

NEW TESTAMENT Summary Book By Book

by Dr. Henderson Ward



Believers of all denominations, and interested persons and Bible students, will find these book by book summaries useful whenever they read and inquire into the Word of God.

MATTHEW

Author: Matthew, aka St. Matthew

Date Written: Probably between AD 60 and AD 70

To Whom Written: The Jewish people

Purpose: To substantiate the link between the Old and New Testament and show that Jesus Christ came from the royal lineage of King David and thereby is qualified to inherit that mantle of kingship. It sought to show the Jews that Jesus Christ was the Jews' Messiah as foretold by the prophets, proclaimed by John the Baptist and attested to by Jesus' life and ministry which was characterized by a number of miraculous events and wonders confirming his special relationship with God.

MARK

Author: Mark, aka St. Mark

Date Written: Probably between AD 58 - AD 70

To Whom Written: Romans and Gentile Christians

Purpose: To document primarily for the Roman Christians and for Gentile Christians everywhere that Jesus of Nazareth was much more than the Jews' Messiah but God's chosen redeemer of the whole world and secondly because of the manner of writing, concentrating as it does on Jesus' deeds rather than his words (19 miracles, 4 parables), it might have been written to provide information to help those young in the faith to be grounded and convinced of the truth about Jesus and thereby enhance the efforts of spreading the gospel.

LUKE

Author: Luke, aka St. Luke

Date Written: Probably between AD 60 and AD 85

To Whom Written: To Theophilus and non-Jewish people

Purpose: To give an orderly account of the life of Jesus, including his many parables, miracles and prayers, so that those non-Jews who had already fully accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour may be confirmed in the faith and to document three additional parables peculiar only to Luke, i.e. the prodigal son, the Pharisee and the tax-collector and the Good Samaritan.

JOHN

Author: John , aka St. John

Date Written: Unknown but probably late 1st Century

To Whom Written: To the Jewish Diaspora and those seeking to know and to believe in Jesus Christ.

Purpose: This deeply profound Gospel which documents the life and ministry of Jesus Christ concentrating as it does primarily on his Judean activities and is regarded by many as a supplement to the synoptic Gospels was written for the express purpose of communicating salvation through knowing Christ as John states "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" [John 20: 31](#) .

ACTS

Author: Luke, aka St. Luke

Date Written: Probably around AD 65

To Whom Written: To Theophilus and believers, also non-believers seeking historical early church information.

Purpose: This book which bridges the gap between the activities of Jesus as described in the

Gospels and the activities of the Apostles recorded in the Epistles was written to document the birth of the early church, its many challenges as it sought to resolve and establish sound doctrine, its approach in ministering to the Jews while fervently pursuing outreach to the gentiles in keeping with the command of Jesus to "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel" and the influence and work of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers.

ROMANS

Author: Paul, aka St. Paul

Date Written: Probably AD 56/57

To Whom Written: Roman Christians

Purpose: This book which details the good news of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ apart from the works of the law was written to inform the Roman Church of his longstanding desire to visit them and in particular in anticipation of his visit to prepare the believers, both Jews and Gentiles, for Christian living and service by detailing a tome of foundational theological principles and doctrines for their edification and guidance and at the same time affirm his Apostolic authority. It is possible Paul intended to make Rome a base for his operations in Europe and so this Epistle might have been written with that in mind.

1 CORINTHIANS

Author: Paul, aka St. Paul

Date Written: Probably AD 56

To Whom Written: The Church at Corinth

Purpose: This Epistle was written from Ephesus in response to communication reaching Paul that abominable practices, gross immorality, idolatry and serious divisions had entered the Church and in response Paul sought to rid the Church of these worldly practices by showing them what it means to follow Christ by observing principles of right living in their personal as well as their social life and concentrating their love, devotion and loyalty to Jesus Christ who alone is responsible for their salvation.

2 CORINTHIANS

Author: Paul, aka St. Paul

Date Written: Probably late AD 56 or early AD 57

To Whom Written: The Church at Corinth

Purpose: Of all the churches Paul founded Corinth proved to be the most problematic and caused him to send a number of persons and epistles and make personal visits to sort out some serious problems. Giving rise for this Epistle some factions in the church was questioning Paul's authority and Apostleship and was bolstered in their opposition by some false prophets, newly arrived, claiming to be of apostolic rank and as a consequence Paul wrote this Epistle to motivate the church in Christian giving, to highlight the true nature of Christian service and expose deceitful workers and to assert and defend his apostolic authority.

GALATIANS

Author: Paul, aka St. Paul

Date Written: Probably between AD 55 and AD 60

To Whom Written: The churches in Galatia

Purpose: This book which contributes so significantly to the Christian's understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith and the practicalities of living by sanctification in faith and not by adherence to the Law of Moses was written by Paul primarily to oppose the erroneous doctrine taught by some Jewish Christians that if a person is to be saved it is necessary to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses; to show that sanctification is in faith in Jesus Christ apart from any observance to the Law of Moses and crucially because of its overarching significance Paul sought to re-establish and vindicate his own Apostolic authority.

EPHESIANS

Author: Paul, aka St. Paul

Date Written: Probably between AD 60 and AD 64

To Whom Written: The churches in Ephesus

Purpose: This book which on enquiry seems to have been a circular sent to a number of churches around Ephesus and addresses unity in the body, in the marriage and in the church and is deemed to be one of Paul's prison letters, was written to show believers that in Christ all barriers are broken down, whether these barriers are between Jew and gentile, bond and free, rich and poor, and more so that God's great mystery-plan when all things are finally brought together under Christ will follow the pattern exemplified by the united church of Christ and hence Christians are encouraged to live accordingly.

PHILIPPIANS

Author: Paul, aka St. Paul

Date Written: Probably between AD 60 and AD 64

To Whom Written: The church in Philippi

Purpose: This Epistle, regarded as one of the four prison letters (along with Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon), is in essence a thank you letter to the assembly at Philippi for their loving gift and was written to express Paul's deep and abiding love for this church, the first he founded on the European continent and indeed the first church in Europe, to express heartfelt thanks for their loving, generous gift of money, to encourage them to live joyful lives pleasing to God and to commend his fellow workers especially Epaphroditus who brought the gift and subsequently was seriously ill but thankfully fully recovered.

COLOSSIANS

Author: Paul, aka St. Paul

Date Written: Probably between AD 60 and AD 64

To Whom Written: The church in Colosse (in Asia Minor)

Purpose: This Epistle, regarded as one of the four prison letters (along with Philippians, Ephesians and Philemon), were written in response to information reaching Paul, brought to him by Epaphras, a minister of the Colosse congregation, that certain errors (a combination of Judaism and Gnostic teaching) had crept into the church and in response Paul wrote this Epistle to counteract those false teachings by showing the completeness of Christ and those in Christ. Paul also took the opportunity, on the occasion of a visit to Colosse by his fellow worker Tychicus to foster goodwill and help strengthen and encourage the church in Colosse as well as in Laodicea.

1 THESSALONIANS

Author: Paul, aka St. Paul

Date Written: Probably between AD 49 and AD 54

To Whom Written: The church in Thessalonica

Purpose: This Epistle was written in response to information reaching Paul at Corinth, brought to him by Timothy and Silas on their return from Thessalonica who reported that in spite of enormous difficulty faced by the Christians in Macedonia the saints in Thessalonica had stood firm, and Paul responded with this Epistle encouraging the saints to maintain their strong faith and godly living and even more so as he sets forth the doctrine of Christ's imminent return and comforted them by allaying their fears as to the situation regarding their dead.

2 THESSALONIANS

Author: Paul, aka St. Paul

Date Written: Probably between AD 50 and AD 54

To Whom Written: The church in Thessalonica

Purpose: Following the first letter to the Thessalonians it seems likely there was a misunderstanding regarding Christ's second coming with some refusing to work anticipating Jesus' arrival, hence Paul wrote this letter to give them more fuller information including events that will occur prior to that Advent, namely the falling away of believers and the revelation of "the son of perdition" so that the believers may carry on their normal lives encouraged to hold fast to the Apostolic teachings and traditions and be circumspect with whom they associated.

1 TIMOTHY

Author: Paul, aka St. Paul

Date Written: Probably between AD 60 and AD 64

To Whom Written: Timothy

Purpose: The Church at Ephesus, where Timothy was now temporarily in charge which was briefly visited by Paul on his second missionary journey (leaving Priscilla and Aquila to carry on the work while he hurried to Jerusalem for the Passover) and where he stayed for three years on his third missionary journey, was now to be without Paul's presence and as a consequence Paul wrote this letter to encourage the young and faithful Timothy to exercise his spiritual gifts in ministry in an exemplary manner and gave him instructions and guidance in the exercise of his ministerial responsibilities.

2 TIMOTHY

Author: Paul, aka St. Paul

Date Written: Probably between AD 65 and AD 67

To Whom Written: Timothy

Purpose: As Paul was undergoing his second Roman imprisonment and as the bellicose, belligerent and totally evil Nero was determined to rid the Empire of all traces of Christianity by killing Christians indiscriminately this letter was penned to encourage young Timothy in his ministerial work in the church at Ephesus and to fortify and strengthen him for the tribulations ahead and not least to motivate Timothy to visit him speedily so that as he awaits his own impending death with so many abandoning him he might at least have the company and comfort of his beloved son in Christ, Timothy.

TITUS

Author: Paul, aka St. Paul

Date Written: Shortly after AD 64

To Whom Written: Titus

Purpose: This letter was written by Paul (shortly after he had written 1 Timothy and was addressed to Titus whom he had taken to Crete and left there to complete the organization and establishment of the church by having elders appointed in every city) with the aim of encouraging, exhorting and instructing Titus with respect to carrying out his ministerial duties focusing on the character of Christian leadership and the necessity of believers maintaining good works as evidence of their belief in God.

PHILEMON

Author: Paul, aka St. Paul

Date Written: Probably between AD 60 and AD 64

To Whom Written: Philemon

Purpose: This personal letter was occasioned by a runaway slave by the name of Onesimus who met Paul in Rome and was converted to Christianity and having learnt of the slave's truancy Paul decided to send him back, probably with this letter, to his master Philemon with a plea for not only forgiveness and reconciliation but acknowledgement of Onesimus' new status as a beloved brother in Christ and therefore of equal standing with all the other believers in the church at Colosse and also to request Philemon to prepare him lodgings for his expected release from prison.

HEBREWS

Author: Unknown

Date Written: Probably before AD 70

To Whom Written: Jewish Christians

Purpose: To exhort and encourage the Jewish Christians to persist in the faith at the time they were facing great difficulties and not return to Judaism and to show that Jesus had ushered in a superior Christian dispensation when compared with that of the Old Testament and furthermore that Jesus fulfilled all the obligations and ceremonial requirements of the Mosaic Law that were a shadow of things to come when he died on the cross for all humanity.

JAMES

Author: James, aka St. James

Date Written: Probably AD 48/49

To Whom Written: To Jewish Christians

Purpose: This very practical letter which deals with the importance of proper Christian conduct and the application of godly principles to all areas of one's life was written to encourage Jewish Christians in the Diaspora to make practical their faith by producing good works, to avoid social prejudice, control their speech and generally to exhibit those qualities of conduct and character expected of those who believe in Jesus Christ.

1 PETER

Author: Peter, aka St. Peter

Date Written: Uncertain but probably AD 63/64

To Whom Written: To Christians throughout Asia Minor

Purpose: This letter is replete with the joys of salvation and Peter's confidence in Jesus' life, death and resurrection and the Saviour's ability to give abundant grace to endure suffering was written primarily to prepare, encourage and strengthen the Christians in Asia Minor, who mainly were converted under the Apostle Paul's ministry, to meet the upcoming challenges especially from the Roman persecutions and also to fulfill his Apostolic duty to feed the flock of God as instructed by Jesus Christ.

2 PETER

Author: Peter, aka St. Peter

Date Written: Between AD 64 and AD 70

To Whom Written: To Christians everywhere

Purpose: This letter which addresses the issues of the relevance of morality to Christians and false teaching by some that Jesus Christ would not return was written to warn believers against the dangers of Apostasy and the evil work of false teachers who came among them and to encourage the saints to be confident in the soon coming of Jesus Christ who shall return "as a thief in the night" and to motivate them to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" [2 Peter 3:18](#) .

1 JOHN

Author: John, aka St. John

Date Written: Uncertain

To Whom Written: Christians everywhere

Purpose: This letter, written to Christians everywhere, addresses false teaching, mainly arising from Gnosticism, and puts forth practical tests of genuine Christianity was written to encourage and instruct believers generally and in particular to make their joy full, guard them against habitual sinning, warn them against false teachers and to reinforce their belief in Jesus Christ and "that ye may know that ye have eternal life" - [1 John 3:13b](#) .

2 JOHN

Author: John, aka St. John

Date Written: Uncertain

To Whom Written: The Church and its converts

Purpose: To express his love for this church community and urge them to continue in love towards each other and to warn them of false teachers, who are deceivers and anti-Christ, who teach not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh and "to receive him not into your house, nor bid him Godspeed" [2 John 1:10b](#) .

3 JOHN

Author: John, aka St. John

Date Written: Uncertain

To Whom Written: Gaius

Purpose: This letter, written to Gaius, a Christian leader, after Diotrephes (probably another leader from an adjacent church) refused to accept the brethren sent by John and put out of the church those who had received the visitors, was to highly commend Gaius for his commitment to the truth and his unselfish assistance to all those travelling on God's work, to rebuke Diotrephes for his actions with respect to John's visitors, to recommend Demetrius to Gaius and to inform him of John's impending visit.

JUDE

Author: Jude, aka the Brother of James

Date Written: Uncertain

To Whom Written: Christians facing threats to their faith

Purpose: As Jude, the brother of James, the brother of Jesus Christ was about to write to Christians about the common salvation he was inspired to write this letter "to exhort believers

to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints" and in particular to warn the Church against immoral teachers, filthy dreamers speaking disrespectfully of dignities, who crept in unawares, peddling false doctrines and seeking to dilute and endanger the faith and to offer encouragement to continue in the faith and the love of Jesus Christ.

REVELATION

Author: John, aka St. John

Date Written: Uncertain, probably about AD 96

To Whom Written: The seven churches of Asia Minor

Purpose: This book which is the revelation of Jesus Christ to these 7 churches in Asia Minor undergoing great difficulties and soon to experience even greater tribulations was written by the aged Apostle to give hope and encouragement to these Christians by declaring the message of God's supreme power and ultimate control which will climax in the final and resounding victory of Jesus Christ the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and the setting up of a new heaven and a new earth for God and his redeemed people.

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