

# Book Study – Apostle’s Letters

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A tool to help with reading the Bible.



Produced by XA Denton Chi Alpha | UNT & TWU

## Apostle's Letters:

The New Testament is comprised of the Gospels of Jesus, which are the narrative (story-telling) of the life and teaching of Jesus, the Acts of the Apostles which immediately follows the Gospels, a collection of letters written by a variety of first century Apostles, and then finally Revelation.

In this workbook, you will read a portion of the Epistles written by authors other than Paul. These writings are written to the church in general and can be applied to the universal Christian life. This is a list of which books are covered in this booklet:

1. Hebrews
  2. James
  3. 1 Peter
  4. 2 Peter
  5. 1 John
  6. 2 John
  7. 3 John
  8. Jude
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## Reading Checklist:

Hebrews 1:	---	1 Peter 1:	---
Hebrews 2:	---	1 Peter 2:	---
Hebrews 3:	---	1 Peter 3:	---
Hebrews 4:	---	1 Peter 4:	---
Hebrews 5:	---	1 Peter 5:	---
Hebrews 6:	---		
Hebrews 7:	---	2 Peter 1:	---
Hebrews 8:	---	2 Peter 2:	---
Hebrews 9:	---	2 Peter 3:	---
Hebrews 10:	---		
Hebrews 11:	---	1 John 1:	---
Hebrews 12:	---	1 John 2:	---
Hebrews 13:	---	1 John 3:	---
		1 John 4:	---
James 1:	---	1 John 5:	---
James 2:	---		
James 3:	---	2 John:	---
James 4:	---		
James 5:	---	3 John:	---
		Jude:	---

# Hebrews:

*Descriptions provided by Tyndale's New Living Translation Bible book preface*

**Content:** Have you ever second-guessed yourself on a major decision and wondered if you made a big mistake? The letter to the Hebrews deals with this concern among Jewish Christians. Apparently, after pressure and persecution, some believers were having second thoughts about their decision to leave Judaism to become Christians. This letter shows how Christianity is superior to Judaism. In every way, Christ is shown to be better. As God, he is superior to angels, to Moses, and to the Old Testament priests. At the same time, Jesus Christ is fully human. So, he is able to identify with our human struggles. Jesus Christ has sealed a new covenant that is far superior to the old covenant of Judaism. So, the author admonished the believers to move beyond questions about the basics of the faith. The believers were encouraged to follow the many examples of faithful men and women of the past who followed God in the midst of persecution. The author concluded with person greetings and thoughts.

## Milestones (Bibleproject.com)

- **Angels** – Jesus is superior to angels who delivered the Torah, God's Word, to the Israelites, and all other messengers. We should pay attention to His message.
- **Moses** – Jesus leads His people like Moses led the Israelites. Do not rebel and lose out on God's gracious offer to enter into a new creation.
- **Melchizedek** – Morally flawless, Jesus is the ultimate priest and mediator between humans and God. Instead of rejecting Him, accept Him and be fully reconciled with God.
- **Sacrifices** – Jesus' death on the cross was a permanent sacrifice and fulfilled the covenant. He died once for all, so accept His gracious offer of forgiveness.
- **Jesus** – The book of Hebrews ends with a challenge to faithfully trust Jesus and follow great Old Testament models of faith despite life's hardships and persecution.

**Author:** Uncertain; some suggest Paul, Barnabas, Apollos, Priscilla, Luke, and others.

**Date:** Probably around A.D. 68, a few years before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70

**Purpose:** To present Christianity as superior to Judaism and to show the sufficiency of Jesus Christ's work.

**Themes:** Superiority of Christianity over Judaism, Jesus as High Priest, Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice, rest, maturity, faith, endurance.

For a video overview, visit: [thebibleproject.com/explore/hebrews/#!](https://thebibleproject.com/explore/hebrews/#!)

Hebrews Chapters 1-3: The superiority of Christ

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

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From what you read, what is something that you feel like God is showing you at this moment?

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What is something that you learned or were challenged by that you can apply to your life?

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What is something you read in this passage that you did not previously know or understand?

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Additional Notes:

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Hebrews Chapters 4-8: The better life of the believer and Christ's superior priestly work

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Hebrews chapters 9-10: The better covenant

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Hebrews chapters 11-13: Great believers, Practical instructions, and concluding words

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# James:

**Content:** Actions speak louder than words. That old adage is reflected well in the book of James. This book attacks the notion that becoming a Christian is simply a matter of assenting to a few spiritual truths without experiencing any real change in behavior or thought. James was a leader in the church at Jerusalem, so his book has a very Jewish flavor. It contains many short, proverbial sayings and resembles the teachings of Jesus, especially the Sermon on the Mount. James addressed several matters in which Christian behavior should reflect Christian faith. He discussed pride, discrimination, greed, lust, hypocrisy, worldliness, and slander. James used several analogies to show how true faith must evidence itself in good works. He compared believers to fruit trees bearing only the kind of fruit that belongs to them. Because of the book's emphasis on good works, it is a very practical book regarding the Christian life.

**Author:** James, a half-brother of Jesus, a leader in the Jerusalem church.

**Date:** Probably around A.D. 49, prior to the Jerusalem Council held in A.D. 50

**Purpose:** To correct the false belief that a person can have faith without a change of behavior and to give practical instruction regarding the Christian life.

**Themes:** Faith and deeds, trials of faith, controlling the tongue, the dangers of wealth

## Milestones (Bibleproject.com)

- **Life's Circumstances** - Life is hard, but trials produce endurance, shape character, encourage trust and make believers whole and perfect (mentioned seven times in the book of James).
- **Perfect Torah** - Jesus transforms believers into a new humanity that listens to and obeys God's word, the Perfect Torah that motivates us to love God and others.
- **Favoritism and Love** - Believers who say they have faith in God will always obey Jesus' teachings and love others, not show favoritism or neglect the poor and needy.
- **Words Reveal You** - James discusses words three times. The way believers talk about people shows their hearts and core values. Their words reveal the truth about their character.
- **Wealth Dismantled** - God's kingdom community dismantles divisions created by wealth and social status. Instead, believers should live with patient hope for Jesus' return and say faith-filled prayers.

For a video overview, visit: [thebibleproject.com/explore/James/#!](https://thebibleproject.com/explore/James/#!)



James 1-2: The true life and social implications of faith, Faith and works together

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James 3-5: A discourse on controlling the tongue, Practical exhortations, exhortations

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Additional Notes:

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# 1 Peter:

*Descriptions provided by Tyndale's New Living Translation Bible book preface*

- Content:** Abuse and persecution were par for the course for many who followed Christ in the first century A.D. To comfort and encourage these persecuted believers, the apostle Peter wrote them a letter near the end of his life. The letter was addressed to believers in the five different regions of Asia Minor, so it was probably routed among them. Peter opened his letter by reminded his readers of their precious hope in Jesus Christ. This hope far outweighed any sufferings they would endure for their faith. In light of this hope, Peter urged all believers—husbands and wives, masters and slaves, elders and laypeople—to live holy lives among unbelievers, thereby giving testimony to Jesus Christ. He comforted them regarding the abuse they had endured, noting that Jesus Christ had also suffered. But Peter also prepared his readers for even hard times. These sufferings would perfect he believers' faith and purify their souls.
- Author:** Peter the apostle.
- Date:** Around A.D. 63
- Purpose:** To offer encouragement to suffering Christians
- Themes:** Salvation, persecution, believers as living building stones, obedience.

## Milestones (Bibleproject.com)

- **Suffering Believers** - 1 Peter reminds suffering readers that they are God's chosen people, who like Abraham, are exiled. These Old Testament themes are repeated throughout the book.
- **Poetic Song of Praise** - Peter praises God, who caused people to be born again into a new family with a living hope through Jesus' resurrection and the Spirit's power.
- **A New Family Identity** - Old Testament images of Israel are applied to New Testament Gentile Christians, which places their suffering within a brand-new story of redemption and hope.
- **Suffering As a Witness**- Persecution brings clarity to the believer's mission, which is to imitate Jesus and bear witness to God's mercy and upside-down kingdom in the world.
- **Suffering and Hope** - Believers can be grateful they are persecuted for Jesus' sake. They hope that He will one day return and have the ultimate victory over evil.

For video overview, visit: [thebibleproject.com/explore/1-peter/#!](https://thebibleproject.com/explore/1-peter/#!)

1 Peter 1-2: Glory of salvation, God's chosen people, Suffering and the example of Christ

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1 Peter 3-5: Christian living at home and in the world, suffering and the example of Christ

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## 2 Peter:

*Descriptions provided by Tyndale's New Living Translation Bible book preface*

**Content:** Like a road sign warning of things ahead, Peter's second letter, written shortly before his death, alerts readers to the coming return of the Lord. In light of the Lord's imminent return, Peter urged his readers to live lives that would glorify God. He also cautioned them to watch out for false teachers who would distort the gospel. These evil workers will receive their punishment when the Lord returns. Peter instructed his readers to pay no attention to scoffers who cast doubt into the minds of believers regarding the return of the Lord. He assured them that the Lord would indeed return and establish a new heaven and a new earth. The letter closes with a final comment about Paul's letters, noting that they are difficult to understand. Peter warned his readers about those who might twist Paul's words to justify their own lawless actions, and he encouraged believers to continually grow in their knowledge of Jesus Christ.

**Author:** Peter the apostle

**Date:** Around A.D. 67

**Purpose:** To warn believers about false teachers and to encourage them to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ

**Themes:** Diligence, false teachers, the Lord's return

Milestones (provided by Bibleproject.com)

- **Invitation** – Jesus' followers must continue to grow and develop God's divine character traits, including love which is devotion to others no matter the response or cost.
- **Skeptics** – Peter counters objections to Jesus' resurrection with his eyewitness testimony. Jesus is king and will fulfill Old Testament prophecies to return and rescue the world.
- **Teachers** – Corrupt teachers question the final reckoning and accountability. Three examples from Genesis demonstrate God's divine judgment on rebellion and the faithful deliverance of His people.
- **Freedom** – Corrupt teachers despise God's authority and use their freedom in Christ as permission to sin. Enslaved to bodily impulses, they distort Paul's Romans 6 teaching.
- **The "Day"** – 2 Peter ends with a challenge to hope for the Day of the Lord when Jesus exposes evil and creates a new heaven and earth.

For a video overview, visit: [thebibleproject.com/explore/2-peter/#!](https://thebibleproject.com/explore/2-peter/#!)

2 Peter 1-3: Strategy for spiritual growth, False Teachers, Exhortations for the Lord's return

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# 1, 2, 3 John:

*Provided by Tyndale's New Living Translation Bible book preface and Bibleproject.com*

**Content:** Written by John the Elder to house church believers, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John echo the gospel of John. They emphasize that God is light and love and every true believer will demonstrate God's light and love.

Each book also addresses deceivers, teachers who no longer acknowledge that Jesus is the Messiah or Son of God but spread fear and division among believers. All legitimate teachers will share the truth about Jesus and the cross, love others sacrificially and spread love and light rather than fear. He also reminds believers to welcome true missionaries who teach the message of the cross and love others. They should not welcome deceivers or make idols of anything that exalts itself in God's place.

**Author:** John the apostle

**Date:** Probably between A.D. 85-90, from the city of Ephesus

## Milestones:

- **Damage Control** - 1 John, 2 John, 3 John addresses deceivers who no longer acknowledge Jesus as Messiah or God's Son and stir up hostility among faithful believers.
- **God is Light** - God and Jesus are light. To participate in life with God, believers must keep Jesus' commands to love each other and not love the world.
- **God is Love** - God's children should follow Jesus' example to love others. Believers gain victory over the world when they receive God's love and then love others sacrificially.
- **No Deceivers** - Teachers who deny Jesus and His work on the cross or command to love others is a deceiver and should be unwelcome by the church.
- **Accept Missionaries** - Gaius, a house church member, is encouraged to welcome legitimate traveling missionaries who will arrive soon rather than reject anyone associated with John the Elder.

For a video overview, visit [thebibleproject.com/explore/1-3-john/](https://thebibleproject.com/explore/1-3-john/)



1 John: 1-2: The believer's fellowship with God, new command to love, warnings  
What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

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1 John 3-5: Christian behavior, False teachers, Love of God, Victory of faith

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

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**2 John and 3 John:**

**What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?**

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**Additional Notes:**

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# Jude:

*Descriptions provided by Tyndale's New Living Translation Bible book preface*

**Content:** Why do lies tickle our ears so much more than the truth? Often, we allow false information to be spread among us because it is interesting, and we are slow to put an end to it. Jude was but concerned about this problem as he wrote his letter. We do not know where he sent his letter, but the message is very clear: Christians must stand firm against false teachers and their false doctrines. Jude warned his readers that intruders had slipped in among them and spread false teachings. He condemned these teachers and compared their fate to that of Cain, Balaam, and Sodom and Gomorrah. He described these teachers as lawless, lustful malcontents who schemed for their own gain. Jude challenged his readers to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ and to help others who were wavering in their faith.

**Author:** Jude, the half brother of Jesus

**Date:** Around A.D. 65

**Purpose:** To warn believers about false teachers and to encourage believers to remain faithful to Jesus Christ.

**Themes:** False teachers, rebellion against God.

## Milestones (Bibleproject.com)

- **Contend for Faith** - Believers must contend for true Christian faith and deal with corrupt teachers who betrayed Jesus by infiltrating the church with immoral living and distorted grace.
- **Rebellion & Justice** - Judah uses Old Testament and Jewish literature to demonstrate how rebellious people receive divine justice and warn against rebellious, corrupt teachers who reject God's messengers.
- **Rebellious Corruption**- Old Testament examples about rebels who corrupt other people are metaphors for teachers whose self-absorption and trail of chaos betray their claim to follow Jesus.
- **Two Warnings** - Judah gives the church ancient and recent warnings to deal with corrupt teachers. They distort Jesus' good news, but God's justice on evil is coming.
- **Build a New Temple** - The book of Jude reminds believers in God's new temple to build faithfully on Jesus' message, pray, love, obey and stay alert for His return.

For a video overview, visit: <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/jude/>

Jude:

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Next, pick up one of these booklets from the XA store.

1. *Genesis* - 50 chapters
2. *The Torah* (Exodus - Deuteronomy) - 133 chapters
3. *Joshua and Judges* - 45 chapters
4. *Ruth and Esther* - 14 chapters
5. *The Kings* (1 Sam - 2 Chronicles) - 177 chapters
6. *After Babylon* (Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel) - 35 chapters
7. *Psalms* - 150 Psalms
8. *Poetry* (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs) - 93 chapters
9. *Isaiah & Ezekiel* - 110 chapters
10. *Jeremiah and Lamentations* - 57 chapters
11. *Minor Prophets, Pre-Exile* - 43 chapters
  - (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk)
12. *Minor Prophets, Post-Exile* - 24 chapters
  - (Zephaniah, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)
13. *Synoptic Gospels* (Matthew, Mark, Luke) - 68 chapters
14. *John* - 21 chapters
15. *Acts* - 28 chapters
16. *Paul's Letters to churches* - 59 chapters
  - (Romans, 1 & 2 Cor., Galatians, 1 & 2 Thes.)
17. *Paul's Prison Epistles* - 15 chapters
  - (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon)
18. *Paul's Letters to people* (1 & 2 Timothy, Titus) - 13 chapters
19. *Apostle's Letters* (Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1 2 3 John, Jude) - 34 chapters
20. *Revelation* - 22 chapters