

SURVEY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT DOCUMENTS:
AN OUTLINE FOR INTRODUCTORY STUDY

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NOTES:

SURVEY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT DOCUMENTS:
AN OUTLINE FOR INTRODUCTORY STUDY

The Twenty-Seven Documents of the New Testament

Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God

Matthew

Mark

Luke

John

Stories about the Early Witnesses of Jesus from Jerusalem to Rome

Acts of Apostles

Letters of Paul to Christians

Early Period

1 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians

Middle Period

1 Corinthians

2 Corinthians

Galatians

Romans

Late Period

Philippians

Colossians

Philemon

Ephesians

1 Timothy

Titus

(Hebrews)

2 Timothy

Letters of James, Peter, and Jude to Christians

James

1 Peter

2 Peter

Jude

Letters of John to Christians

1 John

2 John

3 John

Revelation

GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS THE MESSIAH, THE SON OF GOD

The four gospels relate “all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven” (Acts 1.1).¹ They portray the birth, the ministry, the death, the resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus. But these books are not strict biographies of the life of Jesus. We are given no information about the life of Jesus from age twelve to about age thirty. Nevertheless, these good news narratives about Jesus provide information sufficient for us to learn about Jesus, to “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,” and to “have life in his name” (John 20.30-31; 21.24-25). The books written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John span a period of approximately thirty years.

<u>Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem</u> (Matthew 1.18-25; Luke 2.1-7)	5 BC
Death of Herod the Great (Matthew 2.15, 19), about 4 BC	
Census of Augustus (Luke 2.1), issued 8 BC, but carried out later	
Quirinius, governor of Syria (Luke 2.2), about 12 BC to 11 AD	
<u>Jesus Visits the Temple in Jerusalem, Age 12</u> (Luke 2)	AD 8
<u>Baptism of Jesus in Jordan River</u> (Matthew 3.13-17; Luke 3.1-2)	AD 26
15th year of Tiberius, co-regent of Roman empire from AD 11	
Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea (AD 26-36)	
Herod Antipas, tetrach of Galilee (AD 4-39)	
Herod Philip, tetrach of Iturea (AD 4-33)	
Annas and Caiaphas, high priests of Judea (AD 18-36)	
<u>Beginning of the Ministry of Jesus in Galilee</u>	AD 27
(Matthew 4.12-17; Mark 1.14-15; Luke 4.14-15)	
46 th year of Herod’s temple (John 2.20), begun BC 19	
<u>The Public Ministry of Jesus</u> (About Three Years)	
1 st Passover (John 2.23)	AD 27
2 nd Pasover (John 5.1)	AD 28
3 rd Passover (John 6.4)	AD 29
4 th Passover (John 11.55)	AD 30
<u>Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus</u>	AD 30

¹Scripture quotations unless noted otherwise are from *The Holy Bible, New International Version*.

MATTHEW–MARK–LUKE: A COMMON PROCLAMATION OF JESUS

“Through either a brief title (Mark 1.1) or account of his miraculous birth (Matthew 1–2; Luke 1–2), the synoptic gospels introduce Jesus of Nazareth as a unique person with a unique ministry to accomplish. They then proceed to proclaim the good news about him by recounting events and teachings organized around the four periods of Jesus’ public ministry.” [Scott, “Synoptic Gospels,” *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Volume 1, 502].

1. Preparation of Jesus for His Ministry

John the Baptizer
The Baptism of Jesus
The Temptation of Jesus

MATTHEW 3.1–4.11 MARK 1.2-13 LUKE 3.1–4.13

2. The Ministry of Jesus in and Around Galilee

MATTHEW 4.12–18.35 MARK 1.14–9.50 LUKE 4.14–9.50

3. The Ministry of Jesus in and Around Judea

MATTHEW 19.1–20.34 MARK 10.1-52 LUKE 9.51–19.27

4. The Final Week of Jesus in Jerusalem

The Death of Jesus
The Resurrection of Jesus

MATTHEW 21.1–28.20 MARK 11.1–16.20 LUKE 19.28–24.53

COMPARISON OF HOW THE DIFFERENT GOSPEL NARRATIVES BEGIN

Matthew 1.1

How does Matthew begin his account of the life of Jesus?

Mark 1.1

What does Mark mean by “the beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God”? Does Mark’s statement exclude the infancy stories (as recorded by Matthew and Luke) from “gospel” or good news?

Luke 1.1-4

Who are the “many” referred to by Luke?

Who “handed down” to Luke what he plans to write about?

What was Luke’s method of research?

How did Luke plan to arrange his material?

What was Luke’s purpose for writing?

John 1.1-18

In his book about Jesus, where does John start? Is John’s “beginning” the same as Mark’s?

What does John call the Word (verse 4)?

Who testified about the light?

From whom did the Word come? To whom did the Word come?

How was the Word received?

What did the Word become?

What did the Word bring (in his person) when he came?

What did the Word do when he came?

SPECIAL STUDY: THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Mark tells us nothing about the birth or youth of Jesus. He confines his narrative to the time between the baptism and the resurrection of Jesus (compare Acts 10.37-41). Similarly, John records nothing directly about the birth or youth of Jesus. But John develops his Christology or teaching about Jesus from the preexistence of the Word.

The events surrounding the birth of Jesus are recorded solely by Matthew and Luke. Four basic reasons can be cited for the recording of these events: (1) to satisfy the curiosity of believers who lived in the first century AD; (2) to defend the Christian faith against false charges made by unbelieving Jews and pagans (for example, that Jesus was an illegitimate child); (3) to proclaim Jesus as Messiah (Matthew's emphasis) and as the Savior of the world (Luke's emphasis); and (4) to obey the guidance of God's Holy Spirit (see 1 Peter 1.12).

How did Matthew and Luke know the details concerning the birth of Jesus? The apostles were eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus but only from soon after his baptism until his death and his resurrection (see Acts 1.22; 10.41; 1 Corinthians 15.3). How then did they know about these events? Were there other eyewitnesses (for instance, friends and relatives from Nazareth)? The indication seems to be that the people among whom Jesus grew up knew nothing about a birth that was out of the ordinary (see Matthew 13.53-58; Luke 4.31-32, 36-37).

Could these details have come from Joseph? Probably not, for Joseph never appears during the public ministry of Jesus, and it usually is assumed that he already was dead by this time. Could these details have come from Mary? Yes, for she was part of the early Christian community (see Acts 1.14), and she could have handed down these details about the birth of Jesus to the apostles. Scripture itself tells us that she "treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2.19; compare verse 51). Who was better qualified to relate these things to Matthew and Luke than the one who was so intimately involved in the birthing, nursing, and parenting of Jesus?

Outline of the Birth Narrative in Matthew

1. The genealogy of the Messiah, 1.1-17
2. The birth of the Messiah, 1.18-25
3. The adoration of the Messiah by magi, 2.1-12
4. The flight of the Messiah into Egypt and his return to Palestine, 2.13-23

Outline of the Birth Narrative in Luke [Adapted from Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 251-252]

I. Two announcements of conception

A. John the baptizer

1. The events surrounding the announcement, 1.5-23
2. Elizabeth's pregnancy and praise of God, 1.24-25

B. Jesus

1. The events surrounding the announcement, 1.26-38
2. Elizabeth's praise of Mary's pregnancy and Mary's song of praise, 1.39-56

II. Two narratives of birth, circumcision, naming, and future greatness

A. John the baptizer

1. His birth, circumcision, naming, 1.57-66
2. Zechariah's song, 1.67-79
3. Summary statement of the growth of John, 1.80

B. Jesus

1. His birth, 2.1-7
2. The angels' song and the shepherds' adoration, 2.8-20
3. Circumcision and predictions of greatness, 2.21-39
4. Summary statement of the growth of Jesus, 2.40
5. In the temple at age twelve, 2.41-52

Similarities between Matthew and Luke [Adapted from Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 34-35]

1. The parents to be are Mary and Joseph who legally are engaged or married but have not yet come to live together or had sexual relations (Matthew 1.18; Luke 1.27, 34).
2. Joseph is of Davidic descent (Matthew 1.16, 20; Luke 1.27, 32; 2.4).
3. There is an angelic announcement of the forthcoming birth of the child (Matthew 1.20-23; Luke 1.30-35).
4. The conception of the child by Mary is not through intercourse with her husband (Matthew 1.20, 23, 25; Luke 1.34).
5. The conception of the child is through the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1.18; Luke 1.35).
6. There is a directive from the angel that the child is to be named Jesus (Matthew 1.21; Luke 1.31).
7. An angel states that Jesus is to be Savior (Matthew 1.21; Luke 2.11).
8. The birth of the child takes place after the parents have come to live together (Matthew 1.24-25; Luke 2.5-6).
9. The birth takes place at Bethlehem (Matthew 2.1; Luke 2.4-6).
10. The birth chronologically is related to the rule of Herod the Great (Matthew 2.1; Luke 1.5).
11. The child is reared at Nazareth (Matthew 2.23; Luke 2.39).

Differences between Matthew and Luke

What Matthew alone mentions—the star, the magi, Herod’s plot against Jesus, the massacre of the children at Bethlehem, and the flight of the family into Egypt.

What Luke alone mentions—the story of Elizabeth, Zechariah, and the birth of John, the census which brings Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, the honoring of the baby Jesus by the shepherds, the presentation of Jesus in the temple at Jerusalem, and Jesus in the temple at age twelve.

SPECIAL STUDY: THE PASSOVER TRADITION [from Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 85-86]

A. *Preliminary Course:*

—Word of dedication (blessing of the feast day and of the cup) spoken by the *paterfamilias* over the first cup.

—Preliminary dish, consisting among other things of green herbs, bitter herbs, and a sauce made of fruit puree. Compare the eating and dipping in the dish in Matthew 26.21, 23; Mark 14.18, 20; and John 13.26.

—The meal proper is served but not yet eaten. The second cup is mixed and put in its place but not yet drunk.

B. *Passover Liturgy:*

—The Passover story or *haggadah* in Aramaic by the *paterfamilias*.

—First part of Passover psalms of praise or *hallel* in Hebrew.

—Drinking of the second cup. Compare the cup in Luke 22.17-18.

C. *Main Meal:*

—Grace spoken by the *paterfamilias* over the unleavened bread. Compare the blessing, breaking, distributing, and eating of the bread, with the interpretation, “This is my body,” in Matthew 26.26; Mark 14.22; and Luke 22.19.

—Meal, consisting of Passover lamb, unleavened bread, bitter herbs, with fruit puree and wine.

—Grace over the third cup, “the cup of blessing.” Compare with the blessing, passing, and drinking of the wine, with the interpretation, “This is my blood,” in Matthew 26.27-28; Mark 14.23-24; and Luke 22.20.

D. *Conclusion:*

—Second part of the Passover psalms of praise or *hallel* in Hebrew. Compare with Matthew 26.30 and Mark 14.26.

—Praise over the fourth cup, “the cup of praise.”

SPECIAL STUDY: OVERVIEW OF THE PASSION EVENTS

The betrayal and arrest in Gethsemane, and desertion by the disciples	MT 26.47-56	MK 14.43-52	LK 22.47-53	JN 18.1-12
The audience with Annas, father-in-law of high priest Caiaphas				JN 18.12-14
The late-night session at the house of Caiaphas	MT 26.57-64	MK 14.53-62	LK 22.54	JN 18.19-24
Charge of blasphemy and mockery of Jesus	MT 26.65-68	MK 14.63-65	LK 22.63-65	
The denials of Peter	MT 26.69-75	MK 14.66-72	LK 22.55-62	JN 18.15-18, 25-27
The early morning ratification of the verdict by the Sanhedrin	MT 27.1	MK 15.1	LK 22.66-71	
The suicide of Judas	MT 27.3-10	(cf. Acts 1.15-20)		
Jesus before Pilate	MT 27.2, 11-14	MK 15.2-5	LK 23.1-5	JN 18.28-38
Jesus before Herod Antipas			LK 23.6-12	
Pilate declares Christ innocent			LK 23.13-16	
Jesus or Barabbas	MT 27.15-23	MK 15.6-15	LK 23.17-23	JN 18.39-40
Pilate's last resistance	MT 27.24-25			
Jesus is scourged, crowned with thorns, mocked by soldiers, and delivered to be crucified	MT 27.26-31	MK 15.15-20	LK 23.24-25	JN 19.1-16

The way to Calvary MT 27.32	MK 15.21	LK 23.26-31	JN 19.17
The crucifixion MT 27.33-35	MK 15.22-25	LK 23.33	JN 19.18
The two thieves MT 27.38	MK 15.27-28	LK 23.33	JN 19.18
The inscription: “This is Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews” MT 27.37	MK 15.26	LK 23.38	JN 19.19-22
The first word: forgiveness		LK 23.34	
Christ’s garments are divided MT 27.35-36	MK 15.24	LK 23.34	JN 19.23-24
The insults MT 27.39-43	MK 15.29-32	LK 23.35-37	
The second word: paradise MT 27.44		LK 23.39-43	
The third word: benevolence			JN 19.25-27
The fourth word: loneliness MT 27.45-47	MK 15.33-35	LK 23.44-45	
The fifth word: thirst MT 27.48-49	MK 15.36		JN 19.28-29
The sixth word: consummation			JN 19.30
The seventh word: death		LK 23.46	
The death of Christ MT 27.50	MK 15.37	LK 23.46	JN 19.30

Signs that accompanied the death of Christ

MT 27.51-56

MK 15.38-41

LK 23.47-49

The piercing of Christ's side

JN 19.31-37

The burial of Christ

MT 27.57-61

MK 15.42-47

LK 23.50-56

JN 19.38-42

The sabbath rest

LK 23.56

The guard at the tomb

MT 27.62-66

The women at the tomb MT 28.1-4	MK 16.1-4	LK 24.1-2	JN 20.1
The message of the angel MT 28.5-7	MK 16.5-7	LK 24.3-7	
The women flee to the other disciples MT 28.8	MK 16.8	LK 24.8-11	JN 20.2
Peter and John		LK 24.12	JN 20.3-10
Appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene MT 28.9-10	MK 16.9-11		
The guards and the chief priests MT 28.11-15			
Appearance of Jesus to two going to Emmaus MK 16.12-13		LK 24.13-35	
Appearance of Jesus to the ten		LK 24.36-43	JN 20.19-23
Appearance of Jesus to the eleven MK 16.14			JN 20.24-29
Appearance of Jesus in Galilee			JN 21.1-23
Great commission MT 28.16-20	MK 16.15-18		
Last instructions of Jesus		LK 24.44-49	
Ascension of Jesus	MK 16.19-20	LK 24.50-53	
Epilogue by John (21.24-25)			

NOTES ON CRUCIFIXION [from Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 22ff.]

Extent of Crucifixion

“As a rule, books on the subject say that crucifixion began among the Persians. However, according to the ancient sources crucifixion was regarded as a mode of execution used by barbarian peoples generally, including the Indians, the Assyrians, the Scythians and the Taurians. It was even used by the Celts, who according to Posidonius offered their criminals in this way as a sacrifice to the gods, and later by the Germani and the Britanni, who may well have taken it over from the Romans and combined it with their own forms of punishment. Finally, it was employed by the Numidians and especially by the Carthaginians, who may be the people from whom the Romans learnt it. Crucifixion was not originally a typically Greek penalty; however, the Greeks did have related forms of execution and partially took over crucifixion. Both Greek and Roman historians were fond of stressing *barbarian* crucifixions, and playing down their own use of this form of execution.”

Methods of Crucifixion

“The *form* of crucifixion varied considerably. Above all, there is not always a clear distinction between the crucifixion of the victim while he is still alive and the display of the corpse of someone who has been executed in a different fashion. In both cases it was a matter of subjecting the victim to the utmost indignity. . . . The common factor is that the victim—living or dead—was either nailed or bound to a stake. . . . We have very few more detailed descriptions, and they come only from Roman times: the passion narratives in the gospels are in fact the most detailed of all. No ancient writer wanted to dwell too long on this cruel procedure.”

“Even in the Roman empire, where there might be said to be some kind of ‘norm’ for the course of the execution (it included flogging beforehand, and the victim often carried the beam to the place of execution, where he was nailed to it with outstretched arms, raised up and seated on a small wooden peg), the form of execution could vary considerably: crucifixion was a punishment in which the caprice and sadism of the executioners were given full rein. All attempts to give a perfect description of *the* crucifixion in archaeological terms are therefore in vain; there were too many different possibilities for the executioner.”

“They were first whipped, and then tormented with all sorts of tortures, before they died and were then crucified before the wall of the city. Titus felt pity for them, but as their number—given as up to five hundred a day—was too great for him to risk either letting them go or putting them under guard, he allowed his soldiers to have their way, especially as he hoped that the gruesome sight of the countless crosses might move the besieged to surrender. So the soldiers, out of the rage and hatred they bore the prisoners, nailed those they caught, in different postures, to the crosses, by way of jest, and their number was so great that there was not enough room for the crosses and not enough crosses for the bodies.” [Josephus, *De Bello Judaico* 5.449-451].

“I see crosses there, not just of one kind but made in many different ways: some have their victims with head down to the ground; some impale their private parts; others stretch out their arms on the gibbet.” [Seneca, *Dialogue* 6.20.3].

Reasons for Crucifixion

“Crucifixion was already, as in Rome, the punishment for serious crimes against the state and for high treason among the Persians, to some degree in Greece and above all among the Carthaginians. That is, it was a religious-political punishment, with the emphasis falling on the political side. . . . Crucifixion was also a means of waging war and securing peace, of wearing down rebellious cities under siege, of breaking the will of conquered peoples, and of bringing mutinous troops or unruly provinces under control.”

“Rebellious subjects were . . . common ‘bandits’. For them the characteristic death penalty was either crucifixion or being thrown to the wild beasts. . . . The just fate of the robber is to die on the cross. The imposition of the penalty of crucifixion upon robbers and rebels in the provinces was under the free jurisdiction of the local governor. . . . Crucifixion was an instrument to protect the populace against dangerous criminals and violent men, and accordingly brought contempt on those who suffered it. . . . The sight of crucified robbers served as a deterrent and at the same time exacted some satisfaction for the victim.”

Subjects of Crucifixion

“In most Roman writers crucifixion appears as the typical punishment for slaves.”

“Because of its harshness, crucifixion was almost always inflicted only on the lower class; the upper class could reckon with more ‘humane’ punishment.”

“According to Tacitus there was a special place in Rome for the punishment of slaves, where no doubt numerous crosses were set up. . . . There may have been similar places of execution, with crosses and other instruments of torture, in every large city in the Roman empire, as a deterrent to slaves and all law-breakers. . . . The great slave rebellions in Italy during the second century BC were the occasion for the excessive use of crucifixion; fear of the threat of danger from slaves aroused hate and cruelty. . . . Slaves thus had relatively little protection against the whim of their masters and therefore against unjust imposition of [punishment].”

“Crucify that slave,” says the wife. “But what crime worthy of death has he committed?” asks the husband. “Where are the witnesses? Who informed against him? Give him a hearing at least. No delay can be too long when a man’s life is at stake.” “What a fool you are! Do you call a slave a man? Do you say he has done no wrong? This is my will and my command: take it as authority for the deed.” [Juvenal, *Satires* 6.219ff.].

“Death on the cross was the penalty for slaves, as everyone knew; as such it symbolized extreme humiliation, shame, and torture.”

BELIEF AND UNBELIEF AT THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS [Source Unknown]

Two thieves also had been crucified, one on the left of Jesus and one on his right. But it was that center cross that attracted the most attention. The high priests had gathered round, exulting in their success. They wagged their heads at him and taunted him. Insult after insult was flung at the meek sufferer. “Ha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days! Save yourself by coming down from the cross.” “Others he saved; himself he cannot save.” “He is king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe on him.” “He trusts in God; let God rescue him now, if God takes pleasure in him; for he said, ‘I am God’s son.’”

The rabble joined in with insults. So did the soldiers who guarded the crosses in case a rescue should be attempted. As the soldiers drank from their beaker of posca or vinegar-water, the drink of soldiers on duty, they joined in by also deriding “the king.” Yet the sarcasm and mockery, “himself he cannot save,” was true and a great glory to Jesus. The mockers were among those whom Jesus was dying to save, and he could not come down from the cross and save himself, because he was held, not by the nails, but by his will and by the will of God, to save them!

These were not the only voices that insulted Jesus. In the frenzy of their agony, the two thieves, later tradition calls them Dysmas and Gestas, also reviled their fellow-sufferer. After a while, however, one of them relented. Perhaps he had never seen Jesus before that day, but he had seen him now, caring for others with meekness and forgiveness in the most trying of circumstances. His soul bowed in awe, and he ceased from his reviling. His callous comrade continued his blaspheming, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

But the penitent thief rebuked, “Don’t you even fear God, since you are under the same condemnation? And we justly, because we are receiving what our deeds deserve; but this man did nothing wrong.” Then he prayed, “Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom.” That penitent thief recognized in Jesus one worthy of his complete trust, one worthy of his reverence. Jesus responded generously, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

By this time John had arrived on the scene, and with him were Mary, the mother of Jesus, her sister Salome, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. These had come close to the cross. Jesus, as always caring for others, was concerned about his mother’s welfare. Joseph apparently was dead already, and even though Mary had other sons, they were unbelievers at this time. Jesus would not leave her to them. John was the beloved of his disciples; he was worthy of the responsibility. Jesus saw both of them and said to Mary, “Dear woman, look, your son.” And he said to John, “Look, your mother.” John took Mary from the scene of horror, “and from that hour he took her into his own household.”

TRADITIONAL APOLOGY FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS FROM THE DEAD

The gospels inform us that Jesus was crucified and died. They also tell us that on the third day the tomb in which he was placed was empty, that angels announced to those who came to visit the tomb that Jesus was risen, and that over a period of forty days the Lord appeared to his followers (Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20, 21; Acts 1.3; 1 Corinthians 15.3-7). Many skeptics, however, deny the resurrection (cf. Acts 17.32) and disregard the evidence of the gospels. But such a denial of the resurrection is untenable in light of the empty tomb. Some have suggested that the tomb was not empty and that the disciples went to the wrong tomb where a young man in white said, "He is not here," meaning "He is in another tomb." But this view is not plausible, since it is unlikely that Mary Magdalene, Mary, the disciples, and others would forget the location of the right tomb after only three days. Also, the Jewish authorities would have spared no effort in their attempts to find the body in order to quell the effectiveness of the early preaching of the apostles that laid considerable stress on the resurrection of Jesus. They simply could not find the body. All they could do was bribe the Roman soldiers to lie (see Matthew 28.13-15), an untruth that, by Roman law, placed these soldiers under penalty of death.

As to the cause of the empty tomb, only three possible explanations exist: (1) friends stole the body; (2) enemies took the body away; or (3) Jesus rose from the dead. The first possibility cannot be true. There was no thought of resurrection in the minds of the disciples (John 20.9-10). They had forsaken the Lord before his crucifixion (Mark 14.50), and they were without hope on the eve of his death. Many doubted, especially Thomas (John 20.24-29), and Peter went back to his old fishing occupation (John 21.3). Too, the Roman guard that was set over the tomb would have prevented anyone from stealing the body, even if they had desired to do so (Matthew 27.62-66). Perhaps the greatest obstacle of this idea that the friends of Jesus stole his body is the suffering that the believers endured for the preaching of the resurrection. Peter and John were beaten and imprisoned (Acts 5.19, 40). Steven and James were killed (Acts 7.58-60; 12.1-2). Men usually do not suffer in this way for believing what they know to be a lie. Surely Paul would not have suffered the things that he did (see 2 Corinthians 11.23-28) had he not been convinced that he saw the risen Christ while travelling the road to Damascus. It seems difficult to maintain that the disciples stole the body of Jesus.

It is just as unlikely that the enemies of Jesus removed his body. Why should they? What reason would they have to do so? To the contrary, they had every reason not to remove the body, because an empty tomb would originate the very rumors of a resurrection that they were so anxious to avoid. Again, the Roman guard would be an obstacle to the enemies as well as the friends of Jesus. But the decisive objection here is the failure of these enemies to produce the body when the first preaching about the resurrection began. Peter and the rest of the apostles put great emphasis on the resurrection of Christ. All that was needed to discredit the believers in a gale of laughter would have been for the enemies of Jesus to produce his body. Their failure to do so seems to prove that they could not do so. Therefore, the only reasonable explanation for the empty tomb is that Jesus rose from the dead. As the apostle Paul says with the assurance of faith, "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead" (1 Corinthians 15.20).

MATTHEW

Author: Matthew, the tax collector (Matthew 9.9), also called “Levi” (Mark 2.14; Luke 5.27; cf. Matthew 10.3; Mark 3.18; Luke 6.15; Acts 1.13). He was a Jew employed as a civil servant of the Roman government, possibly in Capernaum.

Destination: Greek-speaking Jewish Christians.

Origin: Northern Palestine, perhaps Galilee or maybe Antioch of Syria.

Date: AD 50-60.

Theme: Jesus, the Messiah.

Purpose: This book was written to encourage and confirm first-century Jewish Christians in their faith. It also was written to confute Jewish opponents of Christianity by proving that the life of Jesus of Nazareth was a fulfillment of the promises made by God to the patriarchs and prophets concerning the Messiah.

Outline:

- I. The Birth and Childhood of the Messiah, 1.1–2.23.
- II. Preparation of the Messiah for His Ministry, 3.1–4.11.
- III. Ministry of the Messiah in Galilee, 4.12–13.52.
 - A. Introduction to the Galilean ministry, 4.12-25.
 - B. The Messiah’s teaching—“The Sermon on the Mount,” 5.1–7.29.
 - C. The Messiah’s mighty works, 8.1–9.38.
 - D. The commissioning of the Messiah’s twelve disciples, 10.1-42.
 - E. The Messiah’s preaching and teaching misunderstood, opposed, and rejected, 11.1–12.50.
 - F. Parables of the Messiah concerning his kingdom, 13.1-52.
- IV. Ministry of the Messiah in Regions In or Near Galilee, 13.53–18.35.
- V. Journey of the Messiah to Jerusalem, 19.1–20.34.
- VI. The Messiah’s Final Week in Jerusalem, 21.1–28.20.
 - A. The Messiah’s final preaching and teaching in Jerusalem, 21.1–25.46.
 - B. The Messiah’s passion and death, 26.1–27.66.
 - C. The Messiah’s resurrection, 28.1-20.

Notes:

1. Matthew is probably the most widely read of the four gospel narratives.
2. The author often uses concepts familiar to Jewish people—parallels to rabbinic literature, strong anti-Pharisee statements, Jewish practices and laws, “kingdom of God,” “kingdom of heaven,” no explanation of Jewish customs, quotations from the Old Testament.
3. Other distinctive features of Matthew include: only use of the word “church” in the gospels, doublets, repetition of phrases, scenes of final judgment, an interest in universal aspects of the gospel, fondness of introductory formulas.
4. Special themes of Matthew include: “The Messiah,” “The Son of David,” “The Son of Man,” “Lord,” “The Servant of the Lord,” Jesus as teacher.
5. Matthew contains six great discourses of Jesus: (1) the classic “Sermon on the Mount” (chapters 5–7); (2) his address to the twelve (chapter 10); (3) seven great parables of the kingdom (chapter 13); (4) discourse concerning right living (chapter 18); (5) denunciation of the Jewish leaders (chapter 23); and (6) the “Olivet discourse” about future events (chapters 24-24).

Projects:

1. Survey Matthew’s use of the Old Testament. What bearing do these quotations have on his purpose for writing?
2. Compare Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus (1.1-17) with Luke’s genealogy of Jesus (3.23-38). Explain the differences.
3. What is the importance of the phrase “kingdom of heaven” in the book of Matthew?
4. Examine the lengthy discourses of Jesus in Matthew. Does Matthew include these in his narrative for a specific reason?
5. Argue a date for Matthew from internal evidence.

SPECIAL STUDY: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (MATTHEW 5, 6, & 7)

A. *Kingdom living defined*

1. The setting, 5.1-2
2. The blessedness of those in the kingdom, 5.3-12
3. The effects of those in the kingdom as salt and light, 5.13-16

B. *The inadequacy of Jewish thinking for the kingdom*

1. Jesus and the law, 5.17-20
2. Concerning anger, 5.21-26
3. Concerning adultery, 5.27-30
4. Concerning divorce, 5.31-32
5. Concerning oaths, 5.33-37
6. Concerning retaliation, 5.38-42
7. Concerning love, 5.43-48

C. *The inadequacy of Jewish practice for the kingdom*

1. The warning, 6.1
2. Concerning giving alms, 6.2-4
3. Concerning praying, 6.5-15
4. Concerning fasting, 6.16-18

D. *The demands of the kingdom*

1. Loyalty demanded—
 - a. to the treasures of the kingdom, 6.19-21
 - b. to the purposes of the kingdom, 6.22-23
 - c. to the master of the kingdom, 6.24
2. Trust demanded—
 - a. to not worry, 6.25
 - b. for food, 6.26
 - c. for life, 6.27
 - d. for clothing, 6.28-30
 - e. to live in the care of the heavenly father and not like pagans, 6.31-32
 - f. to seek first the kingdom, 6.33
 - g. to not worry about tomorrow, 6.34

3. Balance demanded—
 - a. to avoid being judgmental, 7.1-5
 - b. to avoid being undiscerning, 7.6
 - c. to ask help from the heavenly father, 7.7-11
 - d. to treat others fairly, 7.12

4. Commitment demanded—
 - a. to enter the narrow gate, 7.13-14
 - b. to beware of false prophets, 7.15-20
 - c. to do the will of the heavenly father, 7.21-23
 - d. to keep the words of Jesus, 7.24-27

5. Conclusion: the authority of Jesus, 7.28-29

LESSON: THE CHURCH & THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (MATTHEW 5, 6, & 7)

“The church is both holy and sinful. This is the problem of the church, that it is a union of sinful souls with the holy God.” [Leslie Newbigin].

“The church is something like Noah’s ark. If it weren’t for the storm outside, you couldn’t stand the smell inside.” [A Late Medieval Manuscript].

The quotes above are not meant to be negative nor derogatory. Rather, they vividly describe the challenge of the church. The church is Christ’s body (Colossians 1.18; 2.19), and the church is Christ’s bride (Colossians 1.22, 28; 2 Corinthians 11.2). But the “body and head are not identical; the bride is not the bridegroom; the church is not the Christ. . . . [There is] tension and unity but not identity. In its unity with Christ, the church shares in his glory and perfection. But in its human, unglorified state, the church is far from glorious and perfect.” [Eric Jay]. Yes, the church is divine (the head), glorious, and perfect. And yes, the church is human (the body), imperfect, and sinful. That church we meet with every Sunday and strive to love and to appreciate.

So there is a challenge in claiming too much or too little for the church. When we claim too much, we see the church only as perfect and divine. We proclaim, “What a glorious church!” Such unchecked could lead to self-righteousness, Pharisaism, perfectionism, and a blindness to the effects of culture and tradition on the church. When we claim too little, we see the church only as imperfect and human. Such unchecked could lead to spiritless and godless humanism, to seeing the church as merely the result of social forces. The delicate balance needed is to see the church as filled with people who have weaknesses, faults, and sins, but also to see the church as the product and recipient of Christ’s love and grace. As Leonard Allen states, “His presence is the vitalizing center. It is not our great moral example, our heroic feats of service, our skill in human relations, or our theological expertise. . . . We can be that glorious body only through the presence and power of the risen Christ in our midst.”

And it is Christ in our midst who encourages us with the words of his sermon today. In that message, Jesus does not say, “You must do all of this so that you may be saved” (i.e., the perfectionist concept). Nor does Jesus say, “You ought to have done all of this, see what poor, miserable creatures you really are” (i.e., the impossibility of keeping the law idea). Rather, Jesus says, “Happy are you, if for the sake of God’s kingdom (i.e., heaven’s kingdom), you find yourself persecuted because of righteousness, because of the work of God in you to produce mourning, meekness, mercy, purity of heart, peace, a hungering and thirsting for righteousness” (5.3-12; paraphrased). Jesus says, “You are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world, a city set upon a hill. God has made you salt and light, so let the work of his kingdom bring spice to your life and light up your way!”

A keynote comes in chapter 5, verse 20! “Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.” It was not that the Pharisees and the scribes were not good; they were not good enough. The law itself required a high standard of conduct. Jesus goes beyond their interpretation of the law to call those who seek the kingdom of heaven to rightness in action and thought—personal integrity consistent with belonging to God’s kingdom (5.21-48). Such rightness expects the work of God to transform not only a person’s actions but a person’s speech, mannerisms, thinking—a person’s entire being. It goes beyond murder to deal with hatred. It goes beyond adultery to deal with lust. It goes beyond the certificate of divorce to root out divorce itself. This right way of living transforms oaths and swearing to plain speech and truthfulness. It changes acts of retaliation to deeds of self-sacrifice. And it exceeds love of neighbor to love even the enemy. The righteousness of God’s kingdom seeks to make us like God himself, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (5.48).

The righteousness of the kingdom of heaven also seeks to overthrow any hint of religious hypocrisy and two-facedness in us in order to make us whole and complete with a character that is sincere and true. Jesus encourages his followers, “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven” (6.1). So, he tells us, when you give alms or pray or even fast, do so in secret to God, “and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (6.2-18).

And this kingdom righteousness, brought about by God’s work on earth, holds incredible blessings for those who strive and struggle to “enter” in (see 7.13-14). There are “treasures in heaven” (6.20). There is freedom from “worry about your life, what you will eat or drink,” “worry about clothes,” and “worry about tomorrow” (6.25-34). And there is relief from judging others and being judged (i.e., condemned; 7.1-5). God’s righteous rule promises the benefit of proper discernment and its safety (7.6). It provides protection from ferocious wolves in sheep’s clothing who can be recognized by “their fruit” even though they call out, “Lord, Lord” (7.15-23). But best of all, the one who gives us the ability to “enter through the narrow gate” also grants to us the privilege of asking and receiving “good gifts” from the king himself, the heavenly Father (7.7-13).

And even though we are human, we are frail, and we are sinners (i.e., we are this “stinky” church), we also, as the people of God, are perfect and “without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish” (Ephesians 5.27). We are the redeemed of his kingdom and the recipients of his righteousness through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. As such, if we hear the words of our Lord and put them into practice, we have the blessing of building our house on a solid rock foundation, and it will be an indestructible house. God will not fail; he will not fail us; therefore, in his heavenly kingdom we cannot fail.

MARK

Author: John Mark (see Acts 12.12, 24; 15.37), son of Mary, cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4.10), evangelist with Paul and Barnabas (Acts 12.25; cf. 2 Timothy 4.11; Philemon 24), possibly a convert of Peter (see 1 Peter 5.13). The tradition concerning the author comes from Papias, a church leader at Hierapolis in Asia Minor (ca. AD 60-130), who says, “Mark, who had been Peter’s interpreter, wrote down carefully, but not in order, all that he remembered of the Lord’s sayings and doings.” [Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 3.39.15]. Some think the author refers to himself in 14.51-52.

Destination: Possibly Rome or maybe Antioch of Syria. The traditional evidence for Rome is very strong.

Origin: Likewise, Rome or Antioch of Syria.

Date: It is impossible to know for sure, but perhaps AD 65-70.

Theme: Jesus, Son of God.

Purpose: This book was written for Gentile readers, perhaps for those in the city of Rome, to show the ceaseless activity of Jesus and his power over demons, diseases, and even death. This type of narrative would appeal to the Gentiles, and especially to the Romans. The gospel of Mark is possibly a written record of Peter’s preaching concerning Christ. [Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 6.14.6ff.].

Outline:

- I. Preparation of the Son of God for His Ministry, 1.1-13.
- II. Ministry of the Son of God Around the Sea of Galilee, 1.14–5.43.
- III. Ministry of the Son of God In and Around Galilee, 6.1–9.50.
- IV. The Journey of the Son of God to Jerusalem, 10.1-52.
- V. The Last Week and Death of the Son of God in Jerusalem, 11.1–15.47.
- VI. The Resurrection and Ascension of the Son of God, 16.1-20.

Notes:

1. Mark is the gospel narrative of action; it is fast-moving. “Where the teaching of Jesus is given it is nearly always in the setting of some narrative. The vividness of the style gives the impression of a quickly moving drama with the cross as its climax.” [Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 53]. In Mark, there is little discourse or lengthy teaching of Jesus (cf. Matthew’s “Sermon on the Mount”). Note Mark’s frequent use of words such as “immediately” and “straightway” (KJV).
2. This gospel record is intended for Gentile readers: Aramaic expressions are interpreted (5.41; 7.34; 10.46; 15.22, 34; but see 14.36); Jewish customs are explained (7.3-4, 11; 15.42); Latinisms (Latin loanwords) are frequent (“Legion,” 5.9, 15; “executioner,” 6.27; “poll-tax,” 12.14; “scouraged,” NASB, or “flogged,” NIV, 15.15; “centurion,” 15.39, 44f.); Roman law is reflected (see 10.12; cf. Matthew 19.9).
3. An interesting aspect of Mark concerns the so-called “Messianic Secret,” that is, Jesus summoning others to silence concerning his identity (see 1.34, 44; 3.12; 5.43; 7.36; 8.26, 30; 9.9). Compare the instructions of Jesus to the disciples alone (7.17ff.; 9.30ff.; 10.10). But contrast Mark’s emphasis on the lack of secrecy concerning the identity of Jesus on the part of demons (1.24; 3.11), the sick (10.47), and Jesus himself (11.1ff.; 14.62).
4. Note the “down to earth” nature of the narrative (for example, 9.6; 10.37; 11.5; 13.1; 14.51-52). Note Mark’s use of the title “Son of God” in 1.1; 3.11; 5.7; and 15.39. Compare his focus on the true humanity of Jesus and his use of the titles “Son of Man” and “Son of David.”
5. Note the problem of chapter 16—two very important early Greek manuscripts omit verses 9-20.
6. Mark is the shortest gospel narrative.

Projects:

1. What is meant by “the beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (1.1)?
2. What role does the expression “Son of God” play in Mark? What other titles of Jesus appear in Mark? What role do they play?
3. Argue a destination and/or origin for Mark from internal evidence.
4. Thoroughly discuss the textual variants for chapter 16.
5. Prepare a chart showing the agreement of Mark with Matthew and/or Luke.
6. Discuss Mark’s emphasis on the events surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus.

LESSON: POWER EVEN OVER DEATH (MARK 5.21-43)

Introduction - the Plea of Jairus (verses 21-24).

Jesus returned to the western shore of the lake, perhaps to Capernaum, and a crowd gathered around him while he was still by the sea (verse 21). They did not want him to leave the night before, so now they gladly welcomed him back. Among those coming was Jairus, one of the rulers of the synagogue. This was either an honorary title for a distinguished member of the synagogue or a title indicating responsibility for supervision of the building and arrangement of the sabbath service. Jairus possibly knew of Jesus from previous contact. The ruler was troubled deeply, because his only child, “a girl of about twelve” (verse 42; Luke 8.42), was dying. So he pleaded with Jesus, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live” (verse 23). His request that Jesus should come and lay hands in healing on his daughter reflects a common practice of the day. What was unusual, however, was the confidence of Jairus that, if Jesus would come, his daughter’s life would be saved. Jesus went with him, followed by the crowd, and the crowd pressed around him (verse 24).

The Power of Jesus over Death Demonstrated in the Case of the Women with the Hemorrhage (verses 25-34).

In the pressing crowd, there was a woman who had experienced a flow of blood, a chronic hemorrhaging from the womb or another type of bleeding, for twelve years—the age of the daughter of Jairus! She had consulted a number of physicians, she had endured a wide variety of treatments, and she had spent all of her money in a desperate attempt to better her condition. All this was in vain. In fact, her condition only grew worse (verse 26).

This is no surprise. The Talmud preserves a record of treatments prescribed for an illness of this nature. One treatment instructs the patient to drink a goblet of wine that contains a powder compounded from rubber, alum, and garden crocuses. Another calls for a dose of Persian onions cooked in wine and administered with the summons, “Arise out of your flow of blood!” Sudden shock could also be tried, and, if none of these were successful, the patient might be instructed to carry about in a certain cloth the ashes of the egg of an ostrich. No wonder there were Latin proverbs that said, “To live under doctor’s orders is sorry living.” “A doctor is worse than a robber; the robber takes your money or your life, but the doctor takes both.” And, it was written in the Talmud, “The best of doctors is ripe for Gehenna.”

The existence of this woman was miserable. Like the daughter of Jairus, she was dying. She suffered physically; she suffered emotionally. Because of her condition, according to Jewish law, she was in a constant state of ritual impurity (see Leviticus 15.25-33). She would have been shunned by people who knew her condition, since contact with her would render them ritually unclean.

In spite of her ritual uncleanness, the woman entered the crowd behind Jesus and reached out to his garment (verse 27). She had heard reports of the healing power of Jesus, so she said to herself, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed” (verse 28). She acted partly on the basis of superstition and partly on the basis of truth. She thought that there was some magical power in touching the garments of Jesus. Such was a popular superstitious idea. But the power of Jesus was not magic or trickery. The power of Jesus was the power of God. Rightly, the woman had faith in Jesus. She had tried everything else. Now she comes to Jesus and trusts in him for her salvation.

When the woman touched him (i.e., the fringe or tassels of his cloak, so Matthew and Luke), “the fountain [or, flow] of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction” (verse 29; NKJV). Amid the pressure of the jostling crowd, Jesus had distinguished the nervous grasp of that feeble hand clutching the tassel of his cloak. He had recognized that touch as a claim on his sympathy. He knew neither the individual nor the trouble, but he felt the touch of faith, and that was sufficient. The flood-gates of his pity were unlocked. Mark tells us that “power had gone out from him” (verse 30).

Perhaps she thought to slip away unnoticed, but Jesus insisted on discovering her. He turned around in the crowd and demanded, “Who touched my clothes?” The disciples were a bit surprised at, and perhaps impatient with, Jesus when he said this. “You see all these people pressing against you, and you say, ‘Who touched me?’” (verses 30-31, paraphrased). This seemed pointless to them, especially in light of the very urgent business they had set out to do.

The disciples had no understanding of what had happened. But Jesus knew, and he “kept looking around to see who had done it” (verse 32). And the woman knew, and eventually she made herself known. She comes to Jesus trembling with fear (verse 33), and she tells him the whole truth. But it was worth whatever embarrassment she might have received to hear those gracious words, “Daughter [cf. with the daughter of Jairus], your faith has healed you. Go in peace, and be freed from your suffering” (verse 34). From Jesus, she had received life instead of death.

The Power of Jesus over Death Demonstrated in the Case of the Daughter of Jairus (verses 35-43).

Jesus was still speaking to the woman when a message was brought to Jairus. “Your daughter is dead, why bother the teacher any more?” (verse 35). Jesus overheard the message and said to Jairus, “Fear not; only believe” (verse 36; ASV). This was a call for intense faith. Jairus had exercised faith when he came to Jesus with the confidence that Jesus could save his daughter. He had witnessed the healing of the woman which demonstrated the connection between faith and divine help. Now he stood in the presence of death. Such faith is radical truth in the ability of Jesus to confront a crisis situation with the power of God. And there is no crisis greater than death.

As they continued, Jesus “did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James, and John” (verse 37). When they reached the house of the synagogue ruler, Jesus entered and saw a wild commotion. Preparations already had been made for the funeral—minstrels, professional mourners, friends, neighbors, “crying and wailing loudly” (verse 38). It was all very painful to Jesus. He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep” (verse 39). Jesus uses the image of sleep, because he knew that very soon she would be awake. Such wild mourning was inappropriate. Death never has been God’s intention for his creation. Death is the work of sin and Satan. Death is what Jesus came to destroy.

Certain that the girl was dead, the mourners responded to the words of Jesus with scornful laughter. That wailing and tears could be exchanged so quickly for laughter indicates how artificial these customs had become. But Jesus put the scoffers, the unbelievers, out of the house, and he went into the little girl’s room, allowing only the girl’s parents and the three disciples to go with him (verse 40). Then he took that little hand and spoke to the girl as a mother would to her little darling, “*Talitha, koum!*” (Aramaic, “little girl, arise”; verse 41). And the sleeper heard, and the sleeper awoke. “Immediately the girl stood up and walked around” (verse 42). There was no lingering convalescence, no protracted recovery. She arose in full health, retaining no trace of the sickness that had brought her down to death.

The parents and the three disciples—they had stood in the presence of death. But God had intervened so dramatically that they were left speechless with utter amazement. Jesus then told them to give her something to eat (verse 43). She needed to eat, and they needed to see her eat, as proof of her resurrection.

Conclusion - Stand Firm, Fear Not, Only Believe (verse 36).

There will come a day when Jesus will say to each of his brothers and sisters who are sleeping, “My child, arise” (see 1 Corinthians 15.50-58). Therefore, stand firm; fear not; only believe; for in Jesus there is power even over death.

LUKE

Author: Luke, the beloved physician and a companion of Paul (Colossians 4.14; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4.11). The earliest evidence for Luke as the author of the third gospel comes from the second century Muratorian Canon (ca. AD 180): “The third book of the gospels, that according to Luke. Luke, the physician, compiled it in his own name in order, when, after the ascension of Christ, Paul had taken him to be with him like a student of law. Yet neither did he see the Lord in the flesh; and he, too, as he was able to ascertain events, so set them down. So he began his story from the birth of John.” [Ayer, *Source Book for Ancient Church History*, 118]. Luke was a Gentile (see Colossians 4.11, 14) and probably from Asia Minor or Macedonia.

Destination: Luke was written to one called “Theophilus” which means “lover of God” (see Luke 1.3; Acts 1.1). Luke addresses Theophilus as “most excellent” (either the title of a high official or merely a polite form of address). Theophilus was probably a well-to-do individual and maybe a believer in Christ (see 1.4) who would have felt the need to copy and circulate the work of Luke, according to ancient practice.

Origin: Possibly Caesarea, or Rome, or somewhere else.

Date: AD 50-70.

Theme: Jesus, the Savior of the world.

Purpose: This book was written, in conjunction with the book of Acts, to strengthen the faith of Theophilus or to be for Theophilus an apology for the Christian faith.

Outline:

- I. Introduction, 1.1-4.
- II. The Birth and Childhood of Jesus, 1.5–2.52.
- III. John the Baptizer and Jesus, 3.1–4.13.
- IV. The Ministry of Jesus in Galilee, 4.14–9.50.
- V. The Ministry of Jesus as He Journeyed to Jerusalem, 9.51–19.27.
- VI. The Ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem, 19.28–21.38.
- VII. The Trial, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus, 22.1–24.53.

Notes:

1. Luke is the longest book in the New Testament.
2. Luke is the only gospel writer to give a formal prologue or introduction to his work.
3. Luke portrays Jesus as redeemer of both Jew and Gentile. He is universalistic in his outlook (see 2.14, 32; 3.4-6; 9.54; 10.33; 17.16).
4. Luke vividly captures Jesus' feelings of sympathy (see 22.51, 61; 23.27-31; 23.40-43). Compare this with Luke's emphasis on God's love and his concern for: individuals (e.g., Zacharias, chapter 1; Elizabeth and Mary, chapter 1; Zaccaeus, chapter 19; the centurion, chapter 7; Jairus, chapter 8; the young ruler, chapter 18; Legion, chapter 8; Cleopas, chapter 24; and so forth); the outcasts in society (e.g., sinners, Samaritans); women (e.g., Luke mentions thirteen women not mentioned elsewhere in the gospels); and children.
5. Notice Luke's emphasis on social relations, poverty and wealth, prayer, the Holy Spirit, joyfulness.
6. Luke places the history of Jesus in clearly recognizable connection with world history (see 1.5; 2.1-3; 3.1-2). Correspondingly, the names of Roman emperors in the New Testament appear only in Luke's writings (compare Acts 11.28; 18.2). See also Acts 26.26.
7. Note the apologetic purpose of Luke—namely, he endeavors to demonstrate the political innocence of Jesus in the eyes of the Romans (see 23.4, 14, 20, 22; 23.47). The Jews appear as those who approve of insurrection and seek unjustly to accuse Jesus as a political agitator (see 20.20, 26; 23.2, 5, 18ff., 23, 25).

Projects:

1. Prepare a detailed exegesis of Luke's prologue (1.1-4).
2. Examine Luke's use of the Old Testament in his birth narrative (1.5–2.52).
3. What internal evidence supports the view that Luke writes with a universalistic outlook? Explain.
4. Report on a major theme in Luke's narrative (e.g., the Holy Spirit, prayer, wealth).
5. Argue a purpose for Luke from internal evidence (including the book of Acts).
6. Examine the central section of Luke (9.51–18.14). What is its significance?

LESSON: PERSISTENCE IN PRAYER (LUKE 11.1-13)

Introduction - The Context for the Parable (verses 1-4).

Jesus was “praying in a certain place,” and “one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples’” (verse 1). Prayer was not an uncommon thing to the followers of Jesus. But, when they heard Jesus pray, it was as if they never had heard prayer before. On this occasion, Jesus relates to them a beautiful model prayer (verses 2-4). More important than the form of prayer, though, is the attitude of the pray-er, the one praying. In this context, Jesus tells his disciples a story about a friend at midnight.

The Story or Parable (verses 5-8).

The parable of the friend at midnight exhibits a touch of humor, yet it emphasizes two truths concerning prayer—prayer must be persistent, and God is always ready to give.

The parable gives an accurate picture of conditions in a small Palestinian village. There are no shops, and before sunrise the housewife bakes the day’s supply of bread for the family. A journeying friend makes an unexpected call on a man whose household has used up its daily supply of bread. It is late at night, in fact, midnight. Possibly the friend had travelled after dark to avoid the heat of the day. The man must feed his friend, since it is an imperative duty in the East to entertain a guest.

So the man goes to one of his friends in the village. In a small village, it would be known who still had bread left over in the evening. He says to him, “Friend, lend me three loaves of bread.” It is not an unreasonable request. Three small loaves would be enough for one man’s meal, and he intends to repay the favor. But the desperate borrower meets resistance. His request comes at a most inconvenient time. “Do not bother me” (literally, “do not cause me any trouble,” verse 7). The man already (“long ago”) had bolted and locked the door, and he and his children were in bed.

Evidently, this man was poor and lived in a single-room house. The whole family slept on a mat or a raised platform at one end of the room. The man could not possibly get up without disturbing the whole family. Furthermore, to unbolt the door—the bolt was a wooden or iron bolt thrust through rings in the door panels—would be a tedious and noisy business. So the man says, “I can’t get up and give you anything” (verse 7). In other words, “I won’t get out of bed.” The man raises no difficulty about lending the bread, but the bother of getting up is quite another matter. It is much easier to stay where he is.

The desperate borrower, however, is persistent. He will not go away, nor will he allow his friend to go back to sleep. Jesus says, “Though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man’s boldness [‘persistence’ or ‘shamelessness’] he will get up and give him as much as he needs” (verse 8).

Application of the Parable (verses 9-13).

The lesson is clear. We must not play at prayer. Our prayers must be definite, sincere, and persistent. This is not to say that God is unwilling and must be pressed into answering. God is eager to give (verses 9-13). But if we do not want what we are asking for enough to be persistent, then we do not desire it very much. It is not such sporadic and lukewarm prayer that is answered by God.

1. Prayer must be direct.

The host went directly to his friend and made his request. Prayer is to God! It is the meeting of God and man in the seclusion of a closet (Matthew 6.6). It is confident entrance to God's throne of grace (Hebrews 4.16).

2. Prayer must be definite.

The desperate man asked, "Friend, lend me three loaves." He did not ask for help or for bread in general. He was very specific. Our prayers need to be specific, as detailed as the need. We constantly must guard against praying in general terms, lest our prayers become only hollow, lifeless forms. We are specific with others with our requests. We can be just as specific with God.

3. Prayer must be sincere.

The request of the host was urgent. He felt no shame in waking a friend at midnight. He was sincere (i.e., without decay, unadulterated) in his desire for three loaves of bread. Effective prayer depends on true sincerity (see James 1.5-8). What father feels obligated to give a gift to his son when he knows that to the son it really makes no difference whether he receives it or not? Is God impressed when we routinely ask for things that we really do not want? On the other hand, God knows that our urgent, sincere requests will be accompanied by our active labor to bring about the accomplishment of that prayer. The prayer of faith demands cooperation and effort on our part.

4. Prayer must be persistent.

This is the main point of the parable of Jesus. The host knocked on the friend's door until his request was granted. Jesus instructs, "Ask . . . seek . . . knock," literally, "keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking" (verse 9). Thus, if people can get what they want through shameless begging, certainly a loving heavenly Father will grant the persistent requests of his children (verses 11-13).

Conclusion - The Rewards of Persistent Prayer (verses 10-13).

The desperate borrower did not go away empty-handed. Jesus says, “For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.” God will grant blessing upon blessing to those who make sincere requests of him. When we give good gifts to our children, it delights us to see their joy in receiving those gifts. “How much more,” Jesus says of our Father in heaven. Does not our heavenly Father delight to shower good gifts upon us? And the best gift of all is God’s Holy Spirit (verse 13).

Of course, not all prayers are answered as we would like. King David pleaded for the life of his infant child, but the child died. Paul prayed that God would remove his thorn in the flesh, but it was not removed. We must trust God who knows the whole scheme of things. We cannot see the future; we do not understand the past; and we know only a little bit about the present. Should this keep us from praying sincerely and constantly about what matters to us? Follow the example of Jesus, and learn from him about prayer.

JOHN

Author: John, the apostle, son of Zebedee, brother of James (see Matthew 10.2; Mark 3.17). He was a Jew by birth and a fisherman by trade (see Mark 1.19-20; Matthew 4.21-22). He is called “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13.23; 19.26; 20.2; 21.20) and “the other disciple” (John 18.15; 20.2, 3, 4, 8). [See Foster, *Book of John*, 257].

Destination: If written from Ephesus, then the gospel would have circulated first among churches of western Asia Minor (cf. the destination of the book of Revelation).

Origin: Early Christian tradition associates the writing of the fourth gospel with the city of Ephesus. Irenaeus (ca. AD 180) says, “Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned on his breast, himself produced his gospel, while he was living at Ephesus in Asia.” [*Adversus haereses*, III.1.i, from Bettenson, *Documents*, 40].

Date: AD 85-95.

Theme: Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of the Father.

Purpose: John writes to produce faith that Jesus is the Christ (i.e., the Messiah), the Son of God. He closes his gospel by saying, “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20.30-31). The gospel of John gives an indepth view of the Jewish conflict with and rejection of Jesus, as well as the careful and loving instruction of Jesus to his disciples.

Outline:

- I. Prologue, 1.1-18.
- II. The Work of Jesus in the World, 1.19–12.50.
- III. The Return of Jesus to the Father, 13.1–20.29.
- IV. Conclusion, 20.30–21.25.

Notes:

1. John is the only New Testament writer who portrays Christ as the preexistent “Word” (Greek *logos*; 1.1).
2. Many terms are used by John to describe Jesus: “the Word,” “the Only Begotten,” “the Lamb of God,” “the Son of God,” “the True Bread,” “the Light,” “the Shepherd,” “the Door,” “the Way,” “the Life,” “the Truth,” “the Resurrection,” “the Vine.” Many of these are introduced by the words, “I AM.” Many of these are reflections of Jewish thought and ideas. Many of these imply the divinity of Jesus.
3. John frequently makes allusion to Old Testament events and sayings. For example, Elijah (1.21, 25), Moses’ raising up the serpent in the wilderness (3.14), Jacob’s well (4.12), manna in the wilderness (6.49), Abraham’s deeds (8.39), and so forth. “There is much which bears on Jewish history. The Gospel shows that Jesus was a part of that history, and that the Jews, in rejecting Christ, were rejecting One who belonged to them (cf. John 1.11).” [Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 237]. Note details of Jewish history, Jewish customs, and Palestinian geography.
4. Matthew, Mark, and Luke conclude the activity of Jesus in Galilee and the surrounding regions with the one journey to Jerusalem that ends with the crucifixion of Jesus. In the gospel of John, Jesus sets out four times from Galilee to Jerusalem (see 2.13; 5.1; 6.4; 7.10; 11.7; and 12.1).
5. Like Matthew, John records extensive discourses of Jesus and several of these discourses follow a narrative section (see chapters 4, 5, 6, 9, and 11). This arrangement gives the gospel of John the sense of a drama.
6. Great themes of John include: the work of the Holy Spirit, love, God the Father, the “glory” and “hour” of Jesus.

Projects:

1. Examine and explain so-called contradictions between John and the synoptic gospels (i.e., Matthew, Mark, and Luke).
2. Argue an audience for John from internal evidence.
3. How does John use the Old Testament? What bearing does this have on John's overall purpose?
4. Examine and report the differences between John and the synoptic gospels in the passion narratives.
5. Develop John's Christology.

LESSON: THE SURRENDER OF JESUS (JOHN 18.1-11)

Introduction - the Prayer of Jesus and Heaven's Response (John 12.27-32).

“Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

It Was A Conscious or Planned Surrender (verses 1-4).

After celebrating his last Passover meal with his disciples in the city of Jerusalem, Jesus leads them across the Kidron Valley to the Garden of Gethsemane. Judas, who betrayed him, along with “a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisee” came to the garden “carrying torches, lanterns, and weapons” to arrest him (verses 2-3). John tells us that Jesus, who knew “all that was going to happen to him,” boldly “went out and asked them, ‘Who is it you want?’” While this statement of John in verse 4 relates directly to Jesus’ going out of the garden to meet the party who had come to capture him, it summarizes Jesus’ entire attitude. He went with his disciples to the garden with the full knowledge that Judas had gone to bargain with the priest for his betrayal and would look for him in this familiar place.

Jesus had said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father” (John 10.11, 14-18; cf. 15.13).

It Was A Voluntary Surrender (verses 5-8).

Between the dismissal of Judas from the upper room, where the disciples celebrated the Passover meal, and the arrest of Jesus in the garden, at least two hours must have elapsed. Jesus could have left Jerusalem and been on his way across the Jordan river to Perea or to some hiding place where the Jewish leaders could not have found him. Jesus could have saved himself, but instead he deliberately went to the place where Judas surely would look for him.

There he prayed with his disciples and waited. Furthermore, when the mob finally arrived, Jesus boldly walked out to meet it. He asked them, “Who do you want?” When they answered, “Jesus of Nazareth,” he replied, “I am he” (verses 5, 8). His courage so frightened his

captors that “they drew back and fell to the ground” (verse 6). And he still waited for them to act. So his capture was not the result of their superior cunning or power. Rather, it was the result of the willingness of Jesus to submit himself to their designs. In the words of the prophet, “he was led like a lamb to the slaughter” (Isaiah 53.7; cf. 1 Peter 2.21-25).

It Was A Vicarious or Substitutionary Surrender (verses 8-9).

Jesus was aware of the danger that the mob presented to his followers. So he said to those who accompanied Judas to the garden, “I told you that I am he; if you are looking for me, then let these men go” (verse 8). Jesus gave himself to the mob in the place of his disciples, all of whom made good their escape. John adds his interpretation of the event, “This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: ‘I have not lost one of those you gave me’” (verse 9; cf. John 17.12).

The essence of atonement is illustrated by this act of Jesus who purchased their security by his sacrifice. Tenney appropriately remarks, “Jesus’ chief intent seems not to have been to advance a claim but rather to shield the disciples. In a sense, he sacrificed himself for their safety. He had promised the Father that he would protect them (17.12), and he fulfilled his guarantee in the voluntary surrender of his life. The utterance in verse 8 is a graphic illustration of the principle of substitutionary atonement that pervades this Gospel (cf. 1.29; 3.14-16; 10.11, 15-18; 12.32; 17.19).” [Tenney, “Gospel of John,” *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Volume 9, 169]. Peter, who fled and denied his Lord on this occasion, later says it very well, “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God” (1 Peter 3.18; cf. Isaiah 53.3-6).

It Was A Loving Surrender (verses 10-11).

As the confrontation and arrest of Jesus unfolded, Peter, in a fit of loyal zeal, drew his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest. In contrast to this rash action, Jesus’ rebuke of Peter and his healing of the servant (see Luke 22.51) highlights the Lord’s surrender as motivated by love. Love for the Father was primary. Jesus says to Peter, “Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?” (verse 11). If the Father demanded suffering, Jesus gladly would endure it. Love for the disciples also was a factor, because Jesus wanted to spare them arrest and trial. And love for his enemies is seen in his healing of Malchus and in the absence of any malice or verbal accusation against Judas. As explained by the apostle Paul, “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5.8).

Conclusion - No Greater Love (John 15.13).

The sacrificial surrender of Jesus to be taken prisoner, put on trial, mocked, and then crucified was a planned, voluntary, vicarious, and loving surrender. As Jesus himself said, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15.13).

CHRONOLOGY FOR ACTS OF APOSTLES

Acts of Apostles is the continuation of the work of Jesus on earth through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit–guided apostles. Acts relates the beginning of the church in Jerusalem among the Jews and the spread of the kingdom into the rest of the world among the Gentiles. The book spans a time period of approximately thirty years.

PENTECOST (Acts 2)	AD 30
STONING OF STEPHEN (Acts 7)	34
CONVERSION OF SAUL (Acts 9)	35
1 st Visit of Paul to Jerusalem (9.26)	37
CONVERSION OF CORNELIUS (Acts 10)	
2 nd Visit of Paul to Jerusalem (11.30)	44
Famine While Claudius Emperor, AD 44-48	
KILLING OF JAMES (Acts 12)	44
Death of Herod Agrippa I	
FIRST MISSIONARY TOUR (Acts 13-14)	47 - 48
Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark.	
To Cyprus, Lystra, Derbe, and Antioch of Pisidia.	
3 rd Visit of Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 15)	49
Writing of GALATIANS ? (Antioch)	49 ?
SECOND MISSIONARY TOUR (Acts 15.36–18.22)	49 - 51
Paul, Silas, and Timothy (from Lystra).	
To Lystra, Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth (18-month stay, 18.11), Ephesus, Caesarea, and Antioch.	
Writing of 1 & 2 THESSALONIANS (Corinth)	50
4 th Visit of Paul to Jerusalem (18.22)	51
Edict of Claudius (18.2); Gallio (18.12), AD 51 ?	

THIRD MISSIONARY TOUR (Acts 18.23–21.17)	52 - 57
Paul, Titus, and Luke. To Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus (3-year stay, 20.31), Corinth, Ephesus, Macedonia, Corinth (3-month stay, 20.3), Macedonia, Troas, Miletus, Caesarea, and Jerusalem.	
Writing of 1 CORINTHIANS (Ephesus)	55 / 56
Writing of 2 CORINTHIANS (Macedonia)	56
Writing of GALATIANS ? (Macedonia)	56 ?
Writing of ROMANS (Corinth)	56
5 th Visit of Paul to Jerusalem (21.17)	57
PAUL ARRESTED IN JERUSALEM	57
CAESAREAN IMPRISONMENT OF PAUL (Acts 23.31ff.)	57 - 59
Felix (Acts 23.24; 24.1ff.), AD 52-60 Festus (Acts 24.27), AD 60-62 Herod Agrippa II (Acts 26)	
VOYAGE TO ROME (Acts 27.1–28.16)	59 - 60
ROMAN IMPRISONMENT OF PAUL (Acts 28.30)	60 - 62
Writing of PHILIPPIANS, COLOSSIANS, PHILEMON, & EPHESIANS	
END OF ACTS OF APOSTLES	
Writing of 1 TIMOTHY (Macedonia ?)	63 - 65 ?
Writing of TITUS (Southern Greece ?)	63 - 65 ?
Writing of 2 TIMOTHY (Rome ?)	64 / 65 ?

ACTS OF APOSTLES

Author: Luke the physician.

Destination: Theophilus (see 1.1).

Origin: More than likely Rome, although we cannot know for sure. Note how the book ends (28.30-31).

Date: AD 60-70.

Theme: Acts of Apostles tells how Christianity spread throughout the Roman empire by the power of the Holy Spirit. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (1.8; compare Luke 24.46ff.).

Occasion: The possibility of Luke-Acts as a “trial brief” for Paul in Rome is plausible. Note Paul’s defense (25.8; compare the Jewish charge against Paul, 17.6-7; 24.5). Note Luke’s indication of Roman official acknowledgment of the innocence of Christians, especially Paul (16.39; 18.15f.; 19.37; 23.29; 25.25; 26.32; compare 28.30f.).

Purpose: Luke writes Acts specifically for Theophilus in order to relate to him the early history of the Christian movement (i.e., the new age of the Holy Spirit). Luke writes Acts generally to tell the story about “the age of the apostles in order to edify Christians and to woo the Gentiles.” [Ernst Haenchen, quoted in Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 115]. Acts, therefore, can be viewed as both proclamation of and apology for the message about Jesus the Messiah.

Outline:

- I. Witnesses to Jesus in Jerusalem, 1.1–8.3.
- II. Witnesses to Jesus in Samaria and the Coastal Regions, 8.4–11.18.
- III. Witnesses to Jesus in Antioch and Asia Minor, 11.19–15.35.
- IV. Witnesses to Jesus in Lands Around the Aegean Sea, 15.36–19.20.
- V. Witnesses to Jesus from Jerusalem to Rome, 19.21–28.31.

Notes:

1. Emphases in the book of Acts include: (1) the work of the Holy Spirit; (2) the work of Peter and Paul; and (3) the geographical spread of the Christian faith.
2. Acts gives background information for nine of Paul's letters to churches: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 and 2 Thessalonians.
3. Luke's historical and geographical references are accurate (e.g., titles given to officials in the Roman government, the sea voyage of Paul to Rome).
4. Acts contains numerous speeches by Peter, Paul, Gamaliel, Stephen, James, Demetrius, the town clerk of Ephesus, Tertullus, etc.
5. Note the "we-sections" of Luke in 16.10-17 (journey from Troas to Philippi), 20.5-15 (journey from Philippi to Miletus), 21.1-18 (journey from Miletus to Jerusalem), and 27.1-28.16 (journey from Caesarea to Rome).
6. Note the summary statements about the early Christian community (2.42ff.; 4.32ff.; 5.12ff.).
7. Note the twofold narration of Peter's vision (10.9ff.; 11.5ff.), and the threefold report of Paul's conversion (9.3ff.; 22.5ff.; 26.12ff.).

Projects:

1. What role do the "we-sections" play in the determination of the authorship of Acts?
2. Thoroughly examine the problem of the Greek text of Acts. What are some of the solutions to the problem?
3. Argue a date for Acts from internal evidence.
4. Give evidence of Luke's acquaintance with Roman society.
5. Discuss the problem of the speeches in Acts.

SPECIAL STUDY: STEPHEN'S SERMON (ACTS 7.2-53)

Introduction - History of the Jewish People from Abraham to Moses, verses 2-20.

- I. Moses disowned as arbiter and judge in a dispute between two Hebrews (prior to his flight from Egypt), verses 20-28.
 - A. Moses, raised by the Pharaoh's daughter and supposed to be an Egyptian by the Hebrews, killed an Egyptian who was mistreating an Israelite.
 - B. Moses, trying to peacefully reconcile two fighting Hebrews, was rejected.

- II. Moses disowned as mediator of the living oracles of God at Sinai, verses 29-41.
 - A. Moses was called by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to go to Egypt from the land of Midian and deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.
 - 1. God called Moses through the flaming thorn bush.
 - 2. God sent Moses, the one disowned by the two Hebrews, to Egypt as both a ruler and deliverer of the Israelites.
 - B. Moses, by wonders and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, delivered the Israelites.
 - C. God, through Moses, promised to raise up a prophet like him (Deuteronomy 18.15, 18).
 - D. Moses was rejected at Sinai.
 - 1. Moses received living oracles to give to the people.
 - 2. The Israelites repudiated Moses, and God, and turned back to the gods of Egypt. Aaron made the people an idol which they worshiped.

- III. Because of their stubbornness, God gave up the Israelites to idolatry, verses 42-50.
 - A. Israel served pagan gods, and God punished Israel with exile into Babylon.
 - B. God permitted Israel's imitation of pagan practices.
 - 1. A "house for God" was erected by Moses, by David, and by Solomon.
 - 2. But the Most High does not dwell in man-made dwellings (Isaiah 66.1-2).

Conclusion - Murder of God's Righteous One by the Sons of the Persecutors of the Prophets, verses 51-53.

SPECIAL STUDY: PAUL’S DEFENSE BEFORE FELIX (ACTS 24.5-6, 10-21)

Introduction - opening remark to Felix, verse 10.

- I. Paul is not guilty of disturbing the peace, verses 11-13.
 - A. Less than twelve days had passed since Paul went up to Jerusalem—hardly enough time to start a riot.
 - B. Paul discussed nothing in the temple, in synagogues, or in the city that would cause a riot.
 - C. The Jews against Paul cannot prove their accusations.

- II. Paul is not guilty of promoting a new and illegal religion (e.g., “the sect of the Nazarenes”), verses 14-16.
 - A. “The Way” (e.g., the followers of Jesus as the Messiah) is not a new religion.
 - 1. It is the religion anticipated by the Jewish patriarchs or fathers.
 - 2. It is the religion foretold by the Jewish law and the prophets.
 - B. “The Way” is the fulfillment of the hopes and dreams of the Jewish opponents of Paul.
 - 1. Only through the Messiah is there any hope of resurrection.
 - 2. On the basis of this hope (i.e., resurrection of both righteous and wicked), Paul has tried to keep a clear conscience before God and man.

- III. Paul is not guilty of desecrating the temple, verses 17-19.
 - A. Paul went to Jerusalem and to the temple to bring alms and offerings.
 - B. Paul was “caught” while offering sacrifice for a Nazarite vow—a far cry from profaning the temple.
 - C. Certain Jews from Asia are the ones who “caught” Paul.
 - 1. They were absent from the courtroom in Caesarea.
 - 2. They, as supposed eyewitnesses, should have been present.

Conclusion - Paul’s accusers before the procurator should limit themselves to what they have seen and heard, verses 20-21.

LETTERS OF PAUL TO CHRISTIANS

The letters of Paul represent the apostle's communications with Christian communities that he founded (except Romans and Colossians) and to individual coworkers in the Lord. In these letters, Paul expounds God's work of incorporating believers in Christ and the ethical demands based on such a transformation. In addition to basic teachings about "the Way," these letters provide invaluable information concerning the life of first-century believers (for example, customs, challenges, problems), the life of Paul himself, and the work of an apostle and his fellow laborers. For convenience, these letters have been arranged chronologically into three periods—the early period (ca. AD 50-55), the middle period (ca. AD 55-60), and the late period (ca. AD 60-65). The writing called Hebrews is added here to Paul's writings. Even though attested early as from Paul, it is not at all certain who was the author of the extended homily.

Early Period

1 Thessalonians	from Corinth	AD 50
2 Thessalonians	from Corinth	AD 51

Middle Period

1 Corinthians	from Ephesus	AD 55 or 56
2 Corinthians	from Macedonia	AD 56
Galatians	from Macedonia ?	AD 56/57 [or earlier]
Romans	from Corinth	AD 56

Late Period

Philippians	from Rome	AD 60-62
Colossians	from Rome	AD 60-62
Philemon	from Rome	AD 60-62
Ephesians	from Rome	AD 60-62
1 Timothy	Macedonia ?	AD 63-65 ?
Titus	Southern Greece ?	AD 63-65 ?
(Hebrews)	(?)	(AD 60s ?)
2 Timothy	from Rome	AD 64/65

1 THESSALONIANS

Author: Paul, the apostle (1.1; cf. 2.18).

Destination: Paul sends this letter “to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1.1). Note the mention of Macedonia and Achaia (1.7, 8; 4.10). See also Acts 17.1ff.

Origin: The letter was written at Corinth. After establishing the church at Thessalonica, Paul journeyed to Berea, Athens, and then Corinth, where he stayed eighteen months (Acts 18.11). Here, at Corinth, he received news from Timothy and Silas about the Christians at Thessalonica (see 3.1-8; cf. Acts 18.5), and he responds with this correspondence.

Date: About AD 50-51. Note “Gallio was proconsul of Achaia” (Acts 18.12).

Theme: See chapter 3, verses 11-13.

Occasion: News from Timothy about the Thessalonians prompted both the writing of the letter and its contents.

Purpose: Paul writes: (1) to express joy at the progress of the believers in Thessalonica; (2) to answer charges brought against him by Jewish opponents (2.1-12); (3) to encourage these Christians to persevere even in the face of persecution (2.13ff.); (4) to instruct the Thessalonians about Christian morality, the second coming of Jesus, the respect of leaders, prophetic utterances, and so forth.

Outline:

- I. Greeting and thanksgiving, 1.1-10.
- II. Paul’s evangelistic work in Thessalonica, 2.1-16.
- III. Paul’s joy for the Thessalonians, 2.17–3.13.
- IV. Practical exhortations—moral purity, brotherly love, honest labor, 4.1-12.
- V. The second coming of Jesus, 4.13–5.11.
- VI. Practical exhortations—respecting leaders, helping one another, etc., 5.12-22.
- VII. Conclusion, 5.23-28.

Notes:

1. Note the importance of “example” and “imitation” in the early chapters.
2. According to Paul, what will happen when Christ comes again?
3. What does Paul mean, “God did not appoint us to suffer wrath . . .” (5.9)?
4. Examine Paul’s conclusion in 5.23-28. What do these verses tell us about the early Christian assemblies?

Projects:

1. Argue a purpose for 1 Thessalonians from internal evidence.
2. Compare Paul’s greeting and thanksgiving in 1 Thessalonians (1.1-10) with that of his other letters.
3. Give a detailed exegesis of one main section of 1 Thessalonians (see outline above).

LESSON: TRANSPARENT CHRISTIANITY (1 THESSALONIANS 2.9-13)

Introduction - the Call by Jesus to be the Light of the World.

Jesus told his followers in his Sermon on the Mount, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5.14-16). To light up the world around us, we are instructed to be transparent so that others may see that light and benefit from it.

1. Work Hard.

Paul describes the missionary team’s conduct among the believers at Thessalonica. He, Silas, and Timothy “worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while [they] preached the gospel of God to [them]” (verse 9). Paul urges the Christians in Macedonia to “remember . . . [their] toil and hardship” and to imitate their example (see 1.6). In order to light up our world for good news, we are instructed to work hard, provide for ourselves and our families, and strive not to be a burden to anyone. This is practical advice. Paul was a craftsman, a tentmaker by trade, so he worked long, hard hours to support himself in order to preach to the Thessalonians. Hard work still is appreciated and respected today. Sure, it is old fashioned—“By the sweat of your brow shall you get bread to eat, until you return to the ground” (Genesis 3.19; NJPST). Unfortunate is the “something for nothing” mentality. Rather, the witness of the Christian in the world is to “give no opportunity to the devil . . . labor, doing honest work with [one’s] own hands” (Ephesians 4.27-28; ESV). Perhaps this is the origin of the old adage, “Idle hands are the devil’s workshop.” Paul stresses to the believers at Thessalonica, “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody” (4.11-12).

2. Live Blamelessly.

Paul tells the Thessalonians that they, as well as God himself, saw firsthand the piety and reverence of the apostolic team. They conducted themselves among the people of the city in a “holy, righteous, and blameless” manner (verse 10). Were they perfect without any flaws or mistakes? No, they were not. But they lived among the Thessalonians in such a way that indicated they were worthy of respect, they were honorable, and they were “law-abiding” citizens. Their conduct was free from any accusation—blameless. For the Christian, this means living by a higher standard. Yes, it means we may live “in a glass house” that is transparent and visible to others. Let your light so shine, Jesus says. And that is okay. We should understand and accept that sometimes. Perhaps the world understands Christian commitment better than we do. They may be reluctant to come to Christ, because they know this means greater demands on their lives—their time and their commitments.

It is regrettable that we too get caught up in the “dog eat dog” mentality of the world. Sure, we want to live blamelessly, but then there is peer pressure. For kids in school, this means that it is fashionable not to work hard, not to study, and as a result to do poorly. And the parents encourage with their bumper sticker wars. In response to the “Straight A Student Onboard” notice, we see the “My Kid Beat Up Your Straight A Student” plaquard. In the world, there is the tendency to bring down, to demean, to devalue. But believers in Jesus are called to live transparently by living blamelessly. And so be it if “they think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you” (1 Peter 4.4). Peter says that they too, as well as we, must one day be fully transparent and “give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (verse 5).

3. Be Approachable and Open.

Paul says to the Thessalonians, “For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children” (verse 11). He and his fellow workers were ready to encourage, comfort, and urge the new believers “to live lives worthy of God” (verse 12). Too often today fathers get a negative reputation. But here, Paul compares his work among the Thessalonians to a concerned father who is present to guide, instruct, comfort, and lead. Such tenderness will encourage with words of approval and praise and demands openness and being approachable. Just the opposite is the attitude of the Pharisees who build walls of separation, bind heavy burdens with excessive rules, show off their good deeds, and demand titles and names of honor or distinction (see Matthew 23.1ff.). But the servant of the Lord tries his or her best to be open to others as much as possible in the spirit of Christ. In this way, others can see clearly the light of the Lord in our lives.

Conclusion - the Beauty of Transparent Christianity.

Paul reminds the Thessalonians of the beauty and practical nature of a transparent way of living in Christ—work hard; live blamelessly; and be approachable to encourage and guide others. In another letter, to Corinth, Paul talks about letting our lights shine in the world with a different illustration. He writes, “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us’ (2 Corinthians 4.6-7). The glass of a light filament or the container for a precious diamond is fragile, inexpensive, and transparent, and this allows the beauty within to radiate outward. So God has put his treasure in “jars of clay” or “earthen vessels” (KJV)—fragile, made of dust, but fashioned in the image of God—to allow his all-surpassing treasure to radiate outward. So let your light shine in the world. Be transparent, and others will see the beauty of the heavenly Father through his son Jesus Christ.

LESSON: JOY VERSUS JUDGMENT (1 THESSALONIANS 4.13-18)

Few events raise harder questions about God and life than the death of a close friend or relative. When we lose someone so important to us as a spouse, a mother or father, a son or a daughter, or a grandparent, it forces us to think deeply. We ask questions. What really is life all about? What are the important issues? Why do people suffer so much anyway? Is there life after death? Why do people die? Why did my loved one die? Why now? Why not later? Will I ever see him or her again? And the questions go on and on and on.

This problem is brought to the forefront by Christians at Thessalonica in Greece. What will happen to our brothers and sisters who have “fallen asleep” (verse 13; NKJV)? Among the Greeks, there were different philosophies. At best, thinking about the afterlife was ambiguous, and the afterlife was a netherworld, a nebulous experience. Some of the Greeks had a cyclical view of history—that events go on in endless repetition with no beginning and no end, a cycle that just keeps on repeating itself. This could lead to a belief, as in many eastern religions, in reincarnation or to no life after death at all. Others among the Greeks had a dot or punctiliar view of history—time itself is eternal and events are disconnected and unrelated like a single drop of water in the ocean and very, very insignificant. Each person has a beginning and an end, but he or she is no more significant than a single drop. This is the view of materialism and has no concept of life after death. Some Greeks, though, believed in an afterlife but generally in a type of disembodied existence, a soul without the body.

The Christian teaching about a bodily resurrection is quite different. The Thessalonians, who were recent converts, were concerned about their loved ones. Was this Christianity that they had embraced worth their time and investment? Was it worth risking alienation from society and perhaps even family? What promise or assurance did it hold beyond this life? In some ways, the question posed by the Thessalonians is similar to reading an intriguing, suspense-filled novel. It is tempting to skip to the end and see how the plot ends. And this is precisely what the apostle Paul does. He tells us about the ending, so there will be no doubt, no lack of hope. As a result, we can have joy in our Christian living. The outlook of joy is very important. It is a great and constant motivation. If we know with confidence that the end result is beneficial, we gladly will suffer and sacrifice for our way of life in Christ.

Paul writes to the Thessalonians, “Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.”

There is joy, because we, or those who are alive, will be greeted by our Lord at his return and by Christian friends and relatives “who have fallen asleep in [Jesus].” “We believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him” (verse 14).

There is joy, because the return of Christians with Jesus is sure and certain. This is “the Lord’s own word,” and those “who are still alive, who are left till the coming the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep” (verse 15). In verse 15, Paul more or less repeats what he stated in verse 14, but it is restated more forcefully, emphatically.

There is joy, because the return of the Lord with his people is a decisive event. When it happens, all will know (see Revelation 1.7). This is no subversive revelation, no sneak attack. The return of the Lord will be open, visible, universal, glorious, and decisive. “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first” (verse 16). There will be no doubt; it will not be hidden; it is not a partial revealing. And there will be no need to interpret or explain the event. When that time comes—and no one knows, but God knows the right time—it will be glorious.

There is joy, because, when the Lord returns, whether we have died or still are alive, “we will be with the Lord forever” (verse 17). Paul adds that “we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them [i.e., the ‘dead in Christ’ who ‘rise first’] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” “In the air” is interpreted variously, and the meaning here is not clear. But what is certain is that all of the Lord’s people will be reunited. This will be a big, big family reunion with joy untold.

Finally, there is joy, because of the comfort that comes to the believer in Jesus from these truths. When we lose our loved ones who are Christians to death, we will grieve but not as those who have no hope (see verse 13). It is bitter enough to lose someone dear, but to lose someone to death without hope is bitter indeed. For the Christian, this is not the case, as Paul says, “Therefore encourage each other with these words” (verse 18).

Life in the ancient world was often a grim tale of hopelessness, a “failure of nerve,” because of the suffering brought about by death. Consider, as an example, this ancient letter of condolence.

Irene to Taonnophris and Philo. Good comfort.
I am as sorry and weep over the departed one,
as I wept for Didymas.
And all things, whatsoever were fitting,
I have done, and all mine,
Epaphroditus and Termuthion and Philion and Apollonius and Plantas.
But, nevertheless, against such things one can do nothing.
Therefore comfort you one another.

Contrast the above with the following discussion between the atheist and the preacher.

Atheist: I do not believe what you are preaching.
Preacher: Then tell me what you do believe.
Atheist: I believe that death ends all.
Preacher: So do I.
Atheist: What! You believe that death ends all?
Preacher: I certainly do. Death ends all your chance for doing evil. Death ends all your joy. Death ends all your projects, all your ambitions, all your friendships. Death ends all the gospel you will ever hear. Death ends it all for you, and you will go out into darkness. As for myself, death ends all my wanderings, all my tears, all my perplexities, all my disappointments, all my aches and pains. Death ends it all, and I go to be with my Lord in glory.

In the anticipation that we will be with our Lord forever, there is joy and not judgment for the believer in Jesus. Therefore, we are like the ten wise maidens or virgins in the parable of Jesus (see Matthew 25.1-13), and the exhortation is to watch and be ready for his coming.

2 THESSALONIANS

Author: Paul, the apostle (1.1; cf. 2.5; 3.17).

Destination: Paul sends this letter “to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1.1).

Origin: From Corinth.

Date: The letter was written soon after the first letter, so about AD 50-51.

Theme: “Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way” (3.16).

Occasion: The exact circumstance is not clear for Paul’s writing a second letter to the Thessalonians soon after his first one.

Purpose: It seems that “1 Thessalonians was not as effective as Paul had hoped in dealing with the problem of idleness and fresh misunderstandings had arisen concerning the *parousia*.” [Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 578]. Paul addresses these problems in 2 Thessalonians.

Outline:

- I. Greeting, thanksgiving, encouragement (e.g., God’s judgment on those persecuting the saints), 1.1-12.
- II. The “second coming” or return of Jesus, 2.1-12.
- III. Further thanksgiving and prayer, 2.13-17.
- IV. Exhortations—prayer and the faithfulness of God, the problem of idleness, the need for obedience, 3.1-15.
- V. Conclusion, 3.16-18.

Notes:

1. Did someone in Macedonia send a letter in Paul's name to the Thessalonians (see 2.2)?
2. Note "the man of lawlessness" (2.3).
3. Note Paul's emphasis on "the traditions that were taught by us" (2.15; ESV). Compare 3.6.

Projects:

1. Argue a purpose for 2 Thessalonians from internal evidence.
2. Discuss the different interpretations of the "man of lawlessness" passage (2.1-12).
3. Trace the usage, importance, and content of "the traditions" in early Christian literature.

SPECIAL STUDY: SUMMARY OF 2 THESSALONIANS 1.3-10

With the endorsement of Silas and Timothy, Paul writes a second letter to the Christians at Thessalonica, because the church continued to be vexed by unbelieving Jews who hated the Gentiles. From the beginning of the preaching of Christ at Thessalonica, resistant Jews stirred up trouble in the city (Acts 17.1-9). They were so contentious that they initiated Paul's expulsion from Thessalonica, and then they pursued Paul in Berea and stirred up the people there (Acts 17.10-14). No doubt, Paul after leaving the area was anxious to hear from his brothers and sisters who faced such zealous adversaries. And he was relieved with joy over their steadfast faith and charity (see 1 Thessalonians 3.1-10). But some of the Thessalonian believers were losing patience because of such extreme opposition. Paul felt that it was necessary to encourage them in a second letter. In this brief writing, he commends them for their past endurance (verses 3-5). He describes the final reward and judgment of God on the troublemakers (verses 6-9). And he highlights the glory and the wonder for those who believe when the Lord comes (verse 10).

Paul rejoiced because the Thessalonians from the first had received his message as the word of God. Their faith was so deeply embedded in the truth that they, like the churches of Judea, overcame persecution from their fellow citizens. Like the Judeans, they would not give in to the rejecting of the Gentiles from the marvelous work of God and rightfully so (see 1 Thessalonians 2.13-16). Paul found joy from their faith and patience, especially since he was with them and able to instruct them for only a short time (verse 4; cf. 1 Thessalonians 2.17). Further, they had listened to Paul's instructions in his first letter to them (cf. verse 3 with 1 Thessalonians 3.12; 4.9-10; and verse 4 with 1 Thessalonians 3.3-5). So Paul commends his brothers and sisters in Macedonia by optimistically pointing out that trials and testings are God's way of separating those who are worthy of the kingdom from those who are unworthy (verse 5; cf. 2 Timothy 3.12; 1 Peter 4.16; James 1.2-4; Matthew 5.10-12).

In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul had alluded to the punishment of the evildoers (1 Thessalonians 3.16). Here in his second letter to them, he spells out their fate in vivid detail. Paul urgently reminds those who are troubled to be assured that God's righteous judgment will be carried out. The persistent persecutors will receive everlasting destruction through everlasting dislodgment from the presence of Christ (verses 7-9). However, because they received the testimony of Paul (i.e., the word of God) with belief in their hearts, those who continue in faith will be exalted with Christ at his coming (verse 10). So by commending the courageous, depicting the downfall of the evildoers, and filling the faithful's future with hope, Paul writes to uplift and encourage the downhearted Thessalonian Christians.

1 CORINTHIANS

Author: Paul, the apostle (1.1; cf. 3.4-6; 15.5-11; 16.21).

Destination: Paul is writing “to the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours” (1.2).

Origin: Paul writes 1 Corinthians during his stay of three years in Ephesus (see Acts 19.1–20.1; cf. 20.31).

Date: About AD 55 or 56, and possibly in the spring of the year (see 1 Corinthians 16.8).

Theme: Because of the lack of holiness in the lives of many Christians at Corinth, Paul stresses the need for sanctification. Paul forcefully expounds the ethical demands or holy living that is based on the fundamental Christian doctrine that Jesus is Lord. Paul urges the Corinthians to submit to God’s transforming work, the power of the Spirit working through Jesus Christ. “It is because of [God] that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. Therefore, as it is written, ‘Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord’” (1.30-31).

Occasion: See the Special Study: Reconstruction of the Corinthian Correspondence.

Purpose: Paul admonishes the Corinthians to return to a lifestyle that honors Jesus as the Lord (see 16.22; cf. 1.2). He does this by rebuking them for their sinfulness and by answering their questions (see 7.1).

Outline:

- I. Introduction and thanksgiving, 1.1-9.
- II. Sinfulness rebuked, 1.10–6.20.
 - A. The sin of strife and faction—its causes and consequences, 1.10–3.23.
 - B. The sin of despising Paul’s apostolic authority, 4.1-21.
 - C. The sin of gross immorality (and uncharitable lawsuits against fellow Christians), 5.1–6.20.
- III. Questions answered, 7.1–16.9.
 - A. Concerning marriage and celibacy, 7.1-40.
 - B. Concerning things sacrificed to idols, 8.1–10.33.
 - C. Concerning the traditions of headship and the Lord’s supper, 11.1-34.
 - D. Concerning spiritual gifts, 12.1–14.40.
 - E. Concerning the good news and the resurrection, 15.1-58.
 - F. Concerning the collection for the saints, 16.1-9.
- IV. Conclusion, 16.10-24.

Notes:

- 1. Note the Sosthenes of 1.1 (cf. Acts 18.17).
- 2. Note the word “Maranatha” (16.22).

Projects:

- 1. Give evidence from 1 Corinthians of the influence of pagan culture on the Christian community in Corinth. Give evidence from 1 Corinthians of Paul’s adapting his language to a Greek environment.
- 2. Using passages from 1 Corinthians, describe a first-century “worship service.”
- 3. Prepare a detailed exegesis of chapter 7 or chapter 15.
- 4. Prepare a detailed exegesis of chapters 12 through 14.
- 5. Argue a date for 1 Corinthians using internal evidence.

SPECIAL STUDY: USE OF *EKKLESIA* [“assembly”] IN PAUL’S LETTERS [from ESV]

1 Thessalonians	1.1	“to the assembly of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”
	2.14	“the assemblies of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea”
2 Thessalonians	1.1	“to the assembly of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”
	1.4	“in the assemblies of God”
1 Corinthians	1.2	“to the assembly of God that is in Corinth”
	4.17	“as I teach them everywhere in every assembly”
	6.4	“why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the assembly”
	7.17	“this is my rule in all the assemblies”
	10.32	“give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the assembly of God”
	11.16	“we have no such practice, nor do the assemblies of God”
	11.18	“when you come together as an assembly”
	11.22	“or do you despise the assembly of God”
	12.28	“and God has appointed in the assembly . . .”
	14.4	“the one who prophesies builds up the assembly”
	14.5	“so that the assembly may be built up”
	14.12	“strive to excel in building up the assembly”
	14.19	“in [the] assembly I would rather speak . . .”
	14.23	“if, therefore, the whole assembly comes together”
	14.28	“let him keep silent in the assembly”
	14.33	“as in all the assemblies of the saints”
14.34	“the women should keep silent in the assemblies”	
14.35	“it is shameful for a woman to speak in [the] assembly”	
15.9	“I persecuted the assembly of God”	
16.1	“as I directed the assemblies of Galatia”	
16.19	“the assemblies of Asia send you greetings”	
16.19	“together with the assembly in their house”	
2 Corinthians	1.1	“to the assembly of God that is at Corinth”
	8.1	“among the assemblies of Macedonia”
	8.18	“among all the assemblies for his preaching of the gospel”
	8.19	“he has been appointed by the assemblies to travel with us”
	8.23	“they are messengers of the assemblies, the glory of Christ”
	8.24	“give proof before the assemblies of your love”
	11.8	“I robbed other assemblies by accepting support from them”
	11.28	“the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the assemblies”
12.13	“in what were you less favored than the rest of the assemblies”	

Galatians	1.2	“to the assemblies of Galatia”
	1.13	“how I persecuted the assembly of God violently”
	1.22	“to the assemblies of Judea that are in Christ”
Romans	16.1	“our sister Phoebe, a servant of the assembly at Cenchrea”
	16.4	“all the assemblies of the Gentiles give thanks as well”
	16.5	“greet also the assembly in their house”
	16.16	“all the assemblies of Christ greet you”
	16.23	“Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole assembly, greets you”
Philippians	3.6	“as to zeal, a persecutor of the assembly”
	4.15	“no assembly entered into partnership with me . . .”
Colossians	1.18	“he is the head of the body, the assembly”
	1.24	“for the sake of his body, that is, the assembly”
	4.15	“to Nympha and the assembly in her house”
	4.16	“have it also read in the assembly of the Laodiceans”
Philemon	2	“to the assembly in your house”
1 Timothy	3.5	“how will he care for God’s assembly”
	3.15	“in the household of God, which is the assembly of the living God”
Ephesians	1.22	“and gave him as head over all things to the assembly”
	3.10	“so that through the assembly the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known”
	3.21	“to him be glory in the assembly and in Christ Jesus”
	5.23	“even as Christ is the head of the assembly”
	5.24	“as the assembly submits to Christ . . .”
	5.25	“as Christ loved the assembly . . .”
	5.27	“so that he might present the assembly to himself in splendor”
	5.29	“just as Christ does the assembly”
5.32	“I am saying that it refers to Christ and the assembly”	
[Hebrews	2.12	“in the midst of the assembly I will sing your praise”
	12.23	“and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven”]

2 CORINTHIANS

Author: Paul, the apostle (1.1; cf. 10.1).

Destination: The second letter of Paul to the Corinthians is addressed “to the church of God in Corinth, together with all the saints throughout Achaia” (1.1; cf. 6.11; 11.10).

Origin: Paul is writing from Macedonia, perhaps from Philippi (see 2.12-13; 7.5; 8.1; and 9.2-4).

Date: The writing seems to follow the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians in the same year (e.g., in the fall of the year) or maybe the following year, so about AD 55-57.

Theme: The guiding theme of Paul’s second letter to Corinth might be stated as “the power of God demonstrated in the afflictions of an apostle.”

Occasion: See the Special Study: Reconstruction of the Corinthian Correspondence.

Purpose: Because of recent attacks by some of the believers at Corinth against Paul’s authority as an apostle of God, and because of the failure of some to follow his instructions in his first letter to them (but see 2.6), Paul strongly and with deep emotions must defend his work and his apostolic calling. A good summary statement of Paul’s overall objective in the letter might be 1.24, “Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm.”

Outline:

- I. Greeting and thanksgiving, 1.1-11.
- II. Paul’s ministry—his change of plans explained, 1.12–7.16.
- III. The contribution for needy saints—preparation for Paul’s coming, 8.1–9.15.
- IV. Paul’s call to be an apostle defended—the certainty of his coming, 10.1–13.10.
- V. Conclusion, 13.11-14.

Notes:

1. The problem of the letter's unity.
2. The enemies of Paul at Corinth.
3. Paul's "thorn in the flesh."
4. The deep emotion shown by Paul throughout the epistle.

Projects:

1. Examine the structure of 2 Corinthians and develop a detailed outline of the contents of the book.
2. What does Paul reveal concerning himself (i.e., his life, his experiences, his faith in God, his feelings, and so forth) in 2 Corinthians?
3. From chapters 10–12 (and related passages) discuss the identity of the enemies of Paul at Corinth.
4. Argue an occasion of 2 Corinthians from internal evidence.
5. Thoroughly discuss possible interpretations of 7.5-12.

SPECIAL STUDY: RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CORINTHIAN CORRESPONDENCE

[Adapted from Plummer, *Second Corinthians*, xvii.–xix.]

1. Paul spends eighteen months at Corinth “teaching them the word of God” (Acts 18.11).
2. Paul leaves Corinth with Aquila and Priscilla and goes to Ephesus (Acts 18.18-19).
3. Paul sails from Ephesus to Caesarea. He goes to Jerusalem and then to Antioch of Syria. He revisited the Christians in Galatia and Phrygia. He returns to Ephesus (Acts 18.21-22; 19.1).
4. In the meantime, Apollos continues the work at Corinth (“he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate,” Acts 18.27-28). Later, he returns to Ephesus (see 1 Corinthians 16.12).
5. According to some, Paul sends a letter (presumably by Titus) to Corinth that condemns sexual immorality (see 1 Corinthians 5.9). This commonly is called “the lost letter” or “the previous letter.” But, the “I have written you in my letter” of 1 Corinthians 5.9 can be interpreted as a reference to 1 Corinthians itself (i.e., an epistolary aorist).
6. Members of Chloe’s household (1 Corinthians 1.11) and also Apollos (1 Corinthians 16.12) bring Paul bad news from Corinth.
7. Paul sends Timothy to Corinth (1 Corinthians 4.17; 16.10) via Macedonia (Acts 19.22). Timothy reaches Macedonia (see 2 Corinthians 1.1).
8. The Corinthians send a letter to Paul (1 Corinthians 7.1). It possibly is brought to Paul by Fortunatus, Stephanas, and Achaicus (see 1 Corinthians 16.15-18).
9. Paul writes 1 Corinthians (in the springtime, close to Passover) and sends it by Titus and another brother. The collection for the poor is now organized (1 Corinthians 16.1; 2 Corinthians 8.6; 12.18). Titus returns to Paul in Ephesus.
10. Problems intensify at Corinth. Paul’s apostolic authority is challenged (see 2 Corinthians 10.7, 10; 11.23; 12.16-17).
11. Because of the disobedience of the Corinthians, Paul with Titus pays them a visit (sometimes called the “intermediate visit”; see 2 Corinthians 2.1; 12.14; 13.1). Paul leaves Titus in Corinth and returns to Ephesus.
12. According to some, Paul sends a letter (called the “severe” or “stern” letter) to Corinth (see 2 Corinthians 2.3, 4, 9; 7.8-12). But these references in 2 Corinthians can be explained adequately as pointing to 1 Corinthians.

13. Paul leaves Ephesus (see Acts 19.21–20.1) for Troas. Anxious for news about Corinth from Titus, Paul goes to Macedonia (see 2 Corinthians 2.12-13).
14. Paul meets Titus in Macedonia, possibly Philippi, and receives from him an encouraging report (2 Corinthians 7.5-16).
15. Paul writes 2 Corinthians and sends it by Titus and two other brothers (2 Corinthians 8.16-24).
16. Paul goes to Corinth and spends three months there (see Acts 19.21; 20.2-3).

LESSON: “WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS, THERE IS LIBERTY”

Introduction—Exodus 34.29-35, 2 Corinthians 3.12-18.

“When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the Lord had given him on Mount Sinai. When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever he entered the Lord’s presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the Lord” (Exodus 34.29-35).

“Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech, and are not as Moses, who used to put a veil over his face that the sons of Israel might not look intently at the end of what was fading away. But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3.12-18; NASB here and below for this text).

I. Where the Spirit of the Lord Is—There Is Liberty or Great Boldness to Speak and to Act (verses 12-13).

Paul compares his ministry and that of other servants of the new covenant to the ministry of Moses with the Israelites. He tells the Corinthians, “We . . . are not as Moses . . .” (verse 13). After his descent from Sinai, Moses spoke with a shining, uncovered face. But when he finished speaking, he covered his face with a veil. Then, whenever he entered the holy of holies in the tabernacle to speak with the Lord, he removed the veil. And after he communicated the Lord’s commands to the people, he once again put the veil over his face until the time came once again to speak with the Lord in the most holy sanctuary. This was a regular practice of Moses (i.e., he “used to put”).

Why did Moses do this? What was the purpose of the veil? Paul explains, “That the sons of Israel might not look intently at the end of what was fading away.” The glory was of God. The Israelites were permitted to see that glory when Moses spoke the words of God to them, as proof of his role as leader and mediator. But, after speaking, Moses veiled his face. This, in some measure, was an enacted parable. The glory of the Lord was not compatible “with the wickedness of a rebellious and stiffnecked people (see Exodus 32).” “Their iniquities rendered them unable and unworthy to behold such glory.” So, in a real way, the veiling of the face of

Moses was “a condemnation of the people.” [Hughes, *Second Corinthians*, 108]. With respect to the veil, a symbol of hiddenness, the ministry of Moses was marked by concealment.

By way of contrast, Paul’s ministry of the gospel in Corinth and in other places was distinguished by great openness. He says, “Since we have such a hope [in the splendor of the new covenant, which will not fade or pass away, *Reformation Study Bible*, 1876], we are very bold.” Literally, Paul writes, “With much boldness we act” (verse 12). [Douglas, *Greek-English Interlinear*, 629]. The word translated “bold” means direct or plain speech, “of freeness in speech, as opposed to being under constraint to watch one’s words, straightforwardness, candor, unguardedness” or “with focus on . . . assurance in a relation that presupposes communication, openness, boldness, confidence.” [Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 273]. Paul is affirming that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty to speak, and there is freedom to act.

Among the people of God, unfortunately, there is too much secrecy, too many walls and barriers erected, too many hidden agendas, too much hypocrisy or play acting. Such is artificial and not real. Such is the lifestyle of the world. But the Spirit of the Lord calls us to express our feelings openly with one another, to love one another, to hurt and cry with one another, to help and lean on one another, to confess to one another. A fellow believer in the Lord is someone you should not have to hide anything from.

And this openness is the opposite of fear (see 1 John 4.15ff.), and it is based on our assurance or confidence in God’s openness to each of us because of the work of Jesus (see Ephesians 3.12; Hebrews 10.19, 35; 1 John 2.28; 3.20; 4.17; 5.14). “Since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. . . . Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4.14, 16). As Paul says, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom to speak, freedom to act.

II. Where the Spirit of the Lord Is—There is Liberty and the Veil Is Taken Away (verses 14-16).

Even when confronted with the glory shining from the face of Moses, the Israelites were unwilling to receive what God communicated to them through his prophet. Paul says, “Their minds were hardened” (verse 14). The word for “hardened” means to harden, to petrify, to form a callous. [Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 311]. Their minds were hardened; their perceptions, their understandings were dulled and deadened. And this is often the result of refusing and suppressing the revelation of God’s truth. Paul describes how this took place, “For until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted. . . . But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart” (verses 14, 15). Whenever the Law of Moses or “the old covenant” is read, this same veil of concealment or hiddenness remains unlifted and lies over their hearts. It is a veil of a stony heart rather than a heart of flesh (2 Corinthians 3.3). It is a veil of external motivation rather than the law written by the Spirit of God on human hearts. It is a veil of rebellion and unbelief.

People often have a strong desire to keep on wearing old garments and drinking old wine, as Jesus said in one of his parables. “No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, ‘The old is good’” (Luke 5.36-39; ESV). There is, in human nature, resistance to something new.

But Paul affirms to the Corinthians that the old veil of darkness and concealment is “removed in Christ” (verse 14). The word for “removed” can signify to nullify or terminate, to abolish or eliminate. [Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 193]. So that whenever someone turns to the Lord, this old veil of hiddenness is cast aside or taken away. Just as when Moses turned to the Lord in the tabernacle, off came the veil. In similar fashion, when a descendant of the sons of Israel, like Saul of Tarsus (see Philippians 3.4-6), turned to the Lord, the veil of the old covenant was abolished. There was freedom from a stony heart. There was liberation from external constraint or motivation. “Moses placed motivation on external conduct; Christ transforms the inner life.” [Plummer, *Second Corinthians*, 103]. And this is made possible by God’s Spirit. “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (verse 17). The new covenant of life in Jesus Christ is “not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Corinthians 3.6). In Christ, because the old veil is taken away, we are free from external constraint, since we have internal motivation to do the will of the Lord (see Jeremiah 24.7; Ezekiel 36.25-27).

III. Where the Spirit of the Lord Is—There is Liberty and Transformation from Glory to Glory (verses 17-18).

In verse 17, Paul offers proof of what he has claimed in verse 16. Why is the old veil taken away when someone turns to the Lord? Paul answers, “The Lord is Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is—freedom!” The Greek word *eleutheria* (“freedom” or “liberty”) means “absence of constraint relating to personal choice or action.” [Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 122]. The veil—away with it! Paul is not giving a trinitarian formulation here; rather, he is exalting the liberating power of the Lord as Spirit! Compare John 4.24. Just as God is Spirit, the Lord is Spirit. And, as “the first man Adam became a living being, the last Adam [that is, Christ] became a life-giving spirit” (see 1 Corinthians 15.45). Those who turn to Christ, the Spirit of light and life, remove the old veil of darkness and pass from the death of slavery to the life of freedom and liberty. As a result, the one who possesses the Spirit of Christ has been transformed from a former state of bondage into an unshackled experience of unquestionable liberty (compare Romans 8.15; Galatians 4.6-7).

But this change from bondage of fear to the freedom of affection is not license to do as we please. This liberty in Christ is liberty to change, to grow, to be transformed by the power at work within us—the Holy Spirit. Paul unequivocally affirms that we (i.e., freed or liberated believers in Christ) all (i.e., rather than one, like Moses) with unveiled face (i.e., no fear, nothing to hide, no need of concealment) behold “as in a mirror the glory of the Lord” (verse 18). The

image used by Paul can mean “to see as in a mirror” (i.e., behold) or “to show as in a mirror” (i.e., reflect), and this ambiguity is indicated by the various English translations here. [Compare Vincent, *Word Studies*, Volume III, 308]. A mirror is a funny, unusual thing. One can reflect their own image and see their own image at the same time. And it is a continuous process, as long as we stand before the mirror. This seems to be Paul’s emphasis. As we fix our gaze on Jesus, “the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12.2; NKJV), we are continuously and simultaneously beholding and reflecting the “glory of the Lord.”

As a result, we are changed, we are transformed into his likeness, or, as Paul says, “into the same image from glory to glory.” In Christ, there is freedom to change and to grow. The Greek word *metamorphoo*, be changed or be transformed, means to “undergo complete alteration” and is used of the change of appearance or transfiguration of Jesus in Matthew 17.2 and Mark 9.2. [Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 230]. With the old veil removed, by seeing and reflecting the radiance of his beauty, we become more and more like him. And it is “from glory to glory.” There is no fading away as in the case of Moses. Nor is it a superficial glory. This glory, from the Lord of glory, penetrates to the spiritual nature of the inner person.

Furthermore, this change, this transformation in Christ is not a sudden change. It is continual and gradual (cf. “from strength to strength,” Psalm 84.7; “brighter and brighter,” Proverbs 4.18). And it passes on from this life to the next, because it is eternal (see 1 John 3.2). This whole work of transformation in Christ is “from the Lord, the Spirit.” “There is no transforming power so effectual as spirit, and in this case it is the Lord Christ himself who is the transforming power.” [Plummer, *Second Corinthians*, 109].

Conclusion—Where the Spirit of the Lord Is—Liberty.

In Christ, there is liberty of great boldness and openness (verses 12-13). There is liberty and freedom from external constrain, since the old veil is taken away (verses 14-16). And there is liberty to be changed, to be transformed into the image of Christ, from glory to glory (verses 17-18). All this we experience from the one who is Lord, who is Spirit.

GALATIANS

Author: Paul, the apostle (1.1; 5.2).

Destination: The two possibilities are: (1) territorial Galatia, or (2) provincial Galatia. See Special Study: Destination of Paul's Letter to the Galatians.

Origin & Date:

1. From Antioch of Syria and immediately following the first missionary tour of Paul and before the Jerusalem council of Acts 15, about AD 49.
2. From Antioch of Syria and right after the Jerusalem council of Acts 15, about AD 49.
3. From Corinth toward the end of the second missionary tour of Paul, about AD 50/51.
4. From Ephesus during or near the close of his three-year stay there (i.e., Acts 19.1ff.; 20.31), about AD 54-57.
5. From Macedonia during Paul's third missionary tour (see Acts 18.23–21.17), about AD 56/57.
6. From Corinth during Paul's third missionary tour prior to his writing to the church at Rome, about AD 56/57.
7. From Rome while imprisoned there (Acts 28.11 ff.), about AD 62.

Theme: “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (3.26-29).

Occasion: Paul had founded these churches on his first missionary tour (Acts 13, 14). He visited these churches again on both his second (Acts 15.36–16.6) and third (Acts 18.23) tours. During his protracted absence from Galatia (while in Achaia, Macedonia, or Asia), Jewish teachers came to the region and violently opposed Paul. They denied his authority as an apostle and attacked the doctrine of grace in Christ. Paul, unable to return to the area at that time, writes this letter in haste.

Purpose: Paul addresses the challenges by:

- (1) basing salvation on the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, 1.1-5;
- (2) affirming the divine origin of his gospel, 1.6–2.10;
- (3) showing the consistency of his conduct with his message, 2.11-21;
- (4) defending the doctrine of justification by faith, 3.1–4.31;
- (5) appealing to the Galatians to resist any legalistic yoke of slavery, 5.1-12;
- (6) defining the life of freedom in Christ, 5.13-26;
- (7) teaching patience, sympathy, individual responsibility, and sharing, 6.1-10;
- (8) warning the Galatians concerning the Judaizers, 6.11-18.

Outline [Adapted from Betz, *Galatians*, vii.-ix.]:

- I. Prescript, 1.1-5, the author, the recipients, doxology.
- II. Introduction, 1.6-10, the problem, the curse, Paul's motivation.
- III. The facts of Paul's gospel.
 - A. Received by divine revelation not human tradition, 1.11-12.
 - B. Paul's early experience, 1.13-24.
 - C. Paul's experience at Jerusalem, 2.1-10.
 - D. Paul's experience at Antioch, 2.11-14.
- IV. The proposition—justification by faith in Christ and not by observing the Law, 2.15-21.
- V. The proofs.
 - A. First argument—The Galatians' experience of the Spirit, 3.1-5.
 - B. Second argument—God's promise to Abraham, 3.6-14.
 - C. Third argument—Common experience of human wills applied, 3.15-18.
 - D. Fourth argument—The limited purpose of the Law, 3.19-25.
 - E. Fifth argument—Christian affirmations that sonship comes through faith, not the Law.
 1. Clothed with Christ at baptism, 3.26-27.
 2. A common Master; from the seed of promise, 3.28-29.
 3. Recipients of the Spirit; adopted children and heirs, 4.1-7.
 4. A question, 4.8-11.
 - F. Sixth argument—Paul's friendship, 4.12-20.
 - G. Seventh argument—The allegory of Sarah and Hagar, 4.21-31.
- VI. Exhortations.
 - A. Warnings against acceptance of the Jewish Law, 5.1-12.
 - B. Warnings against corruption of the flesh, 5.13-24.
 - C. Recommendations for Christian living, 5.25–6.10.
- VII. Postscript, 6.11-18.

Notes:

1. Paul's personal history and the chronology of his visits to Jerusalem (1.11–2.10).
2. The early doxology (1.5).
3. The self-authentication (6.11).
4. The allegory of chapter 4.

Projects:

1. Make a study of Paul's use of the Old Testament in Galatians.
2. Harmonize the visits of Paul to Jerusalem in Galatians with his visits to Jerusalem in the book of Acts.
3. Argue a date for Galatians.
4. Argue a destination for Galatians.
5. Examine Paul's thinking on "the law" in Galatians, and prepare a paper called, "The Relationship of Faith and Law in Paul's Letter to the Galatians."

SPECIAL STUDY: DESTINATION OF PAUL’S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

- I. Where were “the churches of Galatia”?
 - A. The significance is not “north Galatia” versus “south Galatia.”
 - B. Did Paul write his letter to Christians in ethnic Galatia using the old Hellenistic designation (the “territory hypothesis,” *landschaftshypothese*)?
 - C. Or, did Paul write his letter to Christians in Antioch, Lystra, Derbe, Iconium, in Pisidia and Lycaonia, using the Roman provincial designation (the “province hypothesis,” *provinzhypothesen*)?

- II. The Territory Hypothesis.
 - A. This is the traditional position even until the 1800s (see Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 18ff.).
 - B. The reasons for this view are as follows.
 1. There is no evidence that the word “Galatia” ever was applied to any group of people other than the descendants of the Gauls who settled the northern mountainous area of Asia Minor (cf. 3.1).
 2. Luke’s ordinary use of the term is geographical not provincial.
 - a. Acts 13.13, Pamphilia (Perga).
 - b. Acts 13.14, Pisidia (Antioch).
 - c. Acts 14.6, Lycaonia (Lystra and Derbe).
 3. Paul and his companions visited the territory of Galatia.
 - a. Acts 16.6, “Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia,” refers to two districts and is a geographical designation.
 - b. Acts 18.23, “Paul . . . traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia,” also is a geographical note.

- III. The Province Hypothesis.
 - A. This view appeared for the first time in works by Schmidt (1748) and Mynster (1825). [Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 192; cf. the statement by Ramsay, *Galatians*, 2ff.].
 - B. Objections to the territory hypothesis are as follows.
 1. There are different ways to interpret Acts 16.6 and 18.23.
 - a. Acts 16.6 reads in the Greek, *tan Phrugian kai Galatikan choran*, literally, “the Phrygia and the Galatian country.” This means that Paul and his companions passed through the region of the province of Galatia known as Phrygia.
 - b. Acts 18.23 reads similarly in the original, *tan Galatikan choran kai Phrugian*.
 - c. Note Luke’s references to “Asia,” “Mysia,” “Bithynia,” and “Macedonia” in Acts 16.6-9.
 2. Luke cannot be restricted to the use of old Hellenistic designations (cf. Acts 19.21).

3. Arguments for the province hypothesis are as follows.
 - a. Paul ordinarily uses the title of the Roman province in addressing churches he founded, for example, in Achaia, Asia, Macedonia (see 1 Corinthians 16.1; Galatians 1.2; 2 Timothy 4.10; cf. 1 Peter 1.1).
 - i. Galatians 1.21 may be an exception.
 - ii. Here, Paul is relating his itinerary.
 - b. No record has been preserved of Paul organizing churches in old Galatia.
 - c. Barnabas is mentioned in the letter to the Galatians (2.1, 9, 13).
 - i. This is more meaningful if the letter is addressed to churches in provincial Galatia, since Barnabas visited this area with Paul during their first missionary endeavor (Acts 14).
 - ii. But Barnabas also is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 9.6, and according to Acts he was not with Paul in Corinth.
 - d. The northern region was less civilized and less accessible by road than the southern region, so Paul would most likely have rested in the southern area during his illness (Galatians 4.13).
 - e. The presence of Judaizing agitators in the northern towns is less probable than their presence in the southern towns. The latter lay on the direct route of travel between Palestine and the Aegean ports, and a Jewish population specifically is mentioned in Pisidian Antioch and in Iconium (Acts 13.14; 14.1). Also, Derbe and Lystra were accessible to the Jews (Acts 14.9).
 - f. The collection delegation contained no representative from territorial Galatia.
 - i. See 1 Corinthians 16.1.
 - ii. Acts 20.4 mentions persons from the provinces of Macedonia (Berea, Thessalonica), Asia, and Galatia (Gaius of Derbe and Timothy).
 - iii. However, no representative from Achaia is mentioned (unless Titus is assumed), and whether or not these individuals were “collection delegates” is disputable.
 - g. The intention of Luke in Acts is to provide background material for the letters of Paul.
 - i. Under this assumption, Luke’s correspondence with “Theophilus” includes the Gospel of Luke, the Acts of Apostles, and a collection or group of letters of Paul.
 - ii. Luke, by relating in Acts the founding of churches in provincial Galatia, indirectly asserts the destination of Paul’s letter to them.

NOTES ON THE GAULS AND GALATIA

The Gauls were a people, often called Celts (Greek *keltoi*) by classical writers, who were found chiefly in what is now France and North Italy. They invaded Macedonia, Achaia, Thrace, and even Asia Minor where many settled and became known as Galatians. [see *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Volume II, 356; *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 453, 458].

1. They invaded Italy and captured Rome about 390 BC. Brennus, the leading Gaul, attacked southward. Another Brennus attacked eastward but was defeated at Delphi in Greece about 281 BC.
2. They invaded cenral Asia Minor in the third century BC, around 278-277. [Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 214].
3. About 240 BC, King Attalos of Pergamum limited their territory to the river regions of the Halys and the Sangarios, along with the towns of Ancyra, Pessinus, and Tavium. [Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 191].
4. In 64 BC, after the Roman conquest of the Near East, Pompey divided the territory of Galatia. Amyntas was appointed king of Pisidia and Phrygia. Polemon was made king of Lycaonia and Isauria. Twenty-eight years later, under the administration of Mark Antony, in 36 BC, Amyntas was given Galatia and Lycaonia. At the death of Antony, Amyntas took over Pamphylia, Cilicia, and Derbe. [Tenney, *Galatians*, 46].
5. In 25 BC, the last king of the Galatians, Amyntas, left behind his kingdom to the Romans who made it a province with Ancyra as the capital. [Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 191]. This province consisted of ethnic Galatia, Pisidia, parts of Lycaonia, Isauria, Phrygia, Paphlagonia, and Pontus. In AD 41, Derbe was restored to Galatia and Lystra and Antioch were made *coloniae*. In AD 63, Pontus Polemoniicus was added by Nero to the province.
6. The extent of the territories and towns assimilated into the province of Galatia changed many times.

ROMANS

Author: Paul, the apostle (1.1).

Destination: Paul is writing to both Gentile and Jewish Christians in the Imperial City of Rome (1.7, 15).

Origin: Romans was written from Corinth. Note the mention of the eastern seaport Corinth, Cenchreae (16.1). Note also the mention of Gaius and Erastus (16.23; cf. 1 Corinthians 1.14). An inscription found at ancient Corinth reads, “Erastus, for the office of aedile, laid [the pavement] at his own expense.” Could this Erastus be “the treasurer of the city” (NKJV) that Paul mentions in Romans 16.23?

Date: Romans was written during Paul’s stay of three months in Corinth (i.e., his third missionary tour; see Acts 20.3; cf. Romans 15.25-27), so about AD 56 or 57.

Theme: Paul explains to the Romans the righteousness of God, a righteousness revealed from faith to faith in the gospel (1.16-17).

Occasion: Paul anticipates a visit to Rome on his way to Spain (15.24), so he prepares the Christians in Rome for his coming. He desires to preach the good news of Jesus to the Gentiles in the city, to impart spiritual gifts to other believers (1.11; 15.20-21), and to receive help from the Romans for his trip to Spain. Using the opportunity of the visit of Phoebe, a deaconess of the Cenchrea church (16.1), to the Imperial City, Paul communicates his plans to the Christians at Rome.

Purpose: “Paul deals with the fundamental Christian principle of ‘righteousness’ as contrasted with the Jewish approach, and then discusses the problem of Israel’s failure and her relationship to the universal Christian Church.” [Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 399].

Outline:

- I. Introduction–salutation; personal plans; the gospel–the revealing of God’s righteousness, 1.1-17.
- II. The Basis of God’s Righteousness
 - A. All men are sinners, under law, and in need of God’s righteousness, 1.18–3.20.
 - B. The cross, proclaimed in the gospel, is the demonstration and the ground of God’s righteousness, 3.21-31.
 - C. The scriptures, especially from the case of Abraham, testify to God’s righteousness, 4.1-25.
- III. The Results of God’s Righteousness
 - A. God’s righteousness brings salvation from wrath and condemnation, 5.1-21.
 - B. God’s righteousness brings freedom from sin, 6.1-23.
 - C. God’s righteousness brings deliverance from law, 7.1-25.
 - D. God’s righteousness brings freedom from death by the power of the Holy Spirit, 8.1-39.
- IV. The Problem of God’s Righteousness
 - A. Israel’s rejection is due to their rejection of God’s sovereign plan, 9.1-29.
 - B. Israel’s rejection is due to their rejection of God’s righteousness, 9.30–10.21.
 - C. Israel’s rejection is not a rejection of Israel, 11.1-36.
- V. The Renewal Brought About by God’s Righteousness
 - A. God’s righteousness works sacrifice and transformation, 12.1-2.
 - B. God’s righteousness works humility and brotherly love, 12.3-16.
 - C. God’s righteousness works love and good instead of hate and evil, 12.17–13.14.
 - D. God’s righteousness works tolerance concerning scruples, 14.1–15.13.
- VI. Conclusion–exhortation; personal plans; greetings; doxology, 15.14–16.27.

Notes:

1. The textual problems of chapters 15 and 16.
2. The long list of greetings in chapter 16.
3. Note the calm, relaxed tone of the letter. Compare this with Galatians.
4. Note the great themes of Christian doctrine in the book of Romans, but some notable teachings are omitted (e.g., the second coming, the Lord's supper, church polity).

Projects:

1. Argue a purpose for Romans from internal evidence.
2. Develop a paper titled, "The Righteousness of God in the Book of Romans."
3. Prepare a detailed exegesis of chapter 5.12-21.
4. Examine and outline Paul's thought in chapters 9–11.
5. Thoroughly discuss the textual problems of chapters 15 and 16.

SPECIAL STUDY: IMPORTANT WORDS IN PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

Atonement (*katallage*)

This word appears in the King James Version at 5.11. This inaccurate translation is the only occurrence of “atonement” (at-one-ment) in the New Testament. “Atonement” implies the sacrifice of Christ itself rather than the results of his sacrifice which is the proper meaning for *katallage*. Therefore, “reconciliation” is the preferred translation (so ASV).

Reconciliation (*katallage*)

1. Properly denotes to change, exchange (especially of money); hence, of persons to change from enmity to friendship, to reconcile.
2. Adjustment of a difference; restoration to favor.
3. The order of reconciliation is important. Man is reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5.18, 19; cf. 5.11; 11.15).

Death (*thanatos*) - literally, separation

1. Physical death or the separation of the spirit or soul from the body (James 2.26; the Greek word is *nekros* here; cf. James 1.15 and 5.20 for his use of *thanatos*).
 - a. Natural death (8.38).
 - b. Penalty of natural death (5.10, 12).
 - c. The imminent danger of natural death.
 - d. The power or terrible consequences of natural death, that is, “death” personified (5.14, 17; 6.9).
2. Spiritual death - eternal separation of the spirit of man from God (1.32; 7.10; 8.6), or “the second death” (see Revelation 21.8). All those who are “dead in sin” when they undergo natural death will experience this second death.
3. Type of death Christians experience while alive in the body, for example, a cutting off from the forces that would bring about spiritual destruction (6.2; 7.4-6; cf. Ephesians 2.1).
4. “Death” used as a figure or as a metonymy (6.3). A “metonymy” is a figure of speech in which a word stands for something that word suggests. It is a sign for the thing that is signified, an effect for a cause (e.g., “he drank the whole bottle”). In Romans 6.3, Paul states that believers are baptized into the benefits of Christ’s death.

Faith (*pistis*)

1. Subjective
 - a. Conviction that a thing is right and involves the conscience (14.23).
 - b. Belief or trust in the Lord (3.25; 4.5, 9, 11-13) that is based on sufficient evidence (10.17).
2. Objective
 - a. Fidelity or faithfulness of an individual (i.e., the character of one who can be relied on) that causes others to put faith or trust in that person (3.3).
 - b. What a person believes or the content of belief; synonymous with the “gospel” (1.5; 16.26; cf. Jude 3).

Grace (*charis*) - unmerited favor or unmerited love

1. Graciousness or attractiveness.
2. Favor, grace, gracious care or help, goodwill (3.24).
3. Practical application of goodwill by man or by God and Christ.
4. Exceptional effects produce by divine grace above and beyond those usually experienced by Christians (1.5; 12.3; 15.15); power or endowment for ministry.
5. Thanks; gratitude (7.25).

In Romans, “grace” is contrasted with debt and works (4.4, 16; 11.6) and law (6.14-15).

Justification (*dikaiosis, dikaioma*)

1. The act of pronouncing righteous; justification, acquittal, vindication. Signifies the establishment of a person as just by acquittal from guilt (4.25).
2. The state of one who has been pronounced just. That person is right, just, and free from guilt (5.16).

Law (*nomos*)

1. Of law in general or any law such as a rule governing one’s actions, a principle, or a norm (7.23).
2. The Law of Moses (2.15, 18, 20, 26, 27; 3.19; 4.15).
3. By metonymy, the books that contain the Law of Moses (e.g., “the law and the prophets,” 3.21).

Today, we are not under a system or code of law, but we are under law.

Types of law:

- law to themselves (2.14)
- law and prophets (3.21)
- law of faith (3.27)
- law prior to Law of Moses (5.13)
- law of marriage (7.2)
- Law of Moses; cf. law of God (7.7, 22)
- law in members (7.23)
- law of the mind (7.23)
- law of sin (7.23)
- law of sin and death (8.2)
- law of the Spirit of life (8.2)
- law of righteousness (9.31)

- law of Christ (Galatians 6.2)
- law of liberty (James 1.25)
- royal law (James 2.8)
- law of a carnal commandment (Hebrews 7.16)

Peace (*eirene*)

1. Harmony or a right relation between God and man (5.1; 14.17; 15.13).
2. A common greeting signifying health or welfare (1.7).
3. The peace of God that is opposed to the wrath of God (2.10).

Propitiation (*hilasterion*)

An expiatory sacrifice, that is, a gift or sacrifice to atone for or to make amends for a person's sin (3.25). This word does not seem to be used by Paul in the sense of a sacrifice offered by pagan worshipers to appease the wrath of their gods, since in Christian thought it is God himself who provides the sacrifice. Rather, the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus is offered by God to satisfy the demands of justice, not to appease his wrath, even though his wrath and punishment are averted when his justice is met. The Greek word *hilasterion*, depending on context, carries with it the sense of satisfying a debt by appeasement, covering, or payment.

Redemption (*apolutrosis*)

1. A releasing effected by payment of a ransom; thus, redemption, deliverance, liberation. In the classical world, slaves or captives could be set free once the ransom was paid.
2. The state of being redeemed.
3. A releasing from sin (3.24); a releasing of the body from the grave (8.23).

Righteousness (*dikaioisune*) - uprightness, honesty, justness

1. The character of quality of being right or just.
2. The righteousness of God; his righteous character (3.25); his way of making sinners right or righteous (1.16; 10.3) by an “act of righteousness” (5.18).
3. The righteousness of man; man’s right standing with God (4.3, 6) based on faith; man’s right conduct (6.13, 16, 18, 19, 20; cf. Psalms 119, 172); man’s trying to be righteous, that is, his “own righteousness” (9.30-31; 10.1-3) based on law.

Salvation (*soteria*)

Deliverance or preservation from danger and death, especially spiritual death. Salvation is a process beginning at the point of forgiveness of sins and ending at the time of judgment. The gospel is God’s power for this deliverance (1.16; cf. 5.9, 10; 8.24; 10.11; 11.11; 13.11).

Sin (*hamartia*)

1. Transgression (*parabasis*), a stepping across God’s boundary line, which is an action of disobedience (4.15; 5.14).
2. Sin (*hamartia*), a missing of the mark, which is to fall short of God’s intended purpose (3.23; 3.25).
3. That which does not proceed from faith, which is a violation of one’s own conscience or conviction (14.23).
4. Personified, a governing or ruling principle or power (3.9; 5.12, 13, 20; 6.12; 7.11; 8.2).

Works (*ergon*)

1. Deed; action.
2. Occupation; task.
3. Accomplishment.

Various works include:

works of the law (2.15; 3.27)
good works; evil works (2.10; 13.3)
works of darkness (13.12)
work of God (14.20)
“work together” (8.28)

works of faith (Galatians 5.6; James 2.14ff.)

Wrath (*orge*) - anger

1. God's unfavorable reaction against sin (1.18).
2. God's future judgment, not arbitrary, but for guilt (2.5; 5.9).
3. God's judgment in the past (9.22).
4. God's judgment through civil authorities (13.4).

IMPRISONMENTS OF PAUL

According to Acts of Apostles, Paul suffered three imprisonments—at Philippi (Acts 16.19ff.), at Caesarea (Acts 23.33; 24.22-27; 25.4), and at Rome (Acts 28.16ff.).

Other evidence concerning Paul’s imprisonments and a severe trial he experienced (at Ephesus) come from his letters.

1. In 2 Corinthians 11.23, Paul speaks of experienced “far more imprisonments” (ESV) than other servants of Christ.
2. In 1 Corinthians 15.32, Paul writes, “I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus” (NASB). Is this to be viewed literally or metaphoricaly? See the immediate context (verses 29-34) and especially his comment, “I die daily” (verse 31).
3. In 2 Corinthians 1.8, Paul refers to a severe affliction that he experienced during his time in Asia, “For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself” (ESV).
4. In Romans 16.4, Paul greets Prisca and Aquila, and he adds, “who risked their necks for my life” (ESV).
5. Extrabiblical evidence mentions seven imprisonments of Paul (e.g., Clement of Rome, *To the Corinthians* 5.6) and Paul’s encounter with a lion (e.g., *Acts of Paul, Acts of Titus*).

While it is possible, although not at all certain, that Paul was imprisoned during his stay of three years in Ephesus, the evidence does not support the origin of any letter from Paul during such an imprisonment.

PHILIPPIANS

Author: Paul, the apostle (1.1).

Destination: The letter is written “to all the saints in Christ Jesus in Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons” (1.1). Note the following terms of endearment used by Paul for the believers at Philippi (from ESV): “my beloved” (2.12); “my brothers” (3.1; cf. 1.12; 3.17; 4.8); “my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown” (4.1); “you Philippians” (4.15).

Origin: Either from Caesarea or Rome.

Date: If from Caesarea, then about AD 57 (e.g., during the time Felix was procurator and before Paul’s appeal to Caesar; see Acts 24.22-27; 25.1-12; cf. 23.11; Philippians 1.25-26; Philemon 22). If from Rome, then about AD 61 or 62.

Theme: “I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ” (1.3-6; NRSV).

Occasion: Paul, who is in prison (“my imprisonment,” 1.7, 13, 14, 17; cf. “the whole praetorian guard,” 1.13; “Caesar’s household,” 4.22; NASB), receives a gift of financial support from the Philippians that is carried to Paul by Epaphroditus (see 4.10-20). After an illness during which Epaphroditus was “sick to the point of death” (2.27; NASB), the brother eagerly wants to return to Philippi. Paul uses this opportunity to send a letter to his Christian friends and supporters back in Macedonia which apparently is delivered to them by Epaphroditus (see 2.19-30).

Purpose: Paul uses this occasion to send a “thank you note” (4.10ff.) to the Philippians for their gift and to explain to the Philippians his situation in prison (1.12-26). Also, he urges the Philippians to unity in Christ (2.1-11), specifically the two sisters Euodia and Syntyche (4.2-3). And he calls the Philippians to holiness in living (2.12-18; 4.4-9), especially in light of anti-Christian opposition such as from the Judaizers (1.27-30; 3.1-4.1).

Outline:

- I. Greeting and introduction, 1.1-11.
- II. Missionary report, 1.12-26.
- III. Exhortation to unity and holiness, 1.27–2.18.
- IV. Intended plans, 2.19-30.
- V. Intended conclusion (?), 3.1.
- VI. Warning and doctrinal discussion, 3.2–4.1.
- VII. Concluding exhortations, thanksgiving for offering, final greetings, doxology, 4.2-23.

Notes:

1. Note the emphasis on sanctification (1.6; 1.9-11; 2.12-13; 3.7-16; 4.4-7).
2. For what purpose does Paul give the beautiful sentiments about Jesus in 2.5-11, sometimes called “a christological hymn” or “the kenosis passage”?
3. Note Paul’s mention of church leaders in 1.1.

Projects:

1. Prepare a detailed exegesis of the “christological hymn” of 2.5-11.
2. Argue an origin for Philippians from internal evidence. If necessary, use other “prison letters” of Paul.
3. Prepare a paper titled, “The Role of Sanctification in Paul’s Letter to the Philippians.”

SPECIAL STUDY: PAUL'S WARNING TO THE PHILIPPIANS (PHILIPPIANS 3.1-11)

Paul seems to come to a conclusion for this letter in 3.1, “finally” or “in conclusion” (*to loipon*, “for the rest”), since this expression often begins the concluding portion of his letters (cf. 2 Corinthians 13.11; 1 Thessalonians 4.1; 2 Thessalonians 3.1; Ephesians 6.10). But here in Philippians, his final words are diverted for some reason until 4.8. Perhaps he received more word from Macedonia about the situation there while he was composing the letter, but this is only conjecture. More likely, he used this concluding note to get their attention (cf. his use of the doxology in Galatians 1.5-6).

And it is a note of joy and possibly a farewell. The theme of rejoicing occurs frequently in Philippians (1.18; 2.18; 4.4). But in the case of the Philippians, the problems of disunity and Judaizing elements in the church motivate the apostle “to write the same things” to them. Paul typically concludes a letter with a warning against impending danger (see 2 Corinthians 13.10; 1 Thessalonians 4.1; 2 Thessalonians 3.14). Paul cared for the Philippians, so the repeating of fundamental teaching was both a “safeguard” for them and “not troublesome.”

Condemnation of Those Who Boast in their Flesh, verses 2-3

The threefold repetition of “look out for” indicates the forcefulness of Paul’s warning, as he ironically and precisely identifies these opponents of the gospel with three derogatory terms. Then he contrasts these with three phrases to describe true believers—“the dogs . . . the evildoers . . . those who mutilate the flesh . . . for we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh” (verses 2, 3; ESV for this study).

Paul denounces the Judaizers as “dogs” which is the term they applied to the Gentiles (e.g., those outside the covenant; cf. Matthew 15.26, 27; Revelation 22.15; see too Psalm 22.16, 20). Jews commonly called Gentiles or Greeks “dogs” and by such implied that the non-Jews were ceremonially impure (see Deuteronomy 23.18). Paul also calls the Judaizers “evildoers” (cf. 2 Corinthians 11.13). Are these “evil workers” to be equated with the ones who “preach Christ from envy and rivalry” that Paul mentions in 1.15-18? Probably not, since there Paul says that those who have “selfish ambition” do indeed “proclaim Christ” which causes him to rejoice.

Paul has no such sympathy for “the mutilators” of chapter 3. They boast their rightness with God on the basis of human, fleshly achievement. They contradict the righteousness of God on the basis of faith in Jesus. Therefore, as far as Paul is concerned, they are “enemies of the cross of Christ” (verse 18; cf. 1.28). Of them, Paul does not speak with joy. To the contrary, he speaks “with tears.” This is because these enemies promote a “mutilation” that leads to spiritual destruction (see Leviticus 21.5 where the same verb in the Septuagint is used of incisions forbidden by the Mosaic law; cf. 1 Kings 18.28). The circumcision of the Judaizers, in which they glory (e.g., as a basis for covenant relationship with God, see Acts 15.1), is no more than the mutilations and gashings of the wicked heathen (cf. Galatians 5.12; Deuteronomy 23.1).

On the contrary, true circumcision is not of the flesh but of the heart (Deuteronomy 10.16; 30.6), of the ear (see Jeremiah 6.10), and of the lips (see Exodus 6.12). Paul frequently contrasts physical and spiritual circumcision (i.e., Romans 2.25-29; Colossians 2.11-13; Ephesians 2.11; cf. Jeremiah 9.25-26), and he makes bold statements about the impotence of “circumcision” as well as “uncircumcision” for a right relation with God (see 1 Corinthians 7.19; Galatians 5.6; 6.15).

And the worship or service to God offered by the true circumcision is not that of external rites (e.g., the temple ritual). Rather than dependence on the flesh, those regenerated in heart and mind serve God by a complete and total dependence on his Spirit (cf. Romans 1.9). For Paul, the whole Christian life is in the Spirit (Romans 8.4; Galatians 5.25). And the true *latreia* or service of God no longer belonged to fleshly Israel (e.g., Romans 9.4-5) but to spiritual Israel who offers up “by the mercies of God” not dead but living sacrifices (i.e., “your bodies,” Romans 12.1). Therefore, unlike the Judaizers who tried to ground their boasting before God in their flesh (cf. Galatians 6.13, 14), the boasting of the truly circumcised, of spiritual worshipers, is in the Lord (see Jeremiah 9.23-24; 1 Corinthians 1.31; 2 Corinthians 10.17). As Paul states, “We are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.”

Paul’s Own ‘Mock’ Boast in the Flesh, verses 4-6

In order to refute their false thinking, Paul uses his own personal experience to imitate or mock the type of reasoning of the Judaizers. For Paul, his conversion from the Law of Moses to faith in Jesus as the Christ completely negates any notion of works righteousness as the basis for right standing before God. If the Judaizers think that they have an impressive argument to the contrary, Paul can go one better—“I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also,” he retorts (verse 4; cf. 2 Corinthians 11.18). And, with his *argumentum ad hominem* (“if anyone else thinks”; see 1 Corinthians 3.18; 11.16), he adds, “I have more . . . reason for confidence in the flesh.” Simply put, Paul’s argument for boasting in the flesh has greater legitimacy.

Paul highlights for the Philippians and their antagonizers his privileges by reason of birth and his accomplishments by way of choice (verses 5-6). Note the parallels with the apostle’s statements to the church at Corinth where the danger was just as real (2 Corinthians 11.22ff.). As a Jew, Paul was “circumcised on the eighth day.” Gentile proselytes to Judaism would be circumcised as adults. Ishmaelites were circumcised in their thirteenth year. Paul was born a Jew and circumcised accordingly (Genesis 17.12; Leviticus 12.3). He was “of the people of Israel.” Paul’s ancestors and Paul himself belonged to the fleshly covenant family of Israel (Romans 11.1; cf. 2 Corinthians 11.22). Here Paul uses the term “Israel” as he typically does to designate the natural descendants of Abraham, but for his use of the word to highlight spiritual descendants of Abraham, see Romans 9.6 and Galatians 6.16.

The apostle also descended from “the tribe of Benjamin.” As in Romans 11.1, the tribal identification no more than specifies the Israelite subfamily from which Paul descended. Perhaps his former appellation, Saul, may have come from the first Israelite king who was a Benjamite. But attempts to single out the tribe of Benjamin as especially honorable or pure ignore the extreme wickedness of some in the tribe who provoked a civil war among all the tribes that resulted in an almost total annihilation of the Benjamite populace (Judges, chapters 19 and 20).

Above all, Paul was “a Hebrew of Hebrews.” His ancestors and Paul himself did not adopt the customs, practices, and languages of the non-Jewish populace. They were *Hebraioi* and not *Hellenistai* (“Hellenists”; Acts 6.1). Paul spoke the Hebrew language and practiced Hebrew customs (Acts 18.18; 21.26, 40; 22.2). Although born in Tarsus (Acts 9.11; 22.3), the principal city of Cilicia and thoroughly Hellenized, Paul was educated by Gamaliel in Jerusalem and acquired strict training in the Law of Moses and the traditions of the rabbis. Paul is much more than just an Israelite. He is a Hebraist Israelite, or as he puts it, “a Hebrew of Hebrews.” Such was the pedigree of the apostle by reason of his fleshly birth of Jewish heritage.

Now he turns his attention to and recites his accomplishments within the same. Paul made certain choices based on important motivating principles of life (e.g., law, zeal, and righteousness). With respect to the Law and its interpretation, Paul chose to be “a Pharisee” (Acts 23.6; 26.5). With respect to the passion of life that drives an individual toward the accomplishment of important goals (e.g., zeal), Paul chose “to persecute the church” (Acts 8.3; Galatians 1.13-14). And with respect “to righteousness under the law,” not a true righteousness but a righteousness based on fleshly achievement in obedience to external ritual (e.g., the Pharisaic standard of righteousness), Paul could declare himself “blameless” (cf. Luke 1.6), and no one could argue otherwise. He had lived his “life before God in all good conscience” (Acts 23.1) and had every reason to boast.

The Antithesis of Boasting in the Flesh, verses 7-11

Paul now renounces all his mock boasting, all his past achievements, all his privileges of birth for Christ. He says, “But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ” (verse 7). To make his point more emphatic, Paul repeats himself and affirms, “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (verse 8). And to make his argument a *tour de force*, he crescendoes and states, “For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish.” Paul repeats himself here in what could be called progressive parallelism. And his “what things,” “everything,” and “all things” cover the entire scope of his fleshly credentials, as it should have included that of the Judaizers too. Paul clearly rejects fleshly privileges and accomplishments in order to know Jesus as Lord.

Paul also, in typical rabbinic fashion (see Matthew 16.26), contrasts his “loss” with his “gain” (cf. 1.21). Paul willingly forfeits all in order to gain Christ, because “the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus” nullifies all other gains. This is not a mystical, gnostic type of knowledge but rather “knowledge” in the Hebrew sense. It is a personal experience of covenant communion with the Lord (i.e., Yahweh) and, in Paul’s case, through faith in Jesus (see 2

Corinthians 2.14; 4.4-6; 10.5; Ephesians 3.19). For such a “surpassing worth,” Paul considers all his achievements as *skubala*—“dung,” “excrement,” or “garbage waste.” Is Paul’s reference here to the food that is thrown away from the table and to the dogs, with a possible etymology being *to tois kusi ballomenon*? The Judaizers, according to Paul, are the real dogs, and to them belong all their fleshly accomplishments and privileges (i.e., “the garbage” from the feast).

For his part, and hopefully for the Philippian Christians as well, Paul gladly rejected his own fleshly righteousness based on the Law (e.g., *ten ek nomou*) for God’s righteousness based on faith in Christ (e.g., *ten ek theou . . . epi te pistei*). Paul happily exchanged such refuse or garbage in order to “gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of [his] own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God that depends on faith” (verse 9). “To be found” in Christ is to be justified by him or to be clothed with his righteousness (cf. Galatians 2.17). And to be “in Christ,” a common phrase of Paul, indicates union with Christ, a union that occurs at baptism (Romans 6.4-5; cf. 2 Corinthians 5.21).

This abandonment of personal righteousness (see Romans 10.3; Isaiah 64.6), that is based on the keeping of law (Galatians 3.21), gains the righteousness of God in Christ for the one who believes (Romans 3.21ff.; cf. Psalm 31.1; 71.2). The righteousness of Christ is credited or imputed to the one with faith as the means (see Romans 3.22; Galatians 2.16) and faith as the basis (cf. Acts 3.16) of that righteousness. Thus, Paul with joy and confidence can say, “That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead” (verses 10-11). Paul himself knew and wanted his brothers and sisters at Philippi to know that to accept God’s righteousness freely given in Jesus the Christ meant life instead of death. To follow after the Judaizers and their righteousness surely would bring death. But to follow after Christ and God’s righteousness, though it might bring suffering and even death in this world, most certainly would lead to life eternal—“the resurrection from the dead.”

COLOSSIANS

Author: Paul, the apostle (1.1; 1.23; 4.18).

Destination: The letter is addressed “to the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae” (1.2). Colossae was one of three towns of the Lycus valley in Asia Minor (also Laodicea and Hierapolis; see 2.1; 4.13, 15, 16).

Origin: Paul writes from Rome.

Date: About AD 61 or 62.

Theme: Christ, “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation” (1.15).

Occasion: Epaphras (1.7-8; 4.12-13; Philemon 23) gets word to Paul, who is in prison in Rome (4.3, 10, 18; cf. Philemon 1, 9, 10, 13, 23), about the faith of the believers in the Lycus valley (see 1.4, 9; 2.1) and about a certain heresy at Colossae that threatened the security of the church. Paul writes to the Christians at Colossae, and also to the Christians at Laodicea (see 4.16) to address this problem. He sends the letter by Tychicus (4.7; cf. Ephesians 6.21; Philemon 12), along with Onesimus (4.9; Philemon 10ff.).

Purpose: Paul writes to warn against the false teachings and false practices at Colossae, for example, a low view of Christ, philosophical speculations, ritual practices, angel worship, asceticism, exclusivism, and so forth. Donald Guthrie says that, based on the fragmentary evidence in chapters one and two, “the heresy was of a syncretistic Jewish-Gnosticizing type.” [*New Testament Introduction*, 549]. Paul also writes to instruct the Colossians regarding the Christian life, in chapters three and four. Note Paul’s encouragement of Archippus in his work at Colossae (4.17; cf. Philemon 2).

Outline:

- I. Greeting, thanksgiving, and prayer, 1.1-12.
- II. Doctrinal section—the person and work of Christ, 1.13-23.
- III. Personal section—the work of Christ through Paul, 1.24–2.5.
- IV. Doctrinal section—the fullness of life in Christ, 2.6-23.
- V. Practical section—the work of Christ in believers, 3.1–4.6.
- VI. Final greetings, instructions, farewell, 4.7-18.

Notes:

1. In what sense can Paul write, “I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions” (1.24)?
2. How would you describe the heresy at Colossae?
3. Note the Christian duties mentioned in 3.12–4.6.
4. Note the reference of Paul to a letter from Laodicea (4.16).

Projects:

1. From internal evidence describe the nature of the problems at Colossae that Paul addresses in the letter.
2. Prepare a paper called, “The Christology of Paul’s Letter to the Colossians.”
3. Compare the book of Colossians with the book of Ephesians. Are the similarities important or significant?

PHILEMON

Author: Paul (verse 1; cf. 9, 19), a prisoner of Christ Jesus (verse 1; cf. 9, 10, 13, 23).

Destination: This short letter is written “to Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker, to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in [Philemon’s ?] home” (verses 1-2). Was Philemon a resident of Colossae?

Origin: From Rome.

Date: About AD 61 or 62.

Theme: The debts of Christian love.

Occasion & Purpose: “It has traditionally been supposed that Philemon was a member of the Colossian church, who had in some way been converted to Christianity through the agency of Paul. His slave Onesimus after robbing his master absconded to Rome, where he came into touch with Paul. Through the apostle’s influence he became a Christian and proved very useful in ministering to Paul’s needs. But the apostle, having persuaded him that his duty was to return, writes this delicate letter appealing to Philemon to reinstate him as a ‘beloved brother.’” [Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 635].

Outline:

- I. Greeting, verses 1-3.
- II. Commendation of Philemon, verses 4-7.
- III. Appeal for Onesimus, verses 8-20.
- IV. Conclusion, verses 21-25.

Notes:

1. Note Paul's reference to himself as "the old man" (verse 9; the marginal note in both NEB and NASB reads "ambassador").
2. Paul evidently does not use an amanuensis (i.e., a scribe or personal secretary) to write this short letter (verse 19).
3. Does Paul expect to be released from prison (verse 22)?

Projects:

1. Prepare a paper titled, "Slavery in the Roman Empire during the First Century AD," or, "Slavery in the Writings of Paul."
2. Compare the "greetings" and "conclusions" of Paul's "late period" letters.
3. Prepare a detailed exegesis of the letter to Philemon.

EPHESIANS

Author: Paul, the apostle (1.1; cf. 3.1).

Destination: The letter is written “to the saints who are at Ephesus” (1.1; NASB). However, the words “in Ephesus” are lacking in a few early Greek manuscripts. This omission suggests that the original manuscript also omitted these words. To whom then was the letter written? Various possibilities have been argued. [See Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 508-514].

1. It was sent to Laodicea (as per Marcion’s canon; cf. Colossians 4.16).
2. It was a circular letter intended for all the churches of western Asia Minor.
3. It was Paul’s spiritual testament, an overview of his teachings and work.
4. It was an introduction or cover letter for a collection of Paul’s writings.
5. It was intended as a philosophy of religion for the whole Christian world.
6. It was a general safeguard against the spread of the heresy at Colossae.

Origin: From Rome.

Date: Either during Paul’s first Roman imprisonment (according to Acts of Apostles), about AD 61 or 62, or during Paul’s second Roman imprisonment (according to tradition), about AD 65.

Theme: “Now to him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen” (3.20-21; NASB).

Occasion & Purpose: Paul, “the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of (the) Gentiles” (3.1; cf. 4.1), not knowing the time of his death (cf. Philippians 1.19-26; 2 Timothy 4.6-8), writes in order to express his praise of God’s glory. He sends this treatise to Ephesus by Tychicus (6.21-22; cf. Colossians 4.7-8; 2 Timothy 4.12), who will inform them of Paul’s situation and will instruct them to circulate the letter to other churches as a general treatise from the apostle.

Outline:

- I. Salutation, 1.1-2.
- II. Prayerful Hymn of Doctrine, Chapters 1–3.
 - A. All spiritual blessings in Christ, 1.3-23.
 - B. Gentile and Jew given life, unity, and peace in Christ, 2.1-22.
 - C. Paul’s ministry of the mystery of Christ, 3.1-21.
- III. Exhortation to Faithful Living, Chapters 4–6.
 - A. Call to unity in the Spirit, 4.1-16.
 - B. Call to walk in Jesus, 4.17–6.9.
 1. The new life in Christ, 4.17–5.21.
 2. Household duties (*haustafel*), 5.22–6.9.
 - C. Call to battle against Satan, 6.10-20.
- IV. Closing, 6.21-23.

Notes:

1. Note the similarities between Ephesians and Colossians.
2. Note the apparent lack of personal contact with the readers in Ephesians (1.15; 3.2; 4.21).
3. Watch for key phrases—“the praise of his glory”; “the church”; “in Christ”; “in the heavenlies”; “the mystery of Christ”; and so forth.

Projects:

1. Argue a destination or a purpose for Ephesians from internal evidence.
2. Compare Paul’s use of *ekklesia* (“assembly” or “church”) in Ephesians with his use of the word in his earlier letters.
3. Prepare a paper called, “‘Spiritual Powers’ in the Writings of Paul.”

SPECIAL STUDY: THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS [from RSV]

The Believer's Blessings in the Holy Spirit

—The believer's security, 1.11-14

“Sealed with the promised Holy Spirit”

“The guarantee of our inheritance”

“To the praise of his glory”

—The believer's knowledge, 1.15-23

“A spirit of wisdom and of revelation”

“The eyes of your hearts enlightened”

“That you may know . . .”

—The believer's equality, 2.14-18

“Made us both one”

“Reconcile us both to God in one body”

“Both have access in one Spirit to the Father”

—The believer's status, 2.19-22

“No longer strangers and sojourners”

“Fellow citizens . . . members . . .”

“A holy temple to the Lord”

“Built . . . for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit”

—The believer's privilege, 3.1-6

“The stewardship of God's grace”

“Insight into the mystery of Christ”

“Revealed to . . . by the Spirit”

—The believer's power, 3.14-19

“The riches of his glory”

“Strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man”

“Christ . . . dwell in your hearts”

“Power to comprehend . . .”

The Believer's Responsibilities in the Holy Spirit

—Strive for peace and unity, 4.1-6

“Maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as . . .”

—Speak truthfully to minimize anger and sin, 4.25-32

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God,

in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption”

—Live wisely and welcome the Spirit, 5.15-20

“Be filled with the Spirit . . .”

—Fight against the devil and his evil forces, 6.10-17

“Take (up) the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”

—Communicate with the Spirit always, 6.18-20

“Pray at all times in the Spirit . . .”

1 TIMOTHY

Author: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope” (1.1).

Destination: Paul writes to Timothy (1.2), who apparently is in Ephesus (1.3). Note Paul’s strong affection for Timothy. He calls him “my true son in the faith” (1.2), “my son” (1.18), “O Timothy” (6.20; ESV).

Origin: Is Paul in Macedonia (see 1.3), or is this just a reference to his geographical movement after leaving Timothy in Ephesus? Does the book of Acts reflect an appropriate setting for the historical allusion in 1.3 (i.e., Paul goes to Macedonia, and Timothy stays in Ephesus)? The Greek participle in 1.3, *poreuomenos*, may indicate that Paul left Timothy en route for Ephesus (meaning “when I was going to” rather than “when I went into” Macedonia) and told him to stay and wait for him there.

On Paul’s second missionary journey, he and Silas go from Mysia to Macedonia (Acts 16.6-12). However, on this occasion, Paul does not visit Ephesus, since his missionary team was “forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia” (verse 6). Later, Timothy accompanies Paul and Silas to Macedonia (see Acts 17.14-15; 18.5). On Paul’s third missionary journey, he goes to Macedonia from Ephesus (Acts 20.1-6). But does Timothy go with him, or does Paul leave Timothy in Ephesus and then Timothy rejoins him during his stay of three months in Greece? See Acts 19.22; 2 Corinthians 1.1. According to 1 Timothy, Paul certainly was acquainted with the problems Timothy encountered at Ephesus as well as Timothy’s personal problems (1.20; 5.23).

Date: Realizing the difficulty in harmonizing the historical allusion in 1.3 with the geographical movements of Paul and Timothy in the narrative of Acts, most conservative scholars date this letter sometime between AD 63 and 65. This date presupposes Paul’s release from his first imprisonment at Rome.

Theme: “O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you” (6.20; NASB).

Occasion & Purpose: Recognizing the possibility of a delay in visiting Timothy in Ephesus (see 3.14-15), Paul writes to let Timothy know who and what he should shun and who and what he should promote.

Outline:

- I. Salutation, 1.1-2
- II. Warning Against False Teachers, 1.3-20.
- III. Church Order, 2.1–3.13.
 - A. Public prayer, 2.1-8.
 - B. Women, 2.9-15.
 - C. Overseers and deacons, 3.1-13.
- IV. Warning Against Apostasy, 3.14–4.16.
 - A. The nature of the church, 3.14-16.
 - B. The coming apostasy, 4.1-5.
 - C. Timothy’s role, his teaching and conduct, 4.6-16.
- V. Further Instructions, 5.1–6.19.
 - A. Treatment of older men, younger men, older women, younger women, 5.1-2.
 - B. Widows, 5.3-10.
 - C. Younger widows, 5.11-16.
 - D. Elders, 5.17-20.
 - E. Timothy, 5.21-25.
 - F. Slaves, 6.1-2.
 - G. False teachers, 6.3-10.
 - H. Timothy, 6.11-16.
 - I. The rich, 6.17-19.
- V. Conclusion, 6.20-21.

Notes:

1. Note the greater organization of the Christian communities at this time (e.g., the formal qualifications for overseers, 3.1ff.; but compare Acts 14.23; 20.17ff; Philippians 1.1).
2. The book contains much practical information for church leaders.
3. Note the “falling away” of 4.1ff. and its key characteristics.

Projects:

1. Argue the authorship for the “pastorals” (1 & 2 Timothy, Titus) from internal evidence.
2. Examine and discuss parallels (i.e., phrases, words, and so forth) between the “pastorals” and the rest of Paul’s letters.
3. Prepare a detailed exegesis of 2.8-15; 3.1-13; or 3.14–4.5.

SPECIAL STUDY: “QUALIFICATIONS” OF ELDERS-OVERSEERS (1 TIMOTHY 3.1-7)

“Faithful is the saying: If a certain one strives for the office of overseer, he desires a good work.” [Personal translation for this study, DWF].

Paul’s introductory statement concerns those who already have a desire for this office. The Greek verb translated “strives for” is *oregeomai*, meaning “to stretch oneself out,” thus indicating “to aspire to.” [Abbott-Smith, *Manual Greek Lexicon*, 322]. If an individual has the office of overseer as his aspiration or goal, that person has his heart set on a good and noble task. The magnitude of this task can easily be seen from the stipulations that follow. Anyone aspiring to the office of elder in the church would do well to consider the importance and the scope of this good work. This certainly is a trustworthy and faithful saying.

Negatively, the statement is not to be taken as an added qualification about whether or not an individual desires the office. That is not Paul’s primary purpose, although such might be inferred from his statement. Why would a man who had no desire whatsoever allow himself to be appointed elder anyway? However, the church needs to encourage Christian men to prepare themselves to serve in this capacity as leaders. And any Christian men possessing satisfactory spiritual and moral qualities should consider prayerfully their responsibility to God in light of the ongoing need for strong leaders in the church. In these ways, desire for the office of overseer can be cultivated lovingly and patiently.

“Therefore, the overseer must be above reproach.”

The “good work” of the overseer involves among other things being an example of godly Christian living to the flock (1 Peter 5.3) and being a representative of the church to the unbelieving community. For these reasons it is necessary for the elder-overseer to be above reproach, that is, above censure or above rebuke. In the words of Titus 1.6, he must be blameless.

Does this mean that the elder-overseer must be perfect? Must he never make a mistake? No, this is not what Paul means. Paul does not mean blameless as regarding sin. Rather, he means blameless as regarding the qualifications of the office of elder. The overseer, like any believer, is counted as blameless concerning sin through the blood of the cross of Christ (see Colossians 1.22) and through the enabling power of the risen Lord Jesus (see 1 Corinthians 1.8). He is blameless concerning sin, not due to any personal merit but only because Christ as his substitute is blameless. Just like any other believer, the elder stands in need of the grace of God. The congregation should not, therefore, expect an elder to be perfect. He will make mistakes as he strives to grow in God’s grace in his shepherding of God’s flock under the guidance of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ (1 Peter 5.1-4).

Yet, the church has every right to expect of its spiritual leaders the maturity of Christian character demanded by the qualifications given. In areas of self-control and orderliness of life, the elder-overseer must be above censure. The nature of the office deserves no less, because as Paul says, “An overseer is entrusted with God’s work” (Titus 1.7). The following comments will look at the specific areas in which an elder-overseer is to be blameless.

“The husband of one wife.”

Paul restricts the office of elder to those men who are “the husband of one wife.” The explanation of this phrase lies in an understanding of: (1) what constitutes the husband-wife union; and (2) what legitimately can sever that union. According to scripture, there are two grounds for breaking the husband-wife covenant of marriage—death (see Romans 7.2) and *porneia* or sexual immorality (see Matthew 19.9).

Death. If a man becomes a widower due to the death of his wife, he is, as implied by Paul in Romans 7.2, released from the law of marriage. At this point, he is unmarried or not a husband. If he marries, he becomes the husband of one wife. Therefore, his marriage after the death of a former spouse would not disqualify him from serving as an overseer.

Porneia. *Porneia* is a general term in the Greek language that includes all kinds of unlawful sexual intercourse (for example, adultery, bestiality, homosexuality, and so forth). It is the word translated “immorality” (NIV) in Matthew 19.9. If a man divorces his wife on the grounds of *porneia*, he is released from the law of marriage. This is the exception given by Jesus in Matthew 19.9. At this point, he is unmarried or not a husband. If he marries, he becomes the husband of one wife. Therefore, his marriage after divorcing a former spouse on the grounds of *porneia* would not disqualify him from serving as an overseer.

What is under scrutiny by Paul is the practice of polygamy. “Collective polygamy” or more than one spouse at the same time seems to have been practiced in the early centuries on a limited basis by certain Jews. Josephus remarks, “It is the ancient practice among us to have many wives at the same time.” Justin Martyr accuses the rabbis of sanctioning four or five wives at a time. Herod the Great had nine wives. This practice, however, seems to have been the exception and not the rule. Much more widespread was the practice of “successive polygamy” or more than one spouse in successive marriages (compare the Samaritan woman of John 4). “Seldom do marriages last until death,” reads the tombstone of the wife of Quintus Vespilla (dated about 19 BC). Marriage in the Roman empire lost its sanctity. It was entered into lightly, since it was annulled easily. Consequently, divorce increased and marriage became unpopular. Among the Jews the marriage bond also deteriorated, one reason being the easy availability of the certificate of divorce (see Matthew 19.7). Paul seems to have this latter problem of “successive polygamy” in mind when he writes, “the husband of one wife.” Realizing that men who had several wives in succession might be or already had been converted to the faith, Paul prohibits these Christian men from serving as overseers. It is important that leaders in the church uphold God’s intent and purpose for marriage in their family lives.

“Temperate.”

The elder-overseer must be “temperate” (compare 1 Timothy 3.11; Titus 2.2). The Greek term is *nephalios*. The verb form is used elsewhere for spiritual soberness (1 Thessalonians 5.6, 8; 1 Peter 4.7; 5.8). The basic meaning seems to be “self-control” and especially self-control in the fulfillment of bodily desires. The overseer must be a man who has the passions and desires of his flesh under control.

“Prudent.”

The elder must be “prudent” (compare Titus 1.8; 2.2, 5). He must be “sensible” (RSV) and “self-controlled” (NIV) in judgment. Because the overseer is a steward of precious souls, he must not be an individual who makes hasty and superficial decisions based on immature thinking or insufficient evidence.

“Honorable.”

The elder must be “honorable” (“dignified,” RSV; “respectable,” NIV). The Greek word is *kosmios* and means in its verbal form “to put in order; to adorn; to decorate.” [Arndt and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 445]. See also 1 Timothy 2.9. As an example of God’s way of living to God’s people, the overseer needs to live an orderly life that demonstrates good behavior.

“Not a wine-bibber.”

The Greek word *paroinos* indicates one who tarries at wine, that is, one who drinks too much wine. It is unclear whether Paul speaks of the commonly used unfermented wine of his day or of the fermented stronger drink. Possibly the latter is intended. If so, excess would lead most likely to drunkenness, an excess clearly contrary to the lifestyle of the believer in Jesus (Galatians 5.21; Ephesians 5.18). Verse three indicates that the spirit of the Christian leader must be marked by control rather than violence, brawling, and contentiousness, and these are examples of uncontrol that can be caused by the excess of wine-bibbing. Such control must extend even to dietary habits, and especially with respect to intoxicating drinks. See too Titus 1.7 and the similar qualification for deacons in 1 Timothy 3.8.

“Not violent, but gentle; not quarrelsome.”

The word translated “violent” can be used to indicate a bully or a pugnacious person. The power and authority of the position of elder might tempt an individual to habitually boss, push, or bully others. This is wrong. There is a right way to rule a church, and there is a wrong way to rule a church. The right way to rule a church is with a gentle spirit. Kindness and firmness are not mutually exclusive. Both are necessary traits for God’s leaders. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, ruled his disciples with kindness and firm guidance. Good pastors of the local congregation likewise will shepherd their flock with tenderness and not sacrifice or yield any principle of truth.

The attitude of the bully leads to strife and disunity. This counters what God intends for his people—peace and harmony. Godly Christian leaders must dedicate themselves to being peacemakers. Too often it is the leaders of a local church that destroys the unity necessary for growth and vitality. This should not be. Elders-overseers must be just as strong in their fight for Christian unity as in their fight against sin and Satan (see Ephesians, chapter 4). Any man prone to quarreling and arguing over insignificant, petty matters is not fit to be a shepherd of God’s flock. The elder must not be quarrelsome.

“No lover of money.”

Here Paul lays down a prohibition against greed. Greed is a disease that robs the soul of true joy. One who is never satisfied with what he or she has, whether it be power, position, or possessions, will never have any peace of mind or satisfaction. This is why scripture tells us, “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have” (Hebrews 13.5). The attitude of the overseer is to be the same as the attitude of Christians in general. The elder must show Christian contentment in his daily living. It will not do to have leaders in God’s kingdom, a kingdom not of the this world, serving the god of greed (see Colossians 3.5). God’s people must be led to fight against Satan’s lies regarding the acquiring of more and more. But greed is not gain in the true sense. Greed is misery and ruin and a poverty of spirituality.

Does this prohibit the elder from honest, profitable enterprise? No, not at all. What is condemned is the unquenched desire for more and more, not the gain itself (see Titus 1.7 and the similar requirement for deacons in 1 Timothy 3.8). Gain becomes greed when a man selfishly makes the acquiring of something his primary objective. To the contrary, God’s servant humbly accepts power, position, or possessions as God’s gifts to use in serving others and to glorify God.

“Hospitable.”

Christians are admonished to “offer hospitality to one another without grumbling” (1 Peter 4.9). Compare Romans 12.13 and Hebrews 6.10. Christians also are told to “not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it” (Hebrews 13.2). Compare 3 John 5. If the attitude of the church as a whole is to be that of sharing God’s gifts with others, the attitude and practice of the elder-overseer cannot be anything less. Hospitality was important in the first century AD, because without the helpfulness of local church leaders to travelling Christian missionaries, the proclamation of the good news about Jesus would have been hindered. Compare the contrasting attitudes of Gaius and Diotrephes in the book of 3 John.

“ . . . able to teach.”

“The Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will” (2 Timothy 2.24-26; NIV).

As this is true of the evangelist, it is also true of the elder-overseer. He is the Lord’s servant. Notice the contrast in the above passage. One who is not able to teach usually resorts to quarreling and manipulation to assert his authority. To the contrary, the elder-overseer must be willing and able to impart Christian truths to the flock that he watches over. And he must be able to teach with gentleness and kindness. The how of teaching is just as important as the what of teaching. Certainly, an individual will grow in his ability to teach given opportunity and time. But an individual lacking the aptitude and desire to teach others should not be appointed elder.

“One who directs his own house well, having his children in submission with all dignity; because if he does not know how to direct his own house, how will he take care of God’s church?”

The testing ground for the man, who is above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, honorable, hospitable, able to teach, not a wine-bibber, not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of money, is the home. Elders are expected to have a Christian household. His children, from the Greek word *teknon* that denotes a minor under the authority of his or her parents, must be “believing” (see Titus 1.6). Here Paul applies the universal principle given by Jesus in Luke 16.10, “He who is faithful with very little is also faithful with much, and he who is unrighteous with very little is also unrighteous with much.” “Potential skill in a larger sphere can only be indicated by similar skill in a lesser sphere.” [Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 81]. A man, unable to govern his children through good and effective discipline, is not qualified to govern the church of God.

“Not a new convert . . .”

The Greek word translated “new convert” is *neophutos* and means literally “newly planted,” so in this context, “one newly planted in the Christian faith” or “a recent convert.” [Arndt and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 538]. The reason for prohibiting a new believer from serving as an elder-overseer is obvious. Quick promotion to such an important office in the church might lead to pride and instability. Paul gives the reason, “Or he might become conceited and fall into the condemnation of the devil.” The Greek word *tuphoo*, translated “become conceited” (“lifted up with pride”; KJV) means “to wrap in smoke.” [Abbott-Smith, *Manual Greek Lexicon*, 453]. This suggests that a new believer appointed as an elder might find himself in a cloud of conceit. Such an attitude would be equivalent to a spiritual fall, something that would deserve no less than the type of judgment reserved for the devil (i.e., for the sin of pride).

“It is also necessary for him to have a good testimony from the ones outside.”

This “good testimony” might seem difficult to attain when one considers the hostility of the non-Christian world toward believers in Jesus. But this qualification of a “good testimony” from unbelievers is essential in order to protect the church from unnecessary abuse. In general, the unbelieving world respects the noble ideas of the Christian faith, but unbelievers strongly and persistently condemn hypocritical Christians, especially if they are church leaders. Something is lacking in a Christian man’s character if the consensus of the outside opinion is unfavorable to him. This is not to say that the outside world arbitrates in the church’s choice of its officers. But it is to say that a total disregard and neglect of the thinking of the non-Christian public will damage the influence and evangelistic mission of the Lord’s people. The appointment to the office of elder-overseer of an individual with ill-repute among unbelievers will lead him to greater public disgrace and to a spiritual fall.

TITUS

Author: “Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1.1).

Destination: Paul is writing to Titus who is on the island of Crete (1.4, 5; cf. 1.12).

Origin: The only biblical record of Paul visiting Crete, apart from the book of Titus itself, is Acts 27.7ff. At this time, he is a prisoner, under Roman guard, and on his way to Rome. However, according to Titus 3.12, Paul plans to spend the winter at Nicopolis, and he wants Titus to come to him there. If this is the Nicopolis of Epirus or Western Macedonia, then the reference to Paul’s leaving Titus on Crete (1.5; cf. 2 Timothy 4.13, 20) is to a time not recorded by Luke in Acts (e.g., after the presumed release of Paul from his first Roman imprisonment). Note too that there is no indication in the letter to Titus that Paul is a prisoner. The “servant” or “bond-servant” of 1.1 is from a Greek word commonly used of slaves (cf. Romans 1.1) and does not mean necessarily imprisonment. The exact origin for Paul’s writing to Titus cannot be determined, but perhaps Rome or southern Greece.

Date: Sometime between AD 63 and 65.

Theme: “Set in order what remains” (1.5; NASB).

Occasion & Purpose: Paul left Crete to continue his work elsewhere, and he writes to Titus soon after to instruct him to put things in order among the Christians on the island. Titus is to develop leaders or “appoint elders in every town” (1.5) and to disciple the believers toward mature Christian faith.

Outline:

- I. Introduction, 1.1-4.
- II. The role of elders, 1.5-16.
- III. Sound doctrine, 2.1-15.
- IV. Good deeds, 3.1-11.
- V. Conclusion, 3.12-15.

Notes:

1. Note Paul's quote from a Cretan poet (1.12).
2. Learn the beautiful salvation passage (3.3-7).
3. Note the strong warning of 3.10-11.

Projects:

1. Compare and contrast Titus 1.5-9 with 1 Timothy 3.1-7.
2. Argue an origin for the letter to Titus from internal evidence.
3. Prepare a detailed exegesis of 3.1-11.

HEBREWS

- Author: No author is given in the letter itself. Is the author an apostle (see 2.1-4)? Notice too the concluding remarks in 13.18-25 (e.g., the reference to Timothy; “those from Italy”). Various conjectures have been made about the author, for example, Paul (Jerome), Barnabas (Tertullian), Apollos (Luther), Priscilla (Harnack), Silvanus (Godet), Philip (Ramsay), and so forth. Clement of Alexandria thought that Paul wrote the letter in Hebrew and Luke, the physician, translated it into the Greek language. Other possible authors have been suggested, but there is little to no concensus about the book’s author.
- Destination: The community of readers has a definite history, definite links with the writer, and it was part of a larger community of believers. “There is much to support the contention that they were a small house-community, which had broken away from and was at least acting independently of the main group of Christians to which they were attached.” [Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 700]. Possibly, the recipients were being influenced by the Essenes, so they could have been situated somewhere in Palestine. [Hughes, *Hebrews*, 10-15]. But other suggestions have been made, for example, Rome, Alexandria, and Ephesus.
- Origin: The expression “those from Italy” (13.24) lends weight to an Italian origin, but the phrase is ambiguous. “If it means Italian Christians who were away from Italy, that is, in some country other than Italy, this would exclude Italy as the place of the epistle’s origin. But if it means those who are from or of Italy, in the sense that Italy was their homeland and implying that these were Italian as distinct from non-Italian Christians in Italy, the letter would then have been written from some place in the Italian peninsula.” [Hughes, *Hebrews*, 16].
- Date: Sometime in the 60’s AD.
- Theme: The superiority of Jesus.
- Occasion & Purpose: “The whole practical thrust of the epistle is to persuade those to whom it is addressed to resist the strong temptation to seek an easing of the hardships attendant on their Christian confession by accommodating it to the regime of the former covenant, which they had professed to leave behind when they were baptized in the name of him who is the Mediator of the new covenant, and which in any case has been rendered obsolete by the advent of Christ and the inauguration of the new and eternal order of priesthood.” [Hughes, *Hebrews*, 10].

Outline:

- I. Christ Superior to the Prophets, 1.1-3.
- II. Christ Superior to the Angels, 1.4–2.18.
- III. Christ Superior to Moses, 3.1–4.13.
- IV. Christ Superior to Aaron, 4.14–10.18.
- V. Christ Superior as the New and Living Way, 10.19–12.29.
- VI. Concluding Exhortations, Requests, and Greetings, 13.1-25.

Notes:

1. Note that the writer's exhortations, unlike those in most of the letters of Paul, do not occur at the conclusion of the letter. Instead, they are interspersed with the expositions. Also notice the lack of any "epistolary introduction."
2. The writer reflects a skillful use of the Old Testament.
3. The book seems to be an extended homily in written form.

Projects:

1. Survey the author's use of the Old Testament. How does he introduce these scriptures and what use does he make of them?
2. Prepare a paper about the author of Hebrews. Defend your choice from internal evidence.
3. Develop a paper on the purpose of the book of Hebrews.

SPECIAL STUDY: CHRIST SUPERIOR TO AARON (HEBREWS 4.14–10.18)

- I. Christ Appointed as a Priest Forever in the Order of Melchizedek, 4.14–5.10.

- II. Exhortation to Growth and Maturity in Christ and Warnings Against Apostasy and Stagnation, 5.11–6.12.
 - A. Six foundations or “elementary teachings about Christ” (6.1-2).
 - 1. Repentance from dead works.
 - 2. Faith in God.
 - 3. Instruction about baptisms.
 - 4. The laying on of hands.
 - 5. The resurrection of the dead.
 - 6. Eternal judgment.
 - B. Six characteristics of the spiritual experience of those of whom it is said, “it is impossible . . . if they fall away” to bring them “back to repentance” (6.4-6).
 - 1. They once repented from dead works with faith unto God.
 - 2. They are “those who have once been enlightened.”
 - 3. They have “tasted the heavenly gift.”
 - 4. They have “shared in the Holy Spirit.”
 - 5. They have “tasted the goodness of the word of God.”
 - 6. They have tasted “the powers of the coming age.”
 - C. Their falling away not so much an act as an attitude leading to certain acts.
 - 1. Compare David’s sin which was not apostasy, see Psalm 51.
 - 2. Compare Demas (2 Timothy 4.10; Philemon 24; Colossians 4.14).
 - 3. See the parable of Jesus about the sower and the soils (Mark 4.18f.).
 - 4. Compare the falling away of Judas Iscariot and Simon Magus.

- III. The Certainty of God’s Promise Confirmed by Oath, 6.13-20.
 - A. Gives assurance and certainty to the eternal priestly office of Jesus.
 - B. Gives the believer “hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (6.19).

- IV. The Superiority of Jesus as High Priest Revealed, 7.1-28.
 - A. The Levitical priests were subservient through Abraham to Melchizedek (7.1-10).
 - B. The Levitical priests lacked perfection based on familial descent (7.11-19).
 - C. The Levitical priests had no everlasting, unchangeable oath from God (7.20-22).
 - D. The Levitical priests all died and failed to continue in their office (7.23-25).
 - E. The Levitical priests were weak, under law, and needed daily sacrifice (7.26-28).

- V. The Superiority of the Better and New Covenant of Jesus Detailed, 8.1–10.18.
- A. Jesus serves as high priest in heaven, “the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man” (8.1-2).
 - B. Jesus serves as high priest of a new covenant foretold by the prophets and based on better promises (8.3-13).
 - C. Jesus serves as high priest in the “greater and more perfect tabernacle” by the sacrifice of “his own blood” for “eternal redemption” (9.1-28).
 - 1. The tent and its furniture were material preparations for the sacrificial service (9.1-5).
 - 2. From the Christian perspective, the work of the priests in this tent was limited and temporary (9.6-10).
 - 3. The work of Christ with his own blood in the Most Holy Place was “once for all” and eternal (9.11-14).
 - 4. The work of Christ with his own blood effected “a ransom” in his work as “the mediator of a new covenant” (9.15-22).
 - 5. The work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary with his own blood was a complete and lasting sacrifice “to do away with sin” (9.23-28).
 - D. The service of Jesus as high priest by the sacrifice of his own body is final and supercedes the old, temporary, and shadowy system that went before (10.1-18).

2 TIMOTHY

Author: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus” (1.1).

Destination: Paul sends this letter “to Timothy, my dear son” (1.2; cf. “my son,” 2.1). Timothy is the son of Eunice and the grandson of Lois (1.5). He apparently is in Ephesus (see 1.15-18; 4.12, 13, 19).

Origin: Paul writes from prison in Rome (see 1.16-17; cf. 1.8; 2.9).

Date: About 64 or 65 AD.

Theme: “Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2.3; NASB).

Occasion & Purpose: Paul visits Ephesus. Here he is imprisoned, and he is taken to the city of Rome. The time of his death is near (see 4.6, 18). He writes to encourage Timothy to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2.1) and to persevere against false teachers (see 2.14–4.5) and persecutions (see 1.5–2.13; 4.14-18). Paul also writes to tell Timothy to “make every effort to come to me soon,” and “make every effort to come before winter” (4.9, 21; NASB). The apostle is “longing to see” his son Timothy, as he remembers their emotional departure (“your tears,” 1.4).

Outline:

- I. Greeting and Thanksgiving, 1.1-4.
- II. Encouragement against persecution at Ephesus, 1.5–2.13.
- III. Encouragement against false teachers, 2.14–4.8.
- IV. Concluding Words, 4.9-22.

Notes:

1. Notice Paul's mention of several individuals in chapter four—Demas (verse 10; cf. Colossians 4.14); Crescens (verse 10); Titus (verse 10; cf. 2 Corinthians 2.13; 8.23); Galatians 2.3 Titus 1.4); Luke (verse 11; cf. Colossians 4.14; Philemon 24); and Mark (verse 11; cf. Colossians 4.10).
2. Note the interesting reference that Paul makes about leaving behind a cloak at Troas with Carpus (4.13). In the same verse, Paul also mentions books or scrolls and parchments.
3. On Erastus and Trophimus in verse 20, compare Acts 19.22; 20.4; 21.29; and Romans 16.23.
4. Note the use of the Greek word *euaggelistes* or “evangelist” in 4.5 (cf. Acts 21.8; Ephesians 4.11). The word does not appear in 1 Timothy, and in the New Testament it means “one who publishes or proclaims the good news of God” (i.e., concerning Jesus). [Danker, *Concise Greek-English Lexicon*, 152].
5. Note Paul's charge to Timothy, “Perform the work of an evangelist, finish (or, complete) your ministry” (4.5; Independent Translation). The Greek word *diakonia* simply means “service” and is more general and less restricted in scope than “evangelist” (cf. 1 Timothy 1.12; Ephesians 4.12; Colossians 4.17).

Projects:

1. Argue an occasion for 2 Timothy from internal evidence.
2. Prepare a detailed exegesis of 4.1-8.
3. Outline and discuss the different reasons for faithfulness that Paul gives to Timothy in the letter.

LETTERS OF JAMES, PETER, JUDE, AND JOHN

The letters written by James, Peter, and Jude commonly are called “catholic” or “general” letters, since they are written to Christians over a broad geographical area—“scattered among the nations” (James 1.1), “scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia” (1 Peter 1.1), and “to those who have been called” (Jude 1; see section on “Destination” for Jude). These letters address the two main problems that faced Christians in the second half of the first century AD, that is, persecution and false teachers.

The letters written by John, including the book of Revelation, reflect conditions among the churches of western Asia Minor during the last decade of the first-century AD. In these books, John counters the false claims of gnosticism, the denial of apostolic authority (e.g., the evil of Diotrephes), and the threat of emperor worship.

JAMES

Author: “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1.1). Who is this James? There are five individuals in the New Testament who are called by this name.

- (1) James, the son of Zebedee (Mark 1.19; 3.17; Acts 12.2).
- (2) James, the son of Alphaeus (Mark 3.18).
- (3) James, the younger (Mark 15.40), son of a Mary (Mark 16.1).
- (4) James, the father of the apostle Judas, not Iscariot (Luke 6.16; Acts 1.13).
- (5) James, son of Joseph and Mary, brother of Jesus (Matthew 13.55; Mark 6.3; Acts 12.17; 15.13; 21.18; 1 Corinthians 15.7; Galatians 1.19; 2.9, 12; Jude 1; also Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9.1; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.23).

“In primitive Christianity there was only one James who was so well known and who assumed such a transcending position that his mere name would identify him sufficiently, James the brother of the Lord.” [Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 290]. The first James listed above was killed by Herod Agrippa I about 44 AD. The others were too insignificant.

Destination: This letter is sent “to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations” (1.1). Is this a reference to Jews, Jewish Christians, or Christians in general (e.g., both Jews and Gentiles as the “new Israel”)?

Origin: Probably Palestine (e.g., Jerusalem). It could be that James prepares this letter to be disseminated at one of the Jewish festivals in the city (e.g., Passover).

Date: Several dates for the letter of James have been conjectured: (1) before the crisis involving Judaizers (sometime between AD 49 and 51); (2) after the letter of Paul to the Romans (about AD 58); (3) before the death of James (about AD 62); or (4) before the fall of Jerusalem (the late 60’s AD).

Theme: The perseverance of pure faith during times of suffering from wealthy oppressors.

Occasion & Purpose: The eruption of intense persecution of Jewish as well as Gentile Christians in the Roman empire and the possibility of apostasy because of these trials causes James to write this letter in order to encourage believers to persevere. For a plausible historical reference, note Suetonius, “Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome.” [*Claudius* 25.4; from Novak, *Christianity and the Roman Empire*, 20; cf. Acts 18.2].

Outline:

1.1, Salutation

1.2-27, Perseverance during times of trial

1.2-8, Joy, wisdom, and persistent faith during trials

1.9-11, Poverty, riches, and “pride” during trials

1.12, Blessed reward of patient endurance through trials

1.13-18, Admonition not to blame God but recognize his goodness in trials

1.19-27, Encouragement to be obedient to the Word during trials

1.19-21, Sincerity in hearing the Word and the avoidance of anger and evil deeds

1.22-25, Folly of hearing but not doing and the blessedness of hearing and doing

1.26-27, Pure religion (help to the poor) instead of worthless religion (verbal criticism)

2.1-26, Love to all equally and not just to the rich during times of trial

2.1-4, Favoritism in the assembly condemned

2.5-7, Actions of the rich condemned, faith of those who are poor lauded

2.8-13, Admonition to follow the royal law and to love others with no favoritism

2.14-26, Admonition to have a faith that works and to help those who are needy

2.14-19, Need for charitable works proven by common sense

2.20-26, Need for works proven by the righteous deeds of Abraham and Rahab

3.1–18, Control of the tongue and restraint of reckless actions during times of trial

3.1-12, The need for and the difficulty of control of the tongue

3.1-2, Control of the tongue demanded especially of community leaders and teachers

3.3-8, Control of the tongue difficult because of its fiery evil and deadly poison

3.9-12, Control of the tongue necessary to be consistent in our praise of God, the Lord

3.13-18, The need for wisdom and knowledge to restrain reckless actions

3.13-14, By deeds of humility versus bitter envy and selfish ambition

3.15-16, Not by earthly, devilish wisdom that leads to discord and evil practices

3.17-18, By heavenly, pure wisdom that leads to peace, mercy, and righteousness

4.1-17, The evils of yielding to worldly ways, during times of trial, highlighted and condemned

4.1-4, Impure, sensual motives, that produce conflicts, disputes, and violence, condemned

4.1, Community conflicts the result of personal cravings and the war within

4.2, Community disputes, even murder, the result of coveting and a lack of prayer

4.3, Community poverty and dispossession the result of selfish, uncaring prayer

4.4, Conflicts and disputes, worldly not godly behavior, condemned as adultery

4.5-10, Submission to God with humility and penitent mourning demanded

4.11-12, Slander and judgment of fellow believers, and the law, condemned

4.13-17, Arrogant bragging and boasting about business and making money condemned

5.1-20, Perseverance in suffering during times of trial

5.1-12, Knowledge that rich oppressors will be judged yields patience

5.1-3, The rich judged ultimately by their own cankered material possessions

5.4-6, The rich judged by the Lord of hosts for their fraud, oppression, and murder

5.7-12, Call to be patient until the coming of the Lord in judgment on the rich

5.7-8, Like the farmer, be patient for the Lord's coming is near

5.9-10, Be patient with one another, for the Judge's presence is imminent

5.11, Like Job, be patient and persevere for the Lord is merciful

5.12, Be patient, refrain from rash oaths that can lead to condemnation

5.13-20, Community integrity, through prayer, forgiveness, and healing, yields patience

5.13, Prayer enjoined for suffering and songs of praise for cheerfulness

5.14, Prayer and anointing by community elders adjured for those with sickness

5.15, Prayer of faith effectual for saving and raising the sick and forgiving sins

5.16-18, Prayer of the righteous powerful and efficacious

5.16, Mutual confession of sins and mutual prayer instructed for healing

5.17-18, The persistent prayer of Elijah, also subject to human weakness

5.19-20, The life of the sinner saved by community rescue that covers many sins

Notes:

1. What is the genre or style of the book of James? Is it a letter, a tractate, a compilation of “sayings” or “maxims” (e.g., a book of Christian proverbs)? Some have suggested that James wrote in the spirit of the Hebrew prophets and strung together a series of “burden apostrophes.” Others think he patterned his work after the Greek “diatribe.”
2. The view that James uses a disjointed style overlooks the unifying theme of the book, that is, the folly and vanity of riches (1.9-11), the oppression of poor believers by the wealthy (2.5-7), and the utter contempt and condemnation of rich people, their greed, and their material possessions (5.1-6). In this judgment of wealth and riches, James follows the lead of the Old Testament prophets and his brother, the Lord Jesus.
3. Does James use a chiasmic structure in presenting his critique of wealth and the rich oppressors of Jewish (and Gentile) Christians? Or, does he crescendo the theme about rich people and their oppression of others to his wholesale condemnation of their actions and what they own (5.1ff.)?
4. Note the parallels between James and the teachings of Jesus in the gospels.

Projects:

1. Argue a date for James from internal evidence.
2. Compare the teaching of James with the teaching of Jesus in the gospels. What parallels and similarities exist?
3. Prepare a paper called, “Faith and Works: A Comparison of James 2.14-26 with Romans 4.1-25.”
4. Examine and discuss the use of Old Testament scripture by James.

1 PETER

Author: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1.1). Some have suggested that Silvanus had an active part in the writing of the letter, “With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly” (5.12).

Destination: This letter is addressed to a wide circle of Gentile readers (see 1.14, 18; 2.10; 4.3) in a large geographical area—“to God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1.1). On Peter’s use of “strangers” or “aliens,” compare 1.17; 2.11.

Origin: What does Peter mean, “She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings” (5.13)? Is “Babylon” to be taken literally, or is it some sort of a hidden code name for the Imperial City of Rome (i.e., a “cryptogram”)? The latter seems to be the case. “The Old Testament prophets depicted Babylon as a place of great wealth, tyranny, idolatry, and vice, standing under God’s judgment; this is the way in which Rome is pictured by first century Christians.” [Best, *1 Peter*, 178]. See also Revelation 14.8; 16.19–18.24.

Date: About AD 65, during the reign of Nero.

Theme: The joyful endurance of temporary trials (see 5.6-11).

Occasion & Purpose: See 5.12. Peter writes to encourage believers to stand firm in their faith, because the persecution they will face is only temporary. On the persecution that the readers are suffering, see 1.6; 3.13-17; 4.12-19; 5.9.

Outline:

- I. Greeting to Exiles or Strangers, 1.1-2.
- II. Prayer of Thanksgiving—"the Christian's Perspective," 1.3-12.
 - A. Praising because born anew to a living hope and heavenly inheritance, 1.3-5.
 - B. Rejoicing even though persecuted, 1.6-9.
 - C. Appreciating God's preparation for and execution of this salvation, 1.10-12.
- III. Exhortations—"the Christian's Imperative," 1.13-4.19.
 - A. Exhortations to transformation, 1.13-2.10.
 - 1. Be holy, 1.13-16.
 - 2. Fear, 1.17-21.
 - 3. Love one another, 1.22-2.3.
 - 4. Come and be built, 2.4-10.
 - B. Exhortations to good conduct, 2.11-3.12.
 - 1. Abstain from fleshly lusts, 2.11-12.
 - 2. Be submissive, 2.13-3.12.
 - a. Be subject to human authority, 2.13-17.
 - b. Slaves, submit to masters, 2.18-25.
 - c. Wives, submit to husbands, 3.1-7.
 - d. Everyone, submit to one another, 3.8-12.
 - C. Exhortations to endure persecution, 3.13-4.19.
 - 1. Suffering for the right reason, 3.13-17.
 - 2. Suffering, a result of cessation from sin, 3.18-4.2.
 - 3. Suffering from living different than the licentious Gentiles, 4.3-11.
 - 4. Suffering as certain and necessary, 4.12-19.
- IV. Conclusion, 5.1-14.
 - A. To the elders and young men, 5.1-5.
 - B. Final exhortations, 5.6-11.
 - C. Greetings, 5.12-14.

Notes:

1. Note the emphasis on the sufferings of Jesus in this letter by Peter.
2. Note Peter's acquaintance with both Jewish and Gentile culture. He quotes freely the Hebrew scriptures, and he applies these teachings to the current circumstances of his Gentile readers.

Projects:

1. What internal discrepancies are suggested by those who are critical of Peter's authorship of this book?
2. Argue a purpose for 1 Peter from internal evidence. Be sure to counter any alternative ideas, especially those that are based on theories that assume the disunity of the book.
3. Prepare a detailed exegesis of 3.18–4.2.

SPECIAL STUDY: THE ROLE OF ELDERS (1 PETER 5.1-9)

[Portions Quoted or Adapted from Lewis, “Greek Words for Elders”]

The Value and Wisdom of Good Leaders

1. Moses selected 70 elders in the desert to aid him (Numbers 11.24).
2. Each of the tribes of Israel had elders (Deuteronomy 31.28).
3. Towns and cities of the Israelites had elders who acted as judges (see Judges 8.14; 1 Kings 21.8; Ezra 10.14).
4. The Jewish synagogues where people gathered for prayer and the reading of Torah had elders (Luke 7.3).
5. In Syria, “Paul and Barnabas appointed elders [Greek *presbuteros*] for them [i.e., the disciples of Jesus] in each church” (Acts 14.23).

The Role of Elders Among the Believers in Jesus

1. It was a service or position with multiple aspects.
 - a. In Acts 20.17-38, Paul calls the “elders” (Greek *presbuteros*) of Ephesus to Miletus. He tells them they have been made “overseers” (Greek *episkopos*) by the Holy Spirit in order to “shepherd” (Greek *poimainein*) the church of God.
 - b. In Titus 1.5-9, the young minister is left by Paul on Crete to appoint “elders” (Greek *presbuteros*) in every town. Paul lists the qualifications for “overseers” (Greek *episkopos*) who are said to be God’s “stewards” (Greek *oikonomos*). Paul points out that the “elder” must be blameless and the “overseer” must be blameless.
2. It was a service or position with authority.
 - a. Popular opinion denies the elders any positional authority over the local group of believers and feels that they only are an example to their flock.
 - b. 1 Peter 5.3 is used to support this view. It is the *locus classicus* that forbids elders to exercise authority by virtue of any “official” capacity in the congregation, since they are not to “lord it over” the flock.
 - c. But does “lording it over” forbid any exercising of authority by those who are elders?
 - i. The Greek word is *katakuriuo*, an intensified form of *kurieuo*, that means literally “to lord against,” so “to lord over” or “to exercise dominion against.”
 - ii. In the Septuagint, it is used of Israel conquering land (Numbers 21.24; 32.22), of sin dominating a person (Psalm 19.13), of man ruling over the earth (Genesis 1.28).

- iii. The basic idea is that of tyranny or a rule without the consent of the object being ruled.
 - iv. In the New Testament (Acts 19.16), a man possessed by an evil spirit “jumped on and overpowered” seven Jewish exorcists who were trying to imitate the apostle Paul.
 - v. In Matthew 20.25 and Mark 10.42, the dominion of Gentile rulers is placed in contrast to the attitude of servitude that the disciples of Jesus should have toward each other. The tyranny of the Gentiles is in antithesis to servitude.
 - vi. “In the world there is a continuous struggle for power, and greatness is evaluated by the prominence and power one attains. Having obtained that power, one exercises it with vigor. In the world, the number of persons one can have serving him is significant, but this is not so among the Lord’s servants. The great one must be the servant of all.”
 - vii. To be a servant does not exclude all authority. Jesus called himself a servant (Mark 10.45), but Jesus exercised his authority as “Lord of both the living and dead” (Romans 14.9).
3. It was a position of authority or rule through loving service.
- a. Peter forbids tyrannical manipulation without the permission of the one being ruled.
 - b. Peter forbids tyrannical dominance in which the elder uses his power for his own purposes.
 - c. Peter forbids exploitation or the exercising of dominion against someone (e.g., to one’s own advantage).
4. It was a service or position like that of a shepherd with his sheep.
- a. Peter says, “Be shepherds of God’s flock” (verse 1).
 - i. Not because you must, but because you are willing.
 - ii. Not greedy for money, but eager to serve.
 - iii. Not lording it over, but being examples to the flock.
 - b. The position of an elder is not comparable to that of an officer in the army. The centurion said of himself, “I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it” (Luke 7.8).
 - c. The response of the church to their elders is not that described in *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, “Theirs not to reason why; theirs but to do and die.”
 - d. Rather, the congregation follows the lead of loving elders who willingly serve as godly examples (e.g., as sheep follow their shepherd).

5. It was a service or position of leading and making decisions.
 - a. Just because Peter forbids tyranny does not mean that he altogether forbids ruling or making decisions (cf. Hebrews 13.17).
 - b. The “shepherding” or “pastoring” is precisely what Peter expects the elders to do. He says, “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care” (verse 2).
 - c. The apostle commands the elders to pastor (Greek *poimanati*) their flocks, but he warns against exploiting (Greek *katakuriuontes*) the flock.
 - d. This “shepherding” is performed under the guidance of Jesus, the Chief Shepherd (verse 4).
 - i. There is a sense in which Jesus is the only true Shepherd, and all his brothers and sisters are sheep.
 - ii. There is also a sense in which elders are shepherds who tend to and care for the flock while the Chief Shepherd is away.
 - iii. So, elders are to lead the flock in the manner and ways that Jesus himself would lead the flock if he were present.
 - e. “One must be impressed with how the terms used for elders are two-edged swords. They are very humbling so that the possessor has no ground for boasting; yet they are exalting, demanding recognition on the part of those being led.”
 - i. The elder is only a steward or one entrusted with something belonging to another. But to those who are being led, he is God’s steward.
 - ii. The elder is only an overseer or one who watches over something belonging to another. But to those who are being led, he is an overseer of God’s will (and not the imposer of his own will).
 - iii. The elder is only a lowly shepherd or one who takes care of sheep belonging to another. But to those who are being led, he is a shepherd of God’s flock.

The Benefit of Good Leaders for Difficult Times

1. Submission to one another in humility will allow God’s mighty hand to lift us up in due time (verses 5-6).
2. Submission to one another in humility will motivate us to cast all our burdens on him and receive his constant care (verse 7).
3. Self control and watchfulness will cause us to resist our enemy the devil as we stand firm together in our faith (verses 8-9).
4. Self control and watchfulness will help us overcome what we and other believers in Jesus are suffering (verse 9).
5. The power of God’s grace and Christ’s eternal glory will restore us and make us strong, firm, and steadfast (verses 10-11).

2 PETER

Author: “Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ” (1.1). Compare 1.16-18.

Destination: This letter is sent “to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours” (1.1). No other indication of the destination of this writing is given, except perhaps that Paul also wrote to these believers (e.g., 3.15).

Origin: Possibly from Rome.

Date: Sometime between AD 65 and 68.

Theme: Remember! See 1.12, 13; 3.1, 2.

Occasion & Purpose: Peter, who is getting close to the end of his life (see 1.14-15), senses the threat of false teaching and writes in order to “strengthen these Christians in faith and practice so that they will be in a position to resist the ungodliness of threatening false teachers.” [Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 850].

Outline:

- I. Greeting–Remember Your Salvation, 1.1-11.
 - A. A faith by the righteousness of Jesus, 1.1.
 - B. Life and godliness through true knowledge, 1.2-3.
 - C. Escape from corruption to precious promises, 1.4.
 - D. Purification from former sins unto sanctification, 1.5-9.
 - E. An entrance into the eternal kingdom through diligence, 1.10-11.
- II. Remember the Basis of Your Salvation, 1.12–2.22.
 - A. Intent of the author–stir up by way of remembrance, 1.12-15.
 - B. Remember the prophetic word of the apostles, 1.16-21.
 1. Not cleverly devised tales, but the testimony of eyewitnesses, 1.16.
 2. Not the interpretation of man, but the result of divine guidance, 1.17-21.
 - a. The divine voice interprets the divine event (e.g., revelation in action and word), 1.17-18.
 - b. This makes the prophetic word more sure, 1.19.
 - c. Every prophecy of scripture bears such divine authentication, 1.20-21.

- C. Remember the way and end of false prophets, 2.1-22.
 - 1. Beware of false teachers, 2.1-3.
 - 2. Examples of judgment and deliverance, 2.4-10a.
 - a. Wicked angels, 2.4.
 - b. The ancient world and Noah, 2.5.
 - c. Sodom and Gomorrah and Lot, 2.6-8.
 - d. Conclusion concerning the godly and the ungodly, 2.9-10a.
 - 3. Description of the false teachers, 2.10b-22.
 - a. Their haughtiness, 2.10b-11.
 - b. Their arrogance, lust, and greed, 2.12-16.
 - c. Their emptiness and tragic state, 2.17-22.

- III. Conclusion—Remember the Promised Coming of the Lord and Savior, 3.1-18.
 - A. Remember the words of holy prophets and apostles, 3.1-2.
 - B. Know that scoffers will deny the coming of the Lord, 3.3-4.
 - C. Remember the destruction by flood of “the world that once was” and realize the coming destruction of the present world by fire, 3.5-7.
 - D. Remember the promise of the Lord, 3.8-10.
 - 1. Remember the Lord’s timetable, 3.8.
 - 2. Remember the Lord’s patience, 3.9.
 - 3. Remember the Lord’s coming will be like a thief, 3.10.
 - E. In view of the Lord’s coming again, remember to live righteously, 3.11-18.
 - 1. Live in holiness and godliness, 3.11.
 - 2. Anticipate the coming “day of God,” 3.12.
 - 3. Look for “new heavens and a new earth,” 3.13.
 - 4. Be diligent, 3.14.
 - 5. Consider the patience of the Lord to be salvation, 3.15-16.
 - a. Remember what Paul wrote, 3.15b.
 - b. Realize that ignorant and unstable men misuse Paul’s letters and all the scriptures, 3.16.
 - 6. Be aware of the errors of lawless men so that you do not fall, 3.17.
 - 7. Grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, 3.18a.
 - 8. Doxology, 3.18b.

Notes:

1. Notice the change in tone from 1 Peter to 2 Peter.
2. Notice closely the quotations of Peter (1.17; 2.22), his allusions to Old Testament passages (3.8, 13), and his reference to the writings of the apostle Paul (3.15-16).
3. Note Peter's appeal to the authority of his own writings, to the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets, and to the commandment of the Lord and Savior by your apostles. Peter also references the writings of "our dear brother Paul" (3.15).

Projects:

1. Thoroughly compare chapter 2 of 2 Peter with the book of Jude.
2. Prepare a paper titled, "The Authoritative Sources of 2 Peter."
3. Give a detailed exegesis of 1.1-11.
4. Argue a late date (i.e., second century AD) or an early date (i.e., first century) for the letter and focus on the so-called indications of a late date such as "my second letter" (3.1), "your apostles" (3.2), "since our fathers died" (3.4), the reference to delay of the Parousia and false teaching regarding it (3.3ff.), the reference to Paul and "all his letters" (3.15).

Key Words in 2 Peter, Chapter 3:

1. "Beloved" (KJV; NIV uses "dear friends"), Greek *agapetoi*, 3.1, 8, 14, 17.
2. "Reminder, remember," Greek *hupomnesis* (1.13; 3.1) and *hupomimnesko* (1.12; 3.2).
3. "Arrival, coming," Greek *parousia*, 1.16; 3.4, 12. The parousia of Jesus—the day of the Lord (10), the day of God (12)—is a day of judgment and the destruction of ungodly men (7) with fire (7, 10, 12).
4. "Destruction," Greek *apoleia*, 2.3; 3.7, 16; *apolluo*, 3.6, 9; *luo*, 3.10, 11, 12. Destruction will be like that of the flood (5-6), of the present heavens and earth (7), of ungodly men (7), certain (9), unexpected (10), and cataclysmic in its cosmic disturbance (10-12).
5. "Patience," Greek *sterigmos*, 3.17; *makrothumia*, 3.9, 15. Saints need to have patience for God's judgment (and thereby reflect God's holy character, 9), in holy conduct and godliness (11), in looking for the coming day of God (12), and for the home of righteousness (13).

JUDE

Author: The writer introduces himself as “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James” (verse 1). See Matthew 12.46; 13.55, 56; Mark 6.3; John 2.12; 7.3, 5, 10; Acts 1.14; 1 Corinthians 9.5; Galatians 1.19. “There seems to be no reason to suppose that this Jude was other than the Lord’s brother. Christians would undoubtedly treat the Lord’s brethren with respect, and this would account for the wide regard which the epistle gained in the Christian church.” [Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 908].

Destination: This short letter is written “to those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ” (verse 1). Note the use of “beloved” (KJV; “dear friends” in NIV) in verses 1, 3, 17, and 20. The lack of specific details in the letter makes the fixing of an exact destination impossible. However, because of the Jewish character of the letter, Palestine is a plausible destination (see verses 17 and 18 and the acquaintance of the readers with the apostles).

Origin: Perhaps Galilee or Judea.

Date: Sometime between AD 60 and 90. Many scholars favor a date after AD 70 on the basis of the following evidence: (1) Christian doctrine has been standardized (“our common salvation,” “the faith which was once for all delivered,” verse 3; NASB); (2) seemingly the apostolic age is past (verses 17-18); (3) the similarities between 2 Peter and Jude; (4) the false teachers appear to be gnostics or at least influenced by a type of Judaic gnosticism (verses 4ff.).

Theme: “Keep yourselves in the love of God” (verse 21; NASB).

Occasion & Purpose: Because of the appearance of false teachers among his readers (see verses 4, 12, 19), Jude writes to remind his readers of the fate of ungodly persons and to encourage his readers to persevere in their faith.

Outline:

- I. Greeting, verses 1-2.
- II. The reason for writing, verses 3-4.
- III. The fate of the ungodly, verses 5-16.
- IV. Exhortation, verses 17-23.
- V. Doxology, verses 24-25.

Notes:

1. Note Jude's use of apocryphal literature, for example, the book of Enoch (verse 14), the assumption of Moses (verse 9). The term "apocryphal" refers to certain Jewish writings not included in the books that were accepted as scripture in the Hebrew Bible. Also known as "pseudepigraphical," these Jewish works influenced early Christian thought indirectly by influencing late Jewish thought directly. They were never widely accepted as canonical by the early church and were not a part of the Apocrypha.
2. Note the beautiful doxology in verses 24 and 25.

Projects & Questions:

1. Prepare a detailed exegesis of the book of Jude.
2. Argue a date for the book of Jude.
3. Prepare a paper called, "The Sources of the Author of Jude."
4. Jude is decisive in his condemnation of "ungodly persons." When is it appropriate to be just as decisive? Is this too negative? Is this a lack of love?
5. What does it mean to "contend earnestly for the faith" (verse 3; NASB)? Does this only involve rooting out the bad?
6. Why are lessons from history such important lessons? What can we learn from the negative events of the past?

SPECIAL STUDY: PARALLEL PASSAGES IN JUDE AND 2 PETER

1. The following passages show similarities in words, phrases, and line of thought.

- | | | | |
|----|-------------|---|----------------|
| a. | Jude 4 | = | 2 Peter 2.1-3 |
| b. | Jude 6 | = | 2 Peter 2.4 |
| c. | Jude 7 | = | 2 Peter 2.6 |
| d. | Jude 8 | = | 2 Peter 2.10 |
| e. | Jude 9 | = | 2 Peter 2.11 |
| f. | Jude 10 | = | 2 Peter 2.12 |
| g. | Jude 11 | = | 2 Peter 2.15 |
| h. | Jude 12 | = | 2 Peter 2.13 |
| i. | Jude 13 | = | 2 Peter 2.17 |
| j. | Jude 16 | = | 2 Peter 2.18 |
| k. | Jude 17, 18 | = | 2 Peter 3.2, 3 |

2. What is the literary dependence or relation, if any, between Jude and 2 Peter?

a. There are four basic views.

- 1) Jude is dependent on 2 Peter (so Luther, Spitta, Zahn, Bigg, Hiebert, and most older commentaries).
- 2) 2 Peter is dependent on Jude (so Mayor, Sidebottom, Bauckham, and most modern commentaries).
- 3) Jude and 2 Peter share a common oral or written tradition (so Harrison, Robson, Reicke, Green, and Spicq).
- 4) Jude and 2 Peter have a common author (so Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, 193ff.), or both wrote independently under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

b. Arguments of literary dependence are highly speculative and lack hard proof.

- 1) Jude's dependence is based on its being the shorter document, its greater spontaneity and firsthand acquaintance with the heretics, its harsher tone, its appeal to and use of the apocryphal works of Enoch and Moses, its less developed theology, and its more polished Greek.
- 2) Peter's dependence is based on its reference to the heretics as future rather than present, its theology that is more developed, its toning down of the strong language used by Jude, its lack of quotes from other sources, and the unlikely use of a nonapostolic writing by an apostle.

- c. Arguments against literary dependence have advantages that can account for both similarities and differences in the two writings.
- 1) In parallel passages between the two, of about 300 words in Peter and about 250 words in Jude, only about 80 words are common to both. These could come from a common tradition either oral or written.
 - 2) In the parallel passages, Jude usually is longer than 2 Peter, and this shows that one is not more concise than the other.
 - 3) It has been argued that each author exhibits an independent style, for example, the flowing unity of 2 Peter and the rhythmic forcefulness of Jude.
 - 4) The similarities of language in Jude and 2 Peter could be derived from a common preaching motif.
 - 5) Also, it is questionable that the heresy argued against by each writer is the same. A different circumstance for the recipients of the letters could help account for the similarities and the differences.

1 JOHN

Author: In this letter, the author nowhere gives his name, but the writer was an eyewitness of the life of Jesus (see 1.1-4, 5; compare 4.6). The earliest traditions attribute the letter to John, the writer of the fourth gospel (so Irenaeus, the Muratorian Canon). Similarities between the gospel and this letter support this identification.

Destination: The churches of Asia Minor.

Origin: Possibly Ephesus.

Date: If by John the apostle, then about AD 90-95, during the reign of Domitian. “The letter belongs to a period when gnosticism is certainly on the horizon, although not as yet fully developed. A date toward the end of the first century would well suit this circumstance.” [Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 883].

Theme: The letter treats many interrelated themes.

Occasion & Purpose: John writes primarily to denounce the false teaching of docetism, that is, a tendency in the early church to consider the humanity and sufferings of the earthly Christ or human Jesus as merely apparent rather than real. See 2.18, 22; 4.3. John writes a letter “somewhat in the form of a tract, to warn and instruct the believers in his own district about the seriousness of the peril. His approach is positive. He presents a wholesome picture of true Christian life, and only incidentally denounces the error. He believes that truth is the best answer to false teaching, although he makes perfectly plain what his own estimate of that teaching is.” [Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 872].

Outline:

- I. Introduction, 1.1-4.
- II. Basis of Life in Christ, 1.5–2.17.
 - A. Walking in the light, 1.5-7.
 - B. Confessing sin, 1.8–2.2.
 - C. Keeping his commandments, 2.3-6.
 - D. Loving fellow Christians, 2.7-11.
 - E. Hating the evil one and the world, 2.12-17.

III. Conflicts of Life in Christ, 2.18–4.6.

- A. Truth and what is real versus deceit and what is counterfeit, 2.18-27.
- B. Children of God versus children of the devil, 2.28–3.12.
- C. Love versus hate, 3.13-24.
- D. The Spirit of truth versus the spirit of error, 4.1-6.

IV. Victory of Life in Christ, 4.7–5.21.

- A. The victory of love, 4.7-21.
- B. The victory of obedient faith, 5.1-12.
- C. The confidence of such victory, 5.13-21.

Notes:

1. Note John’s emphasis on his intimate contact with “the word of life” (1.1-4).
2. Note the similarities between the gospel of John and the letters of John.

Projects:

1. Thoroughly discuss the similarities of this letter with the gospel of John.
2. How does John counter gnostic thinking in 1 John?
3. Thoroughly examine and outline the structure of John’s thought in 1 John.
4. Argue a theme for 1 John from internal evidence.

SPECIAL STUDY: “WORLD” IN 1 JOHN [from NASB]

- I. The World as the Object of God’s Holy Love of Redemption (see John 3.16).
 - A. Jesus is “the propitiation for our sins . . . and also for those of the whole world” (2.2).
 - B. “God has sent his only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through him” (4.9).
 - C. “The Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world” (4.14).
 - D. The world is seen as the realm of those who are lost and need a Savior.

- II. The World as An Evil System under the Power of Satan, “The Ruler of This World” (see John 12.41; 14.30; 16.11).
 - A. “Many false prophets have gone out into the world” (4.1).
 - B. The spirit of antichrist is “in the world” (4.3).
 - C. Satan is the one who is “in the world” so that “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one” (4.4; 5.19).
 - D. The world is seen as the realm for all those who are in the kingdom of darkness and have not been born of God.

- III. The World as the Realm of both the Rescue and the Struggles of the Believer.
 - A. The tension produced by the rescue of believers from the world.
 - 1. Believers are chosen “out of the world” (John 15.19).
 - 2. Believers are “not of this world” (John 8.23; 18.36).
 - 3. Believers are still “in the world” but not a part of it (John 17.11, 16).
 - B. The antagonism produced by the rescue of believers from the world.
 - 1. Followers of Jesus are unknown by the world (3.1).
 - 2. Followers of Jesus are hated by the world (3.13).
 - 3. Followers of Jesus will have tribulation in the world (John 16.33).
 - C. The victory over the world promised to believers if they endure in faith.
 - 1. “You are from God, little children, and have overcome [the world], because greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world” (4.4).
 - 2. “Whoever is born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (5.4).

LESSON: “LOVE NOT THE WORLD” (1 JOHN 2.15-17)

Text - “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” [KJV].

For John, the “world” can mean the universe (John 1.10), the inhabitants on the earth (John 3.16), or, as here, “the life of human society as organized under the power of evil” [Dodd, *Johannine Epistles*, 39] or “the order of finite being regarded as apart from God” [Westcott, *Epistles of St. John*, 63]. The NEB translates verse 15, “Do not set your hearts on the godless world or anything in it.” This is the first reason John gives for children of the Father not to love the world. Love for the world and love for the Father are mutually exclusive. If an individual is obsessed in the outlook and pursuits of the world, which at a basic level rejects Christ and his Father, then that person has no love for the Father. James says it like this, “Friendship of the world is hostility toward God . . . whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (4.4; NASB). And Jesus said, “No servant can serve two masters” (Luke 16.13).

The second reason John gives for children of the Father not to love the world is because of the origin and existence of all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These are from the world and are “the essential marks of the pagan way of life.” [Dodd, *Johannine Epistles*, 41]. There is “the lust of the flesh.” Desire per se is not evil. Bodily desires and the fulfillment of these are not inherently sinful, if these desires are satisfied in a way that is in harmony with the will of God. Paul gives a general principle regarding such when he writes, “Everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (1 Timothy 4.4). Sexual desires and needs can be satisfied in marriage (see 1 Corinthians 7.2-5; Hebrews 13.4); nourishment of the body is proper and good if one avoids pagan practices and occasions of stumbling (see 1 Corinthians 8); and bodily adornment in modesty and without excess is fine (see 1 Timothy 2.9-10). But the lust of the corrupt, sinful nature (i.e., the use here of the Greek *sarkos* or “flesh” in a negative, ethical sense) of wicked humanity is to be avoided. It is “in the world,” as John says, because the world, where the devil rules, is the sphere of its free operation.

There also is “the lust of the eyes.” Here John refers to temptations not from within, as with the lust of the flesh, but from without or through the eyes. This is “the tendency to be captivated by the outward show of things, without enquiring into their real values.” [Dodd, *Johannine Epistles*, 41]. At the beginning, Eve in the garden of Eden viewed the tree of knowledge of good and evil as “a delight to the eyes” (Genesis 3.6; NASB). Achan saw the spoils of war and coveted “a beautiful robe from Babylonia” (Joshua 7.21). David looked down from his roof and “saw a woman bathing . . . very beautiful . . . and sent someone to find out about her” (2 Samuel 11.2). All three of these fell to a very strong trap used by Satan to deceive and destroy—the lust of the eyes. With the lust of the eyes, we focus on outward appearance, something often deceptive, rather than the inner quality.

Then there is “the pride of life.” Here John refers to “this world’s goods” (3.17; NKJV) or “material possessions” (NIV) and the boasting or bragging that often goes with material wealth. One who is filled with pride of life is little more than “a conceited, pretentious humbug” who tries “to impress everyone he meets with his own nonexistent importance.” [Dodd, *Johannine Epistles*, 42; Barclay, *Letters of John and Jude*, 69]. The pride of life is the boasting or arrogance concerning one’s external circumstances (i.e., wealth, rank, dress). It is “the desire to shine or outshine others in luxurious living.” [Ebrard, *Epistles of St. John*, 170]. It is, for the one who is filled with this pride of life, “the boasting of what he has and does” (NIV). So John sums up what is “not from the Father but is from the world” with “two lusts and one vaunt, two forms of depravation arising from our needs and one from our possessions—unholy desire for things one has not, and unholy pride in things one has.” [Findlay, *Fellowship in the Life Eternal*, 201].

Finally, the third reason John gives for children of the Father not to love this world is because the new age already has arrived and the present age is doomed. Furthermore, the world, just like the darkness that is in it, already is disintegrating (cf. 1 Corinthians 7.31). And those who engage in worldly lusts and depend on their earthly pride will pass away (i.e., perish) along with the object of their hopes and dreams. For the apostle and for believers in the Christ, only “the one who does the will of God lives forever.” As Jesus had said, “I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (John 12.24-25).

Do not love the world, and do not love the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in that person. For everything that is in the world is not from the Father. It is from the world—the evil desires of the flesh, the lustful desires of the eyes, and the pompous pride from the stuff of life. All this and the world itself will cease to be and will perish. But the one who does the will of God never will perish and will live forever.

2 JOHN

Author: “The elder” (verse 1). What person could command the attention of his readers by referring to himself as “the elder”? The word “elder” here means no more than an elderly person or man.

Destination: “To the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth” (verse 1; compare verse 4, “some of your children”). Is this address a reference to an individual Christian lady and her family (e.g., named Electa), or to a church known to the author and its members? Compare the conclusion, “The children of your chosen sister send their greetings” (verse 13).

Origin: Perhaps Ephesus.

Date: About AD 95.

Theme: “Walk according to his commandments” (verse 6; NASB).

Occasion & Purpose: The author warns his readers against false teachers “who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh” (verse 7).

Outline:

- I. Salutation, verses 1-3.
- II. Counsel and warning, verses 4-11.
- III. Conclusion, verses 12-13.

Notes:

1. Note the use of the term “antichrist” in verse 7 (cf. 1 John 2.18).
2. Note the expression “teaching [or doctrine] of Christ” (verse 9).

Projects:

1. Do a study on the mechanics of letter writing in the first-century AD and relate this to passages in the New Testament.
2. Survey early Christian literature for details about travelling missionaries. Prepare a paper titled, “The Travelling Christian Missionary in the Roman Empire.”

3 JOHN

Author: “The elder” (verse 1).

Destination: This letter is sent to “Gaius” (verse 1; compare Acts 19.29; 20.4; Romans 16.23; and 1 Corinthians 1.14). Gaius was a common name in New Testament times.

Origin: From Ephesus.

Date: About AD 95.

Theme: “Do not imitate what is evil, but what is good” (verse 11).

Occasion & Purpose: “John has apparently sent out some itinerant representatives, who have returned and reported to him their experiences (verse 3). They speak highly of Gaius who entertained the strangers (verses 3, 5), but one man, Diotrephes, did not receive these missionaries, and he even banned the members of his church who did receive them. In addition, Diotrephes had been making none too complimentary remarks about the apostle himself (verse 10). . . . The apostle writes to Gaius to acquaint him with the situation . . . to commend Gaius for his stand against Diotrephes . . . and to commend Demetrius to Gaius (verse 12).” [Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 896-897].

Outline:

- I. Salutation, verse 1.
- II. The elder’s joy, verses 2-4.
- III. Duty of generosity to brothers, verse 5-8.
- IV. Diotrephes, verses 9-10.
- V. Demetrius, verses 11-12.
- VI. Conclusion, verses 13-15.

Notes:

1. Compare the testimony of Demetrius (verse 12) with the testimony of Diotrephes (verses 9-10).

Projects:

1. Prepare a detailed exegesis of either 2 John or 3 John.

SPECIAL STUDY: A BRIEF COMMENTARY ON 3 JOHN (KJV)

1 - The elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

The elder. The only other time this particular phrase (*ho presbuteros*) is used in the New Testament is in 2 John, so “the elder” seems to be the author of 2 John as well. Similarities between both letters also indicate that the writer is the same. 2 John was written to a specific lady (e.g., Electa) or church (2 John 1, 13), while 3 John was written to a particular person (e.g., Gaius) in that church (3 John 1, 9). The phrase, **whom I love in the truth**, is common to both letters (2 John 1; 3 John 1). Joy was expressed by John over each recipient’s **walking in the truth** (2 John 4; 3 John 3). Warnings against false teachers, generally in 2 John and specifically in 3 John, are given. And the author wishes in both letters to write little with **paper and ink** but rather to come and speak **face to face** with the ones and the one to whom he is writing. With these similarities, the natural conclusion is that the writer of 3 John is also the writer of 2 John.

This is also the case when comparison is made between 1 John and 2 John and between the gospel of John and 1 John. All four books seem to be coming from the same hand. But in all four books, the author never identifies himself by name. External attestation (i.e., the tradition of the early church) gives credit for these writings to the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 21.20, 24), the beloved apostle John, son of Zebedee. Little does one wonder why John’s letters are full of so much care, concern, and love for those he addresses. He leaned on the breast of Jesus at the Passover supper (John 13.23; 21.20). He followed Jesus into the palace of the high priest during the Savior’s hour of need, while others watched from a distance (John 18.15). He stood at the cross of Jesus with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the other women, while Jesus suffered and died (John 19.25-27). He was loved by Jesus because of his love for his Lord and for the others. This one, John the beloved apostle, is **the elder**.

Why does John use this title and not his name to distinguish himself? John’s readers definitely would recognize this appellation and would accept his written words as encouragement and instruction from an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. He apparently was more comfortable using this expression instead of his name to address his readers who seem to be close friends and fellow Christians. Whether or not John wanted to conceal his identity to outsiders (e.g., those who were not Christians) because of threat of confiscation of the letter and potential persecution is uncertain.

Gaius. Three men called Gaius are mentioned in the New Testament (see Acts 19.29; 20.4; Romans 16.23; and 1 Corinthians 1.14). It is not clear whether the Gaius of 3 John is the same Gaius as mentioned in any of the passages above. It is a common name of the Roman period, and most likely John writes to another Gaius. He is probably a church leader and, as John indicates, one who is well liked or beloved.

I love. The Greek verb here is in the present tense and indicates continuous or linear action. John says of Gaius, “whom **I am loving in truth**. This is not “the truth,” since the Greek definite article is not used, but rather “in truth” meaning “in reality.” John’s love is a genuine and real affection that is ongoing and in contrast to any artificial and forced emotion.

2 - Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

Beloved. This is a common appositive used by John and appears three times in this letter (verses 2, 5, 11).

I wish above all things. Here the KJV translators have rendered the Greek preposition *peri* as “above,” but the word implies “that around which an act or state revolves.” [Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 501]. A better rendering would be “I wish **concerning** all things.” This is not the dearest of John’s wishes for Gaius but a very important one.

Prosper and be in health. John wants the best for Gaius in both material and physical matters. He wants his brother to be “fit and well” and “safe and sound” (cf. use of *hugiaino*, “be in a state of well-being,” in Luke 5.31; 7.10; and 15.27; Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 359). Concern or care for prosperity and health is not wrong unless this desire causes one to place secondary importance on the kingdom of God (Matthew 6.25-34). Whether Gaius did or did not prosper materially and have good health can only be conjectured. But these qualities of his life were not **even as thy soul prospereth**. Gaius primarily cared for his spirituality and placed lesser importance on the needs of his body. This is to be seen in his gracious hospitality to other Christians. So John simply is expressing his desire for the continued or improved prosperity and health for Gaius in comparison with the health and prosperity of his soul. And the apostle’s statement is a wonderful reflection on the life of Gaius. The welfare of his inner man is the standard to which his outer man might be elevated. John unfortunately might write just the opposite to many believers today. His words might be, “Beloved, I wish for your soul to prosper, even as you are prospering in all things and are in health.”

3 - For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

After some of **the brethren** from the “elect sister” congregation (see 2 John 13) had visited the church where Gaius belonged, they returned and reported to John that Gaius **walked in the truth**. When he received this good news, John **rejoiced greatly**.

4 - I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Here John's fatherly affection for other believers in the Lord is to be noted (cf. his use of "children" and especially "little children," Greek *teknion*, in 1 John 2.1, 12, 28; 3.7, 18; 4.4; 5.21). Nothing pleased John more than **to hear that my children walk in truth**. These are the apostle's "spiritual" descendants whom John had begotten in Christ through the preaching of the gospel.

The Greek verb for **walk** is present tense and signifies a continuous action. John is not speaking of those who "have walked" or "were walking" or even of those who "walk" but a solitary moment. His exultation comes from the realization that some of his spiritual children, of whom Gaius is one, "are walking" day by day and hour by hour **in truth**.

In truth. The Received Greek text, from which the KJV was translated omits the definite article and causes the sense of the phrase to approximate that in verse one. But the published text of the United Bible Society (Second Edition, 1968), that follows primarily the Westcott-Hort tradition, retains the definite article and can be translated **in the truth**. With this reading, the adverbial phrase indicates where they are walking rather than how they are walking. Gaius and others are not "truly walking"; rather, they are "walking in the truth," that is, the truth revealed to the children of God by the Holy Spirit and by the apostle John. There was no dichotomy between their creed and their conduct, between their profession and their practice.

5 - Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers.

Thou doest faithfully. This could be translated "what you are doing faithfully." What did Gaius do that caused him to walk in the truth? Gaius had acted with courtesy, grace, and kindness **to the brethren, and to strangers**. The "brothers" and "strangers" are one and the same ("them that are brethren and strangers withal"; ASV). Gaius probably had received into his house and had entertained at his own expense the messengers of the gospel that had been sent out by the apostle.

6 - Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church; whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well.

The **witness** or testimony of the **charity** or love of Gaius was that those to whom he had performed his acts of goodness told other believers about him. This was done **before the church** or in the presence of the church (e.g., during an assembly). The Christian brothers, who were strangers to Gaius and from a different church, that is, the "elect sister" church, bore witness to their church of the love of Gaius.

Whom if thou bring forward on their journey. Possibly the same ones who previously had come to Gaius were returning to him with this brief letter from John. That a lapse in time has occurred between the two phrases in verse six can be seen in the change of the verb tense from aorist to future. The conditional **if** also suggests this change. So John tells Gaius that, to do well, he must treat the brothers **after a godly sort** (“worthily of God,” or in a manner that is pleasing to God) and help them along on their journey with food, supplies, and perhaps money. John next indicates to Gaius the reason why he should provide help to these brothers.

7 - Because that for his name’s sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

For his name’s sake. No doubt, John is speaking here of the Lord Jesus (“for the sake of the Name”; ASV).

They went forth. These words suggest that their action was voluntary. No one forced them to go. It was a deliberate mission to promote the Name of Christ.

Gentiles. The Greek word also can be rendered “heathens” or “pagans” as an indication of nonbelievers or unbelievers.

These travelling evangelists or missionaries left home and family in order to serve God by carrying the life-giving good news of the Lord Jesus Christ to those who were lost. They taught, instructed, and encouraged other believers, and they warned against false teachers and against those who, like Diotrefes, challenged the authority of the apostles. They also served as an important and necessary means of communication between the apostle John and the churches. These servants of God received no help from the heathen but were supported financially by self or by other brothers.

8 - We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow helpers to the truth.

Ought. This could be translated “must.”

Receive. The Greek verb implies the idea of “help” or “support. John seems to be saying, “If we do not help and support these brothers, who will? They might turn to the heathen and pagans! We must help them, and by doing this we are fellow workers for the truth.” Notice John’s use of **the truth**. These travelling missionaries were not deceivers like the itinerants that the apostle had warned against, the reception or help of whom would make one a partaker of their evil deeds (2 John 7, 11).

This brief letter provides the apostle’s sanction for support of missionaries today. And if God expected believers to support messengers of the truth of the good news then, he expects it today and possibly even more so because of our greater supply of resources. But why this

instruction to Gaius? Was he not walking in the truth? Did he not faithfully help these brothers previously? John's instruction comes not because of any lack of obedience on the part of Gaius but because of the presence and problem of the disobedient Diotrephes.

9 - I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

I wrote unto the church. The writing mentioned by John here might be 2 John, but we cannot know for sure.

Diotrephes. This individual appears only here in the New Testament. He is an obscure figure of whom we know little.

Loveth to have the preeminence. The phrase is translated from a compound Greek verb (*philoproteuo*) that means "to love to be first." The domain of Diotrephes was **among them**. This could be an indication of a division that had occurred in the church (see comments on verse 10).

This we do know about Diotrephes—he was a selfish character. Full of arrogance and pride, he wanted all eyes to be upon him. He was greedy for position and power, and he wanted to rule others. He was ready to despise and dispel anyone who tried to upset his absolute authority. This is why, as John says, Diotrephes **receiveth us not**. The problem of Diotrephes was not ecclesiastical, social, or theological. The problem of Diotrephes was a moral problem; his was a problem with personal sinfulness.

10 - Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

John, who anticipates a visit to the church and to Gaius (verse 14), mentions his plans about Diotrephes to Gaius.

I will remember his deeds which he doeth. The intention of John is not a personal reminiscence but a public reminder or pronouncement of the things that Diotrephes is doing. Diotrephes is **prating** against John **with malicious** (or evil) **words**. And that is not enough to satisfy the antagonist. He also refuses to **receive** (or welcome) **the brethren** whom John sent, and he even goes so far as to dissociate from those members of the church who did receive the representatives sent by the apostle.

Because the apostle is a rival to Diotrephes, he attempts to discredit John with slanderous gossip that is baseless and spiteful. Furthermore, by not receiving the brothers sent out by John,

he does not honor their efforts and labor for the Name of the Lord Jesus. He is more concerned for promoting his own name. Out of personal vanity and love of self, Diotrephes creates dissention and hinders the good works of others for the Lord by casting them **out of the church**. Possibly, Gaius was one of those whom Diotrephes had expelled. Some of the believers, who were content to follow Diotrephes, also rejected John and the missionary brothers, but Gaius and others faithfully did what was right even in the face of expulsion from the body of believers.

11 - Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

Not that which is evil, but that which is good. In this section of personal counsel to Gaius, John emphasizes that good is to be desired over evil because of the important union that the practitioner of good has with God. In the doing of good, our spiritual condition is the most important consideration in spite of the effect that good deeds may have on our own lives and for others.

He that doeth good is of God. God is the source of all good, and of his goodness the psalms testify amply. “Good and upright is the Lord: therefore he will teach sinners in the way”; “For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth to all generations”; “The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his work” (Psalms 25.8; 100.5; 145.9; KJV). Jesus says in Matthew 19.17 that “there is none good but one, that is, God” (KJV). In our sinful and depraved state, we humans can do no good by ourselves. Only by coming to God and drawing from the fountainhead of all goodness can we ever partake of any valuable virtue. As the moon reflects the light of the sun, we can but reflect in our lives a part of that total goodness.

The one who does good is **of God**, because God is the exemplar of all good. John speaks not of the person who does but one act of good and many acts of evil. John speaks of the person who continuously practices the doing of good. In this sense, **that which is good** can be equated with walking in the light (1 John 1.7), confessing our sins (1 John 1.8), keeping God’s commands (1 John 2.3; 3.24), loving our brother (1 John 2.10; 3.14; 4.7-12), loving not the world (1 John 2.15; 4.4), confessing the Son (1 John 2.23; 3.23; 4.2, 15), doing righteousness (1 John 2.29), purifying ourselves (1 John 3.3), and believing that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 5.1).

On the other hand, doing **that which is evil** parallels walking in the darkness (1 John 1.6), saying that we have no sin (1 John 1.8), disobeyng God’s commands (1 John 2.4), hating our brother (1 John 2.9; 3.14-15; 4.20-21), loving the world (1 John 2.15), denying that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 2.22-23), and committing sin (1 John 3.8-9; 5.17-19). The person who does these things **hath not seen God**. This is not in the physical sense, because “no man hath seen God at any time” (1 John 4.12; KJV). But the evildoer has not perceived the spiritual nature of God. John is not saying that the evildoer “cannot” see God, because he could if he would only open his eyes to the truth of God as revealed in the word of God. John is saying that all evildoers have not seen God or else such a revelation would transform their hearts from defilement unto

purity and renew their minds from sin unto righteousness. In this admonition to Gaius, John is suggesting that his beloved brother carefully choose his role model, that is, a good one (e.g., Demetrius) versus an evil one (e.g., Diotrephes).

12 - Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

The Greek word for **follow** in the previous verse also can mean “imitate” or “follow another’s example.” So John exhorts Gaius not to follow in the evil way of Diotrephes but to walk in the good and right path. Such is the manner of Demetrius who **hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself**.

Demetrius. Two men by this name are mentioned in the New Testament—the one here in 3 John and the silversmith of Ephesus who opposed the apostle Paul (Acts 19.24, 38). It is doubtful that the latter Demetrius was converted so that both John and Luke refer to the same individual. Some interpreters conjecture that Demetrius carried this letter from the apostle to Gaius.

Demetrius had three credentials. He had a good testimony of **all men**, from believers as well as those outside the church. He had a good testimony **of the truth itself**, that is, he lived by its precepts. And he had a good testimony from John and the brothers with him, a **record** or testimony that was known by Gaius to be **true**. Therefore, Gaius is assured by John that he can put his confidence and trust in Demetrius.

13 & 14 - I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: but I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

John, who plans a visit to Gaius in the near future and hopes to speak with him **face to face**, writes with **ink and pen** only a few words and closes his letter with these common and appropriate greetings: **Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.**

REVELATION

Author: John, the apostle (1.1, 4, 9; 22.8). Justin Martyr, a Christian philosopher, wrote about AD 160 in his *Dialogue with Typho the Jew* (81, 4), “John, one of the apostles of Christ, in the revelation given to him.” [See Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 329-330]. Compare the internal similarities with the gospel according to John.

Destination: The book is written “to the seven churches in the province of Asia” (1.4, 11, 20).

Origin: John is writing (see 1.3, 11, 19; 2.1, 8, 12, 18; 3.1, 7, 14; 22.9, 18-19) from the small island called Patmos which was just off the western coast of Asia Minor (1.9-11).

Date: The book was written during the Neronian persecution, about AD 65, or during the Domitian persecution, about AD 95. The later date is suggested by both the nature and extent of the persecution reflected in Revelation. It is worldwide (3.10); it involves emperor worship (13.4, 12, 15ff.; 14.9, 11; 15.2; 16.2; 19.20; 20.4); the persecution already has begun (17.6; cf. 1.9; 2.10, 13; 6.9); and the persecution has begun again or has been renewed (17.8, 11). Also, the more developed circumstance of the churches seems to indicate a later date (e.g., 2.4; 3.17).

Theme: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” (5.13). And, “to him who overcomes . . .”

Occasion & Purpose: John, who was “in the spirit” on the Lord’s Day (1.10), writes in response to the heavenly command. Jesus Christ, through his servant John, wants to exhort the persecuted saints to faithfulness. “The primary purpose, in showing the churches ‘the things that must come to pass hereafter,’ is to encourage and assure them, amid persecutions, of their ultimate victory and the victory of the cause of Christ. Though they are few in number, poor, and distressed, yet the mighty forces of evil will not overwhelm them, for Christ has conquered and guarantees their ultimate triumph.” [Pack, *Revelation, Part 1*, 11].

Outline:

- I. Things That Are, chapters 1–3.
 - A. Introduction, chapter 1.
 - B. Letters to Seven Churches, chapters 2 and 3.

- II. Things That Are To Come, chapters 4–22.
 - A. Heaven, chapters 4 and 4.
 - B. Seven Seals, chapter 6 and 7.
 - C. Seven Trumpets, chapters 8–11.
 - D. Woman, Dragon, and Beasts, chapters 12–14.
 - E. Seven Bowls, chapters 15 and 16.
 - F. The Judgment, chapters 17–20.
 - G. New Heaven and New Earth, chapters 21 and 22.

Notes:

1. The nature of the book is composite, for example, an apocalypse or revelation (1.1), a prophecy (1.3), and a letter (1.4-6, 11). The language is highly figurative and symbolic.
2. There are five major theories of interpretation—futurist, preterist, historicist or continuous historicist, idealist or philosophy of history, and cyclicist (see next section).

Projects:

1. Develop the christology of the book of Revelation.
2. Argue a major theory of interpretation of Revelation from internal evidence.
3. Prepare an exegesis of 2.1–3.22.
4. Argue a date for Revelation.
5. Thoroughly study the different interpretations of chapter 20, and prepare a detailed exegesis of verses 1-10.
6. Survey John’s use of the Old Testament and apocalyptic literature in the book of Revelation.

SPECIAL STUDY: INTERPRETING REVELATION

The Five Major Theories of Interpretation

1. Futurist. This approach recognizes the first century setting of the first chapters of the book, but it maintains that chapters 4–22 are an inspired picture of events immediately preceding the second coming of Christ (usually with chapters 8–18 describing the last seven years prior to the return and chapters 19–22 describing the new order of things).
2. Preterist. This approach supposes that the descriptions in Revelation have to do with events already past, rather than many of them in the future as they are pictured. It finds fulfillment of John's visions in the Roman persecution of the church, emperor worship, and divine judgment on Rome (ca. AD 476), things that already have occurred.
3. Historicist or Continuous Historicist. Some older interpreters view Revelation as an allegorical panorama of the history of the church from the first century to the time of the second advent of Christ. This was a common view among Protestant Reformers and for some in the American Restoration Movement.
4. Idealist (Philosophy of History). This approach emphasizes the heightened symbolism of Revelation as teaching spiritual lessons rather than expecting literal fulfillment. The prevailing lesson pertains to the constant warfare between good and evil, both in heaven and on earth, and the certain outcome of the victory of God, good, and the people of God.
5. Cyclicist. Also known variously as spiral, concurrent, or recapitulation, this approach combines aspects of the above theories, recognizes limited fulfillment in the book's references to the Roman empire, and stresses contemporary and future fulfillments of the prophecies.

The Extremes

1. Overemphasis or Neglect
2. Dogmatism or Lack of Concern
3. Then or Now
4. Historical or Spiritual

The Parameters—What Not to Expect

1. Do not expect a guaranteed, valid interpretation for all figures or symbols. No person at any period of time will have an answer for all the visions of Revelation.
2. Do not expect to put what is figurative into any literal scheme, framework, or chronology. The visions are used to stimulate the mind (e.g., the spiritual senses), but they are not to be viewed in a literal way.

The Parameters—What to Expect

1. Expect to learn and understand the main themes of God's purpose in revealing these visions to John that are recorded in the book of Revelation.
2. Expect to have the mind (e.g., the spiritual senses) stimulated, as engaging the book forces one to concentrate on heavenly matters instead of a materialistic world.
3. Expect to receive encouragement to be alert to the signs of the times.
4. Expect to apply to one's own spiritual journey the principles of life and death that are urgent matters in the book of Revelation.

Detailed Overview or Outline

I. Things That Are

- A. Introduction Chapter 1
 - 1. The Letter Begins
 - 2. The Vision of Christ

- B. Letters to Seven Churches Chapters 2 and 3
 - 1. Ephesus
 - 2. Smyrna
 - 3. Pergamum
 - 4. Thyatira
 - 5. Sardis
 - 6. Philadelphia
 - 7. Laodicea

II. Things That Are To Come

- A. Heaven Chapters 4 and 5
 - 1. Around the Throne
 - 2. The Lamb and the Scroll

- B. Seven Seals Chapters 6 and 7
 - 1. First Seal: White Horse
 - 2. Second Seal: Red Horse
 - 3. Third Seal: Black Horse
 - 4. Fourth Seal: Pale Horse
 - 5. Fifth Seal: Souls under the Altar
 - 6. Sixth Seal: Earthquake, Sun Darkened, Judgment
 - 7. 144,000 Sealed
 - 8. Great Multitude in White Robes

- C. Seven Trumpets Chapters 8–11
 - 1. Seventh Seal: Silence in Heaven
 - 2. First Trumpet: Hail and Fire
 - 3. Second Trumpet: Mountain into Sea
 - 4. Third Trumpet: Star, Wormwood
 - 5. Fourth Trumpet: A Third of Sun, Moon, Stars
 - 6. Fifth Trumpet (First Woe): Locusts
 - 7. Sixth Trumpet (Second Woe): Four Angels
 - 8. Mighty Angel and Little Scroll
 - 9. Two Witnesses
 - 10. Seventh Trumpet (Third Woe): Judgment

- D. Woman, Dragon, and Beasts Chapters 12–14
1. Woman with Child
 2. Red Dragon
 3. Satan’s Defeat and Rage
 4. Beast from the Sea
 5. Beast from the Earth
 6. Lamb and 144,000 on Mount Zion
 7. Harvest and Vintage of the Earth
- E. Seven Bowls Chapters 15 and 16
1. The Song of Moses
 2. First Bowl: Sores
 3. Second Bowl: Sea Becomes Blood
 4. Third Bowl: Rivers and Springs, Blood
 5. Fourth Bowl: Sun Scorches People
 6. Fifth Bowl: Darkness
 7. Sixth Bowl: Euphrates Dries Up, Armageddon
 8. Seventh Bowl: Earthquake and Hail
- F. The Judgment Chapters 17–20
1. Woman on a Scarlet Beast
 2. The Seven Heads
 3. The Ten Horns
 4. The Fate of the Woman
 5. Babylon’s Doom
 6. Babylon’s End Is Declared
 7. Triumph in Heaven
 8. Rider on the White Horse
 9. Beast and False Prophet into Fire
 10. The Thousand-Year Reign of Christ
 11. War of Gog and Magog
 12. The Devil into the Lake of Fire
 13. General Resurrection and Last Judgment
- G. New Heaven and New Earth Chapters 21 and 22
1. The Saved and the Lost
 2. The New Jerusalem
 3. The Water and Tree of Life
 4. Keep the Words of This Book
 5. Jesus Is Coming Soon
 6. Warnings and Promises

SPECIAL STUDY: JOHN'S CREATIVE APOCALYPSE

[Adapted from Aune, *New Testament in Its Literary Environment*; Johnson, *Writing of the New Testament*; and Other Sources]

1. Note the nature of the book as an apocalypse or revelation (1.1), a prophecy (1.3), and a letter (1.4-6, 11). The language of John's work is highly figurative and symbolic. It is filled with numerous allusions to the Old Testament.
2. The strength of Revelation's language is not in its theological argumentation or its historical information but in its evocative power that invites imaginative participation. The book elicits emotions, reactions, and convictions that cannot be put into logical, propositional language. This is because the author speaks in the language of symbol. This is the "music" of the "poetic" language of Revelation, and it was written to be read aloud and to be heard.
3. John (the work is not pseudonymous, see 1.1, 4, 9; 22.8) did not write merely for artistic purposes. He wrote to instruct the seven churches. He had a definite purpose in mind for writing the book.
4. The book is set within a framework of the apostolic letter-form that begins with a series of seven letters. It is an extended vision report (1.9–22.9), framed by an epistolary prescript (1.4-8) and postscript (22.10-21), and introduced by a title (1.1-2). In this respect, the apocalypse of John is unique—no other apocalypse is framed by such epistolary conventions that identify clearly both sender and receivers. And at the conclusion of the book, there are publication instructions (22.10; cf. Daniel 12.10), integrity formula (22.18-19), mention of the parousia of the Lord (22.12-13; cf. 1.7-8), and word about the destinies of both righteous and wicked (22.14-15; cf. 21.6b-8). The authority for the book's message (22.16) moves seamlessly to an invitation from "the Spirit and the bride" to "come" (22.17). This epistolary or letter framework of Revelation is not an artificial or accidental structure for John's vision. John did not derive the authority for his work from pseudonymity or fictional timetables. John writes instruction to the churches from none other than the Lord himself. Thus, the Revelation of John is foremost "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1.1).
5. Note the customary language of prophecy that John uses (e.g., "I saw" and "I heard"; cf. 1.18). In writing down these "words of prophecy" (see 1.3; 22.7, 10, 18, 19; 22.9), the apostle wants to encourage the persecuted Christians in Asia Minor who were expecting more suffering and harassment. So he writes a letter of encouragement that is filled with visions of exhortation. But more than this, he encourages the embattled believers by showing them new structures of reality—a new symbolic universe.

6. Rather than an interpretation of history, one of Revelation's main concerns is the issue of power. The main symbol of power is the image of the "throne," and its main motif is that of kingly rule or authority. The big question in Revelation is: Who is Lord? Who is *kurios*? And the central issue of Revelation is: Who is lord over the whole world?
7. The apostle Paul understood the question above in terms of the alternative between the rule of Christ versus that of the cosmic powers. Revelation presents this same alternative in political terms. Christians belong to God and Christ, but they still are subject to the political powers. Those rejecting the beast and its cult are excluded from the economic and social life of their time and have to expect captivity and death (13.10-15). Revelation demands resistance to the imperial cult, because honoring the emperor would mean ratifying Rome's dominion over all people and denying the lifegiving power of God and his Christ. The central function of Revelation, therefore, is the pronouncement of the authority and power of God and of his Lamb not only over the lives of individuals but over the whole world and all its political powers.
8. John's message is expressed in succinct form in the speech of God in chapter 21, verses 6-8. There are two categories of people, the righteous and the wicked (22.11). Christians are in a life-and-death struggle (12.17) through which some will "conquer" and others will fail. Conquest is a martial metaphor, perhaps used by John in response to the idea of "victory," an important concept in Roman imperial propaganda. Christians must conquer (used seven times in chapters 2 and 3; cf. 12.11; 15.2; 21.7), just as the Lamb has conquered (5.5) and will conquer (17.14). Jesus paradoxically conquered through death (1.18; 2.8; 5.6, 8, 12), and followers of the Lamb, if necessary, must do the same (2.10, 13; 6.9-11; 7.14; 14.13; 20.4). And if they "persevere" and conquer (2.2-3, 19; 13.10; 14.12) by "keeping" or "taking to heart" the words of John's writing (1.3; 22.7, 9; cf. 2.26; 3.8; 12.17; 14.12), they will receive the blessings that accompany salvation and victory (2.7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3.5, 12, 21). Those who do not conquer, either fallen Christians (i.e., the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted) or nonbelievers (i.e., murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolators, and liars), according to the vice lists (9.20-21; 21.8, 17; 22.15), will experience the second death (2.11; 20.6; 21.4, 8). John also strongly censures eating meat offered to idols (2.14, 20), worshipping the beast or receiving his mark (13.15-17; 14.9-10; 19.20), and being defiled by women (14.4). This suggests incompatibility and conflict between the Christian way of life and the dominant lifestyle of western Asia Minor. In this respect, John stands firmly in the apocalyptic tradition of nonconformity to and stubborn opposition against the prevalent nonbelieving culture.

SPECIAL STUDY: SYMBOLISM IN REVELATION [Adapted, Author Unknown]

- I. Revelation shares with other apocalyptic writings the regular use of symbolic images and symbolic numbers.
 - A. The Old Testament regularly uses symbols to explain and teach, and this becomes more noticeable in the latter prophets and especially in the book of Daniel.
 - B. The visions in these books contain strange, sometimes weird, and even monstrous images that are designed to suggest ideas that either cannot be expressed in words or persons or forces that the writer preferred to leave unnamed.

- II. The imagery in Revelation makes use of many aspects of nature and life.
 - A. From the animal world there are horses (white, red, black, and pale), the lamb and the calf, the lion, the leopard and the bear, the locust, the scorpion and the frog, the eagle and the vulture, the birds of the air, and the fishes in the sea.
 - B. From the vegetable world there are trees and herbs and grass.
 - C. From the cosmological world there are earth, sea, and sky. Agricultural operations such as vintage and harvest, the life and trade of great cities, and the march and clash of great armies are depicted. A sea of glass is spread before the throne of heaven, and a river flows through the Holy City. The sky with its stars shines in the heavens, falls to the earth, or forms a cluster in the hand of Christ or a coronet on the head of the Mother of Christ. And storms of thunder, lightning, and hail that are followed by an earthquake sweep across the heavens.
 - D. From the world of humans there are the mother and her child, the harlot and her lovers, and the bride adorned for her husband. The crowned heads wear their diadems, and the warriors carry their swords. The shepherd appears with his iron-tipped staff, the reaper with his sickle, the herald with flute and harp, and the reveler with a golden cup. The king brings and opens the scroll that is written within and without with secrets of state and has been sealed. Figures are attired with the long girdled robe of kingly or priestly dignity or in shining white; two are dressed in sackcloth; one wears purple and scarlet and is adorned with gold and precious stones.

- III. Much of the imagery in Revelation is taken from the Old Testament.
 - A. Places, persons, and objects from the books of history reappear in Revelation as symbols in the life of the church or of the new order of things.
 1. There are the familiar places such as the Euphrates, Egypt, Sodom, the hill of Megiddo, Babylon, and Jerusalem.
 2. The seven-branched candlestick of the tabernacle suggests the golden lampstand that represents the churches of Asia.
 3. Balaam finds his analog in the Nicolaitans, and Jezebel in a Thyatiran

- prophetess.
4. The new Israel is confronted by a new Babylon, and the bride of Christ is a new Jerusalem. The elders surrounding the throne answer to the elders of Israel. The two witnesses exercise powers that remind the reader of the miracles of Moses and Elijah. Tabernacle and temple, the altar, the censer, and the ark recall the religion of Israel. A holy place not made with hands is seen in the heavenly places. The manna laid up before God finds its counterpart in the future life of victorious Christians.
- B. In other instances, Revelation adopts in part or in whole the symbolism of the Old Testament writers.
1. There is the tree of life, the book of life, and the water of life.
 2. Metaphors of the Old Testament become the symbols of the new prophecy, as when the Lord is called the lamb and the lion of the tribe of Judah or the root of David.
 3. The system of Old Testament symbolism seems to be embraced fully by the author of Revelation for his purpose (e.g., the breastplate of the high priest and the restored Jerusalem of Ezekiel).
- IV. Revelation goes beyond Old Testament and common apocalyptic images. John creates new apocalyptic images for which there are no true parallels (e.g., the woman with child, the harlot Babylon who sits on the scarlet beast, the three sevenfold visions of the opening of the seals, the blasts of the trumpets, and the outpouring of the bowls of wrath, and the millennial reign of the Christ).
- V. A lot of the imagery in the Apocalypse is not symbolic but is designed to heighten the overall portrayal, movement, and vividness of the vision.
- A. Secondary details, like many particulars in the parables of Jesus, are not intended to correspond to any circumstance, person, or time.
 - B. These details illustrate the way things were at that time, as when the writer recounts the various goods and wares that were imported to the new Babylon, many of which he may have seen shipped off from the port of Ephesus to Ostia.
 - C. Much may belong to the eschatological language of apocalyptic literature or may be due to the inspired imagination of the writer himself.
- VI. Much of the imagery, though, is symbolic and is intended to stand for something else.
- A. In several instances, the author pauses to interpret the symbol (e.g., 1.20; 4.5; 5.6; 12.9; 17.9, 12, 15).
 - B. In other cases, the symbolic meaning is veiled only partially, so that the meaning seems obvious (e.g., the standing figure, 1.13ff.; the seated figure, 4.2; the lamb; the wife of the lamb).

- C. There are, however, a number of symbols which are interpreted in different ways.
 - 1. In 6.2, the rider on the white horse is identified with the divine rider of 19.11 by some commentators, but others see the former as a symbol of the Roman or Parthian conqueror.
 - 2. In chapter 7, some view the 144,000 to represent the entire church (e.g., Jewish and Gentile believers) of all ages, while others see the two visions as a reference to either Jewish and Gentile Christians or Judaism and Christianity, respectively.
 - 3. In 11.8, interpreters differ about the meaning of “the great city.”
 - 4. In 17.12, the identity of the “ten kings” is explained in various ways.
 - 5. Other ambiguities are difficult to explain, so that many matters never will be resolved conclusively.
 - D. But the uncertainty of apocalyptic language and the symbols in Revelation do not mean that the author is obscure unintentionally. It is the nature of apocalyptic literature to have some measure of obscurity, since this gives the hearer or the reader an opportunity to exercise judgment and to gain wisdom (see 13.18; 17.9). And in its elasticity, the symbolic language of the Apocalypse gains an important advantage over the more exact and didactic but less inspiring and suggestive style of ordinary prophecy.
- VII. There is a frequent recurrence of numbers in Revelation that appear to have a certain symbolic meaning.
- A. The following numbers are used in the book: 2, 3, 3 ½, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 24, 42, 144, 666 (or, according to a different textual reading, 610), 1000, 1260, 1600, 7000, 12,000, 144,000, 100,000,000, and 2,000,000,000.
 - 1. The predominant number is seven (7) that occurs fifty-four times with reference to the churches, spirits, seals, horns, eyes, angels, and so forth.
 - 2. The next most frequent number is twelve (12) and is used of the tribes, stars, foundation stones, fruits, and so forth. Multiples of twelve also are common (e.g., 144,000 equals 12 x 12,000 or 12 x 12 x 1000).
 - 3. Ten is another favorite of John, as he speaks of ten days, ten horns, ten kings, etc. And multiples of ten are common.
 - 4. Four occurs frequently (e.g., four angels and the four corners of the earth).
 - 5. Three is somewhat less prominent as in the last three trumpets, etc.
 - B. A few numbers are used symbolically only one time (e.g., six, five, and two).
- VIII. The recurrence of some of these numbers, notably of seven, twelve, ten, and four, cannot be accidental.
- A. The author’s partiality for these numbers may be due to his Semitic background and habits of thought.

1. To the Hebrew mind, seven denotes completion, as a survey of Old Testament passages will show. Each series of seven in Revelation is complete in itself, and each suggests perfection that belongs to the Almighty or that which is claimed falsely by the Antichrist.
 2. Three seems to denote limited plurality.
 3. Four, the number of the winds and the quarters of the sky, is a proper symbol for the visible creation.
 4. Ten has a recognized meaning as the round number that is symbolic of indefiniteness and immensity. As one thousand (i.e., $10 \times 10 \times 10$), these attributes are magnified. So “a thousand years” represents a lengthy but unknown period of time that stretches over many generations.
- B. The uncertainty that results from John’s frequent use of numbers would devalue any historical document. But for an apocalypse like Revelation, in which the veil is lifted only to disclose the dim outline of great issues, use of symbolic numbers has great value.
- IX. Two of the numbers call for special treatment.
- A. Three and a half days are given as the interval between the death and resurrection of the two witnesses (11.9, 11). This period corresponds to “time, times and half a time” (12.14) that possibly represents the three and a half years during which Jerusalem was controlled by the Syrian oppressor. Revelation uses this incomplete number, or its equivalents (i.e., 42 months, 1260 days), to signify the age of persecution whatever its duration might be. Other explanations are less probable.
- B. The number 666 (13.18; given as 616 in some Greek texts) has defied a solution that would satisfy all interpreters.
- X. Though much symbolism in Revelation may be of Semitic origin, the importance of local concepts and ideas due to the struggle between the Christians of western Asia Minor and the imperial authorities should not be overlooked. The author writes to strengthen the suffering churches by visions of the majesty of the Divine Lord who walks in their midst, stands before the celestial throne, and rides forth to victory with the armies of heaven under his command. A picture is painted of the glory of the church and its magnificent destiny that is in stark contrast to the abominable vices, the paltry display of power, and the certain doom of Rome. No scene or representation is being made in Revelation that cannot be understood by the hearers and readers of that day.

SPECIAL STUDY: STRUCTURE OF THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

1. *The charge to write*, “to the angel of the church in Ephesus (Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea), write . . .”
2. *Identification of the speaker*.
 - a. The one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands (2.1).
 - b. The first and the last, who was dead but came to life (2.8).
 - c. The one who has the sharp double-edged sword (2.12).
 - d. The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like polished bronze (2.18).
 - e. The one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars (3.1).
 - f. The holy one, the true one, the one who has the key of David, the one who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one will open (3.7).
 - g. The amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation (3.14).
3. *Commendation*, “I know your works . . .”
4. *Words of encouragement, censure, counsel, or warning*, “But I have this against you . . .”
5. *Exhortation to hear*, “Let the one having an ear hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (2.7, 11, 17, 29; 3.6, 13, 22).
6. *The promise to those who overcome*.
 - a. “To the one who overcomes, I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (2.7).
 - b. “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. The one who overcomes will not be injured by the second death” (2.10-11).
 - c. “To the one who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written upon it, known only to the recipient” (2.17).

- d. “To the one who overcomes, and who keeps my works until the end, I will give power over the nations—and he will rule them with a rod of iron, like clay pottery they will be smashed—even as I have received from my father; and I will give him the morning star” (2.26-27).
 - e. “The one who overcomes will be clothed in white garments, and I will not erase his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name in the presence of my father and in the presence of his angels” (3.5).
 - f. “The one who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; he will not go out of it anymore, and I will write upon him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which descends from heaven from my God, and my new name” (3.12).
 - g. ”To the one who overcomes, I will give to sit down with me on my throne, like I overcame and sat down with my father on his throne” (3.21).
7. *Closing exhortation and invitation* (3.19-20).

SPECIAL STUDY: THEORIES ON THE PERIOD OF THE MILLENNIUM IN REVELATION

Definition of Key Terms

Premillennialism. From the Latin *pre* (“before”), *mille* (“thousand”), *annus* (“year”). This theory asserts that Christ will return to earth and reign for a thousand years before the final consummation of all things. The word indicates that the second coming of Christ will precede this thousand year earthly rule of the Lord. Two basic schools of premillennial thought are to be distinguished: historic premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism.

Historic Premillennialism. This view sees the New Testament church as the realization of Old Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom of God, but it interprets Revelation 20 literally as the promise of a future thousand year rule of Christ on earth.

Dispensational Premillennialism. Dispensationalism is a distinctively peculiar form of premillennial thought which is historically recent, rabidly vocal, and more estranged from biblical truth than historic premillennialism. Dispensationalism is a comprehensive system which impacts the entire interpretation of the Bible. It divides all history into seven ages or dispensations in which humans are tested with regard to certain principles of obedience. The Christian Church is not viewed as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom of God but rather as a temporary provision of God until Christ comes again.

Postmillennialism. Postmillennialists believe that the kingdom of God has been and now is being advanced in the world through the preaching of the good news about Jesus and the saving of souls. Through these spiritual means, the world eventually will be converted to Christ, and this will usher in a long period of peace and righteousness commonly called the millennium. After (*post*) this age of a thousand years, Christ will come again.

Amillennialism. The word means “no thousand years.” According to this view, the “thousand years” of Revelation 20 is not a literal period of time. It is a symbolic or figurative representation of God’s complete destruction of Satan and his evil forces.

Millennialism, Premillenarianism, Millenarianism, Chiliasm. These terms are more or less synonymous with “premillennialism.”

Imminent. This is a term used by millennialists to indicate that the second coming of the Lord is impending and immediate.

Armageddon. This place in the Valley of Jezreel in northern Israel is mentioned in Revelation 16.16 as the scene of a great battle. Premillennialists claim this battle will be a great victory for God and his people over AntiChrist and will precede the rapture.

The Tribulation. This, according to premillennial thought, will be a period of woe and trouble on earth for the wicked that occurs while the saints (i.e., the church) are protected with Christ in the rapture. While the majority of premillennialists hold that the rapture of the church will be pretribulation (the view described above), there are some who believe that the rapture will occur after the tribulation (i.e., posttribulationists).

Rapture. This is a period of bliss for the resurrected saints, as they go to meet Christ in the air and prepare for the revelation.

Revelation. This is, according to premillennialists, the coming of Christ with his saints to the earth in order to assume his earthly throne.

The First Resurrection. This, according to premillennialists, is the resurrection of the righteous saints which follows the battle of Armageddon and precedes the rapture and the revelation.

The Different Theories Described [Adapted from Foster, *Revelation*, 300-301]

- I. The Amillennial Approach
 - A. Thousand is a figurative number. It designates the period between the resurrection of Christ and his second coming.
 - B. The reign of Christ will be in heaven.
 - C. Satan is bound and loosed, but his activity continues although limited.
 - D. The second coming, resurrection, and judgment will follow in immediate succession after the millennium.

- II. The Postmillennial Approach
 - A. Thousand is figurative depending on when the right conditions come on earth. It will begin when acceptance of the gospel on earth will bring ideal response to the reign of Christ.
 - B. The reign of Christ will be on earth.
 - C. Satan will be bound, and heavenly conditions will prevail on earth.
 - D. Following the close of the period, the second coming, resurrection, and judgment will follow immediately.

- III. The Premillennial Approach
 - A. Thousand is taken literally. The second coming of Christ precedes the period.
 - B. The reign of Christ will be on earth and, for dispensationalists, will follow the seven dispensations.
 - C. Historic premillennialists and dispensationalists disagree about the rapture and the tribulation, but Satan will be bound, and heavenly conditions will prevail on earth.
 - D. After a thousand years, the Lord will return a third time for judgment.

INTENDED RECIPIENTS FOR NEW TESTAMENT WRITINGS

<u>New Testament</u> <u>Book</u>	<u>Explicit (In Text)</u> <u>Recipients</u>	<u>Probable</u> <u>Audience</u>
Matthew	None	Jewish Christians
Mark	None	Gentile Christians
Luke	“Theophilus” (1.3)	
John	None	Churches of Asia
Acts	“Theophilus” (1.1)	
Romans	“beloved of God in Rome” (1.7)	
1 Corinthians	“church of God at Corinth” (1.2)	
2 Corinthians	“church of God at Corinth with all the saints throughout Achaia” (1.1)	
Galatians	“churches of Galatia” (1.2)	
Ephesians	“saints [at Ephesus]” (1.1)	
Philippians	“saints in Christ Jesus in Philippi” (1.1)	
Colossians	“saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae” (1.2)	
1 Thessalonians	“church of the Thessalonians” (1.1)	
2 Thessalonians	“church of the Thessalonians” (1.1)	
1 Timothy	“Timothy” (1.2)	
2 Timothy	“Timothy” (1.2)	
Titus	“Titus” (1.4)	
Philemon	“Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, and the church in your house” (verse 2)	
Hebrews	None	Jewish Christians (?)
James	“twelve tribes dispersed abroad” (1.1)	
1 Peter	“aliens [in] Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1.1)	
2 Peter	“those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours” (1.1)	
1 John	None, but see 2.14ff.	Churches of Asia
2 John	“the chosen [or elect] lady and her children” (verse 1; cf. verse 13)	
3 John	“Gaius” (verse 1; cf. verse 9)	
Jude	“those called” (verse 1)	
Revelation	“the seven churches in Asia” (1.4)	

COMPARISON OF PAUL'S PRISON AND PASTORAL CORRESPONDENCE

<u>Letter</u>	<u>Salutation</u>	<u>Destination</u>	<u>Origin</u>	<u>Courier</u>
Philippians	Paul and Timothy (1.1)	Philippi (1.1)	Paul in prison (1.7, 13, 14, 17; cf. 4.22)	Epaphroditus (2.25)
Colossians	Paul and Timothy (1.1)	Colossae (1.2)	Paul in prison (4.3, 10, 18)	Tychicus (4.7) and Onesimus (4.9)

[Also with Paul in Colossians - Epaphras (1.7-8; 4.12-13), Aristarchus, Mark, Jesus Justus, Luke, Demas (4.10, 11, 14)]

Philemon	Paul and Timothy (1)	Philemon, Apphia, Archippus (cf. Colossians 4.17), and the church (1-2)	Paul in prison (9, 10, 13, 23)	[Tychicus] and Onesimus (10, 12)
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[Also with Paul in Philemon - Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke (verses 23, 24)]

Ephesians	Paul (1.1)	[Ephesus] (1.1)	Paul in prison (3.1; 4.1)	Tychicus (6.21-22)
1 Timothy	Paul (1.1)	Timothy at Ephesus (1.2-3)	Paul in Macedonia (1.3)?	?
2 Timothy	Paul (1.1)	Timothy at Ephesus (1.15-18; cf. 4.19)	Paul in prison at Rome (see 1.17)	Tychicus (4.12)?

[Also mentioned by Paul in 2 Timothy - Demas, Crescens, Titus, Luke; but Mark not with Paul (4.10-11)]

Titus	Paul (1.1)	Titus on Crete (1.4-5)	Paul at or near Nicopolis (3.12)	Artemas, Tychicus (3.12)
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[Also mentioned by Paul in Titus - Zenas, Apollos (3.13)]

TIMELINE FOR NEW TESTAMENT WRITINGS

Late 40s

Galatians (49)?

James (49-51)?

50s

1 Thessalonians (50/51)

2 Thessalonians (50/51)

1 Corinthians (55/56)

2 Corinthians (55-57)

Romans (56/57)

Galatians (56/57)?

Matthew (50-60)

60s

Philippians (61/62)

Colossians (61/62)

Philemon (61/62)

Ephesians (61/62)

Mark (65-70)

Luke (50-70)

Acts (60-70)

Hebrews (60s)?

James (60s)?

1 Timothy (63-65)

Titus (63-65)

2 Timothy (64/65)

1 Peter (65)

2 Peter (65-68)

Jude (60-90)

70s

80s

90s

1 John (90-95)

2 John (95)

3 John (95)

John (95)

Revelation (95)

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE FORMATION OF THE “NEW TESTAMENT”

1. The authority of the Old Testament books, Jesus himself, and the apostles of Jesus.
2. Prescribed instruction of the apostles for a wider reading and circulation of their writings.
3. The respect for the inspiration and authority of the apostles and their written, as well as their spoken, word.
4. The precedent of the Jewish scriptures for the church (for example, it was not a new thing to consider written testimony as authoritative).
5. The reading of the apostolic writings along with the Old Testament scriptures.
6. The veneration of the apostolic writings as of equal value with the Old Testament writings.
7. The desire for a complete collection of books or writings about Jesus and from his apostles.
8. The gradual passing of apostles, prophets, and teachers (with special gifts) and the need of the church to have the written word of God.
9. The growing pressure of false teaching and false books that increased the need of all the churches to have a carefully defined and universally accepted collection of books.
10. The will of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

REFERENCES TO WRITING AND/OR PUBLIC READING OF NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS

<u><i>New Testament Book</i></u>	<u><i>Mention of Writing and/or Public Reading</i></u>
Matthew	Possibly 24.15; 26.13
Mark	Possibly 13.14; 14.9
Luke	1.1-4
John	20.30-31; 21.24-25
Acts	1.1
Romans	Chapter 16
1 Corinthians	4.6, 14ff.; 5.9ff.; 7.1; 9.15; 10.11; 16.19-24
2 Corinthians	1.13; 2.3, 9; 3.1; 7.8, 12; 9.1; 10.9-11; 13.10
Galatians	6.11
Ephesians	None, but see 6.21ff.
Philippians	3.1; cf. 2.19ff.
Colossians	4.16 (!), 18; cf. 2.1
1 Thessalonians	5.27 (!)
2 Thessalonians	2.15; 3.14-15, 17
1 Timothy	3.14; cf. 4.6, 13
2 Timothy	3.14-17; 4.13
Titus	None, but see 1.3, 9; 2.5, 10
Philemon	None, but see verse 2
Hebrews	Chapter 13, especially verse 22
James	None, but see 1.1
1 Peter	5.12; also 1.1
2 Peter	1.20; 3.1, 2, 14ff.
1 John	2.1, 7, 12-14, 21, 26; 5.13
2 John	Verses 4, 12
3 John	Verses 9, 13
Jude	Verse 3
Revelation	1.3, 4, 11, 19; 2.1, 8, 12, 18; 3.1, 7, 12, 14; 5.1; 10.4; 13.8; 14.1, 13; 17.5, 8; 19.12-13; 20.12, 15; 21.5, 27; 22.6, 7, 10, 18-19 Also, the prominent reference to scrolls and their seals

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