

A Brief Introduction to Each of the Books of the Bible

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M. David Johnson
mdj@theologyfrombelow.org

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General Introduction

This document provides a brief introduction to each of the books of the Bible. But it is not intended to be a “final” document.

In my own continuing studies, I intend to expand this document in the future; using it as a place to assemble and correlate other notes and information about the books of the Bible.

And I encourage you all to do the same, making your copies of this document into a base platform from which many different collections of information might be assembled to the Glory of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

M. D. J.

Note on the Authors of the Books

I hold to the truth that the ultimate author of the entire Bible, and of every individual book within it, is God Himself. The Holy Spirit inspired the human authors of the individual books so that their literary styles and traits are clearly evidenced in their writings, but their words are nevertheless the exact words God intended to relate to us through His Bible.

I also hold to the doctrine of verbal, plenary inspiration as defined by The Chicago Statement on Inerrancy which was established in 1978 by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI). It was adopted on November 18, 1978, at a conference held in Chicago, Illinois. A copy of that statement can be found at

https://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI_1.pdf

Therefore, when I use the title line “Traditional Human Author”, I am also affirming God’s ultimate authorship as well.

01. Genesis

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Moses

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

MacArthur (p.6) says, “It’s estimated that Moses wrote Genesis in approximately 1445 to 1405 b.c.”

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

The wilderness of Sinai

RECIPIENTS:

The Israelite people

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

With respect to the purpose, theme, and theology of Genesis, the first book of the Bible and the first book of the Torah or Pentateuch, (Dockery pp. 121-122) says:

The name Genesis describes what is at least a major theme of the book—beginnings. It recounts the beginnings of the heavens and earth, of all created things within them, of God’s covenant relationship with humankind, of sin, of redemption, of nations, and of God’s chosen people Israel....

The purpose of Genesis was to give the nation Israel an explanation of its existence on the threshold of the conquest of Canaan... Moses had at hand written and oral traditions about Israel's past and records concerning the other great themes of Genesis. He was, however, the first to organize these, select from them those that were appropriate to the divine redemptive purposes, and compose them as they stand. His task as inspired, prophetic author was to clarify to his people how and why God had brought them into being. He also wanted them to know what their mission was as a covenant, priestly nation and how their present situation fulfilled ancient promises.

Close attention to the themes that link Genesis and the remainder of the Pentateuch clarify these purposes. God had revealed to Abraham that he would be granted the land of Canaan (Gen 12:1, 5, 7; 13:15), that his descendants would leave that land for a time (15:13), but that they would be delivered from the land of their oppression to return to the land of promise (15:16). This land would be theirs forever (17:8) as an arena within and from which they would be a means of blessing all nations of the earth (12:2–3; 27:29). Joseph understood this and saw in his own sojourn in Egypt the divine preservation of his people (45:7–8). God had sent him there to save them from physical and spiritual extinction (50:20). The time would come, he said, when God would remember His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and would return them to Canaan (50:24).

LITERARY GENRE:

Historical Narrative.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (aka Israel), Joseph.

02. Exodus

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Moses

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Like Genesis, about 1445 to 1405 B.C.

MacArthur (p. 19) calculates:

At some time during his forty-year role as Israel's leader, beginning at 80 years of age and ending at 120 (7:7; Deut. 34:7), Moses wrote down this second of his five books. More specifically, it would have been after the Exodus and obviously before his death on Mt. Nebo in the plains of Moab. The date of the Exodus (ca. 1445 b.c.) dictates the date of the writing in the 15th century b.c.

Scripture dates Solomon's fourth year of reign, when he began to build the temple (ca. 966/65 b.c.), as being 480 years after the Exodus (1 Kin. 6:1), establishing the early date of 1445 b.c. Jephthah noted that, by his day, Israel had possessed Heshbon for 300 years (Judg. 11:26). Calculating backward and forward from Jephthah, and taking into account different periods of foreign oppression, judgeships and kingships, the wilderness wanderings, and the initial entry and conquest of Canaan under Joshua, this early date is confirmed and amounts to 480 years.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

The wilderness of Sinai

RECIPIENTS:

The Israelite people

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Dockery pp. 136-137) says:

Deciding on a single theme that unifies all the varied materials of Exodus is difficult. One approach views the Sinai meeting where the redeemed nation encountered Yahweh and agreed to enter into covenant with Him as the theological center. The persecution of Israel in Egypt; the birth of Moses, his exile to Midian, and his return to Egypt as Israel's leader; the plagues upon Egypt; and the mighty exodus event itself—these all lead up to the climax of covenant commitment. Likewise, everything after that—the establishment of methods of worship, priesthood, and tabernacle—flow from the covenant and allow it to be put into practice.

A second approach views the presence of Yahweh with and in the midst of Israel as central. Yahweh's saving presence with Israel results in its deliverance from Egyptian slavery (Exod 1–15). Yahweh's continuing presence with Israel calls for obedience to covenant commitments and for worship (Exod 16–40).

A third approach views the lordship of Yahweh as the central theological theme. In Exodus God is revealed as Lord of history (1:1–7:7), Lord of nature (7:8–18:27), Lord of the covenant people Israel (19:1–24:14), and Lord of worship (25:1–40:38)....

The Book of Exodus is the story of two covenant partners—God and Israel. Exodus sets forth in narrative form how Israel became the people of Yahweh and lays out the covenant terms by which the nation was to live as God's people.

Exodus defines the character of the faithful, mighty, saving, holy God who established a covenant with Israel. God's character is revealed both through God's name and God's acts. The most important of God's names is the covenant name Yahweh. Yahweh designates God as the "I am" who is there for His people and acts on their behalf. (See the feature article "Names of God" and the commentary on Exod 3.) Another important name, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" (3:6, 15–16), pictures God as the One who is true to His promises to the patriarchs.

LITERARY GENRE:

Historical Narrative. The Ten Commandments. Chapter 15 is poetry.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Moses, Aaron, Pharaoh, The Israelites.

03. Leviticus

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Moses

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 1445 to 1405 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

The wilderness of Sinai

RECIPIENTS:

The Israelite people

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Water p. 6) says:

Leviticus carries on from the end of Exodus without a break, describing the God-given sacrificial rituals and practices for worship. Holiness and the perfection of God is portrayed throughout the book...

The book answers the question: How can sinful humans approach a holy God? The words “holy” and “holiness” occur over 150 times. Leviticus is filled with laws defining the ways in which God’s people are to worship. The people are instructed to keep their relationship with God alive, and to live holy lives.

LITERARY GENRE:

Directives of the Law. Case Law. Some Historical Narrative.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Moses. Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, Ithamar.

04. Numbers

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Moses

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 1445 to 1405 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

The wilderness of Sinai

RECIPIENTS:

The Israelite people

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Water p. 7) says:

Two themes are apparent: God is faithful to his people, but disobedience is always punished...

While Leviticus covers only a short period of time, Numbers covers nearly 39 years. It records Israel's movements from the last days at Mount Sinai, the wanderings around Kadesh-barnea, to the arrival in the plains of Moab in the fortieth year. This resulted from Israel's disbelief and disobedience to God. For

Israel, what could have been an eleven-day journey became forty years of wandering in the desert.

This book is given the name “Numbers” in the Septuagint, the pre-Christian Greek translation of the Old Testament. This name is derived from the two occasions on which the Israelites were numbered, chapters 1 and 36.

The book’s author is not named. Traditionally, both Jews and Christians have attributed the first five books of the Bible to Moses.

LITERARY GENRE:

Law. Historical Narrative. Poetic Prophecy (Balaam, Chapters 23-24).

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Moses, Aaron.

05. Deuteronomy

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Deuteronomy 1-33: Moses

Deuteronomy 34: Someone other than Moses; possibly Joshua

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 1445 to 1405 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

The wilderness of Sinai

RECIPIENTS:

The Israelite people

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Water p. 8) says:

God renews his covenant with Israel on the plains of Moab just before they enter the Promised Land...

The term deuteronomy signifies the “Second law.” The original teaching of Moses (from God) is repeated, commented upon, explained and enlarged because those who first heard the teachings were now dead, except for Moses, Joshua, and Caleb. This book records three of Moses’ speeches and his last

words. Through this teaching Moses confirms Israel as God's people before handing over his leadership of them to Joshua. He tells them to remember God when they prosper and that they will be disciplined if they disobey God.

LITERARY GENRE:

Re-recitation of the Law. Sermonic Speeches. Poetry (Chapters 32-33).

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Moses, Joshua.

06. Joshua

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Most of the book: Joshua

The last few verses which record Joshua's death: Unknown

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 1380 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

The Land of Canaan

RECIPIENTS:

The Israelite people, after they had settled in Canaan

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Younger p. 174) says:

The book is named after Joshua (Heb. yehoshua‘), the young apprentice and successor to Moses, who was the military commander in the “conquest” of Canaan and the administrator of that land’s allotments to the tribes. Moses renamed Hoshea (Heb. hoshea‘, “salvation”) Joshua (Heb. yehoshua‘, “Yahweh saves”), introducing the Yahwistic theophoric element (Num 13:16)....

The book's canonical narration imposes a number of forms on the presentation. First, the law (Torah) plays a normative role in the book. This can be seen from the very outset. Joshua's (and Israel's) relationship to Yahweh is based on the law and is crucial for Israel's success. Obedience or disobedience to the law determines success or failure.

Second, the book consistently develops the typology of Joshua as parallel to Moses....

Third, the book follows a general, logical sequence: A (preparation for the conquest), B (the conquest's campaigns), B' (the allotment of the conquered land), A' (the conclusion to the conquest)....

Fourth, the book's presentation is arranged along geographic lines. An east-to-west crossing into Canaan (chs. 2–5) is followed by military campaigns directed at the center (6–8), south (9–10), and north (11), concluded by a summary list (12). The division of the land first covers the Transjordanian tribes (13), next the central tribes (14–17), then the peripheral and nongeographic tribes (18–21)...

Finally, land and territory dominate the book of Joshua, which contains 358 place names out of the biblical total of 746. Of these, 198 occur only in Joshua.

LITERARY GENRE:

Historical Narrative.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Joshua, Caleb, Rahab.

07. Judges

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Perhaps Samuel

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Perhaps about 1050 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Israel

RECIPIENTS:

The Israelite people, sometime after Saul became King

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Guest, p. 190) says:

The book of Judges introduces some of the most well-known characters of the Bible—Deborah, Gideon, Samson, and Delilah, for example. Its tales, full of dynamic action and suspense, have inevitably left a lasting impression on readers. Certainly, scholarly interest in the book has never been lacking and has branched into several areas of interest. There have been studies which attempt to reconstruct the lives of the various judges in the context of early Iron Age Canaan as well as studies which attempt to uncover the history of the text's formation.

More recently, some scholars have concentrated on the text as it now exists, noting the careful literary structure of the book, while other areas of interest have included the rhetoric of the text, the interplay of ironic perspectives, the role women are given, and the encoded gender ideologies implicit in the text....

The book of Judges is most easily divided into three major sections: a double prologue (1:1–3:6), a main body (3:7–16:31), and a double epilogue (chs. 17–21).

LITERARY GENRE:

Historical Narrative with prologue and epilogue. Poetry (Chapter 5).

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson.

08. Ruth

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Unknown. Some attribute it to Samuel.

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(West p. 208) writes:

Scholarly opinion on the dating of Ruth ranges from the reign of David to the mid-second century bc, with most scholars falling into two broad groups: those who date the book before the exile, and those who date the book after the exile. The internal evidence (including subject matter and language) and the external evidence (including sociohistorical, literary, and theological context) are not conclusive, and so scholars reach different conclusions from the same evidence (Larkin 1996: 18–19). Some scholars posit both an early and a later authorship by suggesting that it is quite possible that an early oral version of the story was later edited and elaborated in written form

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Israel

RECIPIENTS:

The Israelite people; sometime after David became King.

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(West p. 208) says:

Ruth is a remarkable book, offering a range of different interpretations. Some readers insist that the meaning and significance of the book of Ruth depend on correctly determining its date of composition. The traditional Jewish view, as recorded in the Babylonian Talmud (B. Bat. 14b–15a), states that Ruth was written by the prophet Samuel. That Samuel wrote Ruth is rather unlikely, however, given the internal evidence of the Bible itself, which is that Samuel died sometime before David, who is referred to in the genealogies in 4:17, 18–22....

Those who date the book of Ruth before the exile, in the time of the monarchy, tend to argue that the primary purpose of the book is to establish David's lineage and commend the Davidic dynasty. Read within this historical and ideological context the book of Ruth deals with David's known Moabite ancestry by Judaizing his Moabite great-grandmother. In so doing it "encourages popular acceptance of the Davidic dynasty by appealing to the continuity of Yahweh's guidance in the lives of Israel's ancestors and in particular of David's own ancestors".... Such a purpose would also explain the prominence given in the book to the practice of levirate marriage, which made possible the perpetuation of a patriarchal line in those families where the husband died before his wife had conceived any offspring.... A secondary, but related, concern of the book of Ruth in this sociohistorical context could be the consolidation and legitimization of the Davidic dynasty; the book of Ruth demonstrates the ease with which neighboring peoples are incorporated into the political kingdom of Israel. And, significantly,

when the birth of Ruth's son is celebrated (4:14), the women ask that his name may be renowned in Israel as well as in Judah,

LITERARY GENRE:

Historical Narrative.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Naomi, Ruth, Boaz.

09. 1 Samuel

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Unknown. Some attribute it mostly to Samuel himself, with later parts by Nathan and/or Gad.

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Perhaps about 950 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Israel

RECIPIENTS:

The Israelite people during Solomon's reign

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(McGarvey pp. 25-26) says:

This book begins with the last of the judges and closes with the death of the first king. It contains, therefore, an account of the change in the form of government. It shows how the political and religious degeneration, which had been going on in the latter part of the rule of the judges, sank to its lowest point in the moral corruption of the priesthood, when the people came to abhor the sacrifices of Jehovah on account of the wickedness of the priests who offered

them. It shows also that political degradation reached its lowest point with the degradation of religion; and that then the ark of the covenant, which was the symbol of God's presence with Israel, was captured and taken away by their old enemies, the Philistines. This introduced an irregularity in the worship on the part of those who continued to serve God, and it led to a demand on the part of the people for a king to rule over them. This demand was treated as a sin of the people, because it was their own sins, and not an inherent defect in the form of government which God had given them, that brought about the failure.

Nevertheless, God had foreseen this result, and had provided beforehand for it, and consequently he gave them a king in the person of Saul the son of Kish. In the meantime the prophet Samuel had brought about a great religious reformation among the people, and if Saul had proved to be a faithful servant of God, the affairs of the whole nation would in every way have been greatly improved. But though Saul was a skillful warrior, and fought many victorious battles, he turned away from God in many things; and his career ended in death on the battlefield. His reign closed, as did the rule of the judges, in a defeat which left the people once more in subjection to the Philistines, once more illustrating the rule that righteousness exalteth a nation, while sin is a disgrace to any people. This is the lesson most strikingly taught by this portion of Israel's history. The book also shows how God prepared another man in the person of David to take the place of Saul, and to reign more worthily than he did. It also strikingly exhibits the career of the greatest prophet who had thus far appeared in Israel since the days of Moses; for Samuel was not only an eminently good man, but he was also a

successful ruler, and even a king-maker, seeing that under God he selected and anointed as kings both Saul and David; and until his death, which was mourned by the whole nation, both these men and all the people looked to him for counsel in every great crisis. From this time forward the special officers raised up from time to time to represent God are prophets, as under the preceding period they had been Judges.

LITERARY GENRE:

Historical Narrative.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Samuel, Saul, and David.

10. 2 Samuel

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Unknown. Some attribute it mostly to Samuel himself, with later parts by Nathan and/or Gad. David composed the poetry (See Literary Genre below).

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Perhaps about 950 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Israel

RECIPIENTS:

The Israelite people during Solomon's reign

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(McGarvey pp. 26-27) says:

In the Hebrew Bible our two books of Samuel are but one; and in the English the history goes on from the one into the other without a break. The division was made for convenience in making references and in finding particular passages. Neither of them bears the name Samuel because Samuel wrote it; but because he figured so largely in starting the course of events which they record. He died before the events in First Samuel had all transpired. The present book

opens with David's accession to the throne, first over Judah, and after a seven-year war, over all Israel. The history had now reached the point at which another of the ancient promises of God began to be fulfilled; for it was promised to Jacob, "A nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins"; and Judah had been pointed out as the son of Jacob through whom this promise should be fulfilled; for in Jacob's dying prophecy about his sons he had said, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah till Shiloh come." In fulfillment of this promise, David, a descendant of Judah by the genealogy recorded in the book of Ruth, was now a reigning king, and his posterity were to reign in succession after him. To show this was a leading design of the book. It also shows, by the career of David, even more strikingly than p 27 was seen in the career of Saul, that prosperity attends a king while he serves God, and adversity comes with disobedience; for this book, from the point at which it finds David on the throne, is divided into two very distinct parts, which may be styled, The Prosperous Part of David's Reign (chapters 5–10), and David's Adversity (chapters 12–24). The two parts are separated by the great sin which has been associated with David's name from the day it was exposed until now. The same great lesson is taught in the careers of many men prominently connected with David. This makes the second book of Samuel one of the most profitable for reading and reflection of all the books of the Old Testament....

During David's reign the reader should not fail to observe that God's chosen messengers to declare his will from time to time, in matters both of

government and of morals, continued to exercise authority even over the king.

This was especially true of Nathan and Gad, of whom we know little besides this.

LITERARY GENRE:

Historical Narrative. Poetry (1:19-27; 22:1-51; 23:1-7).

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, David, Joab, Bathsheba, Absalom, Nathan.

11. 1 Kings

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Unknown. Some attribute it to Jeremiah.

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 560 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Probably Babylon

RECIPIENTS:

Probably the people of the nation of Judah in exile

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(B&H Editorial Staff p. 101-102) says:

Melakim, the Hebrew title, means “kings.” Originally a single work, 1 and 2 Kings was first divided into two books by the Greek translators (second century bc), and English Bibles follow this pattern. The Greek version used the titles 3 and 4 Kingdoms....

After Solomon’s splendid rule, culminating in the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem, the kingdom divided, and to confront idolatry God raised up prophets, notably Elijah, who opposed the evil Ahab....

Since this book was originally the first half of a single composition, the purpose for the books now called 1 and 2 Kings must be considered together. This work answered important questions for Israelites (probably living in the years of exile in Babylon) about the period of the kings from God's perspective. If they were now in exile, why had this happened, especially since Solomon's rule had been so splendid? Had the later kings failed militarily? politically? economically? The answer was that the kings and the people under them had all failed religiously. They had abandoned the Lord, their true King, and He had sent three painful lessons to teach them the importance of staying true to Him. First, He divided Israel into two kingdoms (1 Kings 12, about 931 bc); second, He sent the idolatrous northern kingdom into permanent captivity through the Assyrians (2 Kings 17, about 722 bc); third, He sent the idolatrous southern kingdom into temporary exile through the Babylonians (2 Kings 25, about 586 bc).

Thus, the author wrote a highly selective account of the kings, evaluating each one as to whether he did right or evil in the eyes of the Lord. The author's religious perspective is also seen in that about a third of the narrative focuses on the prophetic ministries of Elijah and Elisha. God's people who study the books of Kings today should do so with this original purpose in mind.

LITERARY GENRE:

Historical Narrative.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, David, Solomon, The Queen of Sheba, Adonijah, Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Ahab, Jezebel, Elijah, Nathan.

12. 2 Kings

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Unknown. Some attribute it to Jeremiah.

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 560 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

In Babylon. Spencer (p. 34) writes:

In 2 Kings 17:22–23, we are told, “The people of Israel walked in all the sins which Jeroboam did; they did not depart from them, until the Lord removed Israel out of his sight, as he had spoken by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day” (RSV). This same concept is also stated in 13:23 and 17:34, 41. The book ends with the king of Judah, Jehoiachin, in Babylon. By this we can deduce the second book of the Kings was completed during the captivity of the Jews. .

RECIPIENTS:

The people of the nation of Judah in exile

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(B&H Editorial Staff pp. 101, 111) says:

Melakim, the Hebrew title, means “kings.” Originally a single work, 1 and 2 Kings was first divided into two books by the Greek translators (second century bc), and English Bibles follow this pattern. The Greek version used the titles 3 and 4 Kingdoms....

Even after Elisha’s ministry, Israel persisted in idolatry and so went into permanent captivity; yet Judah, despite the prophets and a few righteous kings, continued to be so wicked that God sent Nebuchadnezzar to remove them to Babylon.... see the discussion in the Purpose section of 1 Kings.

LITERARY GENRE:

Historical Narrative.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Elijah, Elisha, Gehazi, The Shunammite Woman, Sons of the Prophets, Ahab, Jezebel, Ahaziah, Jehu, Jehoshaphat, Hazael, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Josiah, Ben-Hadad, Sennacherib.

13. 1 Chronicles

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Unknown. Some attribute it to Ezra.

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 450 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Probably Jerusalem

RECIPIENTS:

The people of Judah who had returned from exile

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(B&H Editorial Staff pp. 117-118) says:

First divided by the Greek translators (second century bc), 1 and 2 Chronicles were originally one book, Dibre Hayyamin, “events of the days,” in the Hebrew Bible. The English title comes from Chronicon, the name given by the Latin translator Jerome....

After extensive introductory genealogies, the author tells how David ruled for 40 years under the blessing of God, particularly as he lavished attention on Jerusalem, the priesthood, and preparation for building the temple....

Since this book was originally the first half of a single composition, the purpose for the books now called 1 and 2 Chronicles must be considered together. This work answered important questions for Israelites who had returned after years of exile in Babylon. Their times were difficult and disappointing. Did they still fit into God's plan? Were the promises of God still applicable to them? Further, what religious and political institutions were important? Finally, what lessons from the past could they learn to keep from making the same mistakes?

The author answered these questions by compiling a highly selective religious history. The covenant God made with David concerning an eternal dynasty was still in effect. Even with no Davidic king on the throne, they were still God's people and could still wait in hope for restoration of the monarchy. While waiting, they could do the things God required, such as offer the right sacrifices with the right priests at the right place. Finally, although David and Solomon are presented as ideal kings, the apostasy of later kings is noted as the cause of Babylonian exile (2 Ch 36:16). God's people who study the books of Chronicles today should do so with the author's original purposes in mind.

LITERARY GENRE:

Historical Narrative. Genealogy. Poetry (by David, Chapters 16, 29).

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (aka Israel), The Twelve Sons of Jacob, Saul, David, Solomon, Samuel, Nathan, Joab.

14. 2 Chronicles

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Unknown. Some attribute it to Ezra.

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 450 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Probably Jerusalem

RECIPIENTS:

The people of Judah who had returned from exile

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(B&H Editorial Staff pp. 117, 123, 125) says:

First divided by the Greek translators (second century bc), 1 and 2 Chronicles were originally one book, Dibre Hayyamin, “events of the days,” in the Hebrew Bible. The English title comes from Chronicon, the name given by the Latin translator Jerome....

After Solomon’s glorious reign, which culminated in the dedication of the temple, kings of the Davidic dynasty—some righteous and some evil—continued ruling in Jerusalem, ending in the destruction of the temple and the exile....

Because 1 and 2 Chronicles first existed as a single composition, see the discussion in the Purpose section of 1 Chronicles.

LITERARY GENRE:

Historical Narrative.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Solomon, Rehoboam, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Josiah, The Queen of Sheba.

15. Ezra

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Unknown. Some attribute it to Ezra himself.

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 430 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Probably Jerusalem

RECIPIENTS:

The people of Judah who had returned from exile

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Ryrie pp. 85-86) says:

Chapters 1–6 describe the return of about fifty thousand Jewish people led by Zerubbabel.

Chapters 7–10 record the return of six or seven thousand eighty-one years later under the leadership of the priest Ezra. Cyrus was king when the first happened (538–530), and Artaxerxes ruled when Ezra led his group back (464–423).

The events of the book of Esther took place between Ezra 6 and 7...

The first group under Zerubbabel went right to work laying a foundation for a new Temple in Jerusalem (3:7–13). But opposition from people who had settled on the land before the group returned stopped the work from 534 to 520. However, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah urged the people to get with it again, which they did, completing the Temple in 515 (chapters 5–6). You might want to read Haggai and Zechariah at this point.

The second group under Ezra brought valuable gifts to the Temple, but they found the spiritual condition of the people to be in bad shape. Many, including priests, had married heathen women (9:2), which practice God had proscribed in Deuteronomy 7:3–4, so Ezra spent his efforts calling the people back to obedience to God's law. They responded by confessing their sins (9:5–15), promising God to obey Him (10:1–8), and by separating from their heathen wives (10:9–44). Even today God does not want His children marrying anyone who is not a believer (2 Corinthians 6:14).

LITERARY GENRE:

Historical Narrative. Court documents and lists.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Zerubbabel, Ezra, Cyrus, Darius, Haggai, Zechariah.

16. Nehemiah

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Unknown. Some attribute it to Nehemiah himself.

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 430 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Probably Jerusalem

RECIPIENTS:

The people of Judah who had returned from exile

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Ryrie pp. 86-87) says:

A contemporary of Ezra (of the preceding book) and of the prophet Malachi (who wrote the last book in the Old Testament), Nehemiah was a “cupbearer” to King Artaxerxes I (464–423) of Persia. That meant he was the king’s trusted advisor, whose duties, among others, included certifying that nothing the king drank was poison...

On receiving word that the walls of Jerusalem were still in ruins (although the first group under Zerubbabel had returned 84 years before), Nehemiah became

concerned to return to Palestine to lead the people in rebuilding them. Without walls, the city of Jerusalem would be defenseless against attack. First he prayed about the matter, then asked the king for permission to go back to Palestine (chapter 1). Permission being granted, Nehemiah made the journey and surveyed the condition of the walls (chapter 2). He then organized the work of rebuilding, beat back all opposition, and completed the project in exactly fifty-two days (chapters 3–7)...

Ezra then led the people into a revival of commitment to God similar to that which he had done thirteen years earlier (as reported in Ezra 9–10) (chapters 8–10)...

As usual, they soon forgot their commitment. In the meantime, Nehemiah had returned to Persia (about 432, see 13:6), but when he heard about the defection of the people, he returned to Palestine (about 425) to cleanse the Temple, reestablish Sabbath worship, and make those who had married heathen wives put them away (chapters 11–13). Ryrie, C. C. (1983).

LITERARY GENRE:

Memoirs (of Nehemiah). Court documents and lists. Ezra's preaching (Chapters 8-10).

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Nehemiah, Artaxerxes, Sanballat, Tobiah, Gesham.

17. Esther

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Unknown. Jewish tradition holds that the author was Mordecai.

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 465 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Probably in Susa, which was then the Capital of Persia

RECIPIENTS:

The Jewish exiles living in Susa and in the surrounding territory of Persia

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Ryrie pp. 87-88) says:

This event happened during a ten-year portion (483–473) of the reign of King Ahasuerus (his Greek name was Xerxes I, 486–465) and between the time Zerubbabel led his group back to Palestine and Ezra led his. This places the book of Esther during the 58 years that lapsed between chapters 6 and 7 of the book of Ezra. During those same years both Confucius and Buddha died...

Ahasuerus ordered his queen, Vashti, to appear at a drinking party, but she refused. Not wanting to let a women's liberation movement get started in his

kingdom, he divorced her (chapter 1) and called for a beauty contest to find a replacement queen, and Esther won (chapter 2).

Enter the villain (sic), Haman, who got the king to sign a decree to destroy all the Jews in the kingdom (chapter 3).

Enter Mordecai, Esther's cousin, who advised Esther how to p 88 approach the king properly to plead for the lives of her fellow Jews and to get rid of Haman (chapters 4–7). Read how the king and Mordecai circumvented the king's previous decree so that the Israelites could defend themselves against their attackers (chapters 8–10).

LITERARY GENRE:

Historical Narrative.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Esther, Mordecai, Haman, Ahaserous (aka Xerxes), Vashti.

18. Job

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Anonymous and Unknown. Perhaps Moses, Job himself, or Elihu.

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

It could have been written at anytime from Moses to Malachi.

Google AI speculates:

The exact date of the Book of Job's composition is unknown, but most scholars place it within the 5th or 6th century BCE, during the post-Babylonian exile period. This era is characterized by the use of post-exilic Hebrew and Aramaic influences in the text. While the book's narrative framework may have been based on earlier oral traditions, the written form we have today is believed to have emerged later.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Unknown.

RECIPIENTS:

Unknown. May have been the Israelite people in general.

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Water p. 18) says:

Job was a “blameless and upright” man (1:1) who lost everything, which seems totally unjust. In three cycles of debate with his friends, they argue that God judges the wicked and conclude that Job must be wicked. Job challenges the reader with the difficult question, “If God is a God of mercy, why do the righteous suffer?”...

The book of Job does not explain the reason for innocent suffering but rather gives Job a glimpse of God’s greatness, goodness and wisdom. See 38:1–42:6. In chapter 42 Job acknowledges God’s majesty and sovereignty and stops demanding an answer to the “why?” of his situation.

LITERARY GENRE:

Wisdom Literature. Poetic Dialogs. Historical Narrative in prologue and epilogue.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Satan, Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu, Job’s Wife.

19. Psalms

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

The titles of 70 of the 150 Psalms specifically attribute them to David. Others may have been authored by David as well. Asaph wrote several of the Psalms. So did the Sons of Korah. Other named authors are Moses, Solomon, Heman, and Ethan. Others are anonymous.

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Moses would have been the earliest writer, around 1445 to 1405 B.C. David would have written between about 1050 B.C. and 970 B.C. Other writers would have been in that temporal vicinity or later.

B&H Editorial Staff (p. 160) says:

Perhaps Finally Compiled Around 400 BC.... The collection grew gradually over time. For example, “Book One” (Pss 1–41) could have been completed early in Solomon’s time. The “Asaph Collection” (Pss 73–83) and the “Songs of Ascents” (Pss 120–134) were perhaps added as a group. The final compilation probably did not occur until after the second temple had been completed.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Most likely in various locations throughout Israel

RECIPIENTS:

B&H Editorial Staff (p. 161) says:

The Israelite People Living in Their Land... Each of the 150 psalms was first intended for a particular audience. Sometimes the psalm title is suggestive, for example the “Songs of Ascents” (120–134; “Songs of Degrees,” KJV) were evidently composed as songs for Israelite travelers to sing as they were going up (literally) to Jerusalem. The Psalter in its final form was designed as “The Hymnal of Second-Temple Judaism.”

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Water p. 19) says:

The psalms reveal a loving God who is not only the Savior and Shepherd of his own people, but also the Creator, Sustainer, Judge and King of the whole world...

The name of the book of Psalms comes from a Greek word meaning “a song sung to the accompaniment of a plucked instrument.” The psalms were the hymn-book of the Israelites. They were used in the two temples as well as for personal use. A large number of themes are included in the psalms but their common theme is worship. The intent of the psalms is to kindle in the souls of men and women a devotion and affection for God, the Creator and Lord.

LITERARY GENRE:

Poetry.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, David, Moses, Asaph, Solomon, Sons of Korah, Heman, Ethan.

20. Proverbs

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Solomon wrote 1:8-22:16 and 25:1-29:27. Agur wrote 30:1-33. Lemuel wrote 31:1-9.

Two unnamed authors wrote 22:17-24:22. The unknown final compiler probably also wrote the prologue (1:1-7) and epilogue (31:10-31).

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

B&H Editorial Staff (p. 170) says:

Solomon may have put his own proverbs into written form before 930 bc.

The later contributions could have been completed by 700 bc. Some scholars believe the book of Proverbs was not edited into its final form until after the Jews returned from their Babylonian exile, perhaps the fifth century bc.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Israel

RECIPIENTS:

The Israelite people living in their own land

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Water p. 20) says:

The key theme in Proverbs is wisdom, which is mentioned one hundred and four times. Proverbs points out that this wisdom is available to everyone. Wise people are depicted as those who heed God's commands while the foolish ignore them...

Proverbs is a collection of practical, ethical precepts about day-to-day living. They are arranged in balanced pairs of thoughts using contrasting parallelism. Teaching with the use of proverbs is one of the world's most ancient methods of instruction. Solomon's writing cover a broad range of topics, emphasizing correct moral and religious behavior that should be seen in God's people.

LITERARY GENRE:

Poetic Wisdom Literature.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Personified: Wisdom, Folly, The Wise, The Fool, The Simple.

21. Ecclesiastes

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Solomon

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Probably near the end of Solomon's reign, i.e. about 935 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Israel

RECIPIENTS:

The Israelite people living in their own land

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Water p. 21) says:

Ecclesiastes is the Bible's most philosophical book. Its perspective is human wisdom and thus has some verses which run counter to the general teaching of Scripture, such as, "A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work" (2:24). The writer is pointing out the folly of human reasoning in order to focus on the only true satisfaction which is to be found in God...

Ecclesiastes is sort of an Old Testament treatise for worldly people. It is as if the author is saying: “Let’s see what life without God is like. Yes, life is indeed futile and miserable and meaningless, but life with God makes all the difference.” Solomon shows the pointlessness of things that people commonly look to for happiness: human learning, politics, sensual delight, honor, powers, riches and possessions.

LITERARY GENRE:

Wisdom Literature (some in prose; some in poetry).

MAIN CHARACTERS:

The Teacher (aka Qoheleth), The Narrator, The Wise, The Fool, The Rich, The Poor, Humanity in general.

22. Song of Solomon

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Solomon

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Probably near the beginning of Solomon's reign, i.e. about 965 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Israel

RECIPIENTS:

The Israelite people living in their own land

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Water p. 22) says:

No Bible book has been interpreted in so many different ways as the Song of Songs. Most of the interpretations fall into two categories: literal or allegorical.

1. Allegorical
 - The Jewish Talmud, the official teaching of Orthodox Jews, states that it is an allegory of God's love for Israel.
 - Some Christian commentators extend this interpretation to say that it is an allegory of God's love for his people, the Christian Church.

2. Literal

- Theodore of Mopsuestia, 4th century, said that it was a love poem that Solomon wrote in honor of his marriage.
- Some Christian commentators extend this interpretation to say that it is a beautiful depiction of a married couple...

The directly sensuous language in this book has been criticized. Some say this represents the holy affections that exist between God and his people while others say that this is a description of one of God's gifts: the unashamed appreciation of physical attraction.

LITERARY GENRE:

Wisdom Literature.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Solomon, His Beloved (aka The Shulamite Woman).

23. Isaiah

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Isaiah the prophet. The name Isaiah means “The Lord is salvation”. (Hartley) specifies:

ישָׁעָיהוּ, yesha'eyahu; “the salvation of Yahweh”.

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 183) says, “Isaiah, the son of Amoz, ministered in and around Jerusalem as a prophet to Judah during the reigns of four kings of Judah: Uzziah (called “Azariah” in 2 Kin.), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1), from ca. 739–686 b.c.”

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Jerusalem

RECIPIENTS:

(Hartley) says:

King Uzziah (a.k.a. Azariah) reigned 787-736 BC.

King Jotham reigned (as coregent) 756-741 BC.

King Ahaz reigned (as coregent) 741-736 BC. (and as sole ruler) 736-725 BC.

Hezekiah reigned 725-697 BC.

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

Messianic Prophecy. MacArthur, p. 183) says:

Christ in ... Isaiah

The Book of Isaiah presents one of the most startling examples of messianic prophecy in the OT. With vivid imagery, Isaiah depicts the future Christ as the Suffering Servant, who was “led as a lamb to the slaughter” (53:7) and “shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities” (53:11).

Other messianic prophecies found in Isaiah with NT fulfillments include 7:14 (Matt. 1:22, 23); 9:1–2 (Matt. 4:12–16); 9:6 (Luke 2:11; Eph. 2:14–18); 11:1 (Luke 3:23, 32; Acts 13:22, 23); 11:2 (Luke 3:22); 28:16 (1 Pet. 2:4–6); 40:3–5 (Matt. 3:1–3); 42:1–4 (Matt. 12:15–21); 42:6 (Luke 2:29–32); 50:6 (Matt. 26:67; 27:26, 30); 52:14 (Phil. 2:7–11); 53:3 (Luke 23:18; John 1:11; 7:5); 53:4, 5 (Rom. 5:6, 8); 53:7 (Matt. 27:12–14; John 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19); 53:9 (Matt. 27:57–60); 53:12 (Mark 15:28); 61:1 (Luke 4:17–19, 21).

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2:29–32); 50:6 (Matt. 26:67; 27:26, 30); 52:14 (Phil. 2:7–11); 53:3 (Luke 23:18; John 1:11; 7:5); 53:4, 5 (Rom. 5:6, 8); 53:7 (Matt. 27:12–14; John 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19); 53:9 (Matt. 27:57–60); 53:12 (Mark 15:28); 61:1 (Luke 4:17–19, 21).

LITERARY GENRE:

Prophecy. Historical Narrative. Poetry and Prose.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Isaiah and the four Kings listed under “Recipients” above.

24. Jeremiah

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Jeremiah the Prophet. The name means “Yahweh has raised up”. Heyink specifies:

יִרְמֵיהּ (yirmeyah) .The son of Hilkiah

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

ca. 627–586 B.C., during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah; Kings of Judah; i.e. from the thirteenth year of Josiah’s reign to the fall of Jerusalem.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Primarily in Jerusalem, but perhaps small parts were written in Egypt and/or Babylon as well. MacArthur, p.194) indicates:

After 586 b.c., Jeremiah was forced to go with a fleeing remnant of Judah to Egypt (Jer. 43, 44). He was possibly still ministering in 570 b.c. A rabbinic note claims that when Babylon invaded Egypt in 568/67 b.c. Jeremiah was taken captive to Babylon. He could have lived even to pen the book’s closing scene ca. 561 b.c. in Babylon, when Judah’s king Jehoiachin, captive in Babylon since 597 b.c., was allowed liberties in his last days (52:31–34). Jeremiah, if still alive at that time, would have been between 85 and 90 years old.

RECIPIENTS:

Mostly the people of Judah, but occasionally other nations as well, including Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar and Hazor, Elam, and Babylon.

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

The coming judgment on Judah. MacArthur, pp.195-196) says:

The main theme of Jeremiah is judgment upon Judah (chaps. 1–29) with restoration in the future messianic kingdom (23:3–8; 30–33). Whereas Isaiah devoted many chapters to a future glory for Israel (Is. 40–66), Jeremiah gave far less space to this subject. Since God’s judgment was imminent he concentrated on current problems as he sought to turn the nation back from the point of no return.

A secondary theme is God’s willingness to spare and bless the nation only if the people repent. Though this is a frequent emphasis, it is most graphically portrayed at the potter’s shop (18:1–11). A further focus is God’s plan for Jeremiah’s life, both in his proclamation of God’s message and in his commitment to fulfill all of His will (1:5–19; 15:19–21). Other themes include: (1) God’s longing for Israel to be tender toward Him, as in the days of first love (2:1–3); (2) Jeremiah’s servant tears, as “the weeping prophet” (9:1; 14:17); (3) the close, intimate relationship God had with Israel and that He yearned to keep (13:11); (4) suffering, as in Jeremiah’s trials (11:18–23; 20:1–18) and God’s sufficiency in all trouble (20:11–13); (5) the vital role that God’s Word can play in life (15:16); (6) the place of faith in expecting restoration from the God for whom nothing is too

difficult (chap. 32, especially vv. 17, 27); and (7) prayer for the coordination of God's will with God's action in restoring Israel to its land (33:3, 6–18).

Christ in ...Jeremiah: The picture of Christ remains interwoven throughout the prophecies of Jeremiah. Christ as the “fountain of living waters” (2:13; John 4:14) stands in stark contrast to the judgment poured over the unrepentant nation of Judah. Jeremiah also portrays Christ as the “balm in Gilead” (8:22), the good Shepherd (23:4), “a righteous Branch” (23:5), “the Lord our righteousness” (23:6), and David the King (30:9).

LITERARY GENRE:

Prophecy. Historical Narrative. Poetry and Prose.

Prophecy; with vivid descriptions and attention-grabbing physical metaphors. For example, consider the rod of the almond tree (1:11), the boiling pot (1:13), words as fire and people as wood (5:14), the ruined belt (13:1-9), the potter and the clay (18:1-6), the broken jar (19:1-11), the Righteous Branch (23:1-8), and the good figs and the rotten figs (24:1-10).

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Jeremiah, the five kings listed under “Date of Authorship” above, Baruch (Jeremiah's scribe), Passhur the Priest (Chapter 20), Hananiah the false prophet (Chapter 28), Jeremiah's cousin Hanamel (Chapter 32). Ebed-melech (Chapter 38), Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon and Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard (Chapter 39), Gedaliah and Johanan (Chapter 41), and various others.

25. Lamentations

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Jeremiah the Prophet

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Probably shortly after 586 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Probably Jerusalem; or perhaps in Babylon.

RECIPIENTS:

Jewish witnesses to the Fall of Jerusalem

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur pp. 202–203) says:

The chief focus of Lamentations is on God's judgment in response to Judah's sin. This theme can be traced throughout the book (1:5, 8, 18, 20; 3:42; 4:6, 13, 22; 5:16). A second theme is the hope found in God's compassion (as in 3:22–24, 31–33; cf. Ps. 30:3–5). Though the book deals with disgrace, it turns to God's great faithfulness (3:22–25) and closes with grace as Jeremiah moves from lamentation to consolation (5:19–22).

God's sovereign judgment represents a third current in the book. His holiness was so offended by Judah's sin that He ultimately brought the destructive calamity. Babylon was chosen to be His human instrument of wrath (1:5, 12, 15; 2:1, 17; 3:37, 38; cf. Jer. 50:23). Jeremiah mentions Babylon more than 150 times from Jer. 20:4 to 52:34, but in Lamentations he never once explicitly names Babylon or its king, Nebuchadnezzar. Only the Lord is identified as the One who dealt with Judah's sin.

Fourth, because the sweeping judgment seemed to be the end of every hope of Israel's salvation and the fulfillment of God's promises (cf. 3:18), much of the book appears in the mode of prayer: (1) 1:11, which represents a wailing confession of sin (cf. v. 18); (2) 3:8, with its anguish when God "shuts out my prayer" (cf. Jer. 7:16; Lam. 3:43–54); (3) 3:55–59, where Jeremiah cries to God for relief, or 3:60–66, where he seeks for recompense to the enemies (which Jer. 50–51 guarantees); and (4) 5:1–22, with its appeal to heaven for restored mercy (which Jer. 30–33 assures), based on the confidence that God is faithful (3:23).

Christ in ... Lamentations: The tears of Jeremiah flowed from the deep love he had for the people of Israel (3:48–49). In this same way, Christ Himself wept over the city of Jerusalem, crying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Matt. 23:37–39; Luke 19:41–44). While Christ must judge those who rebel against Him, He also feels great sorrow over the loss of His beloved people.

LITERARY GENRE:

Poetic Acrostic Lament.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Jeremiah, The Daughter of Zion (i.e. the people of Judah personified).

26. Ezekiel

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Ezekiel the Prophet

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 570 B.C. The final compiling of the book would most likely have occurred sometime after the latest dated prophecy, i.e. that the land of Egypt was to be given to Nebuchadnezzar. That prophecy was made in 571 B.C., cf. Ezekiel 29:17, “And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first month, in the first day of the month...” (KJV).

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Babylon

RECIPIENTS:

Jewish exiles living in Babylon.

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur pp. 208, 210-211) says:

The “glory of the Lord” is central to Ezekiel, appearing in 1:28; 3:12, 23; 10:4, 18; 11:23; 43:4, 5; 44:4. The book includes graphic descriptions of the disobedience of Israel and Judah, despite God’s kindness (chap. 23; cf. chap. 16). It shows God’s desire for Israel to bear fruit that He can bless; however, selfish

indulgence had left Judah ready for judgment, like a torched vine (chap. 15). References are plentiful to Israel’s idolatry and its consequences, such as Pelatiah dropping dead (11:13), a symbolic illustration of overall disaster for the people....

Many picturesque scenes illustrate spiritual principles. Among these are Ezekiel eating a scroll (chap. 2); the faces on four angels representing aspects of creation over which God rules (1:10); a “barbershop” scene (5:1–4); graffiti on temple walls reminding readers of what God really wants in His dwelling place, namely holiness and not ugliness (8:10); and sprinkled hot coals depicting judgment (10:2, 7).

Chief among the theological themes are God’s holiness and sovereignty. These are conveyed by frequent contrast of His bright glory against the despicable backdrop of Judah’s sins (1:26–28; often in chaps. 8–11; and 43:1–7). Closely related is God’s purpose of glorious triumph so that all may “know that I am the Lord.” This divine “trademark,” God’s signature authenticating His acts, is mentioned more than 60 times, usually with a judgment (6:7; 7:4), but occasionally after the promised restoration (34:27; 36:11, 38; 39:28).

Another feature involves God’s angels carrying out His program behind the scenes (1:5–25; 10:1–22). A further important theme is God’s holding each individual accountable for pursuing righteousness (18:3–32).

Ezekiel also stresses sinfulness in Israel (2:3–7; 8:9, 10) and other nations (throughout chaps. 25–32). He deals with the necessity of God’s wrath to deal with sin (7:1–8; 15:8); God’s frustration of man’s devices to escape from besieged Jerusalem (12:1–13; cf. Jer. 39:4–7); and God’s grace pledged in the

Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:1–3) being fulfilled by restoring Abraham’s people to the land of the covenant (chaps. 34, 36–48; cf. Gen. 12:7). God promises to preserve a remnant of Israelites through whom He will fulfill His restoration promises and keep His inviolate Word.

Christ in … Ezekiel: Ezekiel contains several passages illustrating Israel’s triumph through the work of the Messiah. Christ is pictured as “one of the highest branches of the high cedar” (17:22–24). This messianic prophecy demonstrates Christ’s royal lineage connected to David. The branch, used consistently in Scripture to depict the Messiah, shows Christ as a “young twig, a tender one” who will be planted on the mountain of Israel (34:23, 24; 37:24, 25; Is. 4:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12). On this height, Ezekiel pictures Christ as growing into a “majestic cedar” able to protect Israel in its shadow.

Christ also appears as the Shepherd over His sheep (34:11–31). However, Ezekiel also describes the Shepherd’s judgment on those who abuse the people of Israel (34:17–24; see Matt. 25:31–46).

LITERARY GENRE:

Prophecy (poetic and prose).

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Ezekiel, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah, The Living Creatures.

27. Daniel

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Daniel the Prophet; confirmed by Jesus in Matthew 24:15.

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Daniel probably finished the book about 530 B.C.

B&H Editorial Staff (p. 223) says:

Critical scholarship for the past two centuries has uniformly rejected that a sixth-century author could possibly have written detailed accounts of events centuries in the future. Therefore an unknown prophet living in the Maccabean era (second century bc) necessarily composed large parts of the book. The basic assumption of this critical view appears to be that Scripture does not contain true predictive prophecy. For Bible students who accept that God gave specific revelations of the distant future to His prophets, there is no reason to doubt that Daniel wrote the whole book that bears his name.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Babylon

RECIPIENTS:

Jewish exiles living in Babylon.

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur pp. 216–219) says:

Daniel was written to encourage the exiled Jews by revealing God's program for them, both during and after the time of Gentile power in the world. Prominent above every other theme in the book is God's sovereign control over the affairs of all rulers and nations, and their final replacement with the True King. The key verses are 2:20–22, 44 (cf. 2:28, 37; 4:34, 35; 6:25–27). God had not suffered defeat in allowing Israel's fall (Dan. 1), but was providentially working His sure purposes toward an eventual full display of His King, the exalted Christ. He sovereignly allowed Gentiles to dominate Israel, i.e., Babylon (605–539 b.c.), Medo-Persia (539–331 b.c.), Greece (331–146 b.c.), Rome (146 b.c.–a.d. 476), and all the way to the Second Advent of Christ. These stages in Gentile power are set forth in chaps. 2 and 7. This same theme also embraces Israel's experience both in defeat and finally in her kingdom blessing in chaps. 8–12 (cf. 2:35, 45; 7:27). A key aspect within the over-arching theme of God's kingly control is Messiah's coming to rule the world in glory over all men (2:35, 45; 7:13, 14, 27). He is like a stone in chap. 2, and like a son of man in chap. 7. In addition, He is the Anointed One (Messiah) in chap. 9:26. Chapter 9 provides the chronological framework from Daniel's time to Christ's kingdom....

A second theme woven into the fabric of Daniel is the display of God's sovereign power through miracles. Daniel's era is one of six in the Bible with a major focus on miracles by which God accomplished His purposes. Other periods include: (1) the Creation and Flood (Gen. 1–11); (2) the patriarchs and Moses

(Gen. 12–Deut.); (3) Elijah and Elisha (1 Kin. 19-2 Kin. 13); (4) Jesus and the apostles (Gospels, Acts); and (5) the time of the Second Advent (Revelation). God, who has everlasting dominion and ability to work according to His will (4:34, 35), is capable of miracles, all of which would be lesser displays of power than was exhibited when He acted as Creator in Genesis 1:1. Daniel chronicles the God-enabled recounting and interpreting of dreams which God used to reveal His will (chaps. 2, 4, 7). Other miracles included: (1) His writing on the wall and Daniel’s interpreting it (chap. 5); (2) His protection of the three men in a blazing furnace (chap. 3); (3) His provision of safety for Daniel in a lions’ den (chap. 6); and (4) supernatural prophecies (chaps. 2; 7; 8; 9:24–12:13).

Christ in ... Daniel: In Daniel, Christ is portrayed as a stone that “became a great mountain and filled the whole earth” (2:35). Daniel’s prophecies describe Christ’s kingdom as standing forever and “consuming all [other] kingdoms” (2:44). Christ is called the coming Messiah who shall be cut off (9:25, 26). Daniel identifies the date of His coming, which corresponds to the date of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

Daniel also describes Christ as “One like the Son of Man” (7:13). This title was used by Christ Himself (Matt. 16:26; 19:28; 26:64) and demonstrates the humanity of Jesus. However, Daniel describes the Son of Man as one who approaches Almighty God and is given universal authority.

LITERARY GENRE:

Prophecy.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Daniel (aka Belteshazzar), Hananiah (aka Shadrach), Mishael (aka Meshach),
Azariah (aka Abednego), Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, Cyrus.

28. Hosea

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Hosea the Prophet

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 715 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

The Northern Kingdom of Israel

RECIPIENTS:

Israelites living in the Northern Kingdom

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur pp. 223-224) says:

The theme of Hosea is God's loyal love for His covenant people, Israel, in spite of their idolatry. Thus Hosea has been called the St. John (the apostle of love) of the OT. The Lord's true love for His people is unending and will tolerate no rival. Hosea's message contains much condemnation, both national and individual, but at the same time, he poignantly portrays the love of God toward His people with passionate emotion. Hosea was instructed by God to marry a certain woman, and experience with her a domestic life which was a

dramatization of the sin and unfaithfulness of Israel. The marital life of Hosea and his wife, Gomer, provide the rich metaphor which clarifies the themes of the book: sin, judgment, and forgiving love.

Christ in ... Hosea: Hosea pictures the relationship between a faithful husband (Hosea, God) and an unfaithful bride (Gomer, Israel). The presence of Christ permeates the Book of Hosea as the Lover and redeemer of His people, just as Hosea acted as the redeemer of his wife, Gomer. Hosea also depicts Christposition as Savior of His people: "And you shall know no God but Me; for there is no savior besides Me" (13:4).

LITERARY GENRE:

Prophecy. Poetic Historical Narrative.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Hosea, Gomer, Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah (aka No Mercy), Lo-Ammi (aka Not My People).

29. Joel

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Joel the Prophet

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Uncertain: perhaps sometime between the ninth and fourth centuries B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Jerusalem

RECIPIENTS:

The people of Judah living in Jerusalem

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur p. 228) says:

The theme of Joel is the Day of the Lord. It permeates all parts of Joel's message, making it the most sustained treatment in the entire OT (1:15; 2:1; 2:11; 2:31; 3:14). The phrase is employed nineteen times by eight different OT authors (Is. 2:12; 13:6, 9; Ezek. 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18 [2x], 20; Obad. 15; Zeph. 1:7, 14 [2x]; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5). The phrase does not have reference to a chronological time period, but to a general period of wrath and judgment uniquely belonging to the Lord. It is exclusively the day that unveils His

character—mighty, powerful, and holy, thus terrifying His enemies. The Day of the Lord does not always refer to an eschatological event (relating to the end times); on occasion it has a near historical fulfillment, as seen in Ezek. 13:5, where it speaks of the Babylonian conquest and destruction of Jerusalem. As is common in prophecy, the near fulfillment is an historic event upon which to comprehend the more distant, eschatological fulfillment....

The Day of the Lord is frequently associated with seismic disturbances (e.g., 2:1–11; 2:31; 3:16), violent weather (Ezek. 13:5ff.), clouds and thick darkness (e.g., 2:2; Zeph. 1:7ff.), cosmic upheaval (2:3, 30), and as a “great and very terrible” (2:11) day that would “come as destruction from the Almighty” (1:15). The latter half of Joel depicts time subsequent to the Day of the Lord in terms of promise and hope. There will be a pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh, accompanied by prophetic utterances, dreams, visions (2:28, 29), as well as the coming of Elijah, an epiphany bringing restoration and hope (Mal. 4:5, 6). As a result of the Day of the Lord there will be physical blessings, fruitfulness, and prosperity (2:21ff.; 3:16–21). It is a day when judgment is poured out on sinners that subsequently leads to blessings on the penitent, and reaffirmation of God’s covenant with His people.

Christ in ... Joel: Joel’s prophecy described God pouring out His Spirit on the people so that one day, “Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions” (2:28–32). Peter quotes from this passage in Joel as the prophecy previewed and sampled at the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16–21). The final fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy will

come in the millennial kingdom of Christ when God's Spirit is poured out on all creation.

LITERARY GENRE:

Poetic Prophecy.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Joel.

30. Amos

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Amos the Prophet

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 750 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Jerusalem or nearby

RECIPIENTS:

The people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur pp. 232–234) says:

Amos addresses Israel's two primary sins: (1) an absence of true worship, and (2) a lack of justice. In the midst of their ritualistic performance of worship, they were not pursuing the Lord with their hearts (4:4, 5; 5:4–6) nor following His standard of justice with her neighbors (5:10–13; 6:12). This apostasy, evidenced by continual, willful rejection of the prophetic message of Amos, is promised divine judgment. Because of His covenant, however, the Lord will not abandon

Israel altogether, but will bring future restoration to the righteous remnant (9:7–15).

Christ in … Amos: The references to Christ in the Book of Amos point to the permanent restoration of Israel. The Lord speaks through Amos, declaring, “I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them” (9:15). Israel’s complete restoration and recovery of the land will only be fulfilled during the second advent of Christ the Messiah.

LITERARY GENRE:

Prophecy. Poetic Narrative.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Amos, Jeroboam II, Amaziah.

31. Obadiah

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Obadiah the Prophet

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Uncertain; perhaps sometime around 585-550 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Uncertain; probably somewhere close to Jerusalem

RECIPIENTS:

The descendants of Esau, and the Jewish people in and around Jerusalem

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur p. 238) says:

The book is a case study of Genesis 12:1–3, with two interrelated themes:

(1) the judgment of Edom by God for cursing Israel. This was apparently told to Judah, thereby providing reassurance to Judah that the Day of the Lord (v. 15) would bring judgment upon Edom for her pride and for her participation in Judah's downfall; (2) Judah's restoration. This would even include the territory of the Edomites (vv. 19–21; Is. 11:14). Obadiah's blessing includes the near fulfillment of Edom's demise (vv. 1–15) under the assault of the Philistines and

Arabians (2 Chr. 21:8–20) and the far fulfillment of the nation’s judgment in the first century a.d. and Israel’s final possession of Edom (vv. 15–21).

Christ in … Obadiah: In Obadiah, Christ acts as both Judge over Israel’s enemies (vv. 15, 16), and Savior of His chosen nation (vv. 17–20). Israel’s final triumph comes only through Christ Himself.

LITERARY GENRE:

Poetic Prophecy.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Obadiah.

32. Jonah

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Jonah the Prophet

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 780 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Gath-hepher, a town in the Zebulon allotment in the Northern Kingdom of Israel

RECIPIENTS:

Israelites living in the Northern Kingdom of Israel; near its Capital, Samaria. (Although Jonah's message was originally to Nineveh in Assyria, the book itself was written for the people of the Northern Kingdom; cf. 2 Kings 14:25 - i.e. during the reign of Jeroboam the Second).

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur p. 242) says:

Jonah, though a prophet of Israel, is not remembered for his ministry in Israel, which could explain why the Pharisees erringly claimed in Jesus' day that no prophet had come from Galilee (cf. John 7:52). Rather, the book relates the account of his call to preach repentance to Nineveh and his refusal to go. Nineveh, the capital of Assyria and infamous for its cruelty, was an historical nemesis of

Israel and Judah. The focus of this book is on that Gentile city, which was founded by Nimrod, great-grandson of Noah (Gen. 10:6–12). Perhaps the largest city in the ancient world (1:2; 3:2, 3; 4:11), it was nevertheless destroyed about 150 years after the repentance of the generation in the time of Jonah’s visit (612 b.c.), as Nahum prophesied (Nah. 1:1ff.). Israel’s political distaste for Assyria, coupled with a sense of spiritual superiority as the recipient of God’s covenant blessing, produced a recalcitrant attitude in Jonah toward God’s request for missionary service. Jonah was sent to Nineveh in part to shame Israel by the fact that a pagan city repented at the preaching of a stranger, whereas Israel would not repent though preached to by many prophets. He was soon to learn that God’s love and mercy extends to all of His creatures (4:2, 10, 11), not just His covenant people (cf. Gen. 9:27; 12:3; Lev. 19:33, 34; 1 Sam. 2:10; Is. 2:2; Joel 2:28–32).

Christ in ... Jonah: Jonah attains notoriety as the only prophet whom Jesus Christ identified with Himself (Matt. 12:39–41). Just as Jonah remained three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, Christ uses this experience as an example of the three days and three nights He would be “in the heart of the earth” after His crucifixion.

LITERARY GENRE:

Historic Narrative. One Prophecy, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” (Jonah 3:4, KJV).

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Jonah, The Sailors, The People of Nineveh, The King of Nineveh.

33. Micah

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Micah the Prophet

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 700 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Moresheth-gath in southern Judah

RECIPIENTS:

The Jewish people living in the Southern Kingdom of Judah

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur p. 248) says:

Primarily, Micah proclaimed a message of judgment to a people persistently pursuing evil. Similar to other prophets (cf. Hos. 4:1; Amos 3:1), Micah presented his message in lawsuit/courtroom terminology (1:2; 6:1, 2). The prophecy is arranged in 3 oracles or cycles, each beginning with the admonition to “hear” (1:2; 3:1; 6:1). Within each oracle, he moves from doom to hope—doom because they have broken God’s law given at Sinai; hope because of God’s unchanging covenant with their forefathers (7:20). One- third of the book targets

the sins of his people; another third looks at the punishment of God to come; and another third promises hope for the faithful after the judgment. Thus, the theme of the inevitability of divine judgment for sin is coupled together with God's immutable commitment to His covenant promises. The combination of God's (1) absolute consistency in judging sin and (2) unbending commitment to His covenant through the remnant of His people provides the hearers with a clear disclosure of the character of the Sovereign of the universe. Through divine intervention, He will bring about both judgment on sinners and blessing on those who repent.

Christ in ... Micah: Micah provides one of the most significant prophecies in the Bible referring to Christ's birthplace and eternality: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from the old, from everlasting" (5:2). This passage was used by the scribes and chief priest to answer Herod's query about the birthplace of Jesus (Matthew 2:6). Micah 7:6 was also used by Jesus to explain the nature of His coming (Matthew 10:35, 36).

LITERARY GENRE:

Poetic Prophecy.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Micah.

34. Nahum

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Nahum the Prophet

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 650 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

The town of Elkosh, location unknown

RECIPIENTS:

Perhaps originally the people of Nineveh, but ultimately the people of Judah

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur pp. 251-252) says:

Nahum forms a sequel to the Book of Jonah, who prophesied over a century earlier. Jonah recounts the remission of God's promised judgment toward Nineveh, while Nahum depicts the later execution of God's judgment. Nineveh was proud of her invulnerable city, with her walls reaching 100 feet high and with a moat 150 feet wide and 60 feet deep; but Nahum established the fact that the sovereign God (1:2–5) would bring vengeance upon those who violated His law (1:8, 14; 3:5–7). The same God would bring judgment against evil that was also

redemptive, bestowing His loving-kindnesses upon the faithful (cf. 1:7, 12, 13, 15; 2:2). The prophecy brought comfort to Judah and all who feared the cruel Assyrians. Nahum said Nineveh would end “with an overflowing flood” (1:8); and it happened when the Tigris River overflowed to destroy enough of the walls to let the Babylonians through. Nahum also predicted that the city would be hidden (3:11). After its destruction in 612 b.c., the site was not rediscovered until 1842 a.d.

Christ in ... Nahum: Nahum’s portrayal of God’s attributes also describes the person of Christ in His future coming. Christ first came to earth as the promised Messiah drawing the faithful unto Himself. Nahum depicts God’s protection of the faithful revealing, “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble” (1:7). However, the second coming of Christ will bring judgment as Christ takes “vengeance on His adversaries” (1:2).

LITERARY GENRE:

Poetic Prophecy.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Nahum, The People of Nineveh.

35. Habakkuk

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Habakkuk the Prophet

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 610 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Probably somewhere in the Southern Kingdom of Judah

RECIPIENTS:

The people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur pp. 254–256) says:

The opening verses reveal a historical situation similar to the days of Amos and Micah. Justice had essentially disappeared from the land; violence and wickedness were pervasive, existing unchecked. In the midst of these dark days, the prophet cried out for divine intervention (1:2–4). God's response—that He was sending the Chaldeans to judge Judah (1:5–11)—creates an even greater theological dilemma for Habakkuk. Why didn't God flush out the evil from His people and restore their righteousness? How could God use the Chaldeans to

judge a people more righteous than they (1:12–2:1)? God’s answer that He would judge the Chaldeans also (2:2–20), did not fully satisfy the prophet’s theological dilemma; in fact, it only intensified it. In Habakkuk’s mind, the issue crying for resolution is no longer God’s righteous response toward evil (or lack thereof), but the vindication of God’s character and covenant with His people (1:13). Like Job, the prophet argued with God, and through that experience he achieved a deeper understanding of God’s sovereign character and a firmer faith in Him (cf. Job 42:5, 6; Is. 55:8, 9). Ultimately, Habakkuk realized that God was not to be worshiped merely because of the temporal blessings He bestowed, but for His own sake (3:17–19).

Christ in ... Habakkuk: Although Habakkuk never mentions Christ’s name, he rejoices in the saving ministry of Jesus as the “God of my salvation” (3:18). Habakkuk also foreshadows Christ’s coming salvation: “You went forth for the salvation of Your people; For salvation with Your Anointed” (3:13). The Old and New Testaments clearly point to Christ as the Anointed One (Ps. 28:8; Dan. 9:25, 26; Acts 4:27; 10:38; Heb. 1:9).

LITERARY GENRE:

Poetic Prophecy. Prayer.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Habakkuk, The Chaldeans.

36. Zephaniah

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Zephaniah the Prophet, who carefully identified himself in Zephaniah 1:1, “The word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah. (KJV).

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 625 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Possibly Jerusalem or nearby

RECIPIENTS:

The Jewish people living in the Southern Kingdom of Judah

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur p. 260) says:

Zephaniah’s message on the Day of the Lord warned Judah that the final days were near, through divine judgment at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, ca. 605–586 b.c. (1:4–13). Yet, it also looks beyond to the far fulfillment in the judgments of Daniel’s seventieth week (1:18; 3:8). The expression “Day of the Lord” is employed by the author more often than by any other OT writer, and is

described as a day that is near (1:7), and as a day of wrath, trouble, distress, devastation, desolation, darkness, gloominess, clouds, thick darkness, trumpet, and alarm (1:15, 16, 18). Yet even within these oracles of divine wrath, the prophet exhorted the people to seek the Lord, offering a shelter in the midst of judgment (2:3), and proclaiming the promise of eventual salvation for His believing remnant (2:7; 3:9–20).

Christ in ... Zephaniah: Even though Zephaniah explicitly portrays the judgment of God, Christ is present as the “Mighty One” who will bring salvation to the earth (3:17). Christ Himself made allusions to Zephaniah (1:3, see Matt. 13:41; and 1:15, see Matt. 24:29), further connecting the prophecies of Zephaniah and the second coming of Christ.

LITERARY GENRE:

Poetic Prophecy.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Zephaniah, Josiah, The People of Judah.

37. Haggai

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Haggai the Prophet

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 520 B.C. B&H Editorial Staff (p. 285) writes:

Presumably he was one of the exiles from Babylon that returned to Judah in the 530s. He did, however, date precisely the four occasions on which “the word of the Lord came” to him (1:1; 2:1, 10, 20). In modern equivalents, these dates are (1) August 29, 520; (2) October 17, 520; and (3) December 18, 520. According to Ezra 6:14, Haggai saw the successful conclusion of his ministry in the completion of the temple. Presumably he wrote down his messages as they were given to him, and he compiled them shortly thereafter.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Probably Jerusalem

RECIPIENTS:

B&H Editorial Staff (p. 285) continues:

The original hearers and destination are clearly stated. The first audience was the people of Jerusalem that had returned from exile. In particular,

Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest were recipients of some of Haggai's exhortations.

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur pp. 263, 265) says:

The primary theme is the rebuilding of God's temple, which had been lying in ruins since its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 b.c. By means of five messages from the Lord, Haggai exhorted the people to renew their efforts to build the house of the Lord. He motivated them by noting that the drought and crop failures were caused by misplaced spiritual priorities (1:9–11).

But to Haggai, the rebuilding of the temple was not an end in itself. The temple represented God's dwelling place, His manifest presence with His chosen people. The destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar followed the departure of God's dwelling glory (cf. Ezek. 8–11); to the prophet, the rebuilding of the temple invited the return of God's presence to their midst. Using the historical situation as a springboard, Haggai reveled in the supreme glory of the ultimate messianic temple yet to come (2:7), encouraging them with the promise of even greater peace (2:9), prosperity (2:19), divine rulership (2:21, 22), and national blessing (2:23) during the Millennium.

Christ in ... Haggai: The Book of Haggai reveals Zerubbabel's significant place in the messianic line of David. His position, illustrated by a signet ring (2:23; see Key Words), continued the royal line of David through which Christ would come. Zerubbabel's name is found in both the ancestries of Mary (Luke

3:27) and Joseph (Matt. 1:12), demonstrating his importance in grafting both branches of Christ's lineage together.

LITERARY GENRE:

Prophecy.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Haggai, Zerubbabel, Joshua (the High Priest).

38. Zechariah

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Zechariah the Prophet

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

About 518 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Most likely Jerusalem

RECIPIENTS:

The Jewish people in Jerusalem who had returned from the Babylonian exile

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur pp. 267–269) says:

Zechariah joined Haggai in rousing the people from their indifference, challenging them to resume the building of the temple. Haggai's primary purpose was to rebuild the temple; his preaching has a tone of rebuke for the people's indifference, sin, and lack of trust in God. He was used to start the revival, while Zechariah was used to keep it going strong with a more positive emphasis, calling the people to repentance and reassuring them regarding future blessings. Zechariah sought to encourage the people to build the temple in view of the

promise that someday Messiah would come to inhabit it. The people were not just building for the present, but with the future hope of Messiah in mind. He encouraged the people, still downtrodden by the Gentile powers (1:8–), with the reality that the Lord remembers His covenant promises to them and that He would restore and bless them. Thus the name of the book (which means “The Lord remembers”) contains in seed form the theme of the prophecy.

This “apocalypse of the Old Testament,” as it is often called, relates both to Zechariah’s immediate audience as well as to the future. This is borne out in the structure of the prophecy itself, since in each of the three major sections (chaps. 1–6; 7–8; 9–14), the prophet begins historically and then moves forward to the time when Messiah returns to His temple to set up His earthly kingdom.

Of all the books in the OT, this book is the most messianic (with references to Christ, the Messiah) and the most apocalyptic in its discussion of the end times. Primarily, it is a prophecy about Jesus Christ, focusing on His coming glory as a means to comfort Israel (cf. 1:13, 17). While the book is filled with visions, prophecies, signs, celestial visitors, and the voice of God, it is also practical, dealing with issues like repentance, divine care, salvation, and holy living. Prophecy was soon to be silent for more than 400 years until John the Baptist, so God used Zechariah to bring a rich, abundant outburst of promise for the future to sustain the faithful remnant through those silent years.

Christ in … Zechariah: The Book of Zechariah abounds with passages prophesying the coming Messiah. Christ is portrayed as “My Servant the Branch” (3:8), “a priest on His throne” (6:13), and as “[Him] whom they pierced” (12:10).

Zechariah accurately depicts Christ as both humble and triumphant. Christ is the King who provides salvation but comes “lowly and riding on a donkey” (9:9).

LITERARY GENRE:

Prophecy (mostly prose but some poetry).

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, The Angel of the Lord, Zechariah, Zerubbabel, Joshua (the High Priest).

39. Malachi

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Malachi the Prophet

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Sometime about 450-420 B.C.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Perhaps Jerusalem

RECIPIENTS:

The Jewish people in Jerusalem who had returned from the Babylonian exile

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur pp. 274-275) says:

The Lord repeatedly referred to His covenant with Israel (cf. 2:4, 5, 8, 10, 14; 3:1), reminding them, from His opening words, of their unfaithfulness to His love/marriage relationship with them (cf. 1:2–5). God's love for His people pervades the book. Apparently the promises by the former prophets of the coming Messiah who would bring final deliverance and age-long blessings, and the encouragement from the recent promises (ca. 500 b.c.) of Haggai and Zechariah, had only made the people and their leaders more resolute in their complacency.

They thought that this love relationship could be maintained by formal ritual alone, no matter how they lived. In a penetrating rebuke of both priests (1:6–2:9) and people (2:10–16), the prophet reminds them that the Lord’s coming, which they were seeking (3:1), would be in judgment to refine, purify, and purge (3:2, 3). The Lord not only wanted outward compliance to the law, but an inward acceptance as well (cf. Matt. 23:23). The prophet assaults the corruption, wickedness, and false security by directing his judgments at their hypocrisy, infidelity, compromise, divorce, false worship, and arrogance.

Malachi set forth his prophecy in the form of a dispute, employing the question-and-answer method. The Lord’s accusations against His people were frequently met by cynical questions from the people (1:2, 6, 7; 2:17; 3:7, 8, 13). At other times, the prophet presented himself as God’s advocate in a lawsuit, posing rhetorical questions to the people based on their defiant criticisms (1:6, 8, 9; 2:10, 15; 3:2).

Malachi indicted the priests and the people on at least six counts of willful sin: (1) repudiating God’s love (1:2–5); (2) refusing God His due honor (1:6–2:9); (3) rejecting God’s faithfulness (2:10–16); (4) redefining God’s righteousness (2:17–3:5); (5) robbing God’s riches (3:6–12); and (6) reviling God’s grace (3:13–15). There are three interludes in which Malachi rendered God’s judgment: (1) to the priests (2:1–9); (2) to the nation (3:1–6); and (3) to the remnant (3:16–4:6).

Christ in ... Malachi: The last prophetic words from the OT still reveal hope in the coming of Christ the Messiah. Malachi speaks of two messengers: the

messenger that will precede Christ, whom the NT identifies as John the Baptist (see Matthew 3:3; 11:10, 14; 17:12; Mark 1:2; Luke 1:17; 7:26, 27; John 1:23), and Christ, “the Messenger of the covenant” (3:1). The Book of Malachi closes the OT and marks the beginning of four hundred years of prophetic silence. However, Malachi leaves readers with the striking proclamation, “Behold, He is coming” (3:1).

LITERARY GENRE:

Prophecy.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Malachi, The Priests, The People of Judah.

40. Matthew

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Matthew the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 303) says, “It is clear that this gospel was written at a relatively early date—prior to the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. Some scholars have proposed a date as early as A.D. 50.”

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Antioch, Syria is a good possibility

RECIPIENTS:

It is most likely that they were Jewish Christians living in Antioch, Syria.

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Darby pp. 29-30) says:

Let us now consider the Gospel by St. Matthew. This Gospel sets Christ before us in the character of the Son of David and of Abraham, that is to say, in connection with the promises made to Israel, but presents Him withal as Emmanuel, Jehovah the Saviour, for such the Christ was. It is He who, being received, should have accomplished the promises (and hereafter He will do so) in

favor of this beloved people. This Gospel is in fact the history of His rejection by the people, and consequently that of the condemnation of the people themselves, so far as their responsibility was concerned (for the counsels of God cannot fail), and the substitution of that which God was going to bring in according to His purpose.

In proportion as the character of the King and of the kingdom develops itself, and arouses the attention of the leaders of the people, they oppose it, and deprive themselves, as well as the people who follow them, of all the blessings connected with the presence of the Messiah. The Lord declares to them the consequences of this, and shows His disciples the position of the kingdom which should be set up on the earth after His rejection, and also the glories which should result from it to Himself and to His people with Him. And in His Person, and as regards His work, the foundation of the assembly also is revealed—the Church as built by Himself. In a word, consequent on His rejection by Israel, first the kingdom as it exists now is revealed (chap. 13), then the Church (chap. 16), and then the kingdom in the glory (chap. 17).

At length, after His resurrection, a new commission, p 30 addressed to all nations, is given to the apostles sent out by Jesus as risen.

LITERARY GENRE:

Historic biographical proclamation, i.e. Gospel.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, Jesus' Mother Mary, Joseph, Herod, John the Baptist, The Twelve Disciples, Bartimaeus, Pontius Pilate.

41. Mark

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

John Mark

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 316) says:

The testimony of the church fathers differs as to whether this gospel was written before or after Peter's death (ca. a.d. 67–68).

Evangelical scholars have suggested dates for the writing of Mark's gospel ranging from a.d. 50 to 70. A date before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in a.d. 70 is required by the comment of Jesus in 13:2. Luke's gospel was clearly written before Acts (Acts 1:1–3). The date of the writing of Acts can probably be fixed at about a.d. 63, because that is shortly after the narrative ends . . . It is therefore likely, though not certain, that Mark was written at an early date, probably sometime in the a.d. 50s.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Perhaps somewhere near Rome

RECIPIENTS:

Probably Gentile Christians in and around Rome

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Darby p. 210) says:

The Gospel according to Mark has a character that differs in certain respects from all the others. Each Gospel, as we have seen, has its own character; each is occupied with the Person of the Lord in a different point of view: as a divine Person, the Son of God; as the Son of Man; as the Son of David, the Messiah presented to the Jews, Emmanuel. But Mark is occupied with none of these titles. It is the Servant we find here—and in particular His service as bearing the Word—the active service of Christ in the gospel. The glory of His divine Person shows itself, it is true, in a remarkable manner through His service, and, as it were, in spite of Himself, so that He avoids its consequences. But still service is the subject of the book. Doubtless we shall find the character of His teaching developing itself (and truth consequently shaking off the Jewish forms under which it had been held), as well as the account of His death, on which all depended for the establishment of faith. But that which distinguishes this Gospel is the character of service and of Servant that is attached to the life of Jesus—the work that He came to accomplish personally as living on the earth. On this account the history of His birth is not found in Mark. It opens with the announcement of the beginning of the gospel. John the Baptist is the herald, the forerunner, of Him who brought this good news to man.

LITERARY GENRE:

Historic biographical proclamation, i.e. Gospel.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, John the Baptist, The Twelve Disciples, Bartimaeus, Mary Magdalene, Jairus, Herod, The Roman Centurion at the Cross.

42. Luke

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Luke

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, pp. 327-328) says:

Luke and Acts appear to have been written at about the same time—Luke first, then Acts. Combined, they make a two-volume work addressed to “Theophilus” (1:3; Acts 1:1 . . .) giving a sweeping history of the founding of Christianity, from the birth of Christ to Paul’s imprisonment under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30, 31).

The Book of Acts ends with Paul still in Rome, which leads to the conclusion that Luke wrote these books from Rome during Paul’s imprisonment there (ca. a.d. 60–62). Luke records Jesus’ prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem in a.d. 70 (19:42–44; 21:20–24) but makes no mention of the fulfillment of that prophecy, either here or in Acts. Luke made it a point to record such prophetic fulfillments (cf. Acts 11:28), so it is extremely unlikely he wrote these books after the Roman invasion of Jerusalem. Acts also includes no mention of the great persecution that began under Nero in a.d. 64. In addition, many scholars set the date of James’ martyrdom at a.d. 62, and if that was before Luke completed his history, he certainly would have mentioned it. So, the most likely date for this gospel is a.d. 60 or 61.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Rome

RECIPIENTS:

Theophilus; residence unknown

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Darby pp. 276–277) says:

The Gospel of Luke sets the Lord before us in the character of Son of Man, revealing God in delivering grace among men. Hence the present operation of grace and its effect are more referred to, and even the present time prophetically, not the substitution of other dispensations as in Matthew, but of saving heavenly grace. At first, no doubt (and just because He is to be revealed as man, and in grace to men), we find Him, in a prefatory part in which we have the most exquisite picture of the godly remnant, presented to Israel, to whom He had been promised, and in relationship with whom He came into this world; but afterwards this Gospel presents moral principles which apply to man, whosoever he may be, whilst yet manifesting Christ for the moment in the midst of that people. This power of God in grace is displayed in various ways in its application to the wants of men. After the transfiguration, which is recounted earlier in the narration by Luke than in the other Gospels, we find the judgment of those who rejected the Lord, and the heavenly character of the grace which, because it is

grace, addresses itself to the nations, to sinners, without any particular reference to the Jews, overturning the legal principles according to which the latter pretended to be, and as to their external standing were originally called at Sinai to be, in connection with God. Unconditional promises to Abraham, etc., and prophetic confirmation of them, are another thing. They will be accomplished in grace, and were to be laid hold of by faith. After this, we find that which should happen to the Jews according to the righteous government of God; and, at the end, the account of the death and resurrection of the Lord, accomplishing the work of redemption. We must observe that Luke (who morally sets aside the Jewish system, and who introduces the Son of Man as the man before God, presenting Him as the One who is filled with all the fulness of God dwelling in Him bodily, as the man before God, according to His own heart, and thus as Mediator between God and man, and centre of a moral system much more vast than that of Messiah among the Jews)—we must observe, I repeat, that Luke, who is occupied with these new relations (ancient, in fact, as to the counsels of God), gives us the facts belonging to the Lord's connection with the Jews, owned in the pious remnant of that people, with much more development than the other evangelists, as well as the proofs of His mission to that people, in coming into the world—proofs which ought to have gained their attention, and fixed it upon the Child who was born to them.

LITERARY GENRE:

Historic biographical proclamation, i.e. Gospel.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, Jesus' Mother Mary, John the Baptist, Zechariah, Elizabeth, Simeon, Anna, The Twelve Disciples, Bartimaeus, Zacchaeus, Barabbas, Pontius Pilate.

43. John

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

The author's name does not appear in the book itself, but the traditional heading is "According to John", and the early church consistently attributed the book to John the Apostle. Irenaeus (ca. 130-200 A.D.), a disciple of Polycarp, who was himself a disciple of the Apostle John cites Polycarp as testifying that John wrote the Gospel at Ephesus. Eusebius testifies that Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-215 A.D.) also attributed the Gospel to John the Apostle. (cf. MacArthur, p. 338).

(Bruce, p. 1) says that Papias (ca. 130 A.D.) referred to another John; "John the Elder" or "John the Presbyter", but "no one in antiquity, as far as we can tell, ascribed the Fourth Gospel to this other John".

(Barrows Borrows, p. 436) states:

Though the writer of the fourth gospel everywhere refrains from mentioning his own name, he clearly indicates himself as the "bosom disciple." When he speaks of two disciples that followed Jesus, afterwards adding that "one of the two" "was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother" (chap. 1:37, 40); of "one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23; 21:7, 20); and of "another disciple" in company with Simon Peter (chap. 18:15, 16; 20:2-8), the only natural explanation of these circumlocutions is that he refers to himself.

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(Tenney, p. 189) testifies, “The best solution seems to be that John was produced in Asia Minor, possibly in Ephesus, toward the close of the first century”.

(MacArthur, p. 341) indicates that John wrote his Gospel ca. 80-90 A.D., and prior to writing his epistles and the book of Revelation.

However, (Kretzmann, p. 405) places the writing of the Gospel *after* the writing of the book of Revelation:

The Gospel according to St. John was, by the unanimous testimony of the early teachers of the Church, written at Ephesus, during the last years of John’s residence in that city. Its style, content, and language place it into the last decade of the first century, after the Apocalypse had been written.

(Beale & Gladd, p. 127) are not so certain about this, although they do tentatively suggest a date near 80 A.D.:

Since Peter’s death is assumed in John 21:18–19, John must have been written after AD 64–65, the approximate time of Peter’s death. The destruction of the temple in AD 70, a momentous event in Israel’s history, receives little or no discussion, meaning that it either remains in the future or that significant time has passed since its destruction. Lastly, if we read John’s Gospel alongside the Johannine epistles, it is possible to interpret the three epistles as a response to an aberrant interpretation of this published Gospel. Taken together, these observations suggest that the Fourth Gospel was probably published in the 80s or perhaps later.

And (Fredrikson, p.20) writes, “It is almost too easily assumed this Gospel was written near the end of the first century or early in the second. However, I have begun to wonder about that and almost ‘feel’ in living and working with John that his Gospel might have been written much earlier.”

And (Ryrie, p. 124) also allows the possibility of an earlier date:

Others feel it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 because of the present tense in 5:1. However, many think it was written between 85–90, and most likely from Ephesus. In any case, it is the last of the four gospels to be written.

As does (Sproul, p. 1843), “Some specialists have gone further and dated it before a.d. 80 or even 70.”

(Alford, Vol.1, p. 64) holds to a fifteen-year range between 70 and 85 A.D.:

Whether then we set the death of Paul with Wieseler in a.d. 64, or, as upholders of a second Roman imprisonment, in a.d. 68, we perhaps must not in either case allow our earliest limit to be placed much earlier than 70: nor, supposing John to have been a few years younger than our Lord, can we prolong our latest limit much beyond a.d. 85. We should thus have, but with no great fixity either way, somewhere about fifteen years,—a.d. 70–85, during which it is probable that the Gospel was published.

(Blomberg, p. 42) provides an extended analysis of this dating question. I find the following a good summary of his remarks:

A significant minority of scholars, however, has tried to push the date back to a considerably earlier period, particularly into the 60s before the fall of

Jerusalem to the Romans (see Cribbs 1970; J. A. T. Robinson 1976: 257–258, 267–278; Kemper 1987; Berger 1997). However, most of their arguments stem from silence: John does not refer to the destruction of the temple; he does not know the Synoptics or Paul’s letters; he does not focus on the sacraments as the later church did; there are no references to Peter as the foundation of the church, to the Lord’s Prayer, the Gentile mission, the Sadducees, and so on. None of these points carries much weight. A p 43 document from the late 90s would be far enough removed from the events of ad 70 that no mention of the temple’s destruction or of Sadducees need have occurred. We shall see below that John probably is familiar with the Synoptics even if he does not depend on them literally (pp. 47–49). His silence on the sacraments may be a protest against their growing institutionalization (see pp. 79, 187), and he does have texts that give Peter and the disciples authority to bind and loose (20:22–23), that enunciate many of the principles of the Lord’s Prayer (ch. 17), and that foreshadow a Gentile mission (12:20–36).

An interesting grammatical observation that has convinced some of a pre-70 date is the use of the present tense in 5:2—‘Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda, and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades.’ After Jerusalem’s destruction, these statements would no longer be true; one would expect past-tense verbs. On the other hand, John frequently uses the historical present tense and that may be all he is doing here, to mark out the scene more vividly. Daniel Wallace (1990: 197–205) responds that he can find no other use of the historical present with

the verb ‘to be’ (Gk. eimi), but it is difficult to know how much significance to attach to this observation. After all, most historical presents occur in narrative where a specific verb of speech or action is highlighted.

But, contrary to Blomberg’s assessment, I find Wallace’s position to be both strong and persuasive.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Ephesus is most likely

RECIPIENTS:

Greek and/or Jewish Christians in Ephesus

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Darby p. 410) says:

The Gospel of John has a peculiar character, as every Christian perceives. It does not present the birth of Christ in this world, looked at as the Son of David. It does not trace His genealogy back to Adam, in order to bring out His title of Son of Man. It does not exhibit the Prophet who, by His testimony, accomplished the service of His Father in this respect here below. It is neither His birth, nor the commencement of His Gospel, but His existence before the beginning of everything that had a beginning. “In the beginning was the Word.” In short it is the glory of the Person of Jesus, the Son of God, above all dispensation—a glory developed in many ways in grace, but which is always itself. It is that which He

is; but making us share in all the blessings that flow from it, when He is so manifested as to impart them.

LITERARY GENRE:

Historic biographical proclamation, i.e. Gospel.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, John the Baptist, The Twelve Disciples, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Mary Magdalene, Nicodemus, The Samaritan Woman, Pontius Pilate.

44. Acts

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Luke

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Perhaps sometime around 60 or 61 A.D.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Rome

RECIPIENTS:

Theophilus; residence unknown

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(B&H Editorial Staff p. 356) says:

The author's purpose was twofold. First, he wrote as a historian, penning "volume 2" of his two-part work. The first part told what Jesus "began both to do and to teach" (Acts 1:1); the second part is a selective record of what Jesus continued to do through His Spirit and His apostles. The second aspect of his purpose was theological. He showed that Christianity and the church had become the legitimate heir of Israel (and of the Scriptures of Israel). This is seen especially in the biblical quotations in the book, for example "this is that" in

Peter's citation of Joel (Ac 2:16–21), James's quotation of Amos (Ac 15:16–17), and Paul's reference to Isaiah (Ac 28:25–28).

LITERARY GENRE:

Historical Narrative.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, The Holy Spirit, Peter, Paul, Matthias, Philip, Stephen, Barnabas, Priscilla, Aquila.

45. Romans

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Paul the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 363) says:

Paul wrote Romans from Corinth, as the references to Phoebe (Rom. 16:1, Cenchrea was Corinth's port), Gaius (Rom. 16:23), and Erastus (Rom. 16:23)—all of whom were associated with Corinth—indicate. The apostle wrote the letter toward the close of his third missionary journey (most likely in a.d. 56), as he prepared to leave for Palestine with an offering for the poor believers in the Jerusalem church (Rom. 15:25). Phoebe was given the great responsibility of delivering this letter to the Roman believers (16:1, 2).

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Corinth

RECIPIENTS:

Christian Churches in Rome

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Dockery p. 673) says:

It is clear from the last two chapters of the letter that Paul planned to take the contribution from the Gentile churches to the Christians in Jerusalem (see 1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 8–9; Rom 15:25–29). From Jerusalem he planned to sail for Rome (15:23–24). One important purpose for the letter was to alert the Romans of his coming so they could help him with his journey to Spain (15:24, 28). Paul wanted to inform them of his plans and have them pray for their fulfillment (15:30–32).

In addition to this missionary purpose Paul stated the means by which the righteousness of God had been revealed (1:17). The thematic statement of chapters 1–8 is found in 1:16–17 (see Hab 2:4). The theme of God's righteousness is paramount throughout the book. The first three chapters show that both Jews and Gentiles are under sin and that the atonement of Christ is applicable to both (3:21–31). Chapter four shows how the Old Testament promises to Abraham and David are significant for both since Abraham is the spiritual father of believing Gentiles and Jews.

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, Paul, Phoebe, The Church in Rome.

46. 1 Corinthians

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Paul the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

MacArthur, p. 372) says, “This epistle was most likely written in the first half of a.d. 55 from Ephesus (16:8, 9, 19) while Paul was on his third missionary journey.”

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Probably Ephesus

RECIPIENTS:

Christians in Corinth

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Dockery pp. 686–687) says:

Paul dealt with several problems in this letter. He learned of these matters through the report from Chloe’s people (1:11), common rumors (5:1), and from information received p 687 from the church (7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). Paul wrote to answer the questions the Corinthians had put to him, but he had other concerns as well. Although the church was quite gifted (1:4–7), it was equally immature and un-spiritual (3:1–4). Paul wanted to restore the church in its areas of weakness.

Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he expounded the Bible's clearest exposition on the Lord's Supper (11:17–34), the resurrection (15:1–58), and spiritual gifts (12:1–14:40).

Yet the focus of 1 Corinthians is not on doctrinal theology but pastoral theology. This letter deals with the problem of those who bring division to the body of Christ (1:11–3:4), with the treatment of fellow Christians who sin (5:1–13), with matters of sexuality in marriage and divorce (7:1–40), with propriety in church worship (11:2–34), and with disputes about food (8:1–11:1).

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, Paul, Sosthenes, Apollos, The Church in Corinth, Peter (aka Cephas), Chloe.

47. 2 Corinthians

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Paul the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p.382) says:

Several considerations establish a feasible date for the writing of this letter. Extrabiblical sources indicate that July, a.d. 51 is the most likely date for the beginning of Gallio's role as proconsul (cf. Acts 18:12). Paul's trial before him at Corinth (Acts 18:12–17) probably took place shortly after Gallio assumed office. Leaving Corinth (probably in a.d. 52), Paul sailed for Palestine (Acts 18:18), thus concluding his second missionary journey. Returning to Ephesus on his third missionary journey (probably in a.d. 52), Paul ministered there for about two-and-a-half years (Acts 19:8, 10). The apostle wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus toward the close of that period (1 Cor. 16:8), most likely in a.d. 55. Since Paul planned to stay in Ephesus until the following spring (cf. the reference to Pentecost in 1 Cor. 16:8), and 2 Corinthians was written after he left Ephesus . . . , the most likely date for 2 Corinthians is late a.d. 55 or very early a.d. 56.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Ephesus

RECIPIENTS:

Christians in Corinth

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Dockery p. 696) says:

The primary purpose of 2 Corinthians was to prepare the church at Corinth for another visit from Paul. The letter was penned at a difficult time between Paul and the Corinthians. Paul communicated his thankful relief that the crisis at Corinth had somewhat subsided. Moreover, Paul wrote to them concerning the collection that he wanted to gather for the church at Jerusalem.

Paul exercised extraordinary vigor in declaring his role and authority as an apostle. His opponents, the so-called “super apostles” (see 2 Cor 10–13), had challenged Paul’s apostolic status and leadership. In return Paul authenticated his apostolic calling and ministry.

The self-portrait of Paul is one of the most fascinating features of this letter. Second Corinthians gives invaluable autobiographical information. Dominant motifs include Paul’s gratitude to God and Christ (1:3; 5:14) and his ministry as a continuing triumph in Christ (2:14). Paul shared the risen life of Christ (4:10–11). Simultaneously he gloried in infirmities and was content with weaknesses, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ (12:9). His

ministry was characterized by integrity and suffering (1:8–12; 6:3–10; 11:23–29), marks of a true apostle. His message as an ambassador of Christ focused on the message of reconciliation (5:11–21) and Jesus Christ as Lord (4:5).

Paul's collection for the church at Jerusalem had an important role in his missionary efforts. He devoted two chapters to this matter (chaps. 8–9). They provide some of the most helpful teaching on Christian stewardship found in the New Testament.

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, Paul, Timothy, Titus, The Church in Corinth, The False Apostles, Satan.

48. Galatians

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Paul the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 390) says, “In chap. 2, Paul described his visit to the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, so he must have written Galatians after that event. Since most scholars date the Jerusalem Council about a.d. 49, the most likely date for Galatians is shortly thereafter.”

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Possibly Jerusalem

RECIPIENTS:

Christians in Galatia, a Roman Province

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Dockery pp. 702–703) says:

The hub that holds Galatians together is its treatment of the gospel. Much like a scientist approaching data from every conceivable angle, so the apostle Paul considered “the truth of the gospel” (2:5, 14): its origin, content, reception through justification by faith in Christ, scriptural support, and practical outworking. Considering its shorter length, Galatians actually is proportionately

more saturated with “gospel truth” than even Romans. Perhaps the key verse of this power-packed letter is Galatians 2:16: “Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.”....

Paul had three closely related purposes in mind in writing Galatians.

1. He was defending his authority as an apostle against those who claimed otherwise.
2. He was stating, explaining, and proving the gospel message.
3. He was applying the gospel message to daily Christian living by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The basic theology of Galatians is related to the truth of the gospel and its implications. Its ultimate ramifications are as clear-cut as that turning from this gospel equates with deserting God and deserving “accursed” status (1:6–9), while faith in Christ is the only grounds for justification in God’s eyes and for eternal hope (2:16; 5:5).

The false “gospel” (1:6–7) the Jewish teachers in Galatia were proclaiming relied upon “the works of the law” (2:16; 3:2), apparently emphasizing distinctives like circumcision (5:2–3). Paul made it clear that the motivation behind such “works” is “the flesh” (3:3; 5:19–21), that aspect of humankind that struggles against the Lord (5:17). Tragically, there is no saving power in the pursuit of fleshly works (2:16; 5:21).

Much of the emphasis on the gospel in Galatians has to do with its proper reception and application (2:16–6:10).

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, Paul, Peter (aka Cephas), James (Jesus' Brother), The Church in Galatia.

49. Ephesians

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Paul the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 398) says:

The letter was written from prison in Rome (Acts 28:16–31)

sometime between a.d. 60–62 and is, therefore, often referred to as a prison epistle (along with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon). It may have been composed at nearly the same time as Colossians and initially sent with that epistle and Philemon by Tychicus (Eph. 6:21, 22; Col. 4:7, 8).

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Rome

RECIPIENTS:

Christians living in and around Ephesus.

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Dockery p. 713) says:

The book hints at several purposes. The apostle taught that Jewish and Gentile believers are one in Christ. This oneness was to be demonstrated by their love one for another. Paul used the noun or verb form of love (agape) nineteen times (about one-sixth of the total uses in all the Pauline Letters). Ephesians begins with love (1:4–6) and ends with love (6:23–24).

Paul implicitly addressed matters raised by the mystery religions in the Lycus Valley. The letter has much to say about the mystery of redemption (1:7) and the divine intention for the human race (1:3–14). Other themes treated include grace (1:2), predestination (1:4–5), reconciliation, and union with Christ (2:1–21).

Central to the message of Ephesians is the re-creation of the human family according to God's original intention for it. The new creation destroys the misguided view that God accepts the Jew and rejects the Gentile. Paul claimed that this distinction was abolished at Christ's sacrificial death. Thus no more hindrance remains to reuniting all humanity as the people of God, with Christ as the head (1:22–23). The new body, the church, has been endowed by the power of the Holy Spirit to enable them to live out their new life (1:3–2:10) and put into practice the new standards (4:1–6:9).

In sum we can say that the overall emphasis of Ephesians is on the unity of the church in Christ through the power of the Spirit.

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Jesus, Paul, Tychicus, The Church at Ephesus.

50. Philippians

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Paul the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 407) says:

The question of when Philippians was written cannot be separated from that of where it was written. The traditional view is that Philippians, along with the other Prison Epistles (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon), was written during Paul's first imprisonment at Rome (ca. a.d. 60–62) . . .

Some have held that Paul wrote the Prison Epistles during his two-year imprisonment at Caesarea (Acts 24:27). But Paul's opportunities to receive visitors and proclaim the gospel were severely limited during that imprisonment (cf. Acts 23:35) . . . In the Prison Epistles, Paul expected the decision in his case to be final (1:20–23; 2:17, 23). That could not have been true at Caesarea, since Paul could and did appeal his case to the emperor.

Another alternative has been that Paul wrote the Prison Epistles from Ephesus. But at Ephesus, like Caesarea, no final decision could be made in his case because of his right to appeal to the emperor . . . Also, . . . there is no evidence that Paul was ever imprisoned at Ephesus . . .

Paul's belief that his case would soon be decided (2:23, 24) points to Philippians being written toward the close of the apostle's two-year Roman imprisonment (ca. a.d. 61).

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Rome

RECIPIENTS:

Christians living in Phillipi

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

Dockery pp. 719–720) says:

A continuous note of joy in Christ is sounded throughout the letter. Despite Paul's testings and the difficulties encountered by the church (Phil 1:27–30), the theme of joy in Christ is echoed eighteen times in the four chapters of this letter. An exemplary text of this theme is Philippians 4:4: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”....

Paul wrote this letter for several reasons:

1. He wanted to explain why he was sending Epaphroditus back to them (2:25–30).
2. He wanted to let them know of his plan to send Timothy to them (2:19–24).

3. He wanted to thank the Philippian church for their concern for him and their generous gifts to him (4:10–20).

4. He desired to inform them of his own circumstances and the advancement of the gospel (1:12–26).

5. He wanted to exhort the church to live in humility, fellowship, and unity (1:27–2:11; 4:2–3).

6. He also needed to warn them concerning the false teachings of legalism, perfectionism, and careless living (3:1–4:1).

The letter is extremely practical, but the guidance and warnings are theologically based: Paul’s joy was grounded in Christ, as is all of life. In this sense the letter is thoroughly Christ-centered. The preexistence, incarnation, and exaltation of Christ is set forth in 2:5–11. Christ’s incarnation is offered as an example for Paul’s appeal to humble living and Christian unity (2:1–4).

Paul explained his doctrine of justification by faith in contrast to a false legalism (3:1–9). He contended for a sanctified life by identification with Christ through faith, sharing in His sufferings, death, and the power of His resurrection (3:10–11). Paul exhorted the church to set its mind on heavenly, rather than earthly, realities because Christians are destined for life in the age to come (3:17–4:1).

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus, The Church at Philippi, Euodia, Syntyche.

51. Colossians

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Paul the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 414) says that both Colossians and Philemon “were written (ca. a.d. 60–62) while Paul was a prisoner in Rome (4:3, 10, 18; Philem. 9, 10, 13, 23)”.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Rome

RECIPIENTS:

Christians living in Colossae

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Dockery pp. 723-724) says:

Paul’s purpose was to address the false teaching in the church. To identify the false teaching has been a puzzling problem for students of Paul’s letters. Some think the problem was basically a form of Gnosticism. Others think it was a Jewish mystical asceticism. Still others suggest a type of legalistic separatism. Some think it was a syncretistic (combined forms) movement with aspects of each of these ideologies. What we do know is that the false teaching

- attacked the centrality of Christ (1:15–19; 2:9–10);
- focused on speculative philosophical traditions (2:8);
- observed dietary prescriptions and prohibitions (2:16, 21);
- observed certain religious rites of a Jewish nature (2:16);
- venerated angels (2:18);
- tended toward asceticism (2:20)...

The readers were admonished to “see to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ” (2:8). Paul countered this false teaching with correct teaching, focusing on the supremacy of Christ (1:15–23), ministry and the church (1:24–2:7), and other exhortations (3:1–4:6)...

Paul’s major teaching centered around the question Who is Jesus Christ? The apostle insisted that no chasm existed between the transcendent God and His material creation. Christ is both the Creator and Reconciler (1:15–23). He is the exact expression of God and brings together heaven and earth. A need for a hierarchy of angelic powers is nonexistent since Christ is fully divine and fully human. Indeed “in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have this fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority” (2:9–10).

Second, he dealt with the issue of genuine spirituality. Paul developed the basis for genuine worship and spirituality by refuting the false spirituality that encouraged an unspiritual pride (2:6–23). He exhorted them to abandon sins of the old life and cultivate the virtues of the new life (3:5–4:6)....

The theme of this letter centers on the supremacy of Christ in all things.

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, Paul, Timothy, Epaphras, The Church at Colossae.

52. 1 Thessalonians

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Paul the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p.423) says, “The first of Paul’s two letters written from Corinth to the church at Thessalonica is dated ca. a.d. 51.”

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Corinth

RECIPIENTS:

Christians in Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur p. 425) says:

Both letters to Thessalonica have been referred to as “the eschatological epistles,” perhaps because of their treatment of end times issues. However, in light of their more extensive focus upon the church, they would better be categorized as the “church epistles.” Five major themes are woven together in 1 Thessalonians: (1) an apologetic theme with the historical correlation between Acts and 1 Thessalonians; (2) an ecclesiastical (or church-related) theme with the

portrayal of a healthy, growing church; (3) a pastoral theme with the example of shepherding activities and attitudes; (4) an eschatological theme with the focus on future events as the church's hope; and (5) a missionary theme with the emphasis on gospel proclamation and church planting.

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, Paul, Timothy, Silas (aka Silvanus), The Church at Thessalonica.

53. 2 Thessalonians

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Paul the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 430) says, “The time of this writing was surely a few months after the first epistle, while Paul was still in Corinth with Silas and Timothy (1:1; Acts 18:5) in late a.d. 51 or early a.d. 52”

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Corinth

RECIPIENTS:

Christians in Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur p. 432) says:

Although chaps. 1 and 2 contain much prophetic material because the main issue was a serious misunderstanding generated by false teachers about the coming Day of the Lord, it is still best to call this “a pastoral letter.” The emphasis is on how to maintain a healthy church with an effective testimony in proper response to sound eschatology and obedience to the truth.

Discussion of future and end times, or eschatology, dominates the theological issues. One of the clearest statements on personal eschatology for unbelievers is found in 1:9. Church discipline is the major focus of 3:6–15, which needs to be considered along with Matthew 18:15–20; 1 Corinthians 5:1–13; Galatians 6:1–5, and 1 Timothy 5:19, 20 for understanding the complete biblical teaching on this theme.

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, Paul, Timothy, Silas (aka Silvanus), The Church at Thessalonica.

54. 1 Timothy

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Paul the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 438) says:

The evidence seems clear that Paul wrote 1 Timothy and Titus shortly after his release from his first Roman imprisonment (ca. a.d. 62–64), and 2 Timothy from prison during his second Roman imprisonment (ca. a.d. 66–67), shortly before his death.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Probably Rome

RECIPIENTS:

Timothy, Paul's representative in Ephesus

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur p. 439) says:

First Timothy is a practical letter containing pastoral instruction from Paul to Timothy (cf. 3:14, 15). Since Timothy was well versed in Paul's theology, the apostle had no need to give him extensive doctrinal instruction. This epistle does,

however, express many important theological truths, such as the proper function of the law (1:5–11), salvation (1:14–16; 2:4–6); the attributes of God (1:17); the Fall (2:13, 14); the person of Christ (3:16; 6:15, 16); election (6:12); and the second coming of Christ (6:14, 15).

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, Paul, Timothy, Hymenaeus, Alexander, Satan.

55. 2 Timothy

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Paul the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 438) says:

The evidence seems clear that Paul wrote 1 Timothy and Titus shortly after his release from his first Roman imprisonment (ca. a.d. 62–64), and 2 Timothy from prison during his second Roman imprisonment (ca. a.d. 66–67), shortly before his death.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Rome

RECIPIENTS:

Timothy, Paul's representative in Ephesus, probably still in Ephesus

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur p. 446) says:

It seems that Paul may have had reason to fear that Timothy was in danger of weakening spiritually. This would have been a grave concern for Paul since Timothy needed to carry on Paul's work (cf. 2:2). While there are no historical

indications elsewhere in the NT as to why Paul was so concerned, there is evidence in the epistle itself from what he wrote. This concern is evident, for example, in Paul's encouragement to "stir up" his gift (1:6), to replace fear with power, love, and a sound mind (1:7), to not be ashamed of Paul and the Lord, but willingly suffer for the gospel (1:8), and to hold on to the truth (1:13, 14).

Summing up the potential problem of Timothy, who might be weakening under the pressure of the church and the persecution of the world, Paul calls him to (1) generally "be strong" (2:11), the key encouragement of the first part of the letter, and to (2) continue to "preach the word" (4:2), the main admonition of the last part. These final words to Timothy include few commendations but many admonitions, including about twenty-five commands.

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, Paul, Timothy, Lois, Eunice, Onesiphorus, Demas.

56. Titus

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Paul the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 438) says:

The evidence seems clear that Paul wrote 1 Timothy and Titus shortly after his release from his first Roman imprisonment (ca. a.d. 62–64), and 2 Timothy from prison during his second Roman imprisonment (ca. a.d. 66–67), shortly before his death.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Probably Rome

RECIPIENTS:

Titus, Paul's representative in Corinth

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur pp. 452–453) says:

Like Paul's two letters to Timothy, the apostle gives personal encouragement and counsel to a young pastor who, though well-trained and faithful, faced continuing opposition from ungodly men within the churches

where he ministered. Titus was to pass on that encouragement and counsel to the leaders he was to appoint in the Cretan churches (1:5).

In contrast to several of Paul's other letters, such as those to the churches in Rome and Galatia, the Book of Titus does not focus on explaining or defending doctrine. Paul had full confidence in Titus's theological understanding and convictions, evidenced by the fact that he entrusted him with such a demanding ministry. Except for the warning about false teachers and Judaizers, the letter gives no theological correction, strongly suggesting that Paul also had confidence in the doctrinal grounding of most church members there, despite the fact that the majority of them were new believers. Doctrines that this epistle affirms include: (1) God's sovereign election of believers (1:1, 2); (2) His saving grace (2:11; 3:5); (3) Christ's deity and second coming (2:13); (4) Christ's substitutionary atonement (dying in our place for our sin) (2:14); and (5) the regeneration and renewing of believers by the Holy Spirit (3:5).

God and Christ are regularly referred to as Savior (1:3, 4; 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6), and the saving plan is so emphasized in 2:11–14 that it indicates the major thrust of the epistle is that of equipping the churches of Crete for effective evangelism. This preparation required godly leaders who not only would shepherd believers under their care (1:5–9), but also would equip those Christians for evangelizing their pagan neighbors, who had been characterized by one of their own famous natives as “liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons” (1:12). In order to gain a hearing for the gospel among such people, the believers’ primary preparation for evangelization was to live among themselves with the unarguable testimony of

righteous, loving, selfless, and godly lives (2:2–14) in marked contrast to the debauched lives of the false teachers (1:10–16). How they behaved with reference to governmental authorities and unbelievers was also crucial to their testimony (3:1–8).

Several major themes repeat themselves throughout Titus. They include: work(s) (1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 5, 8, 14); soundness in faith and doctrine (1:4, 9, 13; 2:1, 2, 7, 8, 10; 3:15); and salvation (1:3, 4; 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6).

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, Paul, Titus, Artemas, Tychicus, Zenas, Apollos, The People of Crete.

57. Philemon

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Paul the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 414) says that both Colossians and Philemon “were written (ca. a.d. 60–62) while Paul was a prisoner in Rome (4:3, 10, 18; Philem. 9, 10, 13, 23)”.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Rome

RECIPIENTS:

Philemon, residing in Colossae

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur pp. 458–459) says:

Philemon provides valuable historical insights into the early church’s relationship to the institution of slavery. Slavery was widespread in the Roman Empire (according to some estimates, slaves constituted one third, perhaps more, of the population) and an accepted part of life. In Paul’s day, slavery had virtually eclipsed free labor. Slaves could be doctors, musicians, teachers, artists,

librarians, or accountants; in short, almost all jobs could be and were filled by slaves.

Slaves were not legally considered persons, but were the tools of their masters. As such, they could be bought, sold, inherited, exchanged, or seized to pay their master's debt. Their masters had virtually unlimited power to punish them, and sometimes did so severely for the slightest infractions. By the time of the NT, however, slavery was beginning to change. Realizing that contented slaves were more productive, masters tended to treat them more leniently. It was not uncommon for a master to teach a slave his own trade, and some masters and slaves became close friends. While still not recognizing them as persons under the law, the Roman Senate in a.d. 20 granted slaves accused of crimes the right to a trial. It also became more common for slaves to be granted (or to purchase) their freedom. Some slaves enjoyed very favorable and profitable service under their masters and were better off than many freemen because they were assured of care and provision. Many freemen struggled in poverty.

The NT nowhere directly attacks slavery; had it done so, the resulting slave insurrections would have been brutally suppressed and the message of the gospel hopelessly confused with that of social reform. Instead, Christianity undermined the evils of slavery by changing the hearts of slaves and masters. By stressing the spiritual equality of master and slave (v. 16; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1; 1 Tim. 6:1, 2), the Bible did away with slavery's abuses. The rich theological theme that alone dominates the letter is forgiveness, a featured theme throughout NT Scripture (cf. Matt. 6:12–15; 18:21–35; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13). Paul's

instruction here provides the biblical definition of forgiveness, without ever using the word.

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, Paul, Timothy, Philemon, Onesimus, Apphia, Archippus.

58. Hebrews

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Unknown; B&H Editorial Staff (p. 441) says:

The secret of this book's authorship is one of the longest ongoing challenges for Bible students. In fact, scholarship has hardly advanced farther today than Origen of the third century, who said that God alone knew who wrote the epistle. In the earliest centuries, Barnabas and Luke were mentioned as possible authors; in the Reformation era Luther made the brilliant suggestion that Apollos may have been the author. From the fifth to the sixteenth centuries, Paul was believed to be the author, and many handwritten Greek manuscripts added Paul's name to the title, as did many translations.

The consensus of contemporary scholarship is that Paul could not have been the author. The strongest argument is historical: the author put himself in second-generation Christianity, distancing himself from eyewitnesses. In the eyes of many Bible students, it is impossible that the one who wrote Hebrews 2:3–4 could also have written Galatians 1:11–12, Paul's vehement claim that he was an eyewitness.

I, myself, have been rather intrigued by the position that David L. Allen of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary has recently presented in support of Luke's authorship. Dr. Allen (pp. 6-7) says:

In my estimation, the primary reason Luke has not been considered seriously is the presumption he was a Gentile, while the author of Hebrews was

apparently a Jew. For centuries, the paradigm in New Testament studies that Luke was a Gentile has been axiomatic, as can be seen by any cursory reading of commentaries on Luke-Acts. However, within Lukan studies today, there is no such consensus regarding Luke's background. As will be demonstrated, there is much evidence to suggest Luke was a Hellenistic Jew whose writings exhibit both Jewish and Greek characteristics.

But, as brilliant as Dr. Allen's arguments are, and even though he made several references to Henry Alford's 1875 *Alford's Greek Testament: An Exegetical and Critical Commentary*, he seems to have missed the analysis in (Alford, Vol.2, p. 176) where Alford writes concerning the authorship of Hebrews:

such persons as are given us by history to choose from.

160. These are the following: Barnabas, Luke, Clement, Mark, Titus, Apollos, Silvanus, Aquila. These are all the companions of St. Paul, who were of note enough to have written such an Epistle: with the exception of Timotheus, who is excluded from the list, by being mentioned in the Epistle (ch. 13:23) as a different person from the Author.

161. Of these, Titus is excluded by the fact mentioned Gal. 2:3,—that he was a Greek, and not circumcised even at the time when he accompanied St. Paul in his third journey to Jerusalem, Acts 15:2, 3 ff.

162. It is doubtful, whether a like consideration does not exclude St. Luke from the authorship of our Epistle. Certainly the first appearance of Col. 4:10–14 numbers him among those who were not of the circumcision.

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 461) says:

The use of the present tense in 5:1–4; 7:21, 23, 27, 28; 8:3–5, 13; 9:6–9, 13, 25; 10:1, 3, 4, 8, 11; and 13:10, 11 would suggest that the Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system were still in operation when the epistle was composed. Since the temple was destroyed by General (later Emperor) Titus Vespasian in a.d. 70, the epistle must have been written prior to that date. In addition, it may be noted that Timothy had just been released from prison (13:23) and that persecution was becoming severe (10:32–39; 12:4; 13:3). These details suggest a date for the epistle around a.d. 67–69.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Unknown, perhaps Rome.

RECIPIENTS:

Jewish believers, perhaps in Rome

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Water p. 58) says:

The book was addressed to Jewish Christians who were facing persecution and were being tempted to compromise their faith and return to the practices of

Judaism. The author warns them against regarding Christianity as merely an offshoot of Judaism and encourages them to persevere in their faith. Author

The authorship of Hebrews remains a mystery inasmuch as no direct identification is possible within the book. Traditionally, Paul has been credited as the author. Other suggested authors are Luke, Barnabas and Apollos.

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, The Author of Hebrews, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Melchizedek.

59. James

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

James, the half-brother of Jesus.

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 470) says:

James most likely wrote this epistle to believers scattered (1:1) as a result of the unrest recorded in Acts 12 (ca. a.d. 44). There is no mention of the Council of Jerusalem described in Acts 15 (ca. a.d. 49), which would be expected if that Council had already taken place. Therefore, James can be reliably dated ca. a.d. 44–49, making it the earliest written book of the NT canon.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Most likely Jerusalem

RECIPIENTS:

Jewish Believers living in the Dispersion, i.e. outside of the land of Judah.

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Water p. 59) says:

James writes as a pastor, rebuking and encouraging Christians. He stresses the importance of putting faith into practical action...

James is full of practical advice about Christian conduct.

- For Christians under pressure (see 1:2–4)
- For wealthy Christians (see 1:9–11, 5:1–6)
- As church members (see 2:1–9)

The letter emphasizes practical Christianity and often echoes Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7).

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, James (Jesus' half-brother), Abraham, Rahab, Job.

60. 1 Peter

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Peter the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 480) says, “First Peter was most likely written just before or shortly after July, a.d. 64, when the city of Rome burned, thus a writing date of ca. a.d. 64–65.”

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Rome (aka “Babylon”)

RECIPIENTS:

Believers in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Water p. 60) says:

Peter wrote this letter to encourage those Christians who were downhearted because of the persecution they were suffering...

Peter gives his readers practical advice about how to react as they endure undeserved suffering. They are to stand firm. Peter bases his teaching on the example set by Jesus towards such suffering. Peter wanted to overcome any attitude of bitterness and anxiety with an attitude of dependence on and

confidence in God. Peter's words are to remind Christians of their conversion, the privileges they have in Christ, and the holy lives they are to live.

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, Peter, The Persecuted Christians in Asia Minor, Silas (aka Silvanus), Mark (aka John Mark).

61. 2 Peter

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Peter the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 489) says, “Nero died in a.d. 68, and tradition says Peter died in Nero’s persecution. The epistle may have been written just before his death (1:14; ca. a.d. 67–68).”

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Rome

RECIPIENTS:

Believers; location unknown

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(Water p. 61) says:

The need for growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. The need to stay diligent...

This letter has been called Peter’s “swan song”, as he left this letter to guide those who would carry on after his death:

“I think it right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside ...” (1:13–14).

Peter writes to help with three great problems facing his readers:

- the temptation to become complacent and sit back;
- vicious false teaching from people who were “like brute beasts, creatures of instinct” (2:12)
- cynicism about the delay in Jesus’ return.

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, Peter, Believers, False Teachers.

62. 1 John

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

John the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 495) says:

Precise dating is difficult because no clear historical indications of date exist in 1 John. Most likely John composed this work in the latter part of the first century. Church tradition consistently identifies John in his advanced age as living and actively writing during this time at Ephesus in Asia Minor. The tone of the epistle supports this evidence since the writer gives the strong impression that he is much older than his readers (e.g., “my little children”—2:1, 18, 28). The epistle and John’s gospel reflect similar vocabulary and manner of expression (see Historical and Theological Themes). Such similarity causes many to date the writing of John’s epistles as occurring soon after he composed his gospel. Since many date the gospel during the later part of the first century, they also prefer a similar date for the epistles. Furthermore, the heresy John combats most likely reflects the beginnings of Gnosticism (see Background and Setting), which was in its early stages during the latter third of the first century when John was actively writing. Since no mention is made of the persecution under Domitian, which began about

a.d. 95, it may have been written before that began. In light of such factors, a reasonable date for 1 John is ca. a.d. 90–95.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Ephesus

RECIPIENTS:

Greek and/or Jewish Christians in Ephesus

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur p. 498) says:

In light of the circumstances of the epistle, the overall theme of 1 John is “a recall to the fundamentals of the faith” or “back to the basics of Christianity.” The apostle deals with certainties, not opinions or conjecture. He expresses the absolute character of Christianity in very simple terms; terms that are clear and unmistakable, leaving no doubt as to the fundamental nature of those truths. A warm, conversational, and above all, loving tone occurs, like a father having a tender, intimate conversation with his children.

First John also is pastoral, written from the heart of a pastor who has concern for his people. As a shepherd, John communicated to his flock some very basic, but vitally essential, principles reassuring them regarding the basics of the faith. He desired them to have joy regarding the certainty of their faith rather than being upset by the false teaching and current defections of some (1:4).

The book's viewpoint, however, is not only pastoral but also polemical; not only positive but also negative. John refutes the defectors from sound doctrine, exhibiting no tolerance for those who pervert divine truth. He labels those departing from the truth as "false prophets" (4:1), "those who try to deceive" (2:26; 3:7), and "antichrists" (2:18). He pointedly identifies the ultimate source of all such defection from sound doctrine as demonic (4:1–7).

The constant repetition of three sub-themes reinforces the overall theme regarding faithfulness to the basics of Christianity: happiness (1:4), holiness (2:1), and security (5:13). By faithfulness to the basics, his readers will experience these three results continually in their lives. These three factors also reveal the key cycle of true spirituality in 1 John: a proper belief in Jesus produces obedience to His commands; obedience issues in love for God and fellow believers (e.g., 3:23, 24). When these three (sound faith, obedience, love) operate in concert together, they result in happiness, holiness and assurance. They constitute the evidence, the litmus test, of a true Christian.

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, John, The Children of God in the House Churches.

63. 2 John

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

John the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 504) says, “most likely John composed the letter at the same time or soon after 1 John, ca. a.d. 90–95,”

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Ephesus

RECIPIENTS:

An elect lady and her children; identity unknown. If taken literally, this would mean a particular acquaintance of the Apostle John. Alternatively, if taken figuratively, the “elect lady” could mean a particular congregation and “her children” would be the members of that congregation.

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur p. 506) says:

The overall theme of 2 John closely parallels 1 John’s theme of a “recall to the fundamentals of the faith” or “back to the basics of Christianity” (vv. 4–6).

For John, the basics of Christianity are summarized by adherence to the truth (v. 4), love (v. 5), and obedience (v. 6).

The apostle, however, conveys an additional but related theme in 2 John: “the biblical guidelines for hospitality.” Not only are Christians to adhere to the fundamentals of the faith, but the gracious hospitality that is commanded of them (Rom. 12:13) must be discriminating. The basis of hospitality must be common love of or interest in the truth, and Christians must share their love within the confines of that truth. They are not called to universal acceptance of anyone who claims to be a believer. Love must be discerning. Hospitality and kindness must be focused on those who are adhering to the fundamentals of the faith. Otherwise, Christians may actually aid those who are attempting to destroy those basic truths of the faith. Sound doctrine must serve as the test of fellowship and the basis of separation between those who profess to be Christians and those who actually are (vv. 10, 11; cf. Rom. 16:17; Gal. 1:8, 9; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; Titus 3:10).

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, John, The Elect Lady, The Elect Lady's Children, The Deceivers.

64. 3 John

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

John the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 509) says, “most likely John composed the letter at the same time or soon after 2 John, ca. a.d. 90–95.”

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Ephesus

RECIPIENTS:

Gaius is otherwise unidentified.

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur p. 510) says:

The theme of 3 John is the commendation of the proper standards of Christian hospitality and the condemnation for failure to follow those standards.

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, John, Gaius, Diotrephes, Demetrius.

65. Jude

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

Jude, the half-brother of Jesus.

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(MacArthur, p. 513) says:

The doctrinal and moral dysfunction discussed by Jude (vv. 4–18) closely parallels that of 2 Peter (2:1–3:4), and it is believed that Peter's writing predated Jude for several reasons: (1) 2 Peter anticipates the coming of false teachers (2 Pet. 2:1, 2; 3:3), while Jude deals with their arrival (vv. 4, 11, 12, 17, 18); and (2) Jude quotes directly from 2 Pet. 3:3 and acknowledges that it is from an apostle (vv. 17, 18). Since no mention of Jerusalem's destruction in a.d. 70 was made by Jude, though Jude most likely came after 2 Peter (ca. a.d. 68–70), it was almost certainly written before the destruction of Jerusalem.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Unknown, possibly Jerusalem.

RECIPIENTS:

Believers; location unknown

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(MacArthur p. 514) says:

Jude is the only NT book devoted exclusively to confronting “apostasy,” meaning abandonment of true, biblical faith (vv. 3, 17). Apostates are described elsewhere in 2 Thessalonians 2:10, Hebrews 10:29, 2 Peter 2:1–22, and 1 John 2:18–23. He wrote to condemn the apostates and to urge believers to contend for the faith. He called for discernment on the part of the church and a rigorous defense of biblical truth. He followed the earlier examples of: (1) Christ (Matt. 7:15ff.; 16:6–12; 24:11ff; Rev. 2, 3); (2) Paul (Acts 20:29, 30; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1–5; 4:3, 4); (3) Peter (2 Pet. 2:1, 2; 3:3, 4); and (4) John (1 John 4:1–6; 2 John 6–11).

Jude is replete with historical illustrations from the OT which include: the Exodus (v.5); Satan’s rebellion (v. 6); Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7); Moses’ death (v. 9); Cain (v. 11); Balaam (v. 11); Korah (v. 11); Enoch (vv. 14, 15); and Adam (v. 14).

Jude also vividly described the apostates in terms of their character and unthinkable activities (vv. 4, 8, 10, 16, 18, 19). Additionally, he borrowed from nature to illustrate the futility of their teaching (vv. 12, 13). While Jude never commented on the specific content of their false teaching, it was enough to demonstrate that their dysfunctional personal lives and fruitless ministries betrayed their attempts to teach error as though it were truth. This emphasis on character repeats the constant theme regarding false teachers—their personal corruption. While their teaching is clever, subtle, deceptive, enticing, and

delivered in myriads of forms, the common way to recognize them is to look behind their false spiritual fronts and see their wicked lives (2 Pet. 2:10, 12, 18, 19).

LITERARY GENRE:

Epistle.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Jesus, Jude (Jesus' half-brother), Moses, Michael the Archangel, Cain, Balaam, Korah, Enoch.

66. Revelation

TRADITIONAL HUMAN AUTHOR:

John the Apostle

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:

(Harris, p. 47) writes:

The writings of John cover most of the rest of the New Testament. John, the beloved disciple, moved to Ephesus and lived to a great age. Polycarp knew him there. Patmos, the island of John's exile, was near Ephesus. Irenaeus, Polycarp's student, tells us that John lived until the days of Trajan (a.d. 98–117).

(MacArthur, p. 517) says:

Revelation was written in the last decade of the first century (ca. a.d. 94–96), near the end of Emperor Domitian's reign (a.d. 81–96). Although some date it during Nero's reign (a.d. 54–68), their arguments are unconvincing and conflict with the view of the early church. Writing in the second century, Irenaeus declared that Revelation had been written toward the end of Domitian's reign. Later writers, such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Victorinus (who wrote one of the earliest commentaries on Revelation), Eusebius, and Jerome affirm the Domitian date.

The spiritual decline of the seven churches (chaps. 2, 3) also argues for the later date. Those churches were strong and spiritually healthy in the mid-60s, when Paul last ministered in Asia Minor. The brief time between Paul's ministry

there and the end of Nero's reign was too short for such a decline to have occurred. The longer time gap also explains the rise of the heretical sect known as the Nicolaitans (2:6, 15), who are not mentioned in Paul's letters, not even to one or more of these same churches (Ephesians). Finally, dating Revelation during Nero's reign does not allow time for John's ministry in Asia Minor to reach the point at which the authorities would have felt the need to exile him.

However, given the scope of the material presented in the book of Revelation, I find it difficult to believe that John would have made no reference whatsoever to the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. if the book had indeed been written after 70 A.D. Irenaeus' statement that John lived until the days of Trajan (a.d. 98–117) is not directly material, because we don't know the dates during which John was exiled to the island of Patmos.

But this would be contradicted by the fact that Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Victorinus, Eusebius, and Jerome all testify to the dating within Domitian's reign (81–96 A.D.).

On the other hand, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus (in an earlier treatise), Tertullian, and Eusebius (in other records) held to a date within Nero's reign (54–68 A.D.).

Further, nineteenth and twentieth century scholars who hold to the earlier date include J. A. Bengel (Section 23–24), R. H. Charles (1919, pp. 55–70), R. H. Charles (1920, pp. 23–40), H. Ewald (Part III, Section 4, pp. 312–330), W. Milligan (pp. 146–152), and W. Ramsay (pp. 85–98).

I would thus contend that the date of John's writing of Revelation is still open to further discussion.

PLACE OF AUTHORSHIP:

Probably Patmos, but perhaps Ephesus

RECIPIENTS:

Christians in the seven cities addressed in Revelation 2 and 3: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

PURPOSE, THEME, AND CONTENT:

(McGarvey pp. 77–79) says:

The Apocalypse. The word apocalypse means revelation; but as other books as well as this contain revelations, there is a little confusion in calling this book the book of revelation; hence the preference among scholars for the untranslated title. There p 78 is still another objection to the printed title, “The Revelation of St. John the Divine;” for John was no more a saint, and no more a divine than any of the other apostles. The real title of the book, that is, the one given by the writer himself, is found in the first verse: “The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him to show unto his servants, even the things which must shortly come to pass; and he went and signified it by his angel unto his servant John, who bore witness of the word of God, and of the Testimony of Jesus Christ, even of all things that he saw.” As it was intended to show “things which must shortly come to pass,” its contents must be in the main prophetic.

This fully stated title is followed by a salutation to the “Seven churches of Asia,” similar to the usual salutation of the epistles, and this is by a doxology.

Then the main body of the book opens with an account of the appearance to John on the island of Patmos, of the Lord Jesus himself in glory. The Lord commands him to write what he dictates, and there follow seven brief epistles from the Lord to the seven churches of Asia. The word Asia means the Roman province of which Ephesus was the principal city. By consulting any good map the reader will find the seven churches, or rather the cities in which they were located, almost in a circle. If this book was written about the year 96, as Irenaeus, a writer of the second century affirms, Jesus had now been in heaven about sixty-two years, and these seven churches had been in existence nearly forty years. After the experience of this long period the Lord dictates a letter to each of them to let them know how he regarded their conduct since they were planted, and to give them warnings and exhortations for the future. When the epistle to each was publicly read to the assembled members, the occasion must have been one never to be forgotten. In reading them we should keep in mind a comparison with our own congregation, and so far as the conditions are similar we should take to ourselves the same warnings, or commendations, as the case may be.

After writing the words of the seven epistles as they fell from the lips of the Lord, John saw in a vision a door opened in heaven, and at the bidding of a voice he was caught up through it, and beheld a vision of the glory of God far transcending any vouchsafed before to any prophet or apostle. Then followed a vision of a book sealed with seven seals, which no one in heaven was found

worthy to unseal except “The Lion of the Tribe of Judah,” a well known title of our Lord Jesus Christ. When he took the book in his hand great glory was ascribed to him by all the inhabitants of heaven; and as he proceeded to open the seven seals there followed the opening of each a wonderful symbolic vision portending something to occur on the earth (Revelation 4:1–7:17). When the seventh seal was opened seven angels stood forth with seven trumpets in their hands. They sounded their trumpets one by one, and there followed as many startling events (8:1–11:19). The rest of the book (12–22) is filled with a series of visions of quite a different character and too elaborate for description here, all terminating with a vision of the final judgment and of the New Jerusalem in which the saints are to dwell in the presence of God forever. Thus the Bible, which began with a vision of the creation of the present heavens and earth, in which sin was born and the Redeemer from sin was crucified, closes with a vision of a new heaven and a new earth where those redeemed from sin out of every nation, family and tongue, shall live perpetually in righteousness and bliss. This promise to Abraham has never been lost sight of since it was first announced in Ur of the Chaldees, and it is now fulfilled by the blessing which comes upon men of all nations through Abraham’s seed.

LITERARY GENRE:

Prophecy.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

God, Jesus, The Holy Spirit, John, Satan (aka The Dragon), The Beast of the Sea (aka The Antichrist), The Beast of the Earth (aka The False Prophet), The Seven Churches, The Woman Clothed with the Sun, The 144,000, The Great Multitude, The Two Witnesses, Various Angels.

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