

Genesis

Author: Moses (date of writing: c.1440-1400 B.C.).

Period: Creation to c.1800 B.C.

Summary: Genesis is the single most important book of the Bible. It is the beginning and foundation of the Bible, on which everything else is built. Everything revealed in the other books of the Bible has its beginning in the book of Genesis. It is the first book of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. Genesis is a Greek word which can mean "birth" or "history of origin" and as that name suggests, the book of Genesis is a book of beginnings. Genesis and Revelation stand as two end posts bridging the revelation of God to man; the first telling how it all began, the second revealing in symbol how it all will finish. In Genesis we see the beginnings of all that Revelation predicts as the consummation of the Divine purpose in the earth.

For example, Genesis speaks of a natural creation (chapter 1); Revelation of a spiritual creation (3:14). In Genesis the serpent speaks (3:1-5), in Revelation it is restrained (20:2). In Genesis, the curse is imposed (3:17), in Revelation it is removed (22:3). In Genesis, sorrow and death appear (3:16-19), in Revelation they are taken away (21:4). In Genesis, access to the tree of life is denied (3:24), in Revelation, access to it is opened (22:7). In Genesis, the first paradise is closed to man (3:23); in Revelation it is opened to him (21:25).

Exodus

Author: Moses (date of writing: c.1440-1400 B.C.).

Period: c.1520-1440 B.C.

Summary: Exodus records the great numerical growth of the Israelites during their enslavement in Egypt. It introduces Moses and records the plagues God brought upon Egypt to secure His peoples' release from the bondage of slavery. From this point, the people are given the proclamations of the covenant of the Law at Mount Sinai. The book concludes with a description of the order of worship centred around the Tabernacle and the Law of Moses. This is the second book of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Leviticus

Author: Moses (date of writing: c.1440-1400 B.C.).

Period: c.1440-1400 B.C.

Summary: The third book of the Pentateuch takes its name from one of the twelve sons of Jacob, Levi, whose family was ordained by God to minister to Him as priests. The book covers the laws of the Israelites regarding worship and religious activities, both personal and national, including the Day of Atonement and sacrificial offerings. It contains laws regarding cleanliness, morality, ethics and

hygiene that pertained to the people of Israel on a day-to-day basis. Animal sacrifice was introduced as an atonement for the individual and national sins of the people.

Numbers

Author: Moses (date of writing: c.1440-1400 B.C.).

Period: c.1440-1400 B.C.

Summary: Numbers is the fourth book of the Pentateuch. It is a historical book, and contains two censuses of the Israelite people. It primarily tells of the rebellion of the Israelites in the wilderness after the exodus from their bondage in Egypt. Because of this rebellion, only two of the adults leaving Egypt were to enter into the promised land of Canaan. The book covers a thirty-eight-year period.

Deuteronomy

Author: Moses (date of writing: c.1400 B.C.).

Period: c.1440-1400 B.C.

Summary: Deuteronomy is the fifth and last book of the Pentateuch. It records the repetition of the law recorded in Leviticus. It was given on the plains of Moab just prior to the entrance into the Promised Land by the nation of Israel under the command of Joshua. This was Moses' last address to Israel as a whole prior to his death. At this time only two surviving members were left out of the generation that escaped from Egypt. Therefore, this repetition of the law was extremely important to the welfare of the new generation.

Joshua

Author: Joshua; perhaps with later editing by Samuel.

Period: c.1400-1380 B.C.

Summary: Joshua was selected by God to succeed Moses and lead the nation into the Promised Land. The book outlines the conquest and occupation by Israel under his military leadership. God explicitly states that all the inhabitants of the land were to be utterly driven out or destroyed in order to assure spiritual purity and complete devotion to God. Joshua is the first book of the Former Prophets.

Judges

Author: Samuel or another prophet (date of writing: c.1050 B.C. or shortly thereafter)

Period: c.1380-1050 B.C.

Summary: The Book of Judges covers the period from the death of Joshua to the establishment of the monarchy under Saul. This was a time of great immorality as the result of the failure of the Israelites to drive out the inhabitants of the land. "Rulers" were set up by God to direct and judge the affairs and people of Israel. The book of Judges closes by setting the stage for the people's desire for a human king.

Ruth

Author: Unknown (date of writing: probably during the monarchy of King David)

Time: c.1100 B.C.

Summary: The book of Ruth is dated during the latter part of the period of the Judges, and shows that in a time of national decline and immorality, God preserved a remnant that could serve as the core for a future revival. This would be accomplished through Ruth's descendant, David, from whom the Messiah would come. Ruth is one of four women listed in the genealogy of Christ, and one of two women to have biblical books named after them.

1 & 2 Samuel

Author: Possibly Samuel, Nathan and Gad (see 1 Chronicles 29:29)

Period: c.1100 B.C. (the birth of Samuel) to c.970 (the close of David's reign)

Summary: 1 Samuel is the first of two historical books that illustrate Israel's tradition from a loose confederation of tribes to a strong and united nation. It portrays the anointing of the first king of Israel, Saul, by the prophet Samuel. It then recounts the degenerating reign of Saul and his loss of the throne to David, a man after God's own heart. The second book begins with the death of Saul and the ascension of David to the throne. The rest of the book records military conquests and political intrigues during David's reign. It concludes with the blessing of Solomon by David.

1 & 2 Kings

Author: Unknown; as 1 and 2 Kings continue the account started in 1 and 2 Samuel, it is possible that these books were produced by contemporary prophets.

Period: c.970-586 B.C.

Summary: 1 and 2 Kings contain the history of the Jewish monarchy from the death of David (around 970 B.C.) to the Babylonian exile (587/6 B.C.). They trace the division of the Israelite nation into the Kingdom of Judah in the south and the Kingdom of Israel in the north. 1 and 2 Kings record Israel's history from a religious, rather than a civil, viewpoint. As such, it records the religious progress of the nation and sets forth the various steps in the moral growth and decay of the Kingdom. 1 Kings opens with Israel in its glory and 2 Kings closes with Israel in ruins. The purpose of the Books of Kings is to record the lives and characters of the nation's leaders as a warning and exhortation to all subsequent generations of covenant bearers.

1 & 2 Chronicles

Author: Possibly compiled by Ezra the priest

Period: c.1010-536 B.C.

Summary: 1 and 2 Chronicles are not simply a repetition of history already recorded in the books of Samuel and Kings. The Book of Chronicles was written to remind the nation of their entire history, and of their position among other nations, emphasizing the history of priestly worship from the death of Saul to the end of the Babylonian captivity. The Books of Chronicles contain more detail on the organization of public worship, of religious ceremonies, of Levites and singers and of the relationship of kings to the worship of God, than does the Book of Kings. The history of the Northern Kingdom is omitted from the Chronicles because the Northern Kingdom had no bearing on the development of true worship of God in Jerusalem.

Ezra

Author: Ezra

Period: 538-437 B.C.

Summary: In general, Ezra covers the events of the Jews returning from the Babylonian captivity. The decline of Babylon and its eventual overthrow by the Persians expedited this return to Jerusalem. The Jews are numbered and are allowed to return to Judah to rebuild the Temple. Samaritan assistance is rejected and their opposition is a contributing factor to the slow progress of the Temple construction. Despite the delays, the Temple is completed and dedicated during this period.

Nehemiah

Author: Possibly Ezra and Nehemiah

Period: c.445-432 B.C.

Summary: The book of Nehemiah begins with Nehemiah returning from Babylon as Governor of Jerusalem. He plans and oversees the rebuilding of the city wall despite discouraging opposition and disunity within the Jewish population. The wall is completed and more exiles return and are registered as Jewish citizens. Nehemiah's dedication to God drives him to make several religious reforms. A public reading of the Law and arrangements for worship are among these reforms.

Esther

Author: Unknown

Period: c.460 B.C.

Summary: Esther is regarded as a historical book, written during the period of the Jewish captivity. It records the plot of Haman, the Prime Minister to the Persian king, who intended to exterminate the Jews. This plot is foiled by Esther, the Queen of Persia, who was a Jewess. This book also provides an account of the origin of the Hebrew Feast of Purim.

Job

- Author:** Unknown; probably an Israelite (written shortly after dates given below)
- Period:** Sometime between 1600 and 1100 B.C.
- Summary:** Job is the first poetic book of the Old Testament. This book relates the anguish of a righteous man as he and his friends struggle to explain the affliction that has befallen Job and has stripped him of his wealth, his family and his health. The dialogue continues between Job and his friends as each presents his opinion on the reasons behind such troubles. The purpose of the book of Job is to counter the belief in “exact retribution.”

Psalms

- Author:** David and others (date of writing: c.1000-700 B.C.)
- Summary:** The Psalms are divided into five books, each according to a specific classification. The Psalms are a form of Hebrew poetry, and many were originally meant to be accompanied by music. The content of the Psalms includes Messianic prophecy, praise to God and visions of the future Kingdom and its Glory. David is named as author of approximately half of the Psalms. A handful of others are responsible for approximately fifteen, while the authorship of the remaining Psalms is unknown.

Proverbs

- Author:** Solomon and others (written c.970-700 B.C.)
- Summary:** In the book of Proverbs, wisdom is the attitude that puts God first as man’s rightful guide and master. The book does not hesitate to link good and bad with reward and penalty. Much can be learned by testing personal conduct against the positive and negative standards and warnings as recorded in the Proverbs. Throughout the book, the view is set forth that all men fall into two basic classes. Both are known by their habits, their deeds, their “fruits,” their chosen “ways” in life, and their fitting ends. They are either with God or without Him, good or evil, or wise or foolish. There is even a mutual tension between the two classes—the two ways of life—that shows up in every aspect of life.

Ecclesiastes

- Author:** Probably Solomon (date of writing: c. 970-930 B.C.).
- Summary:** Ecclesiastes is the final book in the “wisdom literature” and forms a collection of many wise sayings and proverbs of Solomon. The book is mainly comprised of observations of life. Solomon, having lived a full life with all its pleasures, concludes that life is vanity (it is also possible, but less likely, that the book was written near the beginning of his life). What better man to speak about life than a man who was given all it had to offer? Without God, life would be meaningless. All

his worldly possessions would amount to nothing. Therefore, the conclusion of his studies states that man should love and fear God and obey his commandments.

Song of Solomon

- Author:** Probably Solomon (date of writing: c.970-930 B.C.).
- Summary:** This book is composed of speeches, or dialogues, in Hebrew poetry. It portrays the beauty and pure love between a man and a woman that develops into a mature undying relationship. More in-depth symbolism shows the relationship between Christ and his bride, the body of believers, which will be consummated at his return. The basic message is the purity and sacredness of love.

Isaiah

- Author:** Isaiah
- Period:** c.740-681 B.C.
- Summary:** Isaiah ministered during the rule of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. His primary focus dealt with the coming judgment on the Southern Kingdom of Judah due to its great wickedness. Isaiah identified the root of Judah’s trouble in its idolatry and apostasy. Although he spoke of judgments on other nations as well, the prophet Isaiah urged the kings and the people to put their trust in God rather than in alliances with earthly powers. He comforted his people with the realization that God loves those who are faithful to Him and keep His commandments. He spoke of the future Messiah who would come to redeem the nation and restore the Kingdom.

Jeremiah

- Author:** Jeremiah and Baruch
- Period:** c.626-580 B.C.
- Summary:** Jeremiah, a priest from the household of Hilkiah, warns of the impending military force of Babylon that would destroy Jerusalem and enslave the Jews. He urges Jerusalem to turn from her wicked ways, but there is no response. Jeremiah further warns of the false prophets who are leading the people astray with deceptive doctrines and falsehoods. He urges the Israelites to submit to the Babylonian authority as the instrument of God’s judgment. They do not heed his warnings and the people are carried away to Babylon. He predicts that the captives will return after seventy years to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple.

Lamentations

- Author:** Jeremiah
- Period:** c.580 B.C.
- Summary:** A lamentation is an expression of suffering. In this book, Jeremiah expresses his sorrow regarding the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity of the nation at

the hands of Nebuchadnezzar's army. The book describes and explains the afflictions brought against the city of Jerusalem as well as surrounding nations that scoff at Jerusalem's affliction. Jeremiah emphasizes that this is the result of divine judgment for the sins of the people. The book further underlines lessons that Jerusalem should learn from its afflictions, namely the vanity of glory, leadership and pride in an attempt to overcome them in the future. An interesting feature of the book is that the first four chapters are written in alphabetic acrostics in the original Hebrew.

Ezekiel

Author: Ezekiel

Period: 593-c.560 B.C.

Summary: This book records the activity of the prophet Ezekiel during the exile in Babylon. His message was directed to fellow captives and to Jews still present in the land of Judah. Both groups refuse to listen and remain unwilling to accept the rule of Babylon. Ezekiel proclaimed good news to the exiles that Israel, after being chastened, would be restored and God's Kingdom would rise. This future Kingdom will last forever and God's people will never again be cast out.

Daniel

Author: Daniel

Period: c.605-535 B.C.

Summary: The book of Daniel predicts the destiny of two opposing powers: The Kingdom of Men and the Kingdom of God, stressing that *"the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men"* (5:21). Daniel's prophecies generally do not deal with Israel as much as with the nations that control Israel. The book of Daniel contains prophecies that span the time from Daniel's day to the coming Kingdom Age.

Hosea

Author: Hosea

Period: c.750-715 B.C.

Summary: The book of Hosea describes the patient longsuffering of God towards the rebellious and unfaithful northern Kingdom of Israel. However, it is made clear to the Israelites that punishment will engulf anyone who remains wilfully rebellious. A key theme is Hosea's marriage to the unfaithful Gomer, who is a symbolic representation of Israel.

Joel

Author: Joel

Period: Possibly c.618-608 B.C.

Summary: The book of Joel begins by describing a devastating swarm of locusts that cause national disaster to the agriculture of Israel. Joel calls the nation of

Judah to a day of repentance due to divine judgment. The last portion of the book is concerned with events associated with *"the day of the LORD."* The message illustrated is that if Judah repents, God will richly bless them and forgive them.

Amos

Author: Amos

Period: c.760-750 B.C.

Summary: The book of Amos was written during a period of national optimism in Israel. King Jeroboam II was ruler, and politically and materially the northern kingdom rivalled the age of Solomon and David. Amos, a shepherd by trade, was called by God to pronounce judgment on the northern Kingdom of Israel by denouncing Israel's luxurious living, idolatry and moral depravity. Amos urges the people to repent before the judgments of God came upon them. *"Seek God and live"* was Amos' plea to the nation. He also foretells of the dispersion of the Israelites, but points to a day when God would regather them in the land of their forefathers.

Obadiah

Author: Obadiah

Period: Possibly 605-586 B.C.

Summary: Obadiah was a prophet who pronounced judgment upon the nation of Edom for its antagonism against Israel. Edom is the nation that is descended from Esau, the twin brother of Jacob (Israel). Edom was to be punished for the violence against Israel they committed when invading the land.

Jonah

Author: Probably Jonah

Period: c.785-775 B.C.

Summary: The book is concerned with the commission of Jonah to warn the city of Nineveh (the capital of Assyria) to repent and obey God's commandments in order to avoid assured destruction. Jonah is reluctant to preach this message and is therefore swallowed by a great fish and remains in the belly of the fish for three days. Upon his release, he preaches the message to the people of Nineveh who believe his message and repent of their sins.

Micah

Author: Micah

Time: c.735-700 B.C.

Summary: Micah, who was contemporary with Isaiah, was to the southern Kingdom of Judah what Amos was previously to the northern Kingdom of Israel. Both were fierce critics of the rich and powerful who exploited the poor. Though Micah's prophecies

refer especially to Judah, they concerned all of Israel. Micah's leading ideas are the regeneration of Israel's remnant through judgment, the establishment of the Kingdom of God in the line of David and the conversion of the nations through that Kingdom. The conclusion of his prophecy is a triumphant expression of faith, which is seen in its true quality against the background of the materialism and the corruption of the reign of Ahaz.

Nahum

Author: Nahum

Period: c.620 B.C.

Summary: The book of Nahum was written approximately a century and a half after the events recorded in the book of Jonah. During that period of time, Nineveh had turned from its repentant attitude and had taken the northern Kingdom of Israel into captivity. Whereas Jonah proclaimed a message of mercy and repentance, Nahum proclaimed an indictment of doom upon Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. They who were once used as God's tool against the people of Israel and Jerusalem, would now be destroyed because of their great wickedness.

Habakkuk

Author: Habakkuk

Period: c.620-605 B.C.

Summary: The book begins with Habakkuk complaining of injustice in Judah and his inability to understand God's failure to judge the wicked and morally deprived nation of Babylon (the Chaldeans). Habakkuk is shown that God's people must continue to trust in His mercy regardless of the circumstances about them. The wicked appear to prosper while the righteous are chastened. However this prosperity of the wicked is only temporary. God will not abandon those who obey and follow His commandments: *"the just shall live by faith"* (cf. Psalm 73).

Zephaniah

Author: Zephaniah

Period: c.640- 627 B.C.

Summary: Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of King Josiah, who was responsible for a great religious reform. This reform followed the wicked reigns of Kings Manasseh and Amon, who led the nation into various forms of idolatry. Zephaniah pronounces inescapable judgments against Jerusalem for their sins and exhorts national repentance. He further speaks of "the day of the LORD," when God will intervene to judge sin.

Haggai

Author: Haggai

Period: 520 B.C.

Summary: Haggai writes to the few Jews who have returned to Judah from the captivity in Babylon. He exhorts them to "consider their ways" and to complete the Temple whose foundation had been laid eighteen years before. The people responded and the Temple was completed in 516 B.C. Haggai further pronounces that the pagan empires will be overthrown by God and Judah will be elevated during the time of the Messiah.

Zechariah

Author: Zechariah

Period: c.520-480 B.C.

Summary: Zechariah was a younger contemporary of Haggai. He also encouraged the people to rebuild the Temple. Like Daniel and Revelation, this book contains Apocalyptic visions. It also includes detailed references to the coming Messiah. The book concludes with descriptions of the enemies of Jerusalem being judged and of the future glory of God's kingdom.

Malachi

Author: Malachi

Period: c.430 B.C.

Summary: Malachi's message comes to the people in a time of great spiritual decline. It is approximately eighty years after the rebuilding of the temple and the promises of the coming Messiah have not yet been realized. As a result, the people had become lax and had an increasingly casual attitude toward God and worship. Malachi states that their sacrifices were unacceptable to God, husbands were unfaithful and the priests had neglected God's covenants. Malachi was probably the last prophet of the Old Testament period.

Matthew

Author: Matthew, who left his work as a tax collector to become one of the twelve apostles (Matthew 9:9-13). Matthew (Hebrew *Mattityahu*) means "Gift of the LORD."

Period: 4 B.C. - 30 A.D.

Summary: Matthew is aimed at a Jewish audience. Its purpose is to witness that Jesus was the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. Matthew emphasizes the words of the Lord regarding the Kingdom of Heaven. This was done to counterbalance the popular Jewish belief of the day that the Messiah would be a militant leader who would overthrow the then current Roman occupation and re-establish the throne of David. Instead, Matthew speaks of the servant role that Jesus led while on earth.

Mark

Author: John Mark, a young believer who assisted Paul and Barnabas in their missionary work (Acts

12:25, 13:5). The fact that Mark had two given names, one Hebrew (John) and the other Latin (Mark), may indicate that he came from a family of Hellenistic Jews.

Period: 4 B.C. - 30 A.D.

Summary: Mark describes in detail Jewish customs and is therefore thought to be aimed at an audience unfamiliar with Jewish ways (in particular, Romans). Mark describes in very lifelike terms the miracles of Jesus and great detail is given to Christ's crucifixion and death. It is thought that Mark was the first of the four gospels to be written (probably between 65 and 70 A.D.). Some feel that the book was taken by dictation from the Apostle Peter because some events contained in the book are unique to Peter.

Luke

Author: Luke, a physician and companion of the Apostle Paul in his journeys (see Colossians 4:14 and Philemon 24). Luke was almost certainly a Gentile, which would make him the only non-Jewish human author of a Biblical book. Luke's name is Greek (*Loukas*), and means "light bearing."

Period: 4 B.C. - 30 A.D.

Summary: The book of Luke gives us the most complete look at the life of Jesus. It takes many of its writings from the Gospel according to Mark. Luke also uses eyewitnesses as sources for his writings. He stresses Jesus' humanity and compassion, as well as the power of the Holy Spirit and of prayer. Luke is at home in both Jewish and Gentile settings and his account of the Gospel forms a two-part work with the book of Acts.

John

Author: John, one of the twelve apostles, described as the disciple "*whom Jesus loved*" (John 13:23). This apostle also wrote 1, 2 and 3 John, and recorded the book of Revelation. His name (Hebrew *Yochanan*) means "The LORD is gracious."

Period: 4 B.C. - 30 A.D.

Summary: The book of John was written in order that men and women might believe that Jesus is the Son of God. John cites eight signs to establish and prove this point culminating in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. John is the only book of the four Gospels that does not record any parables; instead John emphasizes Jesus as the manifestation of God. John's account of the Gospel was the last to be written, and contains much more spiritual language than the synoptics. The Bible reader, upon recognizing this, will employ additional discernment while reading the highly spiritual and metaphorical language found in John's Gospel account.

Acts of the Apostles

Author: Luke (see introduction to Luke)

Period: 30-60 A.D.

Summary: Acts records the foundation and activities of the first century church. It illustrates the struggles and problems that they faced as well as their solutions to overcoming the problems. It describes the power that was given to a select number of men by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to promote the Gospel. The book also traces the missionary journeys of Paul as he helped establish Christian congregations throughout Asia Minor and Rome.

Romans

Author: The Apostle Paul. Paul was first known as Saul (Hebrew *Sha'ul*; "appointed"), but later took the Roman name Paul (Latin *Paulus*), which means "little."

Period: 57 A.D.

Summary: Written to the congregation at Rome by the Apostle Paul, who was instructed by the Lord Jesus Christ to be a minister to the Gentiles. Paul begins the letter by showing how all men are sinners in the eyes of God and therefore worthy of death. However, Paul explains that Jesus Christ was the "second Adam" in whom no sin was found, and is able to provide an acceptable covering for men's sin if they accept all that Jesus said and follow after him in their own lives. With this in mind, Paul explains the distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles and the final outcome of all things when the Lord Jesus returns to the earth to establish the Kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians

Author: Paul

Period: Early 55 A.D.

Summary: Written to the congregation at Corinth by the apostle Paul. He deals with a series of problems, including the presence of sin and false teaching in the newly formed church. Most members were from a promiscuous pagan background and were exhorted to put away their previous ways. There also were difficulties with those who tried to mix the teachings of Christ with the Levitical law.

2 Corinthians

Author: Paul

Period: Late 55 A.D.

Summary: This second letter to the congregation at Corinth was also penned by Paul. It was written after he made a "painful" and unsuccessful visit to the small church in an attempt to give instruction and guidance on several divisive issues. Upon learning that a majority of members had repented, he wrote the letter we now call 2 Corinthians. It gives encouragement, yet teaches of the suffering that

each member must face for the Lord Jesus' sake. Paul concludes by surmising that it is when he is weakest that God is able to work through him most powerfully. This letter was in all likelihood written about six months after the letter we now call 1 Corinthians.

Galatians

Author: Paul

Period: Written sometime from 48 to 57 A.D.

Summary: The letter to the congregations in Galatia focuses on the divisions that Jewish-Christians were causing among new Gentile converts. These Judaizers were trying to convince the Gentiles that first, Paul's authority was given by men and not by God, and second, that they had to be circumcised and to keep the ritual law in order to be saved. Paul argues that both Jew and Gentile alike enjoy in Christ complete salvation. They are justified, adopted, renewed and made heirs according to the promises of the Abrahamic covenant. Reliance on the Law was only a bondage to death and could not produce life-giving freedom, a freedom only available in Christ. Paul was showing that all legalistic variations of the Gospel are perversions of it and should be exposed as such.

Ephesians

Author: Paul

Period: c.60 A.D.

Summary: This letter is divided into two sections. The first outlines the blessings and spiritual riches in Christ; the second the walk in imitation of Christ. The intent is to illustrate the abundance of spiritual riches that Christ himself received or would receive, namely grace, glory, mercy and immortality, and to foster the incentive to walk as Christ himself did. By doing so, the believer would learn to walk worthy of his vocation; not as Gentiles who do not know God, but as children of light who show forth love and walk correctly in a righteous lifestyle until the return of the Lord Jesus. It is thought that this letter was one of several letters that were circulated to the different congregations in Asia.

Philippians

Author: Paul

Period: c.61 A.D.

Summary: The tone of this letter is more personal in nature than most of Paul's letters. Paul outlines his own beliefs and explains that believers must not be self-centred in their own lives. Each believer must look to Christ for an example of self-sacrifice and unity in purpose. Paul further contrasts enemies of the cross with those who are friends of the Lord Jesus and the cross. It is thought that Paul wrote this epistle while he was in prison at Rome.

Colossians

Author: Paul

Period: c.60 A.D.

Summary: The letter to the congregation at Colossi was written in response to heresy and Judaizing that had been brought to Paul's attention. The major errors that had crept into the church were 1) the exaltation of angels or other "elemental spirits," 2) the emphasis on ascetic or liturgical practices thought to produce spirituality and, 3) those in error claimed a special knowledge beyond that found in the Gospel of Christ. Paul states that these are philosophies based on human knowledge and tradition and are therefore worthless. He teaches love, humility, submission to authority and finally prayer to establish a believer in the wisdom of God.

1 & 2 Thessalonians

Author: Paul

Period: c.51-52 A.D.

Summary: The main focus in these letters is the state of those who have died in Christ. It deals with their resurrection and the future of the Kingdom of God. Paul appears to have written these letters due to the large amount of newly baptized believers in Thessalonica. He was forced out of the city by jealous Jews. The occurrence of the statement "you know" in the letters indicates that the teachings were begun but were interrupted and therefore Paul wishes to solidify the subject matter. Further encouragement is given in the second letter regarding the punishment of those wicked men who were persecuting them.

1 & 2 Timothy

Author: Paul

Period: c.63-65, c.67 A.D.

Summary: Both letters were written by Paul from Rome during his imprisonments. Paul gives Timothy encouragement and reminds him of the work at hand. He reveals his fears to Timothy of the dangers within the church and lends advice for godly conduct of all individuals. The two letters to Timothy, along with Paul's letter to Titus, are often called the Pastoral Epistles due to the nature of their material.

Titus

Author: Paul

Period: c.67 A.D.

Summary: This letter was written by Paul from Rome to Titus, who was teaching the churches on the island of Crete. The letter provides Titus with instruction and advice for his conduct, as well as guidance for dealing with the believers in Crete.

Philemon

Author: Paul

Period: c.60 A.D.

Summary: In this letter Paul writes to Philemon whose slave, Onesimus, had run away to Rome where he met Paul and became a Christian. Paul sends him back to his rightful owner with his personal letter of recommendation to accept him back with love and charity.

Hebrews

Author: Probably Paul; others have suggested Barnabas or Apollos.

Period: Probably in the 60s A.D., but before A.D. 70.

Summary: This letter persuasively presents the distinctiveness of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. The letter is primarily written to Jewish Christians who were wavering between Judaism and Christianity. Its primary message is to prove that Jesus Christ was the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy and symbol. With Christ as the fulfilment, there was no longer a need to make the animal sacrifices required under the Mosaic Law. Christ is the High Priest and mediator of all believers in all ages who look for the redemption of God.

James

Author: James (the half-brother of Jesus, and leader of the Jerusalem council; see Acts 15)

Period: c.43-50 AD

Summary: The letter of James contains practical information pertaining to every day life as a Christian. It is not directed at any church in particular, but rather to Jewish believers, revealing their responsibilities to the principles of the Law as manifested in Christ. It focuses on real faith and shows that there is a need to develop faith as an energizing power that finds its out-working in a changed life; therefore, the epistle dwells on practice and not doctrine.

1 Peter

Author: The Apostle Peter

Period: c.60 A.D.

Summary: This letter was written to Christians in Asia Minor to help establish a joyful hope in the face of coming persecution. Peter sternly warns that persecution would come and that each individual must stand fast against it. He illustrates man's relation to God and mankind.

2 Peter

Author: Peter

Period: c.65-68 A.D.

Summary: The theme of this letter is true knowledge. The

newly formed church was threatened by false teachers and therefore Peter exhorts the Christians to be aware of this danger. Peter explains that false teachers had crept in and were secretly subverting the true doctrine of the Gospel.

1 John

Author: The Apostle John

Period: c.85 -100 A.D.

Summary: This letter was written to a community that faced an early form of Gnostic heresy. John teaches how to walk in the light and also to keep in their remembrance the sacrifice that the Lord Jesus Christ made for them.

2 John

Author: John

Period: c.85 -100 A.D.

Summary: The letter is addressed to "an elect lady" who is advised to have minimal fellowship with unbelievers. The ideas of love, truth, and obedience are emphasized.

3 John

Author: John

Period: c.85 -100 A.D.

Summary: This letter commends the believer Gaius for his piety and charity by allowing Christian teachers use of his home and financial means. He is urged to receive only good men who were known by their works and to shun evil men.

Jude

Author: Either Judas the half-brother of Jesus or Judas the apostle (not Iscariot).

Period: c.65 - 80 A.D.

Summary: The primary message Jude is trying to relate is the danger of the false teachers who have "slipped in" unawares by the newly converted Christians. Jude further outlines the past judgments upon evil men who forsook the Word of God and perverted it into the traditions of men.

Revelation

Author: The Apostle John

Time: c.95 A.D.

Summary: The book of Revelation, also called the Apocalypse, is the final book of the New Testament and the Bible as a whole. John, one of the apostles, is given the Revelation of Jesus Christ pertaining to the events of Christ's return and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. The vision is highly symbolic and signifies the apostasy of the church as well as the judgments of those who are held accountable.