

Study Notes



New Testament Survey

By David O'Steen
Hope Bible Church
www.hopebiblechurchga.com

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Overview of the Bible

The Bible (Latin *biblia*, Greek *biblios* = book) is one book made up of many different books. It has unity and diversity just as its Author is one God in three persons. God used about 40 different writers (various backgrounds and locations) over a period of about 1,500 years to write the 66 books of the Bible. These books cover 7,000 years of human history and give glimpses into eternity past and future. The Bible is not everything God knows, but it is everything God wants us to know about Him and His plan and purposes. The revelation was given progressively. That 66 books make up one book without error or contradiction proves that the Bible is given by inspiration of God.

There are 1,189 chapters, 31,101 verses, and 791,328 words in the King James Bible. Not only did God inspire and preserve His words so that we have a perfect copy of it today in our own language, He led men in the proper arrangement of its books as well the chapter and verse divisions so that the Bible is laid out in a divine order perfectly designed for our edification. Chapter and verse divisions greatly enhance our ability to search the scriptures. With the invention of computers searching the scripture is easier than it has ever been and yet it is probably more neglected than it ever has been!

The Bible is a big book, an inexhaustible gold mine of divine revelation. We could spend a lifetime studying it in detail and never learn it all but we should seek to learn as much as possible. The purpose of learning the Bible is not just knowledge, but the knowledge of God. The Bible is God's perfect revelation of Himself to man. It is important in Bible study to have a basic overview of the Bible in our heart and mind because that will greatly help us in studying its details. Sometimes we can't see the forest because of the trees. It is best to start with a panoramic view of the whole Bible before we examine its books, chapters, verses, and words. A key in Bible study is to understand the larger context. In other words, a verse must be studied in light of the surrounding passage, the passage in light of the chapter, the chapter in light of the book, the book in light of the testament, and the testament in light of the whole Bible.

There is unity in the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16):

- It reveals one God – Gen. 1:1; Jn. 1:1; 1 Jn. 5:7; Rev. 22:21
- It reveals one main purpose – the glory of God
- It reveals one main theme – the person and work of Christ
- It reveals one main goal – the establishment of God's kingdom on the earth
- It reveals one plan of redemption – by the blood of Christ
- It reveals one set of moral principles (Paul teaches 9 of 10 commandments, no sabbath)
- It reveals one main enemy – Gen. 3:1; Rev. 12:9
- It reveals a harmonious unfolding of progressive revelation – changes, no contradictions

There are divisions in the Bible (2 Tim. 2:15):

Failure to acknowledge the divisions God put in His word is the root cause of all manner of heresies (1 Cor. 11:19). The most obvious division is between the OT (39) and NT (27). However, it is not correct to say that the whole OT was the Law and the whole NT is grace or that the OT was for the Jews and the NT is for the church (only Rom. – Phil. Was written TO the body of Christ). The main division is not between the OT and NT but between the prophetic kingdom program of God's earthly people (Israel) and the mystery program of His heavenly people (Body of Christ). The burden and emphasis of the prophecy spoken to Israel is the King and His kingdom. Prophecy concerns that which was SPOKEN since the world began through all the prophets (Acts 3:19-21). The burden and emphasis of the mystery revealed through the apostle Paul is the spiritual organism, the Body of Christ. The mystery concerns that which was kept SECRET since the world began (Rom. 16:25). The things that were SPOKEN by the prophets since the world began can not be the same things that were kept SECRET and hid from the prophets since the world began.

- **Prophecy** - Earth, from the foundation of the world, Christ the King, Israel over the Gentiles
- **Mystery** - Heaven, before the foundation of the world, Christ the Head of one Body, neither

Basic outline of the Bible according to its major theme, The King and His Kingdom:

- **OT** – promised and prophesied
- **Gospels** –presented and rejected
- **Acts** – re-offered and rejected, transition
- **Pauline Epistles** –postponed, mystery of one Body revealed
- **Hebrew Epistles** – kingdom program resumed
- **Revelation** – kingdom established

The words “covenant” and “testament” are related but distinct (for example a testament requires blood, but a covenant does not, Heb. 9:15-20). Technically, the OT began with the OC in Exodus 19. The NT began with the shed blood of Christ on the cross (Matt. 26:28). The NC which will be made on the basis of the NT will not be made until the 2nd coming of Christ (Heb. 8:6-13). Both covenants are made with Israel. Nowhere in scripture is the church said to be under a covenant.

The four Gospels as well as the first part of Acts is not about this present age of grace because it was a mystery revealed through Paul. Christ conducted His earthly ministry under the Law. The disciples in early Acts lived by the law (Acts 21:20; 22:12). Though Christ abolished “the law of commandments contained in ordinances” on the cross, it was not revealed until Paul. However, beginning in Matthew 1 everything is moving toward the NT and therefore it is proper to begin the books of the NT with Matthew. Although the body of Christ is not under a covenant, we are saved by the blood of the NT (2 Cor. 3:6).

Genesis begins the OT because it preparatory to giving of the OT. Beginning in Genesis 1 everything is moving toward the call of Abraham and the formal giving of the Law in Exodus. It is

proper to call the books written before Matthew the OT (2 Cor. 3:14). The OT is primarily about the nation of Israel. God devotes just 11 chapters to the first 2,000 of history. He gets to Abraham quickly and from Genesis 12 – Malachi, Gentiles are only mentioned in connection with Israel. We must not interpret this to mean that God did not care about the Gentiles. Though He “gave up” (Rom. 1) on the Gentile world in Genesis 11, He promised to bless them through Israel. Israel was to be a witness of the one true God in the midst of universal idolatry, be an example to the Gentiles of the blessedness of serving the one true God, be the instruments to receive and preserve the scripture, and produce the Messiah.

Jesus Christ taught that the OT was inspired scripture (John 5:39) and He confirmed the 39 books of its canon.

- ✓ Matt. 23:35 – Abel was killed in Genesis 4 and Zacharias in 2 Chron. 24. In the Hebrew OT the first book was Genesis and the last book was 2 Chronicles. In this verse, Jesus confirms the whole OT canon. Same books, different arrangement and order.
- ✓ Luke 24:27, 44 – The Hebrew OT was divided into 3 groups. Paul refers to the law, prophets, and Psalms in his sermon in Acts 13 (v.26-41).

There is nothing wrong with the order of OT books in our King James Bible. They are laid out in a practical manner for English readers (the layout of the KJB revealed in Isaiah):

- 1) Law (5, Genesis – Deuteronomy)
- 2) History (12, Joshua – Esther)
- 3) Wisdom (5, Job – Song of Solomon)
- 4) Prophecy (5 and 12, Isaiah – Daniel, Hosea - Malachi)

Christ gave a pre-authentication of the NT (Jn. 14:26 = Gospels; 16:12-14 = Epistles). Peter referred to Paul's writings as scripture (2 Pet. 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:16).

Overview of the New Testament

The New Testament contains 27 books, 260 chapters, 7,957 verses, and 180,751 words.

A basic outline of the 27 books:

- I. The Gospels (Matthew – John)
- II. The Acts of the Apostles
- III. The Pauline Epistles (Romans – Philemon)
- IV. The Hebrew Epistles (Hebrews – Jude)
- V. The Revelation

It is important to understand that the books are not arranged chronologically, but rather according to a dispensational order:

- **Times Past (Eph. 2:11-12)** – Distinction, Gentiles blessed through rise and instrumentality of Israel
 - **But Now (Eph. 2:13-18)** – No distinction, Gentiles blessed through the fall of Israel, MYSTERY
 - **Ages to Come (Eph. 2:4-7)** – Distinction once again, Israel inherits the earth, Body of Christ the heavenly places
- I. **Matthew – Acts = Times Past** – The prophesied King and His kingdom offered and rejected, transition away
 - II. **Romans – Philemon = But Now** – The revelation of the mystery
 - III. **Hebrews – Revelation = Ages to Come** – The resumption and consummation of the prophetic kingdom program of Israel

The Four Gospels

The four Gospels contain the historical record of the earthly ministry of Christ to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 15:24). While there are some applications for us in the Gospels we must be very careful because their primary doctrinal setting concerns the prophetic kingdom program of Israel. Christ did not come to reveal the mysteries that He later did from heaven through Paul (Eph. 3), but to confirm what He already promised to the Jewish fathers (Rom. 15:8). Why four books? In the Bible four is the number of the earth and the fourfold picture of our Lord's earthly ministry is the unveiling of a fourfold prophetic portrait of the greatest life ever spent on earth. The four Gospels present four different perspectives of the same Messiah.

1) Matthew emphasizes Christ as King

- a) Branch of David (Jer. 23:5)
- b) Behold thy King (Zech. 9:9)

2) Mark emphasizes Christ as the Servant

- a) my servant the BRANCH (Zech. 3:8)
- b) Behold... my servant (Zech. 3:8)

3) Luke emphasizes Christ as the Son of Man

- a) the man whose name is the BRANCH (Zech. 6:12)
- b) Behold the man (Zech. 6:12-13)

4) John emphasizes Christ as the Son of God

- a) the branch of the LORD (Isa. 4:2)
- b) Behold your God (Isa. 40:9)

There are features that are common to all four books but there are also distinctions. The four records do not contradict but rather compliment each other. There is no need to try and harmonize four different records. Each of the Gospel records has a different emphasis. Consider some examples of this from how the records open and close.

Lineage:

- 1) Matthew – His genealogy traced through the royal line back to Abraham
- 2) Mark – No genealogy, the record of His service begins immediately
- 3) Luke – His genealogy traced all the way back to Adam
- 4) John – No genealogy, a declaration that He is God

Ascension:

- 1) Matthew – No ascension recorded, as King of the Jews His place is on the earth
- 2) Mark – He ascended up to continue His work through His apostles
- 3) Luke – He was “carried up into heaven,” implying He ascended by the power of His Father
- 4) John – No ascension recorded, the omnipresent God

The Gospel According to Matthew

Matthew was a publican (tax collector) when Christ called him to be His disciple and then chose him to be one of the 12 apostles (Matt. 9:9; 10:1-7). He will be one of the 12 princes that will judge the 12 tribes of Israel in the Kingdom (Matt. 19:28). The book of Matthew was written by a Jewish apostle about a Jewish Christ and His Jewish Kingdom.

There are 23 direct quotes of the OT and 76 references to it in 28 chapters. The phrase “that it might be fulfilled” occurs 10 times, “which was spoken” occurs 14 times, and there are other similar phrases. The church which is the Body of Christ was a mystery hid in God until revealed through the apostle Paul (Eph. 3) and has to do with His eternal purpose for the heavenly places. Therefore, the book of Matthew is not written to or about the Body of Christ (neither are the other 3 Gospels). The events recorded by Matthew transpired under the dispensation of the LAW (Matt. 5:17-20; 8:4; 19:17; 23:1-3; 24:20).

Matthew presents Christ as the promised King (1:1, comp. Gen. 5:1). God made an everlasting covenant with Abraham who was the father of the Hebrew people (Gen. 12, 15, 17) and confirmed it to Isaac and Jacob. He promised to make of him a great nation and to give them a land. He also made an everlasting covenant with David concerning his throne and the kingdom (2 Sam. 7). Christ came to confirm the promises that God made to the Jewish fathers (Rom. 15:8). Notice the order in v.1.

- I. Jesus Christ as the Son of David (1-12), the kingdom proclaimed
- II. Jesus Christ as the Son of Abraham (13-28), the King rejected

The word "kingdom" is used 56 times. The term “kingdom of heaven” is unique to Matthew and is found 32 times. This is not talking about God’s kingdom in heaven but the God of heaven establishing His kingdom on the EARTH (6:10; Dan. 2:44; Jer. 23:5). The gospel of the kingdom is the good news that the promised kingdom was at hand. The 12 apostles preached the gospel of the kingdom without believing in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Lk. 9:1-6; 18:31-34).

The term “kingdom of God” is used 70 times in the NT (8 by Paul). It is found 5 times in Matthew and 50 times in the other 3 Gospels. God is an eternal King (1 Tim. 1:17) and as such he has an eternal kingdom. The kingdom of God is a general designation that could refer to the eternal and spiritual aspect of God’s kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is a specific designation that refers to the kingdom of God being established upon the earth. That is why the terms are used interchangeably (Matt. 16:27-28 with Lk. 9:27-28; 13:28-29; 14:15; 19:11; 21:31; 22:16-18; 23:51). Christ did not come to establish a spiritual kingdom like so many teachers claim because that has always existed. He came to establish His kingdom on the EARTH! Rejecting God’s commandment to rightly divide the word of truth, the covenant theologians have to “spiritualize” the literal promises that God made to the literal nation of Israel. They accuse dispensationalists of making Christ out to be failure because we teach the kingdom was postponed and will be established later. Christ did not fail, His people did. If you reject dispensational truth, you will make God out to be an unfaithful liar!

The Right of Jesus Christ to be the King:

- I. The Legal Right (1) – His royal lineage
- II. The Royal Right (2) – Born King of the Jews
- III. The Prophetic Right (3) – The prophesied forerunner
- IV. The Moral Right (4) – The righteous King
- V. The Legislative Right (5-7) – The law of the kingdom
- VI. The Miraculous Right (8-11) – The signs of the kingdom
- VII. The Pivotal Chapter (12) – Warning of the unpardonable sin
- VIII. The Preparation of the Disciples for His Rejection (13-26)
- IX. The Crucifixion of the King (27)
- X. The Resurrection of the King (28)

Concerning His earthly ministry, Matthew has two clear sections:

- 1) From that time Jesus began (4:17)
- 2) From that time forth began Jesus (16:21)

Many wrongly think that Christ began to reveal the present mystery age in chapter 13. The parables were about the mysteries of the KINGDOM, i.e. further revelation about the kingdom not found in the OT prophets. When Christ declared, “I will build my church” He was not revealing a new purpose but rather confirming the fact that He would accomplish what He came to do even though He must first be rejected (Matt. 16:13-17:2). From beginning to end, Matthew is all about the KINGDOM.

Mountain = Kingdom (Isa. 2:1-5). Significant mountains in Matthew:

- 1) The charter of the kingdom (Matt. 5-7) – Pure law and religion
- 2) The vision of the kingdom (Matt. 17:1-13) Suffering and then the glory
- 3) The signs of His coming kingdom (Matt. 24-25) – NOT the rapture of the Church!
- 4) The kingdom commission (Matt. 28:16-20) – NOT our commission!

The Gospel According to Mark

The Mark who wrote this book is the John mentioned in Acts 12 whose surname was Mark (Acts 12:12, 25). Mark was a Roman surname; his Hebrew name was John. He was the son of Mary (various Mary's in NT) and cousin to Barnabas. He was a kingdom disciple in Jerusalem that later transitioned into Paul's ministry (1 Pet. 5:12-13; Acts 12:25; 13:4-13; 15:36-41; Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11; Phile. 24).

The Acts period was a unique period of time in which there were two different programs operating simultaneously while one was phasing out (kingdom) and the other phasing in (Body). Evidently some of the kingdom disciples transitioned into the Body of Christ (Barnabas, Mark, Silas) while most of them stayed in the kingdom program. I personally think that Mark probably wrote his gospel before Acts 13 but definitely before Acts 15. While I cannot prove that he did, no one can prove that he didn't.

Mark emphasizes Christ as the perfect servant (10:45). It is fitting that Mark wrote with that emphasis because he was not an apostle but simply a minister (Acts 13:5). This book emphasizes the deeds of Christ more than His doctrine. It is a book of action not discussion. The word "immediately" is used 17 times and "straightway" 19 times. To get an idea of how fast paced this book just read through the first chapter.

Outline:

- I. The Servant (1:1-13)
- II. The Servant's Work (1:14-10:52)
- III. The Servant in Jerusalem (11-13)
- IV. The Servant Obedient unto Death (14-16)
- V. The Servant Continues His Work (16)

The Gospel According to Luke

The Gospel according to Luke presents Jesus Christ as the perfect man. When Christ was born into this world the eternal Word became flesh. He was God and yet He was man. Luke traces the genealogy of Christ all the way back to Adam. The phrase, "Son of man" occurs 26 times (19:10). It is the longest book in the NT with 24 chapters, 1,151 verses, and 25,944 words. Luke writes with great detail and a very human touch. All the words of scripture are the words of God but the different styles of the different human writers are still evident.

Who was Luke? He was a physician that evidently knew the Jewish apostles (Lk. 1:1-2) and became a faithful co-laborer of the apostle Paul (Acts 16:10; 20:5-6; chaps. 27-28; Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Phile. 24). Some think that he was a Gentile (Col. 4:10-14). If he was, he was the only writer of scripture that was a Gentile (Luke a Gentile name, Mark and Paul are Greek names but both were Jews). It is fitting that a physician would be the writer of the Gospel that emphasizes the humanity of Christ.

The book of Luke was addressed to a Gentile (1:1-4, name and title, Roman ruler) and therefore has more of a Gentile audience in mind (4:24-30). For example, explanations of Jewish customs and localities are given, which Jews would not have needed (22:1; 23:51). This does NOT mean that the mystery of this present age is revealed in Luke! It is still a record of the earthly ministry of Christ and the mystery was not revealed at that time. The kingdom program of Israel includes the salvation of the Gentiles (Lk. 2:10-11, 25-32). The mystery of this present age is not that Gentiles are being saved but that believing Jews and Gentiles are baptized by one Spirit into one Body. The Gentiles are not being blessed through Israel (as in prophecy) but WITHOUT Israel! The earthly ministry of Christ is also important to the Body of Christ. If Jesus Christ was not the promised Messiah, the Son of God, His death on the cross would not have accomplished our salvation (Rom. 1:1-5; 16:25-26). Paul quotes Luke (1 Tim. 5:17-18; 1 Cor. 11:24-25). The books of the NT were being copied, circulated, and recognized as scripture in the first century (canon not formed at religious councils in 3rd century as catholics claim).

God also used Luke to write the book of Acts after he wrote his Gospel (1:1). Comparing the last chapter of Luke with the first chapter of Acts clearly shows that Acts is the sequel to Luke (24:36-53; 1:1-11). The purpose of Acts is NOT to reveal the mystery but record the fall of Israel and the transition from the ministry of Peter to Paul. Luke records Paul doing the same signs as Peter (2 Cor. 12:12).

Jesus Christ, the Son of Man:

- I. His birth and childhood (1-2)
- II. The beginning of His ministry, genealogy, and temptation (3:1-4:13)
- III. His ministry in Galilee (4:14-9:50)
- IV. His journey to Jerusalem (9:51-19:27)
- V. In Jerusalem (19:28-21:38)
- VI. His rejection, suffering, and death (22-23)
- VII. His resurrection and ascension (24)

Unique features, most of which goes along with theme of the humanity of Christ:

- The first two chapters (birth of forerunner, birth of Christ, childhood)
- Emphasis on prayer of Christ (7 occasions unique) – expression of dependence on God
- Friend of sinners and outcasts (15:1-2) – examples of Zacchaeus, thief on cross
- Place of women, contrary to Jewish custom (Lk. 8:1-3; 23:27-28, 49)

- 4 hymns of praise unique to Luke:
 - 1) *Mary's (1:46-55)*
 - 2) *Zacharias (1:68-79)*
 - 3) *Simeon (2:29-32)*
 - 4) *Angelic host (2:14)*

- 11 parables unique to Luke:
 - 1) *Two Debtors (7:41)*
 - 2) *Good Samaritan (10:30-37)*
 - 3) *Importunate Friend (11:5-8)*
 - 4) *The Rich Fool (12:16-21)*
 - 5) *The Barren Fig Tree (13:6-9)*
 - 6) *The Lost Piece of Silver (15:8-9)*
 - 7) *The Prodigal Son (15:11-32)*
 - 8) *The Unjust Steward (16:1-8)*
 - 9) *The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31)*
 - 10) *The Importunate Widow (18:1-7)*
 - 11) *The Pharisee and the Publican (18:9-14)*

- 6 Miracles unique to Luke:
 - 1) *The Draught of Fishes (5:1-11)*
 - 2) *The Widows Son at Nain (7:11-16)*
 - 3) *The Woman with Spirit of Infirmary 18 Years (13:11-13)*
 - 4) *The Man with Dropsy (14:1-6)*
 - 5) *The Ten Lepers (17:11-19)*
 - 6) *The Healing of Malchus (22:50-51)*

The Gospel According to John

In the first three Gospels the Lord Jesus is presented as King, Servant, and the perfect Man. The incidents, words, and works are selected, in each Gospel, which support their emphasis. Matthew, Mark, and Luke present the Lord on the side of His perfect humanity. That is the reason for their being what is called "Synoptic" (same view) and for the marked difference between them and the fourth Gospel in which the presentation is on the side of His Deity (no genealogy, birth, temptation, agony in Gethsemane). The four Gospels do not contradict but compliment each other as together they present one portrait of our Lord. There is no need to try and harmonize them or separate the first three from the fourth. It seems obvious to me why John would be so distinct since he emphasizes Christ as God. Of course, Christ is seen as King, Servant, Man, and God in all four Gospels.

Writer: John was the son of Zebedee, a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee, and was the younger brother of James. The brothers worked with their father until Christ called them to follow Him. They were two of the twelve apostles that Christ chose on earth and sent to Israel with the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 19:28). Peter, James, and John are sometimes referred to as the "inner circle" because Christ seemed to set them apart from the twelve. He is known as the beloved disciple because in his Gospel he referred to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. He never refers to himself by name, perhaps because he was writing to glorify Christ.

Although the Gospel of John seems more compatible with Paul's epistles than the other three Gospels there is nothing in the scripture to suggest that John became an apostle to the Gentiles or the Body of Christ (Gal. 2:9). He wrote his epistles after his Gospel (much he says in his epistles is based on what he wrote in his Gospel) and there is doctrine in his epistles does not match doctrine in Paul's epistles (1 Jn. 2:24). The Gospel of John is a record of the earthly ministry of Christ and so irregardless of when it was written we know it does not reveal the mysteries that Christ later revealed through Paul from heaven. Things that are similar are not the SAME. It is easier to read Pauline doctrine into John than the other Gospels because of the emphasis on believing but we must be careful not to anticipate revelation.

When: Most commentaries say that John wrote his five books (Gospel, epistles, Revelation) in the 90's AD but that is tradition and cannot be proven from the scripture. For example, most think he was exiled on the Isle of Patmos in 95 AD but he said that the Lord sent him there to receive the book of Revelation (1:9). We KNOW from internal evidence that he wrote his Gospel before 70 AD (Jn. 5:2, note that it says "there IS", that pool would not have been there after 70 AD because that is when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem).

Theme: The Gospel according to John presents Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (10:22-33). There is a clear emphasis on the deity of Christ throughout the book (something in every chapter, 1:1, 14). The apostle John calls Christ the Word seven times (1:1, 14; 1 Jn. 1:1; 5:7; Rev. 19:13). Christ is the Word because He reveals and declares the invisible God to man (1:18). John plainly stated why he wrote the book (John 20:30-31). Many think that John is written primarily to the Gentiles but SIGNS are for the Jews (1 Cor. 1:22). Luke was actually the Gospel written for the

Gentiles which makes sense because he was a co-laborer with the apostle to the Gentiles. The profession of faith required to enter the kingdom is to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Matt. 16:16-19; Jn. 1:49; 6:69; 11:27; Acts 8:35-37). That is NOT a sufficient profession to be saved in this age! Yes, we need to know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, but specifically that He died for our sins, was buried, and rose again for our justification. Also, the gospel of the kingdom requires works to prove faith (Mk. 16:15-16; 1 Jn. 2:4; 5:13).

Key words: believe (101 times) and world (80 times) - The kingdom program of Israel has a world-wide scope (Ps. 22:27-28). Repentance is emphasized in the other Gospel records (not mentioned in John) but believing is emphasized in John. That is not contradictory but complimentary because those who truly believed on Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God also repented. The Gospel of John does not reveal the gospel of the grace of God (5:28-29; 15:1-10). That was revealed through Paul (Gal. 1:11-12).

Outline:

- 1) Prologue (1:1-14)
- 2) Witness of John the Baptist (1:15-34)
- 3) Public Ministry of Christ (1:35-12:50)
- 4) Private Ministry of Christ to His Own (13-17)
- 5) Sacrifice of Christ (18:1-19:42)
- 6) Manifestation of Christ in Resurrection (20)
- 7) Epilogue (21)

The Gospel according to John is marked by sevens which is fitting because seven is God's number of perfection. The most familiar are the seven "I am" statements of Christ ("I am the bread of life" etc. Ex. 3:14; Jn. 8:58) and the seven signs. Christ did many public signs but God inspired John to record seven (21:25). There was an eighth miracle after His resurrection but that was just for His disciples.

- 1) Water into wine (2:1-11)
- 2) Healing of nobleman's son (4:46-54)
- 3) Healing of the paralytic man (5:1-9)
- 4) Feeding of the 5000 (6:1-14) – recorded in all 4 gospels
- 5) Calming the storm (6:15-21)
- 6) Healing the blind man (9:1-7)
- 7) Raising Lazarus (11:38-45)

Acts of the Apostles

The human writer is Luke, whom Paul called “the beloved physician” (Col. 4:14). By simply comparing 1:1-2 with Luke 1:1-4, it is obvious that Luke is the writer. He wrote Acts sometime after Paul’s earliest ministry in Rome because that is where its history ends in 28 (early 60’s AD). Luke was with Paul until his death (2 Tim. 4:11) and we know Paul’s ministry continued after Acts 28. So why did Luke stop the record where he did? Because the book of Acts is the record of the fall and diminishing of Israel. God set His chosen nation aside through a transition as He called out a believing remnant from among them. Acts concludes with the end of that transition.

The Gospel of Luke records “all that Jesus BEGAN both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up”. The book of Acts takes up the history where the Gospel of Luke left off and records what Jesus CONTINUED to do from Heaven through the Holy Ghost sent down to empower the apostles. By comparing how the Gospel of Luke concluded (24:36-53) with how the book of Acts opens (1:1-12) it is clear that Acts is the sequel to Luke. Therefore, the same kingdom program of Israel recorded in the Gospels continues into the book of Acts.

The message to Israel in the Gospels was “repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”. The kingdom of heaven is a literal and visible kingdom that the God of heaven will establish on the earth (Dan. 2:44). Christ will rule from the throne of David in Jerusalem and Israel will be a kingdom of priests with authority over the nations. But, the Jews rejected their King and crucified Him. Many wrongly think that God set Israel aside at the time of the cross and began this present dispensation. However, consider what Jesus prayed from the cross (Lk. 23:34). Both Christ and Peter (Acts 3:17) said that the Jews crucified their King in ignorance and therefore they are given an opportunity to repent. If we are going to understand the book of Acts, we MUST understand that it records a renewed offer of the kingdom to the nation of Israel (Acts 3:19-21).

We must also understand that Acts is not a book of doctrine. It is a historical record of God moving from Israel to the Body of Christ; from the gospel of the kingdom to the gospel of the grace of God; from the ministry of Peter (1-12) to that of Paul (13-28). Acts is a TRANSITION book because one dispensation is fading out (Law) and another is fading in (Grace). The popular view of Acts is that it is primarily the record of the birth and growth of the church in this age. They assume that it contains the doctrine and practices of the church in its purest form. We are told that we should seek to follow the pattern in Acts.

Problems:

1. Which message should we preach to those who want to know how to be saved, Acts 2:37-38 or 16:30-31?
2. Where and to whom should we preach? Should we, like the 12, begin at Jerusalem (1:8)? Or should we, like Paul, depart from Jerusalem and go far hence to the Gentiles (22:21)?
3. Should we preach to the Jews only (11:19), to the Jews first and then the Gentiles (18:6), or to everybody alike?

4. Do we receive the Holy Ghost several years after repentance and baptism (2:4), immediately after repentance and baptism (2:38), after the apostles from Jerusalem lay hands on us (8:14-17), before baptism (10:44-48)?
5. How are we to handle money? Should we sell all our possessions and have all things common with the church (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35) or should we work to supply for our needs (20:33-34)?
6. Should we expect miraculous deliverance such as Peter's release from prison (Acts 12:7) or imprisonment in chains with Paul (Acts 26:27)?

Trying to use the book of Acts for doctrine can be very dangerous! This transitional book is like a bridge that takes us from one dispensation to another. We are not supposed to park on a bridge, we will get run over! Many religious groups go through Acts picking and choosing verses that seem to support their beliefs. The Campbellites teach that water baptism is essential to salvation and so latch on to 2:38. The Charismatics take the tongues in Acts 2 but ignore 2:44-45.

The correct view of Acts is that from beginning to end it is primarily the account of the fall of Israel. It explains step by step why the chosen people had to be set aside and salvation sent to the Gentiles apart from them (13:46; 18:6; 28:28). It reveals why the commission of the 12 had to be suspended and another apostle raised up to go to the Gentiles with the gospel of the grace of God.

Acts may be divided into 2 main sections. In the first part of the book Peter is prominent and the center of work is Jerusalem (1-12). In the second part of the book Paul is prominent and the center of the work is from Antioch (13-28). There are some distinctions about his ministry during the transition as he worked to get a remnant out of Israel.

Understanding the book of Acts is essential to understanding the New Testament. If we were to study Matthew-John and then go right into Romans, we would be very confused! The key to Bible study is right division (2 Tim. 2:15). The main division in the Bible is between Prophecy and Mystery (Acts 3:21 with Rom. 16:25). The book of Acts reveals the transition between the prophetic kingdom program of Israel and the mystery program of the Body of Christ. The mystery is not dealt with doctrinally in Acts because it was the Lord's will for Paul to make it known and not Luke.

Paul's Epistles

There is no doubt that the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Paul to write 13 epistles to the Body of Christ in this present age (13 associated with his separate ministry, see Acts 13:2). His name appears first in every epistle that he wrote (2 Thess. 3:17).

While all the Bible is for our learning and admonition we must consider what Paul says first because he is the spokesman to the Body of Christ in this present age. Christ made various appearances to him and progressively gave him "an abundance of revelations". I agree with the note in the Old Scofield Bible that says, "In his writings alone we find the doctrine, position, walk, and destiny of the church."

The major keys to Bible study are:

1. Believe the scriptures (1 Thess. 2:13)
2. Search the scriptures (Acts 17:11)
3. Compare the scriptures (1 Cor. 2:13)
4. Consider the scriptures written by Paul (2 Tim. 2:7)
5. Rightly divide the scriptures (2 Tim. 2:15)

Right division has to do with the study of dispensational truth. Moral truth never changes but dispensational truth is gradually revealed and brings about changes in God's dealings with men. The word "dispensation" is used four times in the Bible (1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 1:10; 3:2; Col. 1:25). A dispensation is simply a dealing out or dispensing of something. Ages are periods of time. Dispensations operate within ages but are not periods of time. Each dispensation is marked by: divine revelations, human spokesman, human responsibility, human failure, and divine judgment.

God dispensed grace to Paul to make known the mystery of the Body of Christ. Just as the law was dispensed through Moses (Jn. 1:17), so the mystery was dispensed through Paul. This mystery fulfilled or completed the word of God (Col. 1:24-26). Although the book of Revelation is placed as the last book of the Bible it is the consummation of OT prophecy and was probably written much earlier than most teachers claim. We are not told to rightly divide the Bible until Paul fulfilled the word of God with his last inspired epistle which, chronologically, was possibly the last book of the Bible that was written.

It is vital to understand that the dispensation of the mystery was not given to John the Baptist, Jesus (in His earthly ministry), or the twelve apostles. One of the keys to understanding the Bible is to understand the distinctiveness of Paul's apostleship and message. God gave us three chapters about Paul's conversion (Acts 9; 22; 26) as well as several other passages (Gal. 1:13-23; Phil. 3:4-8; 1 Tim. 1:12-16). Paul referred to the importance of his ministry in nearly every epistle that he wrote (Rom. 11:13; 15:16; 16:25; 1 Cor. 3:10; 4:16-17; 9:1, 17; 11:1; 14:37; 2 Cor. 12:1-4; 13:3; Gal. 1:1, 11-12, 2:5-9; Eph. 3:1-12; Phil. 3:17; 4:9; Col. 1:24-29; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:6; 1 Tim. 1:11-16; 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11-13, 15; 2:2, 7; 3:10; Titus 1:3).

Paul was not an egomaniac (Eph. 3:8)! Clearly, the Lord has placed an emphasis on the distinct apostleship and ministry of Paul because he is the spokesman for the Body of Christ to follow in this age. The specific doctrines for this age are revealed in Paul's epistles. We cannot base doctrine on the book of Acts because it is a history book that records a transition. Things are changing throughout the book of Acts!

Romans is first in order of his 13 epistles but it was not the first epistle that he wrote by inspiration of God (probably Thessalonians). The Pauline epistles are not arranged chronologically but according to a divine order for our edification (2 Tim. 3:16-17). He wrote 9 epistles to 7 churches and 4 epistles to 3 individuals.

Let's consider the order of the church epistles:

Salvation in Christ

- Romans - doctrine of salvation by faith
- 1 & 2 Corinthians - reproof for not living by the doctrine of Romans
- Galatians - correction for listening to doctrine not in line with Romans

Body of Christ

- Ephesians - doctrine of the body of Christ
- Philippians - reproof for not living by the doctrine of Ephesians
- Colossians - correction for listening to doctrine not in line with Ephesians

Coming of Christ

1 & 2 Thessalonians - doctrine, reproof, and correction concerning the coming of the Lord

Taken together these epistles provide instruction in righteousness for the present age. The epistles to Timothy and Titus concern the proper order for the church. The second epistle to Timothy deals with the apostasy of the last days. The epistle to Philemon is fittingly placed last because it illustrates the doctrines of Paul's epistles through a real-life situation.

Romans

Romans is the 45th book of the Bible and it is the first one that we come to that was written directly to Gentiles by the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13). Without the book of Acts demonstrating God's transition away from Israel to Paul's special ministry among the Gentiles how strange it would be to go from the Gospel records right into an epistle to the Romans from an apostle with a Gentile name!

The apostle Paul wrote this epistle around 60 A.D. from Corinth during his 3 month stay in Greece after his departure from Ephesus (Acts 20:1-3). It was not his first inspired epistle but it is placed first in order because it is the foundational book of doctrine for the Grace Age. In Romans we learn that we are crucified, buried, and risen with Christ. The mystery of the Body of Christ is alluded to but not explained (12:4-5). The end of Romans sets us up for the next great doctrinal book: Ephesians (in which we learn that we are ascended up and seated with Christ in heavenly places).

- I. Introduction (1:1-17) – why he is writing
- II. Condemnation (1:18-3:20) – FIRST the bad news
- III. Justification (3:21-5:21) – On basis of the blood of Christ thru FAITH ALONE
- IV. Identification (6-8) – one with Christ, the key to the Christian life, Spirit
- V. Dispensation (9-11) – Israel's fall, not permanent, Gentiles blessed without Israel
- VI. Application (12-15) – conduct in relation to: God, church, enemies, gov, weaker brethren
- VII. Conclusion (16) – greetings, closing remarks

Romans reveals great doctrines such as salvation, redemption, justification, imputation, propitiation, sanctification, identification, predestination, adoption, and glorification. All of this is and more is offered freely by the grace of God to all sinners everywhere on the basis of the perfect cross-work and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every believer must be grounded in these doctrines. But most churches focus on the OT and Gospels because they have stories.

The doctrine of this epistle answers the ancient question, "How can man be just with God?" (Job 9:2). The theme of Romans is stated in 1:16-17. Legalists hate the message of salvation by grace through faith plus nothing. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel Christ revealed to him (Gal. 1:11-12) even though he was slandered for preaching it (3:8).

Romans systematically and logically explains how the righteous God can justify (declare righteous) unrighteous sinners by faith alone (Rom. 3:9-28).

E.W. Bullinger wrote, "ROMANS comes first in order of the three great doctrinal epistles. And rightly so, for it contains the ABCs of the believer's education. Until its lesson is learned, we know and can know nothing. The Holy Spirit has placed it first in Canonical order because it lies at the threshold of all "church" teaching, and if we wrong here we shall be wrong altogether... The great subject is the revelation of God's wrath against sin, and of the ground upon which alone the sinner can stand in righteousness before Him. The fundamental text is "The just shall live by faith" (Rom

1:17), and it shows Jew and Gentile alike short of the standard of God's glory (Rom 3:23). All alike sinners, shut up under sin, and needing a Divine righteousness, the only difference being that to the Jew had been committed the oracles (utterances or revelations) of God... The prominent feature of the Epistle is the long doctrinal portion from Rom 1:16 to Rom 8:39. This shows that doctrine is the important part and dominates the whole. It reveals what God has done with "sins" and with "sin"; and how the saved sinner, taken out from the deepest degradation, is justified by faith, and united to Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection-life. It teaches him that though his "old Adam" nature continues with him till the end, in ever-present hostility to God, yet that for those in Christ there is no judgment and, consequently, no separation "from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord".

A.C. Gaebelien wrote, "No Christian can enjoy the Gospel and know true deliverance unless he knows the precious arguments of the first eight chapters of this epistle. It is the great need at the present time. So many professing Christians are ignorant of what redemption is and what it includes. Many have but a hazy view of justification and have little or no knowledge of a settled peace with God and lack the assurance of salvation. They are constantly striving to be something and to attain to something, which God in infinite grace has already supplied in the Gospel of His Son."

Luther said, "It is the true masterpiece of the New Testament, and the very purest Gospel, which is well worth and deserving that a Christian man should not only learn it by heart, word for word, but also that he should daily deal with it as the daily bread of men's souls. For it can never be too much or too well read or studied; and the more it is handled the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes."

Martin Luther sure liked Romans a lot better than James! Because he didn't know how to rightly divide the word of truth he couldn't handle the fact that Paul and James contradicted each other (Rom. 3:28; Jam. 2:24). He wrote, "Many sweat to reconcile St. Paul and St. James, but in vain. "Faith justifies" and "faith does not justify" contradict each other flatly. If anyone can harmonize them I will give him my Doctor's Hood and let him call me a fool." The explanation is that James likely wrote his epistle before Paul was even saved and he wrote to the scattered 12 tribes of Israel. The gospel of the kingdom requires works to prove faith; a man is justified by his own faith (his faith must be tried and perfected). Under the gospel of the grace of God we are justified by the faith of Christ (already tried and perfect) and therefore no works whatsoever are required to be justified in this age (Rom. 4:5).

1 Corinthians

The apostle Paul wrote this letter by inspiration of God at the close of his three-year ministry at Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:5-8) in about 58 AD. It is the longest epistle in the NT with 16 chapters, 437 verses, and 9,489 words. The record of how the Lord used him to start the church at Corinth during his second missionary journey is found in Acts 18. It was started next door to the Jewish synagogue. God gave the church all the sign gifts to provoke the unbelieving Jews to jealousy (Rom. 11). It became probably one of the largest and wealthiest churches that Paul started and yet it was the most carnal. Remember that Romans through Galatians go together concerning the doctrine of salvation. This is a letter of reproof dealing with conduct that is not in line with the doctrine set forth in Romans. However, there are great doctrinal passages found in this epistle as well (examples: judgment seat of Christ in chapter 3 and resurrection in chapter 15).

Corinth was the capitol city of the Roman province of Achaia, the 4th largest city in the Roman Empire. It had a population of about 200,000 (primarily Greek, Roman, and Oriental). Located on the narrow isthmus between the Aegean and Adriatic Seas, having a harbor on each side it was a port city and wealthy commercial center. It had an outdoor theater that could sit 20,000 people where it hosted athletic games that were second only to the Olympic Games. It also had a great temple dedicated to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of sexuality. The temple had a thousand prostitutes and fornication was part of their pagan worship. Corinth was so notorious for its immorality that there was actually a term in the Greek language for fornicators that meant to “act the Corinthian.” Corinth was known for its commerce, culture, and corruption. Today it is just a small fishing village (the fashion of this world passes away, 7:31). The church at Corinth was being more conformed to the world around them than they were being transformed by the truth Paul had taught them. We too live in the midst of a corrupt culture but we are to shine as lights in this dark world (Phil. 2:12-16).

Paul had already written at least one letter to this church (5:9), not everything he wrote was inspired of God (13 epistles were and we have them perfectly preserved in the KJB). He wrote this letter for two primary reasons: to address to problems he heard about in the church (1:11; 5:1) and to answer the questions they had written to him about (7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). Before he answers their questions he deals with the problems and gets to the root of it all: they were carnal (3:1-3). Sound doctrine can only be lived out by the power of the Spirit. There are 3 kinds of people:

1. The natural (2:14) – those without the Spirit
2. The spiritual (2:15-16) – those in the Spirit that also walk in the Spirit
3. The carnal (3:1-3) – those in the Spirit that walk after the flesh

Every chapter deals with a problem. Although it is a very negative letter it does start out with a positive introduction (1:1-9). Thank God that a wrong state cannot affect our right standing in Christ. Paul doesn't thank God for their conduct (like he does for the Thessalonians) but for the grace God has given them (1:4).

1 Corinthians has been called the troubleshooting manual of the local church. I don't think God put this letter in the Bible so the errors of the church at Corinth would be remembered forever but because He knew these same problems would exist in the local church throughout the present dispensation of grace, especially in the last days (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

- I. Introduction (1:1-9)
- II. Addressing Problems and Answering Questions (1:10-16:4)
- III. Conclusion (16:5-24)

Problems:

- 1) Division in the church (1-3)
- 2) Influence of worldly wisdom (1-3)
- 3) Wrong perspective of the ministry (3-4)
- 4) Fornication (5-6) –
- 5) Inability to judge and solve disputes between brethren (6)
- 6) Women not showing submission (11)
- 7) Abuse of the Lord's Supper (11)
- 8) False doctrine, denying bodily resurrection (15)

Questions:

- 1) Marriage, divorce, and remarriage (7)
- 2) Eating meat offered to idols (8-10) – issue of personal liberty
- 3) Spiritual gifts (12-14) – purpose, motive, and order
- 4) The collection (16)

Great dispensational passages:

- 1) The mystery – 2:6-16
- 2) The judgment seat of Christ (3:10-17)
- 3) Following Paul – 4:16-17; 7:17; 11:1; 14:37
- 4) The Body of Christ – 12:12-13
- 5) Sign gifts shall cease – 13:8-13
- 6) The gospel – 15:1-4
- 7) The rapture – 15:51-52

Principles that should govern our decisions:

- 1) Is it expedient? (6:12a)
- 2) Can it bring me under bondage? (6:12b)
- 3) Will it be a stumbling-block to others? (8:9)
- 4) Is it spiritually edifying? (10:23)
- 5) Does it glorify God? (10:31)

2 Corinthians

The apostle Paul wrote this second inspired epistle to the church at Corinth around 58-59 AD from Macedonia not long after he wrote the first epistle (Acts 20:1). This epistle is in direct contrast to the tone of 1 Corinthians, it is intensely personal and filled with the deep emotions of the dedicated apostle.

Paul had sent Titus to Corinth to see how they would respond to his first letter which was full of rebuke and correction. He had told them that he would visit them himself but circumstances were such that he was delayed along the way (1 Cor. 16:5-7). He had hoped to meet Titus at Troas but that didn't work out either (2 Cor. 2:12-13). Paul preached at Troas and then made his way to Macedonia (probably Philippi) where he finally met up with Titus and heard the good report that the majority of the church had responded in obedience to his first letter which prompted him to write this second letter (7:5-13). There was still a rebellious and disobedient element in the church (12:20-13:3).

We can glean from the letter itself that Paul had several purposes in mind when he wrote it:

- 1) To explain why he had not visited them yet like he planned to (1:15-24)
- 2) To commend the church for disciplining the man living in fornication (1 Cor. 5) and encourage them to forgive and receive him since he repented (2:1-11)
- 3) To answer those who accused him of wrong motives (4:1-2)
- 4) To encourage them to follow through on their promise to participate in the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem (8-9)
- 5) To defend his apostolic authority (10-12)
- 6) To prepare them for his visit (13)

Simple outline:

- I. Explanation of Ministry (1-7)
- II. Exhortation for Giving (8-9)
- III. Vindication of Apostleship (10-13)

It must be vital that we recognize Paul's distinct message and ministry as the apostle to the Gentiles because the Lord inspired Paul to write much scripture defending his apostleship (see Gal. 1-2 for another example).

This epistle is all about the ministry. It provides a real and honest picture of what a faithful ministry in this present age of grace looks like and it is not glamorous (6:1-10). This epistle emphasizes the suffering Paul endured in the path of OBEDIENCE (1:3-11; 4:7-12; 11:22-33; 12:7-10; Col. 1:24).

Since Paul was persecuted for preaching the doctrines that Christ revealed through him, what should we expect if we are going to follow his doctrine and pattern (2 Tim. 3:10-17)? Yet, most ministries in America seem to think gain is godliness (1 Tim. 6:3-6)! Satan's focus is always on opposing what God is doing. He is working to blind the lost to the gospel of Christ (4:3-4) and to

blind believers to the truth of the mystery (Eph. 1:18). Those who are faithfully working to preach the gospel of the grace of God and ground believers in the truth of the mystery know what spiritual warfare is all about (10:3-5; 11:1-4, 13-15).

This epistle contains the Great Commission of the Body of Christ (5:14-21). Ambassadors are:

- 1) Sent to a foreign land in time of peace
- 2) Entrusted with an important message
- 3) Represent their king and homeland
- 4) Brought home before war is declared (pre-tribulation rapture)

We are not sufficient for the ministry; our sufficiency is of God (2:14-17; 3:5; 4:7; 9:8; 12:9).

Galatians

In his epistle to the Galatians the apostle Paul passionately defends the gospel he received by revelation of Jesus Christ against the error of legalism (performance-based religious system). He deals with this error in relation to both justification and sanctification. Legalism is still a very prevalent error today. Key verses: 2:16, 20

There were false teachers that always came in behind Paul's ministry in an area to try and influence the churches he established away from his message of grace. They taught the people that they must be circumcised and do the works of the law to be saved and/or to stay saved. They were having success in Galatia.

The scripture not only reveals doctrine, it also reproveth and corrects for failure to believe and live by the doctrine. A balanced Bible-based ministry both teaches (positive aspect) and reproveth and corrects (negative aspect). Although the apostle Paul wrote Galatians before Romans, it follows Romans in the order of the church epistles because it is a letter of correction for doctrinal failure. The churches at Galatia were listening to doctrine contrary to the doctrine of salvation by grace as laid out in Romans. The Corinthian letters contain reproof for practical failure; their conduct was not in line with the doctrine of Romans.

Doctrinal and moral failure is not to be tolerated in the church because it takes just a little leaven to leaven the whole lump. Leaven represents corruption that spreads (1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9). Doctrinal corruption produces moral corruption (1 Cor. 15:33; 2 Tim. 2:15-18). Sound doctrine produces godliness when it is truly believed (Titus 1:1).

It is important to notice exactly how the letter is addressed (1:1-2). He is writing to local churches in the region of Galatia. He is careful not to say "to the saints" (Eph. 1:1). There are no lost people in the church which is the Body of Christ but there are usually some lost people in the local church. This explains what Paul meant by, "fallen from grace" (5:4). He did not say, "fallen out of grace." Those who are in the Body of Christ cannot lose salvation (Rom. 8:35-39). Those who are seek to be justified by the law have not trusted in Christ. There were some in Galatia that heard the message of grace, but chose rather to put themselves under the law.

- I. Personal (1-2) – Defense of Paul's Distinct Message and Ministry
- II. Doctrinal (3-4) – Grace and the Law do not Mix (Rom. 11:6)
- III. Practical (5-6) – The Grace Life

The first two chapters clearly establish that Christ gave Paul a message and ministry that was distinct from the 12 apostles. Paul shows the precedent of God imputing righteousness by faith with the case of Abraham. We are children of Abraham in the sense that we are also counted righteous by faith (3:6-4:7). Many that preach salvation by grace teach sanctification by works. Putting believers under the law does not stop sin, it actually increases it (Rom. 6:14; 1 Cor. 15:56)! The grace life is lived on a higher plan than the law system (5:13-26). We are not under the law of Moses, but the law of Christ and of sowing and reaping still apply today (6:1-10).

Ephesians

The apostle Paul's work at Ephesus is recorded in Acts 18:18-20:38. Ephesus was the capitol city of Asia minor and had a population of about 300,000 people. Thanks to its large harbor Ephesus grew very wealthy on trade; and, thanks to the Temple of Diana it attracted many visitors who wanted to come see one of the seven wonders of the world. The temple was 418' x 239' and had 100 columns that stood 50 feet high. It housed an image of Diana (goddess of fertility) that supposedly fell from heaven. Like the temple of Aphrodite in Corinth, the temple of Diana had hundreds of temple prostitutes.

In spite of much opposition the Lord gave Paul a great ministry at Ephesus that spanned over two years. In that short time the book of Acts records that "all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:10). We cannot make people believe the word, but are responsible to make sure that everyone in our area at least hear it! His ministry was so influential it caused a riot because the idol-makers were losing money.

Ephesians is the second of the great text-books of doctrinal instruction for believers in this present age of grace. In Romans is set forth the truth concerning the standing of the sinner in Christ, as having died and risen with Him. Now we are taken a further stage and taught that the sinner not only died and rose again in Christ, but that he is now in God's sight and purpose seated with Christ in heavenly places. Romans ends with a reference to the revelation of the mystery (16:25); Ephesians takes up that subject and unfolds it to us. It is therefore, the pinnacle of divine revelation for the Body of Christ, like the Book of Revelation is for Israel.

The Book of Revelation is known for its sevens but did you know that Ephesians is also marked by that divine number of perfection? It opens with seven spiritual blessings, it closes with seven pieces of the spiritual armor, and in the middle we find the sevenfold unity of the Spirit.

The Trinity is in every chapter:

- Salvation (1:3-14)
- Access (2:18)
- Prayer (3:14-17)
- Unity (4:4-6)
- Fulness (5:18-21)
- Prayer (6:18; 3:14; 5:20)

Emphasis on the Holy Spirit (He worked in other ages but not like now, Num. 11:29; 1 Sam. 16:14):

- 1) Sealed (1:13)
- 2) Earnest (1:14)
- 3) Access (2:18)
- 4) Temple (2:22)
- 5) Revelation (3:5)
- 6) Might in the inner man (3:16)
- 7) Unity of (4:3)

- 8) Grieve not (4:30)
- 9) Fruit (5:9)
- 10) Filled (5:18)
- 11) Sword (6:17)
- 12) Praying (6:18)

The 6 chapters of Ephesians are naturally divided in half into two main sections (Eph. 1:3; 4:1):

<u>Ephesians 1-3</u>	<u>Ephesians 4-6</u>
Wealth	Walk
Standing	State
Calling	Conduct
Blessings	Behavior
Riches	Responsibilities

Practical application must be based on the foundation sound doctrine in order for it to be effectual in our lives (Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:9-11; Titus 2:1, 10). Paul always begins with doctrine and then makes the proper applications.

Contrast Law and Grace (1:3; Deut. 28). Most think they are God's earthly people in a covenant relationship! They claim the blessings of Deut. 28 (vs.1-14) but conveniently forget about all the curses (vs.15-68).

<u>Israel</u>	<u>Body of Christ</u>
Material Blessings	Spiritual Blessings
On Earth	In Heavenly Places
Based on Performance	Based on Position

Philippians

The historical record of how the Lord used the apostle Paul to start the church at Philippi during his second missionary journey is found in Acts 16. This short epistle of 4 chapters, 104 verses, and 2,183 words was written in the early 60's AD when Paul was a prisoner in Rome. This present dispensation began with Paul's ministry in the book of Acts, but there is a distinction between the epistles he wrote during Acts and afterwards due to the transitional nature (prophecy program of Israel phasing out, mystery program of Body of Christ phasing in) of the Acts period. For example, he was going to the Jew first and the sign gifts were in effect during his Acts ministry. When he writes his prison epistles, he writes as a prisoner of Jesus Christ for us Gentiles and the full revelation of this present age is known (Eph. 3:1-13).

The prison epistles of Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians form a trilogy concerning the church which is the Body of Christ.

- 1) Ephesians – doctrine of the Body of Christ
- 2) Philippians – reproof for not walking according to the doctrine of Ephesians
- 3) Colossians – correction for listening to doctrine contrary to the doctrine of Ephesians

Philippians is a very practical book. Like most churches today, the church at Philippi was having trouble keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:1-6; Phil. 1:27; 2:1-3, 14-15; 4:2). The worthy walk of our HIGH calling is a LOWLY walk of service! Paul gives 4 great examples in this epistle (Christ, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and himself).

Philippians is known as the joy book because joy is referred to 18 times. Paul was joyful as a prisoner who had endured much suffering. How so? True and lasting joy is found in Christ (1:21, "Christ" mentioned 37 times) and in the pathway of sacrificial service. No wonder most people have no joy!

Key verses

- I. Christ our Life (1:21)
- II. Christ our Mind (2:5)
- III. Christ our Goal (3:14)
- IV. Christ our Strength (4:13)

Outline

- A. Salutation – "Grace be unto you" (1:1-2)
- B. Paul's concern for the Philippians (1:3-26)
 - C. Exhortation: Example of Christ (1:27-2:16)
 - D. Example of Timothy (2:17-24)
 - D. Example of Epaphroditus (2:25-30)
 - C. Exhortation: Example of Paul (3:1-4:9)
- B. Philippians concern for Paul (4:10-20)
- A. Salutation – "Grace be with you" (4:21-23)

Colossians

While the apostle Paul was preaching in Ephesus, all of Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus through his leadership (Acts 19:10). Colosse was in that region, but evidently Paul himself did not start the church at Colosse (2:1). It was likely Epaphras, a fellow-laborer of Paul, who started the church (1:1-8; 4:12-13; Phile. 23). It was Epaphras who told Paul about the condition of the church which led to him writing this letter by inspiration of God while a prisoner in Rome. The church needed to be corrected because they were in danger of being spoiled and beguiled by false teaching that detracted from the supremacy and all-sufficiency of Christ as Head of the church and the blessed truth that all the members of His body are complete in Him (2:8-10).

Just as Galatians was written to correct doctrine contrary to that which is presented in Romans, so Colossians is written to correct doctrine contrary to that which is presented in Ephesians. In Ephesians the emphasis is on the Body of Christ but in Colossians it is on the Head of that Body. The work of the Holy Spirit is mentioned throughout Ephesians (every chapter) but He is only mentioned once in Colossians (1:8). Philippians is a letter of reproof for not holding the members of the Body in the right regard but Colossians is a letter of correction for not holding the Head of the Body (2:19).

In chapter 2 Paul warns about different kinds of false teaching:

- Philosophy (v.8) - love of worldly wisdom
- Legalism (vs.16-17) – trying to be made righteous by the works of the law
- Mysticism (vs.18-19) – pursuit of higher and hidden knowledge in the spirit realm
- Asceticism (vs.20-23) – severe self-discipline and denial of the flesh for religious purposes

The bottom line is that all false teaching denies the deity of Christ and/or His sufficiency to make us complete. All false teaching exalts the works of the flesh over the perfect work of Christ.

"The Epistle attacks and destroys man's way of holiness by lacerations, adoration of angels, performances of sacraments and self-willed efforts of the carnal nature to improve and sanctify "the flesh" which God has condemned to death. The Epistle points out God's way of holiness as opposed to man's way." (E.W. Bullinger)

"The Church finds her full life in her Head. When this is recognized the uselessness and mischievousness of carnal ceremonies which appeal to the natural heart, are recognized. All that is needed for a complete Christian life of worship, service and intellectual progress, is found in Christ. All riches and all perfection are found in Him for the enrichment of His members and their maintenance in the full practical enjoyment of fellowship with Him." (G. Williams)

- I. The Preeminence of Christ (1)
- II. Our Position in Christ (2)
- III. Our Practical Walk in Christ (3-4)

1 & 2 Thessalonians

The historical record of how the Lord used the apostle Paul to start the church at Thessalonica during his second missionary journey is found in Acts 17. From the very beginning this church faced affliction. The unbelieving Jews instigated an uproar in the city that caused the brethren to send Paul away by night. He was very concerned for this young church and so sent Timothy to further establish them and to comfort them in their affliction. Timothy met back up with Paul in Corinth and gave him a good report on the church. Paul sent the first letter in about 52 or 53 AD from Corinth (Acts 18) and the second letter was evidently sent not too long after the first. The Thessalonian letters may have been Paul's earliest inspired writings but they are placed last in order of the church epistles because of their content. The emphasis is on the coming of the Lord which will conclude this present age and is the consummation of our hope. We have already considered how the church epistles are arranged in order best suited for our edification.

In the first letter Paul writes to express his thankfulness for the church, review his ministry among them, comfort them in their affliction, exhort them to continual growth in their Christian walk, and further instruct them concerning the coming of the Lord. The 5 chapters may be simply divided into two main sections:

- I. Personal (1-3)
- II. Practical (4-5)

The emphasis in the first letter is on the secret rapture of the Body of Christ up to heaven which was a mystery revealed to Paul. The Body of Christ is the great mystery that Christ revealed through Paul (Eph. 3:1-13) and our rapture to heaven is one of the accompanying mysteries of this age (1 Cor. 4:1). It is Paul alone that shows us this mystery (1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:15). Reading our rapture into prophetic passages outside of Paul's epistles will lead to false doctrine and rob us of our blessed hope. What we believe about the blessed hope is very important! The apostle Paul has much to say about our hope (Eph. 1:18; 4:4).

In the second letter Paul writes to correct the false teaching that the Body of Christ will go through the day of the Lord. He also corrects the disorderly conduct which was the result of believing that false doctrine (1 Cor. 15:33). Some had quit working because they thought the world was about to end. We may outline the letter based on the chapter divisions:

- I. Encouragement (1)
- II. Correction (2)
- III. Exhortation (3)

The day of the Lord is when the Lord will pour out His wrath on the world (Isa. 2:1-12, 17-21; 13:6-13). It is the second coming of Christ in particular, but it includes what leads up to it (tribulation period) and what follows it (kingdom age). The false teachers troubled the church at Thessalonica by telling them that their affliction was proof that the day of the Lord was at hand (which would mean that they were in the tribulation period). They even presented them with a counterfeit letter from Paul that supported their teaching (2:1-2; 3:17).

Paul very plainly states that the Body of Christ is not appointed to wrath but salvation from it (Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9). The whole seven-year tribulation period will come as a result of God's wrath (not just the last part as some teachers claim). The whole seven-year tribulation period is the subject of prophecy (Dan. 9:24-27). Therefore, we know that the Body of Christ will be taken off the earth BEFORE that period ever begins because we have nothing to do with either the wrath of God or the prophetic program of Israel! Many Christians are troubled today because they are being taught that we will not be raptured before the tribulation period. Christians must deal with tribulation in this present evil world (1 Thess. 3:3-4) but we are not going through the prophesied tribulation period which is called the "time of JACOB'S trouble" (Jer. 30:7).

The church at Thessalonica was being troubled from without (facing fierce persecution) and within (false teachers among them). In chapter one Paul encouraged them by thanking God for their patience and faith in the midst of the tribulations they were enduring and by explaining that God will recompense tribulation to their enemies in the coming day of the Lord. In chapter 2 he clears up their confusion that was caused by the false teaching that the second coming of Christ was at hand. The church at Thessalonica lost their blessed hope (compare 1 Thess. 1:3 with 2 Thess. 1:3) because they listened to teachers who were saying things that did not line up with Paul's teaching (2 Tim. 2:7). False doctrine troubles the hearts and minds of God's people but sound doctrine produces a sound mind (2 Thess. 2:16-17; 2 Tim. 1:7).

Chapter 2 provides a basic overview of the correct order of events in the tribulation period:

- Beginning = A falling away first (v.3) – Israel makes a covenant with the Antichrist
- Middle = The man of sin is revealed (vs.3-8a)
- End = The coming of the Lord to destroy him (v.8)

It is crucial to understand that the "day of Christ" (2 Thess. 2:2) is not referring to our rapture but to the day of the Lord. Those who teach that we are going through the tribulation claim that in this passage Paul is teaching the rapture will not occur until after the man of sin is revealed (v.3). If the "day of Christ" referred to here is our blessed hope, why would the Thessalonians be shaken in mind and troubled for believing it was at hand? Paul uses phrases like "day of Christ" and "day of the Lord Jesus" in reference to the rapture and judgment seat of Christ. However, here he is clearly referring to the day of the Lord which comes AFTER this age because that is what he is talking about in the context. Christ is the Lord and so the "day of Christ" can certainly be referring to the "day of the Lord." Context determines how it is being used. I don't believe the text should be changed to say the "day of the Lord" because the KJB is perfect. That the "day of Christ" and the "day of the Lord" can be used interchangeably is a good proof for the deity of Christ.

Even though we are not the subject of prophecy we need to learn the whole Bible (Rom. 16:25-26). We learn by comparison and contrast. Understanding the tribulation period makes me thankful that I will be delivered from it! The root reason for all the confusion that abounds today about the tribulation period and the second coming is a failure to rightly divide mystery truth from prophetic truth. We are living in parenthetical mystery age that interrupted the prophetic program concerning Israel and the kingdom. Therefore, prophecy concerning Israel is NOT being fulfilled today and will not be until after this age closes with the rapture. Most teachers do not

recognize Paul's authority as the spokesman for this age and so they mix the word of truth instead of rightly dividing it. Paul deals with prophecy in 2 Thess. 2 but his point is not that we should be looking for these things but rather that we should NOT. We are to be looking for the blessed hope of being gathered together to meet Christ in the air, not for signs and the antichrist (1 Thess. 1:10; Phil. 3:20; Titus 2:13)!

1 Timothy

By inspiration of God, the apostle Paul wrote 9 epistles to 7 churches (Galatians actually written to a group of churches in the region of Galatia) and 4 epistles to 3 individuals. The epistles to Timothy and Titus are commonly referred to as the Pastoral Epistles because they were written to pastors in regard to the work of the ministry. The emphasis in 1 Timothy and Titus is on the proper order, doctrine, and practice of the local church and in 2 Timothy it is on the apostasy of the professing church.

It is likely that the apostle Paul suffered two Roman imprisonments and that he wrote this letter during the interval in about 64-65 AD. Timothy was Paul's "son in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2) in that he was saved and taught under his personal ministry. We can glean from the scriptures that Timothy was a young and somewhat timid man, but that Paul considered him to be a faithful and trustworthy fellow-laborer in the ministry (1 Cor. 4:14-17; Phil. 2:18-23). Timothy was the pastor of the church at Ephesus when Paul wrote to him (1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:15).

The theme of this epistle is stated in the heart of it (3:14-16). The "house of God" is not a physical building because it is the "church of the living God" and a church is a called out assembly of people (Eph. 2:22). The church which is the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23) is made up all believers in this present age that have been saved through believing the gospel of the grace of God. There is only one church which is the Body of Christ. The local church is a local manifestation of that Body in a community. It is an assembly of believers who in fellowship together carry out the work of the ministry. The local churches in the NT had fellowship with one another but were independent and autonomous congregations. The apostle Paul gave orders and instruction to churches (1 Cor. 7:17; 2 Cor. 11:28), but he did not exercise dominion over their faith (2 Cor. 1:24). There are no apostles today, but everything we need to know about the local church is preserved for us in Paul's epistles. The problem with most churches today is that they do not follow Paul as the spokesman to Body of Christ. The introductory note to 1 Timothy in the Old Scofield Bible says, "Well had it been with the churches if they had neither added to nor taken away from the divine order."

The church is to be the pillar and ground of the TRUTH. The church should be all about spiritual edification, not carnal entertainment. It is about building believers in the faith, not about building a "campus". Paul refers to "doctrine" 17 times in the Pastoral Epistles. He emphasizes the importance of sound doctrine and warns against false doctrine.

- I. Introduction (1:1-2)
- II. Pastoral Charge (1:3-20)
- III. Priority of Prayer (2:1-7)
- IV. Proper Order (2-3)
- V. Purpose of the Letter (3:14-16)
- VI. Preventing Apostasy (4)
- VII. Practical Instructions (5-6)
- VIII. Practical Admonitions (6:3-21)

2 Timothy

This is the last letter written by the apostle Paul before his execution under the authority of the Roman Emperor Nero just a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. It has 4 chapters, 83 verses, and 1,666 words. These are the last words of a man mightily used of God and take their place alongside other great last words recorded in the scripture (like Moses, Joshua, and David). I personally believe that this was the last book of the Bible that was written (Col. 1:24-26; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2:15). During the transition period covered by the book of Acts, Paul taught that the sign gifts would cease, “when that which is perfect is come” (1 Cor. 13:10). I believe “that which is perfect” refers to the complete revelation of the mystery of this age which is recorded in the sound words of Paul’s epistles. Paul had the sign gift of healing during the Acts period, but not afterwards (2 Tim. 4:20).

Paul wrote this letter to his son in the faith, Timothy, to exhort him to faithfully fulfill his ministry in the midst of growing apostasy (1:6-15). Apostasy is a willful denial and departure from the truth that you once claimed to believe. Just as God revealed the law for Israel through Moses, He revealed specific doctrines for this age of grace through the apostle Paul. Just as it was apostasy for Israel to deny and depart from the word of God through their spokesman (Moses), so in this age it is apostasy to deny and depart from the word of God through our spokesman, the apostle Paul. There are three major doctrines revealed through Paul that are emphasized in the church epistles; justification by faith alone, the Body of Christ, and the blessed hope. Satan attacks these three main doctrines like nothing else.

In the first letter to Timothy we see the church in rule, but in this second letter we see it in ruin. It is interesting that the church is not mentioned. In days of apostasy, we should be very thankful if we have some faithful men to commit the truth to (2:2). Timothy was a young, timid, and unhealthy man. It is evident from things said in both letters that Paul was concerned about his faithfulness in the midst of so much opposition and corruption. But just as Paul faithfully “kept the faith,” he could too by the grace of God.

This letter is divided into four chapters and it may be outlined according to the chapter divisions. Paul makes four appeals to Timothy to be faithful:

- I. The Pastoral Appeal (1)
- II. The Practical Appeal (2)
- III. The Prophetic Appeal (3)
- IV. The Personal Appeal (4)

One of the key words in this epistle is “truth” (2:15, 18, 25; 3:7-8; 4:4). Note the three downward stages of departure from the truth: “erred” (2:18), “resist” (3:8), and “turn away” (4:4).

There was just a few years’ interval between the two letters that Paul wrote Timothy, but in that short time the apostasy had gotten much worse. The “some” in 1 Timothy (1:6, 19; 4:1; 5:15; 6:10, 21) became “all” in 2 Timothy (1:15; 4:16). Paul’s prediction that he made while speaking to the Ephesian elders came to pass (Acts 20:29-31). The introductory note to 2 Timothy in the

Old Scofield Bible says, "The Asian churches had not disbanded, nor ceased to call themselves Christian, but they had turned away from the doctrines of grace distinctively revealed through the apostle Paul. This was the proof that already apostasy had set in its first from, legalism."

The believer's resources in a day of apostasy include:

- The Holy Spirit (1:7, 14)
- The form of sound words given through Paul (1:13; 2:2; 2:7; 3:10)
- The grace that is in Christ Jesus (2:1)
- The whole armor of God (2:3-4; Eph. 6:10-20)
- True separation (2:16-22)
- All scripture (3:16-17; 4:2)
- The Lord's presence and strength (4:16-17)

Titus

Titus was a Greek young man that was saved and trained under Paul's ministry (1:4). He is not mentioned by name in the book of Acts, but he is mentioned thirteen times in Paul's epistles (nine times in 2 Corinthians). Based upon the things Paul said about him we know that he was a great help to him in the ministry (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6; 8:16, 23; 12:18). He went with Paul to the meeting in Jerusalem (recorded in Acts 15) as an example of a Gentile who was saved without circumcision (Gal. 2). He must have been a bold young man for Paul to trust him to stand with him at that controversial meeting. Some think that Titus deserted Paul in the end (2 Tim. 4:10), but that is not clearly stated.

Titus was overseeing the work on the Island of Crete when Paul wrote this letter to him. He was entrusted him with major responsibility (1:5). Crete was one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea. Just south of Greece, the island was famous for its "hundred cities." The Cretians did not have a good reputation (1:12-13). The fact that there were now Christian men on the island qualified to serve as elders in the church is a great illustration of the power of the gospel. The Cretians may have been liars (1:12), but God, that cannot lie (1:2), can change anybody by the power of His faithful word (1:9).

- I. Greeting (1:1-4)
- II. Church Leadership (1:5-16)
- III. Christian Living (2:1-3:11)
- IV. Conclusion (3:12-15)

Like the first epistle to Timothy, this epistle was written after Acts 28, but it is not a prison epistle. From the internal evidence we learn that after Paul's release from the Roman prison, Titus journeyed with him and they preached in Crete, where the apostle left him to "set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city." When he completed that work, he was instructed to join Paul at Nicopolis (3:12).

Paul wrote Titus around the same time that he wrote 1 Timothy (about 65 AD). Titus is similar to 1 Timothy in that they both concern the proper order of the local church (both contain qualifications for leadership). The emphasis in 1 Timothy is on doctrine. The emphasis in Titus is on conduct.

The word "doctrine" is used sixteen times in the Pastoral Epistles.

- 1 Timothy = Protect the Doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3-4, 18-20)
- 2 Timothy = Proclaim the Doctrine (2 Tim. 4:1-4)
- Titus = Practice the Doctrine (Titus 2:1, 10)

The major theme of Titus is the necessity for GOOD WORKS to be evident in the life of the believer (1:15-16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14). In this book that emphasizes good works, Paul makes it very clear that we are not saved by works (3:3-7).

No one can read Titus and say the Bible doesn't teach that Jesus Christ is God. Notice the alternate wording in the following verses: God our Saviour (1:3), Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour (1:4); God our Saviour (2:10), Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (2:13); God our Saviour (3:4), Jesus Christ our Saviour (3:6).

There are four faithful sayings found in the pastoral epistles:

- 1) Concerning salvation (1 Tim. 1:15)
- 2) Concerning godliness (1 Tim. 4:8-9)
- 3) Concerning eternal glory (2 Tim. 2:10-13)
- 4) Concerning salvation and good works (Titus 3:4-8)

Philemon

This is the shortest of Paul's 13 epistles (1 chapter, 25 verses, and 430 words). It was written during the apostle's first imprisonment in Rome in about 62 AD (note that he expected to be released, v.22). It is probably the most neglected and overlooked epistle, but it contains many spiritual principles (for example, it demonstrates brotherly love, Christian courtesy, and forgiveness) and it also contains a spiritual picture of great doctrinal truth concerning salvation in Christ. On the surface it may seem like just a personal letter between two friends. Why is it in the word of God and how are we to be edified by it? The books of the Bible are arranged according to a divine order. It is fitting that this is placed at the end of Paul's epistles. While it does not set forth doctrinal truth and practical exhortation in the same way that his other epistles do, it illustrates both through a real-life situation.

Paul referred to Philemon as his "dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer". All that we know about Philemon is derived from this epistle. He was a believer (saved through Paul's ministry, v.19) that lived in Colosse (compare with Col. 4:7-17) and was evidently a wealthy man (owned servants, house large enough for the church to meet in). One of his servants, Onesimus, had run away (likely stole from him, v.18) and ended up in Rome. While in Rome, he meets the apostle Paul (details as to how are not given) who leads him to the Lord (v.10). Roman law permitted a master to execute a rebellious servant, but Philemon was a godly man and Paul was confident that he would forgive Onesimus and welcome him back not only as a servant, but as a brother in Christ. Paul was a mediator between his new convert and his old friend. He does not command him as an apostle, but rather beseeches him as, "Paul the aged." He writes with much feeling ("bowels" referred to 3 times, associated with heart, Jer. 4:19; 2 Cor. 6:11-12). He sent Onesimus back to his master with this letter in which he intercedes to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus. He also carried the epistle to the Colossians and possibly Ephesians (Col. 4:7-9).

- I. Greeting (vs.1-3)
- II. Philemon's character (vs.4-7)
- III. Intercession for Onesimus (vs.8-21) – The heart of the epistle
- IV. Conclusion (vs.22-25)

- I. Appreciation of Philemon (vs.1-7) - "I thank my God"
- II. Appeal for Onesimus (vs.8-17) - "I beseech thee"
- III. Assurance by Paul (vs.18-25) - "I will repay"

The scripture does not say that Philemon was a preacher, but he was what all believers should be; a "fellowlabourer" in the work of the ministry ("partner", v.17). The word "fellowlabourer" is associated with the word "fellowship." Our fellowship should be centered around our labor for the Lord (Phil. 1:4-5; 1 Thess. 3:1-2). Notice also the terms "fellowsoldier" (v.2) and "fellowprisoner" (v.23). Ministry involves much more than preaching behind a pulpit. We need businessmen in the local church who like Philemon will be fellowlabourers in the ministry. Philemon was not too busy to serve the Lord! He served the Lord WITH his family (v.2). His wife (Apphia) was spiritual enough to go along with allowing the church to meet in their house. His

son (Archippus) was evidently a preacher (Col. 4:17). A Christian home is more than a Christian family living in the same house. It is a Christian family living out their faith on a DAILY basis and serving the Lord together.

Why did Paul send Onesimus back to his master? Why didn't he rebuke Philemon for having servants? Why did he write this letter instead of "Uncle Philemon's Cabin?" There are several passages in Paul's epistles in which he exhorts servants to be good servants and to serve their master as unto the Lord. He also exhorts masters to be good to their servants and to remember that they have a Master in Heaven. All believers are spiritually ONE in Christ and enjoy spiritual liberty in Him. However, on this earth there are still physical, social, and earthly distinctions. A saved woman has the same spiritual standing before God as her saved husband, but in this life she still must submit to his leadership. Likewise, a saved servant has the same spiritual standing before God as his saved master, but in this life he must still obey his master's authority.

Paul did not preach a social gospel. Slavery has existed in this world since the fall of man and still does. The church has not been called to make the world a better place to go to hell from! We are called to get sinners saved out of this present evil world. If Paul would have told servants to run away it would have been against the law, endangered the servants, and worst of all it would have HINDERED the gospel. Paul considered the furtherance of the gospel to be much more important than his rights or even his life. For Paul, it was all about personal responsibility and not personal rights (1 Cor. 7:20-24; 1 Tim. 6:1-5). By sending Onesimus back to his master Paul knew that he was not obeying the Law of Moses which illustrates that in this age we are not under the law, but grace (Duet. 23:15; Rom. 6:14).

The word of God not only plainly states the truth, it also illustrates it through types and pictures. This little epistle provides us with a beautiful picture of salvation by grace. In this picture:

- Onesimus represents lost sinners
- Philemon represents God the Father
- Paul represents God the Son

There are three great doctrinal truths concerning salvation by grace that are revealed and explained in Paul's epistles that are illustrated by this real-life situation that took place between Paul, Onesimus, and Philemon.

- 1) Mediation (v.10) - the truth that Christ is the mediator between God and man
- 2) Imputation (v.18) - the truth that Christ took our sin and gives believers His righteousness
- 3) Identification (v.17) - the truth that God now receives the believer as He does Christ

The name Onesimus means "profitable," but in time past he had been an unprofitable servant to Philemon. Now that he was saved, he was profitable. Based on how he had served him in prison, Paul had confidence that Onesimus would be an excellent servant for Philemon (Col. 3:22-24). Salvation not only changes our hereafter, it changes us here and now! Evidently, Onesimus desired to return to his master that he had wronged. Those that are right with God desire to be right with others. In time past, before salvation, we were unprofitable to God (Rom. 3:10-19). But now, in Christ, we are made profitable (Rom. 3:20-22; Eph. 2; 1 Tim. 4:8)

The Hebrew Epistles

Anybody who distinguishes the OT from the NT is a dispensationalist, whether they admit it or not. Everybody divides the Bible to some extent, but sadly most do not rightly divide it. For example, the far majority of professing Christians believe that Hebrews through Revelation is just as much written to them and about them as is Romans through Philemon. They would call those of us who disagree with them “hyperdispensationalists.” The prefix hyper means excessive and going beyond normal. Are we going beyond the divisions that God put in His word when we distinguish the Pauline epistles from the Hebrew epistles? There are certainly spiritual applications in the Hebrew epistles for us today (like Heb. 11:1 and 1 Pet. 2:2), but they make NO mention of the three major doctrines in Paul’s church epistles: justification by the faith of Christ, the spiritual Body of Christ, and the rapture of the Body of Christ to heaven. In fact, the teaching is different:

- Compare Rom. 3:28 with Jam. 2:24
- Compare 1 Cor. 12:13 with Heb. 3:6, 14
- Compare Gal. 3:28 with Jam. 1:1; Rev. 2:9, 3:9
- Compare Rom. 8:35-39 with Jude 20-21
- Compare 1 Cor. 15:51-52 with Rev. 1:7

James, Peter, John, and Jude were apostles to the circumcision and there is nothing in the Bible to suggest that ever changed! That is why these letters are addressed to the scattered twelve tribes (Jam. 1:1) and strangers (1 Pet. 1:1). The title of the first book in this section should be an obvious tip off (Hebrews)! The books of Hebrews through Revelation are written to and about the godly remnant of Israel who will suffer great tribulation as they look for the second coming of Christ to the earth to establish His kingdom. They have both an historical application to the kingdom church in the book of Acts and a prophetic application to the tribulation saints.

George Williams in his *Student’s Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (published in 1926) wrote, *“The closing Books of the Bible – Hebrews to Revelation – relate to the future, and will uphold the faith of the elect members of the Hebrew people and of the Gentiles who will love and confess the true Messiah, and brave the persecutions of the future false Messiah. These Books specially belong to them, and will be understood by them.”*

There must be scripture written directly to the multitude of tribulation saints that will be living in the time of the culmination of the prophetic kingdom program. Christ foretold of the Hebrew epistles (Jn. 16:12-13). Note the emphasis on the last days of prophecy in the Hebrew Epistles: Heb. 1:1-2; Jam. 5:1-11; 1 Pet. 1:3-13; 2 Pet. 3:1-4; 1 Jn. 2:18; Jude 17-18; Rev. 1:1-3, 7-9.

The books of the NT are arranged dispensationally, not chronologically. James was probably the first NT book to be written, but it is placed after the Pauline epistles because it is written to the “twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (Jam. 1:1).

- The OT - The King and His coming Kingdom in promise and prophecy
- The Gospels - The King and His Kingdom offered and rejected
- The Acts - The King and His Kingdom re-offered & rejected, transition to the Body of Christ

- The Pauline Epistles - The Kingdom postponed, the King made Head of the Church
- The Hebrew Epistles - The King and His Kingdom once again at hand
- The Revelation - The King comes to establish His kingdom on the earth

There are three transition books in the NT:

- 1) Matthew – from prophecy to fulfillment (Matt. 11:13)
- 2) Acts – from prophecy to mystery
- 3) Hebrews – from old covenant to new covenant, tribulation to the kingdom

*note – there is no transition from Body of Christ back to Israel because this mystery age ends suddenly and abruptly with the mystery of the rapture

Just as the nine church epistles of Paul are arranged according to the order of doctrine, reproof, and correction for instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16), so are the nine Hebrew epistles.

New Covenant in the Blood of Christ

- Hebrews = doctrine about the superiority of the new covenant over the old covenant
- James = reproof for not proving faith by works, pure religion
- 1 Peter = correction – their suffering must precede the glory

The Godly Remnant of Israel

- 2 Peter = doctrine – How to make calling and election sure and not fall
- 1, 2, & 3 John = reproof – tests to distinguish children of God from children of the devil
- Jude = correction – exposing the apostate and false prophets

The Coming of Christ

Revelation = primarily doctrine, reproof and correction in chapters 2-3

That the Hebrew epistles are a unit is proven by the fact that end of each one leads into the next one (Heb. 13:20-21; Jam. 5:7-11; 1 Pet. 5:8-9; 2 Pet. 3:17; 1 Jn. 5:19-21; Jude 22-25). The ending of Revelation does not lead into another book because it completes the group (22:21). The ending of Philemon is similar (v.25) because it certainly does not lead into Hebrews!

Hebrews

The theme of an epistle is usually stated in the introduction. The first four verses of Hebrews is one sentence and it declares the theme of the book. Hebrews is about Jesus Christ and is a further expansion of the message that He preached to His own people in His earthly ministry (2:1-5). What was that message? It was the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:17, 23). Israel will enter her kingdom under the blood of the new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). The book of Hebrews is a transition book taking the Hebrews from the old covenant to the new and from the tribulation to the kingdom (8:1-13; 12:11-29). Hebrews reveals the changes in the law in preparation for entering the kingdom (7:12, like Deuteronomy).

The first two verses of the book make it clear that it is written to the Hebrew people which is the earliest name of Israel (Hebrews, Israelite, seed of Abraham, 2 Cor. 11:22). To whose fathers did God speak to through His prophets in time past? To whom did Christ speak in His earthly ministry (Matt. 15:24)? The plural pronouns "us", "we", and "our" which are used throughout refer to the Hebrews. This book deals with:

- The history of the Hebrews (3:7-4:2)
- Their promises and covenants (4:1; 8:6)
- Their salvation (1:14; 2:3)
- Their hope (3:5-6; 11:1; 2:5; 12:25-29)

There are 29 direct quotations from the OT and 53 clear allusions to it for a total of 82 references to the OT in just 13 chapters! It was written during the Acts period and definitely before 70 AD because Jerusalem had not been destroyed when it was written (10:11).

The key word in Hebrews is "better" (13 times). Christ is shown to be better than the angels, Moses, and Aaron, and that in Him is a better sacrifice, priesthood, and covenant. The writer of Hebrews speaks of a better:

- 1) Hope (7:19)
- 2) Testament (7:22)
- 3) Covenant (8:6)
- 4) Promises (8:6)
- 5) Sacrifices (9:23)
- 6) Substance (10:34)
- 7) Country (11:16)

The writer refers to his letter as a "word of exhortation" (13:22). The main exhortation of the letter is stated in the middle of it (6:1-2). There is a danger of the people falling away (6:4-12) and drawing back to perdition (10:26-39). The national salvation of Israel occurs at the second coming of Christ (Acts 3:19; Rom. 11:26-27). That is the reason some passages in the Hebrew epistles make it sound like the people are saved and others that they are looking to be saved. The difference is between individual and national salvation.

General Outlines:

- I. Doctrinal (1-10)
- II. Practical (11-13)
 - I. A Better Person: Jesus Christ, the Son of God (1-6)
 - A. *Christ compared to the angels (1-2)*
 - B. *Christ compared to Moses (3-4)*
 - C. *Christ compared to Aaron (5-6)*
 - II. Better Priesthood: After the order of Melchizedek (7-10)
 - A. *Better order: Melchizedek, not Aaron (7)*
 - B. *Better covenant: new, not old (8)*
 - C. *Better sacrifice: God's Son, not animals (9)*
 - D. *Better sanctuary: heavenly, not earthly (10)*
- III. Better Principle: Faith (11-13)

There has always been a debate over who wrote the book of Hebrews. If it was important for us to know who it was, God would have revealed it. Most think that Paul wrote it. The title of the book in most Bibles is, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews." The titles of the books are helpful, but they are not part of the inspired text of scripture.

The two strongest passages used to support the view that Paul was the writer are not conclusive:

- Heb. 13:23-25 - Timothy was a common name, this may not be the same Timothy that was Paul's son in the faith. If these verses proved that it was Paul who wrote the letter, it would mean he wrote it after Acts 28 because it was written from Italy. That would mean he ignored all the revelations he had already received concerning the Body of Christ and regressed in doctrine. In fact, he would have contradicted some of his own doctrine (Heb. 3:6, 14).
- 2 Pet. 3:15-16 – Note that v.15 does not say that the letter he wrote to the Jews was scripture. Not all of Paul's epistles were given by inspiration (he wrote an epistle to the Corinthians before 1 Corinthians, 1 Cor. 5:9). Those that were written by inspiration of God are preserved in the KJB, and they all start with same word, "Paul." That was token of his epistles (2 Thess. 3:17).

Reasons that Paul did not write Hebrews:

- 1) Hebrews contains major doctrinal and dispensational differences from Paul's epistles
- 2) Paul would be under his own curse if he wrote it (Gal. 1:6-9)
- 3) Someone who heard Christ in His earthly ministry wrote it (1:2)
- 4) It concerns the last days of Israel, not the Mystery Age (Acts 2:17)
- 5) It does not contain the token of his epistles (2 Thess. 3:17)

James

Most preachers like to preach out of James because it is a very practical book. While there are certainly spiritual applications in this epistle for the Body of Christ, we must understand that it was not written to us. It contains doctrine that simply does not line up with the doctrine taught in Paul's epistles. Instead of ignoring the differences or trying water them down, we are going to obey the Lord and rightly divide the word of truth. For example, there is an obvious difference between the teaching of James and Paul concerning justification. The reason for that is they wrote to different groups under different dispensations! Under the gospel of the kingdom, justification is by faith that works (Jam. 2:24). Under the gospel of the grace of God, we are justified instantly and permanently by faith without works (Rom. 3:28; 4:5) because we are justified by the "faith of Christ" (Gal. 2:16). Of course, good works should follow salvation (Eph. 2:10), but they play no part whatsoever in obtaining salvation (Eph. 2:8-9).

Which James wrote this epistle? Two of the twelve apostles were named James (Matt. 10:2-4). After the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:7), James (one of the Lord's brothers, Mark 6:3-4) believed and became the prominent leader in the kingdom church at Jerusalem (Acts 12:17, 15:13, 21:18; Gal. 1:19). That he replaced Peter as the main leader in Jerusalem was an evidence of the fading out of the kingdom program. All three of the apostles named James ministered to the Jews under the kingdom program and so knowing which one it was does not affect the doctrinal understanding of the epistle.

When was it written? It was probably written shortly after Acts 8:1 which would date it in the early 30's AD. It was very likely the first epistle to be written. It is located after Paul's epistles for a dispensational reason. If James the son of Zebedee wrote it, the date could be no later than the early 40's AD (Acts 12:1-2).

To whom was it written? It was written to the twelve tribes scattered abroad (1:1). Historically, they were scattered due to the great persecution mentioned in Acts 8:1 (see also Acts 11:19). It is obvious from the first verse that James did NOT write this epistle to the Body of Christ wherein there is neither Jew nor Gentile (Gal. 3:26-28). There were believing Jews from all twelve tribes in the kingdom church (Acts 2:14, 22, 36). Prophetically, it is written to the twelve tribes scattered abroad in the tribulation period. It is possible that this letter is written to the 144,000 (12,000 from 12 tribes) who will preach the gospel of the kingdom in all the world. They will be the first-fruits of the nation that will be born again at the second coming of Christ (1:18; Rev. 14:1-4).

Why was it written? The key words are: "faith" (16x's), "works" (13x's), and "law" (10x's). James writes to exhort Jews, whose faith is being tried (1:3), to have true faith that works according to the law (2:12) and endures patiently to the end (Matt. 24:13-14; Jam. 5:7-11). James teaches "pure religion" (1:25-27). The word "religion" is only found 5 times in scripture and it is used in reference to the works of the law. Notice that "pure religion" is to DO and CONTINUE in "the perfect law of liberty". What is the "law of liberty"? Many think that the law of liberty cannot be a reference to the law of Moses because it was called a "yoke of bondage" by Peter and Paul (Acts 15:10; Gal. 5:1). The law was a "yoke of bondage" to those who were required to obey it in

order to be saved. Although the law itself cannot save (Rom. 3:20), seeking to keep it by faith was at one time required for salvation (Luke 1:5-6). As a nation, Israel failed under the old covenant but will be saved when God makes a new covenant with them when the kingdom is set up (Heb. 8:6-13). Under the new covenant, Israel will keep the law from the heart because they will be filled with the Holy Spirit. If the law is kept from the heart it is not a “yoke of bondage” but a “law of liberty” (Ps. 119:32, 45; Jn. 8:31-32). The Jews to whom James was writing were filled with the Spirit. The kingdom church of Acts was a preview of Israel in the Kingdom Age (Ezek. 36:24-28). The kingdom church lived by the law (Acts 2:1, 46; 3:1; 5:42; 21:20). Christ will rule by the law in the Kingdom Age (Isa. 2:1-5).

- I. Greeting (1:1)
- II. Two kinds of Temptation (1:2-16)
- III. Pure Religion (1:17-27)
- IV. Justification by Faith that Works (2)
- V. The Tongue (3:1-12)
- VI. Two Kinds of Wisdom (3:13-18)
- VII. Worldliness (4)
- VIII. The Last Days (5)

The King taught “pure religion” in the beginning of His ministry when He taught the righteous principles of His kingdom in Matthew 5-7. The “Sermon on the Mount” was pure law (Matt. 5:17-20). Compare the following verses and you will easily see that James is a commentary on the “Sermon on the Mount.”

James	Sermon on the Mount
1. 1:2	5:10-12
2. 1:4	5:48
3. 1:5, 17, 4:2, 5:15	7:7-11
4. 1:9, 2:5	5:3
5. 1:25, 2:10-12	5:19
6. 1:22, 2:14	7:21-26
7. 2:8	7:12
8. 2:13	6:14-15, 7:2
9. 3:12	7:16
10. 3:17-18	5:9
11. 4:4	6:24
12. 4:8	5:8
13. 4:9	5:4
14. 4:10	5:3-4
15. 4:11-12	7:1-2
16. 4:13-16	6:25, 34
17. 5:1-3	6:19
18. 5:9	5:22-24
19. 5:10	5:12
20. 5:12	5:34

1 Peter

The apostle Peter wrote this epistle to the believing Jews that were scattered as strangers throughout Asia (1:1) in order to exhort them to be faithful in their suffering and remind them of the coming glory they will see and experience at the second coming of Christ (1:11; 4:13; 5:10). He refers to suffering 17 times and glory 14 times. The end of James naturally leads into this epistle (Jam. 5:7-11). There is no doubt that he is writing to Jews (1:18-21; 2:11-12).

There were Jews from the areas mentioned in 1:1 that heard Peter preach on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:5-11). Those that repented waited in Jerusalem for the kingdom until they were scattered by persecution. Peter is writing as a faithful shepherd to those sheep (Jn. 21:15-17; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:1-4). They are part of the little flock that Christ promised the kingdom (Lk. 12:32; Matt. 21:43; 1 Pet. 2:9-10). Most commentators mistakenly think that Peter is talking about Gentiles in 2:10, but Hos. 1:6-11 makes it clear he is referring to Israel.

The Lord called Andrew and his brother Simon to leave their fishing business to follow Him and become fishers of men (Matt. 4:18-20). He later chose them to be 2 of His 12 apostles (Matt. 10:2). He gave Simon the name Cephas which means, a stone (Jn. 1:42). Peter is the same name as Cephas (Mk. 3:16). Of the 12 apostles, Peter, James, and John, seemed to be the Lord's inner circle (Mk. 5:37; 9:2; 14:32-33). Of the three, Peter was the leader (Matt. 16:13-19). That is why Peter was the prominent figure in the first part of the book of Acts. But, Peter is certainly NOT the rock upon which Christ will build His kingdom church! Peter himself testified as to who the rock is (1 Pet. 2:4-8).

Although Peter came to know something of Paul's message and ministry (but he confessed that it was hard to understand, 2 Pet. 3:15-16), there is no evidence to suggest that he ever became an apostle to the Body of Christ. He continued to be an apostle to the circumcision until his death (2 Pet. 1:10-21). There are three passages that settle this issue in my mind (Matt. 19:28; Gal. 2:9; Rev. 21:14). Of course, as is the case with ALL scripture, there are spiritual applications in Peter's epistles for us today (ex: 3:1-7).

Most commentators date this epistle in the 60's AD, but I believe that it was written earlier than that. Peter wrote it from Babylon and Silas and Mark were with him (5:12-13). Babylon is Babylon, it is not Rome. There is ZERO evidence that Peter ever went to Rome. The Roman Catholic Church claims he was the first pope and spent many years in Rome. Paul did not salute him in Romans 16 and he did not mention him in 2 Timothy 4. Peter, Silas, and Mark were in Jerusalem in Acts 15. Silas began to travel with Paul after Acts 15. After escaping prison Peter likely traveled and went to Babylon (Acts 12:17) and went back to Jerusalem several years later. There is internal evidence that he wrote this epistle no earlier than Acts 11 (1 Pet. 4:16; Acts 11:26).

Peter came to learn some things about Paul's ministry in Acts 15. In his second letter, he knows that the second coming of Christ has been postponed, but in his first letter he believed it was at hand (4:7, 17-18). This epistle has a future application to the tribulation saints when the second

coming will once again be at hand (1:1-21; 5:8-9 compare with Rev. 12:12). The great tribulation will certainly be a “fiery trial” (1:7; 4:12-13; Zech. 13:9)!

- I. Greeting (1:1-2)
- II. Salvation (1:3-2:10)
- III. Submission (2:11-3:12)
- IV. Suffering (3:13-5:11)
- V. Greeting (5:12-14)

2 Peter

The apostle Peter wrote this second epistle to the same group as the first epistle (3:1). Both of Peter's epistles were written to the scattered Jewish believers to remind them of the words of the prophets and the 12 apostles concerning the last days and the coming of the Lord (3:1-4). In his first epistle he speaks of the coming of the Lord as being "at hand" (4:7). In this epistle he knows that it has been postponed due to the longsuffering of the Lord (3:9). The difference is that between the writing of his two epistles he came to know some things about Paul's ministry (3:15-16; 1 Tim. 1:16).

By the time Peter wrote this epistle, Paul had already written a number of his. Paul wrote Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, Romans, and 1 & 2 Corinthians during the Acts period. The saints recognized his writings as scripture (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:16). Some try to use v.15 to prove that Paul wrote the epistle to the Hebrews. However, not everything Paul wrote was scripture. For example, he wrote an epistle to the Corinthians before he wrote 1 Corinthians (1 Cor. 5:9). All of the epistles that he wrote by inspiration of God are preserved in the Bible and they all start with his name (2 Thess. 3:17). Peter wrote this epistle not long before his death (1:12-15; Jn. 21:18-19). I think that it was likely written toward the end of the Acts period, in the early 60's AD. Just because Peter knew of Paul's ministry does not mean that he changed his. He continued as an apostle to the circumcision and wrote his last epistle to confirm that their prophetic kingdom program will be fulfilled (1:10-21; 3:8-14).

The key word of this epistle is "knowledge" (1:2-3, 5-6, 8; 2:20; 3:18 = 7x's). It begins and ends with a reference to the knowledge of God (1:1-4; 3:17-18). That knowledge is to be fruitful (vs.5-11) and based on the truth of God's word (vs.16-21). As a faithful shepherd, Peter writes to warn the sheep against false teachers (2:1) and scoffers (3:3). It is possible for them to "fall" (1:10; 3:17) if they don't overcome the deception of the last days (2:18-22).

- I. Knowledge of the Truth (1)
- II. Warning Against False Teachers (2)
- III. The Day of the Lord will Come (3)

For emphasis, the Lord inspired both Peter and Jude to write a similar description of false teachers (compare 2 Pet. 2 with Jude). Satan will plant many wolves in sheep's clothing among the godly remnant of Israel in an effort to lead them astray (Matt. 7:15). It will be absolutely vital for the little flock to identify the deceivers for who they really are.

Peter was the leading apostle to the circumcision and Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. Although given distinct ministries, there are similarities between them (ex: same miracles recorded in Acts). It is interesting to compare their last epistles. For example:

- Both are written with a knowledge of impending death (2 Tim. 4:6; 2 Pet. 1:14)
- Both speak of the supernatural origin of the scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21)
- Both warn of apostasy in the last days (2 Tim. 3:1; 2 Pet. 3:3) – different last days
- Both warn against false teachers (2 Tim. 2:16-18; 3:6-9, 13; 4:3-4; 2 Pet. 2).

Epistles of John

God inspired the apostle John to write five books of the NT (only Paul wrote more). Although his name appears nowhere in these epistles, that he is the writer is easily seen by comparing them with the Gospel of John and Revelation. For example, John is the only writer who calls Christ the “Word” (Jn. 1:1, 14; 1 Jn. 1:1; 5:7; Rev. 19:13). The three epistles are written in the same style and the latter two illustrate the doctrine of the first.

The name John corresponds to the OT name Jonah, which means “a dove”. John was the son of Zebedee, a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee, and was the younger brother of James. The brothers worked with their father until Christ called them. They were two of the twelve apostles that Christ chose on earth and sent to Israel with the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 19:28). Peter, James, and John are often referred to as the “inner circle” because Christ seemed to set them apart from the twelve. He is known as the beloved disciple because in his gospel he often referred to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved.

We have literally no information as to the dates of his writing outside of his own epistles. No one can help us. Neither ancient writers, nor modern critics, can tell us anything beyond what we can read for ourselves in John’s own writings. All else is conjecture. It is commonly believed that all of his writings were written very late in the first century and were the last books to be written (85-95 AD). There is absolutely no biblical proof to support that claim. The gospel of John was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD (Jn. 5:2). Tradition says that John was exiled by the Roman emperor to the isle of Patmos in 95 AD, but that is not why John said he was there (Rev. 1:9). It is my opinion that John wrote all of his books during the Acts period and that Paul is the one who wrote the last books (Col. 1:25).

The first epistle is not addressed to anyone in particular as the other two are (2 Jn. 1; 3 Jn. 1). John calls his readers “little children” nine times in his first epistle. I believe that he wrote to the children of the kingdom (Matt. 18:1-14; Jn. 13:33). In the transition period of the book of Acts there were two distinct groups of believers (kingdom church and the Body of Christ) and one was fading out while the other was fading in. As late as Acts 15 it is clear that John’s ministry was still to the circumcision (Gal. 2:9) and there is no evidence that ever changed (3 Jn. 7; Jam. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1). John’s epistles as well as all the Hebrew epistles have a future application to the Jewish tribulation saints (2:18, 28).

John plainly states some of the reasons that he wrote this first epistle: 1:3-4; 2:1, 26; 5:13. He emphasizes KNOWING the truth (33 times). Throughout the epistle John draws stark contrasts:

- Light vs. Darkness (1:5)
- Righteousness vs. Wickedness (3:10)
- Love vs. Hatred (3:14-15)
- Truth vs. Error (4:6)

What was the first sign Christ gave when His disciples asked Him about the sign of His coming and the end of the world (Matt. 24:3-5)? I believe that his main purpose in this epistle is to exalt

Christ (Jn. 20:30-31) and expose the antichrist (4 times; “wicked one”, 4 times). There is an emphasis on believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God who already came in the flesh (1:1-3; 4:1-3). John also writes to show the difference between their followers (3:10). He gives a series of tests (“hereby we know”) to discern the wheat from the tares (Matt. 13:36-43). He often uses the expression, “If we say” or “He that saith” (ex: 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 6, 9; 4:20). The little word “if” is a key word (21 times).

2 and 3 John are the two shortest books in the Bible (13 and 14 verses). They are very similar in style and were obviously written by the same writer who wrote 1 John. They are like appendixes to 1 John. The doctrine of 1 John is applied to the home (2 John 10) and the local assembly (3 John 9-10). The dispensational setting is the same as 1 John. It is aimed primarily at the tribulation saints living on the last days of Israel’s prophetic kingdom program. Of course, as with all scripture, there are applications for us.

The theme of 2 John is walking in the truth (v.4).

- I. Introduction and greeting (vs.1-3)
- II. Commendation for walking in the truth (v.4)
- III. Commandment to love one another (vs.5-6)
- IV. Cautions concerning false teachers (vs.7-11)
- V. Conclusion and greeting (vs.12-13)

John writes his third epistle to a faithful kingdom saint named Gaius. In this letter he mentioned two other men (Diotrephes and Demetrius), one evil and the other good (1 Jn. 3:10). Evidently they were both leaders in the same church. John had written a letter to their church and sent it with certain brethren. They were rejected by Diotrephes but received by Gaius and Demetrius.

- I. Introduction (v.1)
- II. Gaius (vs.2-8)
- III. Diotrephes (vs.9-11)
- IV. Demetrius (vs.12)
- V. Conclusion and Greetings (vs.13-14)

Jude

This little epistle of 25 verses and 613 words was written either by the apostle Judas (Lk. 6:16; Acts 1:13) or the Lord's brother (Matt. 13:55). It seems that the writer distinguishes himself from the 12 apostles (compare 2 Pet. 3:2 with Jude 17). It was written during the Acts period and it is written to the same people that the other Hebrew epistles are written to; the kingdom saints. It is easy to read the Body of Christ into v.1, but what about v.21 (compare Rom. 8:35-39)? The kingdom saints are also said to be sanctified (Jn. 17:17) and preserved (Jn. 17:11-12). God will keep them IF they keep themselves in His love by keeping His commandments (Jn. 15:1-10). The theme of this epistle is stated in vs.3-4. The "common salvation" refers to the salvation which was spoken by the Lord in His earthly ministry concerning the "world to come" (Heb. 2:3-5). The tribulation saints must contend for the faith against the apostate teachers that Satan will plant among them (wolves in sheep's clothing, tares among the wheat). The false teachers will try to add to and take away from the faith that was once delivered (Rev. 22:18-19). It is "the faith" that was spoken of by the prophets, Christ in His earthly ministry (Jam. 2:1), and His 12 apostles. This is distinct from the "one faith" (Eph. 4:5) that was revealed through Paul for the Body of Christ in this present age.

- I. Introduction (vs.1-2)
- II. Purpose of the letter (vs.3-4)
- III. Past examples of God judging apostasy (vs.5-7)
 - A. *Israel in the wilderness (v.5)*
 - B. *Fallen angels (v.6)*
 - C. *Sodom and Gomorrah (v.7)*
- IV. Portrait of apostates (vs.8-19) – about 30 marks to identify them
- V. Prevention of apostasy (vs.20-25)
 - A. *Building (v.20)*
 - B. *Praying (v.20)*
 - C. *Keeping (v.21)*
 - D. *Looking (v.21)*
 - E. *Reaching (vs.22-23)*
 - F. *Trusting (vs.24-25)*

There are many triplets in this epistle:

- 1) Sanctified, preserved, called (v.1)
- 2) Mercy, peace, love (v.2)
- 3) Ungodly, turning, denying (v.4)
- 4) The people, angels, the cities (vs.5-7)
- 5) Defile, despise, speak evil (v.8)
- 6) Cain, Balaam, Core (v.11)
- 7) Spots, clouds, trees (v.12)
- 8) Fruitless trees, raging waves, wandering stars (vs.12-13)
- 9) Murmurers, complainers, boasters (v.16)
- 10) Separatists, sensual, not the Spirit (v.19)

Revelation

Revelation is the most feared book in the Bible. Many claim that it is impossible to understand, which is ironic in light of its title. It is the Apocalypse (unveiling), not the Apocrypha (hidden)! The purpose of the the book is to reveal, not conceal. The problem is not that men can't understand it, it's that they won't believe it! Like the rest of the Bible, this book is to be taken literally for exactly what it says. When symbols and figures are used we must rely on the word of God to interpret them.

There are 3 main schools of thought about Revelation:

- 1) **Preterist** - This false view teaches that the events recorded in Revelation describe the problems and persecutions of the church during the times the book was written.
- 2) **Historic** - This false view teaches that the events recorded in Revelation describe the history of the church. I also disagree with the view that chapters 1-3 are historical while 4-22 are prophetic.
- 3) **Futurist** - This is the correct view of the book. It teaches that book is what it claims to be, a "prophecy" (1:3). The whole book is futuristic (1:10).

Most commentaries teach that this book was written in about 95 A.D. There is no way to prove that from scripture. It doesn't really matter when it was written because the events recorded in it will take place in the future (I believe it was written during the Acts period). We can get a good idea of what this book is all about by considering some things in the first chapter.

The Introduction (1:1-3)

Notice that this book was given to "shew" God's servants "things which must shortly come to pass." For those to whom the apostle John is writing, the fulfillment of all that is written in this book was "at hand" (v.3; 22:6-10, 20). Therefore, John could not have written this book to the Body of Christ which is not the subject of prophecy (Revelation called "prophecy" five times), but the mystery revealed through Paul. Its been almost 2,000 years since he wrote it and it has not been fulfilled. We are living in a parenthesis dispensation in which prophecy concerning Israel is not being fulfilled. What does it mean that the Lord "signified" this book? He made it known by signs (1 Cor. 1:22). Would we be blessed by keeping the things written in this book (compare 22:14 with Eph. 1:3)? Is the instruction in 14:9-12 something that we must keep?

The Salutation (1:4-6)

This brief salutation is full of doctrinal truth. Notice the Trinity (three in one). The word "Trinity" is not in the Bible, but the doctrine certainly is (1 Jn. 5:7). The "us" in v.5-6 refers to John and his brothers (Jews) and companions in TRIBULATION (v.9). Yes, Christ loves us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, but nowhere in Paul's epistles do we learn that He has made the Body of Christ to be kings and priests to reign on earth. John is referring to what Christ will do for Israel, whom He has loved with an "everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3), upon His revelation (v.7). They will be washed from their sins as nation (Acts 3:19; Rom. 11:26-27; Zech. 12:9-10; 13:1; 1 Pet. 1:1-21) and made to be kings and priests on the earth (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4; Ex. 19:5-6; Isa. 61:6; 1 Pet. 2:5,9).

The Theme of the Book (v.7-8)

The main theme of the book is the revelation of Jesus Christ. This does not describe the rapture of the Body of Christ.

- *He cometh* - He is presently hidden away as it were in the third heaven at the right hand of the Father. He will be revealed with great power and glory from heaven and come back to earth.
- *with clouds* – Clouds were associated with God’s presence in OT (Ex. 40:33-34, man cannot look upon His glory). He ascended in a cloud and is coming in like manner (Acts 1:9-12; Zech. 14:4).
- *and every eye shall see him* – This will be a public, visible return to earth (Matt. 24:29-30).
- *and they also which pierced him* – Israel (Zech. 12:10)
- *and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him* – Why (19:11)?

The Opening Vision (vs.9-20)

John saw the glorified Son of Man as the coming King and Judge. This vision is the major theme of the book. Here is the One that is going to be revealed from Heaven (19:11-16)!

How could John be a companion to the tribulation saints? He witnessed the whole tribulation and will be resurrected to enter the kingdom with those that endure it. They must patiently endure the tribulation before the kingdom comes (Lk. 21:19; Jam. 5:7-11; 14:12). Why was John in the isle of Patmos? Tradition says he was banished there by the Roman Emperor in 95 A.D. and that while there God gave him the revelation. Everything we need to understand the Bible is contained in the Bible. The Bible interprets itself. John plainly stated why he was there (v.2, 9). God sent him there to receive this revelation (probably during Acts period) just like He sent Paul into Arabia to receive revelations for this present age.

If we don’t understand v.10 it will greatly hinder our understanding of the whole book. What did John mean by, “I was in the Spirit”? Every believer is in the Spirit (Rom. 8:9), but that is not what is being referred to here. John was in the Spirit in the same sense that this phrase is used throughout the book of Revelation (4:2; 17:3; 21:10). The Holy Spirit transported him to the future day of the Lord to be a witness and write what he saw. God did this for other prophets (Ezek. 37:1, in 40-48 he saw the future temple).

Many refer to Sunday as the Lord’s day, but the Bible never does. The “Lord’s day” is the same thing as the “day of the Lord” which is mentioned 29 times in the Bible. It is the day that the Lord judges the earth in great wrath (Isa. 13:6-13). The Lord’s day is a prophetic period of time in which includes the 70th week of Daniel, the second coming of Christ, His millennial reign, the last battle with Satan, the renovation of the heavens and earth with fire, and the great white throne judgment. The book of Revelation reveals this day in great detail. It stands in contrast with this present age in which man is having his day.

It is important to understand that the whole book of Revelation was sent to the seven churches for their instruction, and not just the seven letters in chapters 2-3. Why these seven churches?

They are representative churches of all the tribulation saints (number of completion, “what the Spirit saith unto the churches”). Why churches in Asia and not Israel? They are scattered outside the land in the tribulation period (Jam. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1).

The word “seven” and “seventh” are used 59 times in Revelation and there are many sets of sevens (churches, Spirits (1:4), golden candlesticks (1:12), stars (1:16), lamps of fire (4:5), seals (5:1), angels (8:2), trumpets (8:2), thunders (10:3), plagues (15:1), vials (17:1), and kings (17:10). This book is the completion of the prophetic program. Seven is a very important number in God’s dealings with Israel (7 feasts, 70x7 in Dan. 9).

Christ told John that he was to write concerning three things (v.19):

- I. The things which thou hast seen (1) – The vision of Christ
- II. The things which are (2-20) – the Lord’s day
- III. The things which shall be hereafter (21-22) – eternal state