

GOSPELS #1: THE SYNOPTICS READING GUIDE AND ASSIGNMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! We've arrived at the New Testament, and are very near completing our goal of gaining a good overview and understanding of the entire Bible.

This first session in the Gospels will focus on what are known as The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), so-called because they take the same look or view (syn-opsis) at the life and ministry of our Lord. Our second session in the Gospels will look at John's very distinct Gospel and then also at some larger gospel themes. In addition, we will begin to look into the Book of Acts and the biblical history of the early church.

For this first section, I'm going to ask you to read each of these three Gospels and then perform some exercises which will force you to think about the material

SYNOPTIC READING AND ASSIGNMENTS:

MARK

1. Read Mark's Gospel

Probably the best way to read Mark is to divide your reading into two sessions, 1:1-8:26 and 8:27-16:20.

A note on the last twelve verses of Mark: Manuscripts of ancient age and very good condition discovered in the 18th and 19th century do not contain these verses. Some scholars think this is evidence of their secondary (not original) nature; other scholars think the reason the newly discovered manuscripts were in such good shape is because church authorities recognized their inadequacies and laid them aside. Their disuse indicates their deficiency. I think it doesn't matter too much; and, even if the section is secondary, it has the ring of authenticity and was probably added by the Church through the direction of the Holy Spirit.

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Characterize Mark's literary style. (1 sentence or series of one word descriptions)
2. Comment on the relationship between Galilee and Jerusalem in this Gospel. (1 sentence)
3. One person has said that Mark's Gospel is "a passion (the cross) narrative with a long introduction". In what sense is this true? (2 sentences)
4. What do you think might be meant when someone speaks of "the Messianic secret" in Mark? (1 sentence)
5. Explain the importance of the following series of scriptures in Mark:

- a. 1:1; 8:29; 15:39 (1 sentence)
- b. 8:31; 9:31; 10:33 (1 sentence)
- c. 2:23; 6:8; 8:27, 9:33ff; 10:17 (1 sentence)

MATTHEW

1. Read Matthew's Gospel

Suggestion: Splitting it up into 1:1-4:16; 4:17-16:20 (4:16-7:29; 8:1-12:50; 13:1-16:20) and 16:21-28:20 (16:21-34; 21:1-25:46; 26:1-28:20)

ASSIGNMENT:

1. What is good about each of the following outlines? (1 sentence each)
Which one do you think fits Matthew the best? Why? (1 sentence)

A. Preamble – chs. 1-2
Book 1 – 3:1-7:28
Book 2 – 8:1-11:1
Book 3 – 11:2-13:53
Book 4 – 13:54-19:1
Book 5 – 19:2-26:1
Epilogue – chs. 26-28

B. 1:1-4:11 Prehistory and preparation
4:12-13:58 Jesus in Galilee
14:1-20:34 Jesus on the way to Jerusalem
21:1-28:20 Jesus in Jerusalem

C. 1:1-4:16 The Person of Jesus Messiah
4:17-16:20 The Proclamation of Jesus Messiah
16:21-28:20 The suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Messiah

2. If the only Gospel you ever had a chance to read was Matthew's, would you think you were supposed to keep the law or not? Why or why not? (2 sentences)
3. Is Matthew's Gospel specially directed to Jews or Gentiles or both?
4. Some people think Matthew's Gospel is the most "teachy" of the four. Do you agree? Why or why not? (2 sentences)

LUKE

1. Read Luke's Gospel

I think Luke is a little tougher to outline. But here's one way – a sort of geographic approach! – that might help in reading it:

1:1-4:13	Beginnings
4:14-9:50	Jesus in Galilee
9:51-13:30	Beginning of journey to Jerusalem
13:30-19:27	Resumption of journey to Jerusalem
19:28-24:53	Jesus in Jerusalem

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Why does Luke say he wrote down his Gospel? (1:1-4) What do these verses tell us about his intent (2 sentences)
2. What are some characteristics and themes in chs. 1-2? (1 sentence or list)
3. What is different about Luke's report in these passages? What might he be trying to do?

Lk. 3:21 – Mt. 3:16, Mk 3:9
Lk. 6:12 – Mk. 3:13
Lk. 9:29 – Mt. 17:1, Mk. 9:2

4. Do you think Luke has a unique emphasis on the poor, the outcast, and women? Why or why not? (1 sentence)
5. List four episodes or passages found only in Luke's Gospel.

BONUS (WELL, EXTRA) SYNOPTIC ASSIGNMENT:

List five characteristics of:

Mark's Gospel

Matthew's Gospel

Luke's Gospel

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE GOSPELS

I. Israel and Land

- c. 1250 B.C. Land
- c. 586 B.C. Exile 2 Kgs. 25, Josh. (rise of Torah in Babylon)
- c. 445 B.C. Restoration Ezra, Neh. (Ezra 7:1-10)

II. Intertestamental Period

- 333 B.C. The Greeks and Hellenism
 - Subtle but strong and lasting
 - Struggle between Judaism and Hellenism
- 323 B.C. Ptolomies (Egypt)
- 223 B.C. Seleucids (Syria)
 - Antiochus IV (175-163 B.C.)
 - Threatening the survival of Judaism
 - The Maccabees
- 142 B.C. The Hasmoneas (greater autonomy in total freedom)
- 63 B.C. The Romans
 - Spirit of Jewish nationalism in revolt
 - Herod the Great, 37-4 B.C. (some good, mostly bad)

III. Israel in the Time of Jesus

- Tetrarchy (Israel split three ways among Herod's sons)
 - Antipus (4 B.C. – 39 A.D.) Galilee and Peraea
 - Ms. 6:14-29; Lk. 9:9; Lk. 13:32
 - Philip (4 B.C. – 34 A.D.) Iturea and Trachonitis Lk. 3:1
 - Achelaus (4 B.C. – 6 A.D.) Judea, Samaria, Idumaea Mt. 2:22
- Governors or Procurators
 - Pontius Pilate 26-37 A.D.
 - corrupt, violent, contempt for Jews

IV. Israel after the Time of Jesus

- 66-70 A.D. Jewish War and Destruction at Jerusalem
- 90 A.D. Jamnia (rabbinical school)
 - tension between synagogue and Jewish Christianity

V. Conclusion

- Two big issues of the history and of Jesus' time:
 - Foreign domination
 - Cultural and religious compromise

THE GOSPELS #1 DISCUSSION

I KEY ELEMENTS ON FIRST CENTURY JUDAISM

A. APOCALYPTIC PROPHECY

1. Apocalyptic literature dates 165 – 90 AD, e.g., Psalms of Solomon (see last lecture)
2. Characteristics
 - a. Hidden secret revealed to writers regarding God's purposes
 - b. Symbolic language
3. Seeds found in Ezek. 38-39, Zech. 9-14, part of Joel, Is. 24-27. First and greatest = Daniel.
4. Aspects of its message
 - a. Unity of history
Out of apparent confusion emerges a systematic and predetermined order and purpose
 - b. Focus on the Last Things
 - c. Functioned as form of inspiration and hope
i.e., Hope in world to come, in sovereign intervention by God

“Pointed men away from this evil and troubled world to the great unfolding purpose of Almighty God, who held the history and destiny of the world in the hollow of his hand” – D.S. Russell

B. MESSIANIC EXPECTATIONS

1. Traditional or National Messiah (Davidic)
Begins with 2 Sam. 7 (cp. Mic. 5:2ff., Is 11:1ff., Jer. 23:5ff., etc.)
Not as popular during Persian period (following Exile).
Resurgence during the Maccabean and Hasmonean period.
Therefore, mentioned in apocalyptic and pseudopigraphal literature
e.g., Ps. of Sol. 17-18
VAST MAJORITY VIEW AT BEGINNING OF CHRISTIANITY
ERA

Therefore, Jesus had trouble!

cp. Mk 8:27ff

Concept of crucified messiah = stumbling block to the Jews (I Cor. 1:23ff).

“There is no evidence of bringing together of the concepts of The Suffering Servant and Davidic Messiah before the Christian era.” -- H.H. Rowley

2. Transcendent Messiah and Son of Man
Begins in Persian period following exile, although you get it at end of Isaiah.
cp. Dan 7:13ff. Entirely spiritualized concept of “Son of Man”
3. Fusion of two first seen on 2 Esdras 13 written around 90 A.D.

C. PEOPLE AND PARTIES

1. Population facts
1.5 to 2 million in Palestine
500,000 to 600,000 Jews, mostly in Judea
Population of Jerusalem = 25,000 to 95,000
Galilee predominantly non-Jewish Is. 9:1/Mt. 4:15
In the days of Herod the Great 6,000 Pharisees
2. Pharisees
“The Pharisees are a group of Jews who have the reputation of excelling the rest of the nation in the observance of religion and as exact exponents of the Law.”
-- Josephus Jewish Wars I.v.2

Hasidim heritage, conservative, wait patiently for kingdom, doctrinal differences with Sadducees.

Key characterization = Take temple rites and apply to everyday life.

Mixed review of Pharisaism in New Testament

Sadducees

Upper stratum, urban, power block centered around Jerusalem/Temple
No following among masses

Essenes

Sectarian ascetics

Zealots

Pharisaic beliefs with Maccabean spirit
Active up to and through Jewish war of 66-70 A.D.

“Herodians”

Mentioned twice as enemies of Jesus Mk. 3:6, Mt. 22:16/Mk. 12:13

A dozen theories as to who they were
Appear to be Jews who supported Herodian rule

Scribes

Beginning in Ezra 7
New Testament presents them as experts in sacred Mosaic Law

Held in high esteem by the people
“Master”, “Lawyer”, Rabbi”, Teacher”, “teachers of the Law”, etc.
Made living by other means (e.g., Paul tentmaker)

Most Pharisees, but not all

Duties:

1. Theoretic development of the Law itself
2. Teaching of law to pupils
3. Practical administration of law in pronouncing legal decisions
This is “binding and loosing”

Was Jesus a rabbi/scribe?

Yes

No

3. Common People

95% of population belonged to none of these parties!

New Testament = Those who through indifference or ignorance failed to observe the Law of Moses in all its ramifications

Note pharisaic contempt for the people. Avoiding contact with these irreligious and immoral types. Would not eat with one or allow children to marry one. Jesus was friendly with this class and freely mixed with them.

D. TEMPLE AND SYNAGOGUE

1. Christian inheritance of Jewish temple and synagogue.

Ac. 24:5 Paul “a ringleader of the SECT of Nazarenes”

Ac. 2:42-27 Suggests continuance in temple services

Ac. 6:7 Many priests added to church

2. Temple

For Jews, reverence, awe, symbolism

Jesus’ double attitude

Valued it for communion with God and prayer

Yet He embodied new order “greater than the temple”

Disciples take same double attitude

3. Synagogue

Origin probably in Babylonian period

Importance for Jesus and Paul

Synagogue worship

Praise

Prayers

Instruction

II. SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

How do you account for the similarities and differences in the four Gospels?

Classic “solution”, i.e., guess:

Mark first.

Matthew used Mark, “Q” (German Quelle, “Source”) and “M” material.

Luke used Mark, “Q” and “L” material.

John, obviously different approach to organizing and telling the story.

III. MARK

A. AUTHORSHIP

Anonymous with traditional superscription “kata Markon”
Papias tradition (found in Eusebius)

B. WHERE WRITTEN?

Don’t know, can look at internal indicators

e.g., Explanation of Palestinian customs 7:3, 14:12, 15:42 but these could
be explained by design for wider use

C. WHEN WRITTEN?

Same as above, most guess between 60-70 A.D.

e.g., Emphasis on suffering and persecution may suggest Neroian
persecution, after the 64 A.D. fire (?)

Mk. 13 shows signs of closeness of Jewish War (66-70 A.D.) (?) etc.

D. TEXTUAL ISSUES

1:1, 16:9-20

E. LITERARY STYLE

Vividness, Semitic style/popular style, rapid dramatic pace

Yet literary care

e.g., Makes preparation in advance for future events e.g., 3:9 for 4:1ff.

e.g., Evokes an impression of a more comprehensive event by frequently
inserting summary accounts between individual narratives 1:32-34, 3:7-
12, 6:53-56

F. OVERALL STRUCTURE AND MOVEMENT

1. Geographical/Theological Structure
Gentile Mission (Galilee) vs. Jewish Resistance (Jerusalem)

GALILEE

Where Jesus is from and where He performed His ministry
In Mark's Gospel it becomes the place of revelational activity and point of departure for the Gentile Mission.

JERUSALEM

Obviously important as place where Jesus is to die.
But also the origin of Jewish hardness toward and resistance of Jesus
3:22, 7:1, 10:33, 11:18

2. Christological Structure
1:1, 8:29, 15:39 (The Three Confessions)
All before 8:29 leads up to this confession; all that follows it clarifies exactly what Messiahship means, culminating in the confession of 15:39.

3. Pilgrimmatic Structure (Emphasis on Cross)

"The Gospel of Mark is a passion narrative with a long introduction." -- M. Kahler

Shadow as early as 2:20 and 3:6, perhaps even 1:14, the arrest of John.

Threefold Passion prediction 8:31 (immediately after first confession), 9:31, 10:33ff.

Allusion, veiled (9:12) and explicit (10:45)

And, the disciples must follow!

Note Mark's use of "on the way" (Gk. hodos)

Look at Mk. 10:32-38 for these themes

G. THEOLOGICAL THEMES

1. The Humanity of Jesus (Synoptic as well as Markan)
2. The Importance of faith (Again, Synoptic as well as Markan)
Mark is calling men to faith
Bulk of miracle stories = Jesus worked most successfully only when expectant faith was present 5:25-34, 7:24-30, 9:14-29
Unique Markan statement in 6:5-6.

3. Cost of Discipleship
Following Jesus in “the way”, a metaphor for Mark 2:23, 6:8, 8:27, 9:33, 10:17, esp. 10:32!
 4. Incognito Messiahship
Not perceived by officials in Jerusalem (3:20-30)
Hidden from inattentive onlooker
Misunderstood by disciples (8:27-9:1)
- Revealed to/understood by three unlikely characters:
- a. Syro-Phoenician woman 7:24-30
 - b. The woman who anoints him at Bethany 14:1-9 (anointed for crucifixion)
 - c. Gentile soldier 15:39
- Messianic Secret:
Commands to silence: 1:34, 44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:30; 8:26, 30; 9:9
Private instruction of disciples: 7:17ff.; 9:30ff.; 10:10
Hidden meaning of parables: 4:10ff., 34b

IV. MATTHEW

A. SOURCES (Traditional view)

Roughly ½ runs parallel with Mark, much verbatim, although patterns of alteration
Roughly ¼ runs parallel with Luke (Q?)
Roughly ¼ special material (M)

B. AUTHORSHIP

Strictly: anonymous
Traditionally: “kata Mathion”
cp. Papias (In Eusebius) Semitic writing (Heb. or Aramaic) by apostle Matthew.

C. DATING

External Evidence Mark (65 A.D.)...Ignatius (115 A.D.)
Internal Evidence

D. SETTING

E. STRUCTURE

Bacon 1930, Mosaic motif
Kummel Criticism of Bacon, more general approach

“must suffice us to say Matthew has essentially taken over Mark’s framework and employed it as the base for his own presentation.”

Kingsbury

Note similarity of 4:17 and 16:21

1. Name of Jesus
2. Announces new phase of activity

The Person of Jesus Messiah 1:1-4:16

The Proclamation of Jesus Messiah 4:17-16:20

The Suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Messiah 16:21-28:20

F. GENERAL FEATURES AND CHARACTERISTICS

1. Jewish/Gentile Tension or Universalism/Particularism

2. View of the Law

Did Matthew’s “church” keep the Law?
cp. 5:17 (M material)

Exercise: Look at Mt. 12:1-8 in context and in synopsis, Addendum #2

Upshot = Jesus as supreme Interpreter of the Law

3. Idealized and Exalted Jesus

Mk. 1:41/Mt. 8:3, Mk. 10:14/Mt. 19:14 e.g., “Lord” in the Stilling of the Storm 14:28

(Note the inclusion in your material of the classic article, “The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew”, by Gunter Bornkamm, Addendum #3)

4. Idealized Disciples

Blame or evidence of failure eliminated Mk. 4:13/Mt. 13:16ff.,
Mk. 6:52/Mt. 14:33

5. Teaching

Grouping of material in catechetical sections, etc.

6. Church Discipline

e.g., Divorce teaching Chapter 19
e.g., “binding and loosing”

7. Ethical Emphasis

Sermon on the Mount

Sheep and Goats

Use of word “righteousness” (cp. with Pauline usage)

The “exceeding righteousness”

8. Fulfillment Formulas (Salvation History)

G. CONCLUSION

V. LUKE (Aims and Themes Working Form The Prologue, 1:1-4)

A. AIMS

1. Literary/Source
 - Review Three Stages
 - Note connection with Ac. 1:1
 - Literary quality of prologue
2. Historical
 - Obviously means to be taken seriously as historian
3. Apologetic
 - Historical emphasis serves apologetic interest
 - Sets out to establish innocence of:
 - Jesus
 - cp. 23:41 Penitent thief's testimony (L material)
 - cp. 23:47/Mk. 15:39 Centurion's remark changed to emphasize Jesus' innocence.
 - Paul and others
 - Ac. 13-28 Charges against apostle often cast on political terms. Luke correcting misconceptions re: Christian movement, defending its legitimacy as a universal religion.
4. Evangelistic/Pastoral
 - cp. The "fulfillment" motif and pastoral concerns
 - Theophilus a bit like Appolos (Ac. 18:25). Knowledge of Christ event needed complimenting, perhaps even correction – this no doubt true of Luke's larger audience.
 - e.g., Treatment of repentance in Lk. 3

B. THEMES

1. Fulfillment
 - cp. Prologue
 - cp. chs. 1-2

Fulfillment of Old Testament promises has taken place in the person and life of Jesus Christ 4:21(!), 7:18ff., 10:23ff., 22:37

2. Divine Intervention
cp. chs 1-2 Inundated with supernatural elements
cp. “must” 22:37 (!), 24:44 (!), also 4:43, 9:22, 17:25, 24:7
Book of Acts same feeling
3. Salvation
Chs. 1-2
“Savior” and “salvation” used 8 times in Luke, 9 times in Acts
Signs of salvation = joy, table fellowship with poor and outcast, etc.
4. “Witness”
Prologue
Luke himself a witness, so are Old Testament prophets (Ac. 10:43), Holy Spirit (ac. 5:32), the disciples (Lk. 24:48, Ac. 1:8,22, 2:32, etc.) and Paul.
5. Universal Nature of Salvation
cp. Redaction of 3:6
Jesus’ appeal to women, sinners, outcasts, Samaritans, poor
Much L. material geared this direction
The universalism of Acts is obvious as well
6. Prayer and the Spirit (A pastoral concern)
7. The Spirit and witness unto world mission
Lk. 4:18, 24:48-49, Ac. 1:8, 13:1ff., etc.

GOSPELS #2

READING GUIDE AND ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read John's Gospel

OUTLINE:

1:1-18 Prologue

An early Christian hymn (?) adapted to serve as an overture to the Gospel narrative of the career of the incarnate Word.

1:19-12:50 The Book of Signs: Jesus' Work in the World

In signs and word, Jesus shows Himself to His own people as the revelation of the Father, only to be rejected.

13:1-20:31 The Book of Glory: Jesus' Return to His Father

To those who accept Him, Jesus shows His glory by returning to the Father in the "hour" of His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Fully glorified, he communicates the Spirit of "life".

21:1-25 Epilogue (Supplement. 20:30-31 clearly the end of the book)

Added (?) account of post-resurrection appearances in Galilee.

ASSIGNMENT:

1. List five ways in which John's Gospel seems to differ from the other three.
2. List the ten most important words in John's Gospel.
3. Identify five contrasts used in John. *Example: Light vs. Darkness*
4. Locate and identify the "I AM" statements of Jesus recorded in John.
5. List the seven "signs" recorded in the first half of John. In one sentence, what seems to be the purpose of the signs?
6. Why did John write his Gospel? (1 sentence)

2. Read Acts

OUTLINE:

"The Spread of The Gospel" (Playing off of 1:8)

1:1-14 Prologue

1:15-8:3 Jerusalem

8:4-11:18 Samaria

11:19-15:35 Antioch and Outward

15:36-19:20 Aegean Lands

19:21-28:31 From Jerusalem to Rome

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Speculate three reasons why Luke wrote the Book of Acts. (1 sentence each)

2. List five messages Luke wishes to convey through Acts. (1 sentence each)
3. List five characteristics of the early Jerusalem church. Include chapter and verse.
4. List seven functions of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts. Include chapter and verse. *Examples: He empowers for service (1:8)*
He speaks to people (10:19)
5. List five reasons you dislike creating lists. (☺ ☺ ☺) Definitely include chapter and verse!
6. Create a list (yes!) of the cities Paul visits in his first, second, and third missionary journeys. Include chapter and verse, and place a star by the cities for which we have remaining Pauline correspondence (e.g., Corinth).
 - A. First Missionary Journey 13:4-14:28
 - B. Second Missionary Journey 15:36-18:22
 - C. Third Missionary Journey 18:23-21:14

Note: It would be helpful to use a Pauline-oriented map from a Bible atlas so that you see where these cities are.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN DISCUSSION

1. Brainstorm contrast between John and the Synoptics

2. Structure

OUTLINE:

1:1-18 Prologue

An early Christian hymn (?) adapted to serve as an overturn to the Gospel narrative of the career of the incarnate Word.

1:19-12:50 The Book of Signs: Jesus' Work in the World

In sign and word, Jesus shows Himself to His own people as the revelation of the Father, only to be rejected.

13:1-20:31 The Book of Glory: Jesus' Return to His Father

To those who accept Him, Jesus shows His glory by returning to the Father in the "hour" of His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Fully glorified, He communicates the Spirit of "life".

21:1-25 Epilogue (supplement. 20:30-31 clearly the end of the book)

Added (?) account of post-resurrection appearances in Galilee.

Look especially at 12:23ff and 13:1.

3. Purpose. (20:30-31)

4. Important concepts in Johannine Theology.

A. The Contrasts of John

Two Worlds
Darkness and Light
Flesh and Spirit

B. The Person of Jesus

Logos (Word)
"I Am..."

C. Eternal Life (zoe vs bios)

D. Knowledge/"knowing"

E. "Truth"

F. Faith

- G. Sacraments?
- H. Holy Spirit
- I. Eschatology (Future AND Present)

THE FOUR GOSPELS: SUMMARY (From G.E. Ladd)
i.e., What do the Gospels teach us? What is their message?

1. The Need for the Kingdom
 - Explicit sayings
 - More obviously, the picture of the human condition

2. The Kingdom of God
 - A. What it is
 - B. Preparation for
 - C. Receiving the Kingdom
 - D. Present and Future
 - E. The “mystery” of the Kingdom
 - F. Conduct of the Kingdom
 - G. The effects of the Kingdom

3. The God of the Kingdom
 - A. The Seeking God
 - Initiating
 - Mk. 2:15-17
 - Three parables of Lk. 15
 - Concern for sinner was something new
 - B. The Inviting God
 - Banquet motif
 - Jesus’ Johannine invitations
 - C. The Fatherly God
 - “Abba”
 - D. The Judging God
 - Mt. 3
 - Hell

4. The King of the Kingdom
 - A. Who He is
 1. Human Being
 2. “The Christ”...but a different kind than expected
 3. Titles of Jesus
 - Christ, Son of Man, Son of God, Lord
 4. He was God
 - Forgiveness
 - Especially in John
 - B. What He did

1. Manifested the Kingdom of God
 2. Died, rose from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the Father.
 3. The Meaning of the Cross
 - Mk. 10:45 Ransom
 - Last Supper
 - His death was,
 - Messianic “must”, it was deliberate
 - Atoning ransom
 - Substitutionary Greek anti, “instead of” Mk. 10:45
 - Sacrificial Is. 53
 - Experiential i.e., real
5. Faith
- A. Humankind is weak in faith
 - B. But you only need a little faith
 - C. Faith is,
 - Birthed by hearing
 - Based on a knowledge of who Jesus is
 - Active
 - Persistent
 - Effective/powerful

THE BOOK OF ACTS

1. The Purpose of Acts i.e., Luke as,
 - Cp. Lk 1:1-4, Ac. 1:1
 - A. Church Historian
 - B. Theologian
 - C. Evangelist/Apologet
 - D. Pastor
2. The Structure of Acts (1:8)
 - Jerusalem and Judea
 - Samaria
 - End of the earth, ultimately with Paul preaching in Rome
3. The Acts theme: The continuing ministry of Jesus Christ through His Church by the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - Note the prominent place of the Person of the Holy Spirit.
4. The Early Jerusalem Church
 - Pentecost
 - Snapshots of early church life

PAUL IN ACTION

1. PAUL IN CONTEXT

- A. Acts 1-2
- B. Acts 2-8 Life – Jerusalem church
 - 1) A sect of Judaism
 - 2:46, 47; 3:1 “in the temple”
 - 6:1 makeup of the church was all Jews
 - 8:4ff Samaria
 - 8:26ff Even Ethiopian eunuch a proselyte
 - 2) Yet, persecution
 - 4:1ff, 5:17ff, 7:1ff
 - 6:9-15 Significance of Stephen

In this context, we first meet Saul or Paul (7:58, 8:1)

2. PAUL THE MAN – Acts 22:3, 25-29

- A. “Jew” – cp. Phil. 3:6
- B. Tarsus – “no mean city” (cultured, prosperous)
- C. “Citizen” – one of the few who would have constituted a social elite.
- D. Jerusalem/Gamaliel
 - Gamaliel was a leading Pharisaic teacher of his day.
 - Paul would have entered the school in his teens.
- E. Pharisee – cp. Phil. 3:5
 - 1) Arose in reaction to Hellenism
 - 2) Devotion to law, especially Sabbath and dietary laws
 - 3) Zeal! Gal. 1:14, Phil. 3:6

Note, then, these influences and familiarities: Pharisaic, Hellenistic, Roman.

3. PAUL THE PERSECUTOR

- A. References: 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-2.
- B. Motivation
 - 1) Phil. 3:6 – zeal for the law and ancestral traditions cp. Acts 6:14
 - 2) In the eyes of both Stephen and Paul alike, the new order was not compatible with the old.
 - 3) If the Messiah came, the law might be superseded; but Jesus of Nazareth could not be the Messiah:
 - a. Unlikely background and character
 - b. He was crucified (cp., Deut. 21:23)

4. PAUL THE CONVERT – Acts 9:1-19

Note the difficulty in distinguishing between his “conversion” and his commission.

5. PAUL THE CHRISTIAN – Gal. 1:10-24

- A. Arabian journey – 1:16
Why? How long?
- B. Jerusalem visit – 1:18-19
Received tradition – cp. 1 Cor. 11:23; 15:3-8
Cp. Acts 9:23-29
- C. Syria and Cilicia – 1:21
Cp. Acts 9:30
- D. Antioch – Acts 11:19-26; cp. Acts 11:19 with 8:1
Time between return to Tarsus and coming to Antioch largely unchronicled.

6. PAUL THE APOSTLE – Acts 13:1-4a

First Missionary Journey – Acts 13:1-14:28

- 13:4 Seleucia
- 13:4 Cyprus
Salamis
- 13:6-13 Paphos
- 13:13 Pamphylia
- 13:14 Perga
- 13:14-32 ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA (GALATIA)
- 14:1-5 Iconium
- 14:6-20 Lystra and Derbe
- 14:21-25 Return and confirmation of churches
- 14:26-28 Report to home church of Antioch

Second Missionary Journey – Acts 15:38-18:22

- 15:41 Syria and Cilicia (confirmation)
- 16:1-5 Derbe and Lystra
- 16:6-7 Phrygia, Galatia
- 16:9 Macedonian vision
- 16:12-14 PHILIPPI
- 17:1-9 THESSALONICA
- 17:10-15 Berea
- 17:16-34 Athens
- 18:1-18 CORINTH
- 18:19-22 EPHESUS, Caesarea, Antioch

Third Missionary Journey – Acts 18:23-21:14

- 18:23 Galatia to Phrygia (strengthening)
- 19:1-41 EPHESUS

20:1-5 Macedonia (exhortation)
20:6-12 Troas
20:13-38 to Miletus
21:1-14 Ptolemias and Caesarea

From Jerusalem to Rome – Acts 21:15-28:31

Rom. 15:23 The nature of Paul's task as he conceived of it.

PAULINE LETTERS READING GUIDE AND ASSIGNMENTS

INTRODUCTION:

Our purpose is to read the writings of Paul and reflect upon them in preparation for the notes that follow. We will use the letters themselves to accomplish this.

For each of the letters I will ask you to read the letter and sometimes do an exercise or two.

Because it will more evenly divide our remaining reading and because they are distinct among the Pauline letters, we will leave the so-called “pastoral epistles” of Paul (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon) for next time, leaving for our final session those and the so-called “General letters” (Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter as well as Revelation and the letters of John).

THESSALONICA

This is a neat little letter illuminating Paul’s relationship with a new group of believers and giving fundamental apostolic instruction on Christian life. 2 Thessalonians can be read as a follow up to it.

1. Review Ac. 17:1-10 account of planting of the church and read 1 Thessalonians.

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Using Ac. 17:1ff and 1 Thessalonians only and citing chapter and verse after each phrase or sentence:
 - a. Reconstruct the order of events that led up to the writing of 1 Thess. (7 sentence limit)
 - b. Prior to sending Timothy, what were Paul’s concerns? (4 sentence limit)
 - c. What did Timothy tell Paul and how did Paul respond? (2 sentences)
 - d. Based on the time indicated in Ac. 17:1ff and I Thess., how old in the Lord do you think the Thessalonian believers might have been when they got this letter?
2. Read 2 Thessalonians.

CORINTH

1. Review Ac. 18:1-17 and read 1 Corinthians.

This is one of the most valuable of Paul's letters, not only for the light it throws upon the character and mind of the apostle and for its vigorous presentation of the gospel, but also for the vivid pictures it brings us of the actual life of a particular local church at the middle of the first century.

The church at Corinth was situated near the center of the Roman province of Achaia in one of the most important cities of Greece. Paul had himself brought the Christian message to Corinth and it was through his work that the church had been established there (Acts 18.1-11). One gathers from the two letters to the Corinthians that Paul's subsequent relations with this church were disturbed from time to time by doubts and suspicions on both sides, but that for no church did Paul feel a deeper affection. It is clear that he is writing from Ephesus (16.8; compare Acts 19.1-40), just across the Aegean Sea from Corinth. The allusion to the "contribution for the saints" (16.1; compare 2 Cor.9.1-2) shows that the letter must be dated earlier than Romans, but hardly more than two or three years earlier (see introduction to Romans).

The whole letter is concerned directly or indirectly with doctrinal and ethical problems that were disturbing the Corinthian church. In settling these local problems Paul has bequeathed to the Church universal some of the most exalted chapters in his correspondence, such as the hymn on Christian love (ch.13) and the teaching on the resurrection (ch.15).

New Oxford Annotated Bible, New York, Oxford University Press 1973

ASSIGNMENT:

1. List 8 pastoral problems or issues addressed in 1 Corinthians. Include reference to section in which it is discussed - e.g., Divisions 1:1-4:21
 2. List some characteristics of the Corinthian congregation that Paul wanted them to change.
2. Read 2 Corinthians.

Relations between Paul and the Corinthian church had deteriorated during the period after 1 Corinthians was written. Having made a "painful visit" to the church (2:1), the apostle refrained from making a second visit because he had reason to believe that it too would be painful. Instead, he had written a severe letter (not known to us) "out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears" (2:4) and sent it to Corinth, presumably by Titus, one of his fellow-workers. So anxious was he about the effects of this letter that he found it impossible to wait for Titus' return. He left Ephesus, hoping to meet Titus in Troas. Disappointed there, he went on to Macedonia (2:12-13), where Titus rejoined him, bringing a most reassuring report on the attitude of the Corinthian church toward him (7:13-16). In relief and gratitude, Paul wrote this letter. In it he takes occasion to speak at length about the offering for the church at Jerusalem (8.1-9.15), which was now almost complete.

Chapters 10 to 13 constitute a vigorous defense of Paul and his work and are written in a tone so different from that of Chapters 1 to 9 that many scholars believe they are a fragment of another letter written to Corinth at some other time.

Because so much of 2 Corinthians is a response to the words and feelings of others, which are not recorded in the letter, it is difficult sometimes to follow the apostle's argument. Its pages preserve much, however, that illuminates Paul's own life, ministry, and the concern which he felt for the churches he had established (4:5; 5:20; 6:1-10; 11:22-33; 12:2-10).

New Oxford Annotated Bible, New York, Oxford University Press 1973

Division According to Contents:

- 1:1-11: Address/greeting and Thanksgiving, stressing Paul's sufferings
- 1:12-7:16: Part I: Paul's relations to the Corinthian Christians
 - (a) 1:12-2:13: His deferred visit and the "tearful" letter
 - (b) 2:14-7:16: His ministry (interruption: 6:14-7:1)
- 8:1-9:15: Part II: Collection for the church of Jerusalem
- 10:1-13:10: Part III: Paul's response to challenges to his apostolic authority
- 13:11-13: Concluding greetings, blessings.

*The RSV divides Greek 13:12 into two verses, so that the final verse (13:13) becomes 13:14.

An Introduction to the New Testament, Raymond E Brown, Doubleday Publishing Co. 1997

ASSIGNMENT:

1. What was happening in Corinth that moved Paul to write 2 Corinthians?

GALATIANS

1. Read Galatians.

Often called the Magna Charta of Christian liberty, the Letter to the Galatians deals with the question whether a Gentile must become a Jew before he can become a Christian. Certain Judaizing teachers had infiltrated the churches of Galatia in central Asia Minor, which Paul had previously founded (Acts 16.6), declaring that in addition to having faith in Jesus Christ a Christian was obligated to keep the Mosaic law. Paul insists, on the contrary, that a man becomes right with God only by faith in Christ and not by the performance of good works, ritual observances, and the like (2:16; 3:24-25; 5:1; 6:12-15).

So serious was the crisis in Galatia that Paul dispenses with his customary expression of thanksgiving and commendation, and plunges directly into a vigorous defense of his apostolic authority and the validity of his teaching (1:1-2:21). The central part of the letter is an exposition

of the doctrine of justification by faith alone (3.10-4.31). Lest some should imagine that this doctrine leads to a life of indifference to the moral code, Paul concludes with certain practical applications of his teaching (5:1-6:18).

The importance of this brief letter is hard to overestimate. Written perhaps about A.D. 55 during Paul's third missionary journey, it gives many autobiographical details of the apostle's earlier life and evangelistic activity. Here are set forth, with impassioned eloquence, the true function of the Mosaic law and its relation to God's grace manifested in Christ. The declaration of the principles reiterated in these six chapters made Christianity a world religion instead of a Jewish sect.

New Oxford Annotated Bible, New York, Oxford University Press 1973

Division According to Contents (and Rhetorical Analysis):

- 1:1-10: Introduction
1:1-5: Opening Formula (already defensive in describing apostleship and what Christ has done)
1:6-10: Exordium or introduction (astonishment in place of Thanksgiving), describing the issue, the adversaries and the seriousness of the case (by anathemas)
- 1:11-2:14: Paul narrates his preaching career to defend his thesis about his gospel stated in 1:11-12
- 2:15-21: Debate with opponents, contrasting his gospel with theirs: justified by faith in Christ, not by observing the Law; Christians live by faith
- 3:1-4:31: Proofs for justification by faith not by the Law: six arguments drawn from the past experiences of the Galatians and from scripture, particularly centered on Abraham
- 5:1-6:10 Ethical exhortation (paraenesis) for them to preserve their freedom, and walk according to the spirit
- 6:11-18: Conclusion: authenticating postscript in Paul's own hand (as distinct from scribe who took dictation); recapitulation of attitude toward circumcision; benediction.

An Introduction to the New Testament, Raymond E Brown, Doubleday Publishing Co. 1997

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Who were the "troublers"? (1:7) (2 sentences, cite chapter and verses to justify your speculation.)
2. List some of the things they taught, citing chapter and verse.

ROMANS

1. Read Romans. When reading Romans it is easy to get lost in the details. Try to avoid that. Here is a simplified outline that should help you follow the larger argument:

OUTLINE:

1:1-7 The Gospel of God

1:18-3:20 The Wrath of God

Concludes all under judgment – the idolater, the do-gooder, and the religious person.

3:21-5:21 The Righteousness of God, or The Way of Righteousness Through Faith

Though none will become righteous through works, all can become righteous through faith in Jesus Christ, because if they will believe, God will impute that faith to them as righteousness. The consequences of justification by faith (5:1-11) and the analogy/contrast of Adam and Christ conclude the section.

6:1-8:11 Sanctification i.e., How a justified person then can live.

Our inclusion in the death and resurrection of Jesus makes it possible for God to empower us through our relationship to Jesus by the Holy Spirit to walk free from sin's power on a practical level. Having been freed positionally through faith in His blood, now we are freed practically through our historical inclusion in the Cross and Resurrection, so that now we are free to follow the Holy Spirit.

Problem #1: Sins

Solution: Blood

Means: Faith

Result: Peace with God, joy, etc.

Problem #2: Sin (its power)

Solution: Cross/Resurrection and Holy Spirit

Means: Knowledge/Faith/Obedience

Results: Free from power of sin at practical level as I walk in Spirit.

8:12-37 God's Eternal Plan/Purpose

9:1-11:36 Explanation of God's Dealings with the Jews

12:1-15:13 Practical Instruction

15:14-16:27 Concluding items

PHILIPPIANS

1. Read Philippians.

ASSIGNMENT:

1. List three problems in the Philippian church being addressed by Paul in this letter. Cite chapter and verse references.

PHILEMON

1. Read the letter.

A personal letter from Paul to Philemon regarding Philemon's runaway slave, Onesimus.

COLOSSIANS

1. Read the letter.

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Explain a) the circumstances which led to Paul's writing of this letter and b) his concerns for this group of believers (3-4 sentences).

EPHESIANS

Like Romans, Ephesians is a book which can get you lost in detail. The simplest way to think about the letter is to conceive of it as having two sections: A positional section 1:1-3:21 and a practical one 4:1-6:23. Watchman Nee's old book on Ephesians also offers a simple outline: "Sit, Walk, Stand" referring to the three sections 1:1-3:21, 4:1-6:9, 6:10ff.

1. Read Ephesians.

ASSIGNMENT:

1. List and explain 5 or 6 things that strike you when you read this apostolic letter.

PAULS' LIFE, MINISTRY AND TEACHING DISCUSSION

I. THE LIFE OF PAUL: BACKGROUND AND CONVERSION/CALL

A. GENERAL BACKGROUND AND SKETCH OF EARLY MINISTRY (See handout, "Paul in Action")

B. PAUL'S APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY

Paul derived his apostolic authority from several sources, but most significantly from supernatural revelation in his conversion/call and beyond

- ▶ He appealed to his behavior, e.g, 1 Thess. or 1 Cor. 9
- ▶ He appealed to his miracle ministry, 2 Cor. 12: "the signs of the apostle"
- ▶ He appealed, most of all, to revelation
e.g., 1 Cor. 9 "Have I not seen the Lord?"
e.g., Gal. 1-2, esp. 1:15 "I did not receive this gospel from human beings but from God by revelation"!

THE MINISTRY OF PAUL: APOSTOLIC AND PASTORAL

A. TASK

1. Generally: Preach and teach Christ to the Gentiles
2. Specifically: Carry out an "apostolic" ministry to the Gentile lands. Cp. Rom. 15:23ff

B. METHODOLOGY

1. Travel main highways to larger cities
2. Supported himself and his band through tentmaking
Later on, there were apparently modest supplementary (?) support gifts sent to him from churches he founded (e.g., Phil. 4, "no other church gave to me")
3. Jews first, then Gentiles Ac. 13:14-52, esp. 44-52, cp. Rom 1:16
4. Disputing and reasoning cp. Ac. 17:2-3
5. Church planting (modest)
6. Nurture of local fellowships through:

- a. Prayer, mentioned in almost every letter
- b. Visits, e.g., “confirming/strengthening” Ac. 14:21-23 Also evidence in letters
- c. Letters
- d. Networks of people
 - ▶ His band
 - ▶ Local people

C. PRINCIPLES

1. Incarnation 1 Cor. 9:19-23 “becoming” all things to all men

Examples:

Circumcision of Timothy

Vows for Jews in Jerusalem Ac. 21:17ff

Athens speech in Ac. 18

Note the complete dominance of the goal

2. Self-supporting in evangelism
Perhaps even in pastoring, cp. Ac. 20 counsel to Ephesian elders regarding work
3. Leadership of the Holy Spirit
Call (Ac. 13:1-2)
AND Direction (Ac. 16:7-8)
Notice the marriage of preparation and immediacy, the macro and micro of Holy Spirit leadership.
4. Submission to local (Ac. 13-14) and universal (Gal. 2:2) church
5. Example
e.g., Ac. 20, 1 Thess.
Follow me not just “as” but LIKE I follow Christ. Be “imitators” of me (Gk. mimeo, English “mimic”)

D. PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF PAULS’ APOSTOLIC AND PASTORAL MINISTRY

1. Size and Stature
 - ▶ How large were these churches he founded? e.g., Thessalonica
 - ▶ How well known were Paul and these fellowships?
2. Pastoral Nature of his Relationship with the Various Churches
Examples:
Romans – Diplomacy
1 and 2 Cor. – Allegiance

Galatians – Allegiance, perhaps even apostasy
Colossians – “I’m in agony...” (2:1) Note the precariousness of the enterprise
1 Thess. – Relational

Note the frequent problem of competing leaders/groups. Corinthians, Galatians, Colossians, perhaps Philippians

3. Maturity Level of the Churches
A balanced approach to the idealization of the early church.
 - ▶ On the one hand, extraordinary maturity/understanding, e.g., Thessalonica
 - ▶ On the other hand, very ordinary immaturity, e.g., Eph. 4-6, e.g., Corinth

III. THE TEACHING OF PAUL: THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

A. FACTORS THAT MAY HAVE INFLUENCED PAUL’S THEOLOGY:

1. Pharisaic Rabbinism
2. Hellenism
3. Revelation
4. Early Tradition
Did not shy from this kind of language cp. “customs of the churches” 1 Cor. 11:16; 1 Cor. 11:2, 23; 15:1,3; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6; Gal 1:9,12; Phil 4:9, Rom. 6:17
5. Apostolic Experience

B. ORIENTATION TO THEOLOGY OF PAUL

1. Gospel
2. Father’s Plan
3. Christ’s Role
4. Effects of Salvation Event
5. Human Beings before Christ
6. Human Beings in Christ
7. The Church
8. Christian Living

PASTORAL AND GENERAL LETTERS

PASTORAL EPISTLES

I TIMOTHY

Having left Timothy in Ephesus to temporarily oversee the church there (1 Timothy 1:3), Paul writes to reiterate and clarify what he wants to take place. He does not want it to be a church of mere religious knowledge or human energy or personality. Instead, he wants it to be a church of faith and love (ch. 1), prayer (ch. 2), godly character (c. 3), the gospel (ch.4), appropriate institutional responsibility (ch.5) and practical Christian living (ch. 6).

Division According to Contents:

- 1:1-2: Address/greetings to Timothy
- 1:3-11: Warning against false teachers
- 1:12-20: Paul's own career and charge to Timothy
- 2:1-15: Ordering of public worship (especially for men and woman)
- 3:1-16: Instructions for bishop and deacons
- 4:1-5: Correction of false teaching
- 4:6-5:2: Encouragement for Timothy to teach
- 5:3-6:2: Instructions for widows, presbyters, and slaves
- 6:3-10: Warning against false teachers and love of money
- 6:11-21a: Charge to Timothy
- 6:21b: Concluding blessing.

An Introduction to the New Testament, Raymond E Brown, Doubleday Publishing Co. 1997

Read 1 Timothy.

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Rewrite this letter in your own words, making only the main points and restricting it to ten or so sentences.

II TIMOTHY

Mindful of Timothy's evidentially tearful struggle overseeing the Ephesian church, Paul writes a personal letter of encouragement and instruction, reminding him of the resources he has (1:13-14 – love, faith, heritage, the Spirit, a holy calling and an able God); conveying some personal news (1:15-18); offering some practical encouragement and guidance in leading the church (2:1-3:9); concluding with a personal charge based on Paul's example (3:10-4:8) and some practical and personal notes (4:9-18).

Division According to Contents:

- 1:1-5: Address/greeting to Timothy; recollection of his family background
- 1:6-18: Encouragement to Timothy from Paul in prison, feeling himself abandoned
- 2:1-13: Instruction on faithful preaching of the gospel, ending in a poetic saying
- 2:14-3:9: Examples of true teaching vs. false teaching
- 3:10-4:8: Final encouragement to Timothy based on the example of a Paul about to die
- 4:9-18: Practical charges to come and be wary; Paul's situation
- 4:19-22: Concluding greetings and benediction.

An Introduction to the New Testament, Raymond E Brown, Doubleday Publishing Co. 1997

Division According to Contents:

- 1:1-5: Address/greeting to Timothy; recollection of his family background
- 1:6-18: Encouragement to Timothy from Paul in prison, feeling himself abandoned
- 2:1-13: Instruction on faithful preaching of the gospel, ending in a poetic saying
- 2:14-3:9: Examples of true teaching vs. false teaching
- 3:10-4:8: Final encouragement to Timothy based on the example of a Paul about to die
- 4:9-18: Practical charges to come and be wary; Paul's situation
- 4:19-22: Concluding greetings and benediction.

An Introduction to the New Testament, Raymond E Brown, Doubleday Publishing Co. 1997

Read II Timothy.

ASSIGNMENT:

1. List at least seven directions given to Timothy by Paul, e.g. "stir up the gift of God that is within you." (1:6).

TITUS

Similar to I Timothy, Titus sets forth what is required of elders or bishops in the face of various false teachers and local shortcomings (1:5-16), directions on how he should teach different groups within the church (2:1-15) and a call to healthy, righteous Christian living (3:1-11).

Read Titus.

HEBREWS

The letter to the Hebrews is an anonymous letter, which also does not designate to whom it is addressed. It declares that in continuity with the Law and the prophets, God has spoken into human beings in these last days through His Son, the image of God, upholder of the universe and

High Priest of our salvation (1:1-3). Jesus is even superior to angels (1:4-2:18), and superior to Moses (3:1-4:13). His priesthood is a greater one than that of Aaron (4:14-7:28) and His sacrifice and ministry in the heavenly inaugurating a new covenant better than the old one (8:1-10:18). On the basis of all this the readers are exhorted to not turn back but to endure in faith, so they can receive the ultimate reward (10:19-12:29). Some practical instructions for living (13:1-19) are followed by concluding blessings and greetings (13:20-25).

ASSIGNMENT:

1. What were some of the temptations or struggles the recipients of this letter were dealing with? (Cite chapter and verse to support your point). What then was the encouragement of the letter? (Again, cite chapter and verse).

JAMES

An apparent excellent example of early, ethical Jewish Christianity, rich with apostolic wisdom and direction (60 imperatives!).

Division According to Contents (Topics):

- 1:1: Greetings (Opening Formula)
- 1:2-18: The role of trials and temptations
- 1:19-27: Words and deeds
- 2:1-9: Partiality toward the rich
- 2:10-13: Keeping the whole Law
- 2:14-26: Faith and works
- 3:1-12: Power of the tongue
- 3:13-18: Wisdom from above
- 4:1-10: Desires as the cause of division
- 4:11-12: Judging one another as judging the Law
- 4:13-17: Further arrogant behavior
- 5:1-6: Warning to the rich
- 5:7-11: Patience till the coming of the Lord
- 5:12-20: Admonitions on behavior within the community.

An Introduction to the New Testament, Raymond E Brown, Doubleday Publishing Co. 1997

ASSIGNMENT:

1. What are some adjectives descriptive of the kind of work James is calling us to? In other words, fill in the blanks, citing chapter and verse. James is calling us to a walk which is _____ (), _____ (), _____ (), etc. (e.g. impartial (2:1), humble (4:10)).

2. Some people have suggested that James' teaching on the relationship between faith and works (2:14-26) is at odds with Paul's teaching on justification by faith. DO you agree or disagree? Why?

I PETER

The First letter of Peter was written to give encouragement and hope to Christians in the northern part of Asia Minor who were undergoing persecution. The congregations, composed mainly of Gentile converts (1:12; 2:10; 4:3), are urged not to be surprised at the "fiery ordeal" which has come upon them. They are to rejoice even in their trials, which they share with their brotherhood throughout the world (5:9). By participating in the sufferings of Christ (4:13) they will demonstrate the genuineness of their faith (1:6,7).

After the salutation (1:1-2) the author recalls the significance of God's deed in Christ (1:3-12), on the basis of which he exhorts his readers to holiness (1:13-2:10). He then discusses the obligations of Christians in time of suffering, with repeated reference to the example of Christ (2:11-4:6). In view of the nearness of Christ coming, he admonishes them to live as "good stewards" (4:7-11). After restating his message in summary form (4:12-19), he concludes with various exhortation and greetings (5:1-14).

New Oxford Annotated Bible, New York, Oxford University Press 1973

Read 1 Peter.

ASSIGNMENT:

1. What does Peter mean by "holy", and for what reasons does he argue that we should live that way? (Cite chapter and verses for each)
2. Do you think the people Peter writes for were in trial, suffering or persecution? How can you tell? (Cite chapter and verses). How does he encourage them?

II PETER

This brief letter has a double purpose: to undergird faith in the second coming of Christ, and to warn against false teachers. The author recalls the apostolic witness as the basis of the church's proclamation (1:16), points to the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament which have been confirmed by the coming of Christ (1:19-21), and explains the delay of the second coming as due to the patience and forbearance of God, who desires "that all should reach repentance" (3:9).

The false teachers are vigorously denounced as licentious (2:2,10,13,14), greedy (2:3,14,15) and despisers of authority (2:10). They will be visited by God's judgment, as were the fallen angels,

the sinful world in the time of Noah, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah; the godly, however, will be rescued, as Lot was (2:4-9).

New Oxford Annotated Bible, New York, Oxford University Press 1973

Read I and II Peter.

I JOHN

Although this “letter” is anonymous, as early as Dionysius of Alexandria (A.D. 264/65, Eusebius HEVII.25), because of the striking similarity of emphasis, style and vocabulary, it is thought to be written either by the author of the Gospel of John or at least someone closely associated with him.

Read I John.

ASSIGNMENT:

1. According to 1:3-4, what is the purpose of the letter?
2. It is evident that some of the false teachers about which John is concerned taught that “The Word” did not set a moral standard to be followed. To simply “believe” in The Word was enough; the conduct of a Christian was not important. What does John say to this? (Cite chapter and versus).
3. Name three great themes in this letter.

II AND III JOHN

Language, literary style, and ideas, along with early church tradition, make it highly probable that 2 John came from the same pen which produced 1 John and the Fourth gospel. The tone of the author’s admonitions indicates that he was well known to his readers and was one whose spiritual authority they acknowledged. Unlike 1 John, which appears to have been addressed to several churches, this letter was written to one specific church (“the elect lady,” v. 1), probably one of the churches of Asia Minor.

The letter yields no definite evidence regarding date. The kinship of situation and ideas with those reflected in 1 John suggests a date near the end of the first century (see Introduction to 1 John).

The author repeats in briefer form the main teaching of I John, and adds a warning against showing hospitality to false teachers, lest this might further the spread of error (vv. 7-11).

Of the three Johannine letters 3 John alone is written to an individual. It reflects a period in the church’s life when organization was loose and churches were bound together by letters from

those in authority and by personal visits of their representatives and traveling missionaries. In the unknown church to which this letter was directed, a certain Diotrephes, who liked “to put himself first” (v. 9), had challenged the spiritual authority of “the elder,” refusing to receive messengers from him and putting “out of the church” those who showed them hospitality (v. 10). The elder, therefore, writes to a respected and influential member of the church named Gaius (v. 1), who has cordially welcomed the messengers and provided for their further needs (vv. 5-6). He encourages Gaius to continue this practice, indicating that he will deal with Diotrephes on a subsequent visit (v. 10). He also reinforces certain truths set forth in 1 and 2 John (v. 11).

The authorship and date parallel those of 1 and 2 John (see Introduction to 1 and 2 John).

New Oxford Annotated Bible, New York, Oxford University Press 1973

Read both letters.

JUDE

The letter of Jude was written to warn against false teachers who had made their way into the church. Little is said of the content of their teaching, but the letter gives a vivid sketch of their character and methods. They are immoral (vv. 4:7,16) and covetous men (vv. 11,16), who reject the authority (vv. 8,11). Grumblers, malcontents, loud-mouthed boasters (v. 16), they are crisply characterized as “worldly people, devoid of the Spirit” (v. 19). Because they lack brotherly love (v. 12), it is not surprising that they create divisions in congregations (v. 19). Their doom is sure. Like their spiritual prototypes—the disobedient Israelites in the wilderness, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the fallen angels (vv. 5-7)—they will experience God’s judgment.

The author urges his readers to “contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (v. 3), standing firm against the persuasive innovation of those who pervert the grace of God into immorality and deny the Lord Jesus Christ. He concludes his brief but trenchant letter with a beautiful and moving doxology (vv. 24-25).

The destination of the letter cannot be determined. Its author may well be, as tradition affirms, the brother of James and of the Lord. Otherwise it is difficult to see why a pseudonymous author should have chosen the name of one so obscure. It was probably written about the year 80.

New Oxford Annotated Bible, New York, Oxford University Press 1973

Read Jude.

PASTORAL AND GENERAL LETTERS

I. PASTORAL EPISTLES

- A. Structure and Function of the Church Organization
1. Structure
Elders and Deacons
Authority
 2. Function
Care of and Qualifications for Widows 1 Tim. 5:3-16
- B. Personal Leadership Issues
1. Personal Directives and Exhortations to Timothy
A glimpse into the character challenges of a church leader

e.g., 1 Tim. 4:12-16; 2 Tim. 1:6-14 and 2:1-7
 2. Qualifications for Elders and Deacons
1 Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9
 3. Paul (as usual!) as an Example
2 Tim. 3:10

When it comes to leadership, character is THE issue.

- C. Functional Leadership Issues
1. Establishing and Maintaining Right Doctrine
e.g., 1 Tim. 1:3-7
cp. Ac. 20:28-31
cp. Jude
*Note the importance of doctrine and this aspect of the pastoral task.
 2. Instructing Different Classes of People How To Live
1 Tim. 2:11- Women; 6:1-2 – Slaves; 6:17ff. – The Rich
cp. also 1 Tim 4:6-11
 3. Relating To and Managing Wide Variety of People
False Teachers
Hymenaeus and Alexander
Elders 1 Tim. 3:1ff; 5:17-22
Different Stations of Life 1 Tim. 5:1-2

HEBREWS

- A. Essential Message of Hebrews

B. Superiority of Jesus and His Covenant

C. Exhortation

JAMES

A. Emphasis on Right Behavior

B. Concern of Jewish Christianity to Maintain Alms and Good Works
Ja. 1:26-27
cp. Gal. 2:10

1 AND 2 PETER

JUDE

THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

REVELATION

John's Revelation forms a fitting and powerful conclusion to the canon in that it proclaims the final fulfillment and consummation of God's promised salvation for the earth. Wildly varied interpretations of the precise details of the message of John's Revelation abound through history and continue today. Some things are clear: it is a revelation of Jesus and delivers a message from Him to the seven churches, which are of course, edifying for the whole Church; it is a prophetic promise that while there will be struggle with evil, in the end God's new kingdom will triumph in consummation the Revelation reveals "what must take place after this" (4:1) from a heavenly perspective.

While some interpreters see the messages applying mainly to present events of the first century, others think the book shows a series of scenes which fit together to form a continuous history of the church from the apostolic era to the present day and beyond to the end of the age. Others feel the message speaks mainly to situations surrounding the very last days of the era and the final generations of Christians. In this case the precise meaning of the prophecies will become clear only at that time. Others still claim there is no timeline intended, but instead a prophetic picture of the struggle between good and evil – God's ultimate and eternal triumph. Probably each of these views have some truth in that the prophetic can speak to and find fulfillment on multiple levels.

In the end, it is important for us to know who Jesus is, to know, at least in general, that there will be both struggle and ultimate triumph, and to respond to the call to be God's holy and faithful people.

Hopefully, Professor Brown's skeletal outline of the Revelation will help you to enjoy reading it and therefore to receive its promised blessing (Rev. 22:7).

Read Revelation.