

Church under Fire

I. The Story so far

II. The Church and Suffering: Hebrews & 1 Peter

III. The Church and False-teaching: 2 Peter, Jude & John's letters

IV. The Church and the Conqueror: Revelation


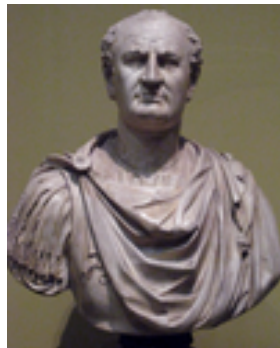


N. T. Wright's View of Scripture as a "Five-Act Play"

Act I: Creation	Act II: Fall	Act III: Israel	Act IV: Jesus	Act V: Church
God creates a world in order to display his glory. In the Temple of his creation, he places humans in order to rule and reign on his behalf and spread the knowledge of his glory to the ends of the earth.	Through their refusal to be faithful image-bearers, humans forfeited the offer of immortality. Death entered the world (cf. Gen. 5) and judgment ensued. Yet the promise of redemption is given: 'he shall bruise his head and you shall bruise his heel.' (Gen 3:15)	The promise of Gen 3:15 begins fulfillment in the call of Abraham to bless the nations. God calls a people to himself to be his representatives, promises a land and gives them laws. Israel, however, show themselves to be just as much a part of the problem as their pagan neighbours.	The true representative of Israel comes in the person of Jesus. He creates a new Israel, bears the curse of his people and makes a way for Abraham's blessing to go forth to the nations by dying and rising from the dead. He commissions his people to take the message of his death and resurrection to the ends of the earth.	God's people are filled with the Spirit and carry out the commission to make disciples of all nations, starting with Jerusalem and extending to the ends of the earth (still ongoing). The act will culminate with the second coming of the Messiah to judge and restore all things.
Gen 1-2	Gen 3-11	Gen 12 – Malachi	Matthew – John	Acts – Revelation (and ongoing)

The Church Under Fire

- The final writings of the New Testament (some of which, such as Jude and 2 Peter, are often somewhat neglected by the church today) are all written as responses to external pressures and crises, hence the name of this final block: 'the Church under fire'
- Although it is dangerous to claim that there is one main problem which is tackled in each writing, the following list is a helpful way of understanding the type of threat each letter tackles (particularly useful if you are pastoring someone or teaching into a similar situation)
 - Hebrews: suffering through social stigma
 - 1 Peter: suffering through social stigma
 - 2 Peter: false teachers
 - 1, 2 and 3 John: false teachers
 - Jude: false teachers
 - Revelation: suffering and temptation through worldly empires
- In terms of the biblical narrative, these writings were probably all written after the end of Acts and many of them (particularly 2 Peter and Revelation) have an eye to the future of the Church after the apostolic age
- **DISCUSSION:** How do each of the above types of threat play out in your church?

Notable Roman Emperors of the Late NT Period

	Nero	Vespasian	Titus	Domitian
				
Reign	54-68AD	69-79AD	79-81AD	81-96AD
NT Documents written during reign	Mark, Rom, 2 Cor, Eph, Col, Php, Phm, 1&2 Tim, Tit, Heb?, 1&2 Pet, Jud	Matt? Luke-Acts?		John, 1-3 John, Rev
Notable facts	Nero was generally more concerned with art and culture than ruling. He sent Vespasian in 66AD to quash the Jewish revolt in Judea. He initiated an intense persecution in Rome against Christians from 64 AD (fire of Rome) until his suicide in 68AD	Vespasian was the general who started the Jewish war, subduing Galilee by 68AD. He won the fight to become emperor in 69AD and founded the Flavian dynasty (Vespasian, Titus and Domitian). He ruled during the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD	Not much of relevance to the NT during his reign as emperor. However, he was the general who led the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD – a watershed event for Jewish history	Megalomaniacal ruler. It is likely (although not certain) that Domitian initiated the first empire-wide persecution of Christians. He insisted on being called <i>Dominus et Deus</i> (Lord and God). Worship of Domitian was particularly widespread in Asia Minor

Church Under Fire

I. The Story so far

II. The Church and Suffering: Hebrews & 1 Peter

III. The Church and False-teaching: 2 Peter, Jude & John's letters

IV. The Church and the Conqueror: Revelation

Hebrews

- The author of Hebrews is unknown. Many possibilities have been put forward (Paul, Barnabas, Luke, Apollos, Priscilla...), but we simply do not know who wrote the letter
- We also do not know to whom or when the letter was written
 - Most scholars, noting the large number of references to Jewish sacrificial practices in the letter, think that the recipients were mainly Jews
 - Although it is impossible to determine where this community was based, the most plausible option is that it was written to a church near Rome (cf. 13:24). However, this still simply remains a hypothesis
 - The letter was most likely written prior to 70AD, since it would seem that the temple has not yet been destroyed, and possibly prior to the Neronian persecution of 64 AD
- Hebrews is often, a little bit like Romans, taken as theology in a vacuum. But it is a letter written in light of a specific crisis and a specific situation. Understanding this is vital in order to appreciate what the author writes and also in order to see how deep theology speaks directly into real-life situations
 - The addressees were in serious danger of taking a disastrous step either through neglect (e.g. 2:1-4) or willful sin (10:26-31)
 - Whatever the exact step or neglect was, it probably involved a neglect of meeting as a Christian community and a reversal back to 'mere' Judaism. The author responds by highlighting the overwhelming superiority of the New Covenant
 - This step towards neglect and sin, it seems, was a response to the external pressure of suffering and social stigma (the author reminds them, in 10:33-35, of their past joy in suffering and, by implication, suggests that they were undergoing some form of social ostracism, although not martyrdom – cf. 12:4)
 - Although the letter contains some very puzzling elements (e.g. Melchizedek in ch7), these OT allusions are all designed to show the superiority of the covenant in the blood of Christ and warn away the hearers from neglecting this. Theology matters!

God: The Son in Hebrews 1

heir
excellent spoken
radiance
Upholds universe Son
Glory of God
purification
Worship
superior
firstborn
Throne
righteousness
anointed
name inherited
Sit
footstool
salvation

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”? And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.”

Of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.” But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.” And, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.”

And to which of the angels has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”? Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Gospel: Jesus the High Priest and the Perfect Offering

Problem: 'The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office' (Hebrews 7:23)

Solution: 'but he [Jesus] holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.' (Hebrews 7:24)

Outcome: 'Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.' (Hebrews 7:25)

Problem: 'According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings' (Hebrews 9:9-10)

Solution: 'But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come ... he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood...' (Hebrews 9:11-12)

Outcome: '...thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls ... sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ ... purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God' (Hebrews 9:12-14)

Problem: 'And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins' (Hebrews 10:11)

Solution: 'But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet' (Hebrews 10:12-13)

Outcome: 'For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified' (Hebrews 10:14)

People: Warnings and Perseverance

Are these aimed
at Christians?

Once saved,
always saved?

What does it
mean to fall
away?

Is this neglect
or apostasy?

What loss is
threatened?



What about
Romans
8:31-39?

1 Peter: A Letter to Suffering Exiles



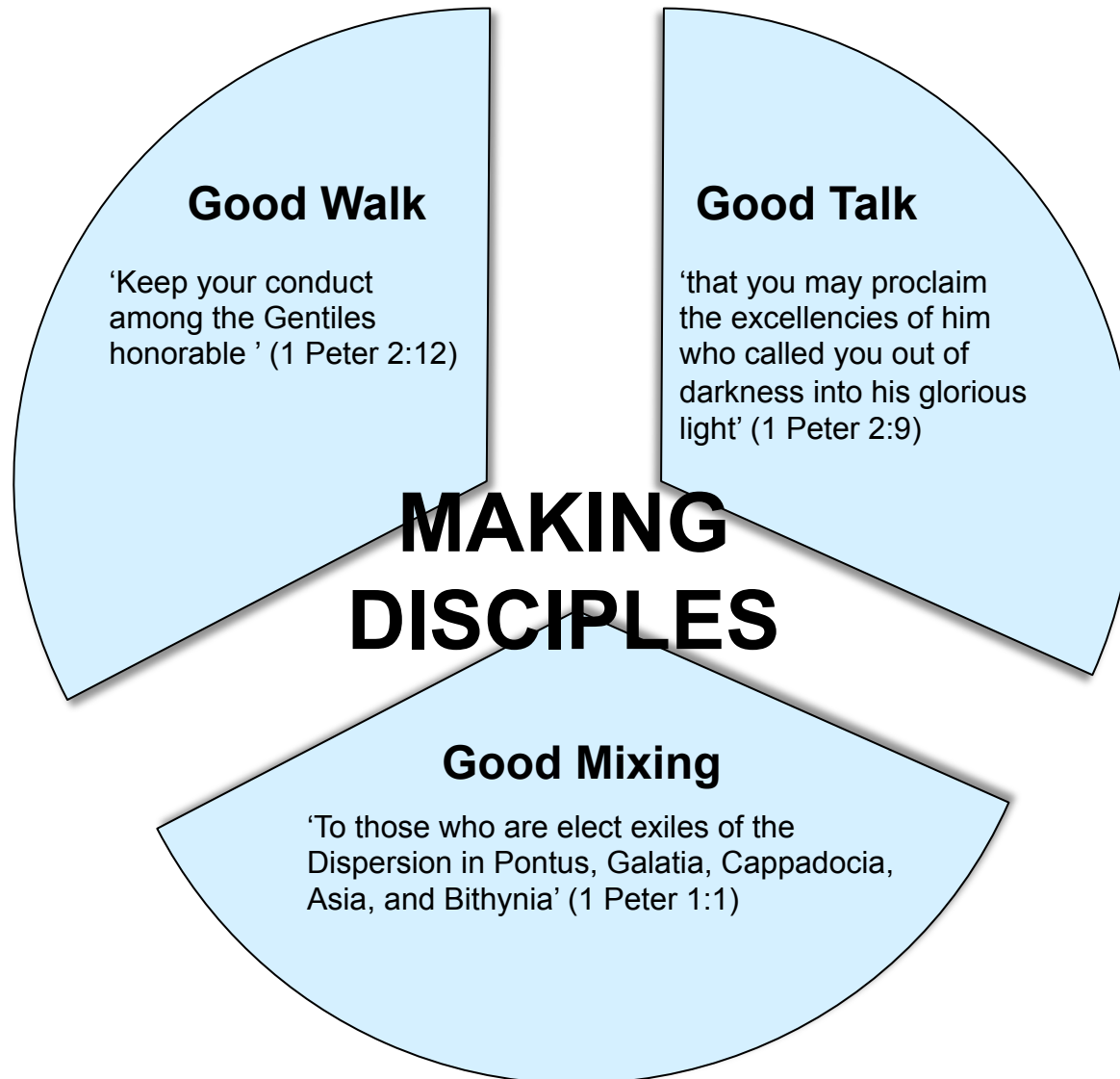
1 Peter: An Abridged Outline

- I. A greeting to the Christian Diaspora of Asia Minor (1:1-2)**
- II. The opening of the letter: reassurance for God's people (1:3-2:10)**
 - A. Doxology as the basis for the Christian life (1:3-12)
 - B. Be what you are (1:13-2:3)
 - C. The identity of God's people (2:4-10)
- III. As God's people, live godly lives (2:11-4:11)**
 - A. Commendable social behavior as God's people (2:11-3:7)
 - B. The inner qualities of righteous living (3:8-12)
 - C. Suffering unjustly for the name of Christ (3:13-4:11)
- IV. Consolation for the suffering flock (4:12-5:11)**
 - A. Two final thoughts about suffering for Christ (4:12-19)
 - B. Final exhortations to the community (5:1-11)
- V. The letter closing: final words and greetings (5:12-14)**

1 Peter: Some Major Themes

- 1 Peter was most likely written from Rome by the apostle Peter, probably in about 62-63 BC (or possibly later, depending on how reliable the reports of his martyrdom are) to churches in what is broadly modern-day Turkey
- The audience (probably both Jews and Gentiles) are described as a dispersed Israel (1:1)
- Ethics are central to this letter (living righteously, honoring political powers, godly family relations...) but always with mission in mind: 'Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation' (2:12)
- Probably the most striking theme of 1 Peter is suffering. In this letter, suffering for the right reasons is something Christians should welcome and rejoice in
 - 'Now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ' (1:6-7)
 - 'What credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps' (2:20-21)
 - 'Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed' (3:13-14)
 - 'Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God' (4:1-2)
- **DISCUSSION:** How should we teach on suffering in church? Do we have a robust theology of suffering? What *is* suffering, biblically – is it limited to persecution, or does it include physical sickness, mental illness, etc?

Mission: Evangelism in 1 Peter (with thanks to Phil Moore)



Gospel: Change of Lifestyle in 1 Peter 1-2

Passage	Description (or implied aspects) of the Old Life	Description of the New Life	Reason/Incentive for Behavioral Change
1:13-16			
1:17-19			
1:22-25			
2:1-3			

People: The Church and Biblical Theology

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Exodus 19:6

Deuteronomy 7:6

Malachi 3:17

Isaiah 19:25

Isaiah 43:21

Hosea 1:2-11

Church Under Fire

- I. The Story so far
- II. The Church and Suffering: Hebrews & 1 Peter
- III. The Church and False-teaching: 2 Peter, Jude & John's letters**
- IV. The Church and the Conquering King: Revelation

2 Peter and Jude: Outlines

2 Peter

1:1-2	Address and Salutation
1:3-11	Theme: A Summary of Peter's Message
1:12-15	Occasion: Peter's Testament
1:16-18	Reply to Objection 1: (a) Apostolic Eyewitness
1:19	Reply to Objection 1: (b) Value of OT Prophecy
1:20-21	Reply to Objection 2: Inspiration of OT Prophecy
2:1-3a	Peter's Prediction of False Teachers
2:3b-10a	Reply to Objection 3: The Certainty of Judgment
2:10b-22	Denunciation of the False Teachers
3:1-4	Peter's Prediction of Scoffers (Objection 4)
3:5-7	Reply to Objection 4: (a) Sovereignty of God's Word
3:8-10	Reply to Objection 4: (b) Forbearance of the Lord
3:11-16	Exhortation
3:17-18	Conclusion

Jude

1-2	Outline and Greeting
3-4	Occasion and Theme of the Letter
3	A. The Appeal
4	B. The Background to the Appeal
5-19	B. The Background to the Appeal: A Midrash on the Prophecies of the Doom of the Ungodly
5-7	(1) Three OT Types
8-10	<i>plus</i> interpretation
9	(1a) Michael and the Devil
11	(2) Three More OT Types
12-13	<i>plus</i> interpretation
14-15	(3) The Prophecy of Enoch
16	<i>plus</i> interpretation
17-18	(4) The Prophecy of the Apostles
19	<i>plus</i> interpretation
20-23	A. The Appeal
24-25	Closing Doxology

Source: Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1983)

2 Peter and Jude: Warning – Wolves!

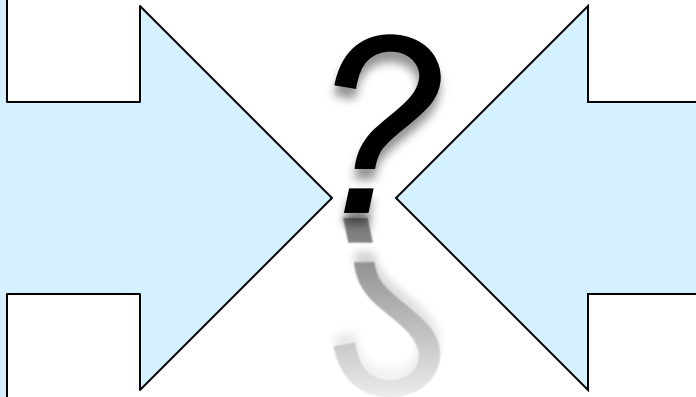
- Although Jude and 2 Peter address different specific situations, they contain a lot of similar material designed to warn God's people against false teachers, and to appeal to the saints to contend for the faith
 - These are not letters warning the saints against listening to particular podcasts – the false teachers themselves, and not just their teachings, had infiltrated/would infiltrate the churches (2 Peter 2:1; Jude 4)
- The exact message of the false teachers is not completely clear, but Jude and Peter warn that these people do and promote certain ideas and behaviour
 - The main problem is that they promoted sensuality (*aselgeia*): 'For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.' (2 Peter 2:18); 'who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ' (Jude 4)
 - They slandered angels: 'Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they slander [ESV: blaspheme] the glorious ones' (2 Peter 2:10); 'in like manner these people ... slander [ESV: blaspheme] the glorious ones' (Jude 8)
 - In 2 Peter, they (or possibly a separate group) scoffed at the idea of Jesus returning: 'They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation"' (2 Peter 3:4)
- Jude and 2 Peter predict that the false teachers will incur incredibly harsh judgment:
 - Both Jude and 2 Peter draw on Old Testament stories of judgment, as well as Jewish expansions (such as the interpretation of Genesis 6 in 1 Enoch) to show that God will judge wrongdoers, but also save his own people (cf. 2 Peter 2:3-10, 17; Jude 4-7, 14-15)

Gospel: The One who keeps you from stumbling

- **ARTWORK SCAN – ASK ONE OF THE ARTISTS FROM REV TO PUT TOGETHER AN ARTWORK FORM OF JUDE 24-25**

God: Patience and Judgment in 2 Peter

“And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment ... then *the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment*, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.” (2 Peter 2:3-10)



“But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, *not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*” (2 Peter 3:8-9)

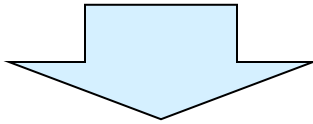
Does God want all people to repent, or does he keep some under guard to be punished?
Whom does he wish to reach repentance?

People: Making every effort to work out what HE has given us

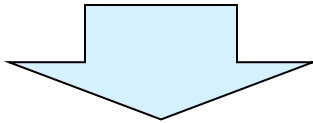
- 2 Peter 1:3-11 shows the importance of God's work and our work. It's not 'let go and let God', but neither is it a form of 'I did it my way'. Notice the underlined link:
 - His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:3-11)
- We need to make sure we understand how our work and God's work function together. Consider the following illustrations. Are any of them fully appropriate to talk of the Christian life? Where do they help? Where do they fall short?
 - Sitting in the passenger seat: the driver does all the work; no effort is required; you just have to sit there
 - Sitting in the driving seat with a co-pilot: you do the driving, but the co-pilot guides you
 - Being Usain Bolt: you train like mad, but you would not be able to win had you not been born with a certain physical build
- How would you teach a group of teenagers/children about how God's work and our effort go together?

Mission: Cosmic Eschatology in 2 Peter 3

Where is the promise of his coming?

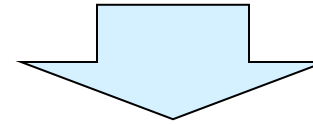


For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. (3:5-7)

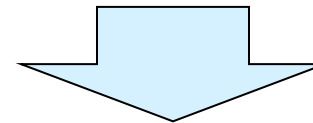


But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. (3:8-9)

What will the day of the Lord be like?



But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! (3:10-12)

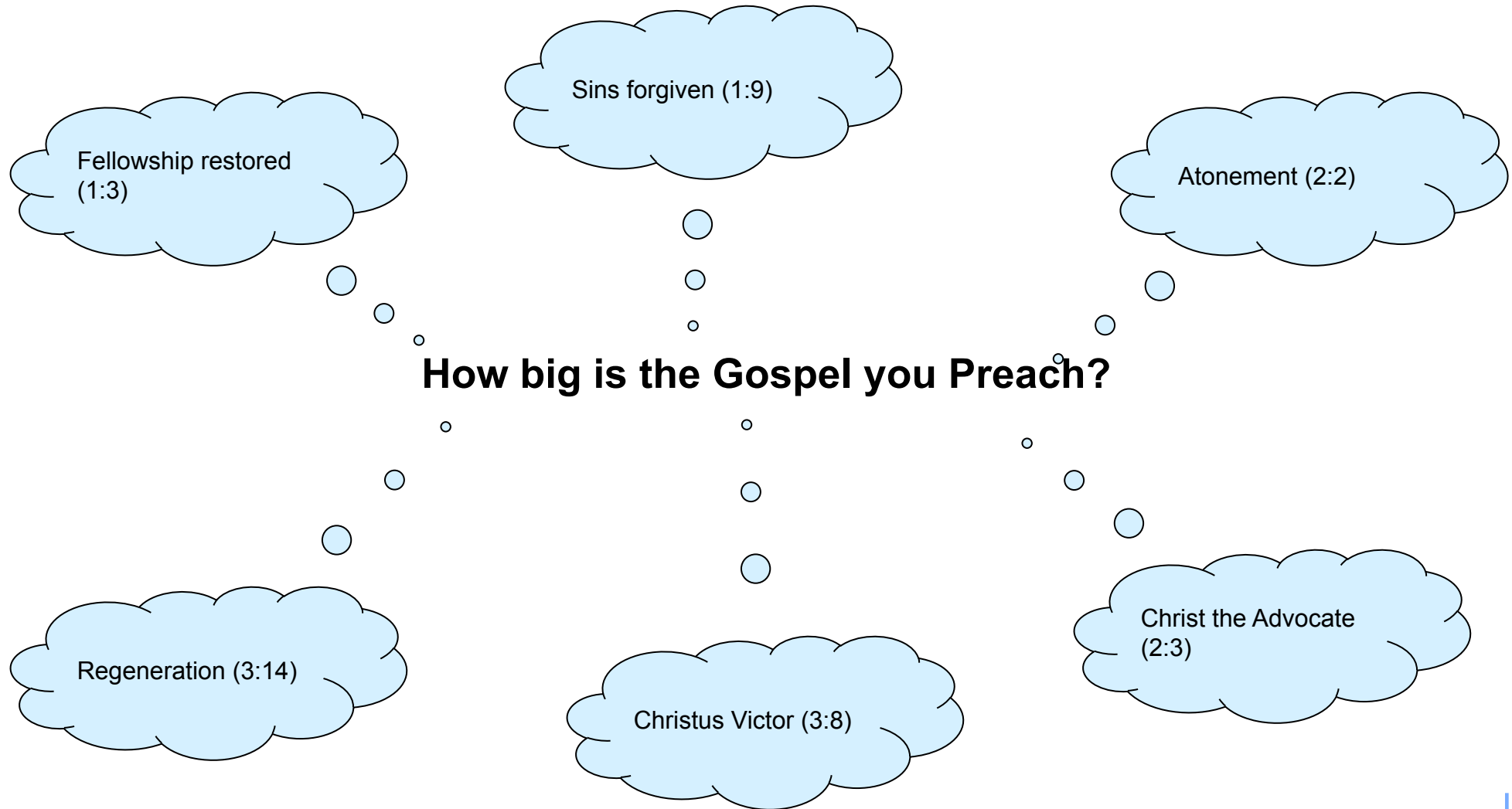


But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (3:13)

God: The Son in 1 John

- 1 John was one of the most significant New Testament writings in contributing to the development of a well-defined doctrine of the Trinity. It seems to have been written in order to counter the teachings of a particular group (or groups) of people who has left the Churches John oversaw and were spreading false teaching and denying certain attributes about Jesus.
- These false teachers are referred to as 'antichrists' (*antichristoi* – 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7) and 'deceivers' (*oi planōntes* – 2:26). Although John seems to hint at their unrighteous behaviour, this behaviour stems from a wrong belief about the nature of Jesus.
 - They denied that Jesus was the Christ (1 John 2:22); However, 'everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God' (1 John 5:1).
 - They denied that Jesus was the Son of God (1 John 2:23 – although Son of God can mean Christ, or Messiah, in John's writings the term expresses something more substantial); However, 'whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God (1 John 4:15).
 - They denied the complete humanity of Christ (1 John 4:1-2; 2 John 7). John, however, at the beginning of his letter (1:1-4), strongly emphasises both the divinity ('That which was from the beginning'; 'concerning the word of life'; 'the eternal life, which was with the Father') and the humanity of Christ ('which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands'; 'the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it').
- **DISCUSSION:** We don't deny either the humanity of Christ or his divinity on a theological level. However, in reality, we can highlight one at the expense of the other. What are the risks of highlighting Christ's humanity at the expense of his divinity? His divinity at the expense of his humanity?

Gospel: Pictures of Salvation in 1 John



People: The Mark of someone who is of God

- John's epistles very concretely delineate certain characteristics which mark out someone who has truly been born again/born of God. By implication, this helps us to spot a false teacher/false believer and especially to be on the lookout for the former:
 - They walk in the light (1 John 1:7)
 - They confess their sins rather than deny them (1 John 1:8-10)
 - They keep Jesus' commandments and walk like him (1 John 2:3-6; 3:24; 5:2)
 - They love other Christians (1 John 2:9-11; 3:10; 4:7-8, 11, 20-21)
 - They do not love the world (1 John 2:15-17)
 - They confess the son (1 John 2:23)
 - They hold fast to the Gospel they heard (1 John 2:24)
 - They do righteousness (1 John 2:29; 3:7, 10)
 - They do not sin (!) (1 John 3:6, 9; 5:18)
 - They should offer up their lives for their brothers (1 John 3:1)
 - They have been given the Spirit (1 John 3:24; 4:13)
 - They confess and believe in Jesus as the Christ/son of God (1 John 4:15; 5:1, 10)
 - They love God (1 John 5:1-2). 1/3 of all NT uses of *agapaō* (to love) and *agapē* (love) are in 1-3 John!
 - They confess Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh (2 John 7)
 - They remain in the teaching of Christ (2 John 9-11)

Church Under Fire

- I. The Story so far
- II. The Church and Suffering: Hebrews & 1 Peter
- III. The Church and False-teaching: 2 Peter, Jude & John's letters
- IV. The Church and the Conqueror: Revelation**

The Visions of Revelation in Perspective

Women, Dragons, Beasts and Saints: Satan's influence over earthly powers and persecution of the Church. The Saints Conquer by the Lamb's blood (chs 12-14)

Babylon the Great has fallen! The luring and enticing power of ungodly powers is undone and shown for what it is – a sham! (17:1-19:5)

King of kings and Lord of lords! The Lamb returns as conquering king to marry his bride and judge all of his enemies! (19:6-20:15)

All things New! 'Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away' (chs 21-22)

Worthy is the Lamb: Christ has conquered by his blood and secured the unfolding of history (ch 5)

Seals, Trumpets and Bowls: God controls history; Disaster is in his hands. History has a purpose and an end (chs 7-11; 15-16)



Behold! A Throne stood in heaven (ch. 4)

God: The Praises of Revelation

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty Who was and is and is to Come (4:8)

To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever! (5:13)

Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed. (15:3-4)

Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever (19:3)

Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created (4:11)

Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb! (7:10)

Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve! (16:5-6)

Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality and has avenged on her the blood of his servants. (19:1-2)

Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth (5:9-10)

Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen (7:12)

Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure (19:6-8)

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing! (5:12)

We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth (11:17-18)

Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great. (19:5)

Gospel: Heaven's New Song

- When understood, Revelation 5 is one of the most triumphant and soul-firing chapters in the New Testament. Taken with Revelation 4, it also forms the backbone of the whole of the book. It is heaven's response to the triumph of Jesus on the cross
 - John sees a sealed scroll in God's hand (5:1). The scroll represents the unfolding of history. Until it is opened, history has no direction or goal. Someone must open the scroll (5:2)
 - No-one, however, is found worthy to bring history to its climax and completion, hence John's loud crying (5:4)
 - John is told that he need not weep; the Lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered and it worthy to bring history to its climax (5:5)
 - In a dramatic twist, the conquering Lion turns out to be a slain lamb – utter victory and willing slaughter meet in the cross of Jesus (5:6-7)
 - Heaven erupts in rapturous praise (5:8-14)
- What is it that makes heaven sing a new song? What causes the very dwelling place of God to add a new chorus to their continual praise? Heaven has been singing, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty' for centuries (see Revelation 4:8 and Isaiah 6:3). But in Revelation 5, heaven starts singing a new song. Why? The apparent defeat and execution of a Jewish 'messianic pretender' in 30AD was, from heaven's perspective, so decisive, so world-changing, so triumphant, that the whole of heaven explodes into a new chorus:
 - "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth" (5:9-10)

Mission: The End of the Story

- The massive multiethnic multitude: 50/50 DVD?
- Pain and death removed: VIDEO of GARWIN DOBBINS' STORY (APOLOGIES FOR THE CHEESY VIOLINS)