

Contents

1: The Beginning of the Story 10

From Jesus of Nazareth to early
Christianity 11

A new faith 11

Opposition 16

Changing the world 16

The Greek heritage 17

Hellenism 17

Philosophy 19

Religion 21

Palestine and its people 31

Hellenism and Judaism 32

Jews and Romans 32

Herod the Great 33

The three Herods 33

Religious loyalties 34

The Sadducees 36

The Pharisees 36

The Zealots 38

The Essenes 38

2: Jesus' Birth and Early Years 46

Jesus grows up 50

Nazareth 52

Jesus and his family 52

John the Baptist 58

Jesus is baptized 59

Temptations and priorities 61

Money 61

Fame 61

Power 62

3: Jesus and His Message 66

The kingdom of God 66

A new way of being 70

Who did Jesus think he was? 76

The Son of Man 76

The Messiah 79

The Son of God 82

The servant 84

4: Stories and Signs 86

Jesus the teacher 86

Parables and their meaning 88

Parable or allegory? 88

The point of the parables 90

The parables and their hearers 92

The parables and their message 95

The kingdom and its ruler 95

The kingdom and its people 97

The kingdom and the community 98

The kingdom and the future 99

Signs of the kingdom 101

The message of the miracles 103

The arrival of the kingdom 103

The scope of the kingdom 104

The challenge of the kingdom 105

5: How to Live like Jesus 109

Conflicts with the tradition 109

Jesus as a teacher of wisdom 116

God at the centre 118

Human goodness takes its character
 from God 118
 Christian goodness and the community 120
 Behaviour and discipleship 120
 Freedom to be made new 121

6: Crucifixion 124

Opposition and conflict 125
 Jesus on trial 126
 Understanding the death of Jesus 129
 Jesus' death as a battle 130
 Jesus' death as an example 131
 Jesus' death as a sacrifice 132
 Jesus' death as a ransom 133
 Jesus in the place of others 135

7: Resurrection 147

Evidence from the New Testament 148
 The belief of the early church 148
 The evidence of Paul 149
 The gospel traditions 150
 The experience of the disciples 150
 Facts and faith 151
 The "resurrection fact" was a
 subjective experience 154
 The "resurrection fact" was a
 theological creation 154
 The "resurrection fact" was a later belief 156
 The meaning of it all 157
 The resurrection and Jesus' identity 157
 The resurrection and new life 159
 The resurrection and future hope 159

8: Understanding the Gospels 161

What is a gospel? 161
 The gospels as biography 163
 Gospel writers on the gospels 166
 Gathering the stories 168
 The Hebrew Scriptures 168
 Words of Jesus 169
 Putting the gospels together 171
 Wording 172
 Order 173
 Contents 173

Style 173
 Ideas and theology 174
 New light on old problems 177
 Did Q really exist? 177
 Whom were the gospels for? 179

9: Four Portraits of Jesus 187

Mark 187
 Evidence 187
 Author 188
 Readers 188
 Date 189
 Purpose 189
 Style 190
 Ending 191
 Luke 191
 Date 192
 Purpose 192
 Matthew 194
 Structure 194
 Purpose 196
 Author 197
 Date 198
 John 199
 Structure 200
 Character 200
 Origins 203
 Purpose 204
 Author and date 205

10: Can We Trust the Gospels? 208

Oral culture and literary culture 209
 Presuppositions 211
 Intellectual imperialism 212
 History and culture 214
 Inscriptions and artifacts 214
 Language 215
 Distinctiveness 215

11: Engaging with the Wider World 224

Back to Jesus 224
 Keeping the Law 225
 Religion and race 227

The church is born 228
 The church grows 233
 Tensions and conflicts 234
 Moving beyond Jerusalem 239
 Into Judea and Samaria 240
 Widening horizons 240

12: Paul: From Persecutor to Apostle 252

Paul's early life 252
 Significant influences in Paul's life 256
 Judaism 256
 Philosophy 258
 Mystery religions 259
 The emperor 262
 Paul and the earliest church 262
 Christians and the Old Testament 263
 The church and Israel 264
 To the Jews first 266
 Jews and Gentiles 266
 Paul and Jerusalem 266
 Paul and the teaching of Jesus 267
 Blasphemy and persecution 268
 The Damascus road 269
 Paul and the Jerusalem Christians 272
 Paul and the Gentiles 273

13: Travels and Letters 278

From Antioch to Cyprus 278
 The first Gentile churches 279
 Judaizers 279
 Paul the letter writer 281
 Paul writes to the Galatian churches 282
 Where did Paul get his authority? 283
 Christians and the Old Testament 284
 Freedom and legalism 285
 The Apostolic Council 287
 Back to Galatia 288
 Philippi 291

Converts 291
 Imprisonment 292
 Athens 292
 Corinth 295
 More letters 296

14: Paul and His Churches 303

Ephesus 304
 The impact of the gospel 305
 Prison again? 305
 Advising the churches 305
 Paul and the church at Corinth 305
 Bad news from Corinth 306
 Paul writes 1 Corinthians 306
 Paul visits Corinth 306
 Another letter 306
 Good news from Corinth 306
 Paul writes 2 Corinthians 306
 1 Corinthians 307
 Life in Christ 307
 Life in the world 309
 Life in the church 312
 More arguments and letters 314
 Facing up to problems 316
 What is an apostle? 316
 Looking to the future 318
 Authority and charisma 318
 Looking toward Rome 319
 Romans 320

15: The End of the Journey 329

The collection for Jerusalem 329
 Under arrest 331
 Destination Rome 332
 Letters from prison 334
 The church at Colossae 334
 The church at Ephesus 338
 The church at Philippi 343
 Timothy and Titus 344
 False teachers 344
 True belief 348
 Christian behaviour 348
 Christian leadership 348

16: What Does it Mean to Be a Christian? 349

- From letters to theology 349
- Back to the Damascus road 351
- Who is Jesus? 352
- What is the gospel? 352
- A social gospel 353
- What about the Law? 354
- Living the Christian life 355
- Explaining the faith 355
- The Hebrew Scriptures 356
- The world of experience 356
- What is the church? 361
- The body of Christ 364
- Life in the body 366
- All members are indispensable 366
- All members are different 368
- All members are equal 368
- All members are responsible 368
- Leadership in the body 369
- The head of the body 369
- Led by the Spirit 370
- Partners in ministry 370

17: The Church and its Jewish Origins 375

- James on Christian morality 376
- A Christian book? 377
- James and Jesus 378
- Hebrews on Jewish ritual 383
- 1 Peter on Christians and the covenant 392
- The believer's status 397
- Christian development 397
- Christian behaviour 398
- Serving Christ 399
- The book of Revelation on Christian hope 404
- The book and its message 406
- Making sense of the message 407

18: Heresy, Orthodoxy, and Organization 411

- Letters to seven churches 412

- 1 John 416
- "False prophets" 416
- Docetism 416
- The letter 417
- Jude and 2 Peter 421
- The Spirit and the letter 424
- The institutional church 425
- The changing church 427
- Church growth 428
- Heresy and Orthodoxy 430
- Frustrated hope 432

19: Reading and Understanding the New Testament 437

- Beginning where we are 437
- Starting points 438
- Influences 440
- The text's own context 443
- The sociological context 443
- Worldview 443
- Personal perceptions 444
- Discovering the message 445
- Other Resources on the New Testament

Special Articles

Chapter 1

- Traditional Greek religion 23
- Traditional deities of Greece and Rome 25
- Jews and Judaism in the Roman empire 29
- Popular spirituality 40

Chapter 2

- When was Jesus born? 48
- The stories of Jesus' birth 55
- John the Baptist and Qumrân 64

Chapter 3

- "Eschatology" and "the kingdom" 72
- The "kingdom of God" and the "kingdom of heaven" 75
- The meaning of "Son of Man" 77

Chapter 4

- Why did Jesus teach in parables? 94

Did Jesus intend to found a church? 100
 Miracle stories in context 106

Chapter 5

Jesus meeting people 114
 Did Jesus abolish the Old Testament Law?
 123

Chapter 6

Palestinian politics and justice under
 the Romans 138
 Who condemned Jesus? 140
 Pontius Pilate 141
 The Last Supper 142

Chapter 7

The resurrection stories 152
 The ascension 158

Chapter 8

Two sources or four? 175
 Form criticism 182

Chapter 9

Redaction criticism 206

Chapter 10

The quest for the historical Jesus 217
 Identifying the authentic words of Jesus 220
 Sayings of Jesus outside the New Testament
 223

Chapter 11

The Day of Pentecost 232
 Stephen's speech 235
 Stephen's death 237
 The church in Galilee 243
 The Acts of the Apostles 245
 The missing apostles 251

Chapter 12

The different accounts of Paul's conversion
 272
 Who were the prophets? 275
 What happened after Paul's conversion? 276

Chapter 13

Who were the Galatians? 288
 1 Thessalonians 297
 2 Thessalonians 299

Did Paul write 2 Thessalonians? 300
 Paul's strategy for evangelism 302

Chapter 14

Paul and his Jewish roots 324

Chapter 15

When did Paul die? 333
 Colossians 336
 Philemon 337
 Ephesians 339
 Did Paul write Ephesians? 340
 Philippians 342
 When was Paul imprisoned? 345
 Did Paul write the Pastorals? 346

Chapter 16

Paul's view of death 362
 City life in the Roman empire 371
 Was Paul really inclusive? 372

Chapter 17

The letter of James 379
 "Faith" and "works" in Paul and James 382
 Hebrews in context 385
 Hebrews and the Old Testament 390
 Who wrote 1 Peter? 394
 Liturgical themes in 1 Peter 400
 Peter and the church in Rome 402
 The author and date of Revelation 410

Chapter 18

The Johannine epistles 419
 Jude and 2 Peter: authors and dates 422
 The "communism" of the early
 Jerusalem church 434
 Putting the New Testament together 435

Chapter 19

The historical-critical method 446
 The text of the New Testament 449
 Glossary 454
 Other Resources on the New Testament
 462

Index 466