

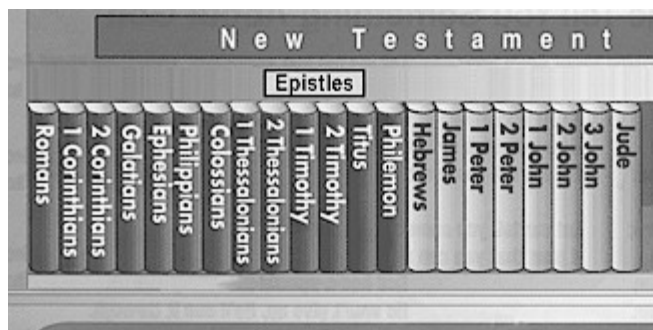
## Introduction to the Bible – Week 5

### Questions from your reading?

I always remind the students: The Bible is the Story of His Loving Pursuit of Rebels in Jesus Christ. We will see that again this week in as we look at the epistles.

### New Testament: Epistles

**Bible books:** *Romans-Jude*



**Timeline:** 48 – 95 A.D.

The early church grows as it is attacked by persecution & false teaching

### What is an Epistle?

- *A letter*
- **A situational document.**

It was prompted by a specific occasion.

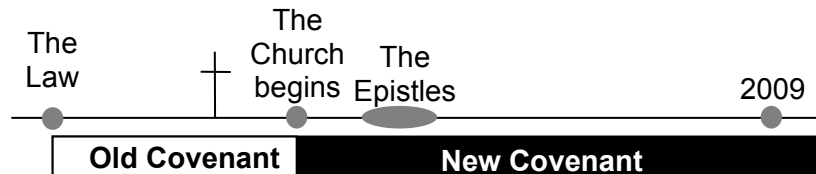
### What prompted Paul to write to the Colossians?

- To encourage them (1:3-8)
- To warn them (2:1-4; 2:8; 2:16-23)

## Key features of the Epistles

- The Epistles were written during the New Covenant. (Hebrews 8:1-13; 2 Cor. 3:5-18)

Recall week 3: Jeremiah 31:31-34 & Ezekiel 36:25,26



**1 Peter 1:10-12** As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, <sup>11</sup>seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. <sup>12</sup>It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things into which angels long to look.

### Under the New Covenant:

- The Old Covenant is *obsolete* (Hebrews 8:13)
- The Holy Spirit indwells *all true believers*. (Romans 8:9-11)

Recall Exod. 29:45,46 “I will dwell” and Jn.1:14 “The Word dwelt among us”

The Holy Spirit is the *Spirit of Christ*. (see above Rom. 8:9)

The Holy Spirit *glorifies Christ*. (John 16:13,14).

J.I. Packer’s uses the illustration of a floodlight to describe the work of the Holy Spirit. A floodlight illuminates an object while the floodlight itself remains out of sight. The Holy Spirit shines His light on Jesus and His work. When the Spirit of God is at work, He does not focus on power or purity in themselves, but on the person and work of Jesus.

- The Epistles unpack the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.

**John 1:16,17** For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

**1 Cor. 2:12** Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God.

“The things freely given by God” are the gospel, the unfolding of the revelation of Christ’s person and work through the cross. When you read the word of God, the Holy Spirit wants to reveal Jesus to your heart. He seeks to make you Christ-Centered & Grace-awed.

## HIS PERSON AND WORK

1. **HIS PERSON:** The Epistle present Jesus as fully God and fully man (Col. 2:9; 1:15-18).

Sadly, without an acknowledgement of the full humanity of Jesus, we are left with a Jesus who appears eerily similar to Superman. We are left to believe that although Jesus looked like a Galilean carpenter, he did not really endure temptation and suffering as we do. The deity of Jesus without the humanity of Jesus tragically leaves us to see Jesus as a faker, not unlike Clark Kent. All we are left with is someone who cannot really sympathize with us in our weakness, as Hebrews says, because he was not fully human.

By itself, an incarnational Christology, though true, is not truly complete. Without a robust recognition of the corresponding deity of Jesus, the humanity of Jesus has the propensity to leave us with a marred false image of Jesus—little more than a limp-wristed, marginalized, hippie-esque, unemployed Galilean pacifist in a dress with feathered hair and open-toed sandals—a guy that the average man would be remiss to worship because he could beat up that Jesus. Therefore, in addition to the humble incarnation of Jesus where his humanity shines forth, we must also retain the glorious exaltation of Jesus where his divinity likewise shines forth. (Mark Driscoll, “The Church and the Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World,” in *The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World*, edited by John Piper and Justin Taylor)

2. **HIS WORK:** The Epistles look back at the significance of Christ’s death and resurrection.

Victory over sin Col. 2:13,14; 1 Peter 3:19)

**Victory over *death* (2 Tim 1:10; Heb. 2:14,15)**

This is what John Owen called “The death of death in death of Christ.”

**Victory over *the serpent* (1 Jn. 3:8; Col. 2:15; Eph. 1:20-23)**

Recall week 1 and Genesis 3:15

**An important relationship you will see again and again in the Epistles:  
What God wants us to DO is based on what he has DONE for us.**

**“This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.” – 1 John 4:10,11**

**Ask: What does God want us to DO?**

**Ask: What has God DONE for us?**

**Ask: What is the relationship between what we DO and what God has DONE for us?**

**Eph. 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. 5:1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**

**Ask: What does God want us to DO?**

**Ask: What has God DONE for us?**

**Ask: What is the relationship between what we DO and what God has DONE for us?**

**3. HIS WORK: The Epistles *look forward* to what Christ will do from now until his return. (future grace)**

**Ask: How should I live in light of the fact that Jesus will one day return?**

**2 Timothy 4:6-8**

What an epitaph!

**Romans 8:32**

This passage assures us we can expect nothing but good from God even before He returns. Future grace is not just the after life—it is from this moment forward!

But...don't confuse your notions of 'good' with God's. This very passage is in the context of suffering for Christ's sake (Romans 8:17-18 since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.<sup>18</sup> Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later

**1 John 2:15-17**

Example: the world system is like a beautiful ice sculpture in 33 degree weather. It doesn't seem to be melting that much.

These truths about future grace should impact your *values*.

**How to do an Epistle Overview**

**1. Read the letter in one sitting.**

**2. Reconstruct the “occasion” for the letter:**

**Philippians**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Opponents</b>
<b>Who wrote the letter?</b>  <i>Paul (1:1)</i>	<b>Who is the letter written to?</b> <i>The Church at Philippi (1:1)</i>	<b>Does the author mention anyone who opposes God's work? If so, who are they?</b>
<b>What information does the author provide about himself?</b>	<b>What information does the author provide about his audience?</b>	<i>False teachers</i>  <b>What information does the</b>

1:3,7,8 1:12-14	1:3-5 4:13-19	author provide about the opponents?  3:2 3:18
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- **Summarize:** *From prison, Paul is writing an affectionate and joyful letter to the Philippians. He is thanking them for a monetary gift and warning them of false teaching.*

### 3. Outline the letter by writing a short title for each paragraph.

<b>Philippians: Paragraph Titles (NASB)</b>
1:3-8 <i>Partnership in the gospel</i>
1:9-11 <i>Discerning excellence</i>
1:12-21 <i>Discernment in difficult circumstances (that the gospel advancing! That is what is excellent!)</i>

### 4. Identify main themes in the letter (Philippians).

**Ask: Are there any repeated words and ideas?**

*Joy and the Gospel (1:5,7,12,27; 2:16, 2:22; 4:3,4)*

## New Testament: Prophecy

### Bible books: Revelation

**The Book of Revelation describes how Jesus will bring about an end to this present phase of history and re-establish his rule.**

### Quick summary:

- **Written by the apostle John in about 95 A.D. when he was a prisoner on the island of Patmos and received a vision from Christ. This was a time of widespread persecution of the fledgling Christian movement.**
- **Has some of the characteristics of an epistle (see 1:4-6, and chapters 2-3), but is essentially a prophetic book (see 1:3 “the words of this prophecy”).**

- Has lessons for daily living but also provides key details about future events.
- Probably the most widely misused and misinterpreted book in the Bible.
- Ties together many biblical themes we've been studying throughout the course – a fitting conclusion to an amazing story.

**PURPOSE: To strengthen Christians to be faithful witnesses in a hostile world by describing Jesus' authority over human history**

The Book of Revelation shows the Sovereignty of Christ

If we were to see Jesus today, we would not see him in his state of humble incarnation. Rather, we would see Jesus as both Isaiah and John saw him enthroned in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords. This Jesus rules over gays and straights, men and women, young and old, rich and poor, black and white, simple and wise, healthy and sick, powerful and powerless, Republicans and Democrats, married and single, Christians and non-Christians, angels and demons, and the living and the dead.

The sovereign, unprecedented, and glorious exaltation of Jesus is typified by a throne. The imagery of a throne is used roughly 196 times in Scripture, with 135 occurrences in the Old Testament and 61 occurrences in the New Testament. Of the New Testament occurrences, 45 of the 61 are in the book of Revelation. The imagery of the throne appears in seventeen of its twenty-two chapters. The book of Revelation breaks into earthly scenes of sin and the curse, as well as heavenly scenes of worship and rule (Mark Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World," in *The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World*, edited by John Piper and Justin Taylor)

See Gary DeLashmutt's Central Teaching series on the book of Revelation for a good introduction ([www.xenos.org](http://www.xenos.org))

What's next?

Are you going to be reading and applying the Bible to your life one month from now? A year from now? A decade from now?

The key to continued learning of the Word and continued motivation to learn is to be a DOER of the Word.

The desire to do comes from God's grace.

**Matt. 7:24-27** "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup>The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew

and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. <sup>26</sup>But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup>The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

I want to urge you to get involved in some spiritual practices that will expose you to the power of God's grace.

**Things you can DO that will lead to further learning and motivation:**

1. ***Get involved in a learning community where you receive & give truth in the context of close relationships (Col. 3:16; Eph 4:15,16).***

This is one of the best ways to experience the power of God's grace—building friendships with other growing believers (not merely attending a bible study).

2. ***Develop a habit of regular, prayerful, scripture reading (Ps. 119).***

Why? This helps you receive "the word of his grace" (Acts 20:32)

Ps. 119:29 Keep me from lying to myself; give me the privilege of knowing your instructions.

Ps. 119:37 Turn my eyes from worthless things, and give me life through your word!

Do you ask God for these things?

- **See reading plans below**

3. ***Be responsive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as He convicts you of sin He leads you out on His mission to share the truth (Gal. 5:16-25, Matt. 28:18-20;; Acts 16:6-10).***

**Additional tips**

1. **Set specific goals for Bible reading**

*Helpful Bible Reading Plans*

**Discipleship Journal Bible Reading plans**

[www.navpress.com/Magazines/DJ/BibleReadingPlans.asp](http://www.navpress.com/Magazines/DJ/BibleReadingPlans.asp)

- ***The Original Discipleship Journal® Bible Reading Plan*** – Readings from four places in the Scripture every day: a Gospel, the Old Testament, an Epistle and the Wisdom Literature.
- ***The Book-at-a-Time Bible Reading Plan*** – Readings from two places in the Scripture every day: an Old or New Testament book and the Wisdom Literature.

**Carson, D.A., *For the Love of God: A Daily Companion for Discovering the Riches of God's Word* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1998).**

**2. Memorize scripture**

**3. Use the Study Center**