

THE EPISTLES AND REVELATION IN THE BIBLICAL STORY

(PART 2)

TITUS

Paul's epistle to Titus, his companion, who was supervising churches in Crete at the time, centers on what should be the role and responsibilities of a minister/pastor.

In this epistle, Paul exhorted Titus to exercise his authority as an apostolic representative--one who must put things in order, counter false teachers and false doctrines and maintain good works.¹

Key verses: 1:5; 3:8

Key chapter: 2

PHILEMON

Onesimus had wronged Philemon, his master, and escaped from Colosse to Rome where he met Paul.

Paul's letter to Philemon was about forgiveness: Paul was asking Philemon to forgive Onesimus using the analogy of Christ's forgiveness of our sins.

Key verses: 16-17

HEBREWS

The writer of Hebrews is unknown. Some believe that it is Paul. Others say it is Barnabas or Luke or Clement. No doubt the recipients of this epistle knew the identity of the writer.

This epistle was addressed to believers who were enduring hardships for the sake of the gospel.

Hebrews makes the case of the superiority of Christ's person over the Old Testament prophets. It also makes the case of the superiority of the high priesthood of Christ over the Aaronic priesthood.

Key verses: 4:14-16; 12:1-2

Key chapter: 11

¹ *The New Open Bible*, 1438.

JAMES

James, the writer of this epistle, was the half-brother of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was a leader of the church in Jerusalem.

James emphasizes that faith must be demonstrated through action, not just words.

Key verses: 1:19-22 and 2:14-17

Key chapter: 1

1 PETER

Peter was writing to the Jewish believers at a time the church was facing persecution. He was exhorting them to be courageous and to ensure that they were above reproach both in character and conduct.

Key verses: 1:10-12; 4:12-13

Key chapter: 4

2 PETER

First Peter dealt with problems from the outside (persecutions) while Second Peter addressed problems from inside the church.

In this epistle, Peter warned about false teachers and false doctrines. He also urged believers to watch their personal lives.

Key verses: 2 Peter 1:20-21; 3:9-11

Key chapter: 2 Peter 1

1 JOHN

1 John is about fellowship with God: God is light, God is love, and God is life. The Gnostics (those who believed that they had an understanding of hidden knowledge that made them to be spiritual elites) were active at this time.²

From Gnostic teachings, Christ, as a divine being, could not have taken on human flesh because matter (the body) is inherently evil. As a result, some began to make a distinction between the man Jesus and the spiritual Christ who came upon Jesus at his baptism but departed prior to His crucifixion.³

² Ibid., 1492.

³ Ibid.

Another variation of this false doctrine was called Docetism (i.e., to seem); Christ only seemed to have a human body. Either of these interpretations denied the incarnation of Christ (i.e., God in the flesh).⁴

John's epistle refuted these heretical teachings. He exhorted his audience to be steadfast in the truth and not to be lured by worldliness and false teachings.

Key verses: 1 John 1:3-4; 5:11-13

Key chapter 1 John 1

2 JOHN

John exhorted his audience to walk in the truth according to Christ's commandments, shun false doctrines, and not to have fellowship or associate with false teachers.

Key verses: 2 John 9-10

3 JOHN

3 John encouraged fellowship among believers.

Key verse: 3 John 11

JUDE

Jude was a half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh. In this epistle, Jude asked believers to fight for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ once for all delivered to the saints.

Believers must be courageous and must defend the gospel whenever it was attacked by false teachers or apostasy would thrive.

Key verse: Jude 3

REVELATION

John wrote this book while on exile on the Island of Patmos. Though Revelation was a letter to the seven churches in Asia, it was a prophecy of end-time events from the time of John up till the end of the age (cosmos).

The church was in dire straits at this time; there was no safe place for believers in the Roman Empire. No doubt some were afraid. John himself had been banished on the Island of Patmos.

⁴ Ibid.

Only a small part of Revelation was about the state of affairs of the seven churches (the audience): Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, was warning lukewarm Christians in those churches to repent and to stop compromising with the world.

The most important part of the Book dwelt on the three persons of the Godhead and the majesty of the resurrected Christ who has the authority to judge and rule the earth.

Key verses: 1: 19; 19:11-15

Key chapters: 19-22