

# *Passage to Patmos*

*by*

*John Louis*

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## Preface

The New Testament is a series of God inspired books that gives us the full revelation of Jesus Christ. Since this revelation contains the truth by which mankind may be saved, all the more reason we should study its contents seriously. The Christian faith is not so much a religion, but rather a call to a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. This call to us is done through human words – words that were written down in the first century, and preserved and passed down through God’s protection to all of us today.

There are some people who consider the Bible to be “literature”; some appreciate it as a historical book, and their interpretation will be limited to their corresponding perspective. For those of us who look at the Bible as God’s word, their perspective will also be different. Unfortunately, too many of us in this category look to the bible to see what rules need to be obeyed. It is my belief that God did not intend for us to view it in this manner. (If he did, he could have just written another list of commandments!)

Fortunately for us, our loving Father used a different format when he wrote the New Testament for us. Specifically chosen individuals, who lived some 2,000 years ago, recorded Spirit-guided accounts and epistles as they travelled and spread the news about God’s love through his Son, Jesus Christ. **The New Testament therefore, in a real way, is a collection of missionary documents, written by missionaries who were on a mission** (Larkin & Williams, 1998). Their writings contain the influence of their culture and circumstances. **Passage to Patmos** is a serious attempt to follow these heroes and their writings from the time in Jerusalem when the church began in A.D. 30, through the events when the different New Testament books were written, right up to the time when the last book, Revelation, was written in the island of Patmos by the Apostle John. Since this is a chronological study, we will be using some historical documents to help date these biblical events. Apart from that, we will also be

studying each book of the New Testament to get an idea of their respective themes and the flow of one to another. We hope that it will be very rewarding as we uncover new insights into their writings that will deepen our faith and our understanding of Jesus. It is my prayer and hope that this simple book will help us all appreciate some of the riches that are contained in the New Testament. Such rewards will not come to those who have a casual attitude about God's word, but to those who take such study seriously. After that comes the most important part – to put it into practice! Only then will each of us be able to “become a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2: 15).

*John Louis*

## **Acknowledgements**

Putting together this small book has been challenging in the midst of my other responsibilities. A team of fantastic servants of the Lord needs to be mentioned and commended for their contribution:

- 1) Pat Tay - For her typing and computer skills which she used to help format the entire write up.
- 2) Tan Beng Hwa - For helping me produce all the maps.
- 3) Kelvin Pang, Goh Ling Pin, See Han Cong and a team of volunteers - Getting the books actually printed.
- 4) Lastly, as with all my other works, Karen, my wife, for her invaluable editing skills.

## **About the Author**

John Louis moved to Singapore shortly after being married in London. He and his wife officially began the Central Christian Church of Singapore in 1988. They are currently overseeing about 20 churches in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia – now known as the South-East Asian Region of Churches (S.E.A. churches; see [www.seachurches.org](http://www.seachurches.org)) and through God's grace have helped the region to grow to a membership of over 4,000.

In addition to his pastoral work, John is also Founder and President of HOPE *worldwide* (Singapore). Apart from his Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering, he also holds a Master's Degree in Counselling from Monash University, and is a Professional Member of the Australian and American Counselling Associations, and a Registered Counsellor with the Singapore Association for Counselling. He and his wife reside in Singapore with their two teenage children.

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CHAPTER ONE:

*Background  
& Overview*

## Introduction

As stated in the preface, the purpose of this book is to give a general overview of the New Testament, which makes up about 23% of the entire bible, and to study events in the book of Acts chronologically; we will *not* try to analyse every verse. Being familiar with the flow is like knowing your city. Take, for example, Singapore. If we want to purchase computer equipment, we probably go to Funan Centre or Sim Lim Square. If we want to do some shopping, we might try Orchard Road, Arab Street, China Town, or Little India. For delicious local food, Newton Circus or East Coast Seafood Centre would not be a bad choice. If we want to bring some friends for sightseeing, the cable car ride to Sentosa, the Science Centre, and the Night Safari would be all be excellent choices. When we need something from an industrialized area, we know to go towards Jurong and Tuas. For big time banking, we head to Raffles Place and Shenton Way. We may not know the name of every street, but that does not mean we do not know Singapore. In a similar way, this is the goal of this study series – for us to know the New Testament, by knowing the flow, the main themes and some of the main points. This will not involve knowing every verse in the bible, any more than you know the name of every street in your heartland, but at the end of the day, you will be very familiar with your New Testament.

The word “Testament” refers to the covenant between a greater powerful being, God, and a lesser powerful party, mankind. God initiated reconciliation with man. We have to do our part, but God started it. In the gospels, people were still under the Old Testament. The New Testament, i.e., new covenant, came into effect after the death of Jesus and ushered in Acts 2, the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit was given to people.

Several fair questions to ask God might be, “Why did you bring Jesus at *that* time? Why did the New Covenant only

begin 2000 years ago? How did the people of the Old Covenant get salvation?" First, let's use an analogy to illustrate how the blood of Jesus covered the sins of those who lived before he died on the cross. Imagine a man named John Doe – he has an unquenchable gambling addiction, and ends up with a debt of 100 million dollars. When he dies, the debt collectors come after his son, Jack, who has no hope of paying the debt in his lifetime. Miraculously, a generous and trustworthy billionaire offers to pay off the casinos. Jack's debt would officially not be paid until the actual transaction was made. However, Jack would be released from worry once his benefactor gave his word. In this way, the people in the Old Testament were forgiven. God gave his word but the penalty was not officially paid until Jesus died years later, when he atoned for the sins of people in the past and the future.

Insofar as timing, the bible tells us that Jesus came into the world at "just the right time" (Romans 5: 6), the "proper time" (1 Timothy 2: 6). What made *that* time the "right" time? Why couldn't Jesus have come earlier? After all, mankind had fallen way before that. What was so special about *that* period of history? We cannot presume to know for sure, but most scholars assume it was because of the Roman Empire and what was then known as *Pax Romana*, i.e., the Roman peace.

When Jesus was born, the Roman Empire had consolidated control of most of Europe and the Middle East. Roman rule was strong, so there was "peace", or at least, political stability. This peace did not begin from the time the Romans rose to power. Many battles were fought at the early stage. In 146 B.C., the Romans defeated the Greek Empire, which covered a major part of the cultured world at that time. A century later, in 44 B.C., Julius Cesar, the famous general, was murdered. His nephew, Augustus, took over and he ruled as Emperor from 27 B.C. – A.D. 14. It was during Augustus' time that people begin to speak of "*Pax Romana*", and it was during his reign that Jesus was born.

Besides political stability, another condition that made this a favourable time for spreading the gospel during this period was communication. Greek was a common language throughout the Roman world. Centuries before, Alexander the Great of the Greek Empire introduced a programme called Hellenisation. Alexander sought to spread Greek culture everywhere, and as a result the Greek language became the common language of his empire. When the Romans came, the Greek language was already well spoken in the world at that time. While *Classical Greek* was the language of poets, playwrights and politicians, *Koine Greek* was the common Greek used by the common people. It was the language the everyman used. The New Testament was written in this common simple language (except for Luke/Acts and Hebrews, which were written in classical Greek). Never in the history of man, up to that time, had so many of God's creatures all spoken the same language.

A third major benefit to bringing Jesus during the time of *Pax Romana* was that travel was good and generally safe. Roads ran through the whole Empire and trade routes were plied to different parts of the world. We can almost see God's hand ordering the Roman emperors to build more roads and ships – no wonder Paul was able to make so many missionary journeys!

Lastly, at the same time that Roman culture was becoming more widespread, people were also growing tired of their own shallow religion. There was a spirit of searching at the time, and a trend of openness to new ideas. Between 1/3 and 1/2 of the population were slaves. All in all, conditions were ideal. Could it be that God was orchestrating these factors all at the same time to set the stage for when Jesus came? Of course, with planes, trains, automobiles, mobile phones, Skype and instant anywhere internet, not to mention Google language translation, conditions look pretty favourable today, don't they?!

## An Overview of the Life of Jesus

Jesus' public ministry lasted for around three to three and a half years. And while the first four books of the New Testament, known as the Gospels, tell us about the life of Jesus, they were very selective. For example, none of the four gospels describe Jesus' teenage years. (We'll never know if Jesus got zitz!) In fact, all together, the gospels only cover a few dozen days of Jesus' life, providing but a brief snapshot of different events in our Saviour's life. By the way, the term "gospel" comes from the Old English term "God-spell". It is translated from the Greek word for "good news". The four gospels announce the good news about Jesus. Why are there four Gospels? The first three, Matthew, Mark and Luke are so very similar that they are called the Synoptic ("see with", or "see alike") Gospels. The book of John is the most different of them all, but all four give us four different perspectives on Jesus and apart from being similar, they also have their own individual themes.

Acts 1: 3 reads:

*<sup>3</sup>After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.*

For a period of over forty days, Jesus appeared many times to his followers and gave proofs of his resurrection. (The day of Pentecost was celebrated on the eighth Sunday - a day after the Sabbath, seen in Leviticus 23: 15-16 - after the Passover Feast. This was counted fifty days from the day after the Sabbath, when the First Fruits offering was made.) In fact, the table in page 6 shows fifteen different post-resurrection appearances of Jesus.

**Table 1: Post-Resurrection Appearances of Jesus**

	<b>Appearance</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Scripture</b>
1	To Mary Magdalene	Garden Tomb	John 20:11-17 Matt 28:9-10 Mark 16:9
2	To Peter	Jerusalem	Luke 24:34 1 Cor 15:5a
3	To Cleopas & Another Disciple	Road to Emmaus	Luke 24:13-31
4	To the Apostles (less Thomas) and Other Disciples	Jerusalem	John 20:19-23 Luke 24:36-49 1 Cor 15:5b
5	To the Eleven Apostles	Jerusalem	John 20:26-29
6	To Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James & John & Two Others	By Sea of Tiberias	John 21:1-23
7	To More than Five Hundred Brethren - Including the Apostles	Mountain Galilee	Matt 28:16-20 1 Cor 15:6
8	To James (Brother of Jesus)	Not Given	1 Cor 15:7
9	To Eleven Apostles At Jesus' Ascension	Near Bethany	Luke 24:50,51 Act 1:4-7
10	To Paul	Near Damascus	Act 9:3-8 1 Cor 15:8
11	To Ananias	Damascus	Act 9:10-16
12	To Paul	Jerusalem	Act 22:17-21
13	To Paul	Corinth	Act 18:9,10
14	To Paul	Jerusalem	Act 23:11
15	To Apostle John	Patmos	Rev 1:10-19

Sometimes in our hurry to synchronise the gospels, we assume that certain accounts are parallel even when they are not. Take, for example, the common misconception that the account in Matthew 28: 16-20 of Jesus commissioning the apostles is the same as that of Luke 24: 50-51 and Acts 1: 4-7. Upon closer examination, it is clear that the Matthew account took place on one of the *mountains in Galilee* (Matthew 28: 16) while the other account of Jesus commissioning his disciples took place in the *Mount of Olives* near the vicinity of Bethany (Acts 1: 12 and Luke 24: 50), as opposed to the traditional site that is marked by the Church of Ascension which is now a mosque. The book of John contains yet another account, this time by the *sea* of Galilee, seen in John 21: 1-23, as opposed to one of the *mountains* in Galilee, mentioned in Matthew 28: 16-20. A benefit of this kind of analysis is that we can see that Jesus didn't give the Great Commission just once, but several times in several places. Indeed, the command to go and make disciples of all nations was one of the central foci of his teachings after his resurrection!

### **An Overview of Acts**

The book of The Acts of the Apostles is a history book of the early church chronicling the spread of the Christian faith during its first four decades. "Acts", as the book is more commonly known, also details the travels of some of the main leaders along with various personal details. As with the gospels, the narration does not give equal attention to the thirty years it covers. In some places, with just a few verses, the writer jumps several years. Sometimes, a single event takes up a whole chapter. Certain leaders, such as Paul and Peter, were highlighted more than the others. In the end, we trust that the Holy Spirit is focusing on the characters and events that he wants us to focus on.

Luke wrote the book of Acts and addressed it to Theophilus (Acts 1: 1), whose name means "God lover" or "lover of God". Since that is a Greek and not a Hebrew name, we can surmise



that he was a Gentile convert. He was probably also an upper class Roman because (a) the book is written in Classical, not common, Greek, and (b) no other book in the New Testament was written just for one person!

Approximately ninety-five places, cities and islands were mentioned in Luke-Acts and most of them can be visited today. Many historical figures were referred to, such as Tiberius, Gallio, Herod Agrippa I, and Claudius. Events such as the famine that would sweep across the Roman empire, the expulsion of the Jews by Claudius, and the death of Herod Agrippa I are historical events that were also recorded by other historians. Using these events from history, we are able to plot with some accuracy the chronology of these events and place an approximate date on most of the chapters in the book of Acts.

### Events in Acts Confirmed by History

The book of Acts covers a period of about thirty (30) years, from A.D. 30 to A.D. 60. A very reasonable and accurate structure of the chronology of the book of Acts, and hence the dating of many of Paul's letters, can be determined by correlating them with extra-biblical historical documents and with different passages in New Testament books.

There are several events that are confirmed by history that we can use as a yardstick to make fairly good estimation of the other events in the book of Luke - Acts. The events that we will be using which are confirmed by history are as follows:

1. The Reign of Tiberius  
Starting from the book of Luke in chapter 3: 1-2, we learn

*<sup>1</sup>In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea*



*and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—<sup>2</sup>during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert.*

History confirms the reign of the following emperors of Rome and their dates:

- i) Julius Caesar - 46 – 44 B.C.
- ii) Augustus Caesar - 27 B.C. – A.D. 14
- iii) Tiberius Caesar - A. D. 14 – 37
- iv) Gaius (Caligula) Caesar - A.D. 37 – 41
- v) Claudius Caesar - A.D. 41 – 54
- vi) Nero - A. D. 54 – 68
- vii) Galba Caesar - A.D. 68 – 69

In Luke 3: 21- 23, the scriptures say:

*<sup>21</sup>When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened <sup>22</sup>and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." <sup>23</sup>Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph,*

Ramsay (1997) dates this incident of Tiberius' fifteenth year to be around A.D. 26. Bruce (1979) puts it at A.D. 27. The flow of the above scriptures show that Jesus got baptized earlier on in the ministry of John the Baptist, when Jesus himself was around thirty years old. Given that there was a difference of about six months between them, (Luke 1: 36), both of them began their respective ministries when they were around thirty years of age. (It is interesting that Numbers 4: 3 we learn that in the Old Testament, the Levites, i.e., the men from the priestly class, were commissioned to serve only when they reached thirty years old). Since we can gauge that Jesus began his

ministry on the fifteenth year of Tiberius, we have here a way to determine the approximate time when Jesus began his ministry, which was around A.D. 26 - 27. Thus, counting backwards, we can fix his approximate time of birth as being around 4 - 5 B.C., and since his ministry lasted around three years, his crucifixion, resurrection and the day when the church began in Acts chapter 2 to be somewhere in the first half of A.D. 29 or 30.

2. The Famine in the Roman Empire  
Acts 11: 28 tells us:

*<sup>28</sup>One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.)*

Ramsay's (1997) calculations based on the writings of Orosius' and Tacitus Ann. XII 43 place the famine at A.D. 45. Thus the time when Paul and Barnabas set out for Jerusalem, mentioned in Acts 11: 27-30 was around the year A.D. 45.

3. The Death of Herod Agrippa I  
The death of Herod Agrippa I is recorded in Acts 12: 23, which says:

*<sup>23</sup>Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.*

The ancient Jewish historian, Josephus, also wrote about Herod's death, in *Antiquities*, 19.8.2, and he says that it occurred during a festival to honour the Emperor Claudius, probably on his birthday. Suetonius, in *The Twelve Caesars*, indicated that this particular celebration took place in A.D. 44. Josephus

wrote that five days later after the festival, Herod died, and so, assuming this was the same birthday celebration for Claudius, the year this took place was A.D. 44. Herod Agrippa I was the same Herod who beheaded James the Apostle. If we can ascertain through the putting together of these stories that this event took place in the year A.D. 44, then the other events in Acts that surrounded this one event, like the famine predicted in Acts 11: 28, the arrest of Peter, and the martyrdom of James, are assumed to have taken place around this time as well.

4. The Expulsion of the Jews by Claudius  
In Acts 18: 2, we learn:

*<sup>2</sup>There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them,*

The support for this date is obtained from Orosius, in his *Seven Books of History Against the Pagans* written in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, where he says that Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome in the ninth year of his reign, which corresponds to the year A.D. 49. If Aquila and Priscilla had recently arrived from Italy, this would take us to about the year A.D. 50. Paul was in Corinth for about a year and a half (Acts 18: 11), which would take us to A.D. 52, which coincides with our findings based on Gallio's inscription, mentioned below.

5. The Year Gallio became Proconsul of Achaia  
Acts 18: 12 tells us:

*<sup>12</sup>While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him into court.*

Finegan (1986), in his book, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, dates the arrival of Gallio for his proconsulship of Achaia to May and June A.D. 51. His dating was based on an inscription found in Delphi, which mentions Gallio as proconsul and is dated to the first half of A.D. 52. Since proconsuls were normally appointed for a one-year term, he must have been appointed the year before in A.D. 51. Somewhere between A.D. 51 and A.D. 52 Paul encountered this proconsul Gallio.

6. The Year Rome was set on Fire  
Paul's house arrest in Rome afforded him a great deal of leeway in fulfilling his ministry, as we see in Acts 28: 31:

*<sup>31</sup>Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.*

History says that Rome was set on fire by Nero in the year A.D. 64. This year can also be used as a date check, since the fire was never mentioned in Acts (and of course Luke would have written about that if it happened when they were there!) Tradition also has it that Paul was executed in Rome, although we do not know the exact year that this took place. Please refer to Chart 1 in page 14-15 for a timeline of the above events.



# New Testament History

Years A.D. / B.C.

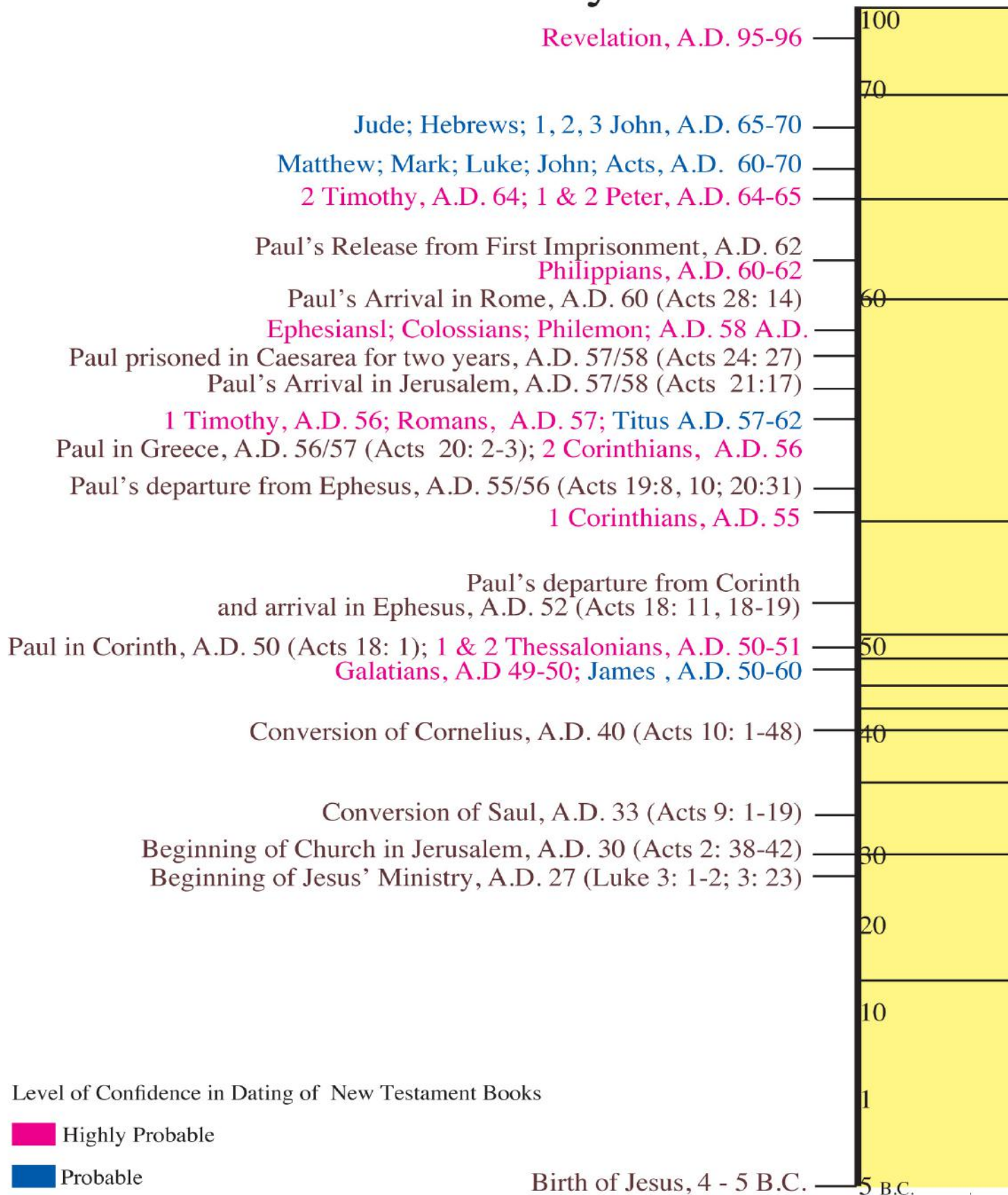
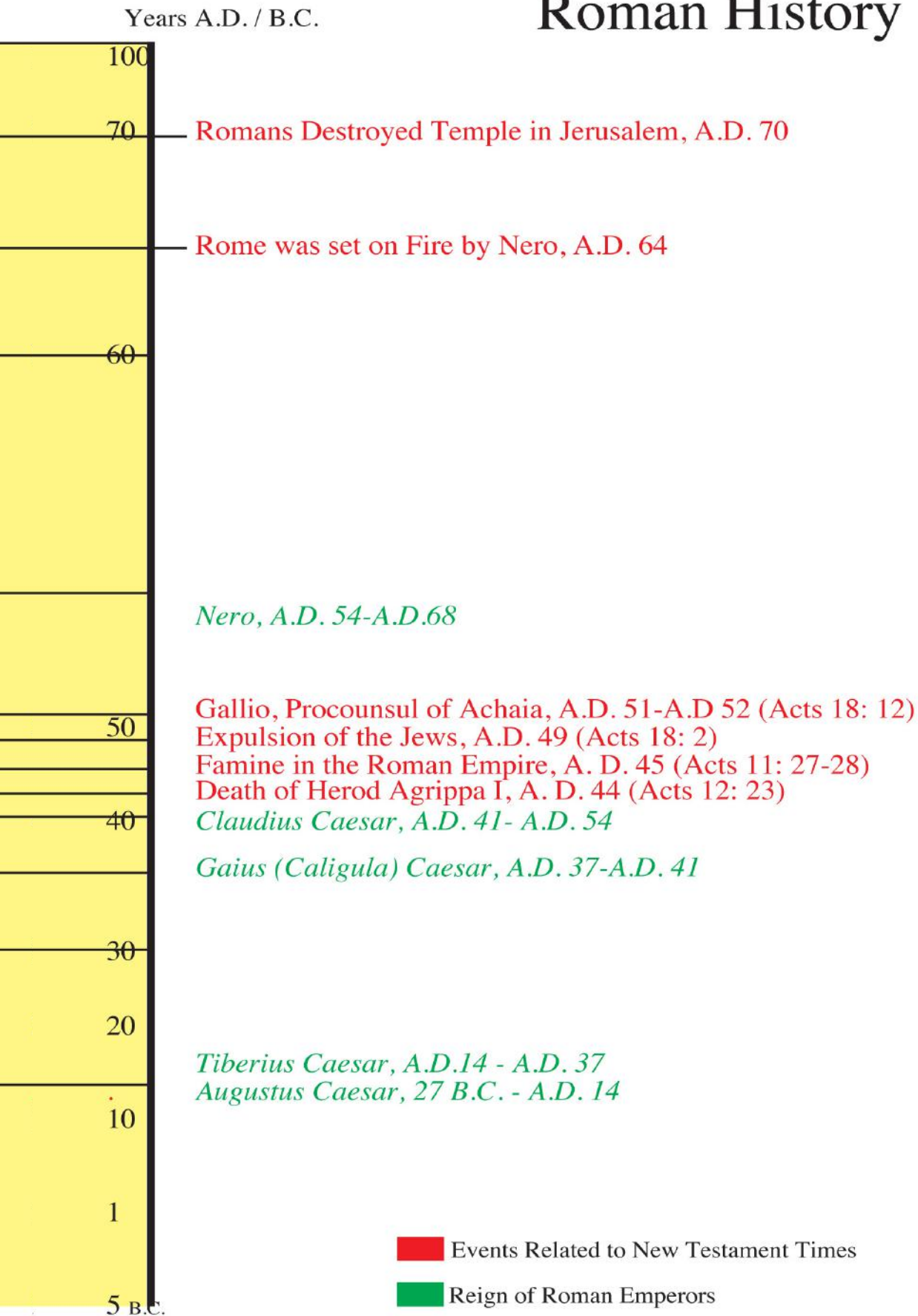


Chart 1

## Comparing New Testament



# Roman History



## History and Roman History





## **Correlating Acts and Galatians**

*(This section is fairly academic, so feel free to skip to the section called "Flow and Theme of Galatians").*

Based on the above dates for events in Acts 12, 18 and 28, we can now use some of Paul's letters to help determine the dates for the other events in the book of Acts, such as the Jerusalem Council and Paul's conversion. A good starting point would be to refer to Galatians 1: 15 - 2: 5, where Paul says:

The phrase "three years later" refers to the visit Paul made to Jerusalem, after his conversion, as recorded in Acts 9: 26-30. The phrase, "Fourteen years later, I went up again to Jerusalem", (probably fourteen years after his conversion), refers to the time when he and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem to bring the gifts for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Thus if we can determine when this visit was, we can determine the year of Paul's conversion in Acts 9 and the year when he first visited Jerusalem. From history we also know that Herod Agrippa I died at around A.D. 44. Acts 12: 19 tells us that Herod stayed in Caesarea "for a while" before he died in A. D. 44. This would put his arrest of James and Peter by Herod slightly earlier to around A.D. 43 or perhaps even the same year. The famine, as determined above, took place around A.D. 45, which was around the time when Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem. It was very probably this visit to Jerusalem that Paul was referring to in Galatians 2: 1, some fourteen years after his conversion. Thus working backwards, from A.D. 45-46, this will put his conversion at around A.D. 32-33 approximately.

Similarly the year of the Council of Jerusalem can be determined since we have a date for Gallio's proconsulship. As mentioned above, Paul reached Corinth around A.D. 50. There is no mention that Paul stayed in any one place for a particularly extended period of time as he travelled through the places mentioned in Acts 16 and Acts 17. It looks very

probable that he was in these places for no more than a few weeks. For example, in reading Acts 16: 12, 39- 40, Paul was not in Philippi for more than a few weeks. In Thessalonica he was there for three weeks (Acts 17: 2). Likewise, in Berea, he was there for a short period because of the persecution. In Athens, Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him. He reasoned with them day after day, in Acts 17: 17. It seemed that after his famous speech in the meeting of the Areopagus, Paul left Athens, mentioned in Acts 17: 33. Thus the period from the time when he began his second missionary journey in Acts 15: 36 until he left Athens would probably be around one year. This means that he probably began his second missionary journey in A.D. 49 since he arrived in Corinth in A.D. 50, as mentioned above. Since he was in Corinth for at least a year and a half (Acts 18: 11, 18) he made his journey back to Antioch around A.D. 52. Thus his second missionary journey took place from A.D. 49 till A.D. 52.

Given this approximate time frame, the date of the Jerusalem Council, working backwards from his arrival time in Corinth in A.D. 50 would be around A.D. 49. Since Paul completed his first missionary journey before the Jerusalem Council, and he began it sometime after Herod's death in A.D. 44, we can put the dates of his missionary journey to be from A.D. 46 – A.D. 48.

Let's now go back to the time of Paul's conversion, which we established to be around A.D. 32-33 and put some dates to the earlier events in the book of Acts. Since we have no reason to believe that Cornelius was converted before Saul, this puts the conversion of Cornelius in Acts 10 - 11 to be in between A.D. 33 and A.D. 45. Most scholars would prefer a later date rather than an earlier one, given the time it would have taken for the Jews to accept that the Gentiles would also be allowed to enter the Kingdom, leading to a choice of the year being A.D. 40 - 45, almost 10 - 15 years after the church began in A.D. 30.

We can do another set of calculations, using Paul's arrival at Corinth as a starting point instead, and we will still arrive at the date of around A.D. 57 when Paul was in Jerusalem and A.D. 60 when he arrived in Rome. We have discussed earlier that the inscription found in Delphi mentioned that Gallio was the proconsul of Achaia around A.D. 51. This means that since Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, he arrived there around A.D. 50. Later on in Acts 18: 18, Luke wrote that Paul stayed there for some time, over and above the one and a half year period, probably for a few more months. This would bring his departure from Corinth at around A.D. 52 (since he arrived at around A.D. 50). We know that Paul set out for Ephesus from Cenchrea (Acts 18: 18). He was in Ephesus for sometime and then left for Antioch, Acts 18: 22, and completed his second missionary journey. We do not know for how long he was in Antioch (Acts 18: 23), but when he left Antioch on his third missionary journey, he headed for Ephesus. Because of weather considerations, etc, we can assume that he probably headed back to Ephesus after about a year, so we can estimate that he arrived in Ephesus around late A.D. 52 - 53. In Ephesus, the scriptures record that Paul spoke boldly in the synagogue for about three months (Acts 19: 8). Then after that he had daily discussions in the lecture hall of Tyrannus, which went on for another two years. In Acts 20: 31, Paul spoke of having spent three years in Ephesus, which means that he left Ephesus around A.D. 55 - 56 (Acts 20:1). Thereafter he was in Greece for about three months (Acts 20: 3). He travelled to various other places and then finally arrived in Jerusalem in A.D. 57 where he completed his third missionary journey. Thus his third missionary journey lasted from A.D. 53 – A.D. 57. His first three missionary journeys all began from Antioch, which was the centre of Paul's activity in spreading the gospel to the region.

Paul was held in custody in Jerusalem, and the time he spent there in that city trying to win the Jews over was no more than two weeks, seen in Acts 21: 17, 26, 27; 22: 30; 23: 11, 12,

23; 24: 1, 24. He was subsequently put in prison for another two years in Caesarea under Felix. Since this began in A.D. 57, he began his imprisonment around A.D. 58. Based on the verses in Acts 28: 11, 14 and Acts 27: 27 (three months, one week, two weeks respectively), it took approximately a good four months for Paul to arrive in Rome after leaving Caesarea. Taking all this into account, two weeks in Jerusalem, two years in Caesarea and four months of travel time to Rome, it puts Paul's arrival in Rome around A.D. 60. If we call his voyage to Rome his fourth missionary journey this means that this journey took place from A.D. 59 to A.D. 60.

CHAPTER TWO:  
*Acts 1: 1 –*  
*Acts 14: 28*

*The following letter was written during the time period covered from Acts 1: 1 to Acts 14: 28*

*Galatians*

*Please refer to the map of Paul's First Missionary Journey on page 29 to see his missionary activities during this period.*

## Book of Galatians

Author: Apostle Paul

Date: Around A.D. 49-50

Place of origin: Antioch

Galatians 2: 1-5 says:

*<sup>1</sup>Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. <sup>2</sup>I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain. <sup>3</sup>Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. <sup>4</sup>This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. <sup>5</sup>We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.*

When Paul was referring to his trip to Jerusalem, he was either referring to the time when the Council of Jerusalem also took place in Acts 15 or the time when he visited there when he was bringing his gifts to the poor there, as mentioned in Acts 11: 30. It is more likely that the latter was the case, supported by the following:

1. The meeting with James and Peter was a private meeting, as opposed to a meeting with all the other Apostles and Elders as mentioned in Acts 15.
2. In Galatians 2: 10, they told him to remember the poor, and he replied that he was very eager to do this. This would be line with he occasion at that time when he brought back the gifts for the poor to Jerusalem. There again, on the flip side, one can argue that their topic on conversation were more centred on Paul going to the Gentiles than about helping the poor.

3. In Galatians he deliberately left out his third visit to the Apostles in Jerusalem. The reason was because he was trying to prove to the Galatians that he was no under the authority of the other Apostles. He received a revelation directly from Jesus, an opinion that the false teachers did not share. An inference to this would complicate his argument since the Jerusalem Council was a meeting that included all the Apostles and Elders.

The Jewish Christians who came and visited Paul in Antioch (Acts 15: 1-2) must have gone to the Galatian churches and poisoned them as well. Paul argued sharply with them. The church then sent them to Jerusalem to settle this matter, which they did. After returning to Antioch in Acts 15: 22, Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia. It would also be unlikely that Paul would have written this letter before the Council in Jerusalem and run ahead of the other Apostles, as he himself showed sensitivity to this in Galatians 2: 2b. In all likelihood it was written just after the Jerusalem Council meeting, around A.D. 49 - 50. Further, after the meeting, it gave Paul all the conviction to write to them about this troubling issue.

One of the main problems that the early church had to wrestle with was the requirement of circumcision before a person can join the church. The book of Galatians is a book that deals with this very pointedly.

Scholars have debated whether the Galatian churches referred to here were the ones in the North, which would include cities like Ancyra, Pessinus and Tavium, or the South of Galatia which would include the cities of Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch. The reason for this debate is based on a text in Galatians 4: 13, which says:

*<sup>13</sup>As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you.*



However, the accounts in Acts 13 - 14 when Paul was in Galatia showed no such illness. Further, Acts is totally silent about the mission in the North, and so this is an issue that has been debated endlessly. It is more likely, on balance, that Paul was writing to the churches in the South, which are mentioned in Acts 13 - 14. His time there could have included an illness that Luke chose not to mention.

Paul begins Galatians by lashing out at them in indignation (this is the only letter that Paul begins with a rebuke!) about the manner in which they went about listening to the Jewish Christians who were preaching strongly about the need for circumcision. They were discrediting the revelation he received and accused him of being subjected to the other Apostles. Thus he went about aggressively proving that he received a revelation that was independent of them. It was helpful then for him to insert the challenge he gave to Peter, thus showing his independence.

## **The Themes of the book of Galatians**

The main themes of the book of Galatians are:

1. Justified by Faith

Paul then says that we are justified by faith in Christ Jesus, not by observing the law, as taught by the radical Judaizers. He says in Galatians 2: 15-16 that:

*<sup>15</sup>"We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners'  
<sup>16</sup>know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.*

The gospel rivals were in effect teaching another gospel, which would lead them all astray and Paul did



not hold back from his warning of apostasy, seen in Galatians 1: 6-9:

*<sup>6</sup>I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— <sup>7</sup>which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup>But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! <sup>9</sup>As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!*

These radicals that were teaching false doctrine were persuasive enough to have caused the members of the churches in Galatia to doubt Paul's previous message. The Judaizers were using the argument that circumcision was essential in order to be part of Abraham's family. Paul argues back and says that it was Abraham's trust in God, not his circumcision, which made him receive God's promise.

2. Live by the Spirit  
Galatians 3: 6-9 reads:

*<sup>6</sup>Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." <sup>7</sup>Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. <sup>8</sup>The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." <sup>9</sup>So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*

Paul then says in Galatians 3: 14

*<sup>14</sup>He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.*

Paul makes a connection here that through faith in Christ we receive the promise of Abraham. That faith will be accompanied by the promise of the Spirit.

This Spirit is given to all who call out "Abba, Father" in Galatians 4: 6, which says:

*<sup>6</sup>Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."*

However, when do we receive this Spirit? In Galatians 3: 26-27, Paul writes:

*<sup>26</sup>You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,  
<sup>27</sup>for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

Irrespective of whether we are Jews or Greeks, slave or free, we are all Abraham's seed.

Thus we are now free from the law, Galatians 5: 13, which says:

*<sup>13</sup>You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.*

We are free to have a relationship with God through Christ.

However, this freedom must be properly interpreted, not used to indulge in sinful nature, Galatians 5: 13.

The freedom we have now should help us to love one another, Galatians 5: 14.

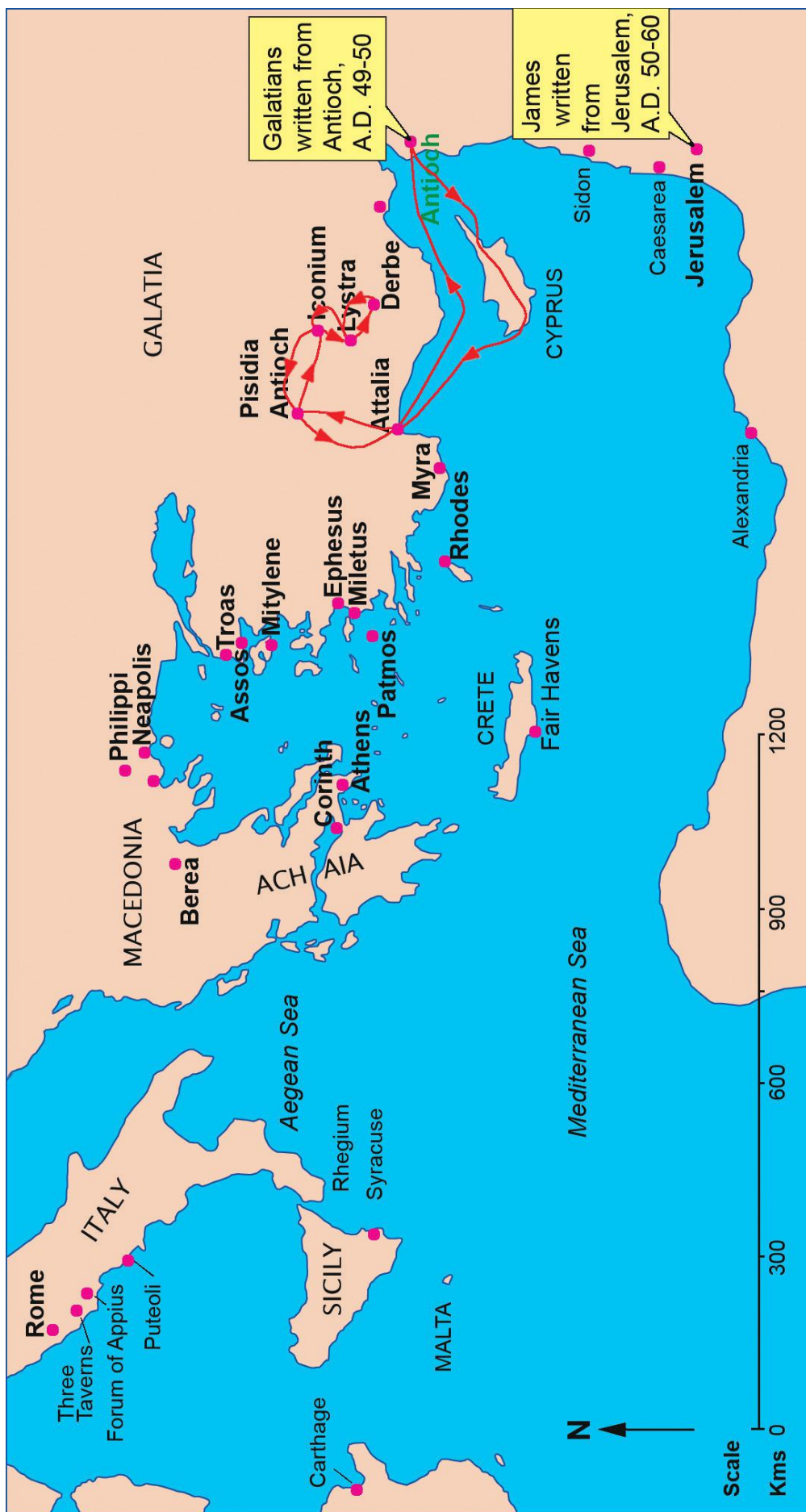
Paul then continues to tell them to live by the Spirit of the New Covenant, not by the sinful nature. Both are in conflict with each other, Galatians 5: 17.

Rather, we are to lead lives where the fruit of the Spirit is evident to us all. Further directions about what it means to live by the Spirit is mentioned in chapter 6, which includes:

- i) Restoring someone who is caught in sin Galatians 6: 1
- ii) Carrying one another's burdens Galatians 6: 2
- iii) Being humble Galatians 6: 3
- iv) Carrying our own load and being responsible Galatians 6: 5
- v) Appreciating and taking care of our leaders Galatians 6: 6
- vi) Continuing to do good and not growing weary Galatians 6: 9

To "Live by the Spirit" therefore means to conscientiously make decisions to please God.





# Paul's First Missionary Journey, A.D. 46-48 Acts 13: 1-14: 28

Map 1



CHAPTER THREE:  
*Acts 15: 1 –  
Acts 18: 11*

*The following letters were written during the time period covered from Acts 15: 1 to Acts 18: 11*

*James  
1 Thessalonians  
2 Thessalonians*

*Please refer to the map of Paul's Second Missionary Journey on page 45 to see his missionary activities during this period.*

## Book of James

Author: James, the brother of Jesus

Date: A.D. 50-60

Place of origin: Jerusalem

Acts 15: 13

*<sup>13</sup>When they finished, James spoke up: "Brothers, listen to me.*

James, the brother of Jesus, held such a pivotal position that he was the obvious choice to speak up to the rest of the Apostles and Elders. In Galatians 2: 9, his name was mentioned again. This was the James to whom Paul referred as the Lord's brother, in Gal 1: 19. (James the Apostle could not have been the person here as he was executed in Acts 12: 2 just before A.D. 44, when Herod Agrippa I died.) James, the brother of Jesus was given prominence only in the middle part of the book of Acts, whereas in the earlier part of the church, it was Peter along with John the Apostle. In order to have been recognized as an inspired writer, James the brother of Jesus would have had to gain some recognition, so it would be unlikely that the book of James was written earlier on. It is more likely that the book of James was written once James the brother of Jesus was established as one of the main leaders of the Jerusalem church. Tradition has it that James died at around A.D. 62, which means that this letter was obviously written before that time, and many hold the view that it was written as early as A.D. 50-60.

James was seen to have stayed in Jerusalem right up to around A.D. 57, the time when Paul visited Jerusalem again in Acts 21: 17, which says:

*<sup>17</sup>When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers received us warmly.*

In all likelihood James stayed there until his death.



This is also known as the “catholic epistle” simply because it was a general epistle to a number of churches (“catholic” used as an adjective means “including or concerned with all people or a wide range of people.”)

## **The Themes of the book of James**

The major themes in the book of James are not as clearly laid out as the themes in Paul’s letters, probably because Paul was much better educated than James. There is no clear structure, but in a very positive and readable way, the book of James comes across as a disjointed collection of good advice. The book was addressed to the twelve tribes, which is taken to mean to all Christians scattered throughout the world.

### **1. Trials Test the Double Minded**

The book of James opens with this, the testing of a person’s faithfulness, not because of persecution as was addressed in 1 Peter or Hebrews, but because of a lack of spirituality from within a person, as opposed to external issues that are from without. It is tests and trials that show our double mindedness. So in James 1: 2-8, we read:

*<sup>2</sup>Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup>because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. <sup>4</sup>Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. <sup>5</sup>If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. <sup>6</sup>But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup>That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; <sup>8</sup>he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.*

It could be that the remainder of the book of James may be seen as giving specific examples of trials that are faced by Christians. For example,

- i) James 2: 1-13 - When a rich person and a poor person enter a congregation, the believers will be tested as to whether their worldliness will surface by them being attracted to the wealthy person, while giving no or little attention to the poor individual.
- ii) James 2: 14-20 - When believers see a poor brother or sister in need, they will be tested as to whether they will love the poor and needy person.
- iii) James 3: 1-12, 4: 11-12 - When believers speak, they are tested as to whether they will indulge in gossip, rage, and curse with their tongue, or remain self-controlled and build others up instead.
- iv) James 3: 13 - 4: 12 – When believers are with each other, they will be tested to either seek means and ways to show heavenly wisdom that is seen by good deeds, etc, or give in to temptation and get worldly, allowing envy and selfish ambition to take over their character.
- v) James 4: 13-17 – When believers make plans they will get tested to see if their plans are in line with God's desires or do they go and pursue their own goals.
- vi) James 5: 1-6 –When believers pursue wealth, they will be tested to see if they do so in line with Christians principles or will they attempt to gain wealth through ungodly means, i.e., by oppressing the poor, and prioritizing only themselves?

2. The Relationship Between Faith and Works.

Faith and action both go hand in hand and are inseparable. Faith is ultimately tested by the way it is lived out, seen in the following scriptures:

i) James 1: 22-27:

*<sup>22</sup>Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. <sup>23</sup>Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror <sup>24</sup>and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup>But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does. <sup>26</sup>If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. <sup>27</sup>Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*

ii) James 2: 14-26:

*<sup>14</sup>What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? <sup>15</sup>Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. <sup>16</sup>If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? <sup>17</sup>In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. <sup>18</sup>But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. <sup>19</sup>You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.*

<sup>20</sup>You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless<sup>la</sup>? <sup>21</sup>Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup>You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. <sup>23</sup>And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. <sup>24</sup>You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. <sup>25</sup>In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? <sup>26</sup>As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Since there is a focus between faith and deeds, does this go against what Paul wrote about in the other letters, where he says we are justified by faith? There is no opposition here between Paul and James. For example, we see that Paul says in Romans 2: 13

<sup>13</sup>For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

Paul actually agrees with what James' says in James 1: 22 and 2: 24:

<sup>22</sup>Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

<sup>24</sup>You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

Paul absolutely instructs in his letters to show deeds that stem from our faith. In Romans 8: 4, 12-14 and in Galatians 5: 13, he talks about the need to live by the Spirit, which entails putting death to the sinful nature and living to please God.

Paul uses the word “law”; sometimes he uses “living by the Spirit”, while James uses the word “works”. They all mean the same. So, should faith result in doing good works? Yes, and both authors agree. When we see Paul opposing works, it is always the works related to Judaism, where these rules from the Old Testament are used as a pre requisite to the Gentiles for becoming a Christians, seen in 1 Corinthians 7: 19, which says:

*<sup>19</sup>Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God’s commands is what counts.*

So in the spirit of this practical book, let us walk the walk, not just talk the talk.

### **Book of 1 Thessalonians**

Author: Paul, Silas and Timothy

Date: A.D. 50

Place of origin: Corinth

Three godly men co-authored this letter. In 1 Thessalonians 3: 1-2, the bible says:

*<sup>1</sup>So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. <sup>2</sup>We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God’s fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith,*

This information correlates with Acts 17: 14; Paul, Timothy and Silas were together in Berea. However, Paul later went

alone to Athens with instructions for the other two brothers to join him as soon as possible. According to 1 Thessalonians 3: 2, Timothy was sent to them. Then according to 1 Thessalonians 3: 6, Timothy came back with good news about their faith, mentioned in Acts 18: 5, and met Paul in Corinth. So, it was here that Paul wrote the letter, in A.D. 50, and Timothy was sent back to encourage and instruct them.

Along with the book of Philippians, this is another excellent book that depicts Paul, Silas and Timothy's friendship with the Thessalonians. In Acts 17, Paul began this church, and after three Sabbaths, he left because of persecution. Paul then made every effort to come back to them, but was prevented by Satan, as he says in 1 Thessalonians 2: 18.

### **The Themes of the Book of 1 Thessalonians**

Some of the themes found in this book are as follows:

1. Bound Deeply by Friendship.  
Paul mentions the bond that they were able to develop during their short time together, in 1 Thessalonians 2: 6b, which reads

*As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you,*

Further, in 1 Thessalonians 2: 17, Paul uses the phrase "torn away". In 1 Thessalonians 3: 1, Paul said he was intensely longing to see them which was why he dispatched Timothy, 1 Thessalonians 3: 2. Then when Timothy came back with a favourable report, 1 Thessalonians 3: 6-7, it brought Paul much joy. He prayed and thought about them, night and day, 1 Thessalonians 3: 10.



2. Faithful In the Face of Opposition

It was a church that began with opposition right from the beginning, 1 Thessalonians 2: 2; 3: 4. Even though they had to endure more opposition in the weeks to come, they managed to stay firm. In the midst of such opposition, the message still rang out from them, which was a great example to the churches in Macedonia and Achaia, and everywhere else, mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 1: 7-8, which says

*<sup>7</sup>And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. <sup>8</sup>The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it,*

They did not shrink back, but rather boldly preached and stood firm through all the trials. As a result, the message “rang out” from them.

3. Practicing One Another Relationships

Paul talks a lot about “one another”, laid out as follows:

- i) encourage one another, 1 Thessalonians 5: 11
- ii) build one another, 1 Thessalonians 5: 11
- iii) love one another, 1 Thessalonians 4: 9-10
- iv) comfort and encourage, 1 Thessalonians 5: 18

This emphasis of “one another” will eventually outweigh their feelings of shame and opposition that have faced. Caring for and being cared for by one another will lead to an increased desire to stand firm and stick to the values of the fledgling group. Eventually, it is the love for one another that will keep them faithful and growing.

4. Anchored by their Hope of Heaven

1 Thessalonians 4: 13 tells us evidently that some people there had died, bringing anxiety among the disciples. They also had heard about Paul's teaching on Christ's return and had expected that the second coming would occur in a very short while. Paul may have even expected that he himself would be among those who would still be alive when that happened when he used the word "we", as seen in 1 Thessalonians 4: 17, which says

*<sup>17</sup>After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.*

There were questions about those that have died, and so Paul addresses them in 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18. In essence, he said that unlike the non-believers, those who have died faithfully have the hope of heaven. Only faithful disciples can say that. Others who die outside Christ have no hope. This was one of the main sources of encouragement that they were to give each other, 1 Thessalonians 4: 18. What a spiritual fellowship.

## **Book of 2 Thessalonians**

Author: Paul, Silas and Timothy

Date: A.D. 51

Place of origin: Corinth

The second book to the church in Thessalonica was written by the same three authors. Since Timothy and Silas were together for only a short time, and since they also co-authored the book of 1 Thessalonians, it follows that this second letter was written shortly after the first, from Corinth, in Acts 18, around A. D. 51.



## The Themes of the Book of 2 Thessalonians

After Timothy came back and gave Paul a favourable report, there were still unsettling issues with the church there, which then Paul addressed in a new letter, 2 Thessalonians. Among others, some of these issues were:

### 1. Counted Worthy of the Kingdom

Firstly, Paul commends them about their love for one another which he wrote about in the first letter. However, they were still facing persecutions, 2 Thessalonians 1: 4. Paul reaffirms that this simply means that they are being *counted worthy* of the kingdom, 2 Thessalonians 1: 5. Paul also says that God is just, 2 Thessalonians 1: 6-10, which says

*<sup>6</sup>God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you <sup>7</sup>and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. <sup>8</sup>He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup>They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power <sup>10</sup>on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.*

The just God will repay those who have troubled them, 2 Thessalonians 1: 6-7. Therefore they should not be unsettled about trials, but should leave this all to the hands of the Lord. They should continue on in their faith and seek to be *counted worthy*, 2 Thessalonians 1: 11, a phrase he used twice in one chapter.

2. Love the Truth

Some of them had already believed that the day of the Lord has come, from some rumours, 2 Thessalonians 2: 2:

*<sup>2</sup>not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.*

Unfortunately that was not true and Paul says that the world would get worse before Jesus comes again. He then talked about the coming of the lawless one, 2 Thessalonians 2: 3-4. God would send them a powerful delusion, in 2 Thessalonians 2: 9-12:

*<sup>9</sup>The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, <sup>10</sup>and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. <sup>11</sup>For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie <sup>12</sup>and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.*

This is what will take place. People will oppose the truth and believe the lie. It is not the innocent victims that will face the wrath of God, but those who have deliberately disobeyed the truth.

3. Prayerful for the Mission

Paul asks for them to pray for him for the spreading of the word, as he says in 2 Thessalonians 3: 1:

*<sup>1</sup>Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.*

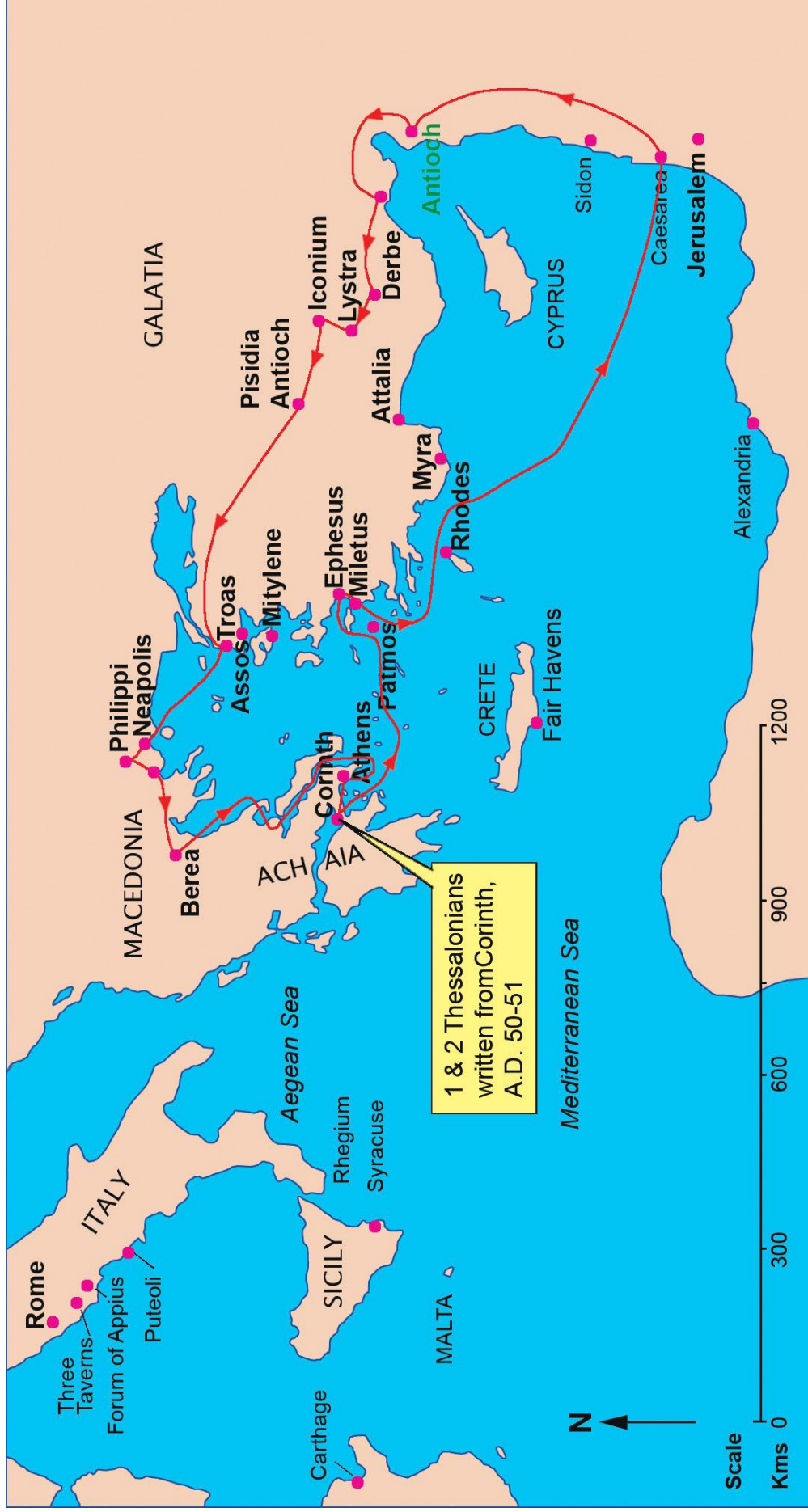
Paul desired for the word to spread fast.

4. Be Responsible

Evidently, when some people believed that the day of the Lord was near, they gave up their jobs and were idling and were relying on others. Paul addressed this issue, and admonished them to work and to provide for themselves, seen in 2 Thessalonians 3: 9-10.

Those who did not repent were to be noted. They would be warned as a brother in Christ, and after a time, fellowship would be withdrawn from them.





Map 2 **Paul's Second Missionary Journey, A.D. 49-52**  
**Acts 15: 36-18:22**



CHAPTER FOUR:  
*Acts 18: 12 -*  
*Acts 19: 22*

*The following letter was written during the time period covered from Acts 18: 12 to Acts 19: 22*

*1 Corinthians*

*Please refer to the map of Paul's Second Missionary Journey on page 45 to see his missionary activities during this period.*

## Book of 1 Corinthians

Author: Paul

Date: A.D. 55

Place of origin: Ephesus

In 1 Corinthians 16: 5-9, Paul wrote:

*<sup>5</sup>After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you—for I will be going through Macedonia. <sup>6</sup>Perhaps I will stay with you awhile, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. <sup>7</sup>I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. <sup>8</sup>But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, <sup>9</sup>because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.*

Here Paul talked about coming to Corinth after he had passed through Macedonia, giving the impression that he hadn't been there yet, but that it was in his plans. His plans to go through Macedonia and Achaia are supported in Acts 19: 21-22, which says:

*<sup>21</sup>After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also." <sup>22</sup>He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer.*

It also says here that he sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia. Presumably they brought the letter to the church at Corinth in Achaia during this trip, after it was written here around A.D. 55 in Ephesus. Also, this was reiterated in 1 Corinthians 16: 8-10:

*<sup>8</sup>But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, <sup>9</sup>because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who*



*oppose me. <sup>10</sup>If Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am.*

Paul mentioned that he would stay in Ephesus a little longer and that Timothy would be joining him. Paul continued to stay in Ephesus, Acts 19: 22 above.

Based on evidence in the letters and the book of Acts, the correspondences between the church and Paul unfolded as follows: *(The part that is about to follow is also somewhat academic, so please feel free to skip to the next section):*

1. Paul's first visit to the church in Corinth was in Acts 18. He stayed there for a period of eighteen months, Acts 18: 11.
2. Then Paul left for Ephesus, Acts 18: 19. He stayed there for about three years. We see a three month period in Acts 19: 8, another two year period in Acts 19: 10. However, in Acts 20: 31, he said he was there for three years.
3. Paul wrote a letter to the church in Corinth, possibly dispatched by Timothy and Erastus, mentioned in Acts 19: 22, which we do not have. This "previous letter" is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5: 9-11, which says:

*<sup>9</sup>I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—<sup>10</sup>not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. <sup>11</sup>But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.*

4. The church responded back with some questions for Paul, seen in 1 Corinthians 1: 11; 5: 1; 7:11. Presumably the brothers mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16: 17 were the ones who brought these questions to Paul, which prompted him to write 1 Corinthians, although this was actually his second letter.
5. Paul then sent 1 Corinthians from Ephesus, and he mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16: 8 that he would remain in Ephesus a little bit longer, so we know that this letter was written from there.
6. Paul sent Timothy, 1 Corinthians 16: 10-11. He told the church to expect him at some point later, showing that he was not the one who brought the letter we know as 1 Corinthians to them.
7. Paul, in Acts 20: 2-3, went to Greece and stayed there for three months. Originally he planned to visit them from Macedonia, but in the end he went to Corinth first, mentioned in 2 Corinthians 1: 15-17.
8. Then after he left Corinth, Paul sent his third letter to the church. This letter was dispatched by Titus, and this letter took the place of his planned visit from Macedonia. In 2 Corinthians 1: 23 – 2: 4, Paul said that he did not return to them because he wanted to spare them of another “painful visit”, so he wrote to them instead.
9. Then Titus returned to Paul with an encouraging report after dispatching the third letter. However, there were still some troubling issues, such as Paul’s authority being questioned.
10. So Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, perhaps in different stages, but we do not know for sure. He sent it to Titus again to the church in Corinth, seen in 2 Corinthians 8: 16-24.
11. Paul returned to Corinth, seen in Romans 15: 25-27, and he wrote to the church in Rome. He set out from there to Jerusalem with the funds he had for them which were collected from Corinth.

## The Themes of the book of 1 Corinthians

The main themes of this book are:

1. Divisions in the Body

One of the main issues that troubled the church there was division. This disunity came from a number of sources. We shall outline some of the sources of division as follows:

- i) The disciples were associating themselves with the different pillar leaders who had been there, like Apollos, Cephas and Paul himself, seen in 1 Corinthians 1: 12.
- ii) The Christians had differing opinions about how to deal with overt sin in the church, 1 Corinthians 5.
- iii) The Christians were also taking one another to court, 1 Corinthians 6: 1-8. It was a worldly church, 1 Corinthians 3: 1 says:

*<sup>1</sup>Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ.*

- iv) They wanted to look good and impressive, and so the gifts of tongue speaking was abused, 1 Corinthians 14: 20, 29-33.
- v) The Lord's Supper was not taken in a worthy manner. In 1 Corinthians 11: 21, some of the brothers were left out, presumably the poorer ones who had nothing, while the richer ones had a party. The richer ones did not wait for these poorer ones, and so this division grew.
- vi) There were also those who were judging others in the matter of food that had been sacrificed to idols, 1 Corinthians 10: 31-33.

## 2. The Foolishness of the Cross

How did Paul approach this troubled church? He began by focusing on how “foolish” the cross is to the world, 1 Corinthians 1: 18-21:

*<sup>18</sup>For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup>For it is written:*

*“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”*

*<sup>20</sup>Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup>For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.*

Power, status, and intelligence all crumble before the cross. Paul then spoke about how much of a fool he was for Christ, mentioned in 1 Corinthians 8-13. All of this was to convict the hearts of the worldly disciples there to be spiritual in their thinking and their treatment of one another.

Paul preached about the body in 1 Corinthians 12; 12-30 about how important it was for the Corinthians to love and respect each part of the body. Paul focused on the need to pay attention to the weaker parts of it, probably the poorer, unimpressive ones in the church that were divided from the richer and more impressive ones.

## 3. The Need to Flee Sexual Immorality

The other main issue that troubled them were sexual sins that crept from the outside world of Corinth into the church. Paul emphasized the value of the human

body, by teaching them about the need to honour purity in 1 Corinthians 3: 16-17, which says:

*<sup>16</sup>Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? <sup>17</sup>If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.*

He called them to repent of their ways and challenged them to expel the immoral person from among them, 1 Corinthians 5: 13. Again he explained to them in 1 Corinthians 6: 18-20.

4. Being Solid on the Fundamentals

Here Paul addressed the resurrection. Evidently, some among them were doubting the resurrection. They were misled by those whom the Christians associated with. So Paul admonished them to not associate with such people, 1 Corinthians 15: 33.

Paul goes into great length to explain that our faith hinges on the resurrection!!! No resurrection, no hope!!!

CHAPTER FIVE:  
*Acts 19: 23 -*  
*Acts 20: 5*

*The following letter was written during the time period covered from Acts 19: 23 to Acts 20: 5*

*Romans*  
*2 Corinthians*  
*1 Timothy*

*Please refer to the map of Paul's Third Missionary Journey on page 71 to see his missionary activities during this period.*

## Book of 2 Corinthians

Author: Paul

Date: A.D. 56

Place of origin: Macedonia

In Troas, Paul found an open door, mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2: 12-13:

*<sup>12</sup>Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, <sup>13</sup>I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-by to them and went on to Macedonia.*

Evidently, Paul was waiting for Titus to come from Corinth with news about the church there. Rather than responding to that open door, he went on to Macedonia instead. This is supported by the passage in Acts 20: 3 above. It was here that he met Titus and was encouraged by his report of the church in Corinth and by their love for him. This encouraged Paul, who then wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia in around A.D. 56, which was a little later date than the first letter to them from Ephesus in A.D. 55. Then he gave this letter to Titus and two other brothers to be sent to the church in Corinth. This is confirmed by the passage in 2 Corinthians 8: 16-24.

Some scholars have concluded because of the many letters that Paul wrote to the Corinth church that the letter of 2 Corinthians is a collection of several letters. They support this from the following:

1. The description of his travels ends abruptly in 2 Corinthians 2: 13, then resumes again in 2 Corinthians 7: 5.
2. The subject matter of 2 Corinthians 1: 1- 2: 13 and 7: 5-16 has little to do with that of 2 Corinthians 2: 14 – 7:4.

3. Chapters 8-9 are also separated from the rest because of the difference in topic.

This book might then be a collection of several letters, though we are not sure. There are others who take the view that it was written as a whole, and that Paul perhaps was writing on different days with different topics in mind.

For the most part Paul wrote this letter to counter the influence of certain Jewish Christians preachers who had impressed some parts of the church. The fundamental question that Paul answered in this letter is, "What makes a person a worthy Christian leader?" All of this had to do with the values that attached to the gospel of the crucified Christ. These rivals of Paul ended up promoting "a different Jesus" resulting in a different gospel, seen in 2 Corinthians 11: 4.

## **The Themes of the book of 2 Corinthians**

Some of the issues that Paul addresses are:

1. **A Worthy Christian Leader**  
What are the values that one derives when one is in line with the crucified Christ? This is how Paul approached the letter. These values are what determine the answers to the question of what makes a person a worthy Christian leader. Paul does not boast about his abilities or other worldly values. He needed no commendation from anyone. He says his commendation is the church he has built through God's power mentioned in 2 Corinthians 3: 1-3, which says:

*<sup>1</sup>Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? <sup>2</sup>You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. <sup>3</sup>You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our*



*ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.*

Further, Paul in 2 Corinthians 3: 4-6 says:

*<sup>4</sup>Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. <sup>5</sup>Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. <sup>6</sup>He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

2. Humility and Vulnerability

Here Paul attributes all the glory of his workings to God. Paul does not come across like an extraordinary human. He actually gets vulnerable, seen in the following scriptures:

i) 2 Corinthians 1: 3-7

*<sup>3</sup>Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup>who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. <sup>5</sup>For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. <sup>6</sup>If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. <sup>7</sup>And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.*

ii) 2 Corinthians 4: 10-12

*<sup>10</sup>We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. <sup>11</sup>For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. <sup>12</sup>So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.*

iii) 2 Corinthians 12: 9-10

*<sup>9</sup>But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. <sup>10</sup>That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

He comes across as a humble vessel of clay, 2 Corinthians 3: 7-12.

Paul later asserted that when we become aligned with Christ, a veil is lifted up, 2 Corinthians 3: 15-26. What was previously valued on earth - prestige, wealth and appearance, are all stripped and now new values takes precedent.

The way we look at people and the world will be different. Paul mentions this in 2 Corinthians 5: 16-19, which says:

*<sup>16</sup>So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. <sup>17</sup>Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! <sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through*

*Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup>that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*

3. Attitude Towards Money

If we are worldly, the way we view money will also be different. In the world it is a privilege to gain money, in Christ it is a privilege to give. Much of this is shared in chapter 8-9.

4. Servant and Suffering Leadership

In 2 Corinthians 6: 4-10, Paul went on to say further about why his ministry should not be discredited. These were Paul's credentials. His sufferings. He later lists them, in 2 Corinthians 11: 23 – 29.

His point was that leadership in the Lord's church is related to our sufferings and how much we have poured ourselves out for others, not our qualifications, position, recognition, personality, eloquence, wealth or appearance. He called the other people who were trying to discredit him false apostles, in 2 Corinthians 11: 13-15, and said that they were from Satan, who was masquerading as angels of light and servants. He, on the other hand, when tested in this way, did not fail the test, and in 2 Corinthians 13: 6 he wrote the following:

*<sup>6</sup>And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test.*

## Book of Romans

Author: Paul

Date: A.D. 57

Place of origin: Corinth

Romans 15: 25-26:

*<sup>25</sup>Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. <sup>26</sup>For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.*

The above passage lets us know that the time of writing of this letter was after Paul received the collection from the churches in Achaia and Macedonia. The collection from the Corinth church was done just after Paul wrote 2 Corinthians since he was trying to motivate them in that letter to make a generous collection, 2 Corinthians 9: 1 -2, therefore supporting the view that both letters were written about the same time.

Compare Romans 16: 23:

*<sup>23</sup>Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings. Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings.*

with 1 Corinthians 1: 14-15:

*<sup>14</sup>I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, <sup>15</sup>so no one can say that you were baptized into my name.*

If we assume that this is the same Gaius, we can surmise that Romans was written from Corinth. We know from our previous discussion of the Corinthian letters that Paul didn't visit Corinth a third time before sending 2 Corinthians, but set out to Macedonia instead (Acts 20: 3). He made arrangements for the other brothers to join him at Troas. In that same

chapter of Acts we learn that Paul sailed from Philippi later on after feast of the Unleavened Bread, which means he was still in Macedonia for some time. It is during that period that we believe he made his third visit to the Corinth church and also wrote the letter of Romans, at a date slightly later than 2 Corinthians, probably around A.D. 57. Another reason to show that both 2 Corinthians and Romans were written at around the same time is they both talked about taking up the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem, seen in 2 Corinthians 9: 1 and Romans 15: 31.

### **The Themes from the book of Romans**

#### **1. God is the Reason**

More than any book, the book of Romans has the word “God” mentioned 153 times, which comes to about one in every forty six words. (Only 1 John has a greater frequency, once in every 34 words.) Romans was written to talk about the heart and revelation of God through Jesus Christ (Morris, 1970)

Written from Corinth in A.D. 57, Paul had not yet visited the church in Rome, which he acknowledged in Romans 1: 8-13:

*<sup>8</sup>First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.*

*<sup>9</sup>God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you <sup>10</sup>in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God’s will the way may be opened for me to come to you.*

*<sup>11</sup>I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong — <sup>12</sup>that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith. <sup>13</sup>I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from*

*doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.*

Wiefel (1991) says that Christianity was probably introduced into the Jewish community in Rome by the Jewish Christian missionaries within a few years of Stephen's martyrdom, sometime before A.D. 33. However, in A.D. 49, Claudius expelled all the Jews as mentioned, in Acts 18: 2. This may have been due to the spread of Christianity there by the Jews, but we cannot be certain about it. Claudius died in A.D. 54, and thereafter the Jews began to filter back to Rome. By the time Paul wrote to the Roman church in about A.D. 57, the church there was already filled with more Gentiles than with Jewish Christians, who were probably the minority. Tension then developed between the two, and it was this issue that Paul addressed primarily in this letter.

While in Corinth and focusing on this issue, Paul also developed an ambition to visit Rome, Spain and Jerusalem.

Right from the start of his letter, Paul wrote about the reasons why he was so motivated in preaching the gospel.

- i) His role as an Apostle, Romans 1: 5
- ii) An obligation, Romans 1: 14
- iii) An eager ambition, Romans 1: 15

## 2. We All Need God

Paul approached the problem between the Jews and the Gentiles by describing the dark spiritual conditions of mankind. In particular, he focused on the manner in which mankind went on a downward spiral from idolatry to sexual perversion (Romans 1: 22 – 32). This was how many of the Gentiles lived.



He turned his focus to the Jews, from Romans 2: 1, and attacked their hypocrisy. Paul essentially here is saying that the special race privilege that the Jews enjoyed in the Old Covenant would not excuse them from sinful behaviours. He says in Romans 2: 11 that:

*<sup>11</sup>For God does not show favoritism.*

There is no favouritism. In Romans 3: 21-26, Paul summarized his point to them in this well-known passage:

*<sup>21</sup>But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. <sup>22</sup>This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, <sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup>God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— <sup>26</sup>he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*

The point here is that all people have sinned and are in need of God.

Since man was so sinful, everyone is dependent on God's plan for redemption. This was why God sent Jesus. However, this is a mystery: How can a righteous God justify the unrighteous? This is demonstrated through the life and death of Jesus Christ.

As such, there should be no boasting, Romans 3: 27, about our race or inheritance. It took a merciful God to

show compassion on the unrighteous and we respond to that by faith, not by our race, mentioned in Romans 3: 27-28.

3. Justified by Faith

Paul tackled the next question that the Jews must have posed: what about Abraham? Has God changed from law to grace? Has he shifted? Paul argued that God had always justified men and women on the basis of faith. Abraham himself was justified by faith before circumcision, Romans 4: 1-3, 9-12. Hence Abraham was the father of both the circumcised and the uncircumcised. This line of reasoning sat well with both the Jews and Gentiles, thus showing no favouritism.

Then Paul talked about Adam and made the comparison with Christ. Although Adam's fall introduced sin into the world, God provision was greater than Adam's sin through Jesus Christ, seen in Romans 5: 15, 17, 20.

4. Slave to Righteousness

However, this glorious grace did not mean that the believers should take this gift from God for granted and sin even more. Paul asserted this in Rom 6: 1-4, which says:

*<sup>1</sup>What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup>By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? <sup>3</sup>Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*



Rather, he attacked such faulty thinking, and said that in baptism, we repented, and were called to a new life. From that point, we continue on with this new repentant life, not sin further and expecting grace to cover it. We should all be dead to sin, Romans 6: 12:

*<sup>12</sup>Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.*

Again in Romans 6: 15:

*<sup>15</sup>What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!*

In contrast, Paul admonished everyone that we should now be slaves of righteousness in Romans 6: 19. This clearly shows that God wants us to respond to his love by dying to sin or repentance, and then being a slave to righteousness. This should not be misconstrued as earning our salvation by good works. Rather, we are now God's slaves and we will seek to obey him since grace now covers us. He reiterated it in Romans 6: 22:

*<sup>22</sup>But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.*

## 5. Life Through the Spirit

This is the new life of holiness in the New Covenant, through the Spirit. In the Old Covenant the Spirit of God was not given to individuals, but after the glorification of Jesus, (John 7: 39), we all have the Spirit that will guide us as we strive to this new life, after putting to death the old one. We are not bound by the old written code of the Old Covenant, but by the Spirit in Romans 7: 6:

*<sup>6</sup>But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.*

In other words, in Christ, a person has died to both the law and to sin. The result is a new life to Christ that will bear fruit for God, Romans 7: 4.

Does that mean that the law is evil? No, in Romans 7: 7, God says:

*<sup>7</sup>What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet."*

By having the law we know what sin is, and then we can go to Christ for desperation and be redeemed. Nothing wrong with the law *per se*, but the problem lies with the flesh and with sin.

In Chapter 8, the Holy Spirit is spoken about at length. The Holy Spirit does the following:

- i) enables obedience to the law, Romans 8: 4
- ii) guarantees the future resurrection of the body, Romans 8: 11
- iii) leads to testify to the sonship, Romans 8: 14-16
- iv) intercedes us in our prayers, Romans 8: 26-27.

How wonderful the plan of God is! We can overcome through Christ and through His Spirit. He also promises protection, as seen in Romans 8: 28-30.

Thus we have this incredible protection from God's love. We can be rest assured that he loves us, no doubt about it, and no matter what circumstances we are in,

he will guide and protect us as we conform to the likeness of His son.

Although Paul was designated as the Apostle to the Gentiles, he gave assurance that he loved His fellow Jewish people, too. We read in Romans 9: 1-5,

*<sup>1</sup>I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit— <sup>2</sup>I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. <sup>3</sup>For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, <sup>4</sup>the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. <sup>5</sup>Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.*

and Romans 10: 1-2,

*<sup>1</sup>Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. <sup>2</sup>For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.*

So, Paul encourages the Jewish Christians that God has not given up hope for the Israelites, and that it is not all over for them. Not at all! There is still hope. God brought the Gentiles in to make them envious, as it says in Romans 11: 11,

*<sup>11</sup>Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.*

Based on all that he had written about the above topics (more or less focusing on beliefs and attitudes about

God and doctrines), Paul then gave the Christians in Rome some rules for godly living in Romans 12: 1-15 and Romans 13. Here are just some of the practicals that Paul thought were especially necessary for the church in Rome.

- i) Love one another deeply, Romans 12: 9
- ii) Be humble, Romans 12: 10
- iii) Never be lacking in zeal, Romans 12: 11
- iv) Reach out to all kinds, Romans 12: 16
- v) Avoid revenge, Romans 12: 19
- vi) Submit to secular authorities, Romans 13: 1-2
- vii) Be flexible in trivial or non-fundamental issues, Romans 14: 6
- viii) Don't pass judgment on one another, Romans 14: 22
- ix) Live to please God, Romans 14: 17

Paul ended up the letter by greeting twenty-six people whom he had met in his journeys over the years who were now in Rome, as well as by warning the disciples against false teachers, while at the same time expressing his confidence in God, Romans 16: 25-27.

## Book of 1Timothy

Author: Paul

Date: A.D. 56

Place of Origin: Macedonia

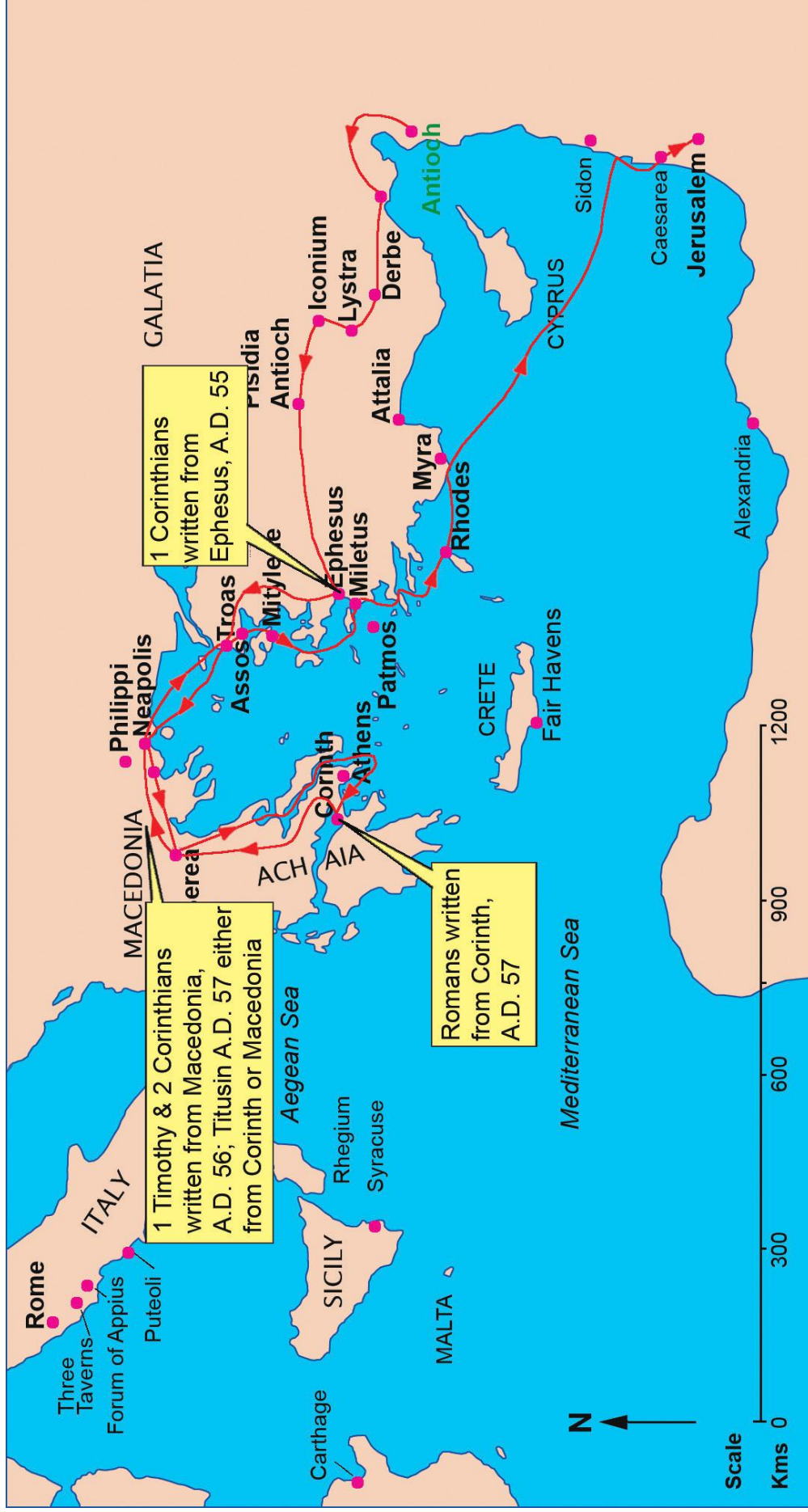
A clue as to when this letter was written is found in 1 Timothy 1: 3-4, which says:

*<sup>3</sup>As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer <sup>4</sup>nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work—which is by faith*

According to the above scripture, Paul was in Ephesus and left Timothy behind. However, in Acts 19: 21-22, he sent Timothy to Macedonia to deliver the first letter to the Corinthians. So, Timothy must have come back to Ephesus and was urged to stay on as Paul departed for Macedonia and Achaia. Therefore, we can surmise that 1 Timothy was written sometime after he had written 1 Corinthians, since that was the letter he gave to Timothy. Based on this scripture in 1 Timothy, a case can be made that Paul wrote this letter when he was in Macedonia, around A.D. 56, right after he left Ephesus.

(Themes in 1 Timothy are dealt together with the themes in 2 Timothy and Titus)





## Paul's Third Missionary Journey, A.D. 53-57

### Acts 18: 23-21: 17

Map 3





CHAPTER SIX:  
*Acts 20: 6 -*  
*Acts 26: 32*

*The following letters were written during the time period covered from Acts 20: 6 to Acts 26: 32*

*Ephesians*  
*Colossians*  
*Philemon*

## Book of Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon

Author: Paul

Date: A.D. 58

Place of origin: Prison in Caesarea

Excerpts from three letters reveal that Paul was surrounded by the same “gang” for several years. Ephesians 6: 21-22 reads:

*<sup>21</sup>Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. <sup>22</sup>I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.*

Similarly, Colossians 4: 7-14 tells us:

*<sup>7</sup>Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. <sup>8</sup>I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. <sup>9</sup>He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here. <sup>10</sup>My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) <sup>11</sup>Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. <sup>12</sup>Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. <sup>13</sup>I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. <sup>14</sup>Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings.*

And Philemon 23-24 lets us know:

*<sup>23</sup>Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. <sup>24</sup>And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.*

We see the same people were with Paul when all three of these letters were written. It is also clear that Paul was a prisoner at this time. We know that the two times Paul was a prisoner for an extended period of time was in Caesarea and Rome.

When Paul departed Greece for Jerusalem, there is another list of names given, seen in Acts 20: 4,

*<sup>4</sup>He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia.*

Here we have Aristarchus, Timothy and Tychicus as well as Luke accompanying Paul to Jerusalem. This would suggest that the imprisonment of Paul referenced in these three letters was the one at Caesarea, which was around A.D. 58.

## **Book of Philemon**

Philemon was written along with Colossians. This may have been the letter to Laodicea that Paul mentioned, or, more likely, there was a third letter written at this time that has been lost.

## **Themes in Philemon**

Onesimus, a non-Christian slave, had run away from his Christian master, Philemon, and while on the lam, came into contact with Paul and became a Christian presumably while Paul was in Caesarea. Apparently as part of Onesimus'

repentance, he was sent back to Philemon. Paul was making an attempt to reconcile the two of them. This is an example of a Christian approach to persuasion and reconciliation. It also shows how we should approach sensitive issues and how limited authority should be used. Paul could have been more forceful, but he made an appeal first, Philemon 8-9

*<sup>8</sup>Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, <sup>9</sup>yet I appeal to you on the basis of love. I then, as Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus—*

Philemon 17, Paul sacrificed financially for his brothers - a good example. Sometimes Paul was in need, at other times he had plenty.

In Philemon 1-2, it is interesting to note that this issue between Philemon and Onesimus became a public issue, hence Paul wrote it to him, to Apphia and to Archippus and to the entire church. So everybody knew and they would all be watching to see how it would be handled. Eyes were on Philemon, the house church leader.

## Book of Colossians

1. Christ is Greater than All Philosophies  
This book focuses on Christ being above every spiritual power, and that Christ is able to transform our lives as well. According to Colossians 1: 7,

*<sup>7</sup>You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf,*

However, one potential distraction to their growth was their attraction to philosophies. Colossians 2: 4:

*<sup>4</sup>I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments*

Paul taught them that their knowledge in Christ was greater than any manmade philosophy and more powerful as well, Colossians 1: 26-27; 2: 2; 4; 3.

2. Christ's Power is Sufficient to Change Us

We were brought in union with him at the waters of baptism, Colossians 2: 12-13, where a spiritual circumcision took place.

Epaphras began the church. Paul wrote to them when he was in prison in Rome, and wanted them to continue growing, seen in the following scriptures, Colossians 1: 9-10,

*<sup>9</sup>For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. <sup>10</sup>And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,*

Colossians 1: 23

*<sup>23</sup>if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.*

Colossians 2: 6-7

*<sup>6</sup>So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*

This book, along with Ephesians, follows the format of Romans and Philippians, where Paul begins with theology and ends with rules for holy living. Since this book is often called a “Twin Epistle” with Ephesians, more will be made out of the content of Ephesians to avoid repetition.

## **Book of Ephesians**

1. The Mystery of the Gospel  
One of the main themes here is the celebration of the “mystery” revealed in the gospel, that is used throughout the book.

- i) Ephesians 1:9
- ii) Ephesians 3: 3
- iii) Ephesians 4,9
- iv) Ephesians 5: 32
- v) Ephesians 6: 19

2. Christ Breaks Down the Walls  
This mystery includes the inclusion of the Gentiles with the spiritual heritage of Israel, Ephesians 2: 11-22, 2: 13-16. There were walls between people and God. A horizontal wall between the Jews and Gentiles, and a vertical wall between mankind and God. The horizontal dividing wall of hostility existed in the Old Testament (though it was not meant to have bred racial and religious hostility) seen in Leviticus 20: 22-26.

The Jew-Gentile controversy was one of the main problems in the first century church. The vertical wall was also broken down as people were joined to Christ who is the head of the church, Ephesians 1: 10, 22-23; 5:32

3. The Church is the Answer

Both types of reconciliation take place in the church. Therefore, the Church is all important and becomes a major theme of its own in this book, seen in Ephesians 1: 22; Ephesians 2: 21-22; Ephesians 3: 10; Ephesians 4: 14-16; Ephesians 5: 23.

The fundamental reason that made this possible is Christ's death: Ephesians 1: 7, 14; 2: 16.

Since the wall is broken down between people, Christians should exemplify this in the church. So instruction about this was given in Ephesians 4: 1-6; 4: 25-5: 2. This applied to relationship between spouses, Ephesians 5: 21-33.

These rules for holy living placed in the last half of the book of Colossians and Ephesians are filled with wonderful practical commandments and guidelines on how to have great relationships, become more Christ-like and be effective and joyful as a Christian.

The book of Ephesians closes out with a wonderful "word picture" of the full armour of God, which describes the spiritual battle all Christians face and how we can be victorious with God.

CHAPTER SEVEN:  
*Acts 27: 1 -*  
*Acts 28: 31*

*The following letter was written during the time period covered from Acts 27: 1 to Acts 28: 31*

*Philippians*

*Please refer to the map of Paul's Journey to Rome on page 85.*



## Book of Philippians

Author: Paul, Timothy

Date: A.D. 60-62

Place of origin: Rome, under house arrest

In this letter we see that both Paul and Timothy were the authors, unlike the three letters (Philemon, Colossians and Ephesians). Philippians 4: 22 says

*<sup>22</sup>All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.*

Paul also mentions that he was held in chains in Philippians 1: 13, 17. Therefore this letter was written when he was held in custody in Rome in A.D. 60-62. Unlike the other three letters mentioned above, (Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon) Epaphroditus was probably the person who delivered this letter, mentioned in Philippians 2: 25. At the end of his letter, in Philippians 4: 22, Paul passed greetings from some members of Caesar's household, supporting the fact that he was still in custody when this letter was written.

This letter, along with 1 Thessalonians, more than most in the NT, really illuminates the friendship that Paul had developed with the Philippians. Their friendship and partnership is one of the themes that emerges from this book, seen in the following characteristics:

1. Growth in Absence because of being Present  
Paul made his "absence" clear through this book, seen in Philippians 1: 27; 2: 12, 24. Notwithstanding that he kept the Philippians always "present" in his mind, Philippians 1: 3-4, 8-11, 2: 17-18. This was a church that was in Paul's mind constantly, Philippians 1: 3, 7. It was, after all, a church that supported Paul monetarily for a time, Philippians 4: 16-18. He had not received support from everyone, evident from 2 Corinthians 11:

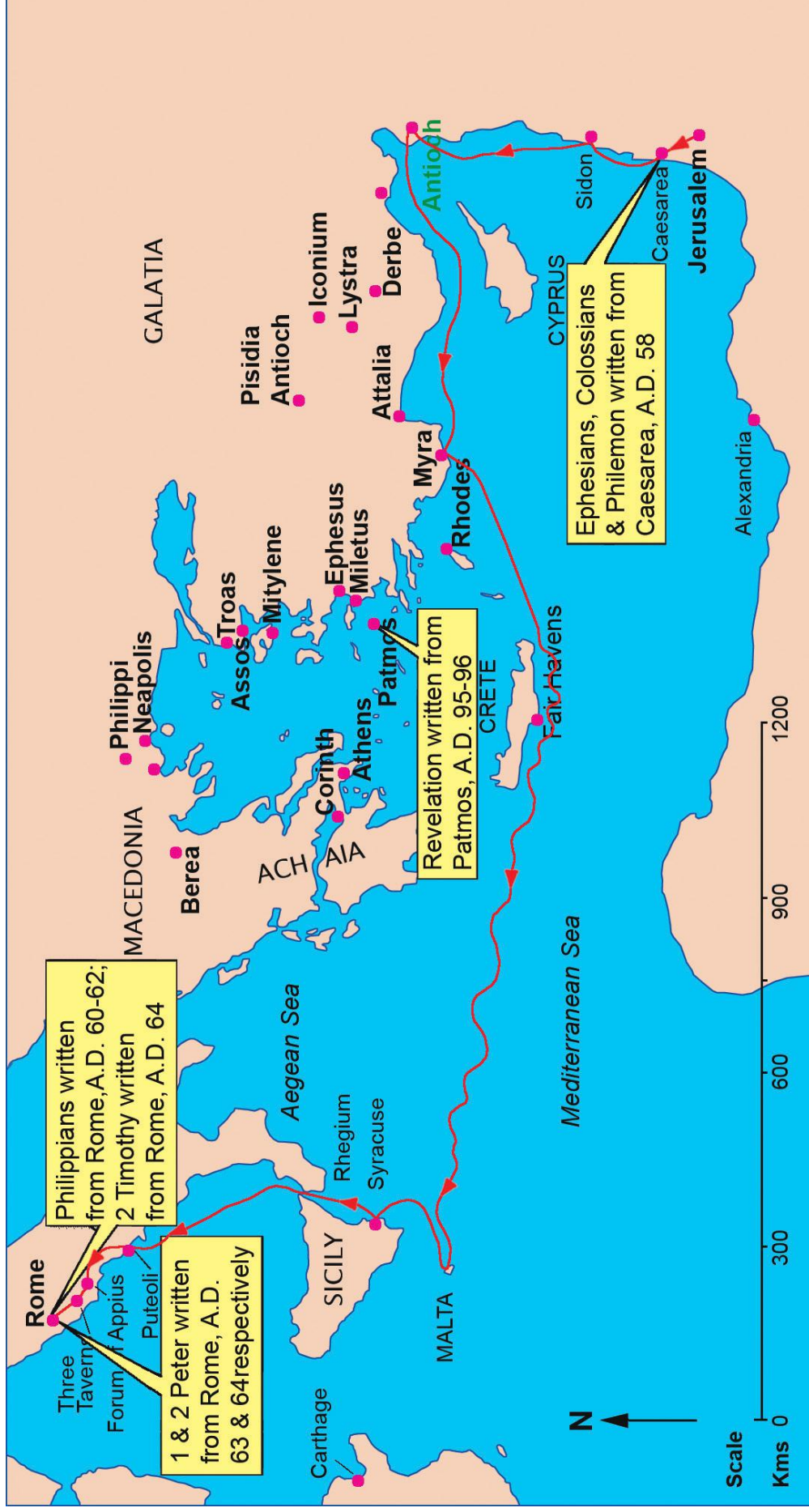
8-9, so he probably had a special place in his heart for the Philippians because of his gratitude.

2. **Partnership and Vulnerability in Jesus**  
This rings out throughout the book. The partnership between Paul and this church stood out above the rest. Words related to “partnership” and “sharing” are found in quite a few places, Philippians 1: 5, 7; 2: 1; 4: 14, 15. This partnership and sharing was what brought out their friendship.
3. **A Genuine Interest for Others**  
Paul also wanted to hear about their welfare, and vice versa, which was why he prayed for them and had them in his heart, Philippians 1: 3, 7-8; 4: 1 He wanted to send Timothy to them, Philippians 2: 19 so that he would be able to hear about them. They, in turn, had continued to hold Paul in their hearts, Philippians 1: 19; 4: 10, 14. They wanted to send another gift to Paul, Philippians 4: 10. It was a very healthy “give and take” relationship. Each party is each other’s source of joy.
4. **Joy from Closeness and Humility**  
Because of their incredible bond, “joy” is a frequent theme found, seen in Philippians 1: 18, 25; 2: 2, 17; 18, 28, 29; 3: 1; 4:1, 4, 10.
5. **Unity as a Priority**  
Unity is also an issue that was of concern to him as he pleaded with two leading female figures in the church, Philippians 4: 2-3. In 2: 1-11, he gave the recipe for getting along with one another, which in essence comes down to putting one another’s interests above one’s own. It is as if he is saying that when we try and “out do” someone, we will all “lose”, but when we “lose” for another’s sake, we will all “win”. Paul highlights two examples of people with such

character, Timothy and Epaphroditus, Philippians 2: 19-30.

6. Christ Centred spirituality  
The word “Christ” is frequently found. In chapter one it appears seventeen times.





**Paul's Journey to Rome, A.D. 59-60**  
**Acts 21: 18-28: 31**

Map 4



## CHAPTER EIGHT: *After the Book of Acts...*

*The events of the book of Acts drew to a close around A.D. 60-62. The following New Testament books were written after that period.*

*Matthew  
Mark  
Luke  
John  
Acts  
2 Timothy,  
Titus  
Hebrews  
1, 2 Peter  
1, 2, 3 John  
Jude  
Revelations*

*Please refer to Chart 1 for a comparison between New Testament events and Roman history.*

## Book of 2 Timothy and Titus

### Book of Titus

Author: Paul

Date: A.D. 57

Place of origin: Corinth/Macedonia

Titus 1: 5 reads:

*<sup>5</sup>The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.*

The book of Acts does not mention any ministry of Paul in Crete. There are two possible scenarios – either Paul was in house arrest in Rome for two years and then left on another missionary journey, only to be rearrested in Rome (just before he was martyred) or Paul went there with Titus before he went to Corinth/wrote Romans, and for some reason, Luke didn't include that trip. The first scenario would see this book written around A.D. 62 and the other scenario would be nearer A.D. 57.

### Book of 2 Timothy

Author: Paul

Date: A.D. 64

Place of origin: Prison in Rome

2 Timothy 4: 6-8:

*<sup>6</sup>For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. <sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup>Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*



These scriptures show that Paul was both in prison and near the end of his life. The fact that this letter was written from Rome was supported by 2 Timothy 1: 16-17:

*<sup>16</sup>May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.*

*<sup>17</sup>On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me.*

However, when one compares this time with the account in Acts 28: 31 there is a difference in his prison condition. In Acts he was unhindered, while the passage in 2 Timothy has the feel that Paul was near the end of his life. Therefore, this letter was probably written *after* his two year period of house arrest in Acts 28: 30, and at another time when he was re arrested. A scripture in 2 Timothy 4: 16, may give a clue to this:

*<sup>16</sup>At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them.*

Here Paul referred to his *first* defence, which may have meant his first imprisonment in Rome, where he was set free thereafter. However, at a later time, he was rearrested. This is highly speculative, but it is also very like because at around that time the Roman Emperor Nero started to persecute the Christians. In fact, history confirms that Rome was set ablaze by Nero in A.D. 64. So, Paul may have been arrested again and this time executed. It would have been this time of imprisonment that Paul wrote the last of these Pastoral Epistles (the nickname for 1, 2 Timothy and Titus).

The main themes of these three books can be summarized as follows:

1. Make the Gospel Attractive to the World  
1 Timothy 3: 15 reads:

*<sup>15</sup>if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.*

Although it may not be obvious, one of the main reasons for managing God's household well, other than being for the spiritual good of the church and for their salvation, was to make the gospel attractive to the outside world. In other words, there was a mission-based reason, seen in the following scriptures:

- i) 1 Timothy 5: 14

*<sup>14</sup>So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander.*

- ii) Titus 2: 5

*<sup>5</sup>to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.*

- iii) Titus 2: 8

*<sup>8</sup>and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.*

- iv) Titus 2: 10

*<sup>10</sup>and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.*

Slaves are also to show respect, seen in 1 Timothy 6: 1-2, Titus 2: 9-10.

The elders are to be chosen from those from those who have a good reputation with outsiders, 1 Timothy 3: 7:

*<sup>7</sup>He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.*

Even young widows are to conduct themselves in such a manner so as to not make room for the enemy to slander, seen in 1 Timothy 5: 14.

Then in Titus 3: 1-2, Paul admonished:

*<sup>1</sup>Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, <sup>2</sup>to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.*

Again, the Christians should set good examples in their interactions with non-Christians and show true humility to all men.

The elders are the representatives of the church, and should have a good reputation with the outsiders, which would go a long way towards gaining respect with Roman society.

Thus the leaders, young men, older women, younger women, slaves, widows, and elders, in fact, *all* believers, were to shine in the Roman world in order to win approval as much as possible while holding on

to the very different and non-Roman belief that Jesus, not Caesar, was Lord.

Another area where they could shine and make the gospel attractive was in the area of doing good deeds, seen in Titus 3: 1, 14. In this way, the Christians would win the admiration and gratitude of society and this would enhance their good name.

## 2. Manage Members within God's Household

While every care was taken to win as many as possible from the outside world, instructions were also given in all three letters on how people within the household of God should conduct themselves, summarized in 1 Timothy 3: 15, which says

*<sup>15</sup>if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.*

- i) Christians are to exercise self-control, this is seen clearly in Titus 2: 5, 6; 1 Timothy 4: 12, 2 Timothy 2: 22
- ii) Christians are not to habitually quarrel with one another, 2 Timothy 2: 14, Titus 2: 3.
- iii) Christian leaders are to set an example

Leaders should not lead only with their lips but with their lives. The leader must show integrity and his life must be an example of discipleship. In fact, in 2 Timothy 2: 20-22, Paul taught that when a person cleanses himself, then he will be used by God in his household. This call to integrity among leaders cannot be overstated. In 1 Timothy 4: 12, this is emphasized again. In Titus 2: 7-8, the leader was called to set the pace in integrity.

Paul urged Timothy to flee from the temptation to become rich, 1 Timothy 6: 11. Through the centuries, money has brought many leaders down, and no one is above it.

Lay leaders, overseers and deacons were also urged to be examples. Their qualifications were listed in 1 Timothy 3: 2-3 and Titus 1: 6-8. Perhaps some elders and deacons had been appointed who did not measure up to this standards and caused problems such that Paul had to remind Timothy and Titus about being careful in their selection of people to such a position. Or perhaps he was just reminding them. Certainly, when Paul spoke to the elders in Ephesus, in Acts 20: 29-30, he felt strongly about how tough they needed to be:

*<sup>29</sup>I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. <sup>30</sup>Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.*

Paul warned them about the real possibility of savage wolves growing from the flock. Timothy was in Ephesus when Paul wrote his letter (1 Timothy 1: 3) and perhaps Timothy had to combat with these savage wolves. (Reminds me of a saying about shepherds/elders: they need to be gentle enough to carry a lamb, strong enough to slay a wolf, and they need to smell like sheep!)

Leaders of God's household should also be leaders of their own families, Titus 1: 6

*<sup>6</sup>An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.*

3. Refute False Teachings

False teaching will always be a threat to God's people. The leader of God's church must have the conviction to protect the flock and refute false teaching, 1 Timothy 1: 3; 4: 16; 2 Timothy 4: 2-4; Titus 1: 10; Titus 2: 1

4. Do Not Be Ashamed

A particular focus in 2 Timothy is to overcome shame. No matter how much we try to win the admiration of the society, Christians will never escape hostility and persecution. Paul reminded Timothy to not be ashamed of him, and of Christ. We read these words in 2 Timothy 1: 8-9,

*<sup>8</sup>So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, <sup>9</sup>who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,*

and 2 Timothy 2: 8-9,

*<sup>8</sup>Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, <sup>9</sup>for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained.*

Paul spoke very openly about his hardships, and then said in 2 Timothy 3: 12 the following:

*<sup>12</sup>In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*

Paul then used Onesiphorus as a good example, in 2 Timothy 1: 16-18.

Still no imprisonment will truly defeat the Christian leader, for God's word will not be chained, 2 Timothy 2: 9.

## **Book of Matthew**

Matthew was an Apostle and even though he authored the book, he referred to himself in the third person. His other Hebrew name was Levi. Matthew used the word prophet thirty-seven times, more often than Luke's thirty times and far more frequently than Mark's six times. Although the people held both John the Baptist and Jesus to be prophets, Matthew's primary focus was on the Old Testament prophets. He quoted Jeremiah and Isaiah by name and Hosea and Zechariah without naming them. He also identified Asaph, the writer of several Psalms, including Psalms 78, as a prophet. Matthew's gospel was written clearly to an audience who held a deep belief and respect for the Old Testament prophets and so it is widely accepted that his readers were Jewish Christians.

Some of the themes of the book of Matthew are:

1. The Gospel for the Gentiles  
One clear theme that emerges from this book is the mission of the gospel to the Gentiles. We see this theme emerging right from the genealogy in chapter one of this book. Jesus, as we see it, was connected to David and to Moses. However, the genealogy contains a number of surprises; in particular we see some women and Gentiles. For example, Tamar in Genesis 38 was made pregnant by Judah, her father-in-law. She was mentioned in Matthew 1: 3. This was part of Jesus' ancestry. The bible is open and does not cover embarrassing events such as this. What about Rahab in



Matthew 1: 5, who was a prostitute and later on came to know the God of Israel? She was also in Jesus' line of ancestry. What about Solomon whose mother was Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, in Matthew 1: 6, whom David slept with and ended up being responsible for doing away with Uriah himself. What about Ruth? She was a Gentile! Then Mary herself was pregnant while being a teenager before she was married. Under suspicion of immorality she could have been killed - another embarrassing situation.

In the first century the relationship between Jews and Gentiles was a major problem. In fact, when the Great Commission was given in Matthew 28, the twelve went and spread the message only to the Jews. Although we see in Acts 10 the conversion of the first Gentile and in Acts 8, the informal and spontaneous spread to Samaria, it wasn't formally done until about 15 years later in Acts 13. We see the patience of God here. This shines through brightly in the genealogy in the book of Matthew.

We also see Matthew's emphasis on God welcoming the Gentiles when he wrote about the Magi in Matthew 2: 1-12 which stood in contrast with the way the Jewish leaders under Herod reacted. Further on, Matthew highlighted the fact that Jesus showed compassion for the outcasts and the helpless. In fact in Matthew 8: 1-17 each person that Jesus helped here was someone from a marginalized group. The demoniac in Matthew 8: 28-34, the paralytic in Matthew 9: 1-8, and the ones described in Matthew 8: 18-34 were unable to help themselves. It is interesting to note that these people included both Jews and Gentiles.



## 2. The Kingdom of God

Matthew summarized the activity of Jesus in Matthew 4: 23 and 9: 35. The message that Jesus taught was “the good news of the kingdom” (Matthew 4:23, 9: 35, 24: 14). This phrase was unique to Matthew’s gospel.

The six kingdom parables in Matthew 13: 24-50 may be grouped into three pairs:

- i) The judgment that will separate the people of the kingdom from the others.
- ii) The worth of the kingdom of God
- iii) The unexpected results of preaching the kingdom of God.

## 3. Discipleship

Another theme about this book is the strong message about discipleship. When he called the first few to follow him in Matthew 4: 19-22, we see that they were to be:

- i) Fishers of men
- ii) Obedient – by following him immediately.
- iii) Sacrificial – they left their livelihood and father.

Later on Matthew contrasted the above with two other examples of people who expressed a willingness to go but did not understand the full cost of discipleship. The Sermon on the Mount also showed the tests of true disciples, which are:

- i) They enter the narrow gate, Matthew 7: 13-14
- ii) They produce good fruit, Matthew 7: 15-20
- iii) They obey the Father’s will, Matthew 7: 21-23
- iv) They act on Jesus’ words, Matthew 7: 24-27

The result of all this would be obedient disciples, Matthew 28: 18-20. The focus on all nations brings back the initial pattern of the mission having to go outside the boundaries of the Jewish people. Like the early disciples of Jesus, we are to be people who bear fruit, who

understand the cost of discipleship and who will take the word out to all nations.

## **Book of Mark**

Early church tradition says that the author of this book was Mark, who was an associate of Peter. Scholars also associate the place of writing to be in Rome.

### Themes from the Book of Mark

1. **Proclaiming the Gospel**  
Preaching the gospel or good news is another main theme of the Mark. Jesus came to preach (Mark 1: 38-39) concerning the necessity of repentance and faith (Mark 1: 14-15). Jesus sent out his disciples to proclaim repentance, Mark 3: 14, 6: 7-12.
2. **Suffering as a Disciple**  
Suffering will come as a result of this proclamation, Mark 13: 10. Mark writes about this good news right from the beginning. The proclamation is so valuable that Jesus is able to promise life to those who lose themselves for the gospel, Mark 8:35. A great reward will also await those who sacrifice possessions and family ties for the sake of the gospel, Mark 10: 29-30. However, it should not be mistaken that the disciples who faced such trials were weak. Mark showed that when the word of God is sown it bears abundant fruit, Mark 4: 20. The kingdom will also grow like a seed without human effort, Mark 4: 26-29. It is also a mustard seed that starts small and then grows beyond expectation, Mark 4; 30-32. Jesus was the model of one who suffered because he set his heart on God's interest, Mark 8: 31-33, 9: 30-31, 10: 32-34; and who himself faced the trials and persecutions from the religious leaders. Mark made it clear that Jesus faced difficulty and so would his followers, Mark 9; 35, 10:

43-44, 13: 9-13. He came to serve and be taken as a ransom for many, Mark 10: 45. Everyone will be salted with fire, Mark 9: 49.

John the Baptist was sent by God to prepare for the coming Messiah, Mark 1: 2-3. Yet he was also rejected by the religious leaders, Mark 11: 30-33; and beheaded by Herod, Mark 6: 27-29, 9: 13. We see this pattern again in the parable of the vineyard, where God sends his beloved son to deal with the tenants, Mark 12: 6-11.

### 3. Humility as a Leader

Another theme that runs through this book is that Jesus did not perform the miracles to validate the truth of his message. Jesus repeatedly commanded people to remain silent concerning his miracles, Mark 1: 43-44, 5: 43, 7: 36, 8: 26, 5: 19, 7: 24. He also refused to provide miracles for those who were looking for a sign for proof of his authority, Mark 8: 11-13, 11: 27-33, 6: 1-6. Rather Jesus performed the miracles because he had compassion on them, Mark 1: 41, 6; 34.

## **Book of Luke**

The author here is undoubtedly Luke the physician. The book of Luke was written in a classical Greek. It was written to the Gentiles. No finer Greek is found in the New Testament than in Luke-Acts other than in the book of Hebrews. Luke was also a travelling companion of Paul, which can be seen from the use of “we” in the book of Acts, Acts 16: 10-17, 20: 5-15, 21: 1-18, 27: 1-28: 16. The fact that Luke the Physician wrote both Luke and Acts is universally agreed upon by scholars. It was probably written in the early 60s A.D. as the last chapter in the book of Acts, chapter 28, ends at a time when Paul was in prison in Rome. The date for this is from A.D. 60-62. Luke went only as far as he was able to and so it is understandable that the narrative ends here. Theophilus was probably a

Roman official, but we are unsure as to whether he was or ever became a convert.

Luke stated in Luke 1: 4 that the primary purpose of his writing was “so that you know the certainty of the things you have been taught.”

From the contents of Luke it seem that Luke wanted Theophilus to be familiar with the history and the mission part of Jesus’ life as opposed to doctrinal teaching.

The themes of the book of Luke are:

1. Divine Mission

That Jesus was on a divine mission to go to Jerusalem can be seen in Luke 9:51, 13: 32-35, 18: 31-35. The teaching of Luke on Jesus’ mission is seen also in the following passages:

- i) In God bringing about his redemptive plan through the house of David, Luke 1: 68-69.
- ii) In the song by Simeon, that Jesus is the salvation God has prepared, Luke 2: 30-32
- iii) In the boy Jesus being concerned with His father’s work, Luke 2: 49.
- iv) In the sermon in Nazareth, when Jesus said that he came to fulfill the scripture, to release the oppressed and to bring salvation, Luke 4:18.
- v) In Jesus’ interaction with Zacchaeus in Luke 19: 10.
- vi) In Jesus’ closing words about salvation and forgiveness of sins in Luke 24: 46-48.

2. Listen to His Word

God has sent prophets to his people though they have been badly treated, rejected and even killed, Luke 11: 49-51, 13: 34, 19: 14, 20: 10. Even Jesus himself had to give his life and end his mission in death, Luke 9:22, 13:33, 17: 25, 24: 7, 26, 44

3. Healthy Comparisons

Luke compared the openness of the Gentiles with the rejection by the Jews, seen in Luke 4: 25-27; 7:1-10; 10: 12-16, 33; 11: 30-32; 13: 28-29; 17: 11-19. Only Luke called the time from between Christ's first and second coming as "the times of the Gentiles", Luke 21: 24. In essence, Luke predicted the fact that fewer Jews, who had been waiting for the kingdom, actually would find it, while many more of those originally not invited, the Gentiles, would enter through into it.

4. Special Emphasis on women, the poor and the humble

Luke focused not only on the Gentiles, but also on women and widows. The initial chapters focused on Mary and Elizabeth. Jesus' reference to the widow in Zarephath in Luke 4: 26, Jesus' compassion to the widow's son in Luke 7: 11-17, his support from the women in Luke 8: 1-3, the anointing by a sinful woman in Luke 7: 36-50, the raising of the dead girl in Luke 8: 40-56, his love for Mary and Martha in Luke 10: 38-42, a crippled woman healed on the Sabbath in Luke 13: 10-17, the persistent widow in Luke 18: 1-8, the widow's offering in Luke 21: 1-4, the followers of Jesus just before and after he was crucified in Luke 23: 27, 49, the resurrection announcement in Luke 24: 1-8 – these were all about women!

5. The Role of the Holy Spirit

Luke also emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit, from the Spirit's role in the prophecies of the Old Testament to the Spirit's role in the birth of Christ (as opposed to Matthew's emphasis on Joseph), and many other references as well.

## Book of John

Of all the four gospels, this is the most different from the others. In fact, the first three are known as the Synoptic Gospels, while the Gospel According to John is seen as being very different. John was the author and the person to whom Jesus referred as “the disciple whom Jesus loved”. John lived longer than the other disciples. He was sent into exile on the island of Patmos. Some say this book appeared as early as A.D. 50 and there are some who say that it was written in A.D. 90. The papyrus P52 is the oldest manuscript that has ever been found, (at the John Rylands Library in Manchester, England) and it contains a portion of John 18 dating to A.D. 125. John also wrote Revelation and 1, 2, and 3 John.

The purpose of this book was stated by John himself in John 20: 31:

*<sup>31</sup>But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

Galilee was the place Jesus recruited his apostles, and he spent a lot of time there, but the book of John records more of Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem. John’s Gospel contains large portions of narrative, such as John 4 and the story of the Samaritan woman, or the healing of the blind man in John 9. This style is easier to read, which makes the book of John a good book for beginners. John was also written as a mission book, to help people develop their faith in Jesus as the Son of God. There are several strong themes that emerge from this gospel which has as its main goal bringing people to a faith in Christ Jesus:

1. Jesus Sent by God

John approached the idea of mission from the point of view that the Father *sent* the Son. There were several words that were used by Jesus to show the



relationship between He and God, with God the sender and He the sent one. As the sender, the Father was in the authoritative position and the Son only did what was pleasing to the Father, as we see in John 8: 29:

*<sup>29</sup>The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him."*

We see this harmonious relationship between Jesus and God, the father in the following scriptures, John 3: 34, 5: 36, 7: 16, 7: 18, 8: 26, 29, 14: 24, 17: 4.

There is unity between the Father and the Son, and whoever believes in the Son also believes in the Father, seen in John 5: 23, 8: 16, 12: 44, 13: 20.

2. Jesus the Giver of Life  
This is seen in John 3: 16; 5: 24-25; 6: 57; 10: 10; 11: 25-26; 17: 2; 20: 31.
3. The "I am"  
Jesus uses the "I am" statement several times to emphasize he is the only author of life and salvation, seen in John 6: 35, 41, 48; 8: 12; 9: 5; 10: 7, 9; 10: 11, 14, 11: 25; 14:6; 15: 1, 5,
4. Glory to God  
As Jesus goes about fulfilling his mission to please the Father, he is also bringing glory to God. We see this ringing throughout the book of John, in John 17:1, 5, 10, 22, 24. This stands in contrast to those who bring glory to themselves, John 5: 41; 7: 18; 8:50, 54. We see how the idea of "glory" appears in many of his miracles, the turning of water into wine in John 2: 11, the raising of Lazarus from the dead in John 11:4; his own death in John 12: 23, 28, when we bear fruit in

John 15: 8, his prayer in John 17:1; and the manner in which Peter would die in John 21: 19.

5. The World is Evil

John also portrayed the world as an evil place, ruled by the devil, seen in John 12: 31, 14: 30, 16: 11. John was trying to show that the religious leaders' behaviour was influenced by the devil, John 7: 48-49; 8:40; 9: 29; 11: 50-53. As a result, Jesus wanted his disciples to not be a part of the world and yet he wanted them to stay in the world, and be sent into the world John 17: 15-18; 4: 38; 20: 21. They should also not be surprised when the world hated them, John 15: 18-25.

6. On a Different Wavelength than Jesus

Jesus, for example, would be on one wavelength while the others were on another. For example, John 2: 22

*<sup>22</sup>After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.*

Jesus was talking about his temple, but they thought he meant the physical temple. Other examples of this are:

In John 3: 3-10

*<sup>3</sup>When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."*

*<sup>4</sup>"Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied, "My time has not yet come."*

*<sup>5</sup>His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."*

*<sup>6</sup>Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.*



<sup>7</sup>Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

<sup>8</sup>Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, <sup>9</sup>and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside <sup>10</sup>and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

Nicodemus also misunderstood the concept of being born again.

Again in John 6: 41-52

<sup>41</sup>At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." <sup>42</sup>They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

<sup>43</sup>"Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered.

<sup>44</sup>"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. <sup>45</sup>It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. <sup>46</sup>No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup>I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. <sup>48</sup>I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup>Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. <sup>50</sup>But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. <sup>51</sup>I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

<sup>52</sup>Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

When he was talking about complete reliance on him, they thought he meant bread.

In John 9: 39-41

*<sup>39</sup>Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."*

*<sup>40</sup>Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?"*

*<sup>41</sup>Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."*

The Pharisees did not understand Jesus' statement about being spiritually blind.

Then in John 13: 8-9

*<sup>8</sup>"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."*

*<sup>9</sup>"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"*

Peter misunderstood Jesus.

We see the same pattern.

7. The Humanity and Divinity of Jesus.  
At the later dating of the writing of John's gospel, the churches were plagued with false doctrine. One of them was called Gnosticism. This teaching did not accept that God had become a man. A man was too filthy to have been God. Therefore Jesus, when he was around, was not in a human form. They would accept his divinity not his humanity. (Many today have a

hard time with the reverse, i.e. they accept his humanity but not his divinity.) Gnostics believed that Jesus did not come in the flesh. To counter this, John talked about Jesus' humanity. He was the incarnate word of God. Jesus was the word. The word was Jesus Christ. John emphasised the divinity of Jesus with the "I am statements" ("I am the Bread of Life", "I am the Good Shepherd", etc.) and emphasised his humanity by citing places where Jesus was tired, John 4:6; where Jesus wept, John 11:35; and where he was thirsty, 19:28. In John 20: 24-25, John said that this was written to help us come to faith in Jesus. John also wanted to his readers to see Jesus from a universal perspective. In John 4 the Samaritans talked about Jesus being the Saviour of the whole world. John was not saying he was just an important historical figure but in the entire universe and cosmos Jesus was/is God!

### Book of 1 Peter

Author: Peter

Date: A.D. 63

Place of origin: Rome

1 Peter 5: 12-13,

*<sup>12</sup>With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. <sup>13</sup>She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.*

"Babylon" was a reference to Rome. Revelation 17: 5 referred to the woman who is called Babylon and this was in reference to Rome. So the city from which this letter was sent was very probably Rome. Peter also mentioned that Mark and Silas were with him. Remember 2 Timothy 4: 11:

*<sup>11</sup>Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.*

Since Paul was requesting for Mark to come and be with him in Rome, it follows that Mark might have crossed paths with Peter in that city. Tradition has it that Peter was crucified in Rome around A.D. 64. If this was the case, this letter was written slightly before that date, around A.D. 63. Another supporting argument is that persecution against the Christians were intensifying, which history says to be the case under Nero's reign (A.D. 54 – A.D. 68). In A.D. 64, Rome was set ablaze by Nero and many Christians died, and it was very likely that Peter was among them. This is consistent with the content of his letter, encouraging Christians to stay faithful in times of persecution. So a date of around early 60s A.D. would be probable.

Speaking of Nero's fire, Nero built a lot of buildings. A fire got started out in one of the poorer areas. The term "fire" in 1 Peter may allude to the fire in Rome, but this cannot be proven. Both these letters were written in the A.D. 60 period. The Roman Empire was filled with disciples all over. Persecution had already taken place. Tradition says that Peter and Paul were arrested during this time, and both were martyred.

The themes in the book of 1 Peter are:

1. Strangers in the World  
With the persecution as the backdrop, Peter addressed them as strangers of the world, in 1 Peter 1: 1, 17; 2:11. Even so, they were special in God's eyes, they were part of the household of God, 1 Peter 4: 17, a spiritual house, 1 Peter 2: 5. They were also God's chosen race, 1 Peter 2: 9; 1: 1-2. Peter was encouraging them to not give up the fight and to set their hearts on their heavenly home.

2. Israel of the New Covenant

Peter made the parallel between the Israel in the Old Covenant and Christians in the New Covenant. He said that they enjoyed the same special status, revealing God's glory. He quoted Isaiah 49: 6, which is found in 1 Peter 2: 9. The church now had this task - to shine. This was used again Acts 13: 47, which says:

*<sup>47</sup>For this is what the Lord has commanded us:  
" 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles,  
that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.' "*

As a result, Peter admonished the Christians to shine in their good deeds, 1 Peter 2: 12. (We are now to be holy, as He is holy, in 1 Peter 1: 16, quoting Leviticus 11: 44)

3. Submission in Times of Injustice

As believers, Peter wrote that we should submit to earthly authorities. Wives should submit to the husbands, and husbands were to treat their wives with love, as fellow heirs. Young men should be submissive to their elders.

4. Suffering Like Jesus

Peter taught that Christians should be willing to suffer like Christ. However, this did not mean that they should not be willing to give an answer to those who asked about their faith, 1 Peter 3: 15. Our example is Jesus, 1 Peter 2: 21-22

5. No Exemption from Doing Good

In light of persecution, disciples should NOT be exempted from doing good. The word "good" appears throughout the book, 1 Peter 2: 12, 15, 20; 3: 6, 11, 17; 4: 19.

6. Leaders Must be Examples  
Leaders should be examples and lay their lives down like Jesus, 1 Peter 5: 2.

## Book of 2 Peter

Author: Peter

Date: A.D. 64

Place of origin: Rome

This letter was written just before Peter gave his life in A.D. 64, if tradition is correct, which puts the date at around A.D. 64, a little later than 1 Peter. Peter was still in prison in Rome. The fact that it was written just before his death is seen in 2 Peter 1: 13-14, which says:

*<sup>13</sup>I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, <sup>14</sup>because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.*

The book of 2 Peter is written in a better style than 1 Peter. Therefore, some scholars will not accept that Peter could have written anything so well. Even though Peter had grown up in Galilee, a very Gentile area, Greek would have been his second language. However, he may have had a scribe or secretary, like Paul did when he wrote Romans. We will accept that this book was written by Peter and his secretary shortly after the first letter. He was aware of his impending departure from the earth. Like Paul, he knew his end was near.

The themes of the book of 2 Peter are:

1. Get a Perspective  
Peter began the letter reminding his audience to grow, and that lack of growth and lack of gratitude are signs that you have lost your perspective. The world isn't going to last forever. See 2 Peter 3: 11



*<sup>11</sup>Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives*

Live like this will happen, and not like earth is the ultimate destiny. He admonished again in 2 Peter 3: 14 for all of them to remain spotless. Nothing matters more than our salvation. Do you live as if “earth” is “heaven”? Earth is earth and it will all end.

Peter told them that since the earth will end, we ought to all lead holy and godly lives.

## 2. Recognize False Teachings

Peter warned that false teachers would try to lead them astray, false teachers who promote pleasure seeking and false knowledge. The false prophets would come, and they had better be prepared, 2 Peter 2: 3.

How can you distinguish between a false teacher, and a regular leader who sometimes teaches some wrong things? Verse three tells us that “motive” is one of the acid tests. Is the teacher’s motive to manipulate or to strengthen, to gain or to give?

2 Peter 3: 15-16:

*<sup>15</sup>Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. <sup>16</sup>He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.*

This verse lets us know that false teachers can also be just plain ignorant, all the more reason that we should study our New Testament!

## Book of Jude

Author: Jude the brother of Jesus

Date: A.D. 60- 80

Place of origin: Unknown

Jude 3:

*<sup>3</sup>Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.*

This is an interesting book. It is the only book where the writer began by saying he wanted to write about one topic (encouragement based on salvation) but in the end, because of circumstances, had to change topics and write about something else, i.e., a warning against false doctrine, which, obviously, is the main theme of this short little book.

As far as determining who wrote the book, Jude refers to himself as the brother of James, which means he was also the brother of Jesus. (Judas in Greek, Jude in English.) And as for timing, we can assume that Jude was written after 2 Peter because he actually quotes from 2 Peter 3:3. Compare the two:

2 Peter 3:3

*<sup>3</sup>First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.*



Jude 18:

*<sup>18</sup>They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires."*

Jude was affirming that Apostles wrote to them saying these words, which means that Jude was written after 2 Peter. However, it is difficult to locate a more exact date than this as well as the place of origin of this letter.

### **Book of Hebrews**

Author: Unknown

Date: A.D. 65 – 70

Place of origin: Italy

In Hebrews 13: 24, the writer of Hebrews wrote that the people from Italy send their greeting. It follows then that this letter was written from Italy. Some people have contended that it was Paul who wrote this book. Although it is uncertain who the author is, the fact that the author includes himself among those who came to the faith because of the message of those who had heard Jesus, Hebrews 2: 3-4, is one of the strongest possible arguments against Paul being the author. However, for those who still believe it was Paul, they assume that he wrote it while he was still in prison in Rome. So when Timothy came in response to his request to 2 Timothy 4: 9.

Timothy would have responded to Paul, and would have come to Rome.

This theory assumes that Timothy got himself arrested but was released soon afterwards. While this is a possibility, it is unlikely. What is more likely is that Paul was executed (remember he already sensed his imminent death in 2 Timothy 4: 6),

*<sup>6</sup>For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure.*

Timothy was jailed at a later time, then released, and the writer of Hebrews began his work. That is my speculation, since the writer of Hebrews lived to see or hear Timothy's release from prison, mentioned in Hebrews 13: 23, which says:

*<sup>23</sup>I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you.*

There is also the issue of language, which points to a different author, since the book of Hebrews has the finest Greek in the entire New Testament.

The content of the letter implies that in all likelihood the temple in Jerusalem was still standing, since there was no mention of it being destroyed (which happened in A.D. 70). Given that Paul was executed around A.D. 64, according to tradition, and assuming that Timothy was arrested shortly afterwards and then released, this letter was written sometime between this period and the fall of the Jerusalem temple in A.D. 70. So a date of around A.D. 65 -70 would be a good estimate.

As to whom this book was written, it was definitely addressed to Jewish Christians since it is full of instructions and discussions about the differences between the Old and New Covenant. In many ways it is the hinge document between the New and Old Testament. The New and Old Covenants are compared and contrasted. It is not true that the Old Covenant was just Law and the New Covenant just Grace. This book ties it all together.

One key passage is Hebrews 8: 7-12.

Jeremiah 31: 31-34 According to this prophecy of the New Covenant, the law would be written *on the hearts* of God's people. In this New Covenant, people will be called to make an adult and informed decision before becoming a Christian.

By contrast in the Old Covenant, a baby, 8 day old (the time of circumcision), was already part of God's family without making a decision of his own.

In other words, under the Old Covenant, people are born into the covenant and then are told about the Lord, Hebrews 8: 11, while in the New Covenant they are taught first and *then* they enter the covenant with a conscious decision of the mind and heart.

In the Old Covenant, the word Holy was related to people, priests, practices and places, but in the New Covenant, the Christians themselves are called to be holy, and they are made holy by the blood of Christ.

The main message of the book of Hebrews is that the fight of our Christian race through Jesus Christ in the New Covenant is worth it, no matter how great the cost, even if it means giving our lives for it. Society may put up all kinds of pressure, but we must not give in – too much is at stake. Some of the recipients of this letter had either been taking God's grace for granted or were at least tempted to do so, and the writer wanted them to know that this did not honour God, the giver of all grace.

The themes of the book of Hebrews are:

1. The Danger of Drifting  
Many passages give the impression that the earlier zeal of these Christians had cooled. We do not know how long ago were the "earlier days" mentioned in Hebrews 10: 32-34 which says:

*<sup>32</sup>Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. <sup>33</sup>Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you*

*stood side by side with those who were so treated. <sup>34</sup>You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.*

Further, they should have been leaders and more mature by now, Hebrews 5: 11-14. The Christians were in danger of drifting away and losing heart, shown in the following passages:

- i) Hebrews 2: 1-3
- ii) Hebrews 4:1, 11
- iii) Hebrews 6: 6
- iv) Hebrews 10: 29
- v) Hebrews 12: 3

How did they get this way? It seems that many of them were compromising in their commitment, and not because of the bloody persecution mentioned in Hebrews 12: 4. Perhaps others were influenced by false doctrine of Judaism.

The writer refers to the examples of the Israelites in Hebrews 3: 7 – Hebrews 4: 11, who refused to take possession of the promise land because they were afraid of the inhabitants of the land and lacked faith, and therefore did not obey.

## 2. The Future by Faith

The writer wanted his readers to look forward to a better promise by faith, not by sight. The point here is that the promises made by God, if we hold on to them, will last forever, unlike earthly possessions. What God is giving is in fact far better, seen in the following scriptures:

- i) Better and lasting possessions - Hebrews 10: 34
- ii) Heavenly homeland, Hebrews 11: 16
- iii) Unshakeable kingdom, Hebrews 12: 28

iv) A city that is to come, Hebrews 13: 14

So, even though they may have lost some of their temporary possessions, they will inherit something far better. Heb 11 contains a list of many Old Testament examples of people who lived by faith, and the world was not worthy of them, Hebrews 11: 38. Jesus was the pioneer of them all, mentioned in Hebrews 12: 1-2 and Hebrews 13: 12-13.

3. The Need for One Another

- i) Hebrews 3:12-13
- ii) Hebrews 10: 25-26
- iii) Hebrews 12:15

We need to keep up with one another. We need each other to make it through the hard times and we will spend eternity together.

4. The Best Mediator of All

Jesus was a better mediator through the New Covenant than was ever possible under the old. Psalms 2 and 110 show how magnificent the Christ will be.

- i) Hebrews 4: 14 -16
- ii) Hebrews 10: 19 -25
- iii) Hebrews 12: 28

There were three very special sacrifices that did not take place in the temple:

- a. Red Heifer – Numbers 19 - when there was a red heifer
- b. The scape goat – Leviticus 16 – annually.
- c. The live birds – Leviticus 14 - cleansing is required (alluded in Hebrews 10: 19-20)

Jesus fulfilled all of them. He is the better mediator and sacrifice for us all by far.

The comparison between Melchizedek and Jesus is mentioned in order to show that Jesus, like Melchizedek, was outside the Jewish line of priests of Aaron. Melchizedek was a godly example of Kingship and righteousness. His father was not mentioned, unusual for the Jewish tradition, which was also the case of Jesus, who entered the world in an unusual manner. Melchizedek was mentioned in Genesis, Psalms and Hebrews. He was outside the “system”. He did not fit into Abraham or Moses. He also had a ministry (Hebrews 7: 11) and his name meant “King of Righteousness”. In Psalms 110: 4, he was a priest, not of the order of Aaron. There are many speculations about this person. Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, so technically he was not qualified to be a priest for the people. However, the Jewish people thought highly of Melchizedek, and the writer postulated, if the Jews could accept Melchizedek, why wouldn't they be able to accept Jesus? That was why Melchizedek was used as an example.

5. The Wrath of God on the Ungrateful  
This is mentioned in the following places:
- i) Hebrews 2: 1- 4;
  - ii) Hebrews 4: 1-3;
  - iii) Hebrews 6: 4-8;
  - iv) Hebrews 10: 26-31;
  - v) Hebrews 12: 16-17, 25

Once saved is not always saved, even though it is a popular false doctrine today.

It is possible to fall away, if we lose heart, so let us not grow weary. In what areas should we not become weary? What should we persevere in? We should spur one another in what direction? Many of these admonitions are mentioned near the end of the letter, seen in the following:

- a. Hebrews 12: 14 - 17– Live at peace with one another. Do not be bitter and be sexually immoral. Be holy.
- b. Hebrews 13: 1 - Keep loving one another. Entertain strangers, love those who are mistreated. Visit the sick, the poor, the unloved.
- c. Hebrews 13: 4 - Honour the marriage. Do not be overcome with greed. Remember, the love of money can lead you astray.
- d. Hebrews 13: 7 – Remember your leaders. Show gratitude.
- e. Hebrews 13: 9 – Do not be carried away by false teachings. Brush up on the fundamentals.
- f. Hebrews 13: 13 – Go the extra mile to help people make it to heaven. Go outside the camp, not stay within the comfort zone.
- g. Hebrews 13: 16 – Do good and share with others.
- h. Hebrews 13: 17 – Obey your leaders. Make their work a joy, not a burden.

### **Book of 1, 2 and 3 John**

Author: John

Date: 65 AD

Place of origin: Unknown

### **Book of I John**

Tradition of the early church says that John the Apostle wrote all three of these letters. The style of 1 John can be identified with the book of John, no question about that. There have been disputes about 2 and 3 John as far as the author.

These letters were written after he wrote the gospel of John but before he wrote Revelation, because when he was in exile in the Island of Patmos, he was not able to move around



freely, unlike the time when he wrote this letter where he mentioned making a visit in 2 John 12.

It is difficult to get an accurate estimate of when it was written. Anywhere from A.D. 60-90, more likely the later date. The similarities in vocabulary and style between the gospel and the letters point to a common author. Some of the common vocabulary used are words like, “word”, “beginning”, “light”, “truth”, “abiding”, “world”, “water”, “blood”, “joy”, “victory”, etc.

## The Theme of 1 John

1. Combating the Teaching of the Gnostics.  
John was writing to combat the false teaching of the Gnostics. They taught that the physical world was created by evil. Therefore their view of Jesus was that he did not appear in the form of a human. God would not come down and be “dirty” like a man. Since the body is dirty anyway, there was nothing wrong with indulging in sexual sins; in fact, by doing so, one might attain so-called “special knowledge”. The Apostle addressed the need to not indulge in sin in the following scriptures:
  - i) 1 John 1: 6
  - ii) 1 John 2: 1
  - iii) 1 John 3: 8

In 1 John 4: 1-3, he wrote:

*<sup>1</sup>That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. <sup>2</sup>The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. <sup>3</sup>We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our*



*fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

We are to not treat false teachings lightly. In 5: 21, why did he say to avoid idols? The wrong concept of God is idolatry as much as the wrong “god” is an idol, and the Gnostics believed in a wrong concept of God.

2. The Need to Love One Another -  
This is seen in the following scriptures in 1 John
  - i) 1 John 2: 9
  - ii) 1 John 3: 11
  - iii) 1 John 3: 16-18
  - iv) 1 John 3: 23
  - v) 1 John 4: 7
  - vi) 1 John 4: 11
  - vii) 1 John 4: 21
3. Love for God is Not Compatible with Friendship with the World  
This is shown in the following:
  - i) 1 John 2: 15-17
  - ii) 1 John 3: 13- 14
  - iii) 1 John 5: 4-5

## **Book of 2 John**

This book was probably written about the same time as 1 John.

2 John 7:

*<sup>7</sup>Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.*

## **The theme of 2 John**

This small letter contains even more teaching to refute Gnostics who believed that Jesus did not come in the flesh. Incarnation is not just a nice theology - it is a matter of salvation. Lines were drawn with promoters of false doctrine. See 2 John 10 – Notice the attitude that God expects us to have with false teachers!

## **Book of 3 John**

### **The themes of 3 John**

1. Be Hospitable to Missionaries  
In verse 7, there were missionaries who went out without getting support, but John was saying that the Christians should encourage those missionaries, help them, and meet their needs.
2. Beware of Leaders with Ego Issues  
In verse 9, John urged his readers to beware of leaders and members who put their ego before the interest of the church and of the mission. It could be rightly stated that ego is another source of false doctrine. In contrast with Diotrephes, we should welcome and listen to commended brothers like Demetrius.  
Pen and ink are good but sometimes it is good to speak face to face. Telephone in our day and age is great. When we send a letter it is easy to be misunderstood. E-mail is not a good place for writing difficult things – many of us have regrets about writing in a way that conveys the wrong tone.

## Book of Revelation

Author: John

Date: A.D. 95-96

Place of origin: Patmos

In Revelation 1: 9:

*<sup>9</sup>I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.*

Early church fathers testify that John received this revelation during the reign of Domitian, in the year A.D. 95-96. There are some biblical scholars who would give a much earlier date of around A.D. 66, at the time of Nero. This is possible, since Christians were persecuted under both of these emperors. However, the earlier date seems to be less likely, given the fact that John was predicted to live the longest in John 21: 20-23. When he was in the island of Patmos it seemed like it was near the end of his life, so the later date would be more likely. The persecution from Domitian centred around the fact that the Christians refused to acknowledge Roman Emperors to be God. (Domitian was the first Emperor to declare himself God while still alive!)

Revelation, also known as the Apocalypse, is the last book of the entire bible. It is a revelation of what is going on in the true heavenly realms. The language was apocalyptic, and is similar in style to parts of Ezekiel and Daniel.

Apocalyptic language means that it was hugely pictorial, filled with allegories and nuances, and cosmic references. The rule of interpretation – For most New Testament documents, take it literally unless forced otherwise. For Revelation, take it figuratively unless forced otherwise. There is a need to distinguish between the two when reading this book. One also

needs an understanding of the Old Testament before understanding Revelation, since great chunks of the book refer back to the Old Testament. Also key in interpreting this book is the understanding of when these things would take place – the book begins and ends by warning the reader that the time is near (Revelations 1:3, 22:10). This view will make a difference in how you see this book. It can be used to help all generations, but it is not just for the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> century as some interpreters would have it. (Many predict the end of the world using Revelation. Many have done false predictions...)

### Themes of the book of Revelation

#### 1. The Coming of God and His Messiah

This is the one issue that John wanted to make known to the Christians; that God and His Messiah were coming. The Messiah is described in Revelations 1: 4, 8 as:

*<sup>4</sup>John,  
To the seven churches in the province of Asia:  
Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was,  
and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his  
throne,*

*<sup>8</sup>"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God,  
"who is, and who was, and who is to come, the  
Almighty."*

The "coming" is repeated throughout, Revelations 3: 11; 14: 6-7; 16:15; 22: 7, 12, 20. Those who are not prepared for His coming will face the "second death", Revelation 2: 11.

This threat or warning is made to all the churches seen in the following:

- i) Revelation 2: 5
- ii) Revelation 2: 16

- iii) Revelation 2: 22-23
- iv) Revelation 3: 3
- v) Revelation 3: 12
- vi) Revelation 3: 21

2. The Honour Due to God and the Lamb

One of the main questions asked in Revelation is, "Who is worthy of glory, honour and power?" The answer is God and His Messiah, seen in the following:

- i) Revelation 4: 11
- ii) Revelation 5: 1-2, 12
- iii) Revelation 1: 3-4

3. Justice Will be Served

Another issue dealt with is that souls that have been unjustly treated and who have been martyred for the word of God will be rewarded. Revelation 6: 9-11:

*<sup>9</sup>When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. <sup>10</sup>They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" <sup>11</sup>Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.*

Again this is seen in Revelation 15: 3-4 and 16: 5-7.

The righteous did not just "wait" for God's coming, but they also "witnessed" for Jesus during dangerous times. Revelation 12: 11:

*<sup>11</sup>They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.*

Revelation 17:6:

*<sup>6</sup>I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.*

Revelation 19: 10:

*<sup>10</sup>At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."*

Revelation 20: 4:

*<sup>4</sup>I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*

Those who did not repent would be judged by their sins, Revelation 21: 8:

*<sup>8</sup>But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."*

The Roman rulers, who boasted of their power and their extensive empire will themselves be judged by the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, Revelation 19: 16.

The righteous will then be rewarded and taken to the New Jerusalem, Revelation 21: 1-4, where there is no pain, no tears and no death. Amen! Come, Lord Jesus.

**APPENDIX I:**  
*100 Useful  
Passages*



## **100 Useful Passages:**

Having great bible knowledge is not a secret. It comes from consistent reading. Try to read everyday. A little bit everyday may not seem a lot, but it all adds up.

Matthew 1: 25 – Mary had sexual relationship after Jesus was born.

Matthew 5: 32 – Divorce

Matthew 6: 15 – If we do not forgive, we will not be forgiven.

Matthew 6: 33 – Seek first the kingdom.

Matthew 7:7-8 – Seek and you will find

Matthew 7: 13 – Narrow road

Matthew 13: 55-56 – Jesus' siblings

Matthew 22: 29 – Biblical ignorance

Matthew 22: 37-40 – The Great Commandment

Matthew 23: 8 – Not calling anyone any “father”

Mark 1: 16-17 – Fishers of men

Mark 2: 22 – A fresh start, not new wine into old wineskins

Mark 3: 20-21 – Taking a stand against family, expect opposition

Mark 7: 6-9 – Not honouring traditions more than the word of God

Mark 7: 20-23 – Sin list

Mark 11: 24 – Faith passage, pray in the name of Jesus

Mark 16: 16 – Baptism

Luke 6: 22-23 – Opposition

Luke 6: 26 – Woe to you when all men speak well of you.

Luke 9: 23 – Discipleship

Luke 9: 57-62 – Discipleship

Luke 10 38-43 – Getting your priorities straight

Luke 13: 1-5 – Repentance

Luke 14: 25-34- Discipleship and counting the cost

Luke 16: 13 – Can't serve two masters

Luke 18: 9-14 – Self righteousness

John 1: 14 – The incarnation  
John 2: 17 – Zeal and conviction  
John 8: 31-32 – First test of discipleship- hold to his teachings  
John 12: 24 – Death to self  
John 12: 48 – Judged by the Word  
John 13: 34-35 – Second test of discipleship - love one another  
John 15: 8 – Third test of discipleship – Lead a productive life

Acts 2: 38 – Repent and be baptized  
Acts 2: 42 – The early church  
Acts 11: 26 – First word “Christians”  
Acts 17: 11 – The attitude of the Bereans  
Acts 22: 16 – Paul’s conversion  
Acts 24: 25 – Convenience and excuses  
Acts 26: 19-21- Repentance

Romans 1: 18 – The fall and sin  
Romans 3: 23-24 – All have sin; redeemed by Jesus’ blood  
Romans 6: 3-4 – Baptism  
Romans 8: 9 – Controlled by the Spirit of Christ  
Romans 12: 1-2 Living Sacrifice  
Romans 13: 8 – Let no debt remain outstanding, live within your means

1 Corinthians 1: 10-11 – Divisions and factions  
1 Corinthians 4: 3-4 – Do not judge carelessly  
1 Corinthians 5: 12-13 – Church discipline  
1 Corinthians 6: 11- We all can change  
1 Corinthians 7: 15 – Grounds for divorce  
2 Corinthians 5: 14 – Compelled by the love of Christ  
2 Corinthians 6: 14 – Yoking with unbelievers  
2 Corinthians 7: 10-11 – Repentance with godly sorrow  
Galatians 1: 6-9 – One gospel only  
Galatians 3: 26-27 – Baptism, clothed with Christ  
Galatians 5: 19-23 – Sin list; Fruit of the Spirit  
Galatians 6: 7-10 – Sowing and reaping

Ephesians 2: 8-10 – Saved by grace through faith

Ephesians 2: 19-20 – The Church

Ephesians 5: 3-7 – Sin

Ephesians 5: 21 – 6: 4 – Family life

Ephesians 6: 10 – The Armor of God

Philippians 1: 21 – To live is Christ, to die is gain

Philippians 2: 3-5 – Humility

Philippians 2: 14 – Complaining, arguing

Philippians 4: 4-7 – Overcoming anxiety

Philippians 4: 13 – Strength through Christ

Colossians 2: 17 – Old Testament, a shadow of the New

Colossians 3: 1-2 – Set heart and mind on things above

Colossians 3: 5-17 – Contrast between old and new self

1 Thessalonians 2: 13 – Word of God

1 Thessalonians 4: 13 – Sexual sin

1 Thessalonians 5: 1- Second coming, no one knows

2 Thessalonians 3: 9-10 – Get a job

1 Timothy 2: 5 – One mediator, no need to pray to saints

1 Timothy 4: 16 – Watch life and doctrine

2 Timothy 1: 7 – The Spirit of power, love and self-discipline

2 Timothy 2: 15 – Need to correctly handle the word of truth

2 Timothy 2: 25 – Avoid foolish and stupid arguments

2 Timothy 3: 16-17 – Word of God is God breathed

2 Timothy 4: 1-5 – Preach the word

Titus 1: 5-9 – Qualifications of Elders

Titus 2: 11 – Grace teaches us to say “no”

Philemon – Resolution and restoration of relationships

Hebrews 3: 12-13 – Getting involved with one another

Hebrews 4: 12-13 – Word, living and active; accountable someday

Hebrews 5: 11-12 – Need to mature

Hebrews 10: 23-25 – Help each other to not swerve

Hebrews 11: 6 – Faith in God

Hebrews 13: 4 – Marriage bed to be kept pure

Hebrews 13: 7.17 – Leadership

James 1: 19-21 – Slow to speak, slow to be angry

James 1: 27 – Reach out to the powerless

James 2: 26 – Faith without deeds is dead

James 3: 3-6 – Control the tongue

James 4: 17 – Sin of omission

James 5: 16 – Confess sin

1 Peter 2: 21-25 – The cross

1 Peter 3: 1-7 – Marriage

1 Peter 3: 21 – Baptism saves us

1 Peter 4: 3-4 Ungodly company and unethical party

2 Peter 1:3 -11 – Spiritual growth

2 Peter 1: 16 – Fact from fiction

2 Peter 2:1-3 – False teachers

2 Peter 2: 20-22 – Don't leave God

2 Peter 3: 15 – Paul's scripture are inspired

1 John 1: 7 – Walk in the light

1 John 2: 1 – Goal is not to sin

1 John 2: 6 – Walk as Jesus did

1 John 2: 15-17 – Don't love the world

1 John 4: 19-20 – Love God = love each other

1 John 5: 13 – Assurance of salvation

Revelation 3: 16 – Lukewarmness

Revelation 3: 20 – Lukewarm people need to repent

Revelation 21: 8 – Sins

Revelation 22: 18-19 – Should not add or subtract to the word.

These verses will help you for the rest of your life!

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## Notes