

New Testament Introduction

(RVS Notes)

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New Testament Introduction

Like the Old Testament, the New Testament is not a single book but an anthology of books. It is composed of twenty-seven books which vary in length and reflect a wide diversity of themes, literary forms, backgrounds, and purposes. The New Testament is less than one-third the size of the Old Testament, written over a period of approximately fifty years in the common Greek of the day.

A common classification of the New Testament books is a threefold division into the Historical Books (the Gospels and Acts), the thirteen Pauline Epistles, and the General Epistles (Hebrews through Revelation). The chart below reflects this division.

<i>Historical Books</i>	<i>Paul's Letters</i>	<i>General Letters</i>
Matthew	Romans	Hebrews
Mark	1 Corinthians	James
Luke	2 Corinthians	1 Peter
John	Galatians	2 Peter
Acts	Ephesians	1 John
	Colossians	2 John
	Philippians	3 John
	1 Thessalonians	Jude
	2 Thessalonians	Revelation
	1 Timothy	
	2 Timothy	
	Titus	
	Philemon	

The five historical books depict the key events in the life of Christ and the foundation and expansion of the early church. Paul's thirteen epistles address various issues confronting the churches he founded on his missionary journeys and in so doing further developed the truths that would, by the power of the Spirit, transform the lives of believers. The authors of the nine books designated as the General Epistles deal candidly with a multiple of issues creeping into the life of the early church. Revelation fittingly concludes the New Testament as it anticipates Christ's glorious return, the vindication of God's righteousness, and the culmination of His eternal plan.

Welcome to this survey of New Testament in five stages: the Gospels, Acts, Paul's Epistles, the General Epistles, and the Book of Revelation.

Gospels

I. Social and Political Backgrounds

A period of silence of almost five hundred years divides the last book of the Old Testament from the first writings of the New Testament. The Jews were dominated by foreigners during this period, excluding the times of the Maccabees and their Hasmonean successors. A thumbnail sketch of these years is as follows:

A. *Persian period (539-331 BC)*—Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon and inaugurated a policy of allowing conquered peoples formerly sent into exile to return to their native lands.

1. Nehemiah and Ezra record Jewish returns to the Palestine—
 - 537 under Zerubbabel;
 - 458 under Ezra;
 - 445 under Nehemiah
2. The Jews struggled to maintain their religious, national, and cultural identity in the years of Persian ascendancy. A mindset and culture described as “Second Temple Judaism” arose. This culture was a driving motivator for Jewish activity—
 - Temple being rebuilt (Haggai; Zechariah)
 - Walls of Jerusalem being rebuilt (Nehemiah);
 - Insistence on rededication to Yahweh (Ezra; Malachi).

B. *Grecian period (331-160s BC)*—Alexander the Great conquered Persia and much more in a series of military campaigns from 334-323 B.C. Upon his early death, his empire was divided between four of his senior generals. Two of these originated dynasties that were particularly important to Jewish history:

1. ***Ptolemies (ruling from Egypt)*** dominated Palestine from 323 to 198 B.C. The most significant event in this period pertaining to the Jewish people was the translation of the Old Testament into Greek in 270 B.C. (called the Septuagint for the seventy scholars Ptolemy Philadelphus gathered in Alexandria to do the translation). When the gospel writers quote the Old Testament, they most frequently use the Septuagint.
2. ***Seleucids (ruling from Syria)*** dominated Palestine from 198 to 160s BC. They were avid promoters of the Greek culture and of the Hellenization of subdued peoples. The Jewish resistance to this culminated in a revolt led by the Maccabees against the Seleucid King Antiochus IV (Epiphanes).

C. *Maccabean/Hasmonean period (160s-63 BC)*—The Maccabees led a revolt against Seleucid rule. It was a long, drawn-out guerrilla war. Led by Mattathias (165 B.C.) and successively followed by his sons, Judas (164-161 B.C.), Jonathan (161-142

B.C.), and Simeon (142-134 B.C.), the revolt succeeded in throwing off Greek rule. The heirs of the Maccabees, the Hasmoneans, ruled as Jewish kings from the death of Simeon (143 B.C.) until the occupation of Palestine by the Roman general Pompey in 63 B.C. Hasmonean rule was ineffective, plagued by corruption, intrigue, and political dissension.

D. Roman period (63B.C.–70 A.D.)—The political ascendancy of Rome frames the entire New Testament (see emperor chart below). Their (and their Byzantine successors) rule of Palestine lasts until the 7th century of our era and ends with the Islamic conquest. For purposes of this brief overview, we will take the Roman political ascendancy up to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. In the first century, the Romans used a patchwork quilt of direct rule through their own procurators (see chart below) and indirect rule through client kings. From 63-37 B.C., they favored the successors of the Hasmonean rulers they replaced. After 37 B.C., their client kings came from the Herodian family (see chart below). The Herodians will figure into the history of the New Testament era in a significant way.

Roman Emperors (First Century):

<i>Years of Reign</i>	<i>Emperor</i>	<i>NT & Related Events</i>
27 BC – 14 AD	Augustus	Jesus born; ordered census taken (Lk 2:1)
14-37	Tiberius	Jesus' public ministry
37-41	Caligula	
41-54	Claudius	Expelled the Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2)
54-68	Nero	Great fire of Rome (64); official persecution of Christians at Rome; emperor Paul appeals to (Acts 25:10-12); Peter and Paul martyred
68-69	Year of the Four Emperors	Year of turmoil and civil war causing and following Nero's suicide
69-79	Vespasian	General in command of crushing the Jewish revolt (66-70); victor of the civil war (68-69)
79-81	Titus	Destroyer of Jerusalem
81-96	Domitian	First general persecution of Christians

Judean Procurators (Up to Fall of Jerusalem)

<i>Years</i>	<i>Procurator</i>	<i>NT & Related Events</i>
6-9	Coponius	
9-12	Ambivius	
12-15	Annius Rufus	
15-26	Valerius Gratus	
26-36	Pontius Pilate	Crucifixion of Jesus (Mt 27; Mk 15; Lk 23; Jn 18-19)
36-37	Marcellus	
37-41	Marullus	
41-44	No procurator –	Murderer of James, the brother of John (Acts 12:2);

	Herod Agrippa I	judged by God (Acts 12:19b-23)
44-46	Cuspius Fadus	
46-48	Tiberius Julius Alexander	
48-52	Ventidius Cumanus	
52-59	Antonius Felix	Paul was tried before him (Acts 24)
59-61	Porcius Festus	Paul was tried before him and appealed to Caesar (Nero) (Acts 24:27-26:32)
61-65	Albinus	
65-70	Gessius Florus	Procurator when Jews revolted; Jerusalem destroyed (70)

Herodian Dynasty:

First Generation	Herod the Great (37-4 BC) – King over all Palestine when Jesus was born (Mt 2:1-19; Lk 1:5)		
Second Generation	Herod Antipas (4 BC-39 AD) -- Tetrarch of Galilee & Perea – See Mk 6:14-29; Lk 3:1; 13:31-35; 23:7-12; Beheaded John the Baptist	Archelaus (4 BC-6 AD) Ethnarch of Judea – See Mk 2:22	Herod Philip (4 BC-34 AD) Tetrarch of Iturea – See Lk 3:1
Third Generation	Herod Agrippa I (37-44) – King over all Palestine; killed James the brother of John (Acts 12:1-24)		
Fourth Generation	Herod Agrippa II (48-70) – Tetrarch of Chalcis; Paul argued his case before him in Acts 25:13-26:32		

II. Social Backgrounds of Second Temple Judaism

Second Temple Judaism is a term used to describe the polyglot Jewish religious and cultural experience from the initial rebuilding of the temple (516 B.C.) after the people's return from exile until the destruction of the rebuilt Herodian temple in 70 A.D. This corresponds to the inter-testamentary period between the completing of the Old

Testament books and the beginning of the New Testament writing. This is the social, religious, and cultural setting in which Jesus lived and ministered.

A. *Unifying factors*—There were unifying factors in this rather diverse experience:

1. *Monotheism/Jewish historical uniqueness*—The exile cured the Jews of their religious syncretism and their fascination with idolatry. To be sure, there would be times of correction ahead, but the situation was never as dire as during the Divided Kingdom era (971 to 722 B.C.) and following (Judah from 721 to 586 B.C.). They were dedicated to the practice of the Law and had a high concept of their historical uniqueness as the covenant people of Yahweh.

2. *Land/Kingdom*—Their concern for their land flowed from their awareness of themselves as God’s covenant people and from the reality of their dispersion. The Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12, 15, 17) had promised a distinctive reality—

- People—a physical posterity for Abraham.
- Place—a land in which to dwell.
- Presence of Yahweh with His people.
- Posterity of spirit—the Jews would be a blessing to the world.

The Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7) spoke of a ruler for the people in their land. The prophets in exile spoke of a new Davidic expectation, a perfect ruler would inaugurate a perfect rule over the people of the Covenant in a restored land of plenty. This notion of Messiah fueled Jewish expectations in the centuries between the Old and New Testaments and converged on the appearance of David’s greater son. It is no accident that Matthew (addressed to a Jewish audience) begins his gospel with a genealogy that links Jesus to both Abraham and David.

3. *Synagogue*—While many Jews returned from exile to the land, the majority did not. The synagogue became the focal point of the Jewish experience outside the land. This differed from that of the temple in that its emphasis was on instruction in the Law and not on the temple’s sacrificial practices. The teaching of various rabbis grew in importance over the course of Second Temple Judaism. Indeed, the synagogue experience will become the typical Jewish experience around the world after the fall of Jerusalem in 70.

4. *Practice of the Law/Temple worship*—This was central. The situation was far from perfect, as witnessed by Christ’s indictment of current practice in cleansing the temple. But gone was the neglect of temple worship in favor of Baal worship or a hundred other idolatrous pretenders that characterized the late Kingdom era before the exile.

B. *Diversity of religious experience*—A brief summary of the major Jewish groups and sects mentioned in the New Testament illustrates this reality:

1. **Essenes**—An ascetic reform group active from the mid-2nd century B.C. until the fall of Jerusalem in 70. They initially formed in reaction to the low repute of the priesthood of the Sadducees. They lived in separate communities scattered throughout Judea, considered themselves the recipients of the prophetic promises to Israel, and rejected the corrupt temple worship of the day. They strictly observed the Sabbath, refrained from marriage, held all their property in common, and lived by a demanding routine consisting of ceremonial washings, daily prayer and meditation, and the systematic study of Torah. The Essenes were driven by End Times expectations. However, they expressed these expectations in pacifistic discipline, completely unlike the martial unrest fostered by the Sicarii (see below).

2. **Herodians**—The Herodians were the supporters of Herod and his successors (see chart above). They accepted foreign rule and were very amenable to whatever group had the upper hand. They were wealthy, thoroughly secular, totally pragmatic, unprincipled, and political influential. In short, they were the political greasers of their day.

3. **High Priests (Up to Fall of Jerusalem):**

<i>Years</i>	<i>High Priest</i>
3 BC-6AD	Jeshua
6	Joazer
6-15	Annas
15-16	Ishmeal
16-17	Eleazar, son of Annas
17-18	Simon
18-36	Caiaphas, son-in-law of Annas
36-37	Jonathan, son of Annas
37-41	Theophilus, son of Annas
41-42	Simon Kantheras
42-43	Matthias, son of Annas
43-44	Elioenai
44-47	Joseph
47-58	Ananias
58-60	Ishmael
60-62	Joseph Kabi
62-63	Ananus
62-63	Jesus
63-65	Jeshua
65-67	Matthias, son of Theophilus
67-70	Phinehas

4. **Pharisees**—“Pharisee” is probably derived from the Hebrew stem that means “to be separated”. They came from a reformed-minded party called the Hassidim that arose during the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. The Pharisees surfaced as a distinct religious and

political group about the time of the Maccabean revolt against Seleucid rule in the 160s B.C. They desired to separate themselves from pagan customs and influences and to proclaim and practice the Law of God.

A movement initially arising from among the common people, the Pharisees vigorously strove to remove the Jewish religion from the exclusive control of the priests. They were “law guys,” conservative and orthodox Jews, much more theologically conservative than the priestly class. They strictly adhered to Torah, priding themselves on going beyond the mere letter of the Law. Many regulations were derived from the Torah to facilitate its practical daily application.

As to the Roman occupation, the Pharisees attempted to take a middle-of-the-road approach, rejecting the comfortable collaborationism of the Sadducees and Herodians as well as the confrontational tactics of the Zealots. They saw themselves as supporting the distinctive claims of the Jewish Law against the inroads of Roman authoritarianism without becoming overt rebels.

5. *Sadducees*—“Sadducee” is a name derived from Zadok, the Jewish high priest in the time of David and Solomon, whose family came to control temple affairs. The Sadducees, at least initially, were sympathizers of the Zadokites. They emerged as a distinctive group around 200 B.C., composed of priests and Jewish aristocratic families. They dominated Jewish religious and political life under the Hasmoneans (143-63 B.C.) until the Romans under Pompey took over in 63 B.C. Even under the Romans, they were very influential and exercised a good deal of religious and political authority in and through the Sanhedrin.

The Sadducees were the religious liberals of their day. They denied the resurrection of the body, the afterlife, the existence of angels and other supernatural beings, and divine providence. They favored Greek culture and were consistently Roman supporters, eagerly uncovering and reporting any sign of insurrection against Rome. They were devoted to the ceremonial Law, the practice of which they completely controlled and from which they gained their influence and a good deal of their wealth. In short, they were the religious honchos of their time, well-versed in protecting the status quo that granted them their privileges and positions. Caiaphas’ self-serving comment in John 11:49-50 succinctly summarized their religious and political attitudes and motives.

6. *Samaritans*—The Samaritans were the descendants of the Jews who remained in the land after the fall of the northern kingdom and intermarried with local Canaanites and other foreigners who were transplanted in the territory of the former northern kingdom. These were the people whose territory Jesus “had to go through” in John 4 which led to his famous discussion with the Samaritan woman at the well.

To understand Jewish-Samaritan animosity, a page of history is worth a volume of logic. After Assyria conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C., they deported many Israelites from their land and resettled Samaria with captives from other countries. The Jews that remained in the land intermarried with the foreign transplants. Over time, these

foreign people combined elements of their religious practice with the worship of Yahweh and Baal and developed a mongrel religion. After Judean Jews returned from the Babylonian exile around 536 B.C. and renewed their commitment to the Law, they discovered a complete rift between themselves and the Samaritans, politically, culturally, and religiously. In the time of Nehemiah (around 450 B.C.), the Samaritans opposed the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls, attempting to keep the Jews in a weak and vulnerable position. In Maccabean times (around 160 B.C.), the Samaritans made themselves particularly odious to the Jews by accepting the Hellenization of their religion and dedicating their temple on Mount Gerizim to Zeus Xenios.

In Jesus' day, a strong rivalry and hatred existed between the Jews and their northern cousins. Thoroughbred Jews regarded the Samaritans with contempt, political, cultural, and religious mutts. The Samaritans, for their part, had their fill of Jewish arrogance and assumed superiority. Why did Jesus have to go through Samaria? The reason is because the gospel transcends ethnic boundaries. The gift of God could not be buried under Jewish, or anyone else's cultural baggage.

7. ***Sanhedrin***—The Romans and their client kings allowed the Jews to handle many of their own religious and domestic matters. The high priest led a court of seventy members, mostly Pharisees and Sadducees. As a result, local courts and organizations existed. Outranking them all was the Jewish Supreme Court, if you will, the Sanhedrin. This body met regularly in Jerusalem. The high priest presided over seventy other members of the court, who came largely from the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The New Testament refers to the Sanhedrin by that name and by such terms as “council,” “chief priests and elders and scribes,” “chief priests and rulers,” or simply “rulers.”

8. ***Sicarii***—“Sicarii” comes from the Greek word meaning dagger-men. They were an extreme group of the Zealots (see below) who were political assassins. They routinely stabbed those supportive of Rome whenever their intended victims ventured into vulnerable areas of the crowded streets of Jerusalem and other Judean towns. Their murderous activity intensified throughout the course of the first century. The Sicarii seized control and direction of the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66-73 that brought about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70. They ceased to be a group in a dramatic and tragic mass suicide (women and children included) just prior to the fall of Masada to the Romans in 73.

9. ***Zealots***—This group's religious zeal gave them their name. The Zealots were Jewish extremists, active from 30 B.C. to 70 A.D. They were uncompromising opponents of Roman rule and would not tolerate peace under the idolatrous pagans. They refused to pay taxes and terrorized their political opponents, both the Roman rulers and their Jewish sympathizers and collaborationists. The Sicarii (see above) were the most extreme of the Zealots.

III. Literary Backgrounds

A. *Unique genre*—The evangelists never call their accounts of Jesus’ ministry by the term “gospel.” In the New Testament, the gospel means “good news” (*euangelion*) and refers to the message about Jesus. Only towards the end of the first century and into the second century, was the term used to refer to the accounts of the four evangelists.

The Gospels are a unique literary genre. They are expanded biographical sermons, four different “snapshots” that tell the story of Jesus’ life and teaching while chock full of Christian teaching and preaching. They concentrate on the years of our Lord’s public ministry and focus on the uniqueness of His person and work. Their primary purpose is not merely to be informative, but to present the message of Jesus as Savior and Lord and call people to respond in faith.

B. *Why written*—One might ask why the written gospels? The reasons are obvious upon reflection:

- Writing the message down became necessary due to the speed and extent of the growth of the church.
- There was the need to record the apostles’ memory and reflection on the Lord’s life and ministry before they passed from the scene.
- With Jesus’ expected return delayed, Christians realized that they might be living in the present age for longer than they initially thought.
- With the spread of the Christian message came the challenge of inauthentic and distorting accounts making a written record vital.
- The need for authoritative factual data as the basis for on-going instruction.

C. *Synoptic Gospels and John*—Matthew, Mark, and Luke have been called the synoptic gospels. “Synoptic” means “seeing together” and succinctly summarizes what the reader encounters at the very beginning of the New Testament. These three accounts of Jesus’ life and teaching contain similar material and view their subject from a common perspective. Yet, they do differ in details, arrangement of material, and in their respective emphases.

The reasons for the great similarities and the significant differences have generated much discussion among New Testament scholars and Bible students through the years. This debate has focused on which gospel was written first and the sources the various writers relied on in writing. Theories have changed through the years, but the most popular current understanding is to see Mark as the first gospel written, with Matthew and Luke written at a later date, but relatively close in time. A good deal of the material in Mark is repeated in Matthew and Luke. There is also significant overlap of material in Matthew and Luke. This has caused scholars to postulate that the latter two gospels used Mark’s account and also a common collection of the sayings of Jesus that circulated at the time, a mysterious source labeled “Q.” “Q” comes from the German word meaning “source.”

In addition, a comparison between the Synoptics and John yields interesting contrasts. See the following charts for these comparisons and contrasts:

Comparative Chart:

<i>Gospels</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
Date	60s	Late 50s or early 60s	60s	Late 80s or early 90s
Place	Syrian Antioch or Palestine	Rome	Rome or Caesarea	Ephesus
Audience	Jews in Syria or Palestine	Pagan Romans	Theophilus types—Roman officials; cultured unbelievers	Second generation Christians and/or non-Christians
Focus on Christ	Messiah-King, Son of David	Servant of Yahweh	Son of Man; compassionate, ideal man	Son of God

Contrasts Between Synoptics and John:

Synoptics	John
Chiefly covers Galilean ministry	More coverage to Judean ministry
Kingdom emphasis	More emphasis on the person of Christ
Jesus as Son of David; Son of Man	Jesus as Son of God
Earthly story	Heavenly meaning
Gospels for those new in faith; first generation	Gospel of maturing church; subsequent generation
Jesus' sayings short, pithy (Matthew's five discourses an exception)	More long discourses of Jesus
Little commentary by evangelists	Much commentary by John
One Passover mentioned	Three, perhaps four, Passovers mentioned

D. Critical studies—Until the 18th century, the Gospels and the entire New Testament were taken on their face as an accurate historical account of the life and teaching of Jesus and the progress of the early church. These books were believed to be written by the apostles and their associates in different locations during the first century. These notes reflect that viewpoint.

However, with the advent of the Enlightenment, a more skeptical spirit arose to the study of the New Testament and the Gospels in particular. The number and nature of the gospels raised literary and historical questions. Critical scholars discount the historical reliability of the gospel accounts. They do not tell us much at all about Jesus, but rather the teaching of the church about him (the *kerygma*, the Greek word for preaching). These scholars readily dispute accounts of the miraculous as well as any indication of predictive

prophecy. They date the writing of the gospels late, well beyond the lifetimes of the apostles or their associates identified as the authors in traditional understanding.

The synoptic problem spawned a number of critical methodologies that attempt to get behind the existent text to its sources. These include form criticism, which focuses on the oral tradition that the writers allegedly relied on, source criticism, which speculates how different literary units were put together to make up the gospels, and redaction criticism, which tries to identify the writer's sources in order to see the distinctive literary and theological perspective he applies in shaping his sources. All these methodologies are extremely subjective.

The discounting of the historical reliability of the gospel accounts has lead critical scholars to various quests for the historical Jesus. The result of these endeavors are extensive volumes of speculation and little agreement or insight into the Lord's life and teaching.

I mention this because it is common to view programs or attend lectures where this perspective is presented as the only one anyone with a brain could adopt. I politely dissent. However, the focus of our survey is the text of the gospels themselves. With this very brief overview, I will leave critical scholarship to its pursuits.

Matthew

Introduction—Matthew stresses Jesus’ fulfillment of the Law and of Messianic prophecy. Matthew has more Old Testament quotes and allusions than any other New Testament source (about 130 instances). That the writer was aiming at a Jewish audience is clear by the emphasis on the Law and prophecy and by the many Jewish features in the writing. These features include a typical Jewish designation for God (“Father in heaven”), frequent references to Jesus as the son of David (and thus the Messiah), and several direct references indicating that the Jews were the prime recipients of the gospel (10:5-6; 15:24). Matthew appeals to Jews by linking Jesus to Abraham and David in Jesus’ genealogy. However, he also mentions four Gentile women in Jesus’ ancestry and specifically includes Gentiles in the Great Commission in Matthew 28. Matthew is the only evangelist to explicitly mention the church (16:18; 18:17).

There is an on-going debate of what language Matthew originally wrote in. We possess only Greek copies of the gospel, yet there are assertions that it may have been translated from an original Semitic language, either Hebrew or Aramaic. The early church understood an ambiguous statement by the second century church father Papias to mean that Matthew was written in Aramaic, composed in Palestine, and later translated into Greek.

Author and Occasion—Church tradition, dating to the second century, recognizes the apostle Matthew as the author of the gospel bearing his name. It was written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 from somewhere in Palestine or in Syrian Antioch. With the rise of critical scholarship, Matthew’s authorship has been questioned for a variety of reasons:

- Matthew nowhere claims to be the author.
- The material reflects a later period of church history.
- It utilizes a gospel written by one who was not an apostle (i.e. Mark) and this would have been highly unlikely.
- It does not have the “feel” of an eyewitness account.

Some critics claim that Matthew is Q and that the apostle’s name was mistakenly attached to the account.

Guiding Concepts:

Kingdom emphasis—The Kingdom of God is coming into and transforming the kingdom of this world. The phrase “Kingdom of Heaven” is unique to Matthew. The Kingdom involves God reigning over the earth with a total restoration of life as God planned it. Matthew takes pains to show that Jesus is King, fulfilling the various promises concerning Messiah. He speaks extensively of the ethics of this Kingdom (see Sermon on the Mount in Mt. 5-7). The Kingdom is now and not yet (see Mt. 24-25, the Olivet discourse).

Treatment of the Law—Matthew has a nuanced understanding of Torah as evidenced by the Sermon on the Mount (focusing on Torah on the heart) and in his fulfillment motifs throughout the gospel.

Fulfillment motif—Virtually every circumstance surrounding the birth, life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus is seen as the fulfillment of prophecy (e.g. 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14-16; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:53-54; 27:9). For example—

- Jesus fulfilled the activities of the Lord as predicted in Old Testament (1:21; 3:3-4; 11:5).
- Jesus as Messianic king (1:23; 2:6, 23; 3:17; 4:15-16; 21:5; 22:44; 26:64).
- Jesus as Servant of the Lord (3:17; 8:17; 11:5; 12:18-21).
- Jesus as the Son of Man (24:30; 26:64; 28:18).
- Jesus as the climactic prophet (Mt 12:39-40; 13:13-15, 35; 17:5).
- Jesus as righteous sufferer (21:42; 27:34-36).
- Jesus as reversing Adam's curse (4:1ff).
- Jesus as ideal Israelite whose personal history recapitulated the national history of Israel (2:15, 18; 4:4, 7, 10).

Teaching discourses—Matthew presents a comprehensive picture of Jesus' teaching ministry. In particular, he records five long and unbroken sections of the Lord's instruction. These five key discourses recall the five books of Moses. Jesus is revealed as the fulfillment of prophecy, the coming prophet who was like Moses (Dt 18:15).

- Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:27).
- Instructions to the Disciples (10:5-42).
- Parables of the Kingdom (13:1-52).
- Terms of Discipleship (18:1-35).
- Olivet Discourse (24:1-25:46).

Person and work of Christ—This idea carries throughout the gospel in the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies relating to Messiah, in Jesus' ministry as prophet, priest, and king, in the attention given to the Cross, and in the nature of Jesus' substitutionary atonement. Jesus is presented as David's greater son.

Birth narrative—Matthew and Luke both have birth narratives. Matthew relates the nativity from the standpoint of Joseph and his family line. Luke takes the vantage point of Mary's line.

Summary Outline: **Matthew—Presenting the King**

- I. The King Presented: Identity Established by Old Testament Prophetic Fulfillment (1:1—4:16)
 - A. Birth of the King (1:1-17)
 - B. The King's Early Childhood: Identification with Israel in Exile (2:1-23)

- C. The King's Dedication and Preparation: Identification with Israel in the Wilderness (3:1-4:11)
 - D. The King's Headquarters: A Light Dawning on the Gentiles (4:12-16)
- II. The King's Identity Revealed: Kingdom of Heaven at Hand (4:17-16:20)
 - A. Disciples Called (4:17-25)
 - B. The King Teaching with Authority: Fulfillment of the Law (5:1-7:29)
 - 1. Righteousness: Its Nature (5:1-48)
 - 2. Righteousness: Its Orientation (6:1-34)
 - 3. Righteousness: Its Requirements (7:1-29)
 - C. The King Acting: Authority Revealed by His Deeds (8:1-16:20)
 - 1. Miracles Attest to the King's Authority (8:1-9:34)
 - 2. The King's Authority Delegated to His Disciples (9:35-11:1)
 - 3. The King's Authority Questioned and Challenged (11:2-12:50)
 - 4. The King's Authority Veiled to Disobedient: Parables of the Kingdom (13:1-52)
 - 5. The King's Authority Rejected (13:53-14:12)
 - 6. The King's Authority in Warning Against False Teaching (14:13-16:12)
 - 7. The King's Authority Supernaturally Revealed to His Disciples (16:13-20)
- III. The King's Mission Unfolds: The Kingdom Linked to the King's Death and Resurrection (16:21-28:20)
 - A. The Cost of Citizenship in the Kingdom: Taking Up Your Cross (16:21-17:23)
 - B. Privileges and responsibilities of Citizenship in the Kingdom (17:24-20:34)
 - 1. Two Drachma Tax (17:24-27)
 - 2. Greatness in the Kingdom (18:1-35)
 - 3. Human Desires Submitted to the King (19:1-20:16)
 - 4. Greatness in the Kingdom Revisited: Preference Requested (20:17-34)
 - C. Disobedient Rulers Exposed and Rejected (21:1-11)
 - 1. The King's Entry into Jerusalem (21:1-11)
 - 2. Temple Cleansed (21:12-17)
 - 3. Fig Tree Cursed (21:18-22)
 - 4. Jesus and John: Pharisees Baffled by Authority (21:23-32)
 - 5. Parables Concerning the Rejection of the Disobedient Rulers (21:33-22:14)
 - 6. Debates with the Disobedient Leaders (22:15-46)
 - 7. Disobedient Leaders Exposed and Rejected (23:1-39)
 - D. The King's Glorious Return (24:1-25:46)
 - 1. Temple Destruction Predicted (24:1-2)
 - 2. End Times: Conditions of the Age (24:3-31)
 - 3. Parables on Alertness (24:32-25:30)

4. Judgment of the King (25:31-36)
- E. Passion, Death, and resurrection of the King (26:1-28:15)
 1. Plot to Kill the King (26:1-46)
 2. The King's Betrayal and Arrest (26:47-56)
 3. Jesus' Trials (26:57-27:26)
 - a. Trial Before Caiaphas (26:57-68)
 - b. Peter's denials (26:69-75)
 - c. Judas' Remorse and Suicide (27:1-10)
 - d. Trial Before Pilate (27:11-26)
 4. The Crucifixion (27:27-56)
 5. Jesus' Burial (27:57-66)
 6. Jesus' Resurrection (28:1-15)
 7. Great Commission of the King (28:16-20)

Mark

Introduction—Mark focuses on Jesus’ activities more than on his teaching. Mark emphasizes the miracles of Jesus, recording more miraculous events per verse than any other gospel. His account is a fast-moving narrative that quickly brings the reader to the central event of the gospel, the death and resurrection of Jesus. The book’s distinctive word is *euthus* (immediately or straightway) which appears over forty times. This word appears more times in Mark than in the rest of the New Testament combined. The focus on the passion of Christ is significant. Mark devotes six of his sixteen chapters to the last eight days of Jesus’ life.

Author and Occasion—Christian tradition back to the earliest days unanimously attributed the gospel to John Mark. A quote from Papias from the second century is particularly relevant to the effect that Mark recorded Peter’s recollections and was striving for accuracy rather than a tightly connected, strictly chronological narrative.

John Mark was the son of a well-to-do family in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12-14) who figured prominently in the early church. He was a cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10) and accompanied Barnabas and Paul on the first missionary journey (Acts 13) before he abandoned them (Acts 13:13) earning Paul’s displeasure (see Acts 15:36-41). Mark became a traveling companion of Barnabas on his missionary journeys (Acts 15:39) and later collaborated so closely with Peter that the chief of the apostles called John Mark his “son” (1 Pt. 5:13). John Mark later reconciled with Paul (2 Tim. 4:11).

Mark writes to a Roman audience. He omits things that would not be meaningful to Gentile audiences (Christ’s genealogy, fulfilled prophecy, Law references, and various Jewish customs), he interprets Aramaic words (3:17; 5:41; 7:34; 15:22), and uses certain “Latinisms” in place of Greek equivalents. Mark likely wrote the gospel in Rome, though some suggest it originated from Galilee. The presence of John Mark with Peter in “Babylon” (see 1 Pt. 5:13, possibly code for Rome), Papias’ testimony that Mark was Peter’s interpreter, and the tradition that Peter was martyred at Rome all support the traditional understanding of the gospel’s place of origin.

Form critics usually deny that John Mark was the author. The form critical theory itself cannot allow an eyewitness and a single author to be the source of most of the material found in a gospel. This view does not have a wide following.

Mark was probably written before 70. There is a disagreement among early traditions regarding whether the gospel was written before or after Peter’s martyrdom in the mid-60s. Critical scholars insist on a date after 70 based on the reference in Mark 13:14: “When you see ‘the abomination that causes desolation’ standing where it does not belong—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains”. They understand that as a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. The context of Mark 13 concerns the end of the age. The assumption that this

verse describes the Roman siege of 70 as a predictive prophecy, which critics assert cannot occur, is misguided.

The common view prior to the 19th century was that Matthew was the first gospel written, followed by Luke, and then Mark. Mark was perceived as a more succinct representation of the other two. Modern biblical scholarship makes Mark the first gospel written and one of two main sources (Mark and the mysterious “Q”) of the gospel tradition.

Purpose—John Mark tells the story of Jesus of Nazareth and focuses on His identity. Mark is an apology for the manner of the Lord’s death (crucifixion was the Roman punishment for the worst of criminals). He presents Jesus as the Son of God worthy of belief despite (indeed, because) of the cross and issues a call to faithful discipleship. Christology and servant discipleship are the twin poles of his purpose.

Guiding Concepts:

Divine Sonship and power—Mark highlights Jesus’ power and authority over Satan and his brood (1:27; 3:19-20), over sin (2:1-12), over nature (4:35-41; 6:45-52), over disease (5:21-34), over death itself (5:35, 43), as Lord of the Sabbath (2:27-28; 3:1-6), over traditions (7:1-20), and over temple observance (11:15-18). Everyone and everything recognize Jesus’ divinity, including John the Baptist, the demons, natural forces, the disciples, and the Father Himself. Everyone, that is, except the religious leaders. The supreme irony is that those who should have recognized Jesus right away, fail to do so at all.

Servant ministry—John Mark highlights Jesus’ servant ministry in his preaching and teaching and in his miraculous works. His life’s focus was service and being a ransom for his people (Mk. 10:45). This is the distinctive heartbeat of Mark’s gospel. Mark’s reference to Jesus as the Son of Man aligns the Lord with Old Testament servant expectations. Jesus is indeed Lord, Messiah, and God, but the power and paradigm of His mission as the ransom for sin is encapsulated in this title. The church is to follow the Lord in these steps of service and resist claims to greatness so endemic to our fallen humanity.

Messianic secret—John Mark emphasizes Jesus’ commands to those witnessing his power to remain silent as to his identity. Critical scholars even suggest that Jesus never claimed to be God or Messiah and Mark writes to cover up this failure and remove the embarrassment to Christian belief by inventing the so-called messianic secret. Why the secrecy?

- With exorcisms, Jesus did not want testimony by demons, even when that testimony was true.
- With healings, the people healed were commanded to silence to avoid publicity and relieve the pressure of the crowds on Jesus’ ministry.
- To avoid being seen as the “miracle man.”
- To avoid many of the current false notions of Messiah.

- The disciples were commanded to remain silent because they did not fully understand Jesus' identity and work yet. They would after His resurrection and would proclaim it to the ends of the earth.

Wilderness—The wilderness motif is present throughout Matthew and Luke, but is mainly found in Mark 1 and 6. The wilderness is understood—

- as a prelude to restoration.
- as linked to revelation.
- as a place of testing and dependence.
- as a time for repentance.

Fear—Proper and false fear is a theme in the gospel as well. Note the following texts: 4:41; 5:15, 33, 36; 6:20, 50; 9:32; 10:32; 11:18, 32; 12:12; 16:8.

The text in Mark 16 leads to an important textual issue. Was 16:9-20 (the so-called longer ending) originally included in Mark's gospel? Most manuscripts include it but two of the earliest and best manuscripts do not. In addition, the testimony of Jerome and Eusebius, asserting that the best manuscripts available to them did not have the longer ending, makes 16:9-20 very problematic. It may be that Mark meant to end his gospel with 16:8, leaving it with a plain statement of the Resurrection and describing the state of reverential awe that that event inspired.

Summary Outline—Mark's gospel is focused around the structural divide of the events at Caesarea Philippi. Until that point, the emphasis is on Jesus' miracles attesting to His identity. After Peter's great confession, Mark's focus is on Jesus' suffering and death and the implications of this for servant discipleship.

Key Idea: Servant of God

Key Verse(s) Mk. 10:45

Key Chapter: Mk. 8

Summary Outline: Jesus—Servant of God

- I. Introduction; Beginnings of Jesus' Ministry (1:1-13)
 - A. John the Baptist: Forerunner (1:1-8)
 - B. Baptism of Jesus (1:9-11)
 - C. Temptation of Jesus (1:12-13)

- II. Jesus' Ministry in and Around Galilee (1:14-9:50)
 - A. Initial preaching; calling the disciples (1:14-20)
 - B. Early miracles (1:21-45)
 - Exorcism at Capernaum synagogue (1:21-28)
 - Peter's mother-in-law and others healed (1:29-34)
 - Seeking a quiet place (1:35-39)
 - Healing a leper (1:40-46)

- C. Early controversies (2:1-3:6)
 - Paralytic forgiven and healed (2:1-12)
 - Calling of Levi; eating with tax collectors and sinners (2:13-17)
 - Fasting query (2:18-22)
 - Sabbath controversies (2:19-3:6)
 - Withdrawal and selection of the Twelve (3:7-19)
 - Charge of being demon possessed (3:20-35)
 - D. Early parables (4:1-34)
 - Sower and the seed (4:1-20)
 - Lamp on the stand (4:21-25)
 - Growing seed (4:26-29)
 - Mustard seed (4:30-34)
 - E. More miracles (4:35-5:43)
 - Stilling a storm at sea (4:35-41)
 - Legend of evil spirits exorcised from demoniac (5:1-20)
 - Healing the woman subject to blessing; raising Jairus' daughter (5:21-43)
 - F. Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth (6:1-6)
 - G. Twelve sent out to preach (6:7-13)
 - H. John the Baptist beheaded (6:14-29)
 - I. Feeding of the five thousand (6:30-44)
 - J. Jesus walks on water (6:45-52)
 - K. Ceremonial defilement; negating the Law to observe tradition (6:53-7:23)
 - L. More miracles (7:24-8:26)
 - Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter exorcised (7:24-30)
 - Deaf mute healed (7:31-37)
 - Feeding of the four thousand (8:1-10)
 - Pharisees demand a sign (8:11-13)
 - Warning against the Pharisees and Herodians (8:14-21)
 - Blind man healed (8:22-26)
 - M. Peter's confession (8:27-30)
 - N. Death prediction; rebuke of Peter (8:31-9:1)
 - O. Transfiguration (9:2-13)
 - P. Exorcism of young boy (9:14-29)
 - Q. Another death prediction (9:30-32)
 - R. Disciples argue over who is the greatest (9:33-38)
 - S. Whoever is not against us is for us (9:39-41)
 - T. Causing others to sin (9:42-50)
- II. Jesus' Ministry on the Way to Jerusalem (10:1-52)
- A. Question of divorce (10:1-12)
 - B. Jesus blesses the children (10:13-16)
 - C. Rich young man: Wealth and the Kingdom (10:17-31)
 - D. Another death prediction (10:32-34)
 - E. Greatest in the Kingdom revisited: request by James and John (10:35-45)
 - F. Blind Bartimaeus healed (10:46-52)

- IV. Jesus' Ministry in and Around Jerusalem: Passion week (11:1-16:20)
 - A. Triumphal entry (11:1-11)
 - B. Cursing the barren fig tree (11:12-14)
 - C. Cleansing the temple (11:15-19)
 - D. Withering of the fig tree (11:20-26)
 - E. Debates in temple precinct (11:27-12:44)
 - Authority questioned (11:27-33)
 - Parable of the tenants (12:1-12)
 - Paying taxes to Caesar (12:13-17)
 - Resurrection query (12:18-27)
 - Greatest commandment (12:28-34)
 - Jesus' query to Jewish authorities: Davidic descent and lordship (12:25-37)
 - Jesus warning about the scribes (12:38-40)
 - Widow's mite (12:41-44)
 - F. Olivet discourse: End of the age (13:1-37)
 - G. Sanhedrin's plot against Jesus (14:1-2)
 - H. Jesus anointed by Mary of Bethany (14:3-9)
 - I. Judas' negotiates betrayal (14:10-11)
 - J. Last Supper (14:12-31)
 - K. Agony in Gethsemane (14:32-42)
 - L. Jesus arrested (14:43-52)
 - M. Jesus' trial (14:53-15:20)
 - Hearing before Sanhedrin; Peter's denials (14:53-72)
 - Hearing before Pilate; release of Barabbas (15:1-20)
 - N. Crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus (15:21-47)
 - O. Resurrection of Jesus (16:1-8)
 - P. Disputed ending: Appearances, commissioning, Ascension (16:9-20)

Luke

Introduction—Luke explicitly states his methodology and purpose in Luke 1:1-4. He systematically gathered information, checked out the evidence, verified sources, did his own critical evaluation, and then made an orderly presentation. He gives his orderly account so that people can base their faith in Jesus on historical facts founded on firsthand testimony that can stand up under scrutiny.

Luke writes for a Gentile audience to establish the religious piety, moral purity, and political innocence of Jesus and His followers. He does not exhibit a narrow Jewish interest but has a broader interest in God's historical plan and in the continuity between Judaism and Christianity.

Author and occasion— Luke and Acts were written by the same author. The common dedication to Theophilus (Lk. 1:3; Acts 1:1), the common interests and style of the books, and the obvious planned continuity between the books (Acts 1:1) have been the primary reasons for this conclusion. Authorship of Acts is established by the “we” sections of that book (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16) and from Luke's presence with Paul during his Roman imprisonment when Acts was written (2 Tim. 4:11). Of all Paul's companions, Luke is the only one likely to be present at those times. Luke's authorship of the gospel is deducted from his authorship of Acts. The Church fathers from Irenaeus (2nd century) to Eusebius (4th century) all point to Luke as the author of the gospel.

Critics challenge the traditional understanding on speculative grounds:

- Jesus' predictions of the fall of Jerusalem (Lk 19:43-44; 21:20-24) allegedly show that the book was written after 70. But all this really shows is how dogmatic the critics are in assuming the impossibility of predictive prophecy;
- Luke makes use of Mark and was written at around the same time as Matthew. Since the critics date those other two gospels late, then Luke must be late as well, too late in time for Luke to be the author;
- Luke allegedly reflects an “early Catholicism” which could not have been the case before the second century, beyond Luke's lifetime.

Luke was a well-educated Gentile, a doctor by vocation (Col 4:14), and a traveling companion of the apostle Paul. He was at home in the Greek language as evidenced by his polished writing style. Both Luke and Acts begin with a formal dedication as was common in Greco-Roman literary works. Luke was with Paul at the end of the apostle's life (2 Tim. 4:11). Tradition has it that Luke remained single all his life and died at the age of eighty-four.

Luke probably wrote the gospel bearing his name from either Caesarea or Rome in either the late 50s or early 60s. Greece (Achaia) and Alexandria also have been suggested as places of writing. He wrote Acts from Rome in the early to mid-60s.

Guiding Concepts:

Comprehensive mission—I use comprehensive, rather than universal, so as not to confuse this point with universalism (that everyone will be saved). The gospel is a message intended for everyone, not just a select few. Jesus is not just the Jewish Messiah, but the Savior of the world (see Lk. 2:32, where Simeon describes the babe as a light to the Gentiles). Jesus has a clear sense of this mission from the very beginning (4:16-21).

Historical focus—Luke gets it right, right down to the reigning rulers and their proper titles. Luke presents what we know concerning the birth of John the Baptist and the birth and early childhood of the Jesus. The travelogue section (9:51-19:27) is unique to Luke and supplements the picture we have of the historical details of Jesus' public ministry. Luke is also unique in recording a number of events in the early part of our Lord's life and after his resurrection (see Lk. 24, the road to Emmaus episode).

Jesus' humanity and compassion—Jesus is portrayed as the ideal Son of Man. His humanity and compassion radiate from the pages of Luke. The gospel is full of His personal ministry to individuals as well as the masses. Luke records the dignity and respect Jesus accords to woman, to outcasts, to people at all levels of society. Jesus is a cosmopolitan Savior with broad sympathies for, and who mingles with, all kinds of people.

Call to discipleship—Luke does not mince words about the cost of following Jesus. He details the priority of disciples (9:57-62), the training needed (10:1-24), as well as the demands made upon those who would follow Jesus (10:25-42).

Ministry of the Holy Spirit—The work of the Holy Spirit appears throughout the gospel:

- John the Baptist is filled from his mother's womb (1:15).
- Holy Spirit's work in the miraculous birth of Jesus (1:35).
- Mary (1:41-42), Zacharias (1:67), and Simeon all speak filled with the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus is filled with the Holy Spirit for testing (4:1) and ministry (4:14).
- Jesus rejoices in the Spirit when the seventy-two return from their labors (10:21).
- Disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit for ministry (24:29).

Luke continues this focus on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in Acts.

Prayer—Luke portrays Jesus as a man of prayer:

- at His baptism (3:21).
- after ministering to the crowds (5:16).
- before choosing the Twelve (6:12).
- before Peter's confession (9:18).
- at the Transfiguration (9:28-29).
- after the mission of the 72 (10:21).

- before teaching the disciples to pray (11:1).
- in the Garden of Gethsemane (22:39-46).
- from the Cross (23:34, 46).

All these times are distinctive to Luke's gospel as are Luke two parables about the need for persistence in prayer in 11:5-13 and 18:1-8.

Summary Outline:* **Luke: To Seek and Save the Lost*

- I. Preface; Preparation for Ministry (1:1-4:13)
 - A. Preface (1:1-4)
 - B. Birth and childhood narratives (1:5-2:52)
 1. Birth of John the Baptist foretold (1:5-25)
 2. Birth of Jesus foretold (1:26-38)
 3. Mary's visit to Elizabeth (1:39-56)
 4. Birth of John the Baptist (1:57-80)
 5. Birth of Jesus (2:1-20)
 6. Presentation of Jesus in the temple (2:21-40)
 7. Passover visit of Jesus to the temple (2:41-52)
 - C. Preparation for ministry (3:1-4:13)
 1. Forerunner ministry of John the Baptist (3:1-20)
 2. Baptism of Jesus (3:21-22)
 3. Genealogy of Jesus (3:23-38)
 4. Temptation in the wilderness (4:1-13)
- II. **Jesus' Ministry in Galilee (4:14-9:50)**
 - A. Good news of the kingdom announced and initially proclaimed (4:14-44)
 - B. First disciples called (5:1-11)
 - C. Beginning of controversy with the Pharisees (5:12-6:11)
 - D. Choosing the Twelve (6:12-16)
 - E. Sermon on the plain (6:17-49)
 - F. Compassion of the Messiah (7:1-17)
 1. Faith of a centurion (7:1-10)
 2. Raising a widow's son (7:11-17)
 - G. Jesus and John the Baptist (7:18-35)
 - H. Jesus anointed by a sinful woman (7:36-50)
 - I. Jesus teaches in parables (8:1-21)
 - J. Group of mighty works (8:22-56)
 - K. Sending out the Twelve (9:1-9)
 - L. Feeding the 5,000 (9:10-17)
 - M. Peter's confession; Cost of discipleship (9:18-27)
 - N. Transfiguration (9:28-36)
 - O. Down from the mountain (9:37-50)
- III. Jesus' Ministry While Journeying to Jerusalem (9:51-19:27)
 - A. Setting the course; Counting the cost (9:51-62)

- B. Sending out the seventy (or seventy-two) (10:1-24)
 - C. Parable of the good Samaritan: On merciful love (10:25-37)
 - D. Martha and Mary: On service and devotion (10:38-42)
 - E. Teaching on prayer (11:1-13)
 - F. Controversy with the Pharisees and teachers of the law (11:14-54)
 - G. Readiness for the coming crisis (12:1-13:9)
 - H. Crippled woman healed on Sabbath (13:10-17)
 - I. Parables and sayings of the kingdom (13:18-30)
 - J. Lament over Jerusalem (13:31-35)
 - K. Jesus at table (14:1-24)
 - L. Cost of discipleship (14:25-35)
 - M. Parables of the lost (15:1-32)
 - N. Warnings about wealth (16:1-31)
 - O. Discipleship in community: Sin, faith, and duty (17:1-10)
 - P. Ten lepers healed (17:11-19)
 - Q. Coming of the Son of Man (17:20-37)
 - R. Characteristics of kingdom dwellers (18:1-30)
 - S. Passion prediction (18:31-34)
 - T. Healing the blind beggar (18:35-43)
 - U. Zacchaeus, the tax collector (19:1-10)
 - V. Parable of the ten minas (19:11-27)
- IV. Passion Week: Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus (19:28-24:53)
- A. Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem during Passover (19:28-21:38)
 - 1. Triumphant entry into Jerusalem (19:28-44)
 - 2. Cleansing the temple (19:45-48)
 - 3. Teaching in the temple (20:1-21:4)
 - 4. Destruction of the temple and the last things (21:5-38)
 - B. Death and burial of Jesus (22:1-23:56)
 - 1. Judas agrees to betray Jesus (22:1-6)
 - 2. Last Supper (22:7-38)
 - 3. Prayer and arrest of Jesus (22:39-53)
 - 4. Jewish trial (22:54-71)
 - 5. Roman trial (23:1-25)
 - 6. Crucifixion of Jesus (23:26-49)
 - 7. Burial of Jesus (23:50-56)
 - C. Resurrection, post-Resurrection appearances, and Ascension of Jesus (24:1-53)
 - 1. Discovery of empty tomb (24:1-12)
 - 2. Appearance to two disciples on road to Emmaus (24:13-35)
 - 3. Appearance to disciples in the upper room (24:36-49)
 - 4. Ascension of Jesus (24:50-53)

John

Author and recipients—The author never identifies himself, but it is certain that was John, the beloved disciple. Evidence from the book itself points to John. The author was familiar with Jewish customs and opinions. He was a Palestinian Jew as demonstrated by his knowledge of the geography of the region (9:7; 11:18; 18:1). He was an eyewitness to the events he narrates (Jn 1:14; 19:35) and seems to have been acquainted with Jesus’ public career from beginning to end. The author’s identity must have been so well known to his contemporaries to make an obvious assertion of his authority unnecessary. It is noteworthy that in this gospel, which provides many personal insights into the disciples, John is not mentioned by name. Instead, he is simply known as a son of Zebedee.

Historical evidence is unequivocal in attributing the gospel to John. The church fathers from Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons (130-200), to Eusebius (265-340), the great church historian, all agree that John the apostle wrote the gospel. The theory that the gospel was the product of an unknown presbyter by the name of John is speculation that cannot be regarded as probable, let alone established.

John was the son of Zebedee (21:1) and Salome (Mt. 27:56; Mk. 15:40; Jn. 19:25). Since Salome was a sister of Jesus’ mother Mary, Jesus and John were cousins. John possessed a passionate and volatile temperament. The Lord nicknamed John and his brother James as the “sons of thunder” (Mk. 3:17). Their father, Zebedee, was in the fishing business in Galilee and the two were among the Galileans who followed John the Baptist until they were called to follow the Lord. They later became his full-time disciples (Lk. 5:1-11) and were among the twelve selected to be His apostles (Lk. 6:12-16). After the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord, John was active in the ministry in and around Jerusalem (see Acts 3:1; 4:13; 8:14). Paul describes John, James, and Peter as the “pillars” of the church in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9). Tradition records that John later went to Ephesus shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem and had a long and fruitful ministry in Asia Minor. The composite personality image of John that emerges from the New Testament is one of a man of courage, fervor, loyalty, spiritual perception, humility, and love.

Date and occasion—The dates most often advocated for this gospel are sometime prior to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem or sometime in the late 80s or early 90s, near the end of the first century. Tradition and the weight of other evidence favors the later date and assigns Ephesus as the place of composition. Until recently, it was popular to propose a second century date for this book and thus undermine Johannine authorship. However, the discovery of the Rylands papyrus, containing a fragment of John 18:31-33 and 37-38, has overthrown this critical conjecture. This fragment dates to approximately 135 and a considerable period of time must have passed for the gospel to have been circulated and copied before it reached Egypt, where the papyrus was found.

The gospel was written at a time when the faith was under attack. Christians were persecuted in the reign of the Emperor Domitian (81-96). Indeed, tradition has it that

John himself was imprisoned on the island of Patmos, where he wrote Revelation, near the end of Domitian's reign.

Purpose—John states his purpose in unequivocal terms in John 20:31: “But these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.” John writes for both Jews and Gentiles and presents Jesus as the Son of God, worthy of belief. John draws primarily on events and discourses not found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke to prove to his readers that Jesus is God in the flesh, the eternal Word of God come to earth, born to die as God's substitutionary sacrifice for human sin. The human response elicited is faith in His person and work.

Guiding Concepts:

Belief—The word believe (*pisteuo*) and its various forms appears almost one hundred times in this gospel and is the major theme in the book. Belief is equated with receiving (1:12), following (1:40), drinking (3:13-14), responding (4:50-51), eating (6:57), accepting (6:60), worshipping (9:38), obeying (11:39-41), and committing (12:10-11). John chooses seven miracles (five of them unique to this gospel) to communicate truth about Jesus designed to invoke belief in Him. These “signs” include: (1) water changed to wine (2:1-11); (2) an official's son healed (4:46-54); (3) an invalid healed at the pool at Bethesda (5:1-5); (4) the feeding of the 5,000 (6:1-15); (5) walking on water (6:16-21); (6) a blind man healed (9:1-12); and (7) Lazarus raised from the dead (11:1-44).

Christ's person—John's gospel emphasizes both the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ. He strongly asserts Christ's deity identifying the Word as God (1:1, 14), recording His declaration of oneness with the Father (10:30), His claims to eternal pre-existence (8:58), His being as the sum and essence of the Father's being (14:9), and His acknowledgement of Thomas' assertion of His deity (20:28-29). His humanity is also stressed. He was weary (4:6), thirsty (4:7), wistful (6:67), deeply sorrowful (11:35), appreciative (12:7), troubled (12:27), loving (13:1ff), and loyal and courageous (18:8).

Jesus makes use of a series of “I am” statements that shed light on His identity and what that means to the believer. He is the bread of life (6:35), the light of the world (8:12; 9:5), the door for the sheep (10:7), the good shepherd (10:11, 14), the resurrection and the life (11:25), the way, the truth, and the life (14:6), and the true vine (15:1, 5). Each of these statements teaches truth about the nature of the believer's union with his or her eternal Lord.

Christ's work—The movement of the entire gospel points to Christ's cross and resurrection. John the Baptist introduces Jesus as the sacrificial “lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world” (1:29). Jesus tells Nicodemus that “just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life” (3:14-15). He speaks of giving His flesh “for the life of the world” (6:51). His cross is seen as the death of the shepherd for the sheep (10:11), the sacrifice of one man for His nation (11:49-52), the triumph of the obedient Son who

bequeaths His life, joy, peace, and Spirit to His own (14:1ff). The doctrine of the atonement is not stated so explicitly as in some of Paul's epistles, but it is unmistakably latent throughout John's gospel.

Holy Spirit—John's gospel contains important teaching on the person and functions of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's intermediary relation between Christ and the believer and His functional relation to God, the believer, and the world are defined in Jesus' farewell discourse to the disciples (14:25-26; 15:26; 16:7-15). In that discourse, Jesus makes it clear that the heavenly Counselor is given in consequence of Jesus' death and exaltation.

Jesus' personal ministry—A great deal of attention is given to Jesus' personal ministry with the disciples and other people. Andrew (1:40; 6:8), Peter (1:41-42; 6:67-69; 13:6-9, 36-38; 18:11; 21:15-22), Philip (1:43; 6:5; 12:21-22; 14:8-10), Nathaniel (1:47-51; 21:2), Thomas (11:16; 14:5-7; 20:24-29), and other followers received Jesus' personal counsel and attention during important stages in the growth of their faith. The Lord's powerful public discourses accompanied an intensive interpersonal ministry. Numerous personal interviews are distributed throughout the text illustrating the nature and consequence of belief (see interviews with Nicodemus (3:1-15), the Samaritan woman (4:1-26), a paralytic (5:1-15), a man blind from birth (9:1-38), Mary and Martha (11:17-37)). The Lord's intensely personal ministry did not shy away from conflict. John records interviews and exchanges with hostile people and/or groups to illustrate the nature of unbelief (see 2:18-20; 5:16-47; 6:41-59; 7:14-44; 8:31-59; 10:2-39).

Relation to Synoptic gospels—The Synoptic gospels are Matthew, Mark, and Luke, so-called because of the similarity in their accounts at various places. The term is derived from the Greek word *synoptikos*, meaning "to see together". John wrote independently of these other gospels, not because he did not know about them, but because he had a different purpose in writing and was addressing a different audience. Noting the differences between the Synoptics and John, someone has said that the Synoptics contain the fundamental facts and words of the Lord's ministry for the infant church which experience afterwards interprets, while John reviews the facts and words of Jesus' ministry in light of their interpretation for a maturing church. While this is accurate as far it goes, it is also true that John consciously attempts to supplement the Synoptics, emphasizing the Lord's Judean ministry, His personal ministry with individuals as well as His longer discourses, and largely omitting the parables and the theme of the kingdom of God. John thought the other gospel writers had covered these aspects of Jesus' life and teaching. John also supplements the others by making it clear that Jesus' public ministry lasted longer than a reading of the Synoptics might otherwise suggest. The Synoptics only mention the last Passover when Jesus died, but John mentions three, and perhaps four, Passovers during the Lord's public ministry.

Summary Outline: **John—In Order that You May Believe**

- I. Prologue: Jesus as Explaining the Father (1:1-18)
- II. Jesus' Revelation of God to the World (1:19-12:50)

- A. Initial witness and first disciples: Behold the Lamb of God (1:19-51)
 - B. Presentation of Jesus for consideration: Cana to Cana (2:1-4:54)
 - C. Continued revelation of the Father by the Son: Increasing controversy and conflict (5:1-11:53)
 - 1. At Jerusalem: Jesus' claims presented (5:1-47)
 - 2. In Galilee: Jesus, the bread out of heaven (6:1-71)
 - 3. At Jerusalem for the feasts (7:1-10:39)
 - 4. In Judea: Lazarus raised (11:1-53)
 - D. Preparation for and prediction of Jesus' death (11:54-12:50)
- III. Jesus Further Revelation of God to the Disciples (13:1-17:26)
- A. Foot-washing: Love in redemptive service (13:1-17)
 - B. Betrayal predicted and betrayer dismissed (13:18-30)
 - C. Farewell discourse (13:31-16:33)
 - 1. Discourse in the upper room (13:1-14:33)
 - 2. Discourse along the way (15:1-16:33)
 - D. High priestly prayer of Christ (17:1-26)
- IV. Death and Resurrection of Jesus: Culmination of Conflict Between Belief and Unbelief (18:1-20:31)
- A. Judas betray Jesus (18:1-11)
 - B. Ecclesiastical trial before the chief priests (18:12-27)
 - C. Civil trial before Pilate (18:28-19:16)
 - D. Crucifixion and burial of Jesus (19:17-42)
 - E. Resurrection of Jesus and initial post-Resurrection appearances (20:1-29)
 - F. Purpose of book stated: That you may believe and live (20:30-31)
- V. Epilogue: Restoration of Peter and Commissioning of the Disciples (21:1-25)

Acts

Introduction—Acts belongs with the Gospel of Luke as part of Luke’s account of Christian beginnings. In Acts, Luke takes the reader on a whirlwind tour of the first three decades of church history. It traces the preaching of the gospel and the Church’s rapid expansion in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7), in all Judea and Samaria (Acts 8-12) and beyond (Acts 13-28). The book begins by describing the early ministry of the apostles before tracing Paul’s missionary journeys up to the time of his imprisonment in Rome. Acts supplies the Bible student with the necessary historical, cultural, and geographical grid for understanding the epistles that follow. It also reveals to us the pattern of church life in between Christ’s advents: its power, its objectives, its methods, its essential organization and discipline, and its driving vision.

Acts derives its name from the Greek word *praxeis*, commonly used in Greek literature to summarize the accomplishments of outstanding people. The irony of the Christian dynamic confronts the reader immediately. How did these followers of Jesus, who were obscure provincial Galileans and Judeans, become people who turned the world upside down (17:6)? What changed these timid men from those who denied their Lord and abandoned him in his hour of need into bold, stalwart apologists for the new faith? How did preachers who were confessedly “unlearned and ignorant men” (4:13) make such an impact on the world that they ushered in a new culture that reshaped the face of Western civilization? Luke records the acts of the Spirit of Christ working in and through these people. These apostles were “jars of clay” (2 Cor. 4:7) abandoned to God’s person, purpose, and program, in and through whom God’s work was done and his glory revealed (2 Cor. 3:17-18).

Author, Date, and Occasion of Writing:

Traditional approach—Although attributed to Luke, the Gospel of Luke and Acts are anonymous. From a casual reading of the two books, one can conclude the following:

- They were meant to be a two-part work on Christian origins. The subject matter is a continuous narrative about the incarnate life and ministry of Jesus Christ and what he continued to do through his Spirit-empowered church after his Resurrection. Theophilus (Lk. 1:3-4; Acts 1: 2,), perhaps a Greek or Roman official and the patron of the works, is addressed in both books.
- The author was well-educated as evidenced by the quality of his Greek text and his writing style.
- He was not an original apostle but did participate in the events he narrates.
- He knows the Old Testament in the Greek Septuagint version (a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible dating from the third century BC).

- He has an exceptional knowledge of the political and social conditions of the Roman world in the middle of the first century.
- He thinks very highly of the apostle Paul.

The “we” passages of Acts (16:8-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:15) shed further light on the book’s authorship. Some think that in these passages the author depends on an itinerary or diary that the author kept in the first person plural at the time of the events and that he incorporates verbatim into his literary product. Others think that the author just lapsed into the first person plural at these points. Either way these passages point to Luke who was with Paul during these events. These passages support his authorship of Acts and that of the gospel that bears his name.

Tradition supports Luke’s authorship. The Muratorian Canon (circa 190), Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Eusebius all assert Luke’s authorship. Indeed, Luke’s authorship of these two books was unchallenged until the end of the 18th century.

Luke himself was a Gentile, a medical doctor (Col. 4:14), and a faithful friend and traveling companion of Paul (2 Tim. 4:11; Phile. 24). He amply demonstrates that he was a thorough researcher and capable writer. The oldest and most respected tradition associates Luke with the Syrian Antioch church. From the pages of the New Testament, we can surmise that Luke was an intelligent, faithful, kind, and loyal servant of Christ.

Critical challenge—Critics challenge the traditional view by questioning the value of the testimony of the Church fathers and debunking the value of the “we” passages of Acts for its authorship. They press the question of why Luke would leave these passages in that form when he reworked all his other sources rather seamlessly.

However, the chief reason for the challenge is the critics’ idea that the book of Acts gives us a distorted idea of the apostle Paul. They allege that the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the epistles are eons apart. They charge that the historical and theological distortion of the real Paul is so serious that it is impossible to think that a companion of Paul could have produced the picture.

Among the historical distortions alleged are the number of trips the apostle made to Jerusalem and the claim of Paul in Acts that he was educated in Jerusalem (22:3). The theological distortions include the author’s representation of Paul’s use of natural revelation in Acts 17 that is at variance with his description of Romans 1. Another is that Paul’s view of the law described in the epistles is far more negative than that portrayed in Acts. Finally, critics allege that many of Paul’s Christological and eschatological themes are missing in the account of Acts.

This critical stance is a one-sided analysis that refuses to see the author's purpose in Acts as different than the variety of purposes Paul had in addressing problems in the churches. They also insist on a critical caricature of the authentic Paul that their interpretation of Acts does not support. Therefore, the authenticity of Acts is what is challenged, not their caricatures of Paul or their interpretation of Acts.

Date—Most scholars date Acts from one of three time periods: early to mid-60s, 80-95, 115-130. We will briefly consider these dating schemes in inverse order.

115-130—The second century date represents the opinion of the Tübingen school, whose best known member was F.C. Baur. They allege that Acts represents an attempt to reconcile opposing early Christian factions of Jewish Christianity, represented by Peter, and Gentile Christianity, represented by Paul. This reconciliation effort was feasible only after an adequate period had passed, allowing the various factions to mellow sufficiently for it to occur. That could not have been before the early part of the second century. However, the early church fathers appear ignorant of this allegedly heated polemic, and this ideological synthesis has no substantial historical underpinning. It is the rhetorical consensus of like-minded German scholars at one university whose historical feet are firmly planted in mid-air.

80-95—Many scholars date Acts to the period between 80-95. They argue that it cannot be earlier because it shows signs of having been written after the gospel of Luke. Luke's gospel must have been written after 70 because of the author's awareness of the destruction of Jerusalem (in Jesus' eschatological discourses of Luke 17 and 22). In addition, the gospel must have been written before 95 because of the optimistic attitude toward the Roman government which would not have survived Domitian's persecutions.

60s—Many think that Luke wrote Acts during Paul's Roman imprisonment in the early 60s. Acts gives no hint of the full-fledged persecution of Christians under Nero (64), Paul's death (mid-60s), or the destruction of Jerusalem (70). The simplest and best explanation for these omissions is that Luke wrote before these events took place, stopping abruptly with the contemporary scene in Acts 28. Other factors also point to this date: (1) Luke's apparent lack of familiarity with Paul's letters; (2) Luke's portrayal of Judaism as a legal religion (not after the revolt in 70); and (3) the vivid shipwreck narrative in 27:1-28:16, which suggests a very recent experience.

Sources—Luke used various sources to create his book. As a traveling companion of Paul, he was one of the principal eyewitnesses of, and had access to other eyewitnesses of, the events recorded in Acts 13-28. As indicated in his preface to his gospel account (Lk. 1:3-4), Luke did extensive research concerning those events to which he was not privy. As a close associate of Paul, he undoubtedly had access to key witnesses in Judea

and Jerusalem for the information contained in Acts 1-12. He may also have used written documents for his sources as well (15:23-29; 23:26-30).

Purpose—Luke’s purpose was to explain in an orderly fashion the sovereignly directed progress of the gospel message from Jerusalem to Rome and from the Jews to the Gentiles. Luke slants the book towards the Gentiles, emphasizing the purpose and purity of Jesus’ followers, portraying the Christian faith as open to all, though rooted in Judaism, based on the Jewish Scriptures, and proclaiming a Jewish Messiah.

He also addresses the Roman authorities. Luke takes pains to show that Christianity poses no threat to the Roman government. The law-abiding nature of Christianity is supported by favorable judgments by various local and provincial officials. An apology was necessary because Jesus was crucified, a Roman method of execution, and disturbances arose wherever the new faith spread. Luke anticipates the apologetic writings of other Christians in the second and third centuries.

Guiding Concepts—Acts is a book of transitions: from the gospels to the epistles, from Judaism to Christianity, from law to grace, and from Jewish exclusivism to the Gentile mission. Key concepts include:

Spirit-empowered witness—The Acts of the Apostles should be called the acts of the Holy Spirit. Acts is the Spirit’s story in and through divinely energized believers. Rather than give us a theological dissertation on the Spirit, Luke tells us the exciting story of who he is and what he did through the early church. We are drawn into an unfolding drama involving real people whom the Holy Spirit empowered.

The Holy Spirit energized the early church to make a dynamic impact on the Roman world. The Holy Spirit is mentioned more than fifty times in this book. The disciples wait on the Spirit in Jerusalem before beginning to preach (2:4). The Holy Spirit fell on each new group of believers in dramatic fashion, including the Jews (4:31), the Samaritans (8:17), the Gentiles (10:44), and the disciples of John the Baptist (19:6). The book is not just a history of a given period in the life of the church, but a handbook for Spirit-directed Christian service and action. It illustrates the procedure and effectiveness of the church built on the principles the Spirit administers.

Historical and cultural interest—Acts is an invaluable historical source. Without Acts, we would know nothing of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, the martyrdom of Stephen, the life of the early Jerusalem church, or the way the gospel first came to the Samaritans and the Gentiles. We would have little information about Paul’s missionary journeys and the founding of various churches around the Roman world.

Can we trust these historical representations? William Ramsey and others have demonstrated the accuracy of Luke’s knowledge about details of Roman provincial

government, first century geographic boundaries, social and religious customs, navigational techniques, and the like. Luke's record of the serious famine in the middle 40s (11:27-30), the death of Herod Agrippa II (12:19-23), the edict of Claudius expelling Jews from Rome (18:2), the activity of an Egyptian terrorist in the middle 50s (21:38), and the replacement of the Judean procurator Felix with Festus (24:27) are all confirmed by secular historical sources.

The most serious challenge to Luke's reliability comes from the alleged historical contradictions between Acts and Paul's epistles. Most of these contradictions stem from incomplete or unclear historical evidence from Paul. Given the nature of Paul's letters, it is not reasonable to expect the apostle to go into the details recorded in Acts. Paul's letters often address urgent issues within churches, with historical or geographical details being less of a priority.

The alleged discrepancy most frequently cited is the number of trips Paul made to Jerusalem after his conversion. Paul's own epistles mention three: (1) three years after his conversion (Gal. 1:18); 14 years after his conversion or his first trip (Gal. 2:1); and a projected visit at the time of the writing of the letter to the Romans (Rom. 15:24). However, Acts records five trips: (1) a post-conversion visit (9:26); (2) the famine-relief visit (11:27-30); (3) the visit at the time of the Jerusalem Council (15:1ff); a visit between the second and third missionary journeys (18:22); and a visit at the end of the third missionary journey (21:17). The contradiction evaporates when we realize that we have no reason to expect Paul to discuss all his journeys to Jerusalem given his purposes in writing the various letters that he penned.

The cry of the Enlightenment was that the necessary truths of reason can never be established by the "accidents" of history. History was the "ugly ditch" and regarded at best as irrelevant and at worst as falsified for purposes of indoctrination. Luke's attitude towards history is decidedly different. He takes meticulous care to detail the events of the early church with an eye to leaving believers with an accurate account of what God did in those early days. Christianity is a religion of space and time. God became man, took on flesh, walked on the earth, laughed, cried, ate, spoke, suffered, and died smack dab in the middle of that "ugly ditch," the very one we find ourselves in today. Accordingly, Luke takes pains to get it right. The historical account of Acts not only gives us a foundation for understanding the details of God's redemptive work in those early Christians but also provides background for understanding the epistles that follow.

Prayer linked to important historical junctures—Reading this book, one senses the irresistible movement of the Spirit of God in answer to the prayers of his people. His followers are united in prayer prior to Pentecost (1:14). Prayer was their daily routine (2:42; 3:1), their first response to opposition (4:23-31), and a ministerial priority (6:4). Prayer preceded significant ministry advances, such as the conversion of Paul (9:11), the

first notable Gentile conversion (10:3, 9), Peter's rescue from a Jewish prison (12:12), and the selection of the first missionary team (13:2). The list could go on and on. Praying was as natural as breathing to these people and accounts for the tremendous way they were used in the early expansion of the church.

Gentile inclusion—Luke records the general rejection of the gospel by the Jews across the Empire and the apostles' turning to the Gentiles for a ready audience to the message of truth. The Church grew rapidly independent of Jewish synagogue and ritual which hastened the final severance between Judaism and Christianity. God's salvation message burst the bonds of ethnic exclusivity (10:34-35) and obliterated any idea of human merit in its reception (15:8-9).

Sermons and speeches—Acts is loaded with sermons and speeches, no less than twenty-two in just twenty-eight chapters. Most of these are by Peter (1:16-22; 2:14-36; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 10:34-43; 11:4-17; 15:7-11) and Paul (13:16-41; 14:15-17; 17:22-31; 20:18-35; 22:1-21; 23:1-6; 24:10-21; 25:8-11; 26:1-23; 27:21-26; 28:17-20, 25-28). Others include Gamaliel (5:25-29), Stephen (7:2-53), James (15:13-21), and Demetrius (19:25-27).

Many scholars assert that Luke is untrustworthy in his record of speeches in Acts. They note that the speeches are all in the same general style, a style that is in accord with the narrative portions of Acts. The speeches are Lucan, not Petrine or Pauline. They assert that Luke put into the mouths of his speakers the sentiments he felt were appropriate for the occasion. Lastly, they charge that there are differences in the theology of the speeches.

In response, the uniformity of style of the speeches is only to say that Luke did not give us verbatim reports of the speeches but paraphrased them in his own words. Paraphrases and summaries of speeches can still accurately convey their contents. What minutes of any organization's meeting is other than a summary? That the speeches are not verbatim does not mean that Luke just made up whatever fit the occasion. As for alleged differences in theology, speeches have real-life context. Peter's speeches in Acts 2 and 3 contain formulations of Christology (2:36) and eschatology (3:19-20) that fit the early days of the church. That context was different than Paul's in Acts 13 and 17 and Paul's formulations reflect his different context. Luke not only provides an accurate summary of the main points expressed but also captures the distinctive phraseology of Peter, Paul, and other speakers.

Luke's summaries supply a portrait of the preaching of the early church, centered on the life and person of Jesus Christ. Unlike modern preaching, which is usually either the logical development of a single topic or the elaboration of a single text, early apostolic preaching was a narration of the life and work of Christ, a defense of his Resurrection,

followed by a call to repentance and faith. One can see the importance of historical continuity in the very structure of the sermons in Acts.

Lessons in church planting—Michael Green in *30 years That Changed the World* examines seven examples of church plants in Acts. The early believers took seriously the outward orientation of the church and thought of founding churches as part of their commission. Their churches were not clubs for the pious. In addition, the early Christians did not wait on consolidation and the training of leaders before moving out. They expected God, who brought the little congregations into being, to sustain them by providing adequate leadership. Green notes the following about church plants:

Jerusalem (2:1ff) -- Three factors were significant in the growth of the Jerusalem church:

- Infectious joy. There was undeniable radiance and joy among these people. That is manifest throughout the early chapters of Acts.
- Alternative lifestyle. You see this described in Acts 2 and 4. This alternative lifestyle gave them a credibility that was magnetic.
- Thoughtful reinterpretation of the good news. This was brought by the Hellenists, particularly Stephen (6:1ff). Whereas the Jewish Christians saw God as primarily the God of the Law, the temple, and Israel, the Hellenists realized that the customs delivered by Moses could not measure up to Christian freedom in the age of the Spirit. They translated the gospel into terms that secular people of that day understood.

Samaria (8:1ff)—Two principles emerge:

- Costly reconciliation. There was a mighty chasm between Jerusalem and Samaria for centuries. The Spirit fell with power and that led to the apostles coming to confirm the work and begin the healing. The church would not be an apartheid church. The Samaritan work will be part of the whole.
- Spiritual gifts are important. We must neither be afraid of them nor go hunting for them.

Caesarea (10-11)—Some takeaways:

- Prayer and vision (10:2). The link between prayerful dependence on God and effectiveness in God's work is undeniable. In the West, we find prayer one of the most difficult disciplines. Busyness and activity come much easier to us.
- Expect the unexpected. Here, a sophisticated Roman officer sends a detachment of men off to find a Jewish angler to instruct him about God! The Spirit is much bigger than our systems and will often act in ways that trample on our prejudices and call forth our awe.
- Household evangelism. Talk about a venue with a receptive audience!

- Confronting prejudice. Simon Peter was no Gentile lover. God had to break his disciple of his prejudice to enable his usefulness. Guess what? The same is true today.

Antioch (11:19ff)—Some takeaways:

- It was lay initiative that brought this church into being (11:20).
- Transcultural fellowship was a noteworthy aspect of the Antioch church. That reality had much to do with their missionary vision and ambition. In a world where real fellowship without judgmental attitudes and ethnic bigotry was rare, this was a most attractive feature.
- Shared leadership. Most church structures are pyramidal – the senior minister at the top, assistant ministers with their spheres of responsibility, elders or council members, various service areas (finance, Christian education, church music etc.), and then the congregation. At Antioch, you do not find a pyramid, but a ring. There was a circle of five individuals sharing the leadership of the church. That circle approach may have characterized the entire operation.
- Balance – They held together in dynamic tension their social concerns, their worship, and their missionary outreach. They are active in relief (11:28ff), in worship (13:2), and in missionary work (13:3).

Thessalonica (17)—Some takeaways:

- Value of a short campaign. The initial effort seems to have happened occurred over a brief period. These initiatives help launch resident believers in the work of evangelism.
- Handling opposition. 1 Thessalonians 2:1-4 indicate that opposition was intense. It is rare when evangelism does not engender opposition and Acts shows us how to handle it and keep going.
- Learning from your mistakes (17:6).
- Supportive work of care and prayer lavished on new converts (see 1 Thess. 1:2-3; 2:1-4, 17-20).
- A combination of preaching, power of the Holy Spirit, conviction and sincerity of leaders, and the impact of example.

Corinth (18)—Lessons from the founding of the church at Corinth:

- Church planting often begins with one individual. Paul's restlessness after his experience at Athens speaks volumes about the founding at Corinth.
- Paul sought out Christian fellowship, namely with Aquila and Priscilla. Paul was a commanding intellect. Aquila may have been a freed slave capable in a business venue. Priscilla may have come from a prominent Roman family of that name

and married the successfully freed slave. They shared a household, an occupation, and a common vision.

- They reached a variety of people. The gospel reached all levels of society in that city. One of the saddest aspects of the gospel in the West is the homogeneous nature of most churches. People like being with their own kind. However, that is not the picture of the gospel given in Acts.
- The value of an encouraging atmosphere, not only by friends but also by the Lord (18:9).

Ephesus (19)—Ephesus was the preeminent city of Asia Minor. Its penetration would be of great significance for the gospel. Glimpses of how that was done:

- Use of the home – The home of Aquila and Priscilla was an invaluable asset. Doubtless others followed this fine example.
- They did not write off “fellow travelers.” John's disciples are fully welcomed into the kingdom.
- Power evangelism – Demonstrations of the power of the gospel accompanied its proclamation.
- Purposeful educational efforts build the church and help spread the gospel. Secular venues are frequently more effective for communicating the gospel than church buildings. The school of Tyrannus illustrates this point. It provided a bully pulpit as well as a place to equip leaders and engage inquirers. Shared learning was an exercise in training – it developed a rudimentary faculty. In addition, the students spread the gospel into the hinterlands of the province of Asia.

Summary Outline: **Acts—You Shall Be My Witnesses**

- I. Holy Spirit Poured Out: Power for Witness (1:1-2:47)
 - A. Waiting on the Holy Spirit: Preparation for witness (1:1-26)
 - B. Pentecost: Enablement of the Holy Spirit (2:1-47)
- II. Witness in Jerusalem: Expansion Despite Jewish Opposition (3:1-8:3)
 - A. Healing the lame man at the temple gate: Initial Jewish opposition (3:1-4:35)
 - B. Ananias and Sapphira: Internal problem of purity (4:36-5:16)
 - C. Increased Jewish opposition: Arrest, miraculous release, and interrogation of the apostles (5:17-42)
 - D. Deacons chosen to attend to food distribution: Witness and internal purity (6:1-7)
 - E. Stephen’s martyrdom: Vigorous persecution by the Jews (6:8-8:3)

- III. Witness in Judea, Samaria, and Beyond: Expanded Witness as a Result of Persecution (8:4-12:25)
 - A. Philip's ministry in Samaria and beyond (8:4-40)
 - B. Conversion and commission of Paul (9:1-31)
 - C. Beginnings of the Gentile mission (9:32-12:25)
 - 1. Peter's ministry among the Gentiles (9:32-43)
 - 2. Cornelius' conversion: Gentile inclusion established (10:1-11:18)
 - 3. Antioch church: Establishment and ministry (11:19-26)
 - 4. Relief for the Jerusalem church (11:27-12:25)
- IV. Worldwide Witness: To the Ends of the Earth (13:1-21:16)
 - A. First missionary journey: Witness in Asia Minor arouses Jewish opposition (13:1-14:28)
 - B. Jerusalem Council: Implications of Gentile inclusion worked out (15:1-35)
 - C. Second missionary journey: Witness in Europe (15:36-18:22)
 - D. Third missionary journey: Exhorting and strengthening the churches (18:23-21:16)
- V. Witness in Chains: Paul's Imprisonment and Trials (21:17-28:31)
 - A. Paul's arrest and initial defense before the Jewish crowd (21:17-22:29)
 - B. Proceedings before the Sanhedrin (22:30-23:11)
 - C. Proceedings before Felix (23:12-24:27)
 - D. Proceedings before Festus and Herod Agrippa II (25:1-26:32)
 - E. Paul's journey to and arrival at Rome (27:1-28:31)

Paul's Letters

Letter	Date	Place	Subject
Galatians	49	Antioch (Syria)	Paul's apostleship; justification by faith; function of Law; Christian freedom
1 Thessalonians	50-51	Corinth	End Times; tough times
2 Thessalonians	50-51	Corinth	End Times; tough times
1 Corinthians	Mid-50s	Ephesus	Christian conduct ("the Cross in its social application") – church divisions; sexual immorality; lawsuits; marriage and celibacy; freedom and questionable practices; spiritual gifts; order in worship; Lord's Supper; Resurrection
2 Corinthians	Mid-50s	Macedonia	Paul's apostleship; heart of an authentic ministry; leading through conflict; giving
Romans	Mid-50s	Corinth	Salvation doctrine; depravity; Law's function; justification by faith; original sin; sanctification; glorification; security of believer; sovereignty, election, and God's faithfulness; Christian conduct; Christian and the State; Christian freedom and questionable practices
Ephesians	Early 60s	Rome	Believer's position in Christ; Christ in us -- church as body and organization; internal ministry of the Holy Spirit
Philippians	Early 60s	Rome	Believer's attitudes; church's body life
Colossians	Early 60s	Rome	Person and work of Christ; believer's completeness in Christ; church's body life
Philemon	Early 60s	Rome	Personal note; picture of substitutionary atonement
1 Timothy	Late 50s Early to Mid-60s	Ephesus Macedonia	Paul's ministry counsel – sound doctrine; church order and leadership, decorum
Titus	Late 50s Early to Mid-60s	Ephesus Nicopolis	Paul's ministry counsel – church order and leadership; sound doctrine; good deeds
2 Timothy	Late 50s Mid-60s	Ephesus Rome	Spiritual conflict; passing the torch

Many modern scholars dispute the authenticity of several of Paul's letters. Typically, Paul is acknowledged as the author of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon. The others are referred to as Deutero-Pauline, assumed to be written by Paul's close associates and disciples at a later date but reflecting Paul's thought closely.

Prison Epistles—Paul wrote the so-called prison epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon) during his first Roman imprisonment in the early 60s. Each of these epistles refer to Paul's imprisonment (Eph 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Phil 1:7, 13-14; Col 4:3, 10, 18; Phil 9-10, 13, 23) and fit well in the period described in Acts 28:16-31, a span of Paul's life conducive to writing. However, the Roman origin to these letters does not command unanimous support. Two alternatives are proposed:

Caesarea—Paul was a prisoner here for two years in the late 50s and his friends had access to him while he was in prison (Acts 24:23, 27). Paul's reference to the praetorium or palace guard (Phil 1:13) can refer to Herod's palace at Caesarea. However, this seems a stretch. Contrary to his situation described in the prison epistles (Phil. 1:20-26), Paul was not facing imminent death while at Caesarea, for he had appealed to Caesar (Acts 25:10-12) and was going to Rome to face trial. Furthermore, he was in a center of travel while in prison, where his friends came and went with ease. This situation would have been more characteristic of Rome than Caesarea.

Ephesus—Some think the prison epistles were written from Ephesus in the mid-50s, during Paul's three-year stay there. To the objection that Acts does not record an Ephesian imprisonment, the proponents of this view hypothesize such an imprisonment from Romans 16:4, 7; 1 Corinthians 15:32; 2 Corinthians 1:8-10 and 11:23. However, of these texts, only 1 Corinthians 15:23 actually mentions Ephesus (Paul is describing how he fought wild beasts there) and this could be a metaphor for the scene described in Acts 19. The "evidence" for this hypothesis is nothing more than interesting conjecture.

On balance, it is reasonable to accept the traditional idea that Paul wrote these letters while under house arrest at Rome in the early 60s. In addition, references to the praetorium or place guard (Phil. 1:13) and Caesar's household (Phil. 4:22) are best explained by a Roman imprisonment than either of the other theories.

Pastoral Epistles—Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus are referred to as the Pastorals because their subject matter relates to Paul's advice to his young associates concerning their pastoral duties in the churches to which they were sent.

Critical attacks—Critical scholars believe that the Pastorals were not written by Paul, but by several of his followers one or even two generations after the Paul's death. Their arguments for asserting this are fourfold:

- **Historical**—This stems from the failure of chronological references in the Pastorals to fit comfortably within the historical framework of the Book of Acts. For example, nowhere in Acts do we read of Paul preaching in Crete and leaving

Titus there to organize the churches (Titus 1:5). Nor does his leaving Timothy in Ephesus fit into Acts 19 narrative (1 Tim. 1:3). Critical scholars assume that the letters date much later and fictitious references inserted. A more satisfactory solution is to give credence to Eusebius' implication that Paul was released after his first Roman imprisonment, traveled to Spain and elsewhere, before being rearrested and martyred. See below.

- ***Ecclesiastical***—This argument asserts that the church structure and order evidenced in the Pastorals did not emerge until the second century, well after the apostolic age. The discussion of bishops, elders or presbyters, and deacons shows a more advanced church organization than existed in Paul's day. Others contend that the critics' arguments are questionable. In the Pastorals, elders and bishops are interchangeable terms (see Titus 1:5-9) in contrast to the emergence of the monarchical bishop during the second century when bishops were distinguished from, and in hierarchy over, presbyters or elders. The emergence of the offices of deacon and elder had already occurred in Paul's lifetime (see Phil. 1:1), indeed, at his instigation (see Acts 14:23). Nothing about the discussion of these offices in the Pastorals requires a second century dating.
- ***Doctrinal***—The doctrinal emphases of the Pastorals are different from those of Paul's previous letters (except for Colossians and Ephesians, but those are discounted by the critics as inauthentic as well). The concern for "sound doctrine" is considered sub-Pauline. Instead of developing truth, the author is content with merely conserving or guarding it, of opting for orthodoxy rather than creative thought. I do not think Paul would have seen the task of conserving truth as being beneath him, but rather as a special stewardship from God.

Another variant of this argument sees the heresy combated in the Pastorals as well-developed Gnosticism, a second century phenomena. However, the full-fledged Gnosticism of the second century was already "incipient" during the first century, including the years of Paul's ministry. On closer inspection, the error addressed in the pastorals may not have been Gnosticism at all. The false teachers described reveal eclectic tendencies, drawing on Jewish influences (1 Tim 1:7; Titus 1:10, 14; 3:9) as well as others.

- ***Linguistic and stylistic arguments***—Critics point out that an unusually high number of words occur in the Pastorals that are not used elsewhere in Paul's letters. They conclude that Paul did not write these letters on the basis of this variance. The reply simply asserts that such word counting does not support the weight of the critics' contentions. More traditional scholars contend that the entire literary procedure here is unsound because the available samples of literature are far too small for such findings to be statistically valid. In addition, the critics' arguments completely overlook the different subject matter of the Pastorals, differing experiences, advanced age, changes in environment and companions, and different recipients and purposes which could affect a writer's vocabulary.

Traditional alternatives—More traditional scholarship offers two options. One views the letters were written in the period after Paul's ministry in Ephesus on the third missionary journey and before spending three months in Greece (Acts 20). That would place the date of writing in the mid to late 50s and from Asia Minor. During this time, Paul also wrote 2 Corinthians and penned the formative concepts in church structure and administration, addressing the needs of the young and developing church.

Another view posits a fourth missionary journey. Acts 13:1-21:16 indicates that Paul made three missionary journeys. Some scholars believe he made a fourth journey after his release from Roman imprisonment in Acts 28. Evidence cited for such a journey includes Paul's mention of his intention to visit Spain (Rom. 15:24, 28), the fourth century historian Eusebius' indication that Paul was indeed released after a first Roman imprisonment, and statements among early Christian writers, including Clement of Rome and the author of the Muratorian Canon, that Paul took the gospel as far as Spain.

Scholars positing this fourth missionary journey have suggested that the subsequent mention of various locales in the Pastorals provide a basis for constructing an itinerary for this journey. They suggest that this journey commenced around 63, after his release from the imprisonment recorded in Acts 28 and concluded in 66 or 67, when he was imprisoned at Rome for the last time prior to his execution at the end of Nero's reign. The order of travel cannot be prescribed, but Paul may have visited the following places between 63 and 66 or 67, when a second imprisonment at Rome allegedly occurred:

- Spain (Rom. 15:24, 28)
- Crete (Titus 1:5)
- Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20)
- Colosse (Phm. 22)
- Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3)
- Philippi (2 Tim. 23-24)
- Nicopolis (Titus 3:12)

During this journey Paul wrote 1 Timothy and Titus. During a second Roman imprisonment, he wrote 2 Timothy. This second imprisonment contrasted with his first one, when he was under house arrest (Acts 28:30) and confident of his eventual release (Phil. 1:25-26). He was in a cold dungeon (2 Tim. 4:13), chained like a common criminal (2 Tim. 1:16; 2:9), in such a remote locale that Onesiphorus had to search diligently to even find (2 Tim. 1:17). Gone is talk of release for now he knew that his work was done and his earthly sojourn ending (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Romans

Introduction—This book is Paul’s magnum opus—the most systematic presentation of the gospel he preached. One writer has described it as “the cathedral of the Christian faith.” Martin Luther wrote: “This epistle is the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest gospel ... It can never be read or pondered too much, and the more it is dealt with the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes.” Luther’s associate, Philip Melancthon, described the book as a timeless treatise, “a compendium of Christian doctrine” that transcends time.

Romans has impacted countless people through the years. There’s John Wesley’s story. On May 24, 1738, he reluctantly went to a service at Aldersgate Chapel in London. It turned out to be a life-changing experience. The preface to Martin Luther’s commentary on Romans was read at this meeting. Wesley recorded his reaction in his journal: “About a quarter before nine, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sin, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.” Wesley went on and had an incredibly far-reaching ministry. He was a key personality in the Great Awakening that swept over Great Britain and the United States in the 18th century. The same Holy Spirit who so utilized Romans to teach and transform these giants of faith and do the same for us.

Author and occasion—Romans was probably composed while Paul was in Corinth in the late 50s, probably around 58 at the close of his third missionary journey. It may have been written during the three-month stopover described in Acts 20:3. He may have been staying with Gaius (16:23) at the time of the letter’s composition. The mention of Erastus, Corinth’s commissioner of public works, and the commendation of Phoebe, who belonged to the church at nearby Cenchrea, further confirms the Corinthian origin of the letter.

When Paul wrote to the church in Rome, he was writing to a church with whose founding he had nothing whatsoever to do. He did not have previous personal contact with the Roman church. This is quite different from the rest of Paul’s letters. Likewise, it is different in another way. Paul’s other letters, with the exception of Ephesians, were driven by the circumstances in which the church addressed was enmeshed. Romans, of all Paul’s letters, comes closest to a theological treatise.

He desired to utilize the Roman church as a base of operations in the western portion of the Empire. He wanted to spread the gospel west, as far as Spain. He wrote this letter, setting out the very essence of the gospel he preached, in order that he might find in Rome a sympathetic supporting church for his intended work in the Western Empire.

The believers at Rome were a mixed lot, both Jew and Gentile, albeit primarily Gentile. The church in Rome was composed of many house churches at Rome. Large basilicas

that populate various European cities did not begin to appear until the third and fourth centuries of our era.

Romans reflects the way ancient letters were commonly composed:

- Greeting (Rom. 1:1).
- Prayer for the health and welfare of the recipients (Rom. 1:7).
- Thanksgiving (Rom. 1:8-15).
- General contents of the letter (main body of Romans).
- Special greetings at the end (Rom. 16).

Likewise, when we say Paul penned this letter, we must not see him as sitting quietly at a desk carefully polishing each sentence as he writes. Paul did not ordinarily pen his own letters. He typically dictated them to an amanuensis (a secretary with leeway to capture the author's thought). Picture him striding across a small room somewhere in Corinth, pouring out a torrent of words, that his amanuensis is scribbling to get down. In Romans 16:22, Tertius identifies himself as Paul's amanuensis when he slips in his own greeting to the Romans.

Purpose—Paul had a threefold purpose for writing Romans:

- To announce Paul's plans to visit Rome after his return from delivering relief from Gentile believers to the Jerusalem church (15:24, 28-29; Acts 19:21). Paul may have intended to use Rome as a base of operations for the evangelization of Spain and the western part of the Roman Empire, much as he used Antioch as a base for the missionary journeys through Asia Minor and Greece.
- To present a complete and detailed statement of the gospel he preached to people who did not know him and yet may have heard charges against him by various Judaizing groups or other of Paul's detractors.
- To address an underlying tension between Jewish and Gentile segments in the Christian community. In Romans 9-11, one senses that Paul is addressing a very definite undertone among Jewish believers that questioned God's goodness, wisdom, and justice as revealed in His salvation plan, particularly as it bore on the Jew.

Guiding Concepts:

Righteousness—The grand theme of Romans is a righteousness of God revealed in the gospel and appropriated by faith from first to last (1:17). This righteousness is not one of human self-justifying merit but a right standing with God which the Lord Himself provides. It is imputed to human beings by grace through faith (justification) and then imparted in the believer resulting in a progressively transformed lifestyle (sanctification). The grand hope, expressed so sublimely in Romans 8, is that our lifestyles will one day be perfectly in accord with our righteous standing before God (glorification).

Protestants have traditionally stressed justification by faith, a doctrine emphasized in Romans and Galatians. However, it is important to understand why Paul needed to emphasize this. Most Jews believed that the Jewish people were saved by divine grace. Jewish Christians recognized that this grace was available only through the Lord Jesus. By what terms would the Gentiles become part of God's people? In arguing for the ethnic unity of God's body, Paul contends that all people come to God on the same terms, no matter what their ethnic, economic, educational, or religious background. He stresses justification by faith, a doctrine most of his readers would know and utilizes it to emphasize reconciliation with one another, a reality that they still needed to learn.

Nature of God—Righteousness necessarily brings God's mercy and justice into sharp relief. This is elaborated upon throughout the letter. God is indeed merciful and gracious and longs to forgive and restore us to a relationship with Himself. The Scriptures say: "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive together with Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions" (Ephesians 2:4-5a). And again, it says: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16). Mercy is unmerited favor from God to erring people who can do nothing to earn it except to hold out our hands.

However, God is also holy and righteous and cannot ignore our sinful state and our constant violation of his commandments. This theme is a dominant one in Scripture. The Apostle Paul writes: "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness (Romans 1:18). Righteousness is that attribute of God by which God's nature is the eternally perfect standard of what is right. His judgment is not arbitrary or capricious, but principled and without favoritism. All will be judged fairly. No breaks. No payoffs. No inequity. He is the standard for a moral universe and if there is no consequence for doing wrong, then doing wrong becomes all right. The ultimate consequence of wrong not judged is a lawless universe, a hell here on earth in our present order.

Human sin dilemma—Humanity's fundamental problem is more serious than a few "boys will be boys" peccadilloes. Romans 1-3 develops the theme of human depravity – sin has twisted every aspect of our being. Humans may not be as bad as they can be, but we are wrong at the root in every facet of our being. The licentious pagan (1:18-32) as well as the moral Gentiles and self-righteous Jews (2:1-3:8) are all on the same plane—lost in sin with no humanly devised way out (3:9-20). Paul develops the theme of original sin in Romans 5, implicating the entire race in Adam's fall.

Jew-Gentile integration—Roman Christians were amid what we would now call ethnic reconciliation and cross-cultural understanding. Paul reminds his Jewish readers that they are lost without Christ just as the Gentiles (Rom. 1-3); that spiritual, not ethnic, descent from Abraham is what matters (Rom. 4; 9); that Jews are also descended from Adam and share his nature (5:12-21); and that the law (i.e. Torah) does not and never did justify Israel (Rom. 7; 10). He also reminds the Gentiles that they were incorporated into Judaism and should avoid any anti-Semitic tendencies (Rom. 11) and that they must

respect Jewish practices (Rom. 14). Christ (Rom. 15:1-13) and Paul (Rom. 15:14-33) are agents of reconciliation and unity (Rom. 16:17-20).

The Jews had a problem with Jesus as the Messiah and with the shift from the Old to the New Covenant. Paul answers the critic who asks why God's chosen people had failed to respond to their Messiah's claims by delineating God's purposes for both Jew and Gentile.

Election—In discussing the problem of Jewish rejection of their Messiah, Paul asserts the doctrine of divine election. Human beings, Jew or Gentile, have no claim on God, but God is faithful to His promise and His covenant, though we be faithless.

Function of Law—The Law was never meant to be a means for people to achieve righteousness before God, but rather a means of showing people the impossibility of such a feat. The Law's revelation prevents people from “dummying down” what it means to have fellowship with a holy God so that they may cast themselves upon God's grace alone.

Book Synopsis and Outline:

The structure of the letter falls into four main divisions:

- Chapters 1-8 deals with the problem of righteousness. The first part of Romans traces the significance of the gospel from condemnation (1:18-3:20) to justification (3:21-5:21) to sanctification (6:1-8:39) to glorification. In this development, the book focuses on the doctrines of sin and salvation.
- Chapters 9-11 deals with the problem of the Jews. What happened here? Is there an undertone among Jewish believers that questioned God's goodness, wisdom, and justice as revealed in His salvation plan, particularly as it bore on them? Did God give up on His covenant and abandon His Old Testament people?
- Chapters 12-15 deals with practical questions of living. Paul provides practical exhortation for the outworking of righteousness in the daily lives of the Roman believers. He also included his own plans for future missionary work.
- Chapter 16 is a letter of introduction for Phoebe and a list of final greetings. The chapter is something of a problem. Paul greets by name far more people in this chapter than in any other letter. Yet, he had never set foot in Rome.

Romans begins by taking you into a courtroom. Paul calls both Gentiles and Jews to the stand and grills them, finding them guilty before God's impartial judgment (Romans 1-3). Then he presents and explains God's marvelous salvation by faith, how he makes us right (Romans 3:21-5:21). But if we are made right by faith in God's substitutionary atonement and not by our behavior, why not go on sinning. It is what we do best and, according to your argument Paul, it shows the rightness of God's law. This leads Paul to explain our ongoing experience of being made right in sanctification—our victory, liberty, and security (Romans 6-8). Then he takes an excursus in Romans 9-11. What about the Jews and God's fidelity to His covenant? Then, in Romans 12-15, he deals with the practical outworking of being made right with God and others in the daily life of the believer.

Finally, in Romans 15 and 16, Paul explains his future plans and greets his friends at Rome.

***Summary Outline:* Romans—Righteousness by Faith**

- I. Introduction (1:1-17)
 - A. Salutation (1:1-7)
 - B. Thanksgiving for the recipients (1:8-15)
 - C. Theme stated (1:16-17)

- II. Need for Salvation: Plight of Humanity Lost in Sin (1:18-3:20)
 - A. For the riotous pagan (1:18-32)
 - B. For the moral pagan and the religious Jew (2:1-3:8)
 - C. All fall short (3:9-20)

- III. Justification: Imputation of Righteousness (3:21-5:21)
 - A. Justification described (3:21-31)
 - B. Abraham as illustrating justification by faith (4:1-25)
 - C. Benefits of justification described (5:1-11)
 - D. Applicability of justification: death in Adam/life in Christ (5:12-21)

- IV. Sanctification: Imparting Righteousness (6:1-8:39)
 - A. Believer's union with Christ in death and resurrection life (6:1-23)
 - 1. Know—what we need to know to live right (6:1-10)
 - 2. Consider/count/reckon—moving out on what we know (6:11)
 - 3. Present/yield/offer (6:12-14)
 - 4. An exchange of masters (6:15-23)
 - B. Believer and the law (7:1-25)
 - 1. Deliverance from law (7:1-6)
 - 2. Law and sin: what is the gig? (7:7-25)
 - C. Life in the Spirit (8:1-39)
 - 1. Liberation from the law of sin and death (8:1-11)
 - 2. Additional ministries of the Spirit—groaning (8:12-27)
 - 3. Security and permanence of life in the Spirit (8:28-39)

- V. Jewish Rejection of Messiah: Righteousness Vindicated (9:1-11:36)
 - A. Paul's sorrow over Israel's condition (9:1-5)
 - B. God's choice of Israel based on election not pedigree (9:6-13)
 - C. God's sovereign right to act (9:14-29)
 - D. Israel's failure due to reliance on works rather than faith (9:30-10:21)
 - E. God not finished with Israel (11:1-36)

- VI. **Spiritual Service: Practice of Righteousness (12:1-15:13)**
 - A. Dedicated lifestyle (12:1-2)
 - B. Practice in the body of Christ: Varied ministries (12:3-8)
 - C. Principles of Christian conduct (12:9-21)

- D. Submission to civil authority (13:1-7)
 - E. Obligation of love in light of the end (13:8-14)
 - F. Questions of conscience upon which Christians differ (14:1-15:13)
- VII. Conclusion (15:14-16:27)
- A. Past labor, present endeavor, future plans (15:14-33)
 - B. Personal greetings, warning, and doxology (16:1-27)

1 & 2 Corinthians

[What follows relates to the background that is common to both 1 & 2 Corinthians. The unique aspects of each book are treated in separate introductions.]

Introduction—The ancient city of Corinth was a key center of Greece. It had a reputation for vulgar materialism and gross immorality. Plato, in the *Republic*, referred to prostitutes as “Corinthians girls” and the playwright Aristophanes coined the verb “*korinthiazomai*” to refer to fornication. Much of the vice and wealth of Corinth was centered around the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, and the more than one thousand prostitutes (called *hieroduli*) dedicated to her service.

In 146 B.C., Corinth was destroyed by the Romans as they completed their subjugation of Greece. For a hundred years, the site lay dormant until its favorable location caught the eye of Julius Caesar who re-founded the city in 46 B.C. His successor, the Emperor Augustus, made it the capital of the Roman province of Achaia.

In Paul’s day, Corinth was regaining her former prominence as a commercial and political center. Located on a narrow isthmus between the Aegean and Adriatic Seas connecting the Peloponnesian peninsula with northern Greece, Corinth was a natural seat of commerce and business. Because of her two seaports, Corinth was a bustling center of trade. Small ships were rolled or dragged across the Corinthian isthmus to avoid the dangerous voyage around southern Greece. A canal was not cut through the isthmus until 1893 despite repeated attempts.

In addition, Corinth made a comeback as a center of entertainment, vice, and corruption. The temple of Aphrodite once again did a booming “sacred” business and pleasure-seekers came from everywhere to spend their money on a holiday from morality. Athletics were a part of the entertainment mix. The Corinthian games ranked second only to the Olympics in competitive caliber.

Author and occasion—Paul established the Corinthian church during his second missionary journey (Acts 18). Persecution in Macedonia drove him south to Athens (Acts 17) and then to Corinth. He made tents with Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2-3) and reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue. When Silas and Timothy joined him (with a financial gift from Philippi, see 2 Cor. 11:8-9; Phil. 4:15), Paul devoted himself full-time to the Gospel, staying at Corinth for around a year and a half. From there he departed to strengthen the disciples in Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23).

A summary of Paul’s Corinthian correspondence is as follows:

- Paul writes a letter (now lost) in which he instructs the Corinthian church to separate from professing Christians who live immorally (1 Cor. 5:9).
- Paul writes 1 Corinthians from Ephesus during his third missionary journey to deal with a variety of problems in the church.

- Paul makes a short “painful” visit to Corinth (2 Cor. 2:1; 12:14; 13:1-2) in an unsuccessful attempt to straighten out problems in the church.
- Paul (now back in Ephesus) writes another lost letter (2 Cor. 2:3-4, 9-10; 7:8) out of deep distress and sorrow in which he commanded the Corinthians to discipline his leading opponents in the church. Titus bore this letter and was entrusted with this mission.
- Paul leaves Ephesus, anxiously awaiting word from Titus, first at Troas and then in Macedonia (2 Cor. 2:12-13).
- Titus finally arrives with the good news that most of the Corinthians had responded obediently to Paul’s sorrowful letter and had submitted to his authority (2 Cor. 7:5-7).
- Paul writes 2 Corinthians from Macedonia in response to Titus’ favorable report and sends it with Titus and another brother (2 Cor. 8:16ff).

1 Corinthians

Introduction—The Corinthians were Paul’s problem children. This book is an index of the hot issues of that day: church divisions, immorality in community, lawsuits among believers, marriage questions, handling questionable practices upon which believers disagree, the role of women in community, abuses of the Lord’s table, the exercise of spiritual gifts, and doctrinal confusion concerning the Resurrection. It was a potpourri of controversy like our time.

This letter offers more insight into the problems of a pioneer church than any other New Testament book. Each problem is met by applying a spiritual principle rather than by recommending a psychological expedient. For schism, the remedy is spiritual maturity (3:1-9); for fornication, church discipline until the offender repents and is restored (5:1-13); for litigation, arbitration by others within the Christian community (6:1-11). Repeatedly, Paul takes practical problems and applies spiritual principles to arrive at concrete recommendations.

Author and occasion—Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus in the mid-50s. Two events prompted the writing of the epistle: (1) receipt of oral reports from Chloe’s household relating to quarrels among the Corinthians regarding various leaders (1:11); and (2) the coming of a delegation from the Corinthians (16:17 identifies Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus as the church representatives) with an offering and a letter asking for Paul’s guidance on a number of issues (see 7:1, 25; 8:1; 11:2; 12:1; 15:1; 16:1).

Purpose—The central theme of 1 Corinthians has been described by one author as “the doctrine of the cross in its social application”. The Corinthians, convinced of their own wisdom and their own ability to “have it all” right then, had developed a cross-voiding spirit. Theirs was the problem of premature exaltation, thinking that the crown of the Christian life could come without a cross.

Paul applies the theology of the cross in a twofold manner: (1) the first six chapters deal with his correction of problems brought to his attention by Chloe’s servants; (2) the last ten chapters address issues raised by the church and presented to Paul by their delegation to Ephesus.

Guiding Concepts:

Enthusiasm—The Corinthians were overly attracted by outward appearances. Dynamic leaders, mesmerizing speakers (3:1-4:21) and flashy, spectacular gifting (12:1-14:40) held their interest and fascination. They did not embrace the ideas of self-sacrifice or surrendering their rights for the benefit of others (6:1-11; 8:1-11:1). They were opting for self-expression (11:2-16; 12:1 et seq.) rather than order and decorum. In all of this, the Corinthians were grasping for a premature sense of exaltation and were forgetting the cross of Christ. The full realization of the Kingdom involves our understanding that just

as the cross came before the crown in the ministry of our Lord, so too with His followers. The cross defined the direction of our Lord's earthly ministry. It is to define our spiritual experience this side of glory.

Wisdom and knowledge—The opening chapters of this book excoriate fleshly wisdom and knowledge. The Corinthians were interested in intellectual pursuits and were attracted to a form of knowledge that emphasized denying worldly and fleshly desires, which they believed to be redemptive. There have been pre-Gnostic elements in the attitudes of the Corinthians. Full-blown Gnosticism was a heresy that besieged the church in the second century, built on two principles:

- **Supremacy of knowledge**—The movement got its name from the Greek word for knowledge (*gnosis*). Gnostics believed that knowledge itself was redemptive and that spiritual people have access to spiritual knowledge that regular, unenlightened people do not have. This belief invariably led to arrogance and elitism among the “enlightened ones.”
- **Matter does not matter**—Gnostics were strict dualists, locating goodness in spirit and evil in matter. They believed that the body, being matter, was inherently evil. The practical ramifications of this led to two entirely different errors. One was that of aestheticism where the body was mistreated or ignored in the pursuit of “spiritual” endeavors. The second error, and the one commonly indulged in, was license. Since matter was not spirit and had no impact on the spirit world, what you did with your matter did not matter. The improper view of the body may have been behind excesses such as that condemned in 1 Corinthians 5, the need for instruction in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, the questions concerning marriage and virginity in 1 Corinthians 7, and the doctrinal problems concerning the physical resurrection of the body discussed in 1 Corinthians 15.

Personality cults—The Corinthians were hero-worshippers. Discussion of the proper view of leadership in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4:21 is as apropos in our day as it was in Paul's.

Spiritual Gifts—Given the Corinthians' fascination with flash and appearance, their attraction to the “showy” spiritual gifts was a natural. This epistle contains a very substantial development of the presence and proper exercise of spiritual gifting in the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12-14).

Summary Outline: 1 Corinthians—The Foolishness of the Cross

- I. Introduction and Thanksgiving (1:1-9)
- II. Divisions in the Church (1:10-4:21)
 - A. Cause: Attitudes that empty the Cross (1:10-17)
 - B. Spiritual and worldly wisdom (1:18-2:16)
 - C. Leadership in perspective (3:1-4:21)

- III. Moral Laxness in the Church (5:1-6:20)
 - A. Immorality in community: Expel the immoral brother (5:1-13)
 - B. Lawsuits between believers (6:1-11)
 - C. Physical purity: Sanctity of the body (6:12-20)
- IV. Celibacy and Marriage (7:1-40)
 - A. Celibacy, marriage, and purity (7:1-7)
 - B. Instructions for various groups (7:8-16)
 - C. Principle presented and applied: Remain as you are (7:17-40)
- V. Christian Liberty: Idol Meat Controversy (8:1-11:1)
 - A. Restricting liberty for concern of edification (8:1-13)
 - B. Paul's personal example (9:1-27)
 - C. Improper use of liberty: Warning from Israel's example (10:1-13)
 - D. Summary on restricting one's use of liberty (10:14-11:1)
- VI. Order in Church Worship (11:2-14:40)
 - A. Head coverings: Women in community (11:2-16)
 - B. Factions at the Lord's table (11:17-34)
 - C. Abuses concerning spiritual gifts (12:1-14:40)
- VII. Resurrection of the Body (15:1-58)
 - A. Fact of Christ's resurrection (15:1-11)
 - B. General resurrection of the body established (15:12-34)
 - C. Nature of the resurrected body (12:35-49)
 - D. Necessity that all change: Triumph over death (15:50-58)
- VIII. Final Remarks and Greetings (16:1-24)

2 Corinthians

Introduction—2 Corinthians is Paul’s most painful and personal letter defending his apostolic character, call, and credentials. This letter affords an insight into Paul’s career that none of his other epistles give. With the Corinthians, Paul not only had to contend with the spiritual darkness and the evils attendant to living in close proximity to hedonistic paganism, but he also faced the active malice of jealous and unprincipled leaders who claimed to be Christians.

The accusations brought by these opponents were numerous. They charged that he walked according to the flesh (10:2) and that he was a coward, his letters sounded like thunder, but his actual presence was very unimpressive (10:10). They said that he demeaned himself by working and not taking support from the churches (11:7). They challenged his authority and apostolic credentials (11:5; 12:11-12). They attacked his personal character, claiming that he was boastful (10:8, 15), deceitful (12:16), and insinuated that he may have embezzled funds entrusted to him (8:20-23). In short, Paul was up against slander.

These accusers were false brethren (11:13-15), of Jewish origin (1:22), claiming to be apostles (11:5, 13; 12:11), who, by the clever means of letters of recommendation (3:1), had gained entrance into the Corinthian church. They were domineering (11:19-20), not ready for the hard toil of pioneering for Christ (11:23ff), preached a false gospel (11:4), and were perhaps responsible for the divisions in the Corinthian church (1 Cor 3-4).

Author and occasion—Paul wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia in the mid-50s, shortly after he penned 1 Corinthians. Critics attack the unity of the book, but not its Pauline authorship. Various critics have alleged that there are five interpolations (insertions into the original text by later editors) in 2 Corinthians:

- 2 Corinthians 2:14-7:4—Some claim that this segment is a separate letter. The insertion of this material allegedly disrupts the flow of thought between 2 Corinthians 2:13 and 7:5.
- 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 is claimed to be extraneous material.
- 2 Corinthians 8 is considered an interpolation that disrupts the flow into 2 Corinthians 9.
- 2 Corinthians 10-13 is considered a separate letter, probably the “sorrowful letter” described in 2 Corinthians 2:3-4, 9-10, which preceded the writing of 2 Corinthians proper (that is, 2 Corinthians 1-9).
- 2 Corinthians 11:32-33 is seen as an awkward intrusion by a later editor in Paul’s flow of thought between 11:31 and 12:1.

Of these theories, the one that understands 2 Corinthians 10-13 as the sorrowful letter has garnered the most support among critics. However, there is not a shred of manuscript evidence to support the theory. The change in tone between 2 Corinthians 1-9 and 10-13

is due to a shift in focus from the repentant majority of Corinthians to the stubborn minority still supporting Paul's critics.

Purpose—2 Corinthians was penned to defend Paul's apostolic credentials and authority. 2 Corinthians 1-7 discuss Paul's ministry among the Corinthians before moving into a more general discussion of the manner, message, and character of a true servant of Christ. 2 Corinthians 8-9 delineate the details of the offering for the Jerusalem church and demonstrate Paul's forthright handling of the collection. 2 Corinthians 10-13 defend his apostleship and denounces those opposing and slandering him.

Guiding Concepts:

Judaizing controversy—This controversy continually plagued Paul. The nature, manner, and message of a New Covenant ministry is developed in 2 Corinthians 2-5 as a necessary corrective for the teaching of Paul's opponents.

Comfort—2 Corinthians is a book of sadness and joy, conflict and reconciliation, sorrow and comfort. From the classical text on comfort in 2 Corinthians 1:4-7, through comfort in the midst of conflict (2 Cor. 12-13) and the joy of the news of reconciliation (2 Cor. 7:5-7), to God's sufficient grace in all weakness (2 Cor. 12:7-10), divine comfort is a constant for Paul in the midst of the turmoil described in 2 Corinthians. Comfort relates to understanding God's perspective on the events of our lives and finding shelter and rest from the storm in His sovereign hands.

Ministry's inner sanctum—More than any other New Testament book, the inner life of a true minister of the gospel is on display here. Paul's feelings about himself, his apostolic ministry, and about his relationship to the churches he founded and nurtured are exposed to view. His pastor's heart is discernible as he opens wide his own heart (6:11-12) and pleads with the Corinthians to do likewise (6:13). Clearly Paul is beyond human emotion as he shepherds the wayward Corinthians with a love which comes only from God.

Summary Outline: 2 Corinthians—Heart of An Apostolic Ministry

- I. Introduction: Comfort in All Trouble (1:1-11)
- II. Paul's Defense of His Change of Itinerary (1:12-2:13)
- III. Paul's Defense of His Apostolic Ministry (2:14-&:16)
 - A. Nature of New Covenant ministry (2:14-3:18)
 - B. Treasure in jars of clay: All surpassing power from God (4:1-16)
 - C. Eternal perspective on ministry (4:17-5:10)
 - D. Message: Reconciliation in Christ (5:11-6:2)
 - E. Marks of sincere ministry (6:3-10)
 - F. Imploring proper response from Corinthians (6:11-7:16)
- IV. Jerusalem Relief Mission: Grace of Giving (8:1-9:15)

- A. Excelling in the grace of giving (8:1-15)
 - B. Service to the saints: Titus and his ministry team (8:16-9:5)
 - C. Principles of the grace of giving (9:6-15)
- V. Paul's Defense of His Apostolic Authority (10:1-13:14)
- A. Exercise of authority (10:1-11:5)
 - B. Boasting about suffering: Apostolic credentials (11:6-12:13)
 - C. Planned third visit to Corinth (12:14-13:10)
 - D. Final greetings; Benediction (13:11-14)

Galatians

Introduction—Galatians has been described as the Magna Carta of Christian liberty. The book played such a key role in the Reformation that it is called “the cornerstone of the Protestant Reformation.” The letter is Paul’s manifesto of justification by faith alone refuting the legalism that ensnared the Galatian churches. This essential truth was challenged by the insistence from certain quarters that believers in Christ must keep the law if they expected to be complete before God. Paul uses personal, theological, and moral arguments to demonstrate the superiority of grace over law and a life of liberty over that of legalism or license.

Author and occasion—There are two major views concerning the background of the writing of Galatians:

- **South Galatia theory**—Paul wrote this letter to the churches in south Galatia (Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch) that he founded during his first missionary journey (Acts 13-14). He wrote from Antioch in Syria before the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) in the late 40s. The visit to Jerusalem described in Galatians 2 is the famine relief visit discussed in Acts 11:27-30.
- **North Galatia theory**—Paul wrote to the churches he founded in north-central Galatia during his second missionary journey (Acts 16:6-8) before he came to Troas and received the Macedonian vision (Acts 16:9-10). A second visit to these churches is described in Acts 18:23. According to this view, Paul wrote Galatians was written after the Jerusalem Council in the mid-50s from either Ephesus or Macedonia. The visit Paul describes in Galatians 2 is the Jerusalem Council itself.

This matter is further complicated by confusion in terminology. The term “Galatia” was used in both a geographical and a political sense. Initially, Galatia referred to the north-central area in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey) where the Gauls had settled after migrating from Europe in the 3rd century B.C. In this geographical sense of the term, the principal cities of the area were Ancyra, Pessinus, and Tavium. In 25 B.C., the Emperor Augustus converted this territory into a Roman province and added to this province an area in the south, which included the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. So Galatia, in the political sense of the term, encompassed an area through which Paul traveled in his first missionary journey.

The problem boils down to this. Was Galatia written to the churches in the southern part of the province (Galatia in the political sense) which Paul and Barnabus evangelized on their first missionary journey, or was it written to a group of churches in Galatia proper (Galatia in the geographical sense), which may have been founded during the second and third missionary journeys? The south Galatian theory allows for an earlier dating for the book and provides a better explanation for its historical setting and the importance of the Judaizing issue prior to the Jerusalem Council.

Purpose—This letter is a protests the corruption of the gospel of grace and defends that gospel from the respective errors of legalism and license.

Guiding Concepts:

Defense of Paul’s apostolic ministry—Like 2 Corinthians, Galatians defends Paul’s apostolic call and ministry and contains in summary form what the apostle taught.

Law and grace—Galatians vigorously defends justification by grace alone and exposes the fallacy of a Law-based righteousness. Galatians is called “a short Romans” since both books teach the doctrine of justification by faith. The superiority of grace over law is a central concern of the book.

Liberty and license—Galatians 5-6 shows that Christian liberty does not mean license. God intends His children to live in the power of the Holy Spirit to manifest the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23) rather than the works of the flesh (5:19-21).

Summary Outline: Galatians—Justification by Faith in Christ

- I. Introduction: Turning to another gospel (1:1-10)
- II. Defense of Apostolic Authority (1:11-2:21)
 - A. Paul’s message received directly from God (1:11-24)
 - B. Apostolic recognition of Paul’s ministry among Gentiles (2:1-10)
 - C. Peter confronted in Antioch: Justification by faith, not by legal observance (2:11-21)
- III. Defense of Justification by Faith (3:1-5:12)
 - A. Vindication of the doctrine (3:1-29)
 - B. Old Testament illustrations of the doctrine (4:1-31)
- IV. Defense of Christian Liberty: Justification by Faith does not Lead to License
 - A. Free from Law-based righteousness (5:1-12)
 - B. Christian liberty: Free not to indulge sinful nature (5:13-6:10)
 - C. Conclusion: Not circumcision but new creation (6:11-18)

Ephesians

Introduction—Ephesians is called the “queen of the epistles”. The letter describes the richness of the believer’s position in Christ in the first three chapters of the book before exhorting us to live up to our privileges in the last three chapters. Theology and worship intersect here as the doctrine and practice of the Church is examined against the backdrop of God’s purposes. This book expounds some of the most sublime and precious biblical truths.

Ephesus was the largest city in Asia Minor (a Roman province consisting of much of modern-day Turkey) in the first century and one of the three largest commercial centers in the eastern Mediterranean (Alexandria in Egypt and Antioch in Syria were the other two). Ephesus was a haven for philosophers, poets, artists, and orators. It was also the center for the cult of the goddess Artemis (Diana to the Romans) as Acts 19:21-41 reveals.

Paul stopped at Ephesus briefly during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21) before returning and staying for three years during his third missionary journey (Acts 19:8-10; 20:31). Paul's stay coincided with the spread of Christianity in Asia Minor (Acts 19:10) and included three significant events in the city of Ephesus:

- The disciples of John episode (Acts 19:1-12) in which the Spirit was poured out upon the former disciples of John the Baptist;
- The sons of Sceva episode (Acts 19:13-20) in which the divination practiced by Sceva’s sons resulted in their humiliation and a widespread revival and the repudiation of occult practices in the city;
- A riot led by Demetrius and the silversmiths of Artemis (Acts 19:21-41) protesting their loss of business because of the inroads the Gospel had made into the pagan worship of the goddess.

Paul later visited the Ephesian elders during a layover at Miletus while in route to Jerusalem (Acts 20:17-38). The warmth of their fellowship and the wisdom of Paul’s counsel are noteworthy. The Ephesian church had several notable preachers, such as Apollos (Acts 18:24-28), and possibly the Apostle John and Timothy. Revelation 2:1-7 addresses the Ephesian church, commending for its work and its purity of doctrine but reproving it for the loss of its first love for the Lord.

Author and occasion—Paul wrote Ephesians from a Roman prison (3:1; 4:1; 6:20) during the early 60s. Chronologically, Ephesians is regarded as the last of the Prison Epistles. Tychicus, Paul’s trusted lieutenant, bore both this epistle and the one to the Colossians (6:21-22; Col 4:7-8).

Critics have attacked on Paul’s authorship of this epistle along the following lines of argument:

- Impersonal tone—The epistle is strangely impersonal and indirect given the amount of time Paul spent in Ephesus. This is best understood by viewing Ephesians as a circular letter, see below.
- Literary usage—The choice of words and style are supposedly unique in Pauline literature. Ephesians employs several unique terms and abstract nouns, along with lengthy sentences featuring complex relative clauses. However, the language used in Ephesians effectively conveys its distinctive expressions of praise, contributing uniquely to the Scripture. Literary usage arguments can be flak jackets for the critic's own subjective bias.
- Marks of early Catholicism—Marks of an emerging Catholicism allegedly places the time of the writing of the book beyond the lifespan of the apostle Paul. The argument is that the situation addressed could only have arisen in a post-Pauline period. This second century milieu is supposedly seen in particular phenomena: the apostles are looked upon as a closed group (2:20; 3:5; 4:11), Church unity is a matter of particular concern (2:11-18; 4:1-16), and the expectation of Christ's imminent return is fading as the Church settled down in the world (4:11-16).

One important concern in any introduction of Ephesians is the destination of the letter. The oldest manuscripts do not have “at Ephesus” in 1:1. The best explanation for this omission is that the letter was intended as a circular epistle that was originally sent to the churches in Asia Minor and was eventually kept at Ephesus as the primary church of that region. The phrase “at Ephesus” in 1:1 was a later editorial addition when Paul's various letters were collected at Ephesus late in the first century. The circular nature of the letter explains its impersonal tone. The letter really is a treatise for general use by the churches of Asia Minor, not a personal note to people that Paul had ministered to for better than three years. For additional notes on the place and date of writing, see Prison Epistles section of the introduction to Paul's Letters.

Purposes—

- To reflect upon the Church as a divine institution and to develop that truth's implications.
- To emphasize that salvation is only in Christ and solely by the grace of God.
- To remind both Jew and Gentile that they are fellow-heirs of the riches in Christ and fellow-members of His Body.
- To emphasize the believers' responsibilities to live up to our privileges and live in accordance with our heavenly calling in Christ Jesus.

Guiding Concepts:

Church—The theme of the Church runs throughout this epistle. The sovereign purpose of God in establishing the church permeates the first half of the letter (1:4, 5, 9, 11, 13, 20; 2:4, 6, 10; 3:11) in which God's plan of redemption is elaborated. The second half of the book emphasizes the believers' conduct as we are instructed to live in a worthy

manner (4:1), not to live as the Gentiles do (4:17), to live a life of love (5:2), to live as children of light (5:8), and to live wisely (5:15). In this letter, the Church is likened to a body (1:23; 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16), a temple (2:19-22), a mystery (3:3-6), a new man (2:15, 4:24), a bride (5:32), and a soldier (6:10-17).

Holy Spirit—The ministry of the Holy Spirit has wide play in the discussions of the believer's position and practice. The Spirit seals us (1:13; 4:30), supplies wisdom (1:17) and access to the Father (2:18). The Holy Spirit builds up the body of Christ (2:21), reveals God's purposes for the Church to God's people (3:5), and strengthens us in our inner beings (3:16) to live as we should. The third person of the Trinity is the bond that unifies the Church (4:3-4), fills individual believers with His power (5:18), and empowers believers amid spiritual conflict through the Word (6:17) and prayer (6:18).

Believer's position in Christ—The phrase "in Christ" or its equivalent appears approximately thirty-five times in Ephesians. Believers are in Christ (1:1), in heavenly places in Christ (1:3), chosen in Him before the foundation of the world (1:4), adopted through Christ (1:5), are in the Beloved (1:6), redeemed in Him (1:7), given an inheritance in Him (1:11), given hope in Him (1:12), sealed in Him (1:13), made alive together with Christ (2:10), brought near to God by His blood (2:13), growing in Christ (2:21), sharers of the promise of God in Christ (3:6), and given freedom and confidence of approach to God in Christ (3:12). Ephesians 1-3 is a treasury of the believer's spiritual inheritance.

Relationship Between Ephesians and Colossians—These two books share a common theme of Christ and His Church. Ephesians emphasizes the Church as Christ's body and Colossians emphasizes Christ as the Church's head. The two letters share a tremendous similarity in texts but are different in dynamics and tone. Ephesians has a general and universal tone addressed to the Church at large, whereas Colossians radiates the concerns of a particular local church and the dynamics of a spiritual battle raging within its midst.

Summary Outline: Ephesians—Christ and the Church

- I. Spiritual Blessings: We in Christ (1:1-3:21)
 - A. Introductory Greetings, Blessing, and Prayer (1:1-23)
 - 1. Salutation (1:1-2)
 - 2. Praise for Spiritual Blessings in Christ (1:3-14)
 - 3. Prayer for Spiritual Enlightenment (1:15-23)
 - B. Remembering What Christ Has Done (2:1-22)
 - 1. Made Alive in Christ (2:1-10)
 - 2. Made One in Christ (2:11-22)
 - C. Strengthening Through the Holy Spirit (3:1-21)
 - 1. Not Discouraged by Suffering (3:1-13)
 - 2. Prayer for Strengthening of Inner Person (3:14-19)
 - 3. Doxology: God's Power in Us (3:20-21)
- II. Worthy Walk: Christ in Us (4:1-6:24)

- A. Maintaining Unity While Reaching Maturity (4:1-16)
 - 1. Maintaining the Unity of the Spirit (4:1-6)
 - 2. Gifting for Unity in the Faith (4:7-16)
- B. Putting on the New Self (4:17-24)
 - 1. Putting Off: No Longer Live Like Gentiles (4:17-19)
 - 2. Putting on the New Self (4:20-24)
- C. Separation From Sinful Practices (4:25-5:2)
- D. Separation From Sinful People (5:3-14)
 - 1. Necessity of Purity (5:3-6)
 - 2. Necessity of Separation (5:7-14)
- E. Living Wisely (5:15-6:9)
 - 1. By Being Filled With the Holy Spirit (5:15-21)
 - 2. As Husbands and Wives (5:22-33)
 - 3. As Parents and Children (6:1-4)
 - 4. As Masters and Slaves (6:5-9)
- F. Standing Firm (6:10-20)
 - 1. Armor of God Delineated (6:10-17)
 - 2. Prayer to God Enjoined (6:18-20)
- G. Final Greetings and Benediction (6:21-24)

Philippians

Introduction—The city of Philippi takes its name from Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, who captured the site in 360 B.C. In 168 B.C., the Romans conquered the area, including Philippi, but the city did not achieve its prominence until more than a century after the Roman conquest. In 42 B.C., Antony and Octavius (later to become the Emperor Augustus) defeated Brutus and Cassius (the assassins of Julius Caesar) outside Philippi and turned the city into a Roman colony and military outpost. Octavian later settled additional groups of his veteran soldiers in the city.

Colony status brought the Philippians Roman citizenship and special privileges, including autonomous government and exemption from taxation. Augustus conferred the right of “*ius italicum*” upon the city, which accorded a provincial town the status of an Italian city. In governing, Augustus favored Rome over Italy and Italy over the provinces of the Empire. Thus, Philippi was treated as “a cut above” any other town in Macedonia, including Thessalonica, the capital of the province.

The church at Philippi was founded around 50 during Paul’s second missionary journey (Acts 16). While the apostle was at Troas, he was instructed in a vision to proceed into Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10), and Philippi was the first European city he visited. Acts 16 records Paul’s ministry at Philippi, including Lydia’s conversion (Acts 16:11-15), the exorcism of a demon from a slave girl resulting in Paul’s imprisonment (Acts 16:16-24), and a Philippian jailer’s conversion after a most unusual jail break (the jail “broke” but all the prisoners stayed put (Acts 16:25-31)). These diverse converts formed the nucleus of the Philippian church.

After Paul left, Luke possibly stayed to lead the new church. The use of “we” in the narrative of Acts indicating Timothy’s presence with the missionary team is dropped after Acts 16 and only picked up again in Acts 20:5-6 when Paul returns to Philippi on his third missionary journey in the mid-50s.

Author and occasion—Paul wrote Philippians while under house arrest in Rome in the early 60s. The occasion for writing the epistle was the Philippians’ gift to Paul (4:10-20). They had sacrificed to meet Paul’s needs on at least three other occasions, twice while he was at Thessalonica (4:15-16) and once while he was at Corinth (2 Cor 11:9). For additional notes on the place and date of writing, see Prison Epistles section of the introduction to Paul’s Letters.

Purpose—Paul had a variety of purposes for writing this epistle:

- To encourage the Philippians to live for Christ in all things and under all circumstances (1:27-30; 2:12-18; 3:17-21; 4:4-9).
- To acknowledge the Philippians’ gift to him and to give thanks for it (4:10-20).
- To reflect on his own circumstances as relating to the progress of the Gospel (1:12-26).

- To explain why he was sending Epaphroditus back to them when they had sent him to help Paul (2:25-30).
- To address issues of rivalry and personal ambition that was threatening division and party spirit in the Philippian ranks (1:27; 2:3-4; 4:2).
- To warn against the legalism of the Judaizers (3:2-11) as well as a creeping antinomianism (3:17-21).

Guiding Concepts:

Joy—The keynote of this warm and cordial letter is joy. The noun *chara* (translated “joy”) is used five times (1:4, 25; 2:2, 29; 4:1). The verb *chairō* (translated “rejoice”) appears seven times (1:18; 2:17-18, 28; 4:4 [twice]). The compound verb *sunchairō* (translated “rejoice”) occurs twice (2:17-18).

The modern notion of joy is that of thrill-seeking. We think of joy as a trip to Disney World, a heart-stopping ride, or a special vacation. This is not what Paul means by the term. Nor does he use “joy” to mean a blurry-eyed passivity of self-centered mystical piety. Paul finds joy, happiness that transcends circumstances, in prayer on behalf of others (1:4), in pouring his life out for the benefit of others (2:17-18), and in the mundane aspects of life (4:4). Christ is source of Paul’s joy. Christ is his life (1:21), his attitude (2:5-11), his goal (3:13-14), and his contentment (4:11-12). It is the all-sufficient Christ, in whom Paul’s life was hid, that gave substance to the apostle’s joy during the grind of his imprisonment.

Mindset/attitude—Paul uses the term *phroneō* ten times (1:7; 2:2 [twice], 5; 3:15 [twice], 19; 4:2, 10 [twice]). While this verb denotes mental process and is commonly translated “to think,” it has implications of sympathetic interest and concern. The action expressed is of the heart as well as the intellect; the concern expressed is in the highest interests of others. The NIV translates this verb “feel” in 1:7 where Paul’s heart for the Philippians is obviously in the forefront. Frequently the word connotes a mindset—having the humble attitude of Christ (2:5); being of the same mind with other believers (2:2; 4:2); having the firm determination to press to the high calling of God in Christ (3:15); having a worldly mindset (3:19); or having an attitude of concern for one’s fellow believers (4:10).

Koinonia—This term denotes a participation with someone else in Gospel reality, truth, and power more than a friendly Christian atmosphere at a public meeting (see 1:5, 7; 2:1; 3:10; 4:14, 16). The Holy Spirit produces this fellowship (2:1). It involves a partnership with one another in the Gospel (1:5) and assumes that the believer will incur a measure of Christ’s afflictions in identifying with Him (3:10). This bond of fellowship moves people to sacrificially share to meet one another’s needs (4:14-15). Out of this fellowship can come strong emotion. The epistle uses the term *epipothētai* (long for) to convey of a strong yearning to be with another person or group of people. Paul expresses this sentiment towards the Philippians (1:8; 4:1) as does Epaphroditus (2:26).

Confidence—This term (*pepoithos*) appears in 1:6, 14, 25; 2:24; 3:3-4. Paul’s confidence flows from God’s sovereign purposes accomplished by the power of the

gospel and not from his own fleshly achievements and credentials (3:3-4). The apostle is confident that he will remain on in the flesh (1:25) and be released from prison (2:24) in order that he may continue to edify the believers and co-labor in the work in them that God most certainly will complete (1:6). Paul's zeal, even while imprisoned, emboldened others to preach the gospel with confidence (1:14). This confidence infused the apostle's actions, thoughts, and attitudes because he was in the Lord and was prompted by the Spirit's energy.

Spiritual ambition—No letter displays Paul's spiritual ambition more clearly than Philippians. We see the completeness of his commitment to Jesus Christ and his single-minded desire to know Him and to make Him known (1:20-21; 3:7-14; 4:11-13).

Summary Outline: **Philippians—Living Above the Grind**

- I. Introduction (1:1-11)
 - A. Salutation (1:1-2)
 - B. Thanksgiving for the Philippians (1:3-8)
 - C. Prayer for the Philippians (1:9-11)
- II. Paul's Chains Advance the Gospel (1:12-26)
 - A. Paul's Chains Promote His Own Preaching (1:12-13)
 - B. Paul's Chains Encourage Others to Preach (1:14-18)
 - C. Paul's Crisis (His Pending Appeal) Exalts Christ (1:19-26)
- III. Exhortation to Live as Worthy Citizens of Heaven (1:27-2:18)
 - A. Conduct Towards Outsiders (1:27-30)
 - B. Conduct Towards the Household of Faith (2:1-11)
 - C. Working Out Your Salvation (2:12-18)
- IV. Commended Servants (2:19-30)
 - A. Timothy (2:19-24)
 - B. Epaphroditus (2:25-30)
- V. Pursuing the Goal (3:1-4:1)
 - A. No Confidence in the Flesh (3:1-11)
 - B. Pressing On to Win the Prize (3:12-16)
 - C. Standing Firm While Waiting (3:17-4:1)
- VI. Final Exhortation, Thanksgiving, and Greetings (4:2-23)
 - A. Final Exhortations (4:2-9)
 - B. Thanksgiving for the Philippians' Gift (4:10-20)
 - C. Concluding Greetings (4:21-23)

Colossians

Introduction—Colossians is the most Christocentric epistle in the New Testament. It demonstrates the preeminence of Christ in creation, redemption, and practical living. A mindset elevating speculation, ritualism, mysticism, and ascetism threatened the saints at Colosse. Paul is emphatic. Our completion is in Christ, not in systems of speculation or legalistic observance.

Colosse was located in the Lycus Valley, approximately one hundred miles east of Ephesus. During the period of the Persian wars in the 5th century B.C., Colosse was a sizeable commercial center famous for its trade in black wool. By Paul's time, it was eclipsed in importance by the neighboring towns of Hierapolis and Laodicea and was in a period of decline. The church at Colosse was founded by Epaphras (1:6-7), who was with Paul at the time the apostle wrote the epistle (4:12-13). Epaphras may have become a Christian during Paul's Ephesian ministry (Acts 19), been active in the evangelization of Asia Minor (Acts 19:10), founding a number of churches in the Lycus Valley, and now was visiting Paul in prison to get his advice on how to deal with a dangerous heresy threatening the Colossian church.

Author and occasion—Paul wrote Colossians while under house arrest at Rome in the early 60s. It was written at the same time as Ephesians, perhaps just before the “queen of the epistles.” Epaphras turned to Paul for help in dealing with a heresy that blended Jewish legalism (2:11-17), Greek philosophical speculation (2:4; 8-10), and Oriental mysticism (2:18-23). Colosse's location on a major trade route contributed to the syncretistic character of this false teaching. At any rate, the Colossian heresy may have been of the same order as that threatening the Galatian churches, except that the focus of the error concerned the person of Christ rather than His work.

Teachers promising a mystic knowledge of the fullness of God had gained entrance to the Colossian church. The teaching had the effect of downgrading the person of Christ (1:15-20) either by overemphasizing His transcendence or by diluting His essential humanity. It adopted a low view of the body (2:20-23), stressed the need for the legalistic observance of circumcision (2:11, 13), dietary regulations (2:16), and various ritualistic days and festivals (2:16), and laid a great emphasis on secret, deeper knowledge divorced from Biblical revelation (2:18). These features appear in later Gnosticism but the presence of Judaistic features suggests that the basic problem emanated from a legalistic and syncretistic Judaizing spirit. For additional notes on the place and date of writing, see Prison Epistles section of the introduction to Paul's Letters.

Purpose—The letter was written as an antidote to an intellectualism that exalted mysteries, secret knowledge, and wisdom, while discounting Christ by false philosophy. The corrective to such speculation is to exalt the person and work of Christ (1:15-20). Paul has a deep desire to present the Colossians complete in Christ, to exhort and instruct the believers to go onto spiritual maturity (1:28; 2:6-7).

Guiding Concepts:

High Christology—Paul highlights the divine person and creative and redemptive work of Christ. His high Christology has practical implications for the believer’s everyday life and conduct. Christ is Lord of creation (1:16-17) and the author of our reconciliation with God (1:20-22; 2:13-15). He is the embodiment of full deity (1:15, 19; 2:9), the resurrected God-man (1:18; 3:1), and the all-sufficient Savior (1:28; 2:3, 10; 3:1-4). This Savior is the basis of the believer’s hope (1:5, 23, 27), the believer’s power to live a new life (1:11, 29), and the believer’s Redeemer (1:14, 20-22; 2:11-15).

Completeness in Christ—The teaching that plagued the Colossians promised fullness in secret knowledge and wisdom. Paul counters by showing the Colossians that true completeness lies only in Christ.

Relationship Between Ephesians and Colossians—These two books share a common theme of Christ and His Church. Ephesians emphasizes the Church as Christ’s body; Colossians emphasizes Christ as the head of the Church. These two letters contain many similar texts:

<i>Eph</i>	<i>Col</i>	<i>Eph</i>	<i>Col</i>
1:1-2	1:1-2	4:22-24	3:9-10
1:4	1:22	4:25-26	3:8-9
1:7	1:14	4:29	3:8; 4:6
1:10	1:20	4:31	3:8
1:15-16	1:3-4	4:32	3:12-13
1:21-23	1:16, 18-19	5:3-6	3:5-8
2:1-2	1:21	5:15	4:5
2:15	2:14	5:19-22	3:16-18
2:16	1:20	5:25	3:19
3:1-3	1:25-26	6:1-4	3:20-21
3:7-9	1:23ff	6:5-9	3:22-4:1
4:1	1:10	6:19-20	4:3-4
4:16	2:19	6:21-22	4:7-8

While the similarities are impressive, there are differences in the dynamics and tone of the two letters. Ephesians addresses the church at large with a general and universal tone, whereas Colossians radiates the concerns of a particular local church and the dynamics of the spiritual battle raging within her midst.

Summary Outline: **Colossians—Complete in Christ**

- I. Supremacy of Christ over All Things (1:1-2:23)
 - A. Thanksgiving and petition for worthy walk (1:1-12)
 - B. Preeminence of Christ over all things (1:13-23)
 - C. Paul’s labor for the Church (1:24-2:5)
 - D. Superiority of life in Christ over prescriptions of human traditions (2:6-23)

- II. Submission to Christ in Holy Living (3:1-4:18)
 - A. Sights on things above (3:1-4)
 - B. Godly conduct enjoined (3:5-4:6)
 - C. Final instructions and greetings (4:7-18)

1 & 2 Thessalonians

Introduction—Thessalonica was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia. It was a prosperous seaport and was also located on the Via Egnatia, the main road running to the East from Rome. The city was named by Cassandra, a general of Alexander the Great, after his wife, who was Alexander's half-sister. The city may have had a population of 200,000 in the first century.

Author and occasion—Paul wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians from Corinth during his second missionary journey in the early 50s. Acts 17:1-9 gives an account of his visit to Thessalonica.

Luke records that Paul went to the synagogue in Thessalonica three Sabbath days (17:2) and reasoned with the Jews and God-fearers from the Scriptures. There is scholarly debate whether this interval represents the totality of Paul's ministry in the city or is merely representative of it. Regardless of the length of his stay, the apostle made a significant impact, angered the Jewish community, and was expelled from the town along with Silas. Paul's Thessalonian opponents even tracked him to Berea and stirred up trouble for the apostle there.

The missionary team then split up, Paul going on to Athens while Silas and Timothy stayed in Macedonia. The two assistants caught up with the beleaguered apostle in Corinth (18:5) and gave Paul a report on the well-being of the Macedonian believers (including the Thessalonians). Paul wrote these letters shortly after his initial visit.

Purpose—Paul writes to commend the Thessalonians and to encourage them to stand fast in the midst of persecution and opposition. He defends himself against the slanderous attacks of his Jewish opponents. He also writes to provide instructions for the believers to progress in their faith.

Guiding Concepts:

End Times—The Thessalonian letters are rich in End Times teaching. The two letters, along with Matthew 24-25, and the book of Revelation constitute the primary eschatological texts in the New Testament. Many of the Thessalonians believed so strongly in the immediacy of Jesus' return that they were leaving their jobs and freeloading on the Christian community. Paul writes to correct their understanding and address the errors in practical living that resulted from it.

Summary Outlines: 1 Thessalonians—Living Now with the End in View

- I. Greeting and Thanksgiving (1:1-3:13)
 - A. For Thessalonians' response to the Gospel (1:1-10)
 - B. For Paul's ministry among them (2:1-16)

- C. For Timothy's good report on their progress (2:17-3:10)
 - D. Prayer for Thessalonians (3:11-13)
- II. Exhortations to Godly Living (4:1-5:28)
 - A. Living to please God (4:1-8)
 - B. Living in brotherly love (4:9-12)
 - C. Lord's return: Correcting false ideas and urging readiness (4:13-5:11)
 - D. Idleness and living in community (5:12-22)
 - E. Conclusion (5:23-28)

2 Thessalonians—Living Now with the End in View

- I. Instructions Concerning Future Things (1:1-2:12)
 - A. Greetings and instruction on present persecution (1:1-12)
 - B. Instruction on the Day of the Lord (DOL) (2:1-12)
- II. Instructions on Living in View of the End (2:13-3:18)
 - A. Encouragement to continue in faith (2:13-17)
 - B. Exhortation to pray (3:1-5)
 - C. Exhortation to address problems (3:6-15)
 - D. Conclusion (3:16-18)

1 Timothy

Introduction—Paul wrote this manual of church oversight and administration to Timothy while Paul’s faithful lieutenant was serving as the apostle’s representative in Ephesus (1:3) and for other churches in Asia Minor. Paul wrote this from Macedonia either in the mid to late 50s or during a fourth missionary journey in the early 60s. Paul wrote this leadership manual to provide guidance to his young charge on such issues as Timothy’s personal and public character and roles, his response to false teaching, the organization, discipline, and administration of the church, the use of Scripture in worship and community, poverty and wealth in community, and the roles of various groups in the church. Timothy’s challenge is to preach and teach the Word and thus combat false teaching, to develop mature and qualified leadership, and to encourage appropriate Christian conduct in community.

Timothy was raised in a religiously divided home. His father was a Greek (Acts 16:1) and his mother a Jew. His Jewish mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois took the initiative in Timothy’s upbringing and raised him in the knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). Timothy may have been a convert of Paul (1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2) possibly when the apostle was in Lystra during his first missionary journey (Acts 14:8-20). When Paul visited Lystra on his second missionary journey, he decided to take Timothy along with him and had him circumcised because of the Jews (Acts 16:1-3). Timothy was ordained to the ministry (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6) and served as Paul’s devoted companion in Troas, Berea, Thessalonica, and Corinth (Acts 16-18; 1 Thess 3:1-2). During Paul’s third missionary journey, Timothy was with him and ministered as Paul’s apostolic legate in Ephesus, Macedonia, and Corinth. He was with Paul during the apostle’s first Roman imprisonment and went to Philippi (Phil. 2:19-24) after Paul’s release. Paul left him in Ephesus to supervise the ministry there (1 Tim. 1:3) and years later summoned him to Rome (2 Tim. 4:9, 21). According to Hebrews 13:23, Timothy was imprisoned and released at an undesignated time and location. Timothy seems to have been sickly (1 Tim. 5:23) and timid (2 Tim. 1:7), but he was gifted in the Word and was trustworthy, loyal, and diligent.

Author and occasion—See the Pastoral Epistles section of the introduction to Paul’s Letters.

Guiding Concepts:

Sound doctrine—Paul warns Timothy of a growing problem with false doctrine. It seems to have centered on the misuse of the Mosaic Law (1:3-11). In 1 Timothy 4, Paul warns that there will be those who abandon the faith for false teaching (citing examples which forbade people to marry and abstain from certain foods) and urges Timothy to teach the truth. He was not to allow people to look down on his youth (4:12) but was to exhort older men who might be wavering in the faith (5:1).

Order in public worship—Paul addresses concerns proper worship, separately addressing roles of men (2:1-8) and women (2:9-15). This is a controversial passage and a primary

text (especially 2:11-12) for those holding to the headship view concerning women in leadership.

Church leadership—1 Timothy 3 specifies qualifications for elders (3:1-7) and deacons (3:8-13). This and Titus 1:5-9 are classic passages on church leadership qualifications. In this and other passages (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7), the words for overseer or bishop (*episkopos*) and elder (*presbuteros*) are used interchangeably. In 1 Timothy 5-6, Paul gives specific instructions to pastors and church leaders on shepherding specific groups in the church.

Summary Outline: 1 Timothy—Sound Doctrine and Church Administration

- I. Warning and Exhortation (1:1-20)
 - A. Salutation (1:1-2)
 - B. Warning against false teachers (1:3-11)
 - C. God's grace to Paul (1:12-17)
 - D. Timothy to fight the good fight (1:18-20)
- II. Order in the Church (2:1-3:16)
 - A. Worship; Call to prayer (2:1-7)
 - B. Men and women in worship (2:8-15)
 - C. Elders' qualifications (3:1-7)
 - D. Deacons' qualifications (3:8-13)
 - E. Conduct in the Lord's house; mystery of godliness (3:14-16)
- III. Administration of the Church (4:1-6:21)
 - A. Countering false teaching (4:1-5)
 - B. Minister's discipline (4:6-16)
 - C. Ministering to groups (5:1-6:2)
 - Men and women, young and old (5:1-2)
 - Widows (5:3-16)
 - Elders (5:17-25)
 - Slaves (6:1-2)
 - D. Teaching; Christian duties (6:3-10)
 - E. Charge to Timothy; Leading by example (6:11-16)
 - F. Warning to the wealthy (6:17-19)
 - G. Final charge and benediction (6:20-21)

2 Timothy

Introduction—During the 1988 Olympics, Carl Lewis remarked that the United States men’s track relay team was one baton pass from a world record or a disaster. Unfortunately for our team, the latter possibility became reality. The relay team, which was far above the rest of the field even by their opponents’ reckoning, was disqualified from the competition. Forget world records, gold medals, or any medal at all—the baton was not successfully passed.

2 Timothy is about a baton pass in a drama that is infinitely more important than an Olympic track event. As the weary apostle Paul neared death, he began to think of a successor and decided on the young man, Timothy. Timothy was gifted in the Word, diligent, trustworthy, and loyal. However, he also was passive, timid, and retiring by nature (1:7) and a person easily intimidated (1 Tim 4:12). Tradition tells us that history gloriously confirmed the wisdom of Paul’s choice. Timothy faithfully executed a long and fruitful ministry and laid his life down in Domitian’s persecution around thirty years later, in a manner that would have made his apostolic mentor proud.

This is an emotional letter from spiritual father to son. At times, Paul is cracking the whip, calling on Timothy to step up, to overcome his natural reticence, to stand firm, to hold to the faith. Elsewhere, Paul fondly affirms his diligent, loyal son in faith. This poignant letter was written at the end of Paul’s pilgrimage on earth and provides rich insight into the heartbeat of the King of kings for His suffering creation. The call to endure and to minister redemptively is undergirded by the confidence that victory will come; that after the conflict there is a crown.

Author and occasion—Many scholars do not think that the Pastorals were written by Paul, but by a follower one or even two generations after the great apostle. The arguments for this view and a reply are found in the Pastoral Epistles section in the introduction to Paul’s Letters. For an introduction on Timothy’s background, see 1 Timothy notes above.

In 2 Timothy, Paul commissions Timothy to faithfully continue the work that the condemned apostle had to relinquish. Timothy needed encouragement because of the hardship and suffering that he was facing, and Paul used this letter to instruct him on how to handle persecution from outside and dissension from within. This book has provided comfort, encouragement, and motivation to Christian workers throughout the centuries.

Guiding Concepts:

Usefulness—Something is useful when it works the way it ought to. Usefulness aligns with God’s will and purposes. The useful person is faithful (2:2), handles the Word accurately (2:15), is ready for good works (2:21), and is willing to follow orders (4:11). A fruitful ministry is rooted in life and the Word of God.

Opposition—Opposition occurs both within and without the community of faith (1:15; 2:16-18; 4:14-16). Paul has an extended discussion of the increased intensity of opposition in the last days (3:1-9). The purpose of God allowing opposition is to teach us to endure (2:3, 10, 12; 3:10-11; 4:5), to produce good works (2:21; 3:17), and to reveal God's great redemption (4:17).

Good works—Good works are designed for the profit of people in need. Their end is the furtherance of the gospel (2:21; 3:17; 4:5, 7-8).

Word of God—Central to the message of 2 Timothy is the sure foundation of the Word of God. The book emphasizes the centrality of the Scriptures and contains the clearest statement in the New Testament of their inspired character (3:16-17). Paul repeatedly emphasizes the gospel (1:8, 10-11; 2:8), the truth (2:15, 18, 25; 3:7-8; 4:4), and the necessity of teaching (1:13; 2:2, 17, 24; 3:10, 16; 4:2-3). Paul's charge to Timothy is to preach the Word (4:2), to guard the good deposit (1:14), and to entrust it to faithful people who will be able to teach others also (2:2).

Summary Outline: 2 Timothy—Passing the Baton

- I. Introduction (1:1-7)
 - A. Salutation (1:1-2)
 - B. Thanksgiving for sincere faith (1:3-5)
 - C. Fan the flame (1:6-7)
- II. Join in Suffering for the Gospel (1:8-18)
 - A. Not ashamed to testify (1:8-11)
 - B. Guarding the good deposit (1:12-14)
 - C. Examples of shame and devotion (1:15-18)
- III. Endure Hardship (2:1-13)
 - A. Faithful entrustment (2:1-2)
 - B. Metaphors of devotion (2:3-7)
 - C. Chained servant; unchained Word (2:8-10)
 - D. Trustworthy saying: Endurance (2:11-13)
- IV. Approved Worker (2:14-26)
 - A. Warnings against godlessness (2:14-19)
 - B. Noble instrument (2:20-21)
 - C. Pursue righteousness; avoid godlessness (2:22-26)
- V. Godlessness in Last Days (3:1-17)
 - A. Cesspool of self (3:1-5)
 - B. On predators and bimbos (3:6-9)
 - C. Continue in faith (3:10-17)

- VI. Charge and Crown (4:1-8)
 - A. Charge: Preach the Word (4:1-5)
 - B. Crown: Finish the race (4:6-8)
- VII. Personal Remarks and Final Greetings (4:9-23)

Titus

Introduction—Paul left Titus on the island of Crete (1:5) to begin the task of organizing new converts into churches. In this letter, the apostle shares practical wisdom in going about the task of organizing and administering local churches. Leaders must be of proven character, false teachers must be confronted, and church members must be encouraged to live godly and productive lives. The community of faith must demonstrate the reality of faith by their careful attention to doing what is good.

Author and recipient—Paul mentions Titus thirteen times in his letters in a manner that makes it clear that he was one of the apostle’s closest and most trusted companions. He was a convert of Paul’s, from Syrian Antioch, and, as an uncircumcised Greek, accompanied Paul to Jerusalem (Gal. 2:3) as a test case on the issue of the Gentiles and liberty from the Law. Later, Titus accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts 18:22). Paul left him in Corinth on three separate occasions to deal with thorny issues relating to that problem church (2 Cor. 2:12-13; 7:5-7, 13-15; 8:6, 16-24). Paul lauds Titus’ character and conduct (2 Cor. 7:13-15; 8:16-17), describing his gifted and trustworthy associate as his “brother” (2 Cor. 2:13) and “partner and fellow worker” (2 Cor. 8:23). Titus was with Paul in his second Roman imprisonment but left on an assignment to Dalmatia (2 Tim. 4:10).

Establishing churches in Crete in the first century would have been a challenging assignment. Cretans were notorious for their deceitfulness and immorality (1:12-13). The church may have gotten its start in Peter’s Pentecost sermon for there were Cretans were present on that day (Acts 2:11). Paul may have done evangelistic work during his brief stay while in route to Rome (Acts 27:7-13). Assuming a second Roman imprisonment, Paul would have left Titus in Crete (1:5) after his release from the first Roman imprisonment and his subsequent evangelistic tour of Crete. If this is correct, the letter was written in the early 60s. See the introduction to the Pastoral Epistles in the introduction to Paul’s Letters for a discussion of the author of this epistle.

Guiding Concepts:

Good deeds—Titus 3:8 is a key text focusing on the apostle’s concern that the community of faith live in a way that is a credit to the Lord. Chapter 2 is a sustained narrative concerning godly relationships in community “so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive”.

Leadership manual—Key passages on leadership qualifications (1:5-9), rebuking false teachers (1:10-16), and teaching sound doctrine (2:1-15) form the core this instruction manual on church formation and administration.

***Summary Outline:* Titus—Teaching the Truth and Doing Good**

I. Task on Crete (1:1-16)

- A. Salutation (1:1-4)
 - B. Appointing elders; Qualifications (1:5-9)
 - C. Countering false teaching (1:10-16)
- II. Ministering to Various Groups (2:1-15)
 - A. Ministering to various groups (2:1-10)
 - B. Bringing salvation: Godly living and authoritative teaching (2:11-15)
- III. Doing What is Good (3:1-11)
 - A. Submission to rulers (3:1)
 - B. Doing good (3:2-8)
 - C. Avoiding controversies and arguments (3:9-11)
- IV. Final remarks and greeting (3:12-15)

Philemon

Introduction—In this short letter highlighting redemptive love, Paul writes to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus. Onesimus, a slave of Philemon living in Colosse, wronged his master, perhaps robbing him, and escaped. He made his way to Rome to lose himself in the masses of that metropolis but instead encountered Paul and converted. He proved himself an eager and useful servant of the Lord Jesus. However, Paul and Onesimus both knew Onesimus had a responsibility to return to his master. Paul sent Onesimus back to Colosse with Tychicus, bearer of the letter to the Colossians (Col 4:9), and penned this poignant request to Philemon on Onesimus' behalf.

Philemon may have converted during Paul's Ephesian ministry described in Acts 19. He was a person of means and hosted the church at Colosse in his home (2). He was a benevolent man (5-7) and his son Archippus may well have been the pastor of the church at Colosse (Col. 4:17; Phile. 2). Paul, under house arrest at Rome in the early 60s, writes this plea for Onesimus that initiates a transition from bondage to brotherhood brought about by Christian love and forgiveness.

Guiding Concepts:

Substitutionary atonement—The punishment for a runaway slave was grim indeed in ancient Rome and Paul pleads for mercy. If Onesimus has wronged Philemon in any way, Paul asks Philemon to put it against Paul's account. This is a wonderful picture of the Lord's substitutionary atonement.

Slavery—This letter is not a direct attack on the institution of slavery, an institution deeply embedded in Roman society but does illustrate Christian principles that lead to its renunciation.

***Summary Outline:* Philemon—Plea for Onesimus**

Thanksgiving and commendation of Philemon (1-7)
 Plea for Onesimus (8-22)
 Conclusion and Benediction (23-25)

General Epistles

At A Glance:

Letter	Date	Place	Subject
Hebrews	60s	Unknown	Superiority of Christ and the Christian faith: better revelation, mediator, position and rest, priesthood, covenant, sanctuary and sacrifice, and power to persevere
James	Late 40s; Early-60s	Jerusalem	Real faith works
1 Peter	60s	Rome?	Purposeful pain of suffering saints
2 Peter	60s	Rome?	Defending the truth; Day of the Lord
1 John	90s	Ephesus	Tests of fellowship
2 John	90s	Ephesus	Warning of false teaching
3 John	90s	Ephesus	Condemning false teachers
Jude	90s	Unknown	Defending the truth

Hebrews

Author and recipients—Acceptance of Pauline authorship of this letter was late (not until the 5th century) in the western part of the Roman Empire. The Reformers raised questions about authorship. We really do not know who wrote this book. Common suggestions are Paul, Barnabas (by Tertullian), Luke, Apollos (by Luther), and Priscilla (by Harnack), and Clement of Rome.

This sermon-like letter was written to Jewish Christians. Support for this assertion comes from the book's title, the assumptions the author's arguments make concerning the reader's knowledge of Old Testament sacrificial practices and general Jewish teaching, and the core teaching of the book that Christianity is superior to Judaism.

The letter may have been directed to Jewish Christians living in Rome (see 13:24). The reference to Italy (in 13:24) suggests this. In addition, the initial hesitancy for the canonicity of this letter came from the church at Rome based on their doubts of its apostolic authorship. Perhaps, as direct recipients, they knew Paul did not write it.

Date and occasion—There are two keys for the dating of this book. Clement of Rome cites Hebrews in a letter to the Corinthians written in 95. The book was written before this date, sometime before to enjoy such a general circulation and familiarity. The second date of import is the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70. Hebrews was written before this date since it is inconceivable that a book making the types of arguments this book makes would not refer to that momentous event.

Beyond these two points, dating is difficult to pinpoint. The book may have been written anywhere from the 40s to the 60s. Given the tone and concern of the author for the potential falling away from the faith by the recipients, a date in the 60s is more likely. It allows time for the Jewish people to become Christians, experience opposition and a certain amount of cultural discomfort, and cool in their initial enthusiasm so as to need the warnings Hebrews supplies.

Purpose and theme—The theme of the book is the superiority of the Christian faith. It is an orderly and systematic treatment of the person and work of Jesus Christ based on key Old Testament texts. Its distinctive contribution to the Bible is its picture of Jesus as our great High Priest. This book urges its readers to full commitment to Jesus Christ and to go on to maturity in the faith.

Guiding Concepts:

Warning passages—

- 2:1-4 – Warning against drifting away;
- 3:7-19 – Warning against hardening your heart;
- 5:11-6:12 – Warning to go on to maturity;
- 10:19-31 – Warning and call to persevere;

- 12:14-29 – Warning against refusing God and growing bitter

These passages are disconcerting, particularly 6:1-12 and 10:26-31. Common interpretations include:

- The passages speak of the real possibility of a true Christian reverting to a lost condition. However, there are New Testament assurances of the perseverance of true saints (Jn. 6:39-40; 10:27-29; Rom. 11:29; Phil. 1:6; 1 Pt. 1:5; 1 Jn 2:1).
- They pose a hypothetical, rather than a real possibility. But what about all the repetition? And what about 10:26-31?
- Loss of reward (see 1 Cor 3:12-15) in view, not loss of salvation. But see 6:9.
- The warnings are addressed to near Christians, not true Christians. But how do you understand phrases like “those who have once been enlightened” (10:32)? How about the writer’s appeal to maturity instead of conversion, warning of apostasy (6:6) instead of failure to convert?
- Warning directed to professing Christians, with the implication that they must show the genuineness of their profession by withstanding pressures to apostatize.

Jesus as perfect High Priest—One of Hebrew’s distinctive contributions to the New Testament is the clear development of Jesus Christ as our great High Priest.

New Covenant—The superiority of the New Covenant over the Old is the key development on Hebrews 8-10.

Centrality of faith—Hebrews 11:6 is a classic text which is illustrated by the rest of the chapter.

Summary Outline: Hebrews—Looking to Jesus; Going on to Maturity

- I. Superiority of Christ and the Christian Faith (1:1-10:18)
 - A. Better Revelation: Jesus to Prophets (1:1-4)
 - B. Better Mediator: Jesus to Angels (1:5-2:18)
Warning: Take Care; Don't Drift Away (2:1-4)
 - C. Better Position and Rest: Jesus to Moses and Joshua (3:1-4:13)
Warning: Take heed; Don't Turn Away (3:7-19)
 - D. Better Priesthood: Jesus to the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-7:28)
Warning Against Spiritual Laziness and Being Slow to Learn (5:11-6:12)
 - E. Better Covenant: New over Old (8:1-13)
 - F. Better Sanctuary: Heavenly over Earthly (9:1-28)
 - G. Better Sacrifice: Christ Once for All (10:1-18)
- II. Exhortation to Persevere (10:19-12:29)
 - A. A Call to Persevere and Press on to Maturity (10:19-39)
Warning: Do not Reject the Word (10:26-31)
 - B. Faith’s Perseverance Exemplified in Old Testament Believers (11:1-40)

- C. Jesus' Example and the Value of Discipline (12:1-13)
 - D. *Warning Against Refusing God and Growing Bitter (12:14-29)*
- III. Concluding Exhortations, Benediction, and Greetings (13:1-25)

James

Author and recipients—The author identifies himself as James (1:1). There are four people named James mentioned in the New Testament, two of whom have been seriously suggested as the author of this book—James, the son of Zebedee and one of the Twelve, and James, the half-brother of the Lord. The Apostle James was martyred too early (44, see Acts 12) to have been the author. The book’s authority was not immediately accepted, largely due to questions about its authorship. It was accepted by the time of Eusebius (265-340) and recognized as canonical at the Council of Carthage in 397.

James was the oldest of Christ’s half-brothers, since he heads the list given in Matthew 13:55. He did not believe (Mk. 3:21; Jn. 7:5) until Christ’s post-Resurrection appearance to him (1 Cor. 15:7). He was the leader of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) and became very prominent in the early Church (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal 1:9; 2:9; Jude 1). Tradition tends to exaggerate James’ ascetic tendencies, presenting him to posterity as a Nazarite from his mother’s womb who interceded for God’s people so frequently that his knees grew hard like a camel’s. James was martyred around 62. Tradition has it that he was stoned at the order of the high priest.

“[T]he twelve tribes scattered among the nations” (1:1) possibly refers to Jewish believers from the early Jerusalem church who fled Palestine for Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Syrian Antioch after the persecution arising from the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:3; 11:19).

Date and occasion—The letter was penned in Jerusalem, possibly prior to the Jerusalem Council in 49A.D. Proponents of this early date point to the following:

- Jewish character of the letter;
- Simple church order reflected;
- No reference made to the Gentile controversy (James was a central character at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15);
- Greek term *synagoge* is used to designate the meeting places of the church, indicating its continuing ties to Judaism.

Not all agree. Some point to a date in the early 60s, just before James’ martyrdom.

Purpose and theme—James’ purpose is to instruct and exhort Jewish believers who are going through tough times. He is their pastor in absentia urging them to make the needed changes in their lives and to live true to the faith. The theme of the book is that real faith works. James emphasizes vital, practical Christianity. His emphasis on faith showing itself in good deeds caused Martin Luther to describe this book as “a right strawy epistle in comparison with them (the writings of Paul and John), for it has no gospel character to it.”

Guiding Concepts:

Wisdom writing—James is called the “Proverbs of the New Testament”. Its style is reminiscent of Proverbs, full of pithy sayings strung together like beads on a string. Thoughts from Proverbs are also explicitly or implicitly behind many of James’ ideas:

James 2:5	Proverbs 2:6
1:19	29:20
3:18	11:30
4:6	3:34
4:13-16	27:1
5:20	10:12

Many have also noted James’ similarity to the Sermon on the Mount. Compare

James 2:5	Lk 6:20
3:10-12	Matt 7:16-20
3:18	5:9
5:12	5:34-37

Faith and works—James emphasizes vital, practical Christianity. He wants to “see the goods.” He brings this perspective to faith. Saving faith works regeneration in the life of the believer and that must show up in what that person does. James wants to see faith validated by what Christians do.

When comparing James with Paul, there initially appears to be a contradiction (see Jas. 2:24; Eph. 2:8, 9). But not really. James is saying that deeds complete faith; they are the outworking of genuine faith. He is railing against superficial faith that has no wholesome effect in a believer’s life. On the other hand, Paul is combating legalism, the belief that one may earn saving merit before God by one’s good deeds. Consequently, Paul insists that salvation is not by works but by faith alone. Note the perspectives:

- Paul is emphasizing the root of righteousness; James the fruit of righteousness;
- Paul has Genesis 15 in mind; James has Genesis 22 in the forefront;
- For Paul, faith is fiducia, a personal reliance; for James faith is assensus, intellectual assent absent deeds showing its reality;
- Paul is concerned with how one stands before a holy God; James is concerned with how one lives, representing that holy God.

Summary Outline:

James—A Faith that Works

- I. Trials and Temptations: Testing of Faith (1:1-18)
- II. Listening and Doing: Practicing the Word (1:19-27)
- III. Respecters of Persons: Favoritism Prohibited (2:1-13)
- IV. Faith Without Deeds Is Dead (2:14-26)
- V. Taming the Tongue (3:1-12)
- VI. Heavenly and Earthly Wisdom (3:13-18)
- VII. Submitting to God as Remedy for Worldliness (4:1-17)

- VIII. Retribution for Rich Oppressors (5:1-6)
- IX. Perseverance in Suffering (5:7-12)
- X. Prayer in All Situations (5:13-18)
- XI. Recovering Straying Saints (5:19-20)

1 & 2 Peter

Author and recipients—1 Peter was written by the apostle Peter while at Rome in the early 60s. The authorship and canonicity of the book was not questioned until modern times. The primary challenges to the book are on two grounds:

- The Greek of 1 Peter is very good, allegedly beyond the competence of Peter. A comparison with the rough-hewn Greek of 2 Peter is stark. However, Peter himself acknowledges the help of Silvanus (Silas) (5:12) and it there were occasions when an amanuensis (a secretary/editor) was allowed a good deal of editorial latitude in the actual composition of a manuscript. Silas may have contributed much to this letter's style and literary quality.
- The book is said to reflect a period of persecution descriptive of the latter part of Domitian's reign (81-96) or that of Trajan (98-117) when Asia was under the governorship of Pliny the Younger. Since Peter died in the persecution of Nero in the mid-60s, critics dismiss the possibility that he is the author.

However, dating this book to the early second century is just a critical assertion. Persecution of Christians in Asia Minor occurred at other times as well. While Nero's persecution was confined to Rome, zealous governors could have made things difficult for Christians in the provinces as well. In addition, there is little in the letter that suggests that the recipients' lives were at risk. The suffering described in the book may well have been the inevitable and adverse reply of a pagan society to a sizable, growing, and vocal Christian presence in their midst. While the initial stage of that reaction was not life-threatening, it did make life tough for believers.

Peter probably wrote 2 Peter while at Rome shortly before his death in the mid-late 60s. The book's acceptance as canonical was delayed due to slow circulation limiting its exposure, the brevity and content restricting endorsements from church fathers, and late recognition causing it to be overshadowed by works falsely attributed to Peter.

1 Peter is addressed to Christians located in what is today modern Turkey. Given Peter's description of their experience gleaned from the book, they were predominantly Gentile in background. 2 Peter is written to the same people (see 2 Peter 3:1).

Purpose and theme—1 Peter has been called the Job of the New Testament. The basic problem for Peter's audience was to live for God amid a society ignorant of the true God and abusive in their treatment of His followers. Peter's purpose is pastoral, to help the early believers see their temporary sufferings in the full light of the coming eternal glory. 1 Peter emphasizes a godly life of submission and good deeds amid hardship.

2 Peter is written to expose the dangerous and seductive work of false teachers and to warn believers to be on their guard. The similarities between 2 Peter 2 and Jude are striking.

Guiding Concepts:

Suffering & Old Testament allusions and quotes—There are many direct quotes of and allusions to the Old Testament in 1 Peter. Half of them deal with Peter’s use of the stone imagery of Isaiah 8 and 28 and Psalm 118 (8:12, 14 in 2:8a, 3:14b; 28:16 in 2:6; Ps 118:22 in 2:7b. These stone imagery texts were linked in the Jewish mind and spoke of God being believers’ rest and sanctuary in times of trouble.

Peter links these stone testimonies to the righteous sufferer, using Psalm 34 as his text. In Psalm 34, David is praising God amid his difficulties in a pagan land (Philistia) while fleeing from Saul. In Peter’s mind, the stone testimonies speak to God as our anchor and David’s psalm to our response in obedience to His character and ability to preserve us.

Pictures of the Church—1 Peter 2 is a classic text in understanding the church. The picture of a house describes the spiritual reality of what God is doing in and through His people. Jesus is our cornerstone. We are joined together in one structure, each contributing his or her part, all choice and precious to God. Our identity and mission is elaborated on. We are “a chosen nation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people for God’s own possession”. The titles connect the expanded church to the people of Israel and the covenant God made with Abraham.

Pilgrim journey—1 Peter 2:11-12 is a key text describing our alien, pilgrim status in a fallen world. However, this reality is held in dynamic tension with that of being God redemptive agents in that world claiming it for its rightful Lord.

Nature & authority of Scripture—1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:19-21 are texts clearly asserting the authority of Scripture.

Summary Outlines:

1 Peter—Steadfast in Suffering

- I. Salutation; Praise for living hope amidst suffering (1:1-12)
 - A. Hope for eternal inheritance (1:3-5)
 - B. Rejoicing in suffering: Faith refined (1:6-9)
 - C. Prophetic word: Grace through suffering (1:10-12)
- II. Setting Your Hope on God (1:13-25)
 - A. Holiness enjoined (1:13-16)
 - B. Living as strangers in reverent fear (1:17-21)
 - C. Purity and love from enduring Word (1:22-25)
- III. Lives that Turn Slander to Praise (2:1-12)
 - A. Craving spiritual food for growth (2:1-3)
 - B. Built into a spiritual house to be royal priesthood (2:4-8)
 - C. Chosen people belonging to God (2:9-10)
 - D. Living as aliens and strangers (2:11-12)
- IV. Submission to Authority (2:13-3:7)

- A. Rulers (2:13-17)
- B. Masters and slaves (2:18-25)
- C. Husbands and wives (3:1-7)

- V. Suffering for Doing Good (3:8-4:11)
 - A. Reasons for not retaliating (3:8-12)
 - B. Attitude while suffering (3:13-17)
 - C. Christ's example (3:18-22)
 - E. Living with the end in view (4:7-11)

- VI. Suffering as a Christian (4:12-5:11)
 - A. Before a faithful creator (4:12-19)
 - B. Shepherds of suffering flocks (5:1-4)
 - C. Submission, humility, and watchfulness (5:5-9)
 - D. Sustaining grace of God (5:10-11)

- VII. Purpose for Writing and Final Greetings (5:12-14)

2 Peter—Established in the Truth

- I. Salutation; Exhortation to grow in Christian virtue (1:1-11)

- II. Purpose and authority in writing (1:12-21)
 - A. Reliability of eyewitness testimony (2:12-18)
 - B. Reliability of prophetic word (2:19-21)

- III. Warning against false teachers; their futile teaching and assured destination (2:1-22)

- IV. Day of the Lord (3:1-18)
 - A. Description (3:1-10)
 - B. Encouragement to wholesome thinking and living (3:11-18)

John's Letters

Author and recipients—Unlike Paul's epistles, which abound with references to known people, places, and events, the letters of John lack identifiable historical markers. Tradition, uncontested until modern times, attributed these letters to John the apostle, recognized Ephesus as their place of publication, and identified the churches in Asia Minor or individuals in those churches as the recipients.

1 John plainly states that the author is an eyewitness to the life of the Lord Jesus (1:1-3; 4:14). The tone of the letter rings with apostolic authority. There is nothing tentative or apologetic about the way the author writes. His statements and commands are dogmatic (1:5; 2:8, 23; 3:6, 9; 4:8; 5:12). He does not hesitate to call people liars (2:4, 22), deceivers (1:8; 2:26), and antichrists (2:18-19, 22; 4:2-3). He supplies definite tests (truth, love, obedience) by which everyone can be sorted into one of two categories.

The style and vocabulary of the letters are similar to that of John's gospel and most scholars acknowledge that the same person probably wrote these books. The author of each had the same love of opposites set in stark contrast to each other, light and darkness, life and death, love and hate, truth and falsehood. People belong to one or the other of the two categories, with no fudge factor or third alternative offered. They are children of God or children of the devil, know God or do not know Him, have life or do not have life. Both are written with the same simple construction, the same Hebrew love of parallelism.

Some reject the common authorship of the Gospel and the letters and believe that the epistles were written by John the elder or presbyter as distinguished from John the apostle. The only basis for such a distinction is the ambiguous statement of Papias, a second century Christian leader, as quoted by Eusebius, a fourth century church historian: "If anyone came who had followed the presbyters, I was accustomed to inquire about the sayings of the presbyters, what Andrew or what Peter had said, or Philip, or Thomas or Jacob or John or Matthew or any other of the Lord's disciples, and what Aristion and the presbyter John, the disciple of the Lord, say."

The statement quoted above certainly allows the possibility that there were two disciples named John. However, his statement does not establish beyond doubt that the presbyter John, whom he identifies as the disciple of the Lord, is different from John the apostle. We have no historical evidence connecting the writings of either the gospel or the epistles to any John other than the son of Zebedee.

Destination, milieu, and date—Two lines of tradition support Asia Minor as the destination of John's letters:

- Irenaeus' statement that John wrote the letter(s) while living at Ephesus in Asia;
- The earliest known references to the letter(s) are by church leaders in Asia Minor.

The churches in Asia Minor were confronted by heresy which arose within the churches themselves (1 Jn. 2:19), promoted by teachers who were deliberately trying to lead the

faithful astray (1 Jn. 2:26; 3:7). Specifically, the heresy denied that Jesus was the Christ (1 Jn. 2:22) and that Christ came in the flesh (1 Jn. 4:2-3; 2 Jn 7). The philosophical background of these teachers seems to have been a syncretistic blend of very early forms of Gnosticism, Docetism, and Adoptionism.

Gnosticism as it developed in the second century and beyond was based on two central principles: (1) the impurity of matter and (2) the supremacy of knowledge. It taught that matter was inherently evil and spirit inherently good and immaterial. The Gnostics despised the material world and particularly the body, which they saw as the tomb of the human spirit. That spirit was the seed of God, and the goal of life was to liberate the divine seed from the clutches of the body. This was achieved through enlightenment or knowledge (in Greek *gnosis*), hence the term Gnosticism. This enlightenment came by imparting esoteric knowledge or secret initiation ceremonies or rites known only to the Gnostics. The spiritually initiated ones were *pneumatikoi* (the spirit ones), who looked down on the *psuchikoi* (the soul ones), doomed to mere animate life on earth and who would never know what real religion was. Since matter did not matter, the secret knowledge created a spiritual elite who were above the normal distinctions of right and wrong. The better Gnostic systems combined these notions with asceticism, but other Gnostics treated morality as a matter of indifference (if matter does not matter, then enjoy your matter!) leading to examples of deplorable conduct and complete disregard for Christian ethics.

Another variation of Gnostic ideas of the impurity of matter was Docetism. This word comes from the Greek word *dokeo*, meaning to seem or to appear. These people believed that Christ only seemed to have a human body. The result of their teaching was the denial of the Incarnation.

Tradition tells us that a man named Cerinthus, an early Gnostic resident of Ephesus, was a contemporary and an opponent of the apostle John. Cerinthus thought that Jesus was not born of a virgin but was the natural son of Joseph and Mary. After Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist, the divine Christ descended on the man Jesus, giving him power to proclaim the unknown Father, perform miracles, and to conduct his public ministry. The divine Christ departed from the human Jesus before his death, always remaining impassable, a quality Gnostics presupposed to be true of all spiritual beings. In short, the essence of the Cerinthus' error was the severance of the man Jesus from the divine Christ. This was an early version of adoptionism, which has flared up in church history from time to time.

These three influences, early versions of Gnosticism, Docetism, and Adoptionism, combined to create an atmosphere where the Incarnation and Messiahship of Jesus was denied, a loveless arrogance was fostered by a spiritual elite, who alone had come to know "the depths", and where ethical conduct was treated as a matter of indifference or even of prideful defiance. In rebuttal, John emphasizes holding on to the truth, loving the brethren, and obeying the commandments of God.

Traditional scholars vary in their opinions as to the date of composition of these letters. A date prior to 70, perhaps as early as 60 to 65, has been suggested. Most think the epistles were written late in the first century, prior to Domitian's persecution of the Christians in the mid-90s. The latter date seems probable given the subtlety of the opposition to the truth.

1 John

Introduction—Many Christians wrestle with assurance of their salvation. They believe God's Word, have trusted Christ, and seek to follow Him. However, the grind of daily living, the knowledge of their propensity to sin, the realization of the depths of their self-life, the actuality of repeated spiritual failure, and missed opportunities too numerous to remember mount up and tempt them to wonder if God can possibly work with them. John writes this letter that his readers might know that they have eternal life, and that this confidence might not be presumptuous but properly based on the finished work of Christ and expressed in a life of devotion and service.

The controlling theme of this letter is fellowship with God (1:3) and the certainty of that fellowship (5:11-13). John focuses his writing on tests by which a person can know that they are in fellowship with God and walking with Him: (1) adherence to the truth; (2) love for the brethren; and (3) obedience to God's commands. These specifically contradict the syncretistic teaching current in John's day, which denied the incarnation, arrogantly presumed a spiritual superiority based on esoteric knowledge, and relegated Christian ethics to unnecessary baggage.

Author and Recipients See separate introduction to John's Letters.

Guiding Concepts:

Tests of fellowship—Discerning true spirituality is not a laborious exercise for John. Holding to the truth, obeying God's commands, and loving the brethren are repeatedly stressed.

Person of Christ—The main attack of the false teachers was on the person of Christ. John has much to say about our Lord:

- He was from the beginning, the Eternal one (1:1, 2, 14).
- He is the unique Son of God (4:15; 5:5).
- He is the Christ, the long-expected Messiah (2:22; 5:1).
- He is truly and fully human (1:1-3; 4:2-3).
- He came to deliver us from our sin problem, being our Advocate (2:1) and our atoning sacrifice (2:2; 4:10).
- In Him people have life (4:9; 5:11-12).

Holy Spirit—The function of the Holy Spirit is stressed in this letter. He makes us conscious of God's abiding presence (3:24; 4:13). His anointing enables us to know the truth (2:20, 27). He enables us to acknowledge the truth of Christ's claims (4:2) and bears witness to the authenticity of the Lord's life and message (5:6, 8).

World—The world system is characterized by sensuality, materialism, and egotism (2:15-17). Those of the world do not know or sympathetically recognize us because they did

not know or recognize Christ (3:1). They hate us just as they hated Him (3:13). The world system is the pawn of the evil one (5:19); it hears and follows him and his false teachers (4:1-3). The spirit of antichrist is now in the world (4:3). However, Christians have overcome the world by faith in Christ (5:4, 5) and must be vigilant to guard our affections from seduction by the world's charms (2:15-17). The world is passing away and a new order is inaugurated by Jesus Christ, who is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (2:2) and as the Savior of the world (4:14).

Summary Outline: 1 John—Knowing That You Have Eternal Life

- I. Word of Life: Source and Basis of Fellowship (1:1-4)
- II. Light's Implications for Christian Walk: Purification from Sin (1:5-2:2)
- III. Tests of Fellowship in Three Cycles (2:3-5:5)
 - A. Tests of fellowship: First cycle (2:3-27)
 - Obedience to commands (2:3-6)
 - Love for the brethren (2:7-17)
 - Knowing and remaining in the truth (2:18-27)
 - B. Tests of fellowship: Second cycle (2:28-4:6)
 - Obedience and confidence (2:28-3:10)
 - Love for one another (3:11-24)
 - Truth and error (4:1-6)
 - C. Composite tests of fellowship: Love as focal (4:7-5:5)
 - First composite test (4:7-21)
 - Second composite test (5:1-5)
- IV. Threefold Witness that Results in Assurance (5:6-15)
- V. Concluding Affirmations and Exhortations (5:16-21)

2 & 3 John

Introduction—2 and 3 John may have been written as cover letters for 1 John, intended as private notes of counsel and greeting. The main body of John’s teaching is contained in the first letter.

2 John addresses “the chosen lady”, variously identified as either a particular person or the entire church. The letter is dominated by themes of Christian love and truth. It warns against showing hospitality to false teachers. Early believers customarily took itinerant teachers into their homes and supplied provisions for their journey. John exhorts them to be discerning and not to have their generosity abused by false teachers and unintentionally contribute to heresy.

3 John is a variant on the theme of 2 John. Here, John exhorts the believers not to reject true itinerants out of their concern for false ones. Demetrius is a true preacher of the Word and is opposed by the domineering Diotrephes, who not only did not extend welcome to traveling preachers but excommunicated those who did (9-10). Thus, he was abusing John’s authoritative counsel in 2 John to sandbag his control of a particular church.

Author and recipients—See separate introduction to John’s Letters.

Summary Outlines: **2 John—Discerning Love and Enemies**

Salutation (1-3)
Exhortation to Christian love (4-6)
Warning against supporting error by misguided hospitality (7-11)
Final greeting (12-13)

3 John—Discerning Love and Turf Battles

Commendation of Gaius: Truth and Hospitality (1-8)
Rebuke of Diotrephes for his quest for preeminence (9-11)
Example of Demetrius; Conclusion (12-14)

Jude

Introduction—Jude identifies himself as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ and a brother of James (1). This James is the Lord's brother and author of the epistle bearing his name. Thus, Jude is the physical half-brother of the Lord and the second brother to author a New Testament book.

In the gospels he is called Judas and identified as one of the Lord's brothers (Mt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3). None of the Lord's brothers initially believed Jesus to be the Messiah (Mt. 12:46-50; Jn. 7:1-5). Jude came to faith soon after the Lord's resurrection for we find him with the disciples in the Upper Room (Acts 1:14). He was married and his wife accompanied him on itinerant preaching journeys (1 Cor. 9:5). Jude was a leader, along with his brother James, of the church in Palestine. Eusebius, the fourth century church historian, records that Jude's grandsons were also leaders of the church in their day and were interrogated by the Emperor Domitian but released when they informed the emperor that Jesus's kingdom was coming at the end of the age and thus not a threat to the current Roman rule.

Author—Some scholars reject Jude's authorship of this letter for the same reasons they reject Peter's authorship of 2 Peter. There are not compelling reasons for rejecting the straightforward testimony of the book. Those accepting Jude's authorship think that he wrote somewhere between 60 and 80 and possibly in Palestine where he ministered.

Jude uses extra-biblical references to support his argument in the book. He relates a story about angels in the *Assumption of Moses* in verses 8 and 9 and cites the apocryphal *Book of Enoch* in verse 14. Like the apostle Paul, he uses non-biblical ideas to make his biblical point (see Paul's use of rabbinical midrash in 1 Cor. 10:4, his appeal to a Greek poet in Acts 17:28, and to tradition in 2 Tim. 3:8). Such use does not put these sources on a par with Scripture as authoritative writing.

Guiding Concepts:

False teaching—Jude writes to the believers to contend for the truth. There were those who were denying Jesus as Sovereign and Lord, possibly an attack on his deity. Such rejection was not only an intellectual attack but also involved an undermining of Christian morality. Most of the letter warns its recipients against the godless evildoers of the day (4-16).

***Summary Outline:* Jude—Contending for the Truth**

- I. False Teaching Described (1-16)
 - A. Introduction; reason for writing (1-4)
 - B. False Teachers Judged in Past (5-7)
 - C. Present Characteristics & future judgment (8-16)

- II. False Teaching Counteracted (17-25)
 - A. Contend for Truth (17-23)
 - B. Doxology (24-25)

Revelation

Author and occasion—The author identifies himself as John (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8), without further elaboration. Early Church fathers, including Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, consistently held that this John was the beloved disciple. However, in the third century, an African bishop by the name of Dionysius compared the language, style, and thought of Revelation with the gospel and epistles of John and concluded that the book could not have been written by the apostle. While there are differences in grammar, vocabulary, and theological content, there are also many similarities, including the distinctive use of terms like “word”, “lamb”, and “true” as well as the use of conflicting themes set in stark contrast with each other such as light and darkness, love and hate, and good and evil. The variations in style and vocabulary are more plausibly attributed to the unique conditions under which Revelation was composed rather than suggesting a different, non-apostolic John as its author.

The apostle John wrote this book while imprisoned on the island of Patmos late in the reign of the Emperor Domitian, in the mid-90s. There is a view that the book was written during Nero’s persecution of Christians following the burning of Rome in 64. The later date is preferable for the following reasons:

- It was the opinion of Irenaeus (a disciple of Polycarp who was a disciple of John) and other church fathers.
- John did not move to Ephesus until after the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66 and thus, the early date would not give him sufficient time to establish an ongoing ministry in Asia Minor prior to the composition of the book.
- The churches addressed in Revelation 2-3 seem to have been in existence for some time, enough to have reached a point of complacency and decline. That observation favors a later date of composition.
- Domitian’s persecution was more widespread and assaulted Christian belief more directly than Nero’s persecution and therefore better fits the time and context of the book.

The book addresses seven churches in the Roman province of Asia. The churches had existed for some time, had undergone various degrees of spiritual development and decline, and were confronting either actual or imminent persecution. There was a growing hostility between the church and the Roman state. Universal persecution may not have been the order of the day, but it was clear that there was to be no compromise between paganism and the claims of Christ. Revelation was written as encouragement for churches and as a warning to careless Christians who were tempted to lapse into an easy conformity to the world.

Revelation unveils the character and program of God. Its purpose is to reveal God’s sovereignty in the affairs of people in time and eternity. One day God will bring history to a triumphant climax in Christ. It is only the resurrected Christ who has the authority to judge the earth, remake it, and rule it in righteousness.

Interpretive approaches—Understanding the exotic imagery of this book is central to its proper interpretation and application. We identify with plain statements asserting God’s control over history, His conflict with Satan, and His coming judgment of the created order. But trumpets? Bowls of wrath? Fire from heaven? Mountains falling into the sea? Fantastic beasts emerging from the smoky core of the earth? Not your typical fare on the church casserole circuit. What do these phantasms mean and what application do they have for our day?

Interpretations of the book have historically fallen into one of four categories:

Idealist view—This perspective considers Revelation to be a symbolic picture of the enduring struggle between good and evil, between Christianity and the forces marshaled against the faith. The symbols in the book cannot be identified with specific historical events either in the past or the future. They simply are trends and ideals. The principles of spiritual warfare are operative throughout the ages and may have repeated embodiments. The impact of the entire message, rather than the literal details, is the point of the book.

Preterist view—“Preterist” comes from the Latin word *praeter*, meaning “past.” This view understands Revelation as describing events in the apostle’s own day. Preterists share the same disposition towards the book as those in the idealist camp, except that they limit the scope of the book to a description of the persecution of Christianity by ancient Rome and to what was expected to happen after the destruction of the Roman Empire.

Historicist view—This perspective regards Revelation as describing events from the time of John’s visions on the isle of Patmos to the end of history. Thus, interpreters speak of the breaking of the seven seals as representing the fall of the Roman Empire, locusts from the bottomless pit as standing for the Islamic invaders around the time of Mohammed, the beast from the pit as symbolizing the Roman papacy (as many in the time of the Reformation believed), and so forth. Explanations of the various symbols in Revelation have varied widely among members of this school of thought. Several Reformers subscribed to this perspective.

Futurist view—This view places the events recorded in Revelation 4-22 in the time immediately preceding Christ’s Second Coming. While the first three chapters relate to the apostolic church, the last nineteen leap forward to the end of the age. Futurists often seek to discern particular meanings behind the symbols in the book, diligently comparing them to many of the Old Testament passages from which the images are drawn, not content to merely ascertain the big picture.

A graphic comparison of these views may be helpful:

<i>View</i>	<i>Rev. 1-3</i>	<i>Rev. 4-19</i>	<i>Rev. 20-22</i>
Idealist	Historic churches.	Symbolic of the conflict between good and evil.	Symbolic of the triumph of good.
Preterist	Historic churches.	Symbolic of contemporary conditions in John's time.	Symbolic of heaven and the Lord's ultimate triumph.

Historicist	Historic churches.	Symbolic of historical events through the ages.	Final judgment; eternal state.
Futurist	Historic churches; seven stages of church history for the more imaginative.	Future tribulation; judgment of the Antichrist; Second Coming.	Millennium; final judgment; eternal state.

Millennial views—Differences in millennial views relate to the understanding of Revelation 20:1-6, which speaks of believers reigning with Christ a thousand years, and to the chronological relation of this passage with Revelation 19:11-21, which describes Christ's Second Coming and His complete victory over the forces of evil. Is the thousand-year period described in Revelation 20 literal or figurative? Do the events of Revelation 20 chronologically follow those described in Revelation 19 or does Revelation 20 introduce another cycle of the book which describes God's judgment leading up to the Lord's return.

Among evangelicals, there are three major millennial views:

- A. Postmillennialism**—Postmillennialists (postmils) believe that the reference to a thousand years in Revelation 20 speaks figuratively of a long interval of time that precedes the Second Coming of Christ. This perspective holds that the gospel will spread throughout the world in this present age and will usher in a golden age of peace on earth followed by Christ's return. The basic tenets of this view include:

Nature of the Kingdom—The kingdom of God is primarily a present reality; it is the rule of Christ in the hearts of people.

Widespread preaching of and response to the Gospel—Postmils expect a wide-ranging conversion of people from every nation on the earth prior to Christ's return. Not everyone will convert, but a significant multitude from every walk of life and every nation will come to faith. Postmils also expect that a large number of Jewish people to be included in this worldwide awakening on the basis of Romans 11:25-26.

Nature of the Millennium—There will be an exceedingly long period of earthly peace called the millennium. This is not a literal thousand-year period, just a lengthy span of time. God's kingdom will grow gradually as the gospel is preached around the world. While premils expect a dramatic and radical in-breaking of Christ's visible rule on earth, postmils see the kingdom spreading as the gospel is preached and the millennium resulting from the spread of righteousness. For postmils, the millennium differs from the present age only in degree.

Final Rebellion—At the end of the millennium, there will be a time of apostasy and a flare up of evil in connection with the coming of the Antichrist. Evil will be revealed for what it truly is and God's just punishment will be seen as eminently deserved.

Return of Christ—The millennium will end with the personal, bodily return of Christ followed immediately by the resurrection and judgment of all people, both righteous and unrighteous, and their assignment to heaven or hell.

Amillennialism—Amillennialism means “not [no] millennium.” Amillennialists (amils) do not reject the teaching of the millennium, just the millennium as envisioned by premils and postmils. Most amils hold that the millennium is a figurative reference to the reign of Christ, and of believers with Him, in the present age. In essence, the millennium is being realized now.

The first resurrection of Revelation 20:4 refers either to Christians who have died and are with Christ in heaven or to life in Christ which starts with the new birth. Amils believe that Satan has been bound (as referred to in Rev 20) through the triumph of Christ in His crucifixion and resurrection. Unlike postmils, amils do not believe that actual earthly conditions will get better and better. Sin will run its course, and Christ will return to judge the world and usher in the eternal state, including the new heavens and the new earth.

Some basic tenets of amillennialism include:

Second Coming as inaugurating the eternal state—The Second Coming of Christ will inaugurate the eternal state for both believers and unbelievers. There will be no transitional state, the millennium envisioned by the premils. The Second Coming sets in motion a number of events in close sequence—a general resurrection of both believers and unbelievers, the transformation of living believers (1 Cor 15:51-52), the rapture or catching up of believers to welcome the descending Lord to earth (1 Thess 4:16-17), final judgment of both believers and unbelievers (Mt 25:31-46), and ushering in the eternal order.

Millennium as symbolic—The thousand-year period mentioned in Revelation 20 is symbolic, not literal. The reference is not a temporal matter at all. Furthermore, the two resurrections mentioned in Revelation 20:4-6 do not require an intervening millennium. Most amils understand the first resurrection as spiritual and the second as physical. A few see both as spiritual.

Figurative interpretation of Old Testament prophecies—Old Testament prophecies are interpreted figuratively. These prophecies are fulfilled in the history of the church or in the eternal state rather than in a literal, seven-year tribulational period or during a millennial reign of Christ.

Interpretation of Revelation—The typical amil approach to Revelation is one of progressive parallelism. They believe that Revelation consists of seven sections which run parallel to each other, each depicting the church and the world between the times of Christ’s first and second comings. These sections typically are as follows:

- Revelation 1-3—Seven lampstands; messages to the churches.

- Revelation 4-7—Seven seal judgments.
- Revelation 8-11—Seven trumpet judgments.
- Revelation 12-14—Seven signs of conflict; description of key spiritual players behind the unfolding drama.
- Revelation 15-16—Seven bowl judgments.
- Revelation 17-19 Victory and judgment of Christ; fall of the earthly order, the dragon, and the beasts.
- Revelation 20-22—New heavens and the new earth; completion of Christ's victory over His enemies and the ushering in of the eternal state.

In this treatment, there is progression. Revelation 1-11 describes the struggle on earth, picturing the church persecuted by the world. Revelation 12-22 gives the deeper spiritual background of this struggle, describing the persecution of the church by Satan and his henchmen.

Points of congruence with other schools—Amils and postmils share common ground in their approach to Revelation, even to claiming the same significant church figures as adherents. Both oppose the literalness and eschatological exuberance of the premils. However, amils do not anticipate a worldwide growth of righteousness as do the postmils and lack postmil optimism. They share the pessimistic outlook of the premils and a belief in the “immanence” of Christ's Second Coming. The Lord may return at any time. There are no significant events of extended duration expected before the return. But while they share this sense of immanence, amils are noticeably less preoccupied with “signs of the times” than are premils.

Premillennialism—Premillennialists (premys) believe that Christ will personally return to initiate the visible manifestation of His kingdom; that the righteous dead will be raised and join the living believers in reigning with the Lord on earth for a thousand years (usually understood as a literal time period); that subsequent to this reign there will be a final rebellion that will be immediately suppressed, the wicked judged, and the eternal state inaugurated. There are two main camps in premillennialism: pre-tribulationism (or dispensational premillennialism) and post-tribulationism (or historic premillennialism, so-called because of its affinity to the chiliasm of the early church fathers like Irenaeus).

Pre-tribulationists (pre-tribbers) believe that God will completely restore the national Israel through a literal seven-year period called the Great Tribulation, described in detail in Revelation 4-19. They distinguish between God's dealings with Israel and His dealings with the church. Dispensational premils believe that the church will be raptured (*rapturo* is Latin for caught up, translating the Greek verb in 1 Thess 4:17) before the period of the tribulation described in Revelation. They believe that the events of the Great Tribulation are used of God to bring Israel to Himself and to inaugurate His millennial reign on earth. Mid-tribulationism (the church will not be raptured until the middle of the tribulation) and partial

rapturism (only the “godly” part of the church will be raptured) are variations of this approach.

Post-tribulationists (post-tribbers) do not make distinctions between God’s dealings with Israel and God’s dealings with the church. They teach that the people of God will be on earth during the entire tribulation period after which Christ will come in triumph to judge His enemies and to inaugurate His visible reign on earth.

Basic tenets of premillennialism include:

Two physical resurrections in Revelation 20:4-6—Revelation 20:4-6 is something of a watershed passage for millennial views. The apostles and those given authority to judge and the righteous martyrs come to life and reign with Christ for a thousand years. In pertinent part, the text states:

“They came to life (*ezesan*) and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

5 (The rest of the dead did not come to life (*ezesan*) until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy are those who have a part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them ...”

Premils insist that the two resurrections mentioned are bodily in nature and of different groups of people separated by an interval of time (the thousand years of the millennium). They point out that the same word (indeed, the same form and tense of the same word – *ezesan*) is used in both references and insist that the word used elsewhere refers to a physical resurrection. While it is possible in principle for one or both resurrections to be spiritual, the literary context needs to suggest this. Premils see nothing in the context to indicate that the two resurrections are different in kind. In addition, they think that the passage also implies that those who participate in the first resurrection do not participate in the second, for the passage makes a contrast between those raised at the beginning of the millennium and those raised at the end.

Amils argue that the language concerning the second death in 20:6 suggests a contrast between the first and second death, the first being bodily and preliminary and the second being spiritual and final. Likewise, the first and second resurrections are preliminary and ultimate as well, only this time, the first resurrection is spiritual and the second is physical.

Nature of the Millennium—Although there are important variations, premils view the millennium as having certain common elements:

- Jesus Christ will have absolute control. Overt opposition will be confined or eliminated.
- It will be a period of truly righteous rule. Torah on the heart as taught in the Sermon on the Mount will be an experiential reality.
- Christ’s reign will be a political reality, ushering in worldwide peace.

- In its character, the millennium will be clearly distinct from the rest of history.
- There will be harmony in nature. All hostility within the forces of nature and among its creatures will cease.
- The saints will reign with Christ. Faithfulness in small things in this age, renders opportunities to co-labor with God on a larger page in the next age.

Israel and the Millennium—Premils see a significant moving of the Spirit of God among the physical descendants of Abraham in the End Times. But with this general description, agreement ends.

- Pre-tribbers (dispensational premils) hold that the millennium itself will have an Jewish flavor and that there will be a virtual restoration of the Old Testament economy (understood as fulfilled in Christ). According to this perspective, when God has accomplished His purpose with the church (His New Testament people), He will renew His concern for national Israel. In the millennium, God will restore national Israel to a favored place in His program and will fulfill each of His prophetic promises to Israel. Thus, from this perspective, passages like Ezekiel 40-48 are to be literally fulfilled (e.g. in the building of a millennial temple).
- Post-tribbers (historic premils) place little emphasis on national Israel, believing that the prophecies and promises to Israel are fulfilled in the church. However, most post-tribbers see a significant awakening among the Jewish people at the end of the age based on such texts as Romans 11:25-26.

Guiding Concepts:

Sovereignty of God—Revelation conveys a sense of the majestic sovereignty of God as no other book in the New Testament. The vision of God on His throne and the worship which is His due is an immense help in getting us beyond our own immediate circumstances to a new understanding of the Lord of heaven and earth. It reminds us that it is God alone who rules, He alone who disposes. It is God alone who is worthy of our devotion and praise. It is God alone who will deal with human sin and who will bring to consummation the salvation of those who are His own and the final judgment which is His alone to render.

Eschatology—Nowhere in the Bible are we given a more detailed description of the events of the end of the age. Revelation reminds us of the reality and severity of evil forces active throughout history and in the world today. Knowing how history ends helps us fit into it. A proper understanding of the focus of Eschatology thrusts us to the present to live godly lives in Christ Jesus now in expectation and hope of our full and complete deliverance in the future (see 1 Jn 3:2-3).

High Christology—Jesus Christ is portrayed throughout the book, from the opening vision (1:12-20) to His triumphant return (19:11-16), in terms only appropriate to God. He is called the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, the ruler over the kings of the earth (1:5), the First and the Last (1:17), the Living One (1:18), the Son of God (2:18), the holy and true (3:7), the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the ruler of God’s Creation (3:14), the Lion of the tribe of Judah (5:5), the root of David (5:5; 22:16), the Lamb (5:6), Faithful and True (19:1), the Word of God (19:13), the King of kings and Lord of lords (19:16), and the Bright and Morning Star (22:16). Both God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ are called “the Alpha and the Omega” (compare 1:8; 22:13). John makes it clear that the sovereign God is accomplishing His purposes on earth through the Son, very God Himself.

Portrait of evil—Revelation paints an alarming portrait of evil. It contains no hint that the world at large will improve or that all people will turn to God in repentance and faith. The depiction of human civilization at the close of the age is one that is highly prosperous, culturally advanced, grossly unjust, and thoroughly materialistic and godless (18:2ff). The last act of unredeemed humanity is armed rebellion against the rightful Sovereign of the universe (20:7-10). The final doom of sin is described in a way that makes your skin crawl (20:15), but the justice of which is indisputable.

Evil’s most prominent and deceitful characteristic is its Satanic counterfeits of God Himself and of His church. Satan, the beast, and the false prophet form an unholy trio that counterfeits the Holy Trinity. Note the following parallels:

- The beast is the image of Satan (13:1ff) as Christ is the perfect image of God (Col 1:15).
- The beast wears many foul crowns (13:1) as Christ wears many worthy ones (19:12).
- The beast is empowered by the dragon (13:2) just as Christ has power and authority from the Father (12:10; Jn 5:21-23).
- The beast counterfeits Christ’s resurrection (13:3) and usurps Christ’s rightful position as the object of human worship (13:4, 8).
- The beast wars against the saints (13:7) as Christ wars with the saints against the godless (19:11-21).
- Babylon the great harlot counterfeits the bride of Christ (17:1ff) complete with a false ministry (the false prophet) and a godless idolatry that makes a mockery of true worship.

Apocalyptic—Revelation belongs to the category of apocalyptic literature. Such literature is characterized by—

- Symbolic language, dreams, and visions.
- Intense despair over the present circumstances and pervasive hope of future divine intervention.

- Celestial powers (angels and demons) as messengers and agents working out God's purposes.
- The catastrophic judgment of the wicked and the supernatural deliverance of the righteous.

Revelation's imagery is largely derived from the Old Testament prophetic books. The outlook of this type of literature is pessimistic in the sense that the world is lost and corrupt. The book calls the people of God to persevere and sinners to repent for the old age is groaning to a close and a divine cataclysm will usher in a new age which is completely different.

Restoration—Note the parallels between the first three (Gen. 1-3) and the last three (Rev. 20-22) chapters of the Bible:

<i>Genesis 1-3:</i>	<i>Revelation 1-3:</i>
God created the heavens and earth (1:1)	New heavens and new earth (21:1)
Darkness he called night (1:5)	There is no night there (21:25)
God made the sun and moon (1:16)	No need for sun or moon (21:23)
Death comes with eating of the tree (2:17; 3:19)	There shall be no more death (21:4)
Satan appears as humanity's deceiver (3:1)	Satan disappears forever (20:10)
Garden of Eden defiled (3:6-7)	City of God never defiled (21:27)
Walk of God with people interrupted (3:8-10)	Dwelling with people resumed (21:3)
Initial triumph of the serpent (3:13)	Ultimate triumph of Lamb (21:3; 22:3)
Sorrow greatly multiplied (3:16)	No more sorrow (21:4)
Cursed is the ground (3:17)	No more curse (22:3)
Adam's dominion broken (3:19)	Christ's dominion restored (22:5)
Eden closed and people barred (3:23-24)	Paradise opened and people welcomed (21:24-25)
Access to the tree of life denied (3:24)	Access to tree reinstated (22:14)
People driven from God's presence (3:24)	They shall see His face (22:4)

Significance of numbers—A distinctive feature of Revelation is the frequent numbers with symbolic significance. "**Seven**" appears over fifty times and is often understood as symbolic of completeness. Revelation has seven beatitudes (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14), seven churches (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14), seven spirits of God (1:4; 4:5), seven golden lampstands (1:12; 4:5), seven stars (1:16), seven seal judgments (5:1; 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 12; 8:1), seven trumpet

judgments (8:6, 7, 8, 10, 12; 9:1, 13; 11:15), a Lamb with seven horns and eyes ((5:6), seven thunders (10:3), seven bowl judgments (16:1, 2-4, 8, 10, 12, 17), seven signs (12:1, 3; 13:13-14; 15:1; 16:14; 19:20), a dragon with seven crowns (12:3), seven hills (17:9), seven kings (17:10), and a number of other sevens as well. The numbers “*four*” and “*twelve*” figure prominently as well. There are four living creatures (4:6), four horsemen (6:1-8), four angels (9:14), as well as multiples of four such as the twenty-four elders (4:4) and the one hundred and forty-four thousands of the redeemed (7:4; 14:1). There are twelve gates with twelve pearls to the city of God (21:12), twelve foundations with the names of the Lord’s twelve apostles (21:14), and twelve kinds of fruit on the tree of life (22:2). Other numbers beg for interpretation, including the number “*ten*” and the notorious “*666*” (13:18). The speculations of the numerologists have been with the people of God since the early days of the interpretation of this book.

Summary Chart and Outline:

Revelation: God on His Throne—The chart below presents a common amillennial outline of the book.

Son of Man: --Letters to churches	Heavenly Throne: --1-6 Seals --Interlude --7 th Seal	Prayers of the Saints: --1-6 Trumpets --Interlude --7 th Trumpet	Woman & child; Beasts from the sea; Lamb & people; Heavenly angels	Plagues; 7 Bowls of wrath	Harlot & Beast; Babylon; Feast of the Lamb; Second coming	Judgment; New heavens & earth; River and tree reappear
Rev. 1-3	Rev. 4-8	Rev. 8-11	Rev. 12-14	Rev. 15-16	Rev. 17-19	Rev. 20-22
Vision 1: 7 Lamps	Vision 2: 7 Seals	Vision 3: 7 Trumpets	Vision 4: 7 Signs of conflict	Vision 5: 7 Bowls	Vision 6: Judgment; Victory of the Lamb	Vision 7: New heavens and earth

Revelation: God on His Throne—The outline that follows presents a sequential premillennial approach.

- I. Source of the Message: Vision of the Exalted Lord (1:1-20)
 - A. Introduction (1:1-8)
 - B. Vision of the exalted Lord; John commissioned to write (1:9-20)
- II. Messages to the Seven Churches: Present Endurance (2:1-3:22)
 - A. Ephesus: Regain your first love (2:1-7)

- B. Smyrna: Persevere in suffering (2:8-11)
 - C. Pergamum: Hold to the truth (2:12-17)
 - D. Thyatira: Do not tolerate immorality (2:18-29)
 - E. Sardis: Complete your deeds (3:1-6)
 - F. Philadelphia: promise for patient endurance (3:7-13)
 - G. Laodicea: Stern but loving rebuke (3:14-22)
- III. Vision of the Heavenly Throne: Glory and Judgment (4:1-5:14)
- A. Vision of glory: Throne room of God (4:1-11)
 - B. Seven-sealed scroll: Worthy is the Lamb (5:1-14)
- IV. Seven Seals Opened (6:1-8:15)
- A. First six seals (6:1-17)
 - B. Interlude—Sealing of 144,000; white-robed multitude (7:1-17)
 - C. Seventh seal: Silence preceding the trumpets (8:1)
- V. Seven Trumpets Sounded (8:2-11:19)
- A. First six trumpets (8:2-9:21)
 - B. Interlude—Little scroll; two witnesses (11:1-13)
 - C. Seventh trumpet: Heavenly temple opened (11:15-19)
- VI. Characters of the Final Drama (12:1-14:20)
- A. Woman and the dragon (12:1-19)
 - B. Dragon's two beasts (13:1-18)
 - C. Lamb and 144,000; Harvest of the earth (14:1-20)
- VII. Seven Bowls of Wrath (15:1-18:24)
- A. Prelude: Seven angels with seven plagues (15:1-8)
 - B. Bowls poured out (16:1-21)
 - C. Judgment on Babylon (17:1-18;24)
- VIII. Second Coming, Judgment, Millennial Reign (19:1-20:15)
- A. Marriage supper of the Lamb (19:1-10)
 - B. Return of the King and destruction of the beast (19:11-21)
 - C. Millennial reign and final judgment (20:1-15)
- IX. New Heavens and New Earth (21:1-22:21)
- A. Vision of the new heaven, new earth, and new city (21:1-22:5)
 - B. Hearing and heeding: Readers exhorted (22:6-21)

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