

KNOW THE BIBLE



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The Epistles #3

General Letters

Also known as the Catholic Epistles, the General Letters are the last group of letters which are written by James, Peter, John, Jude, and in the case of Hebrews, an unknown author. "Catholic" means universal. They are so called because they are addressed to Christians in general, not to any church or person in particular.

These letters are less often spoken of, yet their significance should not be overlooked. These 8 non-Pauline letters are as follows:

- ***H***ebrews
- ***J***ames
- ***1 P***eter
- ***2 P***eter
- ***1 J***ohn
- ***2 J***ohn
- ***3 J***ohn
- ***J***ude

How to remember this section:

The third and last section of letters is from people OTHER than Paul. They were Hebrew people thus it starts with the Book of **Hebrews**. After Hebrews comes the oldest half- brother of Jesus. His name was **James**, a leader of the church in Jerusalem converted after the resurrection. Peter follows James with **1 & 2 Peter**. After Peter comes the three letters from John (**1, 2, & 3 John**). The last book of the General Letters is the Book of **Jude**, the younger brother of James and a half-brother of Jesus as well. So, Hebrews starts it; bookending the remainder are Jesus' half-brothers James & Jude. They sandwich the multiple letters from Peter and John. 8 books in all!

- **Hebrews** – *this letter has an unknown author. Most scholars contribute this letter to Paul, Barnabas, or Apollos. The letter was addressed primarily to Jewish converts to Christianity who were attempting to Judaize the gospel and revert back to Judaism. The theme of Hebrews is the **absolute supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ as the mediator of God's grace and the superseding of the old Jewish system.** The Old Testament was fulfilled in Christ, the Son of God, and a "new covenant" was given through the shed blood of the perfect sacrifice once and for all.*
- **James** – *this letter was written by James, one of several brothers of Christ, a son of Mary and Joseph after Christ. James is probably the oldest brother after Jesus. The leader of the important Jerusalem council. Probably one of the earliest writings in the NT. James stresses the **need for faith to be accompanied by a consistent life-style producing good deeds.** Good deeds are a by-product of true faith.*

- **1 Peter** – written by the apostle, Peter, sometime in early 60's A.D. just prior to his martyrdom during Emperor Nero's reign in 67 A.D. It is a short letter, yet diverse in its topic. The ultimate reason for the letter is to encourage Christians to stand firm amid persecution. Eschatological (end times) in nature, yet emphasizing holy living in spite of the sufferings and tribulations that will come is the theme of the 1st letter of Peter. **Dealing mainly with persecution from outside the church** is its purpose.
- **2 Peter** – the 2nd letter from Peter written just before his death **deals more with false teachers and evildoers from within the church.** Both letters of Peter emphasize the need for **“practice what you preach”** mentality. Deeds should mirror your faith. Also of note again, is the eschatological nature and plea to be watchful for the Second Coming.
- **1 John** – written by the apostle, John, son of Zebedee, and was written with the purpose of exposing false teaching. Gnostic teachings were infiltrating the church. John sought to confront this false doctrine. **Lack of morality was at the forefront** of this doctrine.
- **2 John** – the 2nd letter written by the apostle, John, was written to a specific woman and her children, but most likely was intended for the church as a whole. A further thought on the 1st letter from John in that Gnostic false doctrine was piggy-backing the true Christian faith. **To beware of such false teachings and to not help in its propagation** while performing good deeds is to be watchful of.

- **3 John** – the last letter from John, the apostle, is a very short letter which addresses another aspect that the church was experiencing. Individuals that were not supporting the faithful teachers of Christ. **Encouraging hospitality while warning those that hinder God's work.**
- **Jude** – this letter was written by Jude, one of several brothers of Christ and James, a son of Mary and Joseph after Christ. Jude **warns against Gnostic teachings which perverted the grace of God into a license to sin.** To beware and oppose this heresy with the truth about God's saving grace.

The timeframe spans the 1st century A.D. Within a few decades of Christ's resurrection, these letters were already in existence to build the church. Each of these letters comes from some of the most respected early Christians at a time when first-hand eyewitness testimony was necessary and their conversion was a testimony unto itself.

*This is the 4th section of books in the New Testament. There are 8 books in this group totaling 65 books to this point. (**remember**: Learn the acronym and the **BOLD words and phrases** to retain long term memory.)*

*(Write the books in the spaces below **according to their flow not necessarily chronological order**; for permanent memory)*

1 T _____

2 T _____

T _____

H _____

J _____

1 P _____

2 P _____

1 J _____

2 J _____

3 J _____

J _____

Now you know 26 of the 27 books in the New Testament in order, the flow of the books, and what they are about. There is only 1 book left to remember. It is the last book of the New Testament, **the Book of Revelation!**

Below are 8 Bible verses from the General Epistles. Correctly identify the Bible verse with the corresponding book. The idea is to become familiar with where topics and names are found in the Word of God.

1. *"As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."*
 2. *"If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth."*
 3. *"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."*
 4. *"Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God."*
 5. *"First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.'"*
 6. *"For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord."*
 7. *"And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love."*
 8. *"For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God."*
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___ Hebrews 11:6
 ___ James 2:26
 ___ 1 Peter 2:15
 ___ 2 Peter 3:3

___ 1 John 1:6
 ___ 2 John 1:6
 ___ 3 John 1:11
 ___ Jude 1:4

Below are 4 Bible verses from the General Epistles. Correctly identify the Bible verse with the corresponding book. The idea is to become familiar with where topics and names are found in the Word of God.

“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

1. Which book of the General Epistles? _____

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

2. Which book of the General Epistles? _____

“But no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.”

3. Which book of the General Epistles? _____

“Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight

4. Which book of the General Epistles? _____

Hebrews 4:12

James 3:8

1 Peter 3:3

2 Peter 3:9

Below are 4 Bible verses from the General Epistles. Correctly identify the Bible verse with the corresponding book. The idea is to become familiar with where topics and names are found in the Word of God.

“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.”

1. Which book of the General Epistles? _____

“Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully.”

2. Which book of the General Epistles? _____

“In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.”

3. Which book of the General Epistles? _____

“So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.”

4. Which book of the General Epistles? _____

1 John 3:2

2 John 1:7

3 John 1:10

Jude 1:7

After identifying the previous Bible verses, take the time to find a Bible verse on your own that really identifies with that particular book. Just the act of searching and writing it down gives you a better sense and greater familiarity with the Word of God. You are actively participating in studying the Holy Bible.

Hebrews

James

1st Peter

2nd Peter

1st John

2nd John

3rd John

Jude

Notes

Describe a topic in this section to remember.

(Example: *By faith statement from Abel to Abraham to Moses to all the prophets;
To be commended for faith being sure of what we hope for and certain of what
we do not see. Hebrews 11)*
