



PRAYING WITH PURPOSE MINISTRIES

BIBLICAL NOTES & HIGHLIGHTS

Epistles: Pauline, James, Peter, John, Jude, and Hebrews and The Book of Revelation

December 2021

Pauline Epistles

The Apostle Paul wrote 13 epistles in the New Testament; however, some theologians say 14 because they credit him for the Book of Hebrews. Nevertheless, we will place Hebrew in the General Epistle category. From Paul's writings it is evident that he operated in the Principle of Organization, a doctrine-building principle—God's plan to simplify our lives. So, we might be an effective witness for Jesus Christ. We can all attest that Paul was an effective witness for the Lord Jesus; and by the grace given unto him was able to pen 13 books out of the 27 books of the New Testament.

Out of the 13 books he wrote, nine were addressed to the churches which Paul emphasized the doctrine of the church:

1. What Christians should know and believe
2. How Christians should apply the doctrine for successful Christian life

Paul tells us clearly what his assignment is in Ephesians 3:8–9:

To me, [though I am] the very least of all the saints (God's people), this grace [which is undeserved] was graciously given, to proclaim to the Gentiles the good news of the incomprehensible riches of Christ [that spiritual wealth which no one can fully understand],⁹ and to make plain [to everyone] the plan of the mystery [regarding the uniting of believing Jews and Gentiles into one body] which [until now] was kept hidden through the ages in [the mind of] God who created all things.

1. Preach to the Gentiles
2. Communicate God's plan for managing the Church of Christ

And four were addressed to individuals which he gives specific instructions to. Below is a short overview of each epistle.

Romans

The Apostle Paul had a longing to go to Rome; and before he even visited the Roman church, he penned the epistle while he was in Corinth. It is the longest of all the epistles and gives very detailed doctrine about what we should believe as Christians and why. It's really a theological discourse about the doctrine of Christianity. He explains how the gospel works and how one should respond to the gospel after hearing the preached Word, Romans 10:8–10:

⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”

Last month we talked about the four Gospels which presented the words and works of Jesus, but Romans, the Gospel according to Paul, delves deeply into the significance of His life.

The primary theme of the Book of Romans: The revelation of God’s Righteousness for His plan of salvation for mankind by faith in the “preached Word” ... Gospel, Romans 1:16–17:

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel [*a*]of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”

I believe the Book of Romans answers three basic questions that one may have as it relates to a “spiritual life”.

1. How to be delivered from sin?
2. How to live a good and balanced life under grace?
3. How to live a successful/victorious Christian life, by the power of the Holy Spirit, life?

These questions are addressed in chapters six through eight in Romans. Now, the Book is written in a very systematic way and can be divided into two parts:

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| 1. Doctrine of the Righteousness of God | — | Chapters 1–11 |
| 2. Application of the Righteousness of God | — | Chapters 12–16 |

1 & 2 Corinthians

Corinth was a very important commercial city in Greece during the days of Paul. There was a lot of corruption in the city because it was a pagan society. Corinth was known for its acts of evil—debauchery and prostitution; but the Apostle preached the “Gospel and established a church in Corinth.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul addresses several problems concerning the lifestyle of the Christians in Corinth like ... sex immorality, factions, lawsuits, use of spiritual gifts and even the abuse of the Lord’s Supper. Therefore, Paul writes to rebuke and discipline the Corinthians, as well as give them instructions on how to conduct themselves, in a pagan society. He uses his apostolic authority to address the problems.

One of the most important things we learn from 1 Corinthians is the definition of “Love” found in 1 Corinthians Chapter 13. We call this the “Love Chapter”, for it is the best definition of love, 1 Corinthians 13:4–8a:

⁴ Love endures with patience and serenity, love is kind and thoughtful, and is not jealous or envious; love does not brag and is not proud or arrogant. ⁵ It is not rude; it is not self-seeking, it is not provoked [nor overly sensitive and easily angered]; it does not take into account a wrong endured. ⁶ It does not rejoice at injustice, but rejoices with the truth [when right and truth prevail]. ⁷ Love bears all things [regardless of what comes], believes all things [looking for the best in each one], hopes all things [remaining steadfast during difficult times], endures all things [without weakening].

⁸ Love never fails [it never fades nor ends].

The theme of 1 Corinthians; Christians should conduct themselves as children of the Most High God with utmost integrity by walking in love and putting God’s glory first, 1 Corinthians 10:31 and 13:4–8:

³¹ So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

2 Corinthians

Paul wrote this second letter to the Corinthians to express his thankfulness to the majority of them who repented and to still reach out with an olive branch to the minority to accept his apostolic authority. As one reads through the Book, one notices that Paul is constantly defending his conduct, character and calling as an apostle of the Lord Jesus. Paul wrote this letter in Macedonia and sent it by Titus and another brother.

This letter gives us personal insight into the life of Paul and reveals God’s plan for believers on how they should give ... generously and cheerfully. Why? Because God loves a cheerful giver.

The Theme of 2 Corinthians is a simple message: To live in unity and harmony with each other ... humbly forgiving one another, following godly leaders, and giving generously and cheerfully. In essence, be good stewards of the “ministry of reconciliation”, Corinthians 5:17–20:

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:^[a] The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Galatians

Paul's letter to the Galatians was for them to return to the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. And not to get entangled with legalism because false teachings had arisen. Some were telling the new converts they had to be circumcised; much like some modern-day doctrine that says women can't wear makeup. They were put under bondage by the Mosaic Law; but Paul lets them know, they are free in Christ. This freedom must not be used "as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love to serve one another," (Galatians 5:13).

Therefore, as believers we should walk in the fruit of the spirit according to Galatians 5:22–23:

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ [a]gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Ephesians

Paul wrote the Book of Ephesians according to scholars during his first Roman imprisonment (Ephesians 3:1) which makes Ephesians one of the four epistles commonly referred to as the "Prison Epistles", along with Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. This letter is very formal which deals with the very core issues of Christianity—the doctrines of our salvation. The letter also gives believers practical application on how to walk worthy of our calling. In essence, we should live a life that honors our Savior Jesus Christ and expresses gratitude to God for our salvation according to Ephesians 4:1–2. Therefore, as believers we should exhibit the following:

1. Godly character
2. Moral courage
3. Personal integrity
4. Mature behavior
5. Humility

Paul uses the phrase "in Christ" about 35 times. He wants believers to know their position in Christ and what we have in Christ ... an inheritance and how we are growing in Christ ... just to name a few. The Book of Ephesians can be divided into two simple parts:

1. Position of Authority of the Believer — Chapters 1–3
2. Practical Application for the Believer — Chapters 4–6

The Book of Ephesians starts in the heavenly realm but ends in the home and daily affairs ... where we are to walk worthy of our "divine calling." We do this by taking heed to ALL the instructions Paul gave in Ephesians Chapter six. Therefore ...

¹⁰ In conclusion, be strong in the Lord [draw your strength from Him and be empowered through your union with Him] and in the power of His [boundless] might.

I would like to also encourage you to pray the Ephesians prayer in Chapter 1 and 3.

Philippians

As stated earlier, Paul penned this letter too from prison. One may ask how can someone be so joyous and tell others to Rejoice and again I say Rejoice! He could say this because he knew the God of his salvation. Paul had an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus and the heavenly Father. Paul was not an eyewitness of Jesus' Ministry on earth like the other apostles, Peter, John, etc. Paul received his revelation knowledge on the back side of the desert in Arabia. Remember in 2 Corinthians 12, he tells how he was caught up in the heavenly realm and "heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell."

Paul writes this "epistle of joy" to the believers in Philippi who had supported him financially in his time of need. Indeed, this is a "thank you" note with instructions on unity in the body of Christ ... encouraging them to stand firm/fast, be of one mind and rejoice always. Paul addresses the Philippians with such kindness and affection; it's obvious that he had a love for these believers.

In the Book of Philippians Paul focuses on the following:

1. Paul gives the Philippians a "status report" of his present circumstances
2. Paul exhorts the Philippians to have the mind of Christ, the knowledge of Christ and the peace of Christ
3. Paul expresses his gratitude to the Philippians for their support

The theme of Philippians is JOY and we can have and express this JOY because of Philippians 4:13:

I can do all things [which He has called me to do] through Him who strengthens and empowers me [to fulfill His purpose—I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency; I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses me with inner strength and confident peace.]

Colossians

The Book of Colossians is very similar to Ephesians. Paul wanted to reveal to the believers that Christ is preeminent ... first in everything and that should be reflected in the lifestyle of a Christian. He centers first on the doctrine of Christianity. Again, Paul is really trying to establish the Principle of Organization which is a "doctrine building principle. We as Christians must know our essential doctrines which are:

1. **The Deity of Christ—Jesus is God in flesh (John 1:1, 14) and The Trinity (Colossians 2:9)**
2. **Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8–9; Galatians 5:4, 2:21; Romans 4:5)**

3. **The Resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:14, 17; John 2:19–21)**
4. **The Gospel — Jesus is God in flesh, who died for our sins, rose from the dead and freely gives the gift of eternal life to those who believe. (1 Corinthians 15:1–4; John 1:12; Romans 10:9–10)**

If we know our doctrine, we will not be deceived or persuaded by false teachings. Paul writes this letter to correct the false teaching that has infiltrated the church, like Gnosticism ... that Jesus was not fully God, but merely a man. Therefore, the theme in Colossians centers around Jesus being Preeminent in everything ... the Creator of the universe and everything that's in it, as well as our Redeemer, Head of the Church. So, we should walk in that according to Colossians 2:6–7:

⁶ Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in [union with] Him [reflecting His character in the things you do and say—living lives that lead others away from sin], ⁷ having been deeply rooted [in Him] and now being continually built up in Him and [becoming increasingly more] established ^{la} in your faith, just as you were taught, and overflowing in it with gratitude.

Colossians also places emphasis on the believer's mind ... how we should think. Paul tells us in Colossians 2:1–3:

Therefore if you have been raised with Christ [to a new life, sharing in His resurrection from the dead], keep seeking the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind and keep focused habitually on the things above [the heavenly things], not on things that are on the earth [which have only temporal value]. ³ For you died [to this world], and your [new, real] life is hidden with Christ in God.

The Book of Colossians can be divided into two simple parts like Ephesians.

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| 1. Doctrine: Supremacy of Christ as Head of the Church | — | Chapters 1–2 |
| 2. Application: Submission to Christ in the Church | — | Chapters 3–4 |

1 & 2 Thessalonians

The Thessalonians were experiencing a lot of persecution. Therefore, Paul writes to encourage their faith in the Lord and for them to continue to stand firm in the faith. He also exhorts them to overflow in their love for each other and to rejoice always, no matter what. It is obvious that Paul had a special love for the Thessalonians.

In 1 Thessalonians, as Paul ends his letter to the church in Thessalonica, he gives instructions about the coming of the Lord Jesus ... His return. The overall message/theme of 1 Thessalonians is: To encourage believers to rejoice always and to grow in holiness as we await the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ, 1 Thessalonians 5:16–23:

¹⁶ Rejoice always and delight in your faith; ¹⁷ be unceasing and persistent in prayer; ¹⁸ in every situation [no matter what the circumstances] be thankful and continually give thanks to God; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹ Do not quench [subdue, or be unresponsive to the working and guidance of] the [Holy] Spirit. ²⁰ Do not scorn or reject gifts of prophecy or prophecies [spoken revelations—words of instruction or exhortation or warning]. ²¹ But test ^[a]all things carefully [so you can recognize what is good]. Hold firmly to that which is good. ²² Abstain from every form of evil [withdraw and keep away from it].

²³ Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you through and through [that is, separate you from profane and vulgar things, make you pure and whole and undamaged—consecrated to Him—set apart for His purpose]; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept complete and [be found] blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians

Paul writes this second letter to the believers in Thessalonica because they were still being persecuted by nonbelievers. Remember when Paul established the church, how they persecuted him which was recorded in Acts 17:4–5. The nonbelievers were tenacious, not relenting. Also, false teachings were permeating throughout the church that the rapture had occurred. In addition, there were believers in the church being “busybodies” not working ... being slothful and lazy. Therefore, Paul had to address several issues in this short letter, only three chapters. I believe the message/theme can be expressed in 2 Thessalonians 3:3:

But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen you [setting you on a firm foundation] and will protect and guard you from the evil one.

1 & 2 Timothy

These epistles are known as “Pastoral Epistles.” Paul is writing to young Timothy, his spiritual son, to encourage him in the faith and give him instructions on how to conduct the affairs of the church in Ephesus. In essence, Paul gives Timothy a leadership manual for church organization. Again, here’s that Principle of Organization...doctrine building principles, to simply our lives; so we might be effective witnesses for Jesus Christ.

Paul wants Timothy to be an example for others. Therefore, as a young pastor, his personal and public life must be above reproach...truth must be lived, truth must be seen and then truth must be proclaimed.

This epistle provides us with qualifications for leaders in the church...elders, deacons, etc. (Chapter 3). Paul makes it clear that true leadership comes from our walk/relationship with God, not from our vocational success or worldly achievements. Paul gives Timothy five charges:

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|--------------------------------------|---|--------------|
| 1. Christian Doctrine | — | Chapter 1 |
| 2. Christian Worship Service | — | Chapters 2–3 |
| 3. Charge against False Teachings | — | Chapter 4 |
| 4. Charge about Church Discipline | — | Chapter 5 |
| 5. Charge relating to Pastor Motives | — | Chapter 6 |

As Christians we can all take heed to what Paul said to young Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:12:

Fight the good fight of the faith [in the conflict with evil]; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and [for which] you made the good confession [of faith] in the presence of many witnesses.

2 Timothy

Paul starts off by greeting Timothy warmly and letting him know that he really misses him and desires to see him which will bring joy to him; and he puts Timothy in remembrance of his spiritual heritage. Then Paul begins to remind Timothy of his responsibility, 2 Timothy 1:6–7:

Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

The Apostle Paul knows that his days on earth are coming to an end and wants to encourage young Timothy to be steadfast in the faith. He refers to Timothy as “a good soldier in Jesus Christ.” What a compliment coming from this seasoned apostle who has fought the good fight of faith.

This epistle can be divided into two parts:

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| 1. Steadfastness in Present Trails/Testing | — | Chapters 1–2 |
| 2. Steadfastness in Future Trails/Testing | — | Chapters 3–4 |

Titus

Paul writes this epistle to Titus, a young man, like Timothy, who was a very dear and trusted companion of Paul in the Gospel. Titus’ name is mentioned about 13 times in the Pauline Epistles. Titus has been given the responsibility to set in order the churches in Crete. Therefore, this letter can be seen as a ‘manual for church organization’. Titus is given basically two charges:

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|---------------------------------|---|--------------|
| 1. Appoint Elders of the church | — | Chapter 1 |
| 2. Speak sound doctrine | — | Chapters 2–3 |

Paul lets Titus know that proper belief gives the foundation or basis for proper behavior. So, Paul exhorts him to speak sound doctrine, Titus 2:1–8:

But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: ² that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; ³ the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things— ⁴ that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵ to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

⁶ Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, ⁷ in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility,^[a] ⁸ sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of^[b] you.

Philemon

Paul writes this very, very short epistle to a dear friend about his slave, Onesimus. Paul instructs his friend Philemon to receive Onesimus back as a brother not a slave...to forgive his “runaway slave” who is now his beloved brother in Christ Jesus. And he tells his friend to charge Onesimus’ debt to him, Philemon 1:15–18:

¹⁵ Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever— ¹⁶ no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.

¹⁷ So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸ If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me.

In this very brief epistle, we see three important things:

1. Paul’s prayer of thanksgiving for Philemon
2. Paul’s petition for Onesimus
3. Paul’s promise to Philemon

QUESTIONS

General Epistles:

Hebrews

The author is unknown, however many scholars think Paul wrote the Book. I agree wholeheartedly. Now, time will not allow me to go in detail about this powerful book. But I want to point how three important things that this epistle reveals to us:

1. It lets us know that we have angels to minister to and for us (v. 1:14)
2. It reveals to us that Jesus is our High Priest, of the order of Melchizedek, who sits at the right hand of the Father, ever making intercession for us (v. 7:25)
3. It gives us the definition of faith (v. 11:1)

Now faith is the assurance (title deed, confirmation) of things hoped for (divinely guaranteed), and the evidence of things not seen [the conviction of their reality—faith comprehends as fact what cannot be experienced by the physical senses].

James

James is Jesus' brother who writes the epistles to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad because these Jewish believers were facing many challenges that were testing their faith. and James was very concerned that they were succumbing to materialism, spiritual apathy, and the like. Therefore, his epistle offers practical guidelines for Christian living similar to the Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament, to encourage the people of God to act like God's people by pursuing a "life of holiness."

James lets us know emphatically that faith is not void of action, James 2:14–18:

¹⁴ What is the benefit, my fellow believers, if someone claims to have faith but has no [good] works [as evidence]? Can that [kind of] faith save him? [No, a mere claim of faith is not sufficient—genuine faith produces good works.] ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is without [adequate] clothing and lacks [enough] food for each day, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace [with my blessing], [keep] warm and feed yourselves," but he does not give them the necessities for the body, what good does that do? ¹⁷ So too, faith, if it does not have works [to back it up], is by itself dead [inoperative and ineffective].

¹⁸ But someone may say, "You [claim to] have faith and I have [good] works; show me your [alleged] faith without the works [if you can], and I will show you my faith by my works [that is, by what I do]."

The Book of James points out the characteristics of "true faith," and challenges believers to take introspection of their faith.

1 & 2 Peter

In 1 Peter, the apostle Peter writes to the Jewish believers to encourage them to grow spiritually in their persecution and not to become bitter because their character and conduct must be above reproach. Peter's first epistle is written to counsel and comfort believers by emphasizing the reality of this "living hope" in the Lord Jesus, 1 Peter 1:3–9:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you,⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

The letter addresses the following:

1. Believer' Salvation
2. Believer's Submission to authority
3. Believer's Suffering for Christ's sake

2 Peter

Shortly after his first epistles, Peter writes back to the believers to encourage them to grow in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, so that grace and peace could be multiplied to them. Also, so they would not be deceived by false teachers ... heresy. Peter gives the believers instructions on to grow spiritually, 2 Peter 1:3–10:

³ His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;⁷ and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your

knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

¹⁰Therefore, my brothers and sisters, ^[a]make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble,

As believers we simply need to take heed to those words. The theme is simple: To pursue spiritual maturity through the knowledge of the Word of God; thereby avoiding the danger and destruction of false teachings—doctrines.

1, 2, & 3 John

In 1 John, John writes to his spiritual children to encourage them and enlighten them about this “great salvation.” He wants them to know without a doubt the following:

1. God is Light
2. God is Love
3. God is Life

Now since God is Light as believers we should no longer walk in darkness. And because God is Love as His beloved children, we must walk in unconditional love always; for this is a command that has been given to us., As God’s children we have spiritual life because we have experienced the new birth by faith in Jesus which infuses us with God’s Life—eternal life. Therefore, we can fellowship with Him and the Son, 1 John 1:3–4:

³ what we have seen and heard we also proclaim to you, so that you too may have fellowship [as partners] with us. And indeed our fellowship [which is a distinguishing mark of born-again believers] is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴We are writing these things to you so that our joy [in seeing you included] may be made complete [by having you share in the joy of salvation].

2 John

John writes this very brief letter to encourage the believers again to walk in love and to avoid false teaching, especially Gnosticism. He cautions them to have a “discerning love,” in order to avoid false teachers, 2 John 9, 10:

⁹Anyone who runs on ahead and does not remain in the doctrine of Christ [that is, one who is not content with what He taught], does not have God; but the one who continues to remain in the teaching [of Christ does have God], he has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching [but diminishes or adds to the doctrine of Christ], do not receive or welcome him into your house, and do not give him a greeting or any encouragement;

3 John

John writes the believers this short epistle to encourage fellowship and hospitality with one another, especially those in full-time ministry, like Missionaries and Evangelists. He commends Gaius as a person setting an example of godliness and hospitality, 3 John 1–3:

¹ The elder [of the church addresses this letter] to the beloved and esteemed Gaius, whom I love in truth.

² Beloved, I pray that in every way you may succeed and prosper and be in good health [physically], just as [I know] your soul prospers [spiritually]. ³ For I was greatly pleased when [some of the] brothers came [from time to time] and testified to your [faithfulness to the] truth [of the gospel message], that is, how you are walking in truth. ⁴ I have no greater joy than this, to hear that my [spiritual] children are living [their lives] in the truth.

Jude

Jude is James' brother; therefore, he is also Jesus' brother. He writes to those who are called "sanctified" by God the Father and preserved in Jesus ... that is all of us! Praise the Lord! He writes to them to contend for the faith because false teaching had permeated. So, he is telling believers to FIGHT! CONTEND! Jude 3:

³ Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I was compelled to write to you [urgently] appealing that you ^[a]fight strenuously for [the defense of] the faith which was once for all ^[b]handed down to the saints [the faith that is the sum of Christian belief that was given verbally to believers].

As believers to answer this appeal, one must be "spiritually in shape," therefore, Jude tells us to build ourselves up, vv. 20, 21:

²⁰ But you, beloved, build yourselves up on [the foundation of] your most holy faith [continually progress, rise like an edifice higher and higher], pray in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ and keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously and looking forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ [which will bring you] to eternal life.

William Southerland's Commentary on Book of Revelation

I believe that it is possible for the Book of Revelations to be viewed or understood in context of the rest of the Bible ... and that will contribute to or add to its understanding.

Let's start by considering that reading through the Bible is like sitting in a theatre ..., watching a play.

Let's say that you get to the theater early and they have not started the play yet and you get really good seats right down front ...

You look up at the at the stage and there is a curtain across the entire front of the stage, and you can't see the stage itself ...,

Then when the play begins ..., those curtains across the front of the stage open and now the stage can be seen ... and at the back of the stage is a second curtain ..., you can't see behind it But you know that behind the second curtain in the backstage....

During the play., the actors are not free to do or say anything that they want ..., they are following a script that is provided by the Director ..., who sits just behind them ..., backstage ...

Also controlled from backstage is the lighting, props... etc... so everything that the actors say, do, and how they look are controlled from backstage ...

And while the play is going on ..., if you could see the backstage area..., it would be buzzing and filled with activity ... all to the end of providing direction and support to tell the story that is being portrayed on the stage...

So you can say that the story is told on the front stage..., but to a very real extent, it is manipulated and created from the backstage...

So, think of the first 65 Books of the Bible as scenes that are portrayed on the stage that you can see ... during the play (the first 65 Books of the Bible) you see how God interacts with His people and how His people interact with each other ...

But in the 66th book, the Book of Revelations, it seems that God opens that second curtain and lets us see into the backstage...

In the Book of Revelations, God lets us see the spirits that seek to control people and earthly events...

In the Book of Revelations, God lets us see the backstage of eternity!!! He describes for us the spirits that would control the Earth and its people, including the driving motivations and intentions of those evil spirits.

And He describes the final battle between Jesus and the devil ..., how Jesus' final victory over the devil will usher in the new Heaven and the new earth...

God lets us both see the backstage and then He shows us how He takes over the backstage and reorganizes it...!!!

Book of Revelation

What was...What is...What will be... (Revelation 1:19)

¹⁹ Now I want you to write what you have seen,^[a] what is, and what comes after the things that I reveal to you.

The Book of Revelation was written by the Apostle John who received the revelation from the Lord Jesus on the island of Patmos. The Book can be divided into three parts:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---------------|
| 1. What Was (Past) | — | Chapter 1 |
| 2. What Is (Present) | — | Chapters 2–3 |
| 3. What Will Be (Future) | — | Chapters 4–22 |

In the Book of Revelation, we see the consummation of the story ... (His Story) the divine program of redemption is being brought to fruition. John gives it to us in such vivid imagery.

Let's look first at “What Was” Chapter 1. (Past)

I was dead but now I am alive and hold the keys to death and the unseen world. For I am the Alpha and Omega—the beginning and the end. I have redeemed you with my shed blood and made you priest and kings.

This has already happened at Calvary when Jesus paid the price.

And Jesus said, in John 16:33: “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Now, as believers when we get in harmony with God, by operating in the Principle of Agreement, a peace-sustaining principle, we can have the peace Jesus promised because truly he has overcome the world. And John saw Him AS THE OVERCOMER in all His glory!

“What Is” Chapters 2–3 (Present)

To help us achieve that peace that Jesus promised, we must hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to us in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 so we can identify our strengths, weaknesses, and problems and have a heart of repentance to make the necessary corrections.

WHAT CHURCH REPRESENTS ME?

Church of Ephesus: “The Loveless Church” (Revelation 2:1–7)

The church of Ephesus had a great work ethic. The believers were engaged in ministry activities and the church had sound doctrine. So, their strengths were: good work ethics and sound church doctrines. However, they had a big problem ... Jesus said the church had lost their first “Love.” Their love for Him and each other. They had blended with the environment which was their weakness.

HAVE YOU LOST YOUR FIRST LOVE?

Church of Smyrna: “Suffering Church” (Revelation 2:8–11)

Although this church was facing tremendous persecution, they were a strong, faithful, and loyal church...using their spiritual gifts. They were rich spiritual, but a poor church. They lived in a wealthy city; however, the church didn't get the wealthy saved. They had a “poverty mentality,” which was their weakness. The problem they faced was severe persecution, but the Lord Jesus encouraged them to endure and continue to be faithful.

ARE YOU SUFFERING OR BEING PERSECUTED FOR CHRIST?

Pergamos: “The Compromised Church” (Revelation 2:12–17)

This church was commended for its faithfulness and for loving the Lord and lifting up the name of Jesus ... their strengths. However, they compromised their religion and moral standards. They mixed paganism with Christianity, which was their weakness ... compromising. The teachings of Balaam and Nicolaitans were a big problem in the church. Also, the believers participated in heathen's activities and believers were marrying unbelievers.

DO YOU COMPROMISE YOUR BELIEFS TO BE WITH THE “IN-CROWD”?

Thyatira: “The Defiant Church” (Revelation 2:18–29)

This church had many strengths — good works, charity (love), faith, service and patience. However, they had weak leadership. Leaders in positions without the anointing to be in that position. This was a defiant church because God's agenda didn't fit what they wanted to do. There was constant conflict with authority...a “Jezebel spirit” (spirit of control) existed in the church. They had a big problems like idolatry and sexual immorality just to name a few.

ARE YOU DEFIANT ... “JEZEBEL SPIRIT”?

Sardis: “The Deceitful Church” (Revelation 3:1–6)

This church had a good reputation (in name) which was its strength; however, it was a complacent church. Sardis had a big problem; it was spiritual dead; therefore, one could also call this “the Dead Church.” There were unsaved people going through the motions of religion ... tares among the wheat. Their appearance didn't match reality ... very hypocritical church, a form of godliness, but denying the power of God.

ARE YOU DECEITFUL IN YOUR ACTION...DUPLICITOUS?

Philadelphia — “Steadfast Unmovable Church” (Revelation 3:7–13)

This was a very faithful church. As we know faithfulness is a time-tested attribute. This was their strength; however, they had little natural strength and no political advantages. Constant “satanic

harassment” was their problem. However, the Lord Jesus encourages them to continue in their faithfulness and steadfastness.

ARE YOU STEADFAST & FAITHFUL?

Laodicea — “The Unclean Church” (Revelation 3:14–22)

It is very interesting in the church of Laodicea that Jesus didn’t commend them for anything, even though they were abundantly wealthy in the natural. His message to them was one of condemnation because they were spiritually blind ... wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked, and didn’t even know it. They were indifference to spiritual things—laid back, complacent, apathetic. We as believers must know that neutrality is not acceptable to God. They had a big problem ... “lukewarm faith.” Lukewarm is a comfort zone which Christians must avoided.

Laodicea needed to be purified—clothed in righteousness and healed of spiritual blindness.

ARE YOU LUKEWARM?

“What Will Be” (Future) ... Chapters 4–22

Now, chapters 4–18 of Revelation deal mostly with God’s judgments on the people of the earth. As we know according to 1 Thessalonians 5:2,9 these judgments are not for the church because we, the church, would have been raptured (1 Thessalonians 4:13–15).

Chapter 19 describes Christ’s return with the church, His beloved bride. Jesus defeats the beast and the false prophet and they are casted into the lake of fire.

In Chapter 20, Satan is bound and cast in the Abyss and the kingdom of Christ is established on earth ... in essence the Millennial begins which lasts for 1,000 years. However, at the end of the 1,000 years, Satan is released. Afterward, Satan leads a rebellion against God and is quickly defeated and also cast into the lake of fire. After Satan’s ultimate defeat, we have the final judgment which includes the judgment of all unbelievers; they too are cast into the lake of fire with Satan.

Chapters 21 and 22 describe the creation of a new universe ... the New Jerusalem, theologians refer to as “the eternal state.” God tells us what eternity with Him will be like ... **GLORIOUS!**

THE STORY OF THE BIBLE BEGINS IN PARADISE AND IT ENDS IN PARADISE!!!

SO, WE SAY COME LORD JESUS, COME!!!

PRAYER

Father, our hearts have great anticipation for the return of our Lord Jesus. So, we await His return with joyful hearts believing it will be soon. So, we say come Lord Jesus, come and get Your Bride, in Jesus’ Name. Amen.