

# The Acts of the Apostles

The **Acts of the Apostles** is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke. It tells the story of the early Church, beginning with the **Ascension of Jesus into heaven**, and continuing with the **Pentecost**, and the spreading of the Gospel message by our first Pope, **Peter**, and a key Missionary, **Paul**. **Saint Paul** is both a Jew by birth - and a Roman citizen. **Paul** concludes that the Gospel of Jesus is for **both** the **Jews** and the **Gentiles**, and the emphasis of his ministry is with the **Gentiles**. The Book concludes with **Paul** ministering to the people in Rome (where he eventually is martyred, but that is not mentioned).

The **Acts of the Apostles** can be divided into five sections:

- I. The Preparation for the Christian Mission (chapters 1 – 2)**
  - A) The Ascension, the Pentecost, and the choice of Matthias.
- II. The Mission in Jerusalem (chapters 3 – 8)**
  - A) Peter and the Apostles begin their ministry.
  - B) Stephen is martyred, and Saul approves of his stoning.
- III. The Mission in Judea and Samaria (chapter 9)**
  - A) Saul experiences his Conversion, and is Baptized.
  - B) Saul begins preaching in Jerusalem.
  - C) Peter is instrumental in two miracles (Aeneas and Tabitha).
- IV. The Mission to the Gentiles (chapters 10 – 15)**
  - A) Cornelius and Peter have visions.
  - B) The Baptism of Gentiles is explained.
  - C) King Herod persecutes the Christians (and kills St. James).
  - D) The Mission of Barnabas and Saul.
  - E) Paul sets out on his First Missionary Journey.
  - F) The Council of Jerusalem.
  - G) Paul sets out on his Second Missionary Journey.
- V. Paul's Mission to the Roman Empire (chapters 16 – 28)**
  - A) Paul sets out on his Third Missionary Journey.
  - B) Paul and St. James the Less meet in Jerusalem.
  - C) Paul defends himself before the leaders of the Jews in Jerusalem. Paul is then released and departs for Rome.
  - D) Paul is shipwrecked and spends the winter in Malta.
  - E) Paul arrives in Rome and continues his ministry. This is how the Acts of the Apostles ends.

# CHAPTER 1

- This book, like the **Gospel of Luke**, is addressed to **Theophilus**, a word that means **“friend of God.”**
- **Jesus** ascends into heaven. *“As they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him from their sight.”* The **angels** then ask the disciples, *“Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven.”*
- The first community of faith is formed in **Jerusalem**. *“All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.”*
- **Matthias** is chosen to be the twelfth Apostle (to replace **Judas**).
- **Judas** dies by **“falling headlong.”** (See Matthew 27:3-10)

# CHAPTER 2

- The **Holy Spirit** descends upon the disciples at the **Pentecost**. **“Then there appeared to them tongues, as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them.”**
- The disciples were all filled with the **Holy Spirit**, and began to speak in different tongues as the **Spirit** enabled them to proclaim. Those around them asked, **“Are not all these people who are speaking to us Galileans? The how does each of us hear them in his own native language?”** But others scoffed saying, **“They have had too much new wine.”**
- **Peter** gives **the first of six discourses** (this first one is given at the **Pentecost**) and begins by saying, *“These people are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning.”* **Peter** then goes on to quote from the **Prophet Joel**, and then tells the people about *“Jesus the Nazorean, who was a man commended to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs, which God worked through Him in your midst, as you yourselves know. But God raised Him up, releasing Him from the throes of death.”*
- The disciples devote themselves to the teaching of the **Apostles**, and to the **communal life**, and to the **breaking of the bread**, and to **prayers**.

## CHAPTER 3

- **Peter** (along with **John**) cures a **crippled beggar** in the Temple area by saying, *“I have neither silver, nor gold, but what I do have, I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazorean, rise and walk.”*
- **Peter** makes **his second speech**, addressing the **Israelites** with a message emphasizing **repentance** and **conversion**: *“Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away.”*

## CHAPTER 4

- **Peter** and **John** are arrested for teaching the people about Jesus and proclaiming, in Jesus, the resurrection of the dead.
- **Peter** gives **his third speech**, emphasizing **salvation**: *“There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved.”*
- **Peter** and **John** are released, and ordered not to speak of Jesus. But they respond, *“It is impossible for us not to speak about what we have seen and heard.”* And the people were all praising God.
- The community of believers raised their voices to God in prayer. As they prayed, the place shook, and they were all filled with the **Holy Spirit**, and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.
- The community of believers holds all possessions in common. **Joseph (Barnabas)** sells a piece of property and donates the money.

## CHAPTER 5

- **Ananias** and **Sapphira** also sell a piece of property, but they keep a portion of the proceeds from the sale for themselves. They deceive the community of believers. As a result, both of them die because, as **Peter** says, *“you have lied not to human beings, but to God.”*
- The **Apostles** perform many signs and wonders, and great numbers of believers in the Lord were added to them. All of the sick and those disturbed by unclean spirits were cured.
- Due to the jealousy of the **high priest** and the **Sadducees**, the **Apostles** are arrested and put in the public jail. But during the night, **the angel of the Lord** opens the doors of the prison and leads them out saying, *“Go, and take your place in the Temple area, and tell the people everything about this life.”*
- The **Apostles** did as they were told by **the angel**, and are arrested again by the captain and court officers. The **high priest** questions them as to why they disobeyed his orders and continued to teach.
- **Peter** gives **his fourth speech**, and begins by saying, *“We must obey God rather than men.”* A Pharisee named **Gamaliel** says, *“If this activity comes from God, you will not be able to destroy them.”*

## CHAPTER 6

- Recognizing their need for assistants, the **Twelve Apostles** selected seven reputable men “to serve at table.” These were the first **Deacons**, and their names were: *Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas of Antioch.*
- **Stephen** is falsely accused of “speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God.” **Stephen** is brought before the **Sanhedrin**, and while false witnesses testified against him, “his face was like the face of an angel.”

## CHAPTER 7

- Given a chance to speak, **Stephen** replies by reciting a long discourse on the **history of the Jewish people**, beginning with **Abraham**. He continues with the story of **Isaac, Jacob, Joseph**, and the Israelites’ 430 years of slavery in **Egypt**. He continues by telling of **Moses**, who at **80 years of age**, received the message from God that he was to lead the **Hebrew** people out of slavery and into the **Promised Land**. He then tells of **Joshua**, who actually led the people into the **Promised Land**, and relates the stories of **King David** and **King Solomon** who built the first Temple for the Lord. “*But the Lord does not dwell in houses made by human hands.*”
- **Stephen** concludes his speech by challenging the **Sanhedrin** and calling them a “*stiff-necked people.*”
- **Stephen** is then **martyred** – by stoning – and a young man named **Saul** is a witness to this stoning. **NOTE:** *This is the first mention in the Bible of **Saul**, who later becomes known to us as **Saint Paul**.*
- As they are stoning **Stephen**, he cries out, “*Lord, Jesus, receive my spirit.*” And then he forgives those who are stoning him.

## CHAPTER 8

- **Saul** was consenting to the stoning of **Stephen**.
- The **Church** is persecuted in **Jerusalem**, and **Saul** tries to destroy the **Church** by handing over men and women to be imprisoned.
- **Philip** travels to **Samaria** proclaiming the Gospel message.
- **Simon the magician** becomes a believer – and is Baptized – after hearing the message proclaimed by **Philip**.
- **Peter** and **John** are then sent to **Samaria**, and they laid hands on them, and they received the **Holy Spirit**. **Simon** (the magician) offers money for the power of the Holy Spirit, but **Peter** declined.
- **The angel of the Lord** speaks to **Phillip** and sends him to **Gaza**. There he encounters an **Ethiopian eunuch** who is reading from the prophet **Isaiah**. **Philip** proclaims the message of **Jesus** to the Ethiopian, and then proceeds to **Baptize** the **Ethiopian**.

## CHAPTER 9

- While on the road to **Damascus**, **Saul** is literally blinded by the light of Christ. And **Jesus** says to him, “**Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?**” And then **Jesus** says, “**I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.**” **Saul** is then led to **Damascus** to meet **Ananias**.
- **Ananias** heals **Saul** of his blindness and **Baptizes** him.
- **Saul** begins to preach in **Damascus**, proclaiming **Jesus** in the synagogues, saying that “**He is the Son of God.**”
- The Jews conspire to kill **Saul**, but he escapes by being lowered in a basket through an opening in the wall.
- **Saul** travels to **Jerusalem**, but the disciples are afraid of him.
- **Barnabas** takes charge of **Saul** and the apostles are convinced of **Saul’s** conversion. **Saul** then travels to **Caesarea** and on to **Tarsus**.
- **Peter** encounters the paralyzed **Aeneas** in the city of **Lydda** and heals him with the words, “**Jesus Christ heals you.**”
- **Peter** restores **Tabitha** to life (*in the city of Joppa – near Tel Aviv*).

## CHAPTER 10

- **Cornelius**, a centurion who was devout and God-fearing, receives a vision from **the angel of God**. He is then sent to **Simon Peter**.
- **Peter** has a vision from heaven and he was given a revision of the Jewish dietary laws. “**What God has made clean, you are not to call profane.**” **Peter** then goes to visit **Cornelius**, the centurion, and tells the people, “**God has shown me that I should not call any person profane or unclean.**”
- **Peter** gives his **fifth speech** and begins by saying, “**In truth, God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears Him and acts uprightly is acceptable to Him.**” **Peter** then gives a brief history of the life of **Jesus**.
- **Cornelius** and the other **Gentiles** are **Baptized** in the name of **Jesus Christ**, based on the outpouring of the **Holy Spirit**.

## CHAPTER 11

- When the people challenge **Peter** in regards to his eating with **Gentiles**, **Peter** explains the vision that he had, and tells the people that the message of the Gospel is for everyone. “**God has then granted life-giving repentance to the Gentiles, too.**”
- Persecution of **the followers of Jesus** begins because of **Stephen**, so **Barnabas** is sent to **Antioch**. It was there that the disciples were first called **Christians**.
- **Agabus**, a prophet, predicts a world-wide famine, and the disciples decide to send relief to those who lived in **Judea**.

## CHAPTER 12

- **King Herod** persecutes the Christians, and has **James**, the brother of John, killed by the sword. **Herod** proceeds to arrest **Peter**, and places him in prison until after the Passover. However, the angel of the Lord appears to **Peter** and says, **“Get up quickly.”**
- The angel leads **Peter** past the guards and out to the city, and **Peter** proceeds to enter the house of **Mary**, the mother of **John** who is called **Mark**. (**NOTE:** *He is the writer of the Gospel of Mark*).
- **Herod** searches for **Peter**, and has the guards tried and executed.
- **King Herod**, attired in royal robes, addresses the people. The people call him a god, and, at once, the angel of the Lord strikes him down **“because he did not ascribe the honor to God.”**
- **Saul** and **Barnabas** return to **Jerusalem**, with **John (Mark)**.

## CHAPTER 13

- The **Holy Spirit** says, **“Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”**
- **Saul, Barnabas**, and **Mark** begin their **First Missionary Journey** by sailing to the island of **Cyprus** and on to **Salamis**, where they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues.
- The proconsul, **Sergius Paulus**, wanted to hear the word of God, but **Elymas**, the magician, opposed the missionaries.
- **NOTE:** *This is the first time Saul is referred to as Paul.*
- **Paul** challenges the magician, calling him *“the son of the devil.”*
- The proconsul, **Sergius Paulus**, comes to believe, **“for he was astonished by the teaching about the Lord.”**
- **Paul** travels to **Antioch** in **Pisidia**.
- **Paul** addresses the Jews in the Synagogue in **Pisidia**, and relates to them **the story of the Jewish people**, and then continues by telling them of **Jesus** and His message of the forgiveness of sins.
- **Paul** and **Barnabas** speak to the **Gentiles**, much to the dismay of the Jews. And the **Gentiles** were delighted to hear the word of God.

## CHAPTER 14

- **Paul** and **Barnabas** preach to the Jews in **Iconium**. The disbelieving Jews stir up and poison the minds of the people.
- **Paul** heals the **crippled man** at **Lystra**. As a result, the people start worshipping **Paul** and **Barnabas** as if they were gods.
- Disbelievers then stone **Paul**. But, to their surprise, he survives.
- **Paul** and **Barnabas** appoint *“presbyters” (priests)* in each church.
- This is the **end** of their **First Missionary Journey**.

## CHAPTER 15

- As the **Gentiles** were receiving the message of Jesus, the question arose as to whether they must follow the **Mosaic (Jewish) Laws** in order to be saved. The **Council of Jerusalem** was convened to resolve this matter. **Paul** and **Barnabas** describe the signs and wonders that God had worked among the **Gentiles** through them.
- **James** says that the **Gentiles** who turn to God should “**avoid pollution from idols, unlawful marriage, the meat of strangled animals, and blood.**” Those are the only restrictions.
- A letter is sent by the **apostles** and **presbyters (priests)** to the **Gentiles** (delivered by **Paul** and **Barnabas**) stating that, “**it is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities.**”
- When the letter arrives in **Antioch** the people are delighted.
- **Paul** begins his **Second Missionary Journey**. He does not take **Barnabas** with him; instead he takes **Silas** and they travel to **Syria**.

## CHAPTER 16

- **Paul** travels to **Lycaonia** and there he meets **Timothy**.
- Paul then travels through **Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey)**.  
(**NOTE:** The author now says “**we.**” Was Luke now with them?)
- **Paul** continues his travels into **Macedonia (north of Greece)**.
- **Paul** drives out an oracular spirit (*one that is used for fortune-telling*) and, as a result, **Paul** and **Silas** are imprisoned at **Philippi**.
- **Paul** and **Silas** are freed from prison due to an **earthquake**.
- The **jailer** and his family are **Baptized** and receive salvation.
- **Paul** and **Silas** are secretly released, and then they leave **Philippi**.

## CHAPTER 17

- **Paul** and **Silas** travel to **Thessalonica** (in Greece), where they are met with great resistance by the leaders of the synagogue.
- **Paul** and **Silas** continue their travels to **Beroea**, where the people were much more responsive, and many became believers.
- **Paul** and **Silas** then travel to **Athens**, where they encounter a city full of idols. They are charged with promoting “**foreign deities.**”
- **Paul** speaks to the people at **the Areopagus** regarding their altar inscribed “**To an Unknown God.**” **Paul** then says, “**What therefore you unknowingly worship, I proclaim to you.**” And **Paul** then tells the people about God.
- New disciples are made, including **Dionysius** and **Damaris**.

## CHAPTER 18

- **Paul** travels to **Corinth** (*in Greece*) and stays for a year and a half. There he meets **Aquila** and **Priscilla** who were tentmakers by trade.
- **Silas** and **Timothy** then join **Paul**, and **Paul** concentrates on preaching the word - that the Messiah was Jesus.
- At this point **Paul** shifts his ministry to the **Gentiles**. And the Lord speaks to Paul in a vision, telling him, **“Do not be afraid. Go on speaking, and do not be silent, for I am with you.”**
- **Paul** is then taken before **Gallio**, the proconsul of Achaia, but **Gallio** has no interest in the charges being brought against **Paul**.
- **Paul** returns to Syria, and proceeds to Ephesus. From there he went to Caesarea, and continued on to Antioch. Then he went through the Galatian country, and on to Phrygia.
- A Jew named **Apollos**, who was instructed in the Way of the Lord, arrives in Ephesus. **Priscilla** and **Aquila** explain the Word of God more accurately to him, and he proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah.
- Paul begins his **Third Missionary Journey**.

## CHAPTER 19

- In Ephesus in Asia Minor (*modern-day Turkey*) **Paul** teaches about the **Holy Spirit**. When **Paul** lays his hands on the disciples, the **Holy Spirit** comes upon them and they are able to speak in tongues and to prophesy.
- **Paul** teaches in the synagogue for three months.
- In the lecture hall of Tyrannus, **Paul** holds daily discussions for two years, and **“all the inhabitants of the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.”**
- Some Jewish exorcists try to invoke the name of the Lord over those with evil spirits, but the evil spirits did not recognize them.
- **Demetrius** makes miniature silver shrines to false god **Artemis**, and **Paul** rebukes him. The crowd breaks out into a riot because of **Paul’s** words of truth about their false gods.

## CHAPTER 20

- **Paul** travels back to Macedonia and Greece.
- **Paul** returns to Traos.
- **Paul** gives a long speech, and a young man named **Eutychus** tries to stay awake. He soon falls asleep, and **Paul** works a miracle.
- **Paul** then travels to Miletus (*Asia Minor*) and there he gives his farewell speech and says, **“It is better to give than to receive.”**
- The disciples then escort **Paul** to the ship for his departure.



## CHAPTER 21

- **Paul** sails to Cos, continues on to Rhodes, and then to Patara. From there they sail past Cypress, and on to **Tyre** (*in Syria*).
- From there they sail to Ptolmais and on to **Caesarea**, where they enter the house of **Philip**, the evangelist (*one of the seven deacons*).
- A prophet named **Agabus** warns Paul not to go to Jerusalem. **Paul** replies, saying that he is **“ready to die for the name of Jesus.”**
- Paul and his companions continue to **Jerusalem**, and stay at the house of **Mnason**, a Cypriot, and a disciple of long-standing.
- The next day **Paul** visits **James** and he is then informed that there are false rumors spreading about his teaching to the **Gentiles**.
- **Paul** enters the Temple, and there he is arrested and beaten. The **cohort commander** takes him into the compound and there **Paul** is allowed to speak. He says that he is **“a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia.”**

## CHAPTER 22

- **Paul** defends himself before the **Jews in Jerusalem** by telling of his past, and how he persecuted those who followed **“the Way.”** He then recounts **the story of his conversion** and how, after being blinded by the **light of Christ**, regained his sight through **Ananias**.
- **Paul** then relates how the Lord called him to be baptized, to have his sins washed away, and then to be a witness to the **Gentiles**.
- **Paul** is imprisoned, and is about to be scourged. But then he reminds them that his is a **Roman citizen**, and has not had a trial.
- **Paul** is then taken before the **chief priests** and the **Sanhedrin**.

## CHAPTER 23

- **Paul** defends himself before the **Sanhedrin**. The **high priest Ananias** (*not the Ananias in Chapter 22!*) orders his attendants to strike **Paul** in the mouth. **Paul** responds, **“God will strike you!”**
- **Paul** announces that he is a **Pharisee**, and this causes a dispute between the **Pharisees** and the **Sadducees**. The **Lord** tells **Paul**, **“Take courage. For just as you have borne witness to my cause in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness in Rome.”**
- Forty Jews conspire to kill **Paul**, but **the son of Paul’s sister** warns **Paul** of the plot. **Paul** sends the young man to the **commander**, and the commander makes a plan for **Paul** to escape, by horse, by night to Antipatris, and then on to **Caesarea**.
- The commander, **Claudius Lysias** sends **Paul** to **Felix**, the governor in **Caesarea**, along with a letter explaining the situation. **Felix** orders **Paul** to be held in custody in **Herod’s praetorium**.

## CHAPTER 24

- **Paul** is taken to trial before **Felix**, the governor in **Caesarea**.
- **Tertullus** speaks to **Felix**, making accusations against **Paul**, saying, ***“We found this man to be a pest!”*** among other charges.
- **Paul** replies by disputing the allegations, and says to **Felix**, ***“I am on trial before you today for the resurrection of the dead.”***
- **Felix** decides to wait until **Lysias** the commander arrives before deciding **Paul**’s case. **Paul** is remanded to be kept in custody.
- **Felix** leaves **Paul** in prison in **Caesarea** for two years, having numerous conversations with him. **Felix** was hoping to get a bribe from **Paul** so that he would release him, but that did not happen.

## CHAPTER 25

- After two years **Festus** succeeds **Felix** and the chief priests and Jewish leaders present their formal charges against **Paul**.
- **Festus** tries to send **Paul** to Jerusalem for trial, but **Paul** refuses by invoking his rights as a Roman citizen. He then says to **Festus**, ***“I am standing before the tribunal of Caesar; this is where I should be tried.”*** **Festus** replies, ***“You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go.”***
- **King Agrippa** and his sister **Bernice** arrive in **Caesarea**, and **Festus** refers **Paul**’s case to the king. After **Festus** explains the situation, **Agrippa** states, ***“I too should like to hear this man.”***
- **Paul** is then brought before **King Agrippa**.

## CHAPTER 26

- **King Agrippa** listens as **Paul** speaks of his background as a Pharisee and how he had persecuted the Christians. He then tells the story of his conversion and how he was called to ***“preach the need to repent and to turn to God and to do works giving evidence of repentance.”***
- **Paul** goes on to relate what the prophets and Moses foretold, ***“that the Messiah must suffer and that, as the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”***
- **Festus** accuses **Paul** of being mad, but **Paul** reminds him that he is speaking words of truth and reason.
- **Paul** then asks **King Agrippa**, ***“Do you believe the prophets? I know you believe.”*** And **Agrippa** replies, ***“You will soon persuade me to play the Christian.”*** At that time it was agreed that **Paul** had done nothing that deserved death or imprisonment.

## CHAPTER 27

- **Paul** is then sent to **Rome** to appear before **Caesar**. They sail around the sheltered side of **Cypress** (because of the headwinds) and, crossing the open sea, they arrive in **Myra** in **Lycia**.
- There they board **an Alexandrian ship** that was headed for **Italy**. **Paul** warns them not to sail from **Crete**, but they set sail anyway. Soon they encounter a **“Northeaster”** (*an offshore wind of hurricane force*). Finally, all hope of surviving was taken away.
- **Paul** tells them of a visit he received from **an angel of God** who said to him, **“Do not be afraid, Paul.”** **Paul** then tells everyone that **“God has granted safety to all who are sailing with you.”**
- **Paul** encourages them all to eat and he then takes some **bread**, gives **thanks** to God, **breaks** it, and begins to **eat**. At that point they were all encouraged.
- The next day they run the ship aground on **a beach** (on an island) and all were able to reach shore safely.

## CHAPTER 28

- The island is named **Malta**, and they spend the winter there.
- **Publius**, the chief of the island, had a father who was very sick. **Paul** visits him, prays for him, lays hands on him, and he is healed.
- The other sick people on the island come to **Paul** and are cured.
- **Three months later they set sail for Rome**. After stops in **Syracuse** (*on the island of Sicily*), **Rhegium**, and **Puteoli**, they finally reach the city of **Rome**. When he enters Rome, **Paul** is allowed to live by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.
- Three days later **Paul** calls together the **leaders of the Jews** to appeal for his release. He tells them as to how the **Romans** wanted to release him, but the **Jews** objected. He then appealed to **Caesar**.
- **Paul** then expounds his position to the leaders, bearing witness to the **kingdom of God** and trying to convince them about **Jesus** from the law of **Moses** and the prophets. **Paul** then quotes the prophet **Isaiah** and concludes by saying, **“Let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”**
- For two full years **Paul** continues to proclaim *the kingdom of God* and taught about *the Lord Jesus Christ*.

The **Acts of the Apostles** ends here, but Church tradition tells us that **Peter** was **martyred** in **Rome** in about **the year 64**, and **Paul** was also **martyred** there in about **the year 67**. *Despite their deaths, the Gospel message continues to be spread throughout the world!*

# The Apostle Paul

**Who was the Apostle Paul?** Very little is known about his early life, other than that he was born in **Tarsus**, was a **Jew** (whose family goes back to the tribe of Benjamin), was a **Pharisee**, and was a **Roman citizen** from birth. His Jewish name was **Saul**, and his Roman name was **Paul**, probably a variation of the Latin "Paulus." Scholars think that he was born about the same time as Jesus, but they had no contact with each other during Jesus's time here on earth. *Paul is not mentioned in any of the four Gospels.* His occupation was that of a **tent maker**.

The first mention of **Saul** in the Bible is in the **Acts of the Apostles (7:58)** when **Stephen**, the first martyr, is being stoned. In **chapter 9** we read of **Saul's conversion**, at which time the Lord appeared to him (*Note Acts 9:17*) while he was on the road to **Damascus**, about the year **36 A.D.** Once he recognized Jesus as the Messiah, he went on to preach in Damascus and in Jerusalem. It was at this point that he decided to begin his missionary work throughout the Roman Empire.

*The three missionary journeys of Paul are as follows:*

**MISSION JOURNEY #1** (*Acts 13:1 to 14:28*) **Years 46 to 49 A.D.**  
Began in Antioch, continued to Cyprus, Iconium and Lystra, and then back to Antioch.

**MISSION JOURNEY #2** (*Acts 15:36 to 18:23*) **Years 50 to 52 A.D.**  
Also began in Antioch, and continued through Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) and into Macedonia (modern day Greece), then to Jerusalem, and then back to Antioch.

**MISSION JOURNEY #3** (*Acts 18:24 to 21:17*) **Years 54 to 58 A.D.**  
Also began in Antioch, continued through Asia Minor to Ephesus, again to Greece, and then back to Jerusalem where Paul is taken prisoner.

*Paul's final Missionary Journey was to Rome*

**JOURNEY TO ROME** (*Acts 27:1 to 28:31*) **Years 60 to 67 A.D.**  
This is Paul's final journey, and leads him to the place of his final preaching and his martyrdom. Paul took the command of Jesus to "**Go and make disciples of all nations**" literally, and he eventually travelled to **Rome** since it was the hub of the **Roman Empire**.

**Paul's plan** was to make a journey to **Spain**, but there is no evidence in the Bible that indicates that he actually made it there. He almost didn't make it to **Rome**, due to a powerful storm that left him stranded on the island of **Malta** (off the southern coast of Sicily). **Paul** was held prisoner in **Rome**, and it is at this point that the book of the Acts of the Apostles ends. Subsequently he was beheaded in Rome, probably around the year **67 A.D.**

It was during these missionary journeys that **Paul** wrote the **thirteen letters of the New Testament** that are attributed to him. In most of these letters, he was addressing a particular issue that was facing the new Christians. For example, the question arose as to whether the Good News of Jesus was for all people, or just the **Jews**. And, if **Gentiles** (non-Jews) were included, would they have to follow Jewish customs and traditions to be accepted into the new faith? Also, the question of salvation was debated, in reference to the necessity of **works** (following the law) or if **faith** was the key.

Scholars have asked how **Paul** considers himself to be an "**apostle**" since he was not a follower of Jesus while He was on earth. The best answer that they have found is in **1 Corinthians 9:1-2** in which **Paul** states, *"Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? Although I may not be an apostle for others, certainly I am for you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord."*

Four terms that **Paul** uses frequently are as follows:

**JUSTIFICATION:** The acquittal of humans before the judgment seat of God brought about through the death and resurrection of Jesus. It represents a new relationship between humans and God.

**RIGHTEOUSNESS:** God's justice made manifest through Christ, making justification possible.

**THE LAW:** The Law of Moses that binds the Jewish people. The term **WORKS** is often used to refer to actions that are in accordance with the Law.

**FAITH:** Total trust **in** God, as exemplified by Abraham.

# Paul's Letter to the Romans

This is the longest of Paul's letters (which is why it is included first in order in the Bible) and it was written to a people whom Paul had not yet met. The **Church in Rome** was **not** founded by Paul, but it probably arose within the sizeable Jewish population in Rome. It was not until after Paul wrote this letter that he traveled to Rome and met the Christians there.

**Paul wrote this letter from Corinth (in Greece),** probably around the years **56 to 58**, during **his third missionary journey.** *(Paul eventually made it to Rome, as a prisoner, which we read about in the **Acts of the Apostles in chapter 28**).* Despite his incarceration, he continued to preach the Good News of the Gospel up until the time of his death (by beheading) in the year **67** or so.

Paul regards **Jesus Christ as the key that opens up the Hebrew Scriptures.** Through Christ there is **freedom** from the power of sin, death, and the Law of Moses, and freedom for life in the Spirit. In baptism, Christians enter into the death and life of the crucified and risen Lord. **Love is the fulfillment of the Law** and enables one to live with respect for the dignity of others.

## CHAPTER 1

- Paul's **Greeting** and words of **Thanksgiving.**
- For Paul, **The Gospel is the Power of God for Salvation.** In verse 16, Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel; rather, in verse **17**, Paul writes, ***"The one who is righteous by faith will live."***
- God will punish those who, in verse 25, ***"exchanged the truth of God for a lie and revered and worshiped the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever."*** The wrath of God will be revealed against idolators who, in verse **28**, ***"did not see fit to acknowledge God."***

## CHAPTER 2

- God's just judgment is true. God is the judge, not human beings. In verse **11** Paul points out, ***"There is no partiality with God."***
- Judgment by the ***"interior Law"*** refers to our conscience, that is, the law that is ***"written in their hearts."***
- For the **Jews**, judgment is by the **Law of Moses**, but Paul challenges the hypocrites who preach one thing and do another.

### CHAPTER 3

- Paul points out that the Jews were first entrusted with the message of God. And they were under the Law of Moses. But, in verse 20, **“no human being will be justified in God’s sight by observing the law, for through the law comes consciousness of sin.”** And, the righteousness of God is apart from the law.
- Justification comes about through faith in Christ.

### CHAPTER 4

- **Abraham** was justified by his faith in God. In verse 3, we read, **“Abraham believed in God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”** Then Paul speaks of **King David**.
- Paul then reminds us that God was the one, **“who raised Jesus from the dead..... and He was raised for our justification.”**

### CHAPTER 5

- Paul reminds us that, **“Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**
- It was through Adam that sin entered the world, as did death.
- But it was through the gift of Christ’s death and resurrection that life came to all (verse 18).
- Where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more (verse 20).

### CHAPTER 6

- Paul tells us, **“If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.”** (verse 8)
- And, **“We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him.”** (verse 9)
- And, in verse 23, **“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

### CHAPTER 7

- Paul tells us that, **“We are released from the Law.”** (verse 6).

### CHAPTER 8

- Paul says, **“There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”** (verse 1)
- Paul then tells us that, **“We do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings.”** (verse 26)
- Paul: **“If God is for us, who can be against us?”** (verse 31)
- Paul says, **“nothing can separate us from the love of God.”**

## CHAPTER 9

- Paul reminds us that, ***“I speak the truth in Christ.”***
- Paul then recounts the story of **Israel** , beginning with **Abraham**.
- Paul then reminds the Romans that the message of Jesus is for both **Jew** and **Gentile** alike.
- Paul then makes reference to the prophets **Hosea** and **Isaiah**.

## CHAPTER 10

- Paul’s prayer to God is, ***“my heart’s desire and prayer to God on their behalf is for salvation.”***
- Paul tells us that, ***“if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”***
- Paul then says, ***“For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”***
- Finally he reminds us, ***“How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the Good News!”***

## CHAPTER 11

- Paul then tells us that the people were **not** rejected by God.
- Paul points out that he is ***“the apostle of the Gentiles.”***
- Paul reminds the Romans that, ***“The gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.”***
- The triumph of God’s mercy: ***“To Him be glory forever. Amen.”***

## CHAPTER 12

- Paul then instructs the people, ***“Do not conform yourself to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good, and pleasing, and perfect.”***
- Paul reminds us, ***“There is one body, but many parts.”***
- ***“We, though many, are one body in Christ.”***
- Each person has gifts that differ according to the grace of each.
- Let love be sincere; hate what is evil; hold on to what is good.
- Paul calls us to, ***“Love one another with mutual affection.”***
- ***“Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer.”***
- ***“Bless those who persecute you, and do not curse them.”***
- Finally, Paul tells us, ***“Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good.”***



## CHAPTER 13

- Paul instructs the Romans to, “**be obedient to authority, for all authority comes from God.**” (A common perception at that time!)
- Paul says, “**One who loves another has fulfilled the Law.**”
- And, “**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**”
- Awareness of the End of Time: “**It is the hour to awake.**”
- “**Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.**”
- Paul states, “**Let us throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.**”

## CHAPTER 14

- Welcome anyone who is weak in faith, but not for disputes.
- Let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind.
- Paul tells us, “**For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord.**”
- Let us no longer judge one another, but rather resolve never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.
- “**For the kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.**”
- Keep the faith that you have to yourself in the presence of God.

## CHAPTER 15

- Paul calls us to patience and self-denial.
- “**May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus, that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**”
- Paul plans to go to **Rome** and then on to **Spain**, but first he go to Jerusalem (*he is writing this letter from **Corinth**, Greece*).
- Paul urges the people of **Rome** to join him in the struggle through their prayers.

## CHAPTER 16

- Paul commends **Phoebe**, who is a “**minister to the church.**”
- Paul instructs the people to greet **Prisca (Priscilla) and Aquila**, his co-workers, along with many others who have worked with him to share the Good News of the Gospel.
- Paul speaks against factions and dissensions.
- Paul sends greetings from others in Corinth, including **Tertius**, “**the writer of this letter.**” (*Probably a scribe - or a secretary.*)
- His letter concludes with the Doxology: “**...through Jesus Christ be glory forever and ever. Amen.**”

# Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

**First Corinthians (1 Corinthians)** was probably written in the year **56 A.D.** from the city of **Ephesus** which is in modern day **Turkey** (see *1 Cor 16:8*). Paul founded the Christian community in **Corinth**, a seaport town in **Macedonia** (modern day **Greece**) **during his second missionary journey** around the year **A.D. 51**. The people of the Corinthian community that Paul had founded were primarily **Gentiles** (non-Jews) who had become **Christians**.

**Paul** wrote this letter because of reports that he had received of the Christians breaking into different factions, which caused great division among the faithful. The problems of the community were reflected in the celebration of the liturgy, as well as in other aspects of life, particularly marriage and sexual behavior. **Paul** is ministering with a Christian named **Apollos**. **Paul** reiterates his belief in **the gifts of the Spirit** and **love being the greatest gift**.

## CHAPTER 1

- Greeting and words of thanksgiving.
- Paul recognizes the divisions in the community.
- He then asks, ***“Is Christ divided?”*** in order to make his point.
- ***“For Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews, and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. “God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong...”***

## CHAPTER 2

- **Paul** proclaims Christ crucified.
- **Paul** speaks of the true wisdom that comes from God alone.

## CHAPTER 3

- **Paul** points out the role of God’s ministers.
- **Paul** and **Apollos** are both ministers, assigned by God.
- ***“I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth.”***
- **Paul** tells us that we are the temple of God, and that God dwells within each one of us.

## CHAPTER 4

- Paul and Apollos are “**servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.**”
- “**For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.**”

## CHAPTER 5

- **Moral Disorders** – Incest (a man living with his father’s wife).
- “**You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.**”
- “**I wrote you in my last letter not to associate with immoral people.**” (What letter? We have no record of this letter!!)

## CHAPTER 6

- The risk of taking **lawsuits** to **courts** instead of to the holy ones.
- “**Do you not know that the unjust will not inherit the kingdom?**”
- The body is not for immorality, but for the Lord.
- “**Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?**”
- “**Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price.**”

## CHAPTER 7

- Advice to the married, and the duties of husbands and wives.
- Advice to the unmarried: stay in the state that they are, just as Paul does.
- What if an **unbeliever** separates from the believing spouse?  
“**The brother or sister is not bound.**” (Pauline Privilege)
- “Everyone should remain in the state in which he was called.”
- Paul’s advice to virgins and widows, so as to be free of anxiety.
- **Single people** are anxious about the things of **the Lord**.
- But - **married people** are anxious about the things of **the world**.
- The one who marries does well, but the one who does not marry will do better. (according to Paul)

## CHAPTER 8

- Prohibition against eating meat that has been sacrificed to idols.
- “**Knowledge inflates with pride, but love builds up.**”
- “**If one loves God, one is known by Him.**”
- Paul gives practical rules, especially with the dietary laws.

## CHAPTER 9

- Paul begins by pointing out once again that he is an Apostle.  
**“Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?”**
- Paul challenges those who pass judgment on him.
- Paul point out that, **“the Lord ordered that those who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel.”**
- Paul states that, **“If I preach the Gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it!”**
- Paul concludes this chapter by saying, **“I do not run aimlessly. I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing.”**

## CHAPTER 10

- Paul challenges the Corinthians against idolatry and immorality.
- Paul refers to the Eucharist and challenges the people to be faithful to Christ. **“You can not drink the cup of the Lord and also the cup of demons. You can not partake of the table of the Lord and of the table of demons.”**
- And, **“No one should seek his own advantage, but that of the neighbor.”**
- Paul goes on to say, **“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.”**

## CHAPTER 11

- Paul says, **“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”**
- Paul discusses the role of men and women in the liturgy.
- Paul points out the problems with the community’s celebration of the Lord’s Supper. **“Each goes ahead with his own supper, and one goes hungry while another gets drunk.”**
- Paul reiterates the Words of Consecration of the Eucharist.
- Paul then challenges those who drink the cup of the Lord unworthily.

## CHAPTER 12

- Paul reminds the people, **“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service, but the same Lord.”**
- He goes on to say, **“As a body is one, though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ.”**
- And, then Paul tells the Corinthians, **“Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts.”**

## CHAPTER 13

- Paul points out, ***“If I do not have love, I have nothing.”***
- Paul tells the people, ***“Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, it is not pompous”***
- His key point is: ***“Love never fails.”***
- He concludes this chapter by saying, ***“So faith, hope, and love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”***

## CHAPTER 14

- Paul then says, ***“Pursue love, but strive eagerly for the spiritual gifts, above all, that you may prophesy.”***
- Paul challenges those who believe that speaking in tongues is more important than prophesying. ***“Whoever speaks in a tongue builds himself up, but whoever prophesies builds up the church.”***
- Paul goes on to say, ***“In the church I would rather speak five words with my mind so as to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.”***
- Paul then says, ***“But if there is no interpreter, the person should keep silent in the church and speak to himself and to God.”***

## CHAPTER 15

- Paul summarizes the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- Paul then debates with those who question whether Jesus rose from the dead.
- He then points out, ***“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”***
- Paul then discusses the resurrection of the body and the resurrection event. ***“Death is swallowed up in victory.”***

## CHAPTER 16

- Paul discusses the collection ***“for the holy ones”*** in Jerusalem.
- Paul talks about his travel plans, to go through Macedonia (*modern day Greece*), and perhaps spend the winter in Corinth.
- He is writing this letter from Ephesus (*modern day Turkey*).
- Paul encourages the community to, ***“stand firm in the faith.”***
- He tells them, ***“Your every act should be done with love.”***
- Paul sends greetings from the church in Asia, and from many others. He concludes with the words, ***“Marana tha”*** which is Aramaic for, ***“Come, Lord Jesus!”*** or ***“Our Lord has come.”***

## Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians

As in his first letter to the people of Corinth, Paul's **Second Letter to the Corinthians** (also known as **2 Corinthians**) addresses issues that have come to his attention after he has established the Christian community. But in this letter, Paul is on the defensive. Outbursts of anger, stimulated by a sense of injury, replace the cool logic of First Corinthians. **There appears to be opposition to Paul by certain Jewish Christians, and they are attacking Paul's authority as an apostle.** Note in chapter 11 how Paul refers to his opponents as "*superapostles*" for they consider themselves superior to Paul as apostles and ministers. Paul then refers to them as "*false apostles.*"

This letter was probably written about a year after 1 Corinthians, around **the year 57** or so, from **Macedonia** (modern-day Greece) where Paul had spent the winter. At some point news of the deterioration of the situation of the Church in Corinth had reached Paul, and this letter was written in the heat of disappointment and anger. Most of these problems developed after 1 Corinthians had reached the people of Corinth.

Many Biblical scholars believe that **2 Corinthians** is a combination of two of Paul's letters, with the main division coming between chapters 9 and 10. Most Biblical scholars also regard **2 Corinthians** as the most difficult document in the New Testament. Paul is often emotional, and his mood changes rapidly from reconciling to confrontational, and back again, but all of his arguments center on the message of Jesus, our Savior.

### **Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter to the Corinthians has five main divisions:**

- I. *Paul's Greetings, his Address to the People, and his Words of Thanksgiving*
- II. *The Crisis Between Paul and the People of Corinth*
- III. *The Collection for the People of Jerusalem*
- IV. *Paul's Defense of his Ministry*
- V. *Conclusion*

## CHAPTER 1

- Paul (and Timothy) greet the people of Corinth.
- Paul gives thanks for the blessings from God, and even gives thanks for his suffering.
- He then points out that God will rescue us from death.
- Paul then points out that what he offers is **“not by human wisdom, but by the grace of God.”**
- Paul then discusses why he has not yet returned to Corinth.

## CHAPTER 2

- Paul discusses the pain that he is feeling over the conflicts that he is experiencing.
- Paul points out that he is a minister of a New Covenant through the teachings of Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER 3

- Paul reiterates his confidence that he has through Jesus Christ.
- Paul contrasts the New Covenant with the Old Covenant. **“For if what was going to fade was glorious, how much more will what endures be glorious.”**
- He discusses the Israelites who lived at the time of Moses, and contrasts the actions of Moses to the message of Jesus.

## CHAPTER 4

- Paul points out that, **“We do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for the sake of Jesus.”**
- He then goes on to say, **“But we hold this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing power may be of God and not from us.”**
- Paul then says, **“that we too believe and therefore speak, knowing that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and place us with you in his presence.”**

## CHAPTER 5

- Our Future Destiny – **“We know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, but eternal in heaven.”**
- Paul then points out, **“So we are always courageous, although we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith and not by sight.”**
- Paul discusses the Ministry of Reconciliation.

## CHAPTER 6

- The Experience of the Ministry – ***“Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”***
- The Call to Holiness – ***“I shall be their God and they shall be my people.”***

## CHAPTER 7

- Paul’s joy in **Macedonia** (Greece) with the arrival of **Titus**.
- Paul concludes the chapter with, ***“I rejoice, because I have confidence in you in every respect.”***

## CHAPTER 8

- Paul thanks the people for their generosity in donating for the church in Jerusalem.
- Paul introduces the principle of equality into the discussion, so that no one is burdened.
- Paul describes **Titus** as ***“my partner and co-worker for you.”***

## CHAPTER 9

- God’s Indescribable Gift – ***“Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”***
- Paul then says, ***“You are being enriched in every way for all generosity, which through us produces thanksgiving to God.”***

## CHAPTER 10

- Paul is accused of weakness – For some will say, ***“His letters are severe and forceful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech is contemptible.”***
- But Paul responds with, ***“For it is not the one who recommends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord recommends.”***

## CHAPTER 11

- Paul then asks, ***“Did I make a mistake when I humbled myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the Gospel of God to you without charge?”***
- Paul challenges the **“superapostles”** who he says are ***“false prophets, deceitful workers, who masquerade as apostles of Christ. And, no wonder, for even Satan masquerades as an angel of light.”***



- Paul boasts of his labors for the Lord, as well as his beatings and his imprisonments, as signs of his faith and commitment.
- But Paul then says, ***“If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.”***
- Paul then describes an event in Damascus where, ***“the governor under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus, in order to seize me, but I was lowered in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands.”***

## CHAPTER 12

- Paul now describes his visions and revelations of the Lord.
- At this point Paul tells the Corinthians, ***“that I might not become too elated, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, and angel of Satan, to beat me, to keep me from being too elated.”***
- Paul never says what this thorn is (*a sickness? A physical disorder? A temptation? Or a handicap connected with his apostolic activity? We will never know.*)
- But he points out, ***“When I am weak, I am strong.”***
- He then goes back to his defense against the **“superapostles”** and claims that he is in no way inferior to them.
- Paul now plans to come to **Corinth** for a third time.
- Paul concludes this chapter by saying, ***“In the sight of God we are speaking in Christ, and all for building you up, beloved.”***

## CHAPTER 13

- Paul makes further plans for his third trip to **Corinth**.
- Paul then admonishes the people, ***“Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?”***
- The final words of the letter are the words we hear at the beginning of each Mass: ***“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.”***

# Paul's Letter to the Galatians

**Galatia** was not a city, but a **province in Asia Minor** (modern day **Turkey**). This letter was probably written around **the year 54** or so, **from Ephesus**, at the beginning of Paul's **Third Missionary Journey**.

Biblical scholars believe that Paul was writing to a community of **Gentile (non-Jewish) Christians** who had become fascinated with Jewish practices. The question arose as to whether Gentiles who had become Christians would first have to become Jews, and follow the Jewish laws and customs. Paul **said that they did not**, and in the second chapter of this letter Paul tells the people about the **Council of Jerusalem** in which this question was answered.

Once again, **Paul comes under attack** by those who are **questioning his authority as an apostle**, saying that his commission did not come from Christ and that he was not preaching the true Gospel. Paul responded by writing this strong letter to warn his Christian followers in Galatia about this "different gospel" that was being preached to them by his opponents.

Because Paul writes in such detail about the importance of Christ and His redemptive sacrifice on the cross, **many recognize this letter as a summary of basic Pauline theology**.

## CHAPTER 1

- Paul sends greetings and proclaims that he is an apostle, not from human beings, but through Jesus Christ and His Father.
- He is upset that the people are following a **"different gospel."**
- Paul proclaims the **Gospel** that is **"not of human origin."**
- Paul briefly summarizes his faith journey.

## CHAPTER 2

- Paul tells the people about the **Council of Jerusalem**, which empowered him to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles.  
(or **Cephas**) was wrong and that Paul needed to correct him.
- Paul proclaims **justification through faith** in Jesus Christ.

### CHAPTER 3

- Paul chastises the people for their lack of faith in Jesus Christ.
- Paul points out that **Abraham's faith** was credited to him as righteousness, and God also justifies the Gentiles by their faith.
- ***“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”***
- ***“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”***

### CHAPTER 4

- God sent His son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to ransom those under the Law, so that we might receive adoption.
- Paul emphasizes the freedom that God has given us.
- The comparison of Abraham's two sons, **Ishmael** (*by Hagar, the slave woman*) and **Isaac**, by Sarah (*the freeborn woman*).
- Paul points out that these two women represent **two covenants**.
- ***“We are children not of the slave woman, but of the freeborn.”***

### CHAPTER 5

- Paul emphasizes the importance of faith, and not to be misled.
- ***“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”***
- Paul advises the people to avoid all sorts of immorality.
- ***“I warn you, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”***
- ***“In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”***

### CHAPTER 6

- Paul discusses **life** in the **community of Christ**.
- ***“Peace and mercy be to all who follow this rule and to the Israel of God.”***

# Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

This letter is more of a **theological lecture** than a letter, and was written for the **Gentile** converts of the city of **Ephesus**, on the west coast of **Asia Minor** (modern day **Turkey**). Paul labored in Ephesus for well over two years. This letter was probably written while **Paul was imprisoned in Rome** during the last years of his life around **61 to 63**. Many Biblical scholars have questioned whether this letter was actually written by Paul, or by one of his students or followers. Regardless, it is still a reflection of Paul's thoughts and beliefs.

In this letter **Paul reminds his readers of the exaltation of Christ and the Church "over all heavenly and earthly powers."** He then calls for **the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles in the Church** under the headship of Christ. Then Paul goes on to encourage them to celebrate their unity by **appropriate conduct**.

**Paul emphasizes the Church as the place of Christ's power.** The relationship of Christ with the Church is developed throughout this letter to the Ephesians.

This is the letter that includes the frequently-quoted statement: **"Wives should be submissive to their husbands as to the Lord."** (Ephesians 5:22) Less frequently quoted is what immediately follows: **"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and handed Himself over for her..."** The last verse of the chapter helps clarify Paul's teaching: **"In any case, each one of you should love his wife as himself, and the wife should respect her husband."** (This theme is repeated in Colossians 3:18 to 3:19, but in less detail.)

## CHAPTER 1

- Paul claims to be an **apostle** of Christ Jesus by **the will of God**.
- Paul talks about the Father's plan for salvation, the fulfillment through Christ, and the inheritance through the Spirit.
- Paul compares the **Church to the Body of Christ**.

## CHAPTER 2

- Paul points out that by grace we have been saved; it is not from us, but is a gift from God. Grace does not come from works.
- Paul advises the people to be one in Christ.

### CHAPTER 3

- Paul mentions that he is a **prisoner of Christ** for the Gentiles.
- Paul relates how he was **commissioned to preach God’s plan**.
- Paul says a **prayer** for the people of Ephesus.

### CHAPTER 4

- Paul again points out that **grace is a gift from God**.
- Paul discusses the diversity of gifts from God: **“And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the Body of Christ.”**
- Paul then says, **“Be angry, but do not sin; do not let the sun set on your anger, and do not leave room for the devil.”**

### CHAPTER 5

- **“So be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us.....”**
- Paul then says, **“Therefore, do not continue in ignorance, but try to understand what is the will of the Lord.”**
- Finally he says, **“Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ.”**

### CHAPTER 6

- Paul calls the **children to obey their parents in the Lord**.
- However, Paul calls **slaves** to be obedient to their human masters.

**NOTE:** *Is this because he accepted the institution of slavery, or did he expect the Second coming to be imminent?*

- Paul then says, **“With all prayer and supplication, pray at every opportunity in Spirit.”**
- And he concludes with, **“Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in immortality.”**

# Paul's Letter to the Philippians

This letter, written to the people of the city of Philipp, was probably written while **Paul** was a **prisoner in Ephesus** during his **Third Missionary Journey** (around the year **55 A.D.**). Even though it was written from prison, Philippians has often been referred to as **Paul's "letter of joy."** Paul rejoices at the continuing spread of the Gospel and expresses gratitude for the concern of the Philippians for him.

The city of **Philippi** was a leading town in the **Roman province of Macedonia** (in the northeastern part of modern day Greece). **It was the first Christian community established by Paul in Europe, the foundation of which is described in Acts 16:11-40.**

**The call to unity is the heart of Paul's letter to the Philippians.** This letter is full of insights into Paul's theology and his apostolic love and concern for the Gospel and those who have converted to the teachings of Jesus.

In the **Acts of the Apostles**, we read in **chapter 16** of Paul's travels in Philippi as part of his **Second Missionary Journey**. There he met **the possessed slave girl** who brought a great profit to her owners through her fortune-telling. Paul commanded the spirit to come out of her "**in the name of Jesus Christ**" and the spirit left her. At that point, the owners of the slave girl put Paul (and Silas) into prison, and it was here that the earthquake caused all of their chains to break loose. **This gave them the opportunity to escape, but they stayed, and converted their jailer.**

## CHAPTER 1

- Paul greets the people, along with Timothy, **“slaves of Christ Jesus”** along with the **“overseers”** (*Bishops*) and **“ministers”** (*Deacons*) who are in partnership with him for the Gospel.
- Paul makes reference to **his imprisonment** and offers a **prayer** for the people who had been converted to Jesus.
- Paul, despite his imprisonment, continues to rejoice in the Lord.
- For Paul, **“life is Christ, and death is gain.”**
- He advises the people to **“conduct yourselves in a way worthy of the Gospel of Christ.”**

## CHAPTER 2

- Paul calls for unity and humility among the people.
- **Note Chapter 2, verses 6 to 11**, where Paul writes of the humility of Jesus, especially in relation to His Father.
- Paul calls the people to obedience and service in the world.
- Paul promises to send **Timothy** to them – soon.
- Paul also promises to send **Epaphroditus**, who was ill.

## CHAPTER 3

- Paul calls the people to **“rejoice in the Lord.”**
- He admonishes the people to **beware of evil-workers.**
- Paul gives a brief summary of his life.
- Paul discusses **righteousness** in terms of faith in Christ.
- He reminds the people **to move forward in Christ.**

## CHAPTER 4

- Paul urges two women, **Euodia** and **Syntyche**, to come to a mutual understanding in the Lord. (*We do not know who these women were, nor the nature of their conflict or confusion*).
- **Clement** is also mentioned as a co-worker of Paul. (*NOTE: It is possible that Clement later became our fourth Pope*).
- Paul encourages the people **to prayer and thanksgiving, to make their requests known to God.**
- Paul **gives thanks** to the Philippians for their generosity.
- He closes this letter with **words of farewell.**

# Paul's Letter to the Colossians

Like Philippians, **Paul's letter to the Colossians was probably written by Paul while he was imprisoned.** The specific date of this letter is uncertain, but it could have been written while Paul was imprisoned in **Ephesus** (during his **Third Missionary Journey**) or while he was in prison in **Rome**. Some Biblical scholars believe that it was written by a follower of Paul, some time after Paul's death. But, regardless of who actually wrote it, the letter clearly reflects Paul's teaching and theology.

The city of **Colossae** was in **Asia Minor** (modern day **Turkey**). The Christian community there was probably established by a Christian named **Epaphras** (see 1:7 and 4:12). There is a likelihood that Paul had not yet visited the city at the time of the writing of this letter.

In this letter Paul is addressing problems that had been brought on by **teachers who were misleading the community** by concentrating on the **elemental spirits of the universe**, with an emphasis on the **worship of angels** and **empty seductive philosophy**, rather than the powers of Christ.

In the conclusion of this letter, Paul refers to **Onesimus**, a slave who was owned by **Philemon**. Paul describes **Onesimus** as, "a trustworthy and beloved brother who is one of you." Later Paul writes a letter to **Philemon** in regards to Onesimus and how his escape should be handled by Philemon, in light of Gospel values.

## CHAPTER 1

- Paul greets the people, along with **Timothy**.
- Paul gives **words of thanksgiving**, and makes reference to **Epaphras**. (*He probably founded this Christian community*).
- Paul prays for continued progress in **spreading the Gospel**, and he emphasizes the deliverance from the power of darkness.
- **Note verses 15 to 20**, where Paul discusses Jesus as **"the image of the invisible God."**
- Paul proclaims his hope that **"the gospel that you heard, which has been preached to every creature under heaven of which I, Paul, am a minister."**



## CHAPTER 2

- Paul warns against false teachers, as he says, **“See to it that no one captivate you with an empty seductive philosophy according to human tradition, according to the elemental powers of the world and not according to Christ.”**
- Paul points out the **sovereign rule of Christ.**
- Paul **warns against practices that are contrary to the faith.**

## CHAPTER 3

- Paul discusses the mystical death and resurrection of Christ, as it applies to our lives as we, **“seek what is above.”**
- Paul calls us to renounce our vices, and he names a few of them.
- Again, we hear of the household code involving husbands and wives, and their relationship with one another and with children.
- Again, we hear of the instruction for slaves to obey their masters.
- **NOTE:** *Father Daniel Harrington, S.J., a Scripture scholar, points out that, “Christians today need not embrace the social structures of the Roman Empire.” (From his book, **“Who Is Jesus?”** page 125)*

## CHAPTER 4

- Here, Paul instructs the masters to, **“Treat your slaves justly and fairly, realizing that you too have a Master in heaven.”**
- Paul encourages the people **to pray with an apostolic spirit.**
- Paul agrees to send **Tychicus** and **Onesimus** to encourage the hearts of the people of Colossae.
- Paul sends greetings from his co-workers **Aristarchus, Mark, Jesus (who is called Justus), Epaphras, and Luke.**
- He closes with the words, **“The greeting is in my own hand, Paul’s. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.”**

# Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians

**Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians** is the earliest complete written document in the New Testament. It was written in about the year **51 or 52** during Paul's **Second Missionary Journey**.

Paul founded the church in **Thessalonica**, a port city in northern **Macedonia** (modern day **Greece**). He emphasizes **the Second Coming of Christ**, and he addresses the issue of **moral conduct**, for moral conduct is the practical, personal expression of one's Christian faith, hope, and love.

## CHAPTER 1

- **Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy** greet the people of Thessalonica.
- ***“For our Gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with much conviction.”***

## CHAPTER 2

- Paul describes the struggles that he has had with this community, and gives thanks for those who hear the word of God.
- Paul describes how he had planned to visit the city, more than twice, but Satan thwarted his plans.

## CHAPTER 3

- Paul relates how he stayed in Athens and sent Timothy to them.
- Now Timothy has returned to Paul with good news of their faith.

## CHAPTER 4

- Paul advises the people to conduct themselves to please God.
- He encourages the people to refrain from immorality.
- Paul discussed the Second Coming of Jesus, ***“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus Christ, bring with Him those who have fallen asleep.”***

## CHAPTER 5

- Paul advises us to be children of the light and children of the day.
- He then gives us his famous words, ***“Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit.”***

# Paul's Second Letter to the Thessalonians

This letter is addressed to the same people as the first letter to the people of **Thessalonica**. And, like the first letter, Paul emphasizes the **Second Coming of Jesus**. A problem has arisen in the community whereby someone has acquired a letter alleging that the day of the Lord is at hand. Paul describes the events that must take place before the Second Coming (also known as the "**parousia**") and admonishes the people to be prepared and to hold fast to the traditions that they were taught.

## CHAPTER 1

- Paul, along with Silvanus and Timothy, send greetings to the Church in Thessalonica and they give thanks to God for them.
- Paul speaks again of the Second coming of Christ, and of the judgment that will take place at that time.

## CHAPTER 2

- Paul advises the people not to be alarmed at reports that the day of the Lord is at hand. He asks that no one be deceived.
- Paul describes some of the things that must happen before the day of the Lord, and that all are called to believe in the truth.

## CHAPTER 3

- Paul requests prayer from the people.
- Paul has received reports that some people are refusing to work because they believe that the end is near, and Paul responds with those famous words, "**if anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that one eat.**"

*(Here Paul is addressing laziness, not judging those who are unable to work.)*

# Paul's Two Letters to Timothy

These two letters to **Timothy**, as well as the letter to **Titus**, were written not to a *community*, but to **individual pastors** (thus they are referred to as the "**pastoral letters of Paul**"). Yet they were most likely intended for general reading, as Paul addresses issues that are applicable to many people of the time. **Timothy** is first mentioned in **Acts 16:1**. He was the son of a Jewish woman, who was a believer in Jesus Christ, and his father was a Greek. After meeting Paul in **Lystra**, and accepting the faith, Timothy became a travelling companion of Paul, and shared with him the challenge of spreading the Good News throughout the Roman Empire.

By the time these letters were written, Paul has begun to realize that the **Second Coming of Jesus** may not happen as soon as he thought. As a result, he establishes general guidelines for the organization of the Church, especially in 1 Timothy 3:1-16.

## 1 Timothy

### CHAPTER 1

- Greeting from Paul, ***“an apostle of Christ Jesus...”***
- ***“The aim of this instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.”***
- Paul expresses gratitude to Jesus for strengthening him and appointing him to this ministry.
- Paul entrusts Timothy to this same charge of ministry.

### CHAPTER 2

- Paul states that, ***“For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself as a ransom for all.”***
- Paul expresses his beliefs about the conduct of men and women.

**(Note:** *This was written at a time when women were possessions of their fathers until they were married, and then they became possessions of their husbands. We live in a very different world!)*

### CHAPTER 3

- Paul discusses the qualifications necessary for one to be a bishop.
- Paul then discusses the qualifications of being a deacon.  
(**Note:** *Were there women deacons? The text is not clear on this.*)

### CHAPTER 4

- **“For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected when received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the invocation of God in prayer.”**
- Paul advises Timothy to **“Train yourself for devotion.”**
- “Do not neglect the gift you have, which was conferred upon you through the prophetic word and the imposition of hands of the presbyterate.” **NOTE:** *Presbyterate = Priesthood*

### CHAPTER 5

- **“Honor widows who are truly widows.”** (*with no other relatives*)  
**“and whoever does not provide for relatives and especially family members has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”**
- Paul gives his rules for **Presbyters** (*that is, Priests*)
- Paul tells Timothy to **“Keep yourself pure. Stop drinking only water, but have a little wine for the sake of your stomach and frequent illnesses.”**

(*What was the quality of their water?*)

### CHAPTER 6

- Paul expresses his beliefs on the roles of **slaves**.  
(*Again, this was written in the First Century for people who only knew the economic structures of their day.*)
- Paul says, **“Indeed, religion with contentment is a great gain.”**
- Here we have Paul’s famous saying. **“For the love of money is The root of all evils, and some people in their desire for it have strayed from the faith and have pierced themselves with pains.”**
- Paul tells Timothy, **“Tell the rich in the present age not to be proud and not to rely on so uncertain a thing as wealth, but rather on God, who richly provides us with all things for our enjoyment.”**
- Paul closes this letter by encouraging Timothy to **“guard what has been entrusted to you.”**

## 2 Timothy

### CHAPTER 1

- Again we have greetings from Paul, **“an apostle of Christ Jesus.”**
- Paul reminds Timothy of the gift of God that Timothy has received through the imposition of Paul’s hands (*that is, ordination*).
- Paul relates how the people of Asia (*Turkey*) deserted him.

### CHAPTER 2

- Paul points out that, **“If we have died with him, we shall also live with him; if we preserve, we shall also reign with him.”**
- Paul warns against useless disputes among the people.

### CHAPTER 3

- Paul describes the dangers of the last days, and the behavior of some people who will be leading self-centered lives.
- Paul points out that, **“all who want to live religiously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”**
- Paul then reminds us that, **“All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”**  
**refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so**

### CHAPTER 4

- Paul encourages Timothy to proclaim the word and to be persistent. **“To convince, to reprimand, and to encourage.”**
- **Paul states that “I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith.”**
- Paul makes reference to **Luke** and **Mark**, the Gospel writers.
- Then Paul tells Timothy, **“When you come, bring the cloak I left with Carpus in Troas, the papyrus rolls, and especially the parchments.”**  
*(Question: Did he know that his words would be part of Scripture?)*

- Paul closes this letter by telling Timothy to greet various people, and various people, including **Linus** (*perhaps our second Pope?*) also send their greetings to Timothy.

# Paul's Letter to Titus

Along with Timothy, **Titus** was one of Paul's closest companions. He was a **Gentile Christian** who came with Paul and Barnabas from Antioch to the **Council of Jerusalem** in **49 A.D.** According to **Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians** Titus was with Paul on his **Third Missionary Journey** (though Titus is never mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles).

Paul charges him with developing the Church on the large Mediterranean island of **Crete**. This letter instructs Titus about the character of the assistants he is to choose in light of the pastoral difficulties peculiar to Crete. It also has specific instructions from Paul concerning the behavior of the people.

## CHAPTER 1

- Paul sends greetings, ***“a slave of God and apostle of Christ Jesus.”***
- Paul relates how he left Titus in Crete to appoint presbyters (*priests*) in every town.
- Paul describes the qualifications for priests and bishops.
- Paul has harsh admonishments for the people of Crete.

## CHAPTER 2

- Paul has a long discourse on Christian behavior, addressed to older men, older women, younger men, and to slaves.
- Paul points out our call to a transformation of life.

## CHAPTER 3

- Paul gives advice to Titus to give to the people of Crete as to their actions and behaviors.
- Paul closes this letter with directives, greetings, and blessings.

## Paul's Letter to Philemon

This letter is one of the shortest letters in the New Testament; it is only **one chapter of 25 verses**. It is addressed to **Philemon**, a young, well-to-do, respected Christian in Colossae, a town in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).

Philemon owned a slave named **Onesimus**. It appears that Onesimus had run away, causing great damage to his master. **Onesimus came to Paul, who was imprisoned in Ephesus, and Paul gave him refuge and ultimately converted him to Christianity.**

Paul wanted to keep Onesimus to help him spread the Gospel, but he recognized Philemon's rights and he sent Onesimus back to him. **The question arises as to how Philemon should treat Onesimus on his return.**

To modern day readers this may seem to be an opportunity to condemn the institution of slavery. But Paul, believing that the Second Coming was to take place in the near future, never addresses the morality of any of the social structures of his day.

Rather, he advises Philemon to treat Onesimus "**no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a brother, beloved especially to me, but even more so to you, as a man and in the Lord.**" (*verse 16*)

In the next verse Paul puts Philemon on the spot by saying, "**So, if you regard me as a partner, welcome him as you would me.**"

This is a very profound challenge to a slave owner in the First Century. Paul is not ready to take on existing social structures, but emphasizes his plea "**out of love.**" (*verse 9*)



# The Letter to the Hebrews

For hundreds of years this letter was attributed to Paul, but recent Biblical scholars have questioned this since the letter is written in such a vastly different style and vocabulary than the letters of Paul. **So, who wrote this letter? No one knows for sure**, but he was probably a **Greek Christian** writing to **Jewish Christians** about the **First Covenant** that has been fulfilled by **Jesus Christ**.

The author's purpose was to ward off **apostasy** (the deserting of the faith) that had been brought on by a weariness with the demands of Christian life and a growing indifference to the calling of the Gospel. His goal is to emphasize fidelity to Christ, the high priest, and to show that the sacrifice of Jesus has replaced the sacrifices required in the Old Testament.

## CHAPTER 1

- There is no greeting, as in Paul's letters. The letter begins with words about the Son of God, ***"as far superior to the angels."***
- The author then makes numerous Scriptural references to support this position.

## CHAPTER 2

- The author continues to quote the Old Testament with references to the coming of the Son of God.
- ***"I will proclaim your name to my brothers, in the midst of the assembly I will praise you."***

## CHAPTER 3

- Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses, ***"as the founder of a house has more honor than the house itself."***
- Notice the **words of the Holy Spirit** in verses 7 to 11 as the author discusses the lack of faith of the people of Israel.

## CHAPTER 4

- The author continues to make reference to the Old Testament, beginning with the Sabbath rest.
- The words of David (from Psalm 3), ***"Oh, that today you would hear his voice: Harden not your hearts."***
- Jesus, the Son of God, is the compassionate high priest.

## CHAPTER 5

- Here the author discusses the high priests of the Old Testament including Aaron (the brother of Moses) and Melchizedek.
- Jesus is the eternal high priest.

## CHAPTER 6

- The author proclaims a message of ***“repentance from dead works and faith in God, instruction about baptisms and laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.”***
- The author continues by saying, ***“This we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, which reaches into the interior behind the veil, where Jesus has entered on our behalf as forerunner, becoming high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”***

## CHAPTER 7

- The author further discusses ***“Melchizedek, the priest of God Most High”*** from the book of Genesis.
- Here the author notes that ***“Abraham apportioned to him a tenth of everything.”*** (NOTE: Concept of tithing.)
- Again, **Jesus** is mentioned as the new high priest, forever.

## CHAPTER 8

- The author discusses the heavenly priesthood of Jesus.
- ***“We have such a high priest, who has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle that the Lord, not man, set up.”***
- Here we read of the Old Covenant that God made with Israel and the New Covenant that God made through Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER 9

- The author describes the worship of the Jewish people under the Old Covenant, including the **Temple** and the **Holy of Holies** which held the altar of incense and the **Ark of the Covenant**.
- Next the author describes the sacrifice that Jesus made, ***“not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.”***

## CHAPTER 10

- The sacrifice of Jesus is the only sacrifice necessary for the salvation of the world. No other sacrifices are needed.
- ***“Where there is forgiveness, there is no longer offering for sin.”***

## CHAPTER 11

- The author summarizes many of the events and people in the Old Testament with an emphasis on the faith of the people.
- ***“Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.”***
- ***“By faith we understand that the universe was ordered by the word of God, so that what is visible came into being through the invisible.”***

## CHAPTER 12

- The author discusses the relationship of Jesus to the Father as He ***“has taken His seat at the right of the throne of God.”***
- The author tells us to, ***“Endure your trials as discipline; God treats you as sons.”***
- ***“Strive for peace with everyone, and for that holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”***

## CHAPTER 13

- ***“Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels.”***

(NOTE: The movie, *“Entertaining Angels”* about Dorothy Day.)

- ***“Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teaching.”***
- ***“May the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep by the eternal blood of the covenant, Jesus our Lord, furnish you with all that is good, that you may do His will.”***
- Concluding words of the letter: ***“Grace be with all of you.”***

# The Letter of James

**James**, the writer of this letter, was most likely **not** the Apostle referred to as St. James the Greater. Most Biblical scholars believe that he was either **St. James the Less**, or a third **James** who was a relative of Jesus, often referred to as **“the brother of the Lord”** (see *Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3*). He was **the leader of the Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem** whom Paul called one of the "pillars" of the Church (see *Galatians 2:9*). In the **Acts of the Apostles** he appears as the authorized spokesman for the Jewish Christians in the early Church (see *Acts 12:17 and 15:13-21*).

**The Letter of James** has a strong emphasis on the practice of **virtue** in a community setting and on **social justice**. While Saint Paul put a great emphasis on faith in his letters, Saint James insists that **faith, if not accompanied by good deeds, is dead, and that faith apart from works is barren.**

**Social justice** is the area in which **James** makes the most important contribution to Christian thought and action. James is most famous for his teachings in **no partiality for the rich, God’s partiality for the poor, the obligations on employers to be fair, the condemnation of oppression by the wealthy, and the fleeting character of earthly riches.**

## CHAPTER 1

- James addresses the “twelve tribes” (the Jewish people).
- **“The brother in lowly circumstances should take pride in his high standing, and the rich one in his lowliness, for he will pass away like the flower in the field.”**
- God is not subject to temptation to evil; God tempts no one.
- **“Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding yourselves.”** (*Comparison to a face in a mirror.*)

## CHAPTER 2

- James instructs his readers to show no partiality to the rich.
- James discusses what is now called “God’s preferential option for the poor.”
- **“What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?”**
- **“For just as a body without a spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.**

### CHAPTER 3

- James talks of the power of the tongue, comparing it to the power of a rudder on a ship.
- **“Consider how a small fire can set a huge forest ablaze. the tongue is also a fire.”**
- James discusses the concept of true wisdom from above, which is first of all pure, then peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without inconsistency or insincerity.

### CHAPTER 4

- **“Where do the wars and where do the conflicts among you come from? Is it not from your passions that make war within your members?”**
- **“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”**
- **“Do not speak evil of one another.”**
- James warns us that we do not know what the future may bring.
- **“You have no idea what your life will be like tomorrow. You are a puff of smoke that appears briefly and disappears.”**
- **Rather, we should say, “If the Lord wills it, we shall live to do this or that.”**

### CHAPTER 5

- James warns the rich with the words, **“Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries. Your wealth has rotted away, your clothes have become moth-eaten, your gold and silver have corroded.”**
- James then speaks of the role of employers, and states, **“Behold, the wages you withheld from the workers who harvested your fields are crying aloud, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.”**
- “Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.”
- Do not swear. **“Let your “Yes” mean “Yes” and your “No” mean “No.”**
- James goes into detail regarding the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. **“Is there anyone among you who is sick? He should summon the presbyters (priests) of the church, and they should pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save them.”**
- **“Whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way Will save his own soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”**

# The Two Letters of Peter

Most Biblical scholars agree that these two letters were most likely written by **Peter the Apostle** (and the first Pope). Since he was martyred in Rome during the persecution by Nero between the years 64 and 67, it is assumed that the letters were written from Rome shortly before the time of his death.

## The First Letter of Peter

### CHAPTER 1

- Peter introduces himself as ***“an apostle of Christ Jesus.”***
- He emphasizes the mercy of God the Father who, ***“in His great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”***
- Peter invites the readers to have mutual love for one another.

### CHAPTER 2

- ***“Come to him, a living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God...”***
- ***“Beloved, I urge you as alien and sojourners to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against the soul.”***
- In this chapter Peter, like Paul, accepts the First Century world’s social structures and encourages his readers to do the same.

### CHAPTER 3

- Here Peter points out that, ***“Likewise, you husbands should love your wives in understanding, showing honor to the weaker female sex, since we are joint heirs of the gift of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.”***
- ***“Do not return evil for evil, or insult for insult; but, on the contrary, a blessing, because to this you were called, that you might inherit a blessing.”***

### CHAPTER 4

- ***“For this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead that though condemned in the flesh in human estimation, they might live in the spirit in the estimation of God.”***
- ***“Above all, let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins.”***
- Peter then gives advice to the persecuted Christians of his time.

## CHAPTER 5

- Peter goes on to give advice to Presbyters (Priests), to **“Tend the flock of God in your midst, overseeing not by constraint but willingly, as God would have it, not for shameful profit, but eagerly.”**
- Peter gives advice to the community, for “God opposes the proud but bestows favor on the humble.”
- **NOTE:** In the last verses “Babylon” is a code word for Rome.

## The Second Letter of Peter

### CHAPTER 1

- In this letter, Peter refers to himself as **“Symeon Peter.”**
- **“Know this first of all, that there is no prophecy of scripture that is a matter of personal interpretation, for no prophecy ever came through human will; but rather, human beings, moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke under the influence of God.”**

### CHAPTER 2

- Peter warns the reader to be wary of false teachers.
- Peter implores to learn from Biblical figures from the past.
- Peter denounces the false teachers of the world.

### CHAPTER 3

- Peter refers to this as his second letter.
- Peter explains that the Second Coming of Jesus did not happen as quickly as some expected.
- Peter reminds us, **“that with the Lord, one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day”** and that we should use this time to come to repentance.
- Peter makes reference to Paul’s letters, even going so far as to say that in them, **“there are some things hard to understand.”**  
(Do you find this comment to be surprising?)
- He concludes this letter by exhorting the readers to, **“grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory now and to the day of eternity.”**

# The Three Letters of John

Early Christian tradition identified these letters as writings of **John the Apostle**, who also is credited for writing the fourth Gospel. Many Biblical Scholars believe that these letters were written in response to a debate on the proper interpretation of John's Gospel.

The purpose of these letters was to combat certain false ideas, especially about Jesus, and to deepen the spiritual and social awareness of the Christian community. John argues that the fullness of Christian life – as fellowship with the Father – must be based on true belief and the resulting charitable giving. Knowledge of God and love for one another are inseparable.

The **First Letter of John** is of particular value for its declaration of both the humanity and divinity of Jesus as a teaching of the apostles.

## The First Letter of John

### CHAPTER 1

- Notice how this letter opens with a prologue, similar in style to the Gospel of John.
- ***“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we seen with our own eyes...”***
- ***“God is light, and in Him there is no darkness.”***

### CHAPTER 2

- ***“Jesus is expiation for our sins, and not only for our sins, but for those of the whole world.”***
- ***“Whoever says he is in the light, yet hates his brother, is still in the darkness.”***
- John writes to the members of the community, in various ways.
- John writes of the ***“anti-Christ”*** that have appeared, and they are the ones who deny the Father and the Son.

### CHAPTER 3

- John reiterates the message that we have heard from the beginning, and that is, ***“we should love one another.”***
- ***“If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him? Children, let us love not in word or speech, but in deed and truth.”***



## CHAPTER 4

- ***“Every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God.”***
- ***“Beloved, let us love one another because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.”***
- ***“No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and His love is brought to perfection in us.”***
- ***“God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God, and God in him.”***

## CHAPTER 5

- ***“And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is the Son. Whoever possesses the Son has life; whoever does not possess the Son of God does not have life.”***
- ***“And we are in the one who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.”***

## The Second Letter of John

This letter is only one chapter, and only 13 verses. It was written from the **“Presbyter”** (*priest*) to the **“chosen Lady and her children,”** a reference to the Christian community. It was written as a reply to deceivers in the community who were confusing the people by not acknowledging Jesus Christ.

The message of this letter is the same message that is so prominent in John’s Gospel: ***“Let us love one another.”*** (verse 5)

## The Third Letter of John

This letter is also only one chapter (only 15 verses). It was written to a person named Gaius who was a host to Paul when he was in Rome. This letter offers a brief glimpse into the challenges of missionary activity and encourages the people to be faithful to the name of Jesus Christ. **John** refers to a person named **Diotrephes** ***“who loves to dominate, but does not acknowledge us.”*** He advises the readers, ***“do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does what is good is of God; whoever does what is evil has never seen God.”***

## The Letter of Jude

**Jude**, like James, was a relative of Jesus, and claims to be the brother of James. He was most likely **not** the Apostle Jude.

Like the last two letters of John, this letter is very short - only **one chapter** (25 verses).

The purpose of the letter is to warn the people against false teachers who were worming their way into the community.

Jude refers to **“intruders”** (verse 4) who “pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and who deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”

Jude compares them to **the angels who deserted heaven** and have been “kept in eternal chains, in gloom, for the judgment of the great day.” (verse 6)

The writer then goes on to relate the story of the archangel **Michael** (in verse 9).

For the next 7 verses the writer reiterates the stories of the Old Testament figures who turned against the will of God and were judged accordingly.

From verse 17 to the end of the letter Jude exhorts the people not to lose hope and recalls the words of the apostles who foretold, **“In the last time there will be scoffers who will live according to their own godless desires.”**

In verse 20 Jude tells the readers, **“But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in the love of God and wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.”**

Jude closes his letter with the doxology making reference to the glory, majesty, power, and authority of God **“from ages past, now, and for ages to come. Amen.”**

# The Book of Revelation - The Apocolypse

The book of **Revelation**, the last book of the Bible, is one of the most difficult to understand because it is so full of symbolism. **These symbolic descriptions are not to be taken literally.** Rather, this book is to be read in light of the crisis of the ruthless persecution of the Church by the Roman authorities. **Note:** The "**harlot Babylon**" symbolizes **pagan Rome**, the city on seven hills. Satan is referred to as the great dragon, the ancient serpent, the devil, and the deceiver of the entire world.

Because **Satan** has been defeated in heaven, he vents his anger against the Church through the **Beast from the Sea** (*the Roman Emperor*) and the **Beast from the Earth** (*the local official responsible for promoting the emperor cult and the persecution of the Christians*).

The final chapters of the book feature a sharp contrast between Rome and the new Jerusalem, and the book concludes with the reference to "the new heaven and the new earth" ushering in the eternal reign of God.

**This book is an exhortation to Christians of the first century to stand firm in the faith and to avoid compromise with paganism.** They are to wait patiently for the fulfillment of God's promises. The triumph of God in the world of men and women remains a mystery, to be accepted in faith and longed for in hope.

The author of this book calls himself the servant **John**, who, because of his Christian faith, has been exiled to the rocky island of **Patmos**, a Roman prison colony. He was an early Christian prophet, but otherwise we know very little about him. This book was probably written **between the years 81 and 96**, near the end of the reign of **Domitian**, a fierce persecutor of Christians.

The book of **Revelation** reflects the ultimate salvation and victory over evil that is to take place at the end of the present age when Christ will come again in glory. **Christ's overwhelming defeat of Satan ushers in the everlasting reign of God.** The enduring message of this book is one of **hope** and **consolation** and **challenge** for all who dare to believe in Him. 51

# **The Divisions of the Book of Revelation:**

## **I. Introduction, and the Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia.**

(Chapters 1, 2, and 3)

## **II. God, the Scroll, and the Lamb in Heaven.**

(Chapters 4 and 5)

## **III. The Seven Seals.**

(Chapters 6 and 7)

## **IV. The Seven Trumpets (Seven Disasters).**

(Chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11)

## **V. The Woman and the Dragon.**

(Chapter 12)

## **VI. The Two Beasts (one from sea, one from land).**

(Chapter 13)

## **VII. The Lamb's Companions and the Three Angels.**

(Chapter 14)

## **VIII. The Seven Last Plagues and the Seven Bowls.**

(Chapters 15 and 16)

## **IX. The Punishment of Babylon and the Destruction of the Pagan Nations.**

(Chapters 17, 18, 19, and 20)

## **X. The New Creation.**

(Chapters 21 and 22)

# I. Introduction, and the Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia.

## CHAPTER 1

- The author states that this is the revelation of Jesus Christ, and it was made known to him through an angel.
- The author identifies himself as **“his servant John.”**
- John sends greetings to the seven churches of Asia.
- The Lord God says, **“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the one who is, and who was, and who is to come, the almighty.”**
- John points out that he is on the island called Patmos, **“because I proclaimed God’s word and gave testimony to Jesus.”**
- John then describes his first vision and the instructions he received, **“from a voice as loud as a trumpet.”**
- He was to write on a scroll what he saw and send it to seven churches in Asia (modern-day Turkey): Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.
- John then sees **“one like a son of man”** who said to him, **“Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last, the one who lives. Once I was dead, but now I am alive forever and ever. I hold the keys to death and the netherworld.”**
- **Note:** *The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*

## CHAPTER 2

- John writes to the angel of the church of Ephesus.
- John writes to the angel of the church of Smyrna
- John writes to the angel of the church of Pergamum.
- John writes to the angel of the church of Thyatira.

## CHAPTER 3

- John writes to the angel of the church of Sardis.
- John writes to the angel of the church of Philadelphia.
- John writes to the angel of the church of Laodicia.  
This is the church that has grown complacent in the faith.  
**“So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.”**

## II. The Scroll and the Lamb in Heaven

### CHAPTER 4

- John has a vision of an open door to heaven, and he heard trumpet-like voice saying, **“Come up here and I will show you what must happen afterwards.”**
- In the center and around the throne, there were four living creatures: the first resembled a lion, the second was like a calf, the third had a face like that of a human being, and the fourth looked like an eagle in flight.
- The four living creatures exclaim, **“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come.”**

### CHAPTER 5

- John has a vision of the scroll in the right hand of the one who sat on the throne. But, no one could open the seven seals.
- Finally, the Lamb received the scroll from the right hand of the one who sat on the throne and was able to open it.

## III. The Seven Seals

### CHAPTER 6

- The Lamb broke open the seven seals, one at a time.

### CHAPTER 7

- John has a vision of four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds.
- Another angel came up from the East, holding the seal of the living God, and put the seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God. The number of those who had been marked was one hundred and forty-four thousand: twelve thousand from each of the tribes of Israel.
- After this John had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue, and they cried out in a loud voice, **“Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne, and from the Lamb.”**

## IV. The Seven Trumpets (Disasters)

### CHAPTER 8

- After the seventh seal was broken open, there was silence, and the seven angels who stood before God were given seven trumpets.
- Another angel was given a gold censor and a great quantity of incense to offer, along with the prayers of all the holy ones, on the gold altar that was before the throne.
- The seven angels prepared to blow the seven trumpets, and these trumpets signified seven impending disasters (or plagues) that would come upon the earth
- The first four angels blow their trumpets, and the disasters and plagues continue.

### CHAPTER 9

- The fifth and sixth angels blow their trumpets.
- These plagues killed many people, especially those who did not repent of their actions of worshiping demons and idols, nor did they repent of their murders, their magic potions, their unchastity, or their robberies.

### CHAPTER 10

- When the seventh angel blows his trumpet, ***“the mysterious plan of God shall be fulfilled, as he promised to his servants, the prophets.”***

### CHAPTER 11

- Two witnesses were commissioned to prophesy for those twelve hundred and sixty days, wearing sackcloth.
- The seventh angel blows his trumpet, which was followed by loud voices in heaven saying, ***“The kingdom of the world now belongs to our Lord and to his Anointed and he will reign forever and ever.”***
- Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant could be seen in the temple.

## V. The Woman and the Dragon

### CHAPTER 12

- A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.
- The dragon stood before the woman about to give birth, to devour her child when she gave birth.
- She gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod. Her child was caught up to God and his throne.
- The woman herself fled into the desert where she had a place prepared by God.
- Then war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels battled against the dragon. The dragon and its angels fought back, but they did not prevail and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.

## VI. The Two Beasts (from sea and land)

### CHAPTER 13

- John then saw a beast coming out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads.
- John then saw another beast coming up out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb's but spoke like a dragon.
- The second beast forced all of the people to be given a stamped image on their right hands or their foreheads, so that no one could buy or sell without the stamp.
- ***“Wisdom is needed here; one who understands can calculate the number of the beast, for it is a number that stands for a person. His number is six hundred and sixty-six.”***
- **NOTE**: Many Biblical scholars believe that this refers to the Emperor Nero, whose Greek name is translated into the Hebrew words: **“NRWN QSR”** or **“Nero Caesar.”**

**N=50 R=200 W=6 N=50 Q=100 S=60 R=200**  
***This adds up to a total of 666.***



## **VII. The Lamb's Companions and the Three Angels**

### **CHAPTER 14**

- John saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion with his companions.
- Three angels then appear.
- ***“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”***
- ***“Yes,” said the Spirit, “let them find rest from their labors for their works accompany them.”***

## **VIII. The Seven Last Plagues and the Seven Bowls**

### **CHAPTER 15**

- God sends the seven angels with the seven last plagues.
- Those left standing were the ones who won the victory over the beast and its image and the number that signified its name.
- They were holding God's harps, and they sang the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.
- With that the temple that is the heavenly tent of testimony opened, and the seven angels with the seven plagues came out of the temple.

### **CHAPTER 16**

- The seven angels poured out the seven bowls of God's fury upon the earth. These represent seven more plagues.
- They then assembled in the place called Armageddon.  
**NOTE:** This is also known as, “the Mountain of Megiddo.”

## **IX. The Punishment of Babylon and the Destruction of the Pagan Nations**

### **CHAPTER 17**

- John is now shown the judgment on “the great harlot who lives near the many waters.” This is the city of Rome, which is also referred to as “Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and the abominations of the earth.”

- The beast with the seven heads and ten horns – the seven heads represent the seven hills upon which the woman sits (*that is, the city of Rome*) and the ten horns represent ten kings who have not yet been crowned.

## CHAPTER 18

- The fall of Babylon (*Rome*) is described in great detail, with the negative effects on the merchants of the city.

## CHAPTER 19

- After the fall of Babylon John hears the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, ***“Alleluia! Salvation, glory, and might belong to our God, for true and just are His judgments.”***
- The great multitude said, ***“Alleluia! The Lord has established his reign, our God the almighty.”***
- And the angel said, ***“Worship God. Witness to Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”***
- The heavens opened and there was a white horse; its rider was called ***“Faithful and True.”***
- He has a name written on his cloak and on his thigh, ***“King of kings and Lord of lords.”***

## CHAPTER 20

- The Devil (*or Satan*) is tied up for a thousand years and thrown into the abyss.
- The souls of those who had been beheaded for Jesus and for the Word of God, and had not worshiped the beast nor its image, came to life.
- This is the first resurrection. ***“Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over these; they will be priests of God and of Christ.”***
- When Satan is released from his prison, he will go out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth.
- Satan will again be thrown into the pool of fire and sulfur, and will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

# **X. The New Creation - The New Jerusalem**

## **CHAPTER 21**

- *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.”*
- *“I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven.”*
- *The one who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.”*
- *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give a gift from the spring of life-giving water.”*
- The writer (**John**) goes on to describe the new Jerusalem.
- *“I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb.”*
- *“Only those will enter whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”*

## **CHAPTER 22**

- And Jesus said, *“Behold, I am coming soon.”*
- *“Blessed is the one who keeps the prophetic message of this book.”*
- *“I, Jesus, sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the morning star.”*
- The one who gives this testimony says, *“Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!*
- **NOTE:** In Aramaic, **“Maranatha”** means *“Our Lord, come!”* (*“Maranatha”* appears in some older church hymns.)
- **NOTE:** The last words of the Bible are, *“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.”*

**So ends the New Testament. I hope this Journey Through the New Testament has been rewarding and fulfilling for you, and that it has helped you to get a better understanding of God’s Word as it is recorded in the Sacred Scriptures.**

**Our Journey continues next week with the Old Testament, beginning with the story of Creation!**