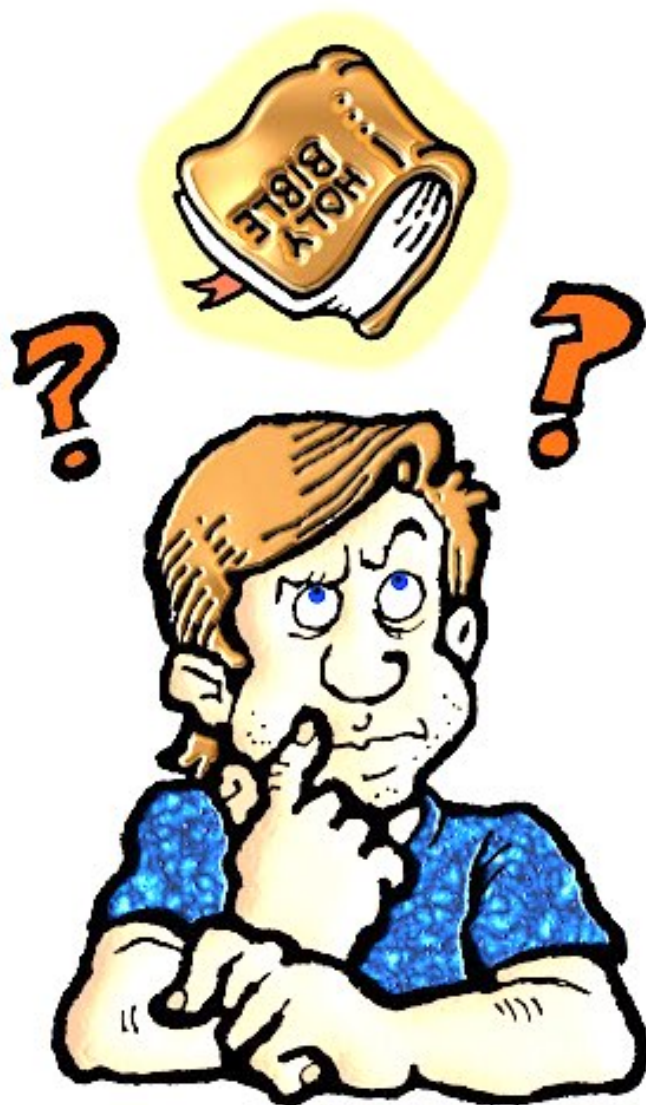


What's This Book About?

A guide for seeing what each book of the Bible is saying.

by John Musgrave



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Introduction.

Purpose of this book:

This book was designed to be a keep-with-your-Bible guide. Its goal is to increase—hopefully greatly—your understanding (and thereby enjoyment) of what you are reading in each book of the Bible. Each section is an introduction to a book of the Bible that will orient you to what each book is about so that you will know why the writer was writing and what he was trying to get his readers to see.

Why was this book written?

One of the most helpful aids for a believer's understanding of any book of the Bible is the introduction of the book in a study Bible. However, these introductions are often too long and too technical for the non-scholar. This can be discouraging to the reader, resulting in the introductions' going unread. This guide—a set of introductions to each Biblical book—seeks two things, therefore: 1) To be shorter and non-technical, and 2) To get to the points: “What is this book about?” and “Why was this book written?”

Use of this book:

This book is designed so that each time you approach a new book of the Bible—to read through it—you can read through the guide first to get oriented to what the book is about and why it was written (what problem it was trying to solve). After reading through that book's introduction, your Scripture reading should be more profitable. I'd suggest referring back to the guide as you're reading along in the Biblical book, especially paying attention to each book's purpose and outline sections. This referring-back should make the book even more clear to you.

Order of the chapters:

In order to aid your understanding of the Bible, I've ordered the chapters of this book (the books of the Bible) in a generally chronological pattern. I've done this so that, if you read the Bible in the order of the chapters of this book, you'll get a better sense of the order of Biblical history.

All Important (please read!): What is the Bible?

The Bible is no ordinary book. All of the Bible's words were penned under the inspiration of God, the Holy Spirit. Thus, while it has many human authors, ultimately it is not a book of human origin.

The Bible was written to other people, not to us! All of the Bible has application to us today, yet it's *very* important to recognize that it was written to other people, in the past (1450 B.C. - A.D. 95). Thus, we, as modern readers, are simply "listening in" to what God was saying to another people, in another time and place, as He spoke to *their* particular needs. This recognition is fundamental to understanding properly what God is saying in each book of the Bible.

God inspired every part of the Bible to move His people to action. In inspiring the Bible, God was not merely recording history. There is no case in the Bible in which God essentially says to us, "Know this, but it may never apply to your life nor have any helpful meaning to you; but, know this because it's the Bible and you should know it." Instead, each part of the Bible is God's purposeful selection of content to re-orient His people's perspective and to move them to godly action in all their circumstances. Know that every piece of content in the Bible was placed there by God not merely to report, but to effect a change in the readers.

Acknowledgements:

This introduction is heavily indebted to a couple of sources:

- 1) Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.'s seminary lectures, delivered at Reformed Theological Seminary-Orlando in 1995-1997; his book, *He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student's Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1993 reprint), especially chapter 12; and the introductions in the *NIV Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), of which he was general editor.
- 2) In the purpose statements and occasion of 1-3 John, my thoughts are close to those of Luke Timothy Johnson, as written in *The Writings of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

Note from the author:

I loved putting this together as I read through the Bible in 2018. Each year since then, I've worked to improve it. My soul and understanding have greatly been blessed, and I hope your using of this guide will have a similar effect on your heart and life.

Lastly—know that I'd love to receive e-mail from you, with any questions you have as you read through this guide and Scripture. You can e-mail me at: john@christchurchclayton.org.

Enjoy your reading of Scripture, and be blessed in it!

John Musgrave, Pastor, Christ Church PCA, Clayton, NC, USA, October 2025.

Old Testament

Genesis

Author:

This book is the first of the five books written by Moses (Genesis -Deuteronomy), which together are known as “the Pentateuch.”

Content:

The events of the book cover Creation to the death of Joseph in Egypt, @1850 B.C.

Date of the book’s writing:

The book was written by Moses, likely around 1450 B.C., at Mt. Sinai, after God's people had crossed the Red Sea. It was written about 400 years after the last event the book recounts (Joseph’s death).

Purpose of the book:

Moses wrote Genesis to convince the Israelites who followed him out of Egypt not to turn back to Egypt, but to press forward to take their promised inheritance, the land of Canaan. The later chapters, 37-50, also aim at directing them to “get along” in love, unity, and forgiveness as they travel to the Promised Land.

Question to ask of each text while reading through Genesis: If I were an Israelite with Moses at Mt. Sinai, what would this text (each text I’m reading) have been teaching me about God’s will for us not to go back to Egypt, but to move forward into Canaan, and to be unified as we do?

Outline:

- 1:1. Primeval History (Creation - Babel).
- 11:10. Early Patriarchal History (Abraham - Jacob).
- 37:2. Joseph’s History.

Job

Content:

Job, the man, lived prior to the establishment of the Levitical priesthood, which was established after the exodus from Egypt under Moses (@1450 B.C.). He may have lived around 1600 B.C. as a contemporary of the Israelites who were enslaved in Egypt.

Date of the book's writing:

The Book of Job was probably written much later, during a time of great hardship in Israel, with likely dates of: a) the period of the Judges, from 930-586 B.C., b) during the divided kingdom of Israel (from the days following Solomon's rule up to the time of Israel's exile into Babylon), or c) in the time after Nebuchadnezzar's first (597 B.C.) or second destructive invasion (586 B.C.) of the Promised Land.

Author:

The author of the book of Job is unknown.

Purpose of the book:

Job was written to teach the limits of the kind of common, proverbial wisdom that falsely asserts that God will always prosper the righteous and always bring hardship on the wicked in this life.

Job was written to encourage God's people, experiencing hardship themselves while witnessing prosperity among the wicked (in Israel and beyond), to remain faithful to God nonetheless, by understanding that though in this era, the wicked often prosper and the righteous suffer, it is all under the sovereignty and good, inscrutable purposes of God, who will mete out perfect reward and punishment at the last day.

Outline:

- 1:1. The setup, and Job's tragedies.
- 2:11. Discussion between Job and his friends.
- 38:1. God's concluding word to Job.
- 42:7. Job's response and continuing life.

Exodus

Author:

This book, along with the other first five books of the Bible, was written by Moses.

Date of the book's writing:

@1410 B.C. While the events of the book cover Moses' birth (roughly 400 years after Joseph), the exodus from Egypt (ten plagues, Red Sea), and the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, the book was written 40 years after Sinai, when the wanderings of God's people in the desert had come to a close. We see reference to the writing's being at the end of the 40 years in 16:35 and 40:38.

Purpose of the book:

God's reason for writing this book at this time: to convince the "second generation" of Israelites (those under 20 at the time of the 12 spies of Numbers 13-14) to follow the covenant order (the laws, the worship regulations) set forth by Moses (and not to stray from it just because Moses would not be with them in the Promised Land).

To accomplish this objective, you'll see throughout Exodus numerous accounts of God's speaking to Moses (and not to others) and of God's providing deliverance of His people (in Egypt and beyond) through Moses. In showing this, God communicates to the Israelites at the end of Moses' life that they should continue when they get to the Promised Land to follow the order of life and worship established by Moses, even though Moses would no longer be with them.

Outline:

- 1:1. Deliverance through Moses.
- 19:1. Covenant through Moses.
- 25:1. Worship guidelines through Moses.

Leviticus

Author, and date of the book's writing:

Moses wrote Leviticus sometime between the completion of the tabernacle at Mt. Sinai (@1448 B.C.) and his death, just prior to the Israelites' entrance into the Promised Land (@1410 B.C.).

Purpose of the book:

God had Moses write Leviticus to convince Israel that its future blessing in the Promised Land depended upon its compliance to the regulations of holiness given at Sinai.

Outline:

- 1:1. Regulations of sacrifices.
- 8:1. Regulations of priests.
- 11:1 Regulations of uncleanness.
- 17:1. Regulations of holy living.
- 26:1. Potential blessings and curses (based on compliance to the regulations).
- 27:1. Regulations of vows.

Numbers

Author, and date of the book's writing:

Moses is writing at the end of the 40 years of desert wandering, at the plains of Moab, prior to Israel's entering the Promised Land @1410 B.C.

Purpose of the book:

Moses uses the history of God's people from Sinai to the edge of the Promised Land to encourage and instruct the new generation so that they would be successful in their taking of the Promised Land under Joshua.

Outline:

- 1:1. Constituting the first-generation army.
- 10:11. Failures in the march to the Promised Land.
- 26:1. Constituting the second-generation army.

Deuteronomy

Author, and date of the book's writing:

Either all or the bulk of Deuteronomy was written by Moses, writing at the end of the 40 years of desert wandering @1410 B.C., at the plains of Moab, prior to Israel's entering into the Promised Land. It's likely that the explanatory elements of the book (when Moses is spoken of in the third person, as in the account of his death in chapter 34) were written by another (under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit). Joshua, in this scenario, has often been considered the likely assembler, perhaps assembling this book to read to the people at the covenant-renewal ceremony seen in Joshua 8:30-35.

Purpose of the book:

God had Moses write the Book of Deuteronomy to guide Israel in covenant renewal under Joshua for its new life in the Promised Land.

Original message:

The people entering the Promised Land were to follow Joshua, the ordained successor to Moses, into the Promised Land, and to understand that their taking and remaining in the Promised Land was dependent upon their loving God with all their hearts and their keeping of His commandments.

Outline:

- 1:1. Preamble.
- 1:5. Historical review of Sinai to their present, at the edge of the Promised Land.
- 4:44. Stipulations of the covenant.
- 27:1. Covenant blessings, curses, and ratification.
- 31:1. Succession (leadership transfer from Moses to Joshua).

Joshua

Author, and date of the book's writing:

Joshua is one of the many books of the Bible for which the authorship is not certain. While most events recorded in the book were accomplishments of God's people under Joshua's leadership, certain events (such as the recording of Joshua's death and burial) and references indicate a later date of writing. Joshua was written as early as a generation or two past Joshua (@1350 B.C.), during the early days of the judges (before the kingship) and most likely before the reign of David in 1010 B.C.

Purpose of the book:

God inspires the Book of Joshua to direct the second (or later) generation after Joshua to conquer the rest of the Promised Land by having faith in the Lord, by loving Him totally, and by faithfully obeying His commands.

Outline:

- 1:1. Conquest of the Land.
- 13:1. Distribution of the Promised Land.
- 23:1. Covenant loyalty in the Land.

Judges

Author, and date of the book's writing:

The author, as with many books of the Bible, is not identified in the text of the book itself. The date of writing could be as late as the exile (into Babylon), but a writing date after Saul's death, during the seven years David reigned over Judah only, while Saul's son, Ish-Bosheth, illegitimately reigned over the other 11 tribes of Israel (2 Samuel 2-4), makes a lot of sense, for two main reasons. First, the book's repeated phrase, "in those days, there was no king in Israel," indicates that at the time of this book's writing, there was a king. Secondly, the generally positive portrayal of David's tribe of Judah, along with the very negative portrayal of Ish-Bosheth's (Saul's) tribe of Benjamin, makes this writing date likely, in view of 1 Samuel 13-16, in which we read of God's rejection (through Samuel) of the kingship of Saul and his descendants, in favor of the kingship of David and his.

Purpose of the book:

God inspired the Book of Judges to convince God's people that for their sustained blessing in the Promised Land, they needed a king, as Deuteronomy 17 had prescribed for them: one from the tribe of Judah (not from the tribe of Benjamin), and one of God's choice, per 1 Samuel 16, namely, from David, not Saul.

Outline:

- 1:1. Faltering conquest of the Promised Land.
- 3:5. Cycles of oppression (by foreign powers) and temporary relief through various deliverers ("judges").
- 17:1. Anarchy and sorrow through unfaithful Levites and the Benjamites.

Ruth

Author, and date of the book's writing:

The author is unknown. Ruth lived during the period of the judges, and the book was probably written at the beginning of David's kingship.

Purpose of the book:

God inspires the Book of Ruth to teach God's people during David's early kingship that his Moabite ancestry did not make him an illegitimate king over God's people, as Ruth, his ancestor, was an exemplary convert to the Faith of Israel.

Outline:

- 1:1. Ruth, the Moabite, shows faithfulness to Israel.
- 2:1. Ruth's faithfulness is recognized by the faithful Judahite, Boaz, who fights to marry her, in accordance with the law.
- 4:1. Bethlehem's elders declare the legitimacy of the marriage of Boaz and Ruth, and pronounce their blessing upon their offspring.

1 & 2 Samuel

Author:

The author is unknown (Samuel, the man, is dead before the narrative of 1 Samuel is over, so we know he didn't write 1 and 2 Samuel!).

Date of the book's writing:

The book was most likely written in the days of the divided monarchy in Israel (between 930 B.C. and 722 B.C.).

Purpose of the book:

God inspires the Book of 1 & 2 Samuel to teach both Judah and Israel of the divided kingdom* that they should both be under and hope for their national blessing through the kingship of David's descendants ("the house of David"), despite the shortcomings of David and his "sons," and the trouble they had caused.

**The divided kingdom consisted of the northern ten tribes, which had broken away from the kingship of David's descendants in 930 B.C., retaining the name, "Israel," and the southern kingdom, "Judah," which consisted of the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and was still under the Davidic kings.*

Outline:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Samuel 1:1. | Foundation of the kingdom. |
| 1 Samuel 8:1. | Saul's kingdom. |
| 1 Samuel 16:1. | David's kingdom. |
| 2 Samuel 21:1. | The future of the kingdom. |



Psalms

Authors:

- 1) David (*77 total psalms. 73 are specifically credited to David: Psalms 3–9; 11–41; 51–65; 68–70; 86; 96; 101; 103; 108–110; 122; 124; 131; 133; and 138–145. Of the four others: Psalm 2 is attributed to David in Acts 4:25; Psalm 72 is likely written by David as an address to Solomon; Psalm 95 is attributed to David in Hebrews 4:7; and Psalm 96 is part of David’s praise in 1 Chronicles 16:23-33.*)
- 2) Asaph (and his descendants) (*12 psalms: 50; 73–83*).
- 3) The sons of Korah (*11 psalms: 42; 44–49; 84–85; 87–88*).
- 4) Heman (*1 psalm, with the sons of Korah: 88*).
- 5) Solomon (*1 psalm: 127*).
- 6) Moses (*1 psalm: 90*).
- 7) Ethan the Ezrahite (*1 psalm: 89*).
- 8) Anonymous (*the 48 remaining psalms*).

Dates:

The psalms were written mostly during the 80 years of David and Solomon, from 1010-930 B.C.

David’s, Solomon’s, Asaph’s, and Heman’s psalms were of this era. The “sons of Korah” most likely wrote psalms during the period of the divided kingdom of Israel (930-597 B.C.). Some Psalms were written in Babylon, during the exile (597-538 B.C.). Moses wrote one psalm—the first—much earlier (1450–1410 B.C.).

Purpose of the Psalms:

The psalms were written to worship God by expressing wonder, praise, thanks, and joy to Him for His character, deeds, and provision, and to cry out to Him for His sympathy and help, from various historical contexts of distress and injustice.

Helpful reading approach:

While the psalms are often viewed merely as ahistorical, emotional expressions common to all believers in all eras, it is more helpful to view them for what they were—songs and poems written out of very real, historical circumstances.

Having just read David's history in 1 & 2 Samuel, try to figure out from what point in David's life (from the history of it in those books) that David was writing the particular psalm you're reading. For instance, read 2 Samuel 15-16 as the context for Psalm 23, and you might feel the Psalm "come alive" for you, as its verses have literal, historical reference points there in 2 Samuel.

If a psalm speaks of longing for Jerusalem, it's probably one that was written during the exile in Babylon, so try to connect the pain of living as an exile to the psalm's statements.

Try not to settle on the common approach to reading Psalms that only says, "This is a psalm to read when you're sad; this is a psalm to read when you're feeling lonely." The psalmists weren't thinking about our 21st Century emotional well-being; they were expressing real wonder, praise, thanks, and joy to God for His character, deeds, and provision in the events of their own day, and were crying out to Him for His sympathy and help, from their various contexts of distress and injustice in their historical lives.

Lastly, try to come up with a short title for each Psalm, writing it in your Bible, in pencil (providing for future-year improvements).

1 & 2 Kings

Author:

The author is unknown, but is most likely among the Israelites in their exile in Babylon, which occurred from 605-538 B.C.

Date of the book's writing:

The book appears to have been written sometime between 561-538 B.C., in the latter half of the Babylonian exile of God's people.

Purpose of the book:

To show God's people why they had been exiled to Babylon, and to teach them to believe and respond to the words of God's prophets, repenting and looking to God and His grace to return them to the Promised Land.

Original message:

The writer of kings wrote the history of Israel's divided kingship so that God's people in exile (in Babylon) would understand that:

- a. Their exile had been caused by the disregarding of God's law, their worshipping of other gods, their abandonment of David's sons as kings over all Israel, and their refusal to listen to God's prophets.
- b. Through their repentance, God would forgive them and restore them to the Promised Land, just as He had forgiven and restored many of their wicked kings who repented, prior to the exile.

Outline:

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 1 Kings 1:1. | The kingship of the sons of David is God's design, and was rightly established under Solomon. |
| 1 Kings 3:1. | Solomon's kingship brought blessing and glory to all Israel through its wise and righteous administration, and especially by its establishing proper worship. |
| 1 Kings 11:1 | Solomon's desecration of proper worship (acceptance of foreign gods) leads to Israel's being divided into two nations, its oppression by foreign nations, and its exile. |

Song of Songs

Author:

This may be partially or entirely the writing of Solomon, or it may have been written for Solomon, as 1:1 could be read either way. There is reference to Solomon in the third person at many points in the book.

Date of the book's writing:

970-950 B.C., early in the reign of Solomon.

Purpose of the book:

To celebrate the occasion of Solomon's wedding, the splendor of King Solomon (& Israel under a faithful, Davidic king), and the beauty of marital love.

Outline:

- 1:1. Pre-wedding thoughts of Solomon, his fiancée, and God's people.
- 3:6. The wedding.
- 4:1. The wedding night.
- 5:2. More pre-wedding thoughts of Solomon, his fiancée, and God's people.

Proverbs

Author:

Primarily Solomon, but also Agur and Lemuel.

Date of the book's writing:

The book was at least primarily written in the days of Solomon (970-930 B.C.), but some of his proverbs were gathered together and put into this book during the days of King Hezekiah, who died in 687 B.C. (see 25:1).

Purpose of the book:

To encourage individual believers to live with wisdom and understanding (which is to live according to God's commandments—His moral law), and not to live disregarding it, which is to live foolishly.

Ecclesiastes

Author:

Solomon.

Date of the book's writing:

940-930 B.C., at the end of Solomon's life.

Purpose of the book:

To teach believers to fear God and to keep His commandments (to do what's right toward God and others, and to live responsibly), even though, in this life, doing so will often not bring about external rewards nor seem to make a difference.

Outline:

- 1:1. Prologue: Solomon's end-of-life, introductory words about life, effort, and meaning.
- 1:12. Body: A recounting of Solomon's earlier-life thoughts and experiences regarding life, effort, and meaning.
- 12:8. Epilogue: Solomon's end-of-life conclusion, in light of his lifelong observations of life, effort, and meaning, on how one should live life.

Interpretative note:

What is "meaningless" (without meaning) in Solomon's conclusion are appearances—the external things we see. The fact that we see one man prospering and another suffering, for instance, does not mean that the prospering man is righteous and the suffering man is wicked. This may be the case, but it may be the opposite. Appearances are meaningless.

Jonah

Author:

Jonah, a prophet, son of a man named Amittai. He lived in the northern kingdom of Israel.

Date of the book's writing:

Jonah lived during the middle of the 700s B.C. He is mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25, during the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Northern Israel. His book was written to the people of Northern Israel, prior to their exile in 722 B.C.

Historical setting:

Jonah ministered under the reign of Jeroboam II in Northern Israel. The king and the people were wicked, yet prosperous.

Purpose of the book:

God had Jonah recount his brief ministry to the Assyrians in their capital city of Nineveh, so that God's people in the northern kingdom of Israel might repent of their wickedness and avoid disaster, just as the Ninevites had done.

Outline:

- 1:1. Jonah disobeys God and nearly dies.
- 2:1. Jonah repents and is saved.
- 3:1. Jonah obeys God, and the Ninevites repent and are saved.
- 4:1. Jonah is angry at God's grace to the Ninevites.

Amos

Author:

Amos, a prophet from Tekoa (in Judah, south of Jerusalem).

Date of the book's writing:

Amos ministered in Northern Israel from the mid-750s B.C., during the divided-kingdom reigns of Jeroboam II in the North (Israel) and Uzziah (aka Azariah) in the South (Judah). His ministry was before the 722 B.C. exile of the North and over 150 years before the 605-586 B.C. exile of the South. The events of his time in ministry are recorded in 2 Kings 14:21-15:7. While his ministry was in the northern kingdom (Israel), his book seems to be written to the southern kingdom (Judah), with a likely writing date slightly before or after the 722 B.C. exile of Israel.

Historical setting:

From 792 B.C. - 753 B.C. (under the reigns of Jeroboam II in Israel and during part of Uzziah's reign in Judah—see 2 Kings 14-15), there was great wickedness in Israel. Amos reveals that God's people were openly worshipping other gods in the Promised Land, while simultaneously giving worship to God that was false and for show before men. The rich were oppressing the poor in the Land, and corrupting the courts to do so. Additionally, the wicked were hating and persecuting the righteous and the prophets of God.

Purpose of the book:

To teach Judah that judgment was coming against her—as it had against Israel—unless repentance took place.

Outline:

- 1:1. God's people will be judged, along with the surrounding nations.
- 3:9. Announcements of coming judgment against God's people.
- 7:1. Visions of coming judgment against God's people.
- 9:11. God's people will be blessed above the nations, after an exile.

Isaiah

Author:

Isaiah, a prophet, son of a man named Amoz. He ministered publicly in the southern kingdom, Judah, from just prior to the death of King Uzziah (aka Azariah) in 740 B.C. through the reign of King Hezekiah, who died in 686 B.C. The events of his time are recorded in 2 Kings 15:1-21:18.

Date of the book's writing:

Isaiah records as a past event the 681 B.C.-coronation of Assyria's king, Esarhaddon. Thus, the book was likely written in the days of Isaiah's retirement from preaching—sometime after 681, in the early years of the reign of Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, in Judah (recorded in 2 Kings 21:1-18).

Historical setting:

Isaiah 1:1 tells us that Isaiah ministered during the reigns of these kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. During this time, Assyria was the major power. They caused crises in Judah both in 734-732 under King Ahaz and in 701 under King Hezekiah.

Purpose of the book:

God had Isaiah write his book after the Assyrian crises to recount Judah's wickedness and God's judgment of Judah through the Assyrians (from 740-686 B.C.) and to give hope of restoration to the Promised Land after Judah's coming exile to Babylon (which would occur from 605-538 B.C.).

Outline:

- 1:1. Overview of Isaiah's ministry.
- 7:1. Isaiah's response to the Assyrian crises of 734, 722, and 701 B.C.
 - 7:1. Isaiah's response to the coalition of Aram and Northern Israel v. Judah in 734 B.C.
 - 13:1. Isaiah's response to the period of Assyria's dominance after its destruction of Northern Israel in 722 B.C.
 - 36:1. Isaiah's response to the Assyrian invasion by Sennacherib v. Jerusalem in 701 B.C.
- 40:1. Isaiah's response to the future Babylonian crisis of 605-538 B.C.

Micah

Author:

Micah.

Date of the book's writing:

While the preaching recorded in the first seven verses of the book were probably delivered before the fall of Northern Israel in 722 B.C., the rest of Micah's preaching and his book were likely completed during the period of Judah's unfaithfulness between 722 and 701 B.C.

Historical setting:

Micah 1:1 tells us that Micah ministered during the reigns of these kings of Judah: Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, who reigned from 742-686 B.C. The events of their reigns are recorded in 2 Kings 15:23-20:21. During this time, Assyria was the major, regional power and caused major crises in Judah both in 734-732 under King Ahaz and in 701 under King Hezekiah. They troubled Judah much in the time between these crises, as well.

Purpose of the book:

To let the Judahites know their Assyrian troubles were God's discipline, that exile was coming, but that God would eventually restore them to the Promised Land.

Outline:

- 1:1. God is bringing disaster and exile on Judah for its leaders' sins.
- 4:1. God will restore His people to the Promised Land after their exile to Babylon.
- 6:1. God's just case for Judah's exile.
- 7:7. Hope in God's merciful, future restoration.

Hosea

Author:

Hosea, a prophet, about whom not much is known.

Date of the book's writing:

Probably around 700 B.C. or shortly thereafter, in Judah.

Historical setting:

Hosea ministered from perhaps 755 B.C. - 700 B.C., first in Northern Israel and then in Judah. In 701 B.C., during the reign of Hezekiah, Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, had invaded Judah and captured or destroyed its towns. Next, he would come to take Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:13-17). Hosea's book was written to urge Hezekiah and Judah's people to respond to the Lord in faithfulness in order to avoid further disaster and potential exile at the hands of the Assyrians. The events of his time are recorded in 2 Kings 15-18.

Purpose of the book:

Hosea's book was written to teach Judah around 700 B.C. that it may receive God's judgment as northern Israel had in 722 B.C. (when it was exiled by Assyria), but that it should not lose hope of the full restoration of all God's people back to the Promised Land.

Outline:

- 1:1. Symbolic experience of Northern Israel's coming judgment and future restoration to the Promised Land.
- 4:1. Prophetic announcements of judgment against Northern Israel.
- 9:10. Historical reflections about the coming judgment and later restoration.
- 14:1. A call to repentance for a renewal of blessing.

Jeremiah

Author:

Jeremiah was a priest from Anathoth (1:1), a town in Benjamin that was near Jerusalem. He was called to be a prophet @628-626 B.C. (1:2-5).

Date of the book's writing:

Jeremiah preached in Jerusalem (and then in Egypt) from 628-585 B.C. He likely wrote his book in Egypt, shortly after 585, and sent it to his brothers exiled in Babylon. The events of his time are recorded in 2 Kings 22-25.

Historical setting:

Jeremiah's prophesying was over a long period of time, primarily in Jerusalem, and began in 628 B.C. He preached to the people during the years of its last five kings: Josiah (640-609), Jehoahaz (609), Jehoiakim (609-597), Jehoiachin (597), and Zedekiah (597-586). At the time of the final deportation into exile in Babylon (586), the Babylonians let Jeremiah stay in Judah with the few, poorest Israelites that the Babylonians left in Judah. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon placed the Israelite, Gedaliah, as governor over the Israelites who remained in Judah, but Gedaliah was assassinated by another Israelite, Ishmael, who later fled. Lastly, and against the Lord's instructions through Jeremiah for the people to stay in Judah, the people fled to Egypt. Jeremiah left with them to go to Egypt, to minister to them there.

Purpose of the book:

To let the the Judahites in exile in Babylon know that, because of their gross obstinance before the exile, the exile would be long (70 years), not short; but that God would later judge the nations and bring a remnant of His people back to the Promised Land, should their exile cause them to repent.

Outline:

Jeremiah's ministry under King Josiah (628-622 B.C.) (1-20).

Jeremiah's ministry under King Jehoiakim (609-598 B.C.)
(25-26, 35-36, 45).

Jeremiah's ministry under King Jehoiachin (597 B.C.) (22-23).

Jeremiah's ministry under King Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.)
(24, 37-38, 27-29, 46-51).

Jeremiah's ministry from the fall of Jerusalem to Egypt (586-561 B.C.)
(21, 32-34, 52:1-30, 39-44, 52:31-34, 30-31).

Zephaniah

Author:

Zephaniah's lineage is traced four generations back. It is possible that he was a descendant of King Hezekiah of Judah (715-686 B.C.), though this is not certain (1:1). He lived and ministered in Judah.

Date of the book's writing:

Zephaniah's preaching ministry was in Judah during the reign of King Josiah (640-609 B.C.), mostly likely before (and the impetus to) Josiah's reforms of 628-622 B.C. The book, however, was most likely penned in the first years of the reign of Josiah's wicked son, Jehoiakim (609-598 B.C.), before Babylon's first deportation of Israelites from Jerusalem in 605 B.C. A good date for the book's writing is, thus, 608-605 B.C.

Historical setting:

Zephaniah preached during Josiah's early and unfaithful years (pre-628 B.C.), when Assyria was still the region's dominant power and the big threat to Judah. His *preaching* and the faithful reforms they effected probably averted Judah's destruction by the Assyrians. The *book* of Zephaniah, in distinction, was probably penned after Josiah's death, when the wickedness of Josiah's son, Jehoiakim, meant the Judahites needed to hear again the words Zephaniah had preached in Josiah's wicked years, this time to avert destruction by the Babylonians, who now dominated the region. The book shows that after the death of Josiah, worship of other gods alongside the Lord and oppression of the poor, which were both present in Josiah's early years, had begun again.

Purpose of the book:

Zephaniah wrote his book so that Judahites would look soberly at the impending doom of Babylonian aggression, but take heart in God's promises of the nation's later restoration to the Promised Land.

Outline:

- 1:1. Judgment & destruction are coming to Judah & Jerusalem, for unfaithfulness.
- 2:4. Judgment & destruction are coming to other nations, too.
- 3:1. Destruction and exile will happen to Judah & Jerusalem, but restoration to the Promised Land will follow.

Nahum

Author:

The prophet, Nahum. He lived and ministered in Judah.

Date of the book's writing:

622-613 B.C. Nahum likely prophesies in Josiah's good years, after his reforms (628-622 B.C.), and before the destruction of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, in 612 B.C.

Historical setting:

Josiah was the fifth-to-last king of Judah, who reigned as the nation headed into its three deportations into exile in Babylon (605, 597, and 586 B.C.) and the destruction of Jerusalem (586 B.C.). During his reign, Assyria was still the main power, as Babylon had not yet conquered Assyria. Josiah's reforms had taken place, and the nation was the most faithful it had been since the days of King Hezekiah, Josiah's great-grandfather (d. 686 B.C.). Hence, the prophecies of Nahum do not rebuke Judah, but speak of Assyria's coming destruction.

Purpose of the book:

Nahum wrote his book to encourage the Judahites under Josiah by letting them know that God would soon destroy their longtime oppressor, Assyria (capital: Nineveh), and bring blessing to Judah.

Outline:

- 1:1. God is coming to punish Nineveh.
- 1:12. Nineveh will be crushed and Judah blessed.
- 3:1. Woe to Nineveh.

Daniel

Author:

Daniel.

Date of the book's writing:

The events of the book are from 605 to around 535 B.C., dating the book around 535 B.C.

Historical setting:

As the opening of the book recounts, Daniel was taken from Jerusalem as a young man in 605 B.C., along with others from the royal family and nobility, to Babylon, to serve in the court of the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar. Additional deportations of more Israelites into their exile in Babylon would take place in 597 and 586 B.C. The events of the book take place in Babylon, during their exile, from 605-535 B.C. Daniel stayed in Babylon after it was conquered by the Persians in 538 B.C., and served in the court of the Persian king, Darius (aka Cyrus).

Purpose of the book:

To teach God's people, through the examples of Daniel's life, how to live in faithfulness to God outside the Promised Land (especially when threatened for being faithful).

Outline:

- 1:1. Stories of Daniel.
- 7:1. Visions of Daniel.

Habakkuk

Author:

Habakkuk. He lived and ministered in Judah.

Date of the book's writing:

Likely after Babylon's deportation of the bulk of Judah's inhabitants from Judah to Babylon at 597 B.C. The events of Habakkuk's time are recorded in 2 Kings 23:36-24:17.

Historical setting:

Habakkuk ministered in Judah during its last years before its main (the middle one) exile to Babylon—that of 597 B.C. The king at this time, Jehoiakim, was never faithful to the Lord.

Purpose of the book:

To teach the newly exiled Judahites in Babylon how to submit to God's plan of their exile, the eventual crushing of Babylon, and their future return to the Promised Land.

Outline:

- 1:1. Habakkuk's lament about Judah's wickedness, and God's response about God's coming judgment of them, through the Babylonians.
- 1:12. Habakkuk's lament about Babylon's greater wickedness, and God's response about His eventual crushing of them.
- 3:1. Exemplary prayer, praise, and submission to God's plan.

Joel

Author:

Joel.

Historical setting and date of the book's writing:

Joel most likely ministered and wrote his book during the kingship of the unfaithful Zedekiah (597-586), after the main deportation of the Judahites to Babylon in 597 B.C., yet before the final Babylonian invasion of 588-586 B.C., when Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed.

Purpose of the book:

To teach the Judahites of their coming judgment, needed repentance, and future hope from Joel's ministry.

Outline:

- 1:1. Announcements of another Babylonian invasion and Judah's final destruction.
- 2:15. Announcements of hope and restoration after the exile.

Ezekiel

Author:

Ezekiel, a prophet who is 30 years old when he is called to preach to God's people, in the year 593. He lived and ministered in exile, in Babylon. He, like Daniel, is what we call an “exilic” prophet, because he ministered in Babylon among God's people there in exile.

Date of the book’s writing:

While some of Ezekiel’s preaching occurred before the destruction of Jerusalem, the Book of Ezekiel was written after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and before the return of the people to the Promised Land in 538 B.C. The last date the book references is 571 B.C., so the book was most-likely written around 570 B.C.

Historical setting:

Ezekiel was one of the many people of Jerusalem who, along with King Jehoiachin, was taken to Babylon as part of the second deportation into exile, in 597 B.C. We can see the account of this deportation in 2 Kings 24:8-17. However, the third deportation, of 586 B.C. (the one in which Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed), had not yet happened. Much of Ezekiel’s subject matter is telling, from exile, of the destruction that was yet to come to Jerusalem in 586.

Purpose of the book:

Ezekiel wrote to remind the people of God in exile that his judgment prophecies concerning the nations and the destruction of Jerusalem had taken place; therefore, they should believe his restoration prophecies and follow the plan he revealed for a priest-led reconstruction of Jerusalem.

Outline:

- 1:1. Judgment and destruction is coming to Jerusalem.
- 25:1. Judgment is coming against the nations.
- 33:1. Promises and instructions for the (post-exile) restoration and reconstruction of Judah.

Obadiah

Author:

Obadiah.

Date of the book's writing:

Likely written upon the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Historical setting:

Obadiah most likely writes immediately after the final deportation into exile in Babylon, with its destruction of the towns of Judah and the city of Jerusalem, in 586 B.C. The nation of Edom (Israel's "brother"—the Edomites were the descendants of Jacob's brother, Esau) had helped and cheered Babylon's destroying of the last parts of the Promised Land held by God's people, and looted the towns and then Jerusalem, as the Babylonian army conquered them.

Purpose of the book:

To teach the newly exiled Judahites to take comfort and hope 1) in their future, grand restoration to the Promised Land and 2) in light of Edom's joyous participation in Jerusalem's downfall, in Edom's future judgment.

Outline:

- 1:1. Announcement of Edom's future destruction.
- 1:10. The reason for Edom's future destruction.
- 1:15. Israel's restoration will include her possessing Edom's land.

Lamentations

Author:

Jeremiah, writing from Egypt.

Date of the book's writing:

Likely written around 586 B.C., right after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

Historical setting:

The Babylonian army had just destroyed Jerusalem, burning it and its temple to the ground, and walked off with the last of the Israelites to go into exile in Babylon (586 B.C.).

Purpose of the book:

Jeremiah wrote Lamentations to establish that the Lord had destroyed Jerusalem for its many sins, to lament these things, and to plead with God for the eventual restoration of the city.

Outline:

- 1:1. Lament over Jerusalem, now destroyed.
- 2:1. It was the Lord who destroyed Jerusalem.
- 3:1. Jeremiah's lament over the people's abuse of him prior to Jerusalem's destruction, and over Babylon's abuse of the city.
- 4:1. Lament over the conditions in Jerusalem during its last days and over the commencement of the exile.
- 5:1. Prayer for the eventual restoration of the city.

1 & 2 Chronicles

Content:

The books look back at the history of God's people essentially from the start of David's reign in the Promised Land (1010 B.C.) to the exile of God's people to the land of Babylon in 597 B.C. and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

Author, and date of the book's writing:

The author is uncertain, and is often referred to as "the Chronicler." He most likely wrote 1 & 2 Chronicles during the early years of the return of God's people to the Promised Land (538-516 B.C.), after they had been exiled to Babylon from 597 B.C. to 538 B.C.

Purpose of the book:

To direct the restoration of the kingdom in the Promised Land upon the return of God's people from their exile in Babylon.

Through recounting Israel's history from David's kingship to its exile to Babylon (from 1010 B.C. to 597 B.C.), the Chronicler directed those who had returned to the Promised Land in 538 B.C. to do the following things so that they would experience God's blessing once again in the Promised Land:

- 1) Crown a descendant of David as king in Jerusalem,
- 2) Reunite as one Israel (all 12 tribes together) under the Davidic king,
- 3) Rebuild the temple,
- 4) Have the Levitical personnel perform their duties in the temple to God's exact specifications, and
- 5) Prioritize worship as primary in Israel.

Outline:

- 1 Chronicles 1:1. Genealogies of God's people.
- 1 Chronicles 10:1. United Kingdom.
- 2 Chronicles 10:1. Divided Kingdom.
- 2 Chronicles 29:1. Reunited Kingdom.

Ezra & Nehemiah

Author:

Ezra, with some writing from Nehemiah.

Date of the events of the book:

538 - 432 B.C.

Date of the book’s writing:

430 - 400 B.C.

Note on the historical dates in the book:	
Ezra 1–3.	538 - 537 B.C.
Ezra 4:1-5 & 4:24.	536 - 520 B.C.
Ezra 5-6.	520 - 515 B.C.
Ezra 4:6.	486 B.C.
Ezra 7-10.	458 - 457 B.C.
Nehemiah 1:1–4:9,	445 - 444 B.C.
Ezra 4:7-23, & Nehemiah 4:10–13:5.	
Nehemiah 13:6 - end.	433 - 432 B.C.

Note on the two books:

They were written as one book around 430-400 B.C., and were not divided into two books until A.D. 225, by Origen (185-253).

Historical setting:

The book covers 106 years of history, dating from God’s people’s return to the Promised Land in 538 B.C. through the ministry of Nehemiah in Jerusalem from 444 until 432 B.C.

Purpose of the book:

To direct the Promised Land Jews in the days after Ezra & Nehemiah to prioritize Jerusalem and to adhere to the law of Moses, especially in its directives about the temple, the Levites & priests, marriage, and the worship of God.

Outline:

Ezra 1:1.	Life in the Promised Land is to center around the reconstructed temple.
Ezra 9:1.	Life in the Promised Land is to include marriage only within the Faith.
Nehemiah 1:1.	Life in the Promised Land is to be marked by the people’s support of Jerusalem.
Nehemiah 8:1	Life in the Promised Land is to be marked by obedience to God in life and in worship.
Nehemiah 13:1	The reforms recorded in this book are to be continued.

Haggai

Author:

Haggai, the prophet.

Date of the book's writing:

520 B.C.

Historical setting:

In 586 B.C., the temple had been looted, demolished, and then burned to the ground by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The people of God were exiled to Babylon at that time. Now, in Haggai's day, they have returned to Jerusalem (in 538 B.C.), and upon returning had laid the foundation of a new temple in Jerusalem. After the foundation was laid, non-Israelites living in the Promised Land had threatened the Israelites against continuing the temple's reconstruction (see Ezra 4:1-4). The Israelites cowered under the threat, and temple reconstruction ceased from about 537 to 520 B.C., when the prophets Haggai and Zechariah began to exhort the people to continue the work of rebuilding the temple.

The book of Haggai is a record of Haggai's exhortation during the year 520 B.C. The people did respond, and the temple was finished and dedicated on March 16, 516 B.C. (as seen in Ezra 6:13-18).

Purpose of the book:

To exhort the returned exiles of 520 B.C. to continue the reconstruction of the temple and to expect a return of blessings in the Promised Land.

Outline:

- 1:1. Call to take up again the reconstruction of the temple.
- 2:1. Promise of the temple's glory.
- 2:10. Encouragement to the people of future blessings.
- 2:20. Call and encouragement to Zerubbabel, the son of David, to take up the kingship in Jerusalem.

Zechariah

Author:

Zechariah, a prophet and priest (Ezra 5:1, 6:14, Nehemiah 12:16).

Date of the book's writing:

480 B.C.

Historical setting:

See notes on Haggai, above. For a time (520-516 B.C.), Zechariah and Haggai ministered side-by-side, exhorting those who had returned to Jerusalem from the exile to Babylon to complete the reconstruction of the temple. Zechariah continued to minister well after the temple reconstruction, and into a period of dashed hopes and trials, due to the people's failures in faithfulness after the deaths of Jeshua, the high priest, and Zerubbabel, the son of David, who had led the temple's reconstruction.

Purpose of the book:

To encourage the people of God living in the Promised Land after the days of Zerubbabel by reminding them of the success and protection the people received in rebuilding the temple, and to exhort the people to be faithful to the Lord, despite hardships, as they looked for future victory associated with the coming of a son-of-David king.

Outline:

- 1:1. Zechariah's exhortation to finish rebuilding the temple.
- 9:1. Zechariah's exhortation about present and future trials and the coming victory through a new, son-of-David king.

Esther

Author:

Unknown. Likely a Jew living in Persia.

Date of the book's writing:

460-444 B.C.

Historical setting:

Many of God's people returned from exile in Babylon when Persia conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. (recounted in Daniel 5 and Ezra 1). Persia's foreign policy was to allow Babylon's exiles from various countries to return to their homelands. Esther and Mordecai are two Jews among many who hadn't returned to the Promised Land, and were (still) living in Persia, in its capital city of Susa, under the Persian king, Xerxes, who reigned from 485-465 B.C.

Purpose of the book:

To establish the annual celebration of Purim, and to encourage God's people living under Persian dominance that God was in control and would protect them as they looked to Him in faith.

Outline:

- 1:1. God's protection of His people through Esther being made Queen of Persia.
- 3:1. Threat to God's people through Haman's plot and the King's edict to annihilate the Jews.
- 4:1. God's protection of His people through the faithful prayers and brave actions of Mordecai, Esther, and the Jews.
- 7:1. God's protection of His people through the annihilation of Haman and the king's protective edict.
- 9:18. The establishment of the annual feast of Purim to commemorate God's protection of His people.

Malachi

Author:

The prophet, Malachi.

Date of the book's writing:

430s B.C.

Historical setting:

Malachi preached in the Promised Land about 80 years after the return from exile in Babylon. He was a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Purpose of the book:

The late 5th-century Israelites in the Promised Land should fear and honor God in their conduct and worship practices, or expect not to survive God's coming judgment.

Outline:

- 1:1. God's covenant love for His people.
- 1:6. The sins of the priests and people, and the judgment coming against them.
- 3:16. The repentance of some, and the judgment coming to bless those who are faithful in Israel.

New Testament

Matthew

Author:

Matthew, also known as Levi, one of the 12 apostles.

Date of the book's writing:

A.D. 39-59.

Historical setting:

Early church testimony reports that Matthew was the first Gospel, and that it was written around Syrian Antioch (north of Israel, SE of Turkey/ "Asia Minor"). Many Jewish Christians had fled to there (among other places, per Acts 8:1 & 11:19) from Jerusalem at the time of the great persecution of Jewish Christians that began in Acts 7-8 (probably before A.D. 40), upon the Jerusalem stoning of the deacon, Stephen, under the supervision of Saul of Tarsus.

Purpose of the book:

Matthew writes his Gospel:

- a. To assure the Jewish Christians in Antioch that they were right to embrace Jesus as the great son of David and their king.
- b. To teach Jewish Christians that the Jewish leadership's rejection of Jesus' kingship was irrational, flowed from jealousy, and was not from a lack of evidence, but in the face of an abundance of it.
- c. To teach the Jewish Christians in Antioch that they were right to receive into the Church Gentiles who came to faith in Jesus.
- d. Matthew also may have written this Gospel to prepare Paul and Barnabas for their first missionary journey (they were sent out from Syrian Antioch in A.D. 46), by teaching them (through this account of Jesus) what to expect and how to operate as they preached the gospel and established churches in new cities around the Roman world.

Outline:

- 1:1. Jesus, the divine and human king (the son of David), is born.
- 3:1. The inauguration of Jesus' kingdom.
- 5:1. Jesus is shown to be king and God by His authoritative teaching of the Law.
- 8:1. Jesus is shown to be king and God by His authoritative conquering of demons, physical defects, sickness, disease, nature, and death, and by His authoritative forgiving of men's sins.
- 9:35. Jesus calls the citizens of His kingdom to work for the gathering of souls into His kingdom, and prepares them for the irrational disbelief and opposition they'll face, especially from the Jews, as they proclaim Him as divine king and son of David. (This theme carries through the end of the Gospel.)
- 16:1. Jesus is king (son of David and Son of God).
- 18:1. Jesus teaches on values to be prized in His kingdom: humility and forgiveness, and not glory. These values will enable His kingdom to grow and His citizens to endure in their faith.
- 20:29. The triumphal entry of the king, Jesus, into Jerusalem, and the opposition of the Jewish leadership against Jesus' kingship, unto death.
- 27:11. The king's death, resurrection from death, and final, authoritative command to His disciples to expand His kingdom throughout the world.

Acts

Author:

Luke, the traveling companion of Paul. A document of Church history indicates that he was a native of Antioch in Syria, the city from which Paul, Barnabas, and Mark set out for their first missionary journey (Acts 13). Luke was a doctor (Colossians 4:14) and, as reported in Acts 16:8-11, joined up with Paul in Troas [a seaport city on the Aegean Sea (between modern-day Turkey and Greece), near ancient Troy, which was ten miles inland] in what is today the northwest corner of Turkey. Luke is present with Paul through chapter 16 of Acts, and probably stayed in Philippi when Paul moved on. Luke rejoined Paul when Paul returned to Philippi (Acts 20:6), and remained with Paul at least through Paul's first imprisonment in Rome (A.D. 60-62), and perhaps for the rest of Paul's life, which ended upon a second imprisonment in Rome @A.D. 65 (2 Timothy 4:11).

Date of the book's writing:

A.D. 62.

Luke's original recipient:

Luke wrote to a man named Theophilus (1:1).

Theory: There is good evidence that Theophilus was a Roman governor [hence the address in 1:3, "most excellent," a title seen elsewhere in Scripture only used by Paul of the Roman governors, Felix and Festus (Acts 24:3 and 26:25)]. It would make much sense of the emphases in this book if it was the case that Theophilus was in Rome, with a voice among the court of Nero, the Roman Emperor from A.D. 54-68. As with the Gospel of Luke, the Church as a whole is a secondary audience.

Purpose of the book:

Luke writes the book of Acts to give Theophilus, a young believer and a government official in Rome, the information he needs to speak up for Paul in the Roman court, in order to win Paul's release from prison there in A.D. 62. Theophilus' argumentation for Paul's release would also carry the message that Christians and the Church, who were receiving unjust abuse from Jews and others, should be protected by the Roman government, as they posed no threat to it.

Luke makes four main points:

1. Though Christians speak of a "kingdom of God," their kingdom is not civil nor political, and its members are peaceful, obeying the laws of Rome. The Church, thus, poses no threat to Roman rule.
2. Christianity has a good claim to being the fulfillment of Jewish religion, a licensed religion in the Roman Empire. Therefore, Christianity should be considered licensed religion, and thus be exempt from Emperor worship and from persecution by Rome.
3. The riots surrounding Christianity have not been caused by the Christians, but by others with bad motives. Furthermore, accusations against Christians—without exception—have been found by Roman officials to be false.
4. No amount of persecution—and not even death—has stopped nor will stop the Christian Church from spreading its message about Jesus, for God the Holy Spirit (sent by Jesus) is active among the Church, working to do so.

Outline:

- 1:1. Introductory words to Theophilus.
- 1:4. Beginnings of the Church in Jerusalem.
- 8:1. Paul's position in Judaism and his initial persecution of the Church.
- 9:1. Paul's conversion, and the spreading of Christianity through him and others, despite the persecution they faced.
- 21:1. The circumstances bringing Paul, in chains, to Rome.
- 28:30. Postscript to the Church.

James

Author: James, the half brother of Jesus (see Matthew 13:55, 1 Corinthians 9:5, and Galatians 1:19). He is not the apostle, who was the brother of John and son of Zebedee. James was likely the pastor of the church in Jerusalem at least in the 30s and 40s. James would later give the speech that “won the day” at the Jerusalem Presbytery (Acts 15), when the elders from all the churches met to decide whether Gentile Christians needed to be circumcised.

Date of the letter's writing: @A.D. 35-45, from Jerusalem.

James's original recipients: Jewish Christians (perhaps in Syrian Antioch)—many of whom were former residents of Jerusalem (and James's former congregants)—who had been scattered from Jerusalem when persecution broke out against the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem in A.D. 35 (Acts 8:2 & 11:19) (with Stephen's martyrdom). James was writing as a pastor to his recently dispossessed and scattered flock and to the native-to-Antioch(?) Christians in the church into which his former congregants had fled.

Purpose of the letter: James writes to exhort the financially established Christians in Syrian Antioch to be humble and to treat with compassion the newly arrived and recently dispossessed brothers from Jerusalem. He writes to exhort the latter group (his former congregants) to patience and love, as they endure their current, impoverished state.

Outline:

- 1:1. A call for the impoverished in the Antioch church to endure their recent disenfranchisement in Jerusalem, and for the financially established in the Antioch church to be humble.
- 2:1. The financially established in the Antioch church should act in loving mercy toward (and not with favoritism against) the recently impoverished believers in the church.
- 3:1. The financially established in Antioch should be humble, loving, and not ambitious, both within the church and in their lives outside it.
- 5:7. Final exhortation to the church's rich and poor to be patient and loving toward one another.

1 Thessalonians

Author:

Paul, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

A.D. 51, from Corinth, when Timothy returns to Corinth from Thessalonica in Acts 18:5.

Paul's original recipients:

Paul and Silas had first arrived in Thessalonica (northern Greece today, part of and known as Macedonia at that time) in Acts 17:1-10. The church started through Paul's preaching on three successive Sabbaths in the Jewish synagogue there. Paul likely stayed longer, but the Jews eventually formed a mob, and the new Christians got Paul and Silas safely out of town at night. Not long after (maybe a year), Paul writes 1 Thessalonians from the south coast of Greece (Achaia), from Corinth (Acts 18:5).

Content of the letter:

Paul writes to the Thessalonian church as the pastor who had first brought the gospel to them. He speaks of his past and continued love for them (possibly to counter the claims of detractors in Thessalonica), expresses his relief in hearing Timothy's recent report of their continued faith and love in the midst of persecution, and instructs them in areas that Timothy's report had revealed were items of uncertainty.

Purpose of the letter:

Paul writes to the Thessalonian church to remind them of and reaffirm to them his love and care for them, to encourage them in their continued faithfulness amidst persecution, and to instruct them for the progress of their faith, according to the things he has learned from Timothy's report.

Outline:

- 1:1. Paul's confidence in the veracity of their faith amidst persecution.
- 2:1. Paul's past and current love and concern for them amidst persecution.
- 3:6. Paul's joy over their continued faith and love amidst persecution.
- 4:1. Paul's pastoral instructions, in line with Timothy's report.

2 Thessalonians

Author:

Paul, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

A.D. 52, from Corinth, during the activities of Acts 18:5-18.

Paul's original recipients:

Paul and Silas had first arrived in Thessalonica (northern Greece today, part of and known as Macedonia at that time) in Acts 17:1-10. The church started through Paul's preaching on three successive Sabbaths in the Jewish synagogue there. Paul likely stayed longer, but the Jews eventually formed a mob, and the new Christians got Paul and Silas safely out of town at night. Not long after (maybe a year), Paul writes 1 Thessalonians from the south coast of Greece (Achaia), from Corinth (Acts 18:5). This letter is a short follow up to Paul's first letter to this church.

Purpose of the letter:

Paul writes 2 Thessalonians to instruct the Thessalonian Christians of the probable distance of the Second Coming, and to encourage them, in light of that, to continue to work and earn livings, and to persevere through persecution until that Day when Christ will come with justice against their persecutors.

Outline:

- 1:1. Through persecution, Christians should persevere in faith in light of the justice and relief they'll experience at Christ's Second Coming.
- 2:1. The Day of the Lord has not come: instruction on our era and its end.
- 2:13. Christians should hold firm in doctrine, practice their faith, and work hard in their vocations.

Galatians

Author:

Paul, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

Two main possibilities.

1. A.D. 48, from Syrian Antioch (Acts 14:28), at the completion of Paul's first missionary journey of Acts 13-14, during which he had started the churches in Galatia (Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe) and revisited them. This letter appears to have been written before the decision of the Jerusalem Presbytery meeting of A.D. 49 (Acts 15), at which the elders and apostles of all the churches firmly declared that Gentile Christians need not be circumcised.
2. A.D. 53, from Ephesus, upon Paul's initial, short visit there in Acts 18:19. This date envisions Paul's receiving a report of the near-to-Ephesus Galatian church upon arriving in Ephesus in A.D. 53. Paul had been far from Galatia, and was in Greece (Europe) since A.D. 49. In A.D. 49, Paul and his companions had "delivered [to the Galatian church] the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem" against circumcision, recorded in Acts 15. With these assumptions, the letter shows that the Galatian church had been "bewitched" (3:1) into a belief that circumcision was a necessity for Gentile Christians, even though it knew the A.D. 49 decisions against circumcision that Paul had delivered to their church four years prior. If Peter's Antioch visit of Galatians 2:11-14 is placed at the time of Paul's stay in Antioch in A.D. 48 (Acts 14:28), just prior to (and the occasion for) the Jerusalem Presbytery of Acts 15, then the past-tense feel of Galatians 2:11-14 fits better (with a Galatians' writing date of A.D. 53, as opposed to A.D. 48).

Paul's original recipients:

The churches in Galatia (Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe). The churches in Pisidian Antioch and Iconium contained a mix of Gentile and Jewish Christians, as they had started in Jewish synagogues (Acts 13:14-14:7). The churches in Lystra and Derbe, however, might not have contained many Jewish Christians (Acts 14:8-21, but Acts 16:1).

Purpose of the letter:

Paul writes to prove to the Galatian churches that the inheritance of eternal life comes through being a son of Abraham through faith in Jesus, and not through obedience to the law and, in particular, to circumcision. He also emphasizes to them two sets of things that go together. On the one hand is the fleshly, the sin nature, devouring one another, the “works of the flesh,” being a slave and figurative descendant of Hagar, and the belief that adherence to the ceremonial law (including circumcision) justifies one before God. On the other hand is the Spirit, faith, true justification by God through faith in Jesus, being an heir (a descendant of Sarah) and son of God, and a keeping of the moral law, which is the fruit of the Spirit.

Outline of Galatians:

- 1:1. Greeting and initial rebuke for deserting the gospel.
- 1:11. Paul recounts how his departure from Judaism and its ceremonial law was approved by the Jerusalem church and its apostles.
- 2:11. Paul recounts his rebuke even of Peter when Peter temporarily re-embraced the Jewish view of ceremonial cleanliness.
- 2:15. Justification (in the Old Testament and still now) is solely by faith.
 - 2:15. Summary of his argument.
 - 3:1. Supporting argument 1: You were born again by the Spirit, not by the ceremonial law.
 - 3:6. Supporting argument 2: Abraham was justified by believing, not by observing the ceremonial law.
 - 3:10. Supporting argument 3: Those who attempt justification before God by observance of the ceremonial law must observe the whole law, thereby earning them God's curse, not justification.
 - 3:15. Supporting argument 4: The ceremonial law (with its sacrifices) was put into place by God in Moses' day only as a temporary (not permanent!) means (until Christ came) of providing forgiveness for sins for His people. The ceremonial law was like a guardian who guided the future heir of an estate in his childhood. The guardian's and the ceremonial law's role would become obsolete when the heir (God's people) reached adulthood (at Christ's first coming).
 - 4:21. Supporting argument 5: With Hagar and her son, Ishmael, inheritance was not obtained by natural, ordinary means. With Abraham and his son, Isaac, it was by faith in God's promise and by a supernatural birth that inheritance was obtained. Today also, it is through supernatural birth and faith in God's promise that one becomes the heir of eternal life, not by natural, physical, ordinary things, namely, mere physical birth and performance of the ceremonial law.
 - 5:2. Paul's concluding exhortation not to be circumcised, but to believe righteousness/justification/inheritance is solely through faith in Jesus.
- 5:13. Paul qualifies that a Christian's freedom from the guardianship of the ceremonial law does not mean freedom from the moral law to love others, which is the fruit of the Spirit in a believer.
- 6:11. Final exhortation not to be circumcised.

Philippians

Author:

Paul, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

A.D. 54, from Ephesus. Note: many hold the writing of this letter to be from Rome, around A.D. 61, and that might be so.

Historical background:

Paul writes this letter during an imprisonment in Ephesus. Some events from his time in Ephesus are recorded in Acts 19. He was there from A.D. 53-56. For a period of his time there, he likely suffered imprisonment, though it is not recorded in Acts 19. However, 1 Corinthians 15:32 and 2 Corinthians 11:23 may make an imprisonment there seem likely. Paul makes numerous references to his being imprisoned at the time of his writing this letter. The letter (and Paul's imprisonment) likely was written during the time summarized in Acts 19:20 (and prior to 19:22).

Paul's original recipients:

Paul, Silas and Timothy had first arrived in Philippi (in northern Greece today, part of what was Macedonia at that time) four years earlier, in A.D. 49-50. The visit is seen in Acts 16:11-40. There was not a synagogue in Philippi, but there were a small number of women (including Lydia) who met for prayer outside the city on Sabbaths. The church at Philippi started when Paul found these women on a Sabbath and preached the gospel to them at their gathering. Lydia believed and her whole household was baptized. Paul and Silas would soon be imprisoned there, and the jailer and his household would come to believe, too. Upon their release from prison, they encouraged the infant church there and headed to Thessalonica.

Occasion of writing:

The Philippian church had sent to Paul one of Paul's coworkers (who may have stayed behind in Philippi, along with Luke, perhaps, when Paul, Silas, and Timothy had left for Thessalonica, in Acts 16:40). His name was Epaphroditus, and he had arrived in Ephesus to encourage Paul in prison, giving Paul a report of the Philippian church, financial support, and other gifts (Philippians 2:25, 4:18). Among the positives in his report, Epaphroditus reported two negative things that were happening in the Philippian church: 1) disunity, due to a lack of humility (especially as it was occurring between two women in the church, Euodia and Syntyche), and 2) the teaching by some in their church that physical circumcision was necessary. Paul responds to address these issues with this letter, which he sends to the church by the hand of Epaphroditus.

Purpose of the letter:

Paul writes Philippians to thank the Philippian church for their generous encouragement and gifts of support during his present imprisonment, and to straighten out their congregational issue of disunity and their doctrinal issue of circumcision.

Outline of Philippians:

- 1:1. Paul's report.
Paul gives a report of his present circumstances of imprisonment.
- 2:1. Unity.
Consideration of the character and actions of Jesus in His accomplishing the gospel should eliminate pride and disunity in the Church.
- 3:1. Circumcision.
Righteousness is not by circumcision, nor by other forms of fleshly religiousness, but by faith in Jesus.
- 4:1. Final Words.
Paul's specific exhortation about unity, and his final words of thanks.

1 Corinthians

Author:

Paul, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

A.D. 55, from Ephesus (16:8). Paul spent three years in Ephesus (A.D. 53-56), as recorded in Acts 19.

Paul's original recipients:

Paul had first arrived in Corinth in A.D. 51. He stayed there 18 months (Acts 18:11). Corinth was a city on the southern coast of Greece, and it had a synagogue. Paul preached the gospel every Sabbath there in that synagogue, and established a church in the city. The church consisted of Jews and Greeks (Acts 18:1-4). Silas and Timothy, who had stayed in Berea (in Macedonia—northern Greece today) when Paul left there in Acts 17:14, soon joined Paul in Corinth, as we see in Acts 18:5. Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla here. Two synagogue rulers, Sosthenes (who was with Paul in Ephesus as he was writing this letter: 1:1) and Crispus, became Christians.

Occasion of writing:

During Paul's three years in Ephesus (A.D. 53-56, Acts 19), Paul was visited by a group from Corinth—Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (16:17), along with others from Chloe's household (1:11)—with a report on the Corinthian church, including a list of questions from them on various topics of life. Paul writes 1 Corinthians as a response.

Purpose of the letter:

Paul writes 1 Corinthians 1) to exhort the church to cease the pridefulness, boasting, and envy that had led to divisions among its members, and to replace it with love for one another 2) to answer the Corinthian church's questions and to correct the church's mistakes on various topics of: practical Christian living; church life; worship; and the future, bodily resurrection of believers, and 3) to encourage the church to be generous in their collection for the impoverished Jerusalem church.

Outline of 1 Corinthians:

- 1:1. Pride and divisions.
Paul addresses various forms of and bad reasons for pride and envy that have led to church divisions. This theme is present from chapters 1-14.
- 5:1. Answers and corrections.
Paul answers various questions and corrects the church's mistakes on various topics of practical Christian living, church life, worship, and the bodily resurrection of Jesus and of all men.
 - 5:1. A church-discipline case.
 - 6:1. Believers suing believers.
 - 7:1. Marriage.
 - 8:1. Food sacrificed to idols.
 - 9:1. Paul's right to receive their support.
 - 10:1. Examples from the Old Testament addressing all the above.
 - 11.1. Corrections addressing worship services: prayer, women, Lord's Supper, and spiritual gifts.
 - 13.1. Love
(This chapter, nestled here as a solution to spiritual-gift abuse and pride, is also the solution Paul is giving for all the issues in the letter).
 - 15:1. The future, bodily resurrection of believers.
- 16:1. Giving to the Jerusalem church.
Paul encourages the Corinthian church to give generously for the relief of the impoverished Jerusalem church.

2 Corinthians

Author:

Paul, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

A.D. 57, from Macedonia (7:5, Acts 20:1).

Paul's original recipients:

Paul had first arrived in Corinth in A.D. 51. Corinth was a city on the southern coast of Greece. Paul preached the gospel every Sabbath in its synagogue, and established a church in the city. The church consisted of Jews and Greeks (Acts 18:1-4). Silas and Timothy, who had stayed in Berea (in Macedonia—northern Greece today) when Paul left Macedonia in Acts 17:14, soon joined Paul in Corinth, as we see in Acts 18:5. Paul met Aquila and Priscilla here, and two of Corinth's synagogue rulers, Sosthenes and Crispus, became Christians. Paul had stayed in Corinth 18 months (A.D. 51-53 (Acts 18:11).

Occasion of writing:

After staying three years in Ephesus (A.D. 53-56, Acts 19), during which time Paul had made a second, quick, “painful” visit to Corinth (not mentioned in Acts, but by Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:1), Paul was now on his way from Ephesus for a third visit to Corinth (12:14, 13:1-2), writing from Macedonia (2:13, 7:5), to the north of Corinth, where he had just been met by Titus, who came bearing a report of the Corinthian church. Paul writes 2 Corinthians to prepare the church in Corinth for his third visit.

Purpose of the letter:

Paul writes 2 Corinthians 1) to express his affection for the church in Corinth and to reestablish their love for him in return, 2) to warn them of the false (“super”) apostles (who had come among them and were trying to undermine Paul’s pastoral authority over them), and 3) to ask that they be ready when he arrived with their final gift for the impoverished Jerusalem church.

Outline:

- 1:1. Paul recounts his suffering and his Spirit-powered, life-changing, gospel ministry.
- 8:1. “Give generously for the impoverished Jerusalem church.”
- 10:1. Paul v. the “super apostles”:
his humility & suffering v. their boastfulness.

Romans

Author:

Paul, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

A.D. 57, from Corinth (Acts 20:2-3).

Paul's original recipients:

Paul had not planted the church in Rome. It was another man's work (15:19-22). Neither had he visited the church. While in Ephesus in A.D. 53-56, he had purposed to visit the church at Rome (Acts 19:21). He would reach Rome three years later, as a prisoner, after revisiting Macedonia,¹ Achaia,² and Jerusalem.

Occasion of writing:

Paul wrote Romans in the winter of A.D. 57, during his third visit to Corinth (Acts 20:2-3). Paul had learned that the church in Rome was divided between the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians there. These two groups toward each other were haughty, unloving, and divided.

Purpose of the letter:

Paul writes Romans to unite the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians in the church in Rome by teaching them about the role of the moral law in justification and righteousness.

¹ Macedonia was northern Greece, containing the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.

² Achaia was southern Greece, containing the cities of Athens and Corinth.

Special Note about the Old Testament Law of God:

The Old Testament law of God is commonly divided into three types, which have overlap: judicial, moral, and ceremonial. Judicial law directed the civil government of Israel as it ruled in the Promised Land. These laws instructed Israel's government in penalties for crimes and in fair resolution of disputes between individuals. Ceremonial law directed worship procedures, sacrifices, annual festivals, and the work of the Levites and Priests. Moral law directed the behavior of individuals in Israel in everyday life—in how to love neighbor and be holy and pleasing to God in conduct.

While in the Book of Galatians, Paul addressed a misunderstanding of the *ceremonial* law, here in Romans, his writing about the law is correcting a misunderstanding primarily of God's *moral* law.

Outline:

- 1:1. Greetings.
- 1:16. The world, rejecting God's righteous law, is headed to God's wrath at final judgment.
- 2:1. The law has never been a source of a justifying righteousness, but of condemnation for both Jews and Gentiles throughout history.
- 3:21. Justifying righteousness has only ever come through faith in God's promises, not by law obedience.
- 5:12. The moral law, apart from God's Spirit, causes men to sin more; but by God's Spirit, men can live according to the moral law (not unto salvation, but to a practical righteousness).
- 9:1. The Jews' failure to obtain righteousness through moral-law-obedience was part of God's plan for saving many Gentiles and a remnant of Jews.
- 12:1. Directives for righteous lives of loving and respecting other Christians and nonbelievers.
- 16:1. Final greetings.

Colossians

Author:

Paul, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

A.D. 61, from Rome (Acts 28:30-31). This letter was carried from Rome to Colosse by Tychicus (4:7), who also carried on the same trip Paul's letters, Ephesians and Philemon.

Paul's original recipients:

Paul had not planted the church in Colosse, a city in modern-day Turkey, and of the Roman province of Asia (as was Ephesus). He had not visited there, either, by the time of this letter (1:4, 8-9, 2:1). The church there had been planted by Epaphras, a "fellow servant" of Paul's in the gospel ministry (1:7). It may be that Epaphras had been established in the Faith in Ephesus during Paul's three years there (A.D. 53-56; Acts 19), during which time Paul taught the Faith daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. Perhaps with Paul's departure from Ephesus or with Paul's possible imprisonment there (effectively ending the Tyrannus training), Epaphras returned to his home city of Colosse to evangelize there (4:12). At the time of writing, Epaphras was Paul's fellow prisoner in Rome (4:12, Philemon 23).

Occasion of writing:

Paul wrote Colossians during his imprisonment in Rome of A.D. 60-62 (Acts 28). Paul had received a report of the Colossian church, perhaps from the same messenger who had brought him news of the churches in the region of Ephesus—perhaps Epaphras (1:7-8). From the letter and from knowledge of Greek and Roman religions of that day, it is apparent that the church was under heavy influence of pagan religious ideas, not so much affecting their view of salvation, but affecting their understanding of how one could mature in the Faith. They believed that physical things had spiritual power, and held onto other aspects of pagan religions, such as angel veneration, the navigation of spiritual and heavenly beings,

pagan (and Jewish) religious rituals, and physical practices such as asceticism. They believed these things would help them to obtain their spiritual ideals of wisdom, spiritual maturity and perfection, knowledge and understanding, and (future) glory. Paul writes to correct these errant, foreign ideas and to direct the Colossians in how these ideals are effectively obtained.

Purpose of the letter:

Paul writes Colossians to inform the Christians in Colosse that to obtain spiritual maturity (and therewith their ideals of wisdom, spiritual growth, maturity, perfection, knowledge, understanding, and future glory), they need only to pursue knowing Christ.

Outline of Colossians:

- 1:1. Initial greetings and Paul's establishing of his relationship with the Colossian church.
- 1:9. Paul's prayer for the church that they would understand that reconciliation with God, wisdom, and power to overcome sin are found only in Christ.
- 1:15. Look to Jesus, the Creator, not to created beings, to gain reconciliation and peace with God, for reconciliation is found in Jesus' blood, shed on the cross.
- 1:24. Look to Jesus, not to human philosophies/religions, to gain all spiritual wisdom, knowledge, fullness, and understanding, for all wisdom is hidden in Christ.
- 2:11 Look to Jesus, not to earthly, physical practices, for power over your former ways of darkness, for power to conquer sin flows from Christ.
- 3:12. With the the reconciliation, wisdom, and power Jesus has given you, walk in His ways, with love for one another.
- 4:7. Final greetings.

Philemon

Author:

Paul, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

A.D. 61, from Rome (Acts 28:30-31). This letter was carried from Rome to Colosse by Tychicus, who also carried on the same trip Paul's letters, Ephesians and Colossians.

Paul's original recipient:

Philemon, a former co-worker in the gospel with Paul (1, 13), who was now a part of the Colossian church.

Occasion of writing:

Onesimus, an indentured servant of Philemon, who was a "dear friend and fellow worker" (1, 13) of Paul and Timothy, had run away from Philemon in Colosse and come to Rome, where Paul was in prison (A.D. 60-62). While in Rome, Onesimus met Paul and became a Christian. Paul was sending Onesimus back to Philemon in Colosse with this letter.

Purpose of the letter:

Paul writes this letter to appeal to Philemon to receive Onesimus back not as a runaway servant, but as a beloved brother, and as a dear brother of Paul. Paul offers to pay for anything Onesimus owes Philemon, and hints at Philemon gifting Onesimus back to him as a helper for Paul's gospel work.

Outline:

- 1:1. Initial greetings and words about Christian sharing with one another.
- 1:8. Receive Onesimus back as a beloved brother.
- 1:22. Future plans to visit and final greetings.



Ephesians

Author:

Paul, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

A.D. 61, from Rome (Acts 28:30-31). This letter was carried from Rome to the region of Ephesus by Tychicus (6:21), who also carried on the same trip the letters to the Colossians and to Philemon.

Background to Paul's original recipients:

Paul first evangelized and started a church in Ephesus in A.D. 53, on his way from Corinth to Jerusalem in Acts 18:19-21. At that time, he preached in the synagogue there and stayed only a short time (maybe just one Sabbath), leaving behind his friends from his time in Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla, to disciple this new, infant church. Paul returned that same year to Ephesus, and stayed and ministered there for the next three years (A.D. 53-56; Acts 19, 20:31). Upon arriving there this second time, he preached of Jesus in the synagogue three months, until some of the Jews “became obstinate,” at which point Paul took the gospel to the Gentiles there. Paul established daily training in the Faith among the believers in the lecture hall of Tyrannus for two years. During his stay in Ephesus, Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, faced wild beasts (1 Corinthians 15:32), may have been imprisoned (hence, the beasts), and may have written Philippians. His time in Ephesus ended in A.D. 56, with a riot against the church that was raised by the city's silversmiths, who saw that Christianity was causing their idol-making business to decrease. After revisiting churches in Macedonia (perhaps Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea) (Acts 20:1-2) and spending three more months with the church in Corinth (and perhaps Athens, too) (Acts 20:2-3), Paul met with the elders of the Ephesian church the next year (A.D. 57) in nearby Miletus, on his way to Jerusalem. We have a significant portion of his speech to them in Acts 20:25-38.

Paul's original recipients:

This letter seems to be a shared (“circular”) letter written to the churches in the region of Ephesus, which was the main and capital city of the Roman province of “Asia” (western Turkey today). These churches, as the church in Colosse, may have been started by “Tyrannus” students of Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19:9, and see above). Paul had not met all the believers to whom he addressed this letter (there are no personal addresses, and see 1:15, 3:2, and 4:21), but he had heard reports of them, and wrote this letter to address their issues.

The churches of this region were primarily Gentile, yet there were Jewish believers among them, and there was disunity between the Jewish and Gentile believers. Paul writes to the churches in and around Ephesus to spur them on to unity through their seeing God's eternal plan to include the Gentiles in His people, and through committing themselves to a) the truths of the faith, b) godly conduct, c) love for one another, d) the use of their spiritual gifts to build up the church, and e) loving leadership and submission in various relationships among them.

Purpose of the letter:

Paul writes to the churches in and around Ephesus to spur them on to unity.

Outline of Ephesians:

- 1:1. God has united Gentiles and Jews in the Church.
- 3:14 Pursue maturity in your new selves by the power of the Holy Spirit and involvement in the Church.
- 4:17 Maturity in your new selves means abandoning pagan behaviors and living lives of love.
- 6:10 In the Spirit's power, fight to maturity in your new selves.

Luke

Author:

Luke, the traveling companion of Paul. A document of Church history indicates that he was a native of Antioch in Syria, the city from which Paul was sent out as a missionary in Acts 13. Luke is a doctor (Colossians 4:14) and met up with Paul (in Acts 16:8-11) in Troas [a seaport city on the Aegean Sea (between modern-day Turkey and Greece), near ancient Troy, which was ten miles inland] in what is today the northwest corner of Turkey. It is possible that the two knew each other already from Paul's time in Luke's home town of Antioch in Acts 11-13. Luke is present with Paul through chapter 16 of Acts, and probably stayed in Philippi when Paul moved on. Luke rejoined Paul when Paul returned to Philippi (Acts 20:6), and remained with Paul at least through Paul's first imprisonment in Rome (A.D. 60-62) and perhaps for the rest of Paul's life, which ended upon a second imprisonment in Rome @A.D. 65 (2 Timothy 4:11).

Date of the book's writing:

A.D. 60.

Luke's original recipient:

A man named Theophilus (1:3).

Theory: There is good evidence that Theophilus was a Roman governor [hence the address in 1:3, "Most Excellent," a title seen elsewhere in Scripture only used by Paul of the Roman governors Felix and Festus (Acts 24:3 and 26:25)]. Luke's particular emphases in this Gospel may indicate that Theophilus was a "God-fearing Greek" (a gentile who had converted to the Jewish faith prior to his hearing the gospel) who was now a young Christian, perhaps in Rome.

The Church as a whole is a secondary audience.

Purpose of the book:

Luke writes his Gospel:

- a. To give Theophilus, a young believer, a detailed and clear account of Jesus' life to show him who Jesus was, what He did, and the salvation He offered and still offers to those who follow Him.
- b. To encourage Theophilus, a government official in Rome, to speak up for Paul and the Church in the Roman court (even if it cost him his position, power, prestige, and wealth) by showing him that the kingdom of God was not a civil kingdom nor a threat to Rome, and that Paul, like Jesus, had fallen into Rome's hands for no good legal reason, but out of the hatred and plotting of the Jews of his day.
- c. To teach Theophilus not to believe that the wealth, power, status, and prestige he had outside the Church carried into the Church, and that he should use his wealth and power for the sake of the poor and powerless in the church, as he himself needed to see himself in humility.
- d. To explain to Theophilus the mixed reaction of the Jews to Jesus, and to show that the Jewish rejection of Jesus (and Paul) was illogical.
- e. To show Theophilus that God's plan in Jesus was to include and lift up all kinds of people (the poor, women, the wealthy, Jews, Gentiles, Samaritans, great sinners, tax collectors, Jewish religious leaders, Roman soldiers, Roman officials, the simple, and the educated) in the Church.

Outline of Luke:

- 1:1. Introductory words to Theophilus.
- 1:5. Beginnings of Jesus' life and ministry.
- 4:14. Jesus' ministry, early on, in Galilee.
- 9:51. Jesus' ministry as He approached Jerusalem for His crucifixion.
- 19:28. Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem before His death.
- 22:1. Jesus' ministry from betrayal to ascension.

Titus

Author:

Paul, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

Perhaps the early fall of A.D. 64, from Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20; west coast of modern-day Turkey), after having left Titus (perhaps late that summer) on the island of Crete, in the Mediterranean Sea, southeast of Greece and southwest of Turkey.

Paul's original recipient:

Paul writes to Titus, perhaps a native of Antioch (Acts 11:27-30, Galatians 2:1), a pastor and his (former) apprentice, traveling companion, and fellow gospel worker [off and on, from the time of their visiting Jerusalem together from Antioch @A.D. 44-45 (Acts 11:27-12:24 and Galatians 2:1-10) to maybe a month prior to this letter]. They had known each other about 20 years at the time of this letter.

Occasion of writing:

Paul, perhaps coming from Spain (Romans 15:24, 28), following his first imprisonment in Rome (A.D. 60-62, Acts 28), reconnected with Titus and visited the island of Crete, where they had planted the island's first churches in various towns (1:5). When Paul was ready to leave the island and sail to Miletus, on the west coast of modern-day Turkey, he left Titus on the island to pastor the young church and to establish elders there (1:5).

Purpose of the letter:

To instruct Titus about the qualifications and purposes of elders, so that he could establish good elders for each Cretan church; and to urge Titus to instruct the Cretan Christians to leave behind their former, unrestrained conduct (typical of Cretans), and instead to exercise self-control, that they might do what is good and pure instead, that the gospel might be attractive in Crete.

Outline:

- 1:1. Initial greetings and words about truth leading to godly living.
- 1:5. Install godly elders and for the purposes of refuting false teaching (by the rebellious in the churches), and of teaching sound doctrine, to produce godly living by all.
- 1:6-9. Elder qualifications.
- 1:9-16. Warning of rebellious deceivers in the churches.
- 2:2. All people of each demographic in the churches should exercise self-control, unto godly living, meekness, and the doing of good, so that the gospel will attract nonbelievers in Crete to the Faith.
- 3:9. Second warning of divisive, quarrelsome people.
- 3:12. Travel plans and final greetings.

1 Timothy

Author:

Paul, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

Perhaps the mid-to-late fall of A.D. 64 (Titus 3:12), from Philippi (a likely stop when he went to Macedonia, per 1:3). During this year, Paul had been in Spain perhaps (Romans 15:24, 28), Crete (Titus 1:5), Ephesus (1:3), perhaps Colosse (inland from Miletus, Philemon 22), Miletus (west coast of modern-day Turkey), and lastly Macedonia, the home of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. He intended to winter (December 64 - March 65) in Nicopolis (Titus 3:12), on the west coast of the Macedonian/Greek peninsula, presumably on his way back to Rome (2 Timothy 1:8), perhaps after a stop in Corinth (on Greece's southern coast), too.

Paul's original recipient:

Paul writes to Timothy, who had become a Christian as a young man living in Lystra (in Galatia, of modern-day Turkey) when Paul came to the city on two different occasions, probably around A.D. 46 or 47 (Acts 14:8-23). Later, upon returning to Lystra (A.D. 49), Paul took Timothy with him as a traveling companion and coworker in the gospel (Acts 16:1-3). Timothy is mentioned by Paul in many of his letters (more than anyone else).

Occasion of writing:

Timothy and Paul had been together just prior to the writing of this letter, in perhaps the early part of the fall, after Paul's visit to Crete with Titus. Paul left Crete to perhaps Colosse (Philemon 22) and more certainly Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3) and Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20), on the west coast of modern-day Turkey. He had been with Timothy there, and upon heading to Macedonia, left Timothy in Ephesus (near Colosse and Miletus) to pastor the church there. Now Paul was in Macedonia, and was writing to Timothy, who was pastoring the church in Ephesus. Paul had seen in his recent visit to Ephesus that there were harmful men in the church there who wanted the honor and glory of leading the church as its teachers, elders, and deacons. They thought they were Christians, but were not, were probably Jewish in background and thus focused on genealogies and the Law (probably to gain prominence in the church, having Jewish

lineage), were teaching other falsehoods (“understanding nothing”), were quarrelsome and divisive, and were otherwise of bad character.

Purpose of the letter:

To instruct Timothy to rebuke the men who were teaching false doctrines and creating controversies in the Ephesian church, to warn him not to allow these men to become elders or deacons (though that was their desire), to instruct Timothy about the care of the church’s widows, and to encourage him to live out his calling as a pastor, devoting himself to preaching and teaching, while continuing in his sincere faith and love, as an example to the church.

Outline of 1 Timothy:

- 1:1. Timothy must rebuke the troublemaking false teachers in Ephesus, whose aim was to be considered the teachers of the church.
- 1:12. The sound teaching of the church is not of genealogies, but that Christ came to save sinners. This brings all the honor and glory in the Church to Jesus.
- 3:1. Qualifications for elders and deacons, which the false teachers didn't have.
- 4:1. The troublemaking false teachers were liars, hypocrites, and followers of deceiving spirits, so have nothing to do with their teaching, and warn the church about it, being devoted to your calling as an ordained pastor to teach and preach of the salvation that is only through Jesus.
- 5:3. Instructions about what kind of widows the church should support.
- 5:17. Pastors should be paid; they and all elders should be protected from false accusations.
- 6:3. Final instructions for indentured servants/employees (to serve well), for the rich (to be content and generous), and for Timothy (to be loving, godly, and brave in protecting the church from the troublemaking false teachers within it).

2 Timothy

Author:

Paul, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

Perhaps in the summer of A.D. 65 (4:21), during the persecution of the Roman Emperor, Nero (who reigned from A.D. 54-68), not long before Paul's martyrdom (being put to death for his faith) in Rome, in the second half of A.D. 65. Paul writes from prison (1:8, 12, 2:9, 4:16-18), knowing his death is near (4:6).

Paul's original recipient:

Paul writes to Timothy, who had become a Christian as a young man living in Lystra (in Galatia, of modern-day Turkey) when Paul came to the city on two different occasions, probably around A.D. 46 or 47 (Acts 14:8-23). Later, upon returning to Lystra (A.D. 49), Paul took Timothy with him as a traveling companion and coworker in the gospel (Acts 16:1-3). Timothy is mentioned by Paul in many of his letters (more than anyone else).

Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus (a city in modern-day Turkey) in the fall of A.D. 64 (1 Timothy 1:3), had written 1 Timothy to him from Philippi (a city in the northeast of modern-day Greece) later that fall (A.D. 64), and had "wintered in Nicopolis" (on the west coast of Greece, further north) in the winter of A.D. 65. His imprisonment in Rome, from whence he wrote this letter, occurred sometime after this.

Occasion of writing:

Paul has again been imprisoned in Rome, perhaps by the summer of A.D. 65. Timothy has remained in Ephesus, where Paul had left him in the fall of A.D. 64, to pastor the church there (1 Timothy 1:3). This letter provides further encouragement to Timothy along the same lines of the first letter (1 Timothy).

Purpose of the letter:

Paul writes to describe the troublemakers in the Ephesian church and to explain the tendency of people only to follow teachers who'll say what they want to hear. He writes to exhort Timothy to be bold, not timid, against these false teachers, and to preach sound doctrine, which will correct, rebuke, and encourage the members of the church. He also writes to call Timothy to join him in Rome before winter.

Outline of 2 Timothy:

- 1:1. Timothy should pastor with boldness and teach what he's been taught, to fulfill his ordination's calling.
- 2:1. Timothy should be strong in his calling as a pastor, enduring as a good soldier, rebuking the errant teachers in Ephesus, while personally pursuing righteousness, faith, love and peace, with a pure heart.
- 3:1. A description of the wickedness of the false teachers in the Ephesian church and elsewhere.
- 3:10. Timothy, in face of the opposition from the false teachers in the church (and from members who want them), should endure with courage by preaching the Word, and with it correcting, rebuking, and encouraging the flock.
- 4:9. Paul's update, greetings, and request for Timothy to come to him in Rome before winter, bringing with him Mark.

Hebrews

Author:

Unknown, as the author does not identify himself. Paul, Silas, Apollos, Barnabas, and others have been proposed through the centuries and today. The author came from a Jewish background, was younger than the apostles and first Christian believers (2:3), may likely have been a former traveling companion of Paul or at least a co-laborer with him at least in Rome during Paul's first imprisonment in A.D. 60-62 (13:19, Acts 28), as he identifies himself as a friend of Paul's spiritual son, Timothy (13:23).

Aristarchus is a good, possible match on all counts (Acts 19:29, 20:4, 27:2, Colossians 4:10, and Philemon 24). The book shows a fluent knowledge of Paul's teaching in his epistles. Yet the structure, the lack of an introductory greeting (very prominent in Paul's letters), and the Greek used seem very non-Pauline.

Date of the letter's writing:

A.D. 66, after Paul's A.D. 65 death in Rome and before Peter's arrival to Rome in A.D. 67.

The letter's original recipients:

Jewish Christians in the church in Rome.

Occasion of writing:

In A.D. 64, Nero secretly had Rome set on fire such that he could rebuild it with his name on all the buildings. Not wanting this to be known (as it later became known), he blamed the Christians in Rome for setting the fire, and commenced an official persecution against the Roman church. With these circumstances facing the church in Rome, Jewish Christians were tempted to convert back to the Jewish faith, thinking that such a move would both step them out of the persecution ("I'm not Christian; I'm Jewish") from Nero and also from the persecution that had been coming from the non-Christian Jews prior to and during this time.

Purpose of the letter:

To convince Jewish Christians living in Rome not to return to Judaism—the inadequate “Jerusalem below,” with its physical temple, its priests, and its sacrifices—but to hold confidently to their faith in Jesus, despite the persecutions they would experience from Nero and non-Christian Jews.

Outline of Hebrews:

- 1:1. Confidently believe in Christ, even through suffering, for He is the Creator God, the heavenly, Davidic king, is superior to angels as a messenger of God’s truth, and is the bringer of a greater salvation.
- 3:1. Confidently believe in Christ, for He is greater than Moses and will successfully lead you from the wilderness of this life into the Promised Land of heaven.
- 4:14. Confidently believe in Christ, who is part of a covenant system that is superior to that of the Old Testament, for Jesus is a superior high priest who ascended to the superior tabernacle in heaven with the superior blood of his superior, end-all sacrifice, which is adequate to get all His people into heaven (“the Most Holy Place”).
- 11:1. Confidently believe in Christ and His superior new covenant, though you can’t see its components, just like the faithful of the Old Testament had faith in promises of God they could not see and did not receive on earth, as they suffered hardships.
- 12:14. Confidently believe in Christ because faith in Him has brought you to an unshakeable Mount Sinai, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to its kingdom that is unshakeable.
- 13:1. Final exhortations to confidently believe in Christ, despite the suffering it would cause.

1 Peter

Author:

Peter, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

A.D. 67.

Peter's original recipients:

To the churches of the ancient Roman provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (in modern-day Turkey).

Historical situation:

Since we have no record of Peter ministering to these churches (he may have, but it was not recorded), and since we know that Paul established some churches in the cities of some of these regions (Galatia and Asia), this letter could be Peter's taking over the shepherding of these churches for Paul, who had been put to death in Rome the year or two before.

Peter writes from Rome (which he calls "Babylon" in 5:13). Silas and Mark are with him there (5:12-13). Mark had come to Rome from Ephesus in the past year, at Paul's request (2 Timothy 4:11).

Occasion of writing:

Christians in the churches of modern-day Turkey were suffering for no longer living their lives in the evil ways of their pre-Christian days. This abuse was largely from their pagan, Gentile friends with whom they used to participate in various forms of immorality.

Purpose of the letter:

Peter writes to encourage Christians in the churches of Turkey, especially those from pagan backgrounds, to continue to live holy lives marked by doing good, despite the suffering it was causing them, as their unbelieving friends from their pre-Christian days were egging them on to join in with them again in their sinful behavior.

Short version of the purpose of the letter: Live a holy life, though it will cause you to suffer.

Outline:

- 1:1. Rejoice in the great, future inheritance you have in heaven, despite the suffering you're enduring now as you live obediently to Jesus.
- 2:1. Live self-controlled, holy lives, in contrast to the evil ways of your pre-Christian life.
- 2:13. Do good to all, knowing that you may suffer for it, as Christ did.
- 4:1. Arm yourself for this, so that you can endure the abuse from those you used to run with.
- 4:12. Know that your suffering for doing good is "normal," as Christ suffered for doing good, too.
- 5:1. Since the devil is trying to devour you by bringing you back into your former, evil behavior, it's important for elders to shepherd you and for you to humbly follow their lead.

2 Peter

Author:

Peter, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

A.D. 68.

Peter's original recipients:

The same audience as 1 Peter (2 Peter 3:1): the churches of the ancient Roman provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (in modern-day Turkey).

Historical situation:

Read the “historical situation” of 1 Peter. Also: Peter is now not only in Rome, but most likely in jail and sensing that his life will come to an end there (1:13-15), just as Paul's had two years prior. This is the last year of Roman Emperor Nero's life and the last year, thus, of his persecutions against the Christians in Rome, which began in A.D. 64. Peter would die at the hands of this Roman persecution within the year.

Occasion of writing:

There were false teachers traveling among the churches in Turkey, teaching two major falsehoods: 1. that Christ was not returning, and 2. that it was fine for Christians to live corrupt, depraved, sinful lives.

Purpose of the letter:

Peter writes to emphasize strongly two things: 1. that Jesus will come back (bringing with Him final judgment and a cleansing of the earth to make it a home of righteousness), and 2. that Christians are called to live godly lives of goodness, self-control, and love, with an ever-growing knowledge of Jesus.

Outline:

- 1:1. Call to godliness.
- 2:1. The immoral false teachers will face God's judgment for their immorality.
- 3:1. Jesus will come back, transforming the heavens and earth to be a home of righteousness.

Mark

Author:

Mark (John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, per Colossians 4:10, and son of Mary, of Jerusalem—not Jesus’ mother and not Mary Magdalene, per Acts 12:12). He was perhaps among the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane at Jesus’ arrest (Mark 14:51-52). He traveled with his cousin, Barnabas, and Paul at the front part of Paul’s first missionary journey, from Syrian Antioch to Perga, around A.D. 46 (Acts 13:1-13). Twenty years later, during Paul’s second imprisonment in Rome (@A.D. 65), Paul told Timothy to bring Mark to Rome (2 Timothy 4:11). Mark probably remained in Rome after Paul’s martyrdom there in A.D. 65, as he was present with Peter during Peter’s imprisonment there in A.D. 67-68 (1 Peter 5:13). The early Church commonly understood that the Gospel of Mark was written by Mark in Rome from the information of Jesus’ life and teachings that Mark gained from Peter, during their time together during Peter’s imprisonment.

Date of the letter's writing:

A.D. 68, shortly after the martyrdom of Peter, in Rome.

Mark’s original recipients:

The church in Rome @A.D. 68.

Historical background:

Like many ancient cultures, the Romans believed that their king—Caesar—was a divine Son of God who had come from heaven to bless His people. Mark shows that Jesus is this—divine Son of God who had come to earth to bless His people as their king.

Purpose of the book:

Mark writes for two main purposes:

1. To show the Roman Christians in Rome that Jesus is the real version of what Roman Caesars claimed to be: the Son of God, come from heaven, to be king over the (His) people, to their blessing.
2. To fortify the witness of the Roman Christians in Rome, so that they give testimony of their faith in Jesus even through the persecution, suffering, loss, and potential martyrdom they may face.

Outline of Mark:

- 1:1 Jesus is divine king and Son of God (declarations and demonstrations).
- 9:33 The divine Son of God teaches on His kingdom and on the persecution, suffering, loss, and martyrdom that are part of being in it.
- 14:32 The divine king and Son of God Himself is persecuted, suffers, and loses His life in martyrdom for His people.

Jude

Author:

Jude, the younger, half-brother of Jesus and full brother of James, the epistle writer (see v. 1, Matthew 13:55, Mark 6:3, and 1 Corinthians 9:5).

Date of the letter's writing:

A.D. 69.

Jude's original recipients:

A church Jude knew (and maybe had pastored, per 1:3's "dear friends"), who were probably Jewish in background, given Jude's use of both the Old Testament and of other, non-inspired writings that were known by Jews of the day. There is no naming in the book nor in church history of the location of this church. Jerusalem is one good suggestion, since the book assumes a knowledge of Jewish writings outside the Old Testament, and since Jude had been in Jerusalem with his brother, James, the chief pastor of the Jerusalem church until his martyrdom there in A.D. 62. Jude references James at the beginning of this letter (v. 1).

Historical situation:

Jude and 2 Peter share many verses. It seems best to view Jude's letter to be Jude's use of many of the truths he had recently read in 2 Peter, but with his tailoring of the truths to a different audience. Jude deals with things beyond the content of 2 Peter, too, and that are very specific to the situation of the church to whom he wrote.

Occasion of writing:

There were wolves in sheep's clothing (harmful unbelievers in the church, thinking themselves to be believers) in the church to whom Jude was writing. These nonbelievers were teaching that sexual immorality was OK, were disrespecting the authority of and grumbling against the ordained elders in the church, were boasting about themselves, and were flattering others for their own advantage.

Purpose of the letter:

Jude writes his letter to tell his readers to beware of the wolves who were in their church, to recognize the eternal judgment these men would receive, and to contend for the true faith, building each other up in it.

Outline:

- 1:1. Warning: wolves are in your church!
- 1:5. The sins of the wolves, and proof (from Old Testament history) of their coming, eternal condemnation.
- 1:20. Call for the sheep to build each other up in the true faith and to rescue from the wolves those who are susceptible to their teaching.

2 John

Author:

John, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

A.D. 85. This is possibly the first of the three letters of 1, 2, & 3 John, and delivered by several brothers who were sent by John (3 John 5-6, 10), whom Gaius (perhaps the pastor of the church) had warmly received. After delivering this letter, these brothers then returned to John, giving John a good report of Gaius's faithful pastoring.

John's original recipients:

The church in Ephesus.

Historical situation:

The Ephesian church was started by the apostle, Paul, in A.D. 53. Paul had spent three years there, evangelizing and instructing the church (A.D. 53-56). Years later, perhaps in the fall of A.D. 64, Paul and Timothy visited Ephesus again, and Paul left Timothy there to pastor the church, as he headed again to Rome (1 Timothy 1:3). John later pastored this church, and there are two reasonable possibilities of John's location: either John was away for a time, writing back to the church he pastored and would return to, or he was in Ephesus and writing to a church elsewhere, perhaps nearby. We'll assume the former.

Occasion of writing:

A member of the church, Diotrephes, upon John's absence, was seeking to be "first" in the church and was dividing the church by teaching false doctrine about Jesus, by "gossiping maliciously" about John and the brothers associated with him, and by threatening to cast people out of the church should they receive anyone John sent to them (3 John 9-10).

Purpose of the letter:

John writes 2 John to the Ephesian church as a whole to express his joy over their faithfulness, to encourage them to continue walking in the truth they had been taught (which Diotrephes was trying to lead them from), and to instruct them not to welcome Diotrephes nor anyone else who brought a different teaching.

Outline:

- 1:1. Continue to walk in the truth, loving each other, and obeying God's commands.
- 1:7. Anyone teaching that Jesus did not come in the flesh is a deceiver, and you should not welcome him.
- 1:12. John's final greetings, expressing his plans to come soon to the church.

3 John

Author:

John, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

A.D. 85, and probably the second of the three letters, 1-3 John.

John's original recipient:

Gaius, a friend of John, and member (or pastor) of the church in Ephesus.

Historical situation:

The same as 2 John: the Ephesian church was started by the apostle, Paul, in A.D. 53. Paul had spent three years there, evangelizing and instructing the church (A.D. 53-56). Years later (probably in the early fall of A.D. 64), he left Timothy there to pastor the church (1 Timothy 1:3). John later pastored the church there, and there are two reasonable possibilities of John's location: either John was away for a time, writing back to the church he pastored and would return to, or he was in Ephesus and writing to a church elsewhere, perhaps nearby. We'll assume the former.

Occasion of writing:

The same as 2 John: a member of the church, Diotrephes, upon John's absence, was seeking to be "first" in the church and was dividing the church by teaching false doctrine about Jesus, by "gossiping maliciously" about John and the brothers associated with him, and by threatening to cast people out of the church should they receive anyone John sent to them (3 John 9-10).

Purpose of the letter:

John writes to Gaius, perhaps the pastor of the church in Ephesus, to denounce Diotrephes, an errant member of the church, and to tell Gaius not to imitate Diotrephes, nor to fear him.

Outline:

- 1:1. John's encouragement to Gaius for his faithfulness and for his welcoming of those John had sent to the church with 2 John.
- 1:9. John calls attention to the evil that Diotrephes was doing in the church and tells Gaius not to imitate it, but to do good.
- 1:12. John's commendation of Demetrius (perhaps the carrier of this letter) and his final greetings, expressing his plans to come soon to the church.

1 John

Author:

John, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

A.D. 85. This letter is the third of the three of 1-3 John. While 2 John and 3 John had been sent while Diotrephes was still in the Ephesian church, dividing it and seeking prominence and power within it (3 John 9-10), this letter is sent after John's getting word that Diotrephes and a group with him had left the church, schismatically (1 John 2:19).

John's original recipients:

The church in Ephesus, which now no longer contained the troublemaker and wolf, Diotrephes, and his schismatic group.

Occasion of writing:

The Ephesian church's wolf-among-the-sheep, Diotrephes, had been causing division in the church because he "wanted to be first" (3 John 9-10). He also taught the Greek idea that the flesh is bad and that Jesus, therefore, could not really have come in the flesh (1:1-3, 4:2, 5:6). Now Diotrephes (and a group with him) had left the church, schismatically (2:19).

Purpose of the letter:

John writes 1 John to help the Ephesian church, now in crisis over the recent departure of Diotrephes and his fellow schismatics (2:19), assuring those who had remained that they were the ones who were the children of God and who had eternal life, and that those in the group who had left were not.

Outline of 1 John:

- 1:1. Those who truly know God (as opposed to the schismatics) and have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life are identified: they confess their sins, seek to obey God's commands, love other Christians ("love the brothers"), and believe that Jesus came in the flesh.
- 2:15. Those who left the church left because they didn't have God's Spirit and didn't know God. Rather, they loved the world and claimed that Jesus is not the Christ nor the Son of God.
- 2:28. Those who know God obey His commands; those who don't continue in sin.
- 3:11. Those who know God love their fellow Christians; those who don't, act hatefully toward true Christians, as Diotrephes and his group had.
- 4:1. Not all who teach in the Church teach things from the Spirit of God. Some, like Diotrephes, teach from the viewpoint of the world, and those without God's Spirit, who are really of the world, follow such teachers. That's who left the church.
- 4:7. The way we know that "love for the brothers" is a marker of who's truly a Christian is that Jesus loved the brothers. We should do this, too!
- 5:1. Believing that Jesus is the Christ (meaning: born in the flesh as a human son of David, and thereby also king of the Church as the Davidic—and yet also divine—Son of God) is also a marker of who's truly a Christian.
- 5:11. Concluding words of John, assuring those who've stayed (who, in fact, were confessing their sins, seeking to obey God's commands, loving their fellow Christians, and believing that Jesus came in the flesh) that they (and not those who left the church with Diotrephes) had eternal life.

John

Author:

John, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

A.D. 90.

John's original recipients:

Extant documents from the early church tell us that John wrote his Gospel from Ephesus, primarily to Jewish Christians (and Jewish unbelievers) outside the Promised Land, in Asia Minor (today's Turkey).

Occasion of writing:

In the late A.D. 80s, representatives of the Jews went to the Roman government to make clear to it that Christianity was not a "sect" (modern term: denomination) of the Jews, but a different religion. What this meant for the Church was that it lost its status with the Roman government of "licensed religion." The Jewish religion was licensed, and this allowed the Jews to worship freely, without persecution, and with exemption from having to worship Caesar as God. The Jews went to Rome to accomplish this "de-licensing" of Christianity as a means of persecuting the Church through Rome, just as they had persecuted Jesus through Rome, unto His death on a cross.

Purpose of the book:

John wrote his Gospel to Jewish Christians @A.D. 90 for several reasons:

- 1) To encourage them to be confident in their belief that Jesus was the Christ (the anointed king) for whom they had been waiting. Such belief, he wrote, meant they had spiritual life now and eternal life, too.
- 2) To show them that Jesus had come from heaven, was God's divine Son, the creator of all things, and the giver of life and understanding.
- 3) He wrote to explain that the Jewish unbelief in Jesus was not for a lack of evidence, but because the Jews had not been given the life that enables persons to see (to understand) these things.
- 4) To show them that the persecution they were receiving from the Jews in A.D. 90 was rising from the same place.
- 5) Lastly, to show his readers that Jesus encapsulated the meaning of the Old Testament temple, in both its structures and functions.

Outline:

- 1:1. Jesus, God and creator, came to earth to give eternal life, but was rejected by (His own people), the Jews.
- 2:1. Jesus' rejection by the Jews was irrational, because His signs (miracles) and teaching proved He was the Christ, had come from God, and was God Himself, the giver of life.
- 13:1. Jesus prepared His disciples to be rejected by the Jews after His death, because of their faith in Him.
- 18:1. Jesus was rejected by the Jews unto death.
- 20:1. Jesus rose again and sent His disciples to preach of Him as the Christ and God, Creator of all and giver of eternal life.

Revelation

Author:

John, the apostle.

Date of the letter's writing:

A.D. 95. Most consider Revelation to be the last book God wrote. Not only does the evidence of the book point to this, but also it seems appropriate for this book to be God's last, as its content can be seen as a summary of the rest of Scripture's theology and an explanation of God's orchestration of human history from Adam's day to the future days of the New Heavens and New Earth.

John's original recipients:

The churches of the seven cities in western, modern-day Turkey (the Roman province of "Asia Minor" in the first century) named in chapters 2-3: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

Occasion of writing:

The Roman emperor, Domitian, reigned in the years A.D. 81-96. As was the practice of some (but not all) Roman emperors, he required those under his rule to "acknowledge his divinity" and to offer him worship, potentially upon pain of death for noncompliance. Christians were no longer under the protected status of belonging to a "licensed religion" (which would have given them exemption from emperor worship) (see the Gospel of John's "occasion of writing," above). Thus, from A.D. 89-96, Christians were being put to death (and were under that threat) by Rome for their refusal to declare the emperor divine and to offer him worship. Were they to declare the emperor divine and to offer him worship (easily seen as "the mark of the beast," which was Rome), their persecution, with its threat of death, would have disappeared. Jesus gives this revelation to John during this persecution, while John is living in exile on the isle of Patmos, off the coast of Ephesus.

Purpose of the letter:

John writes Revelation to inform believers in Asia Minor @A.D. 95 that though chaos, death, and hardship would continue in their day and until Jesus returns, and that though the world and its governments will even execute Christians until that time, they should overcome the persecution by patiently enduring in their faith (keeping their testimony that Jesus, not Domitian, is God), knowing 1) that their troubles (even unto death) are temporary, 2) that Jesus is on His heavenly throne, and in control, 3) that the souls of those who have died for their faith in Jesus are now with Him in heaven, 4) that Jesus is protecting Christians on earth now both in their lives and in their deaths, and 5) that Jesus will reward them for their endurance in faith.

Outline of Revelation:

- 1:1. Jesus appears to John on the isle of Patmos.
- 2:1. Jesus dictates to John seven letters for seven churches in Asia Minor.
- 4:1. Heaven, and Jesus' arrival there, post-resurrection.
- 6:1. Symbolic descriptions of life on earth from Jesus' ascension to His return:
 - 6:1. As seven seals.
 - 8:2. As seven trumpets.
- 12:1. A symbolic description of life on earth from the days of Old Testament Israel to our era today: a woman and her children, a dragon, and two beasts.
- 14:14. A symbolic description of the end of this era (with Jesus' return and its final battle, the resurrection of all men, final judgment, and the Lake of Fire): seven bowls of wrath, the great prostitute, and the fall of "Babylon the Great."
- 21:1. A description of the future era, with its redone heaven and earth, and Jesus' reign upon it, over His people.

