**The General Epistles**

Adapted from *Jeremy Chew, East Asia School of Theology, Singapore*

# The Time Period (Occasion)

## Addressed Christians under stress

## 1st generation leadership passing away

## Temple gone – change in Jewish system

## Increasing antagonism between Jewish and Gentile believers (Jewish-Roman War AD 66-73)

## Gentile believers become target for political blame (Jewish Christians suspected they had sided with their enemies)

## Great texts for preaching to encourage people

# A Time of Change

## **Leadership changes**

### Original leaders were passing away.

### James beheaded, James (brother of Jesus), Peter & Paul killed, John exiled

## **Change from oral to written tradition**

### Teachings from Jesus & apostles were becoming published

### Paul’s letters were largely finished

## **Expectation of Christ's return**

### Some expected Jesus to return at time of Jerusalem's destruction, but nothing happened

### People started to doubt & reinterpret their traditions

## **Reorientation of Jewish system**

### Temple gone, so Jews worshipped only in synagogues

### Christians eventually forced out of synagogues

## **Impact of Changes**

### Churches became more Gentile in membership

#### Separation between Jews & Gentiles grew

#### Christians were no longer perceived as a sect of Judaism, which was protected, hence became a political target of Rome

#### Hence increase in persecution

### **Churches became more Gentile in character**

#### Hebrew thinking was slowly replaced by Greek thinking.

#### By the end of the first century the minority Gentiles had become the vast majority.

## **Faith—the issue of the day!**

### James: Faith that works

### 1 Peter: Faith in suffering

### 2 Peter: Knowing the faith

### Hebrews: Faith that is superior

### 1-3 John: Practicing the faith

### Jude: Fighting for the faith

### Revelation: Faith in God's sovereignty & rule

**NT Epistle Contrasts**Overview by Dr. Rick Griffith

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pauline** | | | **General** |
| *Named after* | | Recipients | Author (except Hebrews) | |
| *Authors* | | 1 (Paul) | 5 (anonymous Hebrews, James, Peter, John, Jude) | |
| *Date* | | Earlier | Later (except James) | |
| *Chronology* | | Missionary journeys & Acts (except Pastorals) | After missionary journeys & Acts (except James) | |
| *Number* | | 13 | 9 | |
| *Number of Letters in Theological Categories*  *(cf. p. 24)* | | Soteriology (2)  Ecclesiology (5)  Eschatology (2)  Christology (4) | Soteriology (2)  Ecclesiology (0)  Eschatology (4)  Christology (1)  Missiology (2) | |