

**“The General Letters of the New Testament”***Wednesday Evening Bible Class by Ray Reynolds (February 12, 2014)*

Introduction: The majority of the New Testament books are personal letters to people and to churches from respected scholars and church leaders. Tonight we will consider the general epistles meant for larger audiences. Let’s study them together...

Discussion:

**I. The Letter to the Hebrews**

Author: Anonymous. No name attached. It was probably an associate of Paul.

Date: It is generally accepted it was written in the mid 60’s AD.

Theme: The supremacy of Christ, Christianity, and the new covenant.

Audience: Jewish Christians and predominantly Jewish churches.

Key Verses: **Hebrews 1:1-2, 2:3, 2:14-18, 3:16-19, 4:1-3, 4:14-16, 5:12-14, 6:4-6, 6:13-18, 7:11-13, 7:26-28, 8:3-6, 9:1-5, 9:23-28, 10:19-25, 10:30-31, 11:1, 11:6, 11:32-40, 12:1-2, 12:12, 12:28-29, 13:1-3, 13:7, 13:17, 13:22-24**

Outline:

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|--|---|
| I. The Basis for Christ’s Superiority (1:1–10:18)          | III. The Concluding Instructions (13:18-25) |
| II. The Practicality of Christ’s Superiority (10:19–13:17) |   |

**II. The Letter of James**

Author: “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (**James 1:1**).

Date: It may have been written in the mid to late 40’s or early 50’s AD.

Theme: The need for common sense Christianity or practical Christianity.

Audience: It is addressed to the “twelve tribes of the dispersion” (**James 1:1**).

Key Verses: **James 1:2, 1:12, 1:17, 1:22, 1:27, 2:1, 2:10, 2:18, 2:24, 3:8, 3:13, 4:7-8, 4:12-13, 4:17, 5:8, 5:12, 5:13-14, 5:16, 5:19-20**

Outline:

- |                                 |                                 |                              |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| I. Genuine Perspective (1:1-11) | V. Genuine Speech (3:1-8)       | IX. Genuine Behavior (5:1-8) |
| II. Genuine Religion (1:12-27)  | VI. Genuine Wisdom (3:9-18)     | X. Genuine Prayer (5:9-20)   |
| III. Genuine Love (2:1-13)      | VII. Genuine Humility (4:1-7)   |                              |
| IV. Genuine Faith (2:14-26)     | VIII. Genuine Judgment (4:8-17) |                              |

**III. The Letters of Peter**

Author: The apostle Simon Peter (**I Peter 1:1, II Peter 1:1**).

Date: I Peter was written in the early 60’s AD and II Peter in the mid 60’s AD.

Theme: I Peter is about persecution and II Peter is about seeking knowledge

Audience: I Peter was intended for the exiled Christians (**I Peter 1:1**) and II Peter was intended for a general audience (**II Peter 1:1**).

Key Verses: **I Peter 1:3-5, 13-16, 2:1-2, 2:4-5, 2:9-10, 2:21-25, 3:1-7, 3:17, 3:21-22, 4:1-6, 5:1-4, 5:8-11, II Peter 1:5-9, 1:19-21, 2:4-11, 2:21, 3:1-9, 3:10-13, 3:17-18**

**Outline: I Peter**

- I. The Hope of a Christian (I Peter 1:1-12)
- II. The Holiness of a Christian (I Peter 1:13-25)
- III. The Maturity of a Christian (I Peter 2:1-12)
- IV. The Submission of a Christian (I Peter 2:13-25)
- V. The Companionship of a Christian (I Peter 3:1-14)
- VI. The Salvation of a Christian (I Peter 3:15-22)
- VII. The Wisdom of a Christian (I Peter 4:1-11)
- VIII. The Suffering of a Christian (I Peter 4:12-19)
- IX. The Humbleness of a Christian (I Peter 5:1-7)
- X. The Strength of a Christian (I Peter 5:8-14)

**II Peter**

- I. The Blessings of God (II Peter 1:1-15)
- II. The Glory of God (II Peter 1:16-21)
- III. The Justice of God (II Peter 2:1-16)
- IV. The Teaching of God (II Peter 2:17-22)
- V. The Promise of God (II Peter 3:1-9)
- VI. The Peace of God (II Peter 3:10-18)

**IV. The Letters of John**

Author: These books are assigned to the apostle John, the son of Zebedee.

Date: These letters were probably written in the late 80's or early 90's AD.

Theme: I John is about loving one another, II John is about avoiding false teachers, and III John is about the contrast between good and evil.

Audience: All of the letters are for Ephesian Christians.

Key Verses: **I John 1:3, 1:5-10, 2:1-2, 2:7-11, 2:18-19, 2:22-23, 2:26-29, 3:1-3, 3:7-9, 3:16-18, 3:24, 4:1-3, 4:7-16, 4:20-21, 5:1-5, 5:12-18, 5:20, II John 4-6, 8, 10, III John 2-4, 9-10, 11**

**Outline: I John**

- I. The Test of Obedience (1)
- II. The Test of Love (2)
- III. The Test of Character (3)
- IV. The Test of Spirituality (4)
- V. The Test of Assurance (5)

**II John**

- I. Introduction (vs.1-3)
- II. Practicing the Truth (vs.4-6)
- III. Protecting the Truth (vs.7-8)
- IV. Professing the Truth (vs.9-11)
- V. Benediction (vs.12-13)

**III John**

- I. Introduction (vs.1-2)
- II. Commendation of Gaius (vs.3-8)
- III. Condemnation of Diotrephes (vs.9-10)
- IV. Comparison to Demetrius (vs.11-12)
- V. Benediction (vs.13-14)

**V. The Letter of Jude**

Author: Jude, "a servant of Jesus and a brother of James (**Jude 1**).

Date: It was probably written in the mid to late 60's AD.

Theme: This book is about contending for the faith.

Audience: The letter was intended for a general audience, but especially Jews.

Key Verses: **Jude 3-4, 9-11, 14-15, 20-21, 24-25**

**Outline:**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| I. Contending For Faithful Living (Jude 1-4)        | IV. Committing To Faithful Living (Jude 20-22) |
| II. Condemning Unfaithful Living (Jude 5-13)        | V. Conquering Faithful Living (Jude 23-25)     |
| III. Complaining About Faithful Living (Jude 14-19) |  |

Conclusion: Most of the recipients of these eight epistles are either large churches, regional groups, or all Christians (the exceptions are Hebrews, II and III John). The books of John, James and Jude were embraced because of their unique connections to Jesus. They were written by men who were well respected because of their personal witness to seeing Jesus in the flesh. I strongly urge you to read these great books and make proper application. How do you respond to God's word? Are you letting your faith in Christ grow? Will you apply God's word and follow His will?