

THE EPISTLES AND REVELATION IN THE BIBLICAL STORY

(PART 1)

OVERVIEW

The Epistles were written to 1st century followers of Christ. In addition to addressing specific issues affecting particular churches, the epistles spoke on salvation and discipleship. The main theme in all the epistles is Christ crucified for the salvation of humankind and who resurrected for their justification.

Both the writers of the epistles and the recipients of these letters believed that though Christ will establish the physical Kingdom on earth at His Second Coming, they were already living in that new reality. For them, believers should live according to the ethics of the Kingdom of God and not according to the ethics of the world.

Though believers have the Holy Spirit indwelling them (a seal and deposit of their salvation), the early church believed that what was yet to come was even more glorious. Both the writers of the epistles and 1st century followers of Christ understood and accepted that living godly in Christ Jesus entailed sufferings and persecutions.

The Book of Revelation is the prophecy about the church and the world's history until Christ's Second Coming.

ROMANS

Paul wrote this epistle to the church in Rome. The epistle emphasizes that in Christ, there is no Jew or Gentile--all are one people in God. All have sinned (Jew and Gentile) and Christ has paid the price for sin with His precious Blood.

Key verses: 1:16-17; 3:21-25.

Key chapters: 6-8

1 CORINTHIANS

There is carnality in the Corinthian church. "First Corinthians reveals the problems, pressures, and struggles of a church called out of a pagan society."¹

Paul's epistle seeks to correct those behaviours that were contrary to a new life in Christ.

Key verses: 6:19-20; 10:12-13

Key chapter: 13

2 CORINTHIANS

The glory of the gospel is exhibited in the weakness of its ministers and giving to the poor should be one of an expression of generosity and not of obligation.²

The epistle speaks on servant hood as well as warnings about listening to false teachers.

Key verses: Chapter 4:5-6; 5:17-19

Key chapters: 8-9

GALATIANS

Paul wrote this epistle is about Christian liberty to the Galatians. It warns about mixing the old and the new: some of the Jewish Christians wanted circumcision and keeping of the law by gentiles to be part of the church doctrine.

Paul emphasized that the gospel is one of God's grace and not about the Law of the OT.

Key verses: 2:20-21; 5:1-

Key chapter: 5.

EPHESIANS

This epistle written by Paul emphasizes that Christ is superior to all the principalities and powers. It is a letter of encouragement and exhortation.

¹ *The New Open Bible*, 1342.

² *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, 333.

Key verses: 2: 8-10; 4:1-3

Key chapter: 6

PHILLIPIANS

Paul wrote this letter to the church in Philippi, which was a mostly gentile church. The emphasis of this epistle is on humility. Paul enjoins the Philippians to follow the example of Christ both in His sufferings and in His humility.

Key verses: 1:21 and 4:12

Key chapter: 2

COLOSSIANS

Paul wrote this epistle to this mostly gentile church in Colosse. The emphasis is on the absolute supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ, His pre-eminence in creation, redemption and in the church.

Key verses: 2:9-10; 3:1-2

Key chapter: 3

1 THESSALONIANS

This was written to the mostly gentile believers in Thessalonica. In this epistle, Paul encourages the Thessalonians to "excel in their new-found faith, to increase their love for one another and to rejoice, pray and give thanks always."³

Key verses: 3:12-13; 4:16-18

Key chapter: 4

³ *The New Open Bible*, 1410.

2 THESSALONIANS

Paul deals here with a misunderstanding "spawned by false teachers regarding the coming day of the Lord."⁴ His letter is also one of encouragement in the midst of their persecution and suffering.

Key verses: 2:2-3; 3:5-6

Key chapter: 2

1 TIMOTHY

This is a letter by Paul to his younger companion, Timothy. It is a ministerial epistle that details the challenges of ministry. A minister must contend for the gospel, making sure that false doctrine is not preached. The minister must guard against temptations so that he does not become a liability instead of an asset to the gospel. He must avoid false teachers, false teaching and pursue righteousness. And he or she must not be greedy.

Key verses: 3:15-16; 6:11-12

Key chapter: 3

2 TIMOTHY

Paul's second letter to Timothy. Paul appeals to Timothy to remain loyal to Christ and to Paul. He also indicts false teachers.

Key verses: 2:3-4; 3:14-17

Key chapter: 2

⁴ Ibid., 1419.