

*Footprints*



CHRISTIAN RESOURCES



INTRODUCTION & OUTLINE

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Footprints into Africa

## MATTHEW

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

This Gospel has traditionally been assigned to Matthew. He is named as one of the original disciples of Jesus (Mt 9:9). Matthew was a tax collector (Mt 10:3) and was also known as Levi. It is commonly held that Matthew was written sometime between AD 70 and 80.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

Earlier theologians tended to favour Judea as the place of origin for the Gospel of Matthew, but modern scholars favour some place in Syria, probably Antioch. Matthew quotes the Old Testament often and he uses the phrase “kingdom of heaven” frequently. This Gospel is filled with messianic language (such as “Son of David”).

### THEME AND MESSAGE

Matthew’s main purpose is to prove to his Jewish readers that Jesus is the Messiah, the eternal King. The whole Gospel is woven around five great discourses: (1) the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7); (2) instructions to the disciples (chapter 10); (3) parables about the kingdom of God (chapter 13); (4) teaching on the meaning of discipleship (chapter 18); (5) teaching about the end of the present age (chapters 24-25).

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A     Genealogy and birth of Jesus (1:1-2:23)
- B     The Ministry of John the Baptist (3:1-12)
- C     The Beginnings of Jesus’ Ministry (3:13-4:11)
- D     Jesus’ public ministry in Galilee (4:12-18:35)
- E     Jesus Ministry in Judea and Perea (19:1-20:34)
- F     Passion Week 21:1-27:66)
- G     The Resurrection and appearances of the Lord (28:1-20)

## MARK

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

Mark was the son of Mary (AC 12:12) and the cousin of Barnabas (Col 4:10). He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. Paul speaks of Mark as his companion in Rome (Col 4:10). In 2 Tim 4:11 the apostle pays high tribute to Mark's service. The time of writing is difficult to determine. However, most scholars assign a date in the years 60-70.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

Mark is the shortest of the four canonical Gospels. There is general agreement that it was most certainly the first to be written. Practically all of Mark's Gospel relates to the public ministry of Jesus. Mark also fully explains Jewish customs for his Roman readers.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

The Gospel of Mark deals with the adult ministry of Jesus. Mark gives a picture of Jesus from the standpoint of Christian faith. He shows Jesus religious significance and explains the failure of his contemporaries to recognize him as Messiah. The author regards his information about Jesus' ministry as sufficient to portray his Good News about Jesus. One of Mark's purposes was to demonstrate the deity of Christ.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A The Birth and preparation of Jesus, the Servant (1:1-13)
- B Jesus ministers in Galilee (1:14-6:29)
- C Withdrawals from Galilee (6:30-9:32)
- D Final Ministry in Galilee (9:33-50)
- E Jesus' Ministry in Judea and Perea (10:1-52)
- F The Passion of Jesus (11:1-15:47)
- G The Resurrection of Jesus, and his appearances (16:1-20)

## LUKE

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

Ancient church tradition attributed this gospel to Luke, the beloved physician (Col 4:14), and “fellow worker” with the apostle Paul (Phil 24). Luke was probably a Gentile by birth, and well educated in Greek culture. This gospel is a companion volume to the book of Acts. The structure and the language of these two books indicate that both were written by the same person. The Lucan Gospel was composed about AD 70.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

The Gospel of Luke has been called the most beautiful book ever written. It is also the most comprehensive Gospel. In all likelihood, Luke’s readers were Gentile Christians. He therefore explained Jewish customs and traced the genealogy of Jesus back to Adam. He also omits items that would be chiefly of interest to Jews,

### THEME AND MESSAGE

Luke tells us in the first four verses of his book that he wrote this Gospel to give the true and complete story of Jesus’ life. Luke’s basic theological concern is to show how gentiles figure in God’s plan of salvation. The Gospel of Luke is in a very real sense the Gospel of the Good News to the poor. Luke provides us with many examples of Jesus’ compassion for the poor and the oppressed. Jesus extends God’s forgiveness and love to those for whom all hope has been lost.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Prologue (1:1-4)
- B Birth and Childhood of John the Baptist and of Jesus (1:5-2:52)
- C Jesus Preparation for his Ministry (3:1-4:13)
- D Jesus Ministry in Galilee (4:14-9:9)
- E Jesus Withdrawals from Galilee (9:10-50)
- F Jesus Ministry in Judea (9:51-13:21)
- G Jesus Ministry in and near Perea (13:22-19:27)
- H Passion and Triumph (19:28-24:53)

## JOHN

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

The author is the apostle John, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (Jn 21:20). He was also the son of Zebedee. The author was most certainly a Jew with a firsthand knowledge of the geography of Palestine. He also knew Jewish life and customs very well. The Gospel of John is most often assigned a date of AD 85-90.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

John’s theology is deeper and more sophisticated than that of the other evangelists, whose texts probably emerged earlier than AD 85. Modern scholars are not agreed as to what extent, if at all, the fourth evangelist made use of the other three Gospels in composing his own.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

The avowed purpose of the evangelist in composing his Gospel is clearly stated in John 20:30-31. The author has chosen to record some of the signs that Jesus did in order to provide evidence upon which to base faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God with a view of obtaining eternal life. An early and persistent tradition states that the evangelist was consciously opposing in his Gospel erroneous teaching, which was prevalent at the time of the composition of the Gospel.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A. Prologue (1:1-18)
- B. Beginning of Jesus Ministry (1:19-51)
- C. Jesus public Ministry, Signs and Discourses (2:1-11:57)
- D. Passion Week (12:1-19:42)
- E. The Resurrection and Appearances of the Lord (20:1-31)
- F. Epilogue (21:1-25)

## ACTS

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

The Acts of the Apostles was written by Luke, the physician-friend and fellow traveler of Paul. An analysis of style and language makes it clear that whoever wrote the third Gospel, also wrote the Acts of the Apostles. This book was composed about AD 70.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

The Acts of the Apostles is the second volume of a historical work, recording the earliest history of Christianity (the first volume is the Gospel according to Luke). It forms an essential link between the four Gospels, which record the ministry of Christ, and the New Testament epistles, which interpret that ministry to the world at large. Though the title of this book is "Acts of Apostles", it does not deal with the activities of all the apostles.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

The book takes up the story where the Gospel of Luke ends, namely with the resurrection appearances of Jesus. It goes on to record his ascension, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the beginning of the expansion of the church. The dominating theme of this writing is the activity of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit guides the movements of the preachers, and controls the advance of the gospel.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Peter and the Beginnings of the Church in Palestine (1:1-12:25)
  - 1. Throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria (1:1-9:31)
  - 2. As far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (9:32-12:25)
- B The Expansion of the Church from Antioch to Rome (13:1-28:31)
  - 1. Throughout the Region of Phrygia and Galatia (13:1-15:35)
  - 2. Over to Macedonia (15:36-21:16)
  - 3. To Rome (21:17-28:31)

## ROMANS

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

The writer of this letter was the apostle Paul. It was probably written during the winter of AD 55-56 while Paul was at Corinth.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

Paul had long yearned to go to Rome and to establish closer acquaintance with the Christian congregation there. He wrote this letter for the Roman Christians to prepare them for his visit to their city and to explain the purpose of his visit. He judged it wise while writing it to set before them a full statement of the gospel as he understood and proclaimed it. It therefore served as a theological introduction to that hoped for personal ministry.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

The book Romans consists of a full presentation of the way of salvation. Paul proves the need of all humanity for salvation. Both Jew and Greek are sinful in the sight of God. God has provided righteousness for every believer through the redemptive and sacrificial work of Christ.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Introduction (1:1-15)
- B Theme : Righteousness from God (1:16-17)
- C The Unrighteousness of all Mankind (1:18-3:20)
- D Righteousness is imputed : Justification (3:21-5:21)
- E Righteousness is imparted : Sanctification (6:1-8:39)
- F The Vindication of God's Righteousness : The Problem of Israel's Rejection (9:1-11:36)
- G The Responsibilities of Righteousness (12:1-15:13)
- H Conclusion (15:14-33)
- I Commendation and Greetings (16:1-27)

## 1 CORINTHIANS

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

It is widely accepted that this epistle was written by Paul about AD 55, towards the close of Paul's three-year residency in Ephesus.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

While Paul was at Ephesus, he received disturbing news of divisions within the church at Corinth. There were disquieting irregularities in the conduct of the believers. But Paul had also received a letter from the Corinth Church. In this letter, they had put various questions to him, questions about marriage and celibacy, about food offered to idols, and also about spiritual gifts. There were difficulties in the minds of the Corinth Christians. Paul wrote this letter to them to resolve those difficulties. He also wanted to set right disorders which the Corinthians took lightly, but which he regarded as grave sins. And he also wrote to them to answer the questions put to him.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

Paul was personally concerned with the Corinthian's problems, revealing a true pastor's heart. He presents love as the best of God's gifts to his people. Chapter 13 (on love) is probably the most widely known passage in the book.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Introduction : Greetings and Thanksgiving (1:1-9)
- B Factions in the Church (1:10-4:21)
- C Moral and Ethical Disorders (5:1-6:20)
- D Discussion about Marriage (7:1-49)
- E Instruction on Questionable Practices (8:1-11:1)
- F Instruction on Public Worship (11:2-14:40)
  - 1. Propriety in Worship (11:2-16)
  - 2. The Lord's Supper (11:17-34)
  - 3. Spiritual Gifts (12:1-14:40)
- G Christian Teaching about the Resurrection of the Dead (15:1-58)
- H Conclusion : Practical and Personal Matters (16:1-24)

## 2 CORINTHIANS

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

The author is unquestionably Paul. This epistle was clearly written from Macedonia, where Paul met Titus (2:13). 1 Corinthians was written in the spring of AD 55, and 2 Corinthians was written in the autumn of the following year. This letter is stamped with Paul's style, and contains more autobiographical material than any of his other letters.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

Paul wrote this letter during a difficult period in his relations with the church at Corinth. Some members of the church had evidently challenged both Paul's personal integrity and his authority as an apostle.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

In 1 Corinthians, Paul used strong words to correct and teach the believers at Corinth. In the first part of 2 Corinthians, Paul now discussed his relationship with the church at Corinth. He explains why he was so severe. Fortunately, most of the church responded in the right spirit. Paul is glad that his severity had resulted in repentance and reconciliation. But chapters 10-13 are very different in tone from chapters 1-9. In the final chapters of this letter, Paul defends himself and strongly attacks his opponents. One may even say that the theme of the letter is the apostolic office. The most important teaching of 2 Corinthians dealt with the nature of God and his revelation in Christ Jesus.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Introduction : Greetings and Thanksgiving (1:1-11)
- B Paul and the Church at Corinth (1:12-7:16)
- C The Offering for the Christians at Jerusalem (8:1-9:15)
- D Paul's Vindication of his apostolic Authority (10:1-13:10)
- E Conclusion (13:11-14)

## GALATIANS

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

It is universally acknowledged today that Paul wrote Galatians. Various dates have been given for the writing of this letter, but it was probably written between AD 50-55.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

The churches at Galatia had been visited by Judaistic troublemakers who cast doubt on Paul's apostolic status. These Judaizers argued that Paul was not an authentic apostle, and that the law was not repealed by Christ. According to them, Paul had removed from the Gospel certain legal requirements in order to make the message more appealing to Gentiles. Salvation is available to the Gentiles only if they first become Jews and submit to circumcision and the law. There is no evidence that these Judaizers out rightly denied justification by faith. They probably taught that the highest favor belonged to those who lived under the law.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

Paul writes this letter to counter the teaching of these extremist Jewish-Christian teachers. He begins by defending his right to be called an apostle of Jesus Christ. It also gives Paul an opportunity to work out for the first time his gospel on the freedom of Christianity from Judaism and the total efficacy of the salvation obtained through Christ.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Introduction: Greetings and denunciation (1:1-9)
- B Paul's authority as an apostle (1:10-2:21)
- C Justification of the Doctrine of Liberty of Faith (3:1-4:31)
- D Christian freedom and responsibility (5:1-6:10)
- E Conclusion (6:11-18)

## EPHESIANS

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

The author of the letter identifies himself as Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (1:1:3:1). The letter gives evidence of having been written while the author was in prison (3:1:4:1;6:20), probably between AD 56-62.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

Ephesus was the most important city on the west coast of Asia Minor. It was situated at the junction of natural trade routes, and was on the main route from Rome to the East. The Epistle to the Ephesians was probably a circular letter intended for all the churches of the province of Asia. Since Ephesus was the most important city in the province, the letter naturally came to be considered as addressed to the Ephesians.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

Unlike several of Paul's other letters, this epistle does not address any particular error or heresy. The appeals of this letter are formulated in such general terms that nothing very specific can be determined about its occasion and purpose. It is clear, however, that Paul wants to lead his readers more deeply into the mystery of Christ (3:4). Unity in Christ is a leading theme in this letter. The Church is one and universal, in which Jew and Gentile become one in Christ.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Greetings (1:1-2)
- B Blessing and thanksgiving for the call and redemption of Christians (1:3-14)
- C Prayer that Christians may realize God's Purpose and Power (1:15-23)
- D Steps toward the fulfillment of God's Purpose (2:1-3:21)
- E The new life in Christ (4:1-6:20)
- F Conclusion (6:21-24)

## PHILIPPIANS

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

This letter was written by Paul about AD 60-61. The writing itself reveals the stamp of genuineness, since it bears upon it most vividly the impress of the apostle's personality and character. Philippians is one of the prison letters (along with Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon). These letters alluded to an imprisonment of Paul, not necessarily the same imprisonment in all four.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

The most obvious reason why Paul wrote this letter, was his desire to commend his colleagues Timothy and Ephroditus to his fellow believers at Philippi. There is also the note of appreciation for the Philipian's gift to which he alludes in several places (1:5;4:10,14,foll.). The letter breathes as warmth and cordiality and was indeed inspired by friendship matters. Paul's outpouring of love for a church that always stood by him. With the exception of the Christological hymn (2:6-11), it is informal in structure.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

Although Paul was writing from prison, joy is a dominant theme in this epistle. The secret of his joy, is grounded in his relationship with Christ who is the centre of his life. By the grace of God Paul is able to rejoice under the most trying circumstances of his captivity. Paul also encourages the Philipians to agree with one another, stop complaining and work together. He pleads with them to have the humble attitude of Jesus.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Greetings. Thanksgiving and Prayer (1:1-11)
- B Paul's personal Circumstances (1:12-26)
- C Exhortations (1:27-2:18)
  - 1. Live a Life Worth of the Gospel (1:27-30)
  - 2. Follow the Servant Attitude of Christ (2:1-18)
- D Plans for Timothy and Ephroditus (2:19-30)
- E Warnings against enemies and dangers (3:1-4:1)
- F Final Exhortations, Thanks and Conclusion (4:2-23)

## COLOSSIANS

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

Paul wrote this letter while he was a prisoner probably in Rome about AD60-61.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

As far as we know, Paul did not personally establish the church in Colossae. It is possible that this church was started through the labours of Paul's co-worker Ephraditus (1:7). The letter had brought to Paul a report of the church in Colossae which included many encouraging things (1:4-8), but also disquieting news of the false teaching that threatened to lead its members away from the truth of Christ. The nature of these errors is not clear in detail.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

The basic purpose of Colossians is to combat these heresies. Paul first of all urges the Colossian Christians to put off the "earthly" lifestyle, and to live a Christian life centered in love. He rejects these Colossian heresies and strongly stresses the centrality of Christ's role in creation and redemption.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A The Gospel at Work among the Colossians (1:1-14)
- B The Person and Work of Christ (1:15-23)
- C Paul's Labour for the Church (1:24-2:7)
- D Freedom from human Regulations through Life with Christ (2:8-23)
- E Rules for Holy Living (3:1-4:6)
- F Conclusion (4:7-18)

# 1 THESSALONIANS

## AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

It is generally agreed by scholars that 1 Thessalonians was written about AD50-51. If this is correct, this epistle would be the oldest preserved Pauline Epistle, except for the possibility of an early date for Galatians (48-49).

## BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

Paul founded the church at Thessalonica during his second missionary journey. Because of strong opposition from Jews, Paul was forced to depart after a couple of weeks. At the earliest opportunity he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to encourage the Christians and their persecutions. When Timothy rejoined Paul at Corinth, he brought good news of their steadfastness and zeal in propagating the gospel. But Timothy also reported that they had certain problems. Paul then wrote this letter to counsel them in respect to several matters.

## THEME AND MESSAGE

Paul commends the Thessalonians for their steadfastness under trial. He also clarifies certain features of the doctrine of the second coming of Christ. In this letter Paul addresses the problems of an early Christian community.

## OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Greetings (1:1)
- B Thanksgiving for the Thessalonians Christians' faith and steadfastness (1:2-10)
- C Paul's Defense of his actions and absence (2:1-3:13)
- D Exhortations (4:1-5:22)
  - 1. About Personal Life (4:1-12)
  - 2. About the Coming of Christ (4:13-5:11)
  - 3. About Church Life (5:12-22)
- E Conclusion (5:23-28)

## 2 THESSALONIANS

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

Not long after 1 Thessalonians, Paul wrote this epistle from Corinth about AD51 or 52.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

See the Introduction to 1 Thessalonians. It seems that further news reached Paul which indicated that there were still some misapprehensions amongst the Thessalonian Christians to be removed.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

Like 1 Thessalonians, the epistle deals extensively with eschatology. Paul warns them not to suppose that the day of the Lord has come, or is at hand (2:2). The apostle explains that certain events must take place before the Second Advent. Paul also thanks the Thessalonians for their fidelity amid persecution.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Greetings (1:1-2)
- B Thanksgiving and encouragement (1:3-12)
- C Instruction on Christ's Coming and Christian Conduct (2:1-17)
- D Request for Prayer and Warning against Idleness (3:1-15)
- E Conclusion (3:16-18)

## 1 TIMOTHY

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

According to tradition, this letter comes directly from Paul. The letter perhaps was written from Macedonia between AD 61-64. Paul repeatedly states his desire and determination to visit Timothy which shows that he was not in prison when he wrote this letter.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

The two letters to Timothy and the one to Titus are commonly grouped together as the Pastoral Epistles. They are united by a common literary style. All three letters are ostensibly at least from the Apostle Paul to two church leaders, both co-workers of Paul on other occasions. Paul has left them in charge of the churches to Ephesus and Crete respectively. Both addresses are given instructions relating to their specific situations of ministry.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

The goal of the pastoral letters is to provide instructions to Paul's most trusted collaborations on how the household of God should live during the post Pauline era when the expectation of the Lord's coming has receded. There are also teachers who are propounding false doctrine in the apostle's name. There is also a great deal of instruction about ecclesiastical administration in these letters. The Epistles were intended to strengthen the hands of Paul's representatives in their respective tasks.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Warning against false Teachers (1:1-11)
- B The Lord's grace to Paul (1:12-17)
- C The Purpose of Paul's Instructions (1:18-20)
- D Instructions for the Church (2:1-3:16)
- E Dealing with false Teachers (4:1-16)
- F Dealing with various Groups (5:1-6:2)
- G Miscellaneous Matters (6:3-21)

## 2 TIMOTHY

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

This letter was probably written by Paul after he was again imprisoned in Rome under Emperor Nero about 66-67.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

See also the introduction to 1 Timothy Paul was a prisoner on trial, and he did not expect the decision to go in his favour. Paul knew that his work was done, and that his life was nearly at the end. He therefore felt the need for a final communication to Timothy. In a sense it is a kind of last will and testament, a “passing on the mantle”.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

The motive for writing 2 Timothy is clearer than that of 1 Timothy and Titus, Paul was lonely because his friends had deserted him. The primary reason for writing is therefore to call Timothy to his side. Paul also appeals to Timothy's loyalty, especially in light of so many defections and Paul's own imprisonments. Paul exhorts his timed successor to act worthily of his high calling. Despite his own hardships, Paul recognizes that God's message cannot be chained (2:9).

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Paul's Concern for Timothy (1:1-14)
- B Paul's Situation (1:15-18)
- C Instructions to Timothy (2:1-26)
- D Warning about the last Days (3:1-4:5)
- E Paul's own Situation (4:6-18)
- F Conclusion (4:19-22)

## TITUS

### AUTHOR AND TITLE

As the first verse states, this letter was written by the apostle Paul to his coworker Titus. In the last two centuries the Pauline authorship of Titus (as well as 1 and 2 Timothy) has been called into question. However, the criticisms in the end cannot disprove Pauline authorship, and the arguments for the authenticity of 1 and 2 Timothy also apply to Titus, providing a good basis for affirming the straightforward claim that the book of Titus was written by Paul. The text clearly claims to be from Paul, its theology aligns with Paul's other letters, and the difference in style is certainly conceivable given the difference in situation. For more discussion on authorship, see introduction to 1 Timothy: Author and Title.

### DATE

As with 1 Timothy, critics of Pauline authorship point out that the letter of Titus does not seem to fit into the narrative of Acts. There are no accounts in Acts or Paul's other letters of Paul doing mission work in Crete (Titus 1:5). However, neither Paul's letters nor Acts claim to be comprehensive in their account of Paul's ministry. The traditional understanding has been that Titus, like 1 Timothy, was written in the time between Paul's first imprisonment (Acts 28) and a second imprisonment which led to his death (see Introduction to 1 Timothy : Date). In this case, Titus would have been written in the mid 60's AD, around the same time as 1 Timothy. This is plausible in light of the strong similarities between the letters.

### DATE

The theme of Titus is the inseparable link between faith and practice, belief and behaviour. This truth is the basis for its critique of false teaching as well as its instruction in Christian living and qualifications for church leaders.

### PURPOSE, OCCASION AND BACKGROUND

Paul had recently completed a journey to Crete, resulting in the establishment of new churches. In order to see that these churches were properly established (as was Paul's typical pattern, see Acts 14:21-23), Paul left Titus in Crete. The existence of false teachers (Titus 1:10-16) alarmed the fledgling churches and heightens the intensity of the situation.

The false teachers appear to be the particular occasion for the writing of the letter. Discussion of the false teachers frames the heart of the letter (see Outline). Furthermore, the description of elders (1:5-9) as well as the descriptions of proper Christian living (2:1-10; 3:1-3) appear to be worded for intentional contrast with these opponents. The content of the false teaching is not made explicit (as in 1 Timothy). There appears to be a significant Jewish element to the teaching since the opponents arise from the "circumcision

party" (Titus 1:10) and are interested in "Jewish myths" (1:14) and perhaps ritual purity (1:15) and perhaps. Paul's primary concern, however is with the practical effect of the false teaching. In spite of their concern for ritual purity, the adherence of the false teaching did not live lives of godliness flowing out of the gospel but instead lived in a way that proved they did not know God (1:16).

Thus false teaching, which in some way allowed for ungodliness, would have found a welcome home in Crete, which was proverbial in the ancient world for immorality. But Paul expected the gospel, event in Crete, to produce real godliness in everyday life.

In dealing with the false teaching, Paul also provides Titus a portrait of a healthy church. He describes proper teaching (1:5-9) proper handling of error (1:10-16, 3:9-11), proper Christian living (esp. important for new believers in an immoral milieu (2:1-10;3:1-2) and the gospel as the source of godliness (2:11-14),3:3-7).

## PHILEMON

### AUTHOR AND DATES

Paul and Timothy are explicitly named as the author in verse 1. It becomes apparent however, that the apostle Paul is the principal author when the first person singular "I" is used from verse 4 throughout the rest of the letter. The title indicates that it is a personal letter to a man named Philemon. Nevertheless Paul intends it to be read to the entire church that meets in Philemon's home v 21.

### DATE

The letter was probably written AD 62. Paul may have written it at roughly the same time that he wrote Colossians and Ephesians. All three letters were sent with Tychicus and Onesimus. This date assumes that the imprisonment Paul refers to (see v 1,9,10,13,23) is his imprisonment in Rome (Acts 27,28).

### THEME

The theme of Philemon is the power of the gospel is to transform lives. (formerly he was useless but now he is indeed useful v11) and to impact human relationships "received him".

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Address and Greetings (1-3)
- B Praise for Philemon (4-7)
- C Paul's Plea for Onesimus (8-21)
- D Conclusion (22-25)

## HEBREWS

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

The author of this letter does not identify himself, and therefore is authorship has always been disputed. Even in the ancient church, opinion was divided, though the canonicity of the book was recognized. It is widely agreed that Paul could not have been the author. Apollos and Barnabas are those most often suggested. Because of the use of Hebrews by Clement of Rome, we can be certain that it was written earlier than AD 95.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

The book of Hebrews is a sermon-treatise that the author sent to a particular community of Jewish Christians as a letter. It is also very dependent upon the Old Testament (over 30 actual quotations and over 70 allusions can be counted). The intended readers seem to have been Jewish Christians who were thinking of abandoning their faith in Jesus, and of lapsing back into Judaism.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

The author warns Jewish Christians against apostatizing to their former Judaism. He therefore sets forth the incomparable superiority of God's work in Jesus Christ. The anonymous writer encourages the faithful in their faith and presents Jesus Christ as God's full and final revelation. A turning away from Christianity to any other way is altogether ruled out. The book concludes with general exhortations, warnings and advice.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Christ's superior Revelation (1:1-4)
- B Christ's Superiority over Angels (1:5-2:18)
- C Christ's Superiority over Moses and Joshua (3:1-4:13)
- D Christ's Superiority over Aaronic Priests (4:14-7:28)
- E Christ's superior Sacrifice (8:1-10:39)
- F The primacy of Faith (11:1-12:29)
- G Final exhortations and conclusions (13:1-25)

## JAMES

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

The author is without doubt a Jewish Christian. Tradition has tended to ascribe this letter to James the brother of our Lord, and the leader of the Jerusalem council. If this letter is the work of James, it must be earlier than AD 62, when James was martyred. Some other considerations would point to a slightly earlier date, about AD 50, which would make James the earliest of the New Testament writings.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

The book of James has a distinctively Jewish nature. Almost all modern scholars agree that this author writes for Jewish Christians. It is unlikely that a work with such a thoroughly Jewish tone would have been written for Gentile Christians. There is a very little reference to any of the central doctrines of the Christian faith. Yet, numerous relations with the Gospels and the New Testament epistles can be traced.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

James is writing to Christians under pressure, not facing impending martyrdom but discrimination and economic persecution. He then addresses the significance of trials in the Christian life. James also gives practical advice about the distinctive character of the Christian lifestyle. He warns his readers against mere lip service, explaining what is meant by true faith. Therefore this book has been called the epistle of holy living, of practical Christianity and of Christian ethics.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Greeting (1:1)
- B Trials and Temptations (1:2-18)
- C Listening and Doing (1:19-27)
- D Warning against Discrimination (2:1-13)
- E Faith and Works (2:14-26)
- F Taming the Tongue (3:1-12)
- G Two kinds of Wisdom (3:13-18)
- H Warning against Worldliness (4:1-17)
- I Warning to Rich Oppressors (5:1-6)
- J Various recommendations (5:7-20)

## 1 PETER

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

1 Peter claims to have been composed by Peter (1:1) with the assistance of Silvanus (5:12). We learn from Acts that Silvanus (Silas) was a Jew who had to explain the resolutions of the Jerusalem Council (Ac 15:22, foll.). This epistle was written about AD 63, immediately before the troubles in Rome flared up under Nero.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

This letter was sent from Rome, cryptically referred to as "Babylon". Peter wrote to the Christians North of the Taurus mountains in present day Turkey. Some scholars regard 1 Peter as a sermon dealing with baptism, but which was modified for the purpose of a letter. 1 Peter is full of references to the Old Testament and cannot be fully understood without consulting the Hebrew Scriptures.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

1 Peter was written to encourage Christians who faced suffering and persecution on account of their Christian faith. The basic theme of this letter is the living hope in the midst of suffering. Troubles are never welcome, but for Christians God causes them to serve his purpose of strengthening and purifying their faith (2:20).

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Address and Greeting (1:1-2)
- B Thanksgiving (1:3-12)
- C Exhortation to holy Living (1:13-5:11)
- D The Purpose of this Letter (5:12)
- E Closing Greetings (5:13-14)

## 2 PETER

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

The letter purports to be by the apostle Simon Peter (1:1). He also claims to be an eyewitness of the transfiguration of Jesus (1:16). Since 2 Peter was written close to the end of Peter's life. It was probably composed between AD 64 and 68.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

This letter is not addressed to groups of Christians in specified areas, but much more vaguely to those who share with the writer a like faith in Jesus Christ. As far as subject matter is concerned, 1 Peter and 2 Peter have little in common. But a great deal of the material in Jude appears in a somewhat similar form in 2 Peter.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

This letter was written to warn its readers against the peril of apostasy. The readers are also reminded of the nature and surety of the teaching given as to the Second Advent and the end of the world (3:1-13).

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Introduction (1:1-2)
- B Growth in Christian Virtues (1:3-11)
- C Peter's Message (1:12-21)
- D Warning against False Teachers (2:1-22)
- E The final coming of Christ (3:1-16)
- F Conclusion (3:17-18)

## 1 JOHN

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

It seems that the same author is responsible for the Fourth Gospel and the three epistles of John. This author is usually identified as the apostle John, the son of Zebedee, the beloved disciple of Jesus. He was known as the Elder on account of his age and authority. All three epistles of John were written toward the close of the first century, probably between AD 90-95).

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

We learn from 1 John 2:19 that a schism had divided the Johannine community. A large and influential group had seceded from the church and was attempting to seduce the faithful. They formed an esoteric group, believing that they had superior knowledge to ordinary Christians. It appears that this group denied that Jesus was the Christ (2:22), the pre-exist (1:1) Son of God (4:15;5:5,10) who had come as a human being (4:2) to provide salvation for men (4:9 foll.). Nevertheless, it is difficult to determine the precise form which this heresy took.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

The writer of 1 John wants to expose the false teachers and give believers assurance of salvation. He also recalls his followers to the fundamental truths of the Christian faith.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A The Reality of the Incarnation (1:1-4)
- B Live in the light (1:5-2:29)
- C Divine Son ship (3:1-4:6)
- D Ethics and Christ (4:7-5:12)
- E Great Christian Certainties (5:13-21)

## 2 JOHN

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

See the Introduction to 1 John. The apostle John most likely wrote the book at about the same time as 1 John. Notice the obvious similarities between 1 John and 2 John: 2 John 5 and 1 John 2:7; 2 John 6 and 1 John 5:3; 2 John 7 and 1 John 4:2-3; 2 John 12 and 1 John 1:4.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

This letter was written to “the chosen lady and her children”. This is in all likelihood a symbolic manner of addressing a local church and its spiritual children. False teachers were traveling from church to church. Believers customarily took these missionaries into their homes.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

The Elder warns his readers against the teaching of the false teachers. He also cautions them not to extend hospitality to the false teachers. He encourages them to follow after the truth which already abides in them. John also writes of how important it is for Christians to love one another. To love means to obey God's commandments and God's commandments in turn tell us to live lives of love.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Greetings (1-3)
- B The primacy of love (4-6)
- C Warning against false Doctrine (7-11)
- D Conclusion (12-13)

### 3 JOHN

#### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

See the Introduction to 1 John. This letter is remarkably like 1 and 2 John in style and thought. There is therefore no reason to doubt that these three epistles were written by the same author.

#### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

1 John is a private letter (like Philemon) and is addressed to the elder's friend Gaius, who was an important member in another church. The unity of the Johannine community seems to have been threatened from an organizational, as well as doctrinal, point of view. Among the elders of the church was an arrogant and conceited man named Diotrephes. Apparently this selfish man was fearful that the church would acknowledge an authority other than his own. He therefore barred orthodox members from the church and forbade the reading of the elder's letter.

#### THEME AND MESSAGE

The apostle John praises and thanks Gaius because of his help to other Christians. He also reproves Diotrephes for rebelling against his leadership. The elder warns that he will come and deal personally with Diotrephes. The letter concludes with warm greetings.

#### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Introduction (1-4)
- B Commendation of Gaius (5-8)
- C Condemnation of Diotrephes (9-10)
- D Exhortation to Gaius (11)
- E Example of Demetrius (12)
- F Conclusion (13-14)

## JUDE

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

The writer of the Letter of Jude identifies himself as “a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James” verse 1. He is traditionally identified as one of Jesus’ brothers (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3). This book was probably written between AD 55-56.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

Scholars frequently have noted many similarities between Jude and 2 Peter. The resemblances are largely between Jude 4-13, 16-18, and 2 Peter 1-18; 3:1-3 (note for example the verbal similarities between Jude 13 and 2 Peter 2:17. Arguments have been adduced that both Jude and 2 Peter were the earlier. Other scholars argue that both epistles derive from a common tradition of preaching against false teachers. The most widely accepted view is that 2 Peter is dependant on Jude (see also the Introduction to 2 Peter.

While the author was preparing to write about our common salvation, he thought that he should rather warn them about certain immoral men who were perverting the grace of God. They claimed that the gospel frees Christians from moral obligation. These false teachers have often been identified as Gnostics.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

The author seeks to expose these false teachers as ungodly people whose condemnation has been prophesied.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Introduction (1-2)
- B Occasion and theme of the Letter (3-4)
- C Warning against false Teachers (5-16)
- D Admonition to keep the faith (17-23)
- E Conclusion : A Doxology (24-25)

## REVELATION

### AUTHOR AND DATE OF WRITING

The author of Revelation identifies himself simply as John (1:1). However, there is no specific indication as to exactly who this John was. Early tradition is unanimous in its opinion that Revelation was written by John the Apostle, and that he was the author of the Fourth Gospel and of the three Johannine Epistles. However, differences in language, style and theological emphasis have led some scholars to conclude that Revelation was written by someone besides the author of the other Johannine books. Most scholars hold that this book was written about AD 95.

### BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL FEATURES

The book was written at a time when the Church was undergoing persecution and difficulty. Roman authorities began to enforce the cult of emperor worship. Christians, who held that Christ (not Caesar) was Lord, were facing increasing hostility.

### THEME AND MESSAGE

John writes to encourage the believers to resist the demands that they worship the emperor. He tells them that through Christ the Lord, God will finally and totally defeat all his enemies, including satan. God's people will then enter an eternity of glory and blessedness.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A Jesus among the seven Churches (1:1-20)
- B Letters to the seven Churches (2:1-3:22)
- C The Vision of Heaven (4:1-5:14)
- D The Judgments of the seven seals (6:1-8:1)
- E The Judgments of the seven Trumpets (8:2-11:19)
- F Various Personages and Events (12:1-14:20)
- G The Judgments of the seven Bowls (15:1-16:21)
- H Babylon: The great Prostitute (17:1-19:5)
- I The Wedding of the Lamb (19:6-10)
- J The Return of Christ (19:11-21)
- K The thousand Years (20:1-6)
- L Satan's Doom (20:7-10)
- M Great white Throne Judgment (20:11-15)
- N The new Heaven, the new Earth, the new Jerusalem (21:1-22:5)
- O Conclusion (22:6-21)