

# The Jesus Lens

*Reading Scripture in the Light of His Revelation*



## Session 8

# Those Early Believers



Adam

Abraham

Moses

David

Isaiah

Nehemiah

Jesus

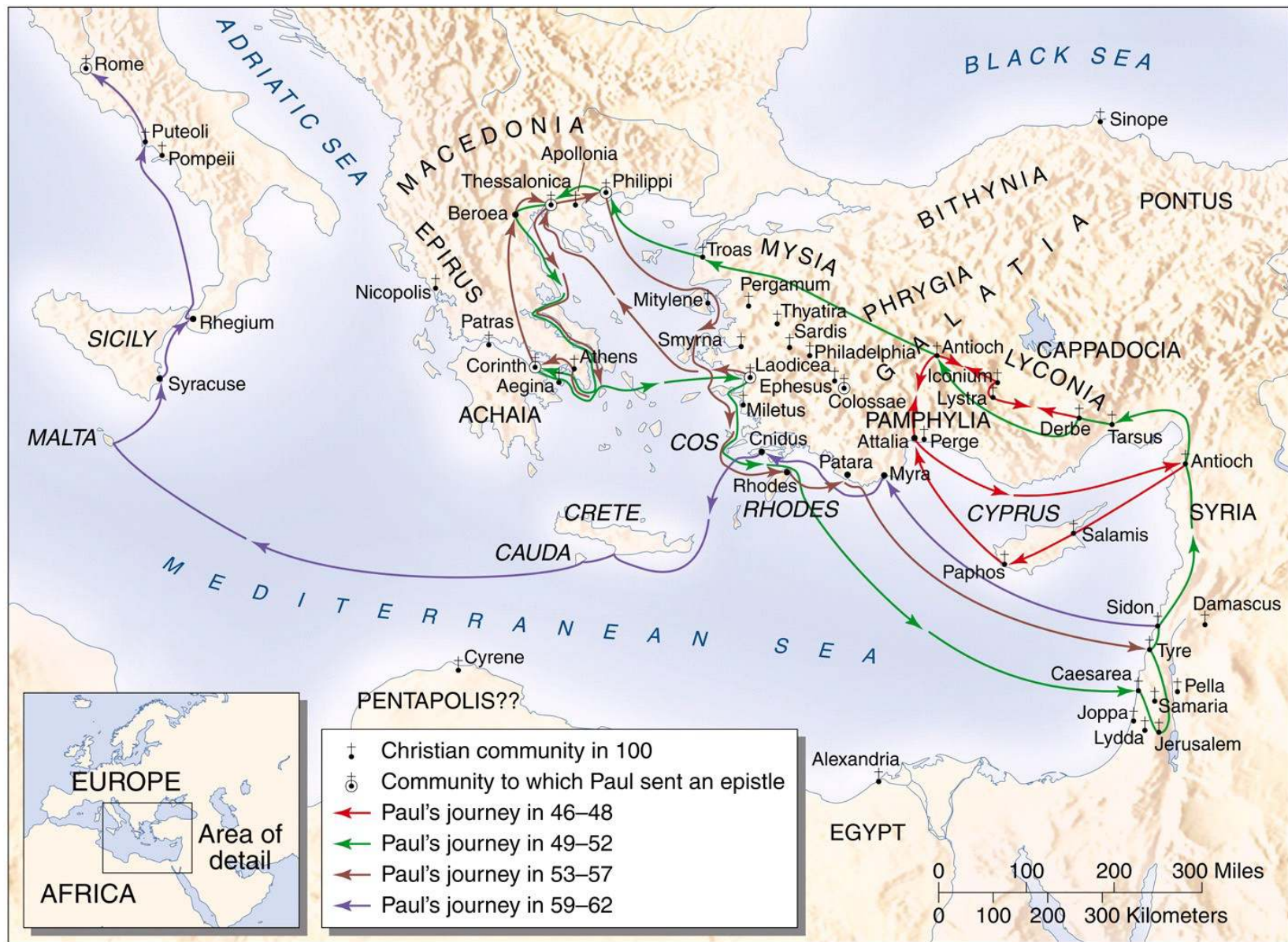
Paul

6/5 BC  
- 27 AD

Matthew  
Mark  
Luke  
John

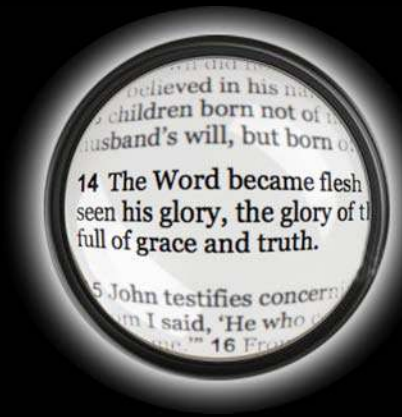
35-68 AD

Acts  
Letters  
James'  
Paul's  
Hebrews  
Peter's  
Jude's  
John's  
Revelation



Paul's Missionary Journeys

**Church at the  
Beginning of Acts****120 people****Jews****Powerless and afraid****Peter/James****Only Jerusalem****Church At the  
End of Acts****Thousands****Jews and Gentiles****Influential and bold****Paul, Silas and Luke****Throughout Middle East,  
Asia, Europe and North  
Africa**



## Session 9

# The Most Dangerous Person

**From someone studying a book with a group of people that says:**

**We can't look at God as "only" a loving Father or we can't appreciate the cross. He's citing passages in the Psalms about how He not only hates sin, he hates sinners & Habakkuk 1:13 to prove God can't look at evil.**

**I feel compelled to share with others how harmful this view of the Father is but I'm realizing I will have to point out that the Old Testament writers got some things wrong about as a result of their fallen, pre-redemption condition. How do I lovingly share this? I'm anticipating people really struggling to process that through their ideas about biblical inerrancy.**

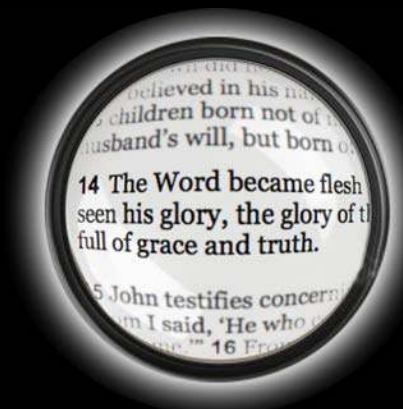
**Ignorance does not result from what we don't know! Ignorance results from what we think we do know—but don't! Most ignorant people are, in fact, quite certain."**

**Richard Rohr**



**(Of Paul:) His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.**

**2 Peter 3:16**



## Session 10

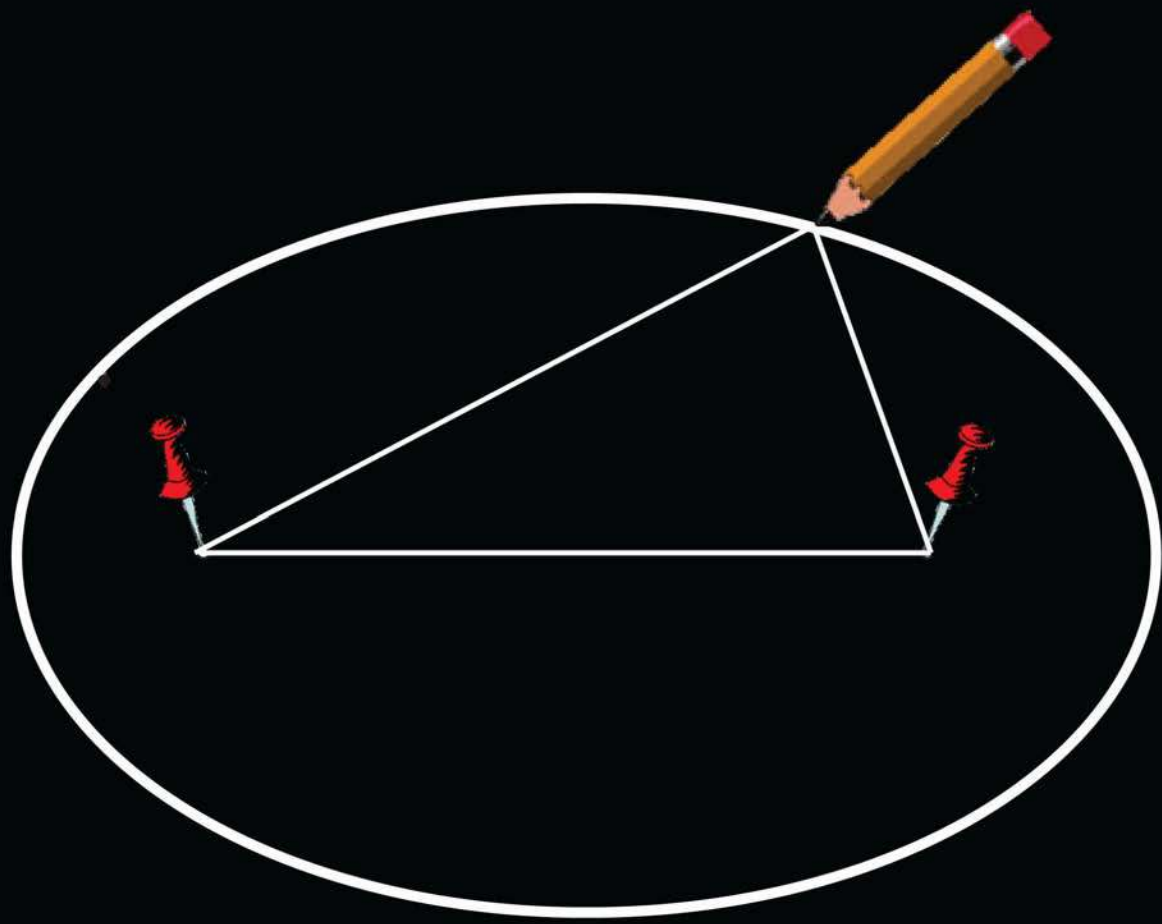
# The Elliptical Playground

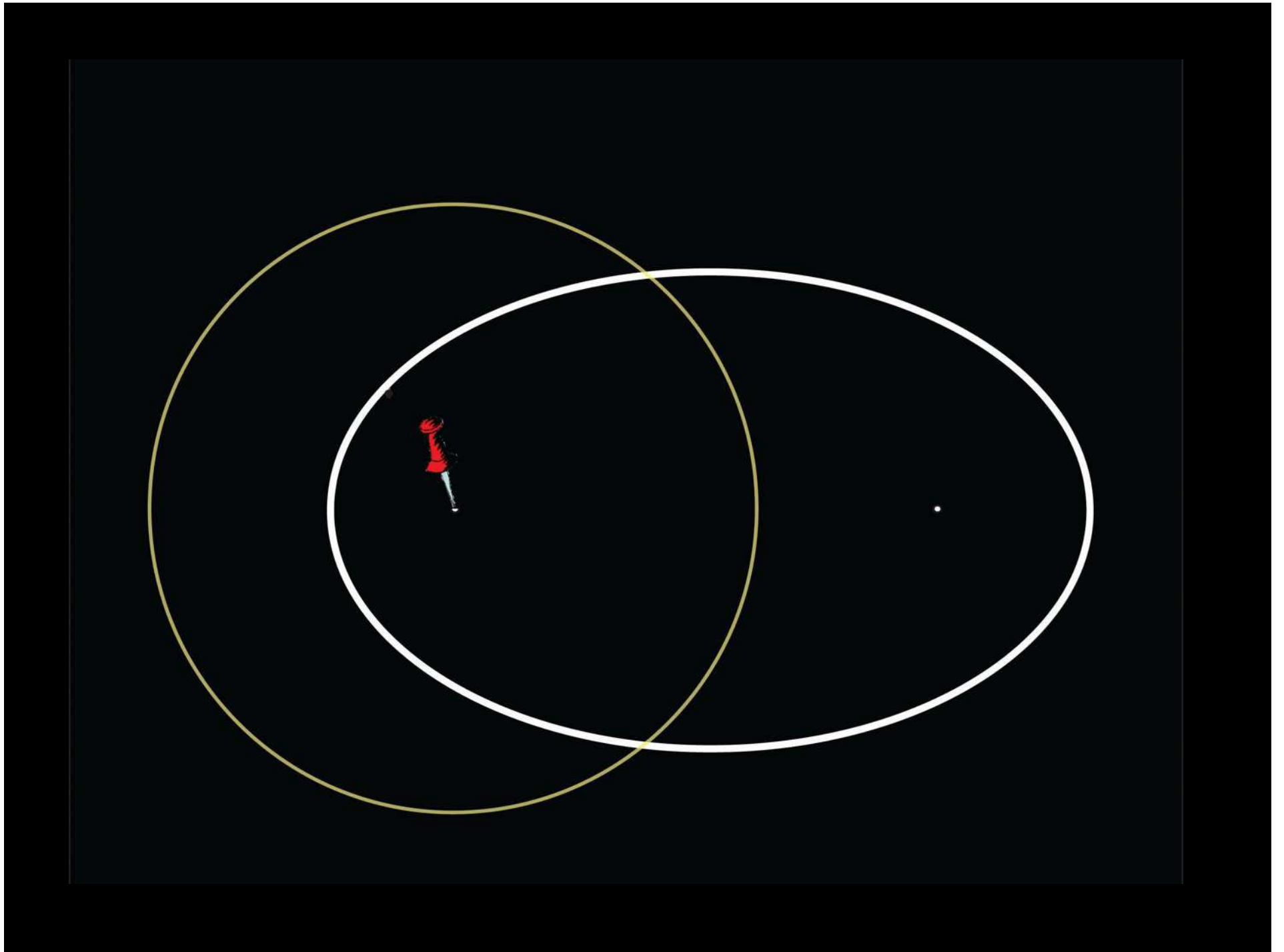


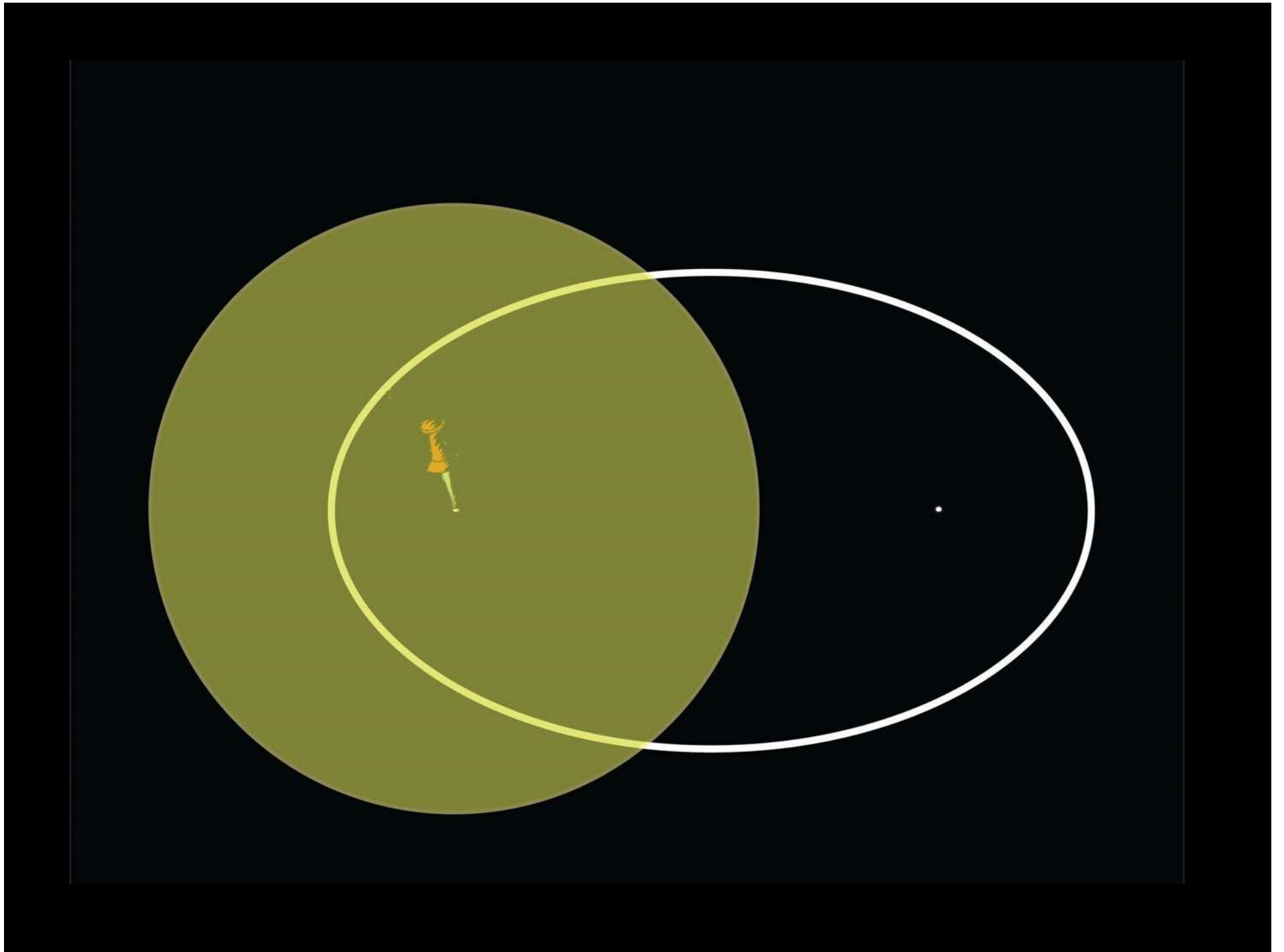
*“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or denying the free exercise thereof...”*

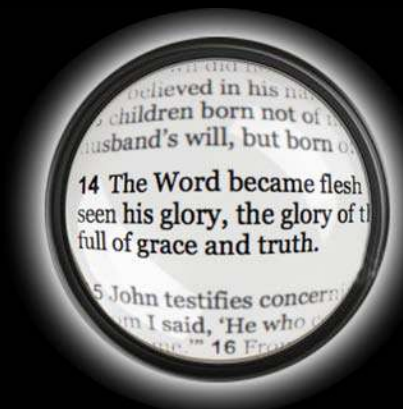
*First Amendment to the United States Constitution*











# Session 11

# The Early Letters





Adam

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Moses

David

Isaiah

Nehemiah

Jesus

Paul

6/5 BC  
- 27 AD

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Mark  
Luke  
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35-68 AD

Acts  
Letters  
James'  
Paul's  
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Peter's  
Jude's  
John's  
Revelation

## **Paul**

## **Others**

### **Early Letters**

**1 & 2 Thessalonians  
Galatians  
1 & 2 Corinthians  
Romans**

**James**

### **Middle Letters**

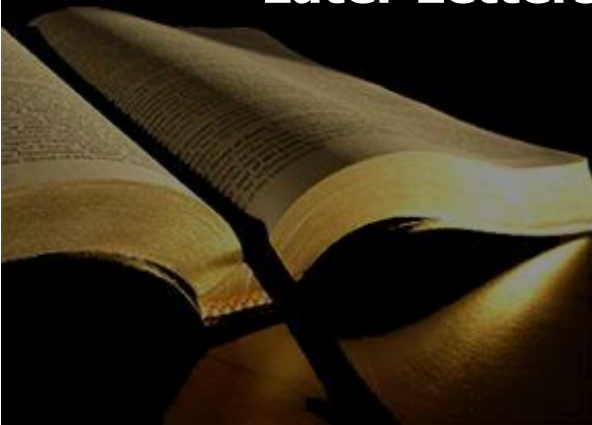
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Philippians  
Colossians  
Philemon**

**Hebrews**

### **Later Letters**

**1 & 2 Timothy  
Titus**

**1 & 2 Peter  
Jude  
1, 2 & 3 John  
Revelation**



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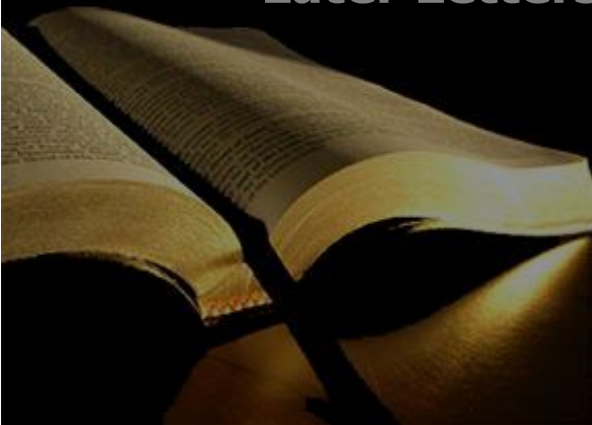
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# James

- **Author: James, the brother of Jesus, didn't believe at first but became leader in Jerusalem, martyred in 62 by being thrown from the temple and stoned**
- **Date: Probably the earliest: 47-48 AD**
- **Theme: The Practice of True Religion**
- **To encourage them in trials, and rebuke for neglect of the transforming power**
- **Characteristics:**
  - **Authoritative - lots of imperatives**
  - **Relationship to Sermon in the Mount**
  - **Very little theological--emphasis is on practical Christianity**

# **1 & 2 Thessalonians**

- **Paul after his abrupt departure (Acts 17) to establish them in the kingdom and deal with problems they had**
- **Date 50-51 within six months of each other.**
- **1 Thessalonians: an apostle's encouragement to a young group in persecution (2:12,4:18) and answering questions concerning the dead in Christ. Gentle in tone: mother caring for children (2:7)**
- **2 Thessalonians: again an apostle's encouragement.**
  - **Further instruction on the second coming of Jesus**
  - **Further instructions on Christian conduct – including a warning to the idle**
  - **Tone: more direct, terse**

## **Galatians**

- **Paul's authorship never questioned, with secretary**
- **Date: 48-49 before Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)**  
**Mentions 2 of his 5 visits to Jerusalem**
- **Visited Galatia twice (Lystra, Iconium, Derbe)**
- **Theme – Justification by Faith in Christ (5:1)**  
**False teachers (1:7,5:10,12,6:12-13)**
- **Tone: Sharp rebuke (3:1-5, 5:12)**
- **Next to 2 Corinthians the most biographical**
- **Versatility in presentation – Scripture, experience, logic, warning, exhortation, allegory**
- **Only letter of Paul to a group of churches**

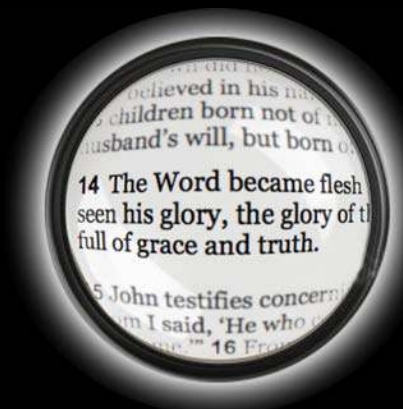
## **1 & 2 Corinthians**

- **The Church at Corinth- Acts 18 major port 12 temples**
- **Four Letters**
  - 1<sup>st</sup> letter – 2 Corinthians 5:9**
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter – I Corinthians**
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> letter – 2 Corinthians 2:4**
  - 4<sup>th</sup> Letter – 2 Corinthians**
- **Date: Toward the close of his time in Ephesus (16:5-9), around 55 AD with second cor. 4-5 months later**
- **1 Corinthians: Unity in the body of Christ**
  - **Tender concern**
  - **Problems in Corinth: Division, lawsuits, immorality, selfishness**
- **2 Corinthians: motives of true and false ministry**
  - **The most personal**
  - **Most autobiographical (sufferings, motives, weakness)**

## **Romans**

- **Author: Paul on his way to Jerusalem with offering (Romans 15:25-26; Acts:18-21)**
- **Rome, where he'd not yet been**
- **Theme: The righteousness that trust produces (1:16-17)**
- **Most intense doctrinal and theological writing in the New Testament ( justification, sanctification, glorification)**
- **Many Old Testament references**
- **Section on God's desires for the Jews (9-11)**
- **Has had a profound and powerful effect on many key individuals in the history of the church, including Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley and William Tyndale.**





# Session 12

# The Middle Letters

## **Reading the Epistles**

- **Example: Galatians 3:1-5**
- **Who is involved?**
  - Paul: 9 to churches 4 to individuals**
  - General: 8 to various locales**
  - Receipients**
- **Structure**
  - Paul: from indicatives to imperatives**
- **Context of the Letter**
  - Where does it fit in the Biblical story?**
  - The situation they are in**
  - Counsel/teaching given**
- **What does this speak to my life?**
  - Where does it signal my heart out of bounds?**
  - How does it inform me to live in him today?**
  - What does it reveal about the ways God works?**

## **Paul**

## **Others**

### **Early Letters**

**1 & 2 Thessalonians  
Galatians  
1 & 2 Corinthians  
Romans**

**James**

### **Middle Letters**

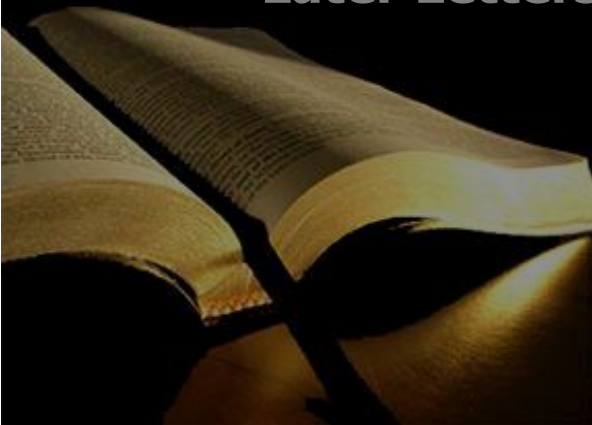
**Ephesians  
Philippians  
Colossians  
Philemon**

**Hebrews**

### **Later Letters**

**1 & 2 Timothy  
Titus**

**1 & 2 Peter  
Jude  
1, 2 & 3 John  
Revelation**



# **The Prison Epistles**

Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians

- **All four written during some kind of imprisonment or at least house arrest (Eph 3:1, 4:1; Phil 1:7, 13-14; Colossians 4:18, Philemon 1, 9) Three possibilities:  
In Caesarea for two years? Acts 23ff  
In Rome for two years? Acts 28  
Some suggest Ephesus but no record of that**
- **Three are obviously at the same time, given their bearers: Tychichus (Col 4:7, Eph. 6:21) and Onesimus (Col 4:17 and Philemon)**
- **Different temper to the Philippian account, Paul is confident of release (1:25), others contain no such hint**
- **Probably the Roman imprisonment, 59-61 AD, the three around the middle and Philippians at its end**

# Ephesians

- **History with Ephesians: Acts 19-20 – 2 visits**
- **Not writing to address any particular problem, but to expand their understanding of the church.**
- **Theme – The Church as the fullness of Christ**
- **Major Characteristics:**
  - No personal greetings, perhaps a circular letter**
  - Equality of Jew and**
  - A developed sense of the trinity**
  - Two prayers (1:15-23;3:14-21)**
- **Relationship with Colossians**
  - Both stress 'fullness', 'mystery', 'wisdom'**
  - Christ is the head of all things**
  - Both speak of putting off the old man and putting on new and make practical applications in life**

# Colossians

- **The Church at Colosse (Acts 19:10, Col 1:7-8)  
Founded by Epaphras and possibly Timothy (1:1)**
- **Theme: Christ is all in all! (Christ in you...)**
- **Major Characteristics**
  - Problems they were facing with false teachers**
  - Warmly personal**
  - Joy and rejoicing major themes, even though he was  
in prison**
  - Two major Christological passages (1:13-20, 2:8-15  
as well as two minor (1:27-28, 2:2-3)**

# Philemon

- **To Philemon of Colosse, an escaped slave**
- **Theme – personal letter to help a new convert make restitution for his failure**
- **Characteristics**
  - Shortest letter of Paul, only 1 not centered on church issues**
  - Shows us how early Christianity deal with slavery – not force but freedom**
  - Shows us Paul's inner life and love for people**

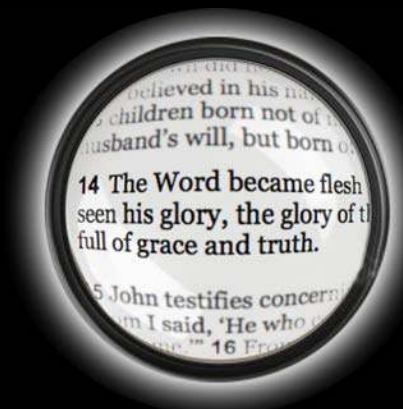
# Philippians

- **Philippi- The first European outpost for the Gospel**
- **Theme: Unity, emphasis on 'one', 'all' 'same',  
Major Christological passage – Ch 2  
Jesus Christ was the center of Paul's life**
- **Major Characteristics**
  - Tone: Warmly personal ("I" used 52 times)**
  - Joy and rejoicing used often, even though in prison**
  - Major passage on righteousness from faith (3)**
  - Paul an example of enduring persecution of ambition  
and contentment**
  - Only time overseers and deacons referred to in  
salutation and closing**



# Hebrews

- **Author unknown Possibly Barnabus, Apollos, Priscilla**  
**Author was second-generation believer (2:3)**
- **Recipients - A group of Hebrew Christians, very familiar with Old Testament, in persecution and near desertion**
- **Date: Probably before 70 AD when temple was destroyed, for it is not mentioned. Timothy released from prison (13:23) probably same as 2 Timothy**
- **Theme: The superiority of Jesus and his Covenant**
- **Characteristics**
  - High literary quality**
  - Saturated with Old Testament quotes**
  - An incredible study on the nature and work of Jesus**
  - "Draw near." Pivotal passage: (10:19-25)**
  - Faith Hall of Fame (11)**



# Session 13

# The Later Letters

## **Paul**

## **Others**

### **Early Letters**

**1 & 2 Thessalonians**  
**Galatians**  
**1 & 2 Corinthians**  
**Romans**

**James**

### **Middle Letters**

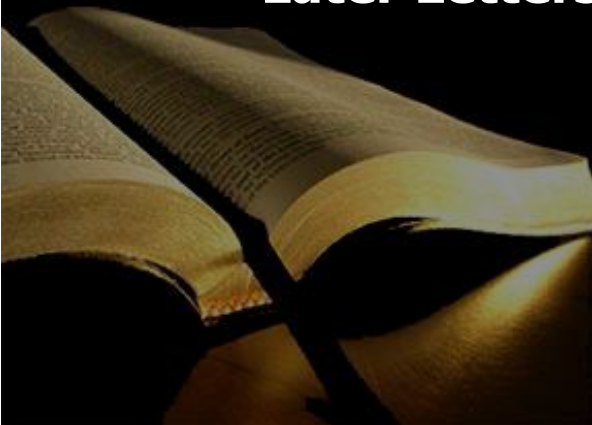
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### **Later Letters**

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**Titus**

**1 & 2 Peter**  
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**1, 2 & 3 John**  
**Revelation**



# **The Pastoral Letters**

## **Timothy and Titus**

- **How accurate is this designation?**
- **To two men Paul had left to function as in his absence**
- **Common Themes: Life in the local church**
  - Sound Doctrine**
  - Leadership**
  - How to treat various groups of people**
- **Take into account the difference between church as they knew it, and church as we know it today**

# 1 Timothy

- **Timothy, Paul's traveling companion and representative in Ephesus.**
  - Native of Lystra (in Galatia) of Greek father and Jewish mother**
  - Brought up in Jewish faith**
  - Joined Paul on 2nd Missionary journey (Acts 16:1-3)**
- **Tradition says he was martyred under (81-117)**
- **Ephesus Timothy helped establish it with Paul**
  - The third of six different snapshots of Ephesus**
- **After Paul's release from prison around 63-65 AD**
- **Theme: The importance of sound**
  - Deal strongly with false teachers.**
  - Very affectionate – Father to Son**
  - Qualifications for elders and deacons**

# Titus

- **Titus (Gal 2:3) Gentile possibly from Antioch**  
**Paul used him to quell problems in Corinth (2 Cor 7:6-16; 8:16-24)**  
**Probably visited Crete on fourth journey and left Titus**
- **The church of Crete**  
**A new church in a morally depraved society**  
**A weak church, reflecting that**
- **Date: after Paul's release from prison around 63-65 AD**
- **Theme – Calling the church to purify in lifestyle**  
**Solution: Godly leadership and sound doctrine**
- **Major passage on how grace teaches us to say no to worldly passions (2:1-14)**

## **2 Timothy**

- **To Timothy again**
  - Paul had been re-imprisoned in Rome and put on trial.**
  - Most of his friends had deserted him – only 2 left**
- **Anxiety for a great falling away**
- **Wanted Timothy and Mark to come to him**
- **Date: during a second imprisonment in Rome, much harsher than the first**
- **Theme – Fulfill your ministry, Timothy**
  - Keep the gospel pure – no matter the cost.**
- **Great encouragement in the face of hardships and hope in the face of death**

# 1 Peter

- **Author: Peter, the fisherman**  
**I Peter is terrific, and II Peter is sloppy**  
**Slivanus (Silas) was secretary of the first (5:12);**  
**Peter wrote the second himself**
- **Epistles are very consistent with his preaching (Acts 2)**  
**and his life with Jesus (the transfiguration, his own**  
**fiery trial)**
- **To Christians scattered in what is modern-day Turkey**  
**(Galatia) Probably toward the end of his life. Peter was**  
**martyred in 68 AD under Nero**
- **The second Epistle refers to the first (3:1)**
- **Theme: hope in the coming age (1:3; 5:12)**  
**Heavy persecution and fear (1:6, 4:12)**  
**Sets their hope in the age to come**

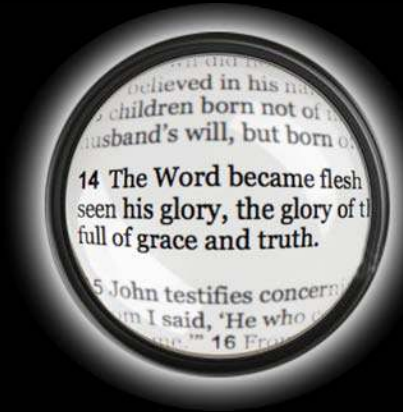


## **2 Peter**

- **Authorship – Already covered**
- **Theme: True knowledge frees us from error (2 Peter 3:17-18)**
- **Where I Peter deals with persecution from without, 2 Peter deals with error from within**
- **To expose the false teachers, and set people free to really discover God's truth**
- **Characteristics**
  - The account of the transfiguration (Ch1) and possible hint of Marks gospel**
  - Common ground with the Epistle of Jude — Same illustrations and layout, possible Peter may have made use of Jude**

## **Jude**

- **Author: Most likely Jude, the brother of Jesus**  
**He nor James refer to their relationship with Jesus, but others did (I Cor 9:5, Gal 1:19)**  
**Not an apostle, but a second generation Christian (3)**  
**Identified as a traveling missionary in I Cor 9:5**  
**Recipients: Unclear, possibly circular?**
- **Probably mid 70's - 80's**
- **Theme: Oppose False teaching (3)**  
**False teaching had crept in, especially Gnostic idea**  
**that the body is evil so just indulge it**  
**Sound doctrine and right practice go hand in hand**
- **Style is direct and aggressive**
- **Uses nonbiblical writings - Assumption of Moses, the Book of Enoch**



## Session 14

# John's Letters & Revelation

## **Paul**

## **Others**

### **Early Letters**

**1 & 2 Thessalonians  
Galatians  
1 & 2 Corinthians  
Romans**

**James**

### **Middle Letters**

**Ephesians  
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**Hebrews**

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# 1 John

- **Author: John the disciple of all 3 (all very similar in vocabulary and terms to each other and John's Gospel)**
- **Recipients: Gentile believers with whom John was personally acquainted probably Ephesus (See Rev 1:11)**
- **Theme: "That you might know—you are loved!"**
  - A faith based on surety**
  - Living loved is transformative**
  - Battles Gnostic heresy that led to asceticism (Colosse) or licentiousness (here)**
- **1/5 of all references to love in NT occur in these books**
- **Simplicity of content and structure**
- **Bluntness of the language--no middle ground, light or darkness**

## 2 John

- **"To the chosen lady and her children" -- a woman, or figurative for church**
- **Theme: Truth--receive it, obey it, cherish it!**
  - The nature of Christ**
  - The call to love one another**
- **Background: False teachers were coming with a distorted gospel, don't receive them!**
- **You are linked to what you support.**

## **3 John**

- **A personal letter to Gaius**
- **Theme: True and False Leadership**
- **Background: To encourage Gaius and Demetrius in their commitment to truth and faithful service  
Demetrius may have been one of the rejected missionaries**
- **To identify the error in Diotrephes who 'loves to be first"-- putting people out of church. John himself coming to set him straight**

## **Seven Snapshots of Ephesus**

- 1. Paul spreads the gospel in Ephesus (Acts 19)**
- 2. Paul meets with elders in Miletus (Acts 20)**
- 3. Paul writes the Ephesian letter to them about the nature of the church and its unity**
- 4. Paul writes to Timothy about the confusion and need for true elders in Ephesus (I and 2 Timothy)**
- 5. Peter's Letters (1 & 2 Peter)**
- 6. John writes three letters there (1, 2, & 3 John)**
- 7. John writes in Revelation about their loss of first love.**



# Revelation

- **Author: John, the Apostle**
- **Same concepts as other books: logos, Lamb, witness, overcome, truth, light and dark**
- **Recipient: Seven specific churches in Asia, c.90's**
- **Theme: Encouragement in the Last Days**
  - To reveal the glory of the Risen Christ**
  - To inform about the future**
  - To fortify the church and foster her endurance**
  - To bring consolation to suffering saints**
- **Dramatic interplay of cataclysmic events and between heaven and earth.**
- **Of 404 verses, 278 refer to Old Testament (69%)**
- **Number 7 used 50 times**
- **A series of visions**
- **Last 2 chapters book-end with the first two of Genesis**

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