

Hello. We will begin the 12th lecture on “An Introduction to the New Testament.” /Our lecture today will be an introduction to the New Testament epistles. /The New Testament is made up of a total of 27 books: 4 Gospels, 1 book of Acts, Revelation, and the 21 epistles.

/In terms of volume, the epistles make up about one-third of the New Testament. /The 21 epistles can be placed in various categories according to their author and personality. /Typically, however, we divide the epistles into two groups.

/First, the epistles written by Paul are called the “Pauline epistles.” /The remainder of the epistles are called the general epistles. /There are thirteen Pauline epistles, which are Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus.

/The Pauline epistles can be further divided into three categories, the first of which are the “prison epistles.” They are the 4 books of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

/Because 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are lessons to the church leaders Timothy and Titus about real pastoral matters in the church, they are called the “pastoral epistles.” /The remaining 6 books are called the “doctrinal epistles.”

/The “general epistles” are the 7 books of James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, and Jude. /We call them the general epistles because they do not specifically reveal to whom the letters are addressed. Rather, they are addressed to the general church community.

/2 John and 3 John are exceptions. /These books do tell us the people for whom they are written. But generally speaking, the general epistles are letters to the church.

/I’ve mentioned the 13 Pauline epistles and the 7 general epistles, which leaves us with one book. I have not yet mentioned Hebrews. Because the sender of Hebrews is anonymous, some scholars count the book as one of the “Pauline epistles” while some consider it a general epistle.

/The epistles of the New Testament follow a format. They follow the letter format of Ancient Greece and Rome. First, the sender’s name is written, then the recipient is mentioned, then there is a word of greeting, words of prayer and thanks, the body of the letter, and finally, closing remarks and a farewell.

/In ancient times, letters were short in length, on average consisting of around 200 words. People like Cicero did write long letters of 4,500 words, but the New Testament epistles are different in that they are on average longer than other ancient letters.

/For example, Romans is made up of 7,100 words, and 1 Corinthians is made up of 6,800 words. In this way, the epistles were significantly longer than regular letters.

/1. The background of the writing of the epistles. /An “epistle” is a letter. /The epistles of the New Testament were written by the early church apostles. They were written to churches or individuals who were in certain situations or in need of something.

/In other words, the epistles were not papers written by scholars sitting at their desks. /Because this is so, we have to understand the author and personality of each epistle if we want to properly read and understand the New Testament epistles. It is very important that we understand the background behind and purpose of the epistles.

/Because Acts offers very important historical information about the early church, we can learn about the historical background of the epistles through Acts. /However, it is not easy for us to reconstruct the historical background of each of the epistles.

/We cannot know the entirety of the background of the epistles by looking only at the book of Acts. When this happens, we should carefully study the content of the epistles to figure out their historical background. Also, what is its main theological message? What is the practical message? We need to find the answers to these questions.

/As I’ve said before, our lecture today is an introduction to the epistles. Let us take a look at the situation of the early church of the 1st century so that we can better understand the epistles.

/The early church of the 1st century was experiencing various conflicts and problems. /The details of the epistles were written to propose proper solutions to the challenges the church faced from inside and out. We must know the challenges from inside and out that the church encountered.

/2. The challenges the early church faced. /We can think of it in three ways. The first challenge the early church encountered was the conflicts caused by the Judaists.

/Outside the church, Judaists revolved around synagogues, and within the church, Christians with Judaist mentalities caused problems. /Galatians and Romans tell us about these conflicts.

/Their main argument is this. “If you want to receive salvation and be a Christian, you must be a Jew.” This was the gist of their argument. /According to their claim, believing in Christ is important, but circumcision and the Old Testament laws must be kept for one to be saved.

/If we look at Galatians 2 and Philippians 3:2, we see this conflict. /In Philippians, Paul refers to these Judaists as the “false circumcision party,” telling readers to look out for the dogs.

/In Galatians 2, Paul rebukes Peter for running away from eating with the Gentiles in fear of the criticism and threat of the Judaists. /The Apostle Paul wrote the epistles to warn against the attacks of the Judaists that took place inside and outside the church.

/Countering the argument of the Judaists, Paul teaches that the only way to salvation is to believe in Christ. /There was the need for the apostles to explain the correct gospel to the churches through the epistles.

/Second, the early church faced conflict and problems because of the 1st century pagan cultures. /The early church was being built in the midst of secular culture. The Greeks and Romans worshiped the gods of their mythology.

/On the other hand, some Greek philosophers, such as Platon, were skeptical about the Greek gods. /Among the philosophers, he asked the question “Can man know god?” and he insisted on agnosticism.

/From the 2nd and 3rd centuries before Christ, there was much religious confusion. There were ideas that said that god does not exist or god cannot be known. /Due to this religious confusion, more gods and religions were created.

/Eastern religion, Egyptian religion, Greek religion, and traditional Roman religions became mixed together. / “Mystical religions” and “mystery religions” led people astray. These mystical religions promised the individual’s salvation through secret rituals and mysterious entrance ceremonies. /Gnosticism and other cult ideologies were rampant.

/These people bathed in the blood of animals. They killed oxen and drank their blood. Such superstitious religions spread all across the Roman Empire. /Paul, who was a citizen of the Roman Empire, was well aware of the negative effects of these cult religions within the Roman Empire.

/For example, in Acts 14, people called Barnabas Zeus and Paul Hermes. /Other foreign religions easily compromised with other ideologies or religions. However, Paul did not mix the gospel of Christianity with the cult religions.

/Jesus Christ was everything to Paul. /For this reason, the pagans considered Christians to be stubborn and uncompromising. /That is why foreigners came to hate Christians.

/To combat this state of religious confusion, the church must not have lost its focus. /The epistles were written so that churches would not be shaken by secular, pagan cultures and religions.

/Next, we have the third challenge the church faced. /Up until now, we have looked at the external challenges and persecution, but the internal problems of the church were also serious. /The church was growing, and as it grew, it became responsible for doing more things.

/We can see this in churches today. /The church appointed positions in the church and formed an organization. They started ministries of worship, nurturing, and evangelism,

and they practiced sacred ceremonies and acts of chastening. The churches did a lot of work.

/As churches had more to do, they needed authoritative figures. This caused people to come forth from various places claiming to be true apostles. /False teachers emerged from within the church. /As the church was being built, various cults formed.

/Cults not only exist today, but they were active and wielded power in the past as well. /During that time, people used the gifts of the Holy Spirit in disorderly fashion, which brought about evil.

/They pretended to receive the Holy Spirit when they had in fact received a false spirit. This messed with the church's order and weakened the authority of the word. /Thus, the apostles had to clarify these matters concerning the idea of the church, the source of the church's authority, and the recipients of this authority.

/The epistles are ecclesiological books that taught the church forming in the 1st century about who head of the church is and about the goal of the church.

/More importantly, the epistles are soteriological books that teach us how the gospel of Christ applies to us believers of today and teach us the meaning of this gospel. /The epistles aren't simply God's word for the early churches of the 1st century, but they are God's letters to churches of all ages and generations.

/Now, for the remainder of our time, we will study **Galatians**, the first of the doctrinal epistles, which are part of the "Pauline epistles," to be written. /The doctrinal epistles are Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

/Paul considered writing letters to be an important part of his ministry. /For the most part, Paul wrote letters to churches because of some problem that had arisen in these churches. /If not for this reason, he wrote letters to prevent potential problems.

/Most of the problems here pertain to errors of doctrine. /Paul had personally visited and planted most of the churches to which he wrote. He knew much about these churches.

/If transportation systems had been developed as they are today, then Paul would have regularly visited these churches and taught them. /However, Paul always felt bad because he heard news about these churches but could not swiftly meet with them and talk to them.

/Paul organized and summarized the gospel and passed it on through a very powerful means. They are the Pauline epistles. /Throughout his missionary journeys, Paul continued to communicate with churches.

/Paul was a person of the church. /Truly, his interest was always for the church. /He lived with the church as his center. /The epistles that we have with us are proof of this.

/To Paul, the greatest, irreplaceable joy was to have the church go down the right path, to have the church be healthy and grow. /For this reason, Paul had the habit of checking on the places he evangelized.

/There were people who defiled the church and twisted the gospel. /Paul did not hesitate in calling people enemies of the cross and cursed people.

/It was because Paul could not stand the church being in disorder and the gospel being twisted. /Paul, by writing to the churches facing the challenges from in and out, has them stand firmly on faith.

/Now, I will talk about the doctrinal epistles one by one and give an introduction on them. /First, we will look at the Apostle Paul's first epistle, **Galatians**.

/The recipients of this letter are the churches of Galatia. /Sent by the church of Antioch, the first place the Apostle Paul and Barnabas went to evangelize was the region of Galatia. This region includes multiple cities.

/Paul first began to evangelize the Gentiles during his first missionary journey. However, the Jews strongly opposed and rejected him. /Despite this opposition, Paul travelled around Galatia and successfully preached the true gospel to conclude his first missionary journey.

/Not long after he left Galatia, Paul heard the news that the Judaists were shaking the churches in the region. /First of all, these false teachers attacked Paul's character and ministry.

/Consequently, people from the churches of Galatia started to seriously question Paul's apostleship, and to take things further, some people were against accepting the gospel preached by Paul.

/The false teachers of Galatia taught that in addition to believing in Christ, people must be circumcised, keep the feasts, and keep the law regarding food to be saved. /They said that people would be justified by doing these things.

/However, these claims stray from the Bible's teachings. They are cult teachings. /There is one thing we must learn here. That is the cults that infiltrated Galatia did not deny believing in Jesus.

/They added circumcision, in addition to believing in Jesus, as a condition for salvation. /This is a cult. /A cult believes in a different central doctrine.

/Initially, cults seem similar, but their end is different. /We must not tolerate these claims.

/These challenges add or subtract to Christ's gospel, and doing so is a serious mistake. If such things are left untouched, there will be obstacles for the church and missions in the future.

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/In Galatians, Paul writes about how people can be justified. /The law does not justify a person. /This is the core message of Galatians.

/Some people of the churches of Galatia adhered to antinomianism. /They taught that because Christians are saved, they could live however they wanted according to the flesh.

/In response to this, the Apostle Paul teaches that freedom in Christ isn't freedom to sin, and that we must offer our bodies to God as a living sacrifice. /Christians are free from sin, and we must be led by the Holy Spirit.

/The doctrine of the grace that we have received for free by faith does not make us lawless, self-indulging people, but it emphasizes that we must follow the Holy Spirit and bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

/Another important theme of Galatians is how a Christian should live a life that pleases God. /The first half of Galatians talks about the doctrine of justification by faith, and the second half talks about how someone who has received by faith salvation and freedom should live.

/For this reason, people refer to Galatians as the Magna Carta of Freedom. /The book reveals the true nature of freedom that is obtained through believing in Christ.

/Paul wrote Galatians in Antioch after he finished his first missionary journey and returned to the church of Antioch, the church that had sent him. /Not long after, the Jerusalem Council was held. Acts 15 talks about this. It seems as though Paul recorded Galatians right before the Jerusalem Council was held.

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/Paul was digging up the nature of the other gospel taught by the false teachers in the church of Galatia. Paul, by emphasizing once again the gospel of grace, brought the believers in Galatia to stand firmly in faith.

/Paul defends the gospel that says that faith in Christ is the only way to be justified. /He begins his letter with a warning and ends with a warning.

/Galatians, which provides the clear answer to the question of how people are justified before God, had an enormous impact on the history of the church. /For example, Luther's religious reformation was founded on Galatians and Romans.

/John Bunyan, author of The Pilgrim's Progress, confessed that his favorite book apart from the Bible is Luther's Commentary on Galatians.

/Galatians is considered to be the cornerstone of the religious reformation. /Galatians is the gospel of the cross of Jesus Christ.

/This concludes the 12th lecture on "An Introduction to the New Testament." /Thank you.