



ROSE GUIDE TO THE EPISTLES

Romans to Revelation



CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

The Epistles: An Overview 5

CHAPTER 2

Paul's Epistles to Churches 29

CHAPTER 3

Paul's Epistles to Individuals 59

CHAPTER 4

General Epistles and Revelation 69

CHAPTER 5

Who's Who in the Epistles. 91

CHAPTER 6

Seven Churches of Revelation 111

CHAPTER 7

Four Views on the Book of Revelation 131

Christians began writing letters to churches from the earliest days of Christianity. The newly planted congregations needed to know more about who Jesus was, especially since the four gospels about the life of Jesus were not written until the latter half of the first century. These letters were essential for instruction about what it meant to live out the Christian faith. Collected and grouped together in our Bible today, these letters are what we call the New Testament Epistles.

The word *epistle* comes from the Greek word *epistole*, which simply means “message, commission, or letter.” The New Testament Epistles were sent to diverse and growing churches in the Mediterranean world and were written to address specific issues the churches faced. So when we read these epistles today, it is very literally reading someone else’s mail.

Though penned two thousand years ago, these letters tackle topics that are still pressing issues for believers today: church diversity, holy living, false doctrines, ministry leadership, persecution, and how to find hope in the future return of Christ Jesus.



THE EPISTLE GENRE

The Bible has many different types of writings within its pages. Some of it is poetry, like the musical lyrics in the Psalms. Some writings are historical, like the epic narratives of Moses and the exodus, and others are wisdom literature, like the proverbs of wise King Solomon. Categories such as these are called *genre*. Much like we would sort music into categories of pop, rock, jazz, classical, or country, the books of the Bible can be sorted according to their genres.

Twenty-one of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament fit the ancient genre of epistle. This epistle genre is not a one-size-fits-all. In fact, some ancient sources list anywhere from twenty-one to forty-one different types of epistles. Although the New Testament Epistles do not follow any of these types exactly, the genre can take on various forms and does so in the New Testament.





1 JOHN

While the theme of love appears in all three of John's epistles, it thoroughly saturates his first letter. Because of God's love, believers are called to love one another—not only in word but also in deed.

Who wrote 1 John?

Unlike many other epistles, the author of 1 John does not identify himself in the opening. From the earliest days of Christianity, John the son of Zebedee, the beloved disciple, was widely said to be the writer of all three epistles named after him. The most compelling argument for John's authorship is that the style and vocabulary of the three letters are remarkably like the gospel of John.

When was 1 John written?

The three letters of John are among some of the latest epistles of the New Testament. It is believed that John wrote his epistles late in life, possibly from Ephesus. Though we don't know which of these letters John penned first or exactly what year, scholars estimate they were written around AD 85–95.

Who was 1 John written to?

First John does not specify the audience, but from the letter we can glean that John knew his readers well, so they were likely congregations in Asia Minor where John ministered. The recipients may have included the seven churches in Asia Minor addressed in Revelation.

The apostle John wrote three letters that reverberate with one message: those who are forgiven and believe in Jesus Christ must walk in truth and love, and resist those who try to bring false teachings into the church.



Why was 1 John written?

Multiple times in the letter, John says, “I write to you so that ...” giving his reasons for the epistle. He writes so that

- ✠ their joy will be complete (1 John 1:4),
- ✠ believers will not sin (1 John 2:1),
- ✠ they will remain strong (1 John 2:12–14), and
- ✠ they will know that they have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

John wants the church to stay grounded in their faith and love, especially as false prophets who denied the core teaching of Christ’s humanity were trying to lead some Christians astray (1 John 2:26; 4:1–3).

What is the message of 1 John?

Relationship with God: Believers know God and his love through Christ, have forgiveness of sins, and have God’s Spirit and word abiding in them (1 John 1:5–10; 2:13–14, 24–27; 4:6–19).

Love: God’s love produces love for one another and good works (1 John 3:11–24; 4:7–21). Belief in Jesus produces love for fellow believers and is proof of being born again and loving and knowing God (1 John 4:7–12).

Christ’s incarnation: As false prophets were leading some Christians astray by denying the humanity of Christ, John forcefully states that acknowledging that Jesus came “in the flesh” (1 John 4:2) is a test for knowing whether a teaching is from God’s Spirit (1 John 4:1–6; 5:6–8).

Key Verses

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 JOHN 1:9

Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

1 JOHN 3:18

This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

1 JOHN 4:2

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

1 JOHN 4:7

Contribution to Scripture

For John, the love of God and love for one another are essential for remaining grounded in the faith. John hammers home the need to love, that the origin of love is God, and the importance of being careful of those who would teach otherwise—and that this kind of love relationship is only possible through the incarnate Son of God.



2 JOHN

John's second letter is a mix of encouragement and warnings. In this short letter, he commends Christians for walking in truth and love, and he cautions them about false teachers.

Who wrote 2 John?

The author refers to himself only as "the elder" (2 John 1:1). The writing style and vocabulary of 2 John are so similar to the other writings of John that there is little doubt of John's authorship.

When was 2 John written?

As with 1 and 3 John, this epistle was likely written from Ephesus around AD 85–95.

Who was 2 John written to?

The letter is addressed "to the lady chosen by God and to her children"

(2 John 1:1). This is probably a metaphor for the church, since it seems that John is writing to Christians more broadly and not necessarily to a specific individual. John's other writings depict the church as a bride (Rev. 21:2; 22:17) and he often refers to believers as children (1 John 2:1; 3 John 1:4). As with 1 John, the churches who received this second letter were likely churches in Asia Minor.

Why was 2 John written?

Some itinerate preachers, or "deceivers" as John calls them (2 John 1:7), were coming into Christian homes and teaching that Jesus did not take on a human body but merely appeared to have a bodily existence.

What is the message of 2 John?

Love: At the heart of the church should be love for one another.

Truth: Walking in the truth means not being led astray by false teachers. Those who promote falsehoods, like that Jesus was not fully human, should not be welcomed into Christian homes, for doing so is sharing "in their wicked work" (2 John 1:11).

Key Verses

I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. 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.

2 JOHN 1:5–6

Contribution to Scripture

Second John shows us that the apostles of the early church, like John, taught that Jesus Christ was both the Son of God and fully human. Yet even in the first century, false teachers tried to infiltrate the church and deny the incarnation of Christ.

In John's view, love and truth go hand in hand, for love is characterized by walking in obedience to God's commands, and those commands are the truth.



3 JOHN

This third letter of John is the shortest epistle in the New Testament. It is a brief, personal letter to a man named Gaius commending him for his faithfulness to truth and love for fellow believers.

Who wrote 3 John?

Like in 2 John, the author identifies himself simply as “the elder” (3 John 1:1), but the letter is so much like the writings of John that John has long been the undisputed author of this epistle.

When was 3 John written?

Just as Philemon was Paul’s personal letter sent along with his epistle to the Colossians, 3 John may have been John’s personal letter delivered along with one or both of his other two epistles (AD 85–95).

Who was 3 John written to?

While there are several men named Gaius (a common Roman name) mentioned in the New Testament (Acts 19:29; 20:4; Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14), it is uncertain whether the Gaius whom John addresses in 3 John was one of these men or, more likely, a different person entirely. From 3 John, we see that Gaius was a well-known and respected leader in the church.

Why was 3 John written?

It appears that there was a power struggle going on in the church. A man named Diotrephes was spreading lies about John and other believers, while Gaius was walking faithfully in the truth. At the end of the letter, John expresses his desire to meet with Gaius face-to-face and talk further.

What is the message of 3 John?

Hospitality: Whereas in John’s second letter he expressly says not to welcome and support false teachers, in this third letter he emphasizes the importance of showing hospitality to and working with missionaries of the truth (3 John 1:8).

Good works: As in John's other writings, he makes clear in this epistle that people's actions reveal whether they truly know God or not (3 John 1:11).

Key Verses

We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we may work together for the truth.

3 JOHN 1:8

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.

3 JOHN 1:11

Contribution to Scripture

This short epistle serves as a reminder to believers to remain faithful to the truth, unify the church with love and support for one another, and reject all forms of evil deeds.



Contribution to Scripture

Jude's unique contribution to Scripture is that he uses rich Old Testament imagery (and some noncanonical Jewish writings) to establish a case against false teachers and to give assurance to Christians that they can fight for the faith.



REVELATION

Revelation stands out as one of the most unique books in all of the Bible. Many times in the past and present, it has been used to assess the signs of the end times. However, first and foremost, it is a message to seven churches about faithfulness through hardship and about hope in salvation.

Who wrote Revelation?

Though John is identified as the writer of Revelation in the very first verse, what is written is “the revelation from Jesus Christ” (Rev. 1:1). Revelation and the gospel of John share some common elements, suggesting that the same person wrote both books. But Revelation's Greek writing style is different from John's other writings, leading some scholars to conclude that a different John wrote Revelation. However, the apostle John's authorship has a long tradition in church history, stated as early as the second century by church fathers Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and others.

When was Revelation written?

Some scholars believe that Revelation 11 predicts the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, indicating that the book was written before AD 70 when the Romans destroyed the temple. But most scholars conclude that Revelation was written in the AD 90s because the cities of the seven churches and the circumstances addressed in Revelation are more relevant to the last decade of the first century when Christians faced persecution under Emperor Domitian.

Who was Revelation written to?

The primary audience is seven churches in cities in Asia Minor: Ephesus,

Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. The wider audience for the book is all God's people who hear the words of Revelation (Rev. 22:18, 21).

Why was Revelation written?

Like many of the later New Testament epistles, Revelation was written to churches facing both the challenges of persecution and false teaching in the church. The revelation given to John by Jesus is meant to fortify believers against the temptations of going the way of the false teachers or watering down their faith by mixing their religion with worldly attitudes and behaviors.

What is the message of Revelation?

Victory: John's visions include metaphors that serve to assure the church of their salvation from enemies. The Lamb, angels, trumpets, bowls of God's wrath, and the new heaven and new earth all illustrate that God is in control and he has a plan to rescue all of his people.

Hope: The final two chapters in this book are all about the hope believers have in a coming future. One day, each believer will enter the new heaven and new earth, where Christ is the radiant sun, and all believers will worship him perfectly. There will be no more sin or evil, death or weeping. There will be the great new Jerusalem in all its splendor where the Lord reigns forever.

Key Verses

Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever!

REVELATION 1:17–18

They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.

REVELATION 17:14

Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death" or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

REVELATION 21:3–4

Contribution to Scripture

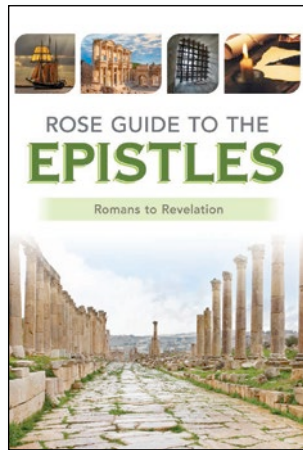
In Revelation, the story of God's redemption of his people and the condemnation of evil is told in an apocalyptic style. With vivid and evocative imagery, the message of Revelation is for all Christians facing hardship, giving them hope and assurance of the defeat of Satan, the reign of Christ, and the new heaven and the new earth.



THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN

Apocalyptic writings in the Bible reveal God's hidden plans through visions, symbols, and images. The word *apocalypse* comes from a Greek word meaning "unveiling" or "uncovering." It is this word in Revelation 1:1 that is translated in most English Bibles as *revelation*. In biblical times, apocalyptic writings often came out of periods of intense suffering and persecution. These writings included not only messages of judgment but also of hope for a coming restoration. The book of Ezekiel, many of Daniel's prophecies, and the book of Revelation are apocalyptic.



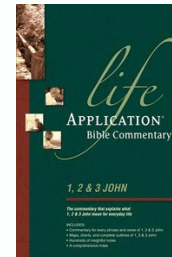


Rose Guide to the Epistles

With pictures, charts, maps, time lines, and a clear and outlined format, this introduction to the Epistles helps you explore the key people, places, and stories of the New Testament.

There are hundreds of key people, events, and places within the Epistles, so how can you cover all of them in their New Testament contexts? The *Rose Guide to the Epistles* provides visual aids, charts, maps, and timelines to help you not only understand but see key concepts at a glance! From Romans to Revelation, you'll find the key facts and teachings of each epistle.

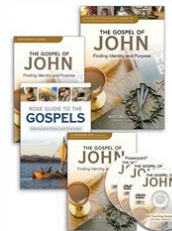
Softcover 978-1-64938-022-7 \$17.99



1, 2, & 3 John

The Life Application Bible Commentary series is the only commentary to offer sermon and lesson applications alongside stirring commentary. This commentary explains what 1,2 & 3 John mean for everyday life and includes a commentary for every phrase and verse along with maps, charts, and outlines.

Softcover 978-0-8423-2857-9 \$15.99



The Gospel of John 12-Session DVD Based Study Complete Kit

This DVD kit covers 12 passages from the book of John that will deepen your understanding of identity, calling, and God's purpose for you. Packed with leader tips, discussion questions, practical applications, and prayer points, this DVD study can be led by anyone!

DVD/Softcover.... 978-1-62862-829-6 \$109.99



Books of the Bible Made Easy

Enjoy having a quick overview of them all with this easy-to-understand guide. From basic outlines to key themes, see what you need to know about all 66 books of the Bible at a glance! Whether you're using it for personal or group study, discipleship, gifts for baptism, or as a gift to a friend, this convenient guidebook is light, easy to carry, and can easily be slipped into a book bag or purse.

Softcover 978-1-62862-342-0 \$6.99

ROSE
PUBLISHING
www.tyndale.com/rose-publishing
csresponse@tyndale.com
or call 1-855-277-9400



**Money Back
Guarantee!**

ECPA
EVANGELICAL
CHRISTIAN PUBLISHERS
ASSOCIATION