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The
BIBLE

Book by Book

Hebrews – Revelation

G. Michael
Cocoris

THE BIBLE

Book by Book

Hebrews - Revelation

G. Michael Cocoris

"THE BIBLE: BOOK BY BOOK
HEBREWS - REVELATION"

G. Michael Cocoris

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INTRODUCTION

In the Sunday evening services at the Church of the Open Door, I preached through the Bible one book per evening. In each message I covered the same 5 points: Author, Recipients, Subject, Structure and Purpose. These messages were later edited for release on our daily broadcast called THE OPEN DOOR. This booklet was prepared to help radio listeners study with us on that program.

Volume 7 contains the notes covering the books of Hebrews through Revelation. The other books of the Bible are in six other volumes.

The messages, as originally preached at the Church of the Open Door, are available on cassette tapes in convenient albums. Or, you may order individual tapes if you desire. There is an Order Form at the back of this booklet for your convenience which will give you complete information on how to order.

It is my desire that these messages will give you an introduction to the basics of each book of the Bible, and you will then be able to read, study and apply your Bible more intelligently.

— G. Michael Cocoris

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HEBREWS

Hebrews is the most controversial book in the Bible. Its authorship, recipients, and interpretation are all battlefields.

I. Author.

Nowhere in the book does the author identify himself by name. Only in the last chapter does he refer to himself in the first person. Yet it is clear that the original readers knew who he was (13:18-24). To complicate the issue, Tradition is divided. According to Eusibius, Clement of Alexander (in Egypt, 155-215 A.D.) said it was written by Paul in Hebrew and translated into Greek by Luke. Tertullian (in North Africa 150-222 A.D.), speaks of Barnabas as the author and does so in such a way as to indicate that it was current tradition. In the west (i.e., Rome), the Pauline view was not accepted at first. Jerome (340-420) and Augustine (354-430) adopted that view. And because of their influence, it became established in the West. In short, "... there is no uniform tradition in the early church concerning the authorship of Hebrews. The names of Paul, Barnabas, Luke and Clement are connected with it, or it was regarded as an anonymous work. Only gradually did the view that it was Pauline come into general favor." ¹

From the 5th to the 16th Centuries,

the Pauline view prevailed. The question was reopened during the Reformation. Erasmus rejected Pauline authorship on linguistic grounds. Luther conjectured that Apollos was the author. Calvin also forthrightly rejected the Pauline authorship, as did his disciple, Beza, who held that a disciple of Paul wrote it. The Council of Trent reaffirmed the traditional view.

The major contenders for authorship are:

A. Paul.

A number of arguments are used for Pauline authorship.

1. Since the time of Pantaenus (died 190 A.D.), there has been a tradition that Paul wrote Hebrews and that tradition "has never been disproven."
2. Paul was an educated Jew who was certainly capable of penning this portion of the New Testament.
3. There is a remarkable similarity of language and thought between Hebrews and the acknowledged Pauline epistles. For example, compare Paul's use of Habakkuk 2:4 in Romans and Galatians, and the characteristic Pauline features of the conclusion. Note especially the salutation,

"Grace be with you, in 13:25. No other author uses it.

4. The author had been in bonds (10:34), wrote from Italy (13:24) and was closely associated with Timothy (13:23).

Yet there are arguments against Pauline authorship.

1. Tradition is divided. There was no certainty in the early church of Pauline authorship. As a matter of fact, no early witness attributes the Greek text to Paul.
2. The style and vocabulary are not Pauline. Thiessen says, "only the student of the Greek Testament can appreciate this situation fully."²
3. When Paul quotes the Old Testament, he uses both the Hebrew and the LXX. The author of Hebrews solely quotes the LXX.

B. Barnabas.

In favor of Barnabas is the following:

1. There is an early tradition--one of the earliest, Tertullion.
2. He was a Levite from Cypress, and a cultured Jew very capable of authoring such a volume.

3. He was not only familiar with, but no doubt influenced by, the teachings of Paul which would account for the affinity of the ideas in Hebrews and Paul's epistles.
4. He, too, knew Timothy. As a matter of fact, he was with Paul on the first missionary journey when Timothy was converted.
5. The author calls his book a word of exhortation (13:22). This was the specific designation of Barnabas (Acts 4:36).

C. Apollos.

Apollos was an Alexandrian Jew of high culture. He was eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures (Acts 18:24), making him capable. Furthermore, he was associated with Paul, at least to some degree (1 Cor. 16:12; Titus 3:13). The difficulty with this suggestion is that, in the words of Hiebert, "...no one ever thought of it until the time of Luther."³ That doesn't make it wrong, but it does make one wonder.

D. Aquila and Priscila.

Harnack made the ingenious suggestion that Priscilla, aided by her husband, was the author. He said that her authorship accounted for the early loss of the name of the author. Clever, but no convincing!

Others could be named as possibilities, including Luke, Silas, Philip the deacon, and Clement of Rome. My personal opinion is that Barnabas wrote Hebrews.

Origen said, "Who it was that really wrote the epistle, God only knows."

Dr. Adolph Saphir said, "Whoever is the author of this Epistle, its value and authority remain the same."⁴

II. Recipients.

A. Their date.

Hebrews had to have been written before 94 A.D. because Clement of Rome refers to it about that time. Actually, it was composed before 70 A.D. Had the temple in Jerusalem been destroyed, it would have given the author a definitive argument for the cessation of the Old Testament sacrificial system. Instead, he seems to regard the system as still in operation (cf. 8:4,13; 9:6-9; 10:1-3).

The other significant factor in the determination of the date is the mention of Timothy (13:23). It is clear from what is said that: (1) Timothy was in prison and had been released; (2) he was not with the author; (3) he was planning on coming to see the author and the two of them would see the readers, implying that the author was not in

prison at the time (i.e., their visit hinged on Timothy coming, not on his release).

We know nothing of Timothy's imprisonment. If Paul is the author, then naturally, as before, they would be united again. But if Paul is not the author, which is likely, then this suggests Paul was dead. Otherwise, Timothy would have been expected to join him. If that is the case, then Hebrews was written between the death of Paul and the destruction of Jerusalem, i.e., in 68 or 69 A.D.

B. Their destruction.

The recipients were Jewish Christians. The author's polemic against the permanence of the Levitical system is best explained if the audience were eagerly Jewish and inclined to be swayed back to their old religion. The heavy and extreme appeal to the Old Testament supports this view. Contrary to many, there is no doubt that the recipients were believers (cf. "we"--2:3; "holy brethren"--3:1. Also cf. 3:12; 5:12-14; 6:1,3,5,9; 10:22-23, the "we" of v. 26, 30,35,36; 12:4,5). It was not to Jewish Christians in general, but a particular group in a certain locality (3:7,17-19, 22-24).

They were not only believers, but they had been believers long enough to be teachers (5:12) and had successfully endured persecution (10:32-34). They had also financially assisted other

Christians (6:10). But they had become dull of hearing, like spiritual babes (5:11), and were in danger of drifting away (2:1; 3:12), perhaps because they were facing renewed persecution (12:4).

III. Subject.

The subject of Hebrews is the superiority of Jesus Christ. (The word "better" occurs 13 times: 1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19,22; 8:6,9,23; 10:34; 11:16,35,40; 12:24.)

Coleridge says, Romans "proved the necessity of the Christian religion, but Hebrews was to prove the superiority of it."

IV. Structure.

A. The literary structure.

The literary structure of Hebrews is different. Hiebert calls it "distinctive." By common consent it is classified as an epistle, yet it lacks entirely the customary opening salutation. It begins more like an essay than an epistle, but it sounds more like a sermon than a theological treatise. Diessmann called it a "religious tract." But it ends like a true letter. Reese sums up the situation well when he says, "Hebrews begins like an essay, proceeds like a sermon and ends as a letter."⁶ Hiebert solves the problem like this:

"Like a true letter in its present form it appears definitely to have been occasion-inspired... The contents of Hebrews, however, suggest that it a homily cast into an epistolary form."⁷

B. An outline.

Prologue. 1:1 - 4

- I. Christ is superior to angels.
1:5-2:8
 - A. He is King: they are servants.
1:5-14
 - B. First Warning: Don't neglect.
2:1-4
 - C. All things are subject to Him.
2:5-18
- II. Christ is superior to Moses.
3:1-4:13
 - A. He is the Son: Moses was a servant. 3:1-6
 - B. Second Warning: Don't disobey.
3:7-4:13
- III. Christ is superior to Aaron.
4:14-7:28
 - A. He is in the heavenlies.
4:14-5:10
 - B. Third warning: Don't fall away.
5:11-6:20
 - C. Christ's priesthood is superior to Aaronic. 7:1-28

IV. Christ has a better ministry.
8:1-10:39

- A. Based on a better covenant.
8:1-9:10
- B. Has a better sacrifice.
9:11-10:18
- C. Fourth Warning: Don't willfully sin. 10:19-39.

V. Therefore, live a life of faith.
11:1-13:17

- A. A life of faith gains acceptance, a good testimony and reward (better way). 11:1-40
- B. Endure like a son. 12:1-17
- C. Fifth Warning: Don't refuse to hear. 12:18-29
- D. Serve acceptably. 13:1-17

Personal greetings and benediction.
13:18-25

V. Purpose.

- A. To check their drift from Christ back to Judaism.

The first and foremost purpose of Hebrews was to prevent apostasy from Christianity to Judaism. To accomplish this purpose, the author shows, by a series of comparisons, that the religion of Christ is superior to that which preceded it. Special emphasis is put on Christ as our High Priest.

The writer also uses warnings. Several times he breaks into a solemn warning and earnest exhortation, very much like in a sermon, and then returns to his theme.

The point is clear. They are not to give up the substance for the shadow by abandoning Christianity and retreating back into Judaism.

- B. To challenge them to steadfastness and maturity.

Technically, Hebrews never speaks of an actual apostasy to Judaism. That view does not find its support so much in an individual passage as in the form of the argument of the epistle as a whole. The author proves throughout the book that Christianity is infinitely superior to Judaism and supercedes it (he does speak of a drifting away--2:1; a departure from God through unbelief--3:12,13; a falling away--6:6; and even willful sin--10:26, but never specifically of a return to Judaism per se.

But there is no doubt that he challenges them to steadfastness (cf. 13:14; 4:1,14; 10:23-25,35-36; 12:1-3) and maturity (6:1; 4:16; 5:12-14).

His great motivation for doing that is that they would be rewarded (10:35-36).

Conclusion:

Barnabas (?) wrote to a group of Jewish Christians arguing that since Christ was superior to Judaism, they should not willfully refuse to heed Him, but should, by faith, endure until the end so that they might be rewarded.

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1. D.E. Hiebert, An Introduction to the Non-Pauline Epistle [Chicago: Moody, 1962] p.76.
 2. H.C. Thiessen, Introduction to the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943]
 3. Hiebert, p. 83.
 4. Adolph Saphir, Expository lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Col. 1 [London: Shaw, 1874] p. 14.
 5. Robert Lee, The Outlined Bible Pickering & Inglis, N.D.] p. 58
 6. International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, p. 1355.
 7. Hiebert, p. 70.

JAMES

James is the "practical" epistle.

I. Author.

The author of this epistle identifies himself as James and calls himself a servant (1:1) and a teacher (3:1). Beyond that, the epistle itself tells us nothing.

But that alone tells us something. It tells us he must have been well known at the time. But it does not solve the problem of exactly which James wrote the book.

There are three prominent men named James in the New Testament.

A. James the son of Zebedee.

James the son of Zebedee was the older brother of the apostle John (Matt. 10:2). He was not only an apostle, he was in the inner circle (Matt. 17:1). His martyrdom by 44 A.D. makes it unlikely that he wrote this epistle (cf. Acts 12:2).

B. James the son of Alphaeus.

James the son of Alphaeus was the brother of Matthew (Matt. 10:3). He, too, was an apostle with the nick-name of James the Less (Mark 15:40). Apart from being listed with the other disciples, this James is comparatively obscure. Thus, it is doubtful that he

is the authoritative figure behind this epistle.

C. James the son of Joseph.

James the son of Joseph was the half-brother of Jesus Christ (Matt. 13:55). At first he didn't believe (John 7:5), but after the Lord appeared to him (1 Cor. 15:7), he became a believer (Acts 1:14) and one of the pillars of the church at Jerusalem (Acts 12:7; 15:3; 21:18; Gal. 2:12-19).

This James best fits the evidence as the author of the epistle.

1. There is no title indicating that he was well known.

The two other James were apostles, but they were not well known. James the son of Zebedee, the only other likely author, is usually eliminated because of his death.

2. It was written to scattered Jewish Christians.

James, the half-brother of Jesus, was the leader of the Jerusalem church. When those believers were scattered, he was the most likely one to write them.

3. The vocabulary of this book resembles the vocabulary of James' speech in Acts 15.

4. Tradition says that James the half-brother of Jesus was the author, and that tradition was not questioned until the Reformation when Luther questioned the whole epistle.

II. Recipients.

A. Their date.

According to Josephus, James was martyred in 62 A.D. Those who accept him as author have proposed the date of writing from 45 A.D. to the end of his life. Many, if not most, believe it was written early. One of the main reasons for that is that James uses the word "synagogue" (cf. "assembly" in 2:2), indicating that these believers were still meeting in the synagogue. I personally have concluded that James was written near 45 A.D., making it the first book in the New Testament collection to be written.

B. Their description.

The recipients were Jewish (1:1) Christians (cf. "brethren" throughout) except 5:1-6 where he speaks to unbelievers. The book is addressed to "the twelve tribes which were scattered abroad." This is probably a reference to the Jewish Christians who were scattered abroad because of the persecution in Acts 8:4 (cf. Acts 9:2, 11:19). If so, then they were as far away from Jerusalem as Syria (Acts 11:19). If this identification

is correct, and many conservative scholars believe it is, then the date of James is about 45 A.D.

From the book itself, it is obvious that these Jewish Christians were still meeting in synagogues (2:2) and had elders (5:14). Strangers sometimes attended their meetings (2:2-4), while some among them were rich (1:10). Maybe some were even traveling traders (4:13ff). The majority however, were probably poor (1:9; 2:6; 5:1-6).

They were having various kinds of trials. The rich were oppressing them by hauling them before the courts (2:6,7), and wrongfully withholding their wages (5:4). Nothing indicates that this was religious persecution (except possibly 2:7). Furthermore, these believers were having trouble among themselves. They had disagreements, ambitions and strifes (3:13-18; 4:1,2; 4:11). Some were weak from sickness (5:13), probably as a result of God's chastening.

To make matters worse, they were not enduring their trials with joy and submission. They were being partial (2:1-13). Many were trying to give advice, assuming the role of teacher (3:1). They had bitter jealousy and strife in their hearts (3:14) causing them to misuse the tongue to abuse one another (3:9,10), arguing with one another (4:1), speaking against one another (4:11), and groaning against one another

(5:9). They were lusting after things (4:2) and were not praying properly (4:4). Acting as if they were self-sufficient, they did not consider the will of God (4:13,16). Since they needed to take oaths (5:12), it appears that they were not completely honest with each other either.

III. Subject.

There are those who say that there is no unifying theme in James. These scholars claim that it was a collection of miscellaneous exhortations devoid of any intentional unity. Goodspeed describes the epistle as "just a handful of pearls, dropped one by one into the hearer's mind."¹ Hunter, recalling that the epistle had been called an "ethical scrapbook," concluded that it is so disconnected, as it stands, that it is the despair of the analyst.²

But most would not agree. Perhaps the most common suggestion for a single subject is faith. Obviously, faith is a subject dealt with in James. It is even conceded that the word "faith" or "believe" occurs 19 times, but 16 of those are in chapter 2.

The subject of the book of James is trials. He begins with that subject (1:2) and ends with it (5:13). He develops various other subjects that one way or another relate to the theme of trials (cf. 1:19).

IV. Structure.

Again, there are those who have said that there is no structure. In the first place, technically it is not an epistle. Furthermore, the content seems disconnected. Hiebert, who wrote an article on "The Unifying Theme of the Epistle of James," began by saying, "The Epistle of James is notoriously difficult to outline."³

Many have suggested that the literary structure had a "sermonic origin." Whatever the literary form, the structure seems to be summarized in 1:19.

Salutation. 1:1

Prologue. 1:2-18

Theme. 1:19-20

- I. Be swift to hear. 1:21-2:26
 - A. Hearing is doing the word. 1:21-25
 - B. Hearing is practicing mercy. 1:26-2:13
 - C. Hearing is producing works. 2:14-26
- II. Be slow to speak. 3:1-18
 - A. Inconsistent use of the tongue. 3:1-12
 - B. Godly wisdom and the tongue. 3:13-18

III. Be slow to anger. 4:1-5:12

A. The cause of conflict.
4:1-6

B. The cure of conflict.
4:7-5:12

Epilogue. 5:13-20

V. Purpose.

A. To exhort Christians to respond properly to trials.

These Jewish believers were in the midst of a number of trials, both from without their group and among themselves.

From without:

1. The rich were oppressing them by taking them to court. (2:6,7).
2. Their landlords were wrongfully withholding their wages (5:4).

From within:

1. There were internal fights going on (4:2).
2. Some were sick (5:14).

James writes to encourage them, yea exhorts them to believe (trust) God and endure (1:3-4). If they were to mature, they would have to be swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to wrath.

B. To warn Christians in trials about the dangers in the midst of trials.

Besides the obvious one of not trusting the Lord, and thus not enduring, he speaks of temptation (1:13-18), a lack of works (1:21-2:18), prejudice (2:1-12), a misuse of the tongue (3:1-12), judging one another (4:11-12), leaving God out of your plans (4:13-17), and even bitterness (5:6-12).

Conclusion:

James, the half-brother of Jesus Christ, wrote to Jewish Christians outside Palestine who were going through various trials to exhort them to respond properly and warn them about several dangers they faced in the process.

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1. E.J. Goodspeed, An Introduction to the New Testament, [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1937] p. 290.
 2. A.M. Hunter, Introducing the New Testament [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1946] p.96
 3. D.E. Hiebert, "The Unifying Theme of the Epistle of James," Bib. Sac. Vol 135, No. 539 [Dallas: Dallas Seminary, July-Sept. 1978] p. 221.

I PETER

Selwyn, who wrote the classic technical commentary on this epistle, said of it, "Nowhere in the New Testament, are the priestly and prophetic elements in christianity so closely fused."¹

I. Author.

I Peter 1:1 says that Peter penned this portion of the New Testament. Furthermore, there are similarities between I Peter and Peter's sermon in Acts. The early church had no doubts concerning the authorship and authenticity of I Peter.

II. Recipients.

A. Their date.

Several factors help pinpoint the date. For one thing, it was obviously written during Peter's lifetime. Tradition asserts that Peter was martyred under Nero who died in 68 A.D., so it had to have been written before that.

The other factor is the repeated mention of suffering in the book. Some scholars, impressed by the statement that the readers were suffering as Christians (4:16) conclude that I Peter was written after the outbreak of the Neronian persecution which was in the fall of 64 A.D. If that is the case, the date of writing was late 64 A.D.

B. Their description.

To whom was the epistle written :
Jewish or Gentile Christians?

"
I Peter 1:1 says, To the pilgrims of the dispersion." This, plus the injunction to keep their behavior "excellent among the Gentiles" (2:12), gives the impression that the readers were Jewish Christians. Yet the content of the letter indicates that they were Gentiles (cf. 2:9, 10, as well as 1:14, 18; 4:3,4).

This is a case where both positions are right. The readers were of a mixed racial and religious origin composed of Jewish and Gentile Christians. The Gentiles were probably in the majority in most of the churches.

These Jewish and Gentile believers lived in Asia Minor in regions not mentioned in Acts (Pontius, Cappadocia and Bythia, cf. 1:1). Perhaps Peter had visited these places and ministered in these areas, but there is no evidence of that.

The occasion of the letter was the news of growing opposition and persecution of believers in Asia Minor (cf. 1:6; 3:13-17; 4:12-19; 5:9,10). Hostility and superstition were mounting. These believers were being slandered and attacked because of their faith (4:14,15). They were being hated because of their withdrawal from sinful practices. Apparently there were also charges of disloyalty to the state

(2:13-17). Boa says, "...they were being reviled and abused for their lifestyles and subversive talk about another Kingdom."² Peter calls these "fiery trials" (4:12). The danger, of course, is that the pressure of persecution would push them back into sin.

selwyn points out that there is no trace of controversy or hint of false teaching anywhere in the book.³ three passages indicate that "the trials besetting the readers spasmodic and particular rather than organized on a universal scale, a matter of incidents rather than of policy... [It] was not the Roman law-court but the Roman police and the ebb and flow of public feeling which might precipitate [these persecutions]"⁴ (a police administration which could be tightened or relaxed anytime, f. 1:6; 3:13-19; 4:12-19). "The fact that he has much to say to slaves, but nothing to their masters suggests perhaps that many of his readers were of a servile station." ⁵

III. Subject.

I Peter is one of those books in the Bible for which several different subjects have been suggested. Salvation seems to be the subject under which all other themes fit, but I must quickly add that I'm not talking about salvation in the initial sense, but in the progressive sense of the term, i.e., not justification, but sanctification.

- 1:3 -- They had been regenerated.
- 1:5 -- Salvation will be disclosed in the last times.
- 1:9 -- Salvation is the goal (telos) of our faith, but we are in the process of receiving it (present tense).

Remember, salvation in the New Testament is past, present and future. I have been, will be and am being saved. Using I Peter 1:9, then, for the phrase, let's say the subject of the book is the salvation of the soul (meaning the salvation of our life).

IV. Structure.

I Peter is a letter. It begins with a salutation, followed by a thanksgiving. After the body of the book there is personal greetings and a benediction. Only the customary "prayer" is missing.

Salutation. 1:1-2

Thanksgiving. 1:3-12

I. Salvation of the soul in relation to God. 1:13-21

A. Hope. 1:13

B. Holiness. 1:14-16

C. Heavenly fear. 1:17-21

II. Salvation of the soul in relation to the church.

1:22-2:10

(i.e., believers)

- A. Love the brethren.
 - B. Desire the world. 2:1-10
- III. Salvation of the soul in relation to the world. 2:11-3:7
- A. Through abstinence from lust. 2:11-12
 - B. Through subjection. 2:13-3:7
 - In public life. 2:13-17
 - In professional life. 2:18-25
 - In private life. 3:1-7
- IV. Salvation of the soul in relation to life. 3:8-4:6
- A. Through blessing. 3:8-12
 - B. Through suffering. 3:13-4:6
- V. Salvation of the soul in relation to the end. 4:7-5:9
- A. Through service. 4:7-11
 - B. Through suffering. 4:12-19
 - C. Through shepherding. 5:1-4
 - D. Through submission. 5:5-9
- Personal greetings and benediction. 5:10-14

V. Purpose.

- A. To exhort them.

At the end of the letter Peter says he wrote to exhort and to testify (5:12). Of the hortatory nature there is no doubt; there are 34 imperatives. It is almost entirely hortatory. It is not a doctrinal treatise, but a powerful appeal. Peter exhorts us to holiness, love, growth, submission, service, etc., all of which can be summarized as salvation (1:9), or the grace of God (5:12).

- B. To testify.

His exhortation to stand fast in the faith constitutes his testimony to the fact that this is the true grace of God (5:12). They were facing, and would face in the future, persecution (3:14), suffering, fiery trials (4:12). Such pressure would no doubt tempt them to doubt, faint heartedness and failure. Peter assures them that they are fundamentally right in spite of the opposition and hatred they were experiencing.

Conclusion:

Peter wrote to the Jewish and Gentile Christians to testify concerning the true grace of God and to exhort them to save themselves from a life of fleshly lust by submitting to the will of God, even in the face of suffering.

1. E.G. Selwyn, The First Epistle of St. Peter
[London: MacMillan, 1964] p.2
2. Kenneth Boa, Talk Thru the New Testament
[Wheaton: Tyndale, 1981] p. 175.
3. Selwyn, pp. 40,53.
4. Selwyn, p. 55.
5. Selwyn, p. 49.

II PETER

II Peter is Peter's swan song.

I. Author.

The epistle itself bears abundant testimony to Peter's authorship. It claims to have been written by "Simon Peter" (1:1). It even claims to be his second letter (3:1). The author refers to the Lord's prediction about Peter's death (cf. John 21:18,19 and II Peter 1:14). He also claimed he was an eyewitness of the the transfiguration (1:16-18).

There are distinctive words that are found in II Peter and in Peter's sermon in Acts. Unusual words and phrases are in both I and II Peter.

II Peter has been rejected as genuine more than any other New Testament book. There are several reasons for that. For one thing, the early tradition of II Peter is weaker than any other New Testament book. For example, there are no undisputed 2nd Century quotations from II Peter. 3rd Century witnesses were, however, generally aware of II Peter and respected its contents. But it was still categorized as a disputed book. The 4th Century finally saw the official recognition of the book despite lingering doubts.

Yet, there is early--very early--even 1st Century evidence for II Peter:

As the earliest and most important piece of evidence,

taking us into the first century, we would point to the Epistle of Jude. It is the earliest and strongest attestation of II Peter. The force of this position is dependent upon the view that II Peter is prior to Jude.

II. Recipients.

A. Their date.

If II Peter 3:1 is referring to I Peter (most scholars say that it is), then obviously II Peter was written after I Peter which was penned in 64 A.D. There was not a large gap of time between the two letters because Peter was martyred in Rome in 66 A.D. II Peter 1:14 seems to indicate the letter was written just prior to his death.

At the same time, if Peter were alive in 67 A.D. when Paul wrote II Timothy, it is likely that Paul would have mentioned him. Everything considered, it seems best to place the date of II Peter at about 66 A.D.

B. Their description.

II Peter 3:1 seems to suggest that Peter had in mind the same readers of Asia Minor as he did in I Peter, although the more general salutation of 1:1 would allow for a wider audience.

The occasion of this epistle was false teachers among the churches. Technically, these false teachers "were coming" in the future (2:1; 3:3). They would deny the Second Coming of Christ (3:4), and live a lustful lifestyle (3:3; 2:10,14), and lead others, even believers, astray (2:14).

III. Subject.

The subject of II Peter is the Second Coming of Christ. He begins by talking about precious promises (1:4). Chapter 3 seems to describe these promises as Christ coming (3:4,9,13). Furthermore, he talks about the coming of the Lord in chapter 1 (1:16), and at the end of chapter 3 (3:4,10,12). False teachers and scoffers denied these truths and led believers into a life of ungodliness. A reminder of these truths provokes us to escape the corruption that is in the world and live godly lives (3:11).

IV. Structure.

II Peter is basically in the form of an ancient letter, but frankly, not all of the elements of that form are present. It does not contain a thanksgiving, a prayer or personal greetings. It does, however, have a salutation, a body and a benediction.

Salutation. 1:1,2

Prologue. 1:3-11 (Promises make godliness possible and profitable)

- I. The promises of prophecies are sure. 1:12-21
- II. The perversions of false teachers will be judged. 2:1-22
 - A. Their judgment. 2:1-9
 - B. Their nature. 2:10-17
 - C. Their allurements. 2:18-22
- III. The pronouncements of scoffers are wrong. 3:1-13
 - A. Scoffers will deny the Second Coming. 3:1-7
 - B. The Lord is not slack concerning His promises. 3:8-10
 - C. Therefore, we should live godly lives. 3:11-13

Conclusion. 3:14-18

V. Purpose.

- A. To warn them against false teachers and scoffers.

While the purpose of the letter is nowhere stated, the last two verses summarize the two-fold purpose. It is evident from the content that Peter means to warn them lest they be led astray with the error of the wicked (3:17). Chapter 2 warns of the false teachers who walk according to the flesh and despise authority (2:10). They are self-willed (2:10), wicked (2:14).

They will be judged (2:1,3,4). The heretics will use deceptive words (2:3) to lead believers astray (2:2,18; 3:17). Chapter 3 warns against scoffers who deny the promise of the Lord's coming (3:3). This, too, has a bearing on godliness (3:11).

- B. To remind them of what they knew and to exhort them to heed it so they would grow.

Peter does not claim to be telling them anything new. He repeatedly says he is reminding them of things they already knew (1:12,15; 3:1,15,17). His purpose, then, is to remind them and thus exhort them to godliness and growth (1:5; 3:11,17,18).

These two are connected. Resisting error will help insure godliness and growth.

Conclusion:

Peter wrote his second epistle to a wider audience to warn them against coming false teachers and scoffers, and to remind them that since the Lord is returning they should live godly lives.

1. Hiebert, p. 144.

I JOHN

I John is the most difficult book in the Bible. It is abstract. It does not contain a single definite statement, either personal, geographical or historical concerning either the author or recipients. As a matter of fact, except for Jesus Christ and Cain, there are no proper names in the book. But the real difficulty is that it is absolute (cf. 3:9; 4:8; 4:7). To complicate matters, some of its abstract absolute statements seem to contradict each other (cf. 3:9 and 1:8; or 5:16 and 5:18). With John, everything is black or white; there is no gray.

I. Author.

Nowhere in the book does the author identify himself. However, there is an early and universal tradition that it was written by the apostle John. Polycarp, who knew John personally, quotes from him.

II. Recipients.

A. Their date.

Nothing in the book indicates a specific date or period for its writing. Most suggest a late date in the 1st Century around 90-95 A.D. This is usually done on the basis that the Gospel of John was written late and I John was written after that.

However, there is evidence that the Gospel was written before 70 A.D.

(cf. the present tense in John 1:5). If that is the case, then maybe it was written earlier than most believe and so was I John.

It seems to me that several factors need to be considered in determining the date of composition:

- (1) The tone of the book, and especially the attitude of the author toward the readers, suggests that an elderly gentleman is addressing a younger generation. For example, he repeatedly calls them "little children";
- (2) There is evidence that John resided at Ephesus and wrote to the churches of Asia.
- (3) Since there is no indication that Timothy and John were at Ephesus at the same time, John must have come after Timothy. We know that Paul was at Ephesus several times between 53-57 A.D. Timothy was there with Paul in 62-63. Timothy was still there when Paul wrote to him in 67 A.D. Yet, evidently, Timothy left after that. (Hebrews refers to an imprisonment and it was written about 68 or 69 A.D.) John probably did not arrive in Ephesus until after 67 A.D.

Therefore, anytime between 67-90 A.D. is conceivable. My personal opinion is that it was probably about

80 A.D.

B. Their description.

Unlike Paul's epistles which were addressed either to individuals or to individual churches (Galatians is the exception), or Peter's epistles which were more general, but still addressed to churches in a given area, I John is truly "general." It was not addressed to any particular local congregation.

What we do know from the book itself is that John wrote to believers (2:12-14,21; 5:13). There is no doubt in his mind that they were Christians (cf. ΤΕΚΝΙΟΝ 2:1,12, 28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21. Also cf. παιδια 2:12,18). Twice he calls them "brethren" (2:7; 3:13) and five times "beloved" (3:2,21; 4:1, 7,11). As a matter of fact, many have concluded that they were not only believers, but that they had been believers a long time.

It is even possible that he was addressing leaders. He tells them that they possessed an anointing and did not need teachers (2:20, 27). In the Old Testament it was the leaders--the prophets, priests and kings--who were anointed. It at least implies that they were spiritually mature since the immature need human teachers (cf. Hebrews 5:12). (II Cor. 1:21 may refer to Paul's apostolic office.)

Even so, John intended for the book to be read to the whole congregation (s).

Some say that the recipients were spiritually half-hearted and nominal. The world had great attraction for them.¹

Be that as it may, it is clear that the readers had been confronted with false teachers whom John calls "anti-Christ" (2:18-26). The identity of these false teachers has been the subject of much discussion. Some say the book was aimed against gnosticism (the name is derived from the Greek word "gnosis," knowledge, which sharply distinguished between the material and the spiritual. Others see docetism (from the Greek word "dokein," to seem), which was a special application of gnosticism to the incarnation. This view taught that Jesus only seemed to have a real physical body of flesh and blood. But since Irenaeus (pupil of Polycarp, who was the pupil of John, died 202 A.D.), many have claimed that I John was written against the backdrop of Cerinthus who believed that the divine Christ descended on the human Jesus at His baptism and departed before the crucifixion. Passages from I John could be cited where each of these seem to be in view (gnosticism--cf. repeated reference to "know"; docetism--1:1,2; Cerinthus--5:6). I John 5:6 definitely seems to have the Cerinthian heresy in mind. Yet, it

must be remembered that John states that they were 'many' false teachers (2:18, 4:1). From the book itself it can be safely said that John had false teachers in mind (2:26; 3:7). Evidently, these anti-Christ's originated in Judea (2:19). They clearly denied that Jesus was the Christ (2:22). Apparently, this was no so much a rejection of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ of the Old Testament as it was a denial of the incarnation. Scott says, "In their case to deny that He was 'the Christ' was equivalent to a denial that He was 'the Son' (2:23; 4:15; I John 9)"². Compare especially 4:2. They probably claimed to have the Father while denying the truth of the Son (2:22,23).

John does not explicitly connect the theological error with the ethical error, but the implication is plain. Stott concludes that I John is directed against the Cerinthian gnosticism which was basically a Christological heresy that included moral indifference and an arrogant lovelessness.³ It could be added that they were not only living a loose lifestyle, but they were causing believers to doubt that they had eternal life.

III. Subject.

Many have preached the book of I John as if it were a series of tests to see if people in the congregation are

truly Christians. The idea is that the author of I John is not sure of the salvation of his readers, so he writes to give them a test to see if they are. That is categorically not the case. There is no doubt in John's mind, nor question in his book that his readers were saved (cf. I John 2:12-14).

The subject of I John is fellowship (cf. 1:3). John G. Mitchell entitled his commentary on I John Fellowship and said, "The main theme of the Epistle is fellowship with God. In John's Gospel we have life through the Incarnate Word of God. In his Epistle, we have fellowship through the Incarnate Word of God!"⁴

IV. Structure.

I John is commonly called a letter or an epistle, yet unlike II and III John or Paul's letters, it does not display the features of contemporary correspondence of the day. It is like Hebrews in that it begins without an opening salutation. But unlike Hebrews, it lacks entirely the epistolary conclusion. It contains no formal Thanksgiving or Prayer characteristic of ancient letters. Clearly, it does not follow the literary form of a letter.

Well, what is its literary form?
Stott comments.

"It is not a theological treatise written in the academic peace of a library, but a tract for the times, called forth by a particular

and urgent situation in the church. This situation concerns the insidious propaganda of certain false teachers."⁵

The most important question is, What is the literary structure? That's very difficult. Hiebert says,

"Any hurried attempt to set forth in logical outline the contents of this epistle will inevitably result in frustration. The epistle is exceedingly difficult to analyze. It has been seriously questioned whether John had any plan at all in the writing of it. It has been characterized as the ramblings of an old man without system or sequence. . . .

It is a mistake to think that there is confusion and lack of order in its contents. The difficulty lies rather in the nature of its composition. The effort to analyze it is like attempting to analyze the face of the sky. 'There is contrast, and yet harmony; variety and yet order; fixedness, and yet ceaseless change; a monotony which soothes without wearying us, because the frequent repetitions come to us as things that are both new and old.' 6

Dale Moody has said,

"The literary structure of John is much like the Meander River

in Asia where such teachings were first formulated against the Gnostic threat. The twisting and turning of the Meander became proverbial. Hence, the English verb "to meander." Some have thought the repetitions of themes in I John impossible to outline, but this is hardly true."

"Plummer frankly says, 'Probably few commentators have satisfied themselves with their own analysis of this Epistle: still fewer have satisfied other people.'"⁸

- Prologue. 1:1-4
- I. Fellowship with God who is light. 1:5-2:28
 - A. The provision for fellowship. 1:5-2:2
 - B. The proof for fellowship. 2:3-11
 - C. The position of the readers. 2:12-14
 - D. The preventatives to fellowship. 2:15-28
 1. Love for the world. 2:15-17
 2. Listening to false prophets. 2:18-28
 - II. Fellowship with God who is Righteous. 2:29-4:6
 - A. The manifestation of God's children. 2:29-3:10a

- B. The manifestation of righteousness. 3:10b-24
 - 1. What love is not. 3:10b-15
 - 2. What love is. 3:16-18
 - 3. What love does. 3:19-24
- C. The manifestation of the Spirit of truth. 4:1-6

III. Fellowship with God who is Love. 4:7-5:13

- A. Reasons for love. 4:7-21
- B. Power for love. 5:1-13
- C. Practice of love. 5:14-17

Epilogue. 5:18-21

V. Purpose.

Most of the books of the Bible do not contain a purpose statement; a few do (cf. Proverbs and the Gospel of John). The few that do say only a little about the purpose at best. I John is different. It not only tells us why it was written, it tells us several reasons why it was written. That fact becomes a problem.

- I John 1:3 - To promote fellowship and joy
- I John 2:1 - To prevent sin
- I John 2:12 - To proclaim forgiveness
- I John 2:26 - To protect the saints
- I John 5:13 - to provide assurance

The question is, Do these individual statements refer to the immediate context, or to the whole book? Which one is the purpose of the book? Some argue that 1:3 is the overall purpose of the book, while others contend that 5:13 is the over-riding aim. I personally believe that the answer is that the aim of the book is stated at the beginning and that all the other statements are referring to what was said in the immediate context. There are two primary purposes of I John.

A. To promote fellowship.

John writes as an elder/pastor to his flock. He repeatedly refers to them as "little children." He states upfront that his purpose is fellowship (1:3). If that is to be maintained, they must deal with sin (2:1) and rest assured that they are forgiven. When that is done they will experience confidence (2:28; 3:21; 4:17).

B. Polemical: to protect against the deception of the false teachers.

In a sense, this purpose is part of the major purpose in that if they are deceived by false doctrine they will not continue in fellowship. Yet this is such an issue, perhaps it needs to be listed separately.

As we have seen, the anti-Christ denied Christ (2:20) and the believers were running the risk of being deceived by them (2:26). So they needed to test the teaching of the false teachers to make

sure that it was true (4:1).

Conclusion:

John wrote to believers dealing with a particular type of false teaching to encourage them to abide in that which they heard from the beginning so that they would maintain their fellowship with God and love for the brethren.

Manifest faith by correct doctrine, righteous living and wholehearted love for the brethren.

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1. A.E. Brooke, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Johannine Epistles [New York: Scribners, 1928] p. xxviii.
 2. John R.W. Stott, The Epistles of John [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964] pp. 42, 43.
 3. Stott, pp. 44-50.
 4. J.G. Mitchell, Fellowship [Portland: Multnomah Press, 1974] p. 14.
 5. Stott, p. 41.
 6. Hiebert, p. 214.
 7. Dale Moody, The Letters of John [Waco, Tx: Word, 1970] p. 15.
 8. Hiebert, pp. 214-5.

II JOHN

II John is the Book of the Closed Door.

I. Author.

The author identifies himself as the elder (v. 1). There is nothing else in the book to further pinpoint the identity of the author. Two factors, however, lead to the conclusion that the author was the apostle John. The first is Tradition.

The second factor is the similarity between I John and II John.

Some have objected that the author called himself "the elder" instead of an apostle. But there is nothing inconsistent in that. The apostle Peter did not think it inconsistent to speak of himself as an elder (I Pet. 1:5). Besides, the author of II John adds the article "the". As Heibert says, "The absolute use of the term "the elder" marks a position wholly exceptional". 1

II. Recipients.

A. Their date.

There is nothing (absolutely nothing--zip, zero, zilch) in the book to indicate the date of writing. Consequently, guesses are all over the calendar from the early 60's to the late 90's.

Most come at the problem like this: I and II John deal with the same problem and use similar (in some cases identical) material. Therefore, they were written about the same time. That reasoning does make sense (cf. Ephesians and Colossians).

Thus, II John was probably written about 80 A.D.

B. Their description.

John says he is writing to an elect lady and her children. That's a problem. There are two basic interpretations of this phrase: (1) that it refers to an individual Christian lady: (2) that it be taken figuratively of a church.

Some, among those who say it was written to an individual lady, go further and say her name is Lady Electa. But that term is not known to have been a personal name. Others claim that she is an unnamed unknown Christian.

Among those who believe the term is a personification of a church are those who hold that it is a reference to the universal church. "Is not the church the bride of Christ?" they ask. Most, however, are content to see it as a reference to a local church. For example, Zane Hodges states,

"The conclusion that 2 John is addressed to a church is further supported by the observation that in the Greek the writer

drops the singular number for his pronouns after verse 5 and uses a singular again only in verse 13. Indeed, the general nature of the epistle's content is most appropriate to a community. Thus, while the probability that a particular Christian woman is addressed cannot be totally excluded, it is preferable to treat the letter as addressed to a church".²

Also consider that if the lady's name is Electa, then she had a sister by the same name (cf. v. 13). Furthermore, if an actual Christian woman were addressed, the greeting would have come from her sister and not from her sister's children (cf. v. 13).

Like the recipients of I John, the readers of II John were faced with false teachers (v. 7). John instructed the church not to be deceived by them (v. 8), nor to receive them (v. 10a), nor to greet them (v. 10b). If they greeted them and received them they would be deceived by them. If they were deceived by them they would cease to obey God and love others (v. 6).

II. Subject.

The one subject that fits everything in the epistle is truth; cf. verse 1 (twice), verses, 2,3,4. (Other verses

talk about truth but do not use the word, e.g., vv. 5,6,7,9

IV. Structure.

Unlike, I John, which did not follow the format of an ancient letter at all, I John does--at least to a degree. It contains the stand and Salutation (including author, recipients and greeting), a Body and ends with Personal greetings. It does not have the familiar Thanksgiving and Prayer (or Benediction).

The body is divided into two parts: exhortation and warning.

Salutation. 1-3

I. The practice of truth. 4-6

- A. The walk in truth. 4
- B. The walk in love. 5-6

II. The protection of truth. 7-11

- A. The danger. 7
- B. The duty. 8-11

Personal greeting. 12-13,

V. Purpose.

- A. To exhort a local church to practice the truth.

John wrote to urge them to practice the truth (v.5). He begins this exhortation by commending the fact that some of the children walk in the truth (v.5) and develops this into its end which is love (v.5).

- B. To warn a local church about the perverters of truth.

But this practice of the truth was in danger from the perverters of the truth, so he writes to warn them about the deceivers which had gone out into the world (v.7).

They were in danger of not receiving a full reward (v. 8). If they did not abide in the doctrine of Christ they would lose out at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Don't be so "progressive" that you fail to "abide".

But the bottom line in this case is, Don't receive the deceivers (v. 10). This verse has been greatly misunderstood. "House" is the church, which in that day met in homes. "Coming" is not the casual visit of a stranger, but the coming of a teacher claiming authority. "Receive" means to let him speak and to support him, including giving him hospitality. Don't even greet him (literally, "to rejoice to be glad" Paul means don't say, "I'm glad to see you. I wish you well"). Hodges says, make it plain from the aloofness that in no way do you condone the activities of these men.

In short, he wrote for the practice and purity of the truth.

Conclusion:

John wrote to a local church to urge them to continue practicing the truth and to warn them not to receive deceivers.

1. Hiebert, p. 230.
2. Zane Hodges, "2 John", The Bible Knowledge Commentary, ed. Walvoord and Zuck [Wheaton: Victor, 1983] p. 905.
3. Hodges, p. 908.

III JOHN

III John is the shortest book in the Bible. It & II John would fill a single sheet of papyrus paper.

I. Author.

II and III John are alike in many ways, one of which is the way the author identifies himself. Instead of his name he gives them the term or title, "the elder." Like II John, III John gives us no other information to identify the author. Tradition, however, reveals that it was John the apostle.

A comparison of this epistle with other writings of John support that view.

II. Recipient.

A. His date.

Again, III John is like II John. There is nothing (zip, zero, zilch) in this book itself that serves as a tipoff to the date of composition. Guesses range from the 60's to the 90's.

The similarity of the contents of III John to II John would suggest a date close to II John. If that is the case, then III John was probably written about 80 A.D.

B. His description.

Evidently, the situation was something like this. Early Christian writers are unified in their testimony that the apostle John ended up in Ephesus. The book of Revelation does seem to confirm that. John apparently commissioned a number of traveling teachers. A team of teachers arrived with a letter of commendation from John, but a fellow named Diotrophes refused them and John's letter (v. 9). They returned to John and reported the hostility of Diotrophes and the hospitality of Gaius.

John had led Gaius to Christ (v.4) and they were close friends (v. 1), so John wrote to this wealthy layman to encourage him to continue receiving missionaries in spite of the opposition of Diotrophes. He also announced his intention of personally visiting to deal with the situation. The letter no doubt was delivered by Demetrius.

Gaius was a common name in the Roman Empire. Three other men by that name are mentioned in the New Testament, but it is highly unlikely that any of them was the Gaius of III John.

III. Subject.

The subject of III John is love (v. 5). In Johannine thought, truth is

the foundation of love (cf. I John 2:3-11, esp. vv. 4,7ff; 3:19; II John 4,5; III John 3,6). Hospitality is one expression of love. In III John Gaius loved others (v. 6), and Diotrophes loved himself (v. 9).

IV. Structure.

II & III John are alike and different from I John in that they both use the letter format. III John follows the formula even more closely than II John. It contains a Salutation, Prayer, Body and ends with Personal greetings and Benediction. Only the customary Thanksgiving is omitted (though John does express joy for Gaius).

Salutation. 1

Prayer. 2-4

I. Confirmation of Gaius. 5-8

A. His example of hospitality. 5-6

B. The explanation for hospitality. 7-8

II. Condemnation of Diotrophes. 9-11

A. His actions. 9-10

B. Your reactions. 11

III. Commendation of Demetrius. 12

Personal greeting & benediction. 13-14

V. Purpose.

A. To Encourage Gaius.

Apparently, Gaius was wealthy (he entertained a lot), but not too healthy (v. 2). There was trouble at church: a strong-willed headstrong man named Diotrophes repudiated the authority of the apostle John, suppressed a letter written to the church, refused to receive traveling teachers and tried to prevent others from receiving them, even going so far as to excommunicate those who did. With the pain in his body and the problems in the church it would have been easy for him to have stopped entertaining missionaries. That was not wrong. He could have used his health as an excuse. Furthermore, to continue was to ask for trouble.

John writes to encourage him to continue doing what he was doing (v. 6) and tell him not to imitate Diotrophes (v. 11); John would deal with him when he arrived. (v.10)

B. To endorse Demetrius.

Demetrius may have just been the bearer of the letter, the postman, but on the other hand he may have been one of the traveling teachers. Either way, he would need hospitality. So John writes to endorse him in the highest possible terms.

Conclusion:

John wrote to Gaius to encourage him to continue the practice of love in the form of hospitality and to endorse Demetrius.

JUDE

The book of Acts is the acts of the apostles; the book of Jude is the acts of the apostates.

I. Author.

The author identifies himself simply as Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James (v.1). The author's designation of himself as the "brother of James" is unique. No other New Testament writer identifies himself by his family connections, although some of the Old Testament prophets do.

That relationship limits the possibilities to two different men: (1) Jude (not Iscariot), one of the apostles (also called Labbaeus, or Thaddaeus--cf. Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18 with Luke 6:16, Acts 1:13 and John 14:22); (2) Jude, the half-brother of the Lord (Matt. 13:55 and Mark 6:2).

In verse 17, the author distinguishes himself from the apostles. Therefore, the author must be Jude, the half-brother of the Lord.

That means that two of the half-brothers of the Lord wrote Scripture: James and Jude. Neither of them say that, indicating their respect for the Lord and their own humility. As a matter of fact, both call themselves His slaves. Jude adds that he is the brother of James (not Jesus!). Evidently, James (whether still alive or not) was much better known than

Jude. Remember, he was the head of the early Jerusalem church.

II. Recipients.

A. Their Date.

Before the date of Jude can be determined, the relationship between II Peter and Jude must be settled. A similarity between the two is not likely coincidental (cf. II Pet. 2:1-3:4 and Jude 4-18). The obvious differences rule out the possibility of one being the mere copy of the other. After looking at the data, scholars conclude that either Peter used Jude or Jude used Peter, rather than both drawing independently from a third source. Both views have their supporters.

The following arguments give strong support for the priority of II Peter.

- (1) II Peter predicted the coming of false teachers (cf. II Pet. 2:1, 2; 3:3), while Jude records the historical fulfillment of Peter's prophecy (Jude 4, 11, 12, 17, 18).
- (2) Jude quotes II Peter 3:3 and acknowledges it as a quote from the apostles (cf. also I Tim. 4:1; II Tim. 3:1).

Therefore, Jude could not have been written before 66 A.D., the year Peter wrote his second epistle. It is likely that some

years passed between the prediction in II Peter and the fulfillment in Jude. Thus, Thiessen with Zahn dates Jude at 75 A.D. (p. 296). Hodges points out that the impression left by the epistle is that the apostles had passed from the scene (cf. E EY00. v. 18), and that Peter had written some time ago. Therefore, the latest possible date is best. I'll settle for 75 A.D.

B. Their description.

Jude addresses believers in general (cf. "sanctified" and "preserved" v. 1) with no geographical designation. Nevertheless, Jude did have a specific region in mind, for it is evident that his readers were a specific group being troubled by ungodly men (v. 4) which were infiltrators into their love feasts (v. 12). These men were no doubt false teachers, (v. 8). (Technically, the text does not say that.) The false teachers, like the ones in II Peter, were libertines (cf. v. 4). Jude calls them dreamers (v. 8) which suggests the possibility that they claimed prophetic visions. He leaves no doubt that they were ungodly men (cf. vv. 4,5-10,15,18, etc.) who were headed for judgment (vv. 13,14-15).

III. Subject.

The subject of Jude is false teachers. That is clear from the body of the book

which deals with a denunciation and condemnation of these ungodly men.

IV. Structure.

The literary structure of Jude is basically that of an ancient letter. It begins with a Salutation and ends with a Benediction. It does not have the customary Thanksgiving, Prayer, and Personal greetings of letters of the day. If it had those elements we would probably know more about the recipients than we do.

The body of the book is divided into two parts, each beginning with a reference (in triplet) to the Old Testament (cf. vv. 5-7 and v. 11). Each of the Old Testament sections are applied to the infiltrators (cf. "these", vv. 8,10 and 12,16, 19).

Salutation. 1-2

Prologue. 3-4

1. Sinners will be judged. 5-10
 - A. Sinners in the Old Testament were judged. 5-7
 - B. Likewise, these sinners will be judged. 8-10
- II. Apostates will be judged. 11-23
 - A. These have apostacized. 11
 - B. Their characteristics. 12-15
 - C. Their conversation. 16-18
 - D. Their constitution. 19-23

Doxology. 24-25

v. Purpose

- A. To remind believers that God judges sinners.

Jude is not writing about something new. In verse 5 he says, "But I want to remind you ...!" He goes on to talk about the fact that God judges sinners (cf. also vv. 17-18).

Yet even though they knew these types would come (vv. 17-18), some had slipped into their own love feasts (v. 12) unnoticed (v. 4). Thus, the believers needed to be reminded of something they had been taught.

- B. To exhort believers to contend for the faith.

Jude wanted them to do more than know that ungodly men were present. He wanted them to contend for the faith (v. 3). The Greek word translated "contend" means "to contend for a prize, fight, struggle, strive." It is one thing to know; it is another to act on that knowledge.

Conclusion:

Jude wrote to believers to remind them that God will judge the ungodly and to exhort them to contend for the faith.

REVELATION

There are four methods of interpreting the book of Revelation:

- (1) The allegorical method - this view sees the book as an allegory of conflict between the church and the forces of evil in all ages;
- (2) The preterist method - this point of view holds that Revelation is a record of the conflict of the early church with Judaism and paganism. In short, it was fulfilled in the early church;
- (3) The historical method - this method views the book as fulfilled, not just in the early church, but throughout church history;
- (4) The futuristic method - this position claims that chapters 4 and following are yet to be fulfilled.

I. Author.

Four times the author calls himself John (1:1; 1:4; 1:9; and 22:8). He does not call himself an apostle, but merely, "a servant of Christ" (1:1), and "your brother and companion in tribulation" (1:9). Now, the question is, which John wrote this book? Early church tradition answered John the Apostle.

II. Recipients.

A. Their date.

There are two theories as to when Revelation was written: one early, @68 or 69 A.D., and one late, @ 95 or 96 A.D.

Lightfoot, Westcott, Hort, Scroggie, et. al., hold to the early date based on the character of the Greek and the identity of the Seven heads in chapters 13-17.

The late date is preferred for several reasons:

- (1) Clement of Rome, Irenaeus, etc. declared that John was banished to Patmos in the 15th year of Domitian (who ruled from 80-95 A.D.) and that he was released by Nerva (96 A.D.) John states that he was banished to Patmos (1:9).
- (2) Since John did not move to Ephesus until 67 A.D., the early date would not give him enough time to have established an on-going ministry in Asia by the time he wrote this book.
- (3) The churches described in chapters 2 and 3 were founded in the late 50's. The early date allows too little time for the decline described to develop (cf. 2:4; 3:1;

15-18).

- (4) The deeds of Domitian were more revelant than those of Nero. Boa explains.

"Worship of deceased emperors had been practiced for years, but Domitian was the first emperor to demand worship while he was alive. This led to a greater clash between the state and the church, especially in Asia, where the worship of Caesar was widely practiced. The persecution under Domitian pointed ahead to the more severe persecutions that would follow." ¹

Then he adds,

"Thus, it is likely that John wrote this book in A.D. 95-96. The date of his release from Patmos is unknown, but he was probably allowed to return to Ephesus after the reign of Domitian. Passages like 1:11; 22:7, 9,10,18,19 suggest that the book was completed before John's release." ²

B. The description.

Revelation was addressed to the seven churches of Asia Minor (1:4; 10, 11; 22:16). Evidently, at least some of these churches were suffering persecution (1:9 where he says "companions in tribulation", 2:10,13; 6:9; 20:4).

III. Subject:

The subject of Revelation is stated in 1:1. This book is a revelation of Jesus Christ. The word "revelation" means "uncovering". Revelation, then, is a revealing, an uncovering of Jesus Christ. The content of the book indicates that it is a revelation of Jesus Christ as Judge.

IV. Structure.

The literary form of Revelation is called Apocalyptic literature. 1 Samuel is narrative, the Psalms are poetry, Romans is didactic, and Revelation is apocalyptic. In apocalyptic literature the predictive element is prominent. It is also highly symbolic but the symbols are often arbitrary.

The overall literary structure of the book is simple because John tells us what it is (cf. Rev. 1:19 and 4:1).

Things seen - chapters 1:19,20
Things which are - chapters 2 and 3
Things which will
take place after
this - chapters 4 thru 22

The sub-divisions of the second part are simple enough: Seven messages to seven churches (technically, these are not seven letters, for they do not follow the format of an ancient letter). The structure of the remainder of the book is also clear. There are three judgments:

seals, trumpets and bowls.

Prologue. 1:1-8

- I. Christ revealed as Judge. 1:9-20
- II. Christ revealed as Judge of the Church. 2:1-3:22
 - A. To Ephesus. 2:1-7
 - B. To Smyrna. 2:8-11
 - C. To Pergamos. 2:12-17
 - D. To Thyatira. 2:18-29
 - E. To Sardis. 3:1-6
 - F. To Philadelphia. 3:7-13
 - G. To Laodicea. 3:14-22
- III. Christ revealed as Judge of the world. 4:1-22:5
 - A. Introduction: The Judge 4:1-5:14
 - B. The seven seal judgments. 6:1-8:1
 - C. The seven trumpet judgments. 8:2-11:19
 - D. The explanatory prophecies. 12:1-14:20
 - E. The seven bowl judgments. 15:1-16:21
 - F. The judgment of Babylon. 17,18
 - G. The Second Coming. 19:1-21
 - H. The Millenium. 20:1-10
 - I. The Great White Throne Judgment. 20:11-15
 - J. The new heavens and the new earth. 21:1-22:5

Epilogue. 22:6-20

Benediction. 22 - 21:

V. Purpose.

A. To comfort persecuted Christians.

Prior to the reign of Domitian, the worship of deceased emperors had been practiced for years, but when Domitian became emperor, he demanded worship while he was alive. This led to a clash between the church and the state, especially in Asia where Caesar-worship was widely practiced. During the period of persecution, John was sent to Patmos as a punishment for preaching (1:9). Luck describes Patmos as a "rough, bare island eight miles long and one mile wide" between what is now Greece and Turkey. "The worst criminals worked in mines."³

But John was not alone. Others were suffering--even death (cf. 1:9 where he says "companions in tribulation"; 2:10,13; 6:9; 20:4).

It must have looked as if wicked men were in control and evil would prevail. John wrote to comfort and reassure believers that Christ will eventually deal with the nations, judge sin on the earth, establish His Kingdom and bring in everlasting righteousness.

B. To challenge complacent Christians.

Yet some were lax and lukewarm. Ephesus had lost its first love (2:4), Pergamos and Thyatira allowed things they ought not (2:15-20), the Laodiceans were lukewarm (3:16). John

wanted to challenge them to steadfastness and perseverance, so he writes to remind them that the Lord is returning and He had His reward with Him (22:12).

Conclusion:

John wrote to the seven churches of Asia Minor revealing Jesus Christ as Judge of the churches and the world in order to comfort persecuted Christians and challenge complacent Christians.

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1. Boa, p. 221.
 2. Ibid.
 3. G.C. Luck, The Bible Book by Book [Chicago: Moody, 1955] p. 250.

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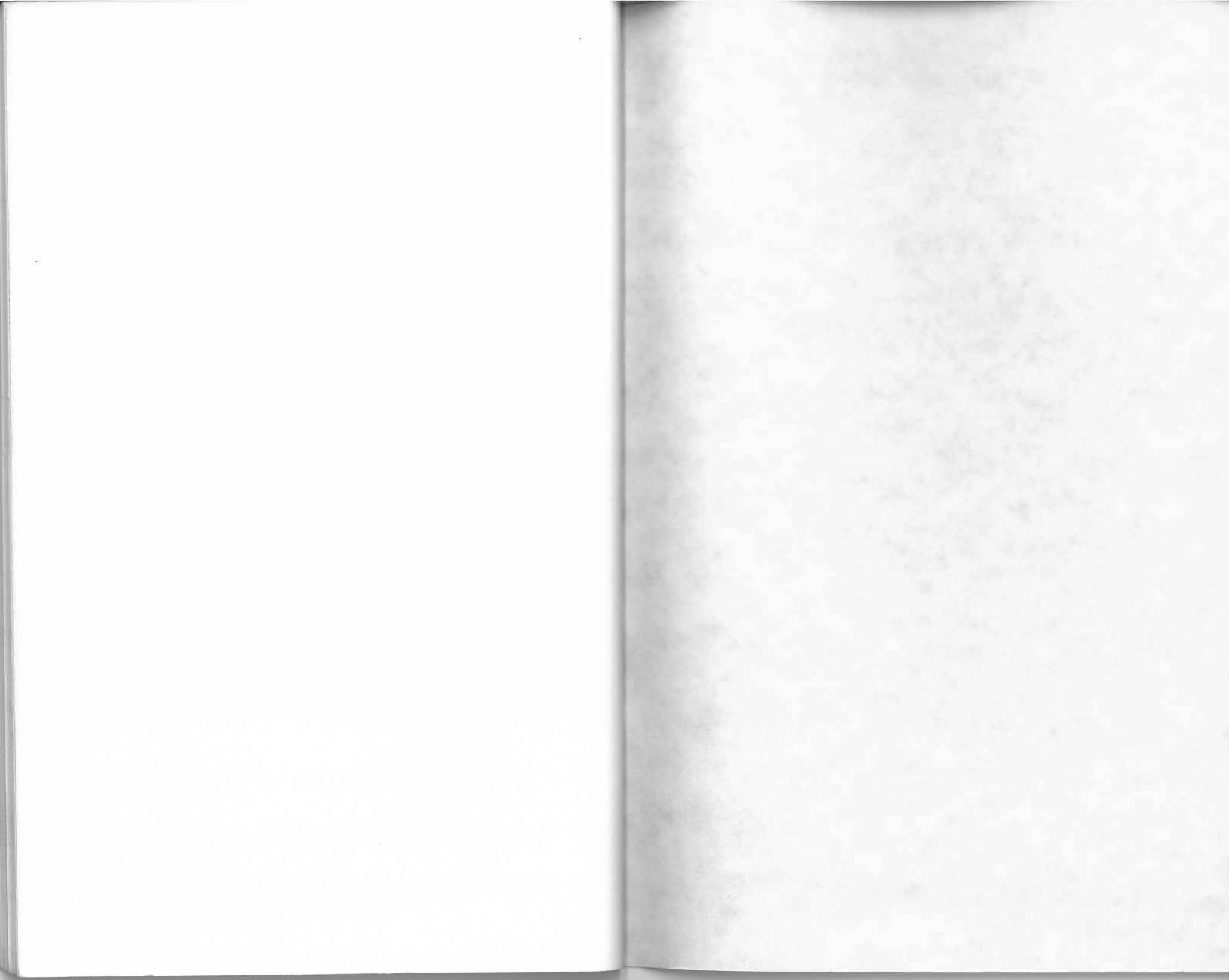
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