**New Year with the New Testament**   
*Horizon U – New Testament Survey*

**Week 5 – The Catholic Epistles and Hebrews**

* The Catholic Epistles
  + - * + “Catholic” = “General or Universal”
        + Paul’s letters are titled by the recipient.

Otherwise we would have had I Paul, II Paul, III Paul, IV Paul, etc.

* + - * + “The Lesser Epistles”

Starting with Martin Luther some theologians have sought to give these letters a lower status than Paul’s writings

* + - * + Formally includes 7 Letters: James, I and II Peter, I, II, and III John, and Jude

I, II, and III John are anonymous

James and Jude – Brothers of Jesus?

* + - * James
        + The Jameses of the NT

James the son of Zebedee (one of the 12 disciples)

James the son of Alphaeus (also one of the 12 disciples)

James the father of Judas (not Iscariot)

James the brother of Jesus

Part of the challenge is that James is the Greek translation of Jacob… a common Jewish name.

* + - * + Authorship: James the (step)brother of Jesus.

Gundry, “It is possible, however, that James is an older stepbrother of Jesus by a conjectural marriage of Joseph preceding his marriage to Mary."

Perpetual Virginity of Mary

Luke’s Genealogy…

1 Cor 15 and Acts 1:14 tell us that Jesus appeared to James (the brother of Jesus) after his resurrection and that James received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

*Josephsus*, “James, the brother of Jesus, was martyred by Jews in Jerusalem. He was thrown from the top of temple but survived the fall only to be stoned and specifically clubbed by a laundryman to death.”

* + - * + Audience:

Jewish Christians, “To the 12 tribes scattered among the nations greetings.” (1:1)

Numerous quotations and allusions to the OT

Use of Jewish *idioms,* “Lord of Hosts” (5:4)

References to the Law

James doesn’t have the same vehemence against the Law as Paul and yet he does recognize the failures of the Law, especially in its inability to save.

* + - * + Date:

Possibly the earliest book of the NT.

No reference to Judaizer conflict (~49AD)

Perhaps it was addressed to Jewish Christians *because there weren’t any Gentile Christians yet*!

* + - * + Theme:

Reads like OT Wisdom Literature

“Allusions to the Jesus Sayings”

1:22, “**22**Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

Sounds like Jesus Sermon on the Mount “Hear these words and put them in practice is like a man…” (Mat 7:24)

* + - * + Highlights:

“Difficult to outline” “It rambles like Proverbs”

Rejoice in Trial (1)

Seek wisdom, be weary of wealth, and be doers not just hearers (1)

Beware of the Tongue (3-4)

Patiently wait for Christ’s return (5)

* + - * + Key Verse:

James 2:20, “Faith without works is dead.”

2:24 “You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.”

“Faith alone unites us to Christ for righteousness, and the faith that unites us to Christ for righteousness does not remain alone.” – Piper

* + - * I Peter
        + Author: Peter

Sounds like “Peter” from Acts

Jesus stories focus on the places Peter (from the Gospels) was a central figure

* + - * + Date:

After 63AD but before 64AD

Very precise because of the reference to the city of Pontus as a client of Rome but Pontus ceased to be a client in 64AD.

The *type* of persecution mentioned in the letter also doesn’t fit what Nero issued in 65AD but signals a time *near* Nero’s persecution.

* + - * + Audience: Persecuted Christians in “Asia Minor”

Jews or Gentiles

“To the exiles”

Gentiles. What’s interesting is that Peter now talks about Gentiles as if they were “God’s people.” At first this is confusing, is he writing to Jewish Christians? I believe Peter is one of the first to start to think of the Church as *displacing* Israel.

* + - * + Highlights:

1 Peter 1 opens with a beautiful unpacking of Jesus as the Messiah and the correction that the Messiah had to first come to die to later come for dominion.

“Therefore (because of Christ’s sacrifice) be holy as I am holy.” 1:16 (quoting from Leviticus)

Problematic Passage: “**9**After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits— **20**to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built…” (3:19-20a)

5 Views (Handout)

Who are the Spirits?

What was the purpose of Christ’s preaching?

Gundry: Demonic Spirits, Proclamation of Victory

* + - * II Peter
        + Author: Peter

Some have debated Peter’s authorship

Stylistic Difference

Perhaps Peter used a different *amanuensis*

II Peter and Jude share phraseology

* + - * + Audience: Christians in “Asia Minor”
        + Highlights:

Historical reliability of the Christian faith. (1), “For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God…” v.21

Warnings against False Teachers

“The False Teachers’ Peter warns against are not a specific group of heretics (like the Angel cult in Collosae). Peter’s warning is a much broader stroke of the pen.

Example: “*These people* are springs without water and mists driven by a storm.” V.17

Peter is a bit infatuated with Angels and Noah

“For if God did not spare **angels** when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment; **5**if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected **Noah**, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others…” v.4-5

“Fascination with the spirit world is endemic of human beings.” – Douglas Moo

*Tartarus*

“Prison of the Titans”

Present in the Pseudepigrapha

Uriel is the overseer

“The Watchers” are imprisoned

II Peter 2:4 – Metaphor for Hell

* + - * Jude
        + Author: Jude, “Jude a brother of James (and Jesus)”

Even though a ½ brother calls himself “A servant of Jesus”

Humility or Mistaken Identity

* + - * + Audience: Unclear, (Christians in danger of False Teaching)

“The most general of the general letters”

Close connection between Jude and II Peter

* + - * + Size: 1 Chapter Letter
        + Highlights:

Dealing with False Teachers

Jude quotes from the Pseudepigrapha at least once

From *1 Enoch* (1:14-15)

And possibly from *The Assumption of Moses* (9)

Two Viewpoints on verse 9, “But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”

1) Jude uses this common story from a widely circulated book to illustrate the audacity of the False Teachers… namely that they would be bolder than Michael!

2) Perhaps Moses was released from Sheol after the resurrection of Jesus.

* + - * Hebrews
        + Start with what we know…
        + Theme:

Superiority of Christ, specifically above every hero of the OT and every aspect of OT righteousness.

“Authorities of the Greek language consider *The Epistle to the Hebrews* as the most polished and eloquent of any book in the New Testament.”

Well thought out, highly theological, intentional writing.

“Theologically Hebrews is 2nd only to Paul’s letter to the Romans”

* + - * + Audience: “To the Hebrews”

Jewish Christians

Some traditions suggest it was written specifically to a few converted Jewish priests in Jerusalem

* + - * + Date:

100% written before 95AD because it was included 1 Clements writings

Mostly likely before 90 AD since the fall of the temple is not mentioned

Most scholars suggest 70AD since the language seems to mention sacrifices in such a way as to suggest they *were still occurring* and they did occur in the Temple up to that date.

* + - * + What we have no clue about…
        + Authorship:

The Great Mystery of the New Testament

Possible Authors:

Paul

Why release apostolic authority?

Compared to Hebrews, Greek scholars say Paul’s writing is “rugged.”

Why make this letter anonymous?

Barnabas

Levite

But Barnabas lived in Jerusalem and the author says they never saw Jesus. (2:3)

Luke

His writing is closer (much closer than Paul’s) to the author of Hebrews.

But Luke was a Gentile who wrote to Gentiles.

Apollos

Apollos was acquainted with Paul and taught by Priscilla and Aquilla.

Apollos was said to be an eloquent teacher.

Martin Luther picked Apollos.

But there is a lack of early tradition favoring Apollos.

Why not sign it?

Priscilla

The author of Hebrews.

* + - * + Highlights:

The phrase “better than” epitomizes the dominant theme of Christ’s superiority throughout the book.

“Hebrews presents a *New Reading* of the OT.” – NT Wright”

The Book of Hebrews presents the idea that, “Sacrifice is part of what it means to be truly human.”

Sacrifice implies awareness that things which are wrong must be put right.

Hall of Faith

Hebrews 11

Melchizedek Priesthood superior in every way.

A priest of God before the Aaronic priesthood.

Lack of genealogy demonstrates *eternality* of Jesus in contrast with past Aaronic priests.

Superior to Aaron for receiving Abraham’s tithe.

Superior to Abraham for giving a blessing.

Jesus can serve as high priest of Gentiles because he is not of the *Aaronic Priest*.

Jesus can rule as high King because his Kingship comes from David.