

Bible-Book Notes

... a companion to the One- and Two-Year Whole-Bible Reading Plans

Genesis

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

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

The book was written 400 years after the last event the book recounts, likely around 1450 B.C., most likely at Mt. Sinai, after God's people had crossed the Red Sea.

The purpose for which Moses wrote 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

Job, the *man*, lived prior to the establishment of the Levitical priesthood that was established after the exodus from Egypt under Moses (@1450 B.C.). He may have lived as early as the time of Abraham (@2050 B.C.), or perhaps around 1600 B.C. as a contemporary of the Israelites who were enslaved in Egypt.

The *Book* of Job was probably written much later, in the wide range of 970-586 B.C., during the divided kingdom of Israel, as early as the days following Solomon's rule up to the time of Israel's exile.

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

Job was written to encourage God's people, experiencing hardship themselves and 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.

Time of the book's writing: 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.

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 providing deliverance of God's 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 & Date: Moses, writing from Mt. Sinai, after the construction of the tabernacle.

Purpose: God has 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 & date: Moses, writing at the end of the 40 years of desert wandering, at the plains of Moab, prior to entering the Promised Land.

Purpose: to call the second generation of Israel (those under 20 years old when exiting Egypt) to arms as the holy army of God to take the Promised Land.

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 & date: Either Moses, writing at the end of the 40 years of desert wandering, at the plains of Moab, prior to entering the Promised Land, or, it's possible that this book is primarily the words of Moses, assembled by Joshua and read to the people at the covenant renewal ceremony in Joshua 8:30-35, with Joshua's compiling a number of sermons of Moses and adding the third-person narratives such as that of Moses' death in Deuteronomy 34.

Purpose: the Book of Deuteronomy was written to guide Israel in covenant renewal under Joshua for its new life in the Promised Land.

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 & date: This 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 could have been written as early as two generations past Joshua, during the early days of the judges (before the kingship) to 561 B.C., when God's people were in their Babylonian exile.

Purpose: to teach Israel how to live in the land God had given them, specifically, in covenantal faithfulness by following the commands of God recorded in the books of Moses (Genesis-Deuteronomy) and by completing the conquest of the Promised Land.

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: the author, as with many books of the Bible, is uncertain, though guesses have been made. The date of writing is a range from the early monarchy (Saul or early David) to the time of the exile. A writing date between David's anointing in 1 Samuel 16 and Saul's death at the end of 1 Samuel makes a lot of sense.

Purpose: to convince God's people that for their sustained blessing in the Promised Land, they needed a king, and one of God's choice, per Deuteronomy 17.

Outline:

- 1:1. Faltering conquest of the Promised Land.
- 3:5. Cycles of oppression (by foreign powers) and blessing under the judges.
- 17:1. Anarchy under the Levites.

Ruth

Author and date: The author is unknown. Ruth lives during the period of the judges, and the book was probably written during the beginning of David's kingship.

Purpose: 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 Moabitess, shows faithfulness to Israel.
- 2:1. Ruth's faithfulness is recognized by the faithful Judahite, Boaz, who fights to marry her according to the law of Moses.
- 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: The book was most likely written in the days of the divided monarchy in Israel (between 930 B.C. and 722 B.C.).

Purpose: To teach both Judah and Israel of the divided kingdom* that they should both be under and hope for their national blessing in the kingship of David's descendants ("the house of David"), despite the shortcomings of David and his "sons," and the trouble that had caused.

*The divided kingdom consisted of Northern Israel ("Ephraim"), the northern ten tribes that had broken away from the house of David in 930 B.C., and the southern kingdom, "Judah," which 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 (75 total psalms; 73 noted in Psalms; Psalm 2 is attributed to David in Acts 4:25; and Psalm 95 is attributed to David in Hebrews 4:7): 3–9; 11–41; 51–65; 68–70; 86; 101; 103; 108–110; 122; 124; 131; 133; 138–145.
- 2) Asaph (and family) (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 (2 psalms): 72 and 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 (597-539 B.C.). Moses wrote one psalm—the first—much earlier (1440–1400 B.C.).

No outline.

Purpose: 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 and 1 Chronicles, 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, 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 their 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 Chronicles

Author & date: 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, after their exile in Babylon (538-515 B.C.).

Purpose: To direct the restoration of the kingdom during the post-exilic period.

Through accounting Israel's history from David's kingship to the exile, the Chronicler directed the returnees to do the following things so that they would experience God's blessing once again in the Promised Land:

- 1) Crown a descendent 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. |

1 & 2 Kings

Author: The author is unknown, but is most likely among the Israelites in their exile to Babylon (605-538 B.C.).

Date: The book was most likely written in the days of the Babylonian exile of God's people (605-538 B.C.).

Purpose: To teach Judah that it deserved its exile to Babylon, but that restoration to the Promised Land was possible through full repentance.

Outline:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 1 Kings 1:1. | Failure and hope in Solomon's years. |
| 1 Kings 12:25. | Failure and hope in the divided-kingdom years. |
| 2 Kings 18:1. | Failure and hope in Judah's final years. |

Proverbs

Author: Primarily Solomon, but also Agur and Lemuel.

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

Ecclesiastes

Author: Solomon.

Date: 970-930 B.C.

Purpose: 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.

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: 970-900 B.C.

Purpose: To celebrate the beauty of intimacy in marriage, especially that of Solomon.

Amos

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

Date: Amos ministered in as early as 792 B.C. and as late as 753 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 at least 31 years before the 722 B.C. exile of the North and over 150 years before the 605-587 B.C. exile of the South. The events of his time are recorded in 2 Kings 14:21-15:7.

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 wickedness throughout the Promised Land. Amos reveals that the people of God 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. Also, the wicked were hating and persecuting the righteous and the prophets of God.

Purpose: To teach Judah that judgment was coming against her unless repentance took place.

Outline:

- 1:1. God's people are judged, along with the nations surrounding them.
- 3:9. Announcements against God's people.
- 7:1. Visions against God's people.
- 9:11. The promise that God's people will later be blessed above the nations.

Jonah

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

Date: 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.

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

Purpose: 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 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 is saved.
- 4:1. Jonah is angry at God's grace to the Ninevites

Hosea

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

Date: 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., Sennacherib, the Assyrian, had seriously threatened the existence of Jerusalem under King Hezekiah. Hosea's book was written to urge Hezekiah and Judah's people to respond to the Lord in faithfulness in order to avoid that and further, future disaster. The events of his time are recorded in 2 Kings 15-18.

Purpose: 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 God's people in the Promised Land.

Outline:

- 1:1. Symbolic experience of judgment and salvation.
- 4:1. Prophetic announcements of judgment.
- 9:10. Historical reflections of judgment and salvation.
- 14:1. A call to repentance and thus the renewal of blessing.

Isaiah

Author: Isaiah, a prophet, son of a man named Amoz. He lived in the southern kingdom, Judah.

Date: Isaiah lived and ministered in Judah in this range of years: 740-686 B.C. The events of his time are recorded in 2 Kings 15:1-20:21.

Historical setting: Isaiah 1:1 tells us that Isaiah ministered during the reigns of these kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, who reigned in this range of years: 767-686 B.C. 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: 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.
- 40:1. Isaiah's response to the coming Babylonian crisis of 605-538 B.C.

Micah

Author: Micah.

Date: Micah lived and ministered in Judah in this range of years: 742-686 B.C. The events of his time are recorded in 2 Kings 15:23-20:21.

Historical setting: Micah 1:1 tells us that Micah ministered during the reigns of these kings of Judah: Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, who reigned in this range of years: 742-686 B.C. 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: To encourage Judah's leaders to repent of their sins that would lead to destruction of the Promised Land and exile, and to look ahead in faith to God for His merciful restoration of the people 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 after their exile to Babylon.
- 6:1. God's just case for Judah's exile.
- 7:7. Hope in God's merciful, future restoration.

Jeremiah

Author: Jeremiah was from Anathoth, a town in Benjamin that was near Jerusalem. Jeremiah was a priest (of the tribe of Levi) who was called to be a prophet (1:1).

Date: Jeremiah lived and ministered in Jerusalem (and then in Egypt) from 626-585 B.C. 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 626 B.C. He preached to the people during the years of its last five kings: Josiah (640-609), Jehoahaz (609), Jehoiakim (609-598), Jehoiachin (598-597), and Zedekiah (598-586). At the time of the final exile (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: To let the the Judahites in exile 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:

- 1:1. Jeremiah's ministry from 626-622 B.C. under King Josiah.
- 21:1. Jeremiah's ministry from 598-597 B.C. under King Zedekiah.
- 35:1. Jeremiah's ministry from 609-598 B.C. under King Jehoiakim.
- 37:1. More of Jeremiah's ministry from 598-597 B.C. under King Zedekiah.
- 39:1. Jeremiah's ministry from the fall of Jerusalem to Egypt (587-585 B.C.).

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: Zephaniah's ministry was in Judah during the reign of King Josiah (640-609 B.C.), and it is likely that it was before (and an impetus to) Josiah's reforms of 628-622 B.C. Thus, a good range for the date for the book is 640-622 B.C.

Historical setting: Josiah was the fifth-to-last king of Judah, who reigned as the nation headed into its three exiles to 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. Yet, Babylon was on the rise, and would defeat Assyria in 612 B.C. King Josiah's father, Amon, and grandfather, Manasseh, were an unfaithful and wicked rulers, and Josiah's first years as a young king were not marked by the faithfulness he would later exhibit. Perhaps the preaching of Zephaniah was one cause for Josiah's turning to the Lord and progressive reforms, which began in 628 B.C.

Purpose: 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 is coming against the nations, and especially Judah.
- 2:4. Judgment is coming against foreign nations.
- 3:1. Judgment and salvation is coming for Judah.

Nahum

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

Date: 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 exiles to 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: Nahum wrote his book so that Judahites would acknowledge God's destruction of Nineveh and blessing for 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: 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, along with others from the royal family and nobility, to Babylon, to serve in the court of the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar. Additional exiles to Babylon of more Israelites 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 stays in Babylon after it was conquered by the Persians in 539 B.C., and serves in the court of the Persian king, Darius (aka Cyrus).

Purpose: 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: Likely from 605-600 B.C., during the reign of Jehoiakim. The events of his time are recorded in 2 Kings 23:36-24:6.

Historical setting: Habakkuk ministered in Judah during its last years before its main (the middle one) exile to Babylon—that of 597 B.C. King Jehoiakim, was never faithful to the Lord.

Purpose: To teach the Judahites how to react to the Babylonian troubles of 605-600 B.C. through Habakkuk's experiences.

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 later judgment of them.
- 3:1. Prayer, praise, and submission to God's plan.

Joel

Author: Joel.

Date: Likely written between the first (605 B.C.) and third (586 B.C.) exiles of Judah, during the reigns of Jehoiakim (609-598), Jehoiachin (598-597 B.C.), and Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.). The events of his time are recorded in 2 Kings 24:1-25:21.

Historical setting: Joel ministered in Judah during its last years, from its first exile in 605 B.C. to its last (third) exile in 586 B.C. During this time, there were no faithful kings in Judah, and little faithfulness in the Promised Land.

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

Outline:

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

Obadiah

Author: Obadiah.

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

Historical setting: Joel most likely writes immediately after the final exile, 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: 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. Edom's future judgment.
- 1:15. Judah's future restoration to the Promised Land.

Lamentations

Author: Jeremiah.

Date: Likely written around 585 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: 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.

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 exile.

Date: 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 exile, in 597 B.C. We can see the account of this exile in 2 Kings 24:8-17. However, the third exile, of 586 B.C. (and the one in which Jerusalem and the temple are 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: 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.

Ezra & Nehemiah

Date of Events in the Books: 538 - 432 B.C.

Date of writing: 430 - 400 B.C.

Author: Ezra, with some writing from Nehemiah.

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: to show the divine directives behind the restoration works of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah in the Promised Land, and the need to continue them.

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 celebrations of the goodness of restoration from exile.
- Nehemiah 13:1. The reforms recorded in this book are to be continued.

Note on the historical dates in the book:

- Ezra 1 - 3. 538 - 537 B.C.
- Ezra 4:1-5 and 4:24. 536 - 520 B.C.
- Ezra 4:6-23. 485 - 460 B.C.
- Ezra 5 - 6. 520 - 515 B.C.
- Ezra 7 - 10. 458 - 457 B.C.
- Nehemiah 1 - 13:5. 445 - 444 B.C.
- Nehemiah 13:6 - end. 433 - 432 B.C.

Haggai

Author: Haggai, the prophet.

Date: 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: 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: 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 dashes 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: 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: 472-444 B.C.

Historical setting: Many of God's people returned from exile 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: 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: 458-433 B.C.

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

Purpose: the late 4th-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 them.

Matthew

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

Date: 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 there (among other places) 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: 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, teaching them 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.
- b. To teach the Jewish Christians in Antioch that they were right to receive into the Church Gentiles who came to faith in Jesus.
- c. 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 members 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 properly identified as king who is son of David and Son of God.
- 17:14. Jesus teaches on the values to be prized in His kingdom: those of humility and forgiveness, and not glory.
- 21:1. The triumphal entry of the king, Jesus, into Jerusalem, and the opposition of the Jewish leadership against Jesus, 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.

Luke

Author: Luke, the traveling companion of Paul. A document of Church history indicates that he was a native of Antioch in Syria. Luke is a doctor (Colossians 4:14) and first met 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 (Acts 16:8-11). 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. 66 (2 Timothy 4:11).

Date: A.D. 60.

Luke's original audience: 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: Luke writes his Gospel:

- a. To encourage Theophilus, a young church member and government official in Rome, to speak up in the Roman court for Paul and the Church, even if it cost him his position, power, prestige, and wealth. Luke does this by teaching Theophilus (from the life and teachings of Jesus) 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).
- b. 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.
- c. To explain to Theophilus that the massive rejection of Jesus, especially from the Jews, was illogical.
- d. To answer the question: "What is the character and composition of Christianity and the Church?"

Outline:

- 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.

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. 65-66), 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. 66, 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: A.D. 69, shortly after the martyrdom of Peter, in Rome.

Mark's original audience: the church in Rome @A.D. 69..

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 king and Son of God, who had come to earth to bless His people.

Purpose: Mark writes his Gospel to teach the Gentile Christians in the church in Rome that they should not hesitate to believe that Jesus is the divine king and Son of God sent from heaven to bless His people (the true caesar), even though His own people, the Jews, had rejected Him. He also writes so that the Jewish Christians in Rome would unite with and not think themselves above the Gentile Christians. He makes this second point by highlighting that it was the Jews who shamefully put Jesus to death and that "children" in the Faith/Gentiles were highly regarded and received by Jesus.

Outline:

- 1:1. Jesus introduced by Mark and the Father as the divine king and Son of God.
- 1:14. Jesus' ministry in Galilee, showing Him to be divine king and Son of God.
- 8:27. Jesus declared divine king and Son of God by Peter and the Father, along with Jesus' predictions of His death and resurrection in Jerusalem.

- 11:1. Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem before His death, showing Him to be divine king and son of God.
- 15:1. Roman declarations that Jesus is divine king and Son of God.
- 15:40. The burial and resurrection of the divine king and Son of God.

Acts

Author: Luke, the traveling companion of Paul. A document of Church history indicates that he was a native of Antioch in Syria. Luke is a doctor (Colossians 4:14) and first met 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 (Acts 16:8-11). 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. 66 (2 Timothy 4:11).

Date: A.D. 62.

Luke's original audience: 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 a lot of sense of the emphases in this book were it the case that Theophilus were in Rome, with a voice among the court of Nero, the Roman Emperor from A.D. 54-68. As with Luke, the Church as a whole is a secondary audience.

Purpose: 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 should be protected by the Roman government, as they pose no threat to it, and receive unjust abuse from Jews and others.

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 them.

4. No amount of persecution—and not even death—will stop the Church from spreading its message about Jesus.

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 to and the spreading of Christianity through him and others, despite the persecution and injustice they've 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 for mentions of him). He is not the brother of John. He is *not* the apostle, who was the brother of John and son of Zebedee. James was a leader of the church in Jerusalem at least in the 30s and 40s. Paul, soon after his conversion, met with him and Peter in Jerusalem (Galatians 1:19). James gave 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: A.D. 45-48, from Jerusalem.

James's original audience: Jewish Christians, many of whom were former residents of Jerusalem who had been scattered from Jerusalem when persecution broke out against the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem in A.D. 44 (Acts 12). James was writing as a pastor to his scattered flock and to other Jewish Christians who were longtime residents of the communities outside of Jerusalem to which the Jerusalem Christians had fled.

Purpose: James writes to encourage the primarily Jewish church congregations in Palestine to rejoice in their recent challenges of dispossession (from Jerusalem) and of treating each other (whether rich, poor, helpless, or powerful) in their churches with love, understanding that their perseverance in these tests would produce in them Christian maturity.

Outline:

- 1:1. Trials bring spiritual maturity as we persevere through them.
- 1:18. God's Word is implanted in believers and produces the following deeds of love toward our brothers and sisters in the Church.
- 2:1. Loving mercy toward poor believers (not favoritism toward the strong).
- 3:1. Loving tongues that don't curse each other.

- 3:12. Humility and kindness between rich and poor believers (not envy toward rich believers nor the oppression of poor believers).
- 5:7. Patience, compassion, and mercy to each other amid suffering.

1 Thessalonians

Author: Paul, the apostle.

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

Paul's original audience: 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 for three successive Sabbaths in the Jewish synagogue there. Jealous Jews soon 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, from Corinth (Acts 18:5).

Purpose: Paul writes to the Thessalonian church to extend his relationship with them, to encourage them in their exemplary faith in the midst of the persecution they faced, and to encourage them to act in a holy way in their bodies, knowing that their bodies will be resurrected at the next event to come: the return of Jesus in judgment. Lastly, he writes to encourage them to live at peace with each other and with the nonbelievers around them.

Outline:

- 1:1. Paul's commendation and his recounting of their loving relationship.
- 4:1. Paul's instructions about self-controlled, respectable living inside and outside the Church, in light of the return of Jesus and their physical resurrection.

2 Thessalonians

Author: Paul, the apostle.

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

Paul's original audience: Paul and Silas had first arrived in Thessalonica (northern Greece today, part of what was Macedonia at that time) in Acts 17:1-10. The church started through Paul's preaching for three successive Sabbaths in the Jewish synagogue there. Jealous Jews soon 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, from Corinth (Acts 18:5). This letter is a short follow up to Paul's first letter to this church.

Purpose: Paul writes 2 Thessalonians to encourage the Thessalonian Christians to persevere through persecution, by reminding them of the justice, relief, and glory that Christ's Second Coming will bring.

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 persecution of this era is described.
- 3:13. Christians should hold firm in doctrine, practice their faith, and work hard in their vocations.

Galatians

Author: Paul, the apostle.

Date: 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 audience: 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: Paul writes Galatians to dissuade the churches of Galatia from believing that obedience to the Jewish ceremonial law (including circumcision) was necessary for one to be righteous/justified in the eyes of God. 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 believing, being an heir and son of God, and a keeping of the moral law, which is the fruit of the Spirit.

Outline:

- 1:1. Paul establishes the authority of his apostleship.
Paul's apostleship was by the authority of Jesus and the Church; thus, Paul established that he possessed and taught the true gospel.
- 2:15. Justification before God is by faith.
Faith in Jesus, and not obedience to the ceremonial law, results in justification.
- 3:1. Abraham.
Abraham was justified by faith in God's promise of children and an inheritance; law obedience did not accomplish this for him. One can only become justified and a child of God (and thus an heir of eternal life) through faith in God's promises of these things in the gospel.
- 5:1. Living by the Spirit.
Encouragement to live by the Spirit, who brings saving faith and produces the fruit of the moral law in a person, and not to live by the sinful nature, which tries to be justified by the works of the ceremonial law, and produces obviously sinful acts.

Philippians

Author: Paul, the apostle.

Date: 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 of this book: 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 audience: 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 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 had 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 promotion by some in their church of the necessity of circumcision. 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:

- 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 eliminates pride and disunity in the Church.
- 3:1. Circumcision.
Righteousness is not by circumcision and 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: 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 audience: Paul had first arrived in Corinth in A.D. 51. 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. Paul stayed in Corinth 18 months (Acts 18:11).

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 resurrection (of Jesus and of all men), and 3) to encourage the church to be generous in their collection for the impoverished Jerusalem church.

Outline:

- 1:1. Pride and divisions.
(Paul addresses various forms of 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 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 resurrection of Jesus and all.]
- 16:1. Giving to the Jerusalem church.
(Paul encourages the church's generous giving for the relief of the impoverished Jerusalem church.)

2 Corinthians

Author: Paul, the apostle.

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

Paul's original audience: Paul had first arrived in Corinth in A.D. 51. 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. Paul stayed in Corinth 18 months (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's suffering and Spirit-powered, life-changing, gospel ministry.
- 8:1. Give generously for the impoverished Jerusalem church.
- 10:1. Paul v. the "super apostles."
(humility & suffering v. boastfulness)

Romans

Author: Paul, the apostle.

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

Paul's original audience: 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 (Acts 19:21) the church at Rome, with this itinerary: from Ephesus, he would travel to Macedonia,¹ Achaia,² Jerusalem, and then Rome.

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 law in justification and righteousness.

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 justifying righteousness, but of condemnation of 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 law, apart from God's Spirit, causes men to sin more; but by God's Spirit, men can live according to the law (not unto salvation, but to a practical righteousness).

- 9:1. The Jews' failure to obtain righteousness through 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.

Ephesians

Author: Paul, the apostle.

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

Paul's original audience: Paul first evangelized and started the 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). 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 faced wild beasts (1Corinthians 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 Thessalonica, Philippi, and Berea) and spending three more months with the church in Corinth (and perhaps Athens, too), 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.

Occasion of writing: Paul wrote Ephesians during his imprisonment in Rome of A.D. 60-62 (Acts 28). Paul apparently had received word that the Ephesian church was divided between the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians, and that church members in various stations in life were unsure of how to relate to one another (parents to kids, husbands to wives, employees to bosses, etc.).

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.

Purpose of the letter: Paul writes Ephesians to exhort the Jewish-Gentile church in Ephesus to be unified (*especially between Jewish and Gentile believers*) through growing in the knowledge of Christ and through loving one another.

Outline:

- 1:1. Jewish and Gentile Christians both were predestined by God to be adopted as His sons.
- 1:15. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians' understanding of this.
- 2:1. Jewish and Gentile Christians both were children of God's wrath, but now are both recipients of God's kindness.
- 2:11. Jewish and Gentile Christians were united into one body through the cross of Christ, for by it, Jesus fulfilled and thereby abolished the ceremonial law, which was a marker that divided Jews and Gentiles.
- 3:1. God's uniting Jew and Gentile in the Church was God's eternal plan.
- 3:14. Paul's second prayer for the Ephesians' understanding of this.
- 4:1. Jewish and Gentile Christians are to build up the church and grow together as one, united body through the use of their spiritual gifts.
- 4:17. Jewish and Gentile Christians are to love each other through acting from their "new [Christian] selves," in their relationships with one another.
- 5:21. Jewish and Gentile Christians are to love each other (and those outside the Church) through appropriate submission in various relationships.
- 6:10. Jewish and Gentile Christians are to fight against the devil to be unified and loving to one another in the church.

Colossians

Author: Paul, the apostle.

Date: 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 the letters to the Ephesians and to Philemon.

Paul's original audience: 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. 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 (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 church in Ephesus (and perhaps this messenger was Epaphras). 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 they adopted pagan religions' ideas such as angel veneration, the navigation of spiritual and heavenly beings, pagan 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 pursue knowing Christ.

Outline:

- 1:1. Initial greetings and Paul's establishing of his relationship with the Colossian church.
- 1:9. Paul's assurance to the church that he's praying for the particular things for which they're striving: spiritual wisdom, understanding, and power over evil ways.
- 1:15. Look to Jesus, the creator, and not to created, spiritual beings, for spiritual resurrection, reconciliation with God, and peace with God, for through His cross and resurrection from the dead, He provides these things for you.
- 1:24. Look to Jesus above for all spiritual wisdom, knowledge, understanding, life, and power, as all these things are hidden in Christ, not in human philosophies, which are errant and powerless.
- 3:1. Look to Jesus, therefore, to rid yourselves of your former, evil ways and to walk in His ways, with love for one another.
- 4:7. Final greetings.

Philemon

Author: Paul, the apostle.

Date: 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 the letters to the Ephesians and to the Colossians.

Paul's original audience: Philemon, a Christian man who was 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.

Titus

Author: Paul, the apostle.

Date: 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 audience: Paul writes to Titus, a pastor and his (former) apprentice, his traveling companion, and his fellow gospel worker [off and on, from the time of their visiting Jerusalem 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 to Cretans, and to instead 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 purpose 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: 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), 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 Macedonian/Greek peninsula, presumably on his way back to Rome (2 Timothy 1:8).

Paul's original audience: 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 and certainly Miletus (2 Timothy 2:20), 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 writing to Timothy, whom he had left to pastor the Ephesian church. Paul had heard a report of the

Ephesian church and knew there to be harmful men in the church 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 (probably to gain prominence in the church, having Jewish lineage), taught 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, and continuing in his sincere faith and love, as an example to the church.

Outline:

- 1:1. Timothy must rebuke the troublemaking false teachers in Ephesians, whose aim is 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 don’t have.
- 4:1. The troublemaking false teachers are 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 saving work of Jesus.
- 5:3. Instructions about caring for widows in the church.
- 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 troublemaking false teachers.

2 Timothy

Author: Paul, the apostle.

Date: 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 the next year, in A.D. 66. Paul writes from prison (1:8, 12, 2:9, 4:16-18), knowing his death is near (4:6).

Paul’s original audience: *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, 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:

- 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, and pursue 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 personal 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 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 (A.D. 60-62, Acts 28), as he identifies himself as a friend of Paul's spiritual son, Timothy (13:23). The book shows a fluent knowledge of Paul's teaching in his epistles. Yet its structure, lack of an introductory greeting (very prominent in Paul's letters), and the Greek used seem very non-Pauline.

Date: A.D. 66, after Paul's death in Rome and before Peter's arrival there in A.D. 67.

Original audience: 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:

- 1:1. Confidently believe in Christ, even through suffering, for He is the Creator God, heavenly king, superior to (created) angels, and 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 the 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 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: A.D. 67.

Peter's original audience: 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 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 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.

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: A.D. 68.

Peter's original audience: 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, just as Paul's had two years prior (1:13-15). 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 strongly emphasize two things: 1. that Jesus will come back (bringing with Him final judgment and a cleansing of the earth into 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.

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: A.D. 69.

Jude's original audience: a church Jude knew (and maybe had pastored), 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 indication in the book itself or in church history of the location of this church.

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: there were wolves among their church.
- 1:5. The sins of the wolves, and proof (from Old Testament history) of their eventual, 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.

3 John

Author: John, the apostle.

Date: A.D. 85, and probably the first of the three letters, 1-3 John.

John's original audience: Gaius, a friend of John, and member of 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 (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: a member of the church, Diotrophes, upon John's absence, was dividing the church 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 (vv. 9-10).

Purpose of the letter: John writes to denounce Diotrophes and to tell Gaius not to imitate nor fear him.

Outline:

- 1:1. John's encouragement to Gaius for his faithfulness and his welcoming of those John had sent to the church.
- 1:9. John calls attention to the evil Diotrophes is 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.

2 John

Author: John, the apostle.

Date: A.D. 85. Probably sent at the same time as 3 John, and delivered by Demetrius (3 John 12).

John's original audience: the church in Ephesus.

Historical situation: *the same as 1 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, 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 3 John: a member of the church, Diotrophes, upon John's absence, was dividing the church 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 (and that Diotrophes was trying to lead them from), and instruct them to show no hospitality to those who carried 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 show hospitality to him.
- 1:12. John's final greetings, expressing his plans to come soon to the church.

1 John

Author: John, the apostle.

Date: A.D. 85. This letter is the third of the three of 1-3 John. While 3 John and 2 John had been sent while Diotrophes 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 Diotrophes and a group with him had left the church, schismatically (1 John 2:19).

John's original audience: the church in Ephesus, which no longer contained the troublemaker and wolf, Diotrophes, and his schismatic group.

Occasion of writing: the Ephesian church's wolf-among-the-sheep, Diotrophes, 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 Diotrophes (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 Diotrophes and his fellow schismatics (2:19), assuring those who remained that they were the children of God who had eternal life, and that those in the group who had left were not.

Outline:

- 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, 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 Diotrophes and his group had.
- 4:1. Not all who teach in the Church teach things from the Spirit of God. Some, like Diotrophes, 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 Diotrefes) had eternal life.

John

Author: John, the apostle.

Date: A.D. 90.

John’s original audience: Roman Christians (and Roman unbelievers in the church), along with a few Jewish Christians (and Jewish unbelievers in the church), probably living a good distance from Israel, in a Roman-dominated area.

Occasion of writing: in the late A.D. 80s, representatives of the Jews went to the Roman government and made it clear to them 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 letter: the primarily Roman Christian audience of @A.D. 90 should grab hold of eternal life by believing in Jesus and enduring in their belief, even though it meant for them receiving the same persecution at the hands of the Jews that Jesus had received from them, for Jesus had adequately proven that He was God and creator, sent by the Father from heaven, and was the only giver of eternal life.

Outline:

- 1:1. Jesus, God and creator, came to earth to give eternal life, but was rejected by the Jews.
- 2:1. Jesus’ rejection by the Jews, despite His signs (miracles) and His teaching that prove He came from God and was the giver of life.
- 13:1. Jesus’ preparing His disciples to be rejected by the Jews after His death, because of their faith in Him.

- 18:1. Jesus’ rejection by the Jews unto death.
- 20:1. Jesus’ resurrection and His commissioning of His disciples to preach of Him.

Revelation

Author: John, the apostle.

Date: A.D. 95.

John’s original audience: 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 offer him worship. Were they to declare the emperor divine and 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 and patiently endure 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 in their lives and in their deaths, and 5) that Jesus will reward them for their faithfulness.

Outline:

- 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 coming 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.