

Christian Dispensation – To Revelation and Beyond

New Testament Writers

The New Testament consists of 27 letters, written by 9 prophets:

Matthew (1) **Matthew**

Mark (1) **Mark**

Luke (2) **Luke, Acts**

John (5) **John, 1,2,3 John, Revelation**

Paul (13) Thirteen Epistles

Peter (2) **1,2 Peter**

James (1) **James**

Jude (1) **Jude**

Unknown (1) **Hebrews**

We have looked closely at the Gospels, Acts, and Paul's letters. Let's examine the other New Testament authors and their work.

Peter, the Apostle

Peter's Life Before Jesus.

Peter was a Galilean fisherman – **Mark 1:16-20; John 21:1-3.**

He was initially called to Jesus by his brother Andrew – **John 1:35-42.**

Peter during Jesus Ministry.

He was very Inquisitive – **Matthew 15:15; 18:21; 19:27; John 21:20-22.**

He often took Initiative – **Matthew 14:26-28; 16:13-17; 17:4; John 20:4-6.**

He sometimes was Impetuous – **John 18:10-11; Matthew 26:31-35,74-75.**

Peter after the death of Jesus.

He and all the apostles quickly gave in to fear – **John 20:19.**

He and all the apostles were chastised for unbelief – **Mark 16:14.**

Peter after seeing Jesus alive again.

He was forever changed by Jesus Resurrection – **Acts 1:15-22; 2:14-36.**

He preached the Truth no matter what – **Acts 4:19-22; 11:2, 16-17.**

Peter wrote two Letters

1Peter was addressed to "aliens" scattered all over Asia Minor. The year is around 62 A.D.

Christians are being persecuted and Peter assures them their inheritance is secure if they stay true to Christ (**1:1-9**). The middle portion of the letter challenged the Christians to do the things that God demands (**1:13-16; 2:11-17; 3:8-12; 4:8-10**). As Peter closes the letter, he again compels them to hold fast during their suffering, knowing eternal glory awaits (**4:14-16; 5:9-11**).

2Peter is a follow up to the first letter and consists of three chapters. He speaks to the authenticity and power of the apostles' letters (**1:1-4, 16-21**). Then he warns against the false teachers who seek to destroy faith (**2:1-3**). Finally he reminds Christians that Jesus is coming again, and we must continue to grow in grace and knowledge so we can be ready (**3:8-13, 17-18**).

James

The Lord's Brother

Jesus had half brothers and sisters, of whom James is one (**Matthew 13:55-56; Galatians 1:19**).

James, the Lord's half brother, now a bondservant of Christ, pens this letter to Christians (**James 1:1**).

This is not James, the apostles, mentioned in the Gospels (**Mark 3:16-19; Acts 12:1-2**).

Shepherd in the Jerusalem Church

James was an elder for the Jerusalem church and was very knowledgeable (**Acts 12:17; 15:12-21; 21:18**).

James was highly respected and his letter would have carried much weight in and around Jerusalem.

James wrote one Letter (possibly the first written

James was written *“to the twelve tribes dispersed abroad.”* This is perhaps the most practical, and daily useful, letter in the Bible. James opens with the need to persevere in all trials (1:2-8,12). He emphasizes that a relationship with the Word is the key to strength (1:18-25). We must treat one another with fairness and equality (2:1-5), showing true faith by the works we choose to perform in Jesus’ name (2:14-20). This includes the daily need to control the words that come out of our mouths (3:1-12), and also the pride that can overtake us (4:1-10). He closes the letter like he opens it, focusing our attention on prayer (5:13-18).

Jude

The Lord’s Brother

Jude, like James, is related to Jesus through Mary (Matthew 13:55-56).

Jude, with the other brothers, did not believe in Jesus at first (John 7:5).

He is now a “bondservant of Christ,” just like his brother James (Jude 1:1).

Jude wrote one letter

Jude was intended to be a letter about *“our common salvation,”* but instead he felt the need to write concerning the need to *“contend earnestly for the faith”* (1:3). This short letter is largely devoted to noting sinful, rebellious men, who have crept in amongst the brethren (1:4,11-12,17-19).

Ultimately, a Christian’s greatest defense against such men is acting faithfully before God and dealing rightly with sinners (1:21-23).

Hebrews

Author Unknown

Though heavily debated, no one is certain who wrote the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 2:2-4 – This passage seems to indicate it was a first century Christian who was not an apostle.

Hebrews was written to exclaim the superiority of Christ and His priesthood (1:1-3; 2:17; 3:1; 4:14).

Jesus is better than angels (1:4) and Moses (3:3). His rule and priesthood bring a better hope (7:19), covenant (7:22), ministry (8:6) and better promises (8:6). He entered into the better tabernacle (9:11), offering better sacrifices (9:14,23). He has promised the faithful a better possession (10:34), better country (11:16), and a better resurrection (11:35). As a response to all of these wonderful things in Christ, the letter beckons for God’s people to work together to do great things: Let us fear (4:1), let us be diligent (4:11), let us hold fast (4:14), let us draw near (4:16), let us press on (6:1), let us draw near again (10:22), let us hold fast again (10:23), let us consider (10:24), let us lay aside (12:1), let us run with endurance (12:1), let us go out to Him (13:13), and let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God (13:15).

John, the Apostle.

John’s Life Before Jesus.

John, and his brother James, are Galilean fisherman and partners with Peter – Luke 5:8-11

Like Peter and Andrew, John and his brother left everything to follow Jesus – Mark 1:16-20.

John during Jesus Ministry.

Jesus called James and John “Sons of Thunder” – Mark 3:17.

John and James may have been called such because of one particular incident – Luke 9:49-56.

John was one of Jesus’ three closest companions – Matthew 17:1-8; 26:36-38.

He refers to himself in the gospel as “the one whom Jesus loved” – John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20.

John after the death of Jesus.

He ran to the tomb with Peter. He believed but did not understand – John 20:1-10.

John too was overtaken with fear until Christ appeared to them – John 20:19.

John after seeing Jesus alive again.

John stood with the Apostles on Pentecost and taught with Peter afterward – **Acts 2:14; 4:13-22**. The last we read of John in Acts is when he and Peter go to Samaria and encounter Simon – **Acts 8:14-24**.

While John's brother was the first apostle martyred (**Acts 12:1-2**), most contend John was the longest living apostle, and perhaps the only one not to be put to death for the faith.

John wrote five Letters.

The Gospel of John was likely written after the other gospels, perhaps as late as 90 A.D.

Regardless of date, the purpose of the book is clear: *"Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name"* (**John 20:30-31**). John places great emphasis on the "testimony" for Jesus by John the Baptist, the Father, and the Scriptures, and Christ Himself (**5:30-39**). Uniquely, nearly half of the letter concerns the last week of Jesus' life (**Ch. 12-21**).

1John was likely written around the time of the Gospel of John. Little is known about the recipients. However, the content is of incredible value to all Christians. John deals with issues like "fellowship" and what it means to share in it with God and others (**1:1-10**). John deals at great length with the need to love God and demonstrate that love by obeying God's commandments (**2:3-5; 5:1-3**). Tied closely to this is the utmost importance of loving God's people with a sacrificial and service filled love (**2:7-10; 3:14-18; 4:7-21**). If we are in fellowship with God and God's people we can live with confidence of eternal life (**5:13**).

2John was written by *"the elder to the chosen lady and her children"* (**1:1**). This may represent a local church or perhaps a family. John quickly emphasizes the importance of "truth" (**1:1-4**). He goes on to warn the brethren that some may come who are "deceivers" and they should not be received into fellowship.

3John was sent by *"the elder to the beloved Gaius"* (**1:1**). Again, the main connection walking in the "truth" (**1:3-8**). John goes on to mention two men. Diotrephes, who was in their local church and harmful to it. And Demetrius, a man of faith. John hoped to be there soon to address issues in person.

Revelation has been dated anywhere from 65 A.D. to 95 A.D. John is clearly addressing the letter to "seven churches" throughout Asia (**1:11**). John taught things from Jesus that was directly for those churches (**Ch. 2-3**). But he also related truths that applied to persecuted Christians in every region. While the book is highly symbolic and very challenging in spots, the main thrust of the message is found in

Revelation 17:14 *These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is the Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.*

Beyond the First Century

It has been over 1900 years since the last New Testament letter was penned. In some ways, things have changed drastically. Specifically, in terms of how God spoke, and revealed His will to man. However, some things continue even today! Some elements of what God established through Christ will live on to the judgment day and beyond, into the eternal courts of heaven.

Beyond the first century, new revelation from God has ceased.

Apostles, who received power on Pentecost, died (**Acts 2:1-4**).

Those who had gifts by the apostles' hands also died (**Acts 8:14-19**).

Miraculous gifts died along with them (**Mark 16:20; 1Corinthians 13:8-13**).

Beyond the first century, wonderful things from God have continued!

We continue to have the inspired Word of God (**2Peter 1:1-4,16-21**).

We continue to live under the Christian Dispensation (**Ephesians 3:8-13**).

We continue to find protection in Christ's Kingdom (**Colossians 1:13-18**).

Beyond the first century lives the promise of an eternity with God!

Even today, we can be forgiven of our sins (**Acts 2:36-41**).

Even today, we can rejoice in hope of eternal life (**Romans 5:1-10**).

Even today, we can anticipate the return of our King (**2Peter 3:10-13**).

There's A Great Day Coming

The greatest Demonstration of Power will be seen (**2Thessalonians 1:7-9**).

The greatest Resurrection will occur (**John 5:28-29; 1Corinthians 15:50-52**).

The greatest Crowd will be assembled (**Matthew 25:31-32**).

The greatest Judge will preside over us all (**Matthew 25:31; 2Timothy 4:8**).

The greatest Books will be opened (**Revelation 20:11-12; John 12:48**).

The greatest Separation ever known will occur (**Matthew 25:31-33**).

The greatest Verdict will follow (**Matthew 25:34,41**).

A Final Word

We have seen the workings of God from Genesis to Revelation, and beyond. We have pieced together the plan to send Jesus as Savior of the world. We have even read about what is coming, and the glory of Christ to be seen. In summary, perhaps the apostle John sums up the Bible best: **John 20:30-31** *Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.*

SteveFontenot/KrisEmerson