

New Testament

We did an overview of the New Testament (NT) earlier in Bible 101. Now we will take a closer look, introducing background information and specific content and interpretive issues peculiar to each book.

“Introduction” is broken into (1) general and (2) special questions. Each area requires a lot of study, but we will try to keep the introductions to a 101 level. Resources may be scrutinized for additional help.

David A. deSilva. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2004.
Donald Guthrie. *New Testament Introduction*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1970 (3rd ed.).

I. Environmental Landmarks to NT

First Testament ends with Persia in world control. Then we have a 400 year gap.

A. Intertestamental period

1. Rise of Greece

- a. Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander, consolidated the Greek city-states over a twenty year reign.
- b. Alexander the Great (born 356 BCE) [died at 33]
 - 1) He defeats Persia and goes on to conquer the rest of known world.
 - 2) He contributes to the world by establishing centers of culture that introduced Greek customs and manners.
 - 3) He brought the Greek language as the vernacular (common language), essential to Hellenization.
- c. Successors to Alexander
 - 1) Empire broken into four parts.
 - 2) Most important for NT were Seleucids and Ptolemies.
 - Ptolemies allowed Israel autonomous rule.
 - Later, the Seleucids won larger territory over their brothers and they ruled with an iron fist, best seen in Antiochus IV.

2. Roman growth

- a. The Rome Republic filled the gap left by Alexander's death and unfulfilled control by the succeeding Greek rulers.
- b. The Romans became the world's peacekeepers among a large number of independent states, opening the way for the Roman Empire.
- c. Roman Empire expanded Alexander's ideology of world domination, promoting unification through Hellenistic-Roman culture, administration, and religion.
- d. David deSilva sums up Roman growth: "Under its emperors, Rome fulfilled this ideal better than any predecessor: culture remained thoroughly Greek, with the distinctive Roman flavoring of central administration, the glorification of power and the promise of peace through unopposable force" (2004, 52).

3. Judaism

- a. Maccabean revolt and rule
 - When Seleucids forbid practice of Judaism and access to the Temple, the Jews revolted (166 BCE). The Seleucids allowed a relatively independent Judea.
 - With Roman support, the Hasmonean dynasty ruled Israel for 80 years.
 - See 1 Maccabees.
- b. Septuagint (LXX)
 - Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures grew with Hellenization.
 - It testifies to underlying Hebrew text.
- c. Apocrypha
 - Books reflecting variety of Jewish beliefs and frustrations.

B. Roman rule and Hellenistic culture

1. Roman contributions

- a. Religions and Philosophical schools [persists to today in Western culture]
 - 1) Platonism – student of Socrates who believed the material was a shadow of ideal, invisible forms. The invisible was the only reality.
 - 2) Stoicism – experience in life made up of things we control (virtue, desire) and things we do not control (reputation, wealth, physical well being).
 - 3) Cynics – goal was simplicity.
 - 4) Epicureans – reality is completely material, naturalistic.
- b. Sociological worldviews
 - 1) As diverse as populations under Roman controls.

2) Freedom allowed within bounds of harm to Rome or neighbors.

c. *Pax romana* = peace of Rome

- Armies maintained peace.
- Roads built to expedite movement of troops and control of areas. [provided for easy movement in mission movement of early Christians]
- Elaborate administrative system brought law and order.

2. Diversity in Judaism

a. Temple and Traditions

- 1) Temple elevated to almost “idolatrous” level as a misinterpretation of sacred space.
- 2) Traditions used to control population (spiritual abuse). They were expanded by oral connection to Moses.
- 3) The world of Jesus was filled with Jewish factions, weight of legalism, levels of spirituality, secularism – the perfect time (Gal 4:4).
- 4) Factions included Sadducees [died out after Temple destroyed], Pharisees [belief of Judaism after Temple destruction in 70 CE], Essenes [Qumran?], Zealots [Bar Kochba revolt, 132-35 CE, is last revolt], Samaritans, and Gnosticism [unknown connection to Judaism and early Christianity, but viewed as a heresy by both]. Role of Sanhedrin continued at least through 1st century.

b. Diaspora (dispersion of Jewish people away from their homeland)

- 1) Started under Assyrians, continued under Babylonians.
- 2) Persians released populations to borders but mostly tribe of Judah from Israel returned to land.
- 3) Greeks more interested in Hellenization.
- 4) Romans allowed lots of travel and movement as part of world peace. It also provided economic opportunities for many peoples in new areas.
- 5) Growth of synagogue provided a focal point for Jewish people in exile, allowing worship and education to the dispersed people. [They became a key starting point for the early mission of the church.]
- 6) 70 CE and destruction of Temple after the first Jewish revolt enlarged diaspora. Laws made after second Jewish revolt in 135 CE required no Jews in homeland (especially near the Temple site), thus forcing more Jews to move abroad.

3. Geography of NT

II. The Gospels

A. Background

1. What is a “gospel”? Why were they written?

a. Definition

- Where would you put a “gospel” in a library collection?
- “Memoirs”? (Justin Martyr, d. 164 CE)
- “Bios” or “Lives”? Common among Greeks and Romans for literature that gave a basic chronological framework for a person’s life and some of the key teachings of that person.
- “Gospel”? Not really a history (e.g., little interest in the majority of Jesus’ life) but spotlights Jesus’ authority and his compelling death and resurrection.

b. Reasons for writing

- 1) Needs of early church to fit in context of FT and future (Luke 1:1-4).
- 2) Focus on “Good News,” John 20:31.
- 3) Early church used Matthew as a “catechesis,” a teaching tool for the basics of faith.

2. Who were the audiences for the Gospels?

a. Tradition

- 1) Mark → Roman Christians
- 2) Matthew and Luke → Antioch Christians
 - Matthew → Jewish Christians
 - Luke → Greek/Hellenistic Christians
- 3) John → Ephesus church

b. All believers

3. What were the sources for the Gospels?

a. Oral traditions?

- Eyewitnesses?
- Aramaic/Hebrew?
- Greek?
- Quest for historical Jesus? Enlightenment worldview and naturalistic explanations of reality produced this quest.

b. Written? Luke prologue (1:1-4)

- 1) Sayings of Jesus? 230 sayings agree in Matthew and Luke.
- 2) Narratives?
- 3) Proto-Luke, Ur-Markus? M = sayings collection used by Matthew? L = Luke material not used in other Gospels?
- 4) Q(uelle)? Written collection of sayings.

c. Synoptic Gospels and Gospel of John

- A side-by-side reading of the Gospels raises many questions.
- Why do Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell some of the same stories in almost the same way but other portions do not match?
- Why are Jesus' sayings grouped differently?
- Why same parables occur in different contexts in Matthew and Luke?
- Why does John share so little sayings material with the others?
- Why do Matthew and Luke only include infancy narratives?
- Why are accounts of post-resurrection appearances so different?

•	• Agree	• Peculiar
• Matthew	• 58% Mk, Lk	• 42%
• Mark	• 93% Mt, Lk	• 7%
• Luke	• 41% Mt, Mk	• 59%
• John	• 8% of others	• 92%

- Other gospels?
 - *Gospel of Thomas; Gospel of Peter; the Secret Gospel of Mark;* fragments of the Egerton Gospel.
 - Early church fathers recount in their writings material from three Jewish Christian writings: the *Gospel of the Ebionites; Gospel of the Hebrews, Gospel of the Nazoreans.*
- Affirmed: four Gospels, three synoptic and one John.

4. When were the Gospels written?

a. Markan priority? Probable, but each stands on its own despite a complex interdependence.

b. Dates → Mark > pre-70 CE (cf. Mark 13:14), possibly ca. 60 CE before death of Peter;

→ Matthew and Luke > after Mark, perhaps after 70 CE and many argue in 80s for Matthew and the 70s for Luke [tied to writing of Acts, too];
→ John > 90s.

B. Synoptic Gospels

1. Matthew

a. Author

- 1) Matthew the apostle (9:9, cf. Mk 2:14, Lk 5:27f; 10:3) – although the book does not give an author’s name.
- 2) Papias – “Matthew composed the Logia in the Hebrew tongue and everyone interpreted them as he was able” (quoted in Eusebius, *HE*, 3:39, 16). Others followed – Irenaeus, Pantaenus, and Origen.

b. Purpose

- 1) Matthew purposes to show that the major events in the life of Jesus took place in fulfillment of prophecy, from birth to death and resurrection.
- 2) Matthew provides guidance on how to walk by following the words of Jesus the Messiah.
- 3) Matthew fulfills an apologetic purpose for Jesus the son of David (infancy questions, details on resurrection).

c. Characteristics

- 1) Conciseness in narrative (cf. Matt 13:3-12 and Mk 6:17-29; Matt 17:14-21 and Mk 9:14-29).
- 2) Messianic interest (thus many quotes from FT, the majority from LXX but many from the Hebrew [all introduced by “that it might be fulfilled”]).
- 3) Reflection on a restricted Jewish-Christian viewpoint (5:18f; 23:2f; 19:17f; 23:23; 15:24; 17:24ff; 1:1ff; plus Jewish customs and phrases are included without explanation).
- 4) Ecclesiastical elements (only Gospel that mentions the Church – 16:18, 18:17f; 18:20, 28:19, 20).
- 5) Eschatological interest – surpasses interest in Mark (13) or Luke (21) in chapters 24-25 and also in some parables (tares, 13:36ff, 10 virgins, 25:13, talents, 25:30) peculiar to Matthew.
- 6) Five thematic discourses – Matthew shows an alternation of large blocks of teaching material with narrative sections (see outline below). They include (1) the Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:27), (2) the missionary discourse (9:36-10:42), (3) the Parables of the Kingdom (13:1-52), (4)

regulations for church life (18:1-35), and (5) the eschatological discourse (23:1-25:46). The book displays careful planning in its structure. Does the five discourse structure match the Torah's five books?

- 7) Numerical groups – It seems to be the way his mind works, different than the other Gospels. Does it reflect his background as a tax collector? He likes 3s, 5s, and 7s.

Examples: 3-fold division of genealogy (1:17); 3 temptations (4:1-11), 3 illustrations of righteousness, 3 prohibitions, 3 commands (6:1-7:20), 3 groupings of 3 types of miracles [healings, power, and restoration] (8:1-9:34), and instances of 3 parables, questions, prayers or denials. In addition, we find 5 discourses, groupings of 14 persons in genealogy 3 times, 7 parables (ch. 13), and 7 woes in Matthew 23.

d. Issues

- 1) Language of the original Gospel – Hebrew/Aramaic or Greek? Perhaps a Jewish-Greek style?
- 2) FT formula quotations and use of the FT – under our hermeneutical rules we would not utilize some of the passages Matthew uses as support nor conclude that Jesus fulfilled them. But Matthew finds correlation everywhere from the oracles of God to the ministry of Jesus.
 - “fulfill” =

e. Structure – it depends on what cues you pick up on. Here is an easy outline by David DeSilva (239).

Prologue: infancy narratives (1:1-2:23)

Part 1 – 3:1-7:29

Narrative (3:1-4:25)

Discourse (Sermon on the Mount) (5:1-7:27)

Concluding/transitional formula (7:28-29)

Part 2 – 8:1-11:1

Narrative (8:1-9:35)

Discourse (missionary) (9:36-10:42)

Concluding/transitional formula (11:1)

Part 3 – 11:2-13:53

Narrative (11:2-12:50)

Discourse (parables of the kingdom) (13:1-52)

Concluding/transitional formula (13:53)

Part 4 – 13:54-19:1

Narrative (13:54-17:27)

Discourse (regulations for church life) (18:1-35)

Concluding/transitional formula (19:1)

Part 5 – 19:2-26:2

Narrative (19:2-22:46)

Discourse (denunciation of Pharisees/apocalyptic discourse) (23:1-25:46)

Concluding/transitional formula (26:1-2)

[Conclusion] – Passion, resurrection, and commissioning narrative (26:3-28:20)

2. Mark

a. Author

- 1) Mark (John Mark in Acts 12:12, 25, 15:37 or Mark in Acts 15:39, Col 4:10, 2 Tim 4:11, Philemon 24 or 1 Peter 5:13)
- 2) Early church testimony concurred with the authorship by Mark and his close relationship with Peter in the production of the Gospel (Papias, Irenaeus, the Muratorian Canon, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Jerome).

b. Purpose

- 1) Mark purposes to present an historical account of the life of Jesus toward an evangelistic goal, a “gospel,” i.e., good news about the Son of God. Thus he spends most space on the death and resurrection, like all the Gospels, but he does so without large blocks of teachings.
- 2) Mark presents the facts, and the personality of Jesus leaps from its words without necessitating intentional pointers; it allows us to see “the man.”

c. Characteristics

- 1) Gospel of action
 - “Immediately” or “straightway” (KJV) often frames movement.
 - The Gospel drives us to the cross. Movement is important.
- 2) Gospel for Gentiles
 - Especially to a Roman audience.
 - Evidence for a western or Roman audience emerges from (1) Latinisms, even explaining Greek terms (12:42 and Latin *quadans* and

15:16 *praetorium*) and (2) Aramaisms that Mark explains (3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 10:46; 14:36; 15:22, 34) along with Jewish customs (e.g., hand-washing at 7:3-4).

- Absence of traces of Jewish-Christian coloring like in Matthew (13:18; 7:24ff; no reference to abiding validity of Law like Matt 5:18; 13:10).

3) Mark's candor

- He narrates the disciples' lack of understanding (4:13, 6:52, 8:17, 21, 9:10, 32).
- He notes the attitude of relatives toward Jesus (3:21).
- He highlights the amazement of hearers (1:27, 10:24, 32) as well as their unbelief (e.g., at Nazareth, 6:5-6).
- He shows Jesus' human reactions (1:41, 43, 3:5, 8:12, 33, 10:14, 16, 21).

4) "Son of God" (1:1)

- Power
- Authority
- 15:39

5) "Son of Man"

- Jesus mixes with common people.
- He needs prayer (1:35, 6:31).
- He is "resolute" on his last journey to Jerusalem (10:32).
- Jesus does not seek messianic recognition until the right time, displaying humility and purpose.

6) Redeemer

- He is a ransom for many (10:45).
- Proportion of Mark's Gospel given to passion narrative forces us to see the importance of redemption at the cross.

d. Issues

1) Marcan ending – a text critical question.

- Majority of manuscripts include all 20 verses.
- Some end at 16:8. They have quality and age on their side (Vaticanus and Sinaiticus).
- Some have a short ending that suggests it was an attempt to fill in the awkward end at 16:8.
- Some early church evidence says the ending of Mark was corrupt.
- The Greek style changes in vv. 9-20 and marks of additional compilation make it distinct from the rest of the Gospel. Some believe

it was added in the 2nd century with examples of real resurrection appearances of Jesus.

- Was 16:8 Mark's intended ending? Does it indicate the loss of the ending at an early stage? I think we have lost the original ending.

2) Marcan beginning – an interpretation question.

- 1:1-4 offers grammatical difficulties that might suppose corruption.
- 1:1 is more like a title because it has no predicate. 1:2-3 quotes from FT in reference to John the Baptizer who isn't introduced until v. 4, unusual but not impossible.

e. Structure

- 1) Since movement is important, some have found Mark's geographical outline (D. Guthrie, 86-87): Sea of Galilee (1:14-5:43), Galilee region (6:1-9:50), Judean period (10:1-13:37), concluding with passion and resurrection (14:1-16:20).
- 2) Others have spotlighted Jesus as Messiah and organize around Peter's confession (8:29) and the centurion's confession (15:39) (Lane).
- 3) Many find the organization key in the tightly written passage at the core of the book, 8:22-10:52, with three passion predictions and teachings on discipleship framed by an *inclusio* of stories of healing blind men (DeSilva, 199).

An Outline of Mark's Gospel (DeSilva, 200).

Opening, 1:1-8:21

Initiation of Jesus' ministry, 1:1-15

Jesus' authority demonstrated in teaching, healings, and exorcism, 1:16-45

Challenges and opposition, 2:1-3:6

Stories about an alternative family, 3:7-35

Parables separating insiders from outsiders, 4:1-34

Failure of miracles to awaken true faith, 4:35-8:21

Middle, 8:22-10:52

Healing of a blind man, 8:22-26

First teaching on Messiahship (passion prediction) and discipleship, 8:27-9:1

Transfiguration and the suffering forerunner, 9:2-13

An exorcism, 9:14-29

Second teaching on Messiahship (passion prediction) and discipleship, 9:30-50

Challenge concerning divorce, 10:1-12

Possessions and the kingdom (cost and rewards of discipleship), 10:17-31

Third teaching on Messiahship (passion prediction) and discipleship, 10:32-45

Healing of a blind man, 10:46-52

Closing, 11:1-16:8

Messiah rides into Jerusalem, 11:1-11

Indictment of the temple and its replacement, 11:12-26

Challenges and opposition, 11:27-12:44

The apocalyptic discourse (cost and rewards of discipleship), 13:1-37

Fulfillment of passion predictions, 14:1-16:8

3. Luke

a. Author

1) Unnamed (like all the Gospels [Luke])

- Any consideration of authorship of the Gospel of Luke includes the book of Acts, too, since both give presence to the author speaking to a targeted person, Theophilus, as well as explaining his activity, purpose, and methods (cf. Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-2).
- Greek style between Luke and Acts shows the best Greek in the NT. In addition, he is cultured enough to reflect a Greek stylized pertinent to varying contexts (e.g., Greek with Semiticisms in infancy narratives while the preface is standard high Koine Greek).
- It seems natural to suppose that the “we-sections” in Acts (16:10-17, 20:5-15, 21:1-18, and 27:1-28:16) and the 1st person singular of the introductions (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1) are the same person – Luke.

2) Early church

- Tradition is unwavering for Luke, the “beloved physician” (Philemon 24; Col 4:10, 14; 2 Tim 4:11).
- Early church fathers point to Luke (Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen).

3) Luke

- Gentile.
- Physician and fellow laborer with Paul on 1st and 2nd imprisonments.
- He remained at Philippi until picked up at end of 3rd journey.
- He stayed with Paul continuously after 3rd missionary journey.

b. Purpose

- 1) To write “an orderly account” (1:3).
- 2) To use great care in ascertaining the facts (1:3-4), i.e., an historical account.

- 3) To enable Theophilus to know with certainty the truth he has been taught (1:4). Thus Luke's purpose helps new believers, especially Gentiles, understand the promises of God.

c. Characteristics

- 1) Comprehensive range
 - Starts with annunciations of John the Baptizer and Jesus and extends to the ascension of Jesus.
 - Longest book in NT (and with Acts makes up 1/4th of NT).
- 2) Gospel aimed at all – Jews, Gentiles, nations
 - Check out 2:14; 2:32; 3:4-6 with Isaiah 40:3-5; 9:54; 10:33; 17:16; 4:25-27; 24:47.
- 3) Luke's interest in people (Guthrie 91f)
 - a) Focus on individuals
 - Priest Zacharias, Elizabeth and Mary, Mary and Martha, Zacchaeus, Cleopas.
 - b) Interest in social outcasts
 - Immoral woman in 7:36ff.
 - Transformation of Zacchaeus, 19:8ff.
 - Repentance of robber, 23:39ff.
 - Acceptance of Samaritans
 - c) Portrayal of women
 - 13 women mentioned that are not mentioned elsewhere in other Gospels.
 - Women figure prominently in birth and resurrection stories (cf. 23:49, 23:55-24:11).
 - d) Interest in children
 - Luke alone refers to childhoods of John the Baptizer and Jesus.
 - 3X mentions "only children" (7:12, 8:42, 9:38).
 - In account of bringing children to Jesus (18:15), Luke only mentions word for "infant" rather than general word for children (as in Matthew and Mark).
 - e) Social relationships
 - Luke records 3X Jesus dining with Pharisees (7:36-50, 11:37-44, 14:1-4).
 - He mentions social interactions in Bethany (10:38-42), at Zacchaeus' house (19:1-10), at Emmaus (24:13-32).

- Several unique stories pertain to social contexts.
- f) Poverty and wealth
- Many parables pertain to money matters, e.g., the two debtors, the rich fool, the tower builder, the lost coin, the unjust steward, and the rich man and Lazarus.
 - The “poor” and “humble” receive the Master’s mercy (6:20, 30, 14:11ff). Jesus at Nazareth proclaims good tidings to the “poor” (4:17-21).
 - The Pharisees are called “lovers of money” (16:14).
 - The first woe in the Sermon on the Plain pronounced against the rich (6:24). First blessing is for the poor (6:20, cf. Matt 5:3).
- 4) Prayer
- a) Luke records 9 prayers with only 2 in other gospels. These prayers are associated with important events – baptism (3:21), day of miracles (5:15-16), choosing disciples (6:12), before first prediction of passion (9:18-22), transfiguration (9:29), return of 70 (10:17-21), teaching disciples to pray (11:1), Gethsemane (22:39-46), and on the cross (23:34, 46).
 - b) Jesus withdraws into the desert to pray (5:16) and once spends all night in prayer (6:12).
 - c) Two parables deal with prayer (11:5ff; 18:1-8).
 - d) Luke alone relates that Jesus prayed for Peter (22:31-32), exhorted his disciples to pray (22:40), prayed for his enemies (23:34) and for himself (22:41).
 - e) Jesus loved quiet and lonely places (4:42, 9:10, 21:37).
- 5) Holy Spirit
- a) Luke is the gospel of the Spirit. Jesus begins in fullness of the Spirit (4:1). He acted in the power of the Spirit (4:14).
 - b) He rejoices in the Spirit (10:21-22).
 - c) Disciples are told to wait for the Spirit (24:49, cf. Acts 1:8).
- 6) Joyfulness
- a) Luke uses several words for joy or rejoicing (1:14, 44, 47, 10:21, including jumping for joy (6:23), laughter (6:21), and merriment (15:23, 32).
 - b) In 3 parables rejoicing results when the lost is found (ch. 15), including also the story of Zacchaeus (ch. 19).
 - c) The Gospel begins and ends with rejoicing (1:47, 24:52-53).
 - d) Only in Luke are songs recorded (Magnificat, 1:46-55; Benedictus, 1:68-79; Gloria in excelsis, 2:14; and Nunc Dimittis, 2:29-32).

d. Issues

- 1) Authorship
- 2) Date of book(s)

e. Structure (see DeSilva, 311)

Luke Johnson proposes a geographical structure for Luke-Acts (*The Writings of the NT*, 204-205). The Gospel moves toward Jerusalem; Acts moves away from Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the world. In Luke's view, Jerusalem is the center or summit, in one the end and in the other the beginning.

Introductory material, 1:1-2:52

Prologue, 1:1-4

Announcement of the birth of John the Baptizer, 1:5-25

Announcement of the birth of Jesus, 1:26-56

Birth of John, 1:57-80

Birth of Jesus, 2:1-52

Jesus in Galilee, 3:1-9:50

Preparation for ministry, 3:1-4:13

John the Baptizer and Jesus, 3:1-22

Genealogy, 3:23-38

Temptation, 4:1-13

Inauguratory Sermon, 4:14-30

Galilean ministry, 4:31-9:50

Journey to Jerusalem, 9:51-19:27

Jesus in Jerusalem area, 19:28-24:53

Jerusalem ministry, 19:28-21:38

Passion narrative, 22:1-23:56

Resurrection appearances in Judea, 24:1-53

C. John

a. Author

- 1) Unnamed (like all Gospels). Traditionally – John the apostle.
- 2) Irenaeus says the disciple of the Lord who wrote at Ephesus (*Against Heresies* III.1.2).

- 3) An anonymous disciple is mentioned in the Gospel (1:35-42; 18:15-18), identified as the one “whom Jesus loved” (13:23; 19:26; 20:2-9). He is the authoritative witness behind the Gospel (19:35; 21:20-24).
- 4) Nothing is said in this Gospel about a John apart from a mention of the sons of Zebedee (21:2); it is reasonable to argue this is John the son of Zebedee (cf. Matt 10:2; Mark 3:17; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13) who was a pillar of the first Jerusalem church (Acts 3:1; 4:13; 8:14; Gal 2:9).
- 5) The writer shows a good knowledge of first-century Palestinian terrain, customs, and ideology (e.g., 3:23; 4:5, 9, 20, 25; 5:16-18; 6:1, 59; 9:11; 11:54; 12:20; 18:13). In fact, archaeology has verified some specific facts that earlier scholars had dismissed as spurious (5:2; 19:13).

b. Purpose

- 1) John 20:30-31 gives us a purpose for the writing – that you might believe that Jesus is Messiah, the son of God, and if you believe, you might have life through his name.
- 2) This purpose shows some ambiguity – (1) who is the “you”? Unbelieving Gentiles? Diaspora Jews? Jewish Christians? Gentile and Jewish believers? Probably Christians. (2) But why the “signs,” of which we have only a small part according to John? In fact, exorcisms, so important in the Synoptics, are missing altogether. Jesus does three healings and one resuscitation, and they are called “signs” (*semeia*) with symbolic significance. And (3) how do we translate the expression, “that you might believe”? If Aorist tense, the purpose is conversion. If Present tense, then it means the purpose is reinforcement, “that you might go on believing.” Probably the present tense.
- 3) In light of its role in reflective thought on Jesus, we might say its purpose is to deepen our understanding of Jesus as Messiah. Thus it strengthens and encourages Christians in their faith journey.

c. Characteristics

- 1) Place of the FT
 - a) Assumed background of FT and Jewish belief system.
 - John 1:11 and rejection
 - 2:16 and authority
 - 3:2 and Nicodemus
 - 4:22 and way of salvation
 - b) Specific uses
 - Scripture pointed to him, 5:39.

- Belief in Moses would mean belief in him, 5:45f.
 - “Bread” and manna, ch. 6.
 - Coming of Spirit promised from FT, 7:38 (although we don’t know what specific passage; close, Prov 4:23; Isa 58:11).
 - Shepherd imagery, ch. 10.
 - Riding on donkey into Jerusalem as fulfillment, 12:14 (so Matthew), as well as the unbelief of Jews, 12:38-39 (Isa 53:1, 6:10).
 - Jesus’ legs not broken, 19:36 (only Gospel to say so; cf. Ps 34:20; also, Ex 12:46 and Num 9:12).
 - References to Abraham, 8:48ff, esp. v. 56 (probably general belief of Abraham; Gen 12:1-3; 17:17, 20; 22:8, 13-18; cf. Rom 4:13-21).
 - Vision of Jacob, 1:50-51.
 - Plus many more.
- c) Jesus’ and John’s uses of the FT show how they point to Christ. John has reflected deeply on this subject.
- d) Qumran findings demonstrate a common Jewish-Palestinian thought background (see “d. Issues. 1)).

2) Teaching on the Spirit

- a) Spirit and regeneration, ch. 3.
- b) Spiritual nature of God, 4:24, and worship.
- c) Spirit promised after Jesus’ glorification, 7:39.
- d) Spirit in “Farewell discourses”
 - Name – Paraclete and Spirit of Truth = Counsellor or Advocate or Comforter (confirmed in Testaments of Twelve and also Qumran; so S. Mowinckel).
 - Representative of Christ indwelling the believer, 14:16-17.
 - Teach all things, 14:26, guiding into truth, 16:13.
 - Witness to Christ, 15:26; 16:14.
 - Convincer of sin, righteousness, and judgment, 16:8-11.

3) Prevalence of great themes

- a) Abstract themes such as light, life, love, truth, abiding are scattered throughout book (introduced in 1:1-18).
- b) Life and light, 1:4 → see 3:15, 16, 36, 6:47, 54, 17:2 and eternal life; 6:35, bread of life; 4:14 and water of eternal life; 10:10, abundant life; 8:12, 9:5 and light; plus other echoes of light theme, 3:19ff, 5:35, 11:9, 12:46.
- c) Love, especially in the Farewell discourses and in Peter’s reconciliation.

- 4) Lack of movement
 - Often labeled as static, the amount of discourses accounts for lack of narrative movement.

- 5) Portrait of Jesus
 - a) Title is “Son of God” or “Son.” “Son of man” is used only occasionally (1:51, 3:13-14).
 - b) However, the humanity comes out more so than Synoptics (see wedding feast at Cana; tired at well in Sychar; moved at tomb of Lazarus; washes feet of disciples; thirsts on cross).
 - c) Inner person of Jesus seen more in John (esp. ch. 17).
 - d) Messianic idea is easily traced in this Gospel – early by some disciples (1:41), by Samaritan woman, feeding leads to proclamation as king (6:15).
 - e) Jesus is the Logos, the preexistent son of God and possessing the full nature of God (prologue to ch. 1).

d. Issues

- 1) Hellenistic vs. Jewish-Palestinian background?
 - a) Evidence in the past amassed support for presenting a Hellenized Christianity in John’s Gospel. Parallels from Philo, Hermetic literature, and Gnosticism were found to confirm this hypothesis.
 - b) However, Qumran materials showed that Judaism in the first century utilized many of the same abstract themes as John. Such phrases as “the spirit of truth and deceit” (1 Jn 4:6), “the light of life” (Jn 8:12), to “do the truth” (Jn 3:21), “sons of light” (Jn 12:36), “life eternal” (3:15-16 and many other passages), plus many more all having corresponding phrases in the Qumran sectarian writings. Concepts like community and oneness surface. Frank Cross states, “. . . John now proves to be in some ways the most Jewish” (*The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies*, 2nd ed, 216; worded differently in 3rd edition).

- 2) Differences with Synoptics?
 - Same basic story, but John certainly speaks about Jesus in his own way.

- 3) Date of book?

- 4) Authorship question?

e. Structure

Outline of John's Gospel

Prologue, 1:1-18

The "Book of Signs," 1:19-12:50

[note on 7:53-8:11]

The "Book of Glory," 13:1-20:31

Jesus' instructions to his followers, 13:1-17:26

Passion and resurrection appearances and conclusion, 18:1-20:31

Epilogue, 21:1-25 [additional resurrection appearance and conclusion]

III. Acts of the Apostles

A. Author

1. Luke writes the sequel to his gospel.
2. See notes on the Gospel of Luke, A. Author

B. Purpose

1. To provide a selective history of the spread of the message of Good News.
2. To spotlight the work of the Holy Spirit in the spread of the Gospel.
3. To give an apology for the continuity of the church with Judaism.
 - Cf. Acts 15:15-18 and Amos 9:11-12.

C. Characteristics

1. It links the Gospels and the Epistles.
 - We cannot understand the epistles without Acts.
2. It demonstrates that the Church advances by supernatural control.
 - The book could be named "the Acts of the Holy Spirit."
3. It portrays the earliest communities of believers.
 - a. It gives a valuable general impression (2:41-47; 4:31-37; 6:1-4).

- b. It supplements the letters; they work together for more specificity.
 - c. It shows a unity among believers. When issues arise, they are addressed and brought to resolution (6:1-4; ch. 10; ch. 15).
 - d. It demonstrates joyfulness of relationship with God through Messiah.
4. It provides samples of apostolic preaching.
- a. As such, it gives insights into early theological thought.
 - b. It is rich in early understandings of Christology (chs. 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, and 13).
 - c. Its addresses reflect a strong view to missional preaching.
5. It focuses on Peter and Paul.
- a. Chapters 1-12 highlight Peter.
 - b. Chapter 8 briefly introduces Saul/Paul at Stephen's stoning (8:1), then in chapter 9 describes his meeting with Jesus on the road to Damascus.
 - c. Chapters 13 and on track Paul, especially in chapters 16 to 28.
 - Features in Peter's stories are often matched in the telling of Paul's.
 - Both heal cripples (3:2-8, 14:8-12), heal through strange means (5:15, a shadow; 19:12, with clothes), have encounters with sorcerers (8:18, 13:6), are concerned in restoration scenes (9:36, 20:9), and are miraculously released from prison (12:7, 16:26).
 - Conclusion, Paul is as much an apostle as Peter.

D. Issues

1. Absence of reference to the death of Paul?
 - Acts 29?
 - Intentional lapse to focus on spread of Good News rather than deaths of Peter or Paul. Evidently Luke lived past that time and wrote after events. But Paul's death was not as important as the growth of the church.
 - 20:38
2. Date of the book?
 - Before 64?

- Between 70-85?
- 20:38 implies Luke knew of Paul's death supporting after 64.

3. Language of the speeches in Acts?

- Especially early ones aimed at Jewish audiences (chs. 2, 3, 13) reflect Palestinian language bias (Aramaic or Hebrew). Luke was a master at showing in his Greek local language differences. The speeches directed to Gentile audiences provide evidence to early evangelistic efforts and are more naturally Greek in language (chs. 14 and 17, for examples).
- None of the speeches are complete in themselves in light of the fact that the longest takes 3 minutes to read.

E. Structure

Prologue, 1:1-26

Rebuilding the "house of David," 2:1-9:31

Firstfruits of Gentile mission, 9:32-12:25

Paul's missionary journeys, 13:1-21:14

 First, 13:1-14:28

 Affirmation of Jerusalem church leaders, 15:1-35

 Second, 15:36-18:22

 Third, 18:23-21:14

Paul's journey to Rome, 21:15-28:31

IV. Epistles

A. Background

1. Hellenistic letters

- Epistles are widely attested in Greek and Roman times.

- Simple format: (1) Greeting – A to B, greetings; (2) Body of letter – in NT, often begins with a prayer or a blessing and prayer, then the body; (3) Farewell and final greetings.

2. Issues

- Comparison of theology of Gospels and letters?
- Comparison of theologies of various authors?
- Authenticity of authors?

B. Pauline epistles

- In NT canon, Paul's letters are arranged in order of length from Romans to Philemon.
- They are marked by great variety – Philemon is a personal correspondence, Timothy and Titus letters are personal to delegates in the field, Ephesians is encyclical, Romans and Colossians are written to churches Paul did not plant, Philippians is a letter of friendship to Paul's dearest and closest community while Galatians is a letter of rebuke and argument, and the Thessalonian and Corinthian letters come closest to pastoral help.
- Paul, the person
 - Sense of divine call, Rom 1:1-6, Gal 1:12, Eph 1:1-14; 3:1-13.
 - Commissioned by Jesus, 1 Cor 9:16, 15:8, Gal 1:13-16.
 - Authority, 2 Cor 10, Phil 2:12, 2 Thess 3:4, Philemon 21.
 - Loved his converts, 2 Cor 7:7, 1 Cor 13.
 - Reflective on theological implications, and thus a man of convictions.
 - Thoughts are not always easy to understand, 2 Pet 3:16.
 - Physical powers of endurance and versatility.
 - Man of deep spiritual experience, 2 Cor 13.

1. Romans

a. Audience

- No apostolic connection to the establishment of the Roman church, although Paul felt it was in his apostolic call to minister to them (15:20).
- Priscilla and Aquila were already Christians when they were banned from Rome (ca. 49 CE; cf. Acts 18:2-3). Peter had not left Jerusalem by that time so it is unlikely, despite Roman Catholic claims, that he established the church.
- Acts 2:10 recounts visitors from Rome in Jerusalem at Pentecost.
- Debate has focused on Jewish Christians, Gentile Christians, or a mixed community of believers made up the Roman church. Since 1:5 leaves no one

out and the lengthy discussion regarding Jews in God's plan in chapters 9-11 certainly suggests Jewish Christians were addressed, it would still be wise to suppose the church was made up mostly of Gentile believers.

b. Purpose

- If we take 1:13 and 15:24 together, the immediate purpose seems to come back to mustering support for his journey to Spain. Since he is writing the letter from Corinth or its port, Cenchreae, between 55-58 CE, we suppose he never made it to Spain after his lengthy imprisonment at Caesarea, Malta, and Rome (Acts 21-28), probably dying around 64-66 CE.
- In light of the theological weight and logic of the book, we could surmise the Roman church had some deep theological questions for which they needed feedback. Thus two-thirds of the purpose is providing answers to intellectual problems on the basics of faith (chs. 1-11).
- A third purpose appears in chapters 12-16 where Paul addresses pastoral perspectives, offering practical applications and goals for the church.

c. Issues

- 1) Chapter 16? Issues surface around the number of people he greets in light of the fact he had not been there and the multiple possible benedictions (16:20, 24 [in some mss.], and after 27 [in some mss.]). Some dismiss the chapter as an addition, ending the book at 15:33.
- 2) Second issue focuses on the letter serving as a circular letter? It may have been, but we have no definitive evidence. Today it circulates as part of scripture.

d. Structure

I. Prologue, 1:1-17

- A. Greetings, 1:1-7
- B. Prayer, 1:8-15
- C. Theme, 1:16-17

II. Theological teaching, 1:18-11:36

- A. God's plan for salvation, 1:18-8:39
- B. God's plan for the Jews, 9:1-11:36

III. Pastoral applications for the church, 12:1-16:27

2. Corinthian correspondence

a. Audience

1) Corinth's history and culture

- Corinth enjoyed a long history as a Greek city-state until Roman forces in 146 BCE destroyed it.
- Julius Caesar ordered its resettlement in 44 BCE as a Roman colony built on a Rome model for governance. It became the seat of the proconsul of Achaia.
- Mostly freed slaves from Rome and other parts of the Empire, including Syrians, Egyptians, and Jews, inhabited the city. Perhaps that is why Paul alludes to their background in I Cor 1:26 as "not many noble."
- Corinth possessed two harbors, an eastern one (Cenchrea) and a northern one, as well as the main land route from east to west. It never reached the cultural pinnacle like Athens, but it was prosperous and politically more important. It was a cosmopolitan city.
- The city was the center of worship of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, often of an immoral kind. In ancient times, it was infamous for vice and for sexual perversion.
- See powerpoint on Corinth.

2) Corinthian church

- Acts 18 describes the founding of the Corinth church. Aquila and Priscilla resided there after Claudius' exile of all Jews from Rome. Paul resided with them for they both were tentmakers.
- Paul stayed there for 18 months, preaching in synagogues and when excluded among Jews continued in a house near the synagogue.
- When he left, Aquila and Priscilla went with him and stayed at Ephesus.
- None of Paul's other churches appear to cause as much trouble as the Corinthian one.

b. Issues

1) Correspondence – how many letters?

- The canonical collection contains two letters, 1 and 2 Corinthians.
- However, Paul's correspondence with this church was more extensive than two letters. It may have involved at least five letters. (1) Paul alludes to an earlier letter in 1 Cor 5:9, either lost or, as some propose, found in 2 Cor 6:14-7:1; (2) 1 Cor 7:1 mentions a letter from Corinth with questions to him; (3) he writes 1 Corinthians; (4) in 2 Cor 2:4 Paul notes a "letter in tears" or a "sorrowful letter," now lost, or some believe found in 2 Cor 10-13, or simply identical to 1 Cor; and (5) 2 Corinthians.

- The historical sequence then looks like this → Paul's first visit to Corinth (18 mos.) → leaves for Ephesus (where he leaves Aquila and Priscilla) and goes on to Caesarea → returns to Ephesus (2 years) → sends previous letter to Corinth (1 Cor 5:9-13) ← questions return from Corinth → **1 Cor** is Paul's answer to questions → Paul sends Timothy (1 Cor 16:10-11) → Paul's second and "painful" visit → Paul returns to Ephesus → "Tearful" letter sent with Titus → Titus returns with hopeful report (Troas) → **2 Cor** sent with Titus → Paul's third visit (2 Cor 13:1) < while in Corinth, he writes Romans.

2) Opposition?

- F. C. Baur (1831) proposed Jewish Christians opposed Paul in Corinth.
- Some offered Jewish Christian Gnostics as opposition (Schmithals 1956).
- Some have argued for different opposition in 1 Cor and 2 Cor.
- Perhaps some "libertines" who misunderstood Christian behavior, some "ascetics" who had adopted too rigid an approach to Christian behavior, and some "ecstasies" who were allowing their spiritual experiences to lead to disorderliness. Their choices, Paul viewed, did not reflect his understanding of the gospel.

2a. 1 Corinthians

a. Purpose

- 1) To address issues reported to Paul.
- 2) To answer Corinthian questions (introduced with "now concerning").
- 3) To encourage collection for the saints in Jerusalem.

b. Structure

I. Prologue: greeting and thanksgiving, 1:1-9

II. Disorders reported to Paul, 1:10-6:20

- A. The spirit of divisiveness, 1:10-4:21
- B. The problems of moral lapses, 5:1-13 and 6:12-20
- C. The problem of appeals to heathen law-courts, 6:1-11

III. Problems raised by the Corinthians, 7:1-15:58

- A. Marriage, 7:1-40
- B. Meats sacrificed to idols, 8:1-11:1

C. Disorders in public worship, 11:2-34

D. Spiritual gifts, 12:1-14:40

E. Resurrection, 15:1-58

IV. Conclusion, 16:1-24

2b. 2 Corinthians

a. Purpose

- 1) To express relief at the good news Titus brought to Paul about the improved attitude of the Corinthians to the apostle.
- 2) To point out the true character of Christian ministry.
- 3) To encourage them in the collection for the saints in Jerusalem.
- 4) To provide a self-vindication of Paul's ministry.

b. Structure

I. Prologue: greeting and thanksgiving, 1:1-11

II. The apostle's ministry, 1:12-7:16

A. His plans, 1:12-2:17

B. His understanding of ministry, 3:1-7:16

III. The collection plan, 8:1-9:15

IV. The vindication of his apostleship, 10:1-13:10

3. Galatians

a. Audience

1) North Galatian theory vs. South Galatian theory

- Which Galatians? (1) a people group who lived in the northern part of the province, or (2) churches in the Roman province called Galatia that extended into southern Turkey.

a) North Galatian theory?

- Region overrun by Gauls so popular term for area – Galatia.

- Acts 16:6 indicates a geographical region, usually understood as in the north. Acts 18:23 seems to concur.
- However, we do not find mentions of churches in the north area.

b) South Galatian theory?

- 1 Cor 16:1 refers to churches (pl.) in Galatia.
- Paul visited these churches in convalescence after physical illness (Gal 4:13). It is thought the rugged isolation of the north suggests a more populated region in the south.
- The collection delegation contained no representatives from northern Galatia (Acts 20:4ff). Gaius is from Derbe and Timothy from Lystra, both from south Galatia.
- The troubles in the churches arise from Jewish Christians who wish to impose Jewish ritual requirements on the Gentile members. Judaizers were focused in the south, pursuing Paul from town to town.

2) Crisis of false teachers – Jewish-Christians teaching a gospel that binds Gentiles under Jewish ritual law.

- Gentile believers, who were converted from paganism (2:8, 14; 3:8, 14; 4:8-9; 6:13), heard in Paul's preaching for the first time about Torah (3:2; 4:21; 5:4).
- Paul preached a crucified Messiah to them (3:1) and they accepted the message as "good news" in faith with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and good deeds (3:2-5). He was perplexed with them (4:19-20).
- Unlike in Corinth, he did not know with certainty who turned them away from his gospel (1:6; 3:1; 5:7). At stake is the gospel (2:5).

b. Purpose

- 1) To affirm his apostolic credentials.
- 2) To confirm the authority of his preaching of the gospel, the good news, an interwoven problem with his credentials. Those who taught that to be truly righteous in a covenantal relationship with God meant observing the commandments of Torah attacked Paul because he preached only a crucified Messiah. If Romans teaches what the gospel is, Galatians hammers what it is not.

c. Issues

- If Jesus is a Jewish Messiah, doesn't it make sense to live by the commandments of Torah?
- Faith versus works.

d. Structure

I. Prologue, 1:1-5

II. Arguments from Paul's testimony, 1:6-2:21

- A. The denouncement of those distorting the gospel of Christ, 1:6-10
- B. The apologia from his own history, 1:11-2:21

III. Arguments from Paul's theology of gospel, 3:1-4:31

- Complex argumentation in midrashic style.

IV. Exhortations for Christian freedom, 5:1-6:10

- Life in the Holy Spirit.

V. Conclusion, 6:11-18

4. Ephesians

a. Audience

- 1) "Saints" in Ephesus (1:1b). Believers.
- 2) The phrase "in Ephesus" is omitted from three of the oldest Greek manuscripts and from some old codices known to Basil. Marcion called the letter, the letter to the Laodiceans, perhaps because he did not know what to put in the blank.
- 3) Since it is the least personal of Paul's letters, the possible omission of the recipients has led some to suppose the letter was an encyclical to the Asian region. Paul spent a total of three years there so it does appear peculiar he did not send personal greetings. This and several style and theological differences from other Pauline letters has led many scholars to surmise Paul did not write the letter. Instead, someone in his camp penned it after his death.
- 4) Several recent scholars have upheld a general view affirming Paul's authorship and the destination to Ephesus and, if circular, the churches in the Ephesus area. Perhaps it is general because of the time gap since his active participation in this rapidly growing church.

b. Purpose

- 1) To celebrate the multidimensional “mystery” revealed in the gospel (1:9; 3:3-4, 9; 5:32; 6:19).
 - Mystery of the inclusion of Gentiles in the spiritual heritage of Israel (3:3-6).
 - Mystery of reconciliation and reunion of human beings with God into one body with Christ as the head (1:10, 22-23; 5:32).

- 2) To celebrate true unity made possible in Christ.
 - Word “unity” used only here in NT (4:3, 13).
 - Term “one” used 14 times.
 - Phrase “in Christ,” “in whom,” “in the Lord,” or similar expressions occur 38 times.
 - The preposition “with, together with” combines with 14 words.
 - This unity is found in the church (used 9 times).
 - Various metaphors describing church show unity – body, holy temple, and bride.

- 3) To unify theological truth with practical conduct.

c. Issues

- 1) Authorship?
- 2) Recipients?
- 3) Comparison with Colossians?

d. Structure

I. The calling of the church, 1:1-3:21

- A. Prologue, 1:1-2
- B. Praise for God’s planned spiritual blessings, 1:3-14
- C. Prayer for wisdom and revelation, 1:15-23
- D. New position as an individual, 2:1-10
- E. New position corporately, 2:11-22
- F. Expansion of the mystery, 3:1-13
- G. Prayer for strengthened love, 3:14-21

II. The conduct of the church, 4:1-6:24

- A. Walk in unity, 4:1-16
- B. Walk in holiness, 4:17-32
- C. Walk in love, 5:1-6

- D. Walk in light, 5:7-14
- E. Walk in wisdom, 5:15-6:9
- F. Stand in spiritual warfare, 6:10-20
- G. Conclusion, 6:21-24

5. Philippians

a. Audience

- 1) 1:1 says, “to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi.” Philippi was a Roman colony where Paul founded the first European church (Acts 16:12-40; Phil 4:15). Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great, took over an agricultural settlement in 356 BCE and renamed it Philippi. In Paul’s day, after civil war in the empire, the city enjoyed Roman citizenship.
- 2) In 3:3ff Paul speaks of the “true circumcision” in such a way that suggests the readers were not circumcised Jews. Thus it must have been predominantly a Gentile church. Epaphroditus, Euodia, Syntyche, and Clement are named, all Gentile names. Terms used in 4:8 were common in the contemporary Gentile world.
- 3) Paul’s greeting adds mention of the “overseers” and “deacons.” They play no role in the letter, but must have been responsible for the organization of the church. Perhaps they were charged with the collection for Jerusalem.

b. Purpose

- 1) 4:18 concludes with a thanks for the gifts they sent to him. His thanks may be the first purpose. His relationship with them was conveyed by his gentle tone through out the letter.
- 2) 2:25-30 provides a purpose in the return of Epaphroditus back home after faithful service to Paul.
- 3) The friendship language of Philippians is best observed in Greek because Paul uses so many forms of “fellowship” (*koinonia*; 1:5; 2:1; 3:10; 4:15). In addition, many words are compounded with *syn-* (“with”) such as “rejoice” (2:17, 18), “struggle” (1:27; 4:3), “be formed” (3:10), “receive” (4:3), and “share” (4:14) along with other nouns like “sharer” (1:5), “soul” (2:2), “worker” (2:25; 4:3), “soldier” (2:25), “imitator” (3:17), “form” (3:21), and “yoke” (4:3), all that could be translated with “fellow- . . .” to match the Greek usage. His purpose of binding the community together emerges in word choices (see also the emphasis on one-mindedness (1:27) in the “fellowship of the Spirit” (2:1). It is the fellowship in the gospel (1:5).
- 4) The form of fellowship aims at service to each other, especially in the main section (2:1-4:3). It begins with a statement of principle (2:1-4) followed by a series of examples – Jesus (2:6-11), Paul (2:17), Timothy (2:19-24),

Epaphroditus (2:25-30), and Paul in contrast to self-seekers (3:2-16). They are called to imitate these examples (3:17-21).

c. Issues

- 1) Philippians is authentically Pauline. However, questions as to what imprisonment he refers has led to much debate. Theories propose imprisonments at Caesarea, Ephesus, or Rome. Most support rests with his Roman imprisonment.
- 2) Jewish Christian false teaching about the law and the gospel may still underline some comments in the book (1:30; ch. 3).
- 3) Unity of the book has been doubted due to usage of older materials (2:6-11; 3:1; and others).

d. Structure

I. Introduction, 1:1-26

- A. Greeting, 1:1-2
- B. Thanksgiving, 1:3-8
- C. Prayer, 1:9-11
- D. Paul's present circumstances, 1:12-26

II. Exhortations, 1:27-4:9

- A. Quality of steadfastness, 1:27-30
- B. Qualities of unity and humility, 2:1-11
- C. Qualities of obedience and purity, 2:12-18
- D. Examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus , 2:19-30
- E. Bad examples – Judaizers and enemies of the cross, 3:1-4:1
- F. Personal exhortations, 4:2-9

III. Conclusions, 4:10-23

6. Colossians

a. Audience

- 1) Colossae sits 100 miles inland from Ephesus in the Lycus valley. It was overshadowed in importance by Laodicea and Hierapolis. Paul never visited the city (2:1).

- 2) Epaphras founded the church (1:7) and Paul is imprisoned with him (4:12). Epaphras probably converted at Paul's preaching in Ephesus, then took the message back to his community, a part of Paul's mission to reach Gentiles.

b. Purpose

- 1) To address some false teaching that has arisen in Colossae, perhaps because their leader and founder has been imprisoned with Paul and that fact has made the church vulnerable.
- 2) To clarify the person of Christ, making the letter one of the strongest on the doctrine of Christ .
- 3) To teach on the practical implications of relationship with Christ.

c. Issues

- 1) False teaching?
 - Fifty years ago scholars thought Gnosticism was the issue. We have learned so much more about this heresy today that no one entertains it as the problem.
 - The region of Phrygia was renowned for fascination with all things magical and mystical. Perhaps the immature Colossian believers learned that something deeper could be theirs according to the false teachings when they did not know yet the depth of relationship with Christ (1:6; 2:2-4).
 - The "opponents" are never named exactly. Could they be visitors from outside? Are they in the church? He calls their teaching a "philosophy" not according to Christ (2:8). It generates a desire to observe festivals and a special diet (2:16). It involves an admiration for physical asceticism (2:20-23).
 - Could they be some form of Judaism? 2:18 becomes crucial – pagan mysteries? Esoteric Judaism? Essenism? Jewish mystics of Merkabah visions?
 - Most important is the answer – put on Christ.
- 2) Authenticity of letter?

d. Structure

I. Introduction, 1:1-12

II. Doctrinal exposition on Christ, 1:13-2:23

- A. Positive teaching on Christ, 1:13-2:7
- B. Specific dangers of false teachings, 2:8-23

III. Practical application of doctrine of Christ, 3:1-4:6

IV. Conclusion, 4:7-18

7. Thessalonian correspondence

- These letters mark the beginning of Christian literature. The NT begins here.
- Paul's overriding concern focuses on the identity and integrity of the community. We find the reception of the gospel does not ensure a full grasp of it.
- **Audience** – see Acts 17 > some Jews converted, even more God-fearing Greeks, together with “not a few” prominent women of the city. 1 Thess 1:9-10 supposes a more pagan audience. I, 2:14 opens the door perhaps for some Jews. The church was probably mostly Gentiles with a few Jewish Christians.
- Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia and sat on the Via Egnatia, the main highway to the east.

7a. 1 Thessalonians

a. Purpose

- 1) To express his general satisfaction over the progress of the community. He shares his joy in the Thessalonians.
- 2) To answer certain charges of self-seeking and cowardice brought against him by Jewish opponents (2:1-12).
- 3) To encourage the Christians to persevere (2:14-16), to walk in ways that pleases the Lord (4:1-12).
- 4) To clarify questions about the Lord's return (4:13-18).
- 5) To address other questions about the practical Christian life (5:12; 5:19-20).

b. Issues

- 1) Authorship authenticity not questioned except by the most radical critics.
- 2) Historical discrepancies between Acts and 1 Thessalonians.
 - Acts 17:2 and three Sabbaths vs. 2:1-12 that appears longer?
 - Composition of the church? Idolaters (1:9) = Gentiles? Jewish opposition?

c. Structure

I. Greeting and prayer of thanksgiving, 1:1-10

II. Paul's mission work in Thessalonica, 2:1-16

III. Paul's present relationship with Thessalonians, 2:17-3:13

IV. Paul's practical exhortations, 4:1-5:22

- A. On Christian living, 4:1-12
- B. On Jesus' return (*parousia*), 4:13-5:11
- C. On social and spiritual responsibilities, 5:12-22

V. Conclusion, 5:23-28

7b. 2 Thessalonians

a. Purpose

- 1) To address problems of idleness and moral lapses (3:6-13).
- 2) To correct fresh misunderstandings on the *parousia* (2:1-12) and a pseudo-Pauline letter's claim that the Day of the Lord was past (2:2).

b. Issues

- 1) Change of eschatology?
 - Lord's return is less imminent? Cf. 1. 5:1-11.
 - "Man of lawlessness" not in 1 Thessalonians? Cf. Mark 13
- 2) Order of letters?

c. Structure

I. Greeting, thanksgiving, hope, and prayer, 1:1-12

II. The second coming of Jesus, 2:1-17

- A. Explanations on the second coming, 2:1-12
- B. Exhortations in light of Christ's return, 2:13-17

III. More exhortations, 3:1-15

IV. Conclusion, 3:16-18

8. – 10. Pastoral letters

- a. These letters are called “pastorals” because they are addressed not to churches but to Paul’s coworkers, delegates, and friends. They are written to individuals who are entrusted with oversight and responsibility to specific congregations. The role of pastor in church settings is the concern.
- b. Authorship
 - Pauline authorship is widely rejected for pseudonymity [an unknown writer penning the letters with false Pauline authority].
 - A respected minority retains authenticity of Pauline authorship or some moderate position (e.g., N. T. Wright; Donald Guthrie; Luke Johnson).
 - Whether authentic to Paul or not, the church recognized these texts as authoritative for the life of the church. They are rich for the life of the church.
 - Reasons for questioning authorship – (1) 147 unique words in three short letters; (2) difficulties in synchronizing Acts accounts and the pastoral letters; (3) advanced ecclesiology (doctrine of church leadership and governance or church order); (4) heresies addressed are more advanced, especially Gnosticism.
 - Each of these and many more questions have been answered in a satisfactory fashion by various scholars. They remain authoritative and I find no useful reason to disregard Paul’s connection.

8a. 1 Timothy

- a. Audience
 - Timothy in Ephesus. Co-sponsor of 5 letters (2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1. Paul’s go-between with Macedonian churches of Thessalonica (1 Thess 3:2) and Philippi (Phil 2:19), as well as Corinth (Rom 16:21). He played the same role to Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3).
- b. Purpose
 - 1) To outline how one ought to behave in the household of God, the church (3:15). Orderly management seems a fundamental concern.
 - 2) To refute false teachers (1:3-11).
 - 3) To present the best side of faith in Christ to the world and to live in such a manner that the reputation of the Christian movement is enhanced (cf. 5:14; 6:1; 2:1-6).
 - 4) To address specifically the character, roles, and responsibilities of leaders in the local church.

c. Issues

- 1) Authorship? Luke Johnson suggests we focus on taking each pastoral letter on the basis of content rather than getting caught up on authenticity (especially a quest that ends in them as fraudulent).
- 2) 2:8-15
 - A huge scholarly output has focused on these verses.
 - Vv. 8-10 appear to limit women in some ministries although the “likewise” of v. 9 should be read as parallel to errors by men rather than a limit. “Good works” should mark a woman’s life.
 - Vv. 11-15 allow women to learn but with words like “submissiveness” (11) and quietness (12). The creation order and her deception at the beginning provide rationales for limiting women in terms of authority over men (13-14). Her godly behavior will spare her in childbearing (15).
 - In the pastorals, women are to teach women (Tit 2:3-5). If women served as deacons (1 Tim 3:11), there is no indication they performed a teaching ministry [unlike overseers, Tit 1:5-9]. So Paul is consistent.
 - Paul in other places uses creation order as the reason for a man’s authority over a woman (1 Cor 11:3, 7-10; Eph 5:22-24). Silence in the assembly is also mentioned (1 Cor 14:34-35).
 - That Eve was deceived and sinned does not speak well for Adam who emerges as a willful and knowing transgressor (see Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:22). Adam is the sinner. It is interesting that most of the doctrinal issues in 1 and 2 Timothy come from male teachers (Hymenaeus, Alexander, and Philetus [1:19-20; 2.2:16-18]).
 - Do we need to take into account all the NT revelation on women to get a clearer picture? E.g., audible prayers and prophecies spoken by women in the assembly (1 Cor 11:4-6); active and vocal roles in some situations and thus addressed in a moderating way by Paul (1 Cor 14:34-35); Phoebe’s role as a deacon at Cenchreae (Rom 16:1); Syntyche and Euodia’s role as Paul’s “fellow contenders for the gospel” (Phil 4:2-3); Priscilla’s role in instructing Apollos, along with her husband (Acts 18:24-26); the evangelistic role of the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:28-30, 39) and the wide interaction with women in a positive way (Gospels); as well as general freedom for all in Christ (Gal 3:28).
 - No easy answer emerges since all readers do so through tinted lenses. We want to be careful about taking too harsh a position since we do not know the full cultural background to Paul’s remarks nor do we want to grant full license to ignore such clear teachings.
- 3) Exercising church discipline? Cf. 1.1:3, 19-20.

4) Wealth and discipleship? Cf. 1.6:5b-19.

d. Structure

I. Greeting, 1:1-2

II. Exhortations between Paul and Timothy, 1:3-20

III. Exhortations for worship and order in the church, 2:1-4:16

A. Public prayer, 2:1-8

B. Christian men and women, 2:9-15

C. Church leaders, 3:1-13

D. Character of church, 3:14-16

E. Threats to church, 4:1-16

IV. Exhortations for various groups in church, 5:1-25

V. Further instructions, 6:1-19

VI. Concluding admonition to Timothy, 6:20-21

8b. 2 Timothy

a. Audience

- Timothy (2. 1:3-7). Written from prison (1:16; 2:9; 4:16).

b. Purpose

- [Similar to 1 Timothy.]
- To overcome shame in light of the difference of a Christian believer and leader in a Greco-Roman society with different ethics and idolatrous beliefs (3:12-13).

c. Issues

- Controversial topics and faithful ministry? 2.2:14

d. Structure

I. Greeting, 1:1-2

II. General instructions to Timothy, 1:3-18

III. Specific instructions to Timothy, 2:1-26

IV. Instructions on the last days, 3:1-17

A. Times of difficulty, 3:1-9

B. How to live through the difficulties, 3:10-17

V. Paul's farewell, 4:1-22

9. Titus

a. Audience

- Titus in Crete.
- Greek origin (Gal 2:3). Paul makes much of the fact he did not require circumcision when they visited Jerusalem (Gal 2:1), making it plausible he was the God-fearer mentioned in Acts 18:7 in Corinth, Titius Justus.

b. Purpose

- 1) To instruct on qualifications for leaders.
- 2) To admonish on sound teaching.
- 3) To aim for "every good work."
- 4) To ask Titus to join him at Nicopolis.

c. Issues

- Authorship?

d. Structure

I. Greeting, 1:1-4

II. Instruction on overseers, 1:5-9

III. Instructions for refuting false teachers, 1:10-16

IV. Instructions for various groups in the church, 2:1-10

V. Teaching on Christian doctrine and life, 2:11-3:11

VI. Concluding request, 3:12-15

10. Philemon

a. Audience

- To Philemon and the church in his home in Colossae (2; cf. Col 4:9).

b. Purpose

- 1) To move the relationship of Philemon and Onesimus to a new level as brothers in Christ.
- 2) To ask for Onesimus' release (15-16).
- 3) To request hospitality (22).

c. Issues

- Slavery in the NT times

d. Structure

I. Greeting, 1-3

II. Commendation of Philemon, 4-7

III. Plea to Philemon for Onesimus, 8-22

IV. Conclusion, 23-25

C. General epistles

1. Hebrews

a. Author

- 1) No author is given. Earliest traditions demonstrate no agreement.
- 2) Guesses include:
 - a. Paul – against is 2:1-4.
 - b. Barnabas
 - c. Luke
 - d. Clement
 - e. Silvanus
 - f. Apollos
 - g. Philip
 - h. Priscilla

b. Audience

- 1) No clear designation of the readership is given either. “To the Hebrews” was added at a later date.
- 2) Usually some connection to Jewish Christians is assumed, but many recent interpreters argue that it is not that clear since James and Peter also assume knowledge of the FT among Gentile audiences.
- 3) The content itself tells us the audience became Jesus followers and they should by this time have acquired a mature walk. They need to persist.

c. Purpose

- 1) 13:22 offers the purpose of a “word of exhortation” or “of consolation.”
- 2) The doctrinal sections carry strong warnings, but scholars differ on their intentions. Various theories all seem inadequate after exploration. What these ideas have in common is a strong warning against turning away from the faith to some weaker path.

d. Issues

- Authorship, audience, and purpose remain issues.
- 1) Which OT text did the author use?
 - Sometimes it is the Hebrew text we know (MT).
 - Sometimes it follows the Greek text (e.g., 10:5-7 with Psalm 40:6-8).
 - Occasionally the text does not match either traditions.
 - 2) Literary affinity? Letter or written sermon?

e. Structure (borrowed from da Silva)

I. First appeal to heed properly the word of God in the Son, 1:1-2:18

- A. Thesis and confirmation, 1:1-14
- B. Exhortation, 2:1-4
- C. Argument in support of exhortation, 2:5-18

II. Second appeal to honor God's word through trust and perseverance, 3:1-4:13

- A. Argument: Jesus has greater honor than Moses, 3:1-6
- B. Exhortation: enter his rest, 3:7-4:13

III. Central exposition, 4:14-10:18

- A. Exhortation: take advantage of access to God through Jesus, 4:14-16
- B. Argument: Jesus' high priesthood, 5:1-10
- C. Digression, 5:11-6:20
- D. Argument resumed, 7:1-10:18

IV. Climactic exhortation to persevere, 10:19-13:25

- A. Exhortation based on new access, 10:19-25
- B. Rationale, 10:26-31
- C. Exhortation: imitate your former endurance, 10:32-39
- D. Sermon on faith, 11:1-12:3
- E. Encouragement to endure opposition, 12:4-17
- F. Exhortations, 12:18-13:21
- G. Postscript, 13:22-25

2. James

a. Author

- 1:1 – James (*Jacobus*), a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Messiah
- Two possible James are found in the NT story.
 - James, the son of Zebedee, one of the apostles. However, he was killed by Herod in 44 CE and the letter was written later than that.
 - James the brother of Jesus
- Author has a Jewish background and Hebrew idioms may be used in places.
- Similarities between James and James' letter in Acts supports the brother of Jesus (Acts 15).
- Similarities with the teaching of Jesus abound (especially Matthew).
- The Greek used in writing is too good for a Galilaeen peasant.

- Some of the ethical arguments reflect Greek rhetoric.
- b. Audience
- “To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion” – general tenor of subject matters obscures clarity on audience. We don’t need to suppose it is aimed at a Jewish-only audience because the reference may be a spiritual allusion to dispersion.
 - Little is known about the circumstances of the readers.
- c. Purpose
- 1) To address and correct practical tendencies among believers.
 - 2) To expose the fallacy of dead orthodoxy where profession produces no results.
 - 3) To speak pastorally into believers’ lives with wisdom.
- d. Issues
- 1) Authorship?
 - 2) Tensions between grace and law?
 - 3) Connection with Jewish wisdom?
- e. Structure – difficult to organize around a theme (borrowed from Guthrie).
1. Greeting, 1:1
 2. Trials and how to meet them, 1:2-4
 3. Wisdom and how to obtain it, 1:5-8
 4. Wealth and how to regard it, 1:9-11
 5. Temptation and trial distinguished, 1:12-15
 6. Good gifts, 1:16-18
 7. Hearing and doing, 1:19-27
 8. Against partiality, 2:1-13

9. Against a barren faith, 2:14-26
10. Qualities required in teachers, 3:1-18
11. Dangers, 4:1-17
12. Warnings to wealthy oppressors, 5:1-6
13. Encouragement to the oppressed, 5:7-11
14. Against oaths, 5:12
15. Power of prayer, 5:13-18
16. Help for the backslider, 5:19-20

3. Petrine epistles

3a. 1 Peter

a. Author

- Peter, the apostle of Jesus Messiah (1:1).
- One of twelve apostles, identified as one of three most important leaders.

b. Audience

- To “elect exiles,” 1:1.
- Exile is mentioned in 1:17 and “sojourner” is added in 2:11.
- FT idea of a person who had a visitor’s status as a non-citizen, a temporary resident, an alien.
- Who does Peter have in mind?
- Use of the word “diaspora” or dispersion in Asia Minor suggests that he is addressing Jewish Christians. However, study shows not many Jews lived in the Asia Minor area, although now we think there were some Jews scattered in this region, though few in number.
- Remember that Paul was not allowed to visit this area by the Spirit, perhaps because there were so few Jews or synagogues with Gentile “god-fearers” (Gentiles who embraced Judaism) which seemed to be his primary target in his mission work.
- 2:10 says, “Once you were not a people [suggesting they were not ethnic Jews], but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but

now you have received mercy.” They had found a home in the “family of God,” one of Peter’s terms for the Church.

- 4:2-4 adds that they had chosen to live a different way than the rest of the Gentiles.
- So the letter goes to chosen or elect believers who in one sense no longer find a home in this world; they are exiles, sojourners, aliens. They are passing through, but they have a new perspective. Something has happened that has placed them in a community of faith made up of Jewish Christians and Gentile converts, doing something new.
- Circular letter to the region of Asia minor, probably delivered by Silvanus (5:12). Perhaps Silvanus would deliver it, putting in at Pontus, traveling inland in a semi-circle, and coming back out to the sea at Bithynia.

c. Purpose

- 1) To prepare us to understand our true Christian identity in a world we view totally different as a believer in Jesus.
- 2) To understand the reality of salvation (1:2).
 - Plan of God the Father. It is his predetermined purpose now being worked out.
 - Process of the Spirit. ESV, “sanctification” = work of separating and perfecting to render the believer holy. It is a word that expresses action (Lenski, 25).
 - Work of obedience and sprinkling of blood to Jesus Christ.
 - The sprinkling refers to FT practice where the priests sprinkled the blood on the altar and the high priest on the mercy seat for the expiation of sin, the removal of sin.
 - Obedience – see 2:11-12, abstain . . . keep your conduct . . . Inner and outer life point to God. See 1:17. Harold Fickett says, “Nonbelievers are not concerned with what we say, only with what we do” (7).
 - 2:13ff will specify application details.
- 3) To live in accordance with the hope they have in salvation in relationship to social settings (government, servants, wives, and husbands) and the Church.
- 4) To understand the part suffering plays in relationship with Jesus.

d. Issues

- 1) Authorship questions?
- 2) Book’s unity?
 - Baptismal sermon and general address?
 - Original liturgy adapted to a literary form?

- Double letter later combined?
- Letter with a postscript added to a specific church?
- Circular letter?
- None of the above negate the book's current unity in the end.

e. Structure

I. Greetings, 1:1-2

II. The Nature of Christian Salvation, 1:3-2:10

- A. Praise for Salvation, 1:3-12
- B. Future inheritance as an incentive to holiness, 1:13-21
- C. Living as the new people of God, 1:22-2:10

III. The Application to bring glory to God in a Hostile World, 2:11-4:11

IV. Persevering in Suffering, 4:12-5:11

V. Concluding Words, 5:12-14

3b. 2 Peter

a. Author

- Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Messiah (1:1).
- Evidence for Peter: vision of his own death (1:14), witness of transfiguration (1:16-18), refers to earlier letter (3:1), and mentions Paul (3:15).
- However, majority of scholars doubt Peter's authorship because of the refined language and issues of literary form, doctrinal problems, and historical allusions. Early in church history the authorship was questioned.

b. Audience

- To "those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ" (1:1).
- 3:1 points to the same audience as letter one. Many question this conclusion despite the reference.

c. Purpose

- 1) To address the problem of false teachers.

2) To strengthen these believers in faith and practice.

d. Issues

- 1) Authorship? Either authentic with a problem in its slow acceptance as scripture or pseudepigraphal with issue in its acceptance as scripture.
- 2) Historical facts and allusions?

e. Structure

I. Greeting, 1:1-2

II. True Knowledge, 1:3-21

- A. Making your calling and election sure, 1:3-15
- B. Christ's glory and the prophetic word, 1:16-21

III. False Knowledge, 2:1-22

IV. Present Challenge, 3:1-18

- A. A reminder, 3:1-2
- B. An explanation, 3:3-10
- C. An exhortation, 3:11-18

4. Johannine letters

a. Author

- See Gospel of John.
- 1:1 does not specify the author as John but the description fits with the apostle.
- Distinctive and shared vocabulary (word, beginning, light, life, truth, abiding, world, water and blood, joy, victory +) and themes bind the Gospel with 1st John.

b. 2nd and 3rd John

- The "elder" – but vocabulary and style fits with the same person as 1 John.

4a. 1 John

a. Audience

- No introductory material, no author's greeting, no thanksgiving, no names mentioned in letter, and no final salutations – all facts that suggest more a homily than a letter (although see 2:1, 26).
- Augustine supposed it was written to churches of Parthia, but he had no foundation for such a supposition.
- It was probably written to a group (or groups) of believers in Asia Minor who the author knew personally and who were threatened with the same infiltration of false teaching.

b. Purpose

- 1) To combat teachings that denied the incarnation, a form of heresy that is close to Gnosticism.
- 2) To strengthen their faith so they realize fully what they possess in Christ (1:3-4; 5:13).
- 3) To edify them with admonishments on the exercise of love.

c. Issues

- 1) Relationship to the Gospel of John?
- 2) Relationship to the teachings of Paul?

d. Structure

I. The Authentic Message, 1:1-4

II. The Principles of Fellowship, 1:5-2:29

- A. The necessity for purity, 1:5-2:2
- B. The evidence of a life of fellowship, 2:3-17
- C. The threats to those in fellowship, 2:18-29

III. The Children of God, 3:1-24

IV. The Spirit of Truth, 4:1-6

V. The Theme of Love Expanded, 4:7-21

- A. The powerful effect of God's love, 4:7-12
- B. The perfecting of God's love in us, 4:13-21

VI. Secrets of a Victorious Faith, 5:1-5

VII. God's Witness to the Gospel, 5:6-12

VIII. Spiritual Confidence, 5:13-20

IX. Warning against Idols, 5:21

4b. 2 John

a. Audience

- To the "elect lady" and her children. Who is the elect lady? Five possible ways to translate the Greek phrase complicates the answer. Even if we settle on a simple "elect lady," the matter is not decided.
- Scholars have offered two alternatives to the interpretation of this phrase: (1) she is an individual acquaintance of the writer; and (2) "she" was a faith community under the writer's general supervision. The majority hold to the second view.
- Evidence for or against one view or the other comes from the same verses. I think it makes more sense it is a veiled reference to a church.

b. Purpose

- To forewarn them to not show hospitality to false teachers who deny the true humanity of Christ and thus might mislead believers (7-8).

c. Issues

- 1) Exact heresy in mind, Gnosticism or Docetism or some other false teaching?
- 2) Relation to 3 John?

d. Structure

I. Greeting, 1-3

II. The Elder's Joy and Request, 4-6

III. The Elder's Concern, 7-8

IV. The Elder's Warning, 9-11

V. Closing: the elder's farewell, 12-13

4c. 3 John

a. Audience

- To the "beloved Gaius" (1). Who he was, in the words of one scholar, is anyone's guess. We can suppose he was connected with one of the Asia Minor churches on a circuit under John's supervision.

b. Purpose

- 1) To commend Gaius for his faith and hospitality with John's emissaries (4-5).
- 2) To warn about the negative and authoritative actions by Diotrephes against John's authority (9) and to assure him that he will take care of the errant leader.
- 3) To imitate good, not evil (11).

c. Issues

- Identification of Diotrephes as heretic or misled leader or true elder in conflict with authority of writer (not John?)?

d. Structure

I. Greeting to Gaius, 1-4

II. Praise for Gaius' support for John's emissaries, 5-8

III. Concern about Diotrephes, 9-10

IV. Advice and Commendation of Demetrius, 11-12

V. Closing, 13-15

5. Jude

a. Author

- “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and the brother of James” (1).
- Jude may be trying to clarify his larger connection to James the brother of Jesus, James of Jerusalem (cf. Mark 6:3), leader of the early church (Acts 15). Since his brother was better known, this would be a natural introduction.
- Perhaps Jude, like other brothers, served in itinerant preaching (1 Cor 9:5).

b. Audience

- Very open-ended (1). Arguments may be directed to a Jewish-Christian audience or to a Gentile one, and the truth probably includes both.

c. Purpose

- 1) To produce a treatise on the “common salvation” was his initial purpose (3).
- 2) To address the problem of false teachers (8-16).
- 3) To encourage them to persevere (17-23).

d. Issues

- Canonicity?
- Authorship questions?
- Relation to 2 Peter?
- Use of non-biblical writings?
 - 1 Enoch 15:8-12; 19:1; 22:4; and Gen 6:1-4, with v. 6.
 - 1 Enoch 1:9 in v. 14. This led to doubts about canonicity. It seems he is quoting something that connects to the point he is making without stamping canonicity on the book of Enoch.
 - *Testament of Moses* (with an appendix called the *Assumption of Moses*), a pseudepigraphal work, is referenced in v. 9. We have 12 chapters of the *TMoses*, but we no longer possess the appendix. It has been lost. Other works refer to it, so we know it existed at one time.
 - Don't forget that Paul refers to a rabbinical midrash in 1 Cor 10:4, a heathen poet in his speech at Athens (Acts 17:28), and names the magicians who withstood Pharaoh as Jannes and Jambres (2 Tim 3:8), evidently drawn from some non-canonical source.

e. Structure

I. The Greeting, 1-2

II. The Appeal, 3-4

III. The Reminders about Past Judgment on False Teachers, 5-7

IV. The Nature of False Teachers, 8-19

V. The Exhortations to the Believers, 20-23

VI. Doxology, 24-25

V. Apocalypse

a. Author

- John the apostle, 1:1, 4, 9-10.
- Although some suppose this could be “John the elder” (supposing he is not John the apostle) or someone else using “John” as a pseudonym, it is too difficult to prove any of the three possibilities. The pseudonym proposal lacks any credibility.

b. Audience

- “To the seven churches that are in Asia” (1:4).
- Although chs. 4-21 seem to go away from the original specificity of chs. 1-3, 22:16 ties them together.
- Since we still read it and apply it, a wider audience was in view.

c. Purpose

- 1) To pass on the challenges of Jesus to the churches (1:11; 2:1-3:22).
- 2) To present a vision of God’s and Jesus’ victory over evil, the world, and the evil one when Jesus returns (key verse, 1:7).
- 3) To offer hope in difficult times (past and present).

d. Issues

- 1) Genre?
 - a. Letter? 1:4; 22:21.

- b. Prophecy? It is difficult to distinguish prophecy and apocalyptic. Prophecies had a present impact (forthtelling) with possible long-range implications (foretelling). The Apocalypse certainly presents these possibilities.
 - c. Apocalyptic? As a genre (a type of literature), apocalyptic is an intensification of prophecy, using visions, dreams, and certain themes (e.g., last things) to communicate.
 - d. G. K. Beale agrees with Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction*, 479, that Revelation is “a prophecy cast in an apocalyptic mold and written down in a letter form” in order to motivate the audience to change their behavior in light of the transcendent reality of the vision (*The Book of Revelation*, 39). We could conclude it is like no other letter, prophecy, or apocalyptic material.
- 2) Varied interpretive approaches? Four main approaches may be summarized here.
- a. Preterist view – this approach finds either a prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem or the fall of the Roman empire, both having passed many years ago.
 - b. Historicist view – this approach (that has many permutations) claims the book predicts the major movements of Christian history (mostly completed already and oriented only to the Western church).
 - c. Futurist view – many strong proponents vary in their approaches to a future reading of the book.
 - i. Dispensational futurism → the order of visions represent the historical order of future events (1:19). Israel and the Church are kept separate until the end.
 - ii. Modified futurism → the order of visions is not as important chronologically, but the Church is Israel and Christians alive at the end will pass through a future final tribulation and succeeding events.
 - d. Idealist view – this view holds that Revelation is a symbolic portrayal of the conflict between good and evil through all time without a culmination of the end of history, as we know it.
 - e. A fifth view might be labeled as Ecclecticism, or a redemptive-historical form of modified idealism. It attempts to take the best from all approaches (so Beale, Caird, Johnson, Sweet, Hendriksen and Wilcock).
 - f. I grew up in churches where the historicist view was taught, but in college found my way to the dispensational futurist interpretation. As I have studied over the last 45 years I have become more eclectic. I retain much of what I originally believed without some of the specific (and often wrong) identifications to modern events or persons from my lifetime. I try to maintain the book addresses a reality in the lives

of the original audience in their cultural setting with all the evils of the Roman Empire as well as similar difficulties through out the last 2000 years, including today. The overall message should not be lost, namely that God and his son are victorious in the end and will spend eternity with us in a new heavens and a new earth worshipping them. I believe there will be a series of judgments far beyond any judgments that have occurred already, that the evil one will do everything possible to win out over God, including evil world systems, evil leaders, and evil forces such as demons to achieve victory, that believers in Jesus as the way to God the Father will not suffer wrath (whether that means condemnation or tribulation) and will receive resurrection bodies to enjoy the Triune God forever. All associated with evil will receive punishment and will be separated from God and believers forevermore. Amen. So there you have it.

3) Interpretation of symbols?

- Literal interpretation means we interpret literature in the way it was intended to be interpreted. This requires us to read narrative as storytelling, poetry as language on its most unusual behavior, and symbols as symbols. Revelation is full of symbolic language. That is why so many different approaches have flourished.
- Scholars differ on how far symbols should be taken. My rule is to take them as far as I can without losing their parabolic significance. They carry a message of encouragement or exhortation in a flowery package. In fact, I try to come back to application every time I attempt to penetrate obscure language.

e. Structure

The outline of the book differs depending on the interpretive approach. No one approach seems to answer all possibilities. Yes, 1:19 provides an outline along with 4:1 and the many “after this” phrases. But there may also be interludes in the progression as well as overlapping of the seals, trumpets, and bowls. Where exactly begs for careful reading (and then you may still not have it). Then comes the end (and even that seems spread out, 8:1 (?), 11:15, 16:17-21, and chapters 17-18).

I. The Prologue, 1:1-20

II. The Letters to the Seven Churches, 2:1-3:22

- A. Ephesus, 2:1-7 [commended, condemned, exhorted]
- B. Smyrna, 2:8-11 [only commendations]
- C. Pergamum, 2:12-17 [commended, condemned, exhorted]
- D. Thyatira, 2:18-29 [commended, condemned, exhorted]
- E. Sardis, 3:1-6 [condemned and exhorted]

- F. Philadelphia, 3:7-13 [commends and encourages]
- G. Laodicea, 3:14-22 [condemned and exhorted]

III. The Visions, 4:1-22:5

- A. Opening interlude: visions of God and Lamb as sovereign to judge and redeem, 4:1-5:14
- B. Seven seals, 6:1-8:5
 - 1. Six seals, 6:1-17
 - 2. Interlude, 7:1-17
 - 3. Seventh seal, 8:1-5
- C. Seven trumpets, 8:6-11:19
 - 1. Six trumpets, 8:6-9:21
 - 2. Interlude, 10:1-11:14
 - 3. Seventh trumpet, 11:15-19
- D. Deeper conflict, 12:1-14:20
 - 1. Satan thrown to earth, 12:1-17
 - 2. Satan's world allies, 13:1-18
 - a. The first beast, 13:1-10
 - b. The second beast, 13:11-18
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