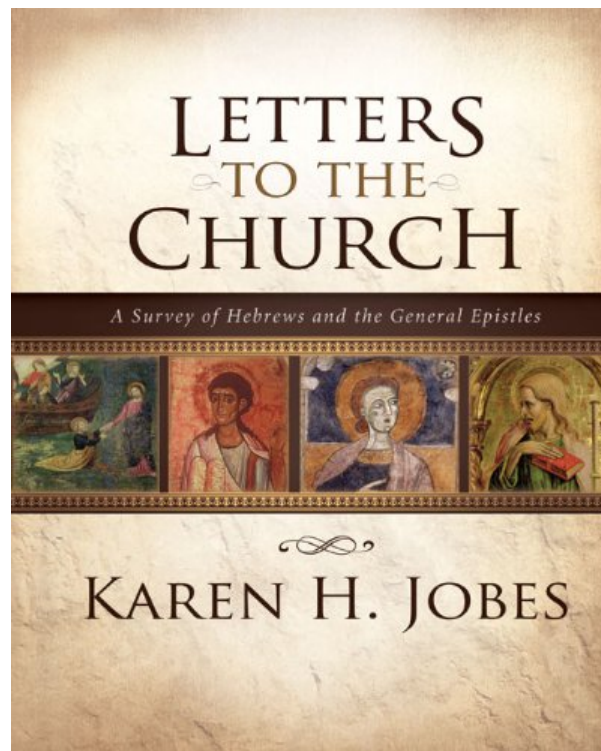
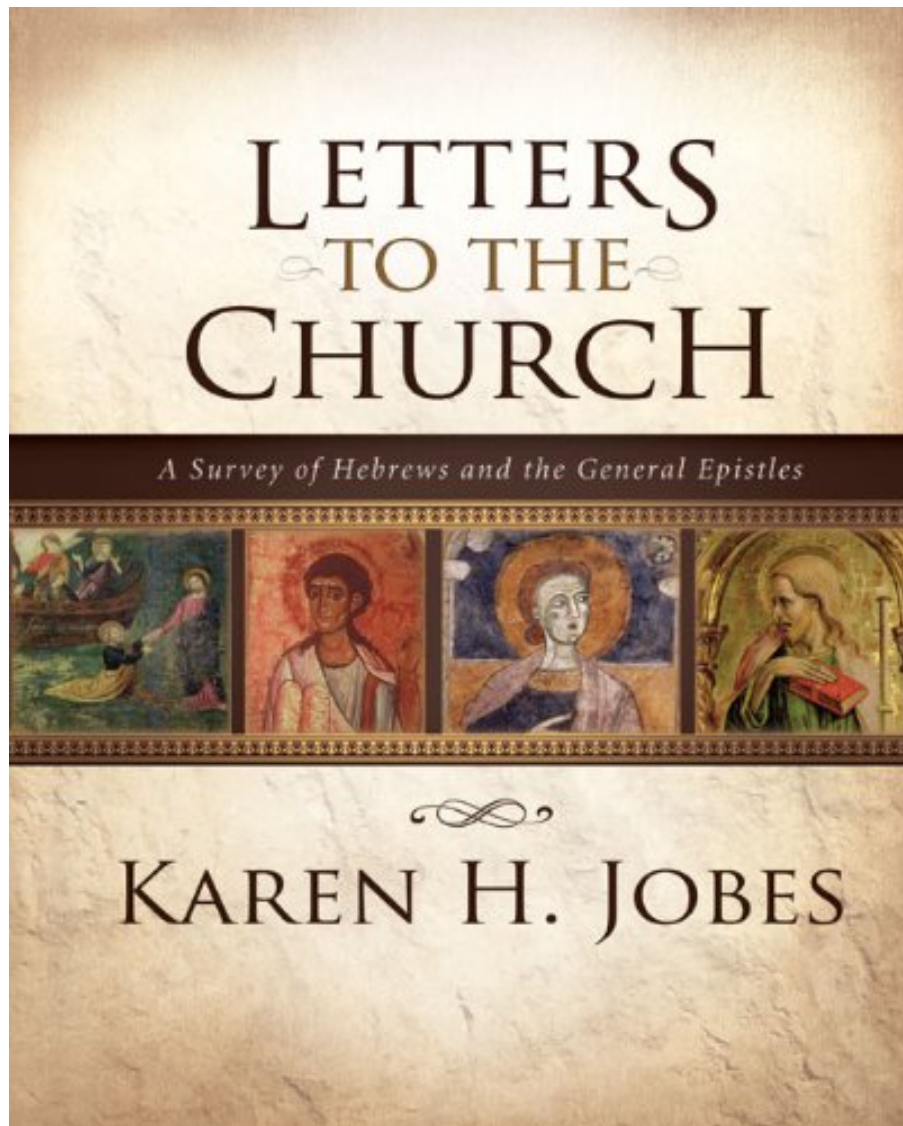


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HEBREWS AND THE GENERAL EPISTLES
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About the Author

Karen H. Jobes (PhD, Westminster Theological Seminary) is the Gerald F. Hawthorne Professor of New Testament Greek and Exegesis at Wheaton College and Graduate school in Wheaton, Illinois. The author of several works, she is also involved in Bible translation. She and her husband, Forrest, are members of Immanuel Presbyterian Church, an EPC church in Warrenville, Illinois.

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Respected New Testament scholar Karen Jobes explores the cultural and theological background of Hebrews and the general epistles (James through Jude) in this rich commentary. Writing from an evangelical perspective, Jobes addresses issues of historical relevance as well as how these ancient books connect with Christian faith and practice today. Letters to the Church includes: -Historical background for each book focusing on authorship, genre, date, and content -An exploration of the major themes in each book and detailed commentary on key passages -Boxes with chapter goals, outlines, challenges, and significant verses -Sidebars addressing difficult passages or ideas -Maps, photographs, charts, and definitions -Questions for discussion, reflection, and testing -A comparison of the teachings about Christ in each of the letters Pastors, professors, students, and laypeople interested in deeper biblical study will find this an invaluable resource that offers well-researched commentary in an accessible, spiritually meaningful form.

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About the Author

Karen H. Jobes (PhD, Westminster Theological Seminary) is the Gerald F. Hawthorne Professor of New Testament Greek and Exegesis at Wheaton College and Graduate school in Wheaton, Illinois. The author of several works, she is also involved in Bible translation. She and her husband, Forrest, are members of Immanuel Presbyterian Church, an EPC church in Warrenville, Illinois.

Most helpful customer reviews

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

An Excellent Textbook on the General Epistles

By Brian C. Small

I must say I was pleasantly surprised when I first opened the package containing this book. This book is no flimsy paperback. The book is a large, attractive, solidly made hardcover with thick, glossy pages. So, it was with great anticipation that I began to explore the book.

The author, Karen Jobes, is the Gerald F. Hawthorne Professor of New Testament Greek and Exegesis at Wheaton College.

To begin, let me lay out the general contents of the book: The book consists of an introduction and fourteen chapters divided into four parts:

Part 1: Hebrews: The Book of Better Things

Part 2: Letters from Jesus' Brothers

Part 3: Letters from Peter

Part 4: Letters from John

The end-matter includes a glossary and indices on Scripture, Extrabiblical Ancient Texts, Authors, and Subjects.

For each one of the general epistles, Jobes basically follows the same format. She addresses introductory issues (authorship, date, genre, recipients, text, canonicity, and outline) and the theological message of each book. For some of the larger books--Hebrews, James, 1 Peter--she provides additional chapters dealing with theological (especially Christology) and ethical themes in the books.

Likewise, each chapter has virtually the same format. The title page for each chapter includes "goals for this chapter." The beginning of each chapter has a section on why the chapter or canonical book is important for the reader, followed by a text-box with key verses, followed by an outline of the chapter. Each chapter ends with key terms, questions for review or discussion, and a bibliography for suggested further reading. Each chapter is arranged topically. This, I think, is preferable than a simple sequential description of the contents of each canonical book--one can get that by simply reading the books! Each chapter is sprinkled copiously with pictures, charts, and text-boxes.

For the purposes of this review, I will give more detailed attention to Hebrews, but I will give some attention to the other general epistles. In the introductory chapter she explores the question of pseudonymity. She does not seem to come to any resolution to the question in the chapter, but seems to give the benefit of the doubt in favor of traditional authorship of the biblical books (6-12).

Chapter 1 introduces Hebrews and deals with the usual introductory topics. As for the addressees, Jobes does not settle for a Jewish or Gentile audience or a specific occasion (26-29). Jobes considers several locations for the destination of Hebrews (Jerusalem, Corinth, Asia Minor, Alexandria), but settles for Rome at the most probable one (29-32). She argues that Hebrews was most likely written between 60 and 70 AD (32-36). As for authorship, she rejects Paul as the author. She explores several other candidates without ultimately deciding for one (36-42). She considers Hebrews to be a sermon sent to a distant congregation (44). She gives an overview of the theology of Hebrews (Christology, God, Holy Spirit, New Covenant, Heaven, Dualism, Faith, Angelology). Of particular interest is that she does not regard the dualism of Hebrews as either Platonic or moral. The dualism is primarily temporal or eschatological in nature (47). She concludes the chapter with a brief discussion of the text and canonicity of Hebrews, and an outline of the book (50-53).

Chapter 2 deals with the concept of divine revelation and the use of the Old Testament (OT) in Hebrews. In the exordium the author of Hebrews contrasts two ages (past/last days), two audiences (ancestors/"us"), and two modes of revelation (prophets/Son), yet there is also a continuity of revelation between the two ages; God reveals himself to humanity (59-64). Jobes then briefly wrestles with modern challenges to the possibility of divine revelation (64-66). Jobes then discusses the use of the OT in Hebrews. Jobes notes that Hebrews made use of a version of the Septuagint (LXX) and that the author's arguments are sometimes based on the Greek text, rather than the Hebrew text (67-68). She also notes that the OT quotations are attributed to the persons of the Trinity, which clearly points to the fact that the author believed in the divine inspiration of the OT (68-72). While the OT is God's word, the author relativizes it with respect to the gospel of Christ. She notes that the OT's "illocutionary force" has changed, that is, its purpose within the context of God's progressive revelation has changed (72-73). She concludes the chapter by noting the curious fact that

although the author states that God's final revelation is in Jesus, the author never quotes any of Jesus' teachings. The reason for this apparent omission is that Jesus himself is God's final revelation: "the identity of Jesus as the divine Son of God is what makes him the perfect and final revelation of God" (75).

Chapter 3 deals with the Christology of Hebrews which centers around two foci: Jesus as Son of God and High Priest. Jobes' presentation of Hebrews' Christology is rather straightforward. The exordium reveals both the nature of the Son and the Son's deeds (83-89). The title "Son of God" in ancient times had royal connotations, as well as Messianic connotations in Jewish literature (89-93). She remarks, "the title 'Son of God,' as applied to Jesus, merges his messianic role as the human king of God's kingdom with his preexistent nature as a member of the Trinity" (93). As Son, Jesus is superior to the angels and to Moses (93-94). Jesus' incarnation was necessary for his priesthood; his human experiences of temptation and suffering, while being sinless, perfected him for his role (96-97). As High Priest of a new covenant, Jesus also was the ultimate sacrifice which made all other sacrifices obsolete (98-100). Since Jesus was not from the tribe of Levi, the author of Hebrews had to demonstrate that Jesus belonged to a superior order, the Melchizedek priesthood (100-106). While some scholars believe that the author viewed Melchizedek as a supernatural angelic being, Jobes seems to reject this notion (105-106). The two roles of Sonship and High Priesthood come together at Jesus' ascension when he receives his coronation after making purification for sins (108-111).

Chapter 4 covers the topic of soteriology in Hebrews. Jobes says that Hebrews' soteriology is a response to God's revelation in Christ (118). The basic need for humanity is purification from sin. The life and death of Jesus inaugurated the new covenant, because the people of God demonstrated their inability to keep the old covenant (118-119). Jesus' death was the full and final substitution that replaces the OT sacrifices and gives humanity the chance to escape the judgment of death, which is the inevitable consequence of their sin (119-120). Hebrews conceives salvation not only as a past event but a future one as well (120). Jesus becomes the source of eternal salvation through his sacrificial death, but this salvation is available only to those who continue to persevere in their faith. Perfection is an important theme in Hebrews. Jesus' suffering perfected him as a human being in that it completed his role as Messiah (124-125). Christ perfects human beings by bringing their redemption to completion. It is an eschatological perfection and not a moral perfection; nevertheless, believers are still called to pursue holiness (125-126). God's rest still remain for people to enter, so Hebrews warns its readers to avoid the example of the wilderness generation which failed to enter God's rest because of unbelief (127-128). Hebrews warns about the dangers of apostasy from the faith. Jobes presents both the Arminian and Calvinist positions on the warning passages of Hebrews, but she does settle the issue, leaving it for the reader to decide (135-140).

Three chapters are devoted to the Epistle of James. Chapter 5 deals with introductory issues and the major themes of James. Jobes believes that the most plausible scenario is that James, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote this "diaspora letter" sometime before 62 AD. Chapter 6 explores the Christology of James through both its explicit references to Jesus and its implicit Christology. Chapter 7 examines the issues of the epistle's relationship to Jesus' teachings and the Jewish wisdom tradition. It also addresses ethical issues such as godly speech, wealth and poverty, and the epistle's relationship to Paul's teaching on faith and works. Chapter 8 deals with introductory issues and the theology (God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Christian Life) of the Epistle of Jude. Jobes leaves open the possibility that the author was the brother of James and half-brother of Jesus. She also explores Jude's use of the OT, the Pseudepigrapha, and its relationship to 2 Peter.

Three chapters are dedicated to 1 Peter. Chapter 9 deals with introductory issues and the purpose and message of 1 Peter. Jobes argues for the plausibility of Petrine authorship countering the common objections to Peter's authorship. Chapter 10 examines the Christology of 1 Peter. At the heart of Peter's Christology is the identification of Jesus with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. Jobes explores the meaning of the difficult passage of 3:18-22, as well as other christological images in 1 Peter such as sacrificial lamb and living stone.

Chapter 11 deals with ethical issues in the letter. Christians receive a new identity in light of God's saving acts in Jesus Christ. Christians should conduct themselves honorably before a pagan society and to imitate the example of Christ. Chapter 12 deals with introductory issues and the theological message (God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Eschatology) of 2 Peter. Jobes wrestles with the question of pseudonymous authorship of 2 Peter; she raises objections to theories of pseudonymous authorship, but ultimately leaves it an open question.

Chapter 13 addresses introductory issues of 1 John. Jobes seems to be favorable towards traditional Johannine authorship. The chapter also covers some of the major themes of 1 John, such as truth, dualism, Christology, and hamartiology. Finally, chapter 14 treats both 2 & 3 John.

The book is clearly designed as a textbook for a college class on the General Epistles. Jobes writes in a very readable style without dumbing it down. She deals with critical issues in an understandable way that should not be too overwhelming for the student. She provides many aids throughout the book that will help the student get at the important points of each chapter and the bibliographies at the end of each chapter direct the more inquisitive students to further avenues for research. As one would expect from a Zondervan textbook written by a Wheaton professor, the theological perspective is very conservative. Jobes seems to take many of the biblical stories at face value; hence a professor who is more skeptical of the historicity of the biblical stories may find her approach insufficient. But for the professor who is concerned about such things, the book is "faith-friendly"; while it explores critical issues, it does so in a non-threatening way for students who may have come out of conservative church backgrounds. At 14 chapters long, it is the ideal length for a semester-long class. A professor can easily assign a chapter a week for in-class discussions or simply as supplemental material. I find this to be a very excellent textbook in many ways.

9 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

Survey of the General Epistles

By Jacob Sweeney

It seems to me that scholarship on Paul and his letters dominate New Testament study. In terms of quantity of books produced, Paul is the number one contributor to the New Testament. Yet, it seems we forget that the Spirit inspired James, John, Jude and the author of Hebrews as much as he inspired Paul. It's essential for believers to study well those letters categorized as the "general "epistles".

Zondervan has wisely began publishing survey books which focus on particular books of the Bible. Rather than one volume survey works, authors are freed up to focus on those areas in which they excel. Karen Jobes (Gerald F. Hawthorne Professor of New Testament Greek and Exegesis at Wheaton College) has contributed an excellent survey of these massively important books.

In this book she survey's Hebrews, James, Jude and 1, 2 and 3 John. She breaks the book into parts based upon the books respective authors: Hebrews; James and Jude; 1, 2, 3 John. Within each part she focuses on major themes and each book's biblical and theological contributions. Each book of the Bible is a vast treasure trove of riches which need patient and faithful exploration. Jobes' book is a welcome resource to aid believer's and students in their study.

The old adage warns of judging a book by its cover. That is not to say that the cover doesn't matter. In a culture that places increasing value upon branding, logos and graphic design, it is appropriate to put thought into a book's cover and design. Saints of old would adorn their copies of Scripture with beautiful art. It added to the beauty and wonder of scripture. The Celtic Lindisfarne Gospels are a clear picture. Zondervan, in my opinion, is following in that ancient and sacred practice. This book is not Scripture. But it does expound the Scriptures. It is good and right to make the Scriptures - and those books which aid in their study - beautiful.

The beauty of the cover, the pages and the pictures within is matched by the excellent prose. Jobes does a wonderful job exploring and explaining the Scriptures. The outlines and breakdown of each book are illuminating and manageable. This is a book intended for learners and the uninitiated. You don't have to earn a PhD to understand.

This book was refreshing to read. It is simple, understandable and enjoyable to look at. It is not intimidating, technical or difficult. Jobes models true, Christian scholarship: confronting falsehood to expose its error and making the truth of God's word apparent to God's people. This is a must have book!

NOTE: In accordance with the regulations of the Federal Trade Commission I would like to state that I received a complimentary copy of the aforementioned text for the purposes of review. I was not required to furnish a positive review.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

A Survey of the Catholic Epistles

By Brendan Knox

Most New Testament Survey books cover the entirety of the New Testament. Zondervan is currently releasing a series of survey textbooks that devote a whole book to specific portions of the Bible such as the Prophets, the Pauline Epistles, the Gospels, and so on. The most recent release is Karen Jobes' survey of the "catholic" or "general" epistles. Focusing in on the general epistles in one book is a very helpful way to study the material in a more in-depth manner rather than using a standard survey textbook like Gundry. What we have with Jobes' book is a 500 page survey of these epistles. This allows Jobes to go into a good bit of depth into each of these epistles.

Jobes' survey covers a variety of issues concerning these books. The standard issues of composition, text, background, and audience are of course all considered. But Jobes also goes beyond that by discussing theological issues that arise in the reading of these ancient and inspired texts. In particular her survey of Hebrews is theologically rich and contains many helpful discussions. She also deals with some of those pesky perennial questions that arise in the study of these books such as the relationship between Jude and 2 Peter and the theology of James as it relates to justification.

Like many survey books Jobes' book contains colorful pictures and illustrations as well as sidebars, questions, and bibliographies for further study. Jobes' book contains a good mix of background discussion, theology, and application for our modern day. The student will come away from this textbook with a better appreciation for the importance and relevance of these epistles of the New Testament. Hebrews is massively important for New Testament theology and Jobes spends a good portion of the book and a number of chapters discussing Hebrews. If you are interested in digging deeper into these epistles then I would highly recommend Jobes' survey. This book is useful for college and seminary students writing papers on these epistles as well as pastors preaching through these texts due to the large amount of theological, textual, and historical discussion.

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Karen H. Jobes (PhD, Westminster Theological Seminary) is the Gerald F. Hawthorne Professor of New Testament Greek and Exegesis at Wheaton College and Graduate school in Wheaton, Illinois. The author of several works, she is also involved in Bible translation. She and her husband, Forrest, are members of Immanuel Presbyterian Church, an EPC church in Warrenville, Illinois.

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