

BAC Podcast Notes

Episode 11: "The Epistles"

This week's episode covers the epistles, or letters, of the New Testament from Romans–Jude. These letters complement the Gospels and Acts by giving theological insights into of Jesus' work and providing practical truths about living out the Christian faith.

Paul's 13 letters (Romans–2 Timothy) are best understood in their historical context.

- After Paul's first missionary journey, he wrote **Galatians**.
 - **Galatians:** Paul planted churches in Galatia, but, after he left, false teachers quickly attempted to undermine his work. Paul wrote this letter to defend the true Gospel and his authority as an Apostle.
- During his second missionary journey, he wrote **1 & 2 Thessalonians**.
 - **1 Thessalonians:** After ministering in the area of Thessalonica, Paul sent Timothy to check on the believers there. After receiving a good report, Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians commending their faith, love, and hope, and defending his ministry against false accusations.
 - **2 Thessalonians:** After receiving another report from the church in Thessalonica, he wrote another letter answering some of their questions about the end times and the Antichrist. He also calls them to hope despite their difficult circumstances.
- During his third missionary journey, he wrote **1 & 2 Corinthians** and **Romans**.
 - **1 Corinthians:** It appears Paul wrote a letter before 1 Corinthians that we have no record of (1 Corinthians 5:9). After that letter, Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to address ongoing issues within the church and to answer their questions about marriage, the Lord's supper, spiritual gifts, and more.
 - **2 Corinthians:** After a "painful visit" (2 Corinthians 2:2) and a difficult letter (2 Corinthians 2:4), Paul received word that the church in Corinth responded positively to his rebukes. He wrote 2 Corinthians to express joy at their repentance and to encourage them in the faith.
 - **Romans:** Paul wanted to establish Rome as a center for further missions, so he wrote the believers there a letter to prepare the way for his arrival. Paul lays out his most complete theology of any letter, painting a beautiful picture of the Gospel and exhorting the readers to apply the Gospel to everyday life.
- During his house arrest in Rome, he wrote **Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians**.
 - **Ephesians:** This letter was probably meant to be circulated among churches in Asia Minor. Paul spends the first half of the letter (Chapters 1–3) laying out theological truths and the second half laying out practical truths (Chapters 4–6).
 - **Colossians:** Similar to the letter to the Ephesians, Paul spends the first half (chapters 1–2) laying out theological truths and the second half (chapters 3–4) dealing with practical matters. Paul emphasizes the supremacy of Christ in this letter.
 - **Philemon:** This letter is about a runaway slave named Onesimus, whom Paul befriended as a fellow worker of the Gospel. After Onesimus felt prompted to return to his master, Philemon, Paul wrote Philemon a letter, exhorting him to receive Onesimus as a brother, not a slave.

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- **Philippians:** Paul wrote to the church in Philippi, thanking them for their financial support of his ministry and encouraging them to pursue harmony and humility in their relationships with each other.
- After Paul's release from house arrest, he wrote **1 Timothy** and **Titus**.
 - **1 Timothy:** Paul left Timothy in charge of the church in Ephesus. Paul wrote to encourage and instruct him in matters of church leadership, pastoral responsibility, false teachers, disorder in worship, and more.
 - **Titus:** Paul left Titus to lead believers on the island of Crete. Paul wrote to encourage and instruct him.
- During his final imprisonment, Paul wrote **2 Timothy** just before his death.
 - **2 Timothy:** In his final letter before his death, Paul wrote to Timothy like a father addressing his son. He charges Timothy to fight the good fight in the midst of suffering.

The 8 "General Letters" (Hebrews–Jude) were written by various authors to various audiences and complement Paul's letters.

- **Hebrews:** Written by an unknown author to a Jewish audience. Many Jews, when faced with persecution, were tempted to return to their previous ways under Judaism. The author reminds his audience of the supremacy of Christ and the New Covenant and warns them against rejecting Christ.
- **James:** Written by the brother of Jesus. James calls his readers to put their faith into action.
- **1–2 Peter:** Written by the Apostle Peter. Peter encourages his readers to live lives worthy of the calling they received, even in the midst of suffering.
- **1–3 John:** Written by the Apostle John. John writes to provide assurance of salvation and warn against false teachers.
- **Jude:** Written by the brother of Jesus. Jude encourages believers to contend for the faith in the midst of false teaching.