

Bible 101

Overview of Epistles in the New Testament

Mantra for Bible study at Redeemer: Bible is a book of truth (about God), not a book of facts!

Paul's epistles

The fourteen books of the New Testament after the book of Acts are called *Letters of Paul* or *Pauline Epistles*. Except for *Hebrews*, the author claims to be Paul, but scholars now know that Paul didn't write all of them. The order of these letters in the Bible as shown below is based on descending length except for *Galatians* with the four letters to individuals at the end before Hebrews. As a group, the letters address controversies and other issues in the early Church.

Book	Likely date*	By Paul (who used secretaries)*	Attributed to Paul but not by him per scholars**	Not claimed to be by Paul & scholars now agree*
Romans	56/57 CE	✓		
1 st Corinthians	53/55 CE	✓		
2 nd Corinthians	55/56 CE	✓		
Galatians	50/55 CE	✓		
Ephesians	60/61 CE		✓	
Philippians	54/60 CE	✓		
Colossians	65/75 CE		✓	
1 st Thessalonians	43/50 CE	✓		
2 nd Thessalonians	75-90 CE^		✓	
1 st Timothy	90/100 CE		✓	
2 nd Timothy	90/100 CE		✓	
Titus	80/90 CE		✓	
Philemon	60/61 CE	✓		
Hebrews	70 CE			✓

* This information is from the *Lutheran Study Bible* (©2009) and from Pastor Kessinger's research.

** These letters are identified as pseudepigraphic works (i.e., falsely-attributed works not by the claimed author); in these cases, they are likely written by associates or followers of Paul in his name.

^ Some scholars favor an earlier date of 50 CE.

Usual format of Paul's letters: opening/greetings; thanksgiving; body; closing/greetings.

Other epistles in the New Testament

This group of the next seven books, before the ending book of Revelation, are called epistles but several are not in the form of letters. The order of these books as shown below is based on descending length. As a group, the books address controversies and other issues in the early Church.

Book	Likely date*	Author*
James	61/62 CE or 130-140 CE	Tradition associates it with James, brother of Jesus, who was leader of the Church in Jerusalem and died in 62 CE; most scholars say authorship is anonymous and date the letter in the 2 nd century CE
1 st Peter	End of 1 st century CE	Anonymous; by someone who wrote in name of Peter after his death
2 nd Peter	End of 1 st century CE	Anonymous; by someone who wrote in name of Peter after his death
1 st John	85-100 CE	Anonymous; tradition associates it with John the apostle
2 nd John	85-100 CE	Unnamed leader of an unnamed Christian community
3 rd John	85-100 CE	Unnamed leader of an unnamed Christian community
Jude	50-110 CE	Anonymous; tradition associates it with Jude, brother of James and Jesus

* This information is from the *Lutheran Study Bible* (©2009) and entries in Wikipedia.