

Concise New Testament Survey

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Introduction

There are, of course, a number of ways one may approach the study of the Bible: *Synthetic*—an overview of the Bible as a whole to provide a grasp of the overall message, *Analytical*—the process of viewing the Bible verse by verse to get an in depth understanding, *Topical or Doctrinal*—a study of the Bible according to its many topics and doctrines, and *Typical*—a study of the many pictures or types found in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, that portray the truth of the New Testament. The *synthetic* or *overview* approach is extremely helpful for the beginning student or for those who have never undertaken such a study. Through the *synthetic* approach, we are not only able to grasp the big picture or see the whole forest, but such an overview will help in understanding the details later on in one's study of the Bible.

We are calling this a *short survey* because this study is more of a nutshell approach to the books of the Old and New Testaments. The goal is to give the reader key terms, verses, themes or purposes of each of the books along with a brief description of the content.¹

Introduction to the New Testament

The New Testament is a record of historical events, the 'good news' events of the saving life of the Lord Jesus Christ—His life, death, resurrection, ascension, and the continuation of His work in the world—which is explained and applied by the apostles whom He chose and sent into the world. It is also the fulfillment of those events long anticipated by the Old Testament. Further, it is sacred history, which, unlike secular history, was written under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. This means it, like the Old Testament, is protected from human error and possesses divine authority for the church today and throughout human history until the Lord Himself returns.

Origin and Meaning of the Term "New Testament"

Our Bible is divided into two sections we call the Old Testament and the New Testament, but exactly what does that mean? The Greek word for "testament," *διαθηκη* (Latin, *testamentum*), means "will, testament, or covenant." But as used in connection with the New Testament "Covenant" is the best translation. As such, it refers to a new arrangement made by one party into which others could enter if they accepted the covenant. As used of God's covenants, it designates a new relationship into which men may be received by God. The Old Testament or Covenant is primarily a record of God's dealings with the Israelites on the basis of the Mosaic Covenant given at Mount Sinai. On the other hand, the New Testament or Covenant (anticipated in Jeremiah 31:31 and instituted by the Lord Jesus, 1 Cor. 11:25), describes the new arrangement of God with men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation who will accept salvation on the basis of faith in Christ.

The old covenant revealed the holiness of God in the righteous standard of the law and promised a coming Redeemer; the new covenant shows the holiness of God in His righteous Son. The New Testament, then, contains those writings that reveal the content of this new covenant.

The message of the New Testament centers on (1) the Person who gave Himself for the remission of sins (Matt. 26:28) and (2) the people (the church) who have received His salvation. Thus the central theme of the New Testament is salvation.²

The names *Old* and *New Covenants* were thus applied first to the two relationships into which God entered with men, and then, to the books that contained the record of these two relationships. "The New Testament is the divine

¹ Some of the ideas and the plan used in this Survey for each of the books of the Bible (author and title, date, purpose and theme, key verse(s), etc.) are similar to and drawn from other survey materials such as, *Briefing the Bible*, J. Vernon McGee, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1949; *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament*, Norman L. Geisler, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1977, "Old Testament Survey," Alban Douglas, class notes, Prairieview Bible College, and *Talk Thru the Bible*, Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1983.

² Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible, Expanded Edition*, Moody, p. 1498.

treaty by the terms of which God has received us rebels and enemies into peace with himself.”³

Divine Preparation for the New Testament

In the time of the New Testament, Rome was the dominant world power and ruled over most of the ancient world. Yet in a small town in Palestine, Bethlehem of Judea, was born one who would change the world. Concerning this Person, the apostle Paul wrote, “But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law (i.e., the Old Covenant).” In several special and wonderful ways, God had prepared the world for the coming of Messiah. Several factors contributed to this preparation.

Preparation Through the Jewish Nation

The preparation for the coming of Christ is the story of the Old Testament. The Jews were chosen of God from all the nations to be a treasured possession as a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation (Ex. 1:5-6). In that regard, beginning with the promises of God given to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen. 12:1-3; Rom. 9:4), they were to be the custodians of God’s Word (the Old Testament [Rom. 3:2]), and the channel of the Redeemer (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8; Rom. 9:5). The Old Testament, therefore, was full of Christ and anticipated His coming as a suffering and glorified Savior. Furthermore, these prophecies were not only many, but very precise giving details of Messiah’s lineage, place of birth, conditions around the time of His birth, life, death, and even His resurrection.

Though Israel was disobedient and was taken into captivity as God’s judgment on her hardness of heart, God nevertheless brought a remnant back to their homeland after seventy years, as He had promised in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. Though four hundred years had passed after the writing of the last Old Testament book, and though the religious climate was one of Pharisaic externalism and hypocrisy, there was a spirit of Messianic anticipation in the air and a remnant was looking for the Messiah.

Preparation Through the Greek Language

It is highly significant that when Christ, the one who came to be the Savior of the world and the one who would send His disciples out to the ends of the earth to proclaim the gospel (Matt. 28:19-20), there was what A. T. Robertson called, “a world speech.”⁴ This was the result of the conquests and aspirations of Alexander the Great, the son of King Philip of Macedon, who more than 300 years before the birth of Christ, swept across the ancient world conquering one nation after another. His desire was one world and one language. In the aftermath of his victories, he established the Greek language as the *lingua franca*, the common tongue, and the Greek culture as the pattern of thought and life. Though his empire was short lived, the result of spreading the Greek language endured.

It is significant that the Greek speech becomes one instead of many dialects at the very time that the Roman rule sweeps over the world. The language spread by Alexander’s army over the Eastern world persisted after the division of the kingdom and penetrated all parts of the Roman world, even Rome itself. Paul wrote the church at Rome in Greek, and Marcus Aurelius, the Roman Emperor, wrote his *Meditations* ... in Greek. It was the language not only of letters, but of commerce and every-day life.⁵

The point here is that God was at work preparing the world for a common language and one that was a matchless vehicle of communication for clarity and preciseness to proclaim the message of the Savior. As a result, the books of the New Testament were written in the common language of the day, *Koine* Greek. It was not written in Hebrew or Aramaic, even though all the writers of the New Testament were Jews except for Luke, who was a Gentile. *Koine* Greek had become the second language of nearly everyone.

³ J. Greshem Machen, *The New Testament, An Introduction to Its Literature and History*, edited by W. John Cook, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1976, p. 16.

⁴ A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, Broadman Press, Nashville, 1934, p. 54.

⁵ Robertson, p. 54.

Preparation Through the Romans

But God was not finished preparing the world for the coming Savior of the world. When Christ was born in Palestine, Rome ruled the world. Palestine was under Roman rule. Above all else, Rome was noted for her insistence upon law and order. The longest, bloodiest civil war in Rome's history had finally ended with the reign of Augustus Caesar. As a result, over 100 years of civil war had been brought to rest and Rome had vastly extended her boundaries. Further, the Romans built a system of roads, which, with the protection provided by her army that often patrolled the roads, contributed greatly to the measure of ease and safety by which travelers could make their way back and forth across the Roman empire. Augustus was the first Roman to wear the imperial purple and crown as the sole ruler of the empire. He was a moderate, wise and considerate of his people, and he brought in a great time of peace and prosperity, making Rome a safe place to live and travel. This introduced a period called "Pax Romana," the peace of Rome (27 B.C.– A.D. 180). Now, because of all that Augustus accomplished, many said that when he was born, a god was born. It was into these conditions One was born who was and is truly the source of true personal peace and lasting world peace, versus the temporary and false peace which men can give—no matter how wise or good or outstanding. He also was truly God, the God-Man, instead of a man called God. The presence of Roman rule and law helped to prepare the world for his life and ministry so the gospel could be preached.

Mark 1:14-15. And after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

The Religious World at the Time of the New Testament

Before surveying the New Testament, it would also be well to get a general picture of what the religious world was like when the Savior came on the scene and when the church was sent out into the world. As you read the quote by Merrill Tenney, note the great similarity to our world today. The message of the Savior as revealed in the New Testament is like a breath of fresh air after being in a smoke filled room.

The Christian church was born into a world filled with competing religions which may have differed widely among themselves but all of which possessed one common characteristic—the struggle to reach a god or gods who remained essentially inaccessible. Apart from Judaism, which taught that God had voluntarily disclosed Himself to the patriarchs, to Moses, and to the prophets, there was no faith that could speak with certainty of divine revelation nor of any true concept of sin and salvation. The current ethical standards were superficial, despite the ideal and insights possessed by some philosophers, and when they discoursed on evil and on virtue, they had neither the remedy for the one nor the dynamic to produce the other.

Even in Judaism revealed truth had been obscured either by the encrustation of traditions or by neglect ...

Paganism and all religions apart from knowledge and faith in God's Word always produces a parody and a perversion of God's original revelation to man. It retains many basic elements of truth but twists them into practical falsehood. Divine sovereignty becomes fatalism; grace becomes indulgence; righteousness becomes conformity to arbitrary rules; worship becomes empty ritual; prayer becomes selfish begging; the supernatural degenerates into superstition. The light of God is clouded by fanciful legend and by downright falsehood. The consequent confusion of beliefs and of values left men wandering in a maze of uncertainties. To some, expediency became the dominating philosophy of life; for if there can be no ultimate certainty, there can be no permanent principles by which to guide conduct; and if there are no permanent principles, one must live as well as he can by the advantage of the moment. Skepticism prevailed, for the old gods had lost their power and no new gods had appeared. Numerous novel cults invaded the empire from every quarter and became the fads of the dilettante rich or the refuge of the desperate poor. Men had largely lost the sense of joy and of destiny that made human life worthwhile.⁶

⁶ Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Times*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1965, p. 107-108.

Composition and Arrangement of the New Testament

The New Testament is composed of twenty-seven books written by nine different authors. Based on their literary characteristics, they are often classified into three major groups—

1. **The historical** (five books, the Gospels and Acts)
2. **The epistolary** (21 books, Romans through Jude)
3. **The prophetic** (one book, Revelation).

The following two charts illustrate the division and focus of this threefold classification of the New Testament books.⁷

New Testament Books						
History	Letters					Prophecy
Matthew	Paul's				General	Revelation
	Early during missionary journeys	Later after arrest at Jerusalem				
Mark					James	
Luke	Galatians	First imprisonment	Release	Second imprisonment	Hebrews	
John	1 Thess. 2 Thess.	Colossians	1 Timothy Titus	2 Timothy	Jude	
	1 Cor. 2 Cor.	Ephesians			1 Peter	
		Philemon			2 Peter	
Acts	Romans	Philippians			1 John 2 John 3 John	

An Overview as to Focus		
Historical	The Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John	Manifestation: <i>Telling the story of the coming of the Savior and His person and work.</i>
	Acts The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the apostles	Propagation: <i>Proclaiming the message of the Savior who has come.</i>
Epistolary	Epistles: Letters to churches and individuals. Romans through Jude	Explanation: <i>Developing the full significance of the person and work of Christ and how this should affect the walk of the Christian in the world.</i>

⁷ The first chart is from the *Ryrie Study Bible, Expanded Edition*, by Charles Caldwell Ryrie, Moody, p. 1500.

Prophetical	Revelation The apocalypse of the Lord Jesus Christ	Consummation: <i>Anticipating the end time events and the return of the Lord, His end time reign, and the eternal state.</i>
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The Order of the Books of the New Testament

As seen in the previous classification, the order of the New Testament books is logical rather than chronological. As Ryrie explains,

First come the Gospels, which record the life of Christ; then Acts, which gives the history of the spread of Christianity; then the letters, which show the development of the doctrines of the church along with its problems; and finally the vision of the second coming of Christ in Revelation.⁸

Though Bible scholars differ on the exact date when the books of the New Testament were written, the order of the writing of the books was approximately as follows:

Book	Date (A.D.)	Book	Date (A.D.)
James	45-49	Philippians, Philemon	63
Galatians	49	1 Peter	63-64
1 & 2 Thessalonians	51	1 Timothy	63-66
Mark	50s or 60s	Titus	63-66
Matthew	50s or 60s	Hebrews	64-68
1 Corinthians	55	2 Peter	66
2 Corinthians	56	2 Timothy	67
Romans	57-58	Jude	68-80
Luke	60	John	85-90
Acts	61	1, 2, 3 John	85-90
Colossians, Ephesians	61	Revelation	90-95

The Collection of the Books of the New Testament

Originally, the books of the New Testament were separately circulated and only gradually collected together to form what we now know as the New Testament part of the canon of Scripture. By preservation of God, our twenty-seven New Testament books were set apart from many other writings during the early church. They were preserved as a part of the New Testament canon because of their inspiration and apostolic authority. Ryrie has an excellent summary of this process:

After they were written, the individual books were not immediately gathered together into the canon, or collection of twenty-seven that comprise the New Testament. Groups of books like Paul’s letters and the Gospels were preserved at first by the churches or people to whom they were sent, and gradually all twenty-seven books were collected and formally acknowledged by the church as a whole.

This process took about 350 years. In the second century the circulation of books that promoted heresy accentuated the need for distinguishing valid Scripture from other Christian literature. Certain tests were developed to determine which books should be included. (1) Was the book written or approved by an apostle? (2) Were its contents of a spiritual nature? (3) Did it give evidence of being inspired by God? (4) Was it widely received by the churches?

Not all of the twenty-seven books that were eventually recognized as canonical were accepted by all the churches in the early centuries, but this does not mean that those that were not immediately

⁸ Ryrie, p. 1498.

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or universally accepted were spurious. Letters addressed to individuals (Philemon, 2 and 3 John) would not have been circulated as widely as those sent to churches. The books most disputed were James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Philemon, but ultimately these were included, and the canon was certified at the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397.

Although no original copy of any of the writings that comprise the New Testament has survived, there exist more than 4,500 Greek manuscripts of all or part of the text, plus some 8,000 Latin manuscripts and at least 1,000 other versions into which the original books were translated. Careful study and comparison of these many copies has given us an accurate and trustworthy New Testament.⁹

⁹ Ryrie, p. 1499.

The Historical Books

Introduction

As previously mentioned, the New Testament falls into three categories based on their literary makeup—the historical, the epistolary, and the prophetic. The four Gospels make up about 46 percent and the book of Acts raises this to 60 percent. This means 60 percent of the New Testament is directly historical tracing the roots and historical development of Christianity. Christianity is based on historical facts. This is inherent in the very nature of the gospel. Christianity is the message of the gospel and what is a gospel? It is good news, information derived from the witness of others. It is history, the testimony of historical facts. “The gospel is news that something has happened—something that puts a different face upon life. What that something is is told us in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It is the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”¹ Following this four-fold account, Acts gives the historical account of the extension of the gospel message from Jerusalem, into Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the earth, into the Gentile world. It begins:

1:1 I wrote the former account (the Gospel of Luke), Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach **1:2** until the day he was taken up to heaven, after he had given orders by the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. **1:3** After his suffering he had also presented himself alive to these apostles by many convincing proofs. He was seen by them over a forty-day period and spoke about matters concerning the kingdom of God.

1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the earth.

Luke is volume one and Acts is volume two of Dr. Luke’s treatise about the historical life and ministry of the Savior as begun by the Lord Jesus. This was continued by the Savior through the Holy Spirit working in the life of His apostles following Christ’s ascension into heaven. Acts thus provides the historical outline of the apostles’ ministry in the life of the early church. This becomes crucial to our understanding of much of what we have in the epistles, which were historical letters written to living people in historical places. The New Testament, then, is a historical book of the Good News of the living God at work in human history, not just in the past, but in the living present and the future in light of the promises of God.

The Synoptic Gospels

Before beginning a survey of each of the Gospels, it might be well to say a bit about the use of the term, *The Synoptic Gospels*. Though each Gospel has its distinct emphasis and purpose, the first three are sometimes referred to as the Synoptic Gospels because they “see together,” that is, they have the same point of view with regard to the life of Christ, agreeing in subject matter and order. Further, they also present the life of Christ in a way that complements the picture given in the Gospel of John. The following show a number of areas that are common to each of the first three Gospels:

- The announcement of the Messiah by John the Baptist (Matt. 3, Mark 1, and Luke 3).
- The baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3, Mark 1, and Luke 3).
- The temptation of Jesus (Matt. 4, Mark 1, and Luke 4).
- The teaching and miracles of Jesus (The major portion of each Gospel).
- The transfiguration of Jesus (Matt. 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9).
- The trial, death, and burial of Jesus (Matt. 26-27, Mark 14-15, Luke 22-23).
- The resurrection of Jesus (Matt. 28, Mark 16, Luke 24).

¹ Machen, p. 17.

The Purpose and Distinctive Focus of the Four Gospels

16:13 When Jesus came to the area of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” **16:14** They answered, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” **16:15** He said to them, “And who do you say that I am?” **16:16** Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Matthew 16:14 gives the four stock answers or schools of thought for a large number of people in Jesus’ day. Only a few at first, a believing remnant, recognized Him for who He really was, the Son of God. Thus, under the inspiration of the Spirit, the Gospel writers set about to reveal just who Jesus really was as to His person and work. In a four-fold way, each with their own distinctive focus, but in accounts that are complementary, the four Gospels answer the questions posed by the Lord to the disciples. They declare just exactly who Jesus is. They show Him to be the Messiah of Old Testament expectation, the Servant of the Lord, the Son of Man, the Son of God, and the one who is the Savior of the World. The Gospels give us God’s portrait of the person and work of Christ with four distinct pictures.

In Sidlow Baxter’s *Explore the Book*, he calls our attention to the interesting similarity between the vision in Ezekiel 1:10 and the Gospels, though he does not suggest the four living creatures were a *type* of the Gospels. He writes:

Most of us, perhaps, are familiar with the parallel which has often been noted between the four Gospels and the four “living creatures” in the opening vision of the prophet Ezekiel. The four “living creatures,” or cherubim, are thus described in Ezekiel 1:10: “As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.” The lion symbolizes supreme strength, kingship; the man, highest intelligence; the ox, lowly service; the eagle, heavenliness, mystery, Divinity.

In Matthew we see the Messiah-King (the lion).

In Mark we see Jehovah’s Servant (the ox).

In Luke we see the Son of Man (the man).

In John we see the Son of God (the eagle).

It needs all four aspects to give the full truth. As Sovereign He comes to reign and rule. As Servant He comes to serve and suffer. As Son of man He comes to share and sympathise. As Son of God He comes to reveal and redeem. Wonderful fourfold blending—*sovereignty and humility; humanity and deity!*²

Matthew addresses his Gospel primarily to the Jews to convince them that Jesus of Nazareth is their Messiah, the King of the Jews. With the genealogy of Jesus, Matthew also uses ten fulfillment quotations by which he seeks to show that this Jesus, though rejected and crucified, is the long-awaited Messiah of the Old Testament (Matt. 1:23; 2:15; 2:18; 2:23; 4:15; 8:15; 12:18-21; 13:35; 21:5; 27:9-10). But though rejected by the nation as a whole and crucified, the King left an empty tomb.

Mark seems to be addressed to the Romans, a people of action but of few words, and presents Jesus as *the Servant of the Lord* who came “to give His life a ransom for many.” In keeping with this, Mark, the shortest of the Gospels, is vivid, active or lively, and presents a very clear eyewitness account, especially of the last week of Jesus’ life on earth. “A full 37 percent of this Gospel is devoted to the events of His last and most important week.”³

Luke, the doctor historian, presents Jesus as the perfect *Son of Man* who came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Luke strongly stresses the true humanity of Christ while also declaring His deity. Some believe that Luke particularly had the Greeks in mind because of their keen interest in human philosophy.

John immediately (1:1-2) focuses the reader on the deity of Christ by presenting Jesus as the *eternal Son of God* who gives eternal and abundant life to all who would receive Him by believing in Him (John 1:12; 3:16-18, 36;

² J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore The Book, A Basic and Broadly Interpretative Course of Bible Study From Genesis to Revelation*, Vol. 5, Inter-Testament and the Gospels, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1960, p. 120.

³Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru The Bible*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1983, p. 305.

10:10). Though written to all mankind, John's Gospel is especially written to the church. Five chapters record the farewell discourses of Jesus to His disciples to comfort them just a few hours before His death. In addition, seven miraculous signs of Jesus are set forth to demonstrate that Jesus is the Savior and to encourage people everywhere to believe in Him that they might have life (John 20:30-31).

Matthew

Author and Title:

Each of the Gospels receives its name from the human author who wrote it. Though this first Gospel, as with each of the Gospels, never names its author, the universal testimony of the early church is that the apostle Matthew wrote it, and our earliest textual witnesses attribute it to him by giving it the title, "According to Matthew" (*Kata Matthaion*). Matthew, who was one of the original disciples of Jesus, was a Jew writing to Jews about the One who was their own Messiah. His original name was Levi, the son of Alphaeus. Matthew worked as a publican collecting taxes in Palestine for the Romans until he was called by the Lord to follow Him (Matt. 9:9, 10; Mark 2:14-15). His quick response may suggest his heart had already been stirred by the ministry of Jesus.

At an early date this gospel was given the title *Kata Matthaion*, "According to Matthew." As this title suggests, other gospel accounts were known at that time (the word *gospel* was added later) ...⁴

Date: A.D. 50s or 60s

Suggestions for the dating of Matthew range from A.D. 40 to A.D. 140, but "the fact that the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 is viewed as an event yet future (24:2) seems to require an earlier date. Some feel that this was the first of the Gospels to be written (about A.D. 50), while others think it was not the first and that it was written in the 60s."⁵

Theme and Purpose:

As evident in the questions Jesus asked His disciples in 16:14f., Matthew wrote to Jews to answer their questions about Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus had plainly declared that He was their Messiah. Was He really the Old Testament Messiah predicted by the prophets? If so, why did the religious leaders fail to receive Him and why didn't He establish the promised kingdom? Will it ever be established, and if so, when? Thus, Matthew is addressed primarily to a Jewish audience to show them that this Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. This is seen in Jesus' genealogy (1:1-17); the visit of the Magi (2:1-12); His entry into Jerusalem (21:5); the judgment of the nations (25:31-46); the often mentioning of the "kingdom of heaven" as is common with the other Gospels, and in the Old Testament fulfillment quotations mentioned previously.

Key Words or Concept:

Jesus, the Messiah, the King of the Jews.

Key Verses:

- **1:20-23.** But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins." 22 Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 23 "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD, AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."
- **16:15-19.** He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also

⁴ Wilkinson/Boa, p. 308.

⁵ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible, Expanded Edition*, Moody, p. 1509.

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say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

- **28:18-20.** And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Key Chapters:

- **Chapter 1** is key in that it introduces the genealogy and birth of Jesus as son of David, son of Abraham, and as one born by the miraculous work of the Spirit, with Joseph being the legal father by adoption, but not the physical father.
- **Chapter 12** is key because in this chapter we see the turning point when the religious leaders formally reject Jesus as their Messiah by attributing His miraculous power to Satan. At this point Jesus began to speak in parables to hide truth from the unresponsive. From this point on more time is given to His disciples.

Christ as Seen in Matthew:

As previously stressed, Matthew’s goal is to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah of Old Testament expectation. He is the son of Abraham and David. Thus He is the King who comes offering the kingdom. The phrase “the king of heaven” occurs some thirty-two times in this Gospel. Further, to show that this Jesus fulfills expectations of the Old Testament, ten times he specifically stresses that what happened in the life of Jesus fulfills the Old Testament. Further, he uses more Old Testament quotations and allusions than any other book of the New Testament, some 130 times.

Outline:

Matthew naturally falls into nine discernible sections:

- I. The Person and Presentation of the King (1:1-4:25)
- II. The Proclamation or Preaching of the King (5:1-7:29)
- III. The Power of the King (8:1-11:1)
- IV. The Program and Progressive Rejection of the King (11:2-16:12)
- V. The Pedagogy and Preparation of the King’s Disciples (16:13-20:28)
- VI. The Presentation of the King (20:29-23:39)
- VII. The Predictions or Prophecies of the King (24:1-25:46)
- VIII. The Passion or Rejection of the King (26:1-27:66)
- IX. The Proof of the King (28:1-20)

Mark

Author and Title:

Mark’s Gospel is actually anonymous since it does not name its author. The Greek title, *Kata Markon*, “According to Mark” was added later by a scribe sometime before A.D. 125, but there is strong and clear evidence (external and internal) that Mark was its author. “The unanimous testimony of the early church fathers is that Mark, an associate of the apostle Peter, was the author.”⁶ In A.D. 112, Papias cited Mark as “the interpreter of Peter.” Dunnett points out, “A comparison of Peter’s sermon in Acts 10:36-43 with Mark’s Gospel shows the former to be an outline of the life of Jesus which Mark has given in much greater detail.”⁷

⁶ John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor Books, Wheaton, 1983, 1985, electronic media.

⁷ Walter M. Dunnett, Professor of New Testament, Moody Bible Institute, *New Testament Survey*, Evangelical Teacher Training Association, Wheaton, 1967, p. 17.

Though Mark was not one of the original disciples of Christ, he was the son of Mary, a woman of wealth and position in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12), a companion of Peter (1 Pet. 5:13), and the cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10). These associations, especially his association with Peter who was evidently Mark's source of information, gave apostolic authority to Mark's Gospel. Since Peter spoke of him as "Mark, my son," (1 Pet. 5:13), Peter may have been the one who led Mark to Christ.

In addition, he was also a close associate of Paul. Ryrie writes:

He had the rare privilege of accompanying Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey but failed to stay with them through the entire trip. Because of this, Paul refused to take him on the second journey, so he went with Barnabas to Cyprus (Acts 15:38-40). About a dozen years later he was again with Paul (Col. 4:10; Philem. 24), and just before Paul's execution he was sent for by the apostle (2 Tim. 4:11). His biography proves that one failure in life does not mean the end of usefulness.⁸

Date: A.D. 50s or 60s

The dating of Mark is somewhat difficult, though many scholars believe this Gospel was the first of the four Gospels. Unless one rejects the element of predictive prophecy, 13:2 clearly shows that Mark was written before A.D. 70 and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Ryrie points out:

In fact, if Acts must be dated about A.D. 61, and if Luke, the companion volume, preceded it, then Mark must be even earlier, since Luke apparently used Mark in writing his gospel. This points to a date in the 50s for Mark. However, many scholars believe that Mark was not written until after Peter died; i.e., after 67 but before 70.⁹

Theme and Purpose:

The theme of Mark is 'Christ the Servant.' This thrust is brought in 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many." A careful reading of Mark shows how the two themes of this verse, *service* and *sacrifice*, are unfolded by Mark. Mark is addressed primarily to the Roman or Gentile reader. As a result, the genealogy of Jesus is omitted along with the Sermon on the Mount and the condemnations by the religious leaders receive less attention. Also, since Mark presents Jesus as the Worker, the Servant of the Lord, the book focuses on the activity of Christ as a faithful Servant effectively going about His work. This focus seems evident by Mark's style as seen in his use of the Greek *euqus*, "immediately, at once," or "then, so then," which occurs some 42 times in this Gospel. Its meaning varies from the sense of immediacy as in 1:10, to that of logical order ("in due course, then"; cf. 1:21 ["when"]; 11:3 ["shortly"]).¹⁰ Another illustration of this active focus is Mark's prominent use of the historic present to describe a past event, which was evidently done for vividness.

Key Word:

Servant, Servant of the Lord.

Key Verses:

- **8:34-37.** Then Jesus called the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "If anyone wants to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and the gospel will save it. What advantage is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? What can a person give in exchange for his soul?"
- **10:43-45.** "But it is not this way among you. But whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

⁸ Ryrie, p. 1574.

⁹ Ryrie, p. 1574.

¹⁰ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media.

Key Chapters:

- **Chapter 8** forms a key chapter in Mark, much like chapter 12 in Matthew, because here there is a change in both the content and course of the ministry of Jesus. The pivotal event that brings about the change is the confession of Peter, “You are the Christ (the Messiah)” (8:29). This is followed immediately by a warning that they should tell no one, the revelation of His death, the call to discipleship, and the transfiguration.

That faith-inspired response triggers a new phase in both the content and the course of Jesus’ ministry. Until this point He has sought to validate His claims as Messiah. But now He begins to fortify His men for His forthcoming suffering and death at the hands of the religious leaders. Jesus’ steps begin to take Him daily closer to Jerusalem—the place where the Perfect Servant will demonstrate the full extent of His servanthood.¹¹

Christ as Seen in Mark:

Of course, Mark’s contribution especially centers on presenting the Savior as the Sacrificing Servant who gives His life obediently for the ransom of many. The focus is clearly on His ministry to the physical and spiritual needs of others always putting them before His own needs. This emphasis on the Savior’s servant activity is seen in the following:

Only eighteen out of Christ’s seventy parables are found in Mark—some of these are only one sentence in length—but he lists over half of Christ’s thirty-five miracles, the highest proportion in the Gospels.¹²

Outline:

With the theme of the book being that of *Christ the Servant*. The key verse, 10:45, provides the key for two natural divisions of the Gospel: the Servant’s *service* (1:1-10:52) and the Servant’s *sacrifice* (11:1-16:20). We can divide this into five simple sections:

- I. The Preparation of the Servant for Service (1:1-13)
- II. The Preaching of the Servant in Galilee (1:14-9:50)
- III. The Preaching of the Servant in Perea (10:1-52)
- IV. The Passion of the Servant in Jerusalem (11:1-15:47)
- V. The Prosperity of the Servant in Resurrection (16:1-20)

Luke

Author and Title:

Both Luke and Acts, which are addressed to Theophilus as a two-volume work, are attributed to Luke, and while Luke is nowhere named as the author of either, a great deal of evidence points to Luke, “the beloved physician” (Col. 4:14) as the author of both books. Significantly, these two books make up about 28 percent of the Greek New Testament. The only places where we find his name in the New Testament are Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; and Philemon 24. It is also believed that Luke referred to himself in the “we” sections of Acts (16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16). These “we” sections of Acts show that the author was a close associate and traveling companion of Paul. Since all but two of Paul’s associates are named in the third person, the list can be narrowed to Titus and Luke.

By process of elimination, Paul’s “dear friend Luke, the doctor” (Col 4:14), and “fellow worker” (Phm 24) becomes the most likely candidate. His authorship is supported by the uniform testimony of early Christian writings (e.g., the Muratorian Canon, A.D. 170, and the works of Irenaeus, c. 180).¹³

¹¹ Wilkinson/Boa, p. 320.

¹² Wilkinson/Boa, p. 321.

¹³ *The NIV Study Bible Notes*, Zondervan NIV Bible Library, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1985, electronic edition.

It seems evident from Colossians 4:10-14 that Luke was a Gentile for there Paul differentiates him from the Jews. Here the apostle states that, of his fellow-workers, Aristarchus, Mark, and John were the only ones who were Jews. This suggest that Epaphras, Luke, and Demas, also mentioned in these verses, were Gentiles, not Jews. "Luke's obvious skill with the Greek language and his phrase "their own language" in Acts 1:19 also imply that he was not Jewish."¹⁴

We know nothing about his early life or conversion except that he was not an eyewitness of the life of Jesus Christ (Luke 1:2). Though a physician by profession, he was primarily an evangelist, writing this gospel and the book of Acts and accompanying Paul in missionary work ... He was with Paul at the time of the apostle's martyrdom (2 Tim. 4:11), but of his later life we have no certain facts.¹⁵

Date: A.D. 60

Two commonly suggested periods for dating the Gospel of Luke are: (1) A.D. 59-63, and (2) the 70s or the 80s, but the conclusion of Acts shows us that Paul was in Rome, and since Luke is the former treatise, written before Acts (Acts 1:1), the Gospel of Luke must have been written in the earlier period, around A.D. 60. However, suggesting that Luke's Gospel received its final form in Greece and not in Rome, some have suggested A.D. 70.

Theme and Purpose:

The purpose of Luke is clearly stated in the prologue of his Gospel.

1:1-4 Now many have undertaken to compile an account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, **1:2** like the accounts passed on to us by those who were eyewitnesses and servants of the word from the beginning. **1:3** So it seemed good to me as well, because I have followed all things carefully from the beginning, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, **1:4** so that you may have certainty regarding the things you were taught.

Several things need to be noticed regarding his approach to presenting the gospel:

Luke states that his own work was stimulated by the work of others (1:1), that he consulted eyewitnesses (1:2), and that he sifted and arranged the information (1:3) under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to instruct Theophilus in the historical reliability of the faith (1:4). This is a carefully researched and documented writing.¹⁶

As a Gentile, Luke must have felt responsible to write his two-volume account of the life of Christ so it would be available to Gentile readers. This seems evident from the fact that Luke "translates Aramaic terms with Greek words and explains Jewish customs and geography to make his Gospel more intelligible to his original Greek readership."¹⁷

Luke, written by the "the beloved physician," is the most comprehensive and longest of the Gospels. It presents the Savior as the Son of Man, the Perfect Man who came to seek and save the lost (19:10). In Matthew we see Jesus as Son of David, Israel's King; in Mark we see Him as the Lord's Servant, serving others; in Luke we see Him as the Son of Man, meeting man's needs, a perfect man among men, chosen from men, tested among men, and supremely qualified to be the Savior and High Priest. In Matthew we see groupings of significant events, in Mark we see the snapshots of significant events, but in Luke we see more details of these events by the physician/historian.

His perfect human nature as the Son of Man, yet also Son of God, is brought out by the following:

1. His physical birth with his genealogy traced all the way back to Adam (3:38) (Matthew goes back only to Abraham).
2. His mental development is stressed in 2:40-52.

¹⁴ Wilkinson/Boa, p. 327.

¹⁵ Ryrie, p. 1614.

¹⁶ Ryrie, p. 1614.

¹⁷ Wilkinson/Boa, p. 328.

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3. His moral and spiritual perfection is also stressed as evidenced at His baptism by the voice of the Father from heaven and by the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

So in Jesus we have One who is perfect manhood—physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Key Word:

Jesus, the Son of Man.

Key Verses:

- **1:1-4** Now many have undertaken to compile an account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, **1:2** like the accounts passed on to us by those who were eyewitnesses and servants of the word from the beginning. **1:3** So it seemed good to me as well, because I have followed all things carefully from the beginning, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, **1:4** so that you may have certainty regarding the things you were taught.
- **19:10** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

Key Chapters:

Chapter 15. In view of the theme stressed in 19:10, the emphasis on ‘seeking’ in the three parables of chapter 15 (the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son) makes this a key chapter in Luke’s Gospel.

Christ as Seen in Luke:

The humanity and compassion of Jesus are repeatedly stressed in Luke’s Gospel. Luke gives the most complete account of Christ’s ancestry, birth, and development. He is the ideal Son of Man who identified with the sorrow and plight of sinful man in order to carry our sorrows and offer us the priceless gift of salvation. Jesus alone fulfills the Greek ideal of human perfection.¹⁸

Outline:

- I. The Prologue: The Method and Purpose of Writing (1:1-4)
- II. The Identification of the Son of Man with Men (1:1-4:13)
- III. The Ministry of the Son of Man to Men (4:14-9:50)
- IV. The Rejection of the Son of Man by Men (9:51-19:44)
- V. The Suffering of the Son of Man for Men (19:45-23:56)
- VI. The Authentication (by resurrection) of the Son of Man Before Men (24:1-53)

John

Author and Title:

From early in the second century, church tradition has attributed the fourth Gospel to John the apostle, son of Zebedee and brother of James. Jesus named John and James, “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17). Salome, his mother, served Jesus in Galilee and was present at His crucifixion (Mark 15:40-41). He was not only close to Jesus as one of the Twelve, but he is usually identified as “the beloved disciple” (13:23; 18:15, 16; 19:26-27), was one of the inner circle and one of three Christ took with Him to the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1). He was also closely associated with Peter. After the ascension of Christ, John became one whom Paul identified as the “pillars” of the church (Gal. 2:9).

In the strict sense of the term, the fourth Gospel is anonymous. No name of its author is given in the text. This is not surprising because a gospel differs in literary form from an epistle (letter). The letters of Paul each begin with his name, which was the normal custom of letter writers in the ancient world. None of the human authors of the four Gospels identified himself by name. But that does not mean one cannot know who the authors were. An author may indirectly reveal himself within the writing, or his work may be well known in tradition as coming from him.

¹⁸ Wilkinson/Boa, p. 328.

Internal evidence supplies the following chain of connections regarding the author of the Fourth Gospel. (1) In John 21:24 the word “them” refers to the whole Gospel, not to just the last chapter. (2) “The disciple” in 21:24 was “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (21:7). (3) From 21:7 it is certain that the disciple whom Jesus loved was one of seven persons mentioned in 21:2 (Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the two sons of Zebedee, and two unnamed disciples). (4) “The disciple whom Jesus loved” was seated next to the Lord at the Last Supper, and Peter motioned to him (13:23-24). (5) He must have been one of the Twelve since only they were with the Lord at the Last Supper (cf. Mark 14:17; Luke 22:14). (6) In the Gospel, John was closely related to Peter and thus appears to be one of the inner three (cf. John 20:2-10; Mark 5:37-38; 9:2-3; 14:33). Since James, John’s brother, died in the year A.D. 44, he was not the author (Acts 12:2). (7) “The other disciple” (John 18:15-16) seems to refer to the “disciple whom Jesus loved” since he is called this in 20:2. (8) The “disciple whom Jesus loved” was at the cross (19:26), and 19:35 seems to refer to him. (9) The author’s claim, “We have seen His glory” (1:14), was the claim of someone who was an eyewitness (cf. 1 John 1:1-4).

Putting all of these facts together makes a good case for the author of the Fourth Gospel having been John, one of the sons of a fisherman named Zebedee.¹⁹

Date: A.D. 85-90

Some critics have sought to place the dating of John well into the second century (about A.D. 150), but a number of factors have proven this false.

Archeological finds supporting the authenticity of the text of John (e.g., John 4:11; 5:2-3), word studies (e.g., *synchro.,ntai*, 4:9), manuscript discoveries (e.g., P⁵²), and the Dead Sea Scrolls have given powerful support to an early dating for John. So it is common today to find nonconservative scholars arguing for a date as early as A.D. 45-66. An early date is possible. But this Gospel has been known in the church as the “Fourth” one, and the early church fathers believed that it was written when John was an old man. Therefore a date between 85 and 95 is best. John 21:18, 23 require the passing of some time, with Peter becoming old and John outliving him.²⁰

Theme and Purpose:

Probably more than any other book of the Bible, John clearly states the theme and purpose of his Gospel. Significantly, this statement of purpose follows Thomas’ encounter with the resurrected Savior. If you recall, Thomas had doubted the reality of the resurrection (John 20:24-25). Immediately after this the Lord appeared to the disciples and addressed Thomas with these words, “Put your finger here, and examine my hands. Extend your hand and put it into my side. Do not continue in your unbelief, but believe.” Thomas then declared, “My Lord and my God!” The Lord then said to Thomas, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are the people who have not seen and yet have believed.” It is following this exchange and the focus on the need of believing in Jesus that John gives us the theme and statement of purpose:

20:30 Now Jesus performed many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples that are not recorded in this book. **20:31** But these are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

In keeping with this statement of purpose, John selected seven sign-miracles to reveal the person and mission of Christ that it might bring people to believe in Jesus as Savior. The term used of these miracles is *shmeion*, “a sign, a distinguishing mark,” and then “a sign consisting of a miracle, a wonder, something contrary to nature.” John always refers to Jesus’ miracles by this term because *shmeion* emphasized the significance of the action rather than the miracle (see, e.g., 4:54; 6:14; 9:16; 11:47). These signs revealed Jesus’ glory (see 1:14; cf. Isa 35:1-2; Joel 3:18; Am 9:13). These seven signs consisted of the following: (1) the turning of water into wine (2:1-11); (2) the cure of the nobleman’s son (4:46-54); (3) the cure of the paralytic (5:1-18); (4) the feeding of the multitude (6:6-13); (5) the walking on the water (6:16-21); (6) the giving of sight to the blind (9:1-7); and (7) the raising of Lazarus (11:1-45).

¹⁹ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media.

²⁰ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media.

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John's special theme and purpose is also easily discerned by the distinctive nature of his Gospel when compared to Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

When one compares the Gospel of John with the other three Gospels, he is struck by the distinctiveness of John's presentation. John does not include Jesus' genealogy, birth, baptism, temptation, casting out of demons, parables, transfiguration, instituting of the Lord's Supper, His agony in Gethsemane, or His Ascension. John's presentation of Jesus stresses His ministry in Jerusalem, the feasts of the Jewish nation, Jesus' contacts with individuals in private conversations (e.g., chaps. 3-4; 18:28-19:16), and His ministry to His disciples (chaps. 13-17). The major body of the Gospel is contained in a "Book of Signs" (2:1-12:50) which embraces seven miracles or "signs" which proclaim Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. This "Book of Signs" also contains great discourses of Jesus which explain and proclaim the significance of the signs. For example, following the feeding of the 5,000 (6:1-15), Jesus revealed Himself as the Bread of Life which the heavenly Father gives for the life of the world (6:25-35). Another notable and exclusive feature of the Fourth Gospel is the series of "I am" statements that were made by Jesus (cf. 6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5).

The distinctiveness of this Gospel must be kept in perspective. The Gospels were not intended as biographies. Each Gospel writer selected from a much larger pool of information the material which would serve his purpose. It has been estimated that if all the words from the lips of Jesus cited in Matthew, Mark, and Luke were read aloud, the amount of time taken would be only about three hours ...²¹

Key Words:

The key concept in John is *Jesus, the Son of God*, the one who is the *Logos*, the very revelation of God (John 1:1, 14, 18). But there are a number of other key words in the presentation of Christ like *truth, light, darkness, word, knowledge, believe, abide, love, world, witness, and judgment*. The verb *believe* (Greek, *pisteuw*) occurs 98 times in this Gospel. The noun, "faith" (Greek, *pistis*) does not occur.

Key Verses:

- **1:11-13.** He came to what was his own, but his own people did not receive him. But to all who have received him—those who believe in his name—he has given the right to become God's children—children not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband's decision, but by God.
- **1:14.** Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory—the glory of the one and only full of grace and truth, who came from the Father.
- **3:16.** For this is the way God loved the world: he gave his one and only Son that everyone who believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
- **20:30-31.** Now Jesus performed many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples that are not recorded in this book. But these are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Key Chapters:

- It is difficult to choose a key chapter in John's Gospel, but surely the Lord's conversation with Nicodemus in **chapter 3** rates as one of the key chapters. John 3:16 is perhaps quoted more than any other verse in the Bible. Also important in this chapter are the words of the Savior regarding the need to be born again or from above (see 3:3-6).
- Other key chapters are **John 4**, the encounter with the woman at the well, the discourses with the disciples preparing them for His absence, **John 13-16**, and the Lord's prayer to the Father in **John 17**.

²¹ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media.

Christ as Seen in John:

While the deity of Christ is a prominent theme in the Bible in many places, there is no book that presents a more powerful case for the deity of Jesus as the incarnate Son of God than does this Gospel. The fact is that one who is identified as “The man called Jesus” (9:11) is also called “God, the One and Only” (1:18 NIV), “Christ, the Son of the Living God” (6:69 KJV) or “the Holy One of God” (6:69 NIV, NASB, NET).

This declaration of the deity of Jesus Christ is further developed by seven “I AM” statements made by Jesus and recorded in John’s Gospel. These seven statements are: I am the bread of life (6:35), I am the light of the world (8:12), I am the gate (10:7, 9), I am the good shepherd (10:11, 14), I am the resurrection and the life (11:25), I am the way, the truth, and the life (14:6), I am the true vine (15:1, 5).

Another distinctive of John’s Gospel, again focusing on the person of Christ, are the five witnesses that witness to Jesus as the Son of God. In John 5:31f., Jesus is responding to the arguments of His opponents. They were claiming that His witness was without other witnesses to corroborate His testimony, but Jesus shows that is not true and proceeds to remind them that there are other witnesses to the validity of His claims: there is His Father (vv. 32, 37), there is John the Baptist (v. 33), His miracles (v. 36), the Scriptures (v. 39), and Moses (v. 46). Later, in 8:14 He declares that His witness is indeed true.

... On certain occasions, Jesus equates Himself with the Old Testament “I AM,” or Yahweh (see 4:25-26; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5-6, 8). Some of the most crucial affirmations of His deity are found here (1:1; 8:58; 10:30; 14:9; 20:28).²²

Outline:

- I. The Prologue: The Incarnation of the Son of God (1:1-18)
 - A. The Deity of Christ (1:1-2)
 - B. The Preincarnate Work of Christ (1:3-5)
 - C. The Forerunner of Christ (1:6-8)
 - D. The Rejection of Christ (1:9-11)
 - E. The Acceptance of Christ (1:12-13)
 - F. The Incarnation of Christ (1:14-18)
- II. The Presentation of the Son of God (1:19-4:54)
 - A. By John the Baptist (1:19-34)
 - B. To John’s Disciples (1:35-51)
 - C. At the Wedding in Cana (2:1-11)
 - D. At the Temple in Jerusalem (2:12-35)
 - E. To Nicodemus (3:1-21)
 - F. By John the Baptist (3:22-36)
 - G. To the Samaritan Woman (4:1-42)
 - H. To an Official of Capernaum (4:43-54)
- III. The Opposition to the Son of God (5:1-12:50)
 - A. At the Feast in Jerusalem (5:1-47)
 - B. During the Time of the Passover in Galilee (6:1-71)
 - C. At the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem (7:1-10:21)
 - D. At the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem (10:22-42)
 - E. At Bethany (11:1-12:11)
 - F. At Jerusalem (12:12-50)
- IV. The Instruction by the Son of God (13:1-16:33)
 - A. Concerning Forgiveness (13:1-20)
 - B. Concerning His Betrayal (13:21-30)
 - C. Concerning His Departure (13:31-38)
 - D. Concerning Heaven (14:1-14)
 - E. Concerning the Holy Spirit (14:15-26)

²² Wilkinson/Boa, p. 338.

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- F. Concerning Peace (14:27-31)
- G. Concerning Fruitfulness (15:1-17)
- H. Concerning the World (15:18-16:6)
- I. Concerning the Holy Spirit (16:7-15)
- J. Concerning His Return (16:16-33)
- V. The Intercession of the Son of God (17:1-26)
- VI. The Crucifixion of the Son of God (18:1-19:42)
- VII. The Resurrection of the Son of God (20:1-31)
 - A. The Empty Tomb (20:1-9)
 - B. The Appearances of the Risen Lord (20:10-31)
- VIII. The Epilogue: The Appearance by the Lake (21:1-25)
 - A. The Appearance to the Seven Disciples (21:1-14)
 - B. The Words to Peter (21:15-23)
 - C. The Conclusion of the Gospel (21:24-25)

Acts

Author and Title:

Although the author is unnamed in Acts, the evidence leads to the conclusion that the author was Luke. As previously mentioned, Acts is the second volume of a two-part treatise written by Luke, the physician, to Theophilus about “all that Jesus began to do and teach.” In support of Luke as the author, Ryrie writes:

That the author of Acts was a companion of Paul is clear from the passages in the book in which “we” and “us” are used (16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16). These sections themselves eliminate known companions of Paul other than Luke, and Colossians 4:14 and Philemon 24 point affirmatively to Luke, who was a physician. The frequent use of medical terms also substantiates this conclusion (1:3; 3:7ff.; 9:18, 33; 13:11; 28:1-10). Luke answered the Macedonian call with Paul, was in charge of the work at Philippi for about six years, and later was with Paul in Rome during the time of Paul’s house arrest. It was probably during this last period that the book was written. If it were written later it would be very difficult to explain the absence of mentioning such momentous events as the burning of Rome, the martyrdom of Paul, or the destruction of Jerusalem.²³

Regarding the title, all available Greek manuscripts designate it by the title *Praxeis*, “Acts,” or by the title, “The Acts of the Apostles.” Just how or why it received this title is uncertain. Actually, “The Acts of the Apostles” is perhaps not the most accurate title since it does not contain the acts of all the apostles. Only Peter and Paul are really emphasized, though the promise of the coming of the Spirit was made to all the apostles in Acts 1:2-8 who were then to go into all the world preaching the gospel in the power of the Spirit (however, see 4:32). Many have felt that the book would be more accurately titled, “The Acts of the Holy Spirit” since it describes the spread of Christianity from the time of the coming of the Spirit in Acts 2 as promised in Acts 1:8.

Date: A.D. 61

The issues regarding the dating of the book are summarized by Stanley Toussaint as follows:

The writing of Acts must have taken place before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Certainly an event of such magnitude would not have been ignored. This is especially true in light of one of the basic themes of the book: God’s turning to the Gentiles from the Jews because of the Jews’ rejection of Jesus Christ.

Luke scarcely would have omitted an account of Paul’s death, traditionally dated from A.D. 66-68, if it had occurred before he wrote Acts.

Nor did Luke mention the Neronian persecutions which began after the great fire of Rome in A.D. 64.

²³ Ryrie, p. 1724.

Furthermore, a defense of Christianity before Nero by using the Book of Acts to appeal to what lower officials had ruled regarding Paul would have had little point at the time of the Neronian antagonism. At that time Nero was so intent on destroying the church, the defense set forth in Acts would have had little effect in dissuading him.

The date usually accepted by conservative scholars for the writing of Acts is around A.D. 60-62. Accordingly the place of writing would be Rome or possibly both Caesarea and Rome. At the time of writing, Paul's release was either imminent or had just taken place.²⁴

Theme and Purpose:

The book of Acts stands out as unique among the New Testament books for it alone provides a bridge for the other books of the New Testament. As Luke's second treatise, Acts continues what Jesus "began to do and to teach" (1:1) as recorded in the Gospels. It begins with Christ's Ascension and continues to the period of the New Testament Epistles. In it we have the continuation of the ministry of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit at work in the apostles who went forth preaching and establishing the church, the body of Christ. Acts is the historical link between the Gospels and the Epistles.

Not only does it make this bridge for us, but it provides an account of the life of Paul and gives us the historical occasion for his letters. In the process, Acts recounts the first 30 years of the life of the church.

After summarizing various views on the purpose of Acts, Toussaint writes:

The purpose of the Book of Acts may be stated as follows: To explain with the Gospel of Luke the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome. In Luke's Gospel the question is answered, "If Christianity has its roots in the Old Testament and in Judaism, how did it become a worldwide religion?" The Book of Acts continues in the vein of the Gospel of Luke to answer the same problem.²⁵

Acts 1:8 expresses the theme of Acts—the indwelling Holy Spirit empowering God's people to be the Savior's witnesses both in Jerusalem (home base), and in all Judea and Samaria (the immediate and surrounding areas), and even to the remotest part of the earth (the world).

Key Word:

- The key concept for Acts would be *the growth of the Church in all the world*.
- Two key words are "witness" or "witnesses," and "the Holy Spirit."

Key Verses:

- **1:8** "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the earth."
- **2:42-47** They were devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayers. **2:43** Reverential awe came on everyone, and many wonders and miraculous signs came about by the apostles. **2:44** All who believed were together and held everything in common, **2:45** and they began selling their property and possessions and distributing the proceeds to everyone, as anyone had need. **2:46** Every day they continued to gather together by common consent in the temple courts, breaking bread from house to house, sharing their food with glad and humble hearts, **2:47** praising God and having the good will of all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number every day those who were being saved.

²⁴ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media.

²⁵ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media.

Key Chapters:

- Since the accomplishment of the church's global mission of worldwide outreach is dependent on the coming of the Holy Spirit, **chapter 2** is naturally the key chapter. This chapter records the fulfillment of 1:8 on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came and began His ministry of baptizing believers into Christ's body, the church (cf. 1:5; 11:15-16 with 1 Cor. 12:13), began indwelling all believers and empowering them to be witnesses of the Savior.

Key People:

Key people include: Peter, Stephen, Philip, James, Barnabas and Paul.

Christ as Seen in Acts:

The resurrected Savior is the central theme of the sermons and defenses in Acts. The Old Testament Scriptures, the historical resurrection, the apostolic testimony, and the convicting power of the Holy Spirit all bear witness that Jesus is both Lord and Christ (see Peter's sermons in 2:22-36; 20:34-43). "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins" (10:43). "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (4:12).²⁶

Outline:

Acts can be naturally outlined around Acts 1:8, the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth.²⁷

I. The Witness in Jerusalem (1:1-6:7)

A. The Expectation of the Chosen (1:1-2:47) *Progress report no. 1*: "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (2:47).

B. The Expansion of the Church in Jerusalem (3:1-6:7) *Progress report no. 2*: "So the Word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly" (6:7).

II. The Witness in all Judea and Samaria (6:8-9:31)

A. The Martyrdom of Stephen (6:8-8:1a)

1. The Arrest of Stephen (6:8-7:1)

2. The Address of Stephen (7:2-53)

3. The Attack on Stephen (7:54-8:1a)

B. The Ministry of Philip (8:1b-40)

C. The Message of Saul (9:1-19a)

D. The Conflicts of Saul (9:19b-31) *Progress report no. 3*: "Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria ... was strengthened; and [it was] encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord" (9:31).

III. The Witness to the Extremity of the Earth (9:32-28:31)

A. The Extension of the Church to Antioch (9:32-12:24) *Progress report no. 4*: "But the Word of God continued to increase and spread" (12:24).

B. The Extension of the Church in Asia Minor (12:25-16:5) *Progress report no. 5*: "So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers" (16:5).

C. The Extension of the Church in the Aegean Area (16:6-19:20) *Progress report no. 6*: "In this way the Word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power" (19:20).

²⁶ Wilkinson/Boa, p. 353.

²⁷ The outline used here follows that of Dr. Stanley in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, edited by Walvoord and Zuck, electronic media.

D. The Extension of the Church to Rome (19:21-28:31) *Progress report no. 7*: “Paul ... welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ” (28:30-31).

The Pauline Epistles

Having finished the survey of the historical books (the Gospels and Acts), we now come to the twenty-one epistles of the New Testament, twenty-two if one includes Revelation as an epistle (which in reality it is [see Rev. 1:4]). Because of its unique apocalyptic nature, however, in this survey we are distinguishing it as *The Prophetic Book* of the New Testament. The Epistles are generally divided into the Pauline Epistles and the Non-Pauline (General) Epistles. Paul's epistles fall into two categories: nine epistles written to churches (Romans to 2 Thessalonians) and four pastoral and personal epistles (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon). This is then followed by eight Hebrew Christian epistles (Hebrews to Jude). Naturally, many questions would arise as to the meaning and application of the gospel for Christians. Thus, the Epistles answer these questions, give the interpretation of the person and work of Christ, and apply the truth of the gospel to believers.

Background of Paul

Paul was known for many years as Saul of Tarsus. He was born of Jewish parentage in the city of Tarsus of Cilicia. He was not only a Jew, but by his own testimony, he was a Pharisee and a son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6), was a Hebrew of Hebrews (spoke Hebrew or Aramaic), was of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:4-5), and had evidently been taught the trade of tent-making as a youth (Acts 18:3). Evidently at a young age, he went to Jerusalem, and according to his testimony, studied under the well know Gamaliel I, a noted teacher in the School of Hillel (Acts 22:3). In his studies, he had advanced in the religion of the Jews beyond many of his fellows as one extremely zealous for his ancestral traditions (Gal. 1:14).

His zeal as a religious Jew was carried over into the way he zealously sought to persecute the church. As a young Pharisee, he was present when Stephen was stoned and murdered (Acts 7:58-83). In his campaign against Christians, both men and women, he traveled with letters of arrest from the high priest and went to other cities to waste the church of Jesus Christ (Acts 26:10-11; Gal. 1:13). It was on one of these missions that Saul was converted while on the road to Damascus.

Paul was also a Greek by culture having evidently received a Greek education (cf. Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12). He shows acquaintance with Greek culture and their thinking. As such a student, he was familiar with many of the sayings of classical and contemporary writers. In addition, Paul was a Roman citizen, being Roman born (Acts 22:28). Because of this, he could appeal to Caesar as a citizen of Rome while imprisoned in Philippi (Acts 16:37-39).

Consequently, Paul was uniquely qualified to be the one chosen to carry the message of the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul could easily say, "I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22).

Conversion of Paul

Having energetically and consistently persecuted the church of Jesus Christ, while on the road to Damascus, Paul had an encounter with the glorified resurrected Christ, which had revolutionary effects on his life.

He had denied the Christian claim that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. Further, he did not believe that He had risen from the dead as Stephen had proclaimed when he cried, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). "Liar!" they cried and stoned him. Saul stood by "consenting unto his death." But when the Lord Jesus spoke to Saul on the day of the great experience outside Damascus, he knew that Stephen had been right and he had been wrong. Jesus was alive after all! And further, he must be the Son of God. Thus, in the synagogues of Damascus, he proclaimed Christ as Savior.

... While the experience was sudden and dramatic, the effects were enduring. The impact must have necessitated great psychological and intellectual readjustments. This may well account for the period spent in Arabia and Damascus before his first visit to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:16-19). Then he went back to his home territory and for a period of eight to ten years little is known of his activities.¹

¹ Walter M. Dunnnett, p. 40.

Distinctive Emphases of Paul's Epistles

Before the overview of each of Paul's epistles, it would be well to note in a nutshell the distinctive emphasis and contributions of each of Paul's epistles.²

The Emphasis on the Lord Jesus:

- Romans: Christ the *power* of God to us.
- 1 Corinthians: Christ the *wisdom* of God to us.
- 2 Corinthians: Christ the *comfort* of God to us.
- Galatians: Christ the *righteousness* of God to us.
- Ephesians: Christ the *riches* of God to us.
- Philippians: Christ the *sufficiency* of God to us.
- Colossians: Christ the *fullness* of God to us.
- 1 Thessalonians: Christ the *promise* of God to us.
- 2 Thessalonians: Christ the *reward* of God to us.

The Emphasis on the Gospel Message:

- Romans: The Gospel and its *message*.
- 1 Corinthians: The Gospel and its *ministry*.
- 2 Corinthians: The Gospel and its *ministers*.
- Galatians: The Gospel and its *mutilators*.
- Ephesians: The Gospel and its *heavenlies*.
- Philippians: The Gospel and its *earthlies*.
- Colossians: The Gospel and its *philosophies*.
- 1 Thessalonians: The Gospel and the *Church's future*.
- 2 Thessalonians: The Gospel and the *Antichrist*.

The Emphasis of the Gospel on the Believer's Union:

- Romans: In Christ—*justification*.
- 1 Corinthians: In Christ—*sanctification*.
- 2 Corinthians: In Christ—*consolation*.
- Galatians: In Christ—*liberation*.
- Ephesians: In Christ—*exaltation*.
- Philippians: In Christ—*exultation*.
- Colossians: In Christ—*completion*.
- 1 Thessalonians: In Christ—*translation*.
- 2 Thessalonians: In Christ—*compensation*.

Romans

Author and Title:

As the letter states, Paul is the author (see 1:1). With almost no exception, from the early church this epistle has been credited to Paul. The letter contains a number of historical references that agree with known facts of Paul's life

² This material is taken from J. Sidlow Baxter's *Explore the Book*, pp. 63-64.

and the doctrinal content of the book is consistent with the other writings of the apostle, a fact quickly evident by a comparison with his other letters.

A few examples must suffice: the doctrine of justification by faith (Rom 3:20-22; Gal 2:16); the church as the body of Christ appointed to represent and serve him through a variety of spiritual gifts (Rom 12; 1 Cor 12); the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-28; 2 Cor 8-9). Understandably, Paul makes fewer references to himself and to his readers in Romans than in 1 and 2 Corinthians and Galatians, since he had not founded the Roman church and guided its struggles to maturity as he had the others.³

The only question concerning the authorship revolves around chapter 16. Ryrie writes:

The mention by name of 26 people in a church Paul had never visited (and particularly Priscilla and Aquila, who were most recently associated with Ephesus, Acts 18:18-19) has caused some scholars to consider chap. 16 as part of an epistle sent to Ephesus. It would be natural, however, for Paul to mention to a church to which he was a stranger his acquaintance with mutual friends. Paul's only other long series of greetings is in Colossians—a letter also sent to a church he had not visited.⁴

Romans, which has been called his “greatest work” or his “magnum opus,” gets its title from the fact it was written to the church in Rome (1:7, 15). Paul did not establish the church in Rome, but as the apostle to the Gentiles, he had longed for many years to visit the believers in Rome (15:22-23) that he might further establish them in the faith and preach the gospel there as well (1:13-15).

Being anxious to minister in Rome, he wrote Romans to prepare the way for his visit (15:14-17). It was written from Corinth, while completing the collection for the poor in Palestine. From there he went to Jerusalem to deliver the money, intending to continue on to Rome and Spain (15:24). Paul did eventually get to Rome, but as a prisoner. It appears that Phoebe, who belonged to the church at Cenchrea near Corinth (16:1), carried the letter to Rome.

Date: A.D. 57-58

Romans was written in about A.D. 57-58 most likely near the end of his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23-21:14; see also Rom. 15:19). In view of Paul's statement in Rom. 15:26, it appears Paul had already received contributions from the churches of Macedonia and Achaia (where Corinth was located). This means he had already been at Corinth and since he had not yet been at Corinth when he wrote to that church (cf. 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9), the writing of Romans must follow that of 1 and 2 Corinthians which is dated about A.D. 55.

Theme and Purpose:

Unlike some of his other epistles, Romans was not written to address specific problems. Rather, three clear purposes unfold for the writing of Romans. The *first* was simply to announce Paul's plans to visit Rome after his return to Jerusalem and to prepare the church for his coming (15:24, 28-29; cf. Acts 19:21). Paul wanted to inform them of his plans and to have them anticipate and pray for their fulfillment (15:30-32). A *second* purpose was to present a complete and detailed statement of the gospel message God had called him to proclaim. The apostle was not only ready “to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome” (1:15), but he wanted them to have a clear understanding of its meaning and ramifications in all of life—past (justification), present (sanctification), and future (glorification). A *third* purpose is related to the questions that naturally arose among the Jewish and the Gentile Christians at Rome like what does the gospel do to the Law and such Old Testament rites like circumcision? And what about the Jew? Has God set the Jew aside? Had He forgotten His promises to the Jews? So Paul explains God's program of salvation for Jews and Gentiles.

Paul's theme or seed plot in Romans is clearly stated in 1:16-17. In this the apostle shows how God saves the sinner. In these verses, the great themes of the epistle are gathered together—*the gospel, the power of God, salva-*

³ Frank E. Gaebelin, General Editor, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, New Testament*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1976-1992, electronic media.

⁴ Ryrie, p. 1786.

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tion, everyone, who believes, righteousness from God, Jew and Gentile. Ryrie has an excellent summary of the theme and contents:

More formal than Paul's other letters, Romans sets forth the doctrine of justification by faith (and its ramifications) in a systematic way. The theme of the epistle is the righteousness of God (1:16-17). A number of basic Christian doctrines are discussed: natural revelation (Rom 1:19-20), universality of sin (Rom 3:9-20), justification (Rom 3:24), propitiation (Rom 3:25), faith (Rom 4:1), original sin (Rom 5:12), union with Christ (Rom 6:1), the election and rejection of Israel (Rom 9-11), spiritual gifts (Rom 12:3-8), and respect for government (Rom 13:1-7).⁵

Key Words:

Various forms of the words "righteous" and "righteousness" are sprinkled abundantly throughout Romans. The Greek noun *dikaioσune*,, "righteousness," occurs 34 times, the noun *dikaioσma*, "a righteous deed, acquittal, ordinance," five times, the noun *dikaioκρισια* (righteous judgment) once, the adjective *dikaioσ*, "righteous," occurs seven times, the noun *dikaioσισ*, "justification, acquittal," twice, and the verb *dikaioo*,, "declare or show to be righteous," occurs 15 times for a total of 64 occurrences.

Key Verses:

- **1:16-17.** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 1:17 For the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel from faith to faith, just as it is written, "*the righteous by faith will live.*" (NET Bible)
- **3:21-26.** But now apart from the law the righteousness of God, which is attested by the law and the prophets, has been disclosed—3:22 namely, the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. 3:24 But they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. 3:25 God publicly displayed him as a satisfaction for sin by his blood through faith. This was to demonstrate his righteousness, because God in his forbearance had passed over the sins previously committed. 3:26 This was also to demonstrate his righteousness in the present time, so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who lives because of Jesus' faithfulness. (NET Bible)
- **6:1-4.** What shall we say then? Are we to remain in sin so that grace may increase? 6:2 Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 6:3 Or do you not know that as many as were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death? 6:4 Therefore we have been buried with him through baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in new life. (NET Bible)

Key Chapters:

Picking out key chapters in Romans is indeed difficult for in this great treatise on doctrine and its application to life, one wants to say every chapter is key. But certainly two sections of the book do stand out.

- **Chapters 3–5** stand out for their teaching on justification by grace through faith in Christ apart from the works of the law. No place is the gospel of grace set forth more clearly than in these awesome chapters. Here we learn how to be delivered from the penalty of sin through faith in God's gift, the Lord Jesus.
- **Chapters 6–8** are perhaps the most foundational passages in scripture for the spiritual life. These great chapters answer the question of how to experience God's deliverance from the power of sin through the believer's union with Christ and the ministry of the Spirit.

Christ as Seen in Romans:

Paul presents Jesus Christ as the Second Adam whose righteousness and substitutionary death have provided justification for all who place their faith in Him. He offers His righteousness as a gracious gift to sinful men, having borne God's condemnation and wrath for their sinfulness. His

⁵ Ryrie, p. 1786.

death and resurrection are the basis for the believer's redemption, justification, reconciliation, salvation, and glorification.⁶

Outline:

Apart from the introduction (1:1-17), where Paul also states his theme, and conclusion, where he has personal messages and a benediction (15:14–16:27), Romans easily divides into three sections:

- The first eight chapters are *doctrinal* and outline the basic doctrines of the gospel of a righteousness (justification and sanctification) of God through faith.
- The next three chapters (9-11) are *national* and describe God's dealings with Jews and Gentiles and the relationship of each to the gospel.
- The remaining chapters (12-16) are *practical or applicational* in that they demonstrate the ramifications of the gospel on a believer's daily life.

I. Introduction (1:1-17)

II. Condemnation: The Need of Righteousness Because of Sin in All (1:18–3:20)

- A. The Condemnation of the Immoral Man (the Gentile) (1:18-32)
- B. The Condemnation of the Moral Man (2:1-16)
- C. The Condemnation of the Religious Man (the Jew) (2:17–3:8)
- D. The Condemnation of All Men (3:9-20)

III. Justification: The Imputation of God's Righteousness Through Christ (3:21–5:21)

- A. The Description of Righteousness (3:21-31)
- B. The Illustration of Righteousness (4:1-25)
- C. The Blessings of Righteousness (5:1-11)
- D. The Contrast of Righteousness and Condemnation (5:12-21)

IV. Sanctification: Righteousness Imparted and Demonstrated (6:1–8:39)

- A. Sanctification and Sin (6:1-23)
- B. Sanctification and the Law (7:1-25)
- C. Sanctification and the Holy Spirit (8:1-39)

V. Vindication: Jew and Gentile, the Scope of God's Righteousness (9:1–11:36)

- A. Israel's Past: Election of God (9:1-29)
- B. Israel's Present: Rejection of God (9:30–10:21)
- C. Israel's Future: Restoration by God (11:1-36)

VI. Application: the Practice of Righteousness in Service (12:1–15:13)

- A. In Relation to God (12:1-2)
- B. In Relation to Self (12:3)
- C. In Relation to the Church (12:4-8)
- D. In Relation to Society (12:9-21)
- E. In Relation to Government (13:1-14)
- F. In Relation to Other Christians (14:1–15:13)

VII. Personal Messages and Benediction (15:14–16:27)

- A. Paul's Plans (15:14-33)
- B. Paul's Personal Greetings (16:1-16)
- C. Paul's Conclusion and Benediction (16:17-27)

First Corinthians

Author and Title:

That Paul is the author of this epistle is supported by both external and internal evidence. From the first century onward (A.D. 96), there is continuous and abundant evidence that Paul is the author. Clement of Rome speaks of 1 Corinthians as "the Epistle of the blessed Apostle Paul," in his *Epistle to the Corinthians* and even cited 1 Corin-

⁶ Wilkinson/Boa, p. 374.

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thians in regard to their continuing factions. The internal evidence is obvious. The writer calls himself Paul in several places (cf. 1:1; 16:21 and see also 1:12-17; 3:4, 6, 22).

Being written to the church at Corinth, this epistle came to be known as *Pros Corinthious A*, which in effect means First Corinthians. The A or alpha, the first letter of the Greek alphabet, was undoubtedly a latter addition to distinguish it from Second Corinthians which shortly followed this epistle.

Date: A.D. 55

Paul first preached the gospel in Corinth while on his second missionary journey, about A.D. 50. While there he lived and worked with Aquila and Priscilla who were of the same trade, tent-makers (Acts 18:3). As was his custom, Paul first preached in the synagogue but was eventually forced out by Jewish opposition. However, he simply moved next door to the house of Titius Justus where he continued his ministry (Acts 18:7). Though accused by the Jews before the Roman governor Gallio (a charge that was dismissed) Paul remained 18 months in Corinth (Acts 18:1-17; 1 Cor. 2:3). This letter was written about A.D. 55, toward the end of Paul's three-year residency in Ephesus (cf. 16:5-9; Acts 20:31). From his reference that he stayed at Ephesus until Pentecost (16:8), it appears he intended to remain there somewhat less than a year when he wrote this epistle.

Theme and Purpose:

To grasp the theme and purpose, a little background is necessary. Corinth was a large metropolis (approximately 700,000; about two-thirds of whom were slaves) located on a narrow isthmus between the Aegean Sea and the Adriatic Sea that connected the Peloponnesus with Northern Greece. And though prosperous with a thriving commerce, from man's point of view, Paul and his associates may have wondered about what kind of success the gospel of God's righteousness would have in a city like Corinth. As a city, it had a reputation for gross materialism and deep sinfulness. The city was filled with shrines and temples with the most prominent being the temple of Aphrodite that sat on top of an 1800-foot promontory called the Acrocorinthus. In the earliest Greek literature it was linked with wealth (Homer *Iliad* 2. 569-70) and immorality. When Plato referred to a prostitute, he used the expression "Corinthian girl" (*Republic* 404d). The playwright Philetaerus (*Athenaeus* 13. 559a) titled a burlesque play *Ho Korinthiaste*, which basically means "The Lecher." Aristophanes coined the verb *korinthiazomai*, "to act as a Corinthian," which came to mean, "to practice fornication." According to Strabo much of the wealth and vice in Corinth centered around the temple of Aphrodite and its thousand temple prostitutes. For this reason a proverb warned, "Not for every man is the voyage to Corinth."

From the account in Acts it would appear as if Paul had little fruit among the Jews and that nearly all of his converts were Gentiles. Most of these came from the humbler ranks, although there appear to have been some of the nobler class also (1:26-31). Marked social and economic differences existed among them (7:20-24; 11:21-34); some of them had even been steeped in pagan vices (6:9-11). Yet as Greeks they prided themselves on their intellectualism, although in their case it had degenerated into a crude and shallow type (1:17; 2:1-5) ...⁷

One can certainly see, then, how the immoral and religious conditions of Corinth had negatively impacted the life of the church spiritually and morally. The basic theme of the letter is how the Christian's new life, sanctified in Christ and saints by calling, is to be applied to every situation of life. This new life in Christ calls for a new way of living through the Holy Spirit (3:16, 17; 6:11, 19-20). God's wisdom manifested to us in Christ is to change believers on both the individual and social level.

Thus, 1 Corinthians was written as a pastoral corrective to the news he had received to the many problems and disorders in the church there. The problems included divisions in the church (1:11), trust in man's wisdom or that of the world rather than God's (1:21-30), immorality (chap. 5; 6:9-20), and a number of questions regarding marriage and divorce, food, worship, spiritual gifts, and the resurrection. Undoubtedly, because of their religious and immoral background, aberrant beliefs and practices of an extraordinary variety characterized this church.

⁷ Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1943, pp. 202-03.

Key Words:

A key word in concept is “correction” as Paul sought to correct the problems in Corinth, but “wisdom,” contrasting God’s wisdom with man’s, is also a key word of the book. “Wisdom” occurs 29 times in 22 verses.

Key Verses:

- **1:18-25.** For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 1:19 For it is written, “*I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will thwart the cleverness of the intelligent.*” 1:20 Where is the wise man? Where is the expert in the Mosaic law? Where is the debater of this age? Has God not made the wisdom of the world foolish? 1:21 For since in the wisdom of God, the world by its wisdom did not know God, God was pleased to save those who believe by the foolishness of preaching. 1:22 For Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks ask for wisdom, 1:23 but we preach about a crucified Christ, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. 1:24 But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. 1:25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.
- **1:30-31.** He is the reason you have a relationship with Christ Jesus (of Him you are in Christ Jesus), who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 1:31 so that, as it is written, “*Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.*”
- **2:14.** The unbeliever (the natural man) does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him. And he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.
- **6:19-20.** Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 6:20 For you were bought with a price. Therefore glorify God with your body.
- **10:12-13.** So let the one who thinks he is standing be careful that he does not fall. 10:13 No trial has overtaken you that is not faced by others. And God is faithful, who will not let you be tried too much, but with the trial will also provide a way through it so that you may be able to endure.

Key Chapters:

Chapter 13, the great chapter on agape,, love, undoubtedly stands out as the pinnacle chapter of this book. Certainly, there has never been a greater explanation of love written.

Christ as Seen in 1 Corinthians:

The centrality of Christ as the essence, source, and means of the Christian life is stated in 1:30, “of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us the wisdom of God: both righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (my translation).

Outline:

- I. Introduction (1:1-9)
 - A. The Salutation (1:1-3)
 - B. The Prayer of Thanks (1:4-9)
- II. Divisions in the Church (1:10-4:21)
 - A. The Report of Divisions (1:10-17)
 - B. The Reasons for Divisions (1:18-2:16)
 1. Misunderstanding of God’s message of the cross (1:18-2:5)
 2. Misunderstanding of the Spirit’s ministry (2:6-16)
 - C. The Result of Divisions (3:1-4:5)
 1. Spiritual growth is hampered (3:1-9)
 2. Rewards are lost (3:10-4:5)
 - D. The Design and Example of Paul (4:6-21)
- III. Moral Disorders in the Church (5:1-6:20)
 - A. The Case of Incest (5:1-13)

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- B. The Problem of Litigation in Heathen Courts (6:1-8)
- C. The Warning Against Moral Laxity (6:9-20)
- IV. Instructions Concerning Marriage (7:1-40)
 - A. Marriage and Celibacy (7:1-9)
 - B. Marriage and Divorce (7:10-24)
 - C. Marriage and Christian Service (7:25-38)
 - D. Marriage and Remarriage (7:39-40)
- V. Instructions Concerning Food Offered to Idols (8:1–11:1)
 - A. Question: May a Christian Eat Food Consecrated to a Pagan God? (8:1-13)
 - B. Example of Paul (9:1-27)
 - C. Exhortations (10:1–11:1)
- VI. Instructions Concerning Public Worship (11:2–14:40)
 - A. The Covering of Women (11:2-16)
 - B. The Lord’s Supper (11:17-34)
 - C. The Use of Spiritual Gifts (12:1–14:40)
 - 1. The varieties of gifts (12:1-11)
 - 2. The purpose of gifts: unity in diversity (12:12-31)
 - 3. The supremacy of love over gifts (13:1-13)
 - 4. The superiority of prophecy over tongues (14:1-25)
 - 5. The regulations for the use of gifts (14:26-40)
- VII. The Doctrine of the Resurrection (15:1-58)
 - A. The Importance of the Resurrection (15:1-11)
 - B. The Consequences of Denying the Resurrection (15:12-19)
 - C. The Christian Hope (15:20-34)
 - D. The Resurrection Body (15:35-50)
 - E. The Christian’s Victory Through Christ (15:51-58)
- VIII. The Collection for Jerusalem (16:1-4)
- IX. Conclusion (16:5-24)

Second Corinthians

Author and Title:

Again as indicated in the opening salutation, Paul is the author of this letter. Both external and internal evidence is very strong in support of Pauline authorship. In fact, “it is stamped with his style and it contains more autobiographical material than any of his other writings.”⁸ The only problem concerns the claim of some regarding its apparent lack of unity. Some critics have claimed that chapters 10–13 were not a part of this letter in its original form because of a sudden change of tone.

A popular theory claims that chaps. 10-13 are part of that lost “sorrowful letter.” Although some features of those chapters correspond to what must have been the contents of the lost letter, the principal subject of that letter (the offender of 2 Cor. 2:5) is nowhere mentioned in these chapters. Further, there is no evidence for so partitioning 2 Corinthians.⁹

To distinguish this letter from the First Epistle to the Corinthians, this letter received the title, *Pros Corinthians B*. The *B* represents the Greek letter *beta*, the second letter of the Greek alphabet.

Date: A.D. 56

A careful study of Acts and the Epistles reveals the following summary of Paul’s involvement with the Corinthian church: (1) there was the first visit to Corinth followed by, (2) the first letter to Corinth (now lost). This was then followed by (3) the second letter to Corinth (1 Cor.). (4) This was then followed by a second visit to Corinth (the “painful visit,” 2 Cor. 2:1). (5) Then there was a third letter to Corinth (now also lost). (6) This was followed by

⁸ Gaebelien, electronic media.

⁹ Ryrie, p. 1844.

2 Corinthians, the fourth letter to Corinth. (7) Finally, there was a third visit to Corinth (Acts 20:2-3). It should be pointed out that the two lost letters were lost only because they were not intended by God to be part of the biblical canon.

Because of the riot caused by silversmiths (Acts 19:23-41) Paul departed from Ephesus for Macedonia (Acts 20:1) in the spring of A.D. 56. In the process, he made a preliminary stop at Troas hoping to rendezvous with Titus (2 Cor. 2:13) and receive news about conditions in Corinth. Not finding Titus there, he pushed on to Macedonia, undoubtedly with concern about Titus' safety (7:5-6). There he met Titus, who brought good news about the general well-being of the Corinthian church but bad news about a group who were standing in opposition to Paul and his apostleship. From Macedonia Paul wrote a fourth letter, 2 Corinthians. Paul then made his third visit to Corinth during the winter of A.D. 56-57 (Acts 20:2-3).

Theme and Purpose:

Of all Paul's letters, 2 Corinthians is the most personal and intimate. In it he bared his heart and declared his steadfast love for the Corinthians even though some had been extremely critical and very fickle in their affection for him. The major theme is summoned by James K. Lowery in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

What concerned Paul preeminently was the presence of false teachers, claiming to be apostles, who had entered the church. They promoted their own ideas and at the same time sought to discredit both the person and message of the apostle. Second Corinthians was written to defend the authenticity of both his apostleship and his message. This was not carried out in a self-protecting spirit but because Paul knew that acceptance of his ministry and message were intimately bound with the Corinthian church's own spiritual well-being.¹⁰

In the process of Paul's defense, three key purposes emerge: (1) Paul expressed his joy at the favorable response of the church to Paul's ministry (chaps. 1-7); (2) he sought to remind the believers of their commitment to the offering for the Christians in Judea (chaps. 8-9); and (3) he sought to defend his apostolic authority (chaps. 10-13).

Key Word(s):

While the general focus of this epistle is Paul's "defense" of his ministry and authority, a key word that surfaces is "comfort" (occurring 11 times in 9 verses). As we face the various dilemmas of life, we must all learn to find our comfort in God who is the God of all comfort.

Key Verses:

- **4:5-6.** For we do not proclaim ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. 4:6 For God, who said "*Let light shine out of darkness,*" is the one who shined in our hearts to give us the light of the glorious knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
- **4:16-18.** Therefore we do not despair, but even if our physical body is wearing away, our inner person is being renewed day by day. 4:17 For our momentary light suffering is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 4:18 because we are not looking at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.
- **5:17-19.** So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old has passed away, see, what is new has come! 5:18 And all these things are from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and who has given us the ministry of reconciliation. 5:19 In other words, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting people's trespasses against them, and he has given us the message of reconciliation.

Key Chapters:

Chapters 8-9 are really one unit and comprise the most complete revelation of God's plan for giving found anywhere in the Scriptures. Contained therein are the principles for giving (8:1-6), the

¹⁰ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media.

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purposes for giving (8:7-15), the policies to be followed in giving (8:16-9:5), and the promises to be realized in giving (9:6-15).¹¹

Christ as Seen in 2 Corinthians:

In a later epistle, Paul will stress how we are “complete in Christ” (Col. 2:10). All we need for life is found in Him. In this epistle, we see Him as our comfort (1:5), triumph (2:14), Lord (2:4), liberty or freedom for a new life (3:17), light (4:6), judge (5:10), reconciliation (5:19), gift (9:15), owner (10:7), and power (12:9).

Outline:¹²

- I. Primarily Apologetic: Explanation of Paul’s Conduct and Apostolic Ministry (chs. 1–7)
 - A. Salutation (1:1-2)
 - B. Thanksgiving for Divine Comfort in Affliction (1:3-11)
 - C. The Integrity of Paul’s Motives and Conduct (1:12–2:4)
 - D. Forgiving the Offender at Corinth (2:5-11)
 - E. God’s Direction in the Ministry (2:12-17)
 - F. The Corinthian Believers—a Letter From Christ (3:1-11)
 - G. Seeing the Glory of God With Unveiled Faces (3:12–4:6)
 - H. Treasure in Clay Jars (4:7-16a)
 - I. The Prospect of Death and What It Means for the Christian (4:16b–5:10)
 - J. The Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11–6:10)
 - K. A Spiritual Father’s Appeal to His Children (6:11–7:4)
 - L. The Meeting With Titus (7:5-16)
- II. Hortatory: The Collection for the Christians at Jerusalem (chs. 8–9)
 - A. Generosity Encouraged (8:1-15)
 - B. Titus and His Companions Sent to Corinth (8:16–9:5)
 - C. Results of Generous Giving (9:6-15)
- III. Polemical: Paul’s Vindication of His Apostolic Authority (chs. 10–13)
 - A. Paul’s Defense of His Apostolic Authority and the Area of His Mission (ch. 10)
 - B. Paul Forced Into Foolish Boasting (chs. 11–12)
 - C. Final Warnings (13:1-10)
 - D. Conclusion (13:11-14)

Galatians

Author and Title:

Paul identifies himself as the author of this epistle with the words, “Paul an apostle.” Apart from a few 19th-century scholars, no one has seriously questioned his authorship. Further, his authorship is virtually unchallenged. Unger writes, “No trace of doubt as to the authority, integrity, or apostolic genuineness of the epistle comes from ancient times.”¹³

The title is *Pros Galatas*, “To the Galatians.” Being addressed to “the churches of Galatia,” it is the only epistle of Paul addressed to a group of churches.

Date: A.D. 49 or 55

The date when Paul penned this letter depends on the destination of the letter. There are two main views, *The North Galatian View* and *The South Galatian View*. Ryrie summarizes this and writes:

¹¹ Wilkinson/Boa, p. 390.

¹² This outline was taken from *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, New Testament*, Frank E. Gaebelein, General Editor, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1976-1992, electronic media.

¹³ Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Talking Bible Dictionary*, Original work copyright © 1957 The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, electronic media.

At the time of the writing of this letter the term “Galatia” was used both in a geographical and in a political sense. The former referred to north-central Asia Minor, north of the cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe; the latter referred to the Roman province (organized in 25 B.C.) that included southern districts and those cities just mentioned. If the letter was written to Christians in North Galatia, the churches were founded on the second missionary journey and the epistle was written on the third missionary journey, either early from Ephesus (about A.D. 53) or later (about 55) from Macedonia. In favor of this is the fact that Luke seems to use “Galatia” only to describe North Galatia (Acts 16:6; 18:23).

If the letter was written to Christians in South Galatia, the churches were founded on the first missionary journey, the letter was written after the end of the journey (probably from Antioch, ca. A.D. 49, making it the earliest of Paul’s epistles), and the Jerusalem council (Acts 15) convened shortly afterward. In favor of this dating is the fact that Paul does not mention the decision of the Jerusalem council that bore directly on his Galatian argument concerning the Judaizers, indicating that the council had not yet taken place.¹⁴

Theme and Purpose:

The Epistle to the Galatians was the battle cry of the Reformation because it stands out as Paul’s *Manifesto of Justification by Faith*. It has therefore been dubbed as “the charter of Christian Liberty.” Luther considered it in a peculiar sense his Epistle.¹⁵ Galatians stands as a powerful polemic against the Judaizers and their teachings of legalism. They taught, among other things, that a number of the ceremonial practices of the Old Testament were still binding on the church. Thus, the apostle writes to refute their false gospel of works and demonstrates the superiority of justification by faith and sanctification by the Holy Spirit versus by the works of the Law.

In addition, these Judaizers not only proclaimed a false gospel, but sought to discredit Paul’s apostleship. In the first two chapters Paul vindicated his apostleship and message. In these two chapters Paul demonstrated convincingly that his apostleship and his message came by revelation from the risen Christ. Then, in chapters 3 and 4 he contended for the true doctrine of grace, the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Some, however, would immediately claim such a doctrine leads to license, so the apostle demonstrates that Christian liberty does not mean license. Thus, chapters 5 and 6 show that Christians must learn to live by the power of the Spirit and that the Spirit controlled walk will manifest not the works of the flesh but rather the fruit of the Spirit.

Key Words:

The phrases “justification by faith” and “freedom from the Law” form the key words of the epistle.

Key Verses:

- **2:20-21.** I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 2:21 I do not set aside God’s grace, because if righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died for nothing!
- **5:1.** For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery.
- **5:13-16.** For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity to indulge your flesh, but through love serve one another. 5:14 For the whole law can be summed up in a single commandment, namely, “*You must love your neighbor as yourself.*” However, if you continually bite and devour one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another. 5:16 But I say, live by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.

¹⁴ Ryrie, p. 1863.

¹⁵ Thiessen, p. 212.

Key Chapter:

The fact that believers are not under the Law in no way means the freedom to do as one pleases, but the power to do what we should by God's grace through the Spirit. In this sense, chapter 5 is a key chapter. Our freedom must never be used "as an opportunity to indulge the flesh" but rather as a basis for loving one another by walking in the strength of the Spirit (5:13, 16, 22-25).

Christ as Seen in Galatians:

Through His death by which believers have died to the Law and through the Christ exchanged life (2:20), believers have been freed from bondage (5:1f.) and brought into a position of liberty. The power of the cross provides deliverance from the curse of the law, from the power of sin, and from self (1:4; 2:20; 3:13; 4:5; 5:16, 24; 6:14).

Outline:

- I. Personal: The Gospel of Grace, Justification by Faith *Defended* (1:1-2:21)
 - A. Introduction (1:1-9)
 - B. The Gospel of Grace Came by Revelation (1:10-24)
 - C. The Gospel of Grace Was Approved by the Church in Jerusalem (2:1-10)
 - D. The Gospel of Grace Was Vindicated in the Rebuke of Peter, the Chief of the Apostles (2:11-21)
- II. Doctrinal: The Gospel of Grace, Justification by Faith *Explained* (3:1-4:31)
 - A. The Experience of the Galatians: The Spirit is Given by Faith, Not by Works (3:1-5)
 - B. The Example of Abraham: He was Justified by Faith, Not by Works (3:6-9)
 - C. Justification Is by Faith, Not by the Law (3:10-4:11)
 - D. The Galatians Received Their Blessings by Faith, Not by Law (4:12-20)
 - E. Law and Grace Are Mutually Exclusive (4:21-31)
- III. Practical: The Gospel of Grace, Justification by Faith *Applied* (5:1-6:18)
 - A. The Position of Liberty: Stand Fast (5:1-12)
 - B. The Practice of Liberty: Serve and Love One Another (5:13-15)
 - C. The Power of Liberty: Walk by the Spirit (5:16-26)
 - D. The Performance of Liberty: Do Good to All Men (6:1-10)
 - E. The Conclusion (6:11-18)

The Prison Epistles

Ephesians along with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon are sometimes referred to as the prison epistles because they were each written while Paul was confined or in chains. Each of these letters contain references to this situation (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Phil. 1:7, 13; Col. 4:10, 18; Philemon 1, 9, 10).

Whether he was imprisoned once or twice in Rome is debated, though two imprisonments seem to fit the facts better. During the first, Paul was kept in or near the barracks of the Praetorian Guard or in rental quarters at his own expense for two years (Acts 28:30), during which these epistles were written. He anticipated being released (Philem. 22), and following his release he made several trips, wrote 1 Timothy and Titus, was rearrested, wrote 2 Timothy, and was martyred (see the Introduction to Titus, Titus 1:1 book note). These, then, are the first Roman imprisonment letters, whereas 2 Timothy is the second Roman imprisonment letter.¹⁶

The fact these great epistles were written while Paul was imprisoned, either in Roman barracks or chained daily to a Roman soldier in his own rented house (Acts 28:30), which gave him access to the whole elite Praetorian Guard, is a marvelous illustration of how God takes our apparent misfortunes and uses them for His glory and the increase of our opportunities for ministry (see Phil. 1:12-13). It shows how we may be chained and hindered, but that the Word of God is not imprisoned (see also 2 Tim. 2:9).

¹⁶ Ryrie, p. 1875.

Ephesians

Author and Title:

As clearly stated in the opening verse of each of the prison epistles, Paul is declared to be the author. That the apostle is the author of Ephesians is strongly supported by both internal and external evidence. Twice, the writer calls himself Paul (1:1; 3:1). Also this epistle is written after Paul's usual manner or pattern with greetings and thanksgiving, a doctrinal section followed by the practical application of that doctrine with concluding personal remarks. As to external evidence, several church fathers (Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Clement of Alexander, and others) either quote from or use language closely resembling that found in Ephesians.¹⁷

In recent years, however, critics have turned to internal grounds to challenge this unanimous ancient tradition. It has been argued that the vocabulary and style are different from other Pauline Epistles, but this overlooks Paul's flexibility under different circumstances (cf. Rom. and 2 Cor.). The theology of Ephesians in some ways reflects later development, but this must be attributed to Paul's own growth and meditation on the church as the body of Christ. Since the epistle clearly names the author in the opening verse, it is not necessary to theorize that Ephesians was written by one of Paul's pupils or admirers, such as Timothy, Luke, Tychicus, or Onesimus.¹⁸

There is some debate as to the title and destination of this epistle. The traditional title is *Pros Ephesious*, "To the Ephesians." Many ancient manuscripts, however omit en Epheso., and for this and other reasons, many scholars believe this was an encyclical letter (intended for circulation among several churches).

Several things indicate that Ephesians was a circular letter, a doctrinal treatise in the form of a letter, to the churches in Asia Minor. Some good Greek mss. omit the words "at Ephesus" in 1:1. There is an absence of controversy in this epistle, and it does not deal with problems of particular churches. Since Paul had worked at Ephesus for about three years and since he normally mentioned many friends in the churches to whom he wrote, the absence of personal names in this letter strongly supports the idea of its encyclical character. It was likely sent first to Ephesus by Tychicus (Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-8) and is probably the same letter that is called "my letter ... from Laodicea" in Col. 4:16.¹⁹

Date: A.D. 60-61

As previously mentioned, the apostle was a prisoner when he wrote this epistle (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20). Though scholars differ on whether Paul wrote Ephesians while he was imprisoned at Caesarea (Acts 24:27) in A.D. 57-59, or in Rome (28:30) in A.D. 60-62, the evidence favors the Roman imprisonment. As also mentioned, it is believed that Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon were also written during the same time period (cf. Phil. 1:7; Col. 4:10; Philemon 9). Because Ephesians gives no hint of Paul's release from prison, as in Philippians (1:19-26) and Philemon (v. 22), many believe that Ephesians was written in the early part of his imprisonment about A.D. 60, while Paul was kept under house guard in his rented quarters (Acts 28:30). After he was released he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus, was arrested again, wrote 2 Timothy, and was martyred in Rome.

Theme and Purpose:

No specific purpose is stated and no particular problem or heresy is addressed. Rather, in Ephesians, Paul sets forth the glorious mystery, "the church which is Christ's body," Christ as the head of the Church (1:22, 23), and believers as co-members of one another and blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ (1:3; 2:11-22). Clearly, Paul's purpose is to broaden the believer's horizons regarding the limitless *wealth* of his blessings in Christ who is the head of the church, the body of Christ. Out of this, two great purposes emerge in the epistle. The *first* is to set forth something of the wealth of blessings that believers have in Christ, and how, through them, the eternal purposes of God are summed up in the person of Christ, the things in heaven and on earth (1:3-12). The *second* theme flows

¹⁷ Thiessen, p. 239.

¹⁸ Wilkinson/Boa, p. 400.

¹⁹ Ryrie, p. 1875. For more detailed discussion, see note 2 on this at this verse in the NET Bible.

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out of the first, namely, the believer's responsibility to know, grasp, and walk in a manner that is fitting with his heavenly position and calling in Christ (1:18-23; 3:14-21; 4:1).

While not written to be remedial or to correct any specific errors, Paul designed this epistle as a prevention against those problems that so often occur because of a lack of maturity or a failure in grasping and applying what believers have in Christ. Closely associated with this is a short section on the believer's warfare with the onslaughts of Satan (6:10-18). Thus, Paul writes about the believer's *wealth*, *walk*, and *warfare*.

Key Words:

In view of the theme or purpose, the key words are "wealth," "walk," and "warfare."

Key Verses:

- **1:3.** Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ.
- **2:8-10.** For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 2:9 it is not of works, so that no one can boast. 2:10 For we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works that God prepared beforehand so we may do them.
- **4:11-13.** It was he who gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 4:12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ, 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God—a mature person, attaining to the measure of Christ's full stature.
- **5:17-18.** For this reason do not be foolish, but be wise by understanding what the will of the Lord is. 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, which is debauchery, but be filled by the Spirit,

Key Chapters:

As with many of Paul's epistles, picking a key chapter is difficult, but perhaps **chapter 6** stands out because of its very important revelation regarding the nature of our warfare with Satan (6:10-18). While we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ (1:3), we are nevertheless faced with a formidable enemy for which we need the armor of God. Thus, we must seriously take the exhortation "to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" (6:10).

Christ as Seen in Ephesians:

Phrases in Ephesians like "in Christ" or "with Christ" appear some 35 times. These are common Pauline expressions, but they appear in this epistle more than in any other. By this, we see much of what believers have through their position in the Savior. They are in Christ (1:1), blessed with every blessing in Christ (1:3), chosen in Him (1:4), adopted through Christ (1:5), in the Beloved (1:6), redeemed in Him (1:7), given an inheritance in Him (1:11), have a hope that is to the praise of His glory in Christ (1:12), sealed with the Spirit through Him as an earnest installment of their inheritance (1:13-14), made alive, raised, and seated with Him in the heavenlies (2:5-6), created in Christ for good works (2:10), partakers of the promise in Christ (3:6), and given access to God through faith in Christ (3:12).

Outline:

- I. Salutation or Greeting (1:1-2)
- II. The Doctrinal Portion of the Epistle, the Wealth and Calling of the Church (1:3-3:21)
 - A. Praise for Redemption (1:4-14)
 1. Chosen by the Father (1:4-6)
 2. Redemption by the Son (1:7-12)
 3. Sealed With the Spirit (1:13-14)
 - B. Prayer for Wisdom a Revelation (1:15-23)
 1. The Cause of the Prayer (1:15-18a)
 2. The Content of the Prayer (1:18b-23)
 - C. Positional Relocation (2:1-22)

1. The New Position in the Heavenlies (2:1-10)
2. The New Position in the Household (2:11-22)
- D. Parenthetical Explanation (3:1-13)
 1. The Mystery, the Product of Revelation (3:1-6)
 2. The Minister, Appointed to Proclamation (3:7-13)
- E. Prayer for Realization (3:14-21)
- III. The Practical Portion of the Epistle; The Walk and Conduct of the Church (4:1-6:24)
 - A. The Believer's Walk in Unity (4:1-16)
 1. The Appeal to Preserve Unity (4:1-3)
 2. The Basis for Unity (4:4-6)
 3. The Means of Unity (4:7-16)
 - B. The Believer's Walk in Righteousness (4:17-5:18)
 1. The Previous Walk of the Old Life (4:17-19)
 2. The Present Walk of the New Life (4:20-32)
 3. The Pattern for Our Walk (5:1-7)
 4. The Proof and Reason for Our Walk (5:8-13)
 5. The Power and Provision for Our Walk (5:14-18)
 - C. The Believer's Walk in the World (5:19-6:9)
 1. As to One's Self and the Church (5:19-21)
 2. As to One's Home (5:22-6:4)
 3. As to One's Profession (6:5-9)
 - D. The Believer's Walk in Warfare (6:10-20)
 1. The Exhortation to Arms (6:10-13)
 2. The Explanation of Our Armor (6:14-17)
 3. The Employment of Our Armor (6:18-20)
 - E. Conclusion (6:21-24)

Philippians

Author and Title:

Both the internal and external evidence again points to Paul as the author. "The early church was unanimous in its testimony that Philippians was written by the apostle Paul (see 1:1). Internally the letter reveals the stamp of genuineness. The many personal references of the author fit what we know of Paul from other NT books."²⁰

The epistle to the church at Philippi, the first church Paul established in Macedonia, is titled in the Greek text, *Pros Philippe,,sious*, "To the Philippians."

Date: A.D. 60-61

As with Ephesians, this epistle was written while Paul was imprisoned. His reference to the Praetorian guard (Phil. 1:13) along with the possibility of death (vv. 20-26) suggest he was writing from Rome. Though death was possible, Paul also seemed confident of his release. This suggests Philippians was written after Ephesians later in A.D. 60 or 61.

Theme and Purpose:

Whereas Ephesians sets forth the glorious mystery, "the church which is Christ's body," Christ as the head of the Church (1:22-23), and believers as co-members of one another who are equally blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ (1:3; 2:11-22), Philippians guards the practice of Ephesians. Philippians guards against the failure to practice Christ-provided unity and against the failure of believers to rejoice in their blessings and position in Christ (Phil. 1:27; 2:2; 4:1f.). The theme of Philippians might well be "**joy and unity in Christ.**"

Paul had several obvious purposes in writing this letter to the Philippians: (1) He sought to express his love and gratitude for the gift they had sent him (1:5; 4:10-19); (2) to give a report about his own circumstances (1:12-26;

²⁰ The NIV Study Bible Notes, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, electronic media.

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4:10-19); (3) to encourage the Philippians to stand firm in the face of persecution and rejoice regardless of circumstances (1:27-30; 4:4); (4) to exhort them to live in humility and unity (2:1-11; 4:2-5); (5) to commend Timothy and Epaphroditus to the Philippian church (2:19-30); and (6) to warn the Philippians against the legalistic Judaizers and the libertarian antinomians who had slipped in among them (ch. 3).

Key Word(s):

The key word, occurring in one form or the other some 16 times, is “joy” or “rejoice.” “Unity” or “oneness” is another key idea of the book. This is expressed in a number of ways like, “being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose” (2:2); “standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together” (1:27), and “be in harmony” (4:2).

Key Verses:

- **1:21.** For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.
- **3:8-11.** More than that, I now regard all things as liabilities compared to the far greater value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things—indeed, I regard them as dung!—that I might gain Christ, 3:9 and be found in him, not because of having my own righteousness derived from the law, but because of having the righteousness that comes by way of Christ’s faithfulness—a righteousness from God that is based on Christ’s faithfulness. 3:10 My aim is to know him, to experience the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings, and to be like him in his death, 3:11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.
- **4:11-13.** I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content in any circumstance. 4:12 I have experienced times of need and times of abundance. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of contentment, whether I go satisfied or hungry, have plenty or nothing. 4:13 I am able to do all things through the one who strengthens me.

Key Chapters:

Chapter 2 is certainly a key chapter in the way it sets forth Christ as our example in putting others before ourselves by having the mind of Christ. In the process of this, Paul then launches into a grand revelation regarding the humility and exaltation of Christ in 2:5-11.

Christ as Seen in Philippians:

No passage is clearer and more declarative regarding the nature, fact, and purpose of the incarnation of Christ as is found in this book, the great *kenosis* passage (2:5f.). Further, in view of all Christ was, is, has and will accomplish, Paul declares Christ as the believer’s life, “for to me to live is Christ” (1:21), that He is the perfect model of humility and sacrificing love (2:4-5), that He is the one who will transform our humble bodies into the likeness of His glorious body at the resurrection (3:21), and He is our means of enablement in any and all circumstances of life (4:12).

Outline:²¹

- I. Salutation and Thanksgiving for the Philippians (1:1-11)
- II. The Personal Circumstances of Paul in Rome: The Preaching of Christ (1:12-30)
- III. The Pattern of the Christian Life: Having the Mind of Christ (2:1-30)
 - A. The Exhortation to Humility (2:1-4)
 - B. The Epitome of Humility (2:5-11)
 - C. The Exercise of Humility (2:12-18)
 - D. The Examples of Humility Seen in Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30)
- IV. The Prize of the Christian Life: Having the Knowledge of Christ (3:1-21)
 - A. The Warning Against Legalistic Judaizers (3:1-4a)
 - B. The Example of Paul (3:4b-14)

²¹ The outline used here closely follows that of Ryrie with slight variations, pp. 1886-1887.

- C. The Exhortation to Others (3:15-21)
- V. The Peace of the Christian Life: Knowing the Presence of Christ (4:1-23)
 - A. Peace With Others (4:1-3)
 - B. Peace With Self (4:4-9)
 - C. Peace With Circumstances (4:10-23)

Colossians

Author and Title:

Because of the greetings in 1:2, Colossians became known as *Pros Kolossaeis*, “To the Colossians.” As with the other epistles of Paul surveyed thus far, both the external and internal evidence strongly support Paul’s authorship. But the authorship of this epistle has been doubted by some on the grounds of the vocabulary and the nature of the heresy refuted in this epistle. *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* has an excellent summary of the key issues involving the authorship and date of Colossians.

That Colossians is a genuine letter of Paul is not usually disputed. In the early church, all who speak on the subject of authorship ascribe it to Paul. In the 19th century, however, some thought that the heresy refuted in ch. 2 was second-century Gnosticism. But a careful analysis of ch. 2 shows that the heresy there referred to is noticeably less developed than the Gnosticism of leading Gnostic teachers of the second and third centuries. Also, the seeds of what later became the full-blown Gnosticism of the second century were present in the first century and already making inroads into the churches. Consequently, it is not necessary to date Colossians in the second century at a time too late for Paul to have written the letter.

Instead, it is to be dated during Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome, where he spent at least two years under house arrest (see Ac 28:16-31).²²

Date: A.D. 61

Paul wrote all four prison epistles during his first Roman imprisonment. This means he wrote it in A.D. 60-61 (see the discussion on the date of Ephesians and Philippians).

Theme and Purpose:

The theme is the fruitful and effective power of the gospel message which heralds the supremacy, headship, and the utter sufficiency of Christ to the church which is His body. In this little epistle, we see Paul’s “full-length portrait of Christ.”²³ Colossians demonstrates that because of all that Jesus Christ is in His person and has accomplished in His work, He, as the object of the believer’s faith, is all we need for in Him we are complete (2:10). In scope, Colossians presents the all supremacy, all sufficiency, uniqueness, and the fullness of the person and work of Jesus Christ as the God-man Savior, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, and the total solution for man’s needs both for time and eternity. It is a cosmic book, presenting the cosmic Christ: the **Creator/Sustainer** and **Redeemer/Reconciler** of man and all the universe.

Key Words:

Key words in this book are “supremacy” and “sufficiency.”

Key Verses:

- **1:15-20.** He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, 1:16 for all things in heaven and on earth were created by him—all things, whether visible or invisible, whether thrones or dominions, whether principalities or powers—all things were created through him and for him. 1:17 He himself is before all things and all things are held together in him. 1:18 He is the head of the body, the church, as well as

²² Gaebelein, electronic media.

²³ A.T. Robertson, *Paul and the Intellectuals*, rev. and ed. W. C. Strickland (Nashville: Broadman, 1959), p. 12.

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the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead so that he himself may become first in all things. 1:19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him 1:20 and through him to reconcile all things to himself by making peace through the blood of his cross—whether things on the earth or things in heaven.

- **2:8-10.** Be careful not to allow anyone to captivate you through an empty, deceitful philosophy that is according to human traditions and the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. 2:9 For in him all the fullness of deity lives in bodily form 2:10 and you have been filled in him, who is the head over every ruler and authority.
- **3:1-3.** Therefore, if you have been raised with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 3:2 Keep thinking about things above, not things on the earth, 3:3 for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Key Chapters:

Chapters 2 is key in that it demonstrates why and how the believer is complete in Christ and needs nothing added to the saving person and work of Christ. **Chapter 3** then builds on this as root to fruit or cause and effect. Because believers are complete in Christ (2:10) and are thereby risen with Him, they now have all they need for Christ-like transformation in all the relationships of life (3:1f.).

Christ as Seen in Colossians:

Wilkinson and Boa point out:

This singularly christological book is centered on the cosmic Christ—“the head of all principality and power” (2:10), the Lord of creation (1:16-17), the Author of reconciliation (1:20-22; 2:13-15). He is the basis for the believer’s hope (1:5, 23, 27), the source of the believer’s power for a new life (1:11, 29), the believer’s Redeemer and Reconciler (1:14, 20-22; 2:11-15), the embodiment of full Deity (1:15, 19; 2:9), the Creator and Sustainer of all things (1:16-17), the Head of the church (1:18), the resurrected God-Man (1:18; 3:1), and the all-sufficient Savior (1:28; 2:3, 20; 3:1-4).²⁴

Outline:²⁵

- I. Doctrinal: The Person and Work of Christ (1:1-2:3)
 - A. Introduction (1:1-14)
 1. Paul’s Greeting to the Colossians (1:1-2)
 2. Paul’s Gratitude for the Colossians’ Faith (1:3-8)
 3. Paul’s Prayer for the Colossians’ Growth (1:9-14)
 - B. The Person of Christ (1:15-18)
 1. In Relation to the Father (1:15)
 2. In Relation to the Creation (1:16-17)
 3. In Relation to the New Creation (1:18)
 - C. The Work of Christ (1:19-2:3)
 1. The Description of His Work (1:19-20)
 2. The Application of His Work (1:21-23)
 3. The Propagation of His Work (1:24-2:3)
- II. Polemical: The Heretical Problems in Light of Union With Christ (2:4-3:4a)
 - A. The Exhortation Against False Teaching (2:4-8)
 1. Exhortation Regarding the Methods of False Teachers (2:4-5)
 2. Exhortation to Progress in the Life of Faith (2:6-7)
 3. Exhortation Regarding the Philosophy of the False Teachers (2:8)
 - B. The Instruction of the True Teaching (2:9-15)
 1. The Believer’s Position in Christ (2:9-10)

²⁴ Wilkinson/Boa, p. 413.

²⁵ The outline used here is taken from an outstanding series of 12 studies by Dr. S. Lewis Johnson in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, “Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians,” beginning Vol. 118, # 471.

2. The Believer's Circumcision (2:11-12)
3. The Believer's Benefits (2:13-15)
- C. The Obligations of the True Teaching (2:16-3:4)
 1. Negative: Emancipation from Legalistic and Gnostic Practices (2:16-19)
 2. Negative: Emancipation from Ascetic Ordinances (2:20-23)
 3. Positive: Aspirations for the Heavenly Life (3:1-4)
- III. Practical: The Practice of the Believer in Christ (3:5-4:6)
 1. In the Inward Life (3:5-17)
 2. In the Home and Household Life (3:18-4:1)
 3. In the Outward Life (4:2-6)
- IV. Personal: The Private Plans and Affairs of the Apostle (4:7-18)
 1. His Special Representatives (4:7-9)
 2. His Personal Salutations (4:10-18)

First Thessalonians

Author and Title:

As declared in 1:1 and 2:18, all evidence (external and internal) supports the claim of the book that Paul is the author of 1 Thessalonians. Early church fathers support Paul's authorship beginning as early as A.D. 140 (Marcion). Those things that characterize Paul are evident throughout (cf. 3:1-2, 8-11 with Acts 15:36; 2 Cor. 11:28). In addition, a number of historical allusions in the book fit Paul's life as recounted in Acts and in his own letters (cf. 2:14-16; 3:1, 2, 5-6 with Acts 17:1-15). In view of this evidence, few (some radical critics of the nineteenth century) have ever questioned Paul's authorship.

As the first of two canonical epistles to the church at Thessalonica, this book was called in the Greek text, *Pros Thessalonikeis A*, "First to the Thessalonians."

Date: A.D. 51-52

Both 1 and 2 Thessalonians were written from Corinth during the apostle's eighteen-month stay in that city (cf. Acts 18:1-11). The first epistle was written during the earlier part of that period just after Timothy had returned from Thessalonica with news of the progress of the church. The second letter was dispatched just a few weeks (or at the most a few months) later. Any date assigned will have to be approximate, though probably A.D. 51-52.

Theme and Purpose:

The purpose and burden of the apostle in writing to the Thessalonians can be summarized as follows: to express his thankfulness for what God was doing in the lives of the Thessalonians (1:2-3), to defend himself against a campaign to slander his ministry (2:1-12), to encourage them to stand fast against persecution and pressure to revert to their former pagan lifestyles (3:2-3; 4:1-12), to answer a doctrinal question pertaining to the fate of Christians who had died (4:1-13), to answer questions regarding the "Day of the Lord" (5:1-11), and to deal with certain problems that had developed in their corporate life as a church (5:12-13; 19-20).

Key Word(s):

Two key words and concepts stand out in this short epistle: "sanctification" (4:3, 4, 7), and "the coming of the Lord," which is referred to in every chapter of the epistle (1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23). The coming of the Lord should not only comfort our hearts, but stir us to godly living.

Key Verses:

- **1:9-10.** For people everywhere report how you welcomed us and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God 1:10 and to wait for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus our deliverer from the coming wrath.

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- **2:13.** And so we too constantly thank God that when you received God's message that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human message, but as it truly is, God's message, that is at work among you who believe.
- **4:1-3.** Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more. 2 For you know what commandments we gave you by *the authority of* the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; (NASB)
- **4:13-18.** Now we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve like the rest who have no hope. 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and arose, so also we believe that God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep as Christians. 4:15 For we tell you this by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not go ahead of those who have fallen asleep. 4:16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will arise first. 4:17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be snatched up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord always. 4:18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Key Chapters:

Chapters 4 and 5 undoubtedly stand out as key chapters because of their teaching on both the coming of the Lord for the church, the rapture (4:13-18), and the day of the Lord (5:1-11), the time in the future when He will intervene in human events to consummate His redemption and judgment.

Christ as Seen in 1 Thessalonians:

With the coming of the Lord mentioned in every chapter, Christ is presented as the believer's hope of salvation both now and at His coming. When He comes, He will deliver us from wrath (undoubtedly a reference to the Tribulation) (1:10; 5:4-11), give rewards (2:19), perfect us (3:13), resurrect us (4:13-18), and sanctify (set apart) all those who have trusted in Him (5:23).

Outline:

- I. The Past: The Work of Faith (1:1-3:13)
 - A. The Commendation of the Thessalonians (1:1-10)
 1. The Evaluation of Paul (1:1-4)
 2. The Evidence of Life (1:5-7)
 3. The Explanation of the Evidence (1:8-10)
 - B. The Conduct of the Apostle and His Fellow Workers (2:1-12)
 1. Their Witness (2:1-2)
 2. Their Word (2:3-7a)
 3. Their Walk (2:7b-12)
 - C. The Conduct of the Thessalonians (2:13-16)
 1. Their Reception of the Word (2:13)
 2. Their Response to the Word (2:14)
 3. The Rejection of the Word (2:15-16)
 - D. The Concern of the Apostle (2:17-20)
 1. His Heart for the Thessalonians (2:17)
 2. His Hindrance by Satan (2:18)
 3. His Hope in the Thessalonians (2:19-20)
 - E. The Confirmation of the Thessalonians (3:1-10)
 1. The Sending of Timothy (3:1-5)
 2. The Report of Timothy (3:6-10)
 - F. The Concluding Prayer (3:11-13)
 1. The Prayer That He Might Return to the Thessalonians (3:11)
 2. The Prayer That the Thessalonians Might Grow in Love (3:12)

- 3. The Prayer That Their Hearts Might Be Established in Holiness (3:13)
- II. The Present: The Labor of Love (4:1-12)
 - A. Their Love for God Expressed in Sanctified Living (4:1-8)
 - B. Their Love for the Brethren, an Expression of Being God Taught (4:9-10)
 - C. Their Love for the Lost Expressed in Godly Living (4:11-12)
- III. The Prospective: The Endurance of Hope (4:13-5:28)
 - A. Concerning the Day of Christ: The Comfort of His Coming (4:13-18)
 - 1. The Resurrection of Sleeping Saints (4:13-16)
 - 2. The Rapture of Living Saints (4:17-18)
 - B. Concerning the Day of the Lord (5:1-11)
 - 1. The Coming of the Day of the Lord (5:1-5)
 - 2. The Conduct of Christians (5:6-10)
 - 3. The Conclusion (5:11)
 - C. Concerning Deportment in the Congregation (5:12-28)
 - 1. The Concluding Prescription (5:12-22)
 - 2. The Concluding Petition (5:23-24)
 - 3. The Concluding Postscript (5:25-28)

Second Thessalonians

Author and Title:

As with 1 Thessalonians, this letter was also written by Paul (cf. 1 Thess. 1:1; 3:17). However, Paul's authorship of this epistle has been questioned more often than that of 1 Thessalonians, even though it has more support from early church writers. There is no evidence among the writings of the early church fathers that his authorship was ever doubted. In fact several fathers mentioned Paul as the author of this epistle in their writings. It was not until the 19th century that certain questions were raised about the authorship of this epistle. The doubts came from rationalistic critics who likewise refused to accept the Bible's claim to divine inspiration. Regardless, external and internal evidence support Paul as the author.

Objections are based on internal factors rather than on the adequacy of the statements of the church fathers. It is thought that there are differences in the vocabulary (ten words not used elsewhere), in the style (it is said to be unexpectedly formal) and in the eschatology (the doctrine of the "man of lawlessness" is not taught elsewhere). However, such arguments have not convinced current scholars. A majority still hold to Paul's authorship of 2 Thessalonians.²⁶

As the second letter to the church at Thessalonica, this epistle is called in the Greek text, *Pros Thessalonikeis B*, the "Second to the Thessalonians."

Date: A.D. 51-52

Because the historical circumstances are very similar to those of 1 Thessalonians, most believe it was written not long after the first letter—perhaps about six months. While conditions in the church were similar, the persecution seems to have grown (1:4-5), and this, with other factors, led Paul to write this letter from Corinth sometime in A.D. 51 or 52 after Silas and Timothy, the bearers of the first letter, had returned with the news of the new developments.

Theme and Purpose:

Second Thessalonians was evidently prompted by three main developments that Paul heard about: (1) there was the news of increasing persecution which they were facing (1:4-5), (2) to deal with the reports of a pseudo-Pauline letter and other misrepresentations of his teaching regarding the day of the Lord and the rapture of the church (2:1f.), and (3) to deal with the way some were responding to belief in the imminent return of the Lord. This belief was still being used as a basis for shirking their vocational responsibilities. So the apostle wrote to deal with the condition of idleness or disorderliness which had increased (3:5-15).

²⁶ NIV Study Bible Notes, Zondervan, 1985, electronic media.

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To meet the needs that occasioned this epistle, Paul wrote this epistle to comfort and correct. In doing so he pursued three broad purposes. He wrote: (1) to give an incentive for the Thessalonians to persevere by describing the reward and retribution that will occur in the future judgment of God (1:3-10), (2) to clarify the prominent events belonging to the day of the Lord in order to prove the falsity of the claims that the day had already arrived (2:1-2), and (3) to give detailed instructions covering the disciplinary steps the church should take in correcting those who refuse to work (3:6-15).

Key Words:

The key words or concepts are “judgment,” “retribution,” and “destruction” all revolving around the return of the Lord in the day of the Lord. In fact, in this epistle, 18 out of 47 verses (38 percent) deal with this subject. In 1 Thessalonians, the focus was on Christ coming *for His Church* (4:13-18) where as in 2 Thessalonians, the focus is on Christ coming *with His Church* in judgment on the unbelieving world (1:5-10; 2:3, 12).

Key Verses:

- **2:1-4.** Now regarding the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered so as to be with him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, 2:2 that you not be easily shaken from your composure or be disturbed by any kind of spirit or message or letter allegedly from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here. 2:3 Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not be here unless the rebellion comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction. 2:4 He opposes *and exalts himself above every* so-called *god* or object of worship, and as a result *he takes his seat* in God’s temple, displaying himself as God.
- **3:1-5.** Finally pray for us, brothers and sisters, that the Lord’s message may spread quickly and be honored as in fact it was among you, 3:2 and that we may be delivered from perverse and evil people. For not all have faith. 3:3 But the Lord is faithful and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. 3:4 And we are confident about you in the Lord that you are both doing, and will do, what we are commanding. 3:5 Now may the Lord direct your hearts toward the love of God and the endurance of Christ.
- **3:16.** Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you all.

Key Chapters:

Chapter 2 is key in that it corrects a serious error that had crept into the Thessalonian church which taught that the day of the Lord had already come. Here the apostle taught them that the day of the Lord had not come and could not until certain events had taken place, not for the rapture of the church which is imminent, but for the day of the Lord, Daniel’s seventieth week.

Christ as Seen in 2 Thessalonians:

A major theme of this book, especially chapters 1-2, is the return of Christ in judgment when He will put down all rebellion and bring retribution. Second Thessalonians anticipates Christ, the coming Judge.

Outline:

Apart from the salutation and benediction, the book easily divides up into five sections:

- I. Salutation or Introduction (1:1-2)
- II. He Commends and Comforts Regarding Persecution (1:4-12)
- III. He Corrects and Challenges Regarding the Day of the Lord (2:1-17)
 - A. In Relation to the Present (2:1-2)
 - B. In Relation to the Apostasy (2:3a)
 - C. In Relation to the Man of Lawlessness (2:3b-4)
 - D. In Relation to the Restrainer (2:5-9)
 - E. In Relation to Unbelievers (2:10-12)
 - F. In Relation to Believers (2:13-17)
- IV. He Commands and Convicts Regarding Idleness (3:1-16)

- A. The Confidence of the Apostle (3:1-5)
- B. The Commands of the Apostle (3:6-15)
- V. His Concluding Benediction and Greeting (3:16-18)

The Pastoral Epistles

The last major group of Paul's epistles have generally been called the "Pastoral Epistles," a term used to designate the three letters addressed to Timothy and Titus (1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus). Originally, they were regarded as mere personal letters and were classified with Philemon, but because of their strong bearing on the life of the church, they began to be called the "Pastoral Epistles." Though addressed to individuals, these books are not only not limited to personal and private communications, but they are more official in character. Paul addressed them to Timothy and Titus to guide them in matters concerning the pastoral care of the church, which is the household of God (cf. 1 Tim. 3:14-15; 4:6-15 with 2 Tim. 2:2).

The term, "pastoral," is an 18th century designation that has stuck down through the years,²⁷ and though not entirely accurate, it is a somewhat appropriate description of these three letters. Further, due to the large portion of these epistles that deal with church order and discipline, the term "pastoral" is accurate. These epistles deal with church *polity*, *policies*, and *practice*, all of which are concerns vital to the pastoral health of the church. However, the term pastoral is inaccurate in the sense that Timothy and Titus were not pastors in the present-day sense of the term. So what were they?

First, they were official representatives of the apostle Paul whom he dispatched to various churches like Ephesus and Crete. Once there, they functioned in an official capacity to deal with special situations and meet special needs. During the interim from the time of the apostles to the more complete transition to elders and deacons, these men were sent by Paul as his apostolic representatives to repel and deal with certain conditions and people who were threatening to hurt the work and ministries of these churches.

Second, Timothy and Titus undoubtedly possessed the gifts needed for pastoral ministry and while there was an element of pastoral care in what they did, they were not elders or pastors who are given by the Lord to various churches for more long-term ministries (1 Pet. 5:1f.). Rather, as official delegates of Paul, they were sent to assist churches in establishing their ministries pastorally speaking (cf. Tit. 1:5f.).

All in all, in their content, these books are pastoral in nature and give directions for the care, conduct, order, ministry, and administration of churches or assemblies of believers. This is true whether they deal with personal matters or the corporate ministry of the church. In summary, then, these books were designed by God to aid us in our pastoral responsibilities and in organic development and guidance for the life of local churches.

In this regard there is an important observation that might be made. Of Paul's thirteen letters, these were the very last books he wrote. What is so significant about that? Since these books deal with church order, ministry, and organization, why were they not first? If you or I were doing this (especially today) we would probably first try to get the administrative organization in order, the structure, and then worry about the doctrine. So here are some suggestions to think about:

Suggestion 1. Of course, organization and order is important. The church is a spiritual body, an organism, and each believer is a member with special functions and tasks to carry out, but the primary need so essential to functioning as God has designed the church is right theology (teaching) and understanding of the Word, along with its personal application for Christ-like living. This provides us with the spiritual and moral foundation on which we base our methods, strategy, and administration. So, while our methods will often vary, they must never contradict the moral or spiritual principles of the Word of God.

Giving, for instance, is a corporate and individual responsibility, but our giving and the collection of money must be so done that it does not violate certain biblical principles such as giving voluntarily rather than by methods that employ coercion or manipulation.

Suggestion 2. Organization, or better, the organic and unified growth of a church, must be based on right teaching, which is based on rightly handling the Word, i.e., God's objective truth along with the use of those people who are qualified and spiritually right with God. When we try to run an organization based on tradition or background,

²⁷ Theissen, p. 253.

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we end up with an organization that is not only not biblical, but which will lack the spiritual fervor and capacity to function as God intends.

These books, then, deal with matters of church order or ecclesiology not hitherto addressed, but before God gave the church directions for church organization (or order as specific as those we find in the pastorals) He gave us Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. Is this because organization is unimportant? No! It is because organization and administration are not primary. They are secondary. Further, it is because sound teaching and spirituality are what ultimately produce ministries that are effective according to God's standards and that manifest the spirit and character of Christ in ministry and outreach.

Suggestion 3. Closely related to this is another concept. Some areas of ecclesiology are more difficult to determine than others. As a result, students of the Word have debated certain issues for years like the exact form of government or how we select and appoint men to leadership. Is this selection to be carried out by the board of elders, by the congregation, or by both working together?

Since there is such a divergence of opinion does this mean we should give up on matters of church government? Of course not. We should carefully study these issues and seek biblical answers so we might come to conclusions based on our study of the facts of Scripture. But the point is simply this: regardless of the type of church government, within certain limits, of course, **if** God's Word is being consistently and accurately proclaimed with prayerful dependence on the Lord, and **if** the people take it to heart, a church will be alive, in vital touch with Christ, and effective for the Lord.

First Timothy

Author and Title:

Because of their close relationship in thought and focus, the attestation and authorship of all three pastoral epistles will be dealt with here. It has also been pointed out that because all three are so closely connected in thought and style that they usually are either all accepted or all rejected as being written by Paul.

Though all three of these letters have been attacked more than any other of Paul's epistles, both the external and internal evidence supports Paul as the author. Some early church fathers as Polycarp and Clement of Rome, allude to these epistles as Pauline. In addition, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria, and the Muratorian Canon do as well. Moreover, the books declare Paul as the author (1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1, Tit. 1:1). In addition, the doctrinal teaching and autobiographical details fit with the life of an aged Paul at the close of his ministry (see 1:12-17; 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:1-8; 4:9-22; Titus 1:5; 3:12-13).²⁸ Those who question Paul's authorship usually do so on the following grounds:

... that (1) Paul's travels described in the pastorals do not fit anywhere into the historical account of the book of Acts, (2) the church organization described in them is that of the second century, and (3) the vocabulary and style are significantly different from that of the other Pauline letters. Those who hold to the Pauline authorship reply: (1) there is no compelling reason to believe that Acts contains the complete history of the life of Paul. Since his death is not recorded in Acts, he was apparently released from his first imprisonment in Rome, traveled over the empire for several years (perhaps even to Spain), was rearrested, imprisoned a second time in Rome, and martyred under Nero; (2) nothing in the church organization reflected in the pastorals requires a later date (see Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1); and (3) the question of authorship cannot be decided solely on the basis of vocabulary without considering how subject matter affects a writer's choice of words. Vocabulary used to describe church organization, for instance, would be expected to be different from that used to teach the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. There is no argument against Pauline authorship that

²⁸ For a detailed discussion of the issues of authorship see Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale Press, London, 1969, pp. 11-52; W. Hendricksen, *A Commentary On I & II Timothy and Titus*, The Banner of Truth Trust, London, 1957, pp. 4-33; and Henry Clarence Theissen, *Introduction To The New Testament*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1943, pp. 253-60.

does not have a reasonable answer. And, of course, the letters themselves claim to have been written by Paul.²⁹

The Greek titles for 1 and 2 Timothy are *Pros Timotheon A* and *Pros Timotheon B*, “First to Timothy” and “Second to Timothy.” Timothy’s name means, “honoring God.”

Date: A.D. 63-66

It seems clear by comparing Acts with the epistles that 1 Timothy and Titus belong to the period after Paul’s first release and acquittal in Rome. Because of this, 1 Timothy must be dated after his first release, around the spring of A.D. 63, but before the outbreak of the Neronian persecutions in A.D. 64. First Timothy was probably written in A.D. 63 right after his first release. Titus was written around A.D. 65 and 2 Timothy in A.D. 66. Paul died in A.D. 67, according to the early church father, Eusebius. As a Roman citizen, he died by the sword (beheaded) rather than by crucifixion as did Peter.

Paul’s missionary journeys occupied approximately the years A.D. 48-56. From 56-60 Paul was slowly making his way through the Roman courts, arriving ultimately at Rome. For two years, 61-62, Paul was held under house arrest in Rome, at the end of which time, it can be surmised, he was released. From 62-67 Paul traveled more or less freely, leaving Timothy in Ephesus and Titus in Crete, and then subsequently writing each of them a letter. Thus the approximate dates for 1 Timothy and Titus are perhaps 63-66. After being recaptured and once again imprisoned, Paul wrote Timothy a second letter, 2 Timothy. Thus 2 Timothy, dated approximately A.D. 67, represents the last Pauline Epistle.³⁰

Theme and Purpose:

At least five clear purposes can be seen in 1 Timothy. Paul wrote: (1) to encourage and boost the spirit and courage of Timothy by reminding him of his charge or duty (1:3), of his spiritual gift (4:14), his good confession (6:12), and of the deposit of doctrine entrusted to him (6:20); (2) to give Timothy biblical insight in dealing with the errors of false teachers and to encourage Timothy himself to continue in sound doctrine (1:3-11, 18-20; 4:1-16; 6:3f); (3) to give direction concerning proper church conduct in worship (chap. 2); (4) to give guidance regarding numerous issues that would arise and to show how they should be handled. This would include such things as: qualification for elders and deacons (chap. 3), proper behavior toward the various age groups—towards elders and widows (chap. 5). Finally, (5) he wrote to warn against the evils of materialism (chap. 6).

The theme of 1 Timothy, as with Titus and 2 Timothy, is twofold, one involving the individual and the other the church.

- **For the individual**, the theme is “fight the good fight” (1:18).
- **For the church**, the theme is “how to behave in the church, the house of God” (3:15).

Key Word(s):

While 1 Timothy is in many ways a manual on leadership and the conduct of the church, a key term is “sound doctrine” which is emphasized in a number of places (see 1:10; 4:6; 6:1-3). But not to be outdone, is the concept of “conduct” or “godliness,” which occurs nine times (cf. 2:2, 10; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11 with 3:15 and 4:12). This is, of course, fitting, for sound doctrine should lead to godly conduct.

Key Verses:

- **1:5.** But the aim of our instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.
- **3:14-16.** I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you 3:15 in case I am delayed, to let you know how people ought to conduct themselves in the household of God, because it is the church of

²⁹ Ryrie, p. 1916.

³⁰ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media

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the living God, the support and bulwark of the truth. 3:16 And we all agree, our religion contains amazing revelation: He was revealed in the flesh, Vindicated by the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

- **6:11-12.** But you, as a person dedicated to God, keep away from all that. Instead pursue righteousness, godliness, faithfulness, love, endurance, and gentleness. 6:12 Compete well for the faith and lay hold of that eternal life you were called for and made your good confession for in the presence of many witnesses.

Key Chapter:

Since leadership is so determinative of a church's spiritual growth and effectiveness, **chapter 3**, which sets forth the qualifications for leadership is clearly a key chapter. "Notably absent are qualities of worldly success and position. Instead, Paul enumerates character qualities demonstrating that true leadership emanates from our walk with God rather than from achievements or vocational success."³¹

Christ as Seen in 1 Timothy:

Several passages stand out in pointing us to the person and ministry of the Savior. He is the source of our calling, strength, faith, and love so needed for ministry (1:12-14), the one who came to save sinners (1:15), "the one Mediator between God and men" (2:5), "God manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory (3:16), and "the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe" (4:10).

Outline:

- I. The Salutation (1:1-2)
- II. Instructions Concerning Doctrine (1:3-20)
 - A. Warnings Against False Doctrine (1:3-11)
 - B. Paul's Testimony of Grace (1:12-17)
 - C. Paul's Charge to Timothy (1:18-20)
- III. Instructions Concerning Worship (2:1-2:15)
 - A. Instructions Concerning Prayer (2:1-7)
 - B. Instructions Concerning Men and Women (2:8-15)
- IV. Instructions Concerning Leaders (3:1-16)
 - A. Concerning Elders and Deacons (3:1-13)
 - B. Parenthetical Explanation (3:14-16)
- V. Instructions Concerning Dangers (4:1-16)
 - A. Description of the Dangers (4:1-5)
 - B. Duties and Defenses Against the Dangers (4:6-16)
- VI. Instructions Concerning Various Responsibilities (5:1-6:10)
 - A. Concerning Various Age-Groups (5:1-2)
 - B. Concerning Widows (5:3-16)
 - C. Concerning Elders (5:17-25)
 - D. Concerning Slaves and Masters (6:1-2)
 - E. Concerning the Heretical and Greedy (6:3-10)
- VII. Final Instructions to Timothy (6:11-21)
 - A. Exhortation to Godliness (6:11-16)
 - B. Instructions for the Rich (6:17-19)
 - C. Exhortations to Remain Faithful (6:20-21)

Second Timothy

Author and Title:

See the material in 1 Timothy.

³¹ Wilkinson/Boa, p. 429.

Date: A.D. 67

See the material in 1 Timothy.

Theme and Purpose:

When we turn to 2 Timothy we find a very different atmosphere. In 1 Timothy and Titus, Paul was free and able to travel, but here he is a prisoner in a cold dungeon and facing death. In this letter Paul had two major purposes in mind. He wrote (1) to urge Timothy to come to Rome as soon as possible in view of his impending death (cf. 4:9, 21 with 4:6-8), and (2) to admonish Timothy to keep holding on to sound doctrine, to defend it against all error, to endure hardship as a good soldier, and to realize we are living in days of growing apostasy.

As with 1 Timothy, there is a personal and a corporate aspect in the themes of the book:

- **For the individual**, the theme is “kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you” (2 Tim. 1:6), though there are several other verses that could form the theme both individually and corporately (cf. 1:14; 2:1, 2; 2:15; 4:5).
- **For the church**, the theme could be entrust sound teaching to faithful men who will be able to teach others also by suffering and serving as a good soldier of Christ (2:2-4) or perhaps fighting the good fight and finishing the course (4:6-7).

Key Word(s):

In view of the challenge of chapter 2 and the model of chapter 4, “endurance in ministry” is a fitting key concept of this letter.

Key Verses:

- **1:7.** For God did not give us a Spirit of fear but of power and love and self-control.
- **2:1-4.** So you, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2:2 And what you heard me say in the presence of many others as witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be competent to teach others as well. 2:3 Take your share of suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 2:4 No one in military service gets entangled in matters of everyday life; otherwise he will not please the one who recruited him.
- **3:14-17.** You, however, must continue in the things you have learned and are confident about. You know who taught you 3:15 and how from infancy you have known the holy writings, that are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 3:16 Every scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 3:17 that the person dedicated to God may be capable and equipped for every good work.

Key Chapters:

I am convinced that Wilkinson and Boa are on target when they write: “The second chapter of Second Timothy ought to be required daily reading for every pastor and full-time Christian worker. Paul lists the keys to an enduring successful ministry: A reproducing ministry (1-2); an enduring ministry (3-13); a studying ministry (14-18); and a holy ministry (19-26).”³²

Since, in reality, all believers are called to full-time ministry in one way or another, this chapter would be more than beneficial for all Christians.

Christ as Seen in 2 Timothy:

At the heart of all ministry and our ability to endure in ministry is the doctrine of the person and work of Christ. It is not surprising, therefore, that even in a book stressing endurance in ministry, the doctrine of Christ is prominent. Here, He is described as the One who “abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (1:10), as the One who rose from the dead (2:8), as the One who gives salvation and eternal glory (2:10), as the One

³² Wilkinson/Boa, p. 435.

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with whom all believers have died, with whom they will live, and from whom they will be rewarded for faithful service (as in the crown of righteousness) and in the privilege of reigning with Him (2:11-13; 4:8).

Outline:

- I. The Salutation (1:1-2)
- II. The Expression of Thanks for Timothy (1:3-7)
- III. The Call to Remember Timothy's Responsibilities (1:8-18)
- IV. The Character of a Faithful Servant (2:1-26)
 - A. He Is Strong in Grace (2:1)
 - B. He Is a Multiplier of Disciples (2:2)
 - C. He Is Single-Minded Like a Soldier (2:3-4)
 - D. He Is Strict Like an Athlete and Enduring Like a Farmer (2:5-13)
 - E. He Is a Diligent Workman (2:14-19)
 - F. He Is Sanctified Vessel (2:20-23)
 - G. He Is a Gentle Servant (2:24-26)
- V. The Caution for a Faithful Servant (3:1-17)
 - A. The Peril of Apostasy (3:1-9)
 - B. The Protection From Apostasy (3:10-17)
- VI. The Charge to Preach the Word (4:1-5)
- VII. The Comfort of a Faithful Servant (4:6-18)
 - A. A Good Finish to Life (4:6-7)
 - B. A Good Future After Life (4:8)
 - C. Good Friends in Life (4:9-18)
- VIII. Concluding Greetings (4:19-22)

Titus

Author and Title:

Since the Pastoral Letters have been treated previously on the matter of authorship, see 1 Timothy. In the Greek text, Titus is titled *Pros Titon*, "To Titus."

Though Titus is never mentioned in Acts, the many references to him in Paul's epistles (13 times), make it clear he was one of Paul's closest and most trusted fellow-workers in the gospel. When Paul left Antioch for Jerusalem to discuss the gospel of grace (Acts 15:1f.) with the leaders there, he took Titus (a Gentile) with him (Gal. 2:1-3) as an example of one accepted by grace without circumcision, which vindicated Paul's stand on this issue (Gal. 2:3-5). It also appears Titus worked with Paul at Ephesus during the third missionary journey. From there the apostle sent him to Corinth where he helped that church with its work (see 2 Cor. 2:12-13; 7:5-6; 8:6).

Date: A.D. 62-67

A recap of the events pertinent to this epistle will help give some idea of a probable date for Titus, though the exact time is unknown. First, Paul was released from his house arrest in Rome (where we find him at the end of Acts). Perhaps because Paul was a Roman citizen and they could not prove the charges, his accusers did not choose to press charges against him before Caesar (see Acts 24-25; 28:30). In essence, then, their case was lost by default, and Paul was freed. The apostle then visited Ephesus, where he left Timothy to supervise the church, and went on to Macedonia. From Macedonia (northern Greece), he wrote 1 Timothy (1 Tim. 1:3). He then visited Crete, leaving Titus there to put in order the remaining matters in the churches of Crete. Following this, Paul went to Nicopolis in Achaia (southern Greece, Titus 3:12). Then, either from Macedonia or Nicopolis, Paul wrote the epistle to Titus to encourage and instruct him. Afterwards, he visited Troas (2 Tim. 4:13) where he was then arrested, taken to Rome, imprisoned, and finally beheaded. As mentioned previously, it was from Rome, during this second imprisonment in the dungeon that he wrote 2 Timothy. These events took place from about A.D. 62-67.

Theme and Purpose:

Several themes and purposes are seen in this epistle. Paul wrote:

1. To instruct Titus about what he should do to correct the matters that were lacking in order to properly establish the churches in Crete.
2. To give Titus personal authorization in view of the opposition and dissenters Titus was facing (see 2:15; 3:1-15).
3. To give instruction on how to meet this opposition and special instructions concerning faith and conduct, and to warn about false teachers (1:5, 10-11; 2:1-8, 15; 3:1-11).
4. To express his plans to join Titus again in Nicopolis for the winter (3:12). Whether this meeting ever occurred, we do not know. Tradition has it that Titus later returned to Crete and there served out the rest of his life.

The **theme** is to show how the grace of God that has appeared to us in the saving life and death of Christ instructs us to deny ungodliness and to live righteously and soberly as a people full of good works that are in keeping with the doctrine of God (2:10–3:9).

Important issues discussed in the letter include qualifications for elders (1:5-9), instructions to various age groups (2:1-8), relationship to government (3:1-2), the relation of regeneration to human works and to the Spirit (3:5), and the role of grace in promoting good works among God’s people (2:11-3:8).

Key Words:

In this short epistle, the concept of “good deeds” occurs some six times (1:16; 27, 14; 3:5, 8, 14). Two other key words are “grace” (1:4; 2:11; 3:7, 15) and “faith” (1:1, 4, 13; 2:10, 13, and 3:15). Good deeds are not to be the product of human ingenuity or dead religion, but the work of God’s grace through faith in the power of God as manifested in Christ, the Savior.

Key Verses:

- **1:5.** The reason I left you in Crete was to set in order the remaining matters and to appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.
- **2:11-13.** For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. 2:12 It trains us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 2:13 as we wait for the happy fulfillment of our hope in the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.
- **3:3-7.** For we too were once foolish, disobedient, misled, enslaved to various passions and desires, spending our lives in evil and envy, hateful and hating one another. 3:4 But “when the kindness of God our Savior appeared and his love for mankind, 3:5 He saved us not by works of righteousness that we have done but on the basis of his mercy, through the washing of the new birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, 3:6 whom he poured out on us in full measure through Jesus Christ our Savior. 3:7 And so, since we have been justified by his grace, we become heirs with the confident expectation of eternal life.”

Key Chapters:

Undoubtedly, **chapter 2** is key because of its emphasis on relationships in the church (2:1-10) and how a proper understanding and focus on both Christ’s first and second coming (the blessed hope) should impact the life of the church.

Christ as Seen in Titus:

Again, as is so consistent with the teaching of Paul, we see how good works or the conduct of the Christian is so connected with the person and work of Christ, past, present, and future. In this book we see the deity (2:13) and redemptive work of the Savior (2:12). Here Christ Jesus is emphatically described as “our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds” (2:13-14).

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The phrase “our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” is one of the christologically significant texts affected by the Granville Sharp rule. According to this rule, in the article-noun-καὶ-noun construction the second noun refers to the same person described by the first noun when (1) neither is impersonal; (2) neither is plural; (3) neither is a proper name. For more discussion see Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 270-78, esp. 276.³³

Outline:

- I. Salutation and Opening Greetings (1:1-4)
- II. Ordination of Elders in the Church (1:5-9)
- III. Offenders in the Church (1:10-16)
- IV. Operation in the Church (2:1-3:11)
 - A. Duties for Titus (2:1-10)
 - B. Directions Regarding God’s Grace (2:11-15)
 - C. Demonstration of Good Works (3:1-11)
- V. Final Instructions and Greetings (3:12-15)

Philemon

Author and Title:

As with the other prison epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians), Philemon was written by Paul during his first confinement in Rome. That Paul is the author is supported by both the external and internal evidence. First, “among the church fathers, Ignatius, Tertullian, Origen, and Eusebius give evidence of the canonicity of this brief book. It was also included in the canon of Marcion and in the Muratorian fragment.”³⁴ As to the internal evidence, Paul refers to himself as the author in verses 1, 9, and 19.

The letter is written to Philemon, the owner of Onesimus, one of the millions of slaves in the Roman Empire, who had stolen from his master and run away. Onesimus had made his way to Rome, where, in the providence of God, he came in contact with the apostle Paul, who led him to trust in Christ (v. 10). So now both Onesimus and Philemon were faced with doing their Christian duty toward one another. Onesimus was to return to his master and Philemon was to receive him with forgiveness as a Christian brother. Death was the normal punishment for a runaway slave, but Paul intercedes on behalf of Onesimus.

Thus, the book is titled *Pros Philemona*, “To Philemon.”

Date: A.D. 61

Since it was written during Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome, it was written around A.D. 61.

Theme and Purpose:

The primary purpose of this letter, the most personal of all Paul’s letters, was to ask Philemon to forgive Onesimus and accept him back as a beloved brother and fellow servant in the gospel (see vv. 10-17). In the process of this, Paul asks Philemon to charge this to his own account. As such, this epistle is a fitting illustration of Christ who took our place as our substitute (see v. 18). A secondary purpose is to teach the practicality of Christian love as we seek to express the life-changing effects of Christ’s life in ours as it transforms our relationships with others whether in the home or in the master/slave or employer/employee relationships. In the other prison epistles, Paul spoke of this new relationship (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22; 4:1). In this letter we have a wonderful example. A final purpose was to express Paul’s thanksgiving for Philemon and to request preparation for lodging for him when he was released from prison (vv. 4-7 and 22).

³³ From the footnote in the NET Bible, BSF web site CD, electronic media.

³⁴ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media.

The theme, then, is the life-changing power of the gospel to reach into the varied social conditions of society and change our relationships from bondage to brotherhood.

Philemon was not the only slave holder in the Colossian church (see Col. 4:1), so this letter gave guidelines for other Christian masters in their relationships to their slave-brothers. Paul did not deny the rights of Philemon over his slave, but he asked Philemon to relate the principle of Christian brotherhood to the situation with Onesimus (v. 16). At the same time, Paul offered to pay personally whatever Onesimus owed. This letter is not an attack against slavery as such, but a suggestion as to how Christian masters and slaves could live their faith within that evil system. It is possible that Philemon did free Onesimus and send him back to Paul (v. 14). It has also been suggested that Onesimus became a minister and later bishop of the church at Ephesus (Ignatius, *To the Ephesians*, 1).³⁵

Key Words:

Key words or concepts are, “Oneness,” and “forgiveness in Christ.”

Key Verse:

- **15-18.** For perhaps it was for this reason that he was separated from you for a little while, so that you would have him back eternally, no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, as a dear brother. He is especially so to me, and even more so to you now, both humanly speaking and in the Lord. Now if he has defrauded you of anything or owes you anything, charge what he owes to me.

Christ as Seen in Philemon:

The forgiveness that the believer finds in Christ is beautifully portrayed by analogy in Philemon. Onesimus, guilty of a great offense (vv. 11, 18), is motivated by Paul’s love to intercede on his behalf (vv. 10-17). Paul lays aside his rights (v. 8) and becomes Onesimus’ substitute by assuming his debt (vv. 19-19). By Philemon’s gracious act, Onesimus is restored and placed in a new relationship (vv. 15-16). In this analogy, we are as Onesimus. Paul’s advocacy before Philemon is parallel to Christ’s work of mediation before the Father. Onesimus was condemned by law but saved by grace.³⁶

Outline:

- I. Prayer of Thanksgiving for Philemon (vv. 1-7)
- II. Petition of Paul for Onesimus (vv. 8-18)
- III. Promise of Paul to Philemon (vv. 19-21)
- IV. Personal Matters (vv. 22-25)

³⁵ Ryrie, p. 1939.

³⁶ Wilkinson/Boa, p. 444.

The Non-Pauline Epistles

Introduction

We now come to the final eight epistles of the New Testament canon, seven of which have often been called the General or Catholic Epistles, though Hebrews has been excluded from this description. The term Catholic was used in the sense of general or universal to distinguish them from the Pauline Epistles which were addressed to churches or persons.¹ In their addresses (with the exception of 2 and 3 John) they were not limited to a single locality. As an illustration, James is addressed “to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad” (1:1), which is a designation for believers everywhere (likely all Jewish Christians at that early date). Then 1 Peter is addressed “to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,” a designation to believers in these various areas. The epistles of 2 and 3 John have also been included in this group even though they were addressed to specific individuals. Because of these differences, in this study these eight books are simply being called “the Non-Pauline Epistles.” It should be noted that the Pauline Epistles are titled according to their addressees, but, with the exception of Hebrews, all these epistles are titled according to the names of their authors.

In general, we may say that James and 1 Peter are **ethical**, calling believers to a holy walk with the Savior. Second Peter and Jude are **eschatological**, warning believers against the presence of false teachers and calling them to contend for the faith. Hebrews and the Epistles of John are primarily **Christological** and **ethical**, calling Christians to abide in Christ as God’s final revelation and fulfillment of the Old Testament covenant, to experience His life, and not go beyond the truth of the gospel.

These eight epistles exert an influence out of proportion to their length (less than 10 percent of the New Testament). They supplement the thirteen Pauline Epistles by offering different perspectives on the richness of Christian truth. Each of the five authors—James, Peter, John, Jude, and the author of Hebrews—has a distinctive contribution to make from his own point of view. Like the four complementary approaches to the life of Christ in the Gospels, these writers provide a sweeping portrait of the Christian life in which the total is greater than the sum of the parts. Great as Paul’s epistles are, the New Testament revelation after Acts would be severely limited by one apostolic perspective if the writings of these five men were not included.²

Hebrews

Author and Title:

For some 1,200 years (from c. A.D. 400 to 1600) this book was commonly entitled, “The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews,” but there was no agreement in the earliest centuries regarding its authorship. The oldest and most reliable title is *Pros Ebraious*, “To Hebrews.”

As stated, the author is unknown. Many suggestions have been made and very elaborate arguments put forth by scholars, but the fact is the author is nowhere named in the book and is in essence, like its place of writing, date, and even its readership, unknown. Ryrie writes:

Many suggestions have been made for the author of this anonymous book—Paul, Barnabas, Apollos, Silas, Aquila and Priscilla, and Clement of Rome. There are both resemblances and dissimilarities to the theology and style of Paul, but Paul frequently appeals to his own apostolic authority in his letters, while this writer appeals to others who were eyewitnesses of Jesus’ ministry (2:3). It is safest to say, as did the theologian Origen in the third century, that only God knows who wrote Hebrews.³

Because of the uncertainty of its authorship, its recognition as a part of the New Testament canon, at least in the West, was delayed until the fourth century when it was finally accepted in the Western church through the testimo-

¹ Thiessen, p. 271.

² Wilkinson/Boa, p. 450.

³ Ryrie, p. 1943.

nies of Jerome and Augustine. Because Paul was considered to be the author by the Eastern church, it was always accepted.

The issue of its canonicity was again raised during the Reformation, but the spiritual depth and quality of Hebrews bore witness to its inspiration, despite its anonymity.

Chapter 13, verses 18-24, tell us that this book was not anonymous to the original readers; they evidently knew the author. For some reason, however, early church tradition is divided over the identity of the author. Part of the church attributed it to Paul; others preferred Barnabas, Luke, or Clement; and some chose anonymity. Thus, external evidence will not help determine the author.

Internal evidence must be the final court of appeal, but here too, the results are ambiguous. Some aspects of the language, style, and theology of Hebrews are very similar to Paul's epistles, and the author also refers to Timothy (13:23). However, significant differences have led the majority of biblical scholars to reject Pauline authorship of this book: (1) The Greek style of Hebrews is far more polished and refined than that found in any of Paul's recognized epistles. (2) In view of Paul's consistent claims to be an apostle and an eyewitness of Christ, it is very doubtful that he would have used the phraseology found in chapter 2, verse 3: "which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*." (3) The lack of Paul's customary salutation, which includes his name, goes against the firm pattern found in all his other epistles. (4) While Paul used both the Hebrew text and the Septuagint to quote from the Old Testament, the writer of Hebrews apparently did not know Hebrew and quoted exclusively from the Septuagint. (5) Paul's common use of compound titles to refer to the Son of God is not followed in Hebrews, which usually refers to Him as Christ, Jesus, and Lord. (6) Hebrews concentrates on Christ's present priestly ministry, but Paul's writings have very little to say about the present work of Christ. Thus, Hebrews appears not to have been written by Paul although the writer shows a Pauline influence. The authority of Hebrews in no way depends upon Pauline authorship, especially since it does not claim to have been written by Paul.⁴

The Recipients:

Since the recipients are not mentioned as in the Pauline Epistles, we might say a word about them. The very nature of the book with its many Old Testament quotations and the emphasis on the sacrificial system strongly suggests they were Hebrews. Writing in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Zane C. Hodges says:

The identity of the first readers of Hebrews, like the author, is unknown. Nevertheless they were evidently part of a particular community. This appears from several considerations. The readers had a definite history and the writer referred to their "earlier days" (Heb. 10:32-34); he knew about their past and present generosity to other Christians (6:10); and he was able to be specific about their current spiritual condition (5:11-14). Moreover, the author had definite links with them and expressed his intention to visit them, perhaps with Timothy (13:19, 23). He also requested their prayers (13:18).

In all probability the readers were chiefly of Jewish background. Though this has sometimes been questioned, the contents of the epistle argue for it. Of course the ancient title "To the Hebrews" might be only a conjecture, but it is a natural one. When everything is said for a Gentile audience that can be said, the fact remains that the author's heavy stress on Jewish prototypes and his earnest polemic against the permanence of the Levitical system are best explained if the audience was largely Jewish and inclined to be swayed back to their old faith. The heavy and extensive appeal to the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures also was most suitable to readers who had been brought up on them.⁵

⁴ Wilkinson/Boa, p. 454.

⁵ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media.

Date: A.D. 64-68

Several things suggest a date sometime between A.D. 64-68. First, the book was quoted by Clement of Rome in A.D. 95 so it had to have been written before that time. Second, it seems quite apparent that the book was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 for the following reasons. First, surely the author would have mentioned the temple's destruction along with the end of the Jewish sacrificial system if such an event of this importance had occurred, especially in view of the argument of this book. Second, the author uses the Greek present tense over and over when speaking of the temple and the priestly activities which suggest they were still going on (see 5:1-3; 7:23, 27; 8:3-5; 9:6-9, 13, 25; 10:1, 3-4, 8, 11; 13:10-11). Third, the author refers to Timothy's recent release in 13:23, which, if in connection with his ministry to Paul in Rome, requires a date in the late 60s.

Theme and Purpose:

Clearly, the theme of Hebrews is the surpassing greatness of Christ or His superiority, and thus also that of Christianity to the Old Testament system. Several words, *better*, *perfect*, and *heavenly*, are prominently used to demonstrate this. As his primary purpose, the author seeks to demonstrate five significant ways Christ is superior or better. As the Son, He is: (1) superior to the Old Testament prophets (1:1-3), (2) to angels (1:4-2:18), (3) to Moses (3:1-6), (4) to Joshua (3:7-4:16), and (5) to Aaron's priesthood (5:1-10:18). The goal of this theme is to warn his readers against the dangers of giving up the substance of what they have in Christ for the temporary shadows of the Old Testament system. Thus, the readers are admonished to go on to maturity and their reward as faithful believers, partakers of their heavenly calling. To do this, there are five warning passages inserted to challenge them to progress in their Christian faith (2:1-4; 3:1-4:13; 5:11-6:20; 10:26-39; 12:14-29).

Key Words:

The key words are *better*, which occurs some thirteen times, *perfect*, which occurs nine times, and *heavenly*, which occurs six times. Thus, the key concept, for Hebrews is *the superiority or the surpassing greatness of Christ*.

Key Verses:

- **2:1-4** Therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. **2:2** For if the message spoken through angels proved to be so firm that every violation or disobedience received its just penalty, **2:3** how will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was first communicated through the Lord and was confirmed to us by those who heard him, **2:4** while God confirmed their witness with signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.
- **4:12-13** For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword, piercing even to the point of dividing soul from spirit, and joints from marrow; it is able to judge the desires and thoughts of the heart. **4:13** And no creature is hidden from God, but everything is naked and exposed to his eyes to whom we must render an account.
- **4:14-16** Therefore since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. **4:15** For we do not have a high priest incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin. **4:16** Therefore let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace whenever we need help.
- **12:1-2** Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, we must get rid of every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and run with endurance the race set out for us, **12:2** keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set out for him he endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and *has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne* of God.

Key Chapters:

Chapter 1, which so strongly declares the deity of Christ as the Son and final revelation of God, is certainly a key chapter, but **chapter 11** also stands out as the great *Hall of Fame and Faith* chapter. In pointing to the many Old Testament saints who lived by faith, it demonstrates the truth of 11:6, "Now without faith it is impossible to please him, for the one who approaches God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."

Christ as Seen in Hebrews:

In accomplishing the purpose to show the superiority of Christ, Hebrews undoubtedly becomes the most Christological single book of the New Testament. Here he is declared as Son, as the very outshining and representation of the essence of God (1:3, 13), as the one who sat at God's right hand (1:3), as the one declared by God the Father as God (1:8-9), as the eternal Creator (1:10-12), and as the eternal Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (7). Here Christ is presented as the divine-human Prophet, Priest, and King. He is seen as our Redeemer who, having been made like His brethren, has once and for all dealt with our sin and done that which the temporary sacrifices could never do. As such, He has now passed into the heavens as our Great High Priest as one who sympathizes with our weaknesses.

Outline:

- I. The Superiority of Christ to Old Covenant Leaders (1:1-7:28)
 - A. Christ Is Superior to Old Testament Prophets (1:1-3)
 - B. Christ Is Superior to the Angels (1:4-2:18)
 - C. Christ Is Superior to Moses (3:1-6)
 - D. Christ Is Superior to Joshua (3:7-4:13)
 - E. Christ Is Superior to the Aaronic Priesthood (4:14-7:28)
 1. Exhortation to hold fast (4:14-16)
 2. Qualifications of a priest (5:1-10)
 3. Exhortation to abandon spiritual lethargy (5:11-6:12)
 4. Certainty of God's promise (6:13-20)
 5. Christ's superior priestly order (chap. 7)
- II. The Superior Sacrificial Work as Our High Priest (chaps. 8-10)
 - A. A Better Covenant (chap. 8)
 - B. A Better Sanctuary (9:1-12)
 - C. A Better Sacrifice (9:13-10:18)
 - D. Exhortations (10:19-39)
- III. Final Plea for Persevering Faith (chaps. 11-12)
 - A. Examples of Past Heroes of the Faith (chap. 11)
 - B. Encouragement for Persevering Faith (12:1-11)
 - C. Exhortations for Persevering Faith (12:12-17)
 - D. Motivation for Persevering Faith (12:18-29)
- IV. Conclusion (chap. 13)
 - A. Practical Principles for the Christian Life (13:1-17)
 - B. Request for Prayer (13:18-19)
 - C. Benediction (13:20-21)
 - D. Personal Remarks (13:22-23)
 - E. Greetings and Final Benediction (13:24-25)

James

Author and Title:

This epistle begins with "James of God ... to the twelve tribes." To clearly indicate the sender, the NET Bible translates, "From James, a bond-servant of God ... to the twelve tribes ..." But there were four men with the name James in the New Testament. These were: (1) the son of Zebedee and brother of John (Mark 1:19), (2) the son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18), (3) the father of Judas (not Iscariot; Luke 6:16), and (4) the half brother of the Lord (Gal. 1:19). Regarding this, Ryrie writes:

Of the four men bearing the name James in the New Testament, only two have been proposed as the author of this letter—James the son of Zebedee (and brother of John) and James the half brother of Jesus. It is unlikely that the son of Zebedee was the author, for he was martyred in A.D. 44 (Acts 12:2). The authoritative tone of the letter not only rules out the two lesser known Jameses of the New Testament ("James the Less" and the James of Luke 6:16) but points to the half brother of Jesus who became the recognized leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18). This

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conclusion is supported by the resemblances in the Greek between this epistle and the speech of James at the Council of Jerusalem (James 1:1 and Acts 15:23; James 1:27 and Acts 15:14; James 2:5 and Acts 15:13).⁶

In the Greek text, the book is simply titled *Jakobos* from James 1:1. The early title was *Jakobou Epistle*, “Epistle of James.” But James was actually Jacob (Iako,,bos). Exactly why the English translators chose “James” rather than “Jacob” is uncertain. “James,” “Jake,” and “Jacob” all come from the same root. Bible translations in other languages tend to utilize the transliterated name from the Hebrew *yāāaʾqo,,b*, “Jacob.” One might wonder if King James desired to see his name in the English translation he authorized.

Recipients:

Again, due to the way James addresses the recipients, a comment is needed here as well. James is addressed “to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad (*diaspora*), greetings.” As is suggested from “my brethren” in 1:19 and 2:1, 7, this is a reference, not to the dispersion that occurred between A.D. 66-70, but to the Jews dispersed from their homeland through the past dispersions (see Matt. 1:11, 12, 17). In the early chapters of Acts, Jews were in Jerusalem from all parts of the world for Pentecost (see Acts 1:5). Many of these saw and heard the phenomena of Pentecost and came to believe in Christ. Eventually, many returned to their respective homes in various parts of the world. It is to these that James was writing. Others, however, see this as a reference to those Christian Jews who had been scattered after the death of Stephen.⁷

Date: A.D. 45 or 46

While a few suggest a date for James as earlier as the late 30s and some as late as A.D. 150, most scholars date the book about A.D. 45. The reasons are as follows: (1) There is a very distinctive Jewish character to the book which suggests it was written when the church was still predominantly Jewish. (2) There is no reference made to the controversy over Gentile circumcision. (3) The Greek term *synagoge* (“synagogue” or “meeting”) is used to designate the meeting or meeting place of the church rather than “church,” *ekklesia* (2:2). (4) The lack of reference to issues involved in the Jerusalem Council like the relationship of Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians (Acts 15:1f.; A.D. 49) also suggests a very early date. (5) “The allusions to the teachings of Christ have such little verbal agreement with the synoptic Gospels that they probably preceded them.”⁸

Theme and Purpose:

A great deal of controversy exists regarding the precise nature of the theme and purpose of this epistle. Regarding this controversy, Ron Blue writes:

Few books of the Bible have been more maligned than the little Book of James. Controversy has waged over its authorship, its date, its recipients, its canonicity, and its unity.

It is well known that Martin Luther had problems with this book. He called it a “right strawy epistle.” But it is only “strawy” to the degree it is “sticky.” There are enough needles in this haystack to prick the conscience of every dull, defeated, and degenerated Christian in the world. Here is a “right stirring epistle” designed to exhort and encourage, to challenge and convict, to rebuke and revive, to describe practical holiness and drive believers toward the goal of a faith that works. James is severely ethical and refreshingly practical.⁹

Clearly, James is concerned about possessing a faith that works, one that is vital, powerful, and functional. But part of the controversy concerns the nature of that faith. Is he writing to develop the characteristics of a true faith versus a false faith of just a professing believer, or is he talking about a genuine faith of a true believer, but one whose faith has become dead and inactive and thus useless? Some would assert that James “effectively uses these

⁶ Ryrie, p. 1966.

⁷ Zane Hodges, *The Epistle of James: Proven Character Through Testing*, Grace Evangelical Society, Irving, TX, 1994, p. 15.

⁸ Wilkinson/Boa, p. 465.

⁹ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media.

characteristics as a series of tests to help his reader evaluate the reality of their relationship to Christ.”¹⁰ Others would stress that James is writing to warn believers about the consequences of a dead, inactive faith both personally and corporately and to stir them to growth and true spiritual maturity. In keeping with this focus, Blue has an excellent summary of James’ purpose:

The purpose of this potent letter is to exhort the early believers to Christian maturity and holiness of life. This letter deals more with the practice of the Christian faith than with its precepts. James told his readers how to achieve spiritual maturity through a confident stand, compassionate service, careful speech, contrite submission, and concerned sharing. He dealt with every area of a Christian’s life: what he is, what he does, what he says, what he feels, and what he has.

With his somewhat stern teaching on practical holiness, James showed how Christian faith and Christian love should be expressed in a variety of actual situations. The seemingly unrelated parts of the book can be harmonized in light of this unified theme. The pearls are not rolling around in some box; they are carefully strung to produce a necklace of priceless beauty.¹¹

Key Words:

In a book of only five chapters, *faith* occurs sixteen times. This, plus the strong emphasis on godly living and the repetition of *works*, *working* thirteen times in chapter 2, shows these are the two key words of the book.

Key Verses:

- **1:2-5.** My brothers and sisters, consider it nothing but joy when you fall into all sorts of trials, 1:3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 1:4 And let endurance have its perfect effect, so that you will be perfect and complete, not deficient in anything. 1:5 But if anyone is deficient in wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without reprimand, and it will be given to him.
- **1:19-27** Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters! Let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger. **1:20** For human anger does not accomplish God’s righteousness. **1:21** So put away all filth and evil excess and humbly welcome the message implanted within you, which is able to save your souls. **1:22** But be sure you live out the message and do not merely listen to it and so deceive yourselves. **1:23** For if someone merely listens to the message and does not live it out, he is like someone who gazes at his natural face in a mirror. **1:24** For he gazes at himself and then goes out and immediately forgets what sort of person he was. **1:25** But the one who peers into the perfect law of liberty and sticks with it, and does not become a forgetful listener but one who lives it out—he will be blessed in what he does. **1:26** If someone thinks he is religious and does not control his tongue but deceives his heart, his religion is futile. **1:27** Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their misfortune and to keep yourself unstained by the world.
- **2:14-17.** What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Can this kind of faith save him? **2:15** If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacks daily food, **2:16** and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, keep warm and eat well,” but you do not give them what the body needs, what good is it? **2:17** So also faith, if it does not have works, is dead being by itself.

Key Chapters:

Choosing a key chapter in James is difficult, but **chapters 1 and 4** certainly stand out. Chapter 1 is key in that it gives us vital information on the nature and purpose of trials and temptation. Trials build character and produce maturity when mixed with faith, and our temptations come from within and never from God. Chapter 4 is also a key chapter because of what it teaches us about the true source of quarrels, the adulterous nature of worldliness, drawing near to God, and resisting Satan who flees when we draw near to God and resist him. Other key subjects found in other chapters are: faith and works (2:14-26), the use of the tongue (3:1-12), and prayer for the sick (5:13-16).

¹⁰ Wilkinson/Boa, p. 465.

¹¹ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media.

Christ as Seen in James:

In 1:1 and 2:1, James specifically refers to the “Lord Jesus Christ” and then anticipates His coming in 5:7-8. “In the 108 verses of the epistle there are references or allusions from 22 books of the Old Testament and at least 15 allusions to the teachings of Christ as embodied in the Sermon on the Mount.”¹²

Outline:¹³

- I. Stand with Confidence (chap. 1)
 - A. Salutation and greeting (1:1)
 - B. Rejoice in diverse trials (1:2-12)
 - 1. Attitude in trials (1:2)
 - 2. Advantage of trials (1:3-4)
 - 3. Assistance for trials (1:5-12)
 - C. Resist in deadly temptation (1:13-18)
 - 1. Source of temptation (1:13-14)
 - 2. Steps in temptation (1:15-16)
 - 3. Solution for temptation (1:17-18)
 - D. Rest in divine truth (1:19-27)
 - 1. Receptivity to the Word (1:19-21)
 - 2. Responsiveness to the Word (1:22-25)
 - 3. Resignation to the Word (1:26-27)
- II. Serve with Compassion (chap. 2)
 - A. Accept others (2:1-13)
 - 1. Courtesy to all (2:1-4)
 - 2. Compassion for all (2:5-9)
 - 3. Consistency in all (2:10-13)
 - B. Assist others (2:14-26)
 - 1. Expression of true faith (2:14-17)
 - 2. Evidence of true faith (2:18-20)
 - 3. Examples of true faith (2:21-26)
- III. Speak with Care (chap. 3)
 - A. Control talk (3:1-12)
 - 1. The tongue is powerful (3:1-5)
 - 2. The tongue is perverse (3:6-8)
 - 3. The tongue is polluted (3:9-12)
 - B. Cultivate thought (3:13-18)
 - 1. Wisdom is humble (3:13)
 - 2. Wisdom is gracious (3:14-16)
 - 3. Wisdom is peaceable (3:17-18)
- IV. Submit with Contrition (chap. 4)
 - A. Turn hatred into humility (4:1-6)
 - 1. Cause of conflict (4:1-2)
 - 2. Consequence of conflict (4:3-4)
 - 3. Cure for conflict (4:5-6)
 - B. Turn judgment into justice (4:7-12)
 - 1. Advice for justice (4:7-9)
 - 2. Advantage of justice (4:10-11)
 - 3. Author of justice (4:12)
 - C. Turn boasting into belief (4:13-17)

¹² Ryrie, p. 1966.

¹³ I have chosen to use Ron Blue's outline here from *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*. It is one of the most accurate and innovative outlines I have seen on the book of James. Ron was a classmate at Dallas Seminary and this is typical of his excellent work.

1. Statement of boasting (4:13)
 2. Sentence on boasting (4:14)
 3. Solution for boasting (4:15-17)
- V. Share with Concern (chap. 5)
- A. Share in possessions (5:1-6)
 1. Consternation from wealth (5:1)
 2. Corrosion of wealth (5:2-3)
 3. Condemnation in wealth (5:4-6)
 - B. Share in patience (5:7-12)
 1. Essence of patience (5:7-9)
 2. Examples of patience (5:10-11)
 3. Evidence of patience (5:12)
 - C. Share in prayer (5:13-20)
 1. Sensitivity to needs (5:13)
 2. Supplication for needs (5:14-18)
 3. Significance of needs (5:19-20)

First Peter

Author and Title:

That the apostle Peter is the author is clearly stated in the opening verse, “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1). Not only was 1 Peter universally recognized as a work of the apostle Peter by the early church, but there is strong internal evidence that attests to his authorship as well. As for the external evidence, Eusebius placed 1 Peter among the *homologoumena*, and no book has earlier or stronger attestation than 1 Peter as evidenced by 2 Peter 3:1.

The letter was explicitly ascribed to Peter by that group of church fathers whose testimonies appear in the attestation of so many of the genuine NT writings, namely, Irenaeus (A.D. 140-203), Tertullian (150-222), Clement of Alexandria (155-215) and Origen (185-253). It is thus clear that Peter’s authorship of the book has early and strong support.¹⁴

The internal evidence for Peter’s authorship is as follows: (1) There are clear similarities between this letter and the sermons of Peter recorded in Acts (cf. 1 Pet. 1:20 with Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 4:5 with Acts 10:42). (2) The Greek word *xylon*, “wood, tree,” is used by Peter of the cross in Acts and 1 Peter (cf. Acts 5:30; 10:39; 1 Pet. 2:24). (3) The themes, concepts, and various allusions to Peter’s experiences with the Lord’s earthly ministry and the apostolic age also supports Peter’s authorship (cf. 1:8; 2:23; 3:18; 4:1; 5:1).

Even with this evidence, some modern scholars have challenged Peter’s authorship on several grounds. Their arguments with answers are summarized by Roger Raymer in the following:

Until relatively recent times the authenticity of the epistle’s claim to apostolic authorship went unchallenged. Then some modern scholars noted that Peter was considered by Jewish religious leaders as “unschooled” and “ordinary” (Acts 4:13). The superb literary style and sophisticated use of vocabulary in 1 Peter seem to indicate that its author must have been a master of the Greek language. Those who deny Peter’s authorship say that such an artistic piece of Greek literature could not possibly have flowed from the pen of a Galilean fisherman.

Though Peter could be called “unschooled” and though Greek was not his native tongue, he was by no means ordinary. The Jewish leaders saw Peter as unschooled simply because he had not been trained in rabbinical tradition, not because he was illiterate. Luke also recorded (Acts 4:13) that these same leaders were astonished by Peter’s confidence and the power of his Spirit-controlled personality. Peter’s public ministry spanned more than 30 years and took him from Jerusalem to Rome. He lived and preached in a multilingual world. It is reasonable to believe that after three decades Peter could have mastered the language of the majority of those to whom he ministered.

¹⁴ *The NIV Study Bible Notes*, Zondervan NIV Electronic Library.

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The rhetorical style and use of metaphor employed in 1 Peter could just as easily be credited to an accomplished public speaker as to a literary scholar. Certainly Peter had the time and talent to become an outstanding communicator of the gospel via the Greek language.

Any further doubts of Petrine authorship based on linguistic style may be answered by the fact that Peter apparently employed Silas as his secretary (1 Peter 5:12). Silas, though a Jerusalem Christian, was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:36-37) and may have had great facility in the Greek language. But whether or not Silas aided Peter with the grammatical Greek nuances, the epistle's content still remains Peter's personal message, stamped with his personal authority.¹⁵

Recipients:

The epistle is addressed to "To those temporarily residing in the dispersion (in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia) who are chosen." Peter used two key words to describe the recipients, "temporary residents" (Greek, *parepidemotai*, a word which emphasizes both temporary residents and alien nationality) and "dispersion" (Greek, *diaspora*, "dispersion."). This word "normally refers to Jews not living in Palestine but scattered out across the Mediterranean world. But here it is probably metaphorical, used of Gentile Christians spread out as God's people in the midst of a godless world."¹⁶ But perhaps, Peter had both Jew and Gentile believers in view:

First Peter is addressed to Christians scattered throughout five Roman provinces of the peninsula of Asia Minor. That area today is northern Turkey. The churches in those provinces were made up of both Jews and Gentiles. This epistle is rich in references to and quotations from the Old Testament. Jewish Christians would have found special significance in the term *diasporas*, translated "scattered," used in the salutation (1:1). Jews who lived outside of Jerusalem were referred to as living in the diaspora.

Gentile readers would have noted Peter's exhortation to holy living in light of their background of complete ignorance of God's Word (1:14). Gentile Christians also would have been greatly encouraged by the fact that though they *were* in ignorance, they were now considered "the people of God" (2:10). Clearly Peter carefully included both Jewish and Gentile Christians in his letter of encouragement to the churches of Asia Minor.¹⁷

Date: A.D. 63-64

Church tradition connects Peter in the latter part of his life with the city of Rome. If the reference to Babylon in 5:13 is a cryptic reference to Rome, this letter was written while Peter was in Rome during the last decade of his life about A.D. 63, just before the outbreak of Nero's persecution in A.D. 64. Peter regards the state in a harmonious or perhaps conciliatory manner (see 1 Pet. 2:13-17) which would have been more difficult (but not impossible) at a later date under the outbreak of Nero's persecution.

Theme and Purpose:

While 1 Peter touches on various doctrines and has much to say about Christian life and Christian responsibilities, the theme and purpose of 1 Peter centers around the problem of suffering—particularly suffering in the form of persecution for one's faith. It has been described as a manual or handbook showing Christians how they are to live as temporary resident and ambassadors of Christ in an alien and hostile world (1:1, 13-21; 2:11-12; 3:14, 17; 4:1, 13, 15, 16, 19).

There are several specific purposes in this book. It is designed to provide direction for believers under persecution (1) by focusing on the coming revelation of Christ and its deliverance (1:3-12), (2) by following Christ as their perfect example in suffering (2:21f.), and (3) by living in the world in accordance with their calling as a special people of God by maintaining a good report with the Gentile world (2:4-12ff.; 4:1ff.). Other purposes include de-

¹⁵ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media.

¹⁶ Footnote from the *NET Bible*, The Biblical Studies Press.

¹⁷ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media.

monstrating the vital link between doctrine and practice (5:12) and encouraging godly leadership and shepherding the flock of God (5:1f.), which is a vital element in the church's ability to function effectively in a hostile world.

Key Word:

The key word and concept is obviously “**suffering for Christ.**” Some form of the word “suffer” occurs some sixteen times in the book. Closely associated with this as a great source of hope and comfort is the concept of the coming revelation and glory of Christ that will be revealed or brought to believers with its accompanying deliverance or ultimate salvation (see 1:5, 7, 12, 13; 4:13; 5:1, 10-11).

Key Verses:

- **1:3-7.** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he gave us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **1:4** that is, into an inheritance imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. It is reserved in heaven for you, **1:5** who by God's power are protected through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. **1:6** This brings you great joy, although you may have to suffer for a short time in various trials. **1:7** Such trials show the proven character of your faith, which is much more valuable than gold—gold that is tested by fire, even though it is passing away—and will bring praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.
- **1:14-21.** Like obedient children, do not comply with the evil urges you used to follow in your ignorance, **1:15** but, like the Holy One who called you, become holy yourselves in all of your conduct, **1:16** for it is written, “*You shall be holy, because I am holy.*” **1:17** And if you address as Father the one who impartially judges according to each one's work, live out the time of your temporary residence here in reverence. **1:18** You know that from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors, you were ransomed—not by perishable things like silver or gold, **1:19** but by precious blood like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb, Christ. **1:20** He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was manifested in these last times for your sake. **1:21** Through him you now trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.
- **3:15-17.** But set Christ apart as Lord in your hearts and always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope you possess. **3:16** Yet do it with courtesy and respect, keeping a good conscience, so that those who slander your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame when they accuse you. **3:17** For it is better to suffer for doing good, if God wills it, than for doing evil.
- **4:12-13.** Dear friends, do not be astonished that a trial by fire is occurring among you, as though something strange were happening to you. **4:13** But rejoice in the degree that you have shared in the sufferings of Christ, so that when his glory is revealed you may also rejoice and be glad.

Key Chapter:

Perhaps because of its extended direction for how to handle persecution, chapter four is the key chapter of 1 Peter.

Christ as Seen in 1 Peter:

The book is loaded with the person and work of Christ. Through the resurrection of Christ, Christians have “a living hope” and “an imperishable inheritance” (1:3-4). In several places, Peter speaks of the coming glory and revelation of Christ (1:7, 13; 4:13; 5:1). He also speaks (1) of the person and work of Christ as God's Lamb who redeemed us by bearing our sins on the cross (1:18-19; 2:24), (2) of Christ as our perfect example in suffering (2:21f.), and (3) of Christ as the Chief shepherd and Guardian of believers (2:25; 5:4).

Outline:

First Peter can be easily divided into four sections: (1) the Salvation of Believers (1:1-12), (2) the Sanctification of Believers (1:13-2:12), (3) the Submission of Believers (2:13-3:12), and the Suffering of Believers (3:13-5:14).

I. The Salvation of Believers (1:1-12)

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- A. Salutation (1:1-2)
- B. Future (Living) Hope and Present Trials (1:3-9)
- C. Present Salvation and Past Revelation (1:10-12)
- II. The Sanctification of Believers (1:13-2:12)
 - A. The Call to Holiness (1:13-21)
 - B. The Call to Love One Another Fervently (1:22-25)
 - C. The Call to Desire the Pure Milk of the Word (2:1-3)
 - D. The Call to Offer Up Spiritual Sacrifices (2:4-10)
 - E. The Call to Abstain From Fleshly Desires (2:11-12)
- III. The Submission of Believers (2:13-3:12)
 - A. Submission to Government (2:13-17)
 - B. Submission in Business (2:18-25)
 - C. Submission in Marriage (3:1-8)
 - D. Submission in All Areas of Life (3:9-12)
- IV. The Suffering of Believers (3:13-5:14)
 - A. Conduct Needed in Suffering (3:13-17)
 - B. Christ's Example for Suffering (3:18-4:6)
 - C. Commands for Suffering (4:7-19)
 - D. Custodians (Shepherds) in Suffering (5:1-9)
 - E. Conclusion or Benediction (5:10-14)

Second Peter

Author and Title:

Regarding the authorship of this epistle, it is the most disputed epistle of the New Testament. However, not only does the author clearly identify himself as Simon Peter (1:1), but a number of other internal evidences point to the apostle Peter as the author. In a very personal section, almost as the final testament of a dying father, he uses the first person singular referring to himself (1:14), declares himself as an eyewitness of the transfiguration (cf. 1:16-18 with Matt. 17:1-5), asserts this letter is his second one to his readers (3:1), and shows his personal acquaintance with the apostle Paul whom he calls, "our dear brother" (3:15). Regarding Peter's authorship, Ryrie writes:

Many have suggested that someone other than Peter wrote this letter after A.D. 80 because of (1) differences in style, (2) its supposed dependence on Jude, and (3) the mention of Paul's letters having been collected (2 Pet. 3:16). However, using a different scribe or no scribe would also have resulted in stylistic changes; there is no reason why Peter should not have borrowed from Jude, though it is more likely that Jude was written later than 2 Peter; and 3:16 does not necessarily refer to all of Paul's letters but only those written up to that time. Furthermore, similarities between 1 and 2 Peter point to the same author, and its acceptance in the canon demands apostolic authority behind it. Assuming Petrine authorship, the letter was written just before his martyrdom in A.D. 67 and most likely from Rome.¹⁸

Writing in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Kenneth Gangel writes:

In the fourth century the Petrine authorship of 2 Peter was strongly affirmed. Two of the great theologians of the early church, Athanasius and Augustine, considered 2 Peter as canonical. The Council of Laodicea (A.D. 372) included the epistle in the canon of Scripture. Jerome placed 2 Peter in the Latin Vulgate (ca. A.D. 404). Also the great third Council of Carthage (A.D. 397) recognized the intrinsic authority and worth of 2 Peter and formally affirmed that it was written by the apostle Peter.

Though 2 Peter is the least attested book in the New Testament, its external support far surpasses that of many of the other Bible books. The absence of early church tradition supporting 2 Peter certainly could have been due to the letter's brevity and the lack of communication among Christians during times of heavy persecution. Consequently the silence of the second century and the

¹⁸ Ryrie, p. 1984.

caution of the third century posed no insurmountable problems for the careful scholarship of the canonical councils of the fourth century.¹⁹

This epistle is titled *Petrou B*, “Second Peter,” to distinguish it from the first letter written by Peter.

Recipients:

This is the second of two letters Peter wrote to this group of believers (see 3:1) as a kind of final testament, warning, and “last day” letter (1:14; 2:1f.; 3:3), written at the close of the apostle’s career (1:12-14). He was writing to Christians of like precious faith, undoubtedly, to Jewish and Gentile churches of “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Peter 1:1).

Date: A.D. 67-68

As a kind of farewell letter warning of dangerous clouds on the horizon, Peter wrote at the end of his career. According to the early church historian, Eusebius, Peter was martyred during Nero’s persecutions (about A.D. 67–68). The letter was most likely written one of these years.

Theme and Purpose:

As the apostle Paul warned of the coming dangers of apostasy in the later years of his life and ministry (2 Timothy), so Peter also warned of the ever rising dangers of false teachers as was predicted by the prophets, by the Lord Himself, and His apostles (2:1; 3:1-3). The purpose of this short letter is found in this very issue, this rise of false teachers. Thus, the purpose is one of warning against these dangers facing the church.

Seeing that God has provided all that is needed for life and godliness (1:3), 1 Peter is a passionate plea for his audience to grow and mature in Christ, to be neither idle nor unfruitful (1:8), and with this as a foundation, to guard against the rising tide of false teachers. This was precipitated by the fact that Peter knew his time on earth was short (1:13-15) and that the body of Christ faced immediate danger (2:1-3). Thus, Peter desired to refresh their memories and stir their thinking (1:13; 3:1-2) so that they might have his teaching firmly in mind (1:15). To do this, he carefully described what mature believers should look like, encouraging them to grow in grace and knowledge of the Savior (cf. 1:2-11; 3:18). As a further foundation for handling false teachers, he reminded them of the nature of God’s Word as their sure foundation (1:12-21) and then warned against sure coming dangers of false teachers whom he also carefully described along with their sure judgment (chap. 2). Finally, he encouraged his readers with the certainty of Christ’s return (3:1-16). With this final emphasis on the return of the Lord, Peter gave a final challenge. “Therefore, dear friends, since you are waiting for these things, strive to be found at peace, without spot or blemish, when you come into his presence... Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard that you do not get led astray by the error of these unprincipled men, and fall from your firm grasp on the truth. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the honor both now and on that eternal day” (3:14, 17-18).

Key Word:

The key word or concept of 2 Peter is that of *warning against false prophets or teachers and mockers with false words* (2:1-3; 3:3).

Key Verses:

- **1:3.** I can pray this because his divine power has bestowed on us everything necessary for life and godliness through the rich knowledge of the one who called us by his own glory and excellence.
- **1:20-21.** Above all, you do well if you recognize this: no prophecy of scripture ever comes about by the prophet’s own imagination, for no prophecy was ever borne of human impulse; rather, men carried along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.
- **3:8-11.** Now, dear friends, do not let this one thing escape your notice, that a single day is like a thousand years with the Lord and a thousand years are like a single day. **3:9** The Lord is not slow concerning his

¹⁹ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media.

promise, as some regard slowness, but is being patient toward you, because he does not wish for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. **3:10** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, when it comes, the heavens will disappear with a horrific noise, and the celestial bodies will melt away in a blaze, and the earth and every deed done on it will be laid bare. **3:11** Since all these things are to melt away in this manner, what sort of people must we be, conducting our lives in holiness and godliness,

Key Chapters:

Chapter 1 is the key chapter of 2 Peter because in it, we are given one of the clearest passages on the nature of the inspiration of the Bible. While 2 Timothy 3:16 clearly declares the fact of inspiration, 2 Peter 1:19-21 describes the how of inspiration and more. It shows us that (1) the Scripture is absolutely reliable, a sure word of prophecy, (2) that no prophecy of Scripture ever comes about by the prophet's own imagination, i.e., he did not originate it himself, but rather (3) it was the Holy Spirit Himself who is the source of the Scripture ensuring its accuracy. See the footnote taken from the NET Bible.²⁰

Christ as Seen in 2 Peter:

Peter speaks of Christ as the source of life and godliness, and, in keeping with the focus, he speaks of Christ as "Lord and Savior" four times, and speaks of Him as "Lord" fourteen times. In addition, he refers to the glorious transfiguration on the holy mountain and looks forward to the Savior's second coming or *parousia*. At this time the whole world will see that which Peter and the other two disciples were privileged to see on that holy mountain.

Outline:

- I. Greetings (1:1-2)
- II. The Development or Cultivation of Christian Character (1:3-21)
 - A. The Growth of Faith (1:3-11)
 - B. The Grounds of Faith (1:12-21)
- III. The Denouncement or Condemnation of False Teachers (2:1-22)
 - A. Their Danger and Conduct (2:1-3)
 - B. Their Destruction or Condemnation (2:4-9)

²⁰ **tn** Verse 20 is variously interpreted. There are three key terms here that help decide both the interpretation and the translation. As well, the relation to v. 21 informs the meaning of this verse. (1) The term "comes about" (**givnetai** [ginetai]) is often translated "is a matter" as in "is a matter of one's own interpretation." But the progressive force for this verb is far more common. (2) The adjective **ijdiva**" (*idias*) has been understood to mean (a) one's own (i.e., the reader's own), (b) its own (i.e., the particular prophecy's own), or (c) the prophet's own. Catholic scholarship has tended to see the reference to the reader (in the sense that no individual reader can understand scripture, but needs the interpretations handed down by the Church), while older Protestant scholarship has tended to see the reference to the individual passage being prophesied (and hence the Reformation doctrine of *analogia fidei* [analogy of faith], or scripture interpreting scripture). But neither of these views satisfactorily addresses the relationship of v. 20 to v. 21, nor do they do full justice to the meaning of **givnetai**. (3) The meaning of **ejpivlusi**" (*epilusi*) is difficult to determine, since it is a biblical *hapax legomenon*. Though it is sometimes used in the sense of interpretation in extra-biblical Greek, this is by no means a necessary sense. The basic idea of the word is *unfolding*, which can either indicate an explanation or a creation. It sometimes has the force of *solution* or even *spell*, both of which meanings could easily accommodate a prophetic utterance of some sort. Further, even the meaning *explanation* or *interpretation* easily fits a prophetic utterance, for prophets often, if not usually, explained visions and dreams. There is no instance of this word referring to the interpretation of *scripture*, however, suggesting that if *interpretation* is the meaning, it is the prophet's interpretation of his own vision. (4) The **gavr** (*gar*) at the beginning of v. 21 gives the basis for the truth of the proposition in v. 20. The connection that makes the most satisfactory sense is that prophets did not invent their own prophecies (v. 20), for their impulse for prophesying came from God (v. 21).

sn *No prophecy of scripture ever comes about by the prophet's own imagination.* 2 Pet 1:20-21, then, form an *inclusio* with v. 16: the Christian's faith and hope is not based on cleverly concocted fables, but is based on the sure Word of God—one which the prophets, prompted by the Spirit of God, spoke. Peter's point is the same as is found elsewhere in the NT, i.e., that human prophets did not *originate* the message, but they did convey it, using their own personalities in the process.

- C. Their Description and Characteristics (2:10-22)
- IV. The Design and Confidence for the Future (3:1-18)
 - A. The Derision of the False Teachers (3:1-7)
 - B. The Delay of the Day of the Lord (3:8-9)
 - C. The Dissolution Following the Day of the Lord (3:10-13)
 - D. The Diligence Needed in View of the Dangers (3:14-18)

First John

Author and Title:

While the author's name is not found in the letter, it has traditionally been ascribed to John the apostle. Various references by early Christian writers including Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian spoke of John as the author of this epistle. From the standpoint of internal evidence, there are some stylistic differences from the gospel of John, but these can be attributed to the differences between an epistle and a gospel. Further, many similarities exist by way of key words (*abide* or *remain*) or contrasting figures like *righteousness and sin*, *light and darkness*, *life and death*, *love and hate*, and *truth and error*. In addition, the writer was one of the original witnesses of the Savior who knew Him intimately (1:1-5). Then there are many similar expressions and phrases: compare 1 John 1:1 with John 1:1, 14; 1:4 with John 16:24; 1:6-7 with John 3:19-21; and 4:9 with John 1:14, 18; 3:36. There are no good reasons why this book should not be attributed to the apostle John.

Though it is generally agreed that the same person wrote the gospel of John and these three epistles, some feel that they were not written (as traditionally held) by John the apostle, the son of Zebedee, but by another John (the elder or presbyter, 2 John 1; 3 John 1). It is argued that (1) an uneducated man (Acts 4:13) could not have written something so profound as this gospel; (2) a fisherman's son would not have known the high priest as did John the apostle; and (3) an apostle would not have called himself an elder. But "uneducated" did not mean illiterate, only without formal training in the rabbinic schools; some fishermen were well-to-do (cf. Mark 1:20); and Peter, though an apostle, called himself an elder (1 Peter 5:1). Further, if John the elder is the "beloved disciple" and the author of the gospel, why did he not mention John the son of Zebedee, an important figure in the life of Christ, in that gospel? Every evidence points to John the elder being the same as John the apostle and the author of this letter.²¹

Recipients:

All the way through the epistle there are verses that indicate John was writing to believers (2:1, 12-14, 19; 3:1; 5:13), but John nowhere indicates who they were or where they lived. This fact may suggest it was a circular letter to be circulated among several churches, perhaps around the city of Ephesus since early Christian writers placed John at Ephesus in his later years.

The earliest confirmed use of 1 John was in the province of Asia (in modern Turkey), where Ephesus was located. Clement of Alexandria indicates that John ministered in the various churches scattered throughout that province. It may be assumed, therefore, that 1 John was sent to the churches of the province of Asia.²²

Date: A.D. 85-90

It is difficult to precisely date this and the other epistles of John, but since many of the themes and words are so similar to the gospel of John, it is reasonable to assume it was written after the gospel. It was undoubtedly written after the gospel but before the persecutions of Domitian in A.D. 95. Therefore, a reasonable date is somewhere between A.D. 85-90.

²¹ Ryrie, p. 1990.

²² *NIV Study Bible*, electronic Library.

Theme and Purpose:

The theme of the book is *fellowship* with God through the Lord Jesus (1:3-7). In view of the heresy facing these believers, perhaps an early form of *gnosticism*, John wrote to define the nature of fellowship with God whom he describes as *light, love, and life*. God is light (1:5), God is love (4:8, 16), and God is life (see 1:1-2; 5:11-13). To walk in fellowship with God, then, means to walk in the light which leads to experiencing His life, His love for others, and His righteousness. The book, then, gives a number of tests or proofs of fellowship, though some see these as tests of salvation. But in keeping with the theme, the teaching of the false teachers, and the nature of his audience as believers, it is best to view these as tests or proofs of fellowship, tests of abiding and knowing the Savior in an intimate relationship that experiences the transforming life of the Savior in believers.

The exact form of the heresy facing these Christians is difficult to determine, but from the content of 1 John it involved denial of the reality of the incarnation and a claim that sinful behavior did not hinder fellowship with God. Thus, John wrote to his “little children” (2:1, 18, 28; 3:7, 18; 5:21) for at least five reasons: (1) to promote true fellowship (1:3f.), (2) to experience full joy (1:4), (3) to promote holiness through true fellowship (1:6-2:2), (4) to prevent and guard against heresy (2:18-27), and (5) to give assurance (5:11-13).

Key Words:

The key concept is *fellowship* as expressed in the terms *fellowship* (1:3, 6, 7), and *abide, abiding*, etc. (2:6, 10, 14, 17, 27, 28; 3:6, 9, 14, 15, 17, 24; 4:12, 13, 15, 16). Other key words are *righteous, righteousness, light, darkness, and sin* and *lawlessness*.

Key Verses:

- **1:5-2:2.** Now this is the gospel message we have heard from him and announce to you: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. **1:6** If we say we have fellowship with him and yet keep on walking in the darkness, we are lying and not practicing the truth. **1:7** But if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. **1:8** If we say we do not bear the guilt of sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. **1:9** But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness. **1:10** If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us. **2:1** (My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.) But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One; **2:2** and he himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the whole world.
- **5:11-13.** And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. The one who has the Son has this eternal life; the one who does not have the Son does not have this eternal life. I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Key Chapter:

Surely, one of the key passages in 1 John, and even in the New Testament, is **chapter 1** because of its truth regarding sin, even in the life of the Christian. To walk in the light means an honest acknowledgment of the problem of sin. Rather than the denial of sin, this chapter shows us the need for the confession of the **principle** of sin (1:8), confession of **particular** or personal sins (1:9), and confession of the **practice** of sin (1:10).

Christ as Seen in 1 John:

This book focuses on the present ministry of the Savior in the life of believers and anticipates His coming again. His blood continually cleanses the believer from all sin (1:7) and from personal sins and all unrighteousness upon confession of sin (1:9). Indeed, it declares that Christ is our righteous Advocate before the Father (2:1) and the propitiation or atoning sacrifice not only for believers, but for all the world (2:2), that Jesus is the Christ who has come in the flesh (2:22; 4:2-3), that He came by water and by blood, a reference to His baptism and the cross (5:6), and that He is coming again when we shall see Him and be like Him (2:28-3:3).

Outline:

- I. Introduction and Purpose of the Letter (1:1-4)
- II. Conditions Vital for Fellowship (1:5-2:2)
 - A. Walking in the Light (1:5-7)
 - B. Confession of Sin (1:8-2:2)
- III. Conduct Consistent With Fellowship (2:3-27)
 - A. The Character of Fellowship—Being Like Christ (2:3-11)
 - B. The Commandment of Fellowship—Loving Not the World (2:12-17)
 - C. The Cautions for Fellowship—Guarding Against Antichrist (2:18-27)
- IV. Characteristics of Fellowship (2:28-5:3)
 - A. Purity in View of Our Prospect (2:28-3:3)
 - B. Practice of Righteousness in View of Christ’s Death (3:4-24)
 - C. Proving (Testing) the Spirits (4:1-6)
 - D. Pattern of Fellowship, Loving as Christ Loved (4:7-5:3)
- V. Consequences of Fellowship (5:4-21)
 - A. Victory Over the World (5:4-5)
 - B. Verification of Christ’s Credentials (5:6-12)
 - C. Verification (Assurance) of the Believer’s Salvation (5:13)
 - D. Verification of Answered Prayer (5:14-17)
 - E. Victory from Habitual Sin (5:18-21)

Second John**Author and Title:**

Though not stated, the author is undoubtedly John the apostle. He simply refers to himself as “the elder” (presbuteros, “elder, old man”), which is in keeping with the reticence of the author of both the Gospel of John and 1 John to identify himself. This is the same self-designation used by the author of 3 John. That he identifies himself as simply “the elder” suggests that he was well known and established to those he was writing to. This was an official title for the office of an elder, but it is perhaps more likely that he was using it as an affectionate designation by which he was well known to his readers.

The similarities in style between this epistle and 1 John and the Gospel of John suggest that the same person wrote all three books. A number of passages show the similarities: compare 2 John 5 with 1 John 2:7 and John 13:34-35; 2 John 6 with 1 John 5:3 and John 14:23; 2 John 7 with 1 John 4:2-3; and 2 John 12 with 1 John 1:4 and John 15:11.

Although John himself might send a shorter personal letter resembling a longer one he had previously written, it is unlikely that a forger would try to produce such a short document that added so little to the case found in 1 John. Further, a later forgery of 2 John (or 3 John) would have drained it of its authority for the readers, since the contents of 2 and 3 John indicate that they knew the writer personally.²³

Since the book has been traditionally tied to the apostle John as the author, it has been titled in the Greek text as *Ioannou B*, Second of John.

Recipients:

The letter is addressed “to the elect lady and her children” (v. 1; cf. vv. 4-5).

This phrase may refer to an individual or to a church (or the church at large). Some have suggested that the addressee is a Christian lady named “Electa,” but the same word in v. 13 is clearly an adjective, not a proper name. Others see the letter addressed to a Christian lady named “Kyria” (first proposed by Athanasius) or to an unnamed Christian lady. The internal evidence of 2 John clearly

²³ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, InterVarsity, Downers Grove, 1997, c 1993, electronic media, Logos Library System.

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supports a collective reference, however. In v. 6 the addressee is mentioned using second person plural, and this is repeated in vv. 8, 10, and 12. Only in v. 13 does the singular reappear. The uses in vv. 1 and 13 are most likely collective. Some have seen a reference to the church at large, but v. 13, referring to “the children of your elect sister” is hard to understand if the universal church is in view. Thus the most probable explanation is that the “elect lady” is a particular local church at some distance from where the author is located.

sn 2 John is being written to warn a “sister” church some distance away, referred to as *an elect lady*, of the missionary efforts of the secessionist false teachers (discussed in 1 John) and the dangers of welcoming them whenever they arrive.²⁴

Date: A.D. 85-90

It is difficult to date the letter, but the circumstances and subjects in the letter suggest it was probably written about the same time as 1 John (A.D. 85-90). The above similarities indicate this as well (see the date as discussed in 1 John above).

Theme and Purpose:

The theme of 2 John is the apostle’s concern that his readers continue to walk in the truth of apostolic doctrine and in accordance with the commandments (vv. 4-6). Because “many deceivers have gone out into the world, people who do not confess Jesus as Christ coming in the flesh” (v. 7), John was writing to protect them from the evil deception of those who refused to remain in the teaching of Christ, but were running beyond and away from the truth (v. 9). In keeping with this, several purposes are seen: (1) He wrote to keep his readers from losing the things they had together worked for, including a full reward (v. 9), and (2) to give them clear instructions against receiving these false teachers into their homes or house churches and giving them a Christian greeting. This undoubtedly referred to recognizing them as teachers of the truth in their home churches. John was not telling them to be rude or refuse to witness to them.

Key Words:

The key words are “*truth*” (nine times), and “*commandment*” (14 times).

Key Verses:

- **6-11.** (Now this is love: that we walk according to his commandments.) This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning; thus you should walk in it. 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, people who do not confess Jesus as Christ coming in the flesh. This person is the Deceiver and the Antichrist! 8 Watch out, so that you do not lose the things we have worked for, but receive a full reward. 9 Everyone who goes on ahead and does not remain in the teaching about Christ does not have God. The one who remains in this teaching has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house and do not give him any greeting, 11 because the person who gives him a greeting shares in his evil deeds.

Key Chapters:

As there is only one chapter to 2 John, this focus is not applicable.

Christ as Seen in 2 John:

Again, as in 1 John, 2 John is concerned with protecting the biblical doctrine of the incarnation. He wrote to refute the error that denies that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. In fact, the statement in verse 7 regarding the denial that “Jesus as Christ coming in the flesh” may even refer to the incarnation in a threefold way. In contrast to 1 John 4:2 where he used the perfect participle, “has come in the flesh” (ele,luthota), here John used the present participle (erchomenon), “is coming” or “is come in the flesh.” Since the present participle may simply emphasize the results

²⁴ Translators note, *The NET Bible*, The Biblical Studies Press, 1998, electronic media, Logos Library System.

and is sometimes translated like a present, there may be no distinction here, but perhaps John meant to broaden the focus on the significance of the incarnation.

This present tense participle seems to include the past coming of Christ in flesh at the Incarnation, the present continuance of His risen humanity, as well as His future coming to earth. By contrast, the perfect tense participle in 1 John 4:2 emphasizes only His incarnation.²⁵

Outline:

- I. Prologue and Greeting (1:1-3)
- II. Commendation for Walking in the Truth (1:4)
- III. Commandment to Continue to Love One Another (1:5-6)
- IV. Cautions and Instructions Against False Teachers (1:7-11)
- V. Concluding Remarks and Final Greetings (1:12-13)

Third John

Author and Title:

The apostle John is the author of this epistle as with 1 and 2 John. In both 2 and 3 John the author identifies himself as “the elder.” Also, note the similarities found in both epistles: “love in the truth” (v. 1 of both letters) and “walking in the truth” (v. 4 of both letters). The style of both epistles are clearly the same, and efforts to deny that John is the author of all three epistles has no real support or evidence.

The ancient opinion that the Apostle John wrote this letter, as well as the other two, may be readily accepted. The arguments that support apostolic authorship of 1 John carry over to this tiny epistle by virtue of the clear stylistic ties. Moreover, the self-confident authority of the writer of 3 John (cf. v. 10) also befits an apostle.²⁶

Recipients:

This is clearly the most personal letter of John. It is addressed to a man John called “the beloved Gaius” (v. 1) regarding ecclesiastical problems Gaius was facing. The recipient is simply identified no further than by the above description which suggests he was well known by those of the churches of Asia Minor where John served for the last years of his life. Gaius is a familiar name in the New Testament. It appears in Romans 16:23 (a Gaius of Corinth), Acts 19:29 (a Gaius of Macedonia) and Acts 20:4 (a Gaius of Derbe).

Date: A.D. 85-90

Again, the similarities between 1 and 2 John suggest a similar date of somewhere between A.D. 85-90.

Theme and Purpose:

John writes Gaius regarding the issue of hospitality and physical support to itinerate Christian workers (missionaries), especially when they were strangers. The theme centers around the contrast between the ministry of Gaius and his generous demonstration of Christian love as one walking in the truth in contrast to the behavior of the selfishness of Diotrephes who, rather than walking in the truth, rejected what John had said and was seeking personal preeminence (v. 9).

Several distinct purposes emerge in this epistle: (1) to commend Gaius (vv. 1-6a), (2) to instruct and encourage the continuation of his support for the Christian workers John had evidently sent (vv. 6b-8), (3) to rebuke Diotrephes for his self-centered behavior (vv. 9-11), (4) to give instruction for Demetrius (v. 12), and (5) to inform Gaius of John’s desire and intention to visit and deal with the difficulties (vv. 10a, 13-14).

²⁵ Ryrie, p. 2000.

²⁶ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media.

Key Word:

While no one word stands out as in 2 John by way of repetition, the key idea is *faithful ministry of selfless service to others as fellow workers in the truth* (vv. 5-8).

Key Verses:

- **6-8.** They have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. **7** For they have gone forth on behalf of ‘The Name,’ accepting nothing from the pagans. **8** Therefore we ought to support such people, so that we become coworkers in cooperation with the truth.
- **11.** Dear friends, do not imitate what is bad but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does what is bad has not seen God.

Key Chapters:

As in 2 John this is not applicable with only one chapter.

Christ as Seen in 3 John:

While the name of Jesus Christ is not mentioned directly, He is referred to in the statement, “For they have gone forth on behalf of ‘The Name.’” This is undoubtedly a reference to ministry on behalf of the Lord Jesus (see Acts 5:40-41 where we have the identical Greek construction in v. 41). Paul uses a similar phrase in Romans 1:5, and in 1 John 2:12 the author wrote, “your sins are forgiven on account of His (Christ’s) name.” John’s Gospel also makes reference to believing “in the name of Jesus” (John 1:12, 3:18).

Outline:

- I. Greeting or Introduction (1)
- II. Commendation of Gaius (2-8)
 - A. His Godliness (2-4)
 - B. His Generosity (5-8)
- III. Condemnation of Diotrephes (9-11)
 - A. His Selfish Ambition (9)
 - B. His Selfish Activities (10-11)
- IV. Commendation of Demetrius (12)
- V. Concluding Remarks (13-14)

Jude

Author and Title:

The author identifies himself as Jude (v. 1). The Greek is literally, Judas. Traditionally, English versions have used Jude to distinguish him from Judas who betrayed Jesus. Further, he identifies himself as the brother of James and bond-servant (Greek, *doulos*) of Jesus Christ. Jude is listed as the half-brother of Jesus in Matt. 13:55 and Mark 6:3. The *NET Bible* has this helpful note here:

Although Jude was half-brother of Jesus, he humbly associates himself with *James*, his full brother. By first calling himself *a slave of Jesus Christ*, it is evident that he wants no one to place stock in his physical connections. At the same time, he must identify himself further: since Jude was a common name in the first century (two of Jesus’ disciples were so named, including his betrayer), more information was needed, that is to say, *brother of James*.²⁷

The title in the Greek text is *Iouda*, an indeclinable form used for the Hebrew *Judah* and the Greek *Judas*.

²⁷ *NET Bible*, electronic media.

Recipients:

Jude seems to write to no specific group of people. Rather the letter is simply addressed “to those who are called, wrapped in the love of God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ” (v. 1) and then later he addresses them as “beloved” or “dear friends” (v. 3).

Date: A.D. 70-80

Though the subject matter is very similar to 2 Peter, one of the chief differences between Jude and 2 Peter is that while Peter warned that “there shall be false teachers” (2:1), Jude states that “there are certain men who have secretly slipped in among you” (v. 4). Since 2 Peter anticipates the problem and Jude speaks of it as present, apparently Jude was written some time later than 2 Peter. If 2 Peter is dated about A.D. 66, then Jude might be placed around A.D. 70-80.

Theme and Purpose:

Jude intended to write about the common salvation, but because of the inroads of heresy and the danger threatening the church, he was compelled to write to encourage believers to contend earnestly for the faith against false teachings that were secretly being introduced in the churches. Evidently, definite advances were being made by an incipient form of Gnosticism—not ascetic, like that attacked by Paul in Colossians, but an antinomian form.

The Gnostics viewed everything material as evil and everything spiritual as good. They therefore cultivated their “spiritual” lives and allowed their flesh to do anything it liked, with the result that they were guilty of all kinds of lawlessness.²⁸

From this, two major purposes can be seen in Jude: (1) To condemn the practices of the ungodly libertines who were infesting the churches and corrupting believers, and (2) counsel believers to stand fast, continue to grow in faith while contending for the apostolic truth that had been handed down to the church.

Key Word:

The key idea or word is “*contend for the faith.*”

Key Verses:

- **3.** Dear friends, although I have been eager to write to you about our common salvation, I now feel compelled instead to write to encourage you to contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.
- **24.** Now to the one who is able to keep you from falling, and to cause you to stand, rejoicing, without blemish before his glorious presence.

Key Chapters:

As with 2 and 3 John, since this book has only one chapter, this is not applicable.

Christ as Seen in Jude:

Jude focuses our attention on the believer’s security in Christ (v. 24), on the eternal life He gives (v. 21), and on His sure coming again (v. 21). It is Jesus Christ our Lord who gives us access into God’s presence (v. 25).

Outline:

- I. Greetings and Purpose (1-4)
- II. Description and Exposure of False Teachers (5-16)
 - A. Their Past Judgment (5-7)
 - B. Their Present Characteristics (8-13)
 - C. Their Future Judgment (14-16)

²⁸ Ryrie, p. 2005.

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III. Defense and Exhortation to Believers (17-23)

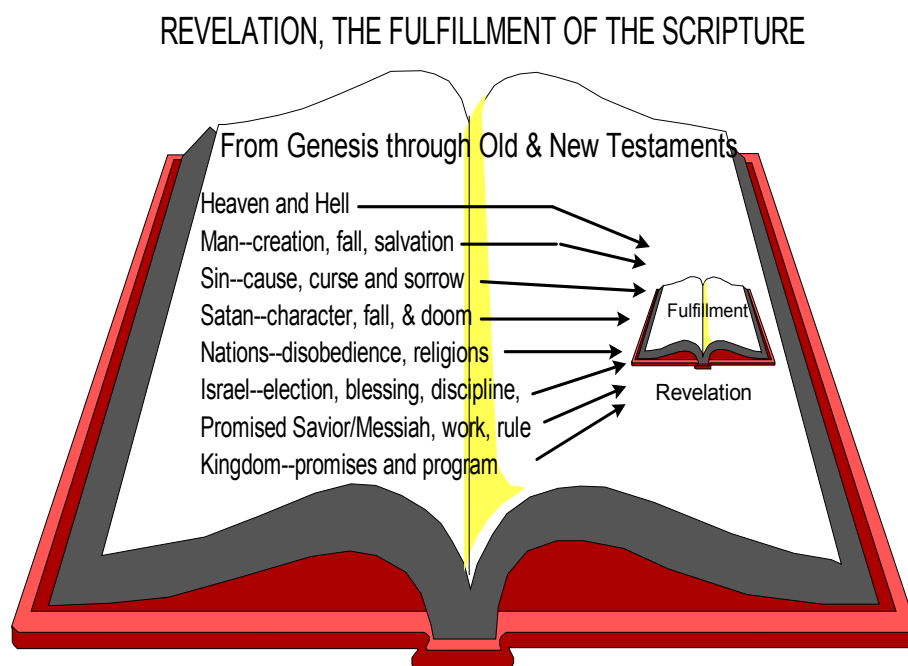
IV. Benediction (24-25)

The Prophetic Book

Revelation

Introduction

With the book of Revelation, we have the conclusion and consummation of the Bible as God's revelation to man. As Genesis is the book of beginnings, Revelation is the book of consummation which anticipates the end-time events, the return of the Lord, His end-time reign, and the eternal state. As one moves through the Bible a number of great themes are introduced and developed beginning with Genesis like heaven and earth; sin, its curse, and sorrow; man and his salvation; Satan, his fall, and doom; Israel, her election, blessing, and discipline; the nations; Babylon and babylonianism; and the kingdoms and the kingdom. But ultimately, all of these find their fulfillment and resolution in the Book of Revelation. The gospels and epistles begin to draw these lines together, but it is not until we come to Revelation that they all converge in one great consummation. We may chart this as follows:



Author and Title:

According to the book itself, the author's name was John (1:4, 9; 22:8). He was a prophet (22:9), and a leader who was known in the churches of Asia Minor to whom he writes the book of Revelation (1:4).

Traditionally, this John has been identified as John the Apostle, one of the disciples of our Lord. That the style is different from the style of the Gospel of John stems only from the difference in the nature of this book as apocalyptic literature.

An early church father, Irenaeus, states that John first settled in Ephesus, that he was later arrested and banished to the Isle of Patmos in the Aegean Sea to work in the mines, and that this occurred during the reign of the Roman emperor, Domitian. This supports the author's own claim to have written from Patmos because of his witness for Christ (1:9).

Date: A.D. 90s

Domitian reigned in Rome from A.D. 81-96. Since Irenaeus tells us that John wrote from Patmos during the reign of Domitian, and since this is confirmed by other early church writers, such as Clement of Alexander and Eusebius, most conservative scholars believe the book was written between A.D. 81-96. This would make it the last book of the New Testament, just shortly after John's gospel and his epistles (1, 2, and 3 John). Other conservative scholars believe it was written much earlier, around 68, or before Jerusalem was destroyed.

Theme and Purpose:

One's understanding of the theme depends to some degree on one's method of interpretation of Revelation (see below). Following the futurist view of interpreting Revelation, the prominent theme of the book concerns the conflict with evil in the form of human personalities energized by Satan and his world-wide system, and the Lord's triumphant victory to overthrow these enemies to establish His kingdom both in the Millennium (the 1,000 years of Revelation 20) and in eternity.

This is accomplished by taking the reader and hearers (1:3) behind the scenes through the visions given to John to demonstrate the demonic nature and source of the awful evil in the world. But Revelation also demonstrates the conquering power which rests in the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David. This Lion is also the Lamb standing, as if slain, but very much alive, angry, and bringing the judgment of God's awesome holiness against a sinful and rebellious world.

However, in the study of this book, the real issue is how one interprets the book. Ryrie summarizes the four principal views as it regards the interpretation of Revelation. He writes:

There are four principal viewpoints concerning the interpretation of this book: (1) the preterist, which views the prophecies of the book as having been fulfilled in the early history of the church; (2) the historical, which understands the book as portraying a panorama of the history of the church from the days of John to the end of time; (3) the idealist, which considers the book a pictorial unfolding of great principles in constant conflict, without reference to actual events; and (4) the futurist, which views most of the book (Rev. 4-22) as prophecy yet to be fulfilled. The futurist is the viewpoint taken in these notes, based on the principle of interpreting the text plainly.¹

For more on the interpretation of this book and its importance, see *Studies in Revelation* on the Biblical Studies Foundation web site at www.bible.org.

Regardless of one's method of interpretation, most acknowledge that it was written to assure the recipients of the ultimate triumph of Christ over all who rise up against Him and His people.

Key Words:

As declared in title of the book, and as the book unfolds the person and work of Christ in His ministry to the church today (chaps. 1-3) and in the future (4-22), the key word or concept is *the Revelation of Jesus Christ*.

Key Verses:

- **1:7.** Look! He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all the tribes on the earth will mourn because of him. This will certainly come to pass! Amen.
- **1:19.** Therefore write what you saw, what is, and what will be after these things. **1:20** The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and the seven golden lampstands is this: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.
- **19:11-16.** Then I saw heaven opened and here came a white horse! The one riding it was called 'Faithful' and 'True,' and with justice he judges and goes to war. **19:12** His eyes are like a fiery flame and there are many diadem crowns on his head. He has a name written that no one knows except himself. **19:13** He is dressed in clothing dipped in blood, and he is named the Word of God. **19:14** The armies that are in heaven,

¹ Ryrie, p. 2009.

dressed in white, clean, fine linen, were following him on white horses. **19:15** From his mouth extends a sharp sword, so that with it he can strike the nations. *He will rule them with an iron rod*, and he stomps the winepress of the furious wrath of God the All-Powerful. **19:16** He has a name written on his clothing and on his thigh: “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

Key Chapters:

Deciding on the key chapters in a book like Revelation is not easy, but certainly, **chapters 2-3**, containing messages of the promises and warnings written to the seven churches are key chapters. Also **chapters 4-5** which prepare the reader for the great conflict unfolded in the chapters that follow are key as well. Here we see how only the Lord Jesus, the Lion and the Lamb is worthy to open the book of seals and pour out their contents on the earth. Finally, **chapters 19-22** are key in that here we see the end of history which is radically different from what we see today.

... In Revelation 19-22 the plans of God for the last days and for all of eternity are recorded in explicit terms. Careful study of and obedience to them will bring the blessings that are promised (1:30). Uppermost in the mind and deep in the heart should be guarded the words of Jesus, “Behold, I am coming quickly.”²

Key People:

There are a number of key people or persons in this book because of the roles they play. These are first of all, the Lord Jesus, then John, the author, but also the two witnesses, the beast out of the sea and the false prophet. Finally, the bride who returns with the Lord in chapter 19 forms a key group of people.

Christ as Seen in Revelation:

Since Revelation is indeed “The Revelation of Jesus Christ” it demonstrates His glory, wisdom and power (1), and portrays His authority over the church (2-3) and His power and right to judge the world (5-19). But as the revelation of Christ, it is loaded with descriptive titles. In particular, it describes Jesus Christ (1:1) as 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), he who lives (1:18), the Son of God (2:18), holy and true (3:7), the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God (3:14), the Lion of the tribe of Judah, The Root of David (5:5), a Lamb (5:6), Faithful and True (19:11), The Word of God (19:13), KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (19:16), Alpha and Omega (22:13), The Bright and Morning Star (22:16), and the Lord Jesus Christ (22:21).

Outline:

- I. The Prologue (1:1-8)
- II. The Things Past (1:9-20)
- III. The Things Present (2-3)
 - A. The Message to Ephesus (2:1-7)
 - B. The Message to Smyrna (2:8-11)
 - C. The Message to Pergamum (2:12-17)
 - D. The Message to Thyatira (2:18-29)
 - E. The Message to Sardis (3:1-6)
 - F. The Message to Philadelphia (3:7-13)
 - G. The Message to Laodicea (3:14-22)
- IV. The Things Predictive (4:1-22:5)
 - A. The Tribulation Period (4:1-19:21)
 - 1. The Throne in Heaven (4:1-11)
 - 2. The Seven Sealed Book and the Lion Who Is Also a Lamb (5:1-14)
 - 3. The Seal Judgments (6:1-17)
 - 4. An Interlude: The Redeemed of the Tribulation (7:1-17)
 - 5. The First Four Trumpet Judgments (8:1-13)
 - 6. The Fifth and Sixth Trumpets and the First Two Woes (9:1-20)

² Wilkinson/Boa, p. 513.

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7. The Angel and the Little Book (10:1-11)
8. The Temple, the Two witnesses, and the Seventh Trumpet (11:1-19)
9. The Angelic Conflict (12:1-17)
10. The Beast and the False Prophet (13:1-18)
11. Special Announcements (14:1-20)
12. Prelude to the Seven Last plagues (15:1-8)
13. The Bowl Judgments (16:1-21)
14. The Judgment of Religious Babylon (17:1-18)
15. The Judgment of Commercial Babylon (18:1-24)
16. The Second Coming of Christ (19:1-21)
- B. The Reign of Christ (the Millennium) and the Great White Throne (20:1-15)
 1. Satan Bound ((20:1-3)
 2. Saints Resurrected (20:4-6)
 3. Sinners in Rebellion (20:7-9)
 4. Satan Doomed (20:10)
 5. Sinners Judged (20:11-15)
- C. The Eternal State (21:1-22:5)
 1. The Descent of the New Jerusalem (21:1-8)
 2. The Description of the New Jerusalem (21:9-27)
 3. The Delights of the New Jerusalem (22:1-5)
- D. The Epilogue (22:6-21)