

## INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE (10)

### NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS (James through Revelation)

#### JAMES (62-63 A.D.)

This book is hard to date with estimates ranging from 45-65 A.D. It was most likely written by one of the brothers of Jesus Christ. He was a leader in the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13; 21:18; Galatians 1:19; 2:9-12). The book was written for Jewish believers (12 tribes scattered abroad) who lived in various countries scattered throughout the Roman Empire. This is in contrast to the book of Hebrews that was written to Jews who lived around Jerusalem. The book of James is very practical in regard to living the Christian life and there are many similarities between the book of James and the sermon recorded by Jesus in Matthew 5-7 (called the sermon on the Mount). James teaches that Christians are patient in trials (Chapter one), practice what they believe (2), try to control their tongue (3), are peacemakers, not trouble makers (4), and are prayerful in troubles (5).

#### 1 and 2 PETER (64-65 A.D.)

Peter was one of the original 12 apostles of Jesus who took the lead when the church first began (Acts 2). Though he worked primarily with Jews, he was the first to preach to Gentiles (Acts 10). He wrote to people that he called strangers or aliens dwelling in modern day Turkey. It is hard to determine whether those who first received this letter were literal aliens, that is, driven from their homes and forced to live in a new country, or whether Peter referred to them as aliens in the sense that all Christians are aliens in this world. This world is not our real home, heaven is. (See 1 Peter 2:11).

The book of 1 Peter is a letter of encouragement to Christians who were undergoing persecution. It talks about the place of suffering in the Christian's life, and how the hope we have in Jesus Christ can get us through that suffering and how suffering can help us grow stronger. The glory that we will have as a result of suffering for Christ will make the suffering worthwhile.

There were many false teachers moving in and out among the churches. Peter's second letter tries to prepare his readers for dealing with false teachers. Peter plainly told them about the completeness of God's revealed truth (1:3-4; 1:16-21) and what they could do to make sure they did not fall away from the faith (1:5-11). He described what false teachers were like and what would happen to them and those they influenced in the end (2:1-3:13).

#### 1 and 2 and 3 JOHN (64-65 A.D.)

John was also one of the original 12 apostles. He referred to himself in the Gospel he wrote as "the disciple who Jesus loved". John, like Peter, had to address false teachers who became more and more fruitful as the days toward the end of the Jewish nation drew near. (Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. by the Romans). John talks about the "last time" and "anti-Christ" and said they would occur in his own time (1 John 2:18). There actually were teachers who were saying that Jesus, when seen on the earth, did not have a body of flesh (1 John 4:1-3). This was a very dangerous teaching since it denied that Jesus was a man and was tempted just like we are. John also emphasizes the importance of obeying God and loving each other. If love is not present in

our life, we are lost! If love is not in our life, it does not matter how much we read our Bible or practice outward religion.

### **JUDE (64-65 A.D.)**

Jude was also a brother of Jesus Christ. His one page book is very similar to what is found in 2 Peter 2. It is full of warnings about false teachers and the need for Christians to "contend earnestly for the faith". We must always be aware of those who would lead us away from Christ.

### **REVELATION (65 A.D.)**

The Revelation received by John from Jesus Christ is a very unique book. John received a series of dreams and visions, which he describes in detail for his readers. All New Testament books are easier to understand if you are at least a little familiar with the Old Testament law and history. This is especially true of the book of Revelation. In 22 chapters, there are over 450 references or allusions to the Old Testament. Because John is describing visions he was given, the language John uses must be interpreted in a figurative way. How do you learn to interpret these symbols and figures? Become very familiar with the rest of the Bible before attempting to study Revelation. Today many modern preachers teach many things from Revelation which are not true. They try to apply its teachings and prophecies to their own modern generation without first asking themselves what it meant to the ones who first received it. Revelation was very relevant to the people who first read it. It applied directly to them in the first century. Any viewpoint that someone gives you on the book of Revelation, which does not take the historical setting in mind, is bound to be wrong. We will have detailed lessons on this book later in our studies after we have laid the background for it in studying the other books.

The key verse to the book is Revelation 6:9-11. John saw a vision of believers who had already been killed because of their faith. They were seen asking God when he was going to carry out vengeance on their enemies. God answered that a few others would have to be killed then God would take out his wrath upon those who shed their blood. The rest of the visions in the book describe God's wrath against those enemies who shed the blood of his apostles, prophets, and other Christians. When you read the Old Testament and the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; ask yourself as you read: "Who was it that killed the apostles, the prophets and other believers in the Bible? When you find out who, then you will know the subject matter of the book of Revelation.

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Which two books were written by brothers of Jesus Christ?
2. Which book written to aliens and strangers encourages them concerning suffering.
3. Which writer deals with false teachers who were saying that Jesus did not have a fleshly body like us while he was on the earth?
4. Why is it important for you to wait awhile before you spend too much time studying the book of Revelation?