

New Believer Lesson- How to Learn the Books of the Bible

Waiver Most of these lessons are prepared and created for uses for anyone that sees the need to learn about the Gospel and has a New Believer who needs discipleship.

Our ministry did not create all of these lessons alone but have used material from various internet sources to better enhance the learning. Please understand that as you learn from this informative Content so the credit does go to leaders, teachers and Scholars other than us.

How do we learn the Books of the Bible? What works best if I'm **New at Reading the Bible?**

There are many ways to learn the books of the Bible, some key ways are:

1. Memorization method-retaining through constant use
2. Repetition Method- going over it and over it in your thoughts keeping it fresh
3. Word Association Method- using the name of each book in a list or group of associated words

In this lesson we will be studying the **books of the Bible**, and some background information and how we can learn to apply them to your lives.

First let us look at the books of the Old Testament in their order as listed in the Bible today:

Note- the Books of the Bible are listed in the Canon [Bible} as it was created; those books are not in Chronological order [by date and event] as we list them.

Books of the Old Testament - The Old Testament contains 39 books total and they are:

Genesis	Jeremiah	Ezekiel
Exodus	Lamentations	Daniel
Leviticus		Hosea
Numbers		Joel
Deuteronomy		Amos
Joshua		Obadiah
Judges		Jonah
Ruth		Micah
1 Samuel		Nahum
2 Samuel		Habakkuk
1 Kings		Zephaniah
2 Kings		Haggai
1 Chronicles		Zechariah
2 Chronicles		Malachi
Ezra		
Nehemiah		
Esther		
Job		
Psalms		
Proverbs		
Ecclesiastes		
Song of Songs		
Isaiah		

In this next section we will look at how the books of the Bible are grouped and what the name of that group is:

1. **The Pentateuch** - which is also called the books of the "Law" written by Moses

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

2. **The Historical Books**- The History writers, prophets who dictated to an Emmaus and they wrote on parchment the words God spoke to these Prophets:

Joshua	1 Chronicles
Judges	2 Chronicles
Ruth	Ezra
1 Samuel	Nehemiah
2 Samuel	Esther
1 Kings	
2 Kings	

3. **The Poetry Books**-

Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Songs of Solomon [Songs]

4. **The Major Prophets**-

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel

5. **The Minor Prophets**-

Hosea	Jonah	Zephaniah
Joel	Micah	Haggai
Amos	Nahum	Zechariah
Obadiah	Habakkuk	Malachi

Next we are looking at the Books the New Testament: Just how many Books does the New Testament contain, and what groups do they fit in?

The New Testament contains 27 Books in total:

1. **The Gospels** - There are four different writers with 4 different perspectives of the Life of Christ:

Matthew
Mark
Luke
John

2. **Acts** - The Book of Acts is the Historical [history and creation of the church] book of the New Testament

3. **The Pastoral Epistles of Paul-**

Romans	1 Thessalonians
1 Corinthians	2 Thessalonians
2 Corinthians	1 Timothy
Galatians	2 Timothy
Ephesians	Titus
Philippians	Philemon
Colossians	

4. **The General Pauline Epistles-**

Hebrews	3 John
James	Jude
1 Peter	
2 Peter	
1 John	
2 John	

5. **The Book of Prophecy-**

Revelation

Understanding the Books of the Bible

The books of the Old Testament are a combination of various types of writings. Here we will outline the "basic" background information that gives us some clear understanding of the meaning and direction each writer is taking and why!!

Genesis: In the Beginning...

The Book of Genesis is the "Book of Beginnings" in the Bible. Genesis, Greek for "Origins", speaks of the Creation of all things in six days and see God rest on that Sabbath 7th day. Other topics in the book circulate around the Fall of Mankind and the Curse, the flood (Noah's Flood), the tower of Babel, and finally the birth of the Jewish Nation. Together, these events cover roughly 2,370 years of Earth's history. The Book of Genesis is divided into two parts Chapters 1-11 covers the Creation to

Babel and Chapters 12-50 covers the birth of Israel, from the calling of Abram (Abraham) until the death and burial of his great grandson Joseph in Egypt.

Exodus:

Background: The theology of the book of Leviticus links holiness with daily life. It goes beyond the question of the sacrifice, and deals with the theme of worship; likewise, it explains the work of the priests in detail. The idea of holiness affects not only the relationship that each individual sustains with GOD, but also the relationships of love and respect that each person should keep with his neighbour. Holiness is God's work because of this each one should be pure as GOD himself is, and that purity makes up the foundation of the holiness of the entire covenant community. Jesus' teaching: "Therefore, all things that you wish men would do with you, thus also do with them; because this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12), reflects the text of Lev. 19:18: "Love your neighbor as you

Theological Contribution: The Book of Leviticus is important because of its clear teachings on three spiritual truths: Atonement, Sacrifice, and Holiness. Without the background of these in Leviticus, we could not understand their later fulfillment in the life and ministry of Jesus himself".

Leviticus:

Leviticus means, "Pertaining to the Levites." The priests of Israel were from the tribe of Levi, and this book deals largely with the laws and regulations of these priests.

The book of Leviticus is divided between a laws regarding making sacrifices to God (1-16) and laws regarding personal conduct (17-25). The book concludes with a statement of blessings and curses for keeping the covenant and then the list of regulations for the keeping of vows. As well the book is distinguished by the phrase, "Speak to the sons of Israel and say.

Leviticus is probably one of the most unread books in the Bible. The regulations and sacrificial system seems to have very little application to a Christian today. While Christians will leave Leviticus as one of the last books of the Bible to study, it is the first book studied by a Jewish child. However, the book of Leviticus has a vital place and meaning for Christians today as well.

No book of the bible contains more of the direct words of God than Leviticus.

- Leviticus is quoted about 40 different times in the New Testament
- A proper understanding of the book of Hebrews is impossible without an understanding of Leviticus.
- The Christian doctrine of atonement (the idea of transferring our guilt and sin to Christ) is key in Leviticus.
- Leviticus gives us a glimpse of God's Holiness.

Numbers: a book that derived its name from the censuses recorded in the book
This book has many purposes that relate to and explain its place in the Canon below are some of the main reasons God placed this book in the **Pentateuch** [the five books of the law]

- A. To fill-in the historical period from the Exodus and Sinai revelation to the preparations in Moab to enter the Promised Land
- B. To explain that the 38 year period in the wilderness was because of unbelief of the older generation
- C. To demonstrate God's faithfulness and patience in light of Israel's unfaithfulness, rebellion, apostasy and frustration
- D. To present laws as case studies which do not have a precedent in what has been spoken thus far.
- E. To narrate the preparation of Israel for entry into the Promise Land by describing the journey from Sinai to the region beyond Jordan, and the legal decisions made in the wilderness

Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy is a key book in the Pentateuch and has a "dual meaning" in its name. Its name Deuteronomy is better named the "second law," which actually means "a copy of the law." Its Jewish name, Debarim (Heb., "words"), comes from the opening phrase: "These are the words. . ."). This is actually a much more appropriate title for the book since the "words" of Moses and God are a central theme of the book. This book is the fifth and final book of the Pentateuch (Gk: "five books," Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), or the Torah (Heb: "instruction") as it is known in Jewish tradition.

Deuteronomy provides both the literary and theological interface between the grace of God manifested in the Exodus, Sinai, and wilderness wanderings, and the continued failure of the people to remain faithful to God seen in the traditions relating to the settlement in the land. The community understood the importance of these "words" in calling the people to obedience at such specific times in their travels.

Joshua:

The Book of Joshua is the sixth book in the Bible, and covers the period from the death of Moses to the Conquest of the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. While the history is very important, we are looking particularly at the lessons of faith taught in the book. It is the faith of people like Joshua, Rehab, and Caleb that vital lessons can be learned. At age eighty-five, Caleb, one of the original 12 spies of Canaan asked for the hill country around the walled city of Hebron to be his inheritance and Joshua gave it to him. "Give me this mountain," he said, and proceeded to take it from its giant inhabitants that had caused the Israelites to fear

forty years before. I want that kind of bold faith. Joshua is the example of faith and has the faith of a giant that we all need.

Judges:

The book of Judges is named after military and civic leaders who were raised up by God to deliver Israel from its oppressors. The Hebrew title Judge does not refer to what we would consider a trained law professional today but leaders who were filled with the Spirit, leaders who were chosen by God for specific tasks for his kingdom. These judges worked hard to bring justice for the oppressed, where they saved and delivered Israel from her enemies

Othniel and Ehud for example are mentioned as deliverers [Judges 3:9-15] while Gideon was said to have saved Israel [not being referred to as a deliver] [11:27]

The Judges were often remembered as military leaders due to the wars they engaged in, but not all where in battles of war, some like Deborah [2:16] engaged in Civil disputes and yet presided as a Judge.

During this period the tribes of Israel were very bound together by the laws and sanctuary. But the key factor for every affair conducted was their commitment To the covenant that they had bound themselves to at Sinai. But time and again they committed lewd sins that separated them from their God, and God used foreign oppressors to bring Israel to repentance

Ruth:

The book of Ruth tells the story of a rich powerful Jewish man who takes a Gentile Bride and exalts her, the way that Jesus, on the day of Pentecost, raised up the Gentile church, as the Bride of Christ.

The book of Ruth is read in the Jewish Synagogue at the feast of Pentecost, which is the first official day of the Gentile church.

The book of Ruth illustrates the theological concept of redemption beautifully, its primary purpose appears to have been to reveal how God often providentially works behind the scenes to bring His will to pass.

This unique yet amazing book that encompasses major doctrines despite all it teaches does not even mention God a single time, yet his will and providence are clearly seen throughout the pages

1 Samuel:

This book represents the personal history of Samuel, last of the Judges. It records the moral failure of the priesthood under Eli, and of the Judges in Samuel's attempt to make the office hereditary (1 Samuel 8:1). In his prophetic office Samuel was faithful, and in him begins the line of writing prophets. Now all that was is done under the prophet's word, not the priest. In this book the old government, as exercised through judges, ends (1 Samuel 8:7), and the line of kings begins with Saul.

The book is in four parts:

1. The story of Samuel to the death of Eli, 1:1-4:22.
2. From the taking of the ark to the demand for a king, 5:1-8:22.
3. The reign of Saul to the call of David, 9:1-15:35.
4. From the call of David to the death of Saul, 16:1-31:13.

The events recorded in First Samuel cover a period of 115 years of Biblical history

2 Samuel:

1 and 2 Samuel are named after the person God used to establish monarchy in Israel. Samuel not only anointed both Saul and David, Israel's first two kings, but he also gave definition to the new order of God's rule over Israel. Samuel's role as God's representative in this period of Israel's history is close to that of Moses (see Ps 99:6; Jer 15:1) since he, more than any other person, provided for covenant continuity in the transition from the rule of the judges to that of the monarchy.

In the literature on this book, it is common to see commentators describe this as a transition from a theocracy to a monarchy, but this is not what it was supposed to be at all. There was a separation of branches of their civil order, but there was no thought of any of those branches operating in what we would call a "secular" way. All was to continue under the authority of God. Theocracies are inescapable. Every society has an ultimate authority; every society has a god of their system. Christians must therefore want the God of the society they live to be the true and living God. How could we possibly want anything else?

First and Second Kings: Background and Historical Significance

The books of Kings was written between 560 and 538/539 B.C.

1. The last event recorded in 2 Kings 25:27-30 is the release of Jehoiachin from prison during the thirty-seventh year of his imprisonment (560 B.C. [597 B.C. minus 37 years of captivity = 560 B.C.]). This marks the earliest date that Kings could have been completed
2. Since there is no mention of a return to Jerusalem after the captivity, it is probable that the book was written before that event in 538/539 B.C. This marks the latest date that Kings could have been written.
3. This material covers a period from the end of David's reign (c. 970 B.C.) to the captivity of Israel (587/586 B.C.) and then the release of Jehoiachin (560 B.C.).

But Kings doesn't merely record what happened in those days; it also explains why it happened. The first "why" is Israel's covenant with God; there were conditions for keeping the land and Israel had repeatedly violated these conditions. As a result, they were now facing the consequences of their actions, curses that had been specified in the covenant (Dt 27-28). The second "why" is the character of God. He is the only God, Creator and Ruler of heaven and earth; as such he demanded exclusive worship and obedience to his law. When Israel failed to obey, God promised to judge them. Even so God was compassionate, always looking for reasons to delay or mitigate his judgments. The third "why" is the promises of God. He promised Canaan to Abraham's descendants, and he promised a dynasty to David. Despite Israel's sins, God always keeps his promises. The fourth "why" is the character of man. Kings testifies to the unbelief and disobedience of all people, even God's people. Kings shows "that the kings of Israel and Judah, almost without exception, were hopelessly flawed. The kings were not alone in this, of course; the people as a whole possessed a chronic tendency to sin."

Four hundred years of history have been reduced to little more than 50,000 Words; obviously the author of Kings was very selective in what he recorded. "What we have here is not a straightforward history but a history which contains

its own theological commentary on events. The author's intention was not so much to record the events themselves as to explain their significance."

Purposes of the Book of Kings:

- A. To complete the written history of Hebrew kingship as a sequel to the books of Samuel
- B. To show the repeated, divine reasons for the fall of the Jewish nation
- C. To relate the history of the Hebrew united and divided monarchies in their 'Covenant failure
- D. To legitimize the Davidic dynasty through the agency of the prophetic office because the kingship covenant previously announced by Nathan sanctioned the Tribe of Judah and the family of David as rightful heirs to the Hebrew throne.
- E. To warn the kings and the people of the consequence of covenant disobedience
- F. To demonstrate that the one who was to fulfill the promise to David in 2 Samuel Chapter 7 had not yet arrived since none of the kings who followed David were greater than David
- G. To provide hope for Israel through the two historical periods that God would yet fulfill his promise to the house of David

First and Second Chronicles:

These books have a freshness and valor all of their own." The Hebrew title means "The Events of the Days" like a journal. These two books cover the same period of Hebrew history as described in 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, but from a priestly perspective. The theme centers on the worship of Yahweh at the temple in Jerusalem.

First and Second Chronicles were originally a simple continuous Hebrew work that was divided as a matter of convenience by the Greek Old Testament translators of the Septuagint (LXX). The name "Chronicles" was penned by Jerome in his Latin Vulgate Bible (A.D. 385-405). He called it "Chronicles of the Entire Sacred History." Chronicles concentrates on King David and his successors in the land of Judah with only selected comments about the Northern Kingdom as it relates to the South. It is an interpretation of the history of Israel from a special religious point of view as it relates to the Covenant and the of the Chronicler was to encourage the despondent and discouraged workers who had returned to Jerusalem after the exile with Zerubbabel to repair the wall of Jerusalem and begin work on rebuilding the temple. David is the central personality because of the covenant, the temple and the greater temple coming in the future. The purpose of Chronicles was the building and rebuilding of the temple of Yahweh. God's dealings with Israel, Judah and David all relate to that central purpose. The master passion of David was to build the temple, but God denied him that privilege because he was a man of war so his son Solomon became the builder instead (1 Chron. 22:8).

Because of this emphasis on the temple and the Covenant, Chronicles has priestly views and overtones of the kingdom. The author's one objective is to show how important the temple is in the life of the nation and its people. The temple, like the old tabernacle, was the place where the God of the Covenant met with His chosen people. This truth was central to the life of the nation.

By contrast the Northern Kingdom set up two golden calves, worshipped idols and rebelled against Yahweh.

The temple symbolized the presence of Yahweh with His people. He is faithful to His chosen people and His covenants with them. "The Chronicler's concern was to recount the history in such a way as to assure the people that Yahweh was ruling and to urge them on to full loyalty to Him," writes La Sor, et al, Old Testament Survey, p. 633).

Erza:

Along with Nehemiah, reckoned one book by the ancient Jews, who called them the First and Second Books of Ezra, and they are still designated by Roman Catholic writers the First and Second Books of Esdras. This book naturally divides itself into two parts or sections, the one contained in the first six chapters, and which relates the circumstances connected with the return of the first detachment of Babylonian exiles under Zerubbabel with the consequent rebuilding of the temple and the re-establishment of the divine service. The other part, embraced in the four concluding chapters, narrates the journey of a second caravan of returning captives under the conduct of Ezra himself, who was invested with powers to restore, in its entire splendor, the entire system of the Jewish ritual. The general opinion of the Church in every succeeding age has been that Ezra was the author of this book. The chief objection is founded on **Ezra 5:4**, where the words, "Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building?" have occasioned a surmise that the first portion of the book was not written by Ezra, who did not go to Jerusalem for many years after. But a little attention will show the futility of this objection, as the words in question did not refer to the writer, but were used by Tatnai and his associates (**Ezra 5:3**). The style and unity of object in the book clearly prove it to have been the production of but one author.

Nehemiah:

Appears to have been the author of this book, from his usually writing in his own name, and indeed, except in those parts which are unmistakably later editions or borrowed from public documents, he usually employs the first person. The major portion of the book is occupied with a history of Nehemiah's twelve years' administration in Jerusalem, after which he returned to his duties in Shushan. At a later period he returned with new powers and commenced new and vigorous measures of reform, which are detailed in the later chapters of the book. He is taken largely with the law and created to it as thus.

Esther:

Derives its name from the Jewess, who, having become wife of the king of Persia, employed her royal influence to affect a memorable deliverance for the persecuted Church of God. Various opinions are embraced and supported as to the authorship of this book, some ascribing it to Ezra, to Nehemiah, or to Mordecai. The authorities are in favor of the last. The historical character of the book is undoubted, since, besides many internal evidences, its authenticity is proved by the strong testimony of the feast of Purim, the celebration of which can be traced up to the events which are described in this book. Its claim, however, to canonical authority has been questioned on the ground that the name of God does not once occur in it. But the uniform tradition both of the Jewish and the Christian Churches supports this claim, which nothing in the book tends to shake; while it is a record of the superintending care of divine providence over his chosen people, with which it is of the utmost importance the Church, should be furnished. The name of God is strangely enough omitted, but the presence of God is felt throughout the history; and the whole tone of the book is so decidedly given to the honor of God and the cause of true religion that it has been generally received by the Church in all ages into the closed canon.

Job:

It is common to suggest that the purpose of the book is to answer the age-old question, "Why does God allow the righteous to suffer?" That is certainly the question Job raises, but it is worthy to note that he himself never receives a direct answer. Nor is one given by the author, other than to answer Satan's challenge, "Does Job fear God for nothing?" We are privileged to know of the challenge of Satan, and that God allows Job to suffer in answer to that challenge, but Job is never told of this. Therefore, I suggest that the purpose of the book is: To answer the question, "How should the righteous suffer?"

While Job's questions and complaints often come close to charging God with wrong, he never crosses the line and humbly submits to God when told that the answers to his questions are beyond his ability to understand. Thus the book shows us how the righteous should bear up under suffering ("You have heard of the perseverance of Job" - Jam 5:11).

Psalms: Psalms is a book that echoes the praise and prayers due an Almighty, and Sovereign God because of his marvelous creation and life giving power. Many are recited by David himself

Proverbs: Is a book that speaks out to the wise and rebukes the simple. Those who fear God learn to live under his blessing and warning to fool's acting in their folly is to turn and find wisdom or be destroyed in their way

Ecclesiastes: Life that is not centered on God is lifeless and purposeless

Songs of Songs: this is a book dealing solely with a man and Woman who being married, share one of the most beautiful gifts that God gave us"" sex!!!!

Isaiah: This book is used to teach the nation of Israel about their past, present and the future, and to speak of God's judgment and salvation in the midst of it all

Jeremiah: Known as the weeping prophet that which his name represents he laments over an unrepentant nation that has and will experience God's wrath, Judgment and will ultimately end in their exile

Lamentations: This book is a plea for mercy, a lament; it's a Godly Prophet asking on behalf of a rebellious nation for mercy and grace. Jeremiah once again was the author petitioning God on behalf of the nation for mercy because of his great judgments.

Ezekiel: Ezekiel was another major prophet that focused on God's Sovereignty, holiness, and purposes he had for the nation of Israel. His main goal was to make God's plan known to a nation once again headed for exile and to show that he was still in control of them if only they would hear his word!

Daniel: a book that is based upon the same theme as that of Ezekiel, the sovereign lord used his prophet to help the nation that was in the midst of cruel oppression of the enemy AND DANIEL called and chosen to rule and reign during this time of CRUEL EXILE! God Mightly used Daniel to as a leader in the Government to aid the nation in her defeats and he exiles

Hosea:

His name means “salvation” and should be spelled “Hoshea” but has come down in English as Hosea. He is the son of Beerai, and unlike Amos, Hosea preached to his own people in Israel. He may have been among the priests in his station in view of his knowledge concerning religious affairs, and may have been a minor prophet but he had three major purposes:

- A. To call Israel and Judah to repentance in Yahweh, the God of love
- B. To reveal the faithlessness of the nation toward their covenant with Yahweh [God}
- C. To rebuke the nation of its lack of knowledge, loyal love, and faithfulness towards a holy Sovereign God

Joel:

The bases of Joel's book can be summed up in the underlining theme spelled out in Joel 2:31 "THE GREAT AND DREADFUL DAY OF THE LORD" The book deals with the restoration and blessing God will bring following his judgment and repentance

Amos: Amos call in the book that bears his name is one of social justice and righteousness. He condemned all who oppressed the poor and needy, for their own purposes. [Another prophet –called a minor prophet]

Obadiah:

Obadiah literally means “Servant of the Lord.” This was one of the most common names in the Hebrew Bible. There are 12 other men with this same name in the Old Testament, none of whom can be identified with the author of this book. We do not know anything about this man except that he must have lived in Judah since he prophesies in relation to Jerusalem. The animosity between Edom and the Israelites, and Edom’s punishment because of that, is the literal theme of the Book of Obadiah.

Jonah:

The book of Jonah holds within it a key theme we all may have heard before. We all know of the great fish that ate Jonah, but really don't know why!! A reoccurring theme shown over and over in the Book is that God does not play favorites. The nation of Israel in this case Jonah thinks that God loved them more than anyone else. This thought can be dangerous as it was with the nation of Israel, and they spent their time hoping that God would annihilate their enemies. This does not please God no matter the reason and God makes that plain to them through the last half of the book in his dealing with Jonah. So the lesson Jonah learned was God cares about all people not just a certain group or nationality.

Micah:

This particular prophet speaks out in judgment against those who think they can act above the law and but only god's deliverance comes to us who reach for it and learn to live by it.

Nahum:

This minor prophet, as others, bears witness to the fact that judgment will come to the nations who practice wickedness and evil, and God wants to let them know that despite it all he is sovereign and controls everyone's destiny whether good or evil

Habakkuk:

It probably comes from the verb that means "to fold one's hands" or "to embrace." Perhaps the significance is that Habakkuk embraced God and his people.

There are 4 main purposes of this book:

- A. To proclaim that Yahweh, Judah's sovereign warrior, will appropriately judge the evil of Judah by bringing the Babylonians against them
- B. To proclaim that God, as the protector of His people, will sustain those who trust in Him
- C. To proclaim that God, as the protector of His people, will deliver Israel from the Babylonians some day
- D. To proclaim that God, as Judah's sovereign Lord, will one day judge the unjust Babylonians

Zephaniah:

This prophetic book has a futuristic theme to it, in that it speaks about the last day judgments of God. God shows that his judgments will be harsh for the wicked but he shows that he will still be merciful towards his people and those that obey him.

Haggai: This book shows that when priority is given to God and his house, blessing results from that obedience. But when disobedience happens, the consequences are lengthy and disastrous as the nation of Israel found out!

Zechariah:

This prophet's message was a very clear warning to the people. Honor God's house and hear the word of the prophets. Take them very seriously, for the spiritual part of man is what counts

Malachi:

No other prophet states as clearly as does the prophet Malachi that spiritual lethargy and laziness will bring God's wrath. He states that only through repentance and reformation, or a complete turning from your sinful ways, is there success and the blessing of God

New Testament Books

The Gospel of Matthew:

It is said that the book of Matthew preserves the teaching of Jesus like no other book. Matthew's gospel is a powerful book attesting to God's call to repentance and grace in Jesus Christ. Having experienced firsthand the amazing grace of God in Christ's calling him to repentance and faith for salvation, Matthew presented in his gospel the Lord's call as a call to complete commitment. As a disciple of Jesus one must totally embrace Jesus as the Messianic King and his gospel of forgiveness, as well as be committed to separating himself from all evil so his righteousness may exceed that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law.

Matthew's purpose was to present Jesus Christ of Nazareth to Jewish Christians and Jews as the Messianic King whose coming was foretold in the Old Testament. In Matthew 1:1 Matthew declared that Jesus is the Son of David, meaning the King whose kingship and throne would have no end, and who would build an everlasting house for the Lord, which is the New Israel and Holy Christian Church (cf. 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Isaiah 9:6,7). In the same opening verse of his gospel Matthew further declared that Jesus is the son of Abraham, meaning the promised Messiah and heir in whom all the families of the earth would be blessed (cf. Genesis 12:3).

Having declared Jesus is the promised Messiah in the Old Testament, Matthew's purpose was to declare that Jesus established his everlasting kingdom: through his preaching and teaching (cf. Matthew 4:17-16:20); Second, by means of his suffering and death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead (cf. Matthew 16:21-28:20).

Mark:

What is the purpose of the gospel of Mark?

Mark wrote his gospel a few years after the death of Jesus, in about A.D. 70 with the intention of showing Jesus' good works. A close reading will reveal that the writings are mainly focused on the last three weeks of the life of Jesus. Mark declares Jesus is the Son of God, and a messenger of God.

Mark 1:1-2 says, "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in Isaiah the prophet: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way'"

The gospel was written for the Galilean Christians who were living under threat of persecution by the Jews. In Mark's depiction of Jesus' ministry and death he focuses on eliminating any political connotations connected with the title "Christ" and the crucifixion. Mark stresses that Jesus was not a rebel who intended to assume political power over an earthly Israel.

The purpose of the gospel of Mark is purely and simply an announcement of the words and works of Jesus. It is the shortest of all the gospels which would have suited the simple, straightforward approach the Romans favored. In his work, Mark gives reference to the Old Testament only once; again this would have suited his readership knowing that they had little or no knowledge of the Old Testament.

Mark is the only one of the four evangelists who spoke of the future Kingdom of God as coming with power.

Luke:

Jesus the Son of Man came to offer salvation to the whole world (19:10). Luke presents Christ as the Savior of the world. Luke applies the term "servant" of God in the sense in which Isaiah spoke of the Messiah.

PURPOSE: Luke's purpose is clearly stated in 1:1-4; 19:10. Here is the historical account of how the living God in His redeeming grace through Jesus Christ entered into the life of mankind, seeking to save the lost. This is not an ordinary detailed biography of our Lord. He only made use of material that served his purpose. His aim was to proclaim as clearly and powerfully as possible that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as the all-sufficient Savior of the world. He progressively reveals that the Son of God and Savior of all.

John:

John is the last Gospel penned as it came several years after the other "synoptic" Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke were written. Like the rest of the Gospels, John covered the events of Jesus' birth and death, His teachings, works, and the plan of redemption. These events occurred early in the first century, from around 27-36 AD, during the reign of Pontius Pilate. John wrote to a Church in turmoil, where the first generation of witnesses and Christians were dying out and the new generation was taking over. He was filling in the gaps to give more evidence and detail to prove Jesus was the Son of God--and more. He is the One True Lord God Creator and Messiah, the Eternal God who is LORD and yet the quintessential example of living for God's glory and humble service. John sought to convince his audience by being rational and giving philosophical evidence for the Divinity of Jesus Christ using facts, Scripture, and logic. He presented instructions and doctrine for a new generation of church leadership who were not eyewitnesses. He showed Jesus' miracles, precepts, and the testimony of those He had touched so others could respond too. In so doing, John answered the common objections that the Jews and Greeks had for a greater understanding of who and what Jesus was.

Acts:

The book of Acts provides a detailed, orderly, eyewitness account of the birth and growth of the early church and the spread of the gospel immediately after the **resurrection of Jesus Christ**. Its narrative supplies a bridge connecting the life and ministry of Jesus to the life of the church and the witness of the earliest believers. The work also constructs a link between **the Gospels and the Epistles**.

Written by Luke, Acts is the sequel to **Luke's Gospel**, furthering his story of Jesus, and how he built his church. The book ends quite abruptly, suggesting to some scholars that Luke may have planned to write a third book to continue the story.

In Acts, as Luke describes the spread of the gospel and the ministry of the apostles, he focuses primarily on two, Peter and Paul.

Author of the Book of Acts:

Authorship of the book of Acts is attributed to Luke. He was a Greek and the only Gentile Christian writer of the New Testament. He was an educated man, and we learn in Colossians 4:14 that he was a physician. Luke was not one of the 12 disciples.

Although Luke is not named in the book of Acts as the writer, he was credited with authorship as early as the second century. In later chapters of Acts, the writer uses the first-person plural narrative, "we," indicating that he was present with Paul. We know that Luke was a faithful friend and travel companion of Paul.

Romans:

The book of Romans in the New Testament is a letter from the apostle Paul to believers living in Rome about 58 A.D. It completely explains the amazing life of Jesus Christ—what He has already done for us and what He wants to do in us.

Paul shows us how God sees us—as desperately in need of a Savior. As sinners, we were all condemned to death and eternal separation from God. But in this letter we see God's wonderful, awesome love for us. He sent His own Son to take the death penalty for our sins so that we might be free to live in marvelous fellowship with Him now and for eternity. Isn't that the best news you could ever hear?

Jesus, who is alive from the dead, wants to share His life with all who trust in Him and make them like Himself. "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (1 John 5:11). Jesus said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32). Paul's letter to the Romans is a message of truth about freedom. Ask God to reveal Jesus to your heart as a living Person, "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, . . . and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Ephesians

I Corinthians:

Corinth was a strategically located Roman city on the main land route between East and West and was the crossroads for several sea routes. Corinth was famous for its intellectual and material prosperity and was honored with being the capitol of Achaia. It also became famous for its corruption. As Guthrie says, "Its name became a byword for profligacy."

Paul began his ministry in Corinth on his second missionary journey under much opposition (Acts 18:6-17), but he was able to convert several influential people and consequently remained for about one and a half years in Corinth.

He left Corinth and traveled to Ephesus. The city's corruption had its influence on the church and Paul heard of the problems and divisions in the church. It is from Ephesus that he wrote and sent this letter to Corinth in about 53 A.D.

Purpose:

Paul's purposes for writing the Corinthians were several. His first purpose was to deal with several moral problems and the divisions that had formed as people had divided into fan-clubs and were proclaiming themselves followers of Paul, Apollo's, Peter or Christ (1:10). His second reason was to deal with several questions that had been asked in a letter the Corinthians had sent to him (7:1). A third purpose that appears throughout the book is Paul's defense of his apostolic authority.

All of these issues can be related to a problem with pride, and thus in 1:27-29 we have what may be the thesis statement of the book:

. . . but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God (1 Cor. 1:27-29). 2

II Corinthians:

Paul is the author of this letter (see 1:1; 10:1). It is stamped with his style and contains more autobiographical material than any of his other writings.

Date:

The available evidence indicates that the year A.D. 55 is a reasonable estimate for the writing of this letter. From 1Co 16:5-8 it may be concluded that 1 Corinthians was written from Ephesus before Pentecost (in the late spring) and that 2 Corinthians may have been written later that same year before the onset of winter. 2 Co 2:13; 7:5 indicate that it was probably written from Macedonia.

Purposes:

Because of the occasion that prompted this letter, Paul had a number of purposes in mind:

1. To express the comfort and joy Paul felt because the Corinthians had responded favorably to his painful letter (1:3-4; 7:8-9, 12-13).
2. To let them know about the trouble he went through in the province of Asia (1:8-11).
3. To explain why he had changed his travel plans (1:12-2:4).
4. To ask them to forgive the offending party (2:5-11).
5. To warn them not to be "yoked together with unbelievers" (6:14-7:1).
6. To explain to them the true nature (its joys, sufferings and rewards) and high calling of Christian ministry. This is the so-called great digression, but it turns out to be in some ways the most important section of the letter (2:14-7:4; see note on 2:14).

7. To teach the Corinthians about the grace of giving and to make sure that they complete the collection for the poor Christians at Jerusalem (chs. 8–9).
8. To deal with the minority opposition in the church (chs. 10–13).
9. To prepare the Corinthians for his upcoming visit (12:14; 13:1–3, 10).

Galatians: Author- teaching from Zondervan

The opening verse identifies the author of Galatians as the apostle Paul. Apart from a few 19th-century interpreters, no one has seriously questioned his authorship.

Date and Destination:

The date of Galatians depends to a great extent on the destination of the letter. There are two main views:

1. **The North Galatian theory.** This older view holds that the letter was addressed to churches located in north-central Asia Minor (Pessinus, Ancyra and Tavium), where the Gauls had settled when they invaded the area in the third century B.C. It is held that Paul visited this area on his second missionary journey, though Acts contains no reference to such a visit. Galatians, it is maintained, was written between AD. 53 and 57 from Ephesus or Macedonia.
2. **The South Galatian theory.** According to this view, Galatians was written to churches in the southern area of the Roman province of Galatia (Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe) that Paul had founded on his first missionary journey. Some believe that Galatians was written from Syrian Antioch in 48-49 after Paul's first journey and before the Jerusalem council meeting (Ac 15). Others say that Galatians was written in Syrian Antioch or Corinth between 51 and 53.

Occasion and Purpose

Judaizers were Jewish Christians who believed, among other things, that a number of the ceremonial practices of the OT were still binding on the NT church. Following Paul's successful campaign in Galatia, they insisted that Gentile converts to Christianity abide by certain OT rites, especially circumcision. They may have been motivated by a desire to avoid the persecution of Zealot Jews who objected to their fraternizing with Gentiles (see 6:12). The Judaizers argued that Paul was not an authentic apostle and that out of a desire to make the message more appealing to Gentiles he had removed from the gospel certain legal requirements.

Paul responded by clearly establishing his apostolic authority and thereby substantiating the gospel he preached. By introducing additional requirements for justification (e.g., works of the law) his adversaries had perverted the gospel of grace and, unless prevented, would bring Paul's converts into the bondage of legalism. It is by grace through faith alone that people are justified, and it is by faith alone that they are to live out their new life in the freedom of the Spirit.

Theological Teaching

Galatians stands as an eloquent and vigorous apologetic for the essential NT truth that people are justified by faith in Jesus Christ -- by nothing less and nothing more -- and that they are sanctified not by legalistic works but by the obedience that comes from faith in God's work for them, in them and through them by the grace and power of Christ and the Holy Spirit. It was the rediscovery of the basic message of Galatians (and Romans) that brought about the Protestant Reformation. Galatians is often referred to as "Luther's book," because Martin Luther relied so strongly on this letter in all his preaching, teaching and writing against the prevailing theology of his day. It is also referred to as the "Magna Carta of Christian Liberty." A key verse is 2:16

Ephesians:

Authorship and Purpose of Writing

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, Ephesians 1:1

Purpose:

To strengthen the Christians in the church of Ephesus.

Being a prisoner in Rome who was awaiting trial, Paul could not revisit the church in Ephesus, as he had revisited other churches he had established during his first and second missionary journeys. Paul had established the church in Ephesus on his third missionary journey about three to five years earlier. He wrote his letter to the Ephesians to do what he could not do personally. He wrote to strengthen and confirm the believers there in the grace of God and the gospel of Christ, as well as to encourage them in performing their works of service and holiness in response to God's saving grace.

Content:

While Paul's companion letter to the Colossians emphasized the greatness of Christ, who is the head of the church, Paul's letter to the Ephesians emphasized the church itself, of which Christ is its head.

The first three chapters concentrate on the church being God's workmanship, which he made to be what it is according to his eternal plan of salvation. It was a plan that began in eternity, was implemented in time, and will be completed on the Day of Judgment when God receives his church of believers, the new Israel, into heavenly glory. This plan of salvation is all by God's grace. See Ephesians 2:8, 9.

The last three chapters concentrate on the response of the believers to God's plan of salvation as the recipients of his grace. The believers are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, to do good works. Their good works will be holy lives of loving service to God and their neighbor. See Ephesians 2:10.

Theme:

Ephesians 2:10: For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Philippians:

Writer of the Letter to the Philippians

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, Philippians 1:1

Purpose of Philippians:

There is no need to assume up front that there must have been only one purpose in the writing of Philippians. In fact, as we read the letter, several objectives seem to be in the mind of the apostle. First, it is clear that Paul wanted the church to know how things were going for him in his imprisonment (1:12-26) and what his plans were should he be released (Phil 2:23-24).

Second, there appears to have been some discord and division in the church and so the apostle writes to encourage humility with a view toward unity (2:1-18; 4:2-3). Third, Paul, the pastoral theologian, writes to head off the negative teaching and consequences of certain false teachers (3:2-3ff.). Fourth, Paul wrote to commend Timothy to the church as well as to give the church a report about the health and plans of Epaphroditus (2:19-30). Fifth, Paul also wrote to thank the church for their concern for him and the gifts they had given (4:10-20).

Colossians:

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, Colossians 1:1

Occasion for the Writing of the Letter to the Colossians:

Epaphras, leader of the church in Colosse in Asia Minor (Colossians 4:12), came to Paul in Rome with good news and bad news about the church of Colosse. The good news was the gospel had born fruit among the Colossians (Colossians 1:6), who were continuing in the faith (Colossians 1:4) in Christ and in love for their fellow believers. The bad news was the Colossians were being troubled by a new teaching that was contrary to the gospel which Epaphras had been preaching to them. The new teaching claimed a profound knowledge apart from Christ (Colossians 2:8), an emphasis on following prescribed rituals (Colossians 2:16), the worship of angels (Colossians 2:18), and ascetic self-abasement (Colossians 2:18 & 20-23). The new teaching which included the worship of angels indicates that it invoked spiritual powers rather than calling on Christ in whom the fullness of God dwelt in bodily form (Colossians 2:9).

The new false teaching in effect denied the total sufficiency of Christ for salvation and the completeness of Christ's atonement. The details of the new false teaching are difficult to describe, because Paul did not write about them point by point. Rather, Paul overwhelmed the false teaching and smothered it with the full and complete riches of Christ, his person and his redemptive work--the Christ who is the true God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, the Savior and God/Man who reconciled by his blood the sinners of the world to God, and who is the power of the believers' faith. In Christ is found the real knowledge, fullness, and completeness. Thus Paul asserted that Christians have no need for human philosophy and wisdom to be complete. They are complete in Christ, in whom they have the divine wisdom of his gospel and the perfect, complete salvation.

To deal with the new false teaching, Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians. Paul then dispatched his co-worker Tychicus to carry his letter to the church of Colosse (Colossians 4:7, 8). Paul's letter was a circular letter to be shared with the other churches in the area, particularly nearby Laodicea (Colossians 4:16).

When Paul dispatched his letter to the Colossians, he sent the slave Onesimus with Tychicus back to his master Philemon, who was a member of the church of Colosse. This

may explain why Paul wrote a longer section on the slave/master relationship than on the other human relationships, and why Paul emphasized his readers should forgive one another as God forgave them in Christ.

Theme of the Letter to the Colossians

“You have been made complete in him (Christ),” Colossians 2:10

I Thessalonians:

The Writer and Purpose of The First Letter I Thessalonians:

Paul is the author of 1 Thessalonians. Paul, Silvanus (the Roman name of Silas), and Timothy are all named in 1 Thessalonians 1:1. Silas and Timothy did not author the letter; however Silas and Timothy are mentioned because the Christians in Thessalonica knew these co-workers of Paul personally, as they knew Paul himself. Silas had assisted Paul **in establishing the church** in Thessalonica. Timothy had gone to Thessalonica as Paul's agent **to encourage the Thessalonian Christians** (cf. 1 Thessalonians 3:1, 2).

II Thessalonians:

Paul is the author of 2 Thessalonians. As in the case of 1 Thessalonians 1:1, the names of Paul, Silvanus (the Roman name of Silas), and Timothy are all mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 1:1. Silas and Timothy did not author the letter of 2 Thessalonians, as they did not write the letter of 1 Thessalonians. Silas and Timothy are mentioned because they were still with Paul in Corinth and the Christians in Thessalonica knew them as well as Paul. In 2 Thessalonians we again find the personal pronouns “we”, “us”, and “our”, which indicate that Silas and Timothy agreed with what Paul wrote in this second letter to the Thessalonians. 2 Thessalonians 2:5 and 3:17 clearly show that Paul himself was the actual writer of the letter, for in these verses Paul referred to himself with the personal pronoun “I”.

Purpose of the Second Letter to the Thessalonians:

1. To encourage the Thessalonians in their faithfulness in the face of the persecution they were enduring and to assure them that Christ would right the wrong being done to them when he returned to judge the world (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10).
2. To clarify that Paul had never said that Christ had already come in judgment and to instruct them that Christ would not return until after the Great Antichrist, the man of sin, had been revealed (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).
3. To encourage the Thessalonians to discipline the idle busybodies in their midst so they would repent of their sin (cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15).

I Timothy: The Writer of the First Letter to Timothy

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, 1 Timothy 1:1

Timothy became a close associate of Paul. He was with Paul during much of Paul's second and third missionary journeys. Six of Paul's letters bear Timothy's name with

Paul's in the opening greeting--2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon.

Purpose of the First Letter to Timothy:

1. To instruct Timothy in writing to oppose the false doctrines that Paul had personally urged him to oppose while they were together in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3).
2. To give Timothy the instructions needed to fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 1:18, 19).
3. To instruct Timothy in how God's New Israel of believers should conduct themselves in the church (1 Timothy 3:14, 15).
4. To instruct Timothy on how to conduct his pastoral ministry (1 Timothy 4:1-6:19)

Theme:

Fight the good fight of the faith (1 Timothy 1:18, 19; 6:12)

II Timothy:

The Writer of the Second Letter to Timothy

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, 2 Timothy 1:1

When Paul wrote his Second Letter to Timothy, he was again a prisoner in Rome. He was imprisoned in a dungeon in chains for his preaching the gospel (cf. 2 Timothy 2:9). Because of Paul's imprisonment, a number of individuals had deserted him when he needed them the most. All in Asia Minor in the area of Ephesus, where Timothy was serving as pastor, had turned away from Paul (cf. 2 Timothy 1:15). At Paul's first trial no one had supported him. Everyone had deserted him (cf. 2 Timothy 4:16). A certain Alexander, identified as a metal worker, may have even testified against Paul at his trial (cf. 2 Timothy 4:14, 15). Only the Lord himself had stood by Paul and had strengthened him that he might be delivered on that occasion from the lion's mouth (cf. 2 Timothy 4:17). One Christian who did not desert Paul was Onesiphorus. He had come to Rome and searched for Paul until he had found him (cf. 2 Timothy 1:16-18).

Purpose of the Second Letter to Timothy:

1. To request Timothy to come to him as soon as possible that he might see his dear son in the faith one last time (cf. 2 Timothy 1:4; 4:9, 21).
2. To request Timothy to bring his warm cloak and books (cf. 2 Timothy 4:13).
3. To encourage Timothy in his faith and ministry to guard and to preach the pure Word of God and the gospel that had been entrusted to him (2 Timothy 1:13, 14; 3:14, 15; 4:1, 2).

Theme of the Second Letter to Timothy:

Encouragement for Timothy's Faith and Ministry In The Face Of Terrible Times

Titus:

The Writer of the Letter to Titus

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, Titus 1:1

Purpose of the Letter to Titus:

1. To encourage Titus to complete the difficult ministerial work that still needed to be done on Crete (cf. Titus 1:5).
2. To put in writing the verbal instructions Paul had given Titus before leaving the island (cf. Titus 1:5).
3. To give Titus' work in the church of Crete Paul's apostolic authority (cf. Titus 1:1-3). Paul's closing this letter with the benediction, "Grace be with you all," indicates Paul intended the contents of the letter be read and heard by all the Christians on Crete.

Theme of the Letter to Titus:

Too Complete the Ministerial Work That Must Still Be Done On Crete

Philemon:

The Writer of the Letter to Philemon

Paul wrote this letter, Philemon 1:1

The Occasion for the Writing of the Letter to Philemon:

The letter to Philemon was one of Paul's prison epistles, which he wrote while being held a prisoner in Rome. While being held under house arrest there, Paul received a visitor named Onesimus, whose name meant profitable or advantage. Onesimus had formerly proven to be anything but profitable and an advantage. He was a runaway slave who had fled from his master, a man named Philemon. When Onesimus ran away, he probably took with him money and goods which belonged to his master Philemon. Runaway slaves customarily did this. Onesimus made his way to Rome. In Rome he somehow came to Paul. Through Paul's teaching he became a Christian. A bond of friendship developed between Paul and Onesimus. Onesimus performed valuable services for Paul. He probably ran errands for Paul, who could not leave the house. Onesimus' services greatly aided Paul's ministry.

Paul would have liked to keep Onesimus with him. Paul, however, honored the social tie that bound a slave to his master and respected the duty Onesimus owed to Philemon, his master. Guided by the tenth commandment, which forbids coveting another man's worker, and by the law of love, Paul decided Onesimus should return to Philemon. Paul was about to send Tychicus, a co-worker, to Colossi with a letter Paul had written to the church there. Philemon was a member of that church. Tychicus' traveling to Colosse offered Paul the opportunity to send Onesimus with Tychicus to Philemon. Onesimus went willingly as a penitent Christian to seek his master's forgiveness and to return to his service in Philemon's household. Paul wrote his letter to Philemon and had Tychicus hand carry it to him.

Hebrews:

The book of Hebrews boldly proclaims the superiority of **Jesus Christ** and Christianity over other religions, including Judaism. In a logical argument, the author demonstrates Christ's superiority, then adds practical instructions for following Jesus. One of the outstanding features of Hebrews is the "**Faith Hall of Fame**" of Old Testament people, found in Chapter 11.

Author of the Book of Hebrews:

The author of Hebrews does not name himself. Paul has been suggested as the author by some scholars, but the true author remains anonymous.

Date Written:

Hebrews was written before the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D.

Written To:

Hebrew Christians who were wavering in their **faith** and all future readers of the Bible.

James:

The book of James is a concise, how-to guide on **being a Christian**. Although some Christians interpret James as proving that **good works** play a role in our **salvation**, this letter actually says that good works are the fruit of our salvation and will attract nonbelievers to the faith.

Author of the Book of James:

James, a major leader in the Jerusalem church, and the brother of **Jesus Christ**.

Date Written:

About 49 A.D., before the **Jerusalem Council** in 50 A.D. and before the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D.

Written To:

First century Christians scattered throughout the world and future Bible readers.

Landscape of the Book of James:

This letter on spiritual themes gives practical advice for Christians everywhere, but especially for believers feeling pressure from society's influences.

Themes in the Book of James:

Faith that is alive is demonstrated by a believer's conduct. We should act out our faith in constructive ways. Trials will test every Christian. We become mature in our faith by facing **temptations** head-on and conquering them with God's help.

Jesus commanded us to love one another. When we love our neighbors and serve them, we imitate Christ's servant character.

Our tongue can be used to build or destroy. We are responsible for our words and must choose them wisely. God will help us **control our speech** and our actions as well.

Our wealth, however much or little, should be used to advance the **Kingdom of God**. We should not favor the wealthy nor mistreat the poor. James tells us to follow the advice of Jesus and store up treasures in **heaven**, through charitable works.

I Peter:

Writer of the First Letter of Peter

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 1:1, who was a witness to the sufferings of Christ, 1 Peter 5:1

Although 1 Peter is a short letter, it touches on various doctrines and has much to say about Christian life and duties. It is not surprising that different readers have found it to have different principal themes. For example, it has been characterized as a letter of separation, of suffering and persecution, of suffering and glory, of hope, of pilgrimage, of courage, and as a letter dealing with the true grace of God. Peter says that he has written "encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God" (5:12). This is a definitive general description of the letter, but it does not exclude the recognition of numerous subordinate and contributory themes. The letter includes a series of exhortations (imperatives) that run from 1:13 to 5:11.

II Peter: Writer of the Second Letter of Peter

Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, (cf. 2 Peter 1:1), who was with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, saw Jesus glorified, and heard the Father declare from heaven that Jesus was his beloved Son with whom he was well pleased (cf. 2 Peter 1:16-18).

Purpose of the Second Letter of Peter:

The internal evidence within the second letter indicates its purpose was to strengthen his fellow Christians in their faith born hope, so they would be on their guard and not carried away by the errors of false teachers (cf. 2 Peter 3:17,18).

Theme of the Second Letter of Peter:

A Reminder To Remember The Word Of Hope You Have Learned (cf. 2 Peter 1:12, 13, 15; 3:1, 2).

I John: The Book of 1 John

The Book of 1 John is a letter though it contains no opening address or greeting typically found in a letter, which identifies the writer and the recipients to whom it was written. The Book of 1 John is not an essay or dissertation, but a teaching of God's Word in letter form. This is evident from the statement "I write to you", which addresses the writer's recipients and readers (cf. 1 John 1:4; 2:1; 2:7,8; 2:12,13,14; 2:21; 2:26; 5:13).

Writer of the First Letter of John:

The author did not identify himself in the letter by name. It has been stated that copies of the First Letter of John were in many churches by the end of the first century. Already then John's authorship and the letter's authority were beyond question. Quotations of the First Letter of John, as well as allusions to passages within it, date back to the earliest times. The letter was at once included in the New Testament canon by the early church.

The internal evidence within the First Letter of John supports John's authorship. The letter possesses the same upward spiraling structure found within the Gospel of John, as well as similarities in vocabulary and writing style. The letter states that its author was an eyewitness to Jesus' person and ministry (cf. 1 John 1:1-3).

Theme of the First Letter of John:

By This Message We Know We Are Christians Who Have Fellowship With God.

John's first letter is highly polemical, that is, it speaks out vigorously against the false teachers whose heresies were attacking and undermining the true gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 John 2:18, 19, 26; 4:1). The false teaching John attacked was Gnosticism in its early form. Its proponent was Cerinthus, who was actively teaching in Ephesus.

It has been stated that Cerinthus was a former Jew from Egypt. He combined Jewish ideas, such as the retention of circumcision and the observance of the Sabbath Day, with his own ideas that brought forth the religion of Gnosticism (knowledge). He rejected the gospels and the letters of Paul. He denied that Jesus was Christ, the Son of God, who had become man. He believed that Jesus was only an ordinary man born of Mary and Joseph. He asserted that Christ the Son of God entered the man Jesus at his baptism, occupied the man Jesus for the three years of his public ministry to impart his divine teachings and knowledge, but then departed from the man Jesus prior to his being crucified. In this manner Cerinthus denied that in the person of Jesus the Son of God died for mankind's sins to redeem and to reconcile everyone to God. He believed that the essential thing was, not the redeeming sacrifice of Christ for sins, but the teachings of Christ which imparted knowledge for a fulfilling life.

John wrote his first letter to uphold the true gospel that Christ, the Son of God, became true man in the person of Jesus. In refutation of Cerinthus, who held Christ entered Jesus at his baptism in water but departed from Jesus prior to his shedding his blood on the cross, John asserted in 1 John 5:6, "This is the one who came by water and blood--Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood." Since Cerinthus did not take sin seriously, John also wrote his first letter to declare the seriousness of sin as an offense against God and the need to live a holy life if one is to be in fellowship with God. Throughout his first letter John upheld the true faith that is to be believed, a true righteousness that is to be lived, and the true love that is to be shown to one another.

Date of the First Letter of John:

II John:

Writer of the Second Letter of John

"The elder," 2 John 1

The author introduced himself simply as "the elder". He has been recognized as being the apostle John. John's authorship is evident from the content and literary style of his second letter, which is like that of the First Letter of John. Like his first letter, his second letter dwells on the truth of Jesus Christ the Son of God and the Christian faith, on the commandment to love one another, on the heresy of the false teachers who are antichrists, and on the insistence one must hold to the truth and teaching of Christ to have God the Father.

John probably identified himself as "the elder" in his second letter for a couple of reasons. He wrote the letter late in his life when he was an elderly man. He was the last of the apostles. The others had preceded him in death. What is more, in Asia Minor in the areas surrounding Ephesus, where he had served from before A.D. 70 to around A.D. 100, he was well known and highly regarded as the elderly, grand spokesman for the church and the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Accordingly he referred to himself simply as "the elder."

Occasion of the Second Letter of John:

The members of the church to whom John wrote his second letter were being disturbed by deceiving false teachers, who denied Jesus is Christ the Son of God. They were probably the same Gnostics led by Cerinthus, whom John wrote against in his first letter. For more information about Cerinthus and early Gnosticism see the Overview on the Book of 1 John, the section entitled "Occasion and Purpose".

Purpose of the Second Letter of John:

John's purpose was to strengthen and encourage the church to walk in the truth and love in contrast to what the many false teachers were telling them. The church members were to guard themselves against those false teachers and were not to assist them in spreading their heresies.

Theme of the Second Letter of John:

Walk In the Truth and Love and Beware Of the Many Deceivers

III John:

Date of Writing:

The Book of 3 John would most likely have been written at about the same time as John's other letters, 1 and 2 John, between A.D. 85-95.

Purpose of Writing:

John's purpose in writing this third epistle is threefold. First, he writes to commend and encourage his beloved co-worker, Gaius, in his ministry of hospitality to the itinerant messengers who were going from place to place to preach the Gospel of Christ. Second, he indirectly warns and condemns the behavior of one Diotrefes, a dictatorial leader who had taken over one of the churches in the province of Asia, and whose behavior was directly opposed to all that the apostle and his Gospel stood for. Third, he commends the example of Demetrius who was reported as having a good testimony from all.

Jude:

Author: **Jude 1** identifies the author of the Book of Jude as Jude, a brother of James. This likely refers to Jesus' half-brother Jude, as Jesus also had a half-brother named James (**Matthew 13:55**). Jude likely does not identify himself as a brother of Jesus out of humility and reverence for Christ.

Date of Writing:

The Book of Jude is closely related to the book of 2 Peter. The date of authorship for Jude depends on whether Jude used content from 2 Peter, or Peter used content from Jude when writing 2 Peter. The Book of Jude was written somewhere between A.D. 60 and 80.

Purpose of Writing:

The Book of Jude is an important book for us today because it is written for the end times, for the end of the church age. The church age began at the Day of Pentecost. Jude is the only book given entirely to the great apostasy. Jude writes that evil works are the evidence of apostasy. He admonishes us to contend for the faith, for there are tares among the wheat. False prophets are in the church and the saints are in danger. Jude is a small but important book worthy of study, written for the Christian of today.

Revelation:

The Apostle John was the most venerated Christian leader throughout Asia Minor, particularly around Ephesus, where he had been the pastor for much of the last half of the first century. He outlived all the other apostles, in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in John 21 v.20-24. The Gospel that bore his name (written about 85 AD) was an instant success among late 1st century Christians so that a book by him about 10 years later, given almost totally to prophecy and graphically different, was nonetheless accepted and used in the churches for over 300 years.

All the external evidence points to the writing of Revelation by John when he was banished to the Isle of Patmos during the reign of Roman emperor Domitian (91-96 AD), for, as he said, "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ." Evidence has been found that Patmos and surrounding islands were indeed used to incarcerate prisoners or the so called "enemies of the state" at that period of history. That would make the writing of Revelation in and around the traditionally accepted date of 95 AD, near the very end of John's life.

The isle of Patmos lies about 37 miles west southwest of Miletus in the Mediterranean Sea. It is about ten miles long and six miles wide at the north end, and consists mainly of volcanic hills and rocky ground. It was an island used by the Romans to exile prisoners. It was in the year 95 AD during the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian that the Apostle John was exiled here for his faith in God. This was no tropical paradise. It was a lonely, deserted, barren place. But it was the Lord's Day and despite the fact John was alone and in desperate circumstances, he decided to worship God. Little did John realize that this worship experience would not only dramatically transform his own life, it would impact generations to come and affect the destiny of the entire world.

There are five major reasons it is important for believers to study the Book of Revelation:

- (1) You receive a blessing when you study it:
"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand". (Rev. 1 v.3)
- (2) It is necessary for full maturity, as it is part of the Word:
"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3 v.16-17)

(3) It enables you to understand the future and how it relates to the past and present:

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show his servants the things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John". (Rev. 1 v.1)

(4) Prophecy authenticates the Word of God. Fulfilled prophecy that which Word says is true: "but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe" (1 Cor. 14 v.22)

(5) Prophecy affects the way we live. The advent of the end times motivates us to live Holy lives, knowing that we will give an account of all things:

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness." (1 Peter 3 v.11)

It motivates us to reach out to a lost and dying world when we realize that time is short: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." (John 9 v.4)

EXPLANATION OF MAJOR EVENTS IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

1. **Rapture** - return of Christ for the church.
2. **Tribulation** - 7 years of Antichrist's rule on earth after the Rapture.
3. **Great Tribulation** - last 3 years of Tribulation - God's wrath poured out upon men.
4. **Marriage Supper of the Lamb** - great feast in heaven after Rapture - Jesus and the Church.
5. **Judgment Seat of Christ** – judgment of believers for their works - tried by God's fire.
6. **Second Coming of Christ** - coming of Jesus with the Church to the earth.
7. **Battle of Armageddon** - Satan, Antichrist and their army verses Jesus Christ
He defeats them, casts Satan into the bottomless pit, and sets up millennial kingdom.
8. **Millennium** - 1000-year reign of Christ on earth with believers - age of restoration; evil is banished, earth is restored, Jews' promises fulfilled.
9. **Resurrection of Unsaved** - unbelievers who died and went to Hell before the Second Coming are Resurrected for the final Judgment.
10. **Great White Throne Judgment** - final judgment of unsaved - cast into the Lake of Fire with Satan and his demons.
11. **Eternal State** - final state after last judgment - believers are in the new heaven and earth; unbelievers are in the lake of fire for eternity.

PENTECOSTAL VIEW OF ESCHATOLOGY:

- A. **INAUGURATED ESCHATOLOGY** - the Kingdom of God is "already but not yet" ... it is in a sense already here (in our hearts) but is also future (has not been realized physically yet).

SCRIPTURES:

1. Matt. 13:3-8 (parable of sower) – harvest image given ... kingdom starts from small beginnings and grows into a great harvest in the end.
2. Matt. 13:24-30 (parable of wheat & tares) - in the midst of growth Satan is still active here ... judgment and reward must await the harvest.
3. Matt. 13:31-33 (mustard seed & leaven) - both indicate tremendous growth ... emphasis is on present and future.
4. Luke 10:18 (Jesus saw Satan fall) - something already happened to his power.
5. Luke 11:20 - the Kingdom of God is come upon you - it is here already.
6. Mark 14:25 - the Kingdom of God is not here yet (in its fullness).
7. Matt. 4:17 - the Kingdom of God is imminent - could come at any moment.

- B. **PREMILLENNIALISM** - there will be a literal, earthly, physical reign of Christ lasting 1000 years, which will be established by Him at His Second Coming (He is coming before the millennium) ... this is the earliest Christian belief (early church fathers after apostles).

- C. **PRETRIBULATIONISM** - Christ will come for the church (the Rapture) before the Tribulation (in contrast to during or after); the Tribulation will be surpassed in its horrible persecution and judgments; the Church will be out of the Tribulation and in heaven for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and the judgment Seat of Christ; the Rapture is sudden and quick, and is secret (no one knows when); emphasizes immanency of Christ's return ... "watch" and "hope" for His return ...

1 Thess. 5:6 - be ... He is coming!

Rom. 13:11, 12 - wake up ... the hour is near!

1 John 1: 1-3 - have hope of His coming ... live purely!

