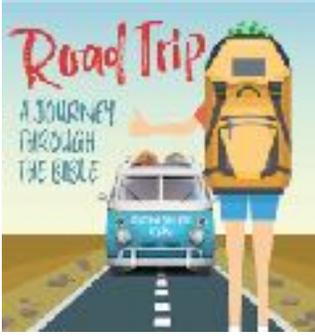


SESSION EIGHT: GENERALLY SPEAKING



- JAMES: “FAITH THAT WORKS”
- PETER: “PERSEVERANCE AND PATIENCE”
- HEBREWS: “A BETTER WAY”
- JUDE: “FIGHT FOR THE FAITH”
- JOHN: “LOVE ONE ANOTHER”

JAMES: “FAITH THAT WORKS”

AUTHOR: Three men named “James” are identified in the New Testament. Two are early disciples of Jesus: 1) James, Son of Zebedee and brother of John; 2) James the Less, Son of Alphaeus; 3) James the brother of “our Lord,” Jesus. The writer of the New Testament epistles is James the brother of Jesus

DATE: This is the earliest book found in the New Testament, completed around 49 or 50 AD.

BACKGROUND: James wrote “to the ‘twelve tribes’ - Jewish believers scattered abroad” (James 1:1). His was a circulatory letter, being passed house church to house church, providing practical instruction for the earliest congregations.

THEME: He was most concerned with the practical nature of faith, saying: “Faith is dead without good works.” His letter is very “Jewish” in its ethics and James quotes the Old Testament often. The book, at times, has been set in opposition to Paul’s instructions about grace.

OUTLINE:

James 1 Faith Under Pressure

James 2 Faith Put Into Practice

James 3-4 Faith That Is Prudent

James 5 Faith That Perseveres

PETER: “PERSEVERANCE AND PATIENCE”

AUTHOR: Peter was called by Jesus as an early disciple. He went by the name Simon bar Jonah (son of Jonah), but Jesus renamed him Peter or Cephas, meaning “the Rock.” Early tradition accepts Peter as the writer of 1 Peter, though 2 Peter is contested by scholars. This is due to major stylistic differences in the two books and the internal evidence.

DATE: 1 Peter had to be written before Peter's martyrdom circa 65 AD. Those who accept Petrine authorship of 2 Peter date it at roughly the same time. Scholars who credit 2 Peter to an unknown, later author, date the book in the mid to late 90s or later.

BACKGROUND: While the second epistle of Peter is written to a unspecified audience, Peter writes his first letter to: "God's chosen people who are living as foreigners in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia."



THEME: Peter was concerned with Christians living holy lives in the midst of a hostile world. The blessed hope of Christ provides strength and patience when facing injustice and suffering. Second Peter is eschatological in nature.

OUTLINE:

- 1 Peter 1 A Call To Hope And Holiness
- 1 Peter 2-3 A Call To Humility
- 1 Peter 4-5 A Call To Hardship
- 2 Peter 1 Rely Upon Divine Power
- 2 Peter 2 Resist Deceptive Teachers
- 2 Peter 3 Rest in the Day of the Lord

HEBREWS: "A BETTER WAY"

AUTHOR: For centuries, up to the printing of the King James Bible, Hebrews was often credited to Paul. The letter, however, is anonymous, and is written to second-generation believers having or familiar with a Jewish background.

DATE: The best possible date is just before the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD) but after the death of Paul (67 AD). However, it is possible that the book was written in the 80s or even early 90s.

BACKGROUND: There are no direct recipients of this letter, but generally they were Christians with a Jewish background or Christians encountering Jewish “pushback.” Some scholars think the book was written to “Hebrew” Christians in Rome or Greece.

THEME: The author portrays Jesus as the “better way,” the fulfillment of Jewish law and custom. The writer speaks eloquently of faith, and wants his recipients to move forward in the faith, not falling backward.

OUTLINE:

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|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Hebrews 1-2 | Warning One: Do Not Drift |
| Hebrews 3-5 | Warning Two: Do Not Defect |
| Hebrews 5-10 | Warning Three: Do Not Degenerate |
| Hebrews 10-12 | Warning Four: Do Not Drop Out |
| Hebrews 12-13 | Warning Five: Do Not Deny |

JUDE: “FIGHT FOR THE FAITH”

AUTHOR: Jude identifies himself as the “brother of James.” There are three Judes in the New Testament: 1) Jude the Disciple; 2) Judas Iscariot; and 3) Jude the brother of James and Jesus. By identifying with James the brother of Jesus, this makes Jude a younger sibling.

DATE: Scholars have never held consensus on the dating of the letter, and Jude was hotly disputed in ancient times. It was one of the last books added to the New Testament. If the book is authentically Jude’s, then an early date of around 70 AD is acceptable. If Jude is a “pseudo epigraph,” then the book could have been written as late 100 AD or the second century.

BACKGROUND: It is a circulatory letter, addressed to “friends” but no particular church. The author is concerned with believers falling away from the faith. Jude quotes Apocryphal books and seems to use 2 Peter.

THEME: Jude wants believers to “contend for the faith,” and resist heresies, false teachers, and immorality. Some scholars think he was speaking against an early form of “Gnosticism.”

OUTLINE:

- Jude 1-4 Contend For The Faith
- Jude 5-16 Count on Judgment
- Jude 17-25 Correct the Wayward

JOHN: “LOVE ONE ANOTHER”

AUTHOR: John, as with his Gospel, does not directly identify himself as the author of his letter. The earliest church fathers identify John the Beloved Disciple as the writer. Scholars are of near unanimous opinion that all three of the letters were written by the same person - but they debate who that person was.

DATE: If John is the author, these are some of the last New Testament letters written (90s AD). If another author is accepted, these letters were written in the early to mid second century.

BACKGROUND: John writes to encourage believers in the security of their salvation and to combat - as Jude did - an early form of “Gnosticism.” He emphasizes the metaphor of light versus darkness and speaks prolifically about the love of God.

THEME: Love one another. Walk in the light. Be gracious, welcoming, and affirming of believers, but beware of those who spread false teaching.

OUTLINE:

- 1 John 1-2 Walk In The Light
- 1 John 2-3 Walk In God’s Love
- 1 John 4-5 Walk In The Truth
- 2 John Walk In Obedience
- 3 John Walk in Faithfulness

