New Testament Survey

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Lecture Notes

These notes have been compiled from a series of lectures presented by Dr. Robert Stein. They do not represent actual class notes written by Dr. Stein.
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1. The Synoptic Problem

I. How do you explain the close similarities?

It is apparent from reading the four Gospels that there are similarities and differences between the accounts. Three of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) look very much alike in numerous ways. These are called the Synoptic Gospels. There is an obvious literary relationship between them. The “synoptic problem” refers to the issue of explaining the extent of commonality between these three Evangelists. To say that the similarity exists simply by inspiration fails to address the fact that the Gospel of John (also inspired) is very different from the others.

II. Agreements in Wording

Numerous accounts in the Synoptics will use identical words, phrases and even entire sentences. For example:

- The children were brought to Jesus (Mat 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17). Each account has very similar language and all include the sentence “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them”.
- The Sadducees questioning the marriage relationship in the resurrection. (Mat 22:22-33; Mark 12: 18-27; Luke 20:27-40). “Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom” is the exact same in all three.

These are just two of many examples of similar wording. One might explain this by saying that all three were relaying history in an accurate fashion. However, that explanation would imply that when differences occur, they were recorded in a less than accurate fashion.

III. Agreements in Order

Many accounts found in the Synoptics are presented in similar order even though they are clearly not based on precise chronological order. E.g. the following list of events is found in identical order. (See Mat 16:13-17:23; Mark 8:27-9:32; Luke 9:18- 9:45)

- Peter’s confession of Christ; followed by
- The first passion prediction; followed by
- Teachings on discipleship; followed by
- The transfiguration; followed by
- Healing of a demon possessed boy; followed by
The second passion prediction

Note: Matthew and Mark include the return of Elijah after the transfiguration but Luke does not.

IV. Other Agreements

a. Not Chronological

It is highly unlikely that anyone would attempt to tell a story in precise chronological order. It is more likely that they would group material together to make the story more coherent. According to John, Jesus made trips to and from Galilee and Jerusalem. Matthew, Mark and Luke all relate their narratives by organizing the events in Galilee at the first of Jesus’ ministry and then the events in Jerusalem at the end.

b. Editorial Comments

Very similar (sometimes identical) editorial comments are added immediately after Jesus is quoted. It is very unlikely that his would occur if the three were writing without some literary connection.

Compare:

“So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place [let the reader understand] then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.” Mat 24:15-16

“But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be [let the reader understand], then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.” Mark 13:14

Also compare:

But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic—“Rise, pick up your bed and go home.” Mat 9:6

“But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic—“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.” Mark 2:10-11
“But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the man who was paralyzed—“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.” Luke 5:24

c. Use of the Old Testament

All three writers, in their account of John the Baptist, quote Isaiah 40:3 saying, “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight”. However, this does not match either the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) or the Hebrew Old Testament (Masoretic text).

All three writers quote Deut 6:5 (see Mat 22:37; Mark 12:30; and Luke 10:27). They all include loving the Lord your God with heart and mind but none of the OT texts included both.

V. Possible Explanations

a. Oral Tradition

The practice of memorizing and reciting oral tradition was an honored part of ancient Israel’s culture. Their capacity for memorization was much greater than that of our modern culture.

b. Written Tradition

The amount of identical wording and the striking commonality of order indicate that there was some form of written tradition that preceded the work of these Evangelists.

VI. Luke 1:1-4

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught." Luke 1:1-4

These verses illustrate the transition from the oral tradition to the written record. The word “delivered” is a technical term that refers to the passing on of tradition. “Orderly account” is more accurately understood as logical order rather than chronological order. Luke’s written account is clearly in accord with the oral tradition of the eyewitnesses.
2. The Priority of Mark

Clearly there is a literary connection between the synoptic gospels based on the high degree of similarity in wording, order, editorial inserts, & OT quotes. Scholars have suggested that there must be some written source, perhaps an early gospel version that was shared. There is good evidence to indicate that Matthew and Luke used Mark for a substantial resource in writing their own accounts. The priority of Mark refers to the understanding that Mark came first in relation to the other two.

I. Length
   a. Overall size is shorter.

   Matthew and Luke are much longer accounts which include genealogies, stories of the birth of Jesus, the Beatitudes, and other passages not found in Mark. It is much easier to assume that Matthew/Luke used Mark and then added their own material; rather than Mark using Matthew/Luke while excluding significant portions of their texts.

   b. Individual accounts are typically longer.

   Some have suggested the Mark was commissioned to write a condensed version of the Gospel thus explaining why material was excluded. However, if his purpose was to condense, then the common stories would have been condensed. The stories in Mark are actually longer. It is Matthew and Luke who condense certain stories, presumably to make space for added material. (The typical scroll was 25 to 30 foot in length.

II. Grammar

   The Greek of Mark is inferior to that of Matthew and Luke. It is easier to see Matthew/Luke improving on the grammar of Mark; rather than a reverse order in which Mark uses the others as a resource but ignores the better use of Greek.

   a. Use of Historical Present

   There are over 150 examples of the present tense in Mark’s gospel and only a handful of instances where it is used in the others. It would be more natural for Matthew and Luke to use the past tense if they were writing at a later date.
b. Use of Slang

E.g. “Rise, take up your pallet and go home” (Mark 2:11). The Greek word for pallet used by Mark was a slang word. Both Matthew and Luke have the exact same phrase except they substitute a more formal word which is translated bed. (See Mat 9:6; Luke 5:24)

i. Redundant expressions

If Mark were attempting to condense an earlier gospel, it would be likely that he would eliminate redundant expressions. However, redundant phrases can be found in Mark that were deleted by the Matthew/Luke. This is another indication that they used Mark’s material but edited out these phrases in or to save space for added material.

*That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons.* Mark 1:32

*And he said to them, “Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him:”* Mark 2:25

ii. Aramaic phrases

Mark seems to be a more Semitic gospel in his use of Aramaic phrases. Greek was the common language of the day therefore he would have to explain what the phrases meant to his readers. It would be quite understandable for Matthew and Luke to simply leave these Aramaic expressions out of their respective version which is exactly what we find.

*Taking her by the hand he said to her, “Talitha cumi,” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.”* Mark 5:41

III. Theological Difficulties

There are several instances where Mark presents stories in such a way that might lead to a theological misunderstanding without additional explanation. Matthew and/or Luke tend to eliminate phrasing that could be misinterpreted.

a. Rich Young Ruler
Jesus asks the rich young ruler, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.” In Matthew this was revised to “Why do you ask me about what is good?”

b. Limiting Jesus’ Power

In a story of Jesus healing the multitudes, Mark recounts “for he had healed many”. (Mark 3:9) Both Matthew and Luke revise this in their parallel accounts to “and he healed them all”. (Mat 12:15; Luke 6:19)

c. Beside Himself

Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, “He is out of his mind.” Mark 3:20-21

“Out of his mind” is sometimes translated as “beside himself”. This unflattering statement about Jesus is deleted in Matthew and Luke.

IV. Agreement between Gospels

In comparing the order of events found in the synoptic Gospels the following observations can be made:

• Matthew and Mark sometimes agree against the order found in Luke.
• Luke and Mark sometimes agree against the order found in Matthew.
• Matthew and Luke never agree against the order found in Mark.

It is therefore most likely that Mark came first with Matthew and Luke using material from Mark but not knowing each other.

V. What was Q?

Q is considered the source material common to both Matthew and Luke. The nature of this Q material (written or oral tradition) is unclear. Additional source material unique to Luke is referred to as L. Material unique to Matthew is referred to as M.

VI. Authorship issues

Matthew and John were both Apostles. Mark was a co-worker with Paul and from Jerusalem. Luke was a Gentile who was converted after the death of Jesus. The tradition of authorship is convincing but it is important to note that none of the actual gospel material bears the name of its author.
7. The Gospel of Mark

I. Emphases

More important than authorship is the question of what this book is seeking to teach.

a. Central Importance of the Cross

Some have referred to the Gospel of Mark as the Passion Story with an extended introduction.

i. Role of Jewish Leadership

It is important to distinguish between the Jewish people and the Jewish leadership of the day. We learn from the account that the leadership delivered Jesus up out of envy (Mark 15:10). The leadership actually feared the reaction of the people because of Jesus’ popularity among the general Jewish public (Mark 12:12, Mark 14:1-2).

ii. Divine Cause of the Cross

The real cause of the cross was divine rather than human.

1. Foretold in the Old Testament

2. Foretold by Jesus

3. Necessity of the Cross

Mark 8:31

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.

iii. Why this emphasis?

Possibly because the audience of Mark were trying to understand how the Son of God could have suffered this fate.
b. Call to Discipleship

There is a unique pattern found in the middle of this Gospel:

i. Passion prediction

There is a series of 3 pronouncements made by Jesus concerning his death (Mark 8:31, Mark 9:31, Mark 10:33)

ii. Disciple error

Each of these pronouncements is followed by an account of misunderstanding by his disciples.

iii. Discipleship teaching

The misunderstanding precipitates an occasion for teaching by Jesus.

c. Teaching Ministry of Jesus

The words *teach, teacher,* and *Rabbi* are used frequently throughout Mark’s Gospel.

d. Messianic Secret

Numerous accounts are made of Jesus instructing his followers not to reveal his identity. The land was a political tinderbox. If Jesus had publicly revealed his messianic identity, it would have been misinterpreted as the leader who would restore Israel’s national independence. This explains his frequent use of parables to teach about the Kingdom of God.

e. Person of Christ

i. Miracles

Mark emphasizes numerous miracles- healing, nature, exorcisms.

Note: exorcisms were clearly distinguished from miracles of healing.

E.g. Mark 1:34

*And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.*

ii. Implicit Christology

These included references to the authority to forgive sin and the authority to cleanse the temple.
iii. Explicit Christology (Titles)

1. Son of God
   E.g., Mark 1:1

2. Son of Man
   Appears to be a favorite title of Jesus

3. Christ
   This title was used sparingly and often was associated with warnings not to reveal his identity.

f. Dullness of Disciples
   This seems to be emphasized more by Mark than the other Gospel writers. It is encouraging to be reminded that God uses very ordinary people (even for his Apostles).

II. Audience of Mark

a. Greek speaking, did not understand Aramaic

b. Not acquainted with Jewish customs
   Apparently, the audience was primarily Gentile. There are cases where he seems to explain Jewish customs. Mark references the Passover lamb in Mark 14:12 which would have been unnecessary to a Jewish audience.

c. Familiar with Latin
   In the story of the widow’s mite (Mark 12:42), clarity is provided using the penny which was a Roman coin.

d. Roman reckoning of time
   Mark 6:48 refers to a fourth watch which indicated a Roman reckoning of time. Jewish time only recognized three watches in the night.

e. The Praetorium
   The reference to the Praetorium in Mark 15:16 is another indicator that Mark’s audience was more familiar with Roman terminology.
III. Authorship of Mark
   a. Text is anonymous
      This is true of all the Gospels.
   b. More concerned with what than who
      The absence of the writer’s name doesn’t indicate that the audiences were unaware of the identity of the author.
   c. Tradition
      Tradition holds that Mark was the recorder of Peter’s memoirs. There are two extremes concerning the traditions of the early church. Some have accepted these traditions without question. Others receive all traditions with extreme skepticism. One should examine the traditions to determine how much weight they should carry. The fact that Mark was a not an Apostle yet virtually all of the early church fathers were in agreement concerning his authorship, would add weight to this tradition being accurate.

IV. Date of Mark
   None of the Gospels have dates. Tradition holds that Mark wrote his Gospel shortly after the death of Peter which would place it just prior to 70 A.D. The fact that there are no specific references to the destruction of Jerusalem would support this tradition.
8. The Gospel of Matthew

I. Theological Emphases

a. Fulfillment of the Old Testament

One of the themes Matthew emphasizes is how the events surrounding Jesus were actually a fulfillment of the OT.

i. Heavy use of term "fulfilled"

Accounts in the synoptic gospels are often very similar except Matthew will add a “fulfillment quotation” that Mark and Luke don’t include.

*But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?” At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples left him and fled.* Matthew 26:54-56


ii. Frequent use of "it is written"

“It is written” is another expression used more frequently in Matthew as a way of emphasizing that the events of the day were predicted by the OT.

iii. Numerous additional Old Testament quotations

E.g., “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” is found both in Matt 9:13 and Matt 12:7. This is a reference to Hosea 6:6.

b. Particular/Universal in Matthew

i. Jewish nature

The opening verse in Matthew is a clear indication of his intent to highlight the Jewish dimension of his account.

*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.* Matt 1:1
Another example:

*These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”* Matt 10:5-6

ii. Condemnation of the Jews

Having mentioned the strong focus of this Gospel, no other Evangelist is as strong in his condemnation of Jews, especially Jewish leadership.

*For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.* Matt 5:20

This emphasis on rebutting the Jewish leadership should not be considered as anti-Semitic. This was a Jew criticizing Jews. Neither should we assume from these passages that there were no devout Pharisees; rather the existence of hypocrisy, particularly among those who confronted Jesus.

iii. Universal concern

Matthew also gives a clear message that Jesus’ mission extended beyond a concern for ethnic Jews.

*Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.* Matt 12:18

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.* Matt 28:19

c. Concern for the Church

This is the only Gospel that refers specifically to the church (ecclesia). (See Matt 18:17)

The organization of Matthew’s material made it an ideal teaching tool for the early church.

d. Christological Emphasis

Matthew includes an emphasis on the authority and superiority of Jesus over the Law and the temple.
e. Eschatological Emphasis

Matthew contains considerably more material on the end of history than the other Gospel writers.

II. Audience of Matthew

Matthew was a Christian Jew writing to a Jewish audience.

a. Must have been Greek-speaking

He wrote using the Greek language.

b. Expects his readers to be familiar with Jewish customs

Unlike Mark, Matthew doesn’t take time to explain Jewish customs.

c. Uses Jewish phraseology

d. Substitution for the name of God

Matthew substitutes “Kingdom of heaven” for “Kingdom of God”. There is a tradition among devout Jews of avoiding the mention God’s name.

III. Authorship of Matthew

a. Tradition is consistent and unanimous

As with Mark, the early church fathers were unanimous in tying this gospel to Matthew.

b. Was it originally written in Hebrew or Greek?

Some early traditions held that Matthew collected his oracles in Hebrew. However, his writings are not easily translated back to Hebrew. This leads to the possibility that while Matthew was the source of the material, another person could have organized and written this Gospel. However, questions concerning its authorship have no bearing on its meaning or significance.


I. Theological Emphases

a. Great Loving Concern of God for the Oppressed

*And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.*

Luke 4:17-18

i. Tax-collectors

Luke pays particular attention to the inclusion of tax collectors, in sharp contrast to the Pharisees and scribes.

*When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John, but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.* Luke 7:29-30

The story of Zacchaeus, a tax collector, is unique to Luke. (Luke 19)

ii. Sinners

God’s concern for sinners is also emphasized by Luke.

*Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.* Luke 15:7

iii. Poor

*But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,* Luke 14:13

iv. Widows

The Parable of the Persistent Widow is found Luke 18:1-8, along with many other passages that address God’s provision for widows.
v. Lame
vi. Blind
vii. Samaritans
viii. Women

There is an interesting pattern found often in Luke in which he relays a story or parable about a man then follows with a corresponding story about a woman. For instance, in the first chapter God reveals his plans to Zechariah concerning the birth of John the Baptist. This is shortly followed by the story of God revealing his plans concerning the birth of Jesus to Mary.

ix. Enemies

Matthew and Luke both record Jesus’ instructions to love your enemies (see Matt 5:44); but Luke’s account goes further:

But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.


b. Universalism (The Gospel was for the world, not just Jews)

i. Genealogy going back to Adam

Unlike Matthew, Luke takes the genealogy of Jesus all the way back to Adam, the father of all nations.

ii. Gospel story begins with Roman census

Luke relates the events in the context of world history, not just Judean history.

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Luke 2:1-2

iii. Implicit missions

In the Parable of the Great Banquet, Luke records a 2 fold sending out of the Master’s servant which implies that the Gospel would go beyond the Jews to the Gentiles.
So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’ And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. Luke 14:21-23

iv. Explicit missions

and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” Luke 24:46-47

This charge to his disciples is picked up again in Acts 1:8.

c. Warnings of the Dangers of Riches


Other themes that can be found in Luke include:

d. Repentance

e. Forgiveness

f. The Holy Spirit

g. The importance of prayer

II. Authorship of Luke

a. Early church tradition

As with Mark, Luke’s non-Apostle status reinforces the unanimity of the early church fathers in crediting Luke with this account.

b. Connection with Acts - "We" sections

There is a clear connection between the Book of Acts and Luke just in reading the prologues of each book which are addressed to Theophilus. In addition, the 1st person plural used in parts of Acts, indicate that the author (Luke) was actually present.
i. Acts 16:10-17
ii. Acts 20:5-21:18

III. Sources

Luke does not use as much of Mark’s material as does Matthew. In addition to Q material that he shares with Matthew, there is other material unique to Luke.

IV. Audience of Luke

a. Tradition

Luke’s primary audience was understood to be Gentile.

b. Lukan Prologue

Theophilus is clearly a Gentile of high standing. This could have bearing on Luke’s emphasis on the dangers of riches.

c. Individual Passages

i. Tiles - 5:19

Luke describes the roof material in the healing of the paralytic as a roof that Theophilus would be acquainted with.

ii. Cloak and coat

In explaining how to respond to your enemy, Luke uses articles of clothing that would be more familiar to a Gentile.

V. Date of Luke

_For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation._ Luke 19:43-44

This passage appears to include a description of the actual destruction of Jerusalem by Titus thus dating this Gospel post 70 AD.
10. The Gospel of John

I. Christology

a. More developed than other Gospels

The titles “Son of God” and “Christ” are found with far more frequency in John than in the Synoptic Gospels. The Messianic secret does not appear to be a concern. Jesus clearly reveals himself to the Samaritan woman:

_The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he._ John 4:25

And to Martha, the sister of Lazarus:

_She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world._ John 11:27

b. Explicit examples: vs. 1:18; 5:18; 10:33; 20:28

These are explicit references that lay claim to the deity of Jesus:

_In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God._

_No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known._ John 1:1, 18

_The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God._ John 10:33

_Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!_ John 20:28

c. Various "I am" sayings (implicit)

The various “I am” sayings in John (e.g. I am the bread of life. I am the truth, I am the light) are implicit references to his deity.

d. Jesus greater than John the Baptist

John points out in several instances Jesus’ superiority over John the Baptist. Perhaps there were disciples of John the Baptist in his audience.
e. Theme of the Gospel - 20: 30-31

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.
John 20: 30-31

II. Dualism

a. Examples: vs. 8:23; 7:7; 15:18-19

The evil of this world is contrasted to the realm of God.

He said to them, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. John 8:23

If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.
John 15:18-19

b. Moral dualism

The dualism found in John should not be confused with ontological dualism of Greek philosophy which separated the physical realm from the spiritual realm. This philosophy gave birth to certain forms of Gnosticism which declared all matter as evil. (This in turn led to a rejection of the incarnation)

The moral dualism of John separates righteousness and holiness from sin and evil.

III. Unique Vocabulary

Words like faith, love, light, and truth are found far more frequently in John than the other Gospels. The expression “eternal life” is used frequently in John as a synonym for Kingdom of God.

IV. Introduction to the Gospel

John goes beyond Abraham and even Adam to introduce the Son of God’s presence and role in creation.

V. Eschatology of John

a. Realized - Eternal life is now: 3:36; 5:24
The “now but not yet” aspect of the Kingdom is not unique to John but he seems to emphasize the “now”.

*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.* John 3:36

b. Consistent - Judgment, Resurrection, Second Coming are Future

Even though he emphasizes the “now”; judgment, resurrection, and the 2nd coming are still clearly portrayed as future events.

VI. Historical Issues

Some have argued that John’s account is a spiritualized version of the Gospel that is void of dependable historical facts. However, this is not the case.

a. John is not ignorant of the geography of Israel.

John speaks of going “down” to Capernaum from Cana in John 2:12. This reflects knowledge of the actual topology of the region.

b. Contains features that reveal good access to historical information.

John records the detail of 5 roof colonnades in describing the pool of Bethesda in John 5:2. This was later verified by archeological evidence.

c. Information learned from John not found in the Synoptic Gospels.

E.g., the three year length of Jesus’ ministry can only be learned from John’s Gospel.

VII. Differences between John and the Synoptics

a. 1. Contains long periscopes

E.g., the story of Lazarus’ resurrection is 44 verses long and takes up the majority of chapter 11.

b. Contains clear statements as to Jesus’ identity

c. Contains a number of stories not in the other Synoptic Gospels

VIII. Possible Intermixture of the Historical Situation of Jesus and John

John seems to project his present historic perspective into his account of the events pertaining to the ministry of Jesus. In John 3:5-8, Jesus speaks to Nicodemus about being born of the Spirit as if it were presently available. However, Jesus made it clear, in a later passage that the Spirit had not yet been given.
Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. ’” Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. John 7:38-39

Going back to the conversation with Nicodemus, the ascension is referred to as having already taken place:

No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. John 3:13

Furthermore, John suddenly switches to first person plural even though the account records a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus.

Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. John 3:11.

John may well have been including later revelation in the story of Nicodemus in order to help clarify the concept of conversion to his present day audience.

IX. Authorship

There is good evidence for Johannine authorship. Clearly it was written by a Jew, living in Palestine who was an eyewitness; and with intimate knowledge of the Apostles.

X. Unity of the Gospel

This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true. John 21:24

This verse seems to indicate that others, possibly disciples of John, made an addendum at the end. Chapter 20 appears to be the conclusion of John’s writing while Chapter 21 seems to have been added later.

XI. Date

Tradition holds a date toward the later years of John’s life, possibly in the 90’s AD.
1. The Book of Acts Part 1

I. Introduction: Sources for the History of the Early Church

   a. The Gospels

   Many consider Acts and Paul’s Epistles as the main source for church history. However, we can learn much about the early church from the Gospels:

      i. The bible of the early church was the Old Testament.
      ii. The significance of baptism, the Lord’s Supper and The Lord’s Prayer
      iii. Ethical teachings, prohibitions on divorce, non-retaliatory response to enemies
      iv. Changes in clean/unclean regulations
      v. Concern for the oppressed
      vi. Submission to government authority
      vii. The role of the Holy Spirit in the church
      viii. Greek was the language of the early church

   b. Acts

   c. Paul’s Epistles

   d. The Catholic Epistles

      Catholic Epistles refer to those written universally to the church at large rather than a particular local body. (E.g., James, 1, 2, & 3 John)

   e. Revelation

II. The Author of Acts

   a. Same as the author of Luke

      This is made clear by simply looking at the verse in Acts with a closely related prologue to the prologue of Luke. The writing style, vocabulary and theology; all closely match with Luke.
b. "We" Sections

There are three sections in Acts where the author switches to 1st person plural. The first section is introduced in Acts 16:10:

*And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.*

The other “we” sections start with Acts 20:5 and Acts 27:1, respectively.

i. Companion of Paul

These “we” sections indicate that the author was a companion of Paul.

ii. People mentioned are separate from the author.

Any individuals mentioned by name in these sections are therefore excluded from a list of possible authors.


Luke is referred to in Colossians as “Luke the Physician”. Hobart’s book researched the abundance of medical terms in Luke/Acts but Cadbury’s book studied the use of these terms by learned people, other than doctors. This really only demonstrated that the author wasn’t necessarily in the medical field.

i. W. K. Hobart (1882) *The Medical Language of St. Luke*

ii. H. J. Cadbury (1920) *The Style and Literary Method of Luke*

d. Church Tradition

Strong church tradition supports the authorship of Luke.

e. Antisupernatural Bias

A rejection of the miracles recorded in the Gospel of Luke and Acts is the only real basis for not accepting Luke as the author. Liberal theologians argue that if the author was truly an eyewitness then the miracles would not have been included.
4. Outline and Speeches in Acts

I. Outline

a. Theme Verse - 1:8

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

b. Divisions show fulfillment of the theme

Each division of Acts ends with a statement about the successful spread of the gospel.

i. 1:1-6:7 – To Jerusalem

*And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.* Acts 6:7

ii. 6:8-9:31 – To Palestine

*So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.* Acts 9:31

iii. 9:32-12:24 – To Syria

*But the word of God increased and multiplied.* Acts 12:24

iv. 12:25-16:5 – To Asia Minor

*So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.* Acts 16:5

v. 16:6-19:20 – To Europe

*So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.*

Acts 19:20

vi. 19:21-28:31 – To Rome (Ends of the Earth)

*proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.* Acts 28:31
II. Speeches

How did Luke know have knowledge about the content of the various speeches that he records on Acts?

a. Critical Scholars

Some have suggested that he simply created the speeches on his own.

b. Arguments against

While it is true that the speeches contain the style and vocabulary of Luke, there are good arguments against believing that he simply made up the content:

i. Speeches have different content.

The speeches made to Jewish audiences were quite different than the speech made to the Cornelius, a God-fearing Gentile. In turn, the content of this speech was different than the speech made by Paul in Athens.

ii. Speeches have different emphases.

It is apparent that one brush did not paint all of the speeches. E.g., the Pauline concept of justification is only emphasized by Paul.

iii. Good historians reproduced what speaker said.

Ancient historians made an effort to stay faithful to what the speaker actually communicated even if they didn’t have a copy of the exact words used. Luke has proven himself to be a reliable historian.

The normal paradigm for conversion found in the New Testament includes a variety of inter-related components that all typically transpire at the same point in a new Christian’s life.

I. Paradigm includes:
   a. Repentance
   b. Faith
   c. Confession
   d. Regeneration
   e. Baptism

II. Various components are associated.
   a. Baptism and faith

   *for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* Galatians 3:26-27

   *In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.* Colossians 2:11-12

   b. Repentance and baptism

   *John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.* Mark 1:4

   *And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* Acts 2:38

   c. Faith and regeneration

   *Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?* Galatians 3:2

   *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,* Ephesians 1:13
d. Baptism and regeneration

he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

Titus 3:5

And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Corinthians 6:11

e. Faith and confession

because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9

f. Baptism and confession

And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name. Acts 22:16

g. Faith and repentance

testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 20:21

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel. Mark 1:14-15

h. Repentance, baptism and regeneration

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 2:37-38

i. Faith, baptism, regeneration and repentance

And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John’s baptism.” And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.” On hearing this, they were
baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands on
them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and
prophesying. Acts 19:2-6

III. Salvation is the result of each component.

a. Through repentance

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient
toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach
repentance. 2 Peter 3:9

b. Through faith

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing;
it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.
Ephesians 2:8-9

c. Through confession

because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your
heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Romans 10:9, 13

d. Through regeneration

he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to
his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit
Titus 3:5

e. Through baptism

Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from
the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection
of Jesus Christ 1 Peter 3:21

IV. Justification comes through various components.

a. Through faith

For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.
Romans 3:28
Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through
our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1
b. Through baptism

And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.
1 Corinthians 6:11

V. Forgiveness comes through various components.

a. Through faith

And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 2:38

And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name. Acts 22:16

b. Through baptism

To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. Acts 10:43

to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me. Acts 26:18

c. Through repentance

and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Luke 24:47

Summary

Even if only one component is mentioned in a text, all were assumed to be present by the original audience of the New Testament. In a modern day illustration- When does a couple consider themselves married? After saying I do? After placement of the ring? After pronouncement by the pastor or perhaps after the signing of the marriage certificate? Any of these could be considered as the “marriage moment”, but in reality they are all integrated as part of the ceremony.
10. The Conversion of Paul

I. How do you explain his conversion?

Those that attempt to deny the supernatural aspects of scripture have come up with a variety of ways to explains Paul’s conversion.

a. Full of guilt or struggle over the law?

This is unlikely when you read about how Paul viewed himself prior to his conversion:

*though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.* Philippians 3:4-6

b. Troubled by his persecution of Christians?

Again, turning to scripture, it doesn’t appear that he suffered psychologically from his persecution.

*For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.* Galatians 1:13-14

c. Suffered a sunstroke?

Sunstroke might lead to a physical ailment but not conversion.

II. He met the Lord on the road to Damascus.

The only logical explanation for Paul’s conversion and radical change of course is the fact that he actually met the Risen Lord on his journey to Damascus.
14. Paul’s First Missionary Journey

I. The Church in Antioch (11:19-12:24)
   a. Evangelism by Hellenists
      Hellenists were Jews who had adopted the language and culture of the Greeks. The 1st outbreak of the Gospel occurred as a result of the persecution of Hellenists (e.g. Stephen) which forced them north into Syria.
   b. Jerusalem Church checks out Antioch.
      Clearly the leadership in Jerusalem felt responsibility to monitor the spread of the gospel message. Just as they sent John and Peter to check on Samaria (Acts 8:14); Barnabas was sent to check on the church in Antioch.
   c. Barnabas gets Saul from Tarsus.
      Barnabas recruits Saul to come to Antioch to help teach a growing church where the converts were first called Christians.
   d. Antioch sends relief to Jerusalem church.
      (as a result of famine in Judea)
   e. John Mark is related to Barnabas.
      John Mark’s mother provided a home where the early church in Jerusalem met. This meant that he would have been directly exposed to the teaching of the Apostles.
   f. Church while praying receives mission calling.

II. The First Missionary Journey (13:4-14:28)
   a. Cyprus - Barnabas, Saul and Mark
      Their first destination is Cyprus by way of the port city of Seleucia. Barnabas was originally from Cyprus. (Acts 4:36) Saul (Paul) seems to take the lead in confronting a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus; thus indicating a shift in the leadership of the group. This could possibly help explain why Mark left the group after traveling to Perga.
   b. They next travel to Asia Minor (modern day Turkey), with stops in Perga, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.
      The account in Pisidia demonstrates a missionary pattern in which Paul would go to a synagogue to first preach to Jews. As an educated Pharisee, he would have been given an opportunity to make an exhortation after the formal reading of scripture. For a Jewish audience, Paul first recounts Jewish history in order to show the continuity of the Gospel with OT scripture. (The Gospel was actually the fulfillment of God’s promises). Some Jews and Gentiles believed but other non-believing Jews rose up against Paul thus setting a pattern of pronouncement followed by persecution.
c. Return

Paul and Barnabas concluded this relatively short missionary journey by returning to Antioch in Syria and declaring how God had “opened a door of faith to the Gentiles”.
15. The Jerusalem Council

I. The Issue at Stake

a. The argument of the circumcision party

*But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.*

Acts 15:1

This was a reasonable argument being backed by Old Testament scripture:

i. God's Covenant demands this - Genesis 17:9-14

>This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised.<

Genesis 17:10

ii. All Scripture teaches this - Genesis 21:4; Exodus 4:25, etc.

>And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.<

Genesis 21:4

iii. Every male believer was circumcised.

iv. This was "good enough religion" for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the Prophets, John the Baptist and Jesus.

All men of faith in the OT were circumcised. Moving into the NT, this included John the Baptist and even Jesus.

v. Paul is promoting a liberal theology (of his time).

The argument of the Judiazers was a convincing one. The burden of proof was on Paul.

b. The argument of Peter, Paul and James

i. Peter - Acts 15:7-11

>And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.<

Acts 15:8-9

Peter looked back at the conversion of Cornelius and recognized that it was God’s giving of the Spirit that was the new sign of acceptance by
God, rather than circumcision. All the other aspects of conversion (confession, repentance, baptism, faith) were fallible responses of men. The giving of the Holy Spirit was from God. This could not be refuted. Therefore, the decision not to require circumcision was not a tactical decision or one arrived upon by vote. It was determined by God himself.

ii. Paul - Acts 15:12

And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. Acts 15:12

iii. James - Acts 15:13-21

Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, Acts 15:19

c. The Conclusion

i. The Jerusalem decree - Acts 15:23-29

We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell. Acts 15:27-29

These stipulations were not speaking to the issue of salvation; nor were they a legalistic compromise. These were practical instructions were given in order to avoid creating an offense to Jewish Christians.

ii. Titus was the test case - Galatians 2:3

But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. Acts 2:3

II. An Unresolved Issue

The question of whether or not Gentiles were required to live under Jewish ethnic laws had been addressed. The question that was not answered by the Jerusalem Council—Were Christian Jews required to abandon their kosher lifestyle?

This issue is addressed in Galatians when Paul describes his confrontation with Peter.
But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?
Galatians 2:11-14

Paul was not arguing that Jews were required to live like Gentiles. His concern is for the implications that Peter demonstrated by not having fellowship based on Jewish practice. For new Gentile believers, this sent a message that they should submit to Jewish law or be recognized as 2nd class Christians. Paul’s recognized that circumcision and dietary laws were now irrelevant.
16. The Second Missionary Journey

I. Two New Teams

Two new teams are formed as a result of a conflict between Paul and Barnabas over Mark.

*Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus* Acts 15:37-38

Apparently this was not a lasting hostility. Paul indicates in that reconciliation had occurred in two of his letters. (Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11)

*Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions — if he comes to you, welcome him)* Col 4:10

a. Barnabas and John Mark – Cyprus

b. Paul and Silas - Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch

c. Derbe - The circumcision of Timothy (Acts 16:3)

*Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.* Acts 16:3

Paul circumcised Timothy even though he knew it was irrelevant in regards to salvation. Paul knew that he would be working in the synagogues and this action would help avoid unnecessary distractions.

II. The Call to Macedonia

a. Plan - Go to Asia

We don’t know the exact means of God’s intervention but we are told in Acts 16:6 that they were prevented by the Holy Spirit from speaking the word in Asia.

b. Troas, Samothrace, Neopolis

Paul receives a call to Macedonia through a vision (Acts 16:9) and they sailed from Troas to Neopolis by way of Samothrace. This begins the first of the “we” passages indicating that Luke is present at this point of the journey.
c. Philippi

i. Missionary strategy - Acts 16:13

The strategy involved going to a major city where there was typically a synagogue. In the case of Philippе, there was no synagogue; therefore Paul goes to a Jewish place of prayer. This was still consistent with his pattern of first taking the Gospel to Jews.

ii. Conversion of the jailor - Acts 16:31ff

This was the first recorded conversion in Europe.

iii. Fear of the magistrates

Paul revealed his Roman citizenship. The magistrates realized they had unlawfully beaten and imprisoned Paul.

d. No mission in Amphipolis or Apollonia

This is a good indication that there were no synagogues in these locations.

e. Thessalonica


Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures. Acts 17:1-2

Once again we see Paul’s methodology in focusing on major cities where a synagogue was present and where he would be assured of an audience.

ii. Length of stay

Luke reports that the length of stay was 3 weeks but Paul’s account in Philippians seems to indicate that it could have been longer.

Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. Philippians 4:16

The two locations were over 100 miles apart. It seems unlikely that Paul would have received aid from Philippi on two occasions in just a 3 week time span.

iii. Forced to leave
A mob rose against Paul and his companions. One of the brethren paid what appears to a bond in order to set them free. This may have prevented their later return. (1 Thess 2:17-18)

f. Berea

The Jews follow Paul to Berea but not before Paul preached the Gospel and established a church, leaving Timothy behind.

g. Athens

i. Silas and Timothy

Paul is apparently waiting in Athens for Silas and Timothy. Even though this was a large city there were no synagogues. Paul is, nevertheless, moved to preach in response to the pervasive idolatry and pagan culture he encountered.

ii. Paul on the Areopagus

Paul speech on the Areopagus, know by Romans as Mars Hill, marked a dramatic departure from his typical sermon due to his non-Jewish audience. He appeals to their religious philosophy rather than starting with God’s history with Israel. This goes well until he describes the resurrection of Christ. The influence of Plato on the Greek culture encouraged dualistic thought where the physical world was evil in essence while the spiritual world was good. The idea of a bodily resurrection was not a desirable outcome.

h. Corinth

i. Port city

Corinth was a large city of approximately 500,000 people. It was located on a critical isthmus for transportation and trade.

ii. Mission to the Gentiles

As a port city, Corinth was known for its immorality, making it ideal for a mission to the Gentiles.

iii. Rome’s view of Christianity

The response of Gallio (proconsul of Achaia) offers insights into Rome’s view of Christianity around AD 52.
But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things.
Acts 18:15

Jews had been granted certain religious privileges by Rome and at this time Christianity was considered a Jewish sect with the same privileges.

i. Cenchreae, Ephesus, Caesarea, Jerusalem, Antioch

This was the route back for Paul and his group.
17. Paul and His Letters

I. Letters or Epistles?
   a. Epistles - formal and do not assume a prior relationship
      Epistles tended to include more explanation and be more general in nature.
   b. Letters - informal and build on a prior relationship
      Letters are more difficult to understand because they tend to include shared experiences that are unknown to an outside reader.
   c. Examples
      Some are not easy to categorize but these are clear cut examples:
      i. Romans – epistle
      ii. Philemon - clear letter
         Also, Philippians is typically considered a letter.

II. Normal Form of a Letter
   a. Salutation
      i. "A" to "B"/ Greeting
         E.g.:
         James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. James 1:1

         *with the following letter: “The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. Acts 15:23

         ii. Jewish - "Peace"
            Jewish letters often included the expression for peace-shalom.

         iii. Paul - "Grace"
            Christian letters often added the expression of grace to peace.
   b. Thanksgiving and/or Prayer
   c. Body of letter - largest section
   d. Exhortation and instruction
e. Conclusion

The conclusion can include the following parts:

i. Benediction

ii. Wish for peace

iii. Greeting

iv. Concluding

v. Autograph

vi. Kiss
18. 1 Thessalonians

I. Occasion of the Letter

But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you 1 Thess 3:6

Timothy brought good news to Paul concerning the church of Thessalonica.

II. Reason for the Letter

a. Praise church (1:2-10; 2:13; 3:6-10)

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. 1 Thess 3:13

Even when a church wasn’t perfect, praise was important to Paul.

b. Encourage church (1:6; 2:1-2, 14; 3:4)

And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 1 Thess 1:6

The church had undergone persecution.

c. Defend his actions (1:5; 2:17-18)

But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, because we wanted to come to you — I, Paul, again and again — but Satan hindered us. 1 Thess 2:17-18

Paul was unable to return even though he wanted to come.

d. Clarify issue of parousia

The main theological question raised by the church and addressed by Paul had to do with those Christians who had died before the 2nd coming of the Lord (parousia). Paul’s short answer was to tell them that death is not the end for those in Christ.
III. Outline of the Letter

a. Salutation – 1:1

b. Thanksgiving – 1:2-10


i. Defense of mission – 2:1-16


d. Exhortation – 4:1-5:22

i. Moral duties – 4:1-12

ii. Concerning the "dead in Christ" – 4:13-18

iii. Concerning the time of Christ's return – 5:1-11

iv. Specific moral duties – 5:12-22

e. Conclusion – 5:23-28

*I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.*
1 Thess 5:27

Paul had a high view of the importance of this letter.
19. 2 Thessalonians

I. Authorship - Did Paul write it?

Most scholars accept that Paul wrote Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philiipians, Philemon, and 1 Thessalonians. Other letters/epistles that are credited to Paul have had their authorship questioned; including 2 Thessalonians.

a. External evidence is not the issue

There is not external evidence that suggests Paul did not write this letter.

b. Alleged "differences" between 1 and 2 Thessalonians

Some, who question the Pauline authorship, point to differences (e.g. in the eschatological statements). These arguments are not particularly convincing.

c. Too much like 1 Thessalonians?

Others say that similar phrases point to another author who was imitating Paul.

E.g.,

“We give thanks to God always for all of you...” 1 Thess 1:2

“We ought always to give thanks to God for you...” 2 Thess 1:3

The problem with this argument is Paul uses the same expression in other letters that were definitely written by him.

d. No reason to deny Paul as the author.

*I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the sign of genuineness in every letter of mine; it is the way I write.* 2 Thess 3:17

There is no compelling reason to doubt this statement.

II. Date – Shortly after 1 Thessalonians – AD 51

III. Occasion - "Second Coming Fever" (2:1-2)

*Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.* 2 Thess 2:1-2

Some were becoming obsessed with the 2nd Coming. Realized eschatology is the recognition that the cross and ascension marks a turning point in redemptive history
from prediction to fulfillment. The Apostles understood they were living in the end
times. However, “the day of the Lord” encompasses all the events involved with the end
times; not just the 2nd Coming. The Thessalonians were over emphasizing the parousia
and thus creating confusion and disruptions.

IV. Outline
   a. Salutation - 1:1-2
   b. Thanksgiving - 1:3-12
   c. Body - 2:1-17
   d. Ethical Exhortation - 3:1-13
   e. Closing - 3:14-18

V. Various Topics
   a. Eternal Judgment

      They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of
      the Lord and from the glory of his might. 2 Thess: 1:9

      This speaks specifically to the eternal punishment of non-believers. It does not
clearly indicate whether this will be annihilation or a conscience existence.
Others writings of Paul indicate the later.

   b. Unity of the Body

      To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his
calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his
power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in
him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thess 1:11-12

      Paul doesn’t have individualism in mind here. The “you” is plural and refers to
the entire church.

   c. Problem of "Second Coming Fever"

      Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you
keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the
tradition that you received from us. 2 Thess 3:6

      The obsession with the 2nd coming resulted in some people quitting work.
d. Three Things that Must Happen
   • A general apostasy
   • The man of lawlessness revealed
   • The restrainer removed

It is hard to know the exact meaning of these as “outsiders” to the letter.

e. Traditions
   So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter. 2 Thess 2:15

   These traditions included the teachings of Jesus as well as theological formulations by the Apostles. (See 1 Cor 15:3)

f. Christology
   Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, 2 Thess 2:16

   This indicates Paul’s high view of the divine nature of Christ.

g. Authoritative Writing
   If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. 2 Thess 3:14

h. Translation Issues
   In 2 Thess 2:1, the word “brethren” is technically translated as “brothers”.
   However, Paul is clearly addressing the entire church. This bring up the question of translating the thought or the actually words of Paul.

i. Idleness
   2 Thess 3:6 has important implications for the church today but should not be interpreted literally to apply to those who don’t have work available or who aren’t able to work.
20. Third Missionary Journey

I. Description of travels (Acts 18:22-23; 19:1)

When Paul landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples. Acts 18:22-23

*And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples.* Acts 19:1

Although this 3rd journey is briefly summarized by Luke, it was a lengthy trip (over 1500 miles).

II. Major Cities

a. Corinth - 2nd Journey

Paul spent time in Macedonia, including Philippi and Thessalonica, but he spent the longest time in the large city of Corinth.

b. Ephesus - 3rd Journey

On his 3rd trip, Paul spent most of his time in the large city of Ephesus. Once again we see the pattern of going to the larger city and then first taking his message to the synagogue. He later turns his attention to the Gentiles, typically when he finds oppositions from the Jews. At Ephesus, he reasoned with the people in the hall of Tyrannus.

There is an unusual account in chapter 19, where Paul encounters some disciples, apparently of John the Baptist. He questions them concerning their receiving of the Holy Spirit. Upon hearing that they were unaware of the Spirit, Paul explained the coming of Jesus and they were baptized by Paul and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. This story points again to the early church’s reliance on the Holy Spirit being the irrefutable evidence of conversion.

III. Ephesus - Missionary base for other churches

From Acts 20:31, we learn that Paul spent three years in Ephesus which later became a base for establishing satellite churches in surrounding towns.
IV. Letters Written

a. Galatians
b. Corinthian correspondence
c. Romans (written in Corinth)
21. Background on Galatians

I. Audience

Galatia was not as city. The name either refers to the Roman province of Galatia or the ethnic territory of Galatia which was north of the Roman province.

   a. Province (South Galatia Hypothesis)

      The Roman province if Galatia included the places visited by Paul and Barnabas on the 1st missionary journey- Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

      Support for the South Galatia Hypothesis:

      • Barnabas is mentioned in Galatians 2:13 in a way that implies the recipients knew who he was. (Barnabas was only with Paul on the 1st journey.

      • Paul, being a Roman citizen, tended to use Roman political designations.

      • In Acts, Luke makes no specific mention of Paul establishing a church or churches in the ethnic territory of Galatia.

   b. Ethnic Territory (North Galatia Hypothesis)

      • Some scholars who are critical of the accounts in Acts tend to argue for the North Galatian Hypothesis. In the end, this is a historical question which doesn’t really affect the interpretation of this book.

II. Date

There are similarities between Romans and Galatians in regards to the doctrine of justification. This leads to the probability that the two were written in the same time period, probably around 54 AD.

III. Occasion

   a. Problems

      i. They cannot be saved unless they:

         1. are circumcised (5:2-6); 6:12-13

            *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.* Gal 5:6

         2. keep the law (3:2, 10, 24-25; 5:4)
Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Gal 3:2

3. observe Jewish feasts (4:10)

You observe days and months and seasons and years! Gal 4:10

ii. Paul is not a "true apostle"

Paul is put in a position of defending the truth of his message:

For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. Gal 1:11-12

b. Anguish of Paul in Writing

i. 1:6-9

In all other letters, Paul follows the salutation with an encouraging word of praise. Instead, in Galatians, he jumps right to the source of his extreme concern:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel. Gal 1:6

ii. 4:11, 12-20

I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain. Gal 4:11

iii. 5:2-12

I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves! Gal 5:12

iv. 6:17

From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. Gal 6:17
22. Outline of Galatians

I. Salutation (1:1-5)

In the opening verse, Paul hints of where he will be going in the letter concerning the defense of his Apostleship.

*Paul, an apostle — not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead*, Gal 1:1

II. Body (1:6-4:31)

   a. Defense of Paul's Independent Apostleship (1:6-2:21)

      Paul understood that the truth of the Gospel and his Apostleship were interwoven. He couldn’t defend one without defending the other.

      i. Summary of his defense (1:6-12)

         These verses represent a summary of his defense. Notice that anyone should be accursed for corrupting the Gospel; even Paul himself.

         The main point in this summary is that this message comes from God, not man:

         *For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.* Gal 1:12

         Following the summary, Paul gives a string of independent arguments.

      ii. Not due to his pre-conversion life (1:13-14)

         Paul’s former life in Judaism included his persecution of the church. How could his radical change be explained other than by revelation of the Son?

      iii. Not going immediately to Jerusalem (1:15-17)

         He went away for 3 years rather than go immediately for ordination by the church leaders in Jerusalem, thus defending his independent Apostleship.

      iv. Brief visit to Jerusalem (1:18-20)

         When he did go to Jerusalem, he only met briefly with Peter and James.

      v. Not from or through man (1:21-2:10)
It was 14 years later before he returned to Jerusalem; this time with Barnabas and Titus to present the case against Judaizers requiring circumcision of Gentiles for salvation (Acts 15). Titus was not forced to be circumcised and the ministry of Paul to the Gentiles was accepted.

_and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised._ Gal 2:9

“The grace given to me” is Paul’s expression of his special call to be the Apostle to Gentiles. His understanding of this calling helps to explain why he would later write such an extensive epistle to the church in Rome even though he didn’t personally start the church there.

vi. Rebuke of Peter (2:11-14)

This demonstrated Paul’s authority in how the gospel must be preserved accurately so as not to imply to the Gentiles that Jewish law had to be included or they would become a lesser class Christian.

vii. Transition (2:15-21)

This theological summary of justification by faith appears to serve as a transition to the next part of the letter which deals with a defense of the Gospel.


i. Galatians received the Spirit by faith (3:1-5)

Just as Cornelius, a Gentile, had received the Spirit upon believing, so had the Galatians. Receiving the Spirit was the one aspect of conversion that represents God acting alone; therefore representing irrefutable evidence of God’s acceptance.

ii. Abraham was justified by faith alone (3:6-9)

The covenant sign of circumcision first given to Abraham as described in Genesis 17. Paul argues, however, that Abraham was justified by faith _before_ this sign was given. (Genesis 15)

iii. Law only condemns (3:10-14)
No one can keep the law perfectly; therefore all are condemned by it.

iv. Cannot nullify the earlier covenant (3:15-18)

The Mosaic Law came 400 years after God’s promise to Abraham. It cannot nullify a covenant previously ratified by God.

v. Law's Purpose (3:19-4:7)

1. Condemns (3:19-22)
   The Law itself does not cause sin; rather it exposes sin and drives the person to grace. (Similar to an X-ray exposing cancer)

2. Tutor for a period (3:23-29)
   The Law was a temporary measure that served as a teacher and guide.

3. Now sons of God (4:1-7)
   With the advent of Christ, the time has dawned for a transition from childhood to heir.

vi. Expression of frustration with Galatians (4:8-11)

vii. Exhortation to follow Paul's example (4:12-20)

viii. The allegory of Sarah and Hagar (4:21-31)

III. Ethical Exhortation (5:1-6:10)

a. Freedom vs. Bondage (5:1-12)

b. Freedom to be exercised in love (5:13-15)

c. Walk in the Spirit (5:16-25)

d. Bear each other's burdens (6:1-6)

e. Walk in the Spirit (6:7-10)

f. Conclusion (6:11-18)
23. Introduction to Corinthians

In Acts 18:11 Luke indicates that Paul taught in Corinth for 18 months, but later (in verse 18) he reports that he stayed many days longer. His entire time in Corinth could have been as much as 2 ½ years.

In 1 Corinthians 5:9, Paul seems to refer to an earlier letter of which we have no record. Then, in 2 Corinthians 2:3-4, Paul refers to another letter which does not seem to correlate to either preceding letter.

I. Authorship

a. Evident that Paul wrote the two letters

It is seldom disputed that both letters to the Corinthians are authentic Pauline letters.

b. Integrity is questioned

The question of integrity only applies to whether the content of each letter is preserved as Paul originally wrote it or; is it an amalgamation of letters.

c. May have been written over a period of time.

Some scholars point to abrupt shift in the letter to argue that a number of letters by Paul were blended to become what we now know as 1 & 2 Corinthians. (E.g., the abrupt shift between 2Cor 9:15 and 10:1) However, this may be explained simply by the fact that Paul wrote these letters in several installments over a long period of time.

II. Occasion

Paul states that he is writing from Ephesus.

a. Addressing questions

*Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.* 1 Cor 7:1

“There is a repeated phrase in the letter indicating that Paul is giving advice on a number of questions addressed to him by letter.*
b. Internal problems in the church

Paul also writes in order to address problems that have been reported to him (1 Cor 1:11). These problems include divisions, immorality, and disorder in communion.

c. Some members on a higher spiritual plane

The assumption of a hierarchy based on spiritual gifts was rebuked by Paul.
24. 1 Corinthians

I. Salutation (1:1-3)

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: 1 Cor 1:2

Paul uses the expression “sanctified in Christ” to refer to the status of being a Christian rather than our typical meaning of sanctification which refers to a process of growth.

II. Thanksgiving (1:4-9)

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge — even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you — so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

1 Cor 1:4-7

Notice how positive Paul writes about the church in Corinth even though there many serious problems within the church (as the body of his letter indicates).

III. Body of the Letter (1:10-16:4)

a. The disunity in the church (1:10-4:21)

Some theologians have tried to explain the history of the church in evolutionary terms in which a thesis was countered by an antithesis which resulted in a new synthesis. F. C. Baur, influenced by the German philosopher Hegel, argued that the early Catholic Church was the outcome of a conflict between Jewish Christianity (represented by Peter and the Jerusalem leadership) and Gentile Christianity (represented by Paul).

However, Paul’s letters do not reflect any recognition on his part that such disunity existed between the church in Jerusalem and his ministry to the Gentiles. One case in point is the offering collected from the Gentile churches that was taken to the church in Jerusalem. Paul made reference to this offering in 3 different letters including 1 Corinthians. (See III. g. below)
i. Divisions

*I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.* 1 Cor 1:10

These divisions were based on church leadership rather than recognition of their unity in Christ.

ii. The cross vs. human wisdom

*For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* 1 Cor 1:18

Paul is critical of human wisdom in the following verses. His argument does not deny the ability of man to reason through scripture in order to gain a deeper understanding of God; rather he discredits man’s ability to understand God by reason alone (rationalism).

iii. Paul and his co-workers

iv. The Corinthians and Paul

b. Discipline in the church (5:1-6:20)

i. The issue of incest

Paul is clear in 1 Cor 5:2 that they should excommunicate the person guilty of such behavior; in hopes that they would be brought to repentance. In his 2nd letter, there seems to be evidence that this discipline was effective. (2 Cor 2:5ff)

During the reformation, the existence of church discipline was seen as a mark of a true church.

ii. The matter of lawsuits

iii. Freedom is not license

c. Response to questions (7:1-11:1)

i. Concerning marriage

In 1 Cor 7:1 ff, Paul gives very practical advice regarding husbands and wives. Paul distinguishes the direct instruction of the Lord from his own in 1Cor 7: 10, 12. This informs us of the care and respect given to the
tradition formulated in the gospels. It doesn’t mean that Paul’s instruction, as an Apostle, is less authoritative.

ii. Concerning the unmarried

Whether married or not, Paul give advice to remain in that condition “in view of the present distress”. This is a reference to a particular situation with which the church in Corinth was aware while we, as outside readers of the letter, have no specific knowledge.

iii. Concerning meat sacrificed to idols

Paul addresses this issue beginning in chapter 8. Although what you eat is irrelevant to your spiritual condition, Paul instructs the church not to allow your freedom to have a harmful influence on others. Later, in chapter 10, he makes this summary statement:

“All things are lawful,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up.” 1 Cor 10:23

d. Issues that Paul has heard about (11:2-33)

i. Women's dress

ii. The Lord's Supper

For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not." 1 Cor 11:21-22

e. Response to questions concerning tongues and spiritual gifts (12:1-14:40)

The varied gifts of the Spirit demonstrate a distinction among Christians but never a division. In fact, it is the Spirit that unites us into one body:

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit. 1 Cor 12:13

f. Issues Paul has heard about: Resurrection (15:1-58)
g. Offering (16:1-4)

Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. 1 Cor 16:1-3

The offering to the Christians in Jerusalem by the Gentile churches is a clear indication of the unity early church, contrary to Tubingen Hypothesis of F. C. Baur. This offering is referred to in other letters as well. (Gal 2:9-10 and Romans 15:25)

IV. Closing (16:5-24)
25. 2 Corinthians

I. Introduction

After Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, he sent Timothy to Corinth who returned with an unfavorable report. This apparently prompted Paul to make a painful visit to the church as well as write a pointed letter. Although we don’t know the specific contents of the letter, we know from 2 Corinthians 2, that it was not a joyful tone or message.

For I made up my mind not to make another painful visit to you. For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all. For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you. 2 Cor 2:1-4

Apparently this letter, which came between 1 & 2 Corinthians, had its effect in bringing repentance and making the occasion for 2 Corinthians a much more joyful circumstance.

But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it— though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. 2 Cor 7:6-9

II. Outline

a. Salutation (1:1-2)

b. Thanksgiving (1:3-11)

As with 1 Corinthians, Paul includes a word of praise in spite of the many problematic issues within this church. The absence of this in his letter to the Galatians highlights how upset Paul was about the distortion of the gospel.
c. Body of the Letter (1:12-13:10)

And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

2 Cor 1:21-22

“Guarantee”, sometimes translated as “earnest”, carries the same meaning as earnest money on a house. It is both a pledge and actual part of the payment (inheritance).

i. The defense of his actions and apostleship (1:12-7:16)

1. Defense of actions (1:12-2:13)

2. Defense of apostleship (2:14-7:16)

ii. The collection for the poor in Jerusalem (8:1-9:15)

iii. Defense of apostleship and the future visit (10:1-13:10)

1. Defense of apostleship (10:1-12:13)

   Apparently some people had tried to assert their authority over the church and even Paul by boasting. He makes the argument that he could claim superiority on their grounds. However, the true measure of one’s status comes from the Lord.

   Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. 2 Cor 10:17

2. Future visit (12:14-13:10)

d. Closing (13:11-14)
26. Introduction to Romans

I. Origin of the church

Paul had planned to go to Rome (Romans 15: 22-24) which is a good indication that the church there had not been established by any particular apostle of standing. Paul’s missionary strategy was to go where others had not previously gone:

and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation. Rom 15:20

We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others. But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged, so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another’s area of influence. 2 Cor 10:15-16

This would contradict the tradition that Peter founded the church in Rome. However, it does not rule out the possibility that the seeds for the church were planted by Jews and proselytes from Rome who heard Peter’s sermon at Pentecost. (Acts 2:10-11)

II. Make-up of the church

It is apparent from this epistle that Paul’s audience included both Jews and Gentiles.

a. Jewish

There is a strong Jewish element in the church at Rome at the time Paul writes. These are Jews who had return after the death of Claudius in AD 54 who had previously expelled them from Rome.

b. Gentile

The reference to “all the nations” in Paul’s salutation is a synonym for Gentiles. through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, Romans 1: 5-6
III. Date of the letter

The reference to being ready to deliver the offering to Jerusalem is fairly clear indication that the letter was written about AD 56.

IV. Place of origin

Based on references to Erastus and Gaius in chapter 16, Paul wrote this letter during his stay in Corinth while on his 3rd missionary journey.
27. Integrity of Romans

I. Problems

In chapter 16, Paul addresses 28 people by name. If this is a church that Paul did not start, how did he know this many personally?

II. Suggestions

Some have suggested that there were 2 copies of this letter. One went to Rome with only the first 15 chapters. Then another copy went to Ephesus after adding chapter 16. This is possible except Paul did not tend to mention people by name in his letters to churches that he actually started. In the case of another church which he didn’t start (Colossians), Paul once again names specific people. This may indicate intentionality on his part in making a personal connection. In the letter to the Romans, these were likely people who had been dispersed by Claudius thus giving Paul the opportunity to know them first hand from encounters at other locations. (E.g. Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus)

III. Outline of the Letter

This letter includes the typical parts of a letter with a very extensive body.
28. Occasion of the Letter to Romans

I. Proposal - Paul's unique view of his apostleship

One theory as to the occasion for Paul's letter to the Romans has to do with his unique view of his apostleship. Paul understands that he is called to be the apostle to the Gentiles. This is supported by the following statement in his letter to the Galatians:

*And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality) — those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.* Gal 2:6-9

“The grace that was given to me” is a phrase he repeats elsewhere in referring to his apostleship to the Gentiles. If he was, in fact, the apostle to the Gentiles then this would be a church that would fall under his care and authority even though he did not personally start it. It would be quite natural for Paul to write an epistle of this nature in order to thoroughly explain a correct theological perspective, particularly in the area of soteriology.

II. Support

a. Salutation

*Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,* Romans 1:1-6
This exceptionally long greeting is far from his typical salutation. This is evidence that Paul wants to establish his position of authority that he received from Christ himself.

b. Thanksgiving Section

In the typical thanksgiving section of the letter Paul seeks to establish a relationship with the church in Rome even though he has never visited. He mentions praying for them and longing to see them.

*For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God’s will I may now at last succeed in coming to you.* Romans 1:9-10

c. Chapter 15

*I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.* Romans 15:14-16

Paul would hardly use this language in writing to church unless he assumed responsibility for it.

III. Reasons for writing

a. Needs their assistance for a trip to Spain

*I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.* Romans 15:24

b. He is the apostle to the Gentiles.

This is an important letter in that it represents Paul’s communication to a church to which he has never preached directly. He expounds on his theological views in a thorough and systematic fashion giving this letter the quality of an epistle.
29. Content of Romans (Part 1)

I. Salutation (1:1-7)
   This enlarged greeting prepares the readers for Paul authority over the church in Rome.

II. Thanksgiving (1:8-15)

III. The Main Theme (1:16-17)
   For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”
   Romans 1:16-17

   Most point to these two verses as the main theme of Romans.

IV. The Big Problem (1:18-3:20)
   Paul first spends time presenting the problem which is sin and its affect on one’s standing before God. He deals first with the Gentile world and then moves to the Jewish world.
   a. Part 1 (1:18-31)
      This part is directed to the Gentiles who, even without special revelation, can recognize God through general revelation; but rejected him nonetheless. There is a repeated phrase in verses 24, 26 and 28- “therefore God gave them up”.
      This seems to indicate that the increased level of sinfulness was a form of punishment in itself.
      i. Idolatry
         Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Romans 12:22-23
ii. Homosexuality

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.
Romans 1:26-27

iii. Sins against society

Romans 1: 28-32 addresses a long list of social sins including envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness, and more.

b. Part 2 (2:1-3:8)

Now, with regard to the Jewish world:

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. Romans 2:1-5

The Jewish world may not have been typified by blatant idolatry and homosexuality, as was the Gentile world, but they were certainly guilty of sin; especially societal sin. The issue with the Jews was they judged the Gentiles while presuming their covenant relationship precluded God’s wrath from being directed their way. Paul makes it clear that this is a mistake.

Note the chiastic pattern of verses 7, 8, 9 and 10 in chapter 2. Paul is not teaching justification by works in verses 7 & 10; rather giving an indication of lifestyle that is indicative of a repentant heart.
c. The Conclusion (3:9-20)

As it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” Romans 3:10-12

i. The Jew is under the wrath of God.

Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?
Romans 3:1

This is a question that Paul doesn’t fully address until chapter 7. For now he makes it clear that both Jews and Greeks stand condemned. (Romans 3:9)

ii. The Gentile is under the wrath of God.
30. Content of Romans (Part 2)

I. The Divine Remedy (3:21-4:25)

In these verses Paul lays out the basic principles of God’s remedy for man’s sin.

a. Two Meanings of Law (3:21)

"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:"

Romans 3:21-22

“Law” is use twice with two meanings: The 1\textsuperscript{st} reference implies legalism (dependence on works to achieve approval from God). The 2\textsuperscript{nd} use of Law refers to the Law given through the Mosaic Covenant.

b. God’s Righteousness: The Just and the Justifier (3:21-31)

“\textit{The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe}”

Faith in Jesus does not refer to the faithfulness of Jesus; rather to Jesus as the object of faith for a believer.

\textit{for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.} Romans 3:23-26

The Greek word \textit{hilaskomai}, translated as propitiation, refers to the alleviation of God’s wrath by the blood of Christ. This would be the most common use of the word in the Greek language of the day. Some translations use expiation in lieu of propitiation. This would imply the removal of sin and its consequences. It doesn’t
have to be either /or. The fact remains that this is a divine remedy enacted on the sinner’s behalf.

c. Abraham's Example (4:1-25)

Paul demonstrates that even Abraham, the founder of the Jewish faith, received his righteous standing **before** being given the sign of circumcision. If this is true for Abraham, it must be true for all Jews that follow him. Furthermore, he is the example for Gentiles as well because Abraham was himself a Gentile when righteousness was reckoned to him on the basis of faith.
31. Content of Romans (Part 3)

I. The Results of Righteousness (5:1-8:39)

Justification is a metaphor that refers to our legal standing with God. The declaration by God that the Christian is not guilty is a final day promise. However, justification is only one aspect of conversion. If one is justified it also follows that they are given a new nature which will result in a new trajectory toward holiness. The implications of righteousness for the Christian’s current life are the subject of chapters 5-8.

a. Peace and Hope (5:1-11)

*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Romans 5:1

This “peace” is not an emotional feeling. It is the objective reality that war with God has ended.

b. Parenthesis on Adam and Christ (5:12-21)

In this digression, Paul compares the influence of the two great figures in human history in a balanced poetic form.

*Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.* Romans 5:18-19

Paul’s poetic language should not be interpreted as Adam’s sin simply being attributed to those that follow. All of his offspring have lived up to their inheritance.


Can/should a person deemed righteous by God, continue in sin in order that grace would be brought (even more) to the forefront? Paul’s responds to his rhetorical question with “By no means!” The logic of the question loses sight of the fact that when a new believer is justified, other things happen as well. There is a newness of life that manifests itself in a different way of living.
i. Indicative (6:1-11)

In these 1st 11 verses of chapter 6, Paul is speaking to our new identity in Christ.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Romans 6:5-7

ii. Imperative (6:12-14)

In verses 12-14, Paul turns to the command that we should live life now in light of the reality to come.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Romans 6:12

Notice that the indicative precedes the imperative. The indicative serves as a basis for the imperative.

d. Paul deals with the Law (7:7-25)

The subject of the law comes up repeatedly throughout Romans. Now, in chapter 7, Paul addresses it with another digression. Paul explains that the law is not the problem; neither does it solve the problem. The law simply reveals the problem much as an MRI reveals a back problem.

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” Romans 7:7

In Romans 7:7 ff; Paul begins speaking in the first person describing a battle in the flesh against sin. The question that is debated- Is the “I” referring to Paul or a hypothetical man living under the law (non-Christian)? The apparent absence of the Spirit (unlike the conflict described in Galatians) seems to indicate it is the later. Paul would thus be describing the losing struggle of a non-believer to overcome sinful behavior.
e. Living in the Spirit (8:1-17)

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:1-2

The “law of the Spirit” simply refers to the rule of the Spirit. This is the answer to the struggle present in chapter 7 and the means by which the Christian can live outside the bondage of sin.

f. The Assurance of the Believer (8:18-39)

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31

This verse begins a doxology in which Paul makes an ironclad case for the assurance of the believer.

II. The Place of Israel in God’s Righteousness (9:1-11:36)

These chapters represent yet another parenthesis in Paul’s letter. Here he stops to deal with the nation of Israel in respect to God’s revelation.

III. Exhortations (12:1-15:13)

These are moral exhortations. (I appeal to you therefore brothers...) In chapter 13 Paul inserts another parenthesis in which he speaks to the Christians’ relationship to state authority. This is the only letter in which he addresses this subject. It is possible that Jews were caught up in political upheaval around AD 49 which resulted in their being expelled from Rome. This might explain why Paul chose to give this instruction. Note, this is not a universal command to obey a government, no matter how evil its nature. The authority that is described here by Paul is a terror to bad conduct rather than a terror to good conduct. (See Romans 13:3)
33. Philippians

I. The Prison Epistles

Paul makes reference to his imprisonment in 4 of his letters:

a. Philippians
   Philippians 1:7; 1:13; 1:17
b. Colossians
   Colossians 4:18
c. Ephesians
   Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; 6:20
d. Philemon
   Philemon 1: 9

II. Where was Paul’s imprisonment?

There is some discussion over where Paul wrote from while in prison including 3 possible suggestions:

a. Caesarea

   According to Acts, Paul was in prison for 3 years in Caesarea where he appears before the Roman governors, Felix and Festus, before being transported to Rome.

b. Ephesus

   There is no direct mention of Paul being in prison while in Ephesus. In 1 Corinthians there is a reference to fighting with beasts at Ephesus.

   *What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”* 1 Cor 15:32

   It is doubtful that Paul, as a Roman citizen, would have been required to fight as a gladiator. It is more likely that he is using this language in a figurative manner.

c. Rome

   i. For - 1:13; 1:22-23; 2:17; 4:22

      There are some strong arguments in Philippians for these prison epistles to have been written while in Rome:
"so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ." Phil 1:13

“The imperial guard” would most likely refer to the guard stationed in Rome.

Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Phil 2:17

Paul seems to reflect on the end of his life in several places which would indicate he was in Rome.

"All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household."
Phil 4:22
Paul closes the letter with this reference to Caesar's household.

ii. Against - Great distance between Philippi and Rome

This letter implies several trips between Rome and Philippi. The distance between the two has been used as an argument against the letter being written in Rome. However, this is a weak point in that the journey could have been made in two weeks.

III. Outline of the Letter

Philippians is best described as a missionary newsletter that expresses joy in the midst of adversity.

a. Salutation (1:1-2)

b. Thanksgiving (1:3-11)

Paul mentions his partnership with the church in his thanksgiving. He elaborates later in 4:10 ff.

c. Body (1:12-4:1)

i. News (1:12-32)

Paul speaks of how his imprisonment proved to be an opportunity to further advance the gospel.
ii. Instruction (2:1-30)

Paul lays out a Christological doctrine that he then uses to teach about humility and how to treat others.

iii. Warnings (3:1-4:1)

It is not clear if these warning should be a mirror reading (applying to an actual issue in the church) or read in a hypothetical sense.

d. Exhortation (4:2-9)

e. Thank You (4:10-20)

f. Conclusion (4:21-23)
34. Colossians

I. Authorship
   a. Problems with Pauline Authorship
      i. Hapaxlegomena
         This refers to words only found once. In the letter to Colossae, there are
         34 words not found in any other New Testament book. There are 28
         additional words not found in other Pauline letters.
      ii. Issues of Style
         Some have argued that the Greek used in this letter is simply too good to
         be written by Paul.
      iii. Theological Issues
         Some have argued that the Christology found in Colossians is too
         developed to be written by Paul. (E.g. the Christological confession found
         in Col 1:15-20 concerning the preeminence of Christ)
      iv. Missing Pauline Themes
         Themes that are common in other Pauline epistles are not found in the
         letter to Colossians. (E.g. justification, the Law, & salvation)
   b. Arguments in favor of Pauline Authorship
      i. The letter claims to be Pauline.
         *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our
         brother, Col 1:1*

         *if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from
         the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all
         creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. Col 1:23*

         *I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains.
         Grace be with you. Col 4:18*
ii. Stylistic features
Expressions such as “on account of this also” and “every good work” are distinctly Pauline.

iii. Typical Pauline theological emphases
Paul’s particular indicative statements “in Christ” and “buried with Christ in baptism” are used.

iv. Typical Pauline letter
The letter follows Paul’s typical format.

v. Ties to the Philemon letter
References are made to some of the same people he refers to in Philemon which is definitely attributed to Paul.

II. Foundation of the Church
The church was not founded personally by Paul but probably by cohorts while Paul was in Ephesus during the 3rd missionary journey.

III. Occasion of the Letter
a. Response to problems in the church
Paul wrote this letter while in Rome after receiving a report from Epaphras.

b. Dangers referred to:
   i. Worship of elemental spirits (2:8)
   ii. Worship of angels (2:18)
   iii. Observance of religious festivals and days (2:16)
   iv. Observance of food regulations (2:16, 21)
   v. Ascetic behavior (2:20-23)
      Col 2:20 would argue for a mirror reading of these warnings rather than a hypothetical reading.
   vi. Emphasis on human wisdom and philosophy (2:8, 22)

3 and 4 above seem similar to issues that Paul addressed with the Galatians. All the others are problems that have not been dealt with by Paul in previous letters.
c. Particular vocabulary

i. Wisdom (1:9, 28; 2:3, 23; 3:16; 4:5)

Wisdom is emphasized as seen in the above note verses.

ii. Understanding (1:9; 2:2)

1. Gnosis (2:3)

\textit{in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.}

Col 2:3

Gnosis is used in a more general sense.

2. Epignosis (1:6, 9, 10; 2:2; 3:10)

\textit{that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, Col 2:2}

Epignosis is used in a more technical sense, often connected with saving knowledge.

iii. Perfect (1:28; 3:14; 4:12)

Some translations use “mature”.

iv. Pleroma (1:19; 2:9-10)

This refers to the absolute wholeness of deity.

d. Gnosticism

Some contend that this letter, in part, deals with the heresy of gnosticism. Some of the aspects of 2\textsuperscript{nd} century gnosticism include:

i. Dualism

Dualism is the notion that all matter is evil and all spirit is good. This was derived from the Greek Platonic philosophy.

ii. Anthropology

Since matter is evil, escape from the physical body is desirable. A bodily resurrection would make have no place in the gnostic thought. Docetism was a 2\textsuperscript{nd} century heresy that believed Christ only “appeared” to be human.
iii. Soteriology

Escape from the physical body would be of no benefit if the spirit was recycled. The gnostics of the 2nd century believed that in order to proceed to the presence of God in afterlife, special knowledge was required. Christ came to provide this special knowledge.

iv. Ethics

The ethics of gnosticism played out in two extremes.

1. Asceticism

Some Gnostics held that since matter was evil, one should deny the body to prevent it from corrupting the inner spirit.

2. Hedonism/Libertinism

The opposite view held that since the body would be ultimately destroyed, it was perfectly fine to indulge the desires of the flesh.

Note: Because this form of gnosticism was not fully developed until the 2nd century, some have argued that this book could not have been written by Paul. However, it is entirely possible that a form of proto-gnostic did exist at the time Paul wrote this epistle. In fact, by the time John wrote his first epistle, it seems to have developed even further.

IV. Paul’s Refutation of the Dangers

a. Christ is all-sufficient.

*and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.* Col 2:10

b. Christ has defeated the powers and archons.

*He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son* Col 1:13

*He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.* Col 2:15
c. In Christ they have come to completeness of salvation and lack nothing.

_He has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him_, Col 1:22

V. Outline of the Letter
   a. Salutation (1:1-2)
   b. Thanksgiving (1:3-8)
   c. Body - The All-sufficiency of Christ (1:9-2:23)
   d. Ethical exhortation (3:1-4:6)
   e. Closing (4:7-18)

VI. The Hymn of Colossians (1:15-20)

This Christological hymn may well have been received by Paul and then passed on to his readers. The poetic balance of these verses can be seen in the original language.
36. Introduction to Ephesians

I. Authorship

   a. Arguments against Pauline authorship

      i. The language is un pauline.

      There is a rather large amount of hapaxlegomena (words that only occur once). However, this is also true of Philippians and 2nd Corinthians which are undisputed letter by Paul.

      ii. The style is un pauline.

      There are a number of extremely long sentences (e.g. Eph 1:3-14) which is uncharacteristic of Paul's writings. However, you can find long sentences in other letters (Romans 1:28-32 & Col 1:9-20). Just because Paul did not normally use long sentences doesn't mean he never used them.

      iii. It's too much like Colossians.

      Eph 4:16 and Col 2:19 have very similar language leading some to suggest a copyist:

      from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. Eph 4:16

      and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. Col 2:19

      However, both of these letters were probably written close to the same time, while Paul was in prison. It would have been normal that he expressed some of the same thoughts.

      iv. The theology is un pauline.

      Col 2:7 speaks of being built up in Christ while Eph 2:19 speaks of being built on the foundation of the prophets and the Apostles. However, this is more of a difference in emphasis rather than a conflict.
v. Unusual "Christ" formulas
   E.g. Eph 3:11 adds “our Lord” to “in Christ”.

vi. The use of marriage as a positive example
   Some have argued that Paul had a negative view of marriage form 1 Corinthians and therefore would not have used marriage in such a positive way.

vii. The author admits to Gentile sins.
   Eph 2:3 seems to refer to sins of Gentiles. The author’s use of “we” is probably an editorial “we” rather than an actual personal admission.

viii. Realized eschatology is emphasized.
   E.g. Eph 2:6. This is not normal for Paul.

ix. The presence of cosmic Christology
   The author speaks of Christ being seated in heavenly places; again this is verbiage that Paul doesn’t use in other letters.

x. Paul doesn’t write to churches in general.
   Typically, Paul writes to particular churches, often addressing particular issues. However, in Galatians, we have another example of Paul writing to a group of churches rather than one.

xi. There is no specific reference to the parousia.
   Although there are no specific references as in other letters, Paul does speak indirectly on this in 1:14 and 4:30.

xii. Onesimus wrote Ephesians as a summary of Paul.
   This theory is based on someone else writing Ephesians from a collection of Paul’s letters.

b. Arguments for Pauline authorship
   i. It claims to be written by Paul.

   Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: Eph 1:1
For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you

_Gentiles_—Eph 3:1

ii. Early church tradition

The early church was unanimous about Paul’s authorship.

iii. The writer is a Jew.

From Eph 2:11-14, the writer is clearly a Jew. (You Gentiles in the flesh...)

Paul was the only Christian Jewish leader who tended to write letters to the Gentiles.

iv. Language is more Pauline than unpauline.

v. Encyclical letter would be more general.

One would expect that an epistle directed to a group of churches would be written in this fashion.

vi. Autobiographical information

Verses like 3:1, 7-13; are very personal in nature. Paul speaks of his gift of God’s grace (a reference to his ministry as the apostle to the Gentiles) as he does in the letter to the Gentiles. It is highly unlikely that a pseudo-author would write in these terms.

vii. Debate on pseudonymity

Some books have been written in an obvious pseudonymity. (The named author is obviously not the actual author.) These books have been accepted as a legitimate genre. However, they are not accepted when there is confusion about whether the named author actually wrote it.

This is especially true of letters. It is unlikely the early church would have accepted this letter as authoritative if Paul was not the actual writer.

II. Occasion of the Letter

a. Emphasis on the unity of the church

The universal nature of the church (inclusive of Jews and Gentiles) is emphasized.

b. General letter to the churches of Asia Minor
III. Outline of the Letter
   a. Salutation (1:1-2)
   b. Thanksgiving (1:3-23)
   c. Body (2:1-3:21)
   d. Ethical exhortation (4:1-6:20)
   e. Closing (6:21-24)
37. Comments on Ephesians

I. Specific Comments

a. "In Ephesus" (1:1)

Most Greek manuscripts include this reference to Ephesus but some of the best manuscripts do not have it included. This would suggest that it was added later and the epistle was intended for a group of churches. There is evidence within the letter that would support this.

b. "Grace"

Paul emphasizes grace throughout the letter which is a common theme in other letters by Paul.

c. "Mystery" (1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19)

d. Mystery is a term used a number of times in Ephesians. Paul uses it to refer to something that was previously unclear but has now been revealed to all. He does not use it to refer to a secret.

This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Eph 3:6

e. "Sealed by the promised Holy Spirit" (1:13)

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. Eph 1:13-14

Our guarantee (earnest) is both a promise and a down payment. (see also 2 Cor 1:22 and Rom 4:11) “Sealed” is used again in Eph 4:30. It refers to the preserving effect of the Spirit.

f. "Heard" (1:15)

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, Eph 1:15

This would be strange language for Paul to use if he wrote this letter specifically to the church in Ephesus (in light of the fact that he stayed there 3 years on his 3rd journey and would have had personal knowledge of their faith).
g. Long sentence prayers (1:15-23; 3:1, 14-19)

h. "Dead in trespasses and sins" (2:1ff)

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Eph 2:1-3

This is a good description of total depravity. The reference to both mind and body is a refutation of the dualistic thought of Platonic philosophy. Total depravity doesn’t mean that we are as bad as we possibly could be; only that every aspect of our being has been corrupted.

i. "By grace ..." (2:8ff)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, Eph 2:8

“And this” refers to the entire preceding phrase concerning being saved by grace through faith; not just faith alone.

j. Second prayer (3:1ff)

Verse 3:1 starts the 2nd prayer of Paul. Verses 2-13 are a literary parenthesis. The prayer takes back up with verse 14.

k. Exhortation (4:1ff)

therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Eph 4:1-3

This picture of a Christian’s walk was modeled by Paul.

l. Seven ones (4:4-6)

• One body
• One Spirit
• One hope
• One Lord
• One faith
• One baptism
• One God

It is probably no accident that Paul mentions seven “ones”. Seven represents completeness.

m. Gifts to the church (4:11ff)

Paul sees the gifts as being given to the church and for the church (vs 12) rather than for individual benefit.

n. "Do not grieve the Spirit." (4:30)

In 1 Thess 5:19, Paul uses a similar idea- “do not quench the Spirit”. This is the opposite side of the same coin when he speaks of being “filled” with the Spirit. One can be filled with the Spirit by avoiding the hindrance of the Spirit.

o. Being filled with the Spirit (5:18ff)

This is a present imperative which means this is to be ongoing. Being filled with the Spirit is not a onetime event.

p. Being subject (5:21)

Verses 19-21 is a list of participles that indicate the means by which one is filled by the Spirit.

q. Household code (5:22-6:9)

Starting with 3:22, Paul starts a new paragraph with a discussion of how household relationships should look. It was common to have household codes in ancient society.
38. Philemon

I. Authorship

This is clearly a letter written to a personal friend rather than an Epistle. There is no real debate as to Paul being the actual author of the letter.

II. Date

Based on the number of names mentioned in both Philemon and Colossians, it is likely that Philemon was a member if the church in Colossae and the letters were written and delivered jointly.

III. Occasion

Paul is writing to Philemon concerning the return and status of Philemon’s slave, Onesimus.

IV. The Letter

Paul appeals to Philemon to accept Onesimus back into his household even though he had unlawfully fled. Paul asked for this favor even though Paul could have compelled Philemon on the basis of Paul’s authority as an Apostle. Paul apparently has great confidence in the outcome by sending Onesimus back.

V. The Issue of Slavery

Why did Paul not address the evils of slavery in this letter? Household slavery in the NT was very different from the slavery found in other cultures throughout history (including U.S. history). Slavery in the NT was based on economic issues rather than racial identity. It was far less demeaning, as slaves were allowed to earn money. Often, slaves were more educated than their masters and called on to teach the children of the household. According to Roman law, slaves should be able to purchase their freedom by age 30. According to Jewish law, slaves were to be set free in 7 years. By the 2nd century, Christians were known for freeing their slaves. This may well have been the result of Paul’s instruction to Philemon to treat Onesimus as a brother in Christ.
39. End of Paul’s Life

I. Tradition says Paul went to Spain before his death.

After 2 years in the Rome prison, he was released and then started a ministry in Spain. He was subsequently re-arrested, placed back in prison in Rome, and then martyred.

II. Luke does not record this.

What are the possible reasons for Luke not recording this in Acts?

a. The dating of Luke is wrong?

Luke could have possibly been writing in current time about the life of Paul which did not extend past his 1st imprisonment. However, the gospel of Mark was written after the death of Peter and Luke apparently used some of Mark’s material.

b. Luke planned a third installment?

Some have suggested that Luke planned on writing a 3rd account that extended to the end of Paul’s life but was unable do so. This is only conjecture with no actual supporting data.

c. Luke did not want to end his book on a negative note?

Tradition says that Paul was beheaded and this would not make for a good ending.

d. Luke’s purpose is to describe the spread of the gospel.

Luke’s purpose was to record the movement of the gospel from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8). This was never meant to be a biography of Paul’s life. Notice how Peter drops out of the picture as soon as the gospel spreads beyond Jerusalem.

III. Sources for the End of Paul’s Life

a. First Clement

Written around 96 AD by Clement of Rome to the Christians in Corinth, this letter refers to Paul as having reached the confines of the west. This would be a reference to Spain.

b. The Muratorian Canon
This was written around 200 AD and has a reference to Paul leaving for Spain.

c. Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History
   Section 2.22.2 mentions coming for a 2nd time to the city (Rome) before he suffered martyrdom under Nero. This was written around 400 AD in reference to the end of Paul

d. The Pastoral Epistles
   There is no period recorded in Acts that would allow for the writing of the Pastoral Epistles (assuming Pauline authorship) unless he was released after his first imprisonment in Rome.
40. The Pastoral Epistles

I. Authorship
   a. Arguments against Pauline authorship
      i. Vocabulary
         Many words found in the pastoral letters are not found elsewhere in
         Paul’s writings. Some critics even suggest a different author for each of
         the letters (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, & Titus) based on word usage.
      ii. Style
         As with vocabulary, some make a similar argument against Pauline
         authorship based on style.
      iii. Historical situation
         This is no apparent period in Paul’s life (as recorded by Luke) when he
         could have written these letters, unless his life continued beyond the
         ending of Acts.
      iv. Second-century heresy
         Some recognize a teaching against Gnosticism which did not come into
         play until the 2nd century. However, based on 1 Tim 1:7, the heresy looks
         to be more Jewish than Greek.
   v. Ecclesiastical situation
      Some argue that the offices of elder and deacon represent a level of
      church organization that exceeded what would be found in Paul’s day.
      However, records from the Qumran site reveal an early Jewish religious
      community that was very organized.
   vi. Theology
      E.g. The instruction to keep the commandment found in 1 Tim 6:14
      doesn’t seem Pauline to some critics.
vii. Pseudonymity

Pseudonymous literature was an excepted genre. However, it would be highly unlikely in a letter form and in an instance which created confusion about the real author.

viii. Missing in certain manuscripts

The pastoral letters were not found in the Marcion cannon but Marcion probably opposed the pastoral letters due to references to the Law.

b. Arguments for Pauline authorship

i. Claim to be written by Paul

Each of the letters claimed to be written by Paul.

ii. Knowledge of the Pastorals by:

1. Clement of Rome (95-96)
   
   Clement wrote a letter to the church in Corinth in which he quoted from the pastorals.

2. Polycarp (110-135)
   
   Polycarp quoted 1 & 2 Timothy in a letter to the church in Philippi.

iii. Pauline reminiscences

Many of the passages in these letters are very personalized to Paul. (E.g. 1 Tim 1:3, 12-16; 2:7; 3:14 2 Tim 1:3-5, 8, 11-13, 15-18; 2:9-10; 3:10-11 Titus 1:5; 3:12

It is hard to believe that someone other than Paul wrote these letters and then fabricated these personal references.

iv. Too short for statistical analysis

Some scholars have suggested that analysts need 10,000 words or more in order to confirm or deny authorship based on vocabulary. These letters are far too short for that sort of analysis.

c. Various Suggestions Concerning Authorship

i. Paul wrote the pastorals.
ii. Written by a secretary under Pauline instruction.
   It is possible that this secretary would be given a certain amount of freedom or latitude.

iii. They were not written by Paul but contain Pauline fragments.
   This assumption would beg the question of what happened to the rest of the letter.

iv. The Pastorals are completely pseudonymous.
   This would be unlikely in the case of a letter genre.

d. The best argument is for Pauline authorship, possibly with the help of a secretary.
41. 1 Timothy

I. Paul's child in the faith (1:2)

Paul speaks of Timothy as being his child in the faith even though it is probable that Timothy was in his mid-thirties.

II. The Law (1:9-10)

understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. 1 Tim 9-11

Paul sees the Law as profitable if used properly. There are three pairs of adjectives which address our response to God. Notice how the list that follows parallels the final five commandments concerning how we relate to others.

III. Paul "acted in ignorance" (1:13)

Sins committed in ignorance are sins nonetheless and thus require forgiveness.

IV. Translation of the word "men" (2:4)

Technically speaking, “men” is the correct translation. However, it is apparent that Paul uses it to refer generically to humans. This highlights the potential for formal equivalent translations to be misinterpreted.

V. Creedal formula (2:5-6)

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. 1 Tim 5-6

This is an example of an early creed in poetic form.

VI. Cultural or universal? (2:8, 9)

I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; 1 Tim 2:8

It is apparent that the universal principal expressed by Paul in this verse is all should pray. It is not intended to universally specify the position when praying.
VII. Role of Women (2:11-15)

a. Learning in silence? (2:11)

This is not a putdown of women by Paul. Rabbinic teaching held that women should not attempt to learn at all.

b. Prohibition of teaching and authority (2:12)

This refers to a position of authority/rule over those who are being taught.

c. Universal, not cultural (2:13-14)

The argument for verse 12 goes back to creation. This would indicate a universal rather than a cultural application for verse 12.

d. Saved through childbearing? (2:15)

Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control 1 Tim2:15

This is a difficult verse to understand, especially considering “if they continue in the faith”. This may refer to the special act of childbearing in the birth of Christ, for it is through him that salvation is made possible.

VIII. Bishops and Elders (3:1)

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 1 Tim 3:1

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. 1 Tim 5:17

Paul uses “overseer” (sometimes translated “bishop”) in 3:1 and “elder” in verse 5:17. These seem to be interchangeable in the Pastoral Epistles. (See also Titus 1:5-7)

IX. Qualifications for Elders (3:2ff)

Many of these qualifications are the same as for the office of deacon. The ability to teach is a distinction.
X. Creedal formula (3:16)

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:
He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory. 1 Tim 3:16

These creedal formulations that are found scattered in Paul’s letters are a clear indication that a high Christology existed prior to Paul’s writing.

XI. Concern for family (5:8)

Other cultures are more faithful to this instruction than ours.

XII. Contentment (6:6-8)

This teaching on contentment has a stoic flair. Paul was from the city of Tarsus which was home to a large stoic university.
42. Titus

I. When and where

This letter was written by Paul between 1 & 2 Timothy; probably from Nicopolis. (Titus 3:12)

II. Comments

a. Salutation (1:1-4)

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior; To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. Titus 1:1-4

The 1st 3 verses of the salutation contain material that is not found elsewhere in Paul’s letters except the reference to “the preaching with which I have been entrusted” is common language for Paul.

b. Elders and bishops (1:5, 7)

These words are synonymous. Elder is derived from Hebrew while Bishop is a Greek term.

c. Requirements for elder/bishops (1:7-9)

These requirements are very similar those given in 1 Tim 3:1-7.

i. Husband of one wife

ii. Not a drunkard

iii. Teaching ability

Paul points specifically to the ability to refute false teachers. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. Titus 1:9-10

It is apparent that the Judiazers are still persistent in their teaching.
d. The Blessed Hope (2:11-14)

*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*, Titus 2: 11-13

These verses acknowledge a realized yet continued (now/but not yet) eschatology. The next event will be the Second Coming. Clearly there is no intermediate event as some cults have claimed.

i. Granville-Sharp Rule

Two nouns connected by one article refers to the same event, thus “our blessed hope” refers to the Parousia or 2nd Coming.

ii. The term "appearing"

This reference to “appearing” in the New Testament is always in reference to Jesus Christ. (E.g. 1 Thess 2:8; 2 Tim 1:10; 4:1)

iii. The expression "god and savior" is found in Greek literature

Once again, by Granville-Sharp Rule, Paul is making God and Savior one in the same.

iv. Clear teaching of the deity of Christ

This expression of God and Savior is clearly teaches the deity of Christ along with many other New Testament passages. (E.g. John 1:1; 1:18; 20:28; Hebrews 1:8; 2 Peter 1:1) These all have strong implications on Trinitarian Doctrine.

e. By the washing ... (3:5)

*he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

Titus 3:5-7

The washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit refer to the same event in the conversion of a believer.
43. 2 Timothy

Unlike 1 Timothy and Titus, 2 Timothy is more of a mentoring letter to Paul’s young colleague than a pastoral letter.

I. Salutation (1:1-2)

“Mercy” is unique to the salutations in 1 & 2 Timothy but this is no reason to doubt Pauline authorship.

II. The faith of Timothy (1:5)

_"I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well."_ 2 Tim 1:5

Timothy is first mentioned in Acts 16:1 as a disciple with a Christian Jewish mother and a Greek father. The fact that Timothy’s father is not mentioned in 2 Timothy is an indication that his father was an unbeliever. This may also explain Paul’s fatherly relationship with Timothy.

III. Exhortation to Timothy (2:1-7)

_"You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."_ 2 Tim 2:1-2

Paul encourages Timothy to disciple others in the faith. He then focuses on the struggle using a 3 fold illustration of a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer.

_"Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything."_ 2 Tim 2:3-7

It is noteworthy that Paul uses the same illustrations in 1 Corinthians (see below). This is further evidence that this letter was, in fact, written by Paul.

- a. Analogy of a soldier (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:7)
- b. Analogy of an athlete (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:22-27)
- c. Analogy of a farmer (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:7)

IV. Creedal Confession (2:11-13)
The saying is trustworthy, for:

*If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.* 2 Tim 2:11-13

In this formulation there are two positive declarations followed by 3 negative declarations.

a. What does "faithful" mean?

“He remains faithful” does not mean faithful to those who are faithless; rather he remains faithful to his own character.

b. God is faithful to deny us and punish us, if we are faithless.

Being faithful to his character would include the judgment of the unrighteous.

V. Shun youthful passions (2:22)

This is some 16 years after being described as a disciple in Acts 16. That would mean Timothy was at least in his mid-thirties when Paul wrote to him.

VI. All Scripture is God-breathed (3:16)

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 2 Tim 3:16

“Theopneustos” is the Greek word that is translated as “inspired” that literally means breathed from God. All scripture would be a reference to the Hebrew Old Testament (excluding the Apocrypha) as well as the Jesus tradition.

VII. Evaluation of his life (4:6)

In Philippians, Paul has an expectation of being released from prison. Here, he acknowledges that the end of his life is imminent.

VIII. Additional news (4:9-18)

When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! 2 Tim 4:13-16

It’s hard to imagine that a pseudonymous writer would have included such a personal reference.
44. Hebrews Introduction

I. Authorship

This is an anonymous book bearing no claim of authorship which has fueled a dispute in church history. The very early church fathers denied that Paul wrote it. This continued with the western church even though the eastern church assumed it was Pauline. Later, in the 4th century, the Roman Catholic Church accepted Paul as the author. The reformers went back to early church fathers in their denial of Paul as the author. The fact there is no certainty as to the author has no bearing on the canonicity or orthodoxy of Hebrews.

a. Arguments against Pauline authorship

The arguments against Pauline authorship are compelling.

i. No Pauline salutation

The start of Hebrews is very unlike the typical Greeting of Paul.

ii. Does not claim to be Pauline

iii. Arrangement is not Pauline

This letter is not organized anything like the typical letter written by Paul. (E.g. Exhortations are scattered throughout rather than centralized in one particular section of the letter.)

iv. Different style and vocabulary

Paul’s Greek was good but it doesn’t match the literary quality of the Greek found in Hebrews. E.g. the alliteration found in the first two verses demonstrates a sophisticated literary technique.

v. Theological emphases

While not in conflict, the theological emphases found in Hebrews are very different from those found in Paul’s letters.

1. Exaltation of Christ

The exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God is one focus while Paul spoke more of the resurrection of Christ.

2. Purification, perfection, sanctification

Paul focused more on justification and reconciliation.
3. High Priesthood of Christ

Paul emphasized the Lordship of Christ.

4. Little concerning justification

In addition, there is no emphasis in Hebrews on the dichotomy between the desires of the spirit and the desires of the flesh.

vi. Hebrews 2:3

This verse presents a strong argument against Pauline authorship: *how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard,* Hebrews 2:3

Here the writer presents three groups: Jesus, the eyewitnesses, and us (those taught by the eyewitnesses). The author clearly places himself in the final group.

Compare this to what Paul says in Galatians when defending his apostleship:

"For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ." Gal 1:12

It would be very difficult to reconcile Heb 2:3 and Gal 1:12 as being written by the same person.

b. Who wrote Hebrews?

i. Luke?

Some have made this argument based on similar vocabulary.

ii. Clement of Rome?

iii. Apollos?

Apollos of Alexandria would have definitely been capable of the Greek found in Hebrews.

iv. Barnabas?

v. Acquila?

vi. Priscilla?
vii. Only God knows.

This is as good an answer as any. There is no real evidence of the author’s identity.

II. Date

a. Quoted in 1 Clement (96)

This means the letter would have to have been written before AD 96.

b. Timothy is alive (up to 96)

You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. Hebrews 13:23

c. Persecution (Nero - 64, Domitian 81-96)

The persecution mentioned in the letter could refer to either of these Roman Emperors.

d. Jewish ritual (before 70)

This letter presents a strong case on the superiority of Christ’s sacrifice over Jewish ritual sacrifice. In chapters 9 and 10, the practice of purification laws is presented in the present tense, indicating that the temple in Jerusalem was still in operation. This would be a strong argument that the letter was written prior to AD 70, when the temple was destroyed by the Roman Legions.

III. Audience

a. Jewish Christians

The numerous references to Old Testament imagery would suggest that this group of believers were mostly Jewish who were wavering for some reason.

b. Living in Italy or Rome

Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings. Heb 13:24

IV. Epistle or Sermon?

There are numerous references to what the author is speaking rather than what he is writing. This, along with the organization of the material, suggests that this was meant more a sermon than an Epistle.
45. Hebrews Content

I. Outline

a. Jesus is greater (1:1-4:14)

Given the superiority of Jesus, what sense would it make to go back Judaism?

i. Greater than the prophets (1:1-3)

*Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, Heb 1:1-3*

1. Jesus is son.
2. Jesus provides greater revelation.
3. Jesus is the heir of all things.
4. Jesus is creator.
5. Jesus reflects the glory of God's nature.
6. Jesus upholds the universe by his will.
7. Jesus brought about purification from sin.
8. Jesus is at the right hand of God.

ii. Greater than the angels (1:4-2:18)

*Having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you” Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”? Heb 1:4-5*

1. Jesus, unlike the angels, is God's son.
2. Jesus is worshiped by the angels.
3. Jesus has the rights and authority of the first born.
4. God says of Jesus "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever."
But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom." Heb 1:8

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever” is used as an address rather than a statement. This is another powerful Christological statement about the deity of Christ.

iii. Greater than Moses (3:1-4:13)

For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope. Heb 3:3-6

b. Jesus is better (4:14-10:18)

i. A better high priest (4:14-7:28)

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Heb 4:14-16

Previously the priests would have to offer sacrifice for their own sin. This was not the case with Jesus.

ii. A better sacrifice (8:1-10:18)

And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all...

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. Heb 10:10,14
c. Hold fast to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. (10:19-13:17)
   This is the closing exhortation.

d. Conclusion (13:18-25)

II. Warnings

The sacrifice has been exalted but the consequences of sin are a reality.

a. 2:1-3

   For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every
   transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape
   if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and
   it was attested to us by those who heard, Heb 2:2-3

b. 3:6

   We are part of God house if we hold fast.

c. 3:7-19

   Today, if you hear his voice, don’t harden your heart lest you become like the
   Israelites who rebelled after leaving Egypt and were therefore not allowed to
   enter God’s rest.

d. 4:1-13

   The good news came to us just as to them; but it did not benefit them.

e. 6:4-9

   For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who
   have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have
   tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come,
   and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they
   are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him
   up to contempt. Heb 6:4-6

   i. Verse 4

      1. Restore again to repentance
      2. Once been enlightened
      3. Tasted the heavenly gift
      4. Become partners of the Holy Spirit
ii. Verse 5

1. Tasted the goodness of God's word
2. Tasted powers of the age to come

These verses appear to be describing someone who has experienced conversion. Does this mean it is possible to lose salvation? For the Arminian, the answer is yes. For the Calvinist the answer would be that they had never come to true saving faith. Some have argued that this is a hypothetical case being presented but the writer seems to present this as a real possibility. As a Calvinist, it might be best to understand a warning like this as an instrument of God to encourage perseverance. In either case, the results are the same for those who are apostates - condemnation.
46. James

I. Authorship
   a. Writer describes himself as "James." (1:1)
   b. Four James in the New Testament
      i. The father of Judas (Luke 6:16)
      ii. The son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18)
      iii. The son of Zebedee and brother of John (Mark 1:19, 3:17, 5:37)
      iv. The brother of Jesus (Galatians 1:19, Acts 12:17; 15:13)

Very little is known about the first two listed above so it is highly unlikely they would simply identify themselves as “James” without further elaboration. James the son of Zebedee was martyred early in church history under the reign of Herod Antipas. Therefore, the mostly likely author of this book is James the brother of Jesus who became a believer after the resurrection and went on to assume a leadership position in the church in Jerusalem. Jesus brother was executed by the Sanhedrin during the absence of a Roman governor in AD 62 which means the book would have been written prior to that date.

   c. Probably James, the brother of Jesus
      i. Problems
         1. The book was slow to be accepted.
            When the Canon of Scripture was being recognized, this book was one of the “Antilegomena” books; meaning it was a book that people had reservations about.
         2. The Greek of James is "too good."
         3. One would expect more references to Jesus.
      ii. In favor of this James
         1. It claims to be written by James.
            The brother of Jesus is the only James that seems plausible.
         2. The style is Semitic.
         3. Many parallels to the teachings of Jesus
            Compare the following:
a. 1:5 with Matthew 7:7

*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.* James 1:5

*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.* Mat 7:7

b. 1:22 with Matthew 7:26

*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.* James 1:22

*And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.* Mat 7:26


*For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.* James 2:13

*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.* Mat 5:7

d. 3:12 with Matthew 7:16

*Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.* James 3:12

*You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?* Mat 7:16

e. 4:13 with Luke 12:13-21

*Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”* James 4:13

*And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”* But God said to him, *Fool! This night your soul is required of you,*
...and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?
Luke 12: 19-20

f. 5:2-3 with Matthew 6:19
Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days.
James 5: 2-3

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, Mat 6: 19

g. 5:12 with Matthew 5:34-37
But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation. James 5:12

But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.
Mat 5:34-37

4. The unusual introduction of the letter
One would expect a Jewish Christian to use “grace” or “peace” but James chose to use the Hellenistic introduction- “greetings”.
This was exactly the same form he used when sending the letter to the Gentiles in Antioch concerning the resolution of the Jerusalem Council. (Acts 15:23)
II. Date
If James the brother of Jesus was indeed the author, the book would have been written prior to AD 62; making it one of the earlier books of the NT.

III. Outline
The book is difficult to outline because James didn’t follow a particular line of argument. There are many proverbial sayings which are inserted in various places.

   a. Salutation (1:1)
   b. On Temptation (1:2-18)
   c. Being doers of the law (1:19-2:26)
   d. On evil speaking (3:1-4:12)
   e. Miscellaneous exhortation (4:13-5:20)

IV. Specific Comments
   a. Chapter 1
      i. Salutation
         “Greetings” used rather than “peace” or “grace”.
      ii. Trials and Temptation
         Beginning with verse 2, “trials” are spoken of in a positive light in that they bring about character growth. Then, at verse 13, it is spoken of in a negative sense (as temptation) because temptation doesn’t come from God. The same Greek word is used. This demonstrates the importance of recognizing “patterns of meaning” or “range of meanings” when undertaking word studies. It can be misleading to simply use a concordance and assume a word means the same thing every time it is used in Scripture.

      iii. True ministry
         At the end of chapter 1, James writes about the nature of religion that is pure and undefiled as including those in need; naming orphans and widows.
b. Chapter 2

One of the issues most debated in James is what he says about faith and works. Some, including Luther, have seen a conflict between James’ statements on faith/works and Paul’s teaching on faith/justification. Again, it is important in hermeneutics to seek to understand what the writers mean by the words they use. James and Paul use the word “faith” in different ways.

i. Faith and Works in James

Faith in James refers to faith without any transforming substance. He even refers to it as faith that believes God is one, as the demons do. (James 2:19)

The works that James refers to is acts of love, mercy, and commitment to God; that are the result of true faith.

ii. Faith and Works in Paul

The faith that Paul talks about is a whole hearted trust in God’s provision, not simply believing that God is one, as the demons.

The works that Paul speaks of in a negative light meant submitting to circumcision and rituals of the law by which Israel assumed would give them a right standing before God.

Notice how Paul’s statement in Galatians would be in complete agreement with the teaching of James when he uses faith and works in a similar manner to James.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. Gal 5:6

c. Chapter 3

Verses 1-12 include various proverbial sayings about the tongue.
d. Chapter 5

i. The "Rich"

In the society in which James lived, there were only two kinds of people—the rich and the poor. Typically the rich held their position by manipulating and oppressing the poor. The strong language employed by James concerning the rich should be understood in this context and light.

ii. The coming kingdom

*You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.* James 5:8

The cry of “Maranatha” was an integral part of the faith and hope of the early church.
47. 1 Peter Introduction

I. Introduction
   a. Authorship
      i. The Apostle Peter
         The book begins with “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ”. Later, in 5:1, the author refers to himself as a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ. This leaves little room to doubt that the author is claiming to be the Apostle Peter.
      ii. Objections
         The following are some critics’ objections to Peter’s authorship.
            1. The Greek is too good.
            2. The theology is too Pauline.
            3. The persecution mentioned didn’t take place until later.
      iii. Response
            1. We don't know the level of Peter's Greek. Silvanus could have made it better Greek.
               Peter likely used an amanuensis (he dictated to a secretary).
               By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. 1 Pet 5:12
               Also, the objection here is similar to the objection on the authorship of James but it does not take into account the education both would have received during the years of leading the church.
            2. The theology is the theology of the Church.
               It would be a mistake to presume that Paul had a theology that was exclusive to him. Silvanus was also closely associated with Paul and it is doubtful there were any major theological conflicts between them.
3. The persecution appears to have been periodic and unofficial.
   The claim that official persecution came later is true but there is no real evidence that Peter was referring to state persecution. The reading of 1 Peter 3:13-14 does not suggest anything more than general/periodic opposition. Most of the suffering that Paul refers to (e.g. 2 Cor 11:23-28) is prior to official persecution that was sanctioned by Rome.

b. Audience
   The letter is addressed to the exiles of the dispersion. Here it seems to refer to Gentiles whereas in James the audience appeared to be Jews in the dispersion.
   *For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.*
   1 Pet 4:3

c. Place of Origin
   It is possible that the Babylon reference in 5:13 is the literal city on the Tigris/Euphrates Rivers, but more likely it is a reference to Rome which was considered the “new Babylon”. In addition, there is a reference to Mark in the final greetings. Tradition is quite strong that Peter spent his final years in Rome with Mark, who wrote his Gospel after Peter died in order to preserve the Jesus traditions that had been taught by Peter.

d. Outline
   i. Salutation (1:1-2)
   ii. The identity of God's people (1:3-2:10)
   iii. The responsibilities of God's people (2:11-4:11)
   iv. The responsibilities of the church and elders (4:12-5:11)
   v. Conclusion (5:12-14)
48. 1 Peter: Content

I. The atonement of Jesus Christ

This is an interesting epistle with strong theological teaching that includes an emphasis on the death of Christ on our behalf.

II. Chapter 1

a. "Born anew" (1:3)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 1 Peter 1:3

This is similar to the language used by John in chapter 3 of his gospel.

b. Continuity of Old and New (1:10)

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully. 1 Peter 1:10

As other NT writers, Peter ties his teaching to the OT. This is not a new religion.

c. Hope in the grace to be revealed (1:13)

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:13

It is popular in modern culture to “live in the moment”. However, Peter encourages his readers to carefully consider the future.

III. Chapter 2

a. Christ the living stone (2:4-8)

“As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” 1Peter 2:4-8
i. Old Testament references

Three OT quotations are included within these verses from 2 Peter:
Isaiah 28:16; Psalm 118:22; and Isaiah 8: 14. Interestingly, Paul puts two of these together in Romans 9: 32-33.

ii. New Testament quotations

The early church likely observed and noted the many OT prophecies that were fulfilled by Jesus. These were in a collection known as “ testimonia”. Therefore it would not be surprising to have more than one author refer to similar OT passages that used the stone metaphor. (see also: Mat 21:42; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11)

b. Household rules (2:18-3:7)

This portion of Peter’s epistle is similar to sections pertaining to household rules found on Ephesians and Colossians.

IV. Chapter 3

a. Atonement teaching (3:18)

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit. 1 Peter 3:18

This is a strong statement concerning sacrificial aspect of the Atonement as well as its substitutionary implications.

b. Preaching to the spirits (3:19-20)

in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. 1 Peter 3:19-20

For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does. 1 Peter 4:6

There are two interpretations to this passage:

One understanding (e.g. The Apostle’s Creed) is to say that Christ descended into hell after his death and preached to those who had died before in
unbelief. If this is correct, the next point of debate is trying to determine whether this was a victorious proclamation in which Christ is vindicated and those in prison were condemned; or a redemptive message giving those who heard it a second chance.

The more popular, and perhaps accurate, interpretation of the above passages that refer to preaching to the dead; is to understand that it is a reference to the spirit of Jesus preaching through Noah, and in Noah’s day, to those who would not obey.

c. Baptism saves you (3:21)

_Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ._ 1 Peter 3:21

This could be mistakenly interpreted as saying the act of baptism effectuates salvation. As discussed in the study of Acts, conversion included a number of components. When the early church referred to one or two components, all the rest were assumed to be true.

V. Chapter 4 and 5

The conclusion includes the ideas of suffering, hope, and Christian conduct. 5:12-14 is a brief final greeting.
49. 2 Peter: Authorship

I. Arguments against Petrine authorship

Petrine authorship is widely disputed among conservative commentaries such as The Word Biblical Commentary.

a. Major differences with 1 Peter

The style and vocabulary are very different. There are 50 words in 2 Peter that are found nowhere else in the NT.

b. The reference to Paul's letters as Scripture

And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. 2 Pet 3: 15-16

Here Paul's letters are equated as Scripture. It would have taken some time to have gathered Paul's writings into one corpus and then acknowledged them as Scripture thus indicating a date much later than AD 64 or AD 65 which is the approximate date of Peter's martyrdom.

c. The use of Jude

2 Peter seems to use the material of Jude in a number of ways. This would also indicate a later date beyond AD 65.

d. Acknowledged as pseudepigrapha

Pseudepigrapha is a form of literature where a writer assumes the name of a famous person after his death. This was a legitimate genre as long as the audience was aware that Peter was no really the author and thus there was no deceit involved.

e. Difficulty in acceptance to the canon

2 Peter was debated prior to acceptance as canon thus it was part of the antilegomena rather than the homologoumena.
II. Arguments for Petrine authorship

a. Letter claims to be written by Peter

*Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: 2 Peter 1:1*

Later in verses 16-18 the write claims to be an eyewitness and present on the mountain during the transfiguration.

b. The letter is too short to consider style issues

We know that Peter dictated his first letter to Silvanus. It is quite possible that he used a different secretary for this second letter and gave that person freedom in style and vocabulary.

c. The letter was not considered pseudepigrapha

This is a legitimate genre when the fictitiousness of the author is transparent. This was not the case in 2 Peter. The debate on 2 Peter centered on whether or not Peter was the actual author.

d. Far better attested than those books left out of the canon

Although it was debated, this book had far better standing than those that were part of *Nottha* - the collection of books which were definitely recognized as not belonging in the canon of inspired Scripture.

e. Does not require Paul's writings to have existed in a complete collection

The reference to Paul’s letters as part of Scripture does not necessarily imply that a formal collection of Paul’s letters existed at that time.

f. Similarities between 2 Peter and Jude:

There is a variety of ways of explaining the similarities:

i. Jude is dependent on 2 Peter

ii. 2 Peter is dependent on Jude

iii. Both are dependent on a common source

iv. Both were written by the same author

g. Lack of institutionalized system of church government
The lack of reference to a clear ecclesiastical system of church government would indicate an earlier rather than later date.

h. Latest date would be 135

It is referred to in the Apocalypse of Peter, one of the apocryphal books which were written in AD 135.
50. 2 Peter: Content

I. Chapter 1
   a. Christological statement (1:1)

   *Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: 2 Peter 1:1*

   There is one article for both God and Savior Jesus Christ which means, in normal Greek, that both titles refer to the same person. This occurs again in 1:11 and then in 3:18. The author of this letter is making a strong Christological statement concerning the deity of Jesus.

   b. Doxology to Christ (3:18)

   *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. 2 Peter 3:18*

   Typically, doxologies in Scripture are given to God. There is only one other doxology given specifically to Christ (Rev 1:4-6) Once again, this indicates a strong doctrinal teaching of the deity of Christ thus reinforcing the Trinitarian doctrine as historically taught by the church- the oneness of God yet his existence in three distinct persons.

   c. Scripture (1:20-21)

   *knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:20-21*

   The individual reader’s interpretation is not the issue being dealt with by these verses; rather Scripture itself is not the result of a writer’s impulse or ingenuity.

II. Chapter 2
   a. 2:20-22 (cf. Hebrews 10:26)

   *For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in
them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. What the true proverb says has happened to them: “The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire. 2 Peter 2:20-22

This is similar language to the warning found in Hebrews 6: 4-8.

b. Denouncing Christ

These two warning passages seem to be addressing the danger of denouncing the faith more than a falling away or lapse of righteous behavior.

III. Chapter 3

a. The delay of the parousia

But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. 2 Peter 3:8-10

The delay of the parousia was a problem for the early church as it has been for the church throughout history. Here, Peter attributes this delay to the mercy of God in allowing time for repentance.

b. Hastening the return of the Lord?

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! 2 Peter 3:11-12

Some translations interpret “hastening the day” as “earnestly desiring”. The former translation is probably more accurate but it poses the question “How can we hasten the day?”
51. 1 John: Introduction

I. Authorship

a. Attributed to the apostle John

Like the Book of Hebrews, 1 John is anonymous; but early church tradition attributes it to John, the brother of James and one of the sons of Zebedee. Clearly the author claims to have been an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus.

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.* 1 John 1:1-3

b. Similarities to the gospel of John

By reading both the Gospel of John and 1 John, it will be apparent that similarities exist in a number of areas:

i. Style

ii. Vocabulary

iii. Theology

iv. Purpose

The following verses demonstrate the similarity of purpose:

*... but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

John 20:31

*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.* 1 John 5:13
II. Date

Tradition has John writing both these books in the AD 90’s, when John would have been an old man living in Ephesus.

III. Audience

The absence of the normal “A to B” salutation would indicate that this is more of a general epistle rather than a letter written to a specific church. However, 1 John 2:18-19 speaks of individuals “going out from us”. This seems to indicate a more personal relationship between John and his readers.

IV. Purpose

a. Address Christological errors

John warns of false prophets by calling them antichrists. Their teaching must have denied the humanity of Christ was common to a group of Gnostics or proto-Gnostics which denied the incarnation of Christ. These were later referred to as Docetists. It comes from the Greek word dokeo which means “to seem”. This belief has its roots in the Greek dualistic philosophy of Plato where spirit is good; matter is bad.

b. Address ethical errors

1 John also the ethical problems associated with dualism which took one of two extremes:

• Asceticism- where the flesh is submitted to extreme discipline and denial in order to keep the spirit pure.

• Hedonism- where all immorality is acceptable because the spirit and flesh or separate.

V. Outline

1 John is a difficult book to outline because of its structure. The following gives a breakdown by subject matter:

a. Preface (1:1-4)

b. Live in the Light (1:5-2:29)

c. Live as children of God (3:1-5:13)

d. Christian Confidence (5:14-21)
52. 1 John (1-3)

I. Chapter 1
   a. Similarity to the Gospel of John
      Similar themes and language is obvious when comparing the opening verses of the Gospel (John 1:1-5) to the opening verses of the epistle (1 John 1:1-4)
   b. Refutation of the Christological error
      Clearly in vv. 1-3, the writer claims to be an eyewitness and emphasizes the various senses of seeing, hearing and touching. This is a refutation of the proto-Gnostics that claimed Christ merely appeared to have come in the flesh.
   c. Contrast between light and darkness
      *This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* 1 John 1:5
      John uses similar light/darkness imagery in his Gospel. (John 1:5)
   d. Opposition to perfectionism
      *In vv. 8-10 he teaches against a doctrine of sinless perfection.*
      *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* 1 John 1:8
   e. Acts of sin vs. practice of sin
      It is important to note that the Greek tense of the verbs in v. 2:1 is aorist. John is speaking of acts of sin rather than the continuing practice of sin.

II. Chapter 2
   a. First sign of Christian faith
      *And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.* 1 John 2:3
   b. Where were the commandments found?
      i. Old Testament teachings
      ii. Scriptures
      iii. Oral gospel traditions
iv. Apostolic teachings

v. The letter itself

c. Second sign

Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.

Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. 1 John 2:9-10

III. Chapter 3

a. Continuing in sin vs. acts of sin

No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. 1 John 3:6

The verb tense used here are present tense rather than aorist. This is referring to habitual sin and not random acts of sin.

b. Third sign

The third sign given in 3:10 is actually a combination of the 1st two signs: living righteously and loving your brother.

c. Fourth sign

The fourth sign is the witness of the Spirit in one’s life.

Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

1 John 3:24
53. 1 John (4-5)

I. Chapter 4

a. Test concerning the Christological heresy

*By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* 1 John 4:2-4

John’s opposition to the Christological heresy associated with proto-Gnosticism is clear in this passage. The answer to this simple question, “has Jesus come in the flesh?” would reveal someone’s allegiance to this theological viewpoint.

b. How do we know what the Spirit is teaching?

Today we don’t have a comprehensive list of questions that will test “orthodoxy”, but we do have reliable means by which to judge heresy vs. truth.

i. Scripture

The canon of Scripture is the ultimate authority by which even creeds should be judged.

ii. Church history

We should be suspicious when some new doctrine comes along (e.g. open Theism) that appears to be in conflict with 1900 years of Christian theology.

iii. Creeds

Creeds can be helpful summaries of doctrine provide they align with Scripture.

iv. The integrity of the teacher

The life and character of the teacher should be considered. The life of a teacher should align with the Christian principals they teach.
II. Chapter 5

a. Textual problem in 5:7

Only the KJV and the RKJV include the following:

“But there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”

There is much evidence that this was not part of the original Greek manuscript and was actually added after AD 1500 in order for it to agree with the Latin Vulgate of the day. If this verse existed in the early manuscripts, it would be hard to imagine the early church fathers not using it as a primary reference when they were working through Trinitarian doctrine. Most modern translations omit this sentence or simple refer to it in a footnote.

b. Jesus coming by "water and blood"

This is probably another refutation of the proto-Gnostic heresy. Jesus not only came through his baptism but he remained through his death.

c. Unforgivable sin

In 5:16 there is a reference to mortal sin and sin that is not mortal. God can forgive any sin provided that repentance exists. However, some sins don’t allow people to repent (e.g. when their hearts have become hardened in their rejection of the Holy Spirit)

d. Jesus, true God and eternal life

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.
1 John 5:20

There are many texts that were used by the early church in putting together the Doctrine of the Trinity. This is one of those that reinforce the deity of Christ.
54. Revelation Introduction

Recommended Resource: *Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book of Revelation* by Bruce M. Metzger

I. Authorship
   a. The author claims to be John (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8)
      He doesn’t qualify himself therefore there is the assumption that the readers who he is.
   b. Tradition states the author was John
      Tradition knows him as John, one of the sons of Zebedee, and one of the 12 disciples. Early references to identity of the author being the Apostle John include:
      i. Justin Martyr
      ii. Melito
      iii. Eusebius
      iv. Irenaeus
   c. Opposition to this came from Dionysius (3rd Century)
      This was based on the difference in ideas, vocabulary, and emphases from the Gospel of John.

II. Date
   a. Probably the mid 90's
   b. Written during a time of persecution
      *I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.* " Rev 1:9
      i. Persecution under Nero was too limited
         (Persecution under Nero was confined to Rome)
      ii. Probably during the persecution of Domitian (81-96)
         Domitian demanded that his subjects refer to him as Lord and God. There appears to be an allusion to this with the mark of the beast.
III. Literary Genre - Apocalyptic Literature
   a. Other examples
      i. Daniel
      ii. Isaiah 24-27
      iii. Ezekiel 38-39
      iv. Zechariah 9-14
      v. Several books from the Apocrypha
         1. Enoch
         2. Apocalypse of Baruch
         3. 2 Esdras
   b. Qualities of Apocalyptic Literature
      i. The view that the world is divided into two camps (good and evil) ruled by God and Satan.
      ii. There is moral dualism between God and Satan, good and evil, not metaphysical dualism between body and spirit.
      iii. Pseudepigraphic authorship
         This is when the real author obviously assumes the name of a more famous person. This is not the case with Revelation but it is true for books like Enoch and 2 Esdras.
      iv. Expecting that the old age was about to end and the new age to begin shortly
      v. Believing that the time of great persecution had begun and sometimes this kind of work is called "tracts for hard times."
      vi. Cosmic and eschatological events taking place
      vii. Fantastic symbolism
      viii. Angelic intervention in the activities of the world
      ix. Predictions as to when the final consummation would take place
   c. Use of Metaphorical Imagery
      It is hard to be a literalist and make sense of the Book of Revelation.
      i. Stars falling
      ii. Altars speaking
      iii. Locusts as large as horses with serpent tails
      iv. A lamb with seven horns
v. A monster with ten horns and seven heads

d. Use of Symbolic Numbers
   i. "Seven" is used 54 times
   ii. "Twelve" is used 23 times
   iii. "Four" is used 16 times

e. Use of Symbolic Color
   i. Purple – royalty
   ii. Black – death
   iii. White - victory, joy, purity

f. Use of various objects and figures
   i. Woman - people or cities
   ii. Horns – power
   iii. Wings – mobility
   iv. Eyes - knowledge, omniscience
   v. Trumpets - superhuman, divine voices
   vi. Sword - Word of God, which judges and punishes
   vii. Heavy Use of the Old Testament
       Much of this metaphoric terminology is borrowed from the Old Testament. R.H. Charles dealt with this OT correlation in a 2- volume commentary on Revelation published in 1910.

IV. Outline
   a. Prologue (1:1-8)
   b. Messages to the Seven Churches (1:9-3:22)
   c. The Seven Seals (4:1-8:2)
      i. The vision of God and the Lamb (4:1-5:14)
      ii. First interlude - Two visions of comfort (7:1-17)
      iii. Opening the seven seals (6:1-17, 8:1-2)
   d. The Seven Trumpets (8:3-11:19)
      i. Opening the seven trumpets (8:3-9:21; 11:15-18)
      ii. Second interlude - the two witnesses (10:1-11:14)
   e. The Dragon and two beasts (12:1-14:20)
f. The Seven Bowls (15:1-18:24)
   i. Opening the seven bowls (15:1-16:21)
   ii. The fall of Babylon (17:1-18:24)

g. The final victory and last judgment (19:1-20:15)

h. The heavenly Jerusalem (21:1-22:5)

i. Epilogue (22:6-2)
55. Revelation- Key Issues

I. Schools of Interpretation

a. Church Historical School
   This view sees the churches addressed in Revelation 2 & 3 as symbolizing the various periods of church history. There is a major lack of commonality amongst proponents of this view due to its speculative nature. It was a popular view in its day but most modern scholars reject this as a valid interpretation.

b. Spiritual School
   Advocates of the spiritual school see this primarily as a work of fiction designed to demonstrate the inevitable victory of good over evil. This is unlikely due to specific historical references (e.g. to Rome).

c. Futuristic School
   This interpretation views everything from chapter 4 and following as future events.

d. Preterist School
   This view sees the Book of Revelation as referring to things that were currently happening or that would happen in the immediate future.

Perhaps the optimum interpretation would be some combination of options “c” and “d”.

II. The Relationship of the Seals, Trumpets and Bowls

There is a question as to how to interpret this revelation with the following possibilities:

a. Consecutive events

b. Six seals with the seventh seal identical to the seven trumpets, which are repeated in the seven bowls

c. Repetition of events

d. Similarities
   i. Trumpets are almost identical to the bowls
   ii. Looks like the end of history after sixth seal (6:12-17), seventh trumpet (11:15-18) and seventh bowl (16:17)
iii. Retelling of the events

We tend to think linearly but people from other parts of the world don’t always argue from a linear perspective. It is entirely possible that the writer of Revelation is using a cyclical pattern in order to emphasize God’s victory through a three-fold pattern of repetition.

III. Letters to the Churches

a. Seven churches

There is no reason to believe that these aren’t actual churches being addressed. There were more than seven churches but this is one of many instances where the writer makes use of the number seven which indicates completeness. Although specific churches are addressed, this is probable that the letter was intended for other churches as well.

b. The one who speaks refers back to the vision in chapter 1

Compare the description of the writer to each church back to the corresponding verse in chapter one:

- 2:1 to 1:16 (the one who holds seven stars in his right hand)
- 2:8 to 1:17-18 (the one who is the first and the last)
- 2:12 to 1:16 (the one with the sharp two-edged sword)
- 2:18 to 1:14-15 (the one with eyes like fire and feet like burnished bronze)
- 3:1 to 1:4 (the one with the seven spirits)
- 3:7 to 1:18 (the one who has the keys to open and shut)
- 3:14 to 1:5 (the beginning of God’s creation-firstborn form the dead)

c. Idea of holding on to Christ and conquering

This is seen in the following verses: 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21

d. Conquering for many of these means dying

e. The book must be read in the context of helping people to overcome and conquer

This is a book that encourages people in the face of adversity and even in the face of death. It was not written as a code to help people decipher a map of the end times.
56. Revelation: Chapters 1-12

I. Prologue (1:1-8)

In the prologue there is an interesting Trinitarian reference:

- God the Father - (him who is and who was is to come)
- The Holy Spirit - (described as the seven Spirits, probably borrowing from Hosea)
- Jesus Christ - (the faithful witness and firstborn from the dead)

II. Seven Churches (1:9-3:33)

The message from Jesus to each of the churches follows a repeated pattern. Jesus is described in light of one of the attributes of chapter 1. He begins with the phrase “I know...” indicating knowledge of their respective struggles. There is also a promise “to him who overcomes there will be granted...”

The various churches most likely represent real historical churches dealing with specific problems. However, since these letters are part of a larger book, it is also intended to be read to the church at large.

III. Book of Life (3:5)

This is not a literal book but a metaphor of something that actually exists. It refers to those who are set in God’s mind as being his children.

IV. Vision (4:1-11)

Chapter 4 begins with throne room vision of God. This is no description of some graven image. God himself is described as having the appearance of a radiant and pure stone. The throne is overshadowed by a rainbow that represents God’s kindness and care, etc.

a. Various creatures (4:7)

   The description is hard to visualize but the idea is they act as worship leaders in praising God.

b. Image of Jesus (4:5)

   Jesus is described as the Lion of Judah who is able to open the scroll. In the next verse he is described as a lamb, indicating that his victory was not secured by force; rather by sacrifice.
It’s important to realize that metaphors are meant to be helpful imagery but should not be pressed too far.

V. Seven Seals

Beginning with chapter 6, we have the first of a three-fold seven series. The first four seals seem to deal with war and the consequences of war. Then for the 5th and 6th seal, the scene shifts to heaven where judgment is brought on rulers of the world by the cry of martyred saints in heaven.

You expect the 7th seal to follow but instead there is an interlude.

VI. Interlude

The interlude consists of two scenes meant to offer comfort.

a. Sealing of the elect

The elect are sealed from judgment. The number 144,000 is symbolic and meant to represent the complete number of God’s people.

b. Glimpse into heaven

This describes the elect as enjoying the benefits of heaven, being clothed in white, being washed in the blood of the lamb.

VII. Seventh Seal - Seven Trumpets

When we finally get to the 7th seal, there is no revelation as with the first six seals. Instead we are introduced to seven trumpets. The intention is probably to say that the 7th seal equals the seven trumpets. The 1st four trumpets relate to natural disasters. The burning mountain of the 2nd trumpet is likely a reference to the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79 which destroyed Pompeii. The 5th and 6th trumpets seem to describe demonic type plagues rather than natural disasters. (v. 9:2- they came out of the bottomless pit)

Even with all of this, the writer of Revelation is depicting mankind as being unwilling to repent.

VIII. Second Interlude

The scroll is given to John to eat, which is described as being sweet in one sense (he knows the future salvation of God; yet it is bitter in another sense (because of God’s judgment on the world)

IX. Measuring of the temple
In chapter 11, there is a measuring of the temple. The Jewish temple was already destroyed at the time of writing. This is a metaphor for the people of God. The people of God represent the church as a whole and their measuring is a metaphoric way of implying that the church exists within God’s protected territory. This is an important concept in understanding that God’s people will be delivered THROUGH tribulation rather than FROM tribulation. God saves us from wrath but not necessarily from martyrdom.

X. Seventh Trumpet (11:15-19)

The 7th trumpet is a brief snapshot of the final consummation of all things. This scene will be covered again. It is important not to read Revelation in a linear dimension. The writer uses a cyclical technique in which various concepts are taught repetitiously for effect.

XI. Birth Story of Jesus (12:14-21)

In chapter 12 we have the birth of the Son of God, the Ascension, and the unsuccessful attempt to destroy the child- all told in the form of a “myth”. It is a “myth” in form and style but not in the sense of it being fictional.

XII. Defeat of the Accuser

In vv. 8-12 there is a heavenly scene that depicts the defeat of Satan and his followers. There is a reference to Satan being conquered by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their (the people of God) testimony. This shows the defeat of Satan in his role as the accuser of God’s people before God.
57. Revelation: Chapters 13-22

I. Beast rising out of the sea
After the “mythical” message of the Christian story in chapter 12, it continues with the beast rising out of the sea in chapter 13. This is probably a reference to the Roman Empire.

II. The number of the beast - Nero Caesar
There is a lot of speculation concerning the number give to the beast in 13:18. Possibly the easiest way to understand the number 666 is as a cryptogram for Nero Caesar. The Hebrew practice of Gematria assigned a numerical value to letters in a word or phrase.

III. View from heaven
There is another shift of scene when things are looked at from a heavenly perspective. God’s glory is revealed as we see Babylon (Rome) is destined for God’s judgment. The 144,000, representing God’s elect, are protected from the coming judgment.

IV. Seven bowls
15:1, ff. described the third and last of the three-fold events. The pouring out of the bowls is a repetition of the kinds of things described in the seals and trumpets.

V. Fall of the great harlot
Chapter 17 describes the fall of the great harlot or beast that is described as making the world drunk with the blood of martyrs. There is a reference to the seven heads or seven mountains on which the woman is seated. This is a description of Rome.

VI. The final victory
In the beginning of chapter 19 there is a description of the final victory. This is a repetition which reinforces that God will win.

VII. Final judgment
Judgment is portrays once again in vv. 11-16. Judgment comes not by conflict, but by the spoken word of Jesus.
VIII. Millennial Reign of Christ

Chapter 20 contains a reference to the millennial reign of Christ. Although this is the only New Testament reference to the millennium, it has been the source of much debate.

IX. Three Views on the Millennium

a. Postmillennialism- Christ will return after a major shift to repentance and “righting” of the world under the influence of the Christian church. This was particularly popular in the early 1900’s but its popularity faded with the advent of WW I.

b. Premillennialism- Christ will return prior to a millennium reign. Some would see the millennium reign as a literal 1000 years while others as simply a metaphoric way of saying an extended period. Dispensationalists added a pre-tribulation rapture to this view.

c. Amillennialism- This is a misnomer in that amillennialists believe in a millennial reign. They simply hold the view that the reign of Christ referred to in Revelation 20, speaks of his reign in the hearts of believers as a present reality.

X. Overview of the Book

This is not a book that was written to help Christians diagram an eschatological chart. It was written for Christians who face hardship and persecution as a reminder that God wins in the end.

XI. New Heaven and Earth

Chapter 21 speaks about the final resting place. The metaphoric descriptions of the new heaven and earth are designed to describe the preciousness of heaven.

XII. Epilogue

Chapter 22 contains the epilogue in v. 6, ff.

*And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book... He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.”* Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! Rev 22: 7, 20