

## HEBREWS

**Historical Background:** The author and audience of Hebrews is unknown, but they were most likely Jewish (hence the name) because the author expects them to have a robust understanding of the Old Testament. Hebrews is written to encourage perseverance in the face of persecution.

**Overall Message:** The author encourages endurance by communicating the supremacy of Christ over all things. Christ is the supreme way that God has revealed Himself, better than angels and better than the Torah (1-2). Christ is the new and better Moses leading us into the new and better promised land of the Kingdom of God (3-4). Jesus is the great high priest and superior to the Levitical priesthood because He is perfect and always lives to make intercession for us (5-7). Christ's sacrifice is supreme because His one death is perfecting for all time those who are being saved (8-10). Therefore the author concludes: Christ's supremacy means that Christians should live by faith and not neglect such a great salvation, no matter how much we are persecuted for it.

## 1 PETER

**Overall Message:** 1 Peter is a letter to gentile Christians who were spread throughout modern day Turkey. Peter writes in order to help them view their suffering through the lens of the gospel, and then he shows how this applies to every area of life. Peter does this by proclaiming the greatness of salvation which has enabled these gentiles to be born again and adopted into the covenant family of God. Peter shows how they are the new exodus people rescued from slavery to sin and passed over because of the blood of Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God. Therefore Peter calls these gentile exiles to be holy, for they are the new temple, a holy priesthood, and a people called to be a blessing to the nations by proclaiming the excellencies of Him who rescued them out of darkness and brought them into His marvelous light. Peter uses all of this theology to encourage his readers to persevere through the suffering caused by oppressive authorities, unbelieving husbands, and wicked culture. And he especially encourages church leaders to shepherd their flocks to suffer well by urging them to follow the Chief Shepherd who suffered on their behalf.

## 2 PETER

**Historical Background:** Peter writes with the awareness that he is on the verge of execution. Therefore this letter acts as a farewell speech jam packed with his important last words. He specifically addresses false teachers who were teaching that Jesus is never coming back and that it does not matter how you live (in order to excuse their own sexual promiscuity).

**Overall Message:** Peter writes to announce that Jesus is absolutely coming back. Peter defends this claim by pointing to the Old Testament (which was written by the Holy Spirit) and his own eyewitness testimony (the transfiguration). Therefore Peter concludes that Christians should be holy, and that God has granted us everything we need to live a godly life. This is of utmost importance because worldwide judgement is coming, just as it did in the days of Noah.

## 1, 2, 3 JOHN

**Background and Overview:** John is writing to a group of house churches who are in crisis because some of the church members had forsaken the faith and were stirring up trouble in the congregations as they were trying to get people to leave the faith and deny Christ with them. 2 and 3 John give counsel regarding how to work through the interpersonal issues that have arisen as John encourages specific churches to love one another and beware of false teachers. 1 John is a poetic meditation on Jesus' teaching recorded in John 13-17.

**Overall Message of 1 John:** John writes to people who have been deceived by people who they thought were true believers so that they may know the true marks of a genuine Christian. John uses two metaphors about God in order to help illustrate what true Christians look like. (1) God is light, therefore those who are born of Him walk in the light and not in the darkness. (2) God is love, therefore those who are born of Him love Him and love others. Additionally true believers believe what the Scriptures say about Christ, that He came in the flesh as the God man and dwelt among us, and they desire to have fellowship with Him (the word abide is used 20+ in the letter). Therefore right Christology, obedience to the commandments, love for one another, and fellowship with Christ are all marks of a genuine Christian.

## JUDE

**Overall Message:** Jude (a half brother Jesus) writes to encourage his readers to contend for the faith and fend off the false teachers who were claiming that God's grace is a license to sin. Jude gives multiple examples (like Sodom and Gomorrah) showing how this has never been the case. He ends with a charge to stay faithful to Jesus who is worthy of all glory, dominion, and authority.

## REVELATION

**Overall Message:** John wrote to 7 churches in Asia Minor in order to encourage faithfulness through persecution warning them that it is going to get worse before it gets better. This leads him to write the climactic culmination of the entire Bible revealing where the history of the world is headed and how it will end. The book's overarching message unveils how the kingdoms of this world (along with the demonic powers behind them) will ultimately be conquered by the Lamb who was slain who will reign over His Kingdom with His blood bought saints forever and ever.

**Tips for Reading:** (1) Just about every verse of Revelation is an allusion to the OT in one way or the other. Specifically be aware of the cosmic conflict between Satan (the dragon) and his seed vs. Christ and His seed (Gen 3:15), the beasts that represent ugly sinful kingdoms (from Daniel), the Son of Man (Daniel 7), Babylon being the archetype city of Satan representing all kingdoms of this world in opposition to Christ, echoes of the Exodus plagues, the New Heavens and the New Earth representing a new and better Eden, and many more. (2) Notice how the conquering nature of the Lamb and His Kingdom comes through sacrifice, not bloodshed. His followers are called to faithfulness, not fighting. (3) Don't allow all the symbols, Old Testament allusions, and questions of historical timeline distract you from the main point: Jesus wins. All earthly kingdoms will fade. Only Christ's kingdom will stand forever. Therefore, remain faithful to Him, for He is worthy.