, priest. That is, he or she is showing how Jesus fulfills the promises of the Jewish tradition while at the same time is even better than the old Jewish tradition.

## Special Verses:

2: 17; 3: 1; 4: 15; 5: 10; 7: 26-27: Jesus as our High Priest  
1: 1-3, 4; 3: 2-6; 7: 16, 19; 8: 6; 9: 13-14; 19: 34;  
11: 16: Christ as better than . . .

*If you have time you can have the students do a hermeneutical study of these verses.*

*Discuss the first century principles and their application to the 21st century.*

## Why?

Jesus is the fulfillment of Scripture, so there is no way one can go “back” to Judaism. These new Jewish Christians were beginning to experience persecution and were wondering if the pain was worth it.

The author of Hebrews tells them there is no forgiveness of sin WHILE we are denying Christ. There is no other way to salvation. So returning to the Temple ritual of sacrifice is equal to denying Christ and therefore their salvation.

True faith believes God even when His works are not seen. This reassures these persecuted Christians that just because things are not going well, does not mean God is not at work. The true Christian will believe even when everything looks like it is going wrong.

Post-Pentecost Christians face more stern judgment for disobedience than those in the Old Testament did because they have had the benefit of the revelation of Christ and the experience of the Holy Spirit.



## Lecture/Discussion: Letter of James

(35 minutes)

James is a letter written, not to a specific church, but to a specific group of people, “12 tribes in the Diaspora,” or better, Jewish Christians in the Diaspora.

It addresses issues that are important to the Jewish Christian Church, but are informative and useful also for the Gentile Church. Because of its very Jewish character with emphasis on “good works,” it took a while before it was accepted into the New Testament canon.

*Refer to Resource 16-2 that the students completed as homework.*

*Involve all the students in the discussion and exploration of the hermeneutical questions. Fill in information the students may have missed.*

*Write the responses on an overhead for all to see.*

**Type:** *Paraenesis*

### Who?

#### Author:

- **James:** A servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. The traditional author is James, “the brother of the Lord” or often referred to as Jesus’ half-brother.
- **Eusebius** (*History of the Church*) depicts James as a model of righteousness and devotion to God. His knees are calloused like those of a camel from praying for the sins of the people. James was taken to the pinnacle of the Temple on Passover where he was to deny Jesus. Instead, he confessed Jesus as the Son of Man and was cast down from there. Since he had not died but was praying for his enemies, James was stoned and then clubbed to death. Immediately after, Emperor Vespasian laid siege to Jerusalem (AD 69).
- From the text of James we see the author was a Greek-speaking, Jewish Christian who understood the significance of religion to be a worshiper of God and to have a commitment to superior moral conduct.

**Audience:** From the text itself the audience is described as the “12 tribes in the Diaspora” (1:1) who gather in a synagogue (2:2) and the community is guided by elders (5:14). They are most likely Jewish Christians.

### Where?

**Author:** Jerusalem

**Audience:** Unknown—Diaspora

## When?

The traditional date would be sometime before James' martyrdom in AD 69.

## What?

The theme of James could be "Salvation by Obedient Faith." Its technical rhetorical style is "paraenesis" or exhortation (encouragement and confrontation on issues of right and wrong) indicating James is not really telling his audience anything new, but encouraging them to follow what they have been taught by him and to keep that faith pure.

The development of the actual manuscript texts of James is an interesting history. Because of it being relatively unknown in the first few centuries, there is no Western text of James. Its history is far better known in the East with Papyrus 20 from the third century. This copy was written in Egyptian and is the earliest testimony to this letter. The best and earliest complete copy of the letter is Manuscript B from the fourth century which is also in Egyptian. No one knows why there were no citations of James earlier than the 400s.

This book was called "an epistle of straw" by Martin Luther whose fight was against the "rules and ritual" of the Roman Catholic Church and in favor of "faith and experience." So you can understand as you read this letter that in his particular context, he would have some trouble with James. Others have wanted to take it out of the Canon and it was one of the last ones to make it into the Canon. Perhaps more than anything this shows the resistance of the Early Church against Jewish ideas and the Early Church's emphasis on salvation by faith.

## Special Verses:

- 1:2-3: The attitude we are to have in temptation
- 1:22-25: Hearing and doing the will of God
- 2: 14-26: The relationship between faith and obedient works
- 3:5-13: The control of the tongue
- 4: 1-17: The source of division and problems in the Christian life
- 5: 13-16: The place of prayer in the Christian life

*Consult an outline from a commentary on James.*

*If you have time you can have the students do a hermeneutical study of these verses.*

*Discuss the first century principles and their application to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

## Why?

True faith will be reflected in our actions and lifestyle, including social and economic justice.

Violence and anger is not a “faith” response to trials and persecution.

### Special Verses:

*If there is time have the students do a hermeneutical study of these verses.*

2: 18: “Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.”

3: 1-12: Taming the tongue.

4: 7 “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

5: 14-16: The prayer of faith.

## Guided Discussion: Faith and Works

(15 minutes)

*Does James' view of faith and works ultimately contradict Paul's teaching?*

*Discuss questions students have over the material presented.*

*Why or why not?*

## Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

### Review

*Have the students write for one minute about what Hebrews says to them.*

*Have the students write for one minute about what James says to them.*

*Collect the papers. Read a few excerpts.*

### Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

*This is an optional assignment. You can require this reading or allow the students to decide.*

**Read 1 and 2 Peter and Jude in two different translations. Fill out the outlines found in Resource 17-1 and 17-2.**

**Read chapter 19 pages 315-323 in *Discovering the New Testament*.**

**Write in your journal. How significant would it be to know the authorship of the Book of Hebrews? Why?**

## Lesson 18

# 1 and 2 Peter and Jude

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	Letters of Peter	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 17-1
0:35	Letter of Jude	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 17-2
0:45	The Salt of the Earth	Video on Sardis	Video/Video Player
1:15	False Teachers	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Drane, John. *Introducing the New Testament*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986, 434-43, 463-67.

Elwell, Walter, and Robert Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998, 362-66, 370-72.

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Third edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, 437-48.

Harris, Stephen L. *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction*. Fourth edition, New York: McGraw Hill, 2002, 383-88.

Perkins, Pheme. *Reading the New Testament*. New York: Paulist Press, 293-303.

**“The Salt of the Earth,” Lesson 2 of Volume 5 of *That the World May Know*, a videotape series produced by Zondervan Publishing House in cooperation with Focus on the Family and also available from Christian Book Distributors (CBD).**

**Tenney, Merrill C. *New Testament Survey*. Revised by Walter M. Dunnott. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992, 344-54, 365-74.**

**Varughese, Alex, ed. *Discovering the New Testament: Community and Faith*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005, 315-323.**

# Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

## Accountability

*Ask the students what translations or study Bibles they are finding the most helpful.*

## Orientation

*Ask a leading question to get the students thinking about the topic.*

*What is the relationship of the virtue of "integrity" to what a person says and does?*

*Would you believe a person who says one thing and does another? Why or why not?*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

**At the end of this lesson, participants should**

- **gain an understanding of the types of letters written in the first century**
- **know the purpose and main content for the General Letters, 1 and 2 Peter, and Jude**

# Lesson Body

## Lecture/Discussion: Letters of Peter

(30 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 17-1 that the students completed as homework.*

*Involve all the students in the discussion and exploration of the hermeneutical questions. Fill in information the students may have missed.*

*Write the responses on an overhead for all to see.*

These two General Epistles are the only direct writing we have of the apostolic hero Peter. They address the situation and needs of the Early Church from a primarily Jewish standpoint, although Peter does not narrow his audience to just Jewish Christians as James did.

### Who?

#### Author:

- Traditional position: Peter, the apostle, grew up in Bethsaida and lived in Capernaum with his family. Both of these towns were on the Sea of Galilee. He was a fisherman by trade, became a disciple of Jesus and a leader in the Early Church. He was a Jewish Christian who recognized Gentiles did not have to become Jews to be Christians.
- “Peterine tradition”: This position, developed in the 19th and 20th centuries, argues that differences in style between 1 Peter and 2 Peter indicate different authors.
- These differences can easily be explained by reading the letters themselves. 1 Peter 5:12 says “With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly . . .” 2 Peter does not acknowledge any help in writing. 1 Peter is considered to have “better” Greek than 2 Peter.

#### Audience:

**1 Peter:** “God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia” (1 Pet 1:1). These cities were in Northern Asia Minor.

**2 Peter:** “To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours” (2 Pet 1:1).

### Where?

**Author:** “Babylon” (1 Pet 5:3), which was alias for Rome. This was probably the location for both letters. (Unknown for “Peterine tradition” author.)



**Audience:** Northern Asia Minor for 1 Peter, anywhere for 2 Peter (Unknown for “Peterine tradition” audience).

## When?

**1 Peter:** Before AD 64-66 (AD 100+ for “Peterine tradition”)

**2 Peter:** Around AD 68 (AD 100+ for “Peterine tradition”)

These dates in the 60s would indicate a time of great unrest and tension, especially for the Jewish Christians. They fit the setting of the letters, which talk about suffering for doing good and being a Christian. The command to submit to “every authority” would also fit this difficult time when the Jews were in revolt against the Romans.

## What?

### Special Verses:

1 Peter 1:7: “[Trials] have come so that your faith— . . . may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

1 Peter 1:15-16: “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’ ”

1 Peter 1:18-23: By whom and at what price were we ransomed?

1 Peter 2:11—3:13: Conduct codes for Christian aliens and exiles, specifically slaves, wives, husbands and everyone

1 Peter 3:14-17: The attitude we should have when suffering for righteousness’ sake

1 Peter 5:5-6: God and humility

1 Peter 5:7: “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

1 Peter 5:8: “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

2 Peter 1:5-7: With what should we support or add to our faith?

2 Peter 2: 1-22: Description and fate of false teachers

2 Peter 3: 3-18: Second Coming of Christ

2 Peter 3:8-9: “But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are

*Consult outlines from commentaries on 1 and 2 Peter.*

*If you have time you can have the students do a hermeneutical study of these verses.*

*Discuss the first-century principles and their application to the 21st century.*

like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

2 Peter 3: 15-16: Indicates Paul's letters are known and authoritative.

## Why?

### 1 Peter:

- To encourage the believers in face of persecution.
- To keep their eyes on eternal salvation and not on the temporal persecutions.
- He contrasts life as a foreigner or “Pilgrim”—citizen of heaven—versus the life of the world.

*From ENT, 365.*

*Refer to Resource 18-1 in the Student Guide.*

#### **The Life of the Pilgrim**

Be obedient to God (1: 14, 22)

Be holy (1: 15)

Live as servants (2: 16, 4: 11)

Be prayerful (3: 7, 4: 7)

Live openly, transparently (2: 16, 3: 16)

Do what is good (2: 15, 3: 16-17)

Be gentle and respectful (3: 15)

Love one another deeply (1: 22, 4: 8)

Exercise self-control (1: 13, 4: 7, 5: 8)

Live humbly (5: 6)

Reject evil (2: 11)

Accept human rule (2: 13, 17)

Control sinful desires (2: 1, 11)

Do God's will (4: 2)

Share with others (4: 9)

Use our gifts for others (4: 10-11)

#### **The Life of the World**

Rebellion against God

Unholiness

Live selfishly

Reject God

Live deceitfully

Do what is wrong

Live harshly and insolently

Hate one another

Live excessively, wildly

Be proud and arrogant

Embrace evil

Reject human rule

Give desires free rein

Reject God's will

Hoard one's possessions

Refuse to share

- He concludes that the Christian's main goal is to follow Christ, wherever that leads.

### 2 Peter:

- Christians are to grow in grace and he lists the virtues that will help do that (1: 5-8).
- Believers can have confidence in the Old Testament and in the apostolic teachings (1: 12-21).
- Believers must beware of false teachers and doctrines (2: 1-22).
- Peter gives an explanation as to why Jesus had not returned: God's time is not like our time and delay indicates God's patience. He also explains the day of the Lord will come like a thief, so we must be ready by living holy and godly lives (3: 8-13).

## Lecture/Discussion: Letter of Jude

(10 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 17-2 that the students completed as homework.*

*Involve all the students in the discussion and exploration of the hermeneutical questions. Fill in information the students may have missed.*

*Write responses on an overhead for all to see.*

Jude is a short, one-chapter letter which is very similar to 2 Peter 2. It reflects the same, tension-filled time as Peter's letters and a similar concern for how to identify and deal with false teachers.

### Who?

**Author:** "Servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James." Most likely, the half-brother of Jesus and brother of James the patriarch of the Church in Jerusalem.

**Audience:** "All chosen and loved by God the Father and kept safe by Jesus Christ." The text seems to point to Jewish Christians who have a background in the Old Testament and Jewish apocryphal writings of Enoch (Jude 14-15).

### Where?

**Author:** Unknown, probably Jerusalem

**Audience:** Unknown, perhaps Jewish Christian Churches of the Diaspora

### When?

AD 66-80, a time of increased tension between Rabbinic Judaism and Jewish Christianity. Christianity is facing persecution from Judaism and the Roman government.

### What?

#### Special Verses:

4, 8-19: False teachers; Compare these verses with 2 Pet 2:1-22. *What are the similarities, what are the differences?*

24-25: "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen."

*Consult an outline from a commentary on Jude.*

*If you have time you can have the students do a hermeneutical study of these verses.*

*Discuss the first century principles and their application to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

## Why?

Some principles which come out of this little letter include:

- Believers must fight for the doctrine of the deity of Jesus because this is fundamental to the Christian faith.
- Salvation involves moral transformation.
- False teachers can be identified by their lifestyles, which do not live up to their teachings.

Jude urges the believers to build one another up and resist evil, false teachers, and doctrines (Jude 4, 8, 10-16).

## Video: The Salt of the Earth

(30 minutes)

*You will need to cue the video in advance so that it is ready to start. This is Lesson 2 of Volume 5. Complete information for the video series is included in the Introduction to this Faculty Guide.*

*You should preview the video before showing it to the class.*

We are going to watch a video about Sardis, a first-century city in the Roman province of Asia Minor. In this city was a prosperous Christian church.

You need to pay attention to the information about culture as well as the archaeological information.

## Guided Discussion: False Teachers

(10 minutes)

*Discuss questions students have over the material presented.*

*What are the main characteristics of false teachers as described in 2 Peter and Jude?*

*Can we use these characteristics/principles to identify false teachers today? Why or why not?*

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

*Have students quickly list the characteristics of the "Life of the Pilgrim" without looking at notes.*

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

*This is an optional assignment. You can require this reading or allow the students to decide.*

**Read 1, 2, and 3 John in two different translations. Fill out the outline found in Resource 18-2.**

**Read chapter 20 in *Discovering the New Testament*.**

**Write in your journal. Reflect on the characteristic of the "Life of the Pilgrim" you would most want people to see in you. Which is the most difficult?**

**Journal Check: Be prepared to show your journal to the instructor during the next session. The instructor will not read it in detail nor will it be handed in. Your journal will be briefly inspected to note regularity and quality of organization and entries.**

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## Lesson 19

# 1, 2, and 3 John

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	1, 2, and 3 John	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 18-2 Resource 19-1 Resource 19-2
1:00	Facing False Teachings	Small Groups	Resource 19-3
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Drane, John. *Introducing the New Testament*, New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986, 457-63.

Elwell, Walter, and Robert Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998, 366-70.

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Third edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, 448-53.

Harris, Stephen L. *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction*. Fourth edition, New York: McGraw Hill, 2002, 388-90.

Perkins, Pheme. *Reading the New Testament*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988, 304-11.

**Tenney, Merrill C..** *New Testament Survey*. Revised by  
**Walter M. Dunnnett.** Grand Rapids: Wm. B.  
Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992, 377-80.

**Varughese, Alexander,** ed. *Discovering the New  
Testament: Community and Faith*. Kansas City:  
Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005, ch. 20.



# Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

## Accountability

*Ask students for one new thing they may have learned about John doing this study.*

## Orientation

*Ask a leading question to get the students thinking about the topic.*

**In 1 John 2:8, John is writing about a “new” command, “to love one another.”**

*Why is it new? Why is it not new?*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

**At the end of this lesson, participants should**

- **gain an understanding of the types of letters written in the first century**
- **know the purpose and main content for the Johannine Letters, 1, 2, and 3 John**

## Lesson Body

### Lecture/Discussion: Letters of 1, 2, and 3 John

(55 minutes)

Refer to Resource 18-2 that the students completed as homework.

Involve all the students in the discussion and exploration of the hermeneutical questions. Fill in information the students may have missed.

Write responses on the overhead for all to see.

The first two letters were written to congregations and the third letter was written to an individual, who was probably part of one of the congregations in Asia Minor. They are written in very simple and clear Greek and express the concern of an aging pastor for his people.

#### Who?

##### Author:

- Textual evidence: No identification of author in 1 John. The author calls himself an “elder” in 2 and 3 John.
- Traditional position: The Apostle John who grew up in Galilee, probably in Bethsaida. His father was Zebedee and his mother was Salome, who accompanied Jesus and His disciples on their journeys. His brother was James. John was a disciple of John the Baptist and after John’s arrest was called by Jesus to be His disciple. He knew the high priest, took care of Jesus’ mother, Mary, and was one of the first men to see the empty tomb. He ministered in Jerusalem from AD 30 to 68 and in Ephesus from AD 68 to 98 when he died. Part of this time he was on the Island of Patmos in exile.

##### Audience:

- **1 John:** “My children,” believers—children, parents, young people
- **2 John:** “The elect mistress or lady (*eklekte kuria*) and her children.” Some interpret this to refer to a Church patroness or woman pastor and those who met in her house for church. Others see the phrase as a personification of the local church, since the word “church” in Greek is feminine.
- **3 John:** “Gaius,” convert of John who had the gift of hospitality and with whom John plans to stay.

#### Where?

**Author:** Ephesus in Asia Minor, most likely

**Audience:** Unknown, but probably in Asia Minor

## When?

Somewhere between AD 68 and 98, but probably in the 90s

## What?

Consult outlines of 1, 2, and 3 John in commentaries.

The themes of **1 John** include right belief and right living. These both directly confront the incipient Gnostic teachings apparently trying to take over in the church(es) John was writing to.

Refer to Resource 19-1 in the Student Guide.

John contrasts these false teachings with Christian belief:

### Gnosticism

#### Wrong Belief

1:6: Believes a lie  
 4:6: Spirit of falsehood  
 2:22-23-4:3: Denies Jesus  
 1:10: Denies sin

### Christianity

#### Right Belief

2:20-23: Believes the truth  
 4:6: Spirit of truth  
 4:2: Confesses Jesus  
 1:9-2:1: Accepts forgiveness

#### Excuses Sin: A Sinning Religion

1:6: Walks in darkness  
 2:19: Division comes from the spirit of the anti-Christ  
 2:4: Disobeys Christ  
 3:8: Sins continually  
 5:19: Under the control of the devil

#### Victorious Christian Living

1:7: Walks in the light  
 1:9: Has fellowship with God and others  
 2:3, 17: Obeys Christ and does God's will  
 3:4-6: Freedom from sinning  
 3:9-10, 4:4, 5:4-5 Has God's victory by faith

**2 John** was written to the “chosen lady,” which is an unusual Greek term for the New Testament, *kuria*, or the feminine form of *kurios*, which is translated “Lord, master, or Sir.” This letter is only one chapter long and is really an announcement that John wants to come and visit. He wants to explain his position and reinforce “the truth.” His two main “commands” are to “love one another” and to watch out for the deceivers who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh.

**3 John** was written to “my dear friend Gaius.” This short, one-chapter letter is also an announcement of John’s desire to come for a visit. He commends Gaius for his hospitality to “brothers” who were strangers to Gaius. Following the tradition of a praise and blame letter, he praises the behavior of Gaius and Demetrius and “blames” or states his disapproval of Diotrephes’ behavior.

*If you have time you can have the students do a hermeneutical study of these verses.*

*Discuss the first century principles and their application to the 21st century.*

### Special Verses:

1 John 1:7-8; 2:1; 3:4-5, 8-9; 5:16-17: Sin  
1 John 2:5, 15; 3:1, 11, 14-18, 23; 4:7-21; 5:2-3:  
Love  
2 John 1:1, 3, 5-6: Love  
3 John 1:1: Love

### Why?

- **1 John:** So their joy might be full, so they will not sin, so that they will love one another, and to assure them of their victory in Christ.
- **2 John:** Similar to 1 John, adds the concern about those who might deny either the humanity or deity of Christ.
- **3 John:** Gaius is commended for his hospitality to traveling Christian evangelists, discusses the vices of Diotrephes and the virtues of Demetrius.

### Exploration of the False Teachings

These three letters of John were written late in the first century and to people who were probably facing Gnostic or pre-Gnostic teachings as well as Docetic teachings, which were surfacing in the church. Let's briefly define these two early heresies.

*Refer to Resource 19-2 in the Student Guide.*

#### Gnosticism

The Church Fathers compared Gnostic teaching to the many-headed hydra of Greek legend. In other words, it was hard to pin down what the Gnostics believed.

There was no Gnostic church or normative theology, no Gnostic rule of faith, and no dogmas of exclusive importance.

Gnostic systems attached themselves to “host” religions, so they did not have their own tradition, sacred books or stories, but borrowed ones from the host religion or a mixture of host religious ideas.

The essential features of Gnosticism consist of:

- Their name comes from the Greek word “gnosis,” which means knowledge. The Gnostics claimed to have special knowledge. They were “gnostics” or knowers, people of understanding. This “gnosis”—special knowledge—had a liberating and redeeming effect. It was given by revelation only to the elect who were capable of receiving it.

*From Trimorphic Protennoia, XIII, 35, in The Nag Hammadi Library, trans. John D. Turner, ed. James M. Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1981).*

- In each person there is a divine “spark” which comes from the divine world and has to be awakened. For some people this is very easy to do, because the spark glows brighter; for others it takes more effort.
- They believed in dualism on the cosmological and anthropological levels. So there are good and evil gods/goddesses or heavenly beings as well as good and evil people. Good and evil forces or beings tend to be of equal strength in pure dualism, so the question of who wins in the end is still to be determined.
- Angels and other heavenly beings played an important role in the creation of the world, and they explain why things are the way they are.
- Soteriology: God/god/goddess and his/her helpers open up a way in which the soul can escape to heaven. This is where the special knowledge comes in. Those with special knowledge know how to get the God/god/goddess and his/her helpers to “reveal the things that are difficult to interpret and the things that are secret.”
- Eschatology: The deliverance of the heavenly soul has cosmic significance. So when a soul is liberated from its earthly body and condition, this will affect the gods/goddesses as well as the rest of the heavens.

### Docetism

In brief, this is the belief that Jesus was not truly human; He just *seemed* to be human. And if Jesus was not human, then He was not the “Messiah” (“Christ”), since by definition the Messiah was an anointed human being and He was not the Son of God, but God himself.

Greek thinking found it very difficult to understand how a truly human person could reveal the character of God. Contrary to Old Testament Jewish teaching, they believed the human world was quite separate from the heavenly world, and the goal of every human soul was to escape this world (or the body) for life in the supernatural world. Note how Gnostic ideas of finding the secret of escape fits also into this perspective.

The religious/philosophical issue Docetism tried to solve was how an all-powerful God could be imprisoned in a human being. Since this was thought to be impossible, Jesus must have only *seemed* to have been human. One of the prominent Docetists who lived at the same time as John (according to Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* 3.3.4) was Cerinthus. Irenaeus tells us the apostle John went to a public bathhouse in

Ephesus, but refused to take a bath because Cerinthus was there. Some have suggested 1 John was written in reply to Cerinthus himself.

## Small Groups: Facing False Teachings

(25 minutes)

*Divide the class into groups of two to three.*

*Allow 15 minutes for small-group work and 10 minutes for reports.*

*Refer to Resource 19-3 in the Student Guide.*

*While the students are working check the students' journals to see if they have been faithful to the assignment. Assure them that you will not be reading the specific entries.*

In small groups you will discuss the following passages and questions. Select a recorder/reporter who will report to the class.

Read and discuss how John deals with the ideas of Gnosticism and Docetism in the following passages:

1 John 2:22-23

1 John 4:1-3, 15

1 John 5:1-5, 10-12

*What do John's concerns tell us about the churches in Asia Minor at the end of the first century?*

*What similarities do they have with 21<sup>st</sup>-century churches?*

*What differences?*

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

*Call on two to three students to give one teaching of the Gnostics or Docetists.*

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

*This is an optional assignment. You can require this reading or allow the students to decide.*

**Read Revelation in two different translations. Fill out the outline found in Resource 19-4.**

**Read chapter 21 in *Discovering the New Testament*.**

**Write in your journal. What thoughts or arguments have you gained from John that will be helpful to counter the false teachings you encounter?**

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## Lesson 20

# Revelation

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	A Summary of Revelation	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 19-4 Resource 20-1 Resource 20-2
0:35	The Nature of Apocalyptic Literature	Lecture	Resource 20-3 Resource 20-4 Resource 20-5
1:10	Revelation	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Collins, Adela Yarbro. *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984.

Drane, John. *Introducing the New Testament*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986, 443-52.

Elwell, Walter, and Robert Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998, 375-85.

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Third edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, 457-76.

**Harris, Stephen L.** *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction*. Fourth edition, New York: McGraw Hill, 2002, 395-419.

**Metzger, Bruce.** *Breaking the Code*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.

**Perkins, Pheme.** *Reading the New Testament*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988, 312-28.

**Tenney, Merrill C.** *New Testament Survey*. Revised by Walter M. Dunnnett. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992, 381-97.

**Varughese, Alexander, ed.** *Discovering the New Testament: Community and Faith*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005, ch. 21.

# Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

## Accountability

*Call on two to three students to give one insight they learned from reading Revelation in two translations.*

## Orientation

*Ask a leading question to get the students thinking about the topic.*

*How important is a person's view of his or her eternal destiny to his or her everyday life?*

*Are fear and hope legitimate "emotions" to live our lives by? Why or why not?*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

**At the end of this lesson, participants should**

- **gain an understanding of the Jewish apocalyptic literature**
- **know the purpose and main content for Revelation**

## Lesson Body

### Lecture/Discussion: A Summary of Revelation

(30 minutes)

Refer to Resource 19-4 that the students completed as homework.

Involve all the students in the discussion and exploration of the hermeneutical questions. Fill in information the students may have missed.

Write the responses on the overhead for all to see.

#### Who?

**Author:**  
The Apostle John

**Audience:**  
Seven churches in the province of Asia—Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea

#### When?

AD 95-96, during the reign of Emperor Domitian. This emperor launched the first official persecution of Christians. In the 60s Nero had instigated an organized persecution of Christians, but Domitian's persecution was empire-wide and intense.

#### Where?

**Author:** John received visions on the island of Patmos, but probably wrote from Ephesus.

**Audience:** Ephesus, Laodicea, Pergamum, Philadelphia, Sardis, Smyrna, Thyatira—Western Asia Minor

#### What?

“Apocalypsis Jesu Christus”: A Revelation of Jesus Christ. This is the first line of Revelation and Vernard Eller, in *The Most Revealing Book of the Bible: Making Sense Out of Revelation*, says

In his title John also has given us the primary principle for interpreting his book . . . his desire to proclaim and expound the person of Jesus Christ . . . John has given us a revelation of Jesus Christ which is to be harmonized with the larger revelation of Christ which is the New Testament itself—this, RATHER THAN as a revelation of future history to be correlated, now, with ‘signs,’ i.e., whatever can be observed in today’s world and in the political events of the twentieth century.

Consult an outline of Revelation in a commentary.

Refer to Resource 20-1 in the Student Guide.

(*Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974*), 12.

“Apocalypse” is a Greek work which means to uncover or unveil something hidden. It is a highly symbolic book which uses the language of Jewish apocalypticism to express its message. We know the meaning of some of the symbols and can guess at others, but the meaning of some of the symbolism has been lost over the centuries.

It is also a book of “apocalyptic” prophecy. As prophecy, the future is described in broad strokes, taking symbolic language from the prophecies of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah. As an “apocalyptic” book it focuses on the end times, when God will break into human history and change is forever. It talks of judgment as well as of preparation of God’s people for the suffering and persecution they will face.

## Why? Interpretations of Revelation

Oldest known interpretation (second to third century): Montanists announced the revelation that the heavenly Jerusalem would descend near a certain village. The movement began in Phrygia, just east of the seven cities of the apocalypse. This is called a literalist interpretation.

The classical theories of interpretation of Revelation include:

*Refer to Resource 20-2 in the Student Guide.*

- **Idealism:** This view interprets Revelation as a purely symbolic story of the ongoing struggle between good and evil. It is not interpreted as prophecy, but simply as a picture of the battle between good and evil. The story ends with the final triumph of God or Christianity over evil or paganism.
- **Preterism:** This view interprets Revelation as a message of hope for those persecuted by the Romans in the late first century. It does not see the book as prophecy and focuses on the situation of the probable audience for clues to the meaning of the book.
- **Historicism:** This view interprets Revelation as a symbolic description of Church history from the first century to Christ’s second coming and the Last Judgment. It divides the book and Church history into time periods. The explanation of the various symbols in terms of historical events is extremely varied. Historicists tend to be *postmillennialists*, or *amillennialists*. We will discuss these two terms in a few minutes.

- **Futurism:** This view interprets Revelation as dealing with future events, i.e., as a book of prophecy. This is a popular view in the 20th and 21st centuries and there are several versions of this view. Futurists tend to hold that Revelation describes the “Tribulation” which will be followed immediately by Jesus’ second coming and the last judgment. They tend to be:
  1. *premillennialists* and hold to pretribulationism (Christians are raptured before the tribulation)
  2. *mid-tribulationism* (Christians raptured in the middle of the tribulation)
  3. or *post-tribulationism* (Christians raptured after the tribulation)

*Adapted from ENT, 380-81.*

There are many versions and combinations of views. Some of these versions include:

### **Premillennial View**

This view dates back to the Early Church fathers, Papias, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, and Hippolytus. It holds that the book relates to the life of the Church.

*Ibid., ch. 19.*

The various persecutions are to be experienced by the believers up to the time of the end, when they will be delivered from the power of antichrist by the return of Christ. There will be a resurrection of believers at the time of Christ’s coming, followed by a millennium, and then a final judgment of unbelievers at the ‘great white throne.’ After that, a new heaven and new earth are instituted, and the eternal day dawns.

*Depicted in 20: 11-15.*

### **Amillennial View**

This view dates back to the early days of the Church and was defended by Origen and Augustine, and was also held by Luther and Calvin. It is probably the majority view throughout Church history.

It rejects the idea of a literal thousand-year reign of Christ after his return at the end of the age. It sees the millennium as being fulfilled in a spiritual fashion in the ministry of the church during this present age. The Book of Revelation is understood to be a description of the life of the persecuted church that will end with Christ’s second coming, at which time there will be a general resurrection of everyone, the saved and lost alike. The last judgment takes place and a new heaven and a new earth are inaugurated as the home of the believers.

The lost are cast into the lake of fire.

### **Postmillennial View**

This view dates back to the 18th century and

postulated that through the preaching of the gospel the world will gradually be won to Christ. In this way the idea of the millennium is fulfilled. The age of the church is the millennium, where righteousness and justice reign and good prevails throughout the earth. After the world has thus been made worthy of Christ, he returns in glory to the world he has saved . . .

It understands the events in Revelation to refer to John's time, and not future prophecies.

### **Dispensational Premillennial View**

This view is of relatively recent origin. It believes:

The first three chapters of Revelation deal with the church (or church age), after which the saints are raptured (removed) from the earth . . . The middle section of the books (ch. 4-19) deals with Israel on earth during a seven-year period of great tribulation that does not affect the church because it is in heaven with Christ. At the battle of Armageddon in chapter 19, Christ brings with him the raptured Christians and establishes a Jewish millennium in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. The Christian saints rule with Christ during this thousand-year period. At the end of this time, Satan is released from his confinement for a final rebellion and at the great white throne, he, and his angels, and all the lost are cast into the lake of fire. A new heaven and a new earth are created and we enter into our eternal state.

This theory comes in three versions:

- Pre-Tribulation Rapture (as described before)
- Mid-Tribulation Rapture (Church raptured in the middle of the seven years of Tribulation)
- Post-Tribulation Rapture (Church raptured after the seven years of Tribulation)

## **Lecture: The Nature of Apocalyptic Literature**

(35 minutes)

### **Modern Historical Critical Approach**

Refer to Resource 20-3 in the Student Guide.

In the 19th century Revelation came to be seen, not as a prophecy of the modern reader's future, but as a literary response to the Roman persecution of Christians near the end of the first century. Therefore, primarily a preterist view.

## **The Sociological Approaches**

These grew out of the historical critical approach and suggest ways of looking at the book. These developed in the late 20th century. These approaches are a quest for the *meaning* of the book. These different sociological models provide different viewpoints or ways to look at the scripture. They are not taken as definitive or absolute within themselves.

### **Elements of Social Crisis**

The conflict with the Jews, the mutual "hatred" or fear of the Jews and Christians toward the ruling Gentiles, and conflict over wealth are elements of social crisis which were the occasion for the writing of the book. So the meaning of the book from this perspective is that the multiplicity of conflict which existed in the lives of these Christians needed a literary outlet which would sort through what was happening in their lives and brings comfort and meaning to the situation.

### **Experience of Trauma**

The destruction of Jerusalem and the Christians becoming the scapegoats in Rome for Nero's burning of Rome all led to a feeling of "relative" deprivation. In other words, Christians were being deprived of their status, property, and lives in contrast to fellow non-Christian Jews and Gentiles. These conditions could also occasion the need for this book. So the purpose of the book from this perspective would be to provide a rationale for their situation and a future resolution which would bring justice.

### **A Call for Social Radicalism**

Because of the social crises and trauma, the danger of accommodation to avoid persecution, and to adapt to the demands of business associations and social relationships, became very real. So the purpose of Revelation is to call the Church to radical Christianity. There is no middle ground. It is all or nothing.

- John adapted oral and literary anti-Roman tradition: his use of Babylon as a symbol of Rome into a fierce image of the opposition between the servants of God and the servants of Rome.



- Chapters 3 and 13 advocate social, political, and economic withdrawal from the life of the cities. The mark on the forehead and the arm symbolize the opposite of the Jewish practice of wearing phylacteries.
- The extreme lifestyles of martyrdom and virginity are valued (14:1-5).

## Jewish Apocalyptic Symbolism

Refer to Resource 20-4 in the Student Guide.

The imagery drawn from the Jewish apocalyptic literature allows the feelings of fear and resentment in the people to be verbalized. So the purpose of the book from this perspective is to purge the emotions of the audience, in the sense that their feelings of fear and pity are intensified and given objective expression without fear of censorship by the Roman government.

1. Similarities between Revelation and Jewish apocalypticism
  - Use of images: Prophecies are clothed in the language of symbol.
  - The expansion of evil toward the end. The end is a cosmic catastrophe and a time of world judgment.
  - The division of time into periods.
2. Differences with Jewish apocalypticism
  - No attempt at pseudonymity. The author uses his own name and not the name of a famous person; The Assumption of Moses is the name of a Jewish apocalypse written in the first century AD and not by a person named "Moses."
  - Not as intense a pessimism in Revelation as we find in, for instance, The Assumption of Moses, where the enemies are totally annihilated and the victors gloat over the destruction of their enemies. Revelation has some of that, but it is quite muted compared to contemporary literature.
  - The prophesied event is not from the vantage point of the seer (John), but from the viewpoint of the exalted Christ.

*Bibliography for Sociological Approach:*

- Perkins, Reading the New Testament;
- Adela Yarbro Collins, Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984);

The sociological approaches would see the purpose of Revelation as a resolution of the tension aroused by a perceived social crisis. The primary focus of this resolution is hope.

Committed, born-again Christians have held all of these views. The Church of the Nazarene holds no particular view on the interpretation of Revelation,

- Bruce Metzger, *Breaking the Code* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999).

You may want to read Article XV from the Manual.

Refer to Resource 20-5 in the Student Guide.

except that:

- It is the inspired Word of God.
- It encourages us to remain totally committed to God through persecution, because Jesus is coming back soon and God has already won the war against evil.

## Theology of Revelation

### God

- Exists
- Created the universe
- Guides the course of history
- Has overcome evil
- Will bring a triumphal end in “his own good time.”

### Son of God

- Jesus is to return as “King of kings” and “Lord of lords.”
- Jesus is the Divine Being with the same divine qualities as God, the Father.
- Jesus is the “Lamb” who was slain and is the Savior of the World.

### People of God

- Individual churches have their strengths and weaknesses.
- As a whole they are victorious over the beast, his image, and his followers.
- They are referred to as: servants of God, a kingdom, priests, saints, the blameless, the called and chosen, the bride of the Lamb, the redeemed.
- Their job is to keep believing in the testimony of Jesus and the Word of God. They do this by being alert, keeping God’s commands, being pure, and doing the work God has asked them to do.

### Eschatology

- Personal eschatology (what happens at the end of our lives)
- Certainty of life after death
- Comfort of the believer in the presence of God and Christ
- Resurrection and reward of the saints
- Cosmic eschatology (what happens at the end of the world)
- Second coming of Christ
- Assignment of all to eternal reward or punishment
- Creation of a new heaven and a new earth

The symbolic language or code used in Revelation should caution us *not to be dogmatic* when it comes to the interpretation of Revelation. It is important to

realize the primary message of Revelation is HOPE. There are two things we know for sure: *Jesus is coming again and God triumphs over evil.*

## **Guided Discussion: Revelation**

(15 minutes)

*What do you think is the primary message of Revelation? Why?*

*What is the best way to teach or preach on the message(s) of Revelation?*

*How do you respond to people in the church who are caught up in reading popular fiction literature on end times and believe it to be true?*

*Do you have any questions about anything pertaining to this module on the New Testament?*

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

For the next five minutes write on this sentence starter:

*Collect the papers.*

The most important thing I will take with me from this module is . . .

## Assign Homework

*This is an optional assignment. You can require this reading or allow the students to decide.*

**Read the Epilogue in *Discovering the New Testament*.**

## Closing

*Close with a time of prayer and benediction for the students.*