

REL A 212 Bible Dictionary Readings: Section 3, Hebrews, Catholic Epistles, Revelation

Hebrews

Pauline Epistles—Epistle to the Hebrews

This epistle was written to Jewish members of the Church to persuade them that significant aspects of the law of Moses, as a forerunner, had been fulfilled in Christ and that the higher gospel law of Christ had replaced it. When Paul returned to Jerusalem at the end of his third mission (about A.D. 60), he found that many thousands of Jewish members of the Church were still “zealous of the law” of Moses (Acts 21:20). This was at least 10 years after the conference at Jerusalem had determined that certain ordinances of the law of Moses were not necessary for the salvation of gentile Christians but had not settled the matter for Jewish Christians. It appears that soon thereafter, Paul wrote the epistle to the Hebrews to show them by their own scripture and by sound reason why they should no longer practice the law of Moses. The epistle is built on a carefully worked-out plan. Some have felt that the literary style is different from that of Paul’s other letters. However, the ideas are certainly Paul’s.

Analysis of Hebrews

1. God has spoken to our fathers for centuries by means of prophets, but in our time He has sent His son Jesus, who is the heir and the Creator and the exact image of the Father (Heb. 1:1–3).
2. Superiority of Jesus: (a) Jesus is greater than the angels. He has a more excellent name, inheritance, and higher calling. They are servants; He is the Son (1:4–2:18). (b) If the word of angels is important, how much “more earnest heed” we ought to give to the things spoken by the Lord (Jesus) (2:1–4).
3. Jesus is greater than Moses. Moses was a faithful servant, but Jesus was a faithful son (3:1–6).
4. The superiority of Jesus’ word: (a) The Israelites while traveling through the wilderness could not enter into the promised land because they did not believe and obey the teachings of God received through Moses (3:7–19). (b) How much more important it is, therefore, to obey the words of Jesus who is greater than Moses, if we wish to enter the heavenly land (4:1–2).
5. Jesus, as a high priest of Melchizedek, is superior to the high priests of the law of Moses: (a) Jesus was of the order of Melchizedek, which is greater than the order of Aaron. Melchizedek was even greater than Abraham (7:1–12). (b) The law of the Melchizedek Priesthood (gospel) is greater than the law of the Aaronic Priesthood (law of Moses) (5:1–7:28).
6. The tabernacle service was symbolic (or a shadow) of the real events: (a) The high priest under the law went through the veil into the Holy of Holies; but Jesus, the great high priest, has gone into heaven itself (6:19–20; 9:1–14). (b) The traveling of Israel out of Egypt, through the wilderness, crossing over the Jordan River into the promised land, is similar to a man forsaking the worldly things, going through the wilderness of temptation, and finally passing through the veil of death into the celestial kingdom (D&C 84:21–24; see also Alma 37:38–45).

7. The first covenant (testament) under Moses was fulfilled, and Jesus brought a new covenant (testament); thus we have in the Bible the Old and New Testaments (8:6–9:28). That which is therefore fulfilled and is old “is ready to vanish away” (Heb. 8:13).
8. Exhortation to faithfulness and diligence (10:1–39).
9. A discourse on faith (11:1–40).
10. Admonitions and greetings (12:1–13:25).

James, Jude

James

An English form of the Hebrew name Jacob. There are several persons of this name mentioned in the New Testament. (1) Son of Zebedee, one of the Twelve, brother of John. His call is given in Matt. 4:21; Mark 1:19–20; and Luke 5:10. He was given the name Boanerges (Mark 3:17) and was one of the inner circle of three chosen to be with our Lord on certain special occasions: at the raising of the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:37), at the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28), and at Gethsemane (Matt. 26:37; Mark 14:33; see also Mark 10:30, 41; 13:3; Luke 8:51; 9:54). He was killed by Herod (Acts 12:2).

(2) Son of Alphaeus, also one of the Twelve (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13).

(3) Brother of the Lord (Gal. 1:19) and of Joses, Simon, Jude, and some sisters (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3; Jude 1:1); known as James the Just. He occupied an important position in the Church of Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 2:9–12) and was probably the writer of the Epistle of James.

(4) James, called “the Less,” son of Mary and brother of Joses (Matt. 27:56; Mark 15:40; Luke 24:10). Nothing further is known of him, unless he is, as some think, the same as number 3 (above).

James, Epistle of

The writer is generally thought of as the Lord’s brother (Gal. 1:19), the son of Mary, and is mentioned in Acts 12:17; 15:13; Gal. 2:9. The epistle, which is addressed to the 12 tribes scattered abroad, was probably written from Jerusalem, but the date is not known. It may be one of the earlier epistles of the New Testament. In the epistle are found some clearly stated items about practical religion, including the important advice of 1:5–6 that if one lacks wisdom, he should ask of God for help. This instructive passage inspired Joseph Smith to inquire of the Lord in 1820 as to the true church, and as a consequence the Father and the Son appeared to him and the dispensation of the fulness of times was launched (JS—H 1:9–20). Among other important teachings of James are those that have to do with faith and works (James 2); the need to control the unruly tongue (James 3); an exhortation to patience (James 5); calling the elders for a blessing when sick (5:14–16); and the desirability of being an instrument of conversion in the life of even one other person (5:19–20).

Jude

One of the brethren of the Lord and probable author of the epistle of Jude.

Jude, Epistle of

The author is the brother of James, and one of the “brethren of the Lord.” The epistle is addressed to certain people in danger, owing to the presence among them of professing Christians who were giving themselves up to the immorality of pagan worship and claiming to be above the moral law. Jude wishes to rouse his “beloved” to a sense of their danger, and also to help them through it by bidding them keep close to the “faith once committed to the saints.” There are some striking resemblances between this epistle and 2 Peter. Some notable passages in Jude are verse 6, recounting the war in heaven and the expulsion of Lucifer and his angels during the “first estate” or premortal existence (see also Abr. 3:26–28); verse 9, speaking of an otherwise unknown event involving Michael (Adam) and the devil contending over the body of Moses; and verses 14–15, citing a prophecy of Enoch.

1 & 2 Peter

Peter

Rock. Brother of Andrew (John 1:40) and son of Jonah (Matt. 16:17); also known as Simeon (Acts 15:14; 2 Pet. 1:1) or Simon; originally a fisherman of Bethsaida, on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee. He was called by Jesus to be a disciple (Matt. 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20; Luke 5:1–11; John 1:40–42); at that time he was living at Capernaum with his wife and his wife’s mother (Matt. 8:14; Mark 1:29; Luke 4:38). His Aramaic name, Cephas, of which Peter is the Greek equivalent, was given him by the Lord (John 1:40–42). He was one of the three disciples present on several important occasions (Matt. 17:1; 26:37; Mark 5:37). Other references to him are found in Matt. 14:28–33; John 6:66–71; and in the very important passage Matt. 16:13–19, where we find his confession of the Lord as the Messiah and the Son of God. The words then addressed to him, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church,” have been made the foundation of the papal claims. But it is the Christ, the Son of God, which Peter had just confessed, who is the true cornerstone of the Church.

Other events connected with his life: his denial (Matt. 26:33–35, 58, 69–75; for parallel passages in the other Gospels, see the Harmony of the Gospels in the appendix); at the Resurrection (Mark 16:7; Luke 24:12, 34; John 20:2–7; 1 Cor. 15:5); with our Lord by the Sea of Galilee (John 21); in Jerusalem after Pentecost (Acts 2–5); with Simon Magus (Acts 8:14–24); at Lydda and Joppa (Acts 9:32–43); with Cornelius (Acts 10:1–11:18); in prison (Acts 12:1–19); at the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15:7–11; Gal. 2:7–9); and at Antioch (Gal. 2:11). From his epistle we learn (1 Pet. 5:13) that he worked in Babylon (which may be the well-known city on the Euphrates, or more likely is a disguised name for Rome) and had as his companions Mark and Silvanus or Silas. It was possibly under his direction that Mark wrote his Gospel. From A.D. 44 to 61 he was probably at work in Syrian towns, having Antioch as his center. It is generally believed that he suffered martyrdom at Rome, perhaps in 64 or 65.

Peter was one of the greatest of men. It is true that the New Testament recounts some mortal weaknesses, but it also illustrates that he overcame them and was made strong by his faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord honored Peter by selecting him to hold the keys of the kingdom on earth (Matt. 16:13–18), and it was upon the holy mount that Peter received these keys from the Savior, Moses, and Elias (Elijah) (Matt. 17:1–12). Peter was the chief Apostle of his day; and after the death, Resurrection, and Ascension of the Savior, it was Peter who called the Church together and acted in the office of his calling as the one who possessed the keys of the priesthood (Acts

1:2). It was through Peter's ministry that the gospel was first opened up to the Gentiles (Acts 10–11).

In the latter days Peter, with James and John, came from heaven and literally conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood and the keys thereof upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. This took place in May or June 1829, near Harmony, Pennsylvania. See D&C 27:12–13.

Peter, Epistles of

The first epistle was written from “Babylon” (probably Rome) soon after the outbreak of the Neronian persecution, A.D. 64, and is addressed to Christians in the different provinces of what is now called Asia Minor. Its object is to encourage men who were in danger of being terrified into a denial of their Lord (compare Luke 22:32), but it also contains valuable teaching about the Atonement (1 Pet. 1:11, 18–19; 2:21–25; 3:18; 4:1, 12–19) and the doctrines of baptism and resurrection (1:3, 23).

Analysis of the First Epistle

1:1–2, salutation; 3–12, thanksgiving for the new life that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ had brought with it; 13–25, an earnest call to a life of holiness, obedience, and love, remembering the price of our redemption.

2:1–10, Christ is the Cornerstone in the “spiritual house” into which individual Christians are built as “lively stones”; 11–12, the flesh must therefore be kept in subjection, and, 13–25, obedience must be rendered to constituted authority, even undeserved punishment being endured with patience, remembering the sufferings of Christ.

3:1–7, the duties of wives and husbands; 8–12, exhortation to unity and love; 13–17, the need of care lest the force of our witness should be marred by arrogance or moral laxity; 18–22, if suffering comes, there is strength to endure in the thought of the sufferings of Christ, who, after His mortal death, preached the gospel also in the spirit world (see also 1 Pet. 4:6).

4:1–6, fresh exhortation to avoid the lusts of men and live according to the will of God, and, 7–11, to exercise our gifts for the good of all and the glory of Jesus Christ; 12–19, to be partakers in Christ's sufferings is to rejoice in His glory, and a ground for thanksgiving, but not for presumption or moral carelessness.

5:1–11, practical exhortations; 12–14, salutations.

Analysis of the Second Epistle

The second epistle was apparently addressed to the same churches as the first (3:1). It was written in the near prospect of death (1:14) and aims at guarding against apostasy. In 2 Pet. 1 we read some of Peter's most forceful language, explaining how man can lay hold of the promise of eternal life and obtain the more sure word of prophecy (1:19; see also D&C 131:5). In 2 Pet. 2, Peter speaks of the sophistry and lack of faith that often accompanies worldly learning and acclaim. In 2 Pet. 3, Peter reaffirms that the Lord will come from heaven in great glory and in judgment upon the earth. The Prophet Joseph Smith said that “Peter penned the most sublime language of any of the apostles” (HC 5:392).

1, 2, 3 John

John

One of the Twelve; son of Zebedee and brother of James. In his early life he was a fisherman in fairly comfortable circumstances (Mark 1:20). We may assume he is the unnamed disciple of the Baptist mentioned in John 1:40. Later on he received a call to be a disciple of Jesus Christ (Matt. 4:21–22; Luke 5:1–11). He was one of the inner circle of three who were with the Lord at the raising of Jairus's daughter, at the Transfiguration, and in Gethsemane. In his own Gospel he refers to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20) and that “other disciple” (John 20:2–8). From Jesus he received the name Boanerges, “a son of thunder” (Mark 3:17). Other incidents that reveal his character are recorded in Mark 9:38; 10:35–40; Luke 9:54. There are frequent references to him in the accounts of the Crucifixion and Resurrection (Luke 22:8; John 18:15; 19:26–27; 20:2; 21:2). In the Acts he appears but seldom (Acts 3:1, 11; 4:13; 8:14). Paul refers to his meeting with him in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9). In Rev. 1:9 John tells of his banishment to Patmos.

John is mentioned frequently in latter-day revelation, as in 1 Ne. 14:18–27; 3 Ne. 28:6; Ether 4:16; D&C 7; 27:12; 61:14; 77; 88:141. These passages serve to confirm and to clarify the biblical record of John and also give us a hint as to his greatness and the importance of the work the Lord has given him to do on the earth, not only in the time of the New Testament, but also in the last days. We especially have a clarification of John 21:20–23, ascertaining that John did not die but has been allowed to remain on the earth as a ministering servant until the time of the Lord's Second Coming (3 Ne. 28:6; D&C 7).

John, Epistles of

In none of these three epistles does the writer mention himself by name; but tradition assigns them to John, while the similarity of the language of these epistles and that of the fourth Gospel is strongly marked.

The first epistle emphasizes the fact that Jesus has come in the flesh and shows its bearing on the life of men. It was probably written after the Gospel, for it assumes in the reader a knowledge of the facts that the Gospel records. It also contains warnings against the dangers that beset a true faith in the literal incarnation of Jesus even before the end of the 1st century, both from teachers who claimed an authority independent of our Lord's in the revelation of truth and from teachers who refused to acknowledge a real manifestation of the Godhead in human flesh.

The second epistle is closely connected with the first in the character of the false teaching it condemns (compare 2 Jn. 1:7 with 1 Jn. 4:2). The “elect lady” addressed in it is nameless. The writer of the letter styles himself the “Elder.”

In the third epistle the Elder refers to Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius, all of whom are otherwise unknown to history.

Antichrist

A word used by John to describe one who would assume the guise of Christ but in reality would be opposed to Christ (1 Jn. 2:18–22; 4:3–6; 2 Jn. 1:7). In a broader sense it is anyone or anything

that counterfeits the true gospel or plan of salvation and that openly or secretly is set up in opposition to Christ. The great antichrist is Lucifer, but he has many assistants both as spirit beings and as mortals. See 2 Thes. 2:1–12; Rev. 13:17; Jacob 7:1–23; Alma 1:2–16; 30:6–60.

Revelation

Revelation of John

Also known as the *Apocalypse*, a Greek word meaning revealed or uncovered. The message of Revelation is the same as that of all scripture: there will be an eventual triumph on this earth of God over the devil; a permanent victory of good over evil, of the Saints over their persecutors, of the kingdom of God over the kingdoms of men and of Satan. This is the subject on which Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Paul, Peter, and all the prophets have written. They spoke of a day of victory that would come, and that the end would be better (more glorious) than the beginning. The victory would be achieved through Jesus Christ.

Such is the theme of the Revelation. The details about the beasts, the wars, the angels, the men, etc., contribute to the development of this theme. By a little study, the theme can be perceived even if the details are not completely identified. It may be in this sense that the Prophet Joseph Smith said that Revelation was “one of the plainest books God ever caused to be written” (HC 5:342). However, the more fully the details are understood, the greater will be the appreciation of the theme. If we fail to catch a glimpse of the theme, we fail in our comprehension, no matter how many details we are able to understand.

Some Guidelines to Understanding:

1. *The Revelation seems to be divided into two parts.* The first, Rev. 1–3, deals with things at the time the Revelation was given, and is addressed to branches of the Church in seven cities of Asia. Note Rev. 1:3: “the time is at hand.” These three chapters show clearly that the Church in that day was rapidly going into apostasy. The second part, Rev. 4–22, deals with things yet future for John, things that had not yet come to pass. It begins with John’s time and continues to the end of the world. Note Rev. 4:1: “I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.” Accordingly, it offers a sort of panoramic view of events through the ages—of Apostasy, Restoration, Judgment, and Millennium.
2. *Apostasy and Restoration.* Apostasy and Restoration are relatively gradual events. Compare the setting and the rising of the sun. It does not become dark or light all at once (see D&C 45:29).
3. *A guided tour.* An interesting circumstance in the Revelation is that an angel comes to John and explains things to him—a sort of guided tour. This is consistent with the visions given to Nephi, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Enoch, who had similar guided tours. It appears to be a typical visionary experience.

Some Points of Doctrine:

1. A description of the resurrected and glorified Savior (1:13–15).
2. The importance of overcoming the world (3:21; 21:7).
3. The faithful are to be kings and priests unto God and will reign on the earth (1:6; 5:10; 20:6; 21:7).
4. Animals are resurrected from the dead, and there are animals in heaven, redeemed by the blood of Christ (5:11–14; D&C 77:3; HC5:343).
5. Two prophets will lie dead in the streets of Jerusalem in the last days and then be raised (11:1–11).

6. The woman driven into the wilderness, and the man child (Rev. 12). The woman is the Church; the man child is the political kingdom of God growing out of the Church.
7. The angel with the everlasting gospel. This being is generally identified in the Church as the resurrected angel Moroni (JS—H 1:33) but may be representative of all the angels involved in the Restoration.
8. All people shall be judged by their works out of the books that are written both on earth and in heaven (20:11–13; see D&C 128:6–7).
9. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (19:10).
10. The New Jerusalem, the city foursquare (3:12; 21:1–22:7; see Ether 13:2–10; Moses 7:62–63). The Revelation was received on the Lord's day by John on the isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:9–10), off the coast of Asia, not far from Ephesus. The exact date is not known. The Book of Mormon confirms that the recipient was John, one of the Twelve (1 Ne. 14:18–27; see D&C 20:35; 77).

Patmos

One of the Sporades, the southeastern group of the islands of the Aegean Sea, being the island to which John was banished. There, according to tradition, he worked in the “mines” (marble quarries) and saw the vision related in the Apocalypse (Rev. 1:9).