ARIZONA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

THE LITERATURE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

SUBMITTED TO MR. JOHN CORREIA
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
BIB 497 BIBLICAL STUDIES INTERNSHIP

BY
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The New Testament

The 27 books of the Bible known as the New Testament span a wide range of topics, genres, themes, and authors. It is important in the interpretation of these books to understand background information including geography, time period, audience, author, and purpose of writing. Without this information significant interpretive errors can and have been made. The purpose of this work is to give a brief overview of the New Testament in order to provide the reader with a basic understanding of the context of each book as well as significant interpretive issues found therein, thereby providing directions to more in depth resources for further study.

The Synoptic Gospels

The synoptic gospels are synoptic in that they share a majority of their information. Mark contains 93% shared information, Matthew 58% and Luke contains 41%. The Gospel of John is the only gospel that is not considered part of the synoptic gospels because it is 92% peculiar, or dissimilar in its structure and makeup.

The Synoptic Problem

“The synoptic problem is the way that serious students of the Gospels attempt to understand the origins and interrelationships of the first three gospels that will explain both the similarities and the differences”. There are three main categories of theories that attempt to explain the amount of similarity as well as account for the apparent discrepancies in the synoptic gospels. The first is the oral tradition view which attempts to explain the similarities in the gospels by pointing out how rigidly first century Christians guarded their oral tradition. If oral tradition was as precise as we believe it to be then the word for word similarities among the gospels can be explained very simply. The second is the interdependence view which theorizes that the gospels used each other as sources. The most common theory within this view is the Farrer Hypothesis which states that Mark was written first and then Matthew used Mark to write his gospel, and Luke followed and used both Matthew and Mark. The final view is that there was at least one, if not more, gospels written that have been lost. This “proto-gospel” view,

3 Meyers, 976.
commonly held by more liberal scholars and referred to as Q, would explain the similarities in Matthew and Luke that do not exist in Mark. Others have theorized as many as three lost gospels. While the proto-gospel would explain the similarities in Matthew and Luke quite well, conservative scholars tend to prefer the Farrer hypothesis.

**Matthew**

The authorship of the book of Matthew is “perhaps the most disputed historical question related to this Gospel.”⁴ Church tradition has long accepted the apostle Matthew as the author and many believe him to be one-and-the-same as the tax collector Levi. Others have argued to the contrary. According to Eusebius, Matthew arranged or compiled the oracles in the Hebrew language or style. Some have argued then that the gospel we call Matthew must have a different author because it is written in Greek. Others have made the argument that that Eusebius was referring to Matthew’s style which is Jewish or Hebrew in nature.⁵ Matthew was a tax collector, and the skillful organization of the book as well as the “prominence of money and tax-collecting themes (10:3; 17:24-27; 18:23-25; 20:1-16; 27:3-5; 28:11-15)”⁶ seems to support the theory that Matthew was the author. None of the arguments for or against Matthean authorship are unassailable, but for Strauss, church tradition tips the scales in favor of Matthew as the author of this gospel.

The date of Matthew is highly debated. Some opt for a late date in the 80’s or 90’s after the Temple was destroyed in AD 70 and point to 22:7 as a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem. Others believe that Mark was more likely the first gospel and believe that Matthew 24:1-28 seems to point to the future of Jerusalem’s destruction which would date the book in the early to mid 60’s. Matthew’s date, like the dates of many other Old and New Testament Books, remains obscure.

Matthew is written specifically to Jews in order to explain and defend the deity of Christ. Matthew contains a great deal of Old Testament prophecy fulfillment which the author

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⁵ Strauss, 252.
⁶ Strauss, 253.
intentionally points out to his Jewish audience in order to argue that Jesus truly was and is the Messiah.

Matthew contains five major discourses, or sermons, of Jesus. The first discourse is found in chapter 5-7 and is referred to as the Sermon on the Mount. The second is found in chapter 10 and deals with instructions to Missionaries. The third discourse is a collection of Parables found in chapter 13. The fourth deals with instructions for the community which include instructions for dealing with conflict in chapter 18. The fifth and final discourse is known as the Olivet Discourse which deals with eschatology and is found in chapters 23-25 (See “Different Views of the Millennium” chart on pg. 26). Matthew also contains a genealogy of Christ in chapter 1 as well as Christ’s discussion of divorce and remarriage in 19:1-12.

Mark

It is commonly accepted that the author of this gospel is John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (Col 4:10) and follower of the Apostle Peter. Some think that it is possible that he is the one who ran away naked the night Jesus was arrested (Mk 14:51-52).

Those who agree with the Farrer hypothesis have no problem dating Mark in the early to mid 50’s AD, but a date in the late 50’s is acceptable as well. According to Gundry, “If Luke ends his book of Acts without describing the outcome of Paul’s trial in Rome because the trial has not yet taken place, then Acts must be dated about A.D. 63, its preceding companion volume, the Gospel of Luke, somewhat earlier, and—if Luke’s Gospel reflects Mark—Mark still earlier in the fifties or late forties.”

Mark was most likely written to Gentiles. Mark explains many Jewish customs and translates many Semitic terms. He also quotes from the Old Testament considerably less than Matthew and Luke and excludes the lineage of Christ.

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9 Halley, 621.
11 7:2-4; 15:42
12 3:17; 5:41; 7:34; 14:36; 15:34
13 Strauss, 202.
It is important when reading Mark to take a step back and examine the overarching theme of the book, namely, the defense of Christ. Mark focuses on the actions of Christ rather than the teachings of Christ in order to prove that Jesus was who he said he was. Mark is a fast paced story of Jesus’ life moving from event to event with little or no explanation. Mark uses the word “immediately” often to move the narrative of his gospel along quickly.

Mark contains an interesting theme known as the “messianic secret”. This concept refers to sections of Mark where Jesus specifically tells people not to talk about him or the miracles that he just did. The paradox that Christ came as messiah and yet commanded people not to proclaim him as such has caused various interpretive difficulties for the book of Mark. Significant debate has arisen with regard to the last chapter of Mark. Verses 9-20 are missing from several reputable manuscripts, causing some scholars to believe that these verses were added later and are therefore not inspired or canonical. This section of Mark is known as the “long ending”. Mark also contains the parable of the soils (4:1-25), a discussion on divorce and remarriage (10:2-12) and the Olivet Discourse (13) which are all found in the other synoptic gospels as well.

Luke

The author of Luke never expressly names himself, but it can be deduced that the same author wrote both the book of Luke and Acts. Both books are written to Theophilus and contain similar grammar and style. Several sections of Acts use the pronoun “we” suggesting that the author was a companion of Paul’s. From the list of Paul’s traveling companions listed in his epistles from Rome (Col 4: 7-17, Philomena 14:10; 20:1-35) and the New Testament (1:10-11; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARABLE</th>
<th>MATTHEW</th>
<th>MARK</th>
<th>LUKE</th>
<th>JOHN</th>
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<tr>
<td>Parable of the Sower</td>
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<td>15:44</td>
<td>15:44</td>
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<td>Wicked Husbandmen</td>
<td>31:17-49</td>
<td>17:112</td>
<td>17:112</td>
<td>17:112</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lost Sheep</td>
<td>15:2-7</td>
<td>15:2-7</td>
<td>15:2-7</td>
<td>15:2-7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lost Corn</td>
<td>15:8-10</td>
<td>15:8-10</td>
<td>15:8-10</td>
<td>15:8-10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two Debtors</td>
<td>7:40-43</td>
<td>7:40-43</td>
<td>7:40-43</td>
<td>7:40-43</td>
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<td>Friend at Midnight</td>
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<td>11:18</td>
<td>11:18</td>
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<td>Pharisee vs Publican</td>
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<td>10:9-14</td>
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<td>Pound</td>
<td>19:11-12</td>
<td>19:11-12</td>
<td>19:11-12</td>
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<td>Good Samaritan</td>
<td>10:30-37</td>
<td>10:30-37</td>
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<td>Barren Fig Tree</td>
<td>13:9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marriage of KIng’s Son</td>
<td>13:11-14</td>
<td>14:15-21</td>
<td>14:15-21</td>
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http://www.biblecharts.org/theparablesofjesus.html

14 1:10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 28, 29, 30, 42, 43; 2:8, 12; 3:6; 4:5, 15, 16, 17, 19, 24; 10:52; 11:2, 3; 14:43, 45, 72; 15:1
15 Mark 1:44; 8:30
23-24, 2 Tim 4:10-11) it can be deduced that the most probable candidate is Luke.\textsuperscript{18} Luke is called “the beloved physician” by Paul and uses medical language in his gospel. It is likely that Luke wrote his Gospel around the year A.D. 60 while Paul was in prison in Caesarea and followed it up with the book of Acts written during Paul’s Roman imprisonment (61-62).\textsuperscript{19}

This gospel seems to be slanted slightly towards a more Jewish audience. Luke was probably a Gentile himself or at least a Hellenistic Jew. His Greek is impeccable and his style is very typical of Greek writing. His purpose is also made very clear in 1:4. Luke writes to Theophilus “so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.” Luke has investigated the gospel and has seen fit to write it down in a succinct way so that the “exact truth” may be made known.\textsuperscript{20} This letter could be accurately referred to as a historical discipleship manual.

Luke contains more parables than any of the other Gospels. The most famous of the parables found only in Luke’s gospel are that of the Prodigal Son\textsuperscript{21} and the Good Samaritan\textsuperscript{22}. Luke’s gospel is also a great place to find evidence for the *ipsissima vox/verba* debate.\textsuperscript{23} This debate centers on the question of Bible transmission and whether we have recorded the “very words” that Jesus spoke, or simply the main ideas that Jesus taught.

**The Gospel of John**

“The apostle whom Jesus loved” (21:20, 24) is the only identification that the author gives but it can be deduced through the process of elimination that the author is John. Of the three disciples closest to Christ, James had already been martyred by the time of writing (Acts 12) and Peter is mentioned in this gospel as an associate of the disciple whom Jesus loved (13:23-24). This evidence leaves John as the only of the three disciples closest to Christ unaccounted for.

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\textsuperscript{18} Strauss, 289.
\textsuperscript{19} Halley, 644.
\textsuperscript{20} Luke 1:1-4
\textsuperscript{21} Luke 15:11-32
\textsuperscript{22} Luke 10:25-37
\textsuperscript{23} See *Jesus under Fire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1994.) by Michael J. Wilkins and J.P. Moreland for more information on the *ipsissima vox/verba* debate.
Some scholars from the late 19th century dated John’s Gospel in the middle of the second century, but the Rylands Fragment found in Egypt has been dated around A.D. 135 and “requires several previous decades for the writing, copying, and circulation of John as far as the Egyptian hinterland, where the fragment was discovered.” 24 This alone puts the date of John as early as the 80’s or 90’s, possibly even earlier. Those who disagree with the legitimacy of predictive prophecy in the gospels opt for a date after the destruction of the temple in AD 70 but John alludes to buildings in Jerusalem 25 that seem to be still standing at his time of writing and never mentions the destruction of the temple which provides evidence for a date before AD 70.

While John does not seem to have a specific audience in mind, his gospel is highly theological and evangelistic. John states his purpose in very specific language in chapter 20 verse 31 “but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.” 26

John’s gospel does not include any parables, or demon exorcisms. It is also void of genealogies and birth or baptism accounts. John does contain a very structured account of 7 miracles and 7 “I am” statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Miracle</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Changing water into wine in Cana (2:1-11)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Healing an official’s son in Capernaum (4:46-54)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Healing a lame man in Jerusalem (5:1-18)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Feeding the five thousand (6:5-14)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Walking on water (6:16-21)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Healing a blind man in Jerusalem (9:1-7)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1-45)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>I Am Statements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>“I am the gate for the sheep” 10:7</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“I am the good shepherd” 11:25</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>“I am the resurrection and the life” 11:25</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>“I am the way, the truth, and the life” 14:6</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>“I am the true vine” 15:1</td>
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24 Gundry, 256.
25 5:2 “Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes.”
26 John 20:31
**The Book of Acts**

It is commonly accepted that Luke is the author of the Gospel of Luke as well as the book of Acts and that the book was completed around the year AD 63, covering an approximate time period from Christ’s ascension (about A.D. 30) to Paul’s Roman Imprisonment (about A.D. 61-63). Paul arrived in Rome around the year AD 61 and stayed for two years before the somewhat abrupt ending of Acts. Many explain the abrupt ending of Acts by pointing to the supposition that Luke was writing a history and had caught up to his present time. Benware says that, “this date seems reasonable since Acts makes no reference to the open persecution of Christians that erupted under Emperor Nero in A.D. 64, or to the martyrdom of Paul in the late sixties, or to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.”

The book of Acts, like the Gospel of Luke, is addressed to the most honorable Theophilus who was most likely Luke’s patron, the person financially supporting Luke’s writing. Gundry argues that Luke probably wrote with a larger audience than just Theophilus in mind and that the writing of the book of Acts seems to be slightly slanted toward a Gentile audience. There are very clear evangelistic and

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Galatians</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>Jerusalem Council</td>
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<td>2 Thessalonians</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>24-26</td>
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<td>60</td>
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<td>27-28</td>
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27 See the Map of the early church in Appendix A.
31 Gundry, 303.
apologetic themes in the book of Acts. The evangelistic theme is most clearly summed up in Acts 1:8.\(^{32}\) It also seems that one of Luke’s main purposes in the writing of acts was to give a written defense of Christianity\(^ {33}\) or set the record straight in a time of change and uncertainty. While Luke’s first letter (the Gospel of Luke) is primarily concerned with the life and ministry of Christ, his second letter (Acts) focuses on the ministry of the apostles and the growth of the first century church.

Acts can be seen as the historical and chronological groundwork for much of the New Testament. Modern publishers however, rarely publish the books of the NT in chronological order opting instead to group the books more or less by category. (law, prophets, gospels, epistles etc...) In order to gain a broad view of the New Testament and study it in its historical, chronological context the remainder of the New Testament will be examined in sequential order.

**Epistles**

**Early Epistles**

**James**

Though there are at least four men in Scripture known as James, church tradition as well as internal and external evidence point to the author of the epistle being the half-brother of Jesus who rejected Christ initially but believed and became a “pillar” of the early church.\(^ {34}\) James gave a speech at the Jerusalem council, recorded in Acts 15, where he confronted the Jewish teaching that circumcision was necessary for salvation. There is sufficient evidence in the New Testament to argue that James was one of the most influential leaders during the early stages of growth in the Jerusalem church.\(^ {35}\) He was martyred in AD 62.\(^ {36}\)

Carson and Moo argue that the lack of conflict between Jewish and Gentile Christians seems to point to a date before the Jerusalem council in AD 48 or 49. They add that James seems to be combating a misunderstanding of Paul’s teaching on justification in chapter 2. With

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\(^{32}\) Acts 1:8 “but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

\(^{33}\) Benware, 126.

\(^{34}\) 1 Corinthians 9:5

\(^{35}\) Acts 12:15, 15:13, 21:18; 1 Cor 9:5

\(^{36}\) Gundry, 477.
Paul’s ministry beginning shortly after his conversion in AD 33 and having allowed some time for Paul’s teaching to spread, Carson and Moo date the book in the mid 40’s.\(^{37}\) Benware agrees, dating the book around AD 45.\(^{38}\)

The book of James is extremely practical in nature which almost disqualified it from being canonized.\(^{39}\) The practical nature of the book of James however, makes it a very suitable handbook for Christian living. The letter is addressed specifically to the Christian Jews who were “dispersed abroad.”\(^{40}\)

One of the most controversial issues in the book of James is the nature of justification. Paul and the rest of the New Testament argue for justification apart from works and James seems to argue for justification by works. Reformed scholars\(^{41}\) explain this by arguing for the necessity of works in “genuine faith”. Rewards scholars\(^{42}\) however, argue that James has a different justification in mind (i.e. a justification before men).

**Galatians**

Paul identifies himself as the author of Galatians in 1:1. The term “Galatian” could refer to a “small area in north central Asia Minor that was dominated by the Gauls, or the much larger Roman province of Galatia. If Paul is referring to the smaller area, then Galatians would be addressed to some churches founded by Paul on his

\(^{37}\) Carson & Moo, 627.

\(^{38}\) Benware, 240.

\(^{39}\) Gundry, 476.

\(^{40}\) James 1:1


second missionary journey. (This is called the north Galatian theory.) Those who hold to a North Galatian theory tend to argue that Paul wrote at a late date around AD 60. This would have occurred after the Jerusalem council and after Paul’s second missionary journey. The similarity between the teachings on justification in Romans and Galatians supports the idea that they were written around the same time. If the larger area of the Roman province is being referred to, then the book of Galatians would be addressed to churches founded by Paul on his first missionary trip. (This is called the south Galatian theory.)”\textsuperscript{43} Many modern scholars including Tenney\textsuperscript{44}, Benware\textsuperscript{45}, and Gundry\textsuperscript{46} hold to a South Galatian theory and an early date around AD 47-49. The main argument for this early date is that if Paul was writing after the Jerusalem council it seems odd that he does not mention the council for it would have given great support to his claim that Gentiles were free from Jewish law.

Paul wrote Galatians to combat the heresy of legalism which he calls “another gospel”.\textsuperscript{47} The specific heresy was that Gentile converts must be circumcised in order to be saved. Galatians 2:16\textsuperscript{48} is arguably the key verse in regard to Paul’s theme of Christian freedom from legalism. He argues that though circumcision had been a huge part of Jewish tradition, it was not necessary for salvation. Haley writes that “He [Paul] emphasized the essential New Testament truth that man is justified by faith in Jesus Christ—by nothing less and nothing more.”\textsuperscript{49} Galatians has such a strong theme of Christian freedom that Tenney calls it the “Magna Charta of spiritual emancipation”.\textsuperscript{50}

Galatians contains the linchpin of the egalitarian argument for women in ministry. Galatians 3:28 says “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Egalitarians use this verse as a “guiding hermeneutic”\textsuperscript{51} to argue that Paul does not see a hierarchical authority structure

\textsuperscript{43} Benware, 154.
\textsuperscript{45} Benware, 155.
\textsuperscript{46} Gundry, 354.
\textsuperscript{47} Gal 1:6-7 “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.”
\textsuperscript{48} Gal 2:16...”Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.”
\textsuperscript{49} Halley, 797.
\textsuperscript{50} Tenney, 265.
\textsuperscript{51} Sumner, Sarah. Men and Women in the Church: Building Consensus on Christian Leadership. Downers Grove,
between men and women but that Paul argues here for gender equality. Complementarians argue that men and women are equal in personhood but have distinct roles. From their perspective Paul clearly teaches “an egalitarianism of privilege in the covenantal union of believers in Christ” but “Questions of roles and functions … can only be answered by a consideration of other and later New Testament teaching.”

1 & 2 Thessalonians

There is almost no argument that Paul is the author of both epistles to the Thessalonians. Paul introduces himself as well as Silvanus and Timothy who were partners in ministry at the beginning of each book, and there is internal evidence that supports Pauline authorship as well. Paul visited Thessalonica and established the Christian church there during his 2nd missionary journey. He only stayed in Thessalonica for a short time before he was forced to move on by enemies of the Gospel. His short stay left him feeling uneasy about the health of this new church, and so he sent Timothy to minister to them. When Timothy returned to Paul at Corinth with news of the church, Paul was motivated to write the book of 1 Thessalonians. Most scholars agree that the writing of 1st

http://bible.org/assets/netbible/jp2.jpg

52 Johnson, found in Piper & Grudem Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, 164.
53 Silvanus is an Aramaic version of the Greek name Silas. Silas is first mentioned in Acts 15:22. He was a companion of Paul during his second missionary journey and was one of the carriers of the letter to the gentile Christians at Antioch. (Myers, Allen C., ed. “Silas” The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary. 1996. Print. Pg. 949)
54 Paul mentions himself in 2 Thessalonians 1:1 as well as 3:17.
55 Acts 17
56 Benware, 163.
Thessalonians occurred around AD 50 or 51 with 2nd Thessalonians following shortly thereafter.

The letters to the Thessalonians are most known for their eschatological themes. Gundry writes that “These two letters, the Olivet Discourse of Jesus, and the Apocalypse of John (the book of Revelation) form the three main predicatively prophetic portions of the New Testament.”

In 1 Thessalonians Paul writes specifically to the Thessalonian church regarding three main issues. First he defends his ministry as an apostle (ch. 1-3), then he clarifies the truth of the future “Day of the Lord” (4:13-5:11), and last he encourages the Thessalonians to live lives that are holy and pleasing to the Lord. In 2nd Thessalonians Paul gives a more thorough explanation of the end times. He explains to the people that though they were experiencing trials they were not in the tribulation and the Day of the Lord had not occurred. Second Thessalonians also deals considerably with the Antichrist.

**Paul’s Major Epistles**

**1 Corinthians**

There is very little dispute that Paul is the author of 1 Corinthians. Paul mentions himself in 1:1 as well as 16:21. Most scholars agree on a date around AD 55, and while Carson and Moo agree, they allow for a date up to a year later depending on the beginning date of Gallio’s proconsulship mentioned in Acts 18:12, being the best historical marker from which we work to

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57 Gundry, 360.  
58 1 Thess 5:12-22
find the date of 1 Corinthians.\(^{59}\)

The letters to the Corinthians were written from Ephesus during Paul’s third missionary journey. Paul had written to the Corinthians before according to 1 Corinthians 5:9\(^{60}\). Unfortunately this letter has been lost. With this in mind 1 Corinthians is actually the second epistle that Paul wrote to the Corinthians. In 2 Corinthians 2:4 and 7:8 Paul reveals a second “lost letter” which leaves us with four known letters to the Corinthians but only two that have lasted.

First Corinthians was written for 2 main reasons: (1) Paul responds to reports which had come to him from Chloe regarding quarrels in the Corinthian church,\(^{61}\) and (2) he responds to a letter that had been written to him from Corinth\(^{62}\) which had “questions\(^{63}\) that needed some apostolic insight”.\(^{64}\)

The Corinthian church was surrounded by a very ungodly, immoral culture. Tenney writes “To live as the Corinthians’ was a euphemism for the vilest kind of life.”\(^ {65}\) The city of Corinth contained the temple of Aphrodite where temple prostitution among other things was practiced. Paul writes the book of 1 Corinthians to combat problems that were creeping up in the church that may well have been a product of their culture. 1 Corinthians contains an emphasis on sanctification. According to Benware, Paul’s desire for the Corinthian church was that they continue in the process of being set apart unto God.\(^ {66}\)

There are three major interpretive issues in 1 Corinthians. The first is Paul’s most detailed and extensive discussion on marriage, divorce, and celibacy.\(^ {67}\) The second is found in 11:2-16 and has led to a large debate over the concept of head coverings in the church today. The debate does not necessarily revolve around the necessity of women to wear something over their head in church but rather the role of women in church altogether. The definition of the

\(^{59}\) Carson and Moo, 448.

\(^{60}\) 1 Cor 5:9 “I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people.”

\(^{61}\) 1 Cor 1:11 “For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you.”

\(^{62}\) 1 Cor 7:1 “Now concerning the things about which you wrote…”

\(^{63}\) In 7:1 Paul writes “Now concerning the things about which you wrote…” Chapters 7-15 Paul answers questions with regard to marriage, eating things sacrificed to idols, matters of conscience etc…

\(^{64}\) Benware, 175.

\(^{65}\) Tenney, 288.

\(^{66}\) Benware, 175.

\(^{67}\) 1 Cor 7
word “head” and the implications found therein are central to both the complementarian and egalitarian arguments.\textsuperscript{68} Chapters 12-14 contain the third major interpretive issue. In the twelfth chapter Paul discusses spiritual gifts and explains to the Corinthian church that all members of the church, like members of a body, are one in Christ and ought to function as one and be unified. This section is central to the overarching theme of unity within 1 Corinthians. Unfortunately, this section of 1 Corinthians has caused much division in the modern church. Many believe that a group of gifts called the “sign gifts” were only active during the time of the apostles, while others believe they are still alive and well in churches today.\textsuperscript{69}

\textbf{2 Corinthians}

Second Corinthians was written by Paul (1:1, 10:1). Most scholars believe that it was written shortly after 1 Corinthians around A.D. 55 or 56. It is likely that it was written from the city of Philippi in Macedonia where Paul traveled shortly after escaping a large riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:21-41), which is where he wrote 1 Corinthians. 2 Corinthians is one of the most personal and emotional letters that we have from Paul. “The letter reflects Paul’s intense emotional stress. There are broken constructions, mixed metaphors, rapid shift in content, and a wide variety of emotions.”\textsuperscript{70} In 2 Corinthians Paul gives us a glimpse into his life, trials, frustrations, and joys as a minister of the gospel.

Second Corinthians was written as a response to numerous criticisms of Paul.\textsuperscript{71} According to Gundry, “Paul wrote 2 Corinthians… (1) to express relief and joy at the favorable response of the majority of Corinthian Christians (chapters 1-7); (2) to stress the collection that he wants to gather from the church for the Christians in Jerusalem (chapters 8-9); and (3) to defend his apostolic authority to the still recalcitrant minority (chapters 10-13).\textsuperscript{72}

Significant issues in 2 Corinthians include Paul’s instructions on forgiving an offender, which some have suggested is the same man referred to in 1 Corinthians chapter 5. Paul’s

\textsuperscript{68} For more information on the Egalitarian/Complementarian debate, see: Sumner Men and Women in the Church and Piper Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood.

\textsuperscript{69} Dr. Geisler is a proponent of the view that the gifts have ceased, and Dr. Grudem that they are still present. See Bible Doctrine by Grudem and Systematic Theology: Volume Four: Church, Last Things by Geisler for a further discussion.

\textsuperscript{70} Benware, 186.

\textsuperscript{71} Paul addresses these criticisms in 2 Corinthians 3:1; 8:20-23; 10:2, 8, 10, 15; 11:5, 7; 12:11-12, 16

\textsuperscript{72} Gundry, 386.
discussion on the ethic of giving is found in 2 Cor 9. He reminds the Corinthians to give out of a generous heart rather than from compulsion for “God loves a cheerful giver.”

Romans

According to Craig S. Keener “All New Testament scholars accept this [Romans] as a genuine letter of Paul.” The letter to the Romans was written during Paul’s stay in Corinth while on his third Missionary Journey in about A.D. 56 or 57. The church in Rome was probably not very large and seems to have begun spontaneously by believers rather than planted by an apostle. Paul identifies these believers in Rome as Gentiles and has a strong desire to visit them and continue on to Spain.

Paul states his purpose for writing in 1:10-13 as well as 15:22-25. Paul’s desire was to come and visit the church in Rome but because he had been hindered he writes to them in order to instruct them in correct Christian Doctrine. Paul’s letter to the Romans is the most didactic and systematic letter in the New Testament.

Gundry points to “justification” as the central theme of Romans, and while it is true that justification is a central focus, Paul has a much larger theme in mind. Justification is the beginning of the Christian life and is dealt with considerably in chapters 1-5, but Paul transitions starting in 6:1 to a broader theme of sanctification throughout the rest of the epistle. It is important to note the true nature of Justification as well as the subsequent Sanctification which follows in Romans. The main theme of Romans then is an overarching righteousness which accounts for the theme of justification in 1-5 as well as sanctification in 6-16.

There are several significant interpretive issues in the book of Romans. In chapter 4 Paul discusses justification by faith alone using Abraham as an example. In Chapter 7 he discusses the inner struggle between two natures which has caused significant discussion between

73 2 Cor 9:7
75 Carson & Moo, 394.
76 For the location of Rome see Prison Epistles Map below.
77 Romans 1:13 “I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.”
78 Gundry, 391.
79 Benware, 194.
Reformed, Arminian, and Rewards proponents. Paul also deals with the sticky subject of foreknowledge in 8:28-29 and goes on to discuss election in chapter 9 using Jacob and Esau as an example of God’s sovereign choice. In 10:9-10 it seems that Paul gives a second prerequisite for salvation in the statement “If you believe… and confess”. If all this was not enough Paul discusses God’s relationship to Israel in Chapter 11, Spiritual Gifts in 12:4-8 and submission to political authority in chapter 13:1-7.

**Prison Epistles**

The prison epistles are a group of 4 letters that were written by Paul from prison. The location of his imprisonment has been debated: Acts 23:23-26:32 refers to an imprisonment in Caesarea and Acts 28:30-31 speaks of Paul’s imprisonment in Rome. Scholars have also argued for a possible Ephesian imprisonment. Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon were likely written at the same time. Most scholars date these three letters somewhere between AD 59 and 61. They were carried by Tychicus and Onesimus. According to Gundry “the Ephesian and Caesarean possibilities must at least be kept in mind for each of the Prison letters” but most scholars believe that a Roman imprisonment seems to make the most sense.

**Ephesians**

Ephesians lacks a specific audience which has led some to believe that it was intended to be distributed throughout the provinces of Asia Minor as a circular letter. While Paul focuses on the headship

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80 The complex nature of Romans 7 does not allow for an in depth explanation in this work. Much of the debate has to do with arguments of weather the writer of Romans 7 is pre or post salvation. The practical implication if he is post salvation is that salvation does not cause temptation or struggle with sin to completely cease. The implication if he is pre salvation is that an unregenerate or depraved person can evidently understand their depravity and seek a way out. This brings the extent of depravity into question. For further reading see Moo, D. J. The Epistle to the Romans. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans. 1996. Pg. 441-67.

81 Some argue that 10:9-10 supports the Calvinistic concept of Perseverance of the Saint in that a person must have actions that back up their faith or else their faith is dead. (James 2:17) Others argue that Paul, having transitioned in chapter 6 to a discussion based heavily on sanctification is not dealing with justification anymore. See Moo The Epistle to the Romans pg 657-59 and Chay The Faith that Saves Pg. 101-10.

82 Halley, 803.

83 Eph 6:21 and Col 4:7-9

84 Tenney, 317.
of Christ in Colossians, in Ephesians he is more concerned with the body, or church of Christ.  

The phrase “in Christ” along with “in Him” and other variants is used numerous times in this letter and the Jewish and Gentile unity “in Christ” might also be seen as one of Paul’s major themes in this book.

Ephesians contains many theological topics. In 1:3-6 Paul discusses the Election of the saints which is a highly debated issue among evangelicals. Arguments also arise over the meaning of 4:9 and whether or not Jesus descended into Hades post-crucifixion. In 5:21-6:9 Paul discusses the relationships between husbands, wives, children and slaves. Paul’s discussion of submission in 5:21-22 has been met with significant disagreement between complementarians and egalitarians. Complementarians understand verse 21 to be transitional and see submission as an overarching principle which is followed by specific instruction in 22-33. Egalitarians, however, see verse 21 as the beginning of the paragraph and see a pattern of “mutual submission” throughout this passage. Though this may seem like semantics, the different interpretations lead to significant implications for the role of women in marriage and ministry.

Colossians

Most agree that Paul is the author of Colossians though some argue that it is likely that he used an amanuensis or scribe to do the actual writing. “Given the brevity of the letter, the possible use of a scribe, similarities with undisputed Pauline letters, and the lapse of several years since his earlier letter, the difference between Colossians and the undisputed Pauline letters need not require different authors.” Paul wrote to the predominantly Gentile, Colossian church around AD 61.

While Paul was in prison in Rome, “Epaphras, a member of the church in Colossae, had come to Rome with word that a dangerous heresy was making headway in the church.” According to Gundry this heresy “diminishes the person of Christ”, “emphasizes human philosophy”, “contains elements of Judaism”, “includes the worship of angels”, and “flaunts an

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85 Benware, 207.  
87 Sumner, 158.  
88 Keener, 568.  
89 Gundry, 418.  
90 Carson & Moo, 522.  
91 Halley, 818.
exclusivist air of secrecy and superiority”. The Colossian heresy was similar to Gnosticism which also claimed to have special or secret knowledge. Paul writes Colossians in response to this heresy which “blends together Jewish legalism, Greek philosophic speculation, and oriental mysticism.” Paul’s theme in the book of Colossians is the supremacy or headship of Christ. We see this specifically in Colossians 1:15-20 where Paul describes Christ as the creator and master of all. He sums up his teaching on Christ in 2:9 when he says, “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.”

Interpretive issues include a discussion of the “image of the invisible God” as well as the word “firstborn” in 1:15, which are both used by Jehovah’s Witnesses to say that Christ was created and is not equal with God the father. Evangelicals however believe, according to the context, that “firstborn” refers to preeminence rather than chronology and that “image of God’ refers to Christ’s role in coming to earth to reveal or reflect God the Father rather than referring to His status as less than or a mere reflection of God. Significant theology can also be drawn from Col 1:22-23 which seems to be evidence for the Calvinistic doctrine of “perseverance of the saints”, but Rewards and Arminian scholars would disagree arguing that Paul is speaking of sanctification rather than justification.

Philemon

The epistle to Philemon is a letter from Paul to Philemon who was most likely a resident of Colossae. This letter was likely delivered by Tychicus along with the letter of Colossians.

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92 Gundry, 418-19.
93 Gundry, 419.
94 Col 1:15 – 20 “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross”.
97 See Grudem Systematic Theology Pg. 243-46.
98 TULIP Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints
99 Halley, 851.
100 Carson & Moo, 592.
around AD 61.\textsuperscript{101} Traditionally it has been understood and accepted that Onesimus was a runaway slave who belonged to Philemon but recent study has argued to the contrary. This recent research has postulated that “Onesimus was not a slave, much less a runaway slave, but a free man—perhaps even Philemon’s biological brother—who sought out Paul for the purpose of getting him as Philemon’s friend and patron to settle a financial dispute between himself (Onesimus) and Philemon.”\textsuperscript{102} Gundry as well as Carson and Moo point out that this interpretation is unlikely at best. Onesimus was a convert of Paul’s ministry who had stolen money from his master Philemon. Post-conversion, Paul convinces Onesimus that he should return and seek forgiveness from his master. Paul writes this letter to his “beloved brother”\textsuperscript{103} urging him not only to forgive Onesimus but to allow him to return to Paul for the purpose of the ministry. The letter to Philemon is only a chapter in length but it provides a great example of forgiveness that can be used as a model for the modern Christian life.

\textbf{Philippians}

Paul identifies himself as the author and almost no one debates this. The date of writing for Philippians depends on the origin of writing. If Paul is writing from Rome then a date around AD 61 or 62 is appropriate. If the letter was written from Caesarea a date around AD 59 or 60 seems reasonable. If written from Ephesus, the letter dates to the mid 50’s AD. The majority of the evidence leans toward a date at the end of Paul’s Roman imprisonment which would be around AD 62.\textsuperscript{104} “Paul founded the church at Philippi on his second journey and visited again some five years later on his third journey.”\textsuperscript{105} This letter is sent much later from Paul’s imprisonment. Epaphras, who was sent from Philippi, had risked his life to bring a financial gift to Paul from the Philippian church. After a short while Paul sends him back to Philippi with this letter.\textsuperscript{106}

This letter is extremely personal containing the first person, personal pronoun “no less than a hundred”\textsuperscript{107} times. Joy seems to be a major theme of this Gospel as Paul tells the Philippians about his joy regarding them and the Gospel.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[101] Halley, 803.
\item[102] Gundry, 415.
\item[103] Philemon 2
\item[104] Carson & Moo, 506.
\item[105] Benware, 219.
\item[106] Halley, 812.
\item[107] Tenney, 323.
\end{footnotes}
Doctrinal debate has arisen regarding 2:5-8 in which Paul describes the attitude of Christ in regards to his humanity and mentions that Christ “emptied himself” and “took the form of a bond-servant”. This has come to be known as the *kenosis* passage, named after the Greek word for “emptied”. The debate centers around the extent and implications of this “emptying”.

**The Pastoral Epistles**

**1 Timothy**

Some have argued against Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles but as Benware notes, “Evidence within the letters as well as a strong church tradition support Pauline authorship.” It is more difficult to give an exact date to these epistles because the ending of Acts coincides with the writing of the prison epistles. After Paul’s imprisonment recorded at the end of Acts, there is not a cogent history of Paul’s travel or ministry. It can be ascertained that Paul was acquitted after his imprisonment in Rome and released, at least for a little while, and it is during this time that most scholars date the Pastoral Epistles.

Both 1 and 2 Timothy were written by Paul to Timothy who was from Lystra (Acts 16:1). Paul and Timothy were very close and had ministered together during Paul’s 2nd and 3rd missionary journey’s. After Paul’s release from Rome, he traveled with Timothy and eventually left him in charge of the church in Ephesus after leaving to go on to Macedonia. The purpose of Paul’s writing is to instruct and encourage Timothy as the pastor of the Ephesian church.

108 Grudem *Systematic Theology*, 549-52.
109 Benware, 224.
110 About AD 62 or 63. It is commonly believed by most scholars that Paul was executed during the height of Nero’s persecution which would have been around AD 64 but Nero didn’t die until AD 68 so it is possible that Paul was not murdered till later. Eusebius says that Paul didn’t die until AD 67. If this is true there is much more time to work with regarding the date of the Pastoral Epistles. (Carson & Moo 572)
111 Lystra is located to the east of Ephesus. See map of Paul’s third missionary Journey on Pg. 12.
112 Tenney, 334.
The first interpretive issue raised in this letter is the interpretation of 2:4. “God desires all men to be saved,” but the reality of life is that not all men are saved. Reformed scholars distinguish between god’s “revealed will” and his “secret will” while Arminian and Rewards scholars argue that the gospel is open to all people. The book of 1 Timothy contains 3 significant passages in regard to the complementarian and egalitarian debate. The role of women in the church is brought up in 2:8-15 when Paul says, “I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man.” Complementarians use this passage to argue that the office of elder or teaching pastor is only open to men but egalitarians point out that the complementarian argument is inconsistent because it allows for women to teach and exercise authority outside of church. They hold that 1 Timothy 2 contains a culturally bound concept that is not necessary in today’s society. Similar concerns are brought up in 3:1-7 on the qualifications for elders and whether women qualify for this office or not. Moreover in 3:8-13 the office of deacon or deaconess is discussed which also brings about debates between complementarians and egalitarians.

**Titus**

Titus was a pastor and companion of Paul as well as a carrier of the second letter to the Corinthians. Later he was left on the island of Crete to look after the church while Paul continued on to the east. In this letter Paul tells Titus that he will be relieved in Crete by Artemas or Tychicus so that he can rejoin Paul in Nicopolis. (Titus 3:12)

Many different suggestions have been put forward regarding the date of this letter. Haley suggests AD 65, Benware AD 63 and Carson and Moo argue for a date as early as AD 57. As with most NT books it is difficult to assign an exact date to Titus. Both Titus and 1 Timothy share a common theme: to instruct and encourage their recipients.

The book of Titus contains similar content to the book of 1 Timothy, and like 1 Timothy raises the issue regarding the qualifications of elders. Titus 1:6 says that an elder must be “the

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113 Rebecca Groothuis has written an impressive article on this passage opting for an interpretation that is neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian. Groothuis, R. M. “Leading him up the garden path.” *Priscilla Papers, 16*, 2, 10-14.  
114 Halley, 846.  
115 Halley, 846.  
116 Benware, 230.  
117 Carson & Moo, 582.
husband of one wife.” Some take this to mean that an elder must never be divorced, others that he must not have more than one wife at a time, and still others believe that in order to be an elder one must be a man with only one wife. This final interpretation would exclude women for the office and possibly unmarried men as well.

2 Timothy

2 Timothy was written by the same author and to the same recipient as 1 Timothy. Depending on one’s view of the time period of Paul’s death, this book was either written around AD 64 or later around AD 67. This is, however the last letter that we have from Paul, and in it he metaphorically hands the reigns of his ministry off to Timothy. It seems from 2:9 that Paul finds himself in prison yet again, and in this letter he begs Timothy to visit him soon (4:9). Paul’s theme is two-fold: he charges Timothy “to guard the treasure of the gospel (1:14) and to carry on the ministry that had been passed on to Him…(2:2).”

2 Timothy 3:16 deals with the inspiration of Scripture and is, therefore, central in Christian orthodoxy. Evangelicals believe that Scripture has “divine origin” and is equivalent with “the actual speech of the Lord”. Some have debated regarding what can be called “scripture,” but the conservative evangelical belief is that the entirety of the cannon is the inspired word of God.

General Epistles

Hebrews

Hebrews does not identify its author. Some have argued that it is Pauline while still others that it was written by Priscilla and Aquila. Many other options have been suggested from Barnabus, to Luke, Apollos, Silvanus, Philip or Clement. Though the authorship is not clear, Benware points out that many Old Testament books are unclear in regard to authorship and

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118 Benware, 233.
119 Benware, 233.
122 Benware, 243.
124 Gundry, 459.
that in spite of our lack of knowledge about the author, we can still treat Hebrews as an inspired text.

The date of this epistle is almost as mysterious as the authorship. Many have argued for a date before AD 70 due to the discussion of sacrifice in Hebrews which would not have been a huge issue after the destruction of the temple. Bruce tentatively suggests that Hebrews was written before the outbreak of persecution in Rome which occurred in AD 65.\textsuperscript{125} He bases this tentative decision on 12:4, in which the author of Hebrews says, “You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.”

The location of the intended audience is yet another mystery within the book of Hebrews. While the book has an “unmistakable Jewish flavor,”\textsuperscript{126} which has led some to believe that it is addressed to the Jews in Jerusalem, almost every major city from Egypt to Italy has been proposed as a possible destination for this letter.\textsuperscript{127} To put it bluntly, we don’t know where this letter was sent.

Because the author, date, and audience are difficult to establish, it is also difficult to ascertain a specific theme. We can say that Hebrews seems to be written in order to turn those who had grown “spiritually lethargic” back to the faith and to keep those in the faith from turning away. Hebrews contains five warning passages\textsuperscript{128} that specifically warn against falling away. These five passages make up the majority of the interpretive issues in the book of Hebrews. Reformed, Rewards, and Arminian theologians all approach them from a slightly different angle.

1 Peter

There is little doubt that Peter was the author of both books which we now refer to as First and Second Peter. Internal evidence as well as external evidence which is “strong or stronger, than that for any other NT book”\textsuperscript{129} points to Peter as the author of both letters. According to Gundry, the language of First Peter seems to be evidence for a date around AD 63

\textsuperscript{125} Bruce, 21.
\textsuperscript{126} Halley, 854.
\textsuperscript{127} Bruce, 10-14.
\textsuperscript{129} Carson & Moo, 641.
or 64 before the full blown persecution by Nero in AD 65. Peter speaks of the government in positive terms in 2:13-4:11 which doesn’t make as much sense if he is writing after Nero started lighting Christians on fire to light his gardens at night. 1 Peter 5:3 states that the letter is written in Babylon, but there is no record of Peter ever going to the Babylon of Mesopotamia, and many scholars believe that “Babylon” was a symbolic name for Rome.

This letter was written “to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia…” According to Haley, Peter is referring to the area that we know today as Turkey. Peter also adds the tag at the end of verse one “who are chosen”. From this we can understand that the letter is written specifically to the believers in the aforementioned places. Peter writes this letter to encourage the saints in their suffering and to “emphasize the proper attitude and conduct that believers are to have when undergoing persecution. This proper attitude is developed by understanding how Christ suffered and by growing in appreciation for the greatness of Christ’s salvation.”

It is worth noting that Peter mentions all three persons of the godhead in 1:2. This is one of the very few passages where all members of the Trinity are explicitly mentioned together. The issue of women in marriage and ministry comes up yet again in 1 Peter 3:1-7. For more regarding this issue see Sumner for the egalitarian perspective and Piper for the complementarian perspective. 1 Peter 3:18-20 provides a challenge for it claims that Christ preached to the spirits in prison after his death. Some have understood this as a reference to Hell and others as a reference to “the atmosphere of the earth, to which demons are now confined”. The nature of this preaching is also debated. 1 Peter 3:21 says that “baptism now saves you.” Peter clarifies that he is not speaking of “the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God

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130 Gundry, 480.
131 Keener, 707.
132 Benware, 250.
133 1 Peter 1:1
134 Halley, 872.
135 Benware, 251.
136 Men and Women in the Church
137 Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood
138 Gundry, 485.
for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” It is also interesting to note that while Paul focuses on the qualifications of elders\textsuperscript{140} Peter focuses on the duties of elders\textsuperscript{141}.

### 2 Peter

There is sufficient internal evidence to infer that the apostle Peter wrote this letter\textsuperscript{142} toward the end of his life (1:13-15) which we know from church tradition was probably around AD 67.\textsuperscript{143} Though this letter is not addressed to a specific location we do know that he had written to his current audience previously (3:1). While it is possible that Peter had written to many other churches, most scholars assume the same audience as in 1 Peter; namely the churches in Asia Minor (1 Peter 1:1).\textsuperscript{144} It seems that false teachers were creeping in to the church claiming to have a “new knowledge”. Peter combats this heresy by reminding the saints of the true knowledge of God.\textsuperscript{145}

The main controversy found in second Peter revolves around authorship. Many have argued that Peter and Jude are very similar in their phraseology, which is correct. Some have gone farther to say that a man of Peter’s status would not have quoted a man like Jude who was not well known. According to Gundry, this argument against Petrine authorship is weak at best. It would not have been out of the ordinary for a prominent author such as Peter to quote a less prominent author like Jude. The argument can also be made that Jude was written later and, therefore, Jude quoted Peter rather than the other way around.\textsuperscript{146}

### Jude

Jude identifies himself as the brother of James in verse 1. This is probably not the Apostle James who was martyred early\textsuperscript{147}, but more likely the half-brother of Jesus. Despite a seemingly close proximity and familial relation to Christ, Jude refers to himself only as “a bond-servant of Jesus Christ.”\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{140} 1 Tim 3:1-7  
\textsuperscript{141} 1 Peter 5:1-4  
\textsuperscript{142} Tenney, 367.  
\textsuperscript{143} Benware, 255.  
\textsuperscript{144} Halley, 878.  
\textsuperscript{145} Gundry, 487.  
\textsuperscript{146} Gundry, 488.  
\textsuperscript{147} Gundry, 491.  
\textsuperscript{148} Jude 1
The date of Jude depends heavily on how one explains the similarities between Jude and 2 Peter. If Peter wrote first, then it is most probable that Jude wrote shortly after in the “late sixties or possibly in the early seventies.” If verse 17 refers to the writings of Peter, and if the argument that they had been in circulation for some time can be reasonable proven, then it is possible that Jude was not written till after the destruction of the temple and possibly as late as 80 AD.

According to verse 3, Jude had intended to write his letter about “our common salvation”, but instead felt it necessary to warn against the false doctrine, and more specifically the false teachers, that had crept into the church. While 2 Peter 2:1 mentions this apostasy as future, Jude 4 describes it as already in process.

The most significant interpretive issue in the book of Jude deals with Jude’s quotation of apocryphal sources. Jude alludes to both the Assumption of Moses and I Enoch which has caused some to question whether or not they might also be inspired writings. Gundry however, points out that “we should not be surprised that a canonical writer quotes noncanonical writings.”

1, 2, and 3 John

Ancient tradition as well as significant grammatical evidence, similar theme and comparable vocabulary all point to the Apostle John as the author of these three short letters. Most commentators date these three letters between 85 and 95 AD toward the end of John’s life while he was at Ephesus. Tenney provides some insightful background for this time period:

“By that time the separation between church and synagogue was complete. The controversy over justification by faith versus works had largely died out, and the

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149 For a more detailed explanation of this argument see Tenney pg 371.
150 Benware, 259.
151 Tenney, 372.
152 Benware, 260.
154 Tenney, 374.
155 Gundry, 492.
156 Keener, 734.
157 Benware, 261, 264, and 266.
influx of Gentiles into the church with their heritage of philosophical thought was beginning to affect doctrinal teaching.”  

John writes to “my little children” in 1 John, and while neither the author nor the audience’s names are mentioned, the letter has a very personal touch. Second John is addressed to a somewhat mysterious and highly debated “elect lady”. Third John is addressed to Gaius who was a close personal friend to John and a leader in the church. 

All three letters combat heresy and stress the importance of truth. 1 John contains a theme of fellowship with the Father which is built on truth, 2 John emphasizes abiding in truth for correct living, and 3 John emphasizes the demonstration of truth in the believer’s life.

1 John makes several statements that might be used to evaluate a believer’s life. These statements can often be interpreted in a very legalistic manner. With regard to the “elect lady,” many different positions have been put forward. Some have proposed a woman named “Electa”, others a woman named Kyria, and still others have proposed that John is referring to an unnamed Christian female. More commonly the elect lady has been considered to be a metaphor for the collective church or possibly a specific church from that time period.

Revelation

For some time it has been commonly accepted that the Apostle John is the author of the fourth Gospel as well as the letters of 1st, 2nd, 3rd John, and the book of Revelation. In more recent times, scholars have argued to the contrary on the basis of stylistic differences between the Gospel and Revelation, but Keener points out that it is not improbable that the same author used a different style while writing in a different genre. According to Keener, the similarities in vocabulary as well as early church tradition seem to provide sufficient evidence for Johannine authorship. Gundry accounts for the poor grammar in Revelation by saying that it may stem
from an “ecstatic state of mind, due to John’s having received prophecies in the form of visions.”  

Though some scholars have dated this book in the 60’s AD it is more commonly accepted that the book was written during the reign of Emperor Domitian in the mid 90’s AD while John was exiled to the Island of Patmos. It is addressed to seven churches in Asia Minor. Each church is addressed separately in chapters 2 and 3.

There are four basic approaches that can be used in the interpretation of this apocalyptic book. The first approach is the **Idealist approach**, which sees Revelation as a book filled with symbolism and imagery but deficient in regard to literal or prophetic significance. The book of Revelation is, according to this approach, a “picture of the continuous struggle between good and evil”. The second approach is **Preterism.** This approach “assumes that everything was fulfilled during the period in which it was written and that the story was told with imagery and symbolism to hide its meaning from the late 1st century pagans.” The **Historical approach** explains the events in Revelation as past tense. According to this view Revelation is a symbolic account of church history. The final approach

165 Gundry, 507.
166 Halley, 900 and Keener, 758.
167 Revelation 1:9
168 Gundry, 508.
169 Halley, 902.
170 Benware, 272.
is known as the **Futurist approach** and those holding this view see the events in chapters 4-22 as events that will still occur in the future. “The Tribulation period is dealt with in chapters 6-19, while chapter 20 views Christ’s thousand-year reign on the earth, and chapters 21-22 focus on eternity.”

Most of the interpretive difficulties in the book of Revelation come from the differences in the four approaches to interpretation, still there are several different theological systems which find much of their basis in the pages of the final book of the New Testament canon. There are three main eschatological systems each taking a different perspective on the millennial kingdom of Christ. These views deal mainly with the timeline of the Millennium.

![Different Views of the Millennium (1000 Years)](image)

*Gundry, 510.*

**Conclusion**

The NT as a whole is the story of Christ’s impact on the earth. The Gospels provide us with a narrative of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. Acts follows with the historical account of the growth of the early church. The Pauline epistles provide sound theology for practical Christian living, and the general epistles pick up right where Paul left off in describing and

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[^171]: Benware, 273.
explaining the implications involved in the coming of Christ. Revelation concludes the NT with John’s vision of what the Kingdom of Heaven will be like. The entirety of the NT revolves around Christ as the redeemer of God’s people. God’s plan from the beginning of time is fulfilled and carried out by Christ.
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Appendix B

http://bible.org/assets/netbible/jp2.jpg
## Religious Background of the New Testament

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sadducees</th>
<th>Pharisees</th>
<th>Essenes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Active in political and economic life.</td>
<td>1. Active religious and political party.</td>
<td>1. Main group was located on the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea region. Other branches were scattered throughout the countryside.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Composed of the wealthier elements of the population - priests, merchants, and aristocrats.</td>
<td>2. Considered themselves the followers of Ezra.</td>
<td>2. Held everything in common ownership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Dominated the Temple worship.</td>
<td>3. Maintained the Oral Law as well as of the Torah as the source of their religion.</td>
<td>3. Celibate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Many were members of the Sanhedrin (high Jewish court).</td>
<td>4. They attempted to imbue the masses with a spirit of holiness.</td>
<td>4. Abhorred slavery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Cherished the sacrificial laws.</td>
<td>5. They were willing to submit to foreign domination as long as it did not interfere with their religious values.</td>
<td>5. Religious outlook closer to the Pharisees than the Sadducees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Opposed the Pharisees.</td>
<td>6. The synagogue worship became a tool to undermine the Sadducees. Ceremonies originally part of the Temple were carried over to the synagogue; learned men of non-priestly descent (rabbis) began to play an important role in national religious affairs.</td>
<td>6. Devoted entire life to the study of the Torah in its minutest details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Supremacy of the Torah.</td>
<td>7. The Sanhedrin, regarding the interpretation of the Torah on questions about daily life, gave the Pharisees the opportunity to incorporate their traditions into the Temple &amp; religious life of the people. Beliefs:</td>
<td>7. Meticulous ritual purity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Refused to accept any precept as binding unless it was based directly on the Torah.</td>
<td>9. Man would be rewarded in heaven or punished in hell according to his conduct.</td>
<td>9. Communal meals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Refused to accept any precept as binding unless it was based directly on the Torah.</td>
<td>10. The Law must be understood according to the interpretation of the teachers who are endowed with God-given abilities to do so.</td>
<td>10. Immortality of the soul, but rejected bodily resurrection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Rejected Pharisaic supernatural beliefs, claiming that they had no basis in Mosaic Law.</td>
<td>11. Mosaic principle of &quot;an eye for an eye&quot; (Ex. 21:24) was interpreted as a reference to monetary compensation &amp; not retaliation.</td>
<td>11. Deemed they were the only true Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Denied the doctrine of resurrection of the body.</td>
<td>12. God could be worshiped both in and outside the Temple, and was not invoked by sacrifices alone.</td>
<td>12. Regarded the religious observances in the cities and the Temple as corrupt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Denied the existence of angels and ministering spirits.</td>
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http://koinonia-all.org/bible/Intertestament.htm
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¹Datings are approximate and often disputed. They presuppose the discussion throughout this book. Places of writing and identification of authors are also disputed.