

LESSON 35

OTHER EPISTLES

Memory verse : Jude. 20 - 21

Objective : To encourage the learners to read and study the epistles helps us get to know about the doctrine and the practices of the Church, and to lead a life pleasing to our hand.

Introduction : How many books constitute the New Testament ? How many are the epistles ? Of the epistles how many are Pauline ? We will get a general idea of the authors, contents, dates, and places of writing of these epistles in this lesson.

The epistles other than the epistles of Paul are called general epistles. They were not written to particular local Churches. They were written mainly for the Jewish converts scattered everywhere.

These 7 epistles were written by 4 apostles.

Epistle	Author
James	- James the brother of the Lord
1,2 Peter	- Simon Peter (Apostle Peter)
1,2,3 John	- Apostle John
Jude	- Jude the brother of James

The writers of epistles also are classified under each of their particular topics.

Paul	- Faith
James	- Works
Peter	- Hope

John	-	Love
Jude	-	striving for the faith

Although various other subjects are found in their writings, these are the predominant themes in each of them. Once we learn this difference, it will be clear to us that their writings are not contradictory, but are only supplementary to each other. Paul states emphatically that justification is by faith alone, while James stresses that the one who is thus justified must demonstrate his faith before others by works. "Abraham was justified by faith (Rom. 4 : 1 -3). Then James asks us "Was not our ancestor Abraham justified for what he did ? (James. 2:21). These two statements must be explained in terms of their themes. Here we see two aspects of the same thing. From this we can conclude that these writings are interlinked and complementary to each other.

Now let us study about each of the epistles a bit more elaborately.

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES :

The author of this letter is James the earthly brother of Jesus Christ. Before Christ's death, His brothers did not believe in Him. (Jn.7 :5) The appearances of the risen Christ brought them to faith in Christ (1Cori. 15 :7). They were among the 120 waiting in the upper room (Acts1 :14). But the brothers of the Lord didn't want to identify with the Lord in body but in spirit. Both James and Jude introduced themselves in the epistles as "Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ" (James.1 :1, Jude.1:1). James was the minister of Jerusalem Church for a long time (Acts 15:13, 21 :18). He was known as 'James the Just' because of his exceptional justice and devotion.

The first epistle that was ever written was the epistle of James (A.D. 44).

The central theme of this epistle is the practical aspect of faith. Those who are justified by faith in Christ must demonstrate their faith and justification in proportionate works. Hypocrisy and falsehood are utterly condemned.

2. I AND II EPISTLES OF PETER :

Peter first of the twelve apostles, worked mainly among the Jews (Gala. 2:9). He also met his martyrdom in Rome about the same time of Paul's martyrdom (A.D.67) during Nero's persecution. His sentence

was crucifixion. It is said that he was crucified head down on his own choice to kiss his Lord's feet.

The grim shadow of persecution had spread all over the Roman empire. Peter wrote his epistles to impart comfort and courage to the people under his care. It was at Macedonia during his tour that these epistles were written. In the first epistle, the believers are called on to face trials and persecutions being stirred by the hope of glory - the hope of the second coming of the Lord. In the second epistle, they are warned against the false teachers who try to turn them away from the true faith.

3. JOHN :

Among the twelve disciples of the Lord, John, the son of Zebedee, who called himself the disciple whom the Lord loved was the one who died last of all. He was put in a caldron of boiling oil by Domitian. Unharmed by it, he was deported to the Isle of Patmos. He returned from Patmos to Ephesus, **later and died a natural death**. He has authored 5 books of which three are epistles and one Gospel after his name and the book of Revelation.

The first epistle of John was written to prove that the characteristic of true Christians is love, as well as to emphasize the truth of Christianity and deity of Christ among the widespread heresies on the person of Christ. The second epistle of John was written to a familiar respected sister and the third to a beloved brother Gaius. The themes of these epistles are respectively congratulations on those who walk in truth and in strong opposition against the false teachers (AD 65-67).

4. JUDE :

Jude the brother of James and the Lord, has given strong admonitions to God's people to beware of the grip of false teachers and strive for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. It is believed to have been written in 67 A.D.

EXERCISE - 35

Answer the following questions

1. Which Epistles are known as the general epistles? To whom was it written?

2. Who wrote the seven general epistles?
3. Write the names of the writers of epistles and also mention their topics of writing?
4. Who was James?
5. How did James and Jude introduce themselves in the epistles?
6. Why was James known as "James the Just"?
7. What is the central theme of the epistle of James?
8. How did Peter meet his death?
9. What are the main themes of the 1st & 2nd epistles of Peter?
10. Which disciple of Christ died last of all?
11. How many books did John write? Which are they?
12. What are the main themes of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd epistles of John?
13. What is the main theme of the epistle of Jude?

