# Table of Contents

**TABLE OF CONTENTS** .................................................................................................................................................. III

**PREFACE** ........................................................................................................................................................................ VI

**STYLE NOTES** ..................................................................................................................................................................... VII

- Quotations of the Bible ................................................................. vii
- A Note on the Divine Name ........................................................ vii
- Common Abbreviations ............................................................... vii
- Abbreviations of the Books of the Bible ..................................... viii

**INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE** .......................................................................................................................... 1

- The Date of the Bible .................................................................... 1
- The Author(s) of the Bible ............................................................ 1
- The Audience of the Bible ............................................................ 2
- The Subject of the Bible ............................................................... 2
- The Purpose of the Bible ............................................................. 3
- The Message of the Bible ............................................................ 3
  - The Storyline of the Bible ....................................................... 3
  - The Gospel Message .............................................................. 5
- General Outline of the Bible .......................................................... 6
  - General Outline of the Old Testament .................................... 8
  - General Outline of the New Testament ................................... 9

**INTRODUCTION TO THE PENTATEUCH** ............................................................................................................. 10

- Theme ........................................................................................ 11
- Purpose ....................................................................................... 11
- Message ..................................................................................... 12
- Author and Date ........................................................................ 12
  - The Authorship of Genesis ..................................................... 13
  - Textual Updating in the Pentateuch ......................................... 18
- The Documentary Hypothesis and Other Attacks on the Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch .......................................................... 26
  - The Historical Development of the Critical View ................. 26
  - Objections to the Documentary Hypothesis .......................... 28
  - Practical Implications .............................................................. 32
- The Text of the Pentateuch ........................................................... 33
  - The Samaritan Pentateuch ..................................................... 36
- Bibliography for the Pentateuch ................................................... 38

**INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO GENESIS** .................................................................................................................. 41

- Author and Date ........................................................................ 42
- Purpose and Message .................................................................. 42
- Outline of Genesis ....................................................................... 42
  - Summary Outline ................................................................... 43
  - Expanded Outline ................................................................... 43
- Argument of Genesis .................................................................... 49
  - Creation Week, 1:1–2:3 ............................................................. 49
  - Early History of the Earth, 2:4–4:26 ...................................... 50
  - History of Adam’s Descendants, 5:1–6:8 ............................... 51
  - History of Noah, 6:9–9:29 ...................................................... 51
  - History of Noah’s Descendants, 10:1–11:9 ......................... 52
  - Record of Shem’s Descendants, 11:10-26 ............................ 53
History of Terah’s Family (Focus on Abraham), 11:27–25:11 ................................................................. 54
Descendants of Ishmael, 25:12–18 ........................................................................................................ 58
History of Isaac’s Family (Focus on Jacob), 25:19–35:29 ................................................................. 58
History of Esau and His Immediate Descendants, 36:1–8 ................................................................. 61
Later History of Edom, 36:9–37:1 ........................................................................................................... 62
History of Jacob’s Family, 37:2–50:26 ............................................................................................... 62
BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR GENESIS ................................................................................................. 68

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO EXODUS ......................................................................................... 75
AUTHOR AND DATE ................................................................................................................... 75
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ........................................................................................................... 75
OUTLINE OF EXODUS ............................................................................................................... 76
Summary Outline ....................................................................................................................... 76
Expanded Outline ...................................................................................................................... 76
ARGUMENT OF EXODUS ........................................................................................................... 81
Israel in Egypt, 1:1–12:36 ........................................................................................................... 81
From Egypt to Sinai, 12:37–18:27 ............................................................................................... 83
Israel at Sinai, 19:1–40:38 ........................................................................................................... 85
BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR EXODUS ............................................................................................... 89

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO LEVITICUS ................................................................................... 92
AUTHOR AND DATE ................................................................................................................... 93
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ........................................................................................................... 93
THE RELEVANCE OF THE LAW FOR TODAY ........................................................................... 94
REFLECTIONS UPON THE IDEAL SYSTEM OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE ...................................... 95
OUTLINE OF LEVITICUS ........................................................................................................... 97
ARGUMENT OF LEVITICUS ....................................................................................................... 101
Laws concerning Approach to God, 1:1–16:34 .............................................................................. 101
Requirements for Communion with God, 17:1–27:34 .................................................................. 102
BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR LEVITICUS ............................................................................................ 104

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO NUMBERS .................................................................................. 107
AUTHOR AND DATE ................................................................................................................... 107
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ........................................................................................................... 107
OUTLINE OF NUMBERS ........................................................................................................... 107
ARGUMENT OF NUMBERS ....................................................................................................... 113
Preparation for Leaving Sinai, 1:1–10:10 ...................................................................................... 113
Journey to Kadesh-barnea, 10:11–12:15 ...................................................................................... 115
Israel at Kadesh-barnea, 12:16–14:45 ....................................................................................... 115
Wandering in the Wilderness, 15:1–19:22 .................................................................................. 115
Journey to the Plains of Moab, 20:1–22:1 .................................................................................... 117
Israel at the Plains of Moab, 22:2–36:13 .................................................................................... 117
BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR NUMBERS ............................................................................................ 121

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO DEUTERONOMY ....................................................................... 123
AUTHOR AND DATE ................................................................................................................... 123
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ........................................................................................................... 123
OUTLINE OF DEUTERONOMY ................................................................................................... 123
ARGUMENT OF DEUTERONOMY ............................................................................................... 127
Moses’ First Major Address: A Review of God’s Faithfulness, 1:1–4:49 ................................. 128
Moses’ Second Major Address: An Exposition of the Law, 5:1–26:19 ................................. 129
Preparations for Renewing the Covenant, 27:1–28:68 .............................................................. 129
Moses’ Third Major Address: An Exhortation to Covenantal Faithfulness, 29:1–30:20 .... 129

BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR DEUTERONOMY .................................................................................... 138
Introduction to the Bible

The Bible is a collection (‘canon’) of books that were written by men, but that are actually the words of God Himself. The Bible is, in its entirety, God’s written revelation to man, and there is no written revelation from God to man outside of the Bible. Although the Bible consists of many individual books that were written by different men at many different times and places, these books together form a single Book, or Bible. The Bible is a unity because it was given by a single Author. The diverse revelations given to so many different men in so many different ways are never at variance with each other, but always complement and harmonize. Further, there are clear connections between the revelation given in one book and that given in another, so that, for example, prophecies in Ezekiel and Daniel are partially interpreted and clarified by prophecies in Revelation. In fact, no part of the Bible can ever be fully understood on its own, without illustrating it from other parts of the Bible, for the Bible is an organic unity.

In all of history, there has never been a book so loved yet so hated, so well-known yet so ignored, so comforting yet so polarizing, so honorable yet so despised. The Bible has been scrutinized like no other book in all the history of all the world, and it has stood up to the toughest tests. All the efforts of modern and postmodern scholarship alike has to the present day been unable to prove a single error anywhere in the entire Bible, not even in the minutest details. The Bible has stood the test of time and the test of scrutiny. It is a book that is worthy of total trust and confidence, to such an extent that one may rest assured when he entrusts his eternal fortunes to its promises.

The Date of the Bible

The Bible was composed in stages over a period of about 2,150 years, from about 2050 B.C. to A.D. 96. The last and final book of the Bible to be written was the book of Revelation (‘the Apocalypse’), which was evidently written in or very near A.D. 96. The book of Job was likely composed around 2050 B.C., making it the earliest book of the Bible to be written in its present form. However, the book of Genesis is a compilation of records which date to a much earlier time, the earliest of which were likely written by Adam himself before the Deluge (Flood). Thus, although Moses completed the writing of the Pentateuch around 1405 B.C., he acted merely as an editor of the book of Genesis, which began to be composed at least as early as 3400 B.C. The account of creation in Genesis 1:1–2:3 could have been written even earlier; certainly it must have been known from the beginning of human history. God’s revelation to man is as old as the earth itself, but the period of the actual composition of the Bible dates to a later period when a written record was needed to preserve revealed truth.

The Author(s) of the Bible

The Author of the Bible is the Holy Spirit of God. This is stated directly in 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21 (cf. Matt 22:43; Acts 1:16; 28:25; Heb 3:7). The writers of the Bible, however, were men. The men who wrote the Bible were, in a sense, authors as well, since they confess their sins to God, praise God, and write other things that God would not write if he were the sole Author. Yet they spoke through the Holy Spirit (were “inspired”) as they did so, and were moved in such a way as to write the actual words of God. As with any supernatural process, there is a degree of mystery involved from a human

---

1 A statement of the date of the Bible answers the question, “When was the Bible written?”

2 A statement of the Author of the Bible answers the question, “Who created the Bible?”
point of view, making it impossible to fully comprehend how it worked. Though there are parts of the
Bible, such as Leviticus and portions of prophetic books, that are presented as word-for-word audible
dictation from God, one still finds a degree of individual writing styles within these portions of Scripture.
The Holy Spirit evidently gave prophets the freedom to speak and write the revelations which they
received in their own natural manner of speaking and writing. This freedom had to do with form, not with
propositional truth. Matthew 10:19-20 indicates that when the Holy Spirit gives men words to speak, He
somehow places the ideas in their minds and guides what they say, but allows them to say it in the
language and manner of speaking that they typically use to express themselves. Probably only Genesis 1
can be said to represent so-called “mechanical dictation” from Author to writer. Other parts of the Bible,
such as penitential Psalms and the New Testament epistles, were evidently written in some sort of
prophetic state, but without the writer hearing an audible voice.

The important fact for us to know is that the Bible is the Word of God. It was produced by God
Himself, using human writers. While inspiration makes the Bible self-authenticating, without the need for
any external proof of validity, the fulfillment of Bible prophecy can certainly be considered a proof of the
Bible’s divine origin (cf. Deut 18:21-22).

The Audience of the Bible

The Bible was written to mankind, and to all of mankind. Most books of the Bible were originally
written to a narrow group of recipients—such as Israel or a local church. But every book of the Bible was
intended by the Holy Spirit for the use of the whole world. Jesus commanded the church to take the
gospel message (contained in the New Testament) to the uttermost part of the world (Matt 28:18-20; Acts
1:8). The Old Testament forms the historical and theological foundation for the New Testament, and 1
Corinthians 10:11 states that the things written in the Old Testament were written for our edification.
Thus, the entire Bible is intended for the entire world.

The Subject of the Bible

Clearly the subject of the Bible is God. The Bible is a book about God, about who He is and what
He does. Since the Bible was written to man, in order to reveal God to man, it has much to say about
God’s dealings with men and His plan for the human race. Since God exists in trinity, the Bible reveals
God as triune, and contains a considerable description of each member of the holy Trinity. It especially
has much to say about God the Son (Jesus), since He bridges the gap between God and man by becoming

3 A statement of the audience of the Bible answers the question, “To whom was the Bible written?”

4 A statement of the subject of the Bible answers the question, “What is the Bible about?” A popular response to this question by an older generation of fundamentalist expositors was “Jesus Christ.” Some went so far as to say that the main point of every book of the Bible, and even of every chapter of the Bible, was to reveal Christ. This then forced them to allegorize in order to find how Christ was revealed in, for example, the life of Joseph or the Song of Songs. It is obviously better to develop the subject of the Bible from the biblical text itself, rather than developing the subject through a seemingly arbitrary theological assertion, and then trying to find a way to read the Bible to fit one’s theology. It is also best to view the Bible as a whole when developing a statement of its subject, since the main subject of a book may not be the main subject of every paragraph or every section of the book. A biography of Abraham Lincoln, for example, could include a chapter on Lincoln’s wife or a chapter on social conditions in the antebellum South. Such chapters, in which Abraham Lincoln would not be the main subject, would not destroy the subject-unity of the book; they would simply function to give background information that is necessary to more fully understand and elucidate the overall subject of the book, to which the book would always return.
Introduction to the Pentateuch

More properly called the Torah

The Pentateuch ("five scrolls"), more properly called by its biblical name Torah ("Law"), consists of the first five books in the English Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. However, "it was not originally viewed as five distinctive works. Rather, the Torah was one book. The singular 'Book of Moses,' 'book of the law,' or simply 'book,' is attested [as late as] exilic and postexilic times (e.g., 2 Chr 25:4; 34:14; 35:12; Ezr 6:18; Neh 8:3, 5; 13:1) and in Mark’s Gospel (12:26)." Thus, Moses originally wrote the whole Torah on a single scroll; the claim that such large scrolls could not be manufactured is belied by the fact that Jews today still keep a copy of a Torah scroll in an ark in their synagogues. Although some scholars refer to the "Hexateuch" under the assumption that the book of Joshua, too, is properly a part of the Torah, the reference to "this book of the law" in Joshua 1:7-8 proves that the Torah, as originally written, did not include the book of Joshua. According to Joshua 24:26, Joshua latter added an account of the conquest to the narrative of the Pentateuch, but he may have done so on a new scroll. There is a sense in which all the OT historical books except Ruth, Chronicles, and Esther form a continuous narrative, but they were always considered separate volumes by the Jews because they were written by different authors, at different times, and on separate scrolls. For the same reason, while the Bible is a single, unified book—God’s Word to man—it is convenient and proper to subdivide the Bible into the individual units in which it was originally given.

The unity of the Pentateuch is also demonstrated by the references in each book to things recorded in another. Thus, "Genesis anticipates the central concern of Exodus when Joseph’s final words announce the return of Jacob’s seed ‘to the land he [God] promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob’ (50:24; cp. Exod 6:3-8)." Genesis 50:25, recording the oath which Joseph took of the Israelites to take his bones back to Canaan when God brought the nation back to its land, anticipates both Exodus 13:19 and Joshua 24:32. Exodus begins with a summary of the descent of Jacob and his family into Egypt and the deaths of the patriarchs (Exod 1:1-6, looking back to Genesis), and it ends with a summary of the Israelites’ wilderness wanderings (Exod 40:36-38, looking forward to Numbers; cf. also Exod 16:35). Importantly, Exodus includes in Exodus 38:26 the results of a census that is not recorded in the narrative until Numbers 1. Again, the content of Leviticus would not make sense without the historical context provided by Genesis–Exodus. In Numbers, “the striking of the rock by Moses (Num 20:11) can only be understood if it is known that he was commanded to do so in Exod 17:5-7.” Deuteronomy comments on the history and law previously recorded, and anticipates Israel’s entrance into the land under Joshua.

The “Five Books,” as received in the Hebrew canon, are in fact one story—from creation (Gen 1:1) to the death of Moses (Deut 34). These five works may be read as independent books, but they have an interdependence that cuts across the traditional fivefold division. The center books of

---

1 The etymology is πέντε (five) + τεῦχος (book, scroll). The first extant writer to use the term “Pentateuch” is Origen, although he probably took it from the Jewish community in Alexandria.

2 Kenneth A. Matthews, Genesis 1–11:26 (NAC, vol. 1A; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 42.

3 Huge scrolls are not unknown from ancient Egypt, either, such as Papyrus Harris and The Book of the Dead. It may also be noted that the entire book of Isaiah was contained on a single scroll at Qumran.

4 Matthews, Genesis 1–11:26, 45.

5 Matthews, Genesis 1–11:26, 46.
Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers are the most interdependent; together they tell of the migration of Israel from Egypt to the plains of Moab and the transition from the exodus generation to that of the conquest. Genesis and Deuteronomy come closest to being independent works, but by themselves each lacks a satisfactory denouement, each looking beyond itself to the next epoch.  

**Theme**

The unifying theme of the Bible, which mirrors the plan and progress of history, is the fulfillment of God’s promise of redemption for the human race. The first two and a half chapters of the Pentateuch give the absolutely essential background information regarding man’s original relationship with God and how man fell into sin. The prophecy of the conflict between the serpent and his seed and the woman and her seed in Genesis 3:15 contains the thematic material for the remainder of the Pentateuch—and, indeed, the thematic material of all history. The call of Abraham, and the covenants made with Abraham and the nation of Israel, are direct developments from the proto-evangelium (“first gospel”), as God’s choice of a Seed to crush the head of the serpent and to rescue the human race is progressively narrowed. Thus, from Genesis 12 onwards, the covenant with Abraham forms a more specific layer of thematic material in the Pentateuch, and from Exodus 19 onwards, an even narrower unifying theme is developed, which is the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and the nation of Israel. Thus, the Pentateuch introduces and develops the Bible’s overall theme of the promise of redemption, describing specific steps which are taken towards the fulfillment of this promise. However, the Pentateuch ends, as does the Bible, with the ultimate fulfillment still anticipated.

**Purpose**

The purpose of the Pentateuch is to introduce and develop God’s plan of redemption for the human race, from creation, to the fall of man, to the initial promise of a Redeemer-Seed, to the choice of Abraham as the mediator of the promised redemption, to the definition of Abraham’s descendants as a national entity, and, finally, to the covenantal union of this nation with God as His peculiar possession. Within this overall purpose, five purposes for our convenient fivefold division of the Pentateuch may be identified as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of Genesis</th>
<th>Purpose of Exodus</th>
<th>Purpose of Leviticus</th>
<th>Purpose of Numbers</th>
<th>Purpose of Deuteronomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to describe the history of God’s dealings with man from the beginning until the passing of Israel’s patriarchs</td>
<td>to record the birth of Israel as a national entity</td>
<td>to give the nation of Israel the legal code which it needed to live in the promised land and worship the God who dwelt in their midst</td>
<td>to describe Israel’s forty years of preparation in the wilderness for entering the land</td>
<td>to describe the renewal of the covenant with the second generation as they prepared to enter the land</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

---

Message

Given the purpose stated above, the following message of the Pentateuch emerges: in the beginning, God created a perfect world, and everything in this world was created for man as its centerpiece. However, man failed, through the serpent’s temptation, the test of love for his Creator, and fell under a sentence of condemnation. God immediately promised to send a Redeemer-Seed, and revealed the framework of history to be a spiritual conflict between God, as man’s friend, and Satan, as man’s foe, that is centered on the fate of the human race. The promise of a seed was maintained through Noah when the remainder of the world was destroyed in judgment. After the nations of the world rebelled against God at Babel, God called out a faithful man, Abraham, whose descendants He set apart unto Himself as His own people, and through whose seed the Redeemer would arise. The promises to Abraham were passed on to his son Isaac, then to Isaac’s son Jacob (a.k.a. Israel), then to Jacob’s twelve sons. After Jacob’s descendants grew into a large people in Egypt but fell into bondage, God redeemed them from Egypt, then set them apart unto Himself as His own possession, establishing a covenant with them, and coming to dwell in their midst. After giving Israel instructions on how to approach Him and live as a redeemed people, the generation which had accepted the covenant failed to take possession of the national homeland which God had promised to give them, resulting in forty years of wandering in the wilderness as a new generation was prepared. This new generation was finally brought successfully to the entrance of Canaan and accepted a renewal of Israel’s covenant with Yahweh. As Moses dies and Israel encamps across the Jordan at Jericho, the nation is seen to be on the cusp of fulfilling the next great stage of God’s redemptive plan. Nevertheless, even possession of the land was nothing more than an interim step to the raising up of a Prophet like unto Moses who will accomplish Israel’s final and ultimate deliverance—a Prophet whose advent was still anticipated at the close of the OT prophetic era.

Author and Date

Both the OT and the NT repeatedly attribute authorship of the Pentateuch to Moses, who would have completed the writing of the Pentateuch shortly before his death in 1405 B.C. Verses which directly state that Moses actually wrote the words of the Pentateuch are particularly compelling. Joshua 8:32-35 directly states that Moses wrote down all the words of the law, and that Joshua read what Moses wrote to the people shortly after they entered the land. Verses which refer to the Pentateuch as the Law of Moses, the book of Moses, the commands of Moses, the words given by the hand of Moses, etc., just as adequately demonstrate Mosaic authorship. Mosaic authorship is also implied by the many verses which treat the Law as inspired Scripture (e.g., Matt 5:17-18; 2 Tim 3:16-17; Heb 9:8), since the Pentateuch would be a fraud if not written by Moses. Because of the clarity of the biblical evidence, Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch was not seriously questioned prior to the European Enlightenment. Most ancient Jewish and Christian writings affirm Mosaic authorship. It is noteworthy that the whole history

---

7 These are: Exod 17:14; 24:4-7; 34:27; Num 33:1-2; Deut 31:9, 22, 24; John 5:46-47; Rom 10:5, 19; see also Mark 7:10; Luke 16:29-31; 20:37; 24:27, 44. Note that these references include both legal (e.g., Exod 24:4-7; Deut 31:9) and historical (e.g., Num 33:1-2) portions of the Pentateuch.

8 Some of these are: Josh 1:7-8; 22:5, 9; Judg 3:4; 1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Kgs 14:6; 21:8; 23:25; 2 Chr 30:16; 34:14; Ezra 6:18; Neh 1:7-8; 8:1; 13:1; Dan 9:11-13; Mal 4:4; Matt 8:4; 19:7-8; Mark 7:10; 12:26; John 1:17; 5:45-47; 7:19, 22; Acts 3:22; 6:14; 13:39; 15:1, 5; 28:23; 1 Cor 9:9; 2 Cor 3:14-15; Heb 10:28.

9 Some early pseudo-Christian heretical sects questioned or denied Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, in line with their attacks on the rest of the Bible. Some early orthodox Christians were influenced by the heretical views, and attributed authorship of the Pentateuch to Ezra.
Argument of Genesis

The book of Genesis describes the earliest historical stages in the development of God’s plan for man. It focuses in particular on God’s plan to bring salvation to the human race, first describing the need for salvation, then showing how the plan was developed through God’s choice of Abraham and his seed. The book ends anticipating the rest of the story.

The history recorded in Genesis covers an extraordinary length of time—2,370 years, to be exact. Comparatively little is said about the 1,656 years of antediluvian history. Probably there was little to record, for the Bible indicates that human government was not established until after the Deluge (cf. Gen 6:3; 9:6). There were no nations or kings before the Deluge, and so no national histories or wars to describe. The important characteristics of the antediluvian age are its spiritual qualities, which are well documented. A godly remnant is contrasted with an increasingly pagan and demonized world. A line of promise is preserved through Noah. In the 352 years between the Deluge and Abraham, man fails once again, resulting in God’s judgment of the nations at Babylon and the birth of Abraham as a new conduit of salvation immediately following the death of Noah. The final thirty-nine chapters of Genesis focus on the family history of the line chosen to be the inheritors of the promises to Abraham, culminating in the beginnings of the nation of Israel in its Egyptian cradle.

Creation Week, 1:1–2:3

The Bible’s account of human history begins, as would be expected, with an account of creation (1:1–2:3). Untold volumes have been written on this account, both in an attempt to explain it away and in an attempt to show that the text stands as written. In the end, however, the issue is simple: if the text is accepted as it stands, it describes seven literal, approximately twenty-four hour days, which are meant to be understood as true history. To deny this is to deny the clear meaning of the text; if spiritual issues were not involved, no intelligent person would fail to see this.

No section of Scripture is so carefully crafted, so precisely structured and worded, as Genesis 1:1–2:3. And no wonder—it was literally dictated by God. The events of each day follow a logical and consistent sequence, with not so much as an extraneous word.

The first day, 1:1-5. The first day of creation is recorded in 1:1-5. The key events in this day include the creation of a great watery mass, “the deep,” from which the stars and the earth will be formed, followed by the creation of light, and the division between day and night.

The second day, 1:6-8. On the second day (1:6-8), God makes a separation between the waters on the outer edge of the deep and those in the middle, and begins to form the heavens (i.e., outer space, “the expanse”) between them.

The third day, 1:9-13. On the third day (1:9-13), God speaks to the formless ball of water in the center of the universe, forming from its elements the foundations of the earth, the dry land, and an atmosphere (1:9-10). He then creates plants on the earth, which of course must precede the creation of animal life (1:11-12).

The fourth day, 1:14-19. On the fourth day (1:14-19), God created the solar system, then created/revealed the stars.

---

5 Calculated as follows: 1,656 (years from Creation to the Deluge) + 1 (year of Deluge) + 352 (years from the Deluge to Abraham’s birth) + 100 (age of Abraham at the birth of Isaac) + 60 (age of Isaac at the birth of Jacob) + 130 (age of Jacob when he entered Egypt) + 71 (years between Jacob’s entrance into Egypt and the death of Joseph).
The fifth day, 1:20-23. On the fifth day (1:20-23), God made marine life and bird life, populating the skies and the sea.

The sixth day, 1:24-31. The sixth day (1:24-31) populates the land, which is the final part of creation. Man is created last, since he is the pinnacle of creation, and everything else in the creation was created for him. Man, of course, was created for his Creator. There was no sin or death in the creation; man and all animals were herbivorous (1:29-30), and everything was very good (1:31).

The seventh day, 2:1-3. Creation was still incomplete after six days, though there was nothing left to be made. God finished His work on the seventh day (2:1-3) by ordaining the seventh day as a day of rest, thereby establishing a pattern for man’s work cycle.

Early History of the Earth, 2:4–4:26

Section heading, 2:4. The next section, which originally was probably written by Adam, possibly by Seth or Enoch from information given to them by Adam, is titled, “the history of the heavens and the earth when they created,” i.e., it is a record of the earliest events of earth history, beginning with the creation of man, including early events which followed from the creation. This entire section is loaded with historical and theological significance which cannot be fully developed here.

The original position of man in the earth, 2:5-25. In order to tell the story of man’s original position in the earth, the author recounts the story of man’s creation, but with added detail. In 2:5-6, cultivated crops are what is meant by a “plant of the field” and an “herb of field.” The phrase “of the field” signifies a farmer’s field. Although plant life was created on the third day, there were no cultivated crops before the creation of man, because there was no man to plant and cultivate them. The context of 2:4-6 is a description of what the earth was like on day six, before man was created—it is not a description of the interval in day three between the creation of dry land and the creation of plant life. These verses reveal that there was something lacking in the original creation, something that only man could complete. To meet this need, God created man (2:7), then God situated him in the garden of Eden and gave him specific charges to keep (2:8-17). However, there was still something lacking even after the creation of man, and 2:18-25 describes the creation of woman in order to meet this need. All of 2:5-25 describes events during the sixth day of creation.

The fall of man and its results, 3:1-24. Chapter 3 describes the single most tragic event in all of human history, which is the fall of man. The chapter consists of three parts: man’s temptation and fall (3:1-8), the curse and promise (3:9-21), and man’s banishment from Eden (3:22-24). The world is totally different at the end of ch. 3 than it was at the beginning of it. A critical verse in the argument of Genesis is 3:15, which reveals God’s plan to rescue man from the predicament he has fallen into. This verse essentially gives the plot of the Bible.

Early postlapsarian history, 4:1-26. Chapter 4 is a chapter of “firsts,” recording the initial and foundational events in human history after the fall. Verses 1-8 note the first births, the first recorded sacrifices, and then the first murder (4:1-8). This is followed immediately by the first decree of retributive
Dr. Anderson’s Interpretive Guide to Old Testament Historical Books

Steven D. Anderson
Dr. Anderson’s Interpretive Guide to Old Testament Historical Books (Joshua–Esther)

by Steven D. Anderson
Ph.D., Dallas Theological Seminary

Dr. Anderson’s Interpretive Guide to the Bible
Volume 2

June 2015 edition

Copyright © 2015 by Steven David Anderson. All rights reserved. Not to be reproduced without the explicit written consent of the author.

Cover photograph (taken by the author): a wall in Dibon (a Gadite city taken from Sihon)

Published by Steven D. Anderson at Payhip

Author’s webpage: http://Bible.TruthOnly.com
Author’s blog: http://TruthOnlyBible.com

Citation for The Chicago Manual of Style (Turabian) and The SBL Handbook of Style:

Payhip Edition License Notes

This e-book is licensed for your personal use only, and you may find your email address stamped on the upper left of each page for security purposes. This e-book may not be resold. This e-book may not be given away to other people (other than a spouse or minor children). If you would like to share this book with another person, please purchase an additional copy for each recipient. If you are reading this book and did not purchase it, or it was not purchased for your use only, then please go to https://payhip.com/truthonlybible and purchase your own copy. Thank you for respecting copyright law and the hard work of this author.
Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS ...................................................................................... III

PREFACE ........................................................................................................... VI

STYLE NOTES ....................................................................................................... VII

Quotations of the Bible ................................................................................... vii
A Note on the Divine Name ........................................................................... vii
Common Abbreviations ................................................................................... vii
Abbreviations of the Books of the Bible ......................................................... viii

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO JOSHUA ................................................................. 1

AUTHOR ............................................................................................................. 1
A NOTE ON WRITING STYLE .......................................................................... 1
DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING ............................................................. 2
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ................................................................................. 2
CRITICAL ISSUES .............................................................................................. 2
Population Figures ........................................................................................... 2
The Amarna Letters ......................................................................................... 3
Archeological Evidence of the Conquest ......................................................... 3
The Justice of Genocide ................................................................................... 3

OUTLINE OF JOSHUA ........................................................................................ 4

ARGUMENT OF JOSHUA .................................................................................. 8
Preparations for the Conquest, 1:1–2:24 ....................................................... 8
Entrance into Canaan, 3:1–5:12 .................................................................. 8
Conquest of Canaan, 5:13–12:24 ................................................................. 8
Division of the Land, 13:1–21:45 ................................................................. 10
Dismissal of the Transjordanian Tribes, 22:1–34 ....................................... 10

BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR JOSHUA ........................................................................ 12

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO JUDGES ............................................................... 14

AUTHOR, DATE, AND OCCASION OF WRITING ....................................... 14
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ................................................................................. 15
A NOTE ON THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE JUDGES .................................. 15
THEOLOGICAL ISSUES IN JUDGES .............................................................. 16
Syncretism ....................................................................................................... 16
Self-direction ................................................................................................... 16

OUTLINE OF JUDGES ....................................................................................... 17

ARGUMENT OF JUDGES .................................................................................. 20
Background: Israel’s Failure to Complete the Conquest, 1:1–2:5 .................. 20
Historical Pattern of the Period of the Judges, 2:6–3:6 ................................ 20
The Aramean Oppression and Othniel, 3:7–11 ......................................... 21
The Moabite Oppression and Ehud, 3:12–30 ............................................. 21
The Philistine Oppression and Shamgar, 3:31 .......................................... 21
The Canaanite Oppression and Barak/Deborah, 4:1–5:31 ...................... 21
The Midianite Oppression and Gideon, 6:1–8:32 ...................................... 22
Abimelech’s Oppression, 8:33–9:57 ......................................................... 23
Two Regional Judges, 10:1–5 .................................................................. 23
Jephthah and the Ammonite Oppression, 10:6–12:7 .............................. 23
Three Regional Judges, 12:8–15 ............................................................... 24
Samson and the Philistine Oppression, 13:1–16:31 ................................. 24
First Illustration of Israel’s Religious Confusion: Micah and the Danite Migration, 17:1–18:31
Second Illustration of Israel’s Religious Confusion: The Atrocity at Gibeah and the Benjamite War, 19:1–21.25

BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR JUDGES................................................................................................................................. 28

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO RUTH.............................................................................................................................. 30

HISTORICAL SETTING .............................................................................................................................................. 30
DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING ......................................................................................................................... 31
AUTHOR ................................................................................................................................................................. 31
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ......................................................................................................................................... 31
OUTLINE OF RUTH .................................................................................................................................................. 31
ARGUMENT OF RUTH .............................................................................................................................................. 32
  The Moabite Sojourn and Return, 1:1-22 .................................................................................................................. 32
  Ruth’s Work in the Field of Boaz, 2:1-23 ............................................................................................................... 32
  Ruth’s Proposal to Boaz, 3:1-18 ............................................................................................................................ 33
  The Marriage of Boaz and Ruth, 4:1-22 ................................................................................................................ 33
BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR RUTH ..................................................................................................................................... 34

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO SAMUEL–KINGS .............................................................................................................. 36

CHRONOLOGY OF THE DIVIDED MONARCHY ....................................................................................................... 36
Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah ........................................................................................................... 38
AUTHOR ................................................................................................................................................................. 38
DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING ......................................................................................................................... 39
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ......................................................................................................................................... 40
TEXTUAL BASE ........................................................................................................................................................ 40
OUTLINE OF SAMUEL–KINGS ................................................................................................................................ 41
  Summary Outline .................................................................................................................................................. 41
  Expanded Outline .............................................................................................................................................. 41
ARGUMENT OF SAMUEL–KINGS .............................................................................................................................. 54
  Transition from Judges to Kings – 1 Samuel 1:1–10:27 ....................................................................................... 54
  Reign of Saul – 1 Samuel 11:1–31:13 ..................................................................................................................... 57
  Reign of David – 2 Samuel 1:1–24:25 .................................................................................................................. 66
  Reign of Solomon – 1 Kings 1:1–11:43 ................................................................................................................. 74
Reigns of the Kings of Israel and Judah – 1 Kings 12:1–2 Kings 17:41 .............................................................. 79
Reigns of the Kings of Judah – 2 kings 18:1–25:30 ............................................................................................... 96
BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR SAMUEL–KINGS .................................................................................................................... 103

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO 1 & 2 CHRONICLES ...................................................................................................... 107

COMPARISON WITH SAMUEL–KINGS ..................................................................................................................... 107
DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING ......................................................................................................................... 108
AUTHOR ................................................................................................................................................................. 109
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ......................................................................................................................................... 110
OUTLINE OF CHRONICLES .................................................................................................................................... 111
  Summary Outline .................................................................................................................................................. 111
  Expanded Outline .............................................................................................................................................. 111
ARGUMENT OF CHRONICLES ................................................................................................................................. 118
Genealogies – 1 Chronicles 1:1–9:34 ...................................................................................................................... 118
History of David – 1 Chronicles 9:35–29:30 .......................................................................................................... 120
History of Solomon – 2 Chronicles 1:1–9:31 ......................................................................................................... 122
History of the Kings of Judah – 2 Chronicles 10:1–36:23 ...................................................................................... 123
BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR CHRONICLES ...................................................................................................................... 129

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO EZRA .............................................................................................................................. 132
AUTHOR ................................................................................................................................................. 132
DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING ........................................................................................................ 133
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ............................................................................................................................ 133
OUTLINE OF EZRA ..................................................................................................................................... 133
ARGUMENT OF EZRA ................................................................................................................................. 135
   The Return from Exile, 1:1–2:70 ............................................................................................................. 135
   The Rebuilding of the Temple, 3:1–6:22 ............................................................................................... 135
   The Return Led by Ezra, 7:1–8:36 ........................................................................................................ 136
   The Revival Led by Ezra, 9:1–10:44 .................................................................................................... 137
BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR EZRA–NEHEMIAH ................................................................................................. 139
   Commentaries ...................................................................................................................................... 139
   Other Works ......................................................................................................................................... 140
INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO NEHEMIAH ........................................................................................................ 142
   The Significance of the Book of Nehemiah .......................................................................................... 142
     Historical ........................................................................................................................................... 143
     Prophetic ........................................................................................................................................... 143
     Applicational ..................................................................................................................................... 143
   Relation to Ezra ..................................................................................................................................... 144
   Historical Background ........................................................................................................................... 144
   Author .................................................................................................................................................. 145
   Date and Occasion of Writing ............................................................................................................... 146
   Purpose and Message ............................................................................................................................. 146
   Textual Base ......................................................................................................................................... 147
   Outline of Nehemiah .............................................................................................................................. 147
   Argument of Nehemiah .......................................................................................................................... 149
     Initial Setting and Events, 1:1–2:8 ....................................................................................................... 149
     Nehemiah’s First Term as Governor, 2:9–13:3 ................................................................................. 149
     Nehemiah’s Second Term as Governor, 13:4–31 ......................................................................... 152
   Bibliography ......................................................................................................................................... 153
INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO ESTHER ............................................................................................................... 154
   Historical Background ............................................................................................................................ 154
   Author, Date, and Occasion of Writing ................................................................................................ 155
   Purpose and Message ............................................................................................................................. 157
   Outline of Esther ................................................................................................................................... 157
   Argument of Esther ............................................................................................................................... 158
     Initial Setting and Events, 1:1–2:23 .................................................................................................... 158
     Haman’s Plot and Destruction, 3:1–7:10 ............................................................................................ 159
     Advancement of the Jews, 8:1–10:3 .................................................................................................... 160
   Bibliography for Esther .......................................................................................................................... 161
Interpretive Guide to Samuel–Kings

The four books known in English Bibles as First and Second Samuel and First and Second Kings were always regarded as a single composition by the Jews, which was simply divided into four roughly equal parts (initially two) for ease of use; a scroll large enough to contain all four books would be very unwieldy. There simply is no good reason to regard Samuel–Kings as two or four separate works. The narrative from each part flows seamlessly into the next, and the ending of 2 Samuel is too abrupt to be intended as the conclusion of a standalone work. In addition, 1 Kgs 2:27 back-references 1 Sam 2:27-36, and the story of 1 Kgs 13 is designed to connect with 2 Kgs 23:15-20. The only reason that Samuel–Kings, Chronicles, and the Pentateuch were subdivided is that they were too long to fit easily onto one scroll. English Bibles follow the titles of the books given in Hebrew manuscripts (1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings), while German Bibles follow the titles given in the Septuagint and Vulgate (1–4 Kings). As with every book of the Bible, there was no title of the original work; the German titles are preferable to the English, since these four books give a history of Israel's monarchy, with Samuel merely being the transitional figure between the judges and the kings. However, we are probably stuck forever with the English book names in the English language, and so they are the names which will be used in this work. The original unified book will be referred to as “Samuel–Kings.”

The book of Samuel–Kings forms an integral part of the continuous narrative of redemptive history given in the Old Testament. It carries this history from the end of the period of the judges to the Babylonian exile, a period of some 550 years (ca. 1100 B.C.–ca. 561 B.C.). The actual length of the Israelite monarchy was 446 years, from 1032 B.C. (accession of Saul) to 586 B.C. (final fall of Jerusalem). The books of Ezra–Nehemiah (also originally one book) continue the history of Israel forward from the endpoint of Samuel–Kings.

The book of Samuel–Kings gives the historical background which is necessary for understanding the prophets and the Psalms, as well as for understanding the development of God’s plan in history through His dealings with the nation of Israel. It tells the story of how Israel grew from a loose confederation of tribes to a strong, unified kingdom, which was subsequently divided, and which was finally terminated through exile. They describe how the nation of Israel prospered through loyalty to its God, and fell through persistent idolatry, yet with the hope of future restoration.

Somewhat surprisingly for one of the longest portions of the Old Testament, the book of Samuel–Kings does not seem tedious to read. It is conceptually easy; its narrative moves at a good pace; and the history it tells tends to captivate the reader. Nevertheless, the chronological and historical background studies that are necessary for a detailed analysis of Samuel–Kings are fairly complex and deal with an enormous quantity of extrabiblical data.

Chronology of the Divided Monarchy

For a long time, critics had accused the Bible of being erroneous in the figures given for the reigns of kings in the divided monarchy period. The figures were not self-consistent, it seemed, and the chronology was too long. Believers just said there must be an answer that had not been discovered, even though the data appeared to be hopelessly contradictory. Those whose “faith” rested on academic argumentation, rather than on what God said, accepted the critical assertion that the numbers were erroneous. Then, in the 1950s, Edwin Thiele, an Adventist graduate student at the University of Chicago, discovered through a tremendous amount of research into methods of timekeeping in the ancient Near East that the biblical

---

1 The birth of Samuel occurred around 1100 B.C. (terminus a quo); the elevation of Jehoiachin occurred in 561 B.C. (terminus ad quem).
numbers actually are not contradictory at all—they only reflect different systems of timekeeping used by different writers and kingdoms. Thiele was able to harmonize all the numbers of reign lengths in Kings and Chronicles through the application of a few general principles. This demonstrated that the biblical text was not only internally consistent, but was also consistent with extrabiblical references to biblical events during the divided monarchy. Thiele’s solution has now been accepted by most scholars, regardless of their theological persuasion.2

What Thiele and other researchers have learned about the chronology of the divided monarchy may be summarized as follows. When the biblical writers cite the year of a king’s reign or the number of years he reigned, they do so using the system of timekeeping current in that particular king’s realm. Throughout the divided monarchy, the northern kingdom began its years with the month Nisan, while the southern kingdom began its years with the month Tishri. There were also differences as to whether the last year of the previous king was also counted as the first year of the next king (the non-accessional-year system = NAYS) or whether first year of a king’s reign was considered to be his first full year (the accessional-year system = AYS), when counted from Tishri (for Judah) or Nisan (for Israel). “In Period A (931-849 B.C.), Judah used the accessional-year system and Israel used the non-accessional-year system; in Period B (849-797 B.C.), both used the non-accessional-year system; and in Period C (797-586 B.C.), both used the accessional-year system.”3 This is further complicated by the fact that often a biblical writer from one kingdom will record events that occurred in the other kingdom. When a writer from one kingdom records an event in another kingdom, he does so using that nation’s calendrical system (Tishri/Nisan), but his own chronicle system (NAYS/AYS). The final complicating factor is that there were frequent coregencies, and sometimes the length or year of a king’s reign is calculated from the first year of his sole reign, while at other times it is calculated from the first year of his coregency. However, once all of these factors are recognized and accounted for, the numbers correlate perfectly, both with each other and with the extrabiblical Assyrian eponym lists. There is nothing in the biblical chronology that is impossible to harmonize. Most biblical scholars, including secular ones, now accept this explanation of the numbers in Kings and Chronicles, because the numbers make sense and the principles behind them make sense. The only major current dispute concerns the chronology of Hezekiah’s period, which is complicated but can be resolved by postulating coregencies. According to this solution, Ahaz was made coregent when he was thirteen, Hezekiah when he was twelve, and Manasseh when he was twelve. It seems that Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah each followed a policy of making his successor a coregent (i.e., crown prince) when he came of age, so as to instruct him in the manner of the kingship. The regularity of this pattern is evidence that the biblical numbers are consistent and logical in the chronology of the divided monarchy period. The names and numbers also match those given in extrabiblical inscriptions; Hess notes that “none of the extrabiblical sources has yielded the name of an Israelite or Judahite king not mentioned in the Bible.”4


3 Daiqing Apollos Yuan, unpublished Divided Monarchy paper.

### Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah (coregencies indicated by slashes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judah</th>
<th>Israel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rehoboam 931–913</td>
<td>Jeroboam 931–910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abijah 913–911</td>
<td>Nadab 910–909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asa 911–870</td>
<td>Baasha 909–886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elah 886–885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Zimri 885)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Omri 885–874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ahab 874–853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ahaziah 853–852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehoshaphat 873/870–848</td>
<td>Ahaziah 853–852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehoram 853/848–841</td>
<td>Joram 852–841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahaziah 842/841–841</td>
<td>Jehu 841–814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athaliah 841–835</td>
<td>Jehoahaz 814–798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joash 835–796</td>
<td>Jehoash 798–782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amaziah 796/790–767</td>
<td>Jeroboam II 793/782–753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzziah/Azariah</td>
<td>Zechariah 753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>790/767–750/739</td>
<td>Shallum 752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Menahem 752–742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pekahiah 742–740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pekah 752/740–732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hoshea 732–722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jotham 750/739–735/732</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahaz 743/735/732–715</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hezekiah 729/715–686</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manasseh 696/686–642</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amon 642–640</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josiah 640–609</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehoahaz 609</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehoiakim 609–598</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehoiachin 598–597</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zedekiah 597–586</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Author

The issues of the date, authorship, and unity of Samuel–Kings are important because they significantly affect one’s view of the purpose and message of the book. Although it could be suggested that Samuel–Kings is a compilation of historical records that were gradually made by one prophet after another over a period of four hundred years, in fact the work bears the marks of a single author; the same key turns of phrase and historical and theological emphases are found throughout. Importantly, it is a distinctive characteristic of the Hebrew of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Samuel, and Kings that the distinction between the prepositions עַל and אֶל is erased; these two common prepositions are fully interchangeable throughout these works. This unique linguistic feature not only shows that Samuel–Kings was written by one author, but also that he was likely the same author who wrote the book of Jeremiah or Ezekiel. In fact, the author was almost certainly Jeremiah’s scribe Baruch, who wrote Jer 52 as an appendix to

---

5 This chart gives specific Julian years even in instances where a different Julian year is possible due to the fact that neither Israel nor Judah began its years in January.
Jeremiah’s book, and then published it. Jeremiah 52 is similar enough to 2 Kgs 25 so that the two chapters must have been written by the same individual. Further, Baruch was in an ideal position to compose Samuel–Kings, since he was a highly educated scribe with family connections to Jerusalem’s elite, and he claims repeatedly in his work to have access to the official chronicles of the kings of Israel and Judah. These official chronicles were Baruch’s primary source for Samuel–Kings; there are no less than thirty-three references in 1–2 Kings to “the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel/Judah.” The author of 1–2 Chronicles often identifies the authors of these official chronicles as prophets, who gave divine sanction to the records and also ensured their trustworthiness (cf. 1 Chr 29:29; 2 Chr 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; 20:34; 26:22; 32:32; 33:19). Nevertheless, only Baruch’s history, and Ezra’s in Chronicles, were inspired documents. Probably the history of Samuel’s judgeship was included in the official state chronicles, along with a record of the other judges, which the author of Judges must have used to write his inspired work. In 1–2 Kings, the narrator’s repeated references to these official documents shows that he is confident of the accuracy of his history. He is telling the reader, “If you want to verify this, and if you want to know more, you can go look it up!” This is likely the reason why the historical books in both the OT and the NT do not name their authors—the original readers could check out the accuracy of the information for themselves from contemporary sources. The credibility of the information came more from its verifiability than from the name of the man who wrote it down. But in the Bible’s more theological books, the authors are named to show that they have the authority to say what they are saying.

For Baruch to write all of Samuel–Kings as well as to be the scribe of the prophet Jeremiah shows that he was a man of extraordinary ability. He was professionally very capable, and was also a deeply spiritual man. He had access to the official state chronicles of Israel and Judah, which he probably received official permission to keep following the fall of Jerusalem, and he had the ability to study these chronicles carefully and summarize them concisely.

**Date and Occasion of Writing**

If Samuel–Kings is regarded as a single composition, written by Baruch (in association with Jeremiah), it must have been written late in the Babylonian exile, after the final event recorded in the book—namely, the elevation of Jehoiachin from prison from the year 560 B.C. until his death at an unspecified time. Jehoiachin may have died around 545, when he would have been seventy; Baruch himself would have been about the same age, and saw the urgency to publish his work. The occasion of writing was not just Baruch’s old age and the termination of Israel’s monarchy period, but also the nearing of the return from exile, and the need to prepare the nation of Israel for it. Samuel–Kings is intended to teach Israel the need to completely separate from idolatry and adhere to the Law of Moses in order to prosper in the land. This work complements the book of Jeremiah, which was published at about the same time, and which was intended to teach captive Judah why they went into exile. The mention of Jehonadab (a.k.a. Jonadab) ben Rechab in 2 Kgs 10:15 without an explanation of who he is indicates that Baruch probably had already published the book of Jeremiah, which describes Jehonadab ben Rechab’s righteousness (Jer 35).

The most significant objection to dating the composition of Samuel–Kings to 545 is the many “unto this day” statements in the book. For example, 1 Sam 27:6 (“Ziklag pertains unto the kings of Judah unto this day”) could be read to imply that the books of 1 & 2 Samuel were written during the period of the divided monarchy. But Chronicles, which no one disputes was written later, contains similar statements (e.g., 2 Chr 5:9; 8:8; 10:19). Some indications of the lateness of the work include the author’s explanation for his readers of the Hebrew terminology of Samuel’s period in 1 Sam 9:9 and his alteration of a geographical reference in a speech reported in 1 Kgs 13:32 by referring to Samaria before the city was

---

6 Since there is no mention of a return from exile, it is not likely that Samuel–Kings was written after the return.
actually built (cf. 1 Kgs 16:24). The author also refers in 2 Kgs 17:41 to the grandchildren (and further descendants) of the nations who were settled by the Assyrians in the northern kingdom after the fall of Samaria in 722. On the other hand, the date cannot be pushed into the postexilic period, since the orthography of Samuel–Kings is clearly earlier than that of Chronicles, and Chronicles presupposes that the reader is familiar with the history in Samuel–Kings. Second Kings 17:23b seems to be a direct statement that the book was written before the return from exile in 536 B.C.

**Purpose and Message**

The purpose of Samuel–Kings is to teach the nation of Israel the imperative to abandon idolatry and to faithfully observe the Law of Moses in order to receive God’s blessing. This purpose is accomplished through a theologically-interpreted review of Israel’s history from the end of the period of the judges until the Babylonian exile. The focus of Samuel–Kings is on how idolatry caused the nation’s downfall. Idolatry brings calamity and leads to exile, while serving Yahweh exclusively in accordance with the Law brings blessing and keeps the nation established in the land. Samuel–Kings shows the consistent pattern of national disobedience that led to exile, but also shows the blessing that came when Israel did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh. There is a significant amount of space directly explaining why the northern kingdom fell (2 Kgs 17), and many statements throughout stating explicitly why the southern kingdom went into exile (e.g., 2 Kgs 21:10-15; 22:16-17; 23:26-27; 24:19-20). Second Kings 17:7-23 is a warning to the post-exilic community, and 2 Kgs 17:34-41 explicitly and repeatedly makes the point that Yahweh alone is to be worshipped and feared, to the exclusion of all other gods. The author makes a moral evaluation of each of the monarchs and explains how the nation prospered or suffered because of the king’s obedience or disobedience to the Mosaic Covenant.

The message of Samuel–Kings is, throughout the long history of Israel’s monarchy, the nation was blessed and prospered when they were faithful to the Law and served Yahweh exclusively, but suffered and eventually went into exile because of unfaithfulness to the Law and idolatry.

**Textual Base**

A comparison of parallel texts in Kings and Chronicles shows that, while Kings does contain some copying mistakes, its text is generally quite well preserved. However, since Samuel and Kings were apparently copied on separate scrolls from an early period, Samuel has more acute textual problems than Kings. In fact, the Hebrew text of Samuel is the least well preserved of any book of the OT. This is not to say that it is poorly preserved or untrustworthy—it is very well preserved, just like the rest of the Bible. However, it is clear that the Hebrew manuscript of Samuel from which all extant copies derive was somehow damaged or contained some copying errors.

Many scholars today look to the LXX and the Qumran manuscripts to emend the text of Samuel. However, the corruption surely must have occurred at some point far before even the translation of the LXX. In 1 Sam 13:1, there is no manuscript or version in the world that preserves the length of Saul’s reign. It is possible that every manuscript of Samuel but one was lost (destroyed?) at some point, similar to the loss of all but one Torah scroll at the time of Josiah, and that the only remaining scroll of Samuel had suffered physical damage. Further, with Masoretic copying practices not yet in place, early Second Temple Period scribes might do their best to copy the manuscript accurately, and proofread it more than once, and yet mistakes were bound to be made. With manuscripts in short supply, such mistakes might become entrenched in the manuscript tradition.

The nature of the damage to the Hebrew text of Samuel is completely unintentional. The missing number in 1 Sam 13:1 looks like it is due to holes in the scroll from which extant copies were made. Further, there are many places where it is clear the text has been corrupted due to unintentional errors in the copying process. Unlike in some Qumran manuscripts and the LXX, however, there is nothing in the
MT of Samuel–Kings that looks like an intentional emendation or redaction of the text, nor did the Masoretic scribes make any attempt to correct errors. And the copying mistakes are not nearly so numerous or significant as some scholars make them out to be.

The MT of Samuel preserves the Hebrew text of Samuel as it was preserved after its damage at an earlier stage in its history. The impossibility of the LXX or DSS preserving the true, undamaged text of Samuel has already been noted. Thus, looking to the versions to correct the Hebrew text may not always be a good idea, since there is nothing to suggest that the versions were based on a text that was any more accurate. Instead, the versions often try to smooth out or correct the Hebrew text on their own, which provides tempting emendations for interpreters.

The time that the text of Samuel was damaged may have been after the time of Ezra, since Chronicles often has the right text where Samuel is erroneous. However, since Ezra wrote Chronicles on the basis of original source documents, he really did not need to consult Samuel–Kings for his information. The original source documents which were used to write Chronicles ca. 400 B.C. were evidently lost within a hundred or two hundred years, for unknown reasons, so it should not be surprising if the text of the book of Samuel–Kings, though not lost, suffered due to neglect or sloppy copying practices.

**Outline of Samuel–Kings**

*Summary Outline*

I. Transition from Judges to Kings – 1 Samuel 1:1–10:27
II. Reign of Saul – 1 Samuel 11:1–31:13
III. Reign of David – 2 Samuel 1:1–24:25
IV. Reign of Solomon – 1 Kings 1:1–11:43
V. Reigns of the Kings of Israel and Judah – 1 Kings 12:1 – 2 Kings 17:41
VI. Reigns of the Kings of Judah – 2 Kings 18:1–25:30

*Expanded Outline*

I. Transition from Judges to Kings – 1 Samuel 1:1–10:27
   A. Samuel’s birth and dedication 1:1–2:11
      1. Hannah’s barrenness and sorrow 1:1-8
      2. Hannah’s prayer 1:9-11
      3. Eli’s response 1:12-18
      4. The birth of Samuel 1:19-20
      5. The dedication of Samuel 1:21-28
      6. Hannah’s exultant prayer 2:1-10
      7. Samuel’s role at Shiloh 2:11
   B. Samuel’s rise at Shiloh 2:12–4:1a
      1. Background: the transgression of Eli’s sons 2:12-17
      2. Hannah’s blessedness 2:18-21
      3. Eli’s rebuke of his sons 2:22-25
      4. Samuel’s favor 2:26
      5. The prophecy against Eli’s house 2:27-36
         a. The recognition of Yahweh’s voice 3:1-9
b. The prophetic word 3:10-14

c. The message relayed 3:15-18

7. The beginning of Samuel’s public ministry 3:19–4:1a

C. The capture and return of the ark 4:1b–7:2
   1. The initial defeat and the people’s response 4:1b-4
   2. The arrival of the ark and the second defeat 4:5-11
   3. The report and Eli’s death 4:12-18
   4. The birth of Ichabod 4:19-22
   5. The ark at Ashdod 5:1-5
   6. The ark at Gath and Ekron 5:6-12
   7. The decision to return the ark 6:1-9
   8. The return of the ark 6:10-16
   9. The trespass-offerings 6:17-18
   10. The ark at Kiriath-jearim 6:19–7:2

D. Samuel’s judgeship 7:3-17
   1. The call to abandon idolatry 7:3-4
   2. The defeat of the Philistines 7:5-11
   3. Samuel’s success against the Philistines 7:12-14
   4. Summary of Samuel’s judgeship 7:15-17

E. The selection of a king 8:1–10:27
   1. Samuel’s appointment of his sons 8:1-3
   2. Israel’s demand for a king 8:4-9
   3. Samuel’s warning 8:10-18
   4. The demand repeated and accepted 8:19-22
   5. Saul made king 9:1–10:27
      a. Saul’s search for his father’s donkeys 9:1-4
      b. Saul’s decision to inquire of Samuel 9:5-10
      c. Saul’s discovery of Samuel 9:11-14
      d. Samuel’s announcement to Saul 9:15-21
      e. Samuel’s feast for Saul 9:22-24
      f. The preparation for the anointing 9:25-27
      g. Saul’s anointing and confirmatory signs 10:1-8
      h. The confirmatory signs fulfilled 10:9-13
      i. Saul’s return home 10:14-16
      j. Saul’s presentation to the people 10:17-24
      k. The kingdom begun 10:25-27

II. Reign of Saul – 1 Samuel 11:1–31:13
    A. Early events of Saul’s reign 11:1–15:35
       1. Saul’s victory over the Ammonites 11:1-15
          a. Nahash’s assault on Jabesh-gilead and the plea for help 11:1-3
          b. Saul’s call to battle and victory 11:4-11
          c. Saul’s praise and graciousness 11:12-13
       2. The renewal of the kingdom 11:14–12:25
          a. Call to the renewal assembly 11:14-15
          b. Samuel’s innocence protested 12:1-5
          c. The people’s wickedness protested 12:6-18
          d. The kingdom conditionally confirmed 12:19-25
       3. Saul’s initial battle against the Philistines 13:1–14:46
          a. Heading: summary of Saul’s reign 13:1
          b. The organization of a professional army 13:2
          c. The war with Philistia initiated 13:3-4

42
d. The Philistine armies and Israel’s fear 13:5-7
e. Saul’s unauthorized sacrifice and the rejection of his dynasty 13:8-15a
f. The initial contact between the armies 13:15b-18
g. The Israelites’ lack of weaponry 13:19-23
h. Jonathan’s initiative 14:1-5
  i. Jonathan’s slaughter 14:6-15
  j. The rout following Jonathan 14:16-23
  k. Saul’s foolish vow 14:24-30
  l. The people’s hunger 14:31-35
m. The results of breaking the vow 14:36-42
n. Jonathan condemned and saved 14:43-46

4. Summary of Saul’s reign 14:47-52
   a. Saul’s military victories 14:47-48
   b. Saul’s family 14:49-51
   c. Saul’s wars with the Philistines 14:52

5. The war with Amalek and Saul’s rejection by Yahweh 15:1-35
   a. The commission to devote Amalek 15:1-3
   b. Saul’s victory but failure to obey 15:4-9
   c. Yahweh’s rejection of Saul 15:10-11
   d. Samuel’s confrontation of Saul 15:12-16
   e. Samuel’s rebuke of Saul 15:17-23
   f. Saul’s insincere repentance 15:24-31
   g. Samuel’s execution of Agag 15:32-33
   h. Samuel’s grief over Saul 15:34-35

B. Transition from Saul to David 16:1–31:13
   1. Anointing of David 16:1-23
      a. The invitation to the sacrifice 16:1-5
      b. Samuel’s anointing of David 16:6-13
      c. David’s service before Saul 16:14-23
   2. David’s victory over Goliath 17:1-58
      a. Goliath’s challenge to the Israelite army 17:1-11
      b. David’s situation 17:12-16
      c. David’s arrival and inquiry concerning Goliath 17:17-27
      d. Eliab’s jealousy and David’s persistence 17:28-30
      e. David sent to Goliath 17:31-40
      f. David’s confrontation with Goliath 17:41-49
      g. The triumph over the Philistines 17:50-54
      h. The identification of David to Saul 17:55-58
      i. Jonathan’s covenant with David 18:1-5
   3. The rift between David and Saul 18:6–20:42
      a. Saul’s jealousy of David 18:6-9
      b. Saul’s fear of David 18:10-16
      c. Saul’s offer of his daughters to David 18:17-21
      d. David’s marriage of Michal 18:22-29
      e. David’s public favor and success 18:30
      f. Jonathan’s attempt to restore David 19:1-7
      g. Saul’s attempt to murder David 19:8-17
      h. David’s flight to Samuel and Saul’s failed pursuit 19:18-24
         i. The confirmation of Saul’s intent to murder David 20:1-42
            i. The test of Saul’s intent proposed 20:1-11
            ii. Jonathan’s renewal of his covenant with David 20:12-17

43
iii. The resolution of the matter 20:18-23
iv. Jonathan’s test of his father’s intent 20:24-29
v. Saul’s attempt to murder Jonathan 20:30-34
vi. The parting of Jonathan and David 20:35-42

4. David’s exile and Saul’s pursuit 21:1–27:12
   a. David’s solitary flight 21:1-15
      i. David’s flight to Nob 21:1-6
      ii. David’s acquisition of provisions at Nob 21:7-9
      iii. David’s flight to Gath 21:10-15
   b. David’s collection of followers 22:1-23
      i. David’s attraction of discontents 22:1-2
      ii. David’s protection of his family 22:3-4
      iii. David’s movement from the stronghold 22:5
      iv. Saul’s search for information 22:6-10
      v. Doeg’s murder of the priests 22:11-19
      vi. Abiathar’s flight to David 22:20-23
   c. David’s escapes from Saul 23:1-29
      i. David’s victory at Keilah 23:1-6
      ii. David’s flight from Keilah 23:7-14
      iii. Jonathan’s encouragement of David 23:15-18
      iv. The Ziphites’ report of David 23:19-23
      v. David’s escape from Saul 23:24-29
   d. David’s first confrontation with Saul 24:1-22
      i. David’s encounter with Saul in the cave 24:1-7
      ii. David’s plea with Saul 24:8-15
      iii. Saul’s temporary repentance 24:16-22
   e. Death of Samuel 25:1
   f. David’s conflict with Nabal 25:2-44
      i. David’s protection of Nabal and request for payment 25:2-9
      ii. Nabal’s rough reply and David’s angry response 25:10-13
      iii. The report to Abigail 25:14-17
      iv. Abigail’s interception of David 25:18-22
      v. Abigail’s plea with David 25:23-31
      vii. Nabal’s death 25:36-38
      viii. David’s acquisition of Abigail 25:39-42
      ix. David’s wives 25:43-44
   g. David’s second confrontation with Saul 26:1-25
      i. David’s interception of Saul 26:1-5
      ii. David’s secret theft 26:6-12
      iii. David’s cry to Abner 26:13-16
      iv. Saul’s dialogue with David 26:17-20
      v. Saul’s temporary repentance 26:21-25
   h. David’s flight to Philistia 27:1-12
      i. David’s flight to Achish 27:1-4
      ii. Achish’s gift of Ziklag 27:5-7
      iii. David’s raiding pattern 27:8-12

5. Preliminaries to Saul’s final battle 28:1–29:11
   a. The mustering of David’s men with Achish’s 28:1-2
   b. Saul’s inquiry by a witch 28:3-25
      i. Saul’s search for communication with God 28:3-7
ii. The bringing up of Samuel 28:8-14  
iii. Samuel’s prophecy of doom 28:15-19  
iv. Saul’s terror 28:20-25  
c. David’s return to Ziklag 29:1-11  
   i. The Philistine lords’ refusal of David 29:1-5  
   ii. Achish’s dismissal of David 29:6-11  
6. David’s rout of the Amalekites 30:1-31  
   a. The sack of Ziklag discovered 30:1-6  
   b. The inquiry and pursuit 30:7-10  
   c. The discovery of a guide 30:11-15  
   d. The total defeat of the Amalekites 30:16-20  
   e. The distribution of the spoil to David’s followers 30:21-25  
   f. The distribution of the spoil to David’s territory 30:26-31  
7. Saul’s death and burial 31:1-13  
   a. Saul’s death 31:1-6  
   b. Saul’s burial 31:7-13  
III. Reign of David – 2 Samuel 1:1–24:25  
A. David’s ascent to power 1:1–5:5  
   1. David’s response to Saul’s death 1:1-27  
      a. The report of Saul’s death 1:1-10  
      b. David’s mourning 1:11-16  
      c. David’s lament 1:17-27  
   2. The initial struggle between David and Saul’s loyalists 2:1-32  
      a. David’s first coronation 2:1-4a  
      b. David’s olive branch to Jabesh-gilead 2:4b-7  
      c. The split between Ishbosheth and David 2:8-11  
      d. The first battle between Abner and Joab 2:12-17  
      e. Abner’s slaying of Asahel 2:18-23  
      f. The conclusion of the battle 2:24-29  
      g. The burial of Asahel 2:30-32  
   3. The fall of Saul’s house 3:1–4:12  
      a. David’s progress in the war 3:1  
      b. David’s early wives and sons 3:2-5  
      c. Abner’s decision to defect 3:6-11  
      d. Abner’s deal with David 3:12-16  
      e. Abner’s deal with the elders of Israel 3:17-21  
      f. Joab’s plot 3:22-26  
      g. Joab’s murder of Abner 3:27-30  
      h. David’s mourning for Abner 3:31-39  
      i. Background to the plot to murder Ishbosheth 4:1-3  
      j. Background to Mephibosheth 4:4  
      k. Ishbosheth’s murder and punishment 4:5-12  
   4. David’s second coronation 5:1-5  
B. David’s consolidation of power 5:6–12:31  
   1. David’s centralization of his government 5:6-16  
      a. David’s capture of Jerusalem 5:6-10  
      b. David’s construction of a palace 5:11-12  
      c. David’s additional wives 5:13-16  
   2. David’s elimination of external threats to power 5:17-25  
      a. First victory over the Philistines 5:17-21  
      b. Second victory over the Philistines 5:22-25
3. The relocation of the ark to Jerusalem 6:1-23
   a. The initial procession 6:1-5
   b. The death of Uzzah 6:6-11
   c. The second procession 6:12-15
   d. The placement of the ark 6:16-19
   e. The punishment of Michal 6:20-23
4. The Davidic Covenant 7:1-29
   a. The covenant stated 7:1-17
   b. The covenant accepted 7:18-29
5. David’s victories 8:1-18
   a. Subjugation of the Philistines 8:1
   b. Subjugation of Moab 8:2
   c. Subjugation of Aram 8:3-8
   d. Gift from Toi of Hamath 8:9-12
   e. Subjugation of Edom 8:13-14
   f. David’s organization of his government 8:15-18
   a. David’s discovery of Mephibosheth 9:1-8
   b. David’s blessing of Mephibosheth 9:9-13
7. David’s defeat of Ammon and Aram 10:1-19
   a. David’s kindness rebuffed 10:1-5
   b. The assault by Ammon and Aram 10:6-8
   c. The initial victory 10:9-14
   d. The major victory over Aram 10:15-19
8. David’s sin with Bathsheba and its consequences 11:1–12:31
   a. Joab’s invasion of Ammon 11:1
   b. David’s adultery with Bathsheba 11:2-5
   c. Uriah’s recall 11:6-13
   d. Uriah’s return and death 11:14-21
   e. The message of Uriah’s death 11:22-25
   f. David’s marriage of Bathsheba 11:26-27
   g. Nathan’s parable 12:1-6
   h. Nathan’s condemnation and David’s repentance 12:7-15a
     i. The death of the child 12:15b-23
     j. The birth of Solomon 12:24-25
     k. The fall of Rabbah 12:26-31
C. Challenges to David’s power 13:1–21:14
   1. Events leading to Absalom’s rebellion 13:1–14:33
      a. Events leading to Absalom’s flight 13:1-39
         i. Amnon’s lust and plot 13:1-6
         ii. The rape of Tamar 13:7-14
         iii. The sending away of Tamar 13:15-19
         iv. Absalom’s hatred of Amnon 13:20-22
         v. The murder of Amnon 13:23-29
         vi. The first report of the murder 13:30-33
         vii. The return of the king’s sons and the flight of Absalom 13:34-39
      b. Events leading to Absalom’s return 14:1-33
         i. Joab’s plan 14:1-3
         ii. The woman’s story to David 14:4-7
         iii. The continuation of the woman’s story 14:8-11
         iv. The story applied 14:12-17
Dr. Anderson’s Interpretive Guide to the Bible

Samuel–Kings

v. David’s discernment of Joab’s plan 14:18-20
vi. David’s approval of Joab’s plan 14:21-24
vii. Absalom’s regal appearance 14:25-27
viii. Absalom’s full restoration 14:28-33

2. Absalom’s rebellion 15:1–19:43
   a. Absalom’s coup 15:1–17:29
      i. Absalom’s campaign 15:1-6
      ii. Absalom’s plot 15:7-12
      iii. David’s flight 15:13-18
      iv. Ittai’s loyalty 15:19-23
      v. Zadok’s loyalty and return 15:24-29
      vi. David’s plot with Hushai 15:30-37
      vii. Zeba’s professed loyalty 16:1-4
      viii. Shimei’s curse 16:5-8
      ix. David’s tolerance of Shimei 16:9-14
      x. Hushai’s professed loyalty to Absalom 16:15-19
      xi. Ahithophel’s first counsel 16:20-23
      xii. Ahithophel’s second counsel 17:1-4
      xiii. Hushai’s counter-counsel 17:5-14
      xiv. Hushai’s counsel to David 17:15-20
      xv. The results of Hushai’s counsel 17:21-23
      xvi. David’s encampment in Mahanaim 17:24-26
      xvii. David’s supporters in Mahanaim 17:27-29
   b. Absalom’s fall 18:1–19:8a
      i. David’s battle instructions 18:1-5
      ii. Account of the battle 18:6-8
      iii. Joab’s slaughter of Absalom 18:9-15
      iv. Joab’s declaration of victory 18:16-18
      v. The messengers sent 18:19-23
      vi. The messengers sighted 18:24-27
      vii. Ahimaaz’s message 18:28-30
      viii. The Cushite’s message 18:31-33
      ix. David’s mourning and Joab’s rebuke 19:1-8a
   c. David’s return 19:8b-43
      i. The determination to recall David 19:8b-10
      ii. Judah’s recollection of David 19:11-15
      iii. Shimei’s plea for mercy 19:16-20
      iv. David’s forgiveness of Shimei 19:21-23
      v. Mephiboseth’s greeting and request 19:24-30
      vi. David’s deal with Barzillai 19:31-39
      vii. The strife between Israel and Judah 19:40-43

3. Sheba’s rebellion 20:1-26
   a. Sheba’s declaration of independence 20:1-2
   b. David’s return to Jerusalem 20:3
   c. The murder of Amasa 20:4-10a
   d. Joab’s pursuit of Sheba 20:10b-13
   e. The death of Sheba 20:14-22
   f. The restoration of David’s administration 20:23-26

4. The Gibeonite retribution 21:1-14
   a. The demand for judgment on Saul’s house 21:1-6
   b. The execution of seven of Saul’s sons 21:7-9
c. The closure of the matter 21:10-14

D. Conclusion of David’s reign 21:15–24:25
1. David’s last battle 21:15-17
2. The defeat of the Philistines completed 21:18-22
3. David’s song of victory 22:1-51
4. David’s last words 23:1-7
5. David’s mighty men 23:8-39
   a. The first elite warrior 23:8
   b. The second elite warrior 23:9-10
   c. The third elite warrior 23:11-12
   d. A feat of the three elite warriors 23:13-17
   e. The first elite commander (after David and Joab) 23:18-19
   f. The second elite commander 23:20-23
   g. The thirty mighty men of the army 23:24-39
6. The census and plague 24:1-25
   a. The census commanded and taken 24:1-9
   b. David’s repentance 24:10-14
   c. The plague 24:15-17
   d. David’s sacrifice 24:18-25

IV. Reign of Solomon – 1 Kings 1:1–11:43
A. Solomon’s accession to the throne 1:1–2:12
   1. David’s illness and prescription 1:1-4
   2. Adonijah’s attempted coup 1:5-10
   3. Nathan’s plan of action 1:11-14
   4. Bathsheba’s request 1:15-21
   5. Nathan’s request 1:22-27
   6. David’s promise to Bathsheba 1:28-31
   7. David’s command to coronate Solomon 1:32-37
   8. The coronation of Solomon 1:38-40
   9. The news of Solomon’s accession 1:41-48
10. Adonijah’s submission to Solomon 1:49-53
11. David’s charge to Solomon 2:1-9
12. David’s death and burial 2:10-12
B. The establishment of Solomon’s kingship 2:13–4:34
   1. The execution of adversaries 2:13-46
      a. Adonijah’s demand 2:13-18
      b. The execution of Adonijah 2:19-25
      c. The banishment of Abiathar 2:26-27
      d. The execution of Joab 2:28-35
      e. The warning to Shimei 2:36-38
      f. The execution of Shimei 2:39-46
   2. Solomon’s initial prosperity 3:1-3
   3. Solomon’s request for wisdom 3:4-9
   4. The request granted 3:10-15
   5. Solomon’s wisdom demonstrated 3:16-28
      a. The case before Solomon 3:16-28
      b. Solomon’s verdict 3:23-28
   6. Solomon’s administration 4:1-34
      a. Solomon’s highest officials 4:1-6
      b. Solomon’s governors 4:7-19
      c. Solomon’s prosperity 4:20-28
d. Solomon’s wisdom 4:29-34
C. Solomon’s construction projects 5:1–8:66
  1. The request to Hiram 5:1-6
  2. The request granted 5:7-12
  3. The levy of laborers 5:13-18
  4. The construction of the temple 6:1-10
  5. Yahweh’s promise to Solomon 6:11-13
  6. Description of the temple as a whole 6:14-22
  8. Description of the inner court 6:29-36
  9. The timeline of the construction 6:37-38
  10. Solomon’s palace 7:1-8
  11. The stones of Solomon’s palace 7:9-12
  12. The pillars of the temple 7:13-22
  13. The molten sea 7:23-26
  14. The lavers 7:27-39
  15. The accessories of the temple 7:40-47
  16. The vessels of the temple 7:48-50
  17. The collection of dedicated items 7:51
  18. The dedication of the temple 8:1-66
    a. The sacrifices at the dedication 8:1-11
    b. Solomon’s prayer of dedication 8:12-53
    c. Solomon’s blessing of the assembly 8:54-61
    d. The dedicatory feast 8:62-66
D. The greatness attained by Solomon 9:1–10:29
  1. The prophecy to Solomon 9:1-9
  2. The exchange between Hiram and Solomon 9:10-14
  3. Solomon’s conscription 9:15-22
  4. Solomon’s chief officers 9:23
  5. The palace for the daughter of Pharaoh 9:24
  6. Solomon’s initial faithfulness 9:25
  7. Solomon’s merchant fleet 9:26-28
  8. The queen of Sheba’s visit 10:1-10
  9. The collection of almug wood 10:11-12
  10. The gifts from the queen of Sheba 10:13
  11. Solomon’s wealth 10:14-22
  12. Solomon’s success as a king 10:23-25
  13. Israel’s prosperity under Solomon 10:26-29
E. Solomon’s sins and judgment 11:1-40
  1. Solomon’s corruption by his pagan wives 11:1-8
  2. Yahweh’s rebuke of Solomon 11:9-13
  3. Opposition by Hadad the Edomite 11:14-22
  4. Opposition by Rezon of Zobah 11:23-25
  5. Opposition by Jeroboam 11:26-40
F. Solomon’s death and succession 11:41-43
V. Reigns of the Kings of Israel and Judah – 1 Kings 12:1 – 2 Kings 17:41
A. The division of the kingdom 1 Kings 12:1-24
  1. The request to Rehoboam 12:1-5
  2. Rehoboam’s foolish counsel 12:6-11
  3. Rehoboam’s hard reply 12:12-15
  4. Israel’s rebellion 12:16-20
5. The rebellion accepted 12:21-24

B. Reign of Jeroboam over Israel 1 Kings 12:25–14:20
   1. Jeroboam’s institution of idolatrous worship 12:25-33
   2. The prophecy and sign to Jeroboam 13:1-10
   3. The false prophecy and its acceptance 13:11-19
   4. The young prophet’s punishment 13:20-25
   5. The prophet’s burial 13:26-32
   6. Jeroboam’s persistence in idolatry 13:33-34
   7. Abijah’s sickness 14:1-5
   8. Ahijah’s prophecy to Jeroboam’s wife 14:6-16
   9. Abijah’s death 14:17-18
   10. End of Jeroboam’s reign 14:19-20

C. Reign of Rehoboam over Judah 1 Kings 14:21-31
   1. Rehoboam’s idolatry 14:21-24
   2. Shishak’s invasion 14:25-28
   3. End of Rehoboam’s reign 14:29-31

D. Reign of Abijam over Judah 1 Kings 15:1-8
   1. Summary of Abijam’s reign 15:1-6
   2. End of Abijam’s reign 15:7-8

E. Reign of Asa over Judah 1 Kings 15:9-24
   1. Summary of Asa’s reign 15:9-15
   2. Asa’s treaty with Ben-hadad 15:16-22
   3. End of Asa’s reign 15:23-24

F. Reign of Nadab over Israel 1 Kings 15:25-32
   1. Summary of Nadab’s reign and death 15:25-30
   2. End of Nadab’s reign 15:31-32

G. Reign of Baasha over Israel 1 Kings 15:33–16:7
   1. Baasha’s sins and prophesied judgment 15:33–16:4
   2. Summary of Baasha’s reign 16:5-7

H. Reign of Elah over Israel 1 Kings 16:8-14

I. Reign of Zimri over Israel 1 Kings 16:15-20

J. Reign of Omri over Israel 1 Kings 16:21-28

K. Reign of Ahab over Israel 1 Kings 16:29–22:40
   1. Ahab’s coronation and wickedness 16:29-34
   2. Elijah’s prophecy and flight 17:1-7
   3. Elijah’s flight to the widow in Zarephath 17:8-16
   4. The raising of the widow’s son 17:17-24
   5. The mission of Ahab and Obadiah 18:1-6
   6. Elijah’s message to Obadiah 18:7-15
   7. Elijah’s message to Ahab 18:16-19
   8. The challenge on Mount Carmel 18:20-24
   9. The failure of the prophets of Baal 18:25-29
   10. Elijah’s success 18:30-40
   11. The coming of rain 18:41-46
   12. Jezebel’s threat and Elijah’s flight 19:1-8
   13. Elijah’s complaint 19:9-14
   14. Yahweh’s response 19:15-18
   15. Elisha’s call 19:19-21
   16. Ben-hadad’s message to Ahab 20:1-6
   17. Ben-hadad’s challenge of Ahab 20:7-12
   18. The prophetic message to Ahab 20:13-15
19. Ahab’s defeat of Ben-hadad 20:16-21
20. The opposing prophecies 20:22-25
21. The second defeat of Ben-hadad 20:26-30
22. Ahab’s covenant with Ben-hadad 20:31-34
23. The prophet’s rebuke of Ahab 20:35-43
25. Jezebel’s plot against Naboth 21:5-10
26. Naboth’s murder 21:11-16
27. Elijah’s confrontation of Ahab 21:17-26
28. Ahab’s repentance 21:27-29
29. Jehoshaphat’s meeting with Ahab 22:1-4
30. The false prophets’ message 22:5-12
31. Micaiah’s message 22:13-23
32. The rebuke of Micaiah 22:24-28
33. The battle at Ramoth Gilead 22:29-36
34. The death of Ahab 22:37-40

L. Reign of Jehoshaphat over Judah 1 Kings 22:41-50
   1. Summary of Jehoshaphat’s reign 22:41-44
   2. End of Jehoshaphat’s reign 22:45-50

M. Reign of Ahaziah over Israel 1 Kings 22:51–2 Kings 1:18
   1. Ahaziah’s reign summarized 22:51-53
   2. Ahaziah’s sickness and Elijah’s message 1:1-4
   3. The message delivered to Ahaziah 1:5-8
   4. The prophecy reaffirmed 1:9-16
   5. The end of Ahaziah’s reign 1:17-18

N. Reign of Jehoram over Israel 2 Kings 2:1–8:15
   1. Elijah’s translation 2:1-12a
   2. The transfer of Elijah’s power to Elisha 2:12b-14
   3. The failed search for Elijah 2:15-18
   4. Elisha’s healing of the waters of Jericho 2:19-22
   5. Elisha’s curse upon the rebellious youths 2:23-25
   6. The beginning of Jehoram’s reign 3:1-3
   7. The assault on Moab 3:4-12
   8. Elisha’s prophecy of water and victory 3:13-20
   9. The defeat of Moab and withdrawal 3:21-27
  10. The widow’s oil increased 4:1-7
  11. The prophecy of a son to the woman of Shunem 4:8-16
  12. The death of the woman’s son 4:17-25a
  13. The failed attempt at resurrection 4:25b-31
  14. The successful resurrection 4:32-37
  15. The healing of the poisonous stew 4:38-41
  16. The multiplication of the bread 4:42-44
  17. Naaman’s request to be healed of leprosy 5:1-7
  18. Elisha’s instructions and Naaman’s healing 5:8-14
  19. Naaman’s return and dismissal 5:15-19
  20. Gehazi’s greed and curse 5:20-27
  21. The miracle of the floating axe-head 6:1-7
  22. Elisha’s aid to the king of Israel 6:8-13
  23. The assault on Elisha 6:14-19
  24. The dismissal of the Arameans 6:20-23
  25. The siege of Samaria 6:24-31
26. The prophecy of relief 6:32–7:2
27. The lepers’ discovery 7:3-8
28. The confirmation by the king’s messengers 7:9-15
29. The plundering of the Aramean camp 7:16-20
30. The woman at Shunem’s flight and restoration 8:1-6
31. Elisha’s commission of Hazael 8:7-15

O. Reign of Jehoram/Joram over Judah 2 Kings 8:16-24
   1. Summary of Joram’s reign 8:16-19
   2. Joram’s loss of territory and death 8:20-24

P. Reign of Ahaziah over Judah 2 Kings 8:25-29

Q. Jehu’s revolution and reign over Israel 2 Kings 9:1-10:36
   1. Jehu’s anointing 9:1-10
   2. Jehu’s coronation 9:11-13
   3. Jehu’s assault on Jezreel 9:14-16
   4. The recognition of Jehu’s assault 9:17-20
   5. Jehu’s execution of Joram 9:21-26
   7. Jehu’s execution of Jezebel 9:30-37
   8. The execution of Ahab’s family 10:1-11
   9. The execution of Ahaziah’s family 10:12-14
  10. Jehu’s reception of Jehonadab ben Rechab 10:15-17
  11. Jehu’s plot to destroy Baal worship 10:18-24
  13. Summary of Jehu’s reign 10:29-31

R. Athaliah’s coup and Jehoiada’s counter-coup 2 Kings 11:1-20
   1. Athaliah’s coup and reign 11:1-3
   2. Jehoiada’s plot 11:4-8
   3. The coronation of Joash 11:9-12
   4. The execution of Athaliah 11:13-16
   5. The establishment of Joash’s kingship 11:17-20

   1. Summary of Joash’s reign 11:21–12:3
   2. Joash’s command to repair the temple 12:4-8
   3. The completion of the temple restoration 12:9-16
   4. Joash’s misuse of the temple funds 12:17-18
   5. End of Joash’s reign 12:19-21

T. Reign of Jehoahaz over Israel 2 Kings 13:1-9

U. Reign of Jehoash/Joash over Israel 2 Kings 13:10-25
   1. Reign of Joash summarized 13:10-13
   2. Elisha’s deathbed prophecy to Joash 13:14-19
   3. The resurrection after Elisha’s death 13:20-21
   4. The fulfillment of Elisha’s prophecy 13:22-25

V. Reign of Amaziah over Judah 2 Kings 14:1-22
   1. The beginning of Amaziah’s reign 14:1-7
   2. The message to Jehoash and his reply 14:8-10
   3. The defeat of Amaziah by Jehoash 14:11-14
   4. Summary of Jehoash’s reign 14:15-16
   5. Summary of Amaziah’s reign 14:17-22

W. Reign of Jeroboam II over Israel 2 Kings 14:23-29
   1. Jeroboam II’s activities 14:23-27

52
2. The end of Jeroboam II’s reign 14:28-29
X. Reign of Azariah over Judah 2 Kings 15:1-7
Y. Reign of Zechariah over Israel 2 Kings 15:8-12
Z. Reign of Shallum over Israel 2 Kings 15:13-16
AA. Reign of Menahem over Israel 2 Kings 15:17-22
BB. Reign of Pekiah over Israel 2 Kings 15:23-26
CC. Reign of Pekah over Israel 2 Kings 15:27-31
   1. Summary of Pekah’s reign 15:27-28
   2. End of Pekah’s reign 15:29-31
DD. Reign of Jotham over Judah 2 Kings 15:32-38
EE. Reign of Ahaz over Judah 2 Kings 16:1-20
   1. Summary of Ahaz’s reign 16:1-4
   2. The Syro-Ephraimitic alliance 16:5-6
   3. Ahaz’s covenant with Assyria 16:7-9
   4. Ahaz’s copy of the Damascus altar 16:10-16
   5. End of Ahaz’s reign 16:17-20
FF. Reign of Hoshea over Israel and the fall of the north 2 Kings 17:1-6
GG. The exile of the northern kingdom explained 2 Kings 17:7-41
   1. The reason for Yahweh’s punishment of the north 17:7-18
   2. The connection with Yahweh’s punishment of the south 17:19-23
   3. The initial resettlement of the north 17:24-26
   4. The syncretism of the northern religion 17:27-33
   5. The continuation of the syncretism 17:34-41
VI. Reigns of the Kings of Judah – 2 Kings 18:1–25:30
A. Reign of Hezekiah 18:1–20:21
   1. The beginning of Hezekiah’s reign 18:1-8
   2. The exile of Samaria 18:9-12
   3. The invasion of Sennacherib 18:13-18
   4. The Rabshakeh’s first speech 18:19-25
   5. The Rabshakeh’s second speech 18:26-35
   6. Report to Hezekiah 18:36-37
   7. Hezekiah’s first plea to Yahweh 19:1-7
   8. The second message from Assyria 19:8-13
   9. Hezekiah’s second plea 19:14-19
  10. Isaiah’s reply 19:20-34
      a. Assyria’s boast defied 19:20-24
      b. Yahweh’s sovereignty over Assyria asserted 19:25-28
      c. The sign to Hezekiah 19:29-34
  11. Yahweh’s punishment of Assyria 19:35-37
  12. Hezekiah’s sickness and recovery 20:1-7
  13. The sign to Hezekiah 20:8-11
  14. The visit of Merodach-baladan’s ambassadors 20:12-19
  15. Hezekiah’s reign summarized 20:20-21
B. Reign of Manasseh 21:1-18
   1. Manasseh’s sins 21:1-9
   2. Judah’s punishment 21:10-15
   3. Manasseh’s reign summarized 21:16-18
C. Reign of Amon 21:19-26
D. Reign of Josiah 22:1–23:30
   2. The prompting of Josiah’s reforms 22:3-20
The narrative of Samuel–Kings obviously follows a chronological order, allowing for narrative switches between the northern and southern kingdoms. However, this does not in itself explain the argument of the book, for the selection of events is just as significant as their order. The events selected focus attention on how the nation of Israel/Judah prospered while it was faithful to Yahweh, but suffered while it was unfaithful. Idolatry is the major emphasis, since this was the primary sin which led to exile. The writer does, however, have as a secondary purpose to leave a succinct historical record of the monarchy period as part of the Bible’s narrative of redemptive history. The focus of this history is on spiritually significant events.

There are six major historical divisions in Samuel–Kings: the transition from judges to kings (1 Sam 1:1–10:27); the reign of Saul (1 Sam 11:1–31:13); the reign of David (2 Sam 1:1–24:25); the reign of Solomon (1 Kgs 1:1–11:43); the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah (1 Kgs 12:1 – 2 Kgs 17:41); and the reigns of the kings of Judah (2 Kgs 18:1–25:30).

**Argument of Samuel–Kings**

The book of Samuel–Kings begins its history of Israel’s monarchy with an extended description of how the transition was made from judges to kings (1 Sam 1:1–10:27). This section is especially focused on the career of Samuel, who was the transitional figure between Israel’s judges and its kings. Samuel was both the last judge and the first prophet (of the new type of prophet), and he anointed Israel’s first two kings. Importantly, Samuel’s function as the overseer of Saul’s kingship showed that Israel’s kings

---

54
would still have to answer to Yahweh as Israel’s true and highest Regent; the human king was merely Yahweh’s vicegerent, and could be chastened or removed by the King of kings.

The first four chapters of 1 Samuel describe how it is that Samuel came to be both Israel’s judge and its leading prophet. Samuel was born to a pious mother as a special gift to her from Yahweh, and she returned the gift by dedicating young Samuel to a lifetime of liturgical service (1:1–2:11). The narrative begins by introducing the desperate plight of a barren woman named Hannah who suffered constant, unbearable irritation from a rival wife, and a lack of understanding from her husband (1:1-8).7 God was at work in these bleak circumstances, however, for they drove Hannah to vow to dedicate her son to Yahweh if He would give her one (1:9-11). The high priest, Eli, heard Hannah’s request, and interceded with God on her behalf (1:12-18). Hannah did, indeed, bear a son that year as she had prayed, calling his name Samuel (“the name of God”; 1:19-20). Her husband Elkanah confirmed her vow to dedicate the child to Yahweh (1:21-23; cf. Num 30:6-8), and Hannah brought him to the tabernacle and dedicated him after he was weaned (1:24-28). At that time, Hannah rejoiced in an exultant, Spirit-led prayer which revealed her to be a woman of deep faith and spiritual understanding (2:1-10). Hannah then left Samuel at the tabernacle in the care of Eli, while she returned home with her husband (2:11). This special child would grow up in the tabernacle as a servant to Eli, while seeing his godly mother once a year at Passover (cf. 2:19).

The narrative now switches to Eli’s family, in order to explain why there would be an opportunity for the boy Samuel to rise to prominence. Eli had placed his two sons in a position to succeed their father as both judges and priests, although Yahweh had rejected them because of their wicked character (2:12-17). The narrative establishes a contrast between Samuel and his family, who were favored by Yahweh, and Eli and his family, who had provoked Yahweh to wrath (2:18-36). The contrast becomes personal in ch. 3, in which young Samuel himself received a prophecy of the judgment of Eli’s house (3:1-18). After this initial call to the prophetic ministry, Samuel gained widespread public recognition as a prophet of Yahweh, thereby making him the natural successor to Eli as Israel’s leader if something were to happen to the high priest and his sons (3:19–4:1a).

The pivotal event which transferred the spiritual leadership of Israel from Eli to Samuel is described in ch. 4. The Israelites had evidently initiated a battle against the Philistines in order to regain their independence, but they did not do well in the first day of fighting (4:1b-2). The elders of Israel implicitly accused Yahweh of making a mistake by not answering their prayers for victory, and they responded by attempting to force His hand: Eli’s sons were called to carry the ark of the covenant out of the Holy of Holies (contra Lev 16:2) and into the Israelite battle line (4:3-4). However, the Israelites found that, far from being a good luck charm, the presence of a holy God in the midst of an unholy people is a very deadly thing—they were disastrously routed by the Philistines, who captured the ark and killed Eli’s sons (4:5-11). Eli died upon hearing the news (4:12-18), as did his daughter-in-law (4:19-22). The initial stages of the judgment which Yahweh had pronounced on the house of Eli had now come to pass (cf. 2:34).

The following two chapters show how Yahweh vindicated Himself after refusing to vindicate sinful Israel with its wicked priests. These chapters also give background for the spiritual renewal led by Samuel some twenty years later. As it was customary for the victors to carry away the gods of the vanquished, the Philistines, who identified the ark of the covenant as the idol of Yahweh, placed it before the statue of

---

7 Note that the last word in 1 Sam 1:1 probably should be translated “Ephratite,” not “Ephraimite.” First Chronicles 6:33-38 traces Samuel’s lineage to Levi. Samuel’s family lived in the territory of Ephraim, but they were Levites. If they were not, Samuel would not have had the prerogative to serve in the tabernacle and offer sacrifices. The meaning of “Ephraimite” for אֶפְרָתִי also does not fit in Ruth 1:2 and 1 Sam 17:12; in these verses the word refers to someone from אֶפְרָתָה, probably a region near Bethlehem (cf. Gen 35:19; 48:7; Ruth 4:11; Mic 5:2).

8 Hannah’s response is noteworthy, because many people—often false believers—become angry with God and leave the church when the going gets tough. As a genuine believer, Hannah’s suffering drove her closer to God, and led her to a deeper spiritual commitment.
Dr. Anderson’s Interpretive Guide to the Bible

their chief god Dagon in his main temple in Ashdod (5:1-2). The Philistines quickly learned that Yahweh is the God of gods, when Dagon’s statue could not remain erect before the ark (5:3-5). The Philistines then learned that the presence of the ark among them was an exceedingly fearful thing, for a holy God who dwells in the midst of a sinful people will consume them if He is not properly reverenced. The ark was moved from one Philistine city to another, and each city was smitten in turn with a severe plague (5:6-12). The Philistines finally owned up to the fact that the ark did not belong to them, and that it had to be sent back to Israel for their own good—though, significantly, they did not begin to worship the God who had overpowered their idols (6:1-9). The ark was sent to the border town of Beth-shemesh, a city of priests (6:10-16; cf. Josh 21:13-16), and was returned with a trespass-offering (6:17-18). The men of Beth-shemesh irreverently looked inside the ark, presumably to see whether the Philistines had tampered with its contents, and they were smitten with a great plague as a result (6:19). As the fear of God fell upon the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, they sent the ark to Gibeonite city of Kiriath-jearim (6:20–7:2)—not to Shiloh, which is said elsewhere to have been destroyed in the aftermath of the Philistine victory described in ch. 4 (Ps 78:60; Jer 7:12-14; 26:6-9).

After twenty years (7:2)—probably the twenty years of Samson’s judgeship (cf. Judg 15:20; 16:31)—Samuel called the people of Israel to a great assembly in order to renew their commitment to Yahweh and to gain relief from the Philistine oppression (7:3-6). This assembly was evidently in response to the death of Samson, but was also due to the people’s weariness from serving the Philistines, and their growing desire to return to Yahweh after they had lost the place of the ark in the tabernacle at Shiloh. The Philistines correctly understood that the Israelites had gathered at Mizpah to regain their freedom, and they launched an attack to put down the rebellion (7:7). Yahweh gave Israel a great victory over their powerful Philistine overlords in answer to Samuel’s intercession on their behalf (7:8-11), and this was not just a short-lived success—the Philistines remained in check throughout the rest of Samuel’s judgeship (7:12-14). Samuel’s judgeship is summarized in 7:15-17.

Chapters 8–10 tell the story of the selection of Israel’s first king. As Samuel’s career as an active judge was winding down due to age, Samuel appointed his sons to succeed him as judges (8:1-2). His sons, however, proved corrupt and therefore unfit to be judges (8:3). The elders of Israel responded by gathering together to address the problem with Samuel (8:4). But rather than asking Samuel to appoint different judges and discipline his sons, the elders of Israel asked Samuel to give the nation a king, who would replace not just Samuel’s sons, but also Samuel himself, and would permanently end the system of national judges (8:5). It is clear that the people of Israel wanted a king for reasons that had nothing to do with the corruption of Samuel’s sons, and that they were just using that situation as an excuse. Samuel was hurt personally by the people’s rejection of him as their leader after a lifetime of faithful service, but he took the matter to Yahweh in prayer (8:6). Yahweh responded that Samuel should give the people what they want, even though they are sinning against Him by making the demand (8:7-9). Samuel went out to the people and gave them a fair warning of the downsides of having a king (8:10-18). The people had asked for a king in order to be free, from both their oppressors and from Yahweh’s chastisement of them for their sins; but the king would actually take away their freedom by making the people his servants and taxing them, and once the kingship was established the people could never revert back to the system of judges. However, the people would not listen; they insisted that they did in fact want a king—particularly to fight their battles, since they imagined that the reason why oppressors kept ravaging their land was because they lacked a professional military with a strong leader, and not because Yahweh was chastening them for their sins (8:19-20). After consulting with Yahweh once again, Samuel agreed to fulfill the people’s demand, and dismissed the assembly (8:21-22).

Having assented to the demand for a king, chs. 9–10 describe the anointing and installation of the man whom Yahweh chose as king. This man was Saul the son of Kish, a Benjamite, who matched the people’s request for a king who would fight their battles, since he and his family were great warriors. Saul had some spiritual qualifications as well, in that he was opposed to idolatry and spiritism, and would seek to make the people follow God’s Law (cf. 14:33-34; 28:3, 9). Saul was like the people who had asked for him, however, in that he had a “practical” attitude toward God’s demands, and proved that he would put personal interests and convenience ahead of rigid obedience to the letter of the law. Saul did have a
firstborn son with an excellent spirit—Jonathan—who would have taken the nation down a better path had he succeeded his father, though in the event he was denied succession due to his father’s transgression. However, Jonathan could not have been made king immediately, while his father was still alive and in the prime of life, and the people may not have accepted Jonathan’s conservative rule immediately anyway. Since God was giving the people what they asked for, He had to give them a king whom they would like, and Saul fit the bill better than anyone else. Saul did possess the administrative abilities to organize a central government, and he also had the potential to be a successful king from a spiritual standpoint; Yahweh did not reject him until he chose to rebel (15:11).

Rather than sending Samuel to Saul’s home to anoint him publicly, Yahweh brought Saul to Samuel for a private anointing prior to his public investiture with the kingship. It began with what seemed like an entirely ordinary, happenstance event—the donkeys of Saul’s father ran off, and Saul went to look for them with a servant (9:1-4). As they were about to return home after three days (9:20) of fruitless searching, Saul’s servant suggested that they go to Samuel to inquire about the donkeys, since they were passing by Samuel’s city (evidently Ramah; 9:5-10). Saul’s timing was providentially perfect—he arrived just in time to meet Samuel in the road, as the prophet was going up to the high place to eat a sacrifice with the people (9:11-14). Samuel had been prepared by God for the encounter, and he told Saul that the donkeys had been found and then pronounced an unexpected blessing on him, though without telling him directly that he would be king of Israel (9:15-21). Samuel then placed Saul in the seat of honor before the people at the feast (9:22-24). After spending the night with Samuel, Samuel took Saul aside in order to anoint him (9:25-27). After anointing Saul as king, Samuel gave him several signs that would confirm the reality of the anointing (10:1-8). As Saul went on his way, all the signs came to pass (10:9-13). The most important of the signs was that the Spirit of God came upon Saul and manifested His presence in Saul by causing him to prophesy, for Israel’s king needed to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit in order to have the wisdom to govern the people properly (cf. Num 11:16-30). When Saul returned home, he kept Samuel’s anointing of him a secret (10:14-16); he appears to have had cold feet regarding the kingship, though once installed he would not tolerate any potential rival.

It was now time for the public installation of Saul as king, and Samuel called the people to a great assembly in Mizpah for this purpose (10:17). Yahweh’s choice of Saul was not yet publicly known, and Samuel cast lots to reveal God’s choice to the people (10:18-21). Saul, who knew that he would be chosen, had hidden himself in an attempt to avoid the job, and Yahweh had to reveal where he was hiding (10:22). When he was officially presented before the assembly, however, his physical stature immediately endeared him to the people, who hailed him as their king (10:23-24). The kingdom was then formally instituted in a sort of constitution, and the people were dismissed (10:25). Some upright and talented men gathered around Saul to be at his service when he returned to his home in Gibeah (10:26), while some baser men despised and mocked Saul (10:27), evidently for his initial bashfulness—they thought it would take a brasher man to fight successfully with the nation’s enemies.

Reign of Saul – 1 Samuel 11:1–31:13

An account of the reign of Israel’s first human king occupies some twenty chapters of Samuel–Kings, though in the rest of Scripture he is largely ignored. Outside of 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles, Saul the son of Kish is only mentioned twice in the Bible, in Isaiah 10:29 and Acts 13:21. Even in the main narrative of his reign (1 Sam 11–31), only the first five chapters are primarily about Saul; the remainder are primarily about the anticipated replacement of Saul by David. The reason for the lack of interest in the man who first united the Israelite nation and organized a central government is that Saul was a spiritual failure; consequently, his posterity was disallowed from the kingship, and he would not be the progenitor of the Messiah. Saul was a one-man dynasty, and the latter part of his reign was overshadowed by the rise of his successor, David.
Dr. Anderson’s Interpretive Guide to Old Testament Wisdom and Song

Steven D. Anderson
Dr. Anderson’s Interpretive Guide to Old Testament Wisdom and Song (Job–Song of Songs)

by Steven D. Anderson
Ph.D., Dallas Theological Seminary

Dr. Anderson’s Interpretive Guide to the Bible
Volume 3

July 2015 edition

Copyright © 2015 by Steven David Anderson. All rights reserved. Not to be reproduced without the explicit written consent of the author.

Cover photograph (taken by the author): cleft of a rock in Petra

Published by Steven D. Anderson at Payhip

Author’s webpage: http://Bible.TruthOnly.com
Author’s blog: http://TruthOnlyBible.com

Citation for The Chicago Manual of Style (Turabian) and The SBL Handbook of Style:

Payhip Edition License Notes

This e-book is licensed for your personal use only, and you may find your email address stamped on the upper left of each page for security purposes. This e-book may not be resold. This e-book may not be given away to other people (other than a spouse or minor children). If you would like to share this book with another person, please purchase an additional copy for each recipient. If you are reading this book and did not purchase it, or it was not purchased for your use only, then please go to https://payhip.com/truthonlybible and purchase your own copy. Thank you for respecting copyright law and the hard work of this author.
# Table of Contents

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STYLIST NOTES</td>
<td>VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotations of the Bible</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Note on the Divine Name</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Abbreviations</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations of the Books of the Bible</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO JOB</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUTHOR</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE, SETTING, AND OCCASION OF WRITING</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PURPOSE AND MESSAGE</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTLINE OF JOB</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary Outline</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanded Outline</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARGUMENT OF JOB</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Setting and Events, 1:1–2:13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speeches of Job and His Friends, 3:1–31:40</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elihu’s Speech, 32:1–37:24</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God’s Speeches, 38:1–41:34</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job’s Repentance and Restoration, 42:1-17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR JOB</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO THE PSALMS</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUTHORSHIP</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascriptions of the Psalms in the MT</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors of the Psalms</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARRANGEMENT AND CLASSIFICATION OF THE PSALMS</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Order of the Psalms</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classifying the Psalms</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE CONCEPT OF HEBREW POETRY</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of Hebrew “Poetry”</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Idea of Hebrew Poetry</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE MUSIC OF ANCIENT ISRAEL</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERVIEW OF THE PSALMS</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book I – Psalms 1–41 – Psalms of David (Personal Emphasis)</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book II – Psalms 42–72 – Psalms for the Chief Musician</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book III – Psalms 73–89 – Psalms by the Temple Singers</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book IV – Psalms 90–106 – Psalms of God’s Care for Israel</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book V – Psalms 107–150 – Psalms for Special Liturgical Use</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR THE PSALMS</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO PROVERBS</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUTHOR</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PURPOSE AND MESSAGE</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT AND TRANSLATION OF PROVERBS</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTLINE OF PROVERBS</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

iii
Summary Outline .......................................................................................................................... 102
Expanded Outline .......................................................................................................................... 102
STRUCTURE AND ARGUMENT OF PROVERBS ........................................................................... 105
Preface, 1:1-7 ................................................................................................................................... 105
Address to the Son 1:8-9:18 ........................................................................................................... 105
Proverbs of Solomon, 10:1-24:34 ................................................................................................... 106
Solomonic Proverbs Added by Hezekiah’s Men, 25:1-29:27 ....................................................... 107
Words of Agur and Lemuel, 30:1-31:31 ......................................................................................... 107
BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR PROVERBS .................................................................................................. 109

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO ECCLESIASTES ............................................................................. 111
AUTHOR ....................................................................................................................................... 111
DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING ........................................................................................... 112
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ............................................................................................................ 112
OUTLINE OF ECCLESIASTES ....................................................................................................... 112
ARGUMENT OF ECCLESIASTES .................................................................................................. 113
The Introductory Affirmation, 1:1-11 ............................................................................................ 114
Solomon’s Search for Meaning in Life and Its Failure, 1:12-2:26 ............................................... 114
God’s Sovereign Design in the Human Experience, 3:1-22 ....................................................... 114
Exhortation to Enjoy the Here and Now, 4:1-5:20 .................................................................... 115
The Inscrutability of Life, 6:1-8:15 ............................................................................................... 115
Summary of the Search for the Ultimate Explanation of the Human Experience, 8:16-9:10 ... 116
Instruction Based on Solomon’s Investigation of Life, 9:11-12:8 ............................................... 116
Epilogue, 12:9-14 ......................................................................................................................... 116
BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR ECCLESIASTES ......................................................................................... 117

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO SONG OF SONGS ........................................................................ 119
AUTHOR ....................................................................................................................................... 120
DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING ........................................................................................... 120
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ............................................................................................................ 120
OUTLINE AND ARGUMENT OF SONG OF SONGS ................................................................... 121
BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR SONG OF SONGS ...................................................................................... 124
Interpretive Guide to Job

As a narrative record, Job is a historical book, and yet it is even more so a book of wisdom, since the point of the book is to teach practical theology, rather than to trace the development of history. For this reason, the body of the book consists of a record of speeches. The book of Job specifically addresses the issue of how to understand the suffering of righteous people in view of who God is. Job is the ideal paradigm of the innocent sufferer: he was the most righteous man in the entire world, perfect and blameless, yet suddenly everything he had was destroyed, including his wealth, his children, and, finally, his health, comfort, respectability, and friends. He seemed to have done nothing to deserve such a complete reversal of fortunes, and, when pressed, he wrongly vented his frustration on God. Job’s suffering probably lasted no more than a few months, and the rest of his long life was quite pleasant and blessed—yet his suffering was so intense that he was brought in that short time almost as low as a man can go.

The book of Job is tremendously relevant, because undeserved suffering is endemic to the human experience. Virtually all Christians struggle to understand and endure the trials they face. We all tend to think when we suffer that we do not deserve it, and we have trouble figuring out why God will not answer our prayers to relieve our pain. Yet, oddly enough, most pastors would not even consider preaching through the entire book of Job—it is too long for them, and, frankly, they think the speeches are boring. They think it better to feed their flock the enervating pabulum of modern psychology and counseling theory. In reality, however, we need a book as long as Job in order to answer in detail the complex issues posed by undeserved suffering. Further, we need to hear God’s answer to suffering, not man’s answer. Far from being boring, the book of Job thoroughly addresses the questions we struggle with when we suffer. It does, however, take a considerable amount of study and reflection to really dig into the book and apprehend its wisdom.

Pastors need to prepare their people for suffering, because the Christian life is characterized by suffering. If we train people to think that God will cause things to go smoothly for us when we follow His will—which is what we naturally think we deserve anyway—then when things go awry, we start to question God’s goodness and sovereignty. Alternatively, we think, “I must be doing something wrong. God would not let this happen to me if I was not.” We need to think, “Suffering is a blessing which God gives to His own, just as prosperity is a blessing.” Job 34:33 teaches that we have no right to refuse what God has given us (cf. 2:10). God knows what is best, and we cannot fully understand His ways. We must simply trust Him.

The book of Job is normally studied for the lessons it teaches about suffering, and rightly so. But this book is less a struggle to understand suffering than it is a struggle to understand God. The resolution only comes when Job finally sees who God is, which resolves all of his questions about suffering. Job repented of his complaint against God when He saw who God is, though he still lacked an explanation for his suffering, and still lay destitute and afflicted. We, too, should read this book with a view to seeing who God is, for our questions about suffering are ultimately questions about God, and they can only be resolved by coming to a proper understanding of God (cf. James 5:11).

Author

The author of this book was probably Elihu. Only someone who had heard the speeches of chs. 3–41 could have written them down, which narrows the possible authors to Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Elihu (postulating an unnamed bystander is too speculative). Of these possible authors, Elihu would have
been in the best position to write the work, since Job did not write the account of his death (42:16-17), without which the book would not have a fitting conclusion. Elihu was younger than Job and his friends (so 32:4-10), and therefore could have outlived Job. Whoever recorded the speeches obviously had a superb memory—as demonstrated by Elihu’s frequent quotations of Job in his own speeches—and was supernaturally given perfect recollection by the Holy Spirit. He was also given by direct revelation the information concerning God’s dialogues with Satan in heaven. The writer must have given the book to one of the Hebrew patriarchs, probably Abraham (see below under “Date”). Abraham may well have known Job when Job was in his later years, and could have confirmed the general outline of events from a variety of sources. This book would then have been passed on to the elders of Israel through Isaac and Jacob. It is sometimes suggested that some changes were made to update the language of the book at some point—perhaps by Moses in the period between the Exodus (1446 B.C.) and the entrance into Canaan (1406 B.C.). However, the language of Job is unmistakably archaic, and the Canaanite language probably did not change so much from the time of Abraham to the time of Moses that a linguistic update would be required. There is no direct evidence for linguistic updating in the book.

The book of Job was written in Hebrew, which was the language of Canaan and many of the surrounding nations, such as Edom, Moab, and Ammon. However, there are some differences between the Hebrew of Job and the standard Classical Hebrew of the rest of the OT. The text of Job is difficult to read in Hebrew—the words and their usages are rare, and much of the grammar and syntax is irregular. This is probably due, in part, to the great age of the text, which therefore represents an unmodified earlier form of the language.

One peculiarity of the language of this book is the terminology it uses for God. The word אֵל, a relatively uncommon word for God in most books of the OT, occurs some fifty-five times in Job, and all of these are in the speeches. The 236 uses of אֵל in the singular in the OT occur almost exclusively in the archaic language of Job and of the Pentateuch, and in the imitatively archaic language of the Psalter and Isaiah. Likewise, forty-one of the fifty-eight OT occurrences of אֵל in Job, and all of these are in the speeches. Additionally, the book of Job contains thirty-one of the forty-eight OT occurrences of the term שַׁדַּי (Almighty), all of which are found in the speeches. On the other hand, אֱלֹהִים, the standard word for God in the other OT books, only occurs seventeen times in Job. Eleven of these occurrences are in the narrative of chs. 1–2, which was probably written 140 years after the speeches were uttered (i.e., after Job’s death). Probably for the same reason, there is only one occurrence of the tetragrammaton (יהוה) in the main group of speeches, in 12:9, though this name occurs more regularly in the introduction (chs. 1–2) and conclusion (chs. 38–42). Finally, the exceedingly common term אָדוֹן is used only twice in Job, and only once of God (with a v. l.).

Elihu was, in all probability, not a descendent of Abraham, and therefore was the only Gentile author of OT Scripture.

---

1 The claim that Hebrew writing did not exist at this early period is based on an evolutionary view of history, and cannot be proved. It is not uncommon that a single archaeological find will overturn masses of scholarly dogma.

2 The suggestion that Abraham wrote the book himself, with the speeches dictated to him by Elihu, is not likely, since this would make Abraham nothing more than Elihu’s scribe. Surely there were professional scribes available for the task, were Elihu not indeed able to write for himself.

3 This does not count the use of אֵלִים in 41:25[17].

4 Incidentally, the non-use of אֱלֹהִים and אֵלִים in the speeches, and the use of the other terms, shows that the speeches were not merely made up by the author, or even reconstructed in accordance with his recollections, but were recorded with precise historical accuracy.
Date, Setting, and Occasion of Writing

The book of Job is not dated by any specific chronological markers, but enough is said to determine that it was written at about the time of Abraham, i.e., around 2200–2100 B.C., about 300 years after the flood. It is clear from the descriptions of behemoth and leviathan in chs. 40–41 that large dinosaurs were still fairly common in Job’s day—a characteristic of the early postdiluvian period. The existence of distinct nations in the book of Job shows that Job lived at least after the division of the nations at Babel. Job’s wealth, like that of the patriarchs, was primarily measured by livestock rather than precious metals (1:3; 42:12). Job’s lifespan is also like that of the patriarchs—he already has ten adult children when the story begins, then lives 140 years afterward. Job definitely did not live after the giving of the Law at Sinai, since he acted as a priest on behalf of his family (1:5), and kept camels (1:17), which were unclean under the Law (Lev 11:4). Since at the start of his troubles Job was called the most righteous man on earth (1:8; 2:3), it is likely that the earlier period of Job’s life occurred when Abraham was a young man, or even before Abraham was born. In any case, it is still interesting that God chose Abraham rather than Job as the progenitor of the Messiah’s people. Job obviously had contact with one or more of the Israelite patriarchs, or else this story would not have been transmitted as part of the Hebrew Scriptures. Probably Abraham came to Canaan toward the end of Job’s life, though he may have already heard of his story.

It would appear that Job not only lived at about the time of Abraham (or slightly earlier), but also in about the same area as Abraham, i.e., near the land of Canaan. Job is said to be one of “the sons of the east” (1:3), a term which is almost always applied in the Bible to the peoples who lived in the semiarid land east and southeast of Canaan. That Job lived near Canaan is confirmed by the reference to the flood of the Jordan River in 40:23. Had Job lived near Egypt, the Nile flood would have been referenced, while the Tigris or Euphrates would have been referenced had he lived near Mesopotamia. The “jungle of the Jordan” also seems like a more suitable biome for giant dinosaurs after the flood than the plains of Mesopotamia or Egypt. According to 6:16, Job lived in a climate where he saw snow and ice, which occurs in the highlands east of the Jordan, but not in Egypt or Babylonia.

The other places and peoples mentioned in the book of Job appear to confirm the location of Job east/southeast of Canaan. Job is said to have lived in the land of Uz (1:1), which must have been named after a son of Aram (Gen 10:23). Lamentations 4:21 specifically identifies its location as including the territory of Edom. The oldest of Job’s friends, Eliphaz, is called “the Temanite,” meaning that he lived in or near Teman. The word תימן means “south” (like נגב, but was also a standard reference for a region in what became Edomite territory. Tema (תמנ), an oasis in northern Saudi Arabia where the Neo-Babylonian monarch Nabonidus famously spent ten years, is mentioned in 6:19. The same verse mentions Sheba (שבע), which in Hebrew is exactly the same term as “Sabeans” (סבעים) in 1:15—the people which made a raid on Job’s livestock. Sheba was a people and a kingdom in southern Arabia which evidently also maintained trading colonies in northern Arabia. Another group which made a raid on Job’s livestock was the Chaldeans (1:17); they were an Aramaic-speaking tribe located in Babylonia later in biblical history, but were nomadic in earlier periods. Job’s friend Bildad is called “the Shuhite” (שׁוּחִי), i.e., someone from the city/region/tribe of Shuah (שׁוּח). The only “Shuah” named in the Bible is a son of Abraham by Keturah (Gen 25:2), which confirms the antiquity of the name but does not reveal anything about the Shuah with which Bildad was associated. Job’s friend Zophar is called “the Naamathite” (นามathi), i.e., someone from the city/region/tribe of Naamah (นามא), an unknown location. Elihu, as the writer of the book, gives the most complete information about himself: “the son of Barachel the Buzite, of

5 It is so used in Judg 6:3, 33; 7:12; 8:10; 1 Kgs 4:30; Isa 11:14; Jer 49:28; Ezek 25:4, 10. The lone exception is Gen 29:1, where it is used to refer to Paddan-aram.
the family of Ram.” Of these three identifiers, the most helpful one is “the Buzite,” meaning that Elihu was from a location called “Buz.” Buz is associated in Jer 25:23 with the Arab desert tribes of Dedan and Tema. The topaz of Cush is noted in 28:19; it certainly was traded in and around Canaan, but would not have been as well known in the more distant Mesopotamia. Finally, the gold of Ophir is noted in 22:24 and 28:16. The location of Ophir is disputed, though Solomon brought gold from Ophir through the port of Ezion-geber in Edom (2 Chr 8:17-18).

In summary, all of the geographical indicators given in the book of Job point to a geographical setting east/southeast of the land of Canaan, probably in what was later known as the land of Edom. The chronological indicators in the book of Job point to the events of the body of the book occurring before the call of Abraham, but with Job’s death occurring after Abraham’s arrival in Canaan. If Job lived about 225 years, he may have been born around 2275 (243 years after the Flood), the main events of the book may have occurred around 2200 (44 years before the birth of Abraham), and Job may have died around 2050 (shortly after the birth of Isaac in 2066). Elihu must have written the book around 2050, possibly in conjunction with Abraham. This easily makes Job the oldest book in the canon, predating the Pentateuch by about 650 years. There is no more appropriate subject for the earliest book in the canon than an investigation into the nature of God, and how man is to relate to his Creator.

Purpose and Message

The purpose of the book of Job is to provide a theological framework for understanding the undeserved suffering of righteous people in view of God’s sovereignty and moral perfection. The message of the book of Job is that God, and God alone, is competent to rule the world. Man is in no position to question God’s wisdom or to demand that God give an account of Himself. Since man is not in a position of omniscience, he often will not understand why God does what He does, but should nevertheless trust that His governance of the universe and His treatment of individuals is just and good, and will turn out for the good of the righteous in the end.

Outline of Job

Summary Outline

I. Initial Setting and Events 1:1–2:13
II. Speeches of Job and His Friends 3:1–31:40
III. Elihu’s Speech 32:1–37:24
IV. God’s Speeches 38:1–41:34
V. Job’s Repentance and Restoration 42:1-17

---

6 The name “Barachel” does not appear elsewhere in Scripture, and so is not helpful as an identifier. The suggestion that Elihu was an Israelite from the family of Ram the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah is impossible. Ram is never given as a family name elsewhere on the Old Testament, and it seems that the events of the book of Job occurred well before Ram’s birth. There are at least two other people named Ram in the Old Testament, so it was probably a fairly common Semitic name.

7 In its themes and language, Job can justly be compared to Isaiah 40–48, another theodicy.
Expanded Outline

I. Initial Setting and Events 1:1–2:13
   A. Job’s initial situation 1:1-5
   B. The first round of affliction 1:6-22
      1. God’s first challenge to Satan 1:6-12
      2. The destruction of Job’s possessions 1:13-19
      3. Job’s response 1:20-22
   C. The second round of affliction 2:1-13
      1. God’s second challenge to Satan 2:1-6
      2. Job smitten 2:7-10
      3. The visit of Job’s friends 2:11-13

II. Speeches of Job and His Friends 3:1–31:40
   A. Job’s first speech 3:1-26
      1. The wish not to have been born 3:1-19
      2. The prayer for death 3:20-26
   B. Eliphaz’s first speech 4:1–5:27
      1. Eliphaz’s accusation 4:1-11
      2. Eliphaz’s dream 4:12-21
      3. The insecurity of the wicked 5:1-7
      4. Call to repent 5:8-16
      5. The restoration to follow repentance 5:17-26
      6. Conclusion 5:27
   C. Job’s second speech 6:1–7:21
      1. Job’s wretchedness 6:1-7
      2. Job’s request for death 6:8-13
      3. Job’s complaint about his friends’ treachery 6:14-23
      4. Job’s reproof of his friends’ false accusation 6:24-30
      5. Job’s complaint regarding the wearisomeness and transitoriness of his life 7:1-10
      6. Job remonstrates with God 7:11-21
   D. Bildad’s first speech 8:1-22
      1. Bildad’s affirmation of prosperity theology and its application to Job 8:1-7
      2. Appeal to history 8:8-10
      3. The insecurity of the wicked 8:11-19
      4. Job’s hope of restoration 8:20-22
   E. Job’s third speech 9:1–10:22
      1. Job’s helplessness before God 9:1-12
      2. The accusation of divine injustice 9:13-24
      3. The unprofitability of righteousness claimed 9:25-35
      4. The charge of wrongdoing 10:1-7
      5. Job’s protest of God’s treatment of him 10:8-17
      6. The request for a peaceful end 10:18-22
   F. Zophar’s first speech 11:1-20
      1. Zophar’s contradiction of Job 11:1-6
      2. God’s knowledge of Job’s hypocrisy 11:7-12
      3. Counsel to repent in order to be restored 11:13-20
   G. Job’s fourth speech 12:1–14:22
      1. Job’s argument against his friends 12:1–13:2
         a. Job’s contradiction of his friends 12:1-6
         b. The universal recognition of the falsity of his friends’ claim 12:7-12
         c. God as the sole source of wisdom 12:13-25
Job

2. Job’s argument against God 13:3-28
   a. Job’s rejection of his friends’ judgment 13:3-12
   b. Job’s assertion of his righteousness 13:13-19
   c. Job’s demand that God cease afflicting him 13:20-28
3. Job’s complaint to God 14:1-22
   a. Job’s plea from man’s frailty 14:1-6
   b. Job’s plea from man’s mortality 14:7-12
   c. Job’s plea for a respite from life 14:13-17
   d. Job’s complaint over man’s lot 14:18-22
H. Eliphaz’s second speech 15:1-35
   1. Eliphaz’s condemnation of Job’s speech 15:1-6
   2. Eliphaz’s rebuke of Job’s presumptuousness 15:7-16
   3. The speedy destruction of the wicked 15:17-35
I. Job’s fifth speech 16:1–17:16
   1. Job’s rebuke of his friends 16:1-5
   2. Job’s complaint over God’s treatment of him 16:6-17
   3. The call for witnesses to the injustice of Job’s death 16:18-22
   4. The call for a heavenly Witness against Job’s friends 17:1-5
   5. Job’s accusation against his friends 17:6-16
J. Bildad’s second speech 18:1-21
   1. Bildad’s rebuke of Job’s speeches 18:1-4
   2. The misfortunes of the wicked man 18:5-21
K. Job’s sixth speech 19:1-29
   1. Job’s rebuke of his friends’ harshness 19:1-6
   2. Job’s complaint of divine injustice 19:7-12
   4. Job’s anticipation of vindication 19:23-29
L. Zophar’s second speech 20:1-29
   1. The swift end of the wicked 20:1-11
   2. The total bereavement of the wicked 20:12-19
   3. The portion of the wicked man 20:20-29
M. Job’s seventh speech 21:1-34
   1. The appeal to keep silent 21:1-6
   2. The prosperity of the wicked 21:7-16
   3. The end of the wicked 21:17-26
   4. The end of all men 21:27-34
N. Eliphaz’s third speech 22:1-30
   1. Eliphaz’s accusations against Job 22:1-11
   2. God’s knowledge of Job’s sins 22:12-20
   3. Exhortation to repentance for restoration 22:21-30
O. Job’s eighth speech 23:1–24:25
   1. Job’s wish for access to God 23:1-9
   2. Job’s integrity in his trials 23:10-17
   3. God’s indifference to oppression 24:1-12
   4. The fate of the rebel 24:13-21
   5. The fate of the righteous 24:22-25
P. Bildad’s third speech 25:1-6
Q. Job’s ninth speech 26:1–31:40
   1. Introduction 26:1-14
      a. Job’s rebuke of Bildad 26:1-4
b. God’s power and majesty affirmed 26:5-14

   a. Job’s knowledge of God’s dealings with the wicked 27:1-23
      i. Job’s asseveration of his righteousness and prayer for vengeance 27:1-12
      ii. The vanity of the hope of the godless 27:13-23
   b. Job’s wisdom parable 28:1-28
      i. Man’s skill in bringing treasure out of earth’s depths 28:1-11
      ii. Wisdom more difficult to obtain 28:12-22
      iii. Wisdom obtainable only from God 28:23-28

3. Job’s reflection on his personal state 29:1–31:40
   a. Job’s recollection of the happiness of his former state 29:1-25
   b. Job bemoans his present affliction 30:1-31
      i. Job’s derision from society’s dregs 30:1-15
      ii. Job’s present affliction under the hand of God 30:16-23
      iii. Job bewails the injustice and wretchedness of his condition 30:24-31
   c. Job’s asseveration of his integrity 31:1-40
      i. What Job believes he deserves from God 31:1-4
      ii. Job’s truthful character 31:5-8
      iii. Job’s faithfulness to his wife 31:9-12
      iv. Job’s justice to his workers 31:13-15
      v. Job’s assistance to vulnerable people 31:16-23
      vi. Job’s rejection of idolatry 31:24-28
      vii. Job’s purity of heart 31:29-36
      viii. Job’s fair business practices 31:37-40
      ix. Job rests his case 31:40b

3. Elihu’s Speech 32:1–37:24
   A. Introductory 32:1-22
      1. Elihu provoked to wrath 32:1-5
      2. Elihu’s reason for waiting 32:6-10
      3. Elihu’s rebuke of Job’s friends 32:11-14
      4. Elihu’s thoughts to himself 32:15-22
   B. Elihu’s defense of God’s dealings with man 33:1-33
      1. Elihu’s appeal to Job 33:1-7
      2. Elihu’s identification of Job’s error 33:8-12
      3. God’s communication through visions 33:13-18
      4. God’s communication through chastisement 33:19-22
      5. God’s communication through intermediaries 33:23-28
      6. Elihu’s challenge to Job 33:29-33
   C. Elihu’s vindication of God’s justice 34:1-37
      1. Elihu’s rebuke of Job’s claim of divine injustice 34:1-9
      2. The impossibility of the Creator and Sustainer of man to sin 34:10-15
      3. The impossibility of the Governor of the world to sin 34:16-20
      4. Elihu’s defense of God’s treatment of the wicked 34:21-30
      5. Elihu’s rebuke of Job’s rebellion against God’s sovereignty 34:31-37
   D. Elihu’s defense of God’s sovereignty 35:1-16
      1. God’s judicial passivity 35:1-8
      2. God’s rejection of impious prayers 35:9-16
   E. Elihu’s defense of God’s use of affliction 36:1-23
      1. God’s purposes in bringing affliction 36:1-16
      2. Call to Job to accept his affliction 36:17-23
   F. Call to humble oneself before the sovereign God 36:24–37:24
IV. God’s Speeches 38:1–41:34
A. God’s first speech 38:1–40:2
   1. Introduction 38:1-3
   2. God’s sovereignty over and knowledge of non-living things 38:1-38
      a. God’s creation of the earth 38:4-7
      b. God’s creation and governance of the sea 38:8-11
      c. God’s creation and governance of the light 38:12-15
      d. God’s knowledge of the unsearchable 38:16-18
      e. God’s knowledge of natural forces 38:19-24
      f. God’s knowledge and governance of precipitation 38:25-30
      g. God’s knowledge and governance of the celestial world 38:31-33
      h. God’s governance of storms 38:34-38
   3. God’s sovereignty over and knowledge of living things 38:39–39:30
      a. God’s provision of prey for young lions and ravens—helpless animals 38:39-41
      b. God’s knowledge of the wild goats—distant animals 39:1-4
      c. God’s sovereignty over the wild ass and the wild ox—untamable animals 39:5-12
      d. God’s creation of the ostrich—a stupid but strong animal 39:13-18
      e. God’s creation of the horse—a steely animal 39:19-25
      f. God’s creation of the hawk and the eagle—high flying animals 39:26-30
B. Job’s first response 40:3-5
C. God’s second speech 40:6–41:34
   1. Renewal of God’s challenge to Job 40:6-14
   2. God’s creation of behemoth—the strongest animal 40:15-24
   3. God’s creation of leviathan—the fiercest animal 41:1-34
      a. God’s power demonstrated by leviathan’s power 41:1-11
      b. Description of leviathan 41:12-34

V. Job’s Repentance and Restoration 42:1-17
A. Job’s repentance 42:1-6
B. The repentance of Job’s friends 42:7-9
C. Job’s prosperity restored 42:10-17

Argument of Job

The overall structure of the book of Job is fairly straightforward: the initial setting and events (chs. 1-2), the speeches of Job and his friends (chs. 3–31), Elihu’s speech (chs. 32–37), God’s speeches (chs. 38–41), and Job’s repentance and restoration (ch. 42). Between three chapters of narrative are thirty-nine chapters of dialogues, with limited narrative in the dialogues. The focus of the book is thus obviously on the dialogues, in which the nature of God and His dealings with man are discussed. Before going through the book paragraph by paragraph, an overview of the argument will be presented.

Job and his friends began with a wrong theology, a theology which said that personal righteousness must result in physical prosperity, because a just and sovereign God will give people what they deserve. When Job suddenly had an experience that contradicted his theology, he began to question God. He knows that he is righteous, yet suffering immensely, and he also suddenly becomes aware of the prosperity of the unrighteous about him. Job complains that this is not fair—he is not getting what he
deserves, and they are not getting what they deserve. There is simply no good cause, in his mind, for what has happened to him. If God is just and sovereign, how can He allow this? Job senses that God will do what is right and vindicate him in the end, but he thinks that God’s treatment of him is simply unjustifiable. Job does not know how to revise his theology or make sense of it all. He seems to alternate in his speeches between saying “God is unjust for doing this to me,” and “I will trust in God until I die, and rely on him for my help.” But he finds that the two attitudes cannot produce a coherent theology. Job finally settles on the assertion that he is more righteous than God; and although he does not renounce his faith in God or his loyalty to God, he does demand a hearing with God so he can present his case. Readers tend to sympathize with Job, who is far more undeserving of suffering than they are and has suffered as much as he can without dying—yet they feel that somewhere he has gone wrong in his attempt to understand his ordeal.

Job’s three friends exemplify the common thinking, which equates righteousness with physical blessing and unrighteousness with physical affliction and does not recognize exceptions. The reader knows this thinking to be wrong, at least in its application to Job, because of the introduction which affirms Job’s righteousness and explains that Job’s suffering was not a result of his sin. As Job’s friends continually accuse him of wrongdoing—without proof—and implore him to repent in order to be healed, the reader is supposed to keep thinking, “That is exactly what I would have said, but it is wrong.” If there was ever a clear-cut case where a man’s suffering was undoubtedly coming from God as direct divine chastisement, it would seem to have been Job’s. When Job loses everything at once—including by fire falling from heaven and consuming his sheep—it is clearly neither a coincidence nor a natural occurrence. When he is then smitten with the most miserable type of illness imaginable, it seems unmistakable that God is smiting him. In a sense it was true that God was smiting Job (so 2:3), though He was not doing so directly—He had allowed Satan to do so. What was not true was the proposition that the only reason a righteous and just God could smite people is in retribution for their sin. In fact, at a later point in history God would give His own Son over to the most cruel and undeserved death ever suffered, yet without violating His perfect justice—and Jesus accepted His suffering because it was part of God’s plan.

After Job and his three friends conclude their speeches in bitter disagreement, two new participants are introduced—Elihu and God. Elihu, a young bystander, represents the viewpoint of a man with the right theology, and the right application of theology to Job’s experience. As Elihu argues God’s case, Job has no response because he realizes Elihu is right. Finally, God Himself appears to pick up the argument where Elihu left it off. When God at last speaks, He does not tell Job why He did what He did; He only asks a series of questions to prove His might and wisdom. The introduction tells the reader what prompted Job’s trials, but Job does not need to know the reason to reach a resolution. The lesson for us is that we do not need to know all the reasons why things happen, either; we can rest confidently in the wisdom of God as He rules the universe. Further, it is abundantly clear that both Job and all readers of his book are better off for his trials, that God did in fact have a good reason to allow Job’s suffering, and that He did actually treat Job with extreme graciousness in the end (cf. James 5:11).

---

8 The resolution of the book of Job, like the resolution of the book of Habakkuk, is totally unlike any other theodicy of the ancient Near East. In “The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer” (in CoS 1:483-95), which has disingenuously been compared to Job, the suppliant only considers Marduk worthy to be praised because he has healed the sufferer. Job concludes that Yahweh is worthy to be praised because He is inherently worthy to be praised, and he comes to this conclusion before he is healed. Many of the biblical laments are composed prior to restoration, and praise Yahweh in anticipation of restoration. They are designed to help people who pray who have not yet reached a resolution. The inherent worthiness of Yahweh is affirmed simply by the fact that one comes to Him with his lament. There are also other significant differences between Mesopotamian “theodicies” and biblical ones: there is no concept in Mesopotamia of a personal relationship between the gods and the people, and so no resolution through meeting the person of the gods; there is no concept of the gods always doing what is right and wise and logical; and the gods fight with each other for control of the world, with none having total sovereignty.
Initial Setting and Events, 1:1–2:13

The first two chapters of Job give the historical background for the theological argumentation which comprises the bulk of the book.

Job’s initial situation, 1:1-5. The book of Job opens with a description of Job’s initial situation, before his troubles began. He was perfect and upright, and he had the greatest wealth of anyone in his region. Detailed information is given about his children to explain what happens to them next.

The first round of affliction, 1:6-22. The first round of Job’s affliction is described in 1:6-22. In this episode, Job loses everything but his health (and his unhelpful wife), yet takes it in stride. The affliction is initiated by God, who brags about Job to Satan (1:6-8). After Satan falsely accuses Job, God allows Satan to test Job by afflicting him, within divinely ordained limits which Satan is bound to keep (1:9-12). Satan proceeds to destroy all of Job’s possessions and to kill all of his servants and children, except for four servants who escaped alone to bring Job the bad news (1:13-19). Job’s incredible response was exactly the opposite of what Satan had confidently predicted—Satan claimed that Job only blessed God because God blessed him, yet when God’s blessing was taken away, Job blessed God anyway (1:20-22). Job did not worship God because of what God gave him, but because of who God is. Job also proved that even though he had great riches, his contentment never did stem from his possessions. Satan was clearly the loser in this battle.

The second round of affliction, 2:1-13. Chapter 2 tells the story of Job’s second round of affliction. It begins with another boast by God to Satan concerning Job, and another false accusation by Satan which leads to God permitting Satan to afflict Job’s person (2:1-6). The next paragraph describes the result: Satan smote Job with the most agonizing non-fatal chronic condition imaginable, yet when his wife speaks as Satan’s mouthpiece to move Job to renounce his allegiance to God, he refuses to do so (2:7-10). When Job’s three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, come to Job to comfort him, they sit with him for seven days and nights to go through his trial with him (2:11-13). The scene is now set for the speeches to begin.

Speeches of Job and His Friends, 3:1–31:40

The largest section of the book of Job, chs. 3–31, records the speeches of Job and his three friends. One must take care when quoting verses from these speeches, for false opinions are often expressed in them. However, all four of these men were believers, and they also say much that is true. Job, in particular, says much truth in his speeches. Even though Job’s attitude is wrong, the fact that he was more righteous than his friends means that he says more things that are right and wise and memorable than they. The book of Job as a whole teaches truth rather than error, though it accomplishes this aim, in part, by quoting common but erroneous opinions. A key to determining to the truth content of statements in the speeches, as well as to interpreting the book as a whole, is to follow the argument of each speaker. The argument being made will, in turn, help one determine the accuracy of the statements made.

---

9 Liberal commentators, who hold to prosperity theology in rejection of the message of the book, cannot understand the justice in God’s challenge to Satan. In reality, it is for some reason necessary for God to brag about believers in response to Satan’s accusations, and to prove to Satan that his charges are false. In addition, God knew that in the end Satan’s challenge would be good for Job and good for every believer who heard Job’s story. Job’s testing revealed hidden character flaws that he otherwise would never have realized existed, and Job became a better person by dealing with them.
Job’s first speech, 3:1-26. After seven days of sitting quietly with his friends, Job finally breaks the silence with a bitter curse against the day of his own birth (3:1-19). After wishing that he had never been born, Job prays for a speedy death to terminate the life which he so loathes (3:20-26).

Eliphaz’s first speech, 4:1–5:27. Eliphaz was apparently the eldest and best respected of Job’s friends, so he spoke first, and spoke the most. He clearly is a believer, and some of what he says is true—Job 5:13 is quoted by Paul in 1 Cor 3:19—but the main thrust of what he says is theologically erroneous (so 42:7). In 4:1-11, Eliphaz states the basic thesis for which he and his three friends will proceed to argue in the remainder of the dialogue: righteousness always brings blessing, and wickedness always brings trouble; therefore, Job’s trouble is a result of sins that he has committed in secret. God is trying to get Job’s attention in order to move him to repentance. Eliphaz begins his speech ominously, by rebuking Job for his anticipated negative reaction to it (4:2)—a sure indication of misguided counsel. In 4:12-21, Eliphaz presents a dream that he had as divine confirmation of his accusation. However, since this dream contains suspect theology, and Eliphaz only saw a vague form, this may have been nothing more than a normal, naturally occurring dream, not a supernatural revelation. Regardless, it shows the danger of putting one’s faith in visions instead of in God’s Word (or publicly revealed truth, at that early point in history).

After presenting his thesis and its “proof,” Eliphaz warns Job of the insecurity and ultimate destruction which befalls the unrepentant (5:1-7), and calls upon him to repent (5:8-16). Eliphaz then describes the restoration of prosperity which will follow Job’s repentance (5:17-26), and affirms that this is the analysis and course of action that the three friends have agreed is the right one (5:27); Eliphaz has represented the opinion of the entire group. Eliphaz ends his speech the same way he began it, which is by asserting that his counsel is for Job’s good, as a foolish protest against the grief that he sensed it would cause (5:27).

Job’s second speech, 6:1–7:21. Job clearly was injured rather than improved by his friend’s accusatory speech, and he responds bitterly in chs. 6–7. Job begins his second speech by complaining about his wretched state (6:1-7). He then calls upon God to slay him in order to end his misery (6:8-13). In 6:14-23, Job begins to speak about his three friends, using the plural “you” as he complains about their treachery. In 6:24-30 he addresses them directly, reproving them for falsely accusing him of unrighteousness. In ch. 7, Job shifts from a response to his friends for their poor advice to a response to God for placing him in such a miserable condition. In 7:1-10, Job complains about the wearisomeness (7:1-5) and transitoriness (7:6-10) of his life. He then addresses God directly, and for the first time lashes out at God for causing him such suffering (7:11-21). Job says many things in this final paragraph that he would later regret, and essentially accuses God of wrongdoing.

Bildad’s first speech, 8:1-22. Bildad, who was likely the second-eldest of Job’s friends, speaks next. Bildad should have affirmed that God’s ways are inscrutable and Job has no right to question them, no right to claim that it is wrong for God to allow the righteous to suffer. Instead, Bildad does exactly the opposite, openly affirming the prosperity theology of the group (8:1-7): God is just, and gives men what they deserve; therefore, the suffering of Job and his children shows they are not righteous. If Job repents, God will restore his prosperity. In 8:8-10, Bildad appeals to history as proof of prosperity theology. He

---

10 Also, one can refer to Elihu’s speeches for remarks that are specifically criticized. Checking cross references, such as those indexed in NA28 and The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge (TSK), can also be helpful for determining which statements are good or bad.

11 One key to understanding Job’s speeches is that most 3ms (“he”) and 2ms (“thou”) references in his speeches are to God, while the 2mp (“ye”) references are to his three friends.
then describes how the wicked are insecure and will come to ruin (8:11-19), and pictures how Job will be restored when he repents (8:20-22).

**Job’s third speech, 9:1–10:22.** Once again, Job’s friends had hurt him rather than helping him, pushing him over the edge of desperation. In response to his friends’ unfounded accusations and prosperity theology, Job becomes increasingly insistent upon his own uprightness, and also becomes increasingly settled upon the idea that God is treating him unjustly. Chapters 9–10 are one of the low points in Job’s speeches. Although this speech is a reaction to Bildad’s, Job is really responding to God in these chapters. He does so in bitterness and anger, repeatedly accusing God of wrongdoing. It is important to note, however, that Job’s faith in God never wavers, nor does he renounce his loyalty to God, or doubt God’s Word or His historic acts. Job begins in 9:1-12 by bemoaning his helplessness in the face of God’s infinite power. In 9:13-24, Job lets loose on God, affirming that God has no right to cause him to suffer, and complaining that God destroys the perfect and the wicked together. In 9:25-35, Job wrongly affirms that there is no profit in righteousness (cf. 35:3), and demands an impartial umpire to judge between himself and God—implying that the umpire would find God guilty of doing wrong, and would justify Job. Job directly charges God with wrongdoing in 10:1-7, saying that God has abused His power and is treating Job as if he is wicked, even though he is not wicked. Job continues to protest God’s treatment of him in 10:8-17, affirming that there is no good reason for what God is doing to him. In 10:14, Job wrongly asserts, on the basis of prosperity theology, that God has refused to forgive his sin. The speech concludes in 10:18-22 with Job requesting a peaceful end to his short and vain life.

**Zophar’s first speech, 11:1-20.** Zophar, the youngest of Job’s three friends, responds to Job’s speech by directly contradicting him: God is fully justified in causing Job to suffer, and in fact is punishing Job less than his sins deserve (11:1-6). Of course, Zophar does not have any direct evidence for such sins, and is simply continuing the false assumption that God does not allow the righteous to suffer. Zophar then appeals to God’s unsearchableness and omniscience as evidence that Job has committed some secret sins that no one else knows about, and that God is bringing these to remembrance (11:7-12). Zophar proceeds to repeat the advice of Job’s first two friends: Job must repent of his sins, and when he does so, his troubles will go away (11:13-20). The trio of friends cannot come up with any other answer to Job’s suffering, because they cannot imagine that suffering would be part of God’s plan for the righteous. Each speech simply repeats the same tired, worn out prosperity theology.

**Job’s fourth speech, 12:1–14:22.** Job responds to Zophar by directly contradicting him, asserting that they are fools, Job himself is righteous, and in fact the righteous do suffer and the wicked do prosper (12:1-6). The claim of Job’s friends that they knew more than he because wisdom resides in the elderly is false (12:7-12; cf. 15:10; 32:6-9)—in fact, wisdom resides in God, who confounds the counsel of elders and princes (12:13-25); therefore Job, who knows all this, is not inferior to his friends in wisdom (13:1-2). Job then dismisses his friends’ speeches, saying that they are worthless words and present false claims about God; Job really is speaking to God, not to his unreasonable friends (13:3-12). Then Job, like his friends, returns to his old refrain, asserting his own righteousness before God, and implying that he is actually more righteous than God (13:13-19). He then addresses God instead of his friends, accusing God of injustice and demanding that God cease from afflicting him (13:20-28). He argues that because man is frail and helpless, God should leave him alone instead of pressing upon him (14:1-6); if he brings a man to an early death, he will not live again until the resurrection which follows the destruction of the present creation (14:7-12). Yet Job would rather die and wait in the grave for resurrection than live without a respite from God’s wrath (14:13-17). Job then complains over man’s lot, since every man’s hope of life is eventually crushed in death, and in the interim his mind and body are racked with pain (14:18-22).

**Eliphaz’s second speech, 15:1-35.** Since all three of Job’s friends have already spoken, they now commence a second round of speeches, beginning once again with Eliphaz, who, predictably, was unmoved by Job’s arguments, and responds by strongly assaulting Job. He condemns Job’s speech, and
repeats the accusation that Job is full of iniquity (15:1-6). He arrogantly belittles Job for thinking that he is wiser than they are, and rebukes him for his presumptuousness against both his friends and God (15:7-16). After attacking Job, Eliphaz returns to the same tired answer: good deeds bring good times, evil deeds bring hard times, therefore Job’s suffering is a punishment for his sin (15:17-35).

**Job’s fifth speech, 16:1–17:16.** Job begins his fifth speech by condemning his friends for their failure to comfort him, imploring them to keep silent (16:1-5). Job then returns to the same old complaint over God’s treatment of him, railing against God for afflicting him, while asserting that he himself is pure (i.e., and God is not; 16:6-17). In 16:18-22, Job calls both the earth and a heavenly Intercessor (the Son of God?) to witness the justice of his cause and the injustice of his death. He then calls for his divine Intercessor to witness against the treachery of his friends and take vengeance upon them (17:1-5). Job then addresses his friends directly in 17:6-16, accusing them of being unrighteous and unwise, unable to prove their claim that he is wicked, and holding out a false hope of restoration.

**Bildad’s second speech, 18:1-21.** The responses of Job’s friends continue in order, with Bildad answering next. He rebukes Job for his speech and for his condemnation of his friends, and says Job’s angry words are empty and ineffective; he sarcastically asks whether the earth will tear itself in response to Job’s hollow call to it (18:1-4). After this gross display of insensitivity, Bildad quickly returns to the same old answer—the wicked always suffer, and the righteous are always blessed. Bildad’s description of the misfortunes of the wicked man in 18:5-21 is a thinly veiled description of Job’s misfortunes, and his conclusion in 18:21—“Surely such are the dwellings of the unrighteous, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God”—is meant to apply to Job.

**Job’s sixth speech, 19:1-29.** As the circular dialogue continues, Job rebukes his friends for their harsh words toward one who is suffering under the hand of God (19:1-6). He then complains once again about God’s unjust treatment of him, using words that Elihu would later rebuke him for (19:7-12; cf. 33:10). Job then bemoans his social estrangement, and appeals to his friends to just have pity on him instead of persecuting him (19:13-22). He finally cries out for vindication (19:23-24), anticipating total restoration in the resurrection (19:25-27), and anticipating temporal vengeance upon his treacherous friends (19:28-29).

**Zophar’s second speech, 20:1-29.** Zophar, who is third in the order of Job’s friends, now speaks again. He does not deride Job directly, but repeats the same theology that the three friends have been propounding all along. Zophar describes the misfortunes suffered by the wicked man—his swift end (20:1-11), his total loss of everything (20:12-19), and his portion from God (20:20-29). The implication, once again, is that Job must be wicked, since this is Job’s portion.

**Job’s seventh speech, 21:1-34.** In Job’s seventh speech, he finally responds to his friends’ claim that the wicked always come to destruction and do not prosper. Job begins, once again, by appealing to his friends to keep silence (21:1-6). Job’s response to his friends’ claim that suffering is a penalty for sin is that experience does not bear this out: the wicked often do prosper in this life, and die in peace (21:7-16). However, the wicked are all brought to the grave eventually, whether after a life of ease or a life of sorrow (21:17-26). In fact, all men are brought to the grave, whether righteous or wicked, whether prosperous or poor, to be recompensed at the final day of judgment (21:27-34). This is one of Job’s better speeches; he is correct to observe that the wicked often prosper, and is also correct to observe the reason: God is waiting to recompense them until the ultimate day of judgment. He does not, however, transfer these observations to his own experience.

**Eliphaz’s third speech, 22:1-30.** Although Job has now put the lie to his friends’ prosperity theology, they are not convinced. Instead, in Eliphaz’s third and final speech, he gives the strongest and most condemnatory statement yet of prosperity theology and its application to Job. In 22:1-11, Eliphaz finally
# Table of Contents

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- PREFACE .............................................................................................................. III
- STYLE NOTES ........................................................................................................ VII
  - Quotations of the Bible .................................................................................. vii
  - A Note on the Divine Name ......................................................................... vii
  - Common Abbreviations .................................................................................. vii
  - Abbreviations of the Books of the Bible ...................................................... viii
- AN INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO ISAIAH ............................................................... 1
  - HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .......................................................................... 1
  - AUTHOR ........................................................................................................... 3
    - Isaiahic Expressions .................................................................................. 4
  - DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING ........................................................... 5
  - PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ............................................................................. 5
  - UNITY ............................................................................................................ 5
    - Development of the Critical View ............................................................. 6
    - Critical Arguments against the Unity of Isaiah ....................................... 7
    - Positive Arguments for the Unity of Isaiah ............................................ 8
    - Conclusion ................................................................................................ 12
  - OUTLINE OF ISAIAH ..................................................................................... 13
    - Summary Outline .................................................................................... 13
    - Expanded Outline .................................................................................... 13
  - ARGUMENT OF ISAIAH ............................................................................... 21
    - Heading, 1:1 .............................................................................................. 22
    - Messages to the Jews of Uzziah’s Day, 1:2–5:30 .................................... 22
    - Message to the Jews of Jotham’s Day, 6:1–13 ......................................... 24
    - Messages to the Jews of Ahaz’s Day 7:1–19:25 ..................................... 24
    - Messages to the Exiles in Babylon, 40:1–48:22 ..................................... 40
    - Messages to Israel in the Interadvent Period, 49:1–66:24 ................... 44
  - BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR ISAIAH ..................................................................... 51
- AN INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO JEREMIAH ......................................................... 55
  - HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .......................................................................... 56
  - AUTHOR ........................................................................................................... 58
    - Distinctively Jeremianic Language ......................................................... 60
  - THE FORMATION OF THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH ......................................... 65
    - References to “Books” in Jeremiah ......................................................... 65
    - Critical Views on the Formation of Jeremiah ......................................... 66
    - Solution .................................................................................................... 68
  - THE LXX TEXT OF JEREMIAH ..................................................................... 69
    - Explanation of the Differences .................................................................. 69
    - The Formation of LXX Jeremiah ............................................................. 74
  - DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING ........................................................ 75
  - PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ........................................................................... 75
  - OUTLINE OF JEREMIAH .............................................................................. 76
    - Form Outline (by Chapter) ....................................................................... 76
    - Summary Subject Outline ......................................................................... 76
    - Expanded Subject Outline ....................................................................... 76
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PURPOSE AND MESSAGE</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRITICAL ISSUES</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses to the Critical View</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Aramaic of Daniel</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hebrew of Daniel</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE HEBREW AND ARAMAIC TEXT OF DANIEL</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscripts of Daniel from the Judean Desert</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE GREEK VERSIONS OF DANIEL</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTLINE OF DANIEL</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary Outline</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanded Outline</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARGUMENT OF DANIEL</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative, 1:1–6:28</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prophetic, 7:1–12:13</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR DANIEL</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentaries</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized Studies</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An Interpretive Guide to Daniel

Daniel has long been recognized as a book of special significance, and, as such, it is frequently preached and taught, particularly in churches which emphasize the Bible’s prophetic teaching. Daniel’s prophecies, its encouragement to live for God in a pagan world, its demonstration of God’s sovereignty over kings and nations, and its encouragement to trust God’s plan all make it an important book to study and teach today. It is a book that is unusually rich, not only in factual content, but also in contemporary relevance. Its prophecies provide a key to understanding the Bible’s other prophecies, though it is an exaggeration to say that it is “the” key, for all of the Bible’s prophecies are interrelated. Historically, the book of Daniel bridges the gap between the OT and NT by prophesying in detail events of the intertestamental period and presenting an exact timetable from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem until the official presentation of the Messiah to Israel.

The book of Daniel is unique in the biblical corpus in that it exhibits a mixture of the forms found in other books. In English Bibles, Daniel is grouped with the prophets, due to the amount of prophecy it contains. In fact, Daniel contains some of the most significant prophecies in the entire Bible. However, Daniel was not a prophet or preacher by occupation, but an administrative official; therefore the Hebrew arrangement of the OT, which first grouped Daniel with the prophetic books, later moved it to the “Writings” (Kethubim). Daniel is also one of only two books in the Bible to have been written partly in Hebrew and partly in Aramaic. This is because Daniel lived in a time and place where Aramaic was the dominant language, and where the Jews spoke both Aramaic and Hebrew. Thus, Dan 2:4b–7:28 (200 verses) are written in Aramaic, while 1:1–2:4a and 8:1–12:13 are written in Hebrew. The Hebrew sections of Daniel are focused on Jerusalem and Israel, while the Aramaic section is focused on the nations.

Daniel is unique in content, as well as form. There are amazing miracles in this book, of a kind rarely paralleled elsewhere in Scripture. These miracles were done through ordinary men, not through those who were supposed to possess special powers. There are exceptionally detailed descriptions of spirit beings and warfare in the spiritual realm. However, it is Daniel’s prophecies that really set this book apart. These prophecies place world events into an overarching schema of history for the world and for Israel from the sixth century B.C. until the millennial kingdom. There are major prophecies of the tribulation, and very specific predictions and timelines. Daniel is also the only OT book that prophesies events of the

---

1 Incidentally, Daniel is a book which is especially geared toward academic study. It is a book of wisdom, a book which contains significant and sometimes difficult prophecies, and a book whose study requires extensive linguistic, historical, and archeological research.


3 The other Aramaic portions of the Bible are Ezra 4:8–6:18, Ezra 7:12-26, and Jeremiah 10:11. The New Testament was written entirely in Greek, and all of the Old Testament outside of the 268 Aramaic verses was written in Hebrew.

4 The reason for the use of Aramaic in the book of Daniel, like the reason for its use in the book of Ezra, is that Aramaic was the language used for official state records and for conversation in the royal courts of both Babylonia and Medo-Persia. Thus, both Daniel and Ezra make a switch from Hebrew to Aramaic when they begin to describe conversations or official documents in the court of Babylon or Medo-Persia, and they make the switch back when they return to purely Jewish concerns. The reason why Daniel 7 is written in Aramaic is that Daniel actually told the vision to his contemporaries in Babylon, and wrote down what he said (Dan 7:2). The reason why Jeremiah 10:11 is written in Aramaic, incidentally, is that it is a message to be proclaimed to the nations, word-for-word, by the exiles in Babylon.
intertestamental period. Each of the visions in Daniel has to do with ultimate destinies, whether of the nations, of Israel, or both. The breadth of Daniel’s prophecies is one reason why they are so frequently taught—the believer who learns the prophecies of this book has learned an overview of biblical prophecy as a whole.

The significance of the book of Daniel is betrayed by the fact that it is the one book of the Bible that critics have attacked more than any other. No biblical book is as polarizing in academia than this book of Daniel. The reason is that Daniel hits critics where they are weakest by giving prophecies of the far future which have been fulfilled in precise detail, and which therefore could only have come by revelation from God. Since this book undermines the fundamental premise of higher criticism that the Bible is a human product, it is sure to strengthen the faith of believers if properly studied and understood.

In sum, the book of Daniel is well worth the careful attention of the Christian believer, and in fact is a book that is absolutely critical to be studied and understood.

### Historical Background

The book of Daniel begins in the year when the first Judeans were deported to Babylon (605 B.C.), and ends in 534 B.C., two years after the exiles were allowed to return to the land. It begins in the year when Nebuchadnezzar became king and drove the Egyptian army out of Syria/Palestine (605), and ends five years after the fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians some sixty-six years later (539). This book thus encompasses one of the great epochs of human history, and it was written by one of the leading participants in both the Babylonian and Medo-Persian Empires. However, the prophecies of the book of Daniel look beyond the time of these empires to encompass all the major world empires up to and including the final kingdom, that of our Lord Jesus Christ. A brief survey of this history may aid the reader in understanding the book of Daniel.

From before the time of Abraham until the time of Solomon’s son Rehoboam, Egypt was the dominant Gentile power in the ancient Near East. However, the Neo-Assyrian Empire, which was founded by Ashur-dan II (934–912 B.C.), became increasingly powerful, and by the reign of Tiglath-pileser III (745–727), Assyria had replaced Egypt as the dominant force in the region. Neither the Egyptian kingdom nor the Assyrian kingdom is mentioned in the book of Daniel, since Daniel prophesies concerning events from his own day until the consummation of history. The history of the book of Daniel begins with the empire which succeeded and conquered Assyria, namely, Babylon. In 625 B.C., just two years after the death of the great Assyrian king Ashurbanipal II, the Chaldean chieftain Nabopolassar was able to take control of Babylon and declare full independence from Assyria, thereby establishing what was to become the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Just eleven years later, in 614, Asshur fell to the Medes, and in 612, Nineveh fell to a joint Median-Babylonian force. The fall of Nineveh ended the Assyrian Empire, although the remnants of the Assyrian army fled west to Haran. In 609, the Babylonians defeated a joint Egyptian-Assyrian force at Haran, led by Pharaoh Neco. For the next four years, fighting continued in northern Syria between Babylon and the Egyptian-Assyrian coalition. Finally, in 605, a decisive battle was fought at Carchemish between the Babylonians, led by Nabopolassar’s son Nebuchadnezzar, and the main Egyptian army, together with the remnant of the Assyrians. The Assyrian army was wiped out, while the Egyptian army was badly mauled and had to retreat to Egypt. Egyptian control of Syria and Palestine was quickly replaced by Babylonian control as Nebuchadnezzar pursued the retreating Egyptians southward, forcing cities and countries in his path to submit to Babylonian lordship. As Nebuchadnezzar was completing his occupation of Palestine, he received word that his father,  

---

5 The dates given here for the vision of chs. 10–12 assume a reign of approximately two years for Darius the Mede after the fall of Babylon, from Oct. 12, 539 to sometime in 537. This fits with Xenophon’s chronology of a seven-year reign of Cyrus, and fits with the Bible’s assertion that the return from exile occurred in Cyrus’ first year (536), seventy years after the first deportation to Babylon (605).
Nabopolassar, had died. He rushed back to Babylon to claim the throne, taking spoils of war with him to be paraded at his coronation. Among these were a group of Judean nobles, including Daniel and his three friends, and some vessels from the temple in Jerusalem.⁶ These events marked the beginning of the Babylonian Empire, the beginning of the seventy-year period of Judah’s exile, and the beginning of Babylon’s domination of Judah. The Babylonian Empire lasted until Oct. 12, 539, when Babylon was taken by the Persian general Cyrus, who led the armies of the Medes and the Persians in behalf of his uncle and father-in-law, Darius the Mede. Two or three years later, in 536, Cyrus became king and issued a decree which permitted the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild their temple. The Medo-Persian Empire lasted until 331 B.C., when Alexander the Great won a decisive and final victory over the Persians at Gaugamela. After Alexander’s unexpected death in 323, the vast empire which he conquered was divided among his generals, who fought each other for ascendancy. This struggle becomes the central subject of Daniel 11, in which Israel becomes a buffer zone between the Ptolemaic kingdom to the south and the Seleucid kingdom to the north. Eventually the Seleucid king Antiochus IV targeted Israel directly, savagely persecuting and massacring the Jews until Judean independence was restored through the campaigns of Judas Maccabeus and his successors (ca. 163 B.C.). Jewish independence lasted until 63 B.C., when the Roman general Pompey conquered Palestine. In Daniel’s visions, the Roman Empire does not totally disappear, but rather becomes diffused and emerges in a new form at the end of the age (Dan 2:42-43; 7:24-25). Initially, this form of the eschatological Roman Empire consists of a union of ten kings over ten divisions of the kingdom, but then a new ruler, the antichrist, emerges, seizes power, and leads the world into a final, all-out rebellion against God. As the antichrist’s persecution of God’s people builds to a climax, Jesus Christ returns to the earth and destroys the antichrist and his kingdom, and replacing it with God’s kingdom, which is never destroyed and therefore is the final kingdom in Daniel’s schema of world history.

Author

The entire prophetic section of the book, chs. 7–12, consists of first person narrative by Daniel, showing that he is the author. Jesus also affirms Danielic authorship of the book in Matt 24:15, when he states that the abomination of desolation was spoken of through Daniel the prophet (Dan 8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). Only Daniel would have known, or known firsthand, most of the information recorded in the book. An exception is ch. 4, which is a letter written by Nebuchadnezzar that Daniel chose to copy into his book, in part because he is a major character in the events recounted in the letter. There are other such letters recorded by other biblical authors (e.g., Ezra 4:11-16). Giving the account of Nebuchadnezzar’s humbling and conversion in his own words, rather than Daniel’s, enhances its credibility. Chapter 7 is another portion of the book that was written at the time of the event (so 7:1), and which Daniel later incorporated into his book.

This book was not only written by Daniel, but Daniel is in the background or foreground in every narrative. Chapter 3 is the chapter where he is most in the background, as the narrative is about his three friends. Even here, however, the events of ch. 3 follow directly from the events of ch. 2, where Daniel is the main character. Since Daniel’s book is so heavily biographical, Feinberg is probably correct to state that “more is known about the writer of the book of Daniel than about any other prophet.” In view of

⁶ An alternate historical reconstruction holds that Nebuchadnezzar campaigned in Palestine in his accession year after claiming the throne in Babylon, and that he simply wanted to add the most talented people in his provinces to his own court. However, since Nebuchadnezzar heard of his father’s death on Av 8 (= Aug. 16, 605; see Donald J. Wiseman, Chronicles of the Chaldaean Kings [Trustees of the British Museum: London, 1956], 45), this reconstruction does not seem to fit with the chronology.
this, it is nothing short of remarkable that Daniel is as faultless a character as can be found in the Bible, short of the Lord Jesus Christ. No sin of Daniel’s, whether major or minor, is ever recorded (though see 9:20); his life was characterized by total and absolute faithfulness to God, and he performed great acts of faith which have rarely been paralleled in human history (cf. Heb 11:33). Further, while most men are corrupted by fame, power, and wealth, Daniel maintained an unwavering loyalty to his God, a humble spirit, and an authentic desire to serve others rather than advancing his own interests. Likewise, Daniel’s extraordinary education at the most elite college in Babylon, and his reputation for having unparalleled wisdom, did not go to his head or lead him to abandon his simple faith in God and His Word.

The writer of this book presents a résumé like none other. Perhaps the first point on the résumé would be that Daniel was one of the godliest men who ever lived. He maintained an open and uncompromising commitment to God in the court of pagan kings. He exhibited an extremely faithful and effective prayer life. He was examined and found faultless in government service (6:3-4). He was diligent in his business, unflinching in his resolve of character, and as equally devout in private as in public. He was proved faultless when tested as a teenager (ch. 1), and was again proved faultless when tested as an octogenarian (ch. 6). He was selected to be the recipient of some of the greatest prophecies in the Bible, even though he was not a prophet by occupation. He had a reputation among the chief angels for being “greatly beloved” (9:23; 10:11, 19)—something that is said of only one other person in the Bible, the apostle John. Among the prophets and people of Israel, Daniel’s righteousness had already achieved legendary status by the time he had reached his late twenties or early thirties (Ezek 14:14-20).

Daniel was also one of the wisest men who ever lived. He was given the best education in Jerusalem as a youth, then graduated first in his class from the best university in Babylon. He was appointed chief of all the wise men of Babylon while still a teenager (2:48). He was the highest administrative official in two of the greatest empires in the history of the world. He had a reputation for possessing “an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and insight, interpreting of dreams, and explaining of riddles, and solving of enigmas” (5:12). His wisdom was legendary in his own time, for when he was only in his middle or late thirties, Ezekiel set him forth as the paradigmatic wise man (Ezek 28:3; the oracle was given during the siege of Jerusalem in 588–586 B.C.). Daniel was fluent in the major languages of his day, including Hebrew, Aramaic, Akkadian, and probably Sumerian. He almost certainly was able to read and write in cuneiform script, as well as in the standard Aramaic Square Script and in the paleo-Hebrew script.

Daniel was of noble ancestry, and may have been of the line of David (1:3). He is described as a youth “in whom was no blemish, but well-favored, and skillful in all wisdom, and endued with knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability to stand in the king’s palace” (1:4). There is no indication that Daniel was married or had progeny, though there is no explicit statement that he was single, either.

---


8 Evidence that Daniel was the author of the book will be presented below.

9 In ch. 1, the man in charge of Daniel and his three friends is called “the chief of the officials.” The word for “officials” (םְרִיגִים) is sometimes translated “eunuchs,” referring to castrated males. This has led some to claim that Daniel was a eunuch. However, often מְרִיגִים simply means “court officials,” who were not necessarily castrated; מְרִים is used in Gen 37:36 and 39:1 of Potiphar, who was a married man. The context of Dan 1 is of court officials, and therefore to take this as a statement of castration seems to go beyond the biblical text. Research into extrabiblical texts is needed to resolve the question of whether the wise men of Babylon were castrated, though I am doubtful of the claim that they were. If Babylonian wise men are depicted as having beards, this would be a clear indication that they were not castrated. Two other points may be noted. First, one of the requirements for Daniel’s position was having no blemish (1:4), and castration would probably be considered a blemish. Second, Daniel had no contact with the harem in his job, so there would be no need to castrate (unlike Hegai in Esth 2:3).
In modern terms, Daniel would be an extraordinary individual who was of the English royal family and who had graduated at the top of his class at Harvard University and was recognized as the world’s best scholar and who was the United States President’s highest cabinet official and top advisor and who was an outstanding Christian evangelist with an impeccable testimony all at the same time.

Daniel was raised in Jerusalem during the reign of godly Josiah, a king whose zeal for Yahweh and His Law was without parallel in the whole history of the monarchy (so 2 Kgs 23:25). As Daniel grew up, he must have sat under the tireless preaching of faithful Jeremiah, whose ministry began a few years before Daniel’s birth—and whose book of prophecies Daniel would finally receive as an old man in Babylon (9:1-2). Daniel would have been well acquainted with the Law, which Josiah personally read to the people, and he would have personally participated in the great national feasts and temple rituals, whose observance Josiah had reimplemented in scrupulous detail. After being deported to Babylon, Daniel ministered over a seventy year period, through different regimes, and in successive world empires. The period of Daniel’s government service, 605 to 536, exactly coincided with the period of Judah’s exile.

It is apparent from 10:1-4 that Daniel did not return to Judah with the exiles. This is due partly to his great age, and partly to his official importance, which probably continued even after his retirement in Cyrus’ first year (1:21). He was taken from Jerusalem as a teenager, and no doubt longed to return as an old man. He must have wished especially to offer sacrifices on the new altar and to join with the returned exiles in worship in the temple courts as they were being rebuilt. We know that even in his later years, he still opened his windows toward Jerusalem, and knelt toward Jerusalem to pray (6:10). Yet Daniel knew that it would be selfish to return, for he could do more good for his people where he was. He also knew that he would participate in worship in a new Jerusalem and a new temple in the messianic age, which would be far better than anything that could be experienced in this world. Throughout his life, Daniel constantly maintained before him the hope of a better resurrection, and refused to trade eternal gain for temporal comfort. His long term outlook and unwavering confidence in God’s promises made him an ideal prophet of the eschaton.

The following chart estimates Daniel’s age at various points in the book, based on his hypothetical age when he was deported to Babylon in 605 B.C. The column to the left of the dates gives what seems to be the lowest reasonable estimate, while the column to the right of the dates gives what seems to be the highest reasonable estimate.
Estimates of Daniel’s Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>605 B.C.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch. 2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>604 B.C.</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch. 3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>603 B.C.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:4-27</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>575 B.C.</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:34-37</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>567 B.C.</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch. 5</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>539 B.C.</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch. 6</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>538 B.C.</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch. 7</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>553 B.C.</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch. 8</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>551 B.C.</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch. 9</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>538 B.C.</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chs. 10–12</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>534 B.C.</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date and Occasion of Writing

The book of Daniel must have been composed shortly after the capstone vision of chs. 10–12, which was revealed on April 24, 534 B.C. Daniel himself likely died of old age soon afterward. The date of the book of Daniel is one of the best known critical problems in the OT, but the issue has more to do with the truth-content of the book than with the date itself. Those who hold to the inspiration and authenticity of Daniel hold that it was written around 534, while those who deny its inspiration and authenticity date the book to around 165. Although this dispute is often framed as a controversy over the date of composition, it is really about the truth-claims of the book, and thus includes such issues as the historicity of Darius the Mede and the possibility of predictive prophecy. For this reason the discussion is placed below under “Critical Issues.”

The occasion of writing of the book of Daniel was Daniel’s reception of the “capstone” vision of chs. 10–12, which was the final vision he would see. At the conclusion of the vision (12:4), the angel who brought the message commanded Daniel to write his book. It is interesting that Daniel had not composed a book prior to that time, even though he was eighty-nine years old and by all human appearances could drop dead at any moment, with the content of his visions never to be published. The writers of Scripture did not write of their own accord, but only as the Holy Spirit led them to write. The Holy Spirit knew when Daniel would receive his final vision and when he would die, and waited until the proper time to tell him to write.

---

10 The date given in Dan 10:1-4 is Nisan 24 of Cyrus’ third year. This is a rare instance in which the Gregorian month began on the same day as the lunar month.
Addressees

For most books of the OT, the question of addressees is a non-issue. Unlike the NT, the OT books are not epistles, and were addressed to the nation of Israel rather than to local churches or individuals. The specific situation of the original addressees is resolved for most OT books merely by addressing the issues of date and authorship. However, the book of Daniel, like the book of Isaiah, gives evidence of being written to multiple audiences. One of these audiences is, of course, Daniel’s own contemporaries, who would be encouraged and instructed by the personal faithfulness of Daniel and his friends in a foreign land and by the message of God’s sovereign direction of world history. There is no doubt that a second audience is Jews who lived in the intertestamental period, who could see the prophecies of Dan 8 and Dan 11:2-35 being fulfilled before their eyes, and who were supposed to calculate the day of the Messiah’s advent from the prophecy of seventy weeks in 9:24-27. Daniel reports in 8:27 that he himself did not understand the vision of ch. 8, which implies that it was revealed primarily for the benefit of a future audience. A third audience addressed in the book is believers living in the eschaton, for whom the prophecies regarding the antichrist and the tribulation period (chs. 2, 7, 9–12) will be most relevant. At the end of Daniel’s capstone vision, he writes, “I heard, but I understood not” (12:8), indicating that this vision was not intended for his contemporaries. The angel who revealed the vision specifically states in 12:4 and 12:9-10 that the vision is intended for those who are living at the end of history, when they will finally be able to understand it by relating it to contemporary events and subsequent revelation.

Purpose and Message

Since the book of Daniel is addressed to multiple audiences, it has a distinct purpose and message to each audience. These purposes and messages overlap partially, but not entirely.

The book of Daniel, like the rest of Scripture, is written to encourage and teach believers throughout all eras of history (cf. Rom 15:4). Many of the encouragements and examples set forth have to do with living for God in a hostile environment. Throughout most of the Second Temple Period, the Jews were under constant persecution, and they struggled to live for God in the midst of pagan cultures. This has also been true of genuine Christians throughout the Church Age. In ch. 1, Daniel and his friends refused to eat food sacrificed to idols, and were blessed for it. In ch. 3, Daniel’s three friends trusted in God and were delivered, and Daniel himself was delivered in ch. 6. These stories teach that God blesses a refusal to compromise, but also set forth examples of absolute faithfulness—“we will obey God even if He does not deliver us” (3:18).

Nearly every chapter of the book of Daniel teaches that God is sovereign over nations, rulers, and history itself. The theme of the book is, “the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (4:32; 5:21; cf. 2:21; 3:29; 6:26; 7:27). This thought is the conclusion and main point of every chapter from ch. 2 to ch. 7. It is not explicitly stated, but is nevertheless the theme in chs. 8, 9, 11, and 12. In the background chapters of 1 and 10, this theme is still present, as God works things out His way in spite of opposition by evil men and evil spirits.

A major purpose of Daniel’s book is to teach and record prophecy for all believers. For the original recipients of the vision, most of the prophecies would have been poorly understood, but they would at least reinforce the message that God is sovereign in history, and that He is working out His master plan. The Jews who had just returned to the land when Daniel wrote would be encouraged by the reaffirmation that God has not set them aside; He will fulfill the promises made to their nation and is continuing to work His plan, even in the absence of theocracy. Daniel’s contemporaries could also have understood in general terms that the present age will end with a final, culminative period of evil and intense persecution led by a single diabolical person, that Israel and the saints would be delivered at the end in a universal judgment, and that this would be followed by a resurrection and the establishment of the divine Son of Man’s eternal kingdom. For the Jews who lived in the intertestamental period, the message became more specific. Since Daniel’s book covers Jewish history in the intertestamental period, describing events from
Alexander’s conquests until the beginning of the Maccabean period, it was a demonstration that even though God was no longer speaking through prophets, he was still active in history, and world events were still proceeding according to His plan. Another major purpose of Daniel’s prophecies for the intertestamental audience was to inform them of the exact day of the Messiah’s advent, so they would be ready to recognize Him (9:24-27). For Church Age believers, the prophecies of intertestamental history and the amazing prophecy of 9:24-27 powerfully validate the divine origin of the Bible and strengthen our faith. However, it was for the benefit of those of us who are living at the end of the age that Daniel’s eschatological prophecies were written. These prophecies are now able to be fully understood, with only the names of some specific referents yet to be clarified. It is critical for believers to understand the direction of world events in our day, as the stage is being set for the tribulation period. All too often, the church is completely directionless or misguided in its work because it has not grasped what God is doing in the present day and does not know what will happen next or where world events are headed. An additional purpose of the book of Daniel for contemporary believers is to provide a framework to help us understand the Bible’s other prophecies within a big picture, even as these other prophecies help to clarify Daniel’s.

Tying together the preceding observations, the overall purpose of the book of Daniel is to teach a biblical worldview, i.e., to teach a biblical view of history and reality. Daniel is the only OT book which lays out a specific and overarching framework of history as a grid through which to understand God’s direction of world events. The message of the book of Daniel is that the Most High God controls the direction of history and is sovereign in the affairs of men; events in the natural realm are often merely the visible manifestations of an invisible spiritual conflict; believers are to accept suffering and difficult circumstances while trusting God’s plan; fulfilled prophecy proves that the Bible is the Word of God; and unfulfilled prophecy gives believers a framework through which to understand how God is working in history as world events unfold in the end times.

**Critical Issues**

No book of the Bible has been the subject of greater critical ire than Daniel. Liberals are satisfied to simply dismiss books like Jonah and Revelation; but they hate Daniel. Opponents of Christianity, from Porphyry in the late second century A.D. to modern liberal-critical scholarship, have fiercely assailed the book of Daniel like none other. Even before the Christian era, Satan made a concerted attempt to corrupt the text of Daniel through the Old Greek redaction of it (originally in a Hebrew Vorlage) in the Maccabean period. In fact, Satan singled out Daniel’s extraordinary prophecies as a special target of attack even before the final vision was revealed (Dan 10:12-13). The book of Daniel has been the subject of a greatly disproportionate amount of liberal academic study, even though liberals supposedly believe it is a late fiction, essentially no different from Grimm’s fairy tales or an apocryphal legend like Tobit. The reality is that liberals understand that Daniel’s prophecies are powerful proof of the inspiration of the Bible, and they are fighting back furiously in an attempt to maintain their theological position. The aggressiveness of their attacks in the very face of reason and evidence shows that the real issues are spiritual, and not purely intellectual.

The reasoning of modern critical scholars, like that of ancient Porphyry, goes as follows: there is nothing supernatural, no God, no book from God, and no prophecy. Therefore all claims to the contrary must be dismissed, and all apparent evidence to the contrary must have an alternate explanation. With regard to prophetic texts, the usual liberal explanation is that they were not intended as prophecies, and are to be interpreted as somehow referring symbolically to events of the author’s own time. However, the prophecies in Dan 8 and 11 are simply too detailed and specific to be explained away through an alternate interpretive scheme. Thus, liberals reason, they must be a forgery, written after the fact. However, since
the book of Daniel claims to have been written in 534 B.C., yet liberals recognize that these prophecies extend to 165/4 B.C., they must make the extraordinary claim that the book was written over 350 years after it claims to have been written. This creates an enormous problem for liberal scholarship, since the Hebrew and Aramaic languages both underwent major changes between 534 and 164, and it would also be expected that a Jewish writer in 164 would not be able to accurately represent Babylonian and Medo-Persian historical and cultural information, at least not in detail. As will be demonstrated below, the language of the book of Daniel is that of the sixth century, and not the second century, and its historical details are of the type which could only be recorded by an eyewitness, not those invented much later by a forger. There is also no apparent reason why the book of Daniel would have been composed in 164, since it does not focus on the Maccabees, and in fact contains much information that would be extraneous to a simple call to join the Maccabean struggle. Thus, the critical problem of the book of Daniel has nothing to do with problems inherent to the book of Daniel, and has everything to do with the problems inherent to the liberal denial of the book of Daniel. The “problem” of Daniel is not a problem for believers but, like the “problem” of the unity of Isaiah and the “problem” of the composition of the Pentateuch, it is a serious problem indeed for liberal scholarship.

It should be noted that the liberal date for the book of Daniel is, of necessity, very specific: 165 or 164 B.C. Liberals base their date of the book of Daniel on the death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (164 or 163). They acknowledge that Dan 11 accurately describes the activities of the Seleucids up to the point of Antiochus IV, and they acknowledge that both Dan 8 and Dan 11 describe events in the reign of Antiochus IV up to a point very late in his reign. However, they think that the author of Daniel got the end of Antiochus’ life wrong, because they do not recognize any prophecies regarding the future antichrist, and therefore think that Dan 11:36-45 is about Antiochus IV. Thus, they reason that the prophecies regarding Antiochus IV and the Persian and Greek history up to Antiochus IV are a forgery, recorded after the fact, but that the forger guessed at how Antiochus IV’s life would end and got it wrong. Therefore liberals have to date the book of Daniel to a time late in the life of Antiochus IV, but just before his death. They are essentially locked into the date of 165/4, and cannot move from this date.

The nineteenth century critical view of the book of Daniel, which held sway until late in the twentieth century, was that the entire book was composed in 165/4 by a single author. However, the nature of Daniel’s Aramaic, his accuracy with regard to Belshazzar, his use of Akkadian names, and other historical details eventually forced liberals to modify their position to recognize that parts of the book were written closer in time to the sixth century—though liberals still deny the historicity of chs. 1–6 because of their miraculous content. The new critical view is that chs. 2–6 were

originally independent stories of the royal court that originated sometime in the Persian period and were brought together in written form (Aramaic?) prior to the second century B.C. By this view, chapter 1 contains its own story but also introduces the other stories and possibly the entire book. Chapters 8–12 were added about 165 B.C., based on their accuracy with regard to events of the Maccabean period. Chapter 7 (also in Aramaic) is difficult to explain. According to the model, it resembles in genre chapters 8–12 but has the language of chapters 2–6. According to the theory, it may have been composed independently during the early part of the Maccabean period and was used by the complier (author of chaps. 8–12?) of the book as a transition between the two parts.13

11 Liberals prefer the term “pseudepigraph,” which means “written falsely,” but which is not an English word and therefore masks what they believe about the book.

12 The problem with this is, 8:12-14 describes the cleansing of the temple by the Maccabees according to a precise timetable. The temple was cleansed in December of 164, likely after the death of Antiochus IV. Why would the author get the end of Antiochus IV’s life right in ch. 8, but wrong in ch. 11?
This model is considerably more complicated than the earlier authorship model, and is purely conjectural. In fact, these are characteristics of liberal theories of authorship for the Bible in general: they are more complicated than accepting the claims made by the biblical text, and they lack any shred of objective evidence in their support. There have been no manuscript discoveries of a pre-Maccabean text of Daniel that is different from the MT, and it is known that the Old Greek text of Daniel is an edited version of the MT that reflects more directly Maccabean events and a political agenda. No ancient writer indicates knowledge of a piecemeal composition of Daniel. The simplest theory of authorship is, of course, that Daniel wrote the whole book. In addition, most sections of Daniel would not make sense on their own, and most assume information previously stated in the book. The new critical view of Daniel is a desperate attempt to formulate hypotheses to match the data, so that the only late parts of the book are the ones which were supposedly forged after the fact.14

Responses to the Critical View

Many superb scholars have written thoroughly researched and brilliantly reasoned responses to the liberal denial of the authenticity of the book of Daniel.15 The liberals have given exactly the same response to every one of these missives: a silent wave of the hand. E. B. Pusey’s Daniel the Prophet, published in 1885, defends the historicity of the book of Daniel from every possible angle, and with great erudition. Pusey was Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, one of the world’s leading Semitics scholars, and also a believer who accepted the Bible as the Word of God. His arguments have not been answered to this day; modern scholars totally ignore this book, or else dismiss it as an exercise in apologetics—a caricature, since it is their works which are an exercise in apologetics, whereas Pusey’s work examines the evidence honestly out of a concern for truth. Thus, the liberals simply continue to repeat the same tired old criticisms that have been rebutted time and again. But what else can they do? Their only other option is to admit that Daniel’s prophecies came from God, in which case they would have to accept the entire Bible, repent of their lifestyle of sin, and bow the knee to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

The importance of one’s theology to his view of the authenticity of Daniel cannot be overstated. If one believes that the Bible is the Word of God, it follows that the claims it makes to have been written by


14 It may be noted that there is no reason why a prophecy must be recorded in writing before it is fulfilled for it to be a genuine prophecy, as the critics would want us to believe. In fact, a few parts of the prophecies of chs. 2, 7, and 8 were fulfilled by the time Daniel wrote his book. The same is true of prophecies in many other books of the Bible, such as Samuel–Kings, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

a sixth century eyewitness must be true (Dan 7:1; 8:27; 9:2; 10:2; 12:4). Conversely, if one starts with the presupposition that the Bible is nothing more than a human product, the only possible explanation is that the book was composed after the last historical events it records, which are thought to be in 165/4 B.C. The nature of Daniel’s prophecies forces a choice between one of these two options; there simply is no middle ground. In such a discussion it is the spiritual issues that are primarily disputed, and these drive one’s interpretation of the history.

The purpose of responding to the critical assault on the authenticity of Daniel is not to convince the critics. They have already proven beyond question that will not be convinced. The purpose is to strengthen the faith of believers, to convince unbelievers who are open to being convinced, and to correct the misconceptions of those believers who have been shaken by higher criticism. The latter group must be shown that the critical assault is evidence not of problems in the book of Daniel, but rather of problems in liberal theology, and of the strength of the book of Daniel. There is much objective evidence in existence for the authenticity of the book of Daniel which the truth-seeking scholar may examine, in spite of the theologically-charged tone of the debate.

The arguments presented below represent only some key points in support of the authenticity of the book of Daniel. Others have written far more exhaustively on the subject, as has already been noted.

The book’s self-claims. Perhaps the first reason to accept a sixth century date of Daniel is that the book itself claims to have been written in the sixth century. The burden of proof is on those who reject this date.

The unity of Daniel. It will be argued in the discussion of the argument of Daniel that the book forms a literary unity, thereby excluding the liberal attempt to only date to the second century the parts which give them the greatest trouble. Here it may be noted that it is also not clear why ch. 1 would be written in Hebrew if chs. 1–6 were originally a single composition. In addition, if chs. 2–6 were supposedly Aramaic stories of the Persian court, then why is 2:1-4a written in Hebrew? The switch in language at this point makes sense in the canonical book, but not if ch. 2 was originally an independent fragment.

---

16 Even if the autograph (original copy) of the book of Daniel were discovered intact, and it were indisputably shown to date from the sixth century B.C., the critics would not fall on their faces before the Most High God, confess that the Bible is the inerrant and infallible Word of God, repent of their sins, and ask Jesus to save them. If Nebuchadnezzar’s original letter in ch. 4 were dug up somewhere, if Babylonian and Persian court records were found which note the position and nationality of Belteshazzar/Daniel, if a palace of Darius the Mede were excavated and annals of his reign were discovered, if Darius’ letter of 6:25-27 were found, liberals would deny that the book of Daniel is the Word of God all the same. By and large, they would persist in unbelief. The evidence which already exists in favor of an early date of Daniel is indisputable proof of the book’s authenticity, and this has done nothing to shake the liberal consensus. This is because the issues in biblical interpretation are not mere intellectual concerns, but spiritual ones. Those who will not believe what Moses wrote will persist in unbelief even in the face of resurrection from the dead (Luke 16:31). Indeed, the Pharisees and Sadducees themselves, like many contemporary critics, believed on the basis of irrefutable evidence that Jesus rose from the dead (cf. Matt 28:11-15), yet they still did not believe His claim to be the divine Son of God.

So what would happen if an early manuscript of the book of Daniel were discovered? The critics would probably act like it is no big deal, and would try to ignore its obvious spiritual implications. If someone cornered a critic and forced him to respond, there are many things he could say. “We have no explanation for Daniel’s startling predictions.” Or, “Daniel’s predictions were not one hundred percent accurate. It would be a gross leap in logic to claim that the entire Bible is perfectly true and accurate just because some of Daniel’s prophecies are.” Or, “We have misread the book of Daniel under the influence of Christian interpretation. Daniel did not actually mean to write about future kings and empires.” Or, “Daniel must have discovered these truths through occultic divination and astrology.” Such objections would only reveal the real reason for the critical unbelief, which is a wicked heart. Lack of proof and evidence is not and never was the reason for their unbelief. The liberals are only making excuses to avoid believing the Bible.
Unexplained content. A major problem for liberals is that they have been unable to offer a satisfactory explanation as to why and how such key elements of the book of Daniel as Darius the Mede and the vision of ch. 7 were created, if fictitious. They cannot adequately explain the symbolism in the visions, or find traditions that Daniel drew upon to create them, or find a motive for creating them.

Obscure historical content. The book of Daniel contains long stories about obscure historical personalities who were probably otherwise unknown in the second century. Examples are Belshazzar, Darius the Mede, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Darius the Mede was so obscure that he is not recognized to this day by liberal scholars, though he is sufficiently attested by extrabiblical sources. Only an eyewitness could have accurately recorded such persons and events. Apocryphal and pseudepigraphical literature routinely garble historical facts concerning even such major entities as Nebuchadnezzar and the Assyrian Empire. Daniel 11 contains a full and accurate history of the entire Seleucid-Ptolemy conflict, a history which ranges over a period of about 150 years. It would be quite difficult for a Jew writing in 164 to discover and record all of this history accurately.

Akkadian words. There are a number of genuine Akkadian names in Daniel, which obviously reflects a sixth century Babylonian setting. Also, Dan 6:7 (in Aramaic) and Dan 9:27 (in Hebrew) use terms which reflect official Akkadian legal terminology, as Shalom Paul has demonstrated. A second century pseudonymous writer in Palestine could hardly be expected to use such terminology, whereas Daniel, as a high official in the Babylonian and Persian courts, would naturally employ the official legal terminology of his time and place.

The Old Greek redaction. As noted below, the Old Greek (OG) text of Daniel intentionally modifies the MT of Daniel in 9:24-27 to fit events in the Maccabean period, and throughout the book it makes obscure references explicit and demonstrates a clearer anti-Seleucid bias. This is evidence that the original text of Daniel was not written by a patriot in the Maccabean period, and that the vision of 9:24-27 cannot be explained on the hypothesis that it describes events in the Maccabean period.

Ezekiel’s references. Ezekiel refers to Daniel three times (Ezek 14:14, 20; 28:3), and liberals admit that his book was written in the sixth century. Although liberals can in no way admit that Ezekiel knew of the prophet Daniel, they have not found any convincing alternative explanation for these references. The best they have been able to do is to interpret them as referring to a certain Danel from the Tale of Aqhat in Ugaritic mythology. However, it stretches credulity to believe that Ezekiel and his Jewish audience were even aware of such an obscure pre-1200 figure from Ugaritic mythology, and it is unthinkable that Yahweh, speaking to Ezekiel, would appeal to a mythical, pagan “Danel” as someone who would have a special ability to intercede with Yahweh on behalf of Israel. The Daniel to whom Yahweh refers is noted for his righteousness, whereas the Ugaritic Danel is called “man of Repha,” identifying him as a leader of the Rephaim (Nephilim). He is described as praying to the idol of Baal and eating ceremonial meals in the temple of Baal. He is said to have worshipped his ancestors and to have offered oblations to idols. The only Daniel whom the Jewish exilic community would have known is the Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar’s court, who had already earned a reputation for possessing legendary wisdom and perfect righteousness. In God’s eyes, Daniel was of the same stature as Noah and Job, and his fame had spread throughout the empire. The alternative liberal theory only shows the depth of absurdities to which the unsaved mind will descend to maintain its denial of the Bible’s divine origin.

---

Extrabiblical references. *First Maccabees* 2.60 refers to Daniel’s deliverance from the lions as if it is common knowledge, and *1 Macc.* 2.59 refers to the deliverance of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah from the fire in the same way. Daniel is also referenced in *Third Maccabees* (6.7), *Fourth Esdras* (12.11), *Fourth Maccabees* (16.3, 21; 18.13), and throughout *Bel and the Dragon*. Although the dates of these works are disputed, at least some of them are close enough to 165 B.C., if not earlier, so that these references support an early date of the book of Daniel. Josephus claims that Alexander the Great treated the Jews favorably because they showed him Daniel’s prophecies concerning his rise. Although Josephus’ story is partly legendary, it probably has a kernel of truth to it; it obviously would have served the Jews well to show Alexander how their prophets had predicted his defeat of Persia.

The Dynastic Prophecy. A most interesting witness to the authenticity of Daniel’s prophecies of the rise of Greece is the existence of a counter-prophecy manufactured by Darius III between his defeat at Issus by Alexander the Great and the Battle of Gaugamela. The Dynastic Prophecy, which is contained on a poorly preserved cuneiform tablet (BM 40623), purports to be a prophecy of the rise and fall of dynasties and empires, from the Neo-Babylonian conquest of Assyria to the conflict between Alexander the Great and Darius III, and beyond. The prophecy refers to personages cryptically, but the descriptions are clear enough to enable precise identifications. It is historically accurate up to its description of the invasion of the Persian Empire by Alexander the Great, and the Persian defeat at Issus. But then the prophecy describes in glowing terms how Darius III will refit his army and, with the gods marching at his side, will crush the Greek army, carry off their booty, and bring peace and prosperity to the land of Akkad while canceling their taxes (3.12-23). Since it was Alexander who crushed Darius, the piece was bogus as a prophecy, and was intended for propaganda purposes only. It concludes by giving what appears to be brief, bogus predictions of a few kings to follow Darius III so as make the prophecy look authentic (4.1-6). The text concludes with statement that it is a secret of the great gods which may only be shown to the initiated (4.7-9; cf. Dan 8:26; 12:9-10). The end of the tablet (4.10-14) is badly broken but evidently is a colophon which purports to give the name of the scribe and the date on which the tablet was composed (both likely bogus).

The Dynastic Prophecy is written in exactly the style of Daniel 11, probably because Daniel’s prophecies had come true to date and were so well known. It predicts the rise and fall of several empires, uses what would be archaisms for later readers of the prophecy, and refers to kings by cryptic descriptions, rather than by name. It therefore appears that the Dynastic Prophecy was composed as a counter to Daniel’s prophecy of the powerlessness of Persia against Alexander (Dan 8:7-8, 20-21; 11:3). Daniel’s prophecies were evidently well known in Babylon, and Alexander probably encouraged the Jews to make these prophecies known in order to support his own propaganda campaign. The existence of a clear counter-prophecy to Daniel 11 not only shows Daniel’s reputation for accurately predicting history up to 330 B.C.; it also shows that the great bulk of Daniel 11–12, whose style the Dynastic Prophecy emulates, was already in existence before 330 B.C., and therefore that Daniel accurately predicted the whole history of the Ptolemies and Seleucids down to 164 B.C. before Alexander the Great had even finished conquering the Persian Empire.

---

18 Josephus *Ant.* 11.8.5 (11.337).

19 For an analysis, text, and translation, see Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, 24-37. Also see Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 231; William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., eds., *Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, vol. 1 of *The Context of Scripture* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 481-82. Grayson notes that it is “not impossible” that the small fragment BM 34903 could be part of the same text (Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, 24).
Dead Sea Scrolls. As argued in detail in the separate section below ("The Hebrew and Aramaic Text of Daniel"), the existence of numerous and very early manuscripts of Daniel at Qumran is strong evidence that the book was written well before 165 B.C.

The language of the book. Both the Aramaic and the Hebrew used in the book of Daniel are clearly earlier than that in use in the second century B.C., as is noted in the separate sections below. The evidence available for dating Daniel’s language has been greatly multiplied by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Prophecy fulfilled after 164 B.C. The whole reason why liberals reject a sixth century date is to avoid having to admit that Daniel recorded true prophecies of such a nature that they could not have been merely guessed beforehand. But even if a second century date of Daniel is accepted, the “problem” of fulfilled prophecy does not go away. The book still prophesies the rise of Rome—predictable but still uncertain in 164—the fact of the crucifixion (9:26), the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome (9:26), and events of the end times. One of the most remarkable prophecies is the timetable of seventy weeks in 9:24-27, which gives the exact number of days from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem (Neh 2:1-8) until Christ’s triumphal entry. The liberal response has been to ignore the Christian interpretation of these passages and to propound alternative interpretations which nevertheless cannot make sense of the text. Barnes’ comments on 9:27 are worth quoting:

> After this protracted examination of the meaning of this prophecy, all the remark which it seems proper to make is, that this prediction could have been the result only of inspiration. There is the clearest evidence that the prophecy was recorded long before the time of the Messiah, and it is manifest that it could not have been the result of any natural sagacity. . . . How could such events have been foreseen except by Him who knows all things? How could the order have been determined? How could the time have been fixed? How could it be anticipated that the Messiah, the Prince, would be cut off? . . . These things lie beyond the range of natural sagacity, and if they are fairly implied in this prophecy, they demonstrate that this. . . book is from God.20

Canonical status. The Jews viewed the book of Daniel as canonical Scripture, which shows that they believed it was authentic. The book of Daniel was never disputed by anyone in ancient Judaism, other than the theologically liberal Sadducees, who rejected all the prophets. Finley argues that the Jews originally grouped the book of Daniel with the Prophets, and at a later time moved it to the Writings, though doubtless the man Daniel was held to be a prophet regardless. Finley concludes his analysis with the following remarks:

> If Daniel, whose book was widely known and circulated at least by the late second century B.C. (1 Macc. 2:60; 4QDan1, 4QDan2), was considered a prophet, how did he achieve this status? If the book was composed in the early second century B.C., as is commonly supposed, then the author succeeded in fooling his readers into believing that Daniel was a true prophet. This is difficult to accept in light of the short span of time between the alleged author and the use of his book on a par with Scripture.21

Use of the tetragrammaton. The multiple occurrences of the tetragrammaton (יְהֹוָה, Yahweh) in Daniel 9 show that that chapter could not have been composed during the Maccabean period, for the Jewish superstition against using the name “Yahweh” had already developed well before that time. Critics who say this shows that chs. 1–8 were written later overlook the fact that chs. 2–7 use the Aramaic term

---

20 Barnes, Daniel, 2:189-90.

“God of heaven” (Aramaic Ezra does not use “Yahweh,” either), while Daniel has no reason to use the name “Yahweh” in chs. 1 and 8.

The Aramaic of Daniel

At one time, the date of Daniel’s Aramaic was a subject on which liberals could yield no ground: Daniel’s Aramaic had to be a type of Aramaic that was in use in 165 B.C. However, since the newer revision of the critical theory claims that only the Aramaic of ch. 7, if that, was composed in the second century, a fourth century date for the Aramaic of Daniel could now considered marginally acceptable for critics—but still not a sixth century date, since that would imply an accurate, eyewitness account. However, since the book of Daniel was evidently composed as a unity, the date of Daniel’s Aramaic is still relevant to the discussion. In addition, if the liberals openly admitted that Daniel’s Aramaic could not be second century, it would weaken their case considerably.

Many conservative scholars have done excellent work on the subject of the Aramaic of Daniel. In the late nineteenth century, E. B. Pusey, the Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, did a definitive study of the Aramaic of Daniel, and presented a detailed list of 121 different words and phrases (not different occurrences) that occur in Daniel’s Aramaic but are lost or rare in the Aramaic of the Targums and the Gemara.22 In the early twentieth century, Robert Dick Wilson, a Semitics professor at Princeton, did his own study of the Aramaic of Daniel, once again resulting in a conclusive demonstration that it is early.23 In the mid-twentieth century, Kenneth Kitchen, a noted British Egyptologist, presented a comprehensive argument that the Aramaic of Daniel could reasonably have been the type of language in use in the sixth century.24

In 1970, the Harvard-educated scholar Gleason Archer brought the Aramaic used in the Dead Sea Scrolls to bear on the problem for the first time, which dramatically altered the discussion.25 Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, there was very little information available regarding Aramaic in the second century B.C. Archer compared the Aramaic of The Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen) with Daniel’s Aramaic. The Genesis Apocryphon is thought to have been originally composed in the third century B.C.—well before the liberal date for the composition of Daniel—while the manuscript 1QapGen was copied in the late first century B.C. Archer finds that the Aramaic of the Apocryphon is significantly different than Daniel’s, and contains many features of later Aramaic. The obvious conclusion is that “the Aramaic of Daniel comes from a considerably earlier period than the second century B.C.”26

More recently, Zdravko Stefanovic did a comprehensive comparison of the Aramaic of Daniel (DA) with Old Aramaic (OA, i.e., the type of Aramaic in use from 925 to 700 B.C. [Fitzmyer]) for his doctoral dissertation at Andrews University. This dissertation was evidently of high quality, since it was published in the normally liberal and prestigious Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series (University of Sheffield) in 1992.27 Stefanovic states his conclusion as follows: “The text of DA in its

---

22 Pusey, Daniel the Prophet, 482-98. See also pp. 98-114.


26 Ibid., 169.
present form (including ch. 7) contains a significant amount of material similar to OA texts. The key desideratum coming out of this study is that the search for features in DA of an early date should be pursued more intensively in the future.²⁸

A few features of Daniel’s Aramaic may be noted briefly here. First, Daniel’s Aramaic is orthographically sparse, whereas Qumranic literature that is written in Aramaic has many matres lectionis, as do the Targumim.²⁹ Second, while Daniel’s Aramaic is very close to Ezra’s, it should be remembered that it is a century earlier than Ezra’s, and therefore should be slightly more archaic. Third, although the Aramaic of Daniel is much closer to the Aramaic used in manuscripts from Elephantine, Egypt (ca. 400 B.C.) than to the Aramaic of sectarian Qumran literature, it is more archaic than the Elephantine Aramaic. For example, biblical Aramaic always uses ָא instead of א, while the Elephantine papyri sometimes use א. Fourth, the Aramaic MT of Daniel sometimes uses ה as the marker of the determined form, whereas later Aramaic (and 4QDan⁵) always uses כ. Fifth, there are many orthographic Qere readings in the Aramaic sections of Ezra and Daniel. It seems that the Masoretes were updating the Imperial Aramaic of the Bible to resemble more closely the later form of Aramaic which they knew as a living language. These Qere readings should be studied for evidence of archaisms.

The Hebrew of Daniel

In assessing the language of the book of Daniel, the bulk of conservative effort has been expended on proving an early date of Daniel’s Aramaic, rather than his Hebrew. However, it is the Hebrew sections of Daniel—chs. 8 and 11 in particular—that are most troublesome to the anti-supernaturalists. Thus, the dating of the Hebrew sections of Daniel ought to command greater attention in the discussion. In 1885, Pusey defended the antiquity of Daniel’s Hebrew based on what was known in his day about the historical development of the Hebrew language.³⁰ In 1965, Martin briefly defended the sixth century date of Daniel’s Hebrew against Driver’s claims to the contrary.³¹ To some extent, the lack of focus on Daniel’s Hebrew was understandable prior to the discovery and publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls, since before this little was known about the state of the Hebrew language in the Maccabean period. However, the manuscripts from the Judean desert have provided copious examples of the way Hebrew was written around the time when liberals claim chs. 8–12 of the book of Daniel were composed. When these manuscripts are compared with the Hebrew MT of Daniel, it is readily apparent that Daniel’s Hebrew is far earlier than the Hebrew of the Maccabean period.

The Hebrew of Daniel has relatively sparse orthography in the MT, though with some mixture of full and defective spellings, not unlike other OT books from the exilic period and from throughout the OT as a whole. According to Tov, “The books with the fullest orthography are Qoheleth, Canticles, and Esther,


²⁸ Ibid., 108.

²⁹ It may be asked why there was such an increase in matres lectionis even while Aramaic was still a commonly spoken language. Certainly the use of matres lectionis gave more clarity at a time when Greek was becoming pervasive in the broader world. Even in biblical Hebrew and Aramaic, some matres lectionis are used for clarity.

³⁰ Pusey, Daniel the Prophet, 98-114, 459-79.

followed by Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles”—not, notably, Daniel. Tov also notes that the orthography of the MT is generally inconsistent, so if Daniel were written around 534 B.C., it would be expected to exhibit a certain amount of mixed orthography. However, in comparison to most Qumran biblical manuscripts (not texts authored by the Qumran community), the orthography of Daniel in the MT can only be considered very sparse. The longest and most famous of the Qumran scrolls, 1QIsa, dates to about 100 B.C. and is replete with plene spellings—as are other Qumran biblical manuscripts. Two of the Qumran manuscripts of Daniel, 4QDanb (chs. 5–8; A.D. 20–50) and 4QDanb (9:12-17; 125–100 B.C.) exhibit significantly fuller orthography than the MT, even though the latter manuscript was written only half a century after liberals believe the autograph was composed. If Dan 8–12 were written in 165 B.C., it ought to have similar orthography to the biblical manuscripts copied at Qumran and all of the Qumran sectarian compositions, with the plene spellings which characterized the written Hebrew of the day. But the orthography of the Hebrew text of Daniel in the MT is far more sparse than the orthography of the Qumran practice. This demonstrates that the MT of Daniel, as a text type, dates from a much earlier time than that of the composition of the Qumran scrolls. Since the Qumran scrolls range in date from ca. 250 B.C. to A.D. 68, the book of Daniel must have been composed well before the second century B.C. The liberal date of the book of Daniel, 165 B.C., cannot be maintained in the face of the orthographic data.

The Hebrew and Aramaic Text of Daniel

There are eight Qumran scrolls of Daniel: 1QDan, 1QDanb, 4QDanb, 4QDanc, 4QDand, 4QDanb, 4QDane, and 6QpapDan. For Qumran, this is a significant number: there are only eight manuscripts of all the minor prophets, and six each of the much longer books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In fact, there are only five books for which there were more manuscripts at Qumran than Daniel: the Psalms, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Genesis, and Exodus. This in itself ought to be shocking to liberals, who believe that the book of Daniel was first composed decades after the earliest Qumran scrolls were written. There are also numerous extrabiblical texts from Qumran which are related to Daniel, and many more which

33 Ibid., 226-29.
34 See Tov, Textual Criticism, 108-9 for a description of the orthographic practices of the Qumran scribes. See also Tov, 109-10 for a description of the distinctive morphology of the Qumran practice. If the morphology of Daniel in the MT is far different than the morphology of the Qumran practice, this is evidence that the book of Daniel was composed at an earlier stage in the development of the Hebrew language.
35 On the orthography of the Qumran sectarian compositions, see Tov, Textual Criticism, 109.
36 The oldest Qumran manuscript that clearly exhibits the orthography of the Qumran practice is probably 4QQohb (see Tov, Textual Criticism, 109), which is one of the oldest biblical scrolls from Qumran (Tov, Textual Criticism, 106), and is dated in DJD to 175–150 B.C.—exactly when the liberals say Daniel was written. It should be noted that the Qumran community did not exist prior to the Maccabean period, and thus manuscripts which were copied by the community would be later.
37 As a last resort, someone could claim that a second century writer deliberately used archaic language. However, there is no evidence for such a practice in other Hebrew or Aramaic writings, and it may be questioned whether a writer could be skillful enough not to slip in some contemporary features of the language. The date of the language is very likely to match the date of composition.
38 For a chart of manuscripts at Qumran, see Tov, Textual Criticism, 104-5.
contain references to Daniel. Daniel is supposed to be the latest book of the OT, and therefore the one which had the least opportunity to circulate. The evidence from Qumran belies the liberal viewpoint.

It is not just the number of Daniel scrolls from Qumran that is problematic, but also the early date of some of them. According to Tov, who holds to the late date of Daniel, “Two manuscripts of Daniel, 4QDan\textsuperscript{c}, containing portions of the second part of the book, were probably copied between 125 and 100 BCE, not more than sixty years after the completion of the final stage of the editing of that book.”\textsuperscript{39} The oldest Qumran texts of Daniel have almost exactly the same paleography as the big Isaiah scroll, and therefore must be dated to the same time, i.e., the last quarter of the second century B.C. Liberals probably would have been tempted to date the Daniel scrolls later, but they had dated 1QIsa\textsuperscript{a} first. Of course, it is unlikely that copies of the book of Daniel would be circulating widely and in divergent forms already only thirty-five to sixty years after its spurious composition.\textsuperscript{40}

4QDan\textsuperscript{a} has a script that is very similar to 4QSam\textsuperscript{a}, and therefore has a similar date. According to \textit{DJD}, this is the middle of the first century B.C. Its orthography is sparse, very much like the MT.\textsuperscript{41} 4QDan\textsuperscript{b} has fuller orthography; יָשֶׁר is always spelled with a \textit{waw} in both the Hebrew and Aramaic sections. It is dated to A.D. 20–50.\textsuperscript{42} 4QDan\textsuperscript{c} is dated to the late second century B.C., “no more than about a half century younger than the autograph,”\textsuperscript{43} i.e., no later than 115 B.C. This is significant because 4QDan\textsuperscript{c} contains parts of chs. 10–11, which is the part of the book of Daniel that gives the liberals the most trouble. It has only slightly fuller orthography than the MT.\textsuperscript{44} 4QDan\textsuperscript{d} is dated to the last quarter of the first century B.C., and is orthographically similar to the MT.\textsuperscript{45} 4QDan\textsuperscript{e} dates to ca. 115 B.C. It has only a few words from Dan 9:12-17, but exhibits fuller orthography where expected, against the MT.\textsuperscript{46} This is significant, because it would be quite unexpected for such a version of Daniel to appear only fifty years after the autograph.

---

\textsuperscript{39} Emanuel Tov, \textit{Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible} (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 106.

\textsuperscript{40} Todd Beall thinks that the dates commonly cited for these manuscripts may be based on liberal presuppositions about the date of Daniel, and that they actually may have been written between 175 and 150 B.C. The Daniel manuscripts have not been carbon dated, though carbon dates are not reliable.

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{DJD}, XVI:240-42.

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{DJD}, XVI:256-57

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{DJD}, XVI:270, quoting Frank Moore Cross.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{DJD}, XVI:271.

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{DJD}, XVI: 279.

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{DJD}, XVI: 287-89.
Manuscripts of Daniel from the Judean Desert

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text No.</th>
<th>Publication</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Text Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1Q71</td>
<td>DJD I</td>
<td>1QDan⁹</td>
<td>1:10-17; 2:2-6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Q72</td>
<td>DJD I</td>
<td>1QDan⁹</td>
<td>3:22-30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4Q114</td>
<td>DJD XVI</td>
<td>4QDan⁹</td>
<td>10:5-9, 11-16, 21; 11:1-2, 13-17, 25-29</td>
<td>no later than 115 B.C.⁵⁰</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4Q115</td>
<td>DJD XVI</td>
<td>4QDan⁹</td>
<td>3:8-10?, 23-25; 4:5-9, 12-16; 7:15-23</td>
<td>25–1 B.C.⁵¹</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4Q116</td>
<td>DJD XVI</td>
<td>4QDan⁹</td>
<td>9:12-17</td>
<td>125–100 B.C.⁵² or 115 B.C.⁵³</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6Q7</td>
<td>DJD III</td>
<td>6QpapDan</td>
<td>8:16-17?, 20-21?; 10:8-16; 11:33-36, 38</td>
<td>A.D. 50⁵⁴</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The contents of the Qumran manuscripts of Daniel could also be listed by the verses covered, as below:

1:10-17 ························· 1QDan⁹
1:16-20 ························· 4QDan⁹
2:2-6 ··························· 1QDan⁹
2:9-11, 19-49 ··············· 4QDan⁹
3:1-2 ··························· 4QDan⁹
3:8-10?, 23-25 ··············· 4QDan⁹
3:22-30 ························· 1QDan⁹
4:5-9, 12-16 ··················· 4QDan⁹
4:29-30 ························· 4QDan⁹
5:5-7, 12-14, 16-19 ············· 4QDan⁹

⁴⁷ DJD, XXXIX: 398.

⁴⁸ So Tov, Textual Criticism, 116. Tov also notes on p. 211 that 4QDan⁹ exhibits the peculiar characteristic of marking verse divisions by the use of spaces. On p. 215, he that a scribe has crossed out words in Dan 8:1 of this manuscript to make a correction which brings the text into line with the MT.

⁴⁹ DJD, XXXIX: 427.


⁵¹ DJD, XXXIX: 419.

⁵² Tov, Textual Criticism, 106, 169.

⁵³ DJD, XXXIX: 384.

⁵⁴ DJD, XXXIX: 433.
The Greek Versions of Daniel

The Greek text of Daniel is unique in the Old Testament in that it is found in two different forms throughout the book, called Old Greek (OG) and Theodotion (Th). Of course, a Greek version called “Theodotion” exists for other OT books, but in none of these books can Theodotion be considered the primary Greek text of the book. In Daniel, however, nearly all extant Greek witnesses are of the Theodotionic text type. The complete OG text of Daniel is preserved in only one Greek witness: Codex 88 (Codex Chisianus), a ninth to eleventh century Christian manuscript. The complete text is also preserved in Syriac in the Syro-Hexapla, a Syriac translation of the fifth column of Origen’s Hexapla. Most of Daniel is also extant in Chester Beatty Papyrus 967 (third century A.D.), which preserves the pre-hexaplaric OG text. Few MSS of the OG text of Daniel are extant because it was rejected by the early church. Jerome says in the prologue to his translation of Daniel, “The churches of our Lord and Saviour do not read the prophet Daniel according to the seventy translators, using rather Theodotion’s edition. Why this has happened I do not know. . . . but this one thing I can affirm, that it deviates widely from the truth, and sound judgment has been shown in its rejection.”56 The OG text of Daniel was the only LXX translation of an OT book that was rejected by the early church. It was simply too divergent from the Hebrew text, especially in the important messianic prophecy of the seventy weeks.57 Note that the book of Daniel is not quoted at clause length in the NT, and there is no clear use of the OG by NT writers.

The Old Greek was not translated from the proto-MT and then edited, but is rather a literal translation of a distinct Hebrew Vorlage. Many of the differences between the OG and the MT are the product of small changes in the form and vocalization of Hebrew words, which would not be the case if a Greek translation of the proto-MT were merely edited in Greek. The presence of manuscripts at Qumran containing a Hebrew Vorlage for the LXX in portions of some books provides indirect evidence for the existence of a Hebrew Vorlage for the OG in Daniel.


In his study of the OG of the entire book of Daniel, McCrystall concludes that “the Old Greek is anti-Seleucid and unashamedly pro-Ptolemaic.” He further concludes that “the Old Greek translation of Daniel was made between the years 161 and 152 B.C., and earlier in this period rather than later. It may have been an invitation to the Jewish members of the Ptolemaic army to support the intentions of Ptolemy VI to invade Coele-Syria and in doing so liberate the Pious Jews from the dominance of the pro-Seleucid members of their community.” Pusey calls OG “a direct but fraudulent encouragement in the Maccabean struggle.” My own exegesis of OG in Dan 9:24-27 revealed that the immediate aim of the redactor in that passage was to change the referents of the prophecy to events in the time of Antiochus IV and the Maccabean struggle. Whatever the redactor’s motives may have been, it is hard to believe that such a large and systematic reworking of the prophecy of Dan 9:24-27, along with the rest of the book, could have come about innocently. It is also unlikely that the revision came about piecemeal, since most of the individual alterations only make sense as part of a systematic revision. The OG redaction, like all perversions of Scripture, ultimately must be considered a Satanic attempt to corrupt the Word of God. Satan singled out Daniel’s extraordinary prophecies as a special target of attack even before the final vision was revealed (Dan 10:12-13), and he has been fighting the book ever since.

In conclusion, an important implication of my study of Dan 9:24-27 may be noted: the existence of a text that is obviously modified to “prophesy” events of the early Maccabean period is powerful evidence that the original text of Daniel was composed long before that time. As Pusey says, “People do not gloss the book of a contemporary. It is not until a book has long had authority, and has had its place in the minds or souls of men, that men write glosses upon it. They do so, because their text has authority.” Further, if the original text fit the Maccabean period perfectly, no later editor would change it in a way that makes it much more mysterious and removes the references to clearly fulfilled prophecy. The only reasonable explanation for the existence of these two divergent text forms, MT and OG, is that the proto-MT was composed well before the Maccabean period. Thus, although OG originated as a Satanic perversion of Scripture, and liberals still use it today to try to create confusion as to the true text of Daniel, it has actually become a powerful witness to the pre-Maccabean origin, and thus to the authenticity, of Daniel’s original text.

Outline of Daniel

Summary Outline

I. Narrative 1:1–6:28
   A. Daniel’s early life in Babylon 1:1-21


59 Ibid., 386. To be more precise, it is the Vorlage of OG that was created between these dates. Most liberal scholars do not mention a date for the creation of OG, presumably because a date between 161 and 152 leaves very little time between their presumed date of composition of the MT (165) and that of OG. Further evidence for an early date of OG is that it is quoted in 1 Maccabees (ca. 100 B.C.), meaning that the translation must have been circulating widely before that time, and the Vorlage before that, and the proto-MT before that if the Vorlage is secondary. Thomas Finley has shown that the OG of Daniel 4–6 is also secondary to the proto-MT (“The Old Greek of Daniel 4–6.” Paper presented at the meeting of the Far West Regional of the ETS, Sun Valley, CA, May 2, 2003).

60 Pusey, Daniel the Prophet, 329.

61 Pusey, Daniel, 330.
B. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the image 2:1-49
C. Deliverance from the fiery furnace 3:1-30
D. Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation and repentance 4:1-37
E. Belshazzar’s feast and judgment 5:1-31
F. Daniel delivered from the lions’ den 6:1-28

II. Prophetic 7:1–12:13
A. Vision of the four beasts 7:1-28
B. Vision of the ram and the he-goat 8:1-27
C. Prayer and the vision of seventy weeks 9:1-27
D. Vision of a great conflict 10:1–12:13

Expanded Outline

I. Narrative 1:1–6:28
A. Daniel’s early life in Babylon 1:1-21
   1. The four youths taken to Babylon and conscripted 1:1-7
   2. Daniel’s refusal to defile himself 1:8-13
   3. The refusal approved 1:14-16
   4. The graduation of the four youths 1:17-21
B. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the image 2:1-49
   1. The king’s ultimatum 2:1-13
   2. Daniel’s request 2:14-16
   3. The secret revealed to Daniel 2:17-24
   4. Daniel brought before the king 2:25-30
   5. The dream described 2:31-35
   6. The dream interpreted 2:36-45
   7. Daniel honored 2:46-49
C. Deliverance from the fiery furnace 3:1-30
   1. The test of loyalty 3:1-7
   2. The accusation against the Jews 3:8-12
   3. The hearing before the king 3:13-18
   4. The three Jews cast into the furnace 3:19-23
   5. The deliverance of the Jews 3:24-27
   6. The king’s change of heart 3:28-30
D. Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation and repentance 4:1-37
   1. Introduction to the letter 4:1-3
   2. The dream described 4:4-18
   3. The dream interpreted 4:19-27
   4. The dream fulfilled 4:28-33
   5. Nebuchadnezzar’s conversion 4:34-37
E. Belshazzar’s feast and judgment 5:1-31
   1. The feast convened 5:1-4
   2. The mysterious writing on the wall 5:5-9
   3. Daniel recommended 5:10-12
   4. The request for the interpretation 5:13-16
   5. The reason for the writing explained 5:17-24
   6. The writing read and interpreted 5:25-28
   7. Daniel’s promotion 5:29
   8. The fall of Babylon 5:30-31
F. Daniel delivered from the lions’ den 6:1-28
1. Daniel in Darius’ administration 6:1-3
2. The plot against Daniel 6:4-9
3. The charge against Daniel 6:10-15
4. Daniel placed in the lions’ den 6:16-18
5. Daniel rescued from the lions’ den 6:19-23
6. The punishment of the conspirators 6:24
7. The reversal of the decree 6:25-27
8. Daniel’s further career 6:28

II. Prophetic 7:1–12:13

A. Vision of the four beasts 7:1-28
   1. Heading 7:1
   2. The vision described 7:2-14
      a. The four beasts 7:2-8
      b. The judgment of the beasts 7:9-12
      c. The establishment of the messianic kingdom 7:13-14
   3. The vision interpreted 7:15-27
      a. The overall interpretation 7:15-18
      b. The interpretation of the fourth beast 7:19-27
   4. Postscript 7:28

B. Vision of the ram and the he-goat 8:1-27
   1. Heading 8:1
   2. The vision described 8:2-14
      a. Setting 8:2
      b. The activity of the ram 8:3-4
      c. The activity of the he-goat 8:5-8
      d. The activity of the horn which grew from insignificance 8:9-14
   3. The vision interpreted 8:15-26
   4. Postscript 8:27

C. Prayer and the vision of seventy weeks 9:1-27
   1. The circumstances of the prayer 9:1-2
   2. The preparation for prayer 9:3
   3. The prayer for forgiveness and restoration 9:4-19
   4. The answer to prayer announced 9:20-23
   5. The prophecy of seventy weeks 9:24-27

D. Vision of a great conflict 10:1–12:13
   1. Prelude to the prophecy 10:1–11:1
      a. Heading 10:1
      b. The prompting of the vision 10:2-3
      c. The initial appearance 10:4-9
      d. The explanation for the appearance 10:10–11:1
         i. The first exchange 10:10-17
         ii. The second exchange 10:18–11:1
   2. The prophecy of a great conflict 11:2–12:4
      a. Heading 11:2a
      b. Prophecies concerning Persia and Greece 11:2b-4
      c. Prophecies concerning the Seleucids 11:5-35
         i. Period from Seleucus I to Antiochus II 11:5-6
         ii. Period of Seleucus II 11:7-9
         iii. Period of Antiochus III 11:10-19
         iv. Period of Seleucus IV 11:20
         v. Period of Antiochus IV 11:21-35
Argument of Daniel

From a structural point of view, Daniel is one of the most straightforward books in the Bible to analyze. It neatly divides into two sections: chs. 1–6 are the narrative section, written in third person, and chs. 7–12 form the prophetic section, written in first person. Of course, there is prophecy in chs. 1–6, and narrative in chs. 7–12; but the prophecies of chs. 1–6 are given within the narrative, while the narratives in chs. 7–12 only provide a background and setting for the visions. The narrative section of Daniel is arranged in chronological order, and so is the prophetic section—i.e., Daniel records his visions in the order that he saw them. The events of chs. 7–8 occur before those of chs. 5–6, but they are not out of sequence within the overall structure of the book.

Some have observed a literary structure called “chiasm” in the Aramaic section of Daniel, chs. 2–7, and they attempt to make a great deal of it. This structure is indeed present, but appears to be an accident, without any interpretive significance, for it does not break up the main division of the book between narrative and prophecy, nor does it interrupt the chronological order of the two main divisions. Chronological sequence is the overall organizing structure of each section, and the overall organizing structure of the book is the content division between narrative and prophecy.

Despite being written in two languages with mixed content, it is evident that the entire book was composed at once, and that it forms a literary unity. For example, ch. 8, which is in Hebrew, mentions the “first” vision, which is the vision of ch. 7 (in Aramaic). Chapter 1, which is about Daniel’s deportation and his training in the king’s court, ends with the statement that Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus, meaning that ch. 1 was not written until sometime after the first year of Cyrus. However, the chapter divisions are abrupt and without transitions, so it is clear that some chapters were written independently and were collated by Daniel when he composed the book. For example, ch. 4 consists entirely of a letter written by Nebuchadnezzar, and 7:1 indicates that Daniel wrote down the vision of ch. 7 shortly after he saw it. Nevertheless, the same themes and characteristic turns of phrase are found throughout the book, and the progressive narration of Daniel’s life also serves to unify the book.

The prophetic visions in Daniel 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8 are exceptionally straightforward to interpret because an interpreting angel or Daniel himself gives the interpretation. In spite of this, modern unbelieving scholars completely misinterpret the visions because they reject the interpretations given in the biblical text. The visions of chs. 9 and 10–12 are harder to interpret—though not impossible—since no interpretation is provided in the text.

Narrative, 1:1–6:28

The narrative section of Daniel, chs. 1–6, is ordered chronologically, with one major storyline per chapter. These stories span the entire period from Daniel’s original capture as a youth in Judah to the final years of his government service in the kingdom of Persia.

---

62 The proposed chiasm is this: chs. 2 and 7 both record a dream of future kingdoms; chs. 3 and 6 record attempts to kill believers through a fiery furnace and a lions’ den, respectively; and chs. 4 and 5 record the judgment of two Babylonian kings, Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar.
Daniel’s early life in Babylon, 1:1-21. Daniel 1 is a background chapter which gives the historical setting of the book. It presents Daniel and his three friends as Judean captives who remained faithful to their God in a pagan land. This chapter contains important messages which parallel the themes of the book: God blesses a refusal to compromise, and He superintends in the actions of pagan governments to work His plan. The first paragraph, 1:1-7, locates the events of the book in a historical time and place and tells how Daniel and his three Jewish friends came to Babylon and entered government service. As soon as they arrived in Babylon, they faced a demand to compromise by eating food that was prohibited by the Law and drinking wine. From the outset, Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself, and his three friends joined with him (1:8). The story of how they refused to compromise is told in 1:8-13. Daniel was determined not to defile himself no matter what the consequences, but also had faith that God would honor his commitment to purity. God did so, strengthening Daniel and his friends with a diet that would normally be weakening, and giving them official approval to maintain their distinct diet (1:14-16). Verses 17-21 describe the completion of the four youths’ training: upon graduation they were found to far surpass all the other wise men of Babylon in wisdom and understanding, and they were accepted into government service—a job which Daniel continued to perform until the first year of Cyrus (1:21).

Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the image, 2:1-49. The events of ch. 2 apparently occurred before the completion of the training of Daniel and his friends. Daniel was not yet supposed to be involved in government service, but finds himself pressed into action. God initiated the events by giving Nebuchadnezzar a “dream” which had the character of a vision, and which was repeated multiple times (2:1). Nebuchadnezzar recognized that this dream was a revelation from God concerning a subject of

---

63 Possibly the verb צָרָה in 1:1 has the sense of “treat as hostile” rather than “besiege”; מָצוֹר has this meaning in Deut 20:19. Probably Nebuchadnezzar sent ambassadors to Jerusalem and made threats and demands, and Jehoiakim complied and became a vassal of Nebuchadnezzar (cf. 1 Kgs 20:1-6). It is also possible that elements of the Babylonian army pursued the retreating Egyptians through Palestine, and that this army forcibly subjugated the nations they passed through along the way.

Also note that Daniel’s statement that this occurred in the third year of Jehoiakim does not contradict the statements in Jeremiah and elsewhere that it occurred in Jehoiakim’s fourth year, since Daniel is using Tishri years, while the others are using Nisan years. The first deportation occurred in Jehoiakim’s third Tishri year but his fourth Nisan year; biblical writers frequently alternate between the two chronological systems. Note that this apparent discrepancy is evidence that Daniel was not forged in the second century, since the forger would simply have copied the dates from elsewhere in the OT.

64 This is the most natural way to read the reference to Nebuchadnezzar’s second year in 2:1. If Daniel and his three friends were deported in Nebuchadnezzar’s first year, then their three-year training period (1:5) would not yet be completed. It could be postulated that Nebuchadnezzar’s accession year was counted as his 0th year, so that his second year would be three years later, and that Daniel’s training period would have just expired. However, the reference to Daniel having understanding in visions and dreams in 1:17 seems to refer to the events of ch. 2. Also, this explains why Daniel and his three friends were not among the group originally called before the king to interpret the dream, even though they were found to be ten times better than the others (1:20)—the term of their education was not yet completed.

65 The reason why God revealed this dream to Nebuchadnezzar, in this way, at this time, was partly to give Daniel the opportunity to be promoted in Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom. But this was also a message from God to the king whom he had chosen to rule the world for a period of time. Nebuchadnezzar was to get the message that God is sovereign over kings and empires, and that it is God’s kingdom that will last forever, not Nebuchadnezzar’s. Therefore Nebuchadnezzar needs to worship and honor the living God, and pay attention to Him. As chs. 3 and 4 reveal, Nebuchadnezzar failed to heed this warning.

Note that one does not have to be a believer to see a vision from God. Two different Pharaohs saw a vision from God (Gen 41:1-36; 2 Chr 35:20-22). So did Pilate’s wife (Matt 27:19). God spoke to Laban in a dream (Gen 31:24). God revealed things in dreams to Pharaoh’s butler and baker (Gen 40). God even gave a dream to a pagan
critical importance, and decided that it was absolutely necessary to find the correct interpretation. He called in his wise men, and demanded that they tell him both his dream and its interpretation, or be killed (2:2-9). If the wise men could not be of value in this crisis, how could they ever be useful? Furthermore, Nebuchadnezzar could not take the chance that the wise men would invent a false interpretation of the dream; if they knew of the mind of God well enough to be able to interpret God’s revelation, then they must also be able to communicate with God to discover the content of the dream. When the diviners admitted that they had no contact with the gods (2:10-11), the king was enraged, and ordered them to be executed as charlatans (2:12-13).

As all the wise men in the kingdom were being rounded up to be killed, the executioner came to get Daniel and his friends (2:14). Daniel, who likely had never seen a vision in his life, went in faith to the king and set a date at which he would tell the king the dream and its interpretation (2:15-16). Daniel and his three friends immediately held a prayer meeting, and prayed in simple faith (2:17-18). When the secret was revealed to Daniel, he responded with a great prayer of thanksgiving (2:19-23). Then, with faith in what God had revealed, Daniel confidently told the chief of Nebuchadnezzar’s guard that he would tell the king the dream and its interpretation (2:24).

When Daniel is brought before the king (2:25-30), he began by clarifying that he had no inherent ability to interpret dreams, but that the God whom he served revealed the secret to him. In 2:31-35, Daniel does the humanly impossible—he tells Nebuchadnezzar what he had dreamed. This must have shocked Nebuchadnezzar, who was then ready to listen to the interpretation which Daniel gave (2:36-45). The dream foretold the succession of world empires from Daniel’s time until the establishment of Christ’s eternal kingdom. The metals of this statue are of declining quality and, excluding the feet and toes, of increasing strength. The kingdoms they represent are in chronological order and of increasing length and size, with each succeeding empire taking over and incorporating the previous one. The head of gold represents the Babylonian Empire (609–539 B.C.); the breast and arms of silver represents the Medo-Persian Empire (539–331 B.C.); the belly and thighs of bronze represents the Greek Empire(s) (331–63 B.C.); the legs of iron represents the Roman Empire (63 B.C.–A.D. 476); and the feet and toes of clay represent the continuation of the Roman Empire (A.D. 476–present). The ten toes (2:42) represent the final state of political power in the fourth of the four empires, and correspond to the ten horns in the vision of Midianite raider (Judg 7:13-14). Today, Charismatics and Pentecostals teach that supernatural experiences are the mark of a true believer, but in Matthew 7:21-23 Jesus denies their claim, and asserts that true believers are those whom He knows, who do God’s will. It is works that are the real giveaway, not supernatural experiences.

Another reason why Nebuchadnezzar was so desperate to get the right interpretation may be that the face of the image was his own (cf. 2:28—“thou art the head of gold”), and he saw it get crushed by the great rock.

The language of the text switches from Hebrew to Aramaic in 2:4 after the words “in Aramaic,” and continues in Aramaic all the way to the end of ch. 7.

The vision of Daniel 2 is one the easiest prophecies in the Bible to interpret. The reason? Daniel interprets it for us. This should eliminate all debate as to its meaning, along with hermeneutical questions. What makes it even easier is that there are relatively few elements in this vision. Daniel’s interpretation of this dream also gives us a model for interpreting prophecy. Daniel says, in a very straightforward and literal manner, what each part of the image represents. His interpretation is just as simple as the dream itself, and there are no double meanings or “already/not yet” fulfillments.

Lehman Strauss points out that this statue shows that civilization has deteriorated over time.

63 B.C. is the date when Pompey conquered Palestine, placing the Jews under Roman control. The Greek kingdoms had begun to lose power to Rome well before this.
ch. 7. This kingdom, along with all the kingdoms of man, is crushed by a stone cut out without hands, which represents an eternal theocratic kingdom.  

In 2:46-49, Nebuchadnezzar responds to Daniel’s revelation by giving him great honor, while giving the glory to Daniel’s God. In fact, chs. 2–4 all conclude with Nebuchadnezzar praising God, and ch. 6 concludes with Darius praising God. The promotion of Daniel to head of state in Babylon shows that the reason why God revealed this dream to Nebuchadnezzar, in this way, at this time, was to give Daniel the opportunity to be promoted in Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom—and to be promoted in a way which would not require him to compromise his loyalty to his God, and which would establish Daniel’s career as a prophet of world history. Daniel also functioned as a missionary who brought saving knowledge of the true God to pagan kings, who in turn caused this message to be proclaimed throughout world empires. The last clause in 2:49 is apparently intended to explain why Daniel was not present for the events of the following chapter, while his newly promoted friends were.

Deliverance from the fiery furnace, 3:1-30. Chapter 3 is very likely set early in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, since it appears to describe a test of loyalty for the officials in the empire which Nebuchadnezzar had inherited from his father. It occurs after the events of ch. 2, since Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego are in positions of authority. Probably it occurred soon after ch. 2, and represents the attempt by native Chaldeans to have their Jewish competitors in government killed. For whatever reason, Daniel evidently was not required to be present on this occasion.

The chapter begins by presenting a test of loyalty to all of the officials in Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom (3:1-7). The king demanded that all the officials bow down to a giant image of Marduk, who was the national patron god of Babylon. In the culture of the day, worshipping Marduk would be like swearing an oath of loyalty to Babylon—or perhaps like pledging allegiance to the flag in modern American culture—while a refusal to worship Marduk would be considered an act of rebellion against the state. The image was placed atop a giant brick kiln which had two levels: a vent at the bottom to control the heat of the furnace, and a door at the top through which to insert bricks—or, in this case, people. The officials

71 The first phase of Christ’s kingdom is the millennium, but His kingdom is never overthrown, and so continues on for all eternity. Pentecost notes several reasons why this stone cannot represent the church: (1) “Christianity did not suddenly fill ‘the whole earth’ (Dan. 2:35) at Christ’s First Advent.” (2) “Though Christ came in the days of the Roman Empire, He did not destroy it.” (3) “The church has not and will not conquer the world’s kingdoms.” (4) “The church is not a kingdom with a political realm, but the future Millennium will be. Thus Nebuchadnezzar’s dream clearly teaches premillennialism, that Christ will return to earth to establish His rule on the earth, thereby subduing all nations.” (J. Dwight Pentecost, “Daniel,” in The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament; Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor, 1985, 1336). I would add that each of the first four empires are literal kingdoms, so the last one must be as well. Also, it is ridiculous to think that we are already in Christ’s kingdom given the prevalence of wickedness in the world.

72 The OG heading (“the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar”) is a spurious exegetical expansion, taken from Jer 52:29.

73 The issue in vv. 12, 14, 18, 28 is that the three Jews would not worship Nebuchadnezzar’s god. These verses as much as state that the idol is an image of Nebuchadnezzar’s chief god.

Some suggest that this image was an image of Nebuchadnezzar, and that he was demanding worship from his officials. But such a concept is completely foreign to Babylonian culture. The kings of Babylon generally did not regard themselves as divine or demand worship. The Pharaohs of Egypt did, but Mesopotamian rulers did not call themselves gods in the same way. However, the Babylonians considered it extremely important for their rulers to participate in national religious festivals, especially in the Marduk cult. A major factor in the fall of Babylon was that Nabonidus failed to observe the New Year’s festival for many years, which caused some angry Babylonians to defect. Even after the Medes and Persians conquered Babylon, the Babylonians initially demanded that the Medo-Persian rulers carry out the prescribed rites at the temple of Marduk.
Dr. Anderson’s Interpretive Guide to the Minor Prophets

Steven D. Anderson
Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS .................................................................................................................................................. III

PREFACE .................................................................................................................................................................. VII

STYLE NOTES ............................................................................................................................................................. VIII

Quotations of the Bible ................................................................................................................................................ viii
A Note on the Divine Name ....................................................................................................................................... viii
Common Abbreviations ........................................................................................................................................... viii
Abbreviations of the Books of the Bible ................................................................................................................... ix

AN INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO HOSEA .................................................................................................................. 1

AUTHOR ................................................................................................................................................................. 1
DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING ..................................................................................................................... 2
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ....................................................................................................................................... 3
OUTLINE OF HOSEA ............................................................................................................................................. 3
ARGUMENT OF HOSEA ........................................................................................................................................ 4

Heading, 1:1 ............................................................................................................................................................ 4
The Sign-Act and Its Explanation, 1:2–3:5 ............................................................................................................. 4
The Imperative to Bring Judgment for Israel’s Rejection of Yahweh and Embrace of Idols, 4:1–5:15 ................. 6
Yahweh’s Desire to Restore Israel Thwarted by Their Refusal to Repent, 6:1–8:14 ........................................... 6
Yahweh’s Abandonment of Israel in Response to Israel’s Abandonment of Yahweh, 9:1–10:15 ..................... 7
Yahweh’s Restoration of Israel after Judgment, 11:1–14:8 ................................................................................. 7
Call to Accept the Message, 14:9 ....................................................................................................................... 8

BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR HOSEA ............................................................................................................................ 9

AN INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO JOEL ...................................................................................................................... 12

HISTORICAL/GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND: LOCUST PLAGUES .................................................................. 12

AUTHOR ................................................................................................................................................................. 12
DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING ..................................................................................................................... 13
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ....................................................................................................................................... 14
THE DAY OF YAHWEH ....................................................................................................................................... 14
OUTLINE OF JOEL ............................................................................................................................................... 15

ARGUMENT OF JOEL ........................................................................................................................................... 16

Heading, 1:1 ............................................................................................................................................................ 16
The Day of Yahweh in Judah, 1:2–2:11 .................................................................................................................. 16
Judah’s Repentance and Restoration, 2:12–27 .................................................................................................... 17
Judah’s Ultimate Restoration at the Ultimate Day of Yahweh, 2:28–3:21 ......................................................... 18

BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR JOEL .................................................................................................................................... 19

AN INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO AMOS ...................................................................................................................... 21

AUTHOR ................................................................................................................................................................. 21
DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING ..................................................................................................................... 22
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ....................................................................................................................................... 22
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .................................................................................................................................. 23
OUTLINE OF AMOS ............................................................................................................................................. 23
ARGUMENT OF AMOS ........................................................................................................................................... 24

Heading, 1:1 ............................................................................................................................................................ 24
Yahweh’s Judgment of Israel in Its Broader Context, 1:2–2:16 ......................................................................... 25
Messages of Judgment, 3:1–6:14 ........................................................................................................................ 26
Visions of Judgment and Restoration, 7:1–9:15 ................................................................................................... 27

BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR AMOS .................................................................................................................................... 29
An Interpretive Guide to Amos

Amos was the first of several prophets whom God raised up to warn Israel’s northern kingdom that God was about to bring it to an end because of its sin. When Amos began to prophesy, Israel was experiencing an unprecedented era of prosperity, yet Samaria fell only thirty years later. In his book, Amos enumerates many specific sins that the people were involved in which led to their judgment. This enumeration, along with an account of God’s dealings with Israel within the context of their covenantal relationship, was intended to explain from a theological point of view why this judgment was not merely justified, but was absolutely necessary. One might think that a book with such a narrow, historically situated message would have few obvious contemporary applications. In fact, however, Amos’ message is perennially relevant, and Amos is one of the more frequently preached of the prophetic books. The sins which Amos reproves have been rampant in many, if not most or all, societies since the prophet wrote, and God’s hatred for these sins has not changed over time, either. Individual Christians can find themselves guilty of the same types of sins which Amos preached against—materialism, neglect of the poor, injustice, failure to recognize God’s discipline, complacency, attachment to the things of this life, lack of concern for others, hypocritical religion, opposition to God’s spokesmen, and even immorality and spiritual infidelity. So it is that Amos’ “message continues to speak to each succeeding generation with the same immediate relevance and urgency.”

Author

The writer of this book identifies himself simply as “Amos,” without a surname (1:1)—perhaps an indication that he was of unusually humble origins. Amos notes that he was from Tekoa, a rural town in southeastern Judah, on the edge of the wilderness that descends to the Dead Sea. Since Amos was from the south, his ministry in the northern kingdom was particularly distasteful to the Israelites, who regarded him as an outsider (7:12-13). Not only was he from a rival kingdom, he was from a rural area and was part of the working class (7:14-15). He had no connections with the rulers, the priestly class, or prophetic schools. He was just a simple and courageous man of faith who received a higher calling by God at a key place and time in history.

Amos is one of only a few prophets to state his occupation prior to his prophetic call. Both of the words Amos uses to describe his original occupation are very rare in the OT. The word נֹּקְדִים (ASV: herdsman; alt. sheep-master) in 1:1 is only used one other time in the OT, in 2 Kings 3:4. The word בּוֹקֵר (ASV: herdsman; alt. cattleman) occurs only in 7:14. This has led to some speculation regarding the exact nature of Amos’ vocation. He apparently dealt with both sheep and cattle, and though some have suggested that he was more of a businessman than a shepherd, he was probably both—7:15 says he personally followed the flock. He also tended to fruit trees (7:14). Essentially, Amos was a farmer and a rancher.

Perhaps because of Amos’ unconventional background, the language of his book is somewhat distinctive. Amos designates God as יהוה אֲדֹנָי (the Lord Yahweh) far more frequently than any other OT writer except Ezekiel. Out of 301 occurrences of יהוה אֲדֹנָי in the OT, some 217, or seventy-two percent, are in Ezekiel. Of the eighty-four remaining occurrences, twenty-one, or twenty-five percent, are in the short book of Amos, which is a striking concentration.

1 Peter C. Craigie, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Jonah (vol. 1 of Twelve Prophets; The Daily Study Bible; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 123.
Even more distinctive is Amos’ use of the term אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת (the God of hosts). This term is found eight times in Amos, which is more than in any other book in the OT, and amounts to one-third of all OT occurrences. These occurrences are always modified in Amos by some form of the divine name. Five of the occurrences take the form יהוה אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת (Yahweh, the God of hosts; 4:13; 5:14-15; 6:8, 14). The others are יהוה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי (the Lord Yahweh, the God of hosts; 3:13), יהוה אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת אֲדֹנָי (Yahweh, whose name is the God of hosts; 5:27).

Amos’ habitual reference to Israel as בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל (the house of Israel) is also distinctive. Amos uses this term eight times in nine chapters; only Ezekiel uses it with greater frequency.

Date and Occasion of Writing

Amos dates his prophetic ministry very specifically: during the reign of Uzziah in Judah and Jeroboam II in Israel, two years before “the earthquake” (1:1; cf. Zech 14:5). His book, of course, was written after this memorable earthquake. This earthquake left a mark in the archeological record, but no firm date can be assigned to it. Uzziah reigned from 790 to 739, and Jeroboam II from 793 to 752. However, Uzziah was a coregent with his father Amaziah until 768 or 767, and Jeroboam II was a coregent with his father Jehoash until 782 or 781. Since Amos probably would have dated his prophecy by the reigns of these kings’ fathers if they were still reigning when he ministered, his ministry is best dated between the years 767 and 752. Further, since the early part of Uzziah’s reign was more prosperous than the latter part, it seems likely that the earthquake occurred closer to 752 than 767, though this cannot be proved. A clearer indication that Amos prophesied towards the end of the reign of Jeroboam II is his message that judgment is about to fall. A date between 767 and 752 would probably have made Amos a contemporary both of Jonah, whose ministry began before Amos’, and of Hosea, whose ministry continued long after Amos’.

It is evident from the heading (1:1) that Amos did not write his book for at least two years after he uttered the prophecies which it contains. Yet the occasion of writing was probably similar to the occasion of Amos’ oral ministry: Israel (the northern kingdom) was about to be judged by God for its sins. The nation had been lulled into complacency by an extended period of economic prosperity and external peace. This period of prosperity was accompanied by gross decadence and injustice, as poor people were mistreated by the upper classes. God sent Amos to give Israel an advance warning that judgment was about to fall and to declare the nation’s sins, so that they would have a fair chance to repent. The heading indicates that Amos spoke all the words recorded in his book within a relatively short period of time.

Purpose and Message

The purpose of Amos’ prophetic ministry was to proclaim to the northern kingdom of Israel Yahweh’s coming judgment of their nation, to document the sins which provoked the judgment, and to set both the sin and the judgment in the context of God’s covenant relationship with Israel. The message

---

2 There are twenty-five occurrences of יהוה אֲדֹנָי in Isaiah, fourteen in Jeremiah, seven in 2 Samuel (all in 2 Sam 7:18-29, in David’s prayer in response to God’s covenant with him), four in the Psalms, and no more than two in any other book.

3 The OT occurrences are: 2 Sam 5:10; 1 Kgs 19:10, 14; Pss 59:5; 80:4, 7, 14, 19; 84:8; 89:8; Jer 5:14; 15:16; 35:17; 38:17; 44:7; Hos 12:5; Amos 3:13; 4:13; 5:14-16, 27; 6:8, 14.
of the book of Amos is that Yahweh must judge Israel for its covenant unfaithfulness, yet Yahweh’s covenant faithfulness to Israel will continue even after the destruction of the northern kingdom.

Amos’ preaching did not prevent the fall of the northern kingdom or move the people to repentance. He was simply dismissed by the elites, and probably by the majority of commoners as well. Yet his purpose was fulfilled merely by the announcement of judgment, which left the nation of Israel with only themselves to blame for their destruction. And by putting his prophecies in writing, Amos affirmed that his message had an enduring significance which reached beyond its impact on the immediate audience. Amos’ book informed Jews who lived through the fall of Samaria why the northern kingdom was destroyed, and answered important theological questions. Today, Amos’ prophecies stand as a witness to the justice of God’s judgment of Israel, to the nature of the sins which will provoke God to judge His own people, and to God’s unwavering commitment to fulfill His covenant with Abraham in spite of the frequent disobedience of the nation of Israel.

Historical Background

Amos prophesied towards the end of an extended period of prosperity in both Israel (the northern kingdom) and Judah (the southern kingdom). Israel’s archenemy Syria had been decisively defeated by the Assyrian monarch Adad-Nirari III in 805 B.C., which removed the Syrian pressure on Israel. After the death of Adad-Nirari III in 783, Assyria immediately fell into a forty-year period of decline and civil war. At the same time, Damascus and Hamath were fighting each other for control of Syria. Israel thus faced no external threats, and Jeroboam II (793/781-752) took advantage of this power vacuum to greatly expand Israel’s borders (cf. 2 Kgs 14:25). The Israelite economy flourished, but the people were complacent, self-serving, and idolatrous. The rich freely oppressed the poor in the belief that judgment would never fall. Toward the end of this period of prosperity, Amos was sent to warn the nation of a judgment that seemed hard to believe in its original historical context. Yet Israel abruptly declined and fell within a few decades of Amos’ brief ministry in the north. Internal strife followed the death of Jeroboam II; the king’s son Zechariah reigned only for six months before he was assassinated in a coup which divided the northern kingdom between two rival kings—Menahem to the west of the Jordan, and Pekah in Gilead. Assyria recovered strength in 743 and promptly invaded and subjugated Israel. Half of the northern kingdom was deported in 733, and when Samaria fell in 722 the remainder of the northern kingdom was deported to Assyria.

Outline of Amos

I. Heading 1:1
II. Yahweh’s Judgment of Israel in Its Broader Context 1:2–2:16
   A. Proclamation of Yahweh’s coming in judgment 1:2
   B. Proclamation of judgment upon Damascus 1:3-5
   C. Proclamation of judgment upon Gaza 1:6-8
   D. Proclamation of judgment upon Tyre 1:9-10
   E. Proclamation of judgment upon Edom 1:11-12
   F. Proclamation of judgment upon Ammon 1:13-15
   G. Proclamation of judgment upon Moab 2:1-3
   H. Proclamation of judgment upon Judah 2:4-5
   I. Proclamation of judgment upon Israel 2:6-8
   J. The enormity of Israel’s transgression 2:9-12
   K. The inescapableness of Israel’s judgment 2:13-16
III. Messages of Judgment and Woe 3:1–6:14
    A. Judgment pronounced for oppression 3:1–4:3
1. The right to announce judgment 3:1-8
2. Destruction of Samaria 3:9-12
3. Destruction of Israel’s cultus and nobility 3:13-15
4. Destruction of Israel’s leading women 4:1-3

B. Judgment pronounced for apostasy 4:4-13
   1. Israel’s idolatrous practices 4:4-5
   2. Israel’s failure to respond to God’s discipline 4:6-11
   3. God’s confrontation of Israel 4:12-13

C. Dirge over Israel’s fall 5:1-17
   1. Amos’ lamentation over Israel’s fall 5:1-3
   2. Call to seek Yahweh to avert judgment 5:4-9
   3. Indictment of Israel’s judges 5:10-13
   4. Call to repent 5:14-15
   5. Prophecy of lamentation over Israel’s fall 5:16-17

D. Woe pronounced on religious hypocrites 5:18-27
   1. Warning concerning the day of Yahweh 5:18-20
   2. Yahweh’s rejection of Israel’s hypocritical religiosity 5:21-24
   3. Yahweh’s judgment of Israel’s hypocritical religiosity 5:25-27

E. Woe pronounced on the complacent wealthy 6:1-14
   1. Warning to the complacent wealthy 6:1-6
   2. The judgment of the complacent wealthy 6:7-11
   3. The vanity of Israel’s confidence 6:12-14

IV. Visions of Judgment and Restoration 7:1–9:15

A. Demonstration of the justness of the judgment 7:1-9
   1. Vision of locusts (cancelled) 7:1-3
   2. Vision of fire (cancelled) 7:4-6
   3. Vision of a plumbline: judgment by a righteous standard 7:7-9

B. Confrontation with Israel’s religious leadership 7:10-17
   1. Amaziah’s attempt to arrest Amos 7:10-11
   2. Amaziah’s attempt to expel Amos 7:12-13
   3. Amos’ defense of his ministry 7:14-15
   4. Prophecy of judgment on Amaziah 7:14-17

C. The end of Israel’s religion 8:1-14
   1. Vision of summer fruit: the end of the northern kingdom 8:1-3
   2. The end of Israel’s hypocritical religion 8:4-10
   3. The end of Yahweh’s messages to Israel 8:11-14

D. The theological context of Israel’s judgment 9:1-15
   1. Vision of a ruined temple: Yahweh’s jealous judgment of Israel 9:1-4
   2. Israel’s judgment in the context of God’s universal sovereignty 9:5-6
   3. Israel’s judgment in the context of God’s overall plan 9:7-15
      a. The judgment as purification, not annihilation 9:7-10
      b. The ultimate restoration after the end of judgment 9:11-15

Argument of Amos

The book of Amos opens with an introductory sermon which gives the outsider Amos the right to be heard in a foreign land by proclaiming that Yahweh is judging all the nations around Israel for their sin, and that He cannot leave Israel unpunished at the same time (1:2–2:16). Having thus established the basic message that Israel is about to be judged for its sins against Yahweh, Amos proceeds to develop it in the remainder of his book. Chapters 3–9 may be divided into two sections on the basis of the forms which
Amos’ prophecies take. Chapters 3–6 consist of prophetic messages which came to Amos in a verbal form, while chs. 7–9 are structured around Amos’ report of visions which he saw.

Headings, 1:1

The book of Amos is prefaced by a heading which gives precise information about the author, the content of the book, and the date of composition (1:1).

Yahweh’s Judgment of Israel in Its Broader Context, 1:2–2:16

The first major section of the book of Amos, 1:2–2:16, sets Israel’s judgment in the context of Yahweh’s universal judgment of all nations. The message of 1:2–2:16 is, if God is going to punish all the nations around Israel for their sins, then He has to punish His own people at the same time. In fact, Israel actually has greater guilt than the other nations because of its unfaithfulness to its covenant with Yahweh. The prophecies against the other nations are given first to show that God’s judgment of Israel is not unfair; God is not simply singling out Israel while letting other nations get away with sin.

The section begins with a proclamation that Yahweh is coming from His dwelling-place in Jerusalem to judge the world—especially and including Israel (1:2). Judgment is then proclaimed upon the nations surrounding Israel, all of whom were enemies of, or rivals to, Israel. The judgment proclamations follow a pattern which moves progressively closer to Israel, until Amos finally comes to a proclamation of judgment upon Israel itself. Amos first proclaims judgment upon Damascus (= Syria, 1:3-5), Gaza (= Philistia, 1:6-8), Tyre (1:9-10), Edom (1:11-12), Ammon (1:13-15), and Moab (2:1-3). For the Gentile nations, each proclamation of judgment begins by noting a sin which deserved judgment,4 then moves to a description of the judgment itself. One can imagine that the Israelites who heard Amos’ preaching must have been nodding their heads in agreement, and perhaps saying things like “Amen! Preach it, brother!” or “That’s right! They are going to get what they have coming!” As he condemned one of Israel’s enemies after another, the congregation may have become more enthused, and the Amens may have grown louder. However, when the prophecies of judgment came to the final nation which shared a border with Israel, Judah (2:4-5), the response was probably more muffled as the people realized that the judgment was hitting closer to home. Judah, after all, was where God’s temple was, and Judah’s kings had been more righteous than Israel’s. Judah was also the native country of the prophet Amos. Still, though, Judah frequently fought with Israel, and the northerners probably would not have objected to its judgment. Amos lists three sins of Judah to give more evidence that it deserved judgment.

After judgment has been proclaimed upon all the nations surrounding Israel, it is finally proclaimed upon Israel as well in 2:6-8, following the same formulaic proclamation as previously, but this time listing all four sins which provoked the judgment. At this point, the crowd’s enthusiasm for God’s judgment must have given way to a sobering silence. Yet Amos has won the right to be heard. It cannot be objected that God’s judgment of Israel is unfair if the people have already assented to the justice of God’s judgment on Israel’s neighbors for similar sins.

Since Amos was preaching in the northern kingdom, Israel’s coming judgment was obviously the main point of his message. He thus expands upon it in 2:9-16. In 2:9-12, Amos briefly reviews the record of Yahweh’s covenant faithfulness to Israel, to show how Israel’s covenant unfaithfulness was such a severe sin. The very existence and prosperity of the nation of Israel was due to Yahweh’s gracious work on their behalf. Judgment was not merely justified, but demanded. The totality and inescapableness of the

4 Each of the proclamations begins with the formula “for three transgressions, even for four,” but there is only the need to list one major transgression for each of the pagan nations. Their other sins were obvious to Israel, and their judgment did not need further justification.
coming judgment is described in 2:13-16. None of the human means upon which Israel relies will be able to save in that day.

Messages of Judgment, 3:1–6:14

The second major section of Amos consists of messages or sermons of judgment (3:1–6:14). This section is usually divided into four or five parts based on three uses of the expression “Hear this word” (3:1; 4:1; 5:1) and two pronouncements of woe (5:18; 6:1). An analysis of the contents of chs. 3–6 shows that such a division works well in four of the five instances, but probably not in 4:1. In ch. 4 it is clear that a different group is addressed in vv. 4-13 than in vv. 1-3. In addition, 4:1-3 seems to fit better with what precedes than with what follows. Also, 3:13-15 is introduced by “Hear ye,” but does not form its own sermon. Thus, it appears that Amos’s messages include two pronouncements of judgment for sin (3:1–4:3; 4:4-13), a dirge over Israel’s fall (5:1-17), and two pronouncements of woe (5:18-27; 6:1-14).

Judgment pronounced for oppression, 3:1–4:3. In 3:1–4:3, judgment is pronounced on Israel for the oppression of the poor and vulnerable by the nation’s leaders and upper classes. The section opens in 3:1–8 with God’s defense of His right to judge Israel (3:1-2), and of Amos’ right to announce the judgment (3:3-8). The message of judgment comes in 3:9–4:3: Israel’s political and religious centers and upper classes will be totally destroyed. In 3:9-10, Yahweh calls the pagan nations around Israel as witnesses to the extreme depravity of Samaria, which even they can recognize. Yahweh will bring total destruction upon the palaces and nobility of Samaria (3:11-12). In 3:13-15, total destruction is prophesied to come at the same time upon Israel’s cultic center at Bethel (3:14) and upon the houses of Israel’s nobility (3:15). Finally, 4:1-3 prophesies judgment upon the rich, domineering women of Samaria.

Judgment pronounced for apostasy, 4:4–13. Amos next pronounces judgment upon Israel for the nation’s apostasy (4:4-13). After describing Israel’s idolatrous practices in 4:4-5, Amos describes the various ways in which God had disciplined Israel to get the nation’s attention, even going to the extreme of overthrowing Israelite cities as completely as Sodom and Gomorrah (4:6-11). Nothing worked; the people continued to persist in its idolatry and rebellion. Thus, God promises a direct confrontation with Israel in 4:12-13—a fearsome thing, since God is the Creator of Israel and the Controller of all natural forces.

Dirge over Israel’s fall, 5:1-17. The result of God’s confrontation with Israel is described in 5:1-3, and prompts Amos to take up a lament over Israel. Yet, Amos affirms, it is not too late to stay the judgment if only the nation would seek Yahweh (5:4-9). Israel’s corrupt judges are singled out as provoking the judgment in 5:10-13. God indicts them by describing how they love evil and hate good, then follows the indictment in 5:14-15 with a call to repent by hating evil and seeking good, so as to avert the judgment. However, it is implied that Israel will not repent, since in 5:16-17 Amos describes the bitter lamentation which will be heard throughout Israel when Yahweh comes in judgment. Thus, Amos’ lamentation, which opened the section, becomes Israel’s lamentation by the end of it.

Woe pronounced on religious hypocrites, 5:18-27. In the next section, 5:18-27, Amos pronounces woe on those who went through the external motions of worshipping Yahweh while practicing injustice and idolatry. These hypocrites were eager for the day of Yahweh to come because they thought it meant that Israel’s enemies would be wiped out, yet in 5:18-20 Amos warns that it will be a day of judgment for

---

5 There is no contradiction here. On the one hand, Israel’s judgment was certain to come, yet, on the other, it would have been averted had Israel repented. God knew that Israel would not repent.
them. In 5:21-27, he explains why: God hates their impure and false worship (5:21-24), and will send them into exile for their syncretistic idolatry (5:25-27).

Woe pronounced on the complacent wealthy, 6:1-14. The final woe is pronounced on Israel’s leaders and nobility, who were wealthy, complacent, and self-serving. They believed that they could do whatever they wanted and get away with it, because judgment would never fall. In 6:1-6, Amos warns them not to be complacent, since they can see by way of example God’s judgment on cities which were more powerful than their own. In 6:7-11, Amos announces the judgment which will end their party. They would be the first to be deported, though most of them would be slain in the fall of the city. In 6:12-14, Amos unmasks the vanity of Israel’s confidence—they cannot expect God’s favor while they practice injustice, nor can they rely on their own strength. God promises to raise up a nation that will devastate Israel from the north (the entrance of Hamath) to the south (the brook of the Arabah).

Visions of Judgment and Restoration, 7:1–9:15

Chapters 7–9 continue the message of the previous chapters, but present it in a different form. These chapters are structured around visions, which are followed by explanations or responses to the visions. The section begins with a series of three visions (7:1-9) and a response to them (7:10-17). Chapters 8 and 9 each begins with a vision, then moves to a reflection on the message of the vision.

Demonstration of the justness of the judgment, 7:1-9. The first three visions (7:1-9) form a series which demonstrate the justice of God’s judgment on Israel. Yahweh shows two visions of terrible, all-consuming destruction in the land—the first by locusts (7:1-3), and the second by fire (7:4-6). Amos protests that they are too harsh, and Yahweh responds by promising not to bring them. The third vision is markedly different: Yahweh stands beside a wall with a plumbline, and states His intention to pass one time through the midst of His people Israel with the plumbline so as to destroy everything that is out of plumb. Amos stops protesting at this point, for he sees that the plumbline represents God’s righteous standard. There can be no objection to a judgment based solely on a measurement against a righteous standard.

Confrontation with Israel’s religious leadership, 7:10-17. Immediately after Amos reports his vision of the plumbline, Amaziah, the chief priest of Israel’s idolatrous temple at Bethel (cf. 1 Kgs 12:26-33), responds by rejecting Amos to his face (7:10-13). He accuses Amos to the king (7:10-11), and tells the prophet to leave the country (7:12-13). Amos responds, first, by defending his prophetic ministry (7:14-15). He was not a prophet by choice, and has no political agenda. He is only reporting what God had sent him to say. Amos then delivers a special prophecy against Amaziah, who had denied the fact of God’s judgment. Not only would Amos’ prophecies come to pass, the calamity would personally fall upon Amaziah and his family (7:16-17). Since Amos prophesied at least thirty years before the fall of Samaria in 722, it seems that Amaziah was carried captive during the reign of Menahem, when the king of Assyria invaded the land and Menahem exacted a large tax from every wealthy man to pay tribute (2 Kgs 15:19). Since this invasion occurred in the year 743, the calamity which befell Amaziah at that time functioned as a near term sign to confirm the long term prophecy of judgment on the entire nation.

6 Amos prophesied during a period of Assyrian weakness in which Israel thought there were no significant external threats. Assyria thus had to be raised up again in order to invade Israel.

7 A plumbline is a string with a weight on it. When the weight is allowed to hang freely from the string, gravity pulls the weight straight toward the earth, so that the string marks a perfectly straight line. When a plumbline is held against a wall, it can immediately be seen whether the wall is straight (“plumb”) or aslant (“out of plumb”).
The end of Israel’s religion, 8:1-14. Amos refuses Amaziah’s admonition, and continues to prophesy at Bethel in spite of it. His final two visions speak specifically against the pagan temple at Bethel (8:3; 9:1). The vision and explanatory message of ch. 8 repeats the previous message of judgment, but focuses on how Israel’s destruction is a judgment of its false religion. In 8:1-3, Amos sees a basket of summer fruit in a vision. The Hebrew word for “summer fruit,” קָיִץ, is virtually identical to the Hebrew word for “end,” קֵץ, and in fact the two were probably pronounced identically in the northern dialect of Hebrew at this time (contracting the diphthong). The prophet’s sight of summer fruit thus functioned as a sign that the northern kingdom was coming to an end.

The end of the northern kingdom meant at the same time the end of its religion (8:4-10). The greedy Israelites hated the Law’s prohibition on work on the sabbath and feast days, because it took them away from their worldly, sinful business (8:4-6). They had no interest in spiritual things. They thought that Yahweh would never call them to account, but Yahweh swears to repay their works in full (8:7). Yahweh will bring such heavy judgment that even the natural order will be affected by it (8:8-9). Israel’s (religious) feasts and songs will come to an abrupt and bitter end (8:10).

It is not just Israel’s false religion that will come to an end when judgment falls—Yahweh Himself will abandon the nation (8:11-14). God gave Israel many prophetic warnings of judgment, all of which were rejected. Once the judgment comes, it is too late (cf. 1 Sam 28). When the people are under extreme duress, they will search far and wide for a prophet who can give them a word of hope and help them get rid of the enemy armies. But God will give them up to their fate, in accordance with their rejection of what He has already said.

The theological context of Israel’s judgment, 9:1-15. Chapter 9 is more reflective in tone, and places Israel’s judgment in a broader theological context. The judgment itself is encapsulated and summarized in 9:1-4. First, in 9:1, Amos sees the Lord standing beside the pagan altar which was, contextually, the one at the main Israelite temple in Bethel. This was the great provocation which had infuriated the Lord Yahweh. In His jealous anger, the Lord commands the temple to be ruined and all of its patrons slain. He then promises that His judgment will be inescapable for all Israelites—even if they could hide in Sheol, or in heaven, or on Mount Carmel, or on the bottom of the sea, He will find them there and punish them (9:2-3). Even when they go into captivity, their calamity will continue in foreign lands (9:4).

The message then moves to a theological reflection on Israel’s judgment. First, in 9:5-6, the Lord sets Israel’s judgment in the broader context of His universal sovereignty. He is judging because He is the Sovereign of the universe, and He directs nature and history. Finally, in 9:7-15, Yahweh sets His judgment of the northern kingdom in the context of His overall plan for the nation of Israel. In 9:7-10, He affirms that His judgment of Israel differs from His judgment of all the other nations of the world in that Yahweh does not purpose to annihilate Israel, only to purify the nation (9:7-10). There will come a day when God’s punishment of Israel for its sins will come to a permanent end, and the nation will be restored fully and forever (9:11-15). This is the final word on, and the ultimate result of, God’s judgment of the nation of Israel. This also finally closes the argument of the book of Amos, by showing that, whereas Yahweh must judge His people when He is judging the rest of the world (chs. 1–2), and the sins of the nation of Israel require judgment (chs. 3–6), Yahweh’s judgment of Israel will be qualitatively different than His judgment of the nations, for He will not destroy Israel completely—He will only purify the nation in preparation for a future permanent restoration.
Dr. Anderson's Interpretive Guide to the Gospels

Steven D. Anderson
# Table of Contents

**TABLE OF CONTENTS** .................................................................................................................................................. III  
**PREFACE** ................................................................................................................................................................. VI  
**STYLE NOTES** ......................................................................................................................................................... VII  
  - Quotations of the Bible ........................................................................................................................................ vii  
  - A Note on the Divine Name ................................................................................................................................. vii  
  - Common Abbreviations .......................................................................................................................................... vii  
  - Abbreviations of the Books of the Bible ........................................................................................................... viii  
**INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPELS** ....................................................................................................................... 1  
  - SUMMARY OF THE GOSPELS .................................................................................................................................. 4  
  - CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOSPELS ................................................................................................................ 4  
  - SOURCE CRITICISM AND THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS ....................................................................................... 5  
    - Independence .......................................................................................................................................................... 5  
    - The Four-source Hypothesis .............................................................................................................................. 7  
  - THE LITERARY GENRE OF THE GOSPELS ......................................................................................................... 11  
  - METHOD OF STUDY ............................................................................................................................................... 13  
    - Approaches to Parallel Material ....................................................................................................................... 13  
    - Higher Criticism of the Gospels ...................................................................................................................... 14  
    - The Quest for the Historical Jesus .................................................................................................................. 15  
  - JUDAISM AT THE TIME OF JESUS ........................................................................................................................ 17  
    - Jewish Messianic Expectation .......................................................................................................................... 18  
    - Jewish Interpretation of Messianic Prophecy .................................................................................................. 19  
    - Reasons Why the Jewish Leaders Opposed Jesus ....................................................................................... 21  
  - JESUS’ MISSION ..................................................................................................................................................... 21  
  - THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM ....................................................................................................................... 22  
    - Objection #1: The Universal and Mediatorial Kingdoms ........................................................................... 23  
    - Objection #2: The Spiritual Kingdom ........................................................................................................... 24  
**BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR THE GOSPELS** ..................................................................................................................... 26  
**INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO MATTHEW** ................................................................................................................ 28  
  - AUTHOR ............................................................................................................................................................... 28  
  - WRITING STYLE .................................................................................................................................................... 30  
  - DATE, RECIPIENTS, AND OCCASION OF WRITING ................................................................................... 30  
    - An Aramaic Original? .......................................................................................................................................... 31  
    - Statements of the Church Fathers ................................................................................................................... 34  
    - The Canonical Order ........................................................................................................................................ 38  
    - The Usage of Matthew ....................................................................................................................................... 39  
    - Internal Evidence ............................................................................................................................................... 39  
    - Arguments for a Late Date ................................................................................................................................ 41  
    - Significance ....................................................................................................................................................... 47  
    - Summary ............................................................................................................................................................ 48  
  - PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ....................................................................................................................................... 48  
  - OUTLINE OF MATTHEW ................................................................................................................................... 48  
    - Summary Outline ............................................................................................................................................. 48  
    - Expanded Outline ............................................................................................................................................ 49  
  - ARGUMENT OF MATTHEW .................................................................................................................................. 53  
    - The Background of the Messiah: Jesus’ Entitlement to the Messianic Role, 1:1–4:11 ........................................... 53  
    - Jesus’ Public Ministry: The Presentation of the Messiah to Israel, 4:12–12:50 ..................................................... 56  
    - Jesus’ Private Ministry: The Presentation of the Messiah to the Disciples, 13:1–18:35 ................................. 63
The Consummation of the Messiah: Jesus’ Completion of the Messianic Mission, 19:1–28:20 .................. 68

BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR MATTHEW ................................................................. 80

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO MARK ................................................................. 85

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE .............................................................................. 85
AUTHOR .................................................................................................. 86
WRITING STYLE ..................................................................................... 87
  Distinctives of Mark’s Writing Style ..................................................... 88
DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING ................................................... 89
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ..................................................................... 90
TEXTUAL BASE ...................................................................................... 92
OUTLINE OF MARK ............................................................................... 92
  Summary Outline .............................................................................. 92
  Expanded Outline ............................................................................. 92
ARGUMENT OF MARK .......................................................................... 95
  Heading, 1:1 ..................................................................................... 95
  Jesus’ Introduction, 1:2-13 ................................................................. 96
  Jesus’ Presentation, 1:14-45 ............................................................... 96
  Jesus’ Opposition, 2:1–3:6 ............................................................... 96
  Jesus’ Withdrawal, 3:7-8:30 ............................................................. 97
  Jesus’ Preparation, 8:31-10:52 ........................................................ 99
  Jesus’ Consummation, 11:1–16:8 .................................................... 101
BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR MARK ................................................................. 106

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO LUKE .............................................................. 108

AUDIENCE .......................................................................................... 108
AUTHOR .............................................................................................. 109
WRITING STYLE .................................................................................. 110
DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING ............................................... 112
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE .................................................................. 113
OUTLINE OF LUKE ............................................................................ 113
  Summary Outline ............................................................................ 113
  Expanded Outline ........................................................................... 113
ARGUMENT OF LUKE ........................................................................ 118
  Prologue, 1:1-4 .............................................................................. 119
  The Origins of John, 1:5-80 .............................................................. 119
  The Birth and Childhood of Jesus, 2:1-52 ....................................... 120
  The Preparation for Jesus’ Ministry, 3:1–4:13 ............................. 121
  Jesus’ Major Public Ministry, 4:14–9:50 ....................................... 122
  Jesus’ Ministry on the Way to Jerusalem, 9:51–19:28 ................ 126
  Jesus’ Ministry at Jerusalem, 19:29–23:56a .................................. 132
  Jesus’ Ministry from Earth to Heaven, 23:56b–24:53 ............... 137
BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR LUKE .............................................................. 138

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO JOHN ............................................................. 141

AUTHOR ............................................................................................. 142
WRITING STYLE .................................................................................. 143
DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING ............................................... 144
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE .................................................................. 147
OUTLINE OF JOHN ............................................................................ 148
  Summary Outline ............................................................................ 148
  Expanded Outline ........................................................................... 148
ARGUMENT OF JOHN ........................................................................ 151
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Prologue, 1:1-18</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Call to Believe and Responses to the Call, 1:19–12:50</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction of the Eleven: The Nature of Saving Faith, 13:1–17:26</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus’ Death: The Consummation of Unbelief, 18:1–19:42</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign of the Resurrection: Final Call to Believe 20:1-31</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilogue: Call to Follow, 21:1-25</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR JOHN</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction to the Gospels

The word “gospel” (from Saxon gode-spell) translates the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον, meaning “good (εὐ) news (ἀγγελία).” In its New Testament sense, the εὐαγγέλιον is the presentation of the good news about Jesus Christ, which is the message of salvation. There is only one gospel, though it is presented in four distinct ways by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Originally the apostles simply described the words and works of Jesus orally, in their teaching and preaching (Acts 2:22-24, etc.). This oral tradition was repeated by the early Christians as they went about preaching the Word (Acts 8:2-4). The basic purpose in writing for all four Gospels was to preserve the apostles’ oral teaching about Jesus precisely, in written form, for future generations (cf. Luke 1:1-4). The gospel was simply too wonderful a story to be told only one time; it had to be told multiple times, by multiple witnesses. The four Gospels are always the highlight of my yearly Bible reading, and I would be sorely disappointed if I could only read one of the four.

Apostolic teaching about Jesus consisted of essentially the same material as is found in the four Gospels, especially the Synoptics. The apostles were not telling random stories about Jesus that were never recorded in Scripture, like the wild stories found in Papias’ works and the Gnostic Gospels, or like the entertaining and gossipy stories told by pagan writers. They were only speaking what the Spirit wanted them to, and were not telling everything they could have told. Their preaching would have no coherence if this were not the case. They were not simply trying to relate a biographical or historical account of Jesus for historical interest or because of their admiration of Jesus, but to communicate the gospel message. Their teaching was carefully selected and presented in accordance with this aim. Further, all the apostles must have all been relating the same things using basically the same language, for if they were not the early church would have a very confused picture of Jesus, with at least twelve different versions of the gospel. Jesus stated that the Holy Spirit would cause the disciples to remember what He said (John 14:26), and it is the Spirit who gave unity and accuracy to apostolic teaching about Jesus.

The Gospels were written between about A.D. 49 and 85. They are the only authoritative accounts of the life of Jesus; the rest of the Bible adds comparatively little information to our understanding of the first advent, while extrabiblical records add nothing credible whatsoever and are not inspired. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are similar in some ways, whereas John is different.

The Gospels were not written simultaneously, but about ten years apart. Matthew was written around 49, Luke around 57, Mark around 66, and John around 80. When Matthew wrote, the church was mostly Jewish, and thus his presentation is to a Jewish mindset. When Luke wrote, the church still had a significant Jewish minority, but the focus had clearly shifted to Gentiles with a Greek mindset, and thus his presentation is geared toward such a mindset. When Mark wrote, the center of the church had moved all the way to Rome, and thus Mark writes to Christians with a Roman mindset. When John wrote, the church was simply global, and so he gave the world a universal Gospel.

_____________________

1 It should be noted that although there was an oral tradition, this does not mean that the Gospel writers relied on this oral tradition to compose their works. Either they were eyewitnesses, or else they got their information directly from the apostles, and therefore completely in independence of oral tradition. In fact, the apostles were the original creators of the oral tradition, and so would have no need to go to it for information.

2 Eddy and Boyd give the examples of “sexual dalliances, exotic encounters with bandits, or explicit and lavish details of persecutions and executions” (The Jesus Legend, 339).

3 Those who think fragments of “the Jesus tradition” are preserved in extrabiblical legends, as recorded in the church fathers and pseudepigraphal works, quickly depart from the clear meaning of Scripture because each of these legends contradicts the Gospels in some way.
Many scholars argue for a date of the Gospels on the basis of suppositions that one used another as a source—e.g., that Luke copied from Mark, and Matthew copied from both Mark and Luke. Many also argue for a post-A.D. 70 date of all four Gospels in order to support the four-source hypothesis (see below). If the Gospels were written before A.D. 70, there would be no need for the writers to use sources because they would be eyewitnesses. Liberals want to move all the dates as late as possible to remove the possibility that they were written by apostles or by people who wrote down what they heard apostles say firsthand. Bart Ehrman wants to move the date of the Gospel of Thomas up by a hundred years to make it earlier than the canonical Gospels. Specific arguments for the date of each of the Gospels are best addressed in the introduction to those Gospels.

Only Matthew and John were firsthand witnesses of most or nearly all of what they record. Mark was probably a young man during the life of Christ. He probably had contact with the disciples because his mother apparently owned the house with the Upper Room (cf. Acts 12:12). We are not told whether Luke had any contact with Jesus in His first advent. Matthew wrote down an inspired account of what he had seen as an eyewitness or had firsthand knowledge of. Luke’s account is taken from the teaching of the apostles that he had heard firsthand, especially Paul; and Mark’s account is taken directly from Peter’s preaching. The Holy Spirit gave a unity to apostolic teaching about Jesus, and is the wildcard that accounts for the similarities that would not normally be expected from three independent writers (cf. John 14:26). Nevertheless, it is still probable that all three writers knew more than what they wrote down, and thus it is still valid to seek an explanation for their selection and presentation of the material.

Matthew definitely did not use any of the other Gospels as a source, as his was the first Gospel written. Church tradition says Luke wrote down what Paul taught about Christ, and Luke’s statement that he has traced the course of all things accurately from the first (Luke 1:3) indicates that he relied entirely on primary sources. Luke was definitely aware of Matthew when he wrote, and yet Luke does not say that he used Matthew as a source. Although Luke could have referred to Matthew for some of his material, he did not need to do so, and it was not his purpose to simply copy down what others had already written. It is obvious that Luke’s writing style is different from Matthew’s, which would not be the case if he were copying from Matthew. The testimony of the early church is unanimous in saying that Mark wrote to preserve Peter’s preaching, and that he wrote down Peter’s preaching. Mark did not write down the oral traditions of his community, nor did he simply revise an existing apocryphal Gospel. Mark wrote with an awareness of Matthew and Luke that clearly influenced his decision to omit much material they included.

4 The NT indicates that Paul, Peter, Barnabas, Mark, Silas, Luke, and probably others were all ministering in Rome in the 60s.

5 The Gnostic gospels are completely disinterested in history. Thomas is sayings only. The Gospel of Truth is a philosophical treatise. There is not even a cursory mention of a place name or event, let alone a historical narrative of the life and ministry of Jesus. Thus, it is highly ironic and very telling of an anti-Christian agenda that liberals say the Gnostic gospels preserve the historical Jesus, while the canonical Gospels distort the picture. The Gnostic gospels are only interested in promoting their own metaphysical dualism.

Thomas is not very clever: it goes back and forth between authentic sayings of Jesus from the canonical Gospels (with modifications) and sayings which the Gnostic author made up. The real sayings are designed to make the work look authentic. Modern scholars have been duped by this simple trick, because they want to be.

6 There are, of course, some things in Matthew’s Gospel that he did not personally see, such as Jesus’ birth and the transfiguration. However, the subject of Jesus’ birth and upbringing probably came up naturally as the disciples spent time with Him, while stories such as the transfiguration and the postresurrection appearances would have been told to the disciples by the eyewitnesses. So everything in Matthew is from primary sources, whether or not that primary source is Matthew personally.

7 As for Paul’s sources, he claimed to have received his gospel directly from the Holy Spirit, and not from the other apostles or other human sources (Gal 1:11-24; cf. Acts 26:16; 1 Cor 7:10-11; 11:23; 15:3).
and it must have influenced his decision to arrange his material as he did as well. Yet, again, Mark had no need to copy from Matthew or Luke, and it would have been pointless for him to write another Gospel if this is all he intended to do. Mark wanted to write down a record of Peter’s preaching, even extending to the type of Greek Peter used when he preached. He got his material from one source, and that was Peter, who was an eyewitness with apostolic authority. John wrote as someone who was an eyewitness and had firsthand knowledge, and he stakes the veracity of his account on this claim (John 21:24). John wrote with an awareness of all three of the Synoptics, and this led him to present mainly new material.

It may be asked why the Gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Why was there not a “Gospel of Thaddeus” or a “Gospel according to Andrew”? The reason is that the apostles were not free to write Scripture of their own accord, but only as the Spirit led them. It would seem that God chose three men of little stature among the group of apostles and apostolic associates to write the Synoptic Gospels so that the authority of the documents would not be attributed to man, but to God. Critics claim that Matthew, Mark, and Luke did not actually write the Gospels attributed to them; rather someone else simply collected source material, and the early church attributed these works to Matthew, Mark, and Luke so as to give them authority. Yet if the Synoptic Gospels were written pseudonymously or anonymously, the early church would not have attributed them to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but to others who were more prominent. Mark is a much more flawed and less prominent character than others in the early church. Every time he is mentioned in the Gospels and Acts, it is in a way that is potentially embarrassing—he likely ran away naked at Jesus’ arrest (Mark 14:51-52); he got cold feet on his first missions trip and sailed back home (Acts 13:13); then he precipitated a split between Barnabas and Paul (Acts 15:36-41). If the Gospels came about by human origins, Mark would not be the most likely writer of Peter’s Gospel, and the early church would never invent his name as the author. Yet church tradition is unanimous that Mark wrote Peter’s Gospel, which can only be explained if this is in fact what happened. Likewise, Timothy, Barnabas, Titus, Silas, Epaphras, Epaphroditus, Aquila, Apollos, and others were more prominent ministry partners of Paul than Luke was. If the early church had simply made up an author to give authority to Paul’s expression of the Gospel, Luke would not have been chosen. Yet Luke is consistently agreed upon in the tradition, which shows the ascription is genuine. The tradition is stubborn and surprising in comparison to what would seem to be the natural choice. Matthew is also not one of the more prominent leaders of the early church. In fact, Jews would have considered him to be the most despised of all the Twelve given his background as a tax collector, which again makes him a surprising choice as the only apostle to write a Synoptic Gospel. It is by divine design that Peter’s Gospel was written by Mark and Paul’s Gospel was written by Luke, for if they had been written by Peter and Paul directly, the church would give them higher credence than Matthew because of the stature of Peter and Paul in the early church—just as some Christians treat the red letters in their Bible as more authoritative than the black letters. The only Synoptic Gospel that was written by an apostle was written by the apostle with the least stature, which would put it on about the same level (in the mind of the church) as the two Synoptics that were written by associates of the two most prominent apostles. The only Gospel that was written by a prominent apostle, John, is so different than the other three that it is no competition to their authority.

---

8 It is also very interesting that the Gospel that is associated with Peter is not called the Gospel of Peter, which indicates that the tradition was handled were care. If the church wanted to give a pseudepigraphic Gospel apostolic authority, they would have attributed it to Peter.
Summary of the Gospels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Written in</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Occasion</th>
<th>Turning Point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>Jewish Christians</td>
<td>eyewitness</td>
<td>to demonstrate that Jesus is the promised Messiah</td>
<td>the need for a written Gospel; departure of the apostles from Palestine</td>
<td>Jesus’ official rejection by Israel (ch. 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Caesarea</td>
<td>Greek Christians</td>
<td>Paul (and others)</td>
<td>to provide his distinguished Greek patron an entirely trustworthy account of the beginnings of Christianity</td>
<td>Paul’s imprisonment at Caesarea; center of church shifted to Hellenistic world</td>
<td>Jesus’ departure on His final journey to Jerusalem (9:51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Roman Christians</td>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>to present the good news about Jesus in the manner that would best appeal to the Roman mindset</td>
<td>Peter’s death; center of church shifted to Rome</td>
<td>Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi (8:27-30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>Ephesus</td>
<td>everyone</td>
<td>eyewitness</td>
<td>to stir men to belief in Jesus as the Son of God</td>
<td>desire to know more about Jesus; early Gnosticism</td>
<td>raising of Lazarus (ch. 11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The different turning points in the four Gospels are related to their different audiences and purposes. With Matthew’s focus on God’s kingdom program, the turning point is the point at which Jesus is rejected by Israel, resulting in the revelation of an interim period in which the kingdom membership will be built before the kingdom comes. For Luke’s methodical presentation of Christian origins, the turning point is when Jesus determinately sets His face to go to Jerusalem in order to bring His earthly ministry to completion and ascend to heaven. Mark focuses narrowly on who Jesus is, as attested by His words and works, and therefore the turning point is when Peter finally confesses directly that Jesus is the Messiah. With John’s focus on the call to believe, and the response to signs which testify to who Jesus is, the turning point is the dramatic raising of Lazarus, which prompted many to believe but also prompted the Jewish leaders to determine to do away with Jesus immediately.

Characteristics of the Gospels

Matthew is methodical, massive, Hebraistic, and messianic. It has an emphasis on the fulfillment of prophecy and the role of the church in God’s program. Mark is conversational, colloquial, concise, graphic, abrupt, forceful, realistic. Luke is literary, artistic, and graceful, with sophisticated Greek. John is abstract and profound, probably in response to the philosophical milieu in Ephesus. Matthew and John focus on what Jesus said. Mark and Luke focus on what Jesus did. The Synoptics tell the story of Jesus from the earth up. John tells the story of Jesus from heaven down. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are written to believers, but also have an evangelistic appeal to various mindsets. John was written to unbelievers, but is also instructive for believers. John is the only Gospel that follows a strict chronological order and has clear and unbroken chronological indicators.
Interpretive Guide to John

Of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke are largely similar in their content and approach, while John is a special Gospel with a character entirely its own. Approximately ninety-two percent of the Gospel of John is not duplicated in the other Gospels. The major reason for the differences between John and the Synoptics is that the Synoptics are primarily written to believers, whereas John’s purpose is more directly evangelistic. A second reason is that John wrote last, and intentionally sought to include new material. Where John does overlap with the Synoptics, he adds new information which illuminates their accounts.

A comparison of the Synoptics with John shows that the Synoptics have an earthly and human emphasis, concentrate on Jesus’ public teaching to crowds, and focus on Jesus’ Galilean ministry, whereas John has a heavenly and divine emphasis, features Jesus’ private conversations with individuals, and primarily describes Jesus’ Judean ministry. In John, Jesus’ ministry is almost exclusively associated with the major Jewish feast days, and thus occurs mainly in Judea and Jerusalem. The Synoptics focus on Jesus’ ministry in Galilee and Perea. The Synoptics imply in certain places that Jesus ministered in Jerusalem and Judea (Matt 4:25; 15:1; Mark 3:8, 22; 7:1; 10:32; Luke 5:17; 6:17; 7:17), and this is directly stated in Luke 4:44, but they focus on other aspects of Jesus’ ministry in accord with their respective purposes.

In contrast to the Synoptics, John emphasizes Jesus’ teaching more than His activity, and especially what He taught about believing in Himself as the divine Son of God in order to have eternal life. There are fourteen discourses in John, which is twice as many as Matthew, and these discourses are of a different character than those in the Synoptics. In the Synoptics, the discourses are simple, direct, and easily understood. In John, they are philosophical and profound; frequently Jesus speaks of truth on a heavenly level, while His hearers interpret His statements on an earthly level. There are concepts and words that are intentionally used with double meanings. John also features many private discourses in addition to public ones. He includes, by one count, twenty-seven interviews of people in his Gospel—from beggars, fishermen, and Samaritans to noblemen, teachers, and priests. These interviews reveal various attitudes towards Jesus and provide an important witness to who Jesus is. Also unlike the Synoptics, John chooses not to relate any of Jesus’ parables, though he does include a number of extended metaphors (e.g., “I am the Good Shepherd”).

John chose not to describe in his Gospel a number of significant aspects of Jesus’ ministry: His birth, His genealogy, His baptism, His temptation, the Sermon on the Mount, the Transfiguration, the institution of the Lord’s Supper, and the Ascension. These events were extraneous to John’s purpose of recording signs and discourses which point men to belief in Jesus as the divine Son of God. In addition, the major events he omitted were already so well known that John does not feel the need to rehearse them again. On the other hand, John’s Gospel shows that the Synoptics have major omissions as well, such as the raising of Lazarus and the healing of the man born blind. John must have felt that some important aspects of Jesus’ ministry were left out of the Synoptics.

The Synoptic Gospels present approximately thirty-five miracles. John only presents seven major miracles, and five of them are unique to his Gospel. These miracles are carefully selected to prove his thesis. The most frequently recorded miracle in the other Gospels is the casting out of demons, which John never mentions. In addition, the words “miracle” and “wonder” are never used in the Gospel of

---

1 It would also be assumed that, since Jesus kept the Mosaic Law perfectly, He would have visited Jerusalem at all the major feasts, in accordance with the Law.

2 Where John does record Jesus’ activities, He often interjects his own comments in a way that the other Evangelists typically do not. He frequently breaks into his narratives with editorial comments which explain the significance of what is happening.
John, only the word “sign” (cf. Acts 2:22). While a miracle gains attention, and a wonder prompts analysis, a sign demands allegiance. John wants to move his readers to believe on Jesus.

John never refers to the kingdom of heaven or kingdom of God, because his focus is on the King—the Person, more than the program. He presents Jesus as the Son of God and the Revelation of the Father. Within John’s evangelistic purpose, he distinguishes carefully between true and false belief in order to evangelize false professing believers as well as professing unbelievers, and to define the type of belief which he is calling for. John makes the argument that true believers will bear fruit and abide, while false believers will manifest themselves by falling away. False believers are illustrated in chs. 2, 6, 7–8, 12, and 15. There are many points in John’s Gospel at which people initially professed belief in Jesus when they saw signs, then walked away when Jesus pressed His claim to divinity. Overall, the circle of Jesus’ followers grows progressively narrower throughout John’s narrative, and the opposition to Jesus becomes progressively hardened, until finally the multitudes crucified Him at the instigation of Israel’s religious leaders.

John is a universal Gospel, a Gospel that was written for the world, especially the world as it was in A.D. 80–85. This is unlike the Synoptics, each of which was written for a specific segment of the world—the Jews, the Romans, or the Greeks. In addition, while the Synoptics are primarily written to believers, the Gospel of John is primarily a call to believe, and therefore is more directly evangelistic. John is sometimes called the Gospel of belief, but the word belief (the noun form) never occurs in the book—it is always the verb. John is thus more accurately called the Gospel of believing, for it demands a decision, and a faith whose genuineness is actively demonstrated.

Author

The evidence for Johannine authorship of the fourth Gospel is extremely strong. The author refers to himself obliquely several times in his work, calling himself “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (13:23; 19:26-27; 20:2; 21:7, 20). He seems to be more closely associated with Peter than any other disciple, and also second in rank to Peter (13:23-24; 18:15-16; 20:2-8; 21:7, 20-21). He was not merely one of the Twelve, but was one of the inner circle of three/four disciples, which consisted of Simon Peter, John, James, and Andrew. But the author was not Simon Peter or Andrew, both of whom are named multiple times in this Gospel. That leaves James and John, but since James was killed very early in the history of the church, in A.D. 44 (Acts 12:1-2; cf. John 21:23), only John could have written the fourth Gospel. John’s special relationship with Jesus is shown in that he was made the recipient of the greatest vision in all the Bible, recorded in the book of Revelation. Also, John’s connection with Peter is clearly evident in the book of Acts (Acts 3:1; 4:13; 8:14). James is probably not named in the book for personal reasons, in keeping with the author’s humble style of not identifying himself by name, since if James were named one would know that his brother was John.

The early church fathers affirmed John’s authorship of this Gospel strongly and unanimously. Some of the fathers, in fact, claim to have personally known those who knew John in Ephesus in his later years, thus making a direct link to the tradition of Johannine authorship.

John’s Gospel is special largely because of its author, who was an eyewitness of nearly everything he wrote, and who therefore concludes his Gospel by testifying that he has borne witness to the things he has written (21:24). Further, John, as the disciple whom Jesus loved, understood Jesus better than any of the other disciples and shared His mentality more closely, making him the ideal author of a special Gospel.

---

3 The verb πιστεύω (believe) is used ninety-eight times in the Gospel of John, but only thirty times in the other three Gospels combined. Approximately sixty of John’s uses of πιστεύω are present or imperfect tenses, which implies that the believing must be active. Thirty-seven times, John specifies that believing must be “in him” (πιστεύω εἰς).
Various references in the Gospels indicate that John and Jesus were related through their mothers, and therefore must have spent time together while growing up in Galilee. John also knew Simon Peter and his brother Andrew very well before becoming disciples of Jesus, since John and his brother James were the fishing partners of Simon and Andrew (Luke 5:9). John probably knew John the Baptist as well, again through his mother’s relationship to the mothers of John and Jesus. John therefore knew the major characters in the Gospel narratives better than anyone, making him able to paint a uniquely insightful picture of them, and to select the most significant incidents and details from their lives. It is amazing that John wrote his gospel nearly fifty years after the events described, and yet the experiences of being with Jesus in His earthly ministry were still burning on the apostle’s heart so many years later.

John likely hailed from the village of Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee, which is where his fishing partners Simon and Andrew were from (John 1:44). John and his brother James were called “the sons of thunder” by Jesus, apparently because of they had deep, strong, authoritative voices. John was probably the youngest of the Twelve, since he outlived the rest, writing the book of Revelation in A.D. 96. Apocryphal stories about the apostle John abound in the writings of early Christians, in part because he was a strong personality, and in part because he lived the latest. Although the majority of these stories are legendary, there is good evidence for some basic facts, such as that John resided in Ephesus in his later years, and that he and the Gnostic Cerinthus were bitter enemies.

Liberals dispute Johannine authorship of the fourth Gospel in order to undermine the authority of the Word. Some liberals think John’s Gospel was produced by a community. This community is then described on the basis of the perceived theology and aims of the Gospel. Then the text of the Gospel is interpreted in light of the aims of the community. This and other denials of Johannine authorship are based on circular reasoning and unfounded presuppositions, and can claim no objective evidence in their support.

Writing Style

Since the three Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, have writing styles that are clearly distinct from each other, one might think that it would not be possible for a fourth Gospel to have a fourth distinct writing style, and yet John’s writing is in fact very distinct. The Holy Spirit’s selection of four writers with four distinct writing styles was intentional, and is meant to show that they represent four independent witnesses to the life and ministry of Jesus, rather than copying from each other or from common sources.

John’s writing uses simple language to communicate profound truths. Metzger’s analysis is excellent:

The language of the Gospel According to John has a simplicity and a grandeur which are unrivaled by any other book of the New Testament. Though John’s vocabulary is far less extensive than that of the other three Gospels, he makes an impressive, almost majestic, use of his fundamental words and phrases by the expedient of repetition. In comparison with the Synoptic Gospels, John has few compound verbs, few adjectives, few concrete nouns; he turns more to abstract nouns, although his use of these is restrained. Characteristic words which appear many times in both the Gospel and in one or more of the epistles are “truth,” “love,” “light,” “to witness,” “world,” “sin,” “judgment,” and “life.”

4 John 19:25 says that Jesus’ mother and His mother’s sister were standing by His cross. Matthew 27:56 identifies these two women as “Mary the mother of James and Joseph” (who were Jesus’ brothers) and “the mother of the sons of Zebedee” (who were James and John). Mark 15:40 evidently names the mother of James and John as Salome. Note that the “Mary the wife of Clopas” in John 19:25 cannot the woman referred to as Jesus’ mother’s sister, since it is highly unlikely that two sisters would both be named Mary.
John

His syntactical construction is severely plain—almost childlike. Even where a particle of logical sequence might have been expected, John co-ordinates clauses and sentences, sometimes with a wooden “and” (parataxis), sometimes without any conjunction at all.

Another stylistic peculiarity of John is his fondness for combining positive and negative expressions of the same truth: as, “All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made” (1:3); “He confessed, and denied not” (1:20); “[Jesus] knew all men and needed no one to bear witness of man” (2:25); “... should not perish, but have everlasting life” (3:16; see also 3:36; 5:24, 30; 10:5; 18:20; I John 1:6; 2:4, 27; etc.).

John writes pure Greek as far as words and grammar are concerned, but more than once he puts his ideas into molds congenial to a typically Jewish point of view. Thus the phrase “the son of perdition” (17:12), which represents a relation between a spiritual principle and the person in whom it is incarnated; “to rejoice with joy” (χαρᾷ χαίρει, 3:29); the use of the verb “to know” (as in 17:3 and elsewhere) to designate the most intimate spiritual union between God and man; the indicating of moral dependence upon another being by the expression “to be in” or “to abide in” (John 14:17; 15:4; I John 2:6; etc.)—all these are far more typical of Semitic idiom than of Greek.

In common with koine Greek, as well as Semitic preference, John very seldom uses indirect discourse, even for the words and opinions of others (perhaps the only example of indirect discourse is the true text of 4:51; see RSV).

The reader of the Greek text soon discovers that John is particularly fond of the perfect tense. As compared with the Synoptic Gospels, John uses the perfect (and pluperfect) tense three times as often as Mark and Luke do, and five times as often as Matthew does; furthermore, I John uses it twice as often, proportionately to length, as does the Fourth Gospel. John’s overworking of the perfect tense is probably to be explained by his wish to emphasize thereby the abiding consequences and eternal significance of the work and words of God’s only Son.5

In spite of his restricted vocabulary, John does have some distinctive terms and expressions. For example, of the 186 uses of κόσμος (world) in the NT, 105 are in John’s writings. Nineteen of the thirty-seven NT uses of ζωή αἰώνιος (eternal life) occur in John’s Gospel (16x) and epistles (3x). John’s simplistic Greek probably reflects his background as a Galilean fisherman. Another indication of the author’s background may be his use of a different word for “fish” in his account of the feeding of the five thousand than the other three Gospels have (ὀψάριον is used in John 6:9; ἰχθύς is used in Matt 14:17, 19; Mark 6:38, 41; Luke 9:13, 16). John appears to use ὀψάριον as a technical term, meaning “little fish”; he carefully distinguishes his use of ὀψάριον and ἰχθύς in ch. 21.

It is an interesting feature of John’s writing style that, out of some seventy occurrences of the term οὐρανός (heaven) throughout his writings, he only uses the term in the plural once (probably under LXX influence), in Revelation 12:12. John uses the singular of οὐρανός eighteen times in his Gospel and fifty-one times in Revelation (the term never occurs in his three epistles). All other NT writers alternate between the singular and the plural of οὐρανός with greater frequency.

Date and Occasion of Writing

There are multiple indications in the Gospel of John that it was written late in the apostolic era, probably between A.D. 80 and 85. One indication of its late date is the appearance of statements in places which seem intended to contradict Docetic Gnostic teaching about Jesus (e.g., 1:14; 19:34-35).6 Since the

---


6 Docetism is the teaching that Jesus only appeared to have a human body; He was really only a phantom. When Jesus walked on the beach, He would leave no footprints on the sand. Docetism was usually associated with Gnosticism, which taught that matter is inherently evil, and that salvation is attained through secret, mystical knowledge.
Docetic heresy does not seem to have developed until late in the first century, a later date would be expected. An upper limit to the writing of John’s Gospel is the writing of 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. The prologue to 1 John indicates that the author had already delivered to the church a record of the witness which he bore concerning Jesus Christ, making the date of 1 John later than the writing of John’s Gospel. The heresy which John confronts in 1 John is also in the foreground in Jude, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation 2–3—all of which were written late in the apostolic era. Since Revelation was written in A.D. 96, and John was likely exiled several years before this (ca. 92?), and John and Jude wrote their epistles and actively fought the Docetic heresy for several years before this (85–92?), the Gospel of John must have been written between A.D. 80 and 85. It seems that Docetic Gnosticism had only begun to take root before the publication of John’s Gospel, and that it exploded afterward—probably with the Gnostic teachers characteristically twisting the esoteric statements in the Gospel to support their heretical doctrines.

Another upper limit on the writing of John’s Gospel is set by the John Rylands papyrus P52, which contains parts of John 18 and is the oldest extant manuscript of any part of the New Testament, being dated by papyrologists to A.D. 125. Since P52 was found in Egypt, it presumably dates from a time when John’s Gospel had already been widely copied and circulated, meaning that the original date of composition must be at least a few decades earlier than 125.

Evidence that the Gospel of John was written after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 comes from its numerous explanations of very basic terminology regarding Palestinian geography, Jewish customs, and temple practices. John has to explain that what he calls “the Sea of Galilee” is what his readers know as “the Sea of Tiberius” (6:1); that Passover and Tabernacles are Jewish feasts (2:13; 6:4; 7:2); that Jews have no dealings with Samaritans (4:9); that “Messiah” is equivalent to “Christ” (1:41; 4:25); and that “Rabbi” is a title which means “Teacher” (1:38; 20:16). Anyone who was even remotely familiar with Judaism or with the pre-A.D. 70 world of Palestine would not need to have such elementary terms explained. It is also significant that John contains no references to the Sadducees, who are referred to seven times in Matthew and once each in Mark and Luke. The Sadducees disappeared as a distinct faction in Judaism when the temple was destroyed, and thus there would be little reason to warn against the Sadducees after A.D. 70. Even if a writer wished to record Jesus’ historical warnings after A.D. 70, he would at least need to explain who the Sadducees were and what they had believed.

John assumes that his readers have knowledge from the other Gospel accounts, such as the fact that John was cast into prison (3:24), the human origins of Jesus (7:41-42), and Mary’s washing of Jesus’ feet (11:2). He also seems to intentionally seek to present different events and sayings in Jesus’ ministry than the other Gospels, or to add new information where he overlaps with them. All of this indicates that John wrote last.

The internal evidence for a late date of composition is supported by the testimony of the church fathers, who regarded John as the last Gospel written—a belief reflected in what came to be the canonical order of the four Gospels. The earliest writer to make a statement on the subject was Irenaeus (ca. 140–ca. 202), in Haer. 3.1.1:

---

7 Wallace argues that ἔστιν in 5:2 is a stative present (rather than a historical present), and assumes that the pool of Bethesda was destroyed in A.D. 70, which would mean that the Gospel of John would have to have been written before A.D. 70 (Daniel B. Wallace, Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the Greek New Testament [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 531). Aside from the grammatical question, however, there is no evidence that the Romans destroyed the pool of Bethesda in A.D. 70. Normally the last thing that an occupation force would destroy would be the water supply. Note, too, that 5:3 is in the past tense, indicating that there no longer was a crowd of sick people lying at the pool of Bethesda at the time when John wrote. Also, in 18:1, when referring to Gethsemane, John says “there was a garden,” possibly indicating that it was no longer there when he wrote.

8 Matthew and Mark use the terms “Rabbi” or “Rabboni” four times each, with no explanation. Matthew and Mark also refer to “the Sea of Galilee” twice each, without an explanation.
Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia.⁹

In summary, a date between 80 and 85 for the Gospel of John fits the various indicators best. This was about fifteen to twenty years after the composition of Mark, the last of the Synoptics.

One reason why John wrote his Gospel is that people asked him to. They wanted to hear more stories about Jesus that were not recorded in the Synoptic accounts (cf. 21:25), and also wanted clearer teaching about Jesus’ divinity and humanity in response to budding heresies. John, however, not being sure whether it was the will of God for him to write another Gospel, and not wanting to write a Gospel in the flesh, called for prayer and fasting regarding the matter, and was led by the Holy Spirit to write. The Muratorian Fragment (ca. 170?) ¹⁰ relates the tradition in this way:

The fourth Gospel is that of John, one of the disciples. When his fellow-disciples and bishops entreated him, he said, “Fast ye now with me for the space of three days, and let us recount to each other whatever may be revealed to each of us.” On the same night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the apostles, that John should narrate all things in his own name as they called them to mind.¹¹

In his Preface to Matthew, Jerome (ca. 340–420) relates a similar account:

The last [Gospel writer] is John, the Apostle and Evangelist, whom Jesus loved most, who, reclining on the Lord’s bosom, drank the purest streams of doctrine, and was the only one thought worthy of the words from the cross, “Behold! thy mother.” When he was in Asia, at the time when the seeds of heresy were springing up (I refer to Cerinthus, Ebion, and the rest who say that Christ has not come in the flesh, whom he in his own epistle calls Antichrists, and whom the Apostle Paul frequently assails), he was urged by almost all the bishops of Asia then living, and by deputations from many Churches, to write more profoundly concerning the divinity of the Saviour, and to break through all obstacles so as to attain to the very Word of God (if I may so speak) with a boldness as successful as it appears audacious. Ecclesiastical history relates that, when he was urged by the brethren to write, he replied that he would do so if a general fast were proclaimed and all would offer up prayer to God; and when the fast was over, the narrative goes on to say, being filled with revelation, he burst into the heaven-sent Preface: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: this was in the beginning with God.”¹²

In Hist. eccl. 6.14.7, Eusebius relates the statement of Clement of Alexandria (ca. 160–ca. 220) regarding the occasion of writing of John’s Gospel:

---


¹⁰ It has been suggested that Gaius of Rome was the author of the Muratorian Fragment.


But last of all, John, perceiving that the external facts had been made plain in the Gospel, being urged by his friends, and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel.\textsuperscript{13}

In \textit{Hist. eccl.} 3.24.7, Eusebius (ca. 270–340) gives his own opinion regarding the reason why John wrote:

And when Mark and Luke had already published their Gospels, they say that John, who had employed all his time in proclaiming the Gospel orally, finally proceeded to write for the following reason. The three Gospels already mentioned having come into the hands of all and into his own too, they say that he accepted them and bore witness to their truthfulness but that there was lacking in them an account of the deeds done by Christ at the beginning of his ministry.\textsuperscript{14}

Eusebius’ analysis of John’s reason for writing is superficial in light of the book’s own purpose statement (20:30-31), but he does support the tradition that John wrote last. See the discussion below under “purpose” for further impetuses for John’s writing.

**Purpose and Message**

The overall purpose of John’s Gospel is directly stated in 20:30-31—\textit{Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name.} The purpose of the Gospel of John is to stir men to belief in Jesus Christ as the divine Son of God in order to obtain eternal life. The message of the Gospel of John is, the Father’s glory was revealed to the world by the incarnated Son, Jesus Christ, who gives eternal life to those who believe in Him and judges those who do not believe.

Closely related to John’s evangelistic purpose was his desire to respond to the Gnostic heresy which was already gaining popularity at the time when he wrote.\textsuperscript{15} There were teachers who denied that Jesus had a human body, and claimed He was but a phantom who left no footprints when He walked on the sand. There were others who taught that the divine element (the Christ) came upon the human element (Jesus) at Jesus’ baptism and left before the crucifixion. Others denied the reality of the crucifixion. In response, John states directly that the Word became flesh (1:14); he notes how Jesus became wearied during His journey through Samaria (4:6), and how He wept (11:35) and sighed (11:33, 38). John emphasizes that he saw the blood and water pour out of the side of Jesus’ body after His death (19:34-35), and that Jesus had the same body after His resurrection that He had when He was crucified (19:20). John affirms that all things were made through Him (1:3), in contradiction of the Gnostic teaching that matter was created by an evil being. In his purpose statement, he states directly that Jesus is the Christ (20:31). Throughout the Gospel, John stresses that one cannot simply believe in his own conception of Jesus or of the messianic role; in order to be a genuine disciple, one must believe the truth about Jesus, which is that He is the divine Son of God. This is also the stress of John’s epistles—those who have believed the right thing about Jesus are assured of eternal life, while those who have believed the wrong thing are antichrists and idolaters.


\textsuperscript{14} Eusebius, “Church History,” 153.

\textsuperscript{15} Irenaeus claims that this was John’s purpose in writing (\textit{Haer.} 3.11.1).
Although the primary purpose of John’s Gospel is evangelistic/apologetic, a secondary purpose is to establish a more explicit chronology of the ministry of Jesus. John’s Gospel follows a strict chronological order, and includes events from each segment of Jesus’ ministry, with multiple chronological markers. The Synoptics only mention one Passover in Jesus’ ministry, and make no precise statement as to how long Jesus’ public ministry lasted (outside of Luke 13:6-9). John’s Gospel mentions three Passovers and implies a fourth, which indicates that Jesus’ ministry lasted three and a half years.

It is possible that an additional secondary purpose John had in writing was to convince John the Baptist’s few remaining followers to believe on Jesus. John (the writer) emphasizes that John the Baptist was not the Messiah (1:8, 20; 3:28), and clarifies the temporary nature of John’s role as the one who would point men to Jesus (1:19-42; 3:22-36).

Outline of John

Summary Outline

I. Thematic Prologue 1:1-18
II. The Call to Believe and Responses to the Call 1:19–12:50
IV. Jesus’ Death: The Consummation of Unbelief 18:1–19:42
V. Sign of the Resurrection: Final Call to Believe 20:1-31
VI. Epilogue: Call to Follow 21:1-25

Expanded Outline

I. Thematic Prologue 1:1-18
II. The Call to Believe and Responses to the Call 1:19–12:50
   A. John’s call to believe 1:19-34
      1. John’s self-identification 1:19-28
      2. John’s witness to Jesus’ Person 1:29-34
   B. Jesus’ call to His first disciples to believe 1:35–2:12
      1. The call of John’s disciples 1:35-42
      2. The call of Philip and Nathanael 1:43-51
      3. First sign: water to wine 2:1-11
      4. Early Galilean ministry 2:12
   C. Jesus’ call to the Jews’ leaders to believe 2:13–3:21
      1. The first temple cleansing: challenge and counterchallenge 2:13-22
      2. The initial response to Jesus’ signs: insincere belief 2:23-25
      4. Explanation of the Son’s coming 3:16-21
   D. John’s second call to believe 3:22-36
      1. The goal of John’s ministry 3:22-30
      2. The new era begun by Jesus 3:31-36
   E. Jesus’ call to Samaritans to believe 4:1-42
      1. Encounter with the woman at the well 4:1-26
      2. Explanation to the disciples 4:27-38
      3. Ministry to the Samaritans 4:39-42
   F. Jesus’ call to the Galileans to believe 4:43-54
      1. Initial reception in Galilee 4:43-45
2. Second sign: healing the nobleman’s son 4:46-54

G. Jesus’ second call to the Jews’ leaders to believe 5:1-47
   1. Departure to Jerusalem 5:1
   2. Third sign: healing the man at the pool of Bethesda 5:2-9a
   3. Controversy over the Sabbath 5:9b-18
   4. The authority of Jesus 5:19-29
   5. The witnesses to Jesus 5:30-47

H. Jesus’ second call to the Galileans to believe 6:1-71
   1. Fourth sign: feeding the five thousand 6:1-14
   2. Jesus’ withdrawal 6:15
   3. Sign to the disciples: walking on water 6:16-21
   4. Call to believe on the Bread of Life 6:22-40
   5. Controversy over Jesus’ divinity 6:41-51
   6. The demand to receive Jesus’ work to have life 6:52-59
   7. The murmuring of false disciples 6:60-65
   8. The departure of false followers 6:66-71

I. Jesus’ call to the Judeans to believe 7:1–8:59
   1. Prelude to the feast 7:1-13
      a. Jesus’ refusal to travel openly 7:1-9
      b. The controversy concerning Jesus’ identity 7:10-13
   2. Exchange in the middle of the feast: Controversy over Jesus’ origin 7:14-36
      a. Challenge over Jesus’ teaching: the heavenly source of Jesus’ works 7:14-24
      b. Challenge over Jesus’ activity: Jesus’ heavenly commission and destiny 7:25-36
   3. Exchange on the last day of the feast: Controversy over Jesus’ identity 7:37–8:59
      a. First controversy resulting from Jesus’ call to believe: Jesus’ messiahship 7:37-52
         i. Call to believe and the questioning over Jesus’ messiahship 7:37-44
         ii. Dispute in the Sanhedrin and the rejection of Jesus’ messiahship 7:45-52
      b. Second controversy resulting from Jesus’ call to believe: Jesus’ witnesses 8:12-30
         i. Call to believe and the challenge over Jesus’ attestation 8:12-20
         ii. Jesus’ sacrificial death as a witness to His identity 8:21-30
      c. Third controversy resulting from Jesus’ call to believe: Jesus’ divinity 8:31-59

J. Jesus’ third call to the Jews’ leaders to believe 9:1–10:39
   1. Blindness dispelled and persisted in 9:1-41
      a. Fifth sign: healing the blind man 9:1-12
      b. Debate regarding the significance of the sign 9:13-34
      c. Results of the sign: salvation and hardened unbelief 9:35-41
   2. Call to leave Pharisaical Judaism and follow Jesus 10:1-21
      a. Claim to be the True Shepherd 10:1-6
      b. Claim to be the Door of the sheepfold 10:7-10
      c. Claim to be the Good Shepherd 10:11-18
      d. The unresolved controversy over Jesus 10:19-21
   3. Challenge at the Feast of Dedication 10:22-39

K. Jesus’ second call to the Judeans to believe 10:40–12:50
   1. Belief in Perea 10:40-42
   2. Sixth sign: the raising of Lazarus 11:1-53
      a. Jesus’ response to Lazarus’ illness: delayed travel 11:1-16
      b. Jesus’ response to Lazarus’ death: grief and resurrection 11:17-44
      c. Results of the miracle: believers and informants 11:45-46
      d. The Sanhedrin’s plot 11:47-53
   3. Prelude to the Passover 11:54–12:11
      a. Jesus’ withdrawal and the resulting controversy 11:54-57
b. Jesus’ anointing by Mary 12:1-8

c. Jesus’ increasing fame 12:9-11

4. Close of Jesus’ public ministry 12:12-43
   a. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem 12:12-19
   b. Final call to believe 12:20-36a
   c. John’s reflection on Jesus’ ministry 12:36b-43
   d. Summation of Jesus’ call to believe 12:44-50


A. Events before Judas’ departure 13:1-30
   1. Jesus’ washing of the disciples’ feet 13:1-11
   2. The lesson from the foot-washing 13:12-20

B. Upper Room discourse 13:31–14:31
   1. The new commandment 13:31-35
   2. Dialogue with Peter: Jesus’ departure temporary 13:36–14:4
   3. Dialogue with Thomas: faith in Jesus the only way to the Father 14:5-7
   4. Dialogue with Philip: the disciples’ relationship with the Father 14:8-21
   5. Dialogue with Judas: Jesus to be manifested only to true believers 14:22-24
   6. The purpose of forewarning: to believe when understanding comes later 14:25-31

C. Discourse on the way to Gethsemane 15:1–16:33
   1. The vine metaphor: true and false believers distinguished 15:1-27
   2. The disciples’ new situation 16:1-16
   3. The change about to occur 16:17-33

D. Jesus’ intercessory prayer 17:1-26

IV. Jesus’ Sacrificial Death: Call to Believe 18:1–19:42

A. Confrontation of Jesus by the Jews’ posse 18:1-11

B. Arrest of Jesus and conduct to Annas 18:12-14

C. Peter’s first denial 18:15-18

D. Trial before Annas 18:19-24

E. Peter’s second and third denials 18:25-27

F. Arraignment before Pilate 18:28-32

G. Interrogation by Pilate 18:33-38a

H. Pilate’s first verdict and its rejection 18:38b-40
   1. Jesus’ rejection and condemnation 19:1-16
   2. Jesus’ crucifixion and accusation 19:17-22

K. Events at the cross 19:23-27

L. Jesus’ death 19:28-30

M. Verification of Jesus’ death 19:31-37

N. The entombment of Jesus’ body 19:38-42

V. Sign of the Resurrection: Final Call to Believe 20:1-31

A. First proof of the resurrection: the empty gravecloths 20:1-10

B. Second proof of the resurrection: the appearance to Mary 20:11-18

C. Third proof of the resurrection: appearance to the disciples 20:19-23

D. Thomas’ unbelief 20:24-25

E. Fourth proof of the resurrection: the appearance to Thomas 20:26-29

F. The writer’s object: to lead men to believe and have life 20:30-31

VI. Epilogue: Call to Follow 21:1-25

A. Appearance at the sea of Tiberias: call to leave secular vocations 21:1-14

B. Confrontation of Peter: call to vocational ministry 21:15-23

C. The writer’s testimony 21:24

D. The writer’s limitations 21:25
Argument of John

John’s Gospel is arranged in chronological order, but John carefully selects only those events and discourses in the ministry of Jesus which relate to the call to believe on Himself in order to have eternal life. In the order of the book, chs. 1–4 occur in the first year of Jesus’ ministry; ch. 5 occurs in either the second or third year; ch. 6 occurs in the third year; and the final two-thirds of John’s Gospel, chs. 7–21, occurs during the last six months of Jesus’ ministry. A full third of the Gospel of John, chs. 11–19, discusses the last week of the Lord’s life. Chapters 13–19 deal with less than twenty-four hours in the life of Jesus, as John zeros in on the critical events surrounding the crucifixion. The whole gospel of John mentions less than thirty individual days in the life of Jesus, and yet these days are drawn from all three and a half years of His ministry. John alone of the Gospel writers has an extended description of the first year of Jesus’ ministry, as the Synoptic accounts do not begin until John is put in prison. However, the first four chapters of the Gospel of John all occur before John’s imprisonment, i.e., when Jesus and John were ministering simultaneously. Towards the end of this period, John further identifies who Jesus is (3:22-30). However, the Gospel of John says virtually nothing about the prelude to Jesus’ ministry, since it begins (at 1:19) after Jesus’ baptism. John assumes knowledge of the historical background given in the Synoptics, which allows him to focus on Jesus’ divine origins.

The major sections of John’s Gospel include the thematic prologue (1:1-18), the call to believe and responses to the call (John’s account of Jesus’ public ministry; 1:19–12:50), Jesus’ instruction of the Eleven regarding the nature of saving faith (13:1–17:26), the final consummation of the Jews’ unbelief (Jesus’ death; 18:1–19:42), the final call to believe (the sign of the resurrection; 20:1-31), and a call to follow (21:1-25). There are six major signs in the body of John’s Gospel which are designed to demonstrate his thesis (20:30-31), plus the sign of the resurrection.16

Thematic Prologue, 1:1-18

John’s Gospel begins with a profound prologue which lays out the themes of the work and presents the truth-claims which John is seeking to prove. The book begins with a strong affirmation of the divinity, and therefore the preexistence, of Jesus, who is called the Word (λόγος) because He is the Revealer and Revelation of the Father. The Word is the eternal God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, the Giver of life, and the Revelation of God in the world (1:1-5). The Word’s coming was announced by a forerunner, John (1:6-8), and yet when He came, His own revelation of Himself was rejected by the world which He created and by His own people (1:9-11).17 However, even though the Word’s own did not

---

16 The seven major signs are: water to wine (2:1-11), healing the nobleman’s son (4:46-54), healing the man at the pool of Bethsaida (5:2:9a), feeding the five thousand (6:1-14), healing the blind man (9:1-12), raising Lazarus (11:1-53), and Jesus’ resurrection (20:1-31). Although walking on water (6:16-21) is usually listed by commentators as a sign, it really is only a miracle that occurs within the discussion of Jesus as the Bread of Life. The resurrection is usually not listed, although it is said to be a sign right in the thesis statement. There are, of course, other, lesser miracles, such as the amazing catch of fish in ch. 21 and Jesus’ revelation of the woman at Sychar’s personal life (4:16-19). However, that John is emphasizing major signs is shown by his numeration of the healing of the nobleman’s son as “the second sign” (4:54). Each sign is intended to prove Jesus’ divinity in some way, and there are usually contextual hints which reveal the spiritual significance of each sign. Most of the signs also involve interpersonal encounters and dialogues, which again bring out the significance.

17 Verse 11, sometimes called the saddest verse in all the Bible, summarizes the other three Gospels. The other three had not begun with a statement of the conclusion, but had let it build throughout the narrative. But John,
receive Him, the invitation to receive Him is open to all, and those who receive Him become His own (1:12-13). John then describes how the Word came and was manifested: He became flesh, without ceasing to be God (1:14). The Word’s incarnate glory was seen by the world, attested by John, and experienced by believers apart from the Law as the Revelation of God (1:14-18).

The Call to Believe and Responses to the Call, 1:19–12:50

The main body of John’s Gospel, from 1:19 to 12:50, consists of repeated calls to believe in Jesus, with responses of belief, unbelief, false profession of belief, and renunciation of false profession. Jesus’ identity is attested by various means—not only by His signs, but also His words, by John, and by the Scriptures. At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, He attracted many believers and disciples through His signs, but by the end most had proved to be insincere, and had stumbled over the claims Jesus made for Himself.

John’s call to believe, 1:19-34. The first call to believe came from John the Baptist, whose witness was already noted in the prologue. In 1:19-34, the general statements about John in the prologue are concretized through the relation of specific historical situations in which John testified of Jesus (cf. 3:22-36). John first gives his own self-identification (1:19-28). The Jews recognized that John’s preaching and baptizing were messianic, and yet John did not match any of the figures in Jewish messianic expectation (1:19-22). John explained that his purpose was to prepare the way for the divine Messiah’s coming, in accord with Isa 40:3 (1:23-28). On the very next day after the official delegation had come to John from Jerusalem, Jesus came to John after returning from His temptation (1:29). John proceeded to publicly and unambiguously identify Jesus as the divine Messiah, implicitly calling men to believe on Him (1:29-34).

Jesus’ call to His first disciples to believe, 1:35–2:12. The call from John to believe quickly transitions to a call from Jesus to believe, as Jesus calls John’s disciples to Himself at the very beginning of His public ministry. The first two disciples were Andrew and an unnamed associate, probably John the writer (1:35-40). They were quickly joined by Andrew’s brother Simon, whose name was changed by Jesus to Rock (Cephas/Peter; 1:41-42). Jesus then called Philip, who immediately believed and brought his brother Nathanael to Jesus, who also believed (1:43-51).

Having summarized the content of the three Synoptics, now frees himself to write entirely new material which shows how anyone can receive Jesus even though the Jews did not.

18 The Gospel of John does not mention Jesus’ baptism or temptation, but these are assumed from the three Synoptic Gospels. Jesus was baptized by John, tempted for forty days in the wilderness, and then returned to John in order to begin calling out a group of followers for His own public ministry.

19 According to 1:33, John did not know that Jesus was the Messiah until He came up out of the water after His baptism. How is it, then, that when Jesus came to be baptized, John initially refused, and said that he needed to be baptized by Jesus (Matt 3:14)? The answer is that John and Jesus were related through their mothers (Luke 1:36), and so knew each other growing up. John only knew Jesus as a man, yet he recognized that Jesus was an absolutely perfect and impeccable man. When John began his public ministry, he taught accurately about the Messiah, yet did not know who the Messiah was. Since John was preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, he did not want to baptize Jesus, because he could not think of anything Jesus needed to repent of, or any sin Jesus had ever done. This is striking, for it shows that even without the knowledge that Jesus was the Messiah or the Son of God, godly men could and did still recognize His complete sinlessness and perfect righteousness.
Dr. Anderson’s Interpretive Guide to Acts and the Pauline Epistles

Steven D. Anderson
# Table of Contents

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**............................................................................................................................................. III

**PREFACE** ........................................................................................................................................................................ VIII

**STYLE NOTES** .............................................................................................................................................................. IX

  Quotations of the Bible .................................................................................................................................................. ix
  A Note on the Divine Name .............................................................................................................................................. ix
  Common Abbreviations ................................................................................................................................................... ix
  Abbreviations of the Books of the Bible .......................................................................................................................... x

**INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO ACTS** ............................................................................................................................. 1

  AUTHOR ........................................................................................................................................................................... 2
  WRITING STYLE .............................................................................................................................................................. 3
  RECIPIENTS ....................................................................................................................................................................... 7
  DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING ............................................................................................................................. 8
  PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ................................................................................................................................................ 9
  TEXTUAL BASE .................................................................................................................................................................. 9
  PAUL’S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS .................................................................................................................................. 11
  OUTLINE OF ACTS .......................................................................................................................................................... 12
    Summary Outline .......................................................................................................................................................... 12
    Expanded Outline ........................................................................................................................................................ 12
  ARGUMENT OF ACTS ...................................................................................................................................................... 15
    The Development of the Church in Jerusalem, 1:1–8:1a ............................................................................................ 16
    The Extension of the Church to Palestine and Syria, 8:1b–12:25 ............................................................................. 20
    The Extension of the Church to the Uttermost Part of the World, 13:1–28:31 ......................................................... 23
  BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ACTS ........................................................................................................................................... 31

**INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO ROMANS** ........................................................................................................................ 34

  HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .......................................................................................................................................... 34
  AUTHOR ........................................................................................................................................................................... 35
  DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING ............................................................................................................................. 35
  PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ................................................................................................................................................ 36
  WRITING STYLE .............................................................................................................................................................. 37
  TEXTUAL BASE .................................................................................................................................................................. 37
  OUTLINE OF ROMANS ..................................................................................................................................................... 38
    Summary Outline .......................................................................................................................................................... 38
    Expanded Outline ........................................................................................................................................................ 38
  ARGUMENT OF ROMANS ............................................................................................................................................... 40
    Salutation, 1:1–7 ........................................................................................................................................................... 40
    Introduction, 1:8–17 ..................................................................................................................................................... 41
    Universality of Condemnation in Sin Apart from Christ, 1:18–3:20 ...................................................................... 41
    Justification by Faith in Christ as the Solution to Sin, 3:21–4:25 ................................................................................. 43
    The Eternal Security of the Justified Believer, 5:1–8:39 ............................................................................................ 43
    Israel’s Status in the Church Age Explained, 9:1–11:36 ............................................................................................. 47
    Service in View of Salvation, 12:1–15:13 .................................................................................................................... 51
    Directions regarding Paul’s Coming, 15:14–33 ........................................................................................................ 52
    Conclusion, 16:1–27 ..................................................................................................................................................... 52
  BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR ROMANS ...................................................................................................................................... 54

**INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO 1 CORINTHIANS** ............................................................................................................. 57

  HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .......................................................................................................................................... 57
<p>| ARGUMENT OF EPHESIANS                                                                 | 102 |
| Salutation, 1:1-2                                                                    | 102 |
| The Calling of the Church, 1:3–3:21                                                  | 102 |
| The Conduct of the Church, 4:1–6:20                                                  | 103 |
| Closing Remarks, 6:21-24                                                             | 104 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR EPHESIANS                                                          | 105 |
| INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO PHILIPPIANS                                                   | 107 |
| HISTORICAL BACKGROUND                                                                | 107 |
| AUTHOR                                                                                 | 107 |
| DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING                                                         | 107 |
| PURPOSE AND MESSAGE                                                                  | 108 |
| OUTLINE OF PHILIPPIANS                                                               | 108 |
| ARGUMENT OF PHILIPPIANS                                                              | 108 |
| Introductory Matters, 1:1-30                                                         | 109 |
| Exhortation to Have a Sacrificial Mind, 2:1-30.                                      | 110 |
| Exhortation to Have a Spiritual Mind, 3:1-21.                                        | 111 |
| Behavior Which Should Result from Having the Christian Mind, 4:1-9                   | 112 |
| Closing Remarks, 4:10-23                                                             | 112 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR PHILIPPIANS                                                         | 114 |
| INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO COLOSSIANS                                                    | 117 |
| HISTORICAL BACKGROUND                                                                | 117 |
| THE COLOSSIAN HERESY                                                                 | 117 |
| AUTHOR                                                                                 | 118 |
| DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING                                                         | 119 |
| PURPOSE AND MESSAGE                                                                  | 119 |
| OUTLINE OF COLOSSIANS                                                                | 119 |
| ARGUMENT OF COLOSSIANS                                                               | 120 |
| Salutation, 1:1-2                                                                    | 120 |
| Doctrinal: Instruction regarding the Person of Christ, 1:3–2:7                       | 120 |
| Polemical: Defense of the Sufficiency of Christ, 2:8-23                              | 120 |
| Applicational: Exhortation to Life in Christ, 3:1–4:6                               | 121 |
| Closing Remarks, 4:7-18                                                              | 121 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR COLOSSIANS                                                         | 122 |
| INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO 1 THESALONIANS                                                 | 124 |
| HISTORICAL BACKGROUND                                                                | 124 |
| AUTHOR                                                                                 | 124 |
| DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING                                                         | 125 |
| PURPOSE AND MESSAGE                                                                  | 125 |
| OUTLINE OF 1 THESALONIANS                                                            | 125 |
| ARGUMENT OF 1 THESALONIANS                                                           | 126 |
| Salutation, 1:1                                                                       | 126 |
| Personal: Paul’s Desire for the Thessalonians’ Growth, 1:2–3:13                     | 126 |
| Hortatory: Paul’s Directions for the Thessalonians’ Growth, 4:1–5:24                 | 126 |
| Closing Remarks, 5:25-28                                                             | 127 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR THE THESSALONIANS EPISTLES                                         | 128 |
| INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO 2 THESALONIANS                                                 | 131 |
| AUTHOR                                                                                 | 131 |
| DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING                                                         | 131 |
| PURPOSE AND MESSAGE                                                                  | 132 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outline of 2 Thessalonians</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument of 2 Thessalonians</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salutation, 1:1-2</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement in the Midst of Persecution, 1:3-12</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to False Teaching concerning the Day of the Lord, 2:1-17</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhortation to Obedience, 3:1-16</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing Remarks, 3:17-18</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interprettive Guide to 1 Timothy</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Background to the Pastoral Epistles</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressee</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date and Occasion of Writing</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose and Message</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline of 1 Timothy</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument of 1 Timothy</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salutation, 1:1-2</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhortation to Faithfulness to the Word, 1:3-20</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directions for Maintaining Proper Roles in the Church, 2:1-3:13</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directions for Guarding the Purity of the Church, 3:14-4:16</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directions for Proper Treatment of Groups in the Church, 5:1-6:2</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion, 6:3-21</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography for the Pastoral Epistles</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interprettive Guide to 2 Timothy</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date and Occasion of Writing</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose and Message</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline of 2 Timothy</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument of 2 Timothy</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salutation, 1:1-2</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: The Imperative for Faithfulness in Ministry, 1:3-18</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charge to Timothy, 2:1-4:8</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing Remarks, 4:9-22</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interprettive Guide to Titus</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressee</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date and Occasion of Writing</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose and Message</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Style</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual Base</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline of Titus</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument of Titus</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salutation, 1:1-4</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directives regarding the Oversight of the Church, 1:5-3:11</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing Remarks, 3:12-15</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interprettive Guide to Philemon</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Background</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AUTHOR .................................................................................................................................................................. 156
DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING .................................................................................................................. 156
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ..................................................................................................................................... 156
OUTLINE OF PHILEMON ....................................................................................................................................... 157
ARGUMENT OF PHILEMON ................................................................................................................................. 157
BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR PHILEMON ....................................................................................................................... 158
Interpretive Guide to Acts

The book commonly known as “Acts” (short for “The Acts of the Apostles”)1 tells the story of how the church began. God chose to display His power to the world by building His church through men who were poor, mainly uneducated (Paul is the notable exception), and of low status in society. To the secular mind, it would take a group of people of noble birth, political power, and great cunning to get a new religion up and running. It could not be done by commoners from Galilee. Christianity lacked everything that the world said was necessary for success, yet no religion has ever been more successful. The apostles were never able to raise large sums of money to fund their work; they completely failed to win the support of powerful people and government officials; and their religion could only hold out the promise of hardship, rejection, and suffering in this life. There was no political or social agenda, and no hope of temporal riches, fame, or pleasure. Somehow, the new religion spread like wildfire in the very face of Satan’s fiercest attacks, and has now withstood the vicissitudes of time for nearly two thousand years. The world has no explanation for it. The apostles’ own explanation was that Christianity was a work of God, not a work of man, and therefore it could not be stopped by men, nor could it be spread or established by human strength.

Acts is a book of firsts, especially in chs. 1–15. It describes the beginning of the church, the first new converts in the church, the first baptisms, the first congregation, the first persecution, the first appointment of deacons, the first martyr, the first Samaritan converts, the first Gentile converts, the first use of the name “Christian,” the first apostolic martyr, the first major missionary journey, and the first church council.

Acts is also a book of transition which lays out the bridge between the old dispensation and the new one. It begins with Jesus teaching the apostles about the kingdom outside Jerusalem, and ends, about thirty years later, with Paul teaching Gentile Christians about the kingdom in Rome. The entire book shows an increasing expansion of the church from its starting point in Jerusalem, and a shift from an exclusively Jewish and provincial religion to a predominantly Gentile and universal church. Acts encompasses a simultaneous movement of increasing blessing upon the church and increasing judgment upon Israel. Acts also marks a transition in the NT canon, connecting the Gospels to the Epistles. Acts is both the sequel to the Gospels and the background to the Epistles. The Epistles would not make sense on their own, without the historical background given in Acts. Likewise, it would be difficult to understand the connection between the ministry of Jesus in the Gospels and the Christian church as we know it without the link provided by Acts, which records the continuation of Jesus’ work through the apostles to found the church.

Some Bible teachers say that it is dangerous to base doctrines on Acts because it is a transitional book. But 2 Tim 3:16 affirms that all Scripture is profitable for doctrine. We can and should base Christian doctrines on Acts, though, just like any other book of the Bible, we need to understand what is happening in the larger historical and theological context, lest an isolated verse or passage be misread out of its context.2 In fact, Acts is a crucial book for many areas of theology, such as missiology, ecclesiology, pneumatology, eschatology, soteriology, and Israelology. It also sets forth examples that,

---

1 Although the title which the church has given to this book seems to imply that it describes the history of all the apostles, it really focuses on the ministries of Peter and Paul, because these were the two apostles whose work was of greatest significance for the founding of the church. It might have been more accurately titled, “The Origin of the Church.”

Alphabetically “Acts” is the first book in the Bible.

2 By way of comparison, virtually no one would say that we should not base doctrines on 1 Corinthians, even though 1 Cor 14 lays out rules for speaking in tongues that do not apply directly in a modern situation, in which the gift of tongues is no longer operative.
when understood in their historical context, teach important lessons about how to do evangelism, how to respond to persecution, and how to do ministry. The fact that some have claimed verses in Acts as a basis for false doctrines should not lead us to reject the legitimacy of Acts as a doctrinal textbook any more than the abuse of Romans or of any other part of Scripture.

Author

It is clear from the headings of the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts that they form a two-part series composed by the same author. This author’s name, according to the universal testimony of the early church, is Luke. Some of the earliest references in the church Fathers include Irenaeus (ca. 140–ca. 202) in *Haer.* 3.14.1, Clement of Alexandria (ca. 160–ca. 220) in *Strom.* 5.12 and the fragmentary *Adumbr. in 1 Pet,* and the *Anti-Marcionite Prologue to Luke* (probably ca. A.D. 190). To these can be added the abundant references in the Fathers to Lucan authorship of the third Gospel, along with the title KATA ΔΟΥΧΑ in early manuscripts. Significantly, no one in the early church questioned Lucan authorship of Acts or showed knowledge of any alternative tradition. This tradition is powerful, because if the early church were simply inventing a name to give authority to the books of Luke and Acts, Luke would not be the first choice, since he is not one of the more prominent companions of Paul and is never named in the books attributed to him.

The testimony of the Fathers is strongly corroborated by internal evidence within the book of Acts itself. Although the writer does not name himself, there are three sections of the book in which events are narrated in the first person plural, “we”: 16:10-17, 20:5–21:18, and 27:1–28:16.3 The “we” sections fall in the narratives of Paul’s second missionary journey, third missionary journey, and journey to Rome, and clearly indicate that the writer was a companion and ministry partner of the apostle Paul. Since, however, the writer does not refer to himself in the third person, all of Paul’s companions who are named in the narrative may be eliminated as potential authors: Timothy (16:1), Silas/Silvanus (15:22), Barnabas (4:36), Apollos (18:24), Mark (12:25), Aquila (18:2), Tycho (20:4), Trophimus (20:4), Secundus (20:4), Aristarchus (27:2), Gaius of Macedonia (19:29), Gaius of Derbe (20:4), Jason (17:7), and Erastus (19:22). Titus may be excluded as well, since Paul states in Gal 2:1-3 that Titus accompanied him to Jerusalem in Acts 15, which is not one of the “we” sections. Luke is virtually the only frequent companion of Paul’s who could have written the book. Further, the references to Luke in both Col 4:14 and Phlm 24 show that Luke was a companion of Paul’s in his first Roman imprisonment, as was the author of Acts. Second Timothy 4:11 states that Luke was Paul’s only companion in his second Roman imprisonment—meaning that Luke was Paul’s amanuensis for 2 Timothy, which is widely recognized to exhibit a Greek style much closer to that of Acts than most of Paul’s epistles. Conversely, there is no mention of Luke in any of the letters which Paul wrote during periods in the narrative of Acts not covered by the “we” sections. Everything fits with Lucan authorship, and there is nothing to suggest otherwise.

Relatively little is known about the personal life of Luke, as he is only mentioned by name three times in the NT (Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 24). The reference in Col 4:14 identifies him as “the beloved physician.” Surely as he traveled with Paul, he must have attended to the physical problems Paul developed as a result of all his beatings and deprivations and travels in disease-ridden areas. Luke also was apparently a pastor of the church at Philippi between Acts 16 and 20:6, where he may have used his secular profession to provide himself an income. Obviously he was highly educated, a native speaker of Greek, and trained in Greek schools. Yet his writings show an intimate familiarity with the OT and Judaism, which implies that Luke was a Jewish proselyte prior to his conversion to Christianity. Colossians 4:14 may be taken as an indication that Luke was a Gentile, since Paul puts the salutations from Jews in a separate section (Col 4:10-11). If he was a Gentile, he would be possibly the only Gentile author of Scripture (the writer of Job is another possibility). Luke may have been a freedman, as

---

3 It seems that the writer was with Paul for the entire narrative from 20:5 until the end of the book.
physicians were often slaves; but of this we have no certain knowledge. For evidence that Luke may have been from Syrian Antioch, as stated by Eusebius (H.E. 3.4.6) and Jerome (Vir. ill. 7; Praef. in Comm. in Mt.), see Bruce, Acts of the Apostles, 8-9. “In that case he may well have been one of the earliest Christian converts whom St Paul admitted to the full rights of Christian brotherhood, and with whom St Peter was afterwards, for one weak moment, ashamed to eat.” Beyond this, we know of Luke simply as “the faithful companion of St Paul, both in his first Roman imprisonment, when he still had friends about him, and in his second Roman imprisonment, when friend after friend deserted him and was ‘ashamed of his chain.’ . . . To [Luke]—to his allegiance, his ability, and his accurate preservation of facts—we are alone indebted for the greater part of what we know of the Apostle to the Gentiles.”

To the extent that Luke’s writings betray his personality, we may form a picture of him as a man who was keenly observant, both of details and of the big picture, who demanded perfection in all his endeavors, and who spared no effort to achieve it. His writing shows a greater attentiveness to the literary canons of classical Greek than any other NT books, and yet this attentiveness is overridden by an even greater concern for the precise preservation of history.

Luke was an eyewitness to at least a third of the events in Acts, including the ones recorded from 20:5 to the end of the book. He was also an eyewitness to 16:9-40. Since Luke was a companion of Paul’s for several years, Paul could have personally told Luke about events in his ministry to which Luke was not an eyewitness. Luke probably already knew much of this information from other sources within the network of Paul’s ministry team. It is simply not known whether or to what extent Luke was present for the events recorded in chs. 1–12, regarding the founding of the church in Jerusalem and Judea; if he were present, there would be no reason for him to narrate events in the first person. However, while Luke was with Paul in Rome during his first imprisonment, he likely had ready access to Barnabas, Mark, and Peter, each of whom was present for most of the events recorded in chs. 1–12 (see below under “Date”). Luke could also have spoken with James and other eyewitnesses during Paul’s imprisonment in Caesarea. For the report of secret proceedings of the Sanhedrin (4:15-17; 5:34-39), Luke could have gotten this information from someone in the council who converted to Christianity, most likely Paul (see also 6:7; 15:5; Luke 23:50-51). Thus, Luke would appear to be in an ideal position to draw up an account of the founding of the church, which was of course finally made inerrant, perfect, alive, and powerful by the work of the Spirit of God inspiring the words Luke wrote. “Luke contributes more to the NT than any other writer: in bulk his contribution exceeds that of Paul. His Gospel is the longest of the NT documents, and Acts is the second longest. Both works represent the limits of a single roll of papyrus.”

**Writing Style**

The writing style of Acts is universally acknowledged as the best in the New Testament as measured by the literary standards of classical Greek, rivaling that of the best extrabiblical Greek authors of the day. Even in English, one can tell that Luke has a superior ability for literary artistry. Although there are clear stylistic correspondences between the Gospel of Luke and Acts, the style of Acts is closer to classical Greek because the Gospel of Luke is based on apostolic teaching and eyewitness reports which Luke does not feel at liberty to alter substantially. In Acts, however, Luke is the narrator and is a personal eyewitness to many of the events, which he records in idiomatic Greek style. Thus, although Acts and Luke are of

---


similar length—and all agree that they were written by the same author—the classical enclitic particle τέ occurs 151 times in the NA27 text of Acts, but only nine times in Luke.7 Likewise, eight out of the thirteen partial fourth class conditions in the New Testament, as listed by Wallace, are found in Acts, whereas Luke only contains one. Again, Acts contains four of the five archaic future infinitives in the NT, and Luke has none. Thus, although in one sense, Acts, Luke, and Hebrews are on the same literary level, their style differs. Acts is the pinnacle of Greek literary style in the NT. Simcox’s comments speak for most:

The Acts is, of all the books included in the N. T., the nearest to contemporary if not to classical literary usage—the only one, except perhaps the Epistle to the Hebrews, where conformity to a standard of classical correctness is consciously aimed at.

The fact is, that St. Luke is the most versatile of the N. T. writers; his mind, if not the greatest among them, was the most many-sided. . . . he writes in a Hebraistic or Hellenic style, according as he is describing events that took place in a Hebrew or in a Hellenic society. . . . if we give any weight to the tradition that he was a native of Antioch, he may have been a bilingual Syrian, as much at home among “Hebrews” as among Hellenists or Hellenes.8

Metzger’s evaluation is similar:

The Third Gospel and Acts reveal the hand of the most versatile of all the New Testament authors. The elaborately constructed preface to his Gospel (1:1-4) is a period of the purest Greek, one which may be compared, without too much disadvantage to Luke, with the prefaces to the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides. His breadth of culture is shown by his employing a good number of words and literary constructions unused or very rare in the rest of the New Testament. Thus his two books contain about 750 words not occurring elsewhere in the New Testament—more than 250 are in the Gospel and about 500 in Acts. He is familiar with nautical terms, which are correct without being strictly technical (Acts 27). . . .

In characteristic details Luke commends himself as a capable littérateur. He uses the optative mood, which is totally lacking in Matthew, John, James, and Revelation, twenty-eight times. He makes frequent and generally idiomatic use of participles. Among Hellenistic authors who show certain affinities with Luke, so far as his vocabulary is concerned, are Polybius, Dioscorides, and Josephus.9

Mussies could also be quoted:

Like the latest books of the LXX canon, the whole NT was written in the period of beginning Atticism. Apart from such incidental cases as -tt- in elatton and krettonos in Heb 7:7, both of which may have been permanent exceptions, it is only Acts which shows some Atticistic tendencies. It is here only that the old-fashioned word naun is used (27:41) by the side of ploion (27:37, 39, 44), that optatives are found in dependent clauses (17:27; 27:12, 39), and that the obsolete future participles (8:27; 22:5; 24:11, 17) and future infinitives (11:28; 24:15; 27:10) are mainly present in the NT.

Only the author of Acts varies his style in accordance with the Greek stylistic ideal, which manifests itself in his use of alternating synonyms in one and the same context. In the story of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11) and its introduction (4:32-37), he uses three different words for “to

---

7 The 151 occurrences in Acts comprise seventy percent of the 215 total NT occurrences of τέ.


9 Bruce M. Metzger, “The Language of the New Testament” (*IB*, vol. 7; New York: Abingdon Press, 1951), 47. Note that the optative mood verb εἴη occurs in a v. l. in John 13:24 which is printed in the text of NA27, and would, if accepted, contradict Metzger’s assertion that the optative is “totally lacking” in John.
sell"; πολεό (4:34, 37), πιπράσκο (4:34; 5:4), and ἀπωδιόμαι (5:8); in the pericope of the apostles’ imprisonment there are three words for “prison”: τῆρησις δεμοσία (5:18), φυλακή (5:19, 22), and δεσμότεριον (5:21, 23). Compare in the story of the jailkeeper in Philippi the words φυλακή (16:23, 24, 27) and δεσμότεριον (16:26); the use of οἶνος besides πλοιόν may also be a case in point. He has two words for “many”: πολλοί and ἕκαστος, two for “one another”: ἑαυτοῦ (28:29) and ἕλεγχος and the expression ἀλλος πρὸς ἄλλον (2:12), two words for “other”: ἀλλος and ἕτερος, three for “to be”: εἰμί, γίνομαι, and ὑπάρχω, and there are some six for “the next day”: ἐν οἴρω, ἐν ἑποίρω, ἐν ἥρα, ἐν ἑποίρῳ, ἐν ἑτέρῳ, and δευτέραιος. It is even thinkable that such a variant as ἔλθημεν (28:14) between ἔλθομεν (28:13) and εἰσῆλθομεν (28:16) goes back to the original and was deliberately chosen; compare also the shift from 1st declension sg. Λυστραν (14:6 and 16:1) to 2d declension pl. Λυστροις (14:7 and 16:2). The variation between Ἰεροσαλήμ and Ἱεροσολύμα has an extra dimension: the former is mainly used in contexts where in reality the conversation should be assumed to have been carried on in Aramaic (with some exceptions).

This stylistic tendency then may shed some light on the literary taste of both the author and Theophilus, his first addressee. Nevertheless, there are also Semiticisms in Acts, such as the frequency of the periphrastic conjugation (1:10, 13, 14: 2:5, and elsewhere; on these, see Fitzmyer Luke I–IX AB).10

Metzger notes the change in style between chs. 1–12 and chs. 13–28:

In the first part, containing testimony from Palestinian witnesses, Luke retains proportionately more Semitic coloring than in the remaining chapters. In the latter, where Paul’s missionary journeys into Gentile lands are described, the author appropriately clothes his account in more elegant Greek, which would have been quite out of character in the first part.11

Simcox also notes this change: “As we go on after ch. xiii. in the Acts, the Hellenic element in the language becomes more and more predominant.”12

Luke is very careful in his use of language. His speeches tend to use different style than his narratives. He also seeks to preserve the exact vocabulary that was used in each place and period. For example, Paul is called by his Hebrew name “Saul” until he begins his first missionary journey, after which point he is always referred to by the Roman name “Paul” (13:9). Luke refers to “Barnabas and Saul” before the first missionary journey (11:30; 12:25; 13:2, 7), then switches to “Paul and Barnabas” as Paul gains in prominence (13:43, 46, 50; 15:2, 22, 35; cf. 13:13, “Paul and his company”). However, he carefully reverses the order when the two apostles traveled to Jerusalem, where Barnabas had greater stature (15:12, 25), and also in 14:14, when the crowds were calling Barnabas “Zeus” and Paul “Hermas,” making Barnabas more prominent. In Acts 15:14, Luke carefully records the Aramaic form of Peter’s name that James used in his speech, Συμεών, in contrast to the angel’s message to Cornelius, in which the Greek form Σίμων is used (Acts 10:5, 18, 32; 11:13).13

Luke always uses the correct term for each Roman official in each province. Different provinces used different terms for the same officials, depending on the kind of province it was.


13 Other examples: 4:27, 30—“thy holy Child/Servant Jesus”; 5:20—“the words of this Life”; 5:41—“the Name”; 6:7—“the word of God increased”; 9:2—“the Way.”
Luke, unlike the other evangelists, sets the gospel story in a context of world history—referring, e.g., to the Emperors Augustus and Tiberius by name (Lk. 2:1; 3:1). He does this to an appreciably greater degree in his second volume, especially when the gospel leaves the confines of its Palestinian homeland and moves through the wide open spaces of the Roman Empire. Even in its Palestinian homeland we meet Roman governors of Judaea and members of the colorful family of the Herods; beyond its frontiers we meet governors of other Roman provinces and a variety of civic officials. Luke’s accuracy, as has long been recognized, is especially evident in his use of the manifold designations for such public persons.  

Both Sergius Paulus (13:7) and Gallio (18:12) were correctly titled as *anthupatoi* (deputies or proconsuls), officials in charge of senatorial provinces. The magistrates at Philippi were *strategoi* (16:20, 22, 35, 36, 38). The “rulers of the city” of Thessalonica were properly called *politarchoi* (17:6, 8). He knew that the town clerk or scribe (*grammateus*; 19:35) at Ephesus had political authority over the people and responsibility toward Rome. He was aware that Felix the governor (*hegemon*; 23:24) held the same position in Judea that Pilate once had (Matt. 27:11), the ruler of an imperial province. “The chief man of the island” (28:7) of Malta was literally “the first man” (*ho protos*), a technical term for the ruling official. For these reasons, Luke must be known as a first-class ancient historian.

To these examples may be added Luke’s proper designation of Herod Antipas as a tetrarch (*τετραάρχης*, Acts 13:1; cf. Luke 3:1, 19; 9:7), in contrast to Herod Agrippa I and II, who are both properly called “king” (*βασιλεύς*, Acts 12:1; 25:13); the designation of the attendants of the chief magistrates of the Roman colony of Philippi as *ραβδοῦχοι* in 16:35; and the mention in Ephesus of “Asiarchs,” high officials of the province of Asia (19:31). Luke’s use of *πολιτάρχας* (from *πολιτάρχης*, “politarch”) in Acts 17:6, 8 for Thessalonian officials is noteworthy because this term is only used in these two verses in all of Greek literature—the usual literary term was *πολιάρχος*, with the dialectical variant *πολιτάρχος* used only once in literature and otherwise occurring, along with *πολιτάρχης*, only in non-literary papyri and inscriptions. The majority of the inscriptive uses (eighteen of thirty-two) are from Thessalonica, which was ruled by a council of five or six politarchs, and the term is found on an inscription on the Vardar Gate on the west side of the city which dates to the time of Paul. It is hardly coincidental that Luke uses this extremely rare technical term in just the right place in the narrative—he is obviously a historian of rare ability and accuracy.

When it is remembered that the status of provinces, with the designations of their governors, varied from time to time, Luke’s precision is the more noteworthy: there were no works available to him for ready reference on such matters as there are to the modern historian. Luke probably reproduces such data from an accurate memory, as one who was around and observant at that time and in those places.

A unique terminological distinction of Acts is its designation of believers. In Acts, believers are usually called disciples, whereas in the epistles, they are usually called saints. The term *μαθητής* (*disciples*) occurs twenty-eight times in Acts, whereas it does not occur once in the epistles. Likewise, the

---


term “saints” occurs in the ASV forty-one times in the epistles, and only four times in Acts (9:13, 32, 41; 26:10)—once in a speech by Paul, once in an event reported to Luke by Paul, and twice in events reported to Luke by Peter. It is also significant that Luke uses ξύλον for the cross in Peter’s addresses in Acts 5:30 and 10:39, since Peter does not use σταυρός in his epistles, only ξύλον (1 Pet 2:24).  

**Recipients**

Luke formally addresses both his Gospel and the book of Acts to a man named Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). This name does not occur elsewhere in the NT, though “Theophilus was a perfectly ordinary personal name, attested from the third century B.C. onward.” However, “Theophilus” is likely a nickname, as it means “lover of God”; by way of comparison, the Apostolic Father Ignatius (writing ca. 105–110) refers to himself in each of his letters by the name Theophorus, meaning “owned by God.” In Luke 1:3, Theophilus is addressed by the appellation κράτιστε (most excellent), which was used to address people of high rank in the socio-political order; this term is used elsewhere in the NT only in address to the governors Felix (Acts 23:26; 24:3) and Festus (Acts 26:25). The only man of such rank whom we know was a Christian at the time Luke wrote was Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of Cyprus whose conversion is described as the first major event in Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 13:4-12). It would be natural that when Luke told the story of how the church began, he would include the story of his addressee’s conversion. As there is no evidence of the conversion to Christianity at this early period of anyone else to be addressed as κράτιστε, it can be assumed with reasonable confidence that Theophilus is a Christian nickname for Sergius Paulus.

The man Sergius Paulus (Latin, “Paulus”) is amply attested by extrabiblical historical sources. Reasoner notes that “This proconsul is not attested in [extant] pagan literature, but we do find his name on ancient coins of Cyprus (Cat. Greek Coins, “Cyprus,” 119-21). The Sergii Pauli were a senatorial family of the first century; the name therefore fits one of consular status.” Nobbs surveys proposed archeological attestations of Sergius Paulus, and concludes that he is probably named as “Lucius Sergius Paulus” in an inscription along the Tiber River in Rome dating to the early years of Claudius’ reign. In addition, it is likely that a monument erected in Pisidian Antioch by L. Sergius Paulus and dedicated to his parents is identifiable with the son of the Sergius Paulus of Acts 13. There are indications from inscriptions that Sergius Paulus’ family were Christians.

Sergius Paulus was an ideal convert. He was highly intelligent, called “a man of understanding” by Luke (Acts 13:7). He actually initiated contact with Paul and Barnabas, summoning them to his courtroom or residence, and requesting to hear the gospel from them. Formerly he had been under the influence of a Jewish magician named bar Jesus/Elymas, who opposed Paul’s message. Paul demonstrated that he had greater power than Elymas by smiting him with temporary blindness, and

---


23 Ibid., 287.

Sergius Paulus converted immediately. Yet Luke notes that he was astonished by the teaching of the Lord more than by the miracle (13:12). The story of Sergius Paulus and Elymas, as the initial event in Paul’s first missionary journey, sets a pattern which will be repeated time and again throughout Paul’s missionary endeavors, which is Jewish hostility to the gospel contrasted with Gentile openness. Of this pattern, Sergius Paulus was the first prototype, and so it was that Luke’s addressee himself has a prominent role in the story of how the church began.

It seems that Theophilus/Sergius Paulus was Luke’s patron, i.e., that Theophilus paid Luke to write a thoroughly researched story of the origins of Christianity, and to send him the result. Regarding Luke’s dedication of both volumes to Theophilus, Bruce notes that

Such dedications were common form in contemporary literary circles. For example, Josephus dedicated his *Jewish Antiquities*, his *Autobiography*, and his two volumes *Against Apion* to a patron named Epaphroditus. At the beginning of the first volume *Against Apion*, he addresses him as “Epaphroditus, most excellent of men”; and he introduces the second volume of the same work with the words: “By means of the former volume, my most honored Epaphroditus, I have demonstrated our antiquity.”

Ferguson notes that

the formal dedications to Theophilus in Luke and Acts mark these works for the book trade and are one indication of the author’s familiarity with the literary conventions of the Hellenistic world; they are the only books in the New Testament with this feature, which shows that they were intended for a wider audience than that of the Christian communities and reflect a higher level of culture.

The standard use of a dedication to mark a book for public circulation shows that Luke did not intend for these works to be read by Theophilus alone, but rather to be widely disseminated. Luke’s primary audience was the church, though his Gospel has an evangelistic appeal, and Acts presents an apologetic for the legitimate and supernatural origins of Christianity.

**Date and Occasion of Writing**

Acts ends with Paul’s release after a two-year imprisonment in Rome, implying that the book was composed shortly thereafter. Paul arrived in Rome in the spring following Festus’ succession of Felix as procurator of Judea, which most likely occurred in the summer of A.D. 59. Thus, his imprisonment of “two full years” (28:30) would have ended in the spring of 62, and Luke must have published Acts later in 62. The occasion of writing was the maturation and universal extension of the church, coupled with the request by Luke’s patron for a record of how the church began.

Since the preface to Acts states that it was written after Luke’s Gospel, and since Luke states that he was with Paul both on the journey to Jerusalem and on the journey to Rome, it would seem that during the two years in which Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea, Luke did research for his Gospel, interviewing sources, traveling, and organizing the material. His Gospel contains much information that could only

---


have come from primary source interviews. It stands to reason, then, that Luke published his Gospel before Paul left for Rome, and that he then spent the two years in which Paul was at Rome doing the research to write Acts. Paul’s prison epistles indicate that Luke was with Paul for at least part of his first Roman imprisonment (Col 4:14; Phlm 24), so he must have used this time to interview Paul and others who were in Rome at about the same time—notably Peter (1 Pet 5:13), Barnabas (Heb 13:24), Mark (1 Pet 5:13), Timothy (Phil 1:1; Col 1:1), and Silas (1 Pet 5:12), among others—in order to collect the material needed to write Acts. Since virtually all of the material in Acts was personally witnessed by either Peter, Barnabas, Mark, Paul, or Luke, and most by at least two of these, everything fits with a composition of the book in Rome in A.D. 60–62, and with publication of the book from Rome shortly after Paul’s release.

The date of composition of the Gospel of Luke also has direct bearing on the question of the date of composition of Acts.²⁸ Since Acts is really vol. 2 of a two-part work, one would expect that there was not a delay of decades between the two writings, but that Luke began his research for Acts immediately after publishing his Gospel, and completed his research and writing in no more than a couple of years. The Gospel of Luke must, at a minimum, have been composed before the writing of 1 Timothy in A.D. 64 and had opportunity to circulate, since Paul quotes from Luke 10:7 in 1 Tim 5:18, prefaced by the words, “For the scripture saith,” and in parallel with a quotation from Deuteronomy. When Luke’s opportunity to do research and interview sources is considered, however, his Gospel must be viewed as having been composed in Palestine and Acts in Rome. Luke was in Rome in A.D. 60–62 and had the time and access to the sources which he needed to write Acts, so there is no reason why he would have waited to write or publish the book.

Purpose and Message


Textual Base

Some scholars consider the text of Acts to be the most problematic in the New Testament. Metzger’s Textual Commentary gives 224 pages to Acts, compared with 205 pages for the Gospels and 246 pages for Romans–Revelation. In reality, however, this is a problem which Metzger himself has created by giving undue weight to the Western text simply because it is early and significantly different from the so-called Alexandrian text. The Western text is weakly attested (D and three fragmentary papyri are the significant witnesses), whereas the Alexandrian text is attested by all the early and strong witnesses to the Gospels and the Epistles, as well as by the well-preserved P⁷⁴ and P⁵⁵. Canons of internal evidence also

²⁸ This is in response to writers such as Bruce, who suggests that Luke could have written Acts decades after the last events recorded in the book (The Acts of the Apostles, 9-18). Naturally, commentators who hold that Mark was the first Gospel written, and who date Luke after A.D. 70 as a result, simply have a precommitment to the view that Acts had to have been written later, no matter how contrary to logic this may seem.
point to the secondary and expansionistic nature of the Western text, which is one-tenth longer than the Alexandrian text.\textsuperscript{29}

The major papyri in Acts are P\textsuperscript{74} and the third-century P\textsuperscript{45} (P\textsuperscript{91} is also third-century). Since P\textsuperscript{74} is seventh-century, it is not as significant as most papyri. The primary witnesses to the Alexandrian text in Acts are P\textsuperscript{45} N BY B sa. Secondary Alexandrian witnesses are P\textsuperscript{50} A (C) \(\Psi\) 33 (11:26–28:31) 81 104 326. Western witnesses are P\textsuperscript{29} P\textsuperscript{38} P\textsuperscript{48} D E 383 614 1739 syr\textsuperscript{hmq} syr\textsuperscript{palms} cop\textsuperscript{G67} early Latin Fathers, Ephraem.

\textsuperscript{29} See Bruce M. Metzger, \textit{A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament} (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 223.
Paul’s Missionary Journeys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Missionary Journey</th>
<th>Second Missionary Journey</th>
<th>Third Missionary Journey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ministry Partners</strong></td>
<td>Barnabas, John Mark (left early)</td>
<td>Silas (Silvanus), Timothy, Luke, Aquila and Priscilla (Prisca)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus of Ministry</strong></td>
<td>Galatia</td>
<td>Corinth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Associated Epistles</strong></td>
<td>Galatians (between first and second journeys, early A.D. 49)</td>
<td>1 Thessalonians (from Corinth, spring A.D. 50), 2 Thessalonians (from Corinth, late A.D. 50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Events</strong></td>
<td>conversion of Sergius Paulus; address at Pisidian Antioch; healing and stoning at Lystra</td>
<td>split with Barnabas; call of Timothy; Macedonian vision; beating at Philippi; conversion of the Philippian jailor; riot in Thessalonica; sermon at Mars’ Hill; trial before Gallio</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Paul wrote one epistle after his first journey, two on his second, three on his third, four in his first Roman imprisonment, and three later.
Outline of Acts

Summary Outline

I. The Development of the Church in Jerusalem 1:1–8:1a
II. The Extension of the Church to Palestine and Syria 8:1b–12:25
III. The Extension of the Church to the Uttermost Part of the World 13:1–28:31

Expanded Outline

I. The Development of the Church in Jerusalem 1:1–8:1a
   A. From the resurrection to Pentecost 1:1-26
      1. Introduction and setting 1:1-5
      2. Final instructions and ascension 1:6-11
      3. The interim setting 1:12-14
      4. The replacement of Judas 1:15-26
   B. The beginning of the church 2:1-47
      1. The coming of the Spirit 2:1-4
      2. The reaction of the people 2:5-13
      3. Peter’s sermon 2:14-36
      4. The response to the gospel 2:37-42
      5. The progress of the church 2:43-47
   C. The ministry of Peter and John 3:1–4:37
      1. The healing of the lame man 3:1-10
      2. Peter’s sermon 3:11-26
      3. The opposition to Peter and John 4:1-31
         a. The arrest of Peter and John 4:1-4
         b. Peter’s defense 4:5-12
         c. The verdict 4:13-22
         d. The response of the church 4:23-31
      4. The progress of the church 4:32-37
   D. The ministry of the apostles 5:1–6:7
      1. The demonstration of apostolic power 5:1-16
         a. Apostolic power demonstrated to the church 5:1-11
            i. The lie and death of Ananias 5:1-6
            ii. The lie and death of Sapphira 5:7-11
         b. Apostolic power demonstrated to Israel 5:12-16
      2. The opposition to the apostles 5:17-42
         a. The arrest, rearrest, and trial 5:17-32
         b. The verdict and result 5:33-42
      3. The appointment of apostolic coworkers 6:1-6
      4. The progress of the church 6:7
   E. The ministry of Stephen 6:8–8:1a
      1. Stephen’s ministry and arrest 6:8-15
      2. The high priest’s inquisition 7:1
      3. Stephen’s defense 7:2-53
         a. Recitation of Israel’s history 7:2-50
         b. Application to the Jews 7:51-53
      4. The martyrdom of Stephen 7:54–8:1a
II. The Extension of the Church to Palestine and Syria 8:1b–12:25
   A. The impetus of the extension 8:1b-3
   B. Extension of the church to Samaria 8:4-25
      1. Philip’s ministry in Samaria 8:4-8
      2. The belief of Simon the sorcerer 8:9-13
      3. Peter and John in Samaria 8:14-24
      4. Conclusion of the Samaritan ministry 8:25
   C. Extension of the church to Ethiopia 8:26-40
   D. The conversion and growth of Saul 9:1-30
      1. The vision on the Damascus road 9:1-9
      2. The visit of Ananias 9:10-19a
      3. Saul’s ministry in Damascus 9:19b-22
      4. Saul’s escape from Damascus 9:23-25
      5. Saul’s visit to Jerusalem 9:26-30
   E. The progress of the church 9:31
   F. The growth of the church in coastal Judea 9:32-43
      1. The healing of Aeneas 9:32-35
      2. The raising of Dorcus 9:36-43
   G. Extension of the church to the Gentiles 10:1–11:18
      1. Cornelius’ vision 10:1-8
      2. Peter’s vision 10:9-16
      3. The arrival of Cornelius’ messengers 10:17-23a
      4. The meeting with Cornelius 10:23b-33
      5. Peter’s address 10:34-43
      6. The admission of Gentiles into the church 10:44-48
      7. The Jewish acceptance of Gentile believers 11:1-18
   H. Extension of the church to Antioch 11:19-26
   I. The shift in the center of the church 11:27–12:25
      1. The Judean church supported by Antioch 11:27-30
      2. James killed and Peter persecuted 12:1-19
      4. The progress of the church 12:24
      5. The ascendance of Barnabas and Saul 12:25

III. The Extension of the Church to the Uttermost Part of the World 13:1–28:31
   A. Paul’s first missionary journey 13:1–14:28
      1. The commissioning of Barnabas and Saul 13:1-3
      2. The ministry in Cyprus 13:4-12
      3. The ministry at Pisidian Antioch 13:13-52
         a. The coming to Antioch 13:13-15
         b. Paul’s sermon 13:16-41
         c. The initial response 13:42-43
         d. Belief and rejection 13:44-52
      4. The ministry at Iconium 14:1-7
      5. The ministry at Lystra 14:8-18
      6. Rejection and return 14:19-28
   B. The Jerusalem Council 15:1-35
      1. The dispute over the Law 15:1-5
      2. The council called 15:6
      3. Peter’s opinion 15:7-11
      4. Paul and Barnabas’ report 15:12
      5. James’ judgment 15:13-21
6. The letter sent 15:22-29
7. The delegation to Antioch 15:30-35

C. Paul’s second missionary journey 15:36–18:22
1. The split between Paul and Barnabas 15:36-41
2. The church plants revisited 16:1-5
3. Travels through Asia Minor 16:6-10
4. Ministry at Philippi 16:11-40
   a. The initial converts 16:11-15
   b. The demon-possessed girl 16:16-18
   c. Paul’s ministry through suffering 16:19-34
   d. Paul’s release and departure 16:35-40
5. Ministry at Thessalonica 17:1-9
6. Ministry at Berea 17:10-15
7. Paul at Athens 17:16-34
   a. The dispute with the philosophers 17:16-21
   b. Paul’s sermon 17:22-31
   c. The response to the message 17:32-34
8. Paul at Corinth 18:1-17
   a. Paul’s initial ministry in Corinth 18:1-4
   b. Paul’s continued ministry in Corinth 18:5-11
   c. Paul’s trial in Corinth 18:12-17

D. Paul’s third missionary journey 18:23–21:16
1. The return visit to Galatia and Phrygia 18:23
2. The ministry of Apollos 18:24-28
3. Paul’s ministry at Ephesus 19:1-41
   a. Conversion of John’s Ephesian disciples 19:1-7
   b. Paul’s ministry in Ephesus 19:8-20
   c. Paul’s journey plans 19:21-22
   d. The riot in Ephesus 19:23-41
4. Travels from and to Asia 20:1-6
5. Discourse and miracle at Troas 20:7-12
6. Travels through Asia 20:13-16
7. Paul’s address to the Ephesian elders 20:17-38
   a. The elders called 20:17
   b. Review of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus 20:18-21
   c. Overview of Paul’s present situation 20:22-27
   d. Paul’s charge to the Ephesian elders 20:28-35
   e. The farewell 20:36-38
8. The journey from Miletus to Tyre 21:1-6
9. The meeting with the Caesarean church 21:7-14
10. The journey from Caesarea to Jerusalem 21:15-16

E. Paul’s journey to Rome 21:17–28:31
   a. Paul’s acceptance by the Jerusalem church 21:17-26
   b. Paul assaulted 21:27-36
   c. Paul’s request 21:37-40
   d. Paul’s defense 22:1-21
      i. The entreaty to hear 22:1
      ii. The Jews’ attentiveness 22:2
      iii. Paul’s conduct before his conversion 22:3-5
iv. Paul’s conversion 22:6-16
v. Paul’s commission to minister 22:17-21
c. Opposition and deliverance 22:22-29
f. Paul’s trial before the Sanhedrin 22:30-23:10
   i. The trial called 22:30
   ii. The trial conducted 23:1-10
g. Paul’s vision and charge 23:11
h. The plot against Paul 23:12-24

   a. The letter to Felix 23:25-30
   b. The journey to Felix 23:31-35
   c. The trial before Felix 24:1-23
      i. The Jews’ accusation 24:1-9
      ii. Paul’s defense 24:10-21
      iii. Felix’s verdict 24:22-23
d. Felix’s subsequent dealings with Paul 24:24-27

3. The trial before Festus 25:1-12
   a. The request for the trial 25:1-5
   b. The trial conducted 25:6-12

4. The hearing before Agrippa 25:13–26:32
   b. The hearing convened 25:23-27
   c. Paul’s defense 26:1-23
d. Paul’s apology to the court 26:24-29
e. Agrippa’s verdict 26:30-32

5. From Caesarea to Rome 27:1–28:15
   a. From Caesarea to Crete 27:1-8
   b. The storm 27:9-26
   c. The shipwreck 27:27-44
d. Arrival at Malta 28:1-6
   e. Events in Malta 28:7-10
   f. From Malta to Rome 28:11-15

6. Paul in Rome 28:16-31
   a. Paul’s lodging in Rome 28:16
   b. The meeting with the Jews called 28:17-22
   c. Paul’s preaching to the Jews 28:23-28
d. Paul’s stay in Rome summarized 28:30-31

**Argument of Acts**

Acts begins with Jesus teaching the Eleven about the kingdom outside Jerusalem, and ends with Paul teaching Gentiles about the kingdom in Rome. In between is the story of how this movement took place. Some exegetes divide the book of Acts into two sections, with chs. 1–12 describing the development of the church with Jerusalem as the center and Peter as the central apostle, and chs. 13–28 describing the development of the church with Antioch as the center and Paul as the central apostle. The problem with this is that parts of chs. 1–12 are not about Peter, most notably 8:26–9:30, and Antioch loses its prominence by the end of the book. Thus, it seems better to trace the major sections of the book according to commission given to the apostles in 1:8, with chs. 1–7 describing the development of the church in Jerusalem, chs. 8–12 describing the development of the church in Judea and its environs, and chs. 13–28 describing the extension of the church throughout the known world. In any case, it is clear that the
structure of the book is both chronological and geographical, paralleling the expansion of the church through time.¹

The Development of the Church in Jerusalem, 1:1–8:1a

The first major section of Acts, from 1:1 to 8:1a, describes the initial founding and development of the church in Jerusalem. The apostles proclaimed the fulfillment of the ancient promises to Israel in the Person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, and while some accepted the message gladly, the majority in Jerusalem rejected it.²

From the resurrection to Pentecost, 1:1-26. The first chapter describes events between the ascension and Pentecost, and lays the groundwork for the origin of the church. The very first verse (1:1) presents this book as a continuation of Jesus’ work and teaching as recorded in Luke’s Gospel, though it will now be Jesus’ work through the church. After a brief introduction in 1:1-5 which anticipates the outpouring of the Spirit, Jesus gives final instructions to the disciples in 1:6-11, then ascends.³ The commission of the apostles to found the church is stated in 1:8, and parallels Luke’s aim in this book of giving a history of the church’s origin. The setting in which the disciples found themselves during the week-long interval between the ascension and Pentecost is described in 1:12-14. The twelve gathered daily for prayer with the women who followed Jesus, along with Jesus’ mother and brothers, who had only just believed in Jesus following His resurrection (cf. John 7:5; 1 Cor 15:7). The replacement of Judas was the final event preparatory to Pentecost (1:15-26).⁴

¹ Toussaint proposes that the movement of the book of Acts is marked by a progress report at the end of each unit (Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck [Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1983], 352-53). The list of progress reports he gives include 2:47, 6:7, 9:31, 12:24, 16:5, 19:20, and 28:30-31. The last progress report tells of the triumph and worldwide spread of the gospel. While his structure is interesting and worthy of consideration, it is possible to interpret these progress reports as other than structural indicators, and it is questionable whether, for example, 28:30-31 is a true progress report.

² The apostles initially sought to transform Judaism into a New Covenant community defined by faith in Jesus as the Messiah, instead of an Old Covenant community defined by Jewish identity markers. They were not starting a new religion, but instead were loyal adherents of the Jewish Scriptures, literally interpreted. As Judaism progressively disowns the Nazarenes in Acts, however, the church acquires an identity independent of Judaism. Biblical Judaism is assimilated into the church, which grows with the hand of God’s blessing upon it, while Old Covenant Judaism quickly fades into insignificance.

³ Two key theological points are contained in this opening section. First, after forty days of being taught by Jesus about the kingdom of God (1:3), the disciples still believed that the kingdom was literal, earthly, future, and for Israel (1:6). In His reply, Jesus does not correct their beliefs concerning the nature of the kingdom (1:7). Second, the return of Jesus is said to be in the same manner as His ascension (1:11). This means it is a literal, visible, personal, and bodily return in glory. It even means that Jesus will return to the same place as He ascended from, namely, the Mount of Olives (Zech 14:4). People will literally see Jesus descending from the sky in a cloud (Matt 24:30), just as the disciples could see Him ascending into the sky in a cloud.

⁴ In Matt 19:28, Jesus promised that the twelve apostles would sit upon twelve thrones in the kingdom, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Therefore a replacement was needed for Judas to fill out the number of the apostles, and also to have twelve witnesses to the resurrection. Paul could not have been the twelfth apostle, because he did not meet the criteria set forth by Peter in 1:21-22. The replacement for Judas had to have been with Jesus throughout His earthly ministry. It should also be noted that Paul sets himself apart from the other apostles as a different kind of apostle (1 Cor 15:5-8; Gal 2:8). Paul never claimed to be one of the twelve (compare 1 Cor 15:5 with 15:8). Luke
The beginning of the church, 2:1-47. Chapter 2 describes the beginning of the church, mostly its first day of existence (2:1-42), but also several days or weeks immediately following (2:43-47). The dramatic moment at which the church began (cf. 11:15) is recorded in 2:1-4, as the Holy Spirit came powerfully upon the 120 in the Upper Room, permanently indwelling them and baptizing them into the body of Christ. The people who were in Jerusalem for the Feast immediately knew something miraculous had happened, because every foreign Jew heard the new Christians speaking in his own native language (2:5-13). The questioning of the multitudes concerning this strange phenomenon prompted Peter’s great sermon of 2:14-36. Peter’s message is that Jesus is the Lord and Messiah who will bring the coming judgment upon the world. You need to call upon the name of the Lord before the judgment comes so you will be saved in that day. Peter begins by linking the phenomenon of tongues with the outpouring of the Spirit at the inauguration of the New Covenant, following the eschatological judgment (2:14-21). He then links the miracles Joel spoke of with those performed by Jesus, which is his first proof of Jesus’ messiahship (2:22). Peter offers two other proofs of Jesus’ messiahship: His resurrection (2:23-32) and His ascension (2:33-35). Verse 36 is a concluding summary statement, which shows that the point of Peter’s sermon is to prove Jesus’ messiahship (Pss 16, 132) and Lordship (Ps 110).

The response to Peter’s sermon is recorded in 2:37-42—three thousand people were saved and baptized. The new church formed a tightly knit and devout community, listening to the apostles’ teaching, praying, sharing their goods (κοινωνίᾳ), and eating meals with other believers (2:42). The further progress and growth of this new group of Spirit-empowered believers is described in 2:43-47. The church was a united body which delighted in hearing the Word taught, ministering to the saints, praising God, and sharing the good news about Jesus.

indicates in Acts 1:26 that Matthias was still numbered with the Eleven at the time of writing, and he refers to “the twelve” in 6:2, before the conversion of Paul.

5 The signs accompanying Christ’s first advent are typological prefigurements of those accompanying His second advent.

6 It is significant that Peter staked his argument in this sermon on the resurrection of Jesus (2:32). If the resurrection never happened, the Sanhedrin could have disproved it easily by taking Jesus’ corpse out of the tomb and putting it on public display. Christianity would have been ruined. That the opponents of Christianity did not do this shows that the tomb was empty.

7 Acts 2:38 has long been used by some to argue for baptismal regeneration, i.e., the view that baptism saves. A question may be raised as to how Peter’s original hearers would have understood his call. The concept of baptism that the Jews on the day of Pentecost would have been most familiar with was that of John’s baptism. According to Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3, John preached a baptism based on repentance for the purpose of the remission of sins. John was not baptizing people in order that they would repent; rather, his ministry of baptism was for the purpose of repentance (cf. Matt 3:11). People came to be baptized by John to signify that they were repenting of their sins (Matt 3:6). Hence, Peter’s hearers would have understood that baptism was an outward sign of repentance. Baptism is associated with repentance as the act which naturally follows repentance and outwardly signifies conversion. The purpose of this whole conversion process is to have one’s sins forgiven, though the sins are actually forgiven after the first step in the process rather than the final step. From a logical point of view, it is obvious that baptism follows a decision to forsake one’s former lifestyle and identify with the church; one does not make this decision as he is being baptized.

There is a great irony in the whole debate over baptismal regeneration in this verse, however: Peter himself, along with the 120 in the Upper Room, went out and began to speak in tongues immediately after they received the Spirit, and there was no body of Christ to be baptized into before that. Since John’s baptism is distinguished from Christian baptism—John’s disciples had to be rebaptized in Acts 19:1-5—the first 120 themselves apparently never underwent Christian water baptism. In such a situation, Peter obviously could not be telling the people that they could only be saved through water baptism.
The ministry of Peter and John, 3:1–4:37. Chapters 3–7 highlight the ministries of specific leaders in the Jerusalem church in chronological sequence, showing the centrality of their role in the founding and upbuilding of the church. As the church becomes established, the most prominent ministry roles pass from the leading apostle (ch. 2) to the two leading apostles (chs. 3–4) to the twelve as a group (5:1–6:7) to a leader appointed by the twelve (6:8–8:1a). The mission of Peter and the other apostles was to found the church, and therefore the apostolic role was not meant to continue throughout the age except through the preservation of the apostles’ teaching in the NT Scriptures.

The focus on the ministry of Peter and John in chs. 3–4 begins with a dramatic miracle in the temple (3:1-10). A lame man who was over forty years old (cf. 4:22) was healed instantly when Peter commanded him to walk in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. As a crowd gathered around, Peter delivered a sermon (3:11-26), beginning by explaining that the miracle was not performed by his own power (3:12). It came about because Jesus, whom the Jews denied and killed, has been raised from the dead, and it is through faith in His name that the lame man was healed (3:13-16). Peter then explains that the crucifixion of the Messiah was part of God’s plan, and therefore not an event which cancelled out the promises to Israel (3:17-18). He urges the people to repent, first, so that their sins would be forgiven, and, second, so that Jesus the Messiah would return to Israel from heaven and establish His kingdom on earth (3:19-21).

Peter’s argument is that the nation is under judgment for crucifying the Messiah, and must repent for the kingdom to come. In 3:22-25, he then warns of what is coming should the nation fail to repent. The message of the kingdom went to Israel first because they are the sons of the prophets, who foretold the ministry of the Messiah, and the sons of the Abrahamic Covenant, which promised blessing through the Messiah. However, if Israel hardens itself to the message, it will be temporarily pushed aside while the blessings through the Jewish Messiah go out to the nations.

As if to fulfill Peter’s warning, the Sadducees, who believed that bodily resurrection was impossible, came to arrest Peter and John—the first direct opposition to the nascent church (4:1-4). At the trial the next day, the Sanhedrin did not even bother to challenge the miracle, but simply looked for a way to accuse Peter and John. Peter said in the apostles’ defense that, far from being criminals, they were on trial for performing a good deed (4:9). He then argues that, far from leading the people astray, the apostles’ teaching of the crucifixion and resurrection of the Messiah is fully in accord with the OT Scriptures (4:10-12). After a closed-door consultation, the Sanhedrin failed to find a way either to deny the miracle or to justify punishment of the apostles (4:13-17). However, they gave the apostles an order to stop preaching in the name of Jesus so as to manufacture a legal basis for future charges (4:18). This first climactic confrontation between the apostles and the Sanhedrin ended with the apostles only growing emboldened in their witness and commitment (4:19-22). The church, too, was encouraged and emboldened by the apostles’ stance (4:23-31). They quoted Ps 2:1-2 to say, “opposition to the Messiah was predicted by the God who is sovereign in history, and so we will go on serving Him in the face of opposition.”

8 The “seasons of refreshing” (3:19) apparently refer to roughly the same thing as “the times of restoration of all things” (3:21). Both references are to the messianic kingdom. However, “refreshing” has more to do with enjoyment of benefits, while “restoration” has more to do with straightening things out—restoring the Davidic kingdom to Israel (cf. 1:6), restoring the spiritual condition of the people (Matt 17:11; Luke 1:17), restoring creation from the curse, and restoring rule over the earth to redeemed man.

There is no verse that says the offer of the kingdom to Israel, which was presented at Jesus’ first advent, has been rescinded. Thus, the generation of Jews which accepts Jesus as the Messiah will see the second advent (cf. Matt 23:39; Rom 11:25).

9 The church is not saying that Psalm 2 has been completely fulfilled, but that the scene at Armageddon is only the ultimate expression of the opposition to God and His Messiah that has characterized the nations of the world throughout history. “The nations” is interpreted in 4:27 as including more than just the Sanhedrin—it encompasses the total rejection of the Messiah by all groups of people. The prayer is therefore for boldness, not for a removal of the opposition which is a part of God’s plan.
The section ends with another progress report (4:32-37). In spite of the opposition, the church was fully united and energized, and demonstrated their love for one another by sharing their goods freely with any brother who had need.

The ministry of the apostles, 5:1–6:7. The section highlighting the ministry of the apostles (5:1–6:7) begins in 5:1-11 with a dramatic demonstration of apostolic authority. When a couple in the church, Ananias and Sapphira, envied the recognition Barnabas received for the gift he gave to the church (4:36-37), they sold a parcel of land and brought part of the proceeds to the apostles. This was, of course, no sin, but they lied to the apostles and said they were giving the full sale price (5:2, 8). What made this lie so bad is that the apostles were God’s representatives, so they were really lying to the Holy Spirit. Ananias and Sapphira were both killed immediately after they spoke the lie to the apostles. Ananias and Sapphira were given the judgment they truly deserved for their lie to teach the church a lesson about God’s power and holiness. Right at the beginning point of a new program, God uses those who transgress His commands as an object lesson to demonstrate His holiness (cf. Lev 10; Num 15:32-36; Josh 7).

The demonstration of apostolic authority to the church in 5:1-11 is followed by the demonstration of apostolic power to the people of Israel as a whole in 5:12-16. The apostles performed numerous miracles of various kinds, which resulted in the growth of the church in numbers and in reputation. The religious leaders, however, were provoked to jealousy, and arrested the apostles (5:17-18). After an angel released the apostles during the night, the Sanhedrin showed themselves to be such hardened sinners that they ordered their rearrest and brought them to trial (5:19-28). Peter defended the apostles’ actions by repeating the gospel message and demonstrating that they were preaching at God’s command (5:29-32). The Sanhedrin was enraged at Peter’s statement that they had murdered the Son of God and did not have the Holy Spirit in them, and they intended to put the apostles to death on the spot.10 Rabbi Gamaliel stood up and intervened, giving wise counsel (5:34-35). He pointed out that when previous messianic claimants had died, their followers immediately ceased to believe in them, and so did the people (5:36-37). If Jesus’ work went forward after His death, the only explanation is that there was divine power behind it, and that Jesus was a living Messiah who had risen from the dead (5:38-39). Gamaliel’s speech is reported not only to relate how the apostles were released, but also because Gamaliel unwittingly gives a direct statement of a major theme of the book of Acts, which is the expansion of the church in the face of opposition, thereby demonstrating that the church is a work of God, not of men. The Sanhedrin agreed not to kill the apostles, but still had them flogged (5:40). The apostles had joy in the midst of persecution (cf. Luke 6:22-23), and continued to faithfully teach and preach Jesus as the Messiah (5:41-42).

The first schism in the church, which led to the first appointment of non-apostolic church officers, is recorded in 6:1-6. The apostles were not able to administer the church’s benevolence fund and commit themselves to the study and teaching of the Word at the same time. Thus, they appointed a group of seven men who appear to function as deacons.

The section regarding the ministry of the apostles ends in 6:7 with another progress report, describing how the church continued to grow in Jerusalem, both numerically and spiritually.

The ministry of Stephen, 6:8–8:1a. The ministry of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, is recorded in 6:8–8:1a. After being appointed to the deaconate, Stephen began performing miracles and preaching—things previously done only by the apostles. His Spirit-empowered ministry was so effective that Stephen was completely unstoppable in debates with his opponents (6:9-10). These opponents therefore arrested

---

10 Humanly speaking, it looked as if the church came within a hairbreadth of being crippled here. It would have been a severe blow to the church to have all twelve apostles killed right at the beginning. But God was in control the whole time, protecting and building up His church. This really was not a close call. The apostles’ attitude is noteworthy—“We will do the right thing no matter what the cost, and let God worry about what might happen to the church if we die.” Too many church leaders throughout history have yielded to compromising pressures in order to preserve their existence and supposed influence.
Dr. Anderson’s Interpretive Guide to Hebrews–Revelation

by Steven D. Anderson
Ph.D., Dallas Theological Seminary

Dr. Anderson’s Interpretive Guide to the Bible
Volume 8

June 2015 edition

Copyright © 2015 by Steven David Anderson. All rights reserved. Not to be reproduced without the explicit written consent of the author.

Cover photograph (taken by the author): looking across the Dead Sea to the oasis of En Gedi

Published by Steven D. Anderson at Payhip

Author’s webpage: http://Bible.TruthOnly.com
Author’s blog: http://TruthOnlyBible.com

Citation for The Chicago Manual of Style (Turabian) and The SBL Handbook of Style:

Payhip Edition License Notes

This e-book is licensed for your personal use only, and you may find your email address stamped on the upper left of each page for security purposes. This e-book may not be resold. This e-book may not be given away to other people (other than a spouse or minor children). If you would like to share this book with another person, please purchase an additional copy for each recipient. If you are reading this book and did not purchase it, or it was not purchased for your use only, then please go to https://payhip.com/truthonlybible and purchase your own copy. Thank you for respecting copyright law and the hard work of this author.
# Table of Contents

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**........................................................................................................................................................................ III

**PREFACE** ................................................................................................................................................................................................... VII

**STYLE NOTES**........................................................................................................................................................................................................ VIII

- Quotations of the Bible ........................................................................................................................................................................................ viii
- A Note on the Divine Name ................................................................................................................................................................................ viii
- Common Abbreviations .................................................................................................................................................................................... viii
- Abbreviations of the Books of the Bible ......................................................................................................................................................... ix

**INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO HEBREWS** ......................................................................................................................................................... 1

- **AUTHORSHIP AND WRITING STYLE** ....................................................................................................................................................... 2
  - Paul .............................................................................................................................................................................................................. 3
  - Other Suggested Writers ............................................................................................................................................................................. 6
- **Barnabas** ...................................................................................................................................................................................................... 7
- **The Warning Passages** .................................................................................................................................................................................. 9
- **Addressees** ..................................................................................................................................................................................................... 11
- **Date and Occasion of Writing** ................................................................................................................................................................. 12
- **Purpose and Message** .................................................................................................................................................................................. 13
- **Textual Base** .................................................................................................................................................................................................. 13
- **Outline of Hebrews** .................................................................................................................................................................................................. 14
  - Superiority of Christ to the Mediators of the Law (Angels), 1:1–2:18 ........................................................................................................... 15
  - Superiority of Christ to the Apostle of the Law (Moses), 3:1–4:13 .............................................................................................................. 16
  - Superiority of Christ to the High Priests of the Law, 4:14–6:20 .................................................................................................................. 17
  - Superiority of Christ to the Atonement System of the Law, 7:1–10:39 .................................................................................................. 18
  - Superiority of Christ to the Hope of the Law, 11:1–12:29 .......................................................................................................................... 19
  - Superiority of Christ Applied, 13:1–21 ........................................................................................................................................................... 20
  - Epistolary Conclusion, 13:22-25 ................................................................................................................................................................. 21
- **BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR HEBREWS** ................................................................................................................................................................. 23

**INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO JAMES** ............................................................................................................................................................. 27

- **AUTHOR** ....................................................................................................................................................................................................... 28
- **WRITING STYLE** ................................................................................................................................................................................................ 30
- **Date and Occasion of Writing** ................................................................................................................................................................. 31
- **Purpose and Message** .................................................................................................................................................................................. 32
- **Critical Issues** .................................................................................................................................................................................................. 32
- **Textual Base** .................................................................................................................................................................................................. 32
- **Outline of James** .................................................................................................................................................................................................. 33
- **Argument of James** ................................................................................................................................................................................................ 34
  - Greeting, 1:1 ................................................................................................................................................................................................. 34
  - Instruction on Trials, 1:2-27 ........................................................................................................................................................................... 35
  - Exhortation to Pure Religion, 2:1–5:6 ......................................................................................................................................................... 35
  - Application, 5:7-20 ...................................................................................................................................................................................... 37
- **BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR JAMES** ................................................................................................................................................................. 39

**INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO 1 PETER** ............................................................................................................................................................. 42

- **AUTHOR** ....................................................................................................................................................................................................... 43
- **WRITING STYLE** ................................................................................................................................................................................................ 45
- **Addressees** ....................................................................................................................................................................................................... 45
- **Date and Occasion of Writing** ................................................................................................................................................................. 47
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ................................................................................................................. 48
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PETER’S EPISTLES .................................................................................. 48
TEXTUAL BASE .............................................................................................................................. 50
OUTLINE OF 1 PETER .................................................................................................................... 50
ARGUMENT OF 1 PETER ................................................................................................................ 51
   Greeting, 1:1-2 .......................................................................................................................... 51
   The Call of the Christian, 1:3–2:10 ......................................................................................... 51
   The Conduct of the Christian, 2:11–5:11 ............................................................................ 52
   Epistolary Conclusion, 5:12–14 ............................................................................................ 53
BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR 1 & 2 PETER ......................................................................................... 54

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO 2 PETER ............................................................................................ 59

AUTHOR ........................................................................................................................................ 59
WRITING STYLE ............................................................................................................................. 62
RECIPIENTS .................................................................................................................................... 67
DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING .......................................................................................... 67
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ............................................................................................................ 67
TEXTUAL BASE .............................................................................................................................. 68
OUTLINE OF 2 PETER .................................................................................................................... 69
ARGUMENT OF 2 PETER ................................................................................................................ 69
   Exhortation to a Vital Faith, 1:1-21.......................................................................................... 70
   Warning concerning False Teachers, 2:1-22 ........................................................................ 70
   Instruction concerning the Last Days, 3:1-18 ...................................................................... 70
BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................................................................................................. 71

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO 1 JOHN .............................................................................................. 72

THE OPPONENTS IN 1 JOHN ....................................................................................................... 72
ADDRESSEES .................................................................................................................................. 74
AUTHOR ........................................................................................................................................ 75
WRITING STYLE ............................................................................................................................. 75
DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING .......................................................................................... 76
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ............................................................................................................ 77
INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES .................................................................................................... 77
TEXTUAL BASE .............................................................................................................................. 77
OUTLINE OF 1 JOHN .................................................................................................................... 77
ARGUMENT OF 1 JOHN ................................................................................................................ 78
   Prologue: The Reality of the Incarnation, 1:1-4 ...................................................................... 80
   First Doctrinal Test: False and True Claims Evaluated by God’s Holiness, 1:5–2:2 .......... 80
   First Lifestyle Test: False and True Claims Evaluated by the New Commandment, 2:3-17 81
   Second Doctrinal Test: Teachers Evaluated by Their Claims about Christ, 2:18-27 .......... 81
   Second Lifestyle Test: Children of God and of the Devil Manifested by Their Righteousness or Sinfulness, 2:28–3:10 ................................................................. 81
   Third Lifestyle Test: Those Abiding in Life and Death Manifested by Their Love or Hatred, 3:11-24 .......... 81
   Third Doctrinal Test: Prophets Evaluated by Their View of the Incarnation, 4:1-6 .......... 81
   Fourth Lifestyle Test: Those Who Know God Manifested by Their Love according to God’s Love, 4:7-21 ...... 82
   Fourth Doctrinal Test: Those Begotten of God Manifested by Their Belief in the Son of God, 5:1-12 82
   Epilogue: The Confidence and Certainties of Believers, 5:13-21 ........................................ 82
BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR THE JOHANNINE EPistles ...................................................................... 84

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO 2 JOHN .............................................................................................. 88

AUTHOR ........................................................................................................................................ 88
DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING .......................................................................................... 88
PURPOSE AND MESSAGE ............................................................................................................ 89
| TEXTUAL BASE | OUTLINE OF 2 JOHN | ARGUMENT OF 2 JOHN | BIBLIOGRAPHY | INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO 3 JOHN | AUTHOR | DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING | PURPOSE AND MESSAGE | TEXTUAL BASE | OUTLINE OF 3 JOHN | ARGUMENT OF 3 JOHN | BIBLIOGRAPHY | INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO JUDE | AUTHOR | WRITING STYLE | ADDRESSEES | DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING | PURPOSE AND MESSAGE | AUTHENTICITY | RELATION TO 2 PETER | ON THE SUPPOSED PSEUDEPIGRAPHAL REFERENCES | JUDE 9 and Assumption of Moses | JUDE 14-15 and 1 Enoch 1.9 | Bibliological Issues | Conclusion | TEXTUAL BASE | OUTLINE OF JUDE | ARGUMENT OF JUDE | Greeting, 1-2 | Body, 3-23 | Benediction, 24-25 | BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR JUDE | INTERPRETIVE GUIDE TO REVELATION | AUTHOR | WRITING STYLE | CHARACTERISTIC EXPRESSIONS | TRANSLATING THE BOOK OF REVELATION | DATE | TITLE | PURPOSE | SUBJECT AND MESSAGE | INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES | THE POSSIBILITY OF ESCHATOLOGICAL VISIONS | HERMENEUTICAL ISSUES | HISTORY OF HERMENEUTICS | THE UNIQUENESS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION | ON “APOCALYPTIC GENRE” | ON OLD TESTAMENT ALLUSIONS IN THE APOCALYPSE | TEXTUAL BASE | THE TEXTUAL HISTORY OF REVELATION | 89 | 89 | 90 | 91 | 91 | 92 | 92 | 92 | 92 | 92 | 93 | 94 | 95 | 97 | 98 | 98 | 98 | 99 | 100 | 101 | 102 | 105 | 105 | 105 | 106 | 106 | 106 | 107 | 108 | 111 | 112 | 114 | 116 | 116 | 117 | 118 | 119 | 119 | 119 | 121 | 122 | 125 | 126 | 127 | 129 | 133 | 133 | 91 | 92 | 92 | 94 | 97 | 98 | 98 | 99 | 100 | 100 | 101 | 122 | 122 | 125 | 126 | 127 | 129 | 133 | 133 | V
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Witnesses to the Text of Revelation</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating the Witnesses</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papyri of Revelation</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncials of Revelation</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandrian Uncials and Minuscules of Revelation</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTLINE OF REVELATION</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary Outline</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanded Outline</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARGUMENT OF REVELATION</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction, 1:1-20</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Seven Churches, 2:1–3:22</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rapture and the Ensuing Scene in Heaven, 4:1–5:14</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The First Half of the Tribulation, 6:1–9:21</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Midpoint of the Tribulation, 10:1–14:20</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Second Half of the Tribulation, 15:1–16:21</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlude: Babylon the Great, 17:1–19:5</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Second Coming, 19:6-21</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Millennium, 20:1-10</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Final Judgment, 20:11-15</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Eternal Creation, 21:1–22:5</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilogue, 22:6-21</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR REVELATION</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interpretive Guide to Hebrews

The book of Hebrews was written to weary Christians—to Christians who had become introverted and isolated, and, rather than challenging the world around them with the message of the gospel, were being worn down by outside pressures and were in mortal danger of collapsing. The author of Hebrews exhorts his readers to get back to work so that they do not wear out completely and drop out of the faith, but rather press on to perfection. Not that they could lose their salvation—but there was a minority group within the church that had made an insincere profession of faith, and some had already shown this by quitting the Christian church altogether and returning to the religion of the culture around them.

Hebrews is one of three New Testament books addressed specifically to Jewish Christians, the other two being James and Matthew. However, while James and Matthew were written at a time when the church was still largely Jewish and centered in Palestine, Hebrews was composed much later, well after the center of gravity in the church had shifted to the Gentile world. This treatise deals with the final crisis of Jew-Gentile relations in the first century church—namely, is there a place for a Christianized form of Judaism within the church of Jesus Christ? The author’s message is that the Jewish church must make a clean break with Judaism and become one with the universal church, for Christianity can only exist as such in independence from religious Judaism.

The premise of the book of Hebrews—the inability of the Sinai to save—is also treated at length in the Pauline epistles, but the issue is approached from different angles which complement and complete one another. Paul argues in Romans and Galatians that the Law, viewed as a code of moral ordinances, is unable to save because it cannot cause those who are under its power to keep these ordinances, thereby placing them under its curse. Hebrews argues that the Law, viewed as a system of sacrificial, sacerdotal, and ceremonial rituals, is unable to save because it is merely typical of the Messiah’s consummative work, not being the ultimate reality itself. “Judaism is the shadow, and Christianity is the substance.” Romans and Galatians refute the attempt to add Judaism to Christianity; Hebrews refutes the attempt to add Christianity to Judaism. “Paul from the subjective side shews that the individual can be brought near to God only by personal faith and not by any outward works; the author of the Epistle [to the Hebrews] from the objective side shews that purification cannot be gained by any sacrifices ‘of bulls and goats’ but only through the offering of the Blood of Christ.”

Though addressed to Jews, Hebrews makes an incalculable contribution to Christian theological and Scriptural understanding. The entire main body of the book constitutes a single magnificent and extended argument for the superiority of Christ over Judaism, explaining both why Judaism cannot exist alongside Christianity in the new age, and how the Christian dispensation relates to the Mosaic one. Hebrews especially clarifies the meaning of Christ’s Melchizedekian priesthood, the relationship of the cross to the New Covenant, and Christ’s high priestly ministry. Psalm 110 is quoted in many places in the NT, but only in Hebrews are the profound implications of the reference to Melchizedek explained. Further, though there is no other book in the New Testament which contends so strongly for the essential incompatibility of Judaism with Christianity, neither is there another book which so stresses the continuity of the old dispensation with the new one.

From first to last it is maintained that God spoke to the fathers in the prophets. The message through the Son takes up and crowns all that had gone before. In each respect the New is the consummation of the Old. It offers a more perfect and absolute Revelation, carrying with it a more perfect and absolute Mediation, and establishing a more perfect and absolute Covenant,

---


embodying finally the connexion of God and man. There is nothing in the Old which is not taken up and transfigured in the New.³

Although this book is known as The “Epistle” to the Hebrews, it opens in the style of a doctrinal treatise, without an epistolary greeting or salutation. However, it is addressed to a specific audience, to which the author relates his message throughout the book, then closes in typical epistolary style. The book is thus a letter sent to a church, though in form it looks more like a sermon than a letter. It is in every respect a literary masterpiece. Both the elevated language and the tightly crafted argumentation are unsurpassed in the NT.⁴ The author proves unequivocally, through careful exegesis of numerous OT texts, that the Law was temporary and inadequate, and only anticipated fulfillment in Christ’s finished work. Those who attempt to practice the Law while professing Christ cannot have it both ways, and must choose one or the other. Those who forsake the Christian assembly and shrink back to Judaism are hardened beyond reason, making it impossible for them to return to Christ afterwards.

Hebrews is a magnificent and profound book which commands all too little of the average Christian’s attention. It is a crucial book for unraveling the relationship of the Mosaic dispensation to Christianity, along with understanding the purpose of the OT sacrificial system, the Aaronic priesthood, and the tabernacle/temple. It is a crucial book for understanding the significance of the Crucifixion, the Ascension, and the work of Christ in the present age. There is no other book that so speaks to the contemporary issue of Messianic Judaism, of Jews who add the belief that Jesus is the Messiah to their practice of Judaism, but refuse to identify with the Christian church. Nor is there a better book to confront the crisis in the American church of people who were raised in the church abandoning it in droves to become secular. This is a book which solemnly warns those who are just playing church of the fearful dangers of apostasy. Above all, however, Hebrews is a book which sets before us the surpassing preeminence of Jesus Christ, for no one could ever rationally consider an alternative to Christianity after apprehending the perfection of our Savior and the absolute finality of His finished work.

Authorship and Writing Style

One’s view of such background issues as author, destination, and the date of writing directly affect his interpretation of the book of Hebrews, because they affect his view of the intended audience and the occasion of writing, out of which follows the purpose, message, and subject of the book. The place to begin an investigation of these problems is with the issue of authorship. In no other book of the New Testament is authorship so hotly disputed among evangelicals as it is in Hebrews. This dispute has arisen because the author does not identify himself by name in the book, and, unlike other NT books without a named author, the early church was not united in its identification of the author. However, despite the variety of opinions that have been strenuously affirmed, and the insistence of many that it is impossible to know, there is sufficient evidence available to prove that Barnabas was the author of this epistle.

The authorship of Hebrews is not a question to be lightly dismissed, for if it cannot be shown that the epistle was written by an apostle, or possibly by a close associate of an apostle, its inspiration and canonicity could be called into question. Liberals often attack the authorship of books because God reserved the privilege of writing Scripture for those who held special authority among His people. Thus, in the Old Testament, only prophets and other recognized spiritual leaders wrote Scripture, while in the New Testament, only apostles and those closely associated with the apostles wrote Scripture.

³ Westcott, Hebrews, lviii.

Paul

Since Paul is the person who is most often suggested to be the author, it is appropriate to begin an investigation of the question of authorship with an assessment of this suggestion. Paul’s name comes up so often because he wrote more NT epistles than anyone else, and several of these contain extensive argumentation regarding the relationship of Christians to the Law. A textual variant in Heb 10:34 that is followed by the KJV supports Pauline authorship (“ye both had compassion with my chains. . .”) rather than “ye both had compassion on them that were in bonds. . .”), but the textual evidence is decidedly against following this variant.5 Less significant is the mention of “our brother Timothy” in 13:23.6 There is also a feeling in the minds of many that if Hebrews was not written by Paul, it would be less authoritative, or perhaps not inspired at all. However, this is not the case. If Hebrews was written by any other apostle under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it would bear no less authority than if written by the apostle Paul.

In view of the fact that Paul would seem in some ways to be the most natural candidate for the unnamed author of Hebrews, it is telling that among the ante-Nicene fathers only Clement of Alexandria (ca. 160–ca. 220) held a form of this position, suggesting that Paul wrote the book in Hebrew or Aramaic, and Luke translated it into Greek.7 Tertullian (ca. 145–ca. 220), the only other ante-Nicene father to name an author, attributed the work to Barnabas.8 Gaius of Rome (ca. 200) notes thirteen epistles of Paul, thus excluding Hebrews,9 as does the Muratorian Fragment (ca. 170?).10 Irenaeus (ca. 140–ca. 202) and Hippolytus (170–236) are said by later writers to have denied Pauline authorship of Hebrews, although they do not state this directly in their extant works.11 Origen (185–254) was unsure of the author.12 The placement of this book in the canon, after the Pauline epistles (which are organized from longest to shortest), also indicates that it was held at an early time to be one of the General Epistles, i.e., an epistle written by someone other than Paul. According to Zahn, the church at Alexandria was the only one in the world that generally held to Pauline authorship at the time of Clement and Origen: “It cannot be shown that this opinion was held at that time anywhere outside of Egypt, nor subsequently in any place not under the influence of Alexandrian scholars.”13 Most likely, they held this belief for the same reason that many

---

5 Some use the title of the book as an argument for Pauline authorship. The Pauline Epistles were named by the early church after their recipients, while the General Epistles were named after their author. Yet an epistle that contains doubt about authorship would necessarily have to be named for the recipients, and not by the author. Thus, the title “To the Hebrews” does not prove Pauline authorship.

6 In Pauline literature, Paul always says “Timothy our brother” or “Timothy my son,” not “our brother Timothy.” The order is the reverse of Paul’s.

7 Quoted by Eusebius in Hist. eccl. 6.14.2-4.

8 On Modesty 20.

9 According to Eusebius Hist. eccl. 6.20.3.

10 It has been suggested that Gaius of Rome was the author of the Muratorian Fragment.

11 See the references in Westcott, Hebrews, lxiv-lxv.

12 Quoted by Eusebius in Hist. eccl. 6.25.11-14.
do today, which is that it dealt with Pauline subjects and gave more authority to the book in the minds
of some. For the same reasons, this became the dominant view in the church by late the fourth century.

Specific verses in Hebrews give strong indications that the author is someone with a background
different than Paul’s. The author indicates in 2:3 that he was present in Jerusalem in the early days of
the church, and that he was distinct from the Twelve. That verse also indicates that the author heard
the gospel message from the apostles, which Paul did not (cf. 4:2; Gal 1:12; 1 Pet 1:25). Other verses, such as
10:32-34, indicate that the author was present at Jerusalem in the early days of the church, and that
the author knew the Jerusalem believers well. Paul did not know the believers at Jerusalem well, nor did he
know them in the early days.

Hebrews would be the only epistle that Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, wrote to the Jews. 14 Almost
the entire scope of Paul’s ministry occurred outside of Jerusalem, and he seems to have had little direct
dealings with the church there. It would therefore be strange for him to send an epistle to the Jerusalem
church, especially without a salutation and greetings of specific people known to Paul. Paul could not
simply begin a letter to the Jerusalem church with an authoritative pronouncement, but would instead
have to win the right to be heard by expressing his deep affection for them, his indebtedness for all the
things they have done, his love for the Jewish people, and so forth.

As demonstrated below (“Date”), Hebrews was probably written from Rome in A.D. 66. If Paul was
still alive at this time, and if he were in Rome (13:19), he would be in prison, awaiting his execution by
Nero. However, this author gives no indication that he is in prison. The author looks forward to visiting
the Hebrews soon (13:23), whereas Paul looked forward to his approaching death in his final Roman
imprisonment (2 Tim 4:6-8). The author also says Timothy has just been set at liberty (13:23). Since the
author is writing from Rome, presumably Timothy had been arrested in Rome, and presumably for his
association with the apostle Paul at the latter’s final trial. The lack of any mention of Paul may indicate
that he is dead, and that the Jerusalem church had already heard of his death (cf. 13:7).

Paul states in 2 Thess 2:2 that some false teachers wrote spurious letters that were addressed to
churches from “the apostle Paul” in order to claim authority for their heretical teachings. Thus, at the
close of the same letter 2 Thessalonians (2 Thess 3:17), Paul states that he placed his signature at the end
of every of his letters in order to identify them as authentically Pauline. Paul’s signature must have been
readily recognizable to the early church, and surely if there were such a signature on the original
manuscript of Hebrews, later generations of Christians would have seen it and recognized it as Pauline.
Further, if Paul would go to the trouble of personally writing the postscript of every one of his letters in
order to show that it was truly his, surely this implies that he would state his name in each letter for the
same reason.

One of the strongest arguments against Pauline authorship is that the style of Greek of Hebrews is
completely different from Paul’s Greek. It is difficult for people who are not proficient in Greek to
appreciate this difference, since it is not easily quantifiable and does not show up clearly in translation.
The word order is generally different from Paul’s; participles are used heavily; and the vocabulary is
different. Hebrews has a very disproportionate number of the *hapax legomena* in the New Testament,
about ten per chapter. Most of these are literary terms found in classical writers, while others are taken
from the LXX. 15 Hebrews uses the postpositive particle τε more frequently than any book but Acts. This
author’s writing style also includes a word order that is different from most of the other NT authors. The

---

13 Theodor Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament* (3 vols.; Translated by John Moore Trout et al. under the
direction of Melancthon Williams Jacobus and Charles Snow Thayer; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1953), 2:300.

14 Barnabas was an apostle to the Gentiles as well (Gal 2:9), although, unlike Paul, his ministry was centered in
Jerusalem in the early days of the church.

15 See William Henry Simcox, *The Writers of the New Testament: Their Style and Characteristics*, vol. 2 of
Greek of Hebrews is among the most difficult in the New Testament. Along with Acts (and possibly James), it is on the highest literary level, rivaling any extrabiblical writer. Unlike in Paul’s writings, there are no instances of anacoluthon in Hebrews—it is perhaps the most tightly argued epistle in the NT, with hardly an extraneous word. It is also impressive that although the Old Testament is quoted and referenced throughout the book, there are no traces of Semiticized Greek. This indicates that Greek was the mother tongue of the writer, not Aramaic or Hebrew. Most Greek scholars would agree that the Greek of Hebrews is too different from Pauline Greek to have been written by Paul. Perhaps the best way to put it is that the style of this book is more literary than Paul’s style. Had Paul written this book, we would expect its Greek to be like that of Paul’s other formal, structured, argumentative epistles, i.e., like Romans and Ephesians.

This point may be amply illustrated by quoting various authorities on the subject. Simcox writes, “The affinities of this Ep. with the acknowledged ones of St. Paul are, as regards the greater part of it, theological or at most intellectual, rather than grammatical or literary.” Again, “the resemblance not only is much less in language than in thought, but is almost entirely confined to that side of language where the line between it and thought is hardest to draw.” Zahn writes, “Everyone who is capable of judging differences in style must admit that the Greek of Hebrews is better than that of the generally accepted letters of Paul.” Lane states that “The language of Hebrews constitutes the finest Greek in the NT, far superior to the Pauline standard both in vocabulary and sentence-building.”

The church father Clement of Alexandria (ca. 160–ca. 220) believed that Paul wrote Hebrews, but in order to explain the marked difference in literary style, he had to suggest that Paul wrote it in Hebrew, and then Luke translated it into Greek (quoted by Eusebius Hist. Eccl. 6.14.2-4). Origen, who followed Clement in Alexandria, believed the style of Greek in Hebrews could not be Paul’s (Eusebius, H.E. vi. 25. 11-14). Both Clement and Origen were native Greek speakers, and so could appreciate this difference.

Finally, an extended quote from Metzger:

Curiously enough this author, although he addresses his epistle to “Hebrews,” is the least Hebraistic writer in the New Testament. Except, of course, in quotations from the Old Testament—which are invariably from the Septuagint and never from the Hebrew—there is

---


17 Simcox, Writers of the New Testament, 44. Note that Simcox accepts the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles, which are more literate.

18 Ibid., 46.


20 William L. Lane, Hebrews 1–8 (WBC, ed. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and Ralph P. Martin, vol. 47A; Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991), xlix. It is not clear whether Lane is including the Pastorals in Pauline literature.

21 The author of Hebrews always quotes from the LXX, not the Hebrew text, and often bases his arguments on specific LXX readings. There is no evidence of translation Greek anywhere.

22 It could be suggested that Paul had an amanuensis who made his style more literary, as Silvanus did for Peter in 1 Peter. However, Paul did in fact have such an amanuensis—Luke—for the Pastoral Epistles, yet these are still different in style from Hebrews.
scarcely a trace of Semitic influence in his work. The author has a rich vocabulary at his command and uses it with great skill.

The style is even more characteristic of a practiced scholar than the vocabulary. In the first place the Greek text of the epistle is distinguished among the prose works of the primitive church by its rhythmical cadences, so much cultivated by “good” Greek authors. Again, the author likes to choose his words to produce alliteration. For example, in the first verse of his treatise, there are five words which begin with the syllable πολ-, παλ-, πατ-, or προ-; and in 9:27 out of five consecutive words four begin with α-.

He also endeavors, as did careful classical authors, to avoid bringing two words together when the former ends in a vowel and the latter begins with a vowel (called hiatus).

Besides being acquainted with these tricks of the ancient rhetorician—and not only acquainted with them, but being able to use them—this unknown writer displays a most remarkable capacity for an architectonic style of composition. Unlike Paul, whose emotions occasionally run away with him, making havoc of syntax, this author knows at each moment precisely what his next sentence will be, and he follows meticulously an elaborate outline. In fact his treatise involves the longest sustained argument of any book in the New Testament. With delicate finesse he suggests an idea before he develops it at some subsequent point. For example, in 2:17 he mentions “high priest” and takes it up again at great length in 4:14ff.; in 5:6 he mentions Melchizedek, but defers the full development of this typology to 6:20ff. He deftly employs parentheses and asides, sometimes of considerable length (e.g., 3:7-11; 5:13-14; 8:5; 11:13-16). These and many similar features betray the hand of a careful and skillful author, whose work is easily recognized as coming closer to the definite literary style of a master of the Greek language than anything else in the New Testament.²³

Other Suggested Writers

Thus, the evidence is overwhelmingly against Pauline authorship of Hebrews. Who else might be a possible writer? According to 2:3, the author had had the gospel message confirmed to him through signs performed by those who had heard this message from the Lord. This means that none of the Twelve could have written Hebrews.²⁴ In addition, so far as we know, none of them were native Greek speakers, and so would lack the ability to write in polished Greek. Further, the style of Hebrews is inseparable from the argument, and thus cannot be attributed to an amanuensis.

Martin Luther suggested that Apollos could be the author. Certainly the author’s eloquent writing and knowledge of the Scriptures fits well with Apollos. However, Apollos was not an apostle, had no contact with the Jerusalem church in its early days, and in fact is never said to have had any contact with Jerusalem at all. There is also no support for this hypothesis from the tradition of the early church.

The use of the masculine singular participle διηγομένον in 11:32 shows that the author was one person who was male. Thus, various suggestions that the author could be female (e.g., Priscilla) or that the epistle could have been written by two authors or by an entire community, may safely be ruled out.

Luke has also been suggested as the author. Certainly the writing style of this author is closer to Luke than to Paul. However, there is no other evidence for Luke, and it is not certain that the historical details the author gives concerning himself would fit well with Luke. This author shows a much greater familiarity with the details of the Law and the priesthood than a Gentile would probably have, assuming that Luke was a Gentile. It would almost be inappropriate for a Gentile to write a book like Hebrews to

---


²⁴ As already noted, Paul affirms strongly in Galatians 1 that he did not receive the gospel from man, but directly from the Lord.
the Jerusalem church, and 13:13 indicates the author was a Jew. It would also be necessary for Luke to write in association with an apostle (as with Paul for Luke–Acts), since he was not an apostle himself.

Silas has been suggested as another person who could have written Hebrews. He was from Jerusalem (Acts 15:22), and may have been with the church since Pentecost. Silas was also Peter’s amanuensis for 1 Peter (1 Pet 5:12), which uses polished Greek, though not exactly like that of Hebrews. The major objection to Silas is that he was not an apostle, and so would not seem to have the authority to write this book on his own. Another objection is that this hypothesis has no support from the early church.

Barnabas

As already noted, the church father Tertullian (ca. 145–ca. 220) cites Barnabas as the author. No tradition of the authorship of Hebrews has greater support among the ante-Nicene fathers than Barnabas, because only one other Father puts forth a view of authorship, and this was Clement’s proposal of a complex dual authorship (Paul/Luke). Tertullian’s reference (notwithstanding his problematic interpretation of Hebrews) shows that he regards Barnabas’ authorship of Hebrews as a fact generally accepted by his audience, not merely his own guess or opinion, since he bases his argument on it:

For there is extant withal an Epistle to the Hebrews under the name of Barnabas—a man sufficiently accredited by God, as being one whom Paul has stationed next to himself in the uninterrupted observance of abstinence: “Or else, I alone and Barnabas, have not we the power of working?” And, of course, the Epistle of Barnabas is more generally received among the Churches than that apocryphal “Shepherd” of adulterers. Warning, accordingly, the disciples to omit all first principles, and strive rather after perfection, and not lay again the foundations of repentance from the works of the dead, he says: “For impossible it is that they who have once been illuminated and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have participated in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the word of God and found it sweet, when they shall—their age already setting—have fallen away, should be again recalled unto repentance, crucifying again for themselves the Son of God, and dishonouring Him.” “For the earth which hath drunk the rain often descending upon it, and hath borne grass apt for them on whose account it is tilled withal, attaineth God’s blessing; but if it bring forth thorns, it is reprobate, and nighest to cursing, whose end is (doomed) unto utter burning.” He who learnt this from apostles, and taught it with apostles, never knew of any “second repentance” promised by apostles to the adulterer and fornicator.

Acts 14:4, 1 Cor 9:5-6, and Gal 2:9 indicate that Barnabas was an apostle. The early church accepted this epistle as Scripture because there was a strong tradition that apostolic authority lay behind it. There can be no question that Barnabas held apostolic authority, and therefore that he had the authority to write this book of Scripture. Most likely, confusion regarding Barnabas’ authorship of Hebrews developed because there was an early pseudepigraphal work called The Epistle of Barnabas which was rejected by the early church as spurious.

Barnabas was a Jew who was originally from Cyprus (Acts 4:36). This means that Greek was his native language, and presumably he was well versed in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint. It is obvious from the elevated Greek style of this book that its author was a well-educated native Greek speaker, and certainly this fits well with Barnabas. It is also significant that the author of Hebrews normally quotes the LXX, even though he was writing to the Jewish church in Jerusalem. This may indicate that the author was much more familiar with the LXX than the Hebrew, even if his readers


may have had both. It is clear that the author knows the LXX very well, because he is able to quote from it at length, verbatim, and at will. It makes sense, then, that the author would be a Jew who was raised in Greek society, as Barnabas was.

In spite of his Greek background, the author of Hebrews is exceptionally well versed in the Law and in the rites and ceremonies of the temple. This again fits well with Barnabas, for Acts 4:36 states that he was a Levite. A Levite in the Second Temple Period would be trained in temple practices and rituals, even if living outside of Judea.

There were few people in the early church who had sufficient stature in the Jerusalem church to send them such a bold and authoritative letter as this is. Whoever wrote it would have to be a distinguished and respected teacher, someone with apostolic authority (i.e., an apostle), and someone who had a strong and lengthy relationship with the church in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the mother church; leaders of other churches in the Roman world could not just send a letter to Jerusalem telling the church there what to do. Internal evidence from the book has already been noted that precludes one of the Twelve, such as Peter or John, from writing this epistle. Paul was distrusted by many in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 21:20-21), and was not personally well known among them. On the other hand, Barnabas knew the church at Jerusalem well, since he was there in the days when the church was founded (Acts 4:36). The church at Jerusalem would not receive Paul until Barnabas took Paul to them and told them he was okay (Acts 9:26-27). Barnabas was eventually sent to Antioch by the Jerusalem church as a missionary (Acts 11:22). That he maintained a good relationship with the Jerusalem church is shown by the fact that the normal word order “Paul and Barnabas” is twice altered to “Barnabas and Paul” when the pair traveled to Jerusalem together after their first missionary journey (Acts 15:12, 25). Barnabas had a closer connection to the Jerusalem church than did Paul.

Internal evidence also supports Barnabas’s authorship. Since Barnabas was writing to his own home church, there was no need for him to review the names of the people he knew there, or even to open with a salutation or to state his name. He could just start speaking to them, as he would to family and friends. Someone like Paul would need to state his name and give a salutation. The author expresses his desire to be restored to this church in 13:19, indicating that he has had held a position of leadership there in the past and could be considered part of its assembly. Again, this fits with Barnabas, who was an early leader in the Jerusalem church. It is indicated in 10:32-34 that the author was with this church when it began, which again fits Barnabas. If some theological concepts and terminology in the book are similar to Paul’s, this also comes as no surprise, for Barnabas was Paul’s ministry partner for many years.

The book of Acts says nothing about Barnabas after ch. 15, though it last mentions him continuing his itinerant missionary work—something which is also indicated by the reenergizing of John Mark (cf. Mark; 2 Tim 4:11; 1 Pet 5:13). Paul’s statements in 1 Cor 9:6 and Col 4:10 show that Barnabas was well known to the churches at Corinth and Colossae as late as the end of Paul’s first Roman imprisonment. Barnabas’ ministry presumably went on, but it was outside the scope of Luke’s purpose in Acts to comment on the later ministry of any of the apostles except Paul. There is no reason to think that Barnabas was not still active in ministry in the mid to late 60s, and capable of writing this epistle.

Thus, Barnabas’s authorship is supported by the tradition of the early church; by Barnabas’ qualifications as an apostle; by Barnabas’ historical relationship with the Jerusalem church; by Barnabas’ knowledge of the Law; by Barnabas’ fluency in Greek; and by the close match between historical details concerning this author and Barnabas. Everything fits with Barnabas, and there are no significant problems. On the other hand, there is no other person in the early church that could plausibly be suggested as the author of Hebrews, so by a process of elimination the author must be Barnabas.

Some might find it hard to believe that a letter as strong as this one could come from the pen of one whose surname means, as it is usually translated, “son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36). However, a better translation of υἱὸς παρακλήσεως is “son of exhortation.” The idea is that Barnabas was always pressing...

---

27 The Greek Βαρναβᾶς is a transliteration of the Aramaic בַּרְנָבָא, “son of a prophet.” The ministry of a prophet was one of exhortation.
people to higher ground through what we would call both encouraging and exhorting. Exhorting can include rebuke and challenge as well as compliments. Thus, Barnabas calls his letter a “word of exhortation” (τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως, 13:22). The author does balance his warnings with positive remarks (e.g., 6:9-12; 10:34-39; 12:1-3), but he is writing to an audience that needs firm reproof. In addition, the author asks the church to pray for his soon return (13:18-19, 23), which indicates that he had such a strong reputation for being a loving and gentle man that the church would welcome him back even after he had sent this letter. Barnabas’ reenergizing of John Mark shows that he had a gift for restoring backslidden and struggling believers, making him an ideal man to write a letter to a church that had become bogged down.

It is clear from the book of Hebrews that Barnabas had a brilliant mind and a first rate education. His arguments from the Old Testament are very cogent throughout; his exegesis flawlessly draws carefully reasoned implications from difficult OT passages. He quotes from the LXX at will, and seems to have it memorized. He is intimately familiar with the Mosaic legal system and the regulations of the Levitical priesthood. Most of this book does not come by way of direct revelation, but simply from the author’s own Spirit-guided reasoning, as he shows the theological implications of various passages and principles from both the Old Testament and the New. In fact, this book is an excellent hermeneutical model because of the author’s method of quoting and interpreting the OT, then applying it to the situation of his addressees.28

The Warning Passages

The major exegetical issue in the book of Hebrews is the interpretation of the so-called warning passages, which may be identified as 2:1-4, 3:12–4:13 (others say 3:7–4:13), 5:11–6:8 (others say 6:4-8), 10:26-31, and 12:14-27. The interpretation of these five passages is closely linked to the interpretation of the author’s argument as a whole. There are three main lines of interpretation for these passages. One view, often labeled as “Free Grace,” claims that those addressed in the warning passages are saved, and they will not lose their salvation eternally, but will miss out on various rewards and perhaps be punished in purgatory. A second view, often labeled as “Arminian,” claims that those addressed in the warning passages are saved, and that the author is warning them that they may lose their salvation. A third view, often labeled as “Calvinist,” states that the warning passages describe those who have made a false profession of faith in Jesus and either could renounce Christianity irrevocably or have already done so.

There are two obviously wrong, yet common, ways to approach the warning passages. One approach is to give each of the three major views a theological label (“Free Grace,” “Arminian,” “Calvinist”), and then pick the view that aligns with one’s theological presuppositions. “I am a Calvinist, so this is how I would interpret this passage.” It is not true that the warning passages in Hebrews are ambiguous and can be adjusted to fit any of a number of theological perspectives. There is one, and only one, legitimate interpretation of these passages. One must determine what the text says, and then adjust his theology to fit his exegesis. On the other hand, it is also true that each of the three major interpretations of the warning passages has far-reaching theological ramifications which will affect one’s approach to many other Scriptures. It should also be noted that the three major views of the warning passages are not necessarily as exclusive as the theological labels given to them would suggest. For example, a person who rejects four of the five points of Calvinism, whom some would label an Arminian, could hold to the so-called Calvinist view (as I do). Also, there are several other views of the warning passages than these three, and many variations on them.

The second mistaken approach analyzes the warning passages independently, and then interprets the book as a whole in light of this view of the warning passages. Of course, if exegesis of the warning

passages is done properly, this approach works. However, Hebrews is a very unified, focused, and flowing book. The same theme is developed throughout the book, with good transitions between subpoints and a logical development of the argument from start to finish. It is therefore important to see the warning passages within the flow of thought of the book, and to study all five of the warnings together. To study only a single passage in isolation from its context risks losing sight of its place in the argument and potentially misconstruing it as a result. The five warning passages, when taken together, paint a larger picture that is more difficult to see when analyzing any one verse or passage on its own. Each of the warning passages addresses the same problem, using similar terminology. The main argument of each section of the book relates to these problems as well.

Each warning passage, when read in context and carefully analyzed, is a warning against unbelief. In between the warnings, the author argues for the superiority of Christ over Judaism. Hebrews is not about a moral or lifestyle problem, but is about what the addressees believe about Jesus. The warnings are directed towards false believers who are tempted to renounce the Christian faith and leave the church in order to return to Judaism. In the information sections, between the warnings, the author argues that there is nothing to go back to, since the Law cannot do the job, and never could.

Views of the warning passages which see them as addressed to sinning Christians completely fail to recognize the content of each warning. Every time, the warning concerns what one believes about Jesus Christ, and does not have to do with lifestyle issues. The sole sin that is singled out in these passages is the sin of unbelief. Further, the consequence of unbelief threatened in each warning is eternal damnation, not loss of reward accompanied by eternal salvation. The idea of rewards for living properly is nowhere in the warning passages, which are about salvation. It should also be noted that since Judaism is a works system, and the addressees were obviously zealous to keep the Law, works were not the problem in this church. There are only a couple of places in the main argument where the author of Hebrews mentions works, both of them positive. In 6:10, he refers to the love and the ministry to the saints which this church has showed in the past and is still showing. In 10:32-34, the author again recalls the former good works and zeal of the congregation. The section of moral exhortation in 13:1-6 which applies the argument is markedly shorter than the corresponding sections in Paul’s epistles.

Both the so-called Free Grace and Arminian views of Hebrews (though not held by all who identify themselves by these labels) affirm that someone who is truly saved can repudiate the Christian faith. From the Arminian viewpoint, this person has lost his salvation. Such a view not only misreads the warning passages, it also contradicts numerous affirmations of eternal security in the book of Hebrews (e.g., 7:25; 10:14, 23) and elsewhere in the NT. From the Free Grace viewpoint, one can repudiate Christianity, embrace Buddhism or atheism, lead a reprobate life, and could still go to heaven if he “trusted Christ” at some point in his life. This leads to the idea that there are two categories of believers—those who continue to have faith and those who have lost it. However, such a verse as Heb 3:6 shows that someone who is truly saved will never repudiate the faith. In addition, the idea that one can be saved and not show it by his works is contradicted by countless verses in both the OT and NT (e.g., Matt 7:16-20; 12:33; John 15:1-6). Nevertheless, this strange aspect of the modern Free Grace system explains how those in this theological camp could say that people who have left the church and apostatized could still be saved. Against both the so-called Free Grace and Arminian views is 1 John 2:19, which teaches that the mark of a true believer is continuance in the faith. If they are believers, they will continue. If they do not, they are lost.

---

29 Some attempt to skirt this issue by affirming that the term “salvation” in Hebrews refers to eschatological deliverance, rather than justification. However, the idea that someone can be justified in the present but not saved eschatologically is not found anywhere in the NT. In fact, the author’s argument is that future salvation is based on faith in Christ now. Hence, eschatological deliverance cannot be separated from present justification.

30 Note that 12:16 is, in context, referring to spiritual fornication.
Many pastors have applied the warning passages to sinning Christians because they think this makes better preaching, but in fact this is a misuse of the book of Hebrews. Its warning is against people who have, knowingly or unknowingly, made a false profession of faith, and are considering an alternative to Christ. Irrevocable hardening and eternal damnation is threatened for this group, and not merely chastisement in this life or loss of reward. Thus, this book stands as a very stern and sober warning to those who are playing church, pretending to be Christians when they are not truly born again. They need to be warned that if they repudiate Christianity, there will be no second chance for them—they may be hardened beyond reason and be condemned while still alive.

**Addressee**

The addressees, like the author, are not identified by name. However, it is clear from various statements made in the book that the epistle is addressed to the church in Jerusalem. The opening sentence in the book makes a reference to τοῖς πατράσιν, “to the/our fathers,” which indicates that the recipients of the epistle were Jewish. These were, of course, Christian Jews (cf. 3:1, etc.), i.e., a Jewish church. According to 5:12, most in this group had been saved for a long time. Hebrews 10:32-34 describes a persecution in the early days of the church, which would fit well with Acts 8. Hebrews 2:3 indicates that the twelve apostles first preached the message of the gospel at this church and confirmed it by signs. Hebrews 13:7 indicates that the church’s original group of teachers and leaders were no longer there, and that in fact many of their lives were over. The exhortation not to offer sacrifices according to the Law (10:1-25) would only apply to Palestinian believers, and in particular to those who lived in Jerusalem, where the temple was. There is no hint that any of the recipients were Gentiles or that they had a past in paganism. In 13:13-14, the author exhorts his readers to forsake the Jerusalem of this present age for the one that is to come in the kingdom age. Jerusalem is thus the only possible destination that fits with the contents of the epistle.

The majority of the professing believers in the Christian assembly at Jerusalem were truly saved, but there was a minority of unbelievers among them who had made a false profession. In every local church of any size, the group as a whole is saved, but there are unbelievers among them. Thus, statements in the book which indicate that the addressees are saved do not imply that there cannot be a subgroup within them that is atypical of the group as a whole. A pastor might legitimately address his congregation as “brethren” because he is speaking to a group of professing Christians, even if he knows or suspects that some of the people he is speaking to have made a false profession. In Hebrews, the marked difference between the way in which the author describes people in the warning passages and the way he describes them elsewhere is due to the presence of an unsaved subgroup within the congregation. That they are a minority in the group is indicated by the use of the terms τις, ὁμοιός (3:13; 4:1), and ἐκ (4:11; 12:15-16) in the warning passages.

The book of Acts presents a dramatic change in the church at Jerusalem from its enthusiastic launch in A.D. 33 until Paul’s release from prison some thirty years later. At the beginning, Jerusalem was the center of Christianity in the world, and its church was composed exclusively of Jews. The early narratives of Acts are pulsating with great zeal, enthusiasm, and commitment. Yet by the end of Acts, the Jerusalem church is just hanging on, while the Gentiles have taken the gospel and are running with it. Certain

---

31 Likewise, the fact that the author of Hebrews frequently speaks in the first person plural should not be read to indicate that everyone in the group is saved. This is just a generic “we,” a preacher’s “we,” of the sort which is common in 1 John (cf. Acts 4:12). Those who claim that everyone in the Jerusalem church was a true believer are simply being unrealistic, as we all know that there are false believers in every church of any size.

32 All of the epistles are written to churches or to believing individuals, and not to the world. The epistles are meant more to be didactic than evangelistic.
members of the church in Jerusalem initially resisted Gentile conversion (Acts 11:1-3; 15:1-11), and they remained zealous for the Law, even resisting Paul’s emphasis on salvation by faith apart from the Law (Acts 21:20-25). Essentially, the Christians in Jerusalem were like many modern Messianic Jews—they accepted the idea that Jesus was the Messiah, but they still wanted to keep the traditions of the Pharisees and the Law of Moses. By the time the epistle of Hebrews was written, the Jewish believers in Jerusalem were bogged down, having never moved past the Law—in contrast to the Gentiles, who were responsible for the church’s forward momentum and doctrinal distinctiveness. The Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were under pressure to return to Judaism as a means of fitting in with the crowd and avoiding persecution (cf. 12:4). The author knows of some former members of the church who had already left (cf. 6:4-6; 10:25), and he has good evidence that others who are still in the church are wavering. The church was zealous to keep the Law (Acts 21:20), and so for the most part, outward, behavioral sins were not a problem. The major sin that is a problem among this group is the sin of unbelief (4:11-16). Among those who are true believers, there is a failure to commit decisively to Christ, leaving Judaism behind. Thus, the whole group of recipients is lagging spiritually, but there is an unbelieving subgroup among them that must be evangelized. The warning passages are addressed to the unbelieving members of the Jerusalem church, and are strong warnings to believe, rather than forsaking the church and returning to Judaism.

Date and Occasion of Writing

The date of composition of Hebrews can be determined with a fair degree of precision from clues given in the book and knowledge of the history of the period. The terminus a quo can be fixed by the death of James. According to Josephus (Ant. 20.200), James the brother of Jesus was martyred in the interregnum between the procuratorships of Festus and Albinus, i.e., in A.D. 62. As long as the Jerusalem church had James or other apostles to guide them, there was no need for anyone else to write an epistle to Jerusalem. But once the church had been deprived of their senior pastor and the apostles, the need arose for someone to write to them to give them direction, especially as a crisis loomed.

A terminus ad quem of possible dates for Hebrews is the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. The author speaks as if the Levitical priesthood is still outwardly functioning (cf. 8:4-5), and exhorts his readers not to return to the Jewish sacrificial system. Such an exhortation would only make sense if the temple were still standing and functioning normally. Further, if the temple had been destroyed, the author surely would have made a point of this when he spoke of the temporary nature of the Old Covenant. The non-mention of Jerusalem’s destruction may therefore be taken as proof that the city was still standing and operating normally.

The best explanation is that the book of Hebrews was written from Rome (or near Rome) to the church in Jerusalem on the eve of the First Jewish War. The prospect of the Jewish rebellion was the impetus for this epistle. The long and terrible procuratorship of Antonius Felix (A.D. 52–59) created conditions which made revolt inevitable. Porcius Festus (A.D. 59–62) was more competent, but did not turn the situation around. The horrendous procuratorship of Luceceius Albinus (A.D. 62–64) saw the descent of anarchy upon Palestine. The procuratorship of Gessius Florus (A.D. 64–66) consisted of a more or less constant state of armed robbery, massacre, and injustice such that Jewish revolt against Roman rule was the obvious end of his tenure, and the one for which Florus himself hoped. By early 66, both Barnabas and the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem knew that war was coming, and that it was coming soon. Barnabas is writing urgently to these Jewish Christians because the imminent war would bring overwhelming pressure to return to Judaism. When zealot leaders gained control of Jerusalem, those who refused to identify themselves with Judaism, to the exclusion of Jesus, would be killed. Those who were unsaved and just playing church would quickly depart in such a circumstance, thereby sealing their fate to eternal damnation.

The writer warns that severe persecution is coming, but has not yet arrived (12:4). Thus, the book of Hebrews was written before the Jews revolted in June of 66, but after the death of Paul in the winter of 65/66 and Timothy’s brief imprisonment for standing by Paul at his death (cf. 2 Tim 4:9-21; Heb
Most likely, Hebrews was written in early spring of 66, and Barnabas reached Jerusalem in the summer of the same year and subsequently exhorted the Christians to flee the city.

**Purpose and Message**

The aim of this epistle is to demonstrate Jesus’ superiority over and supersession of Judaism, and thereby to prod the readers to make a clean break with Judaism—to get saved if necessary, and to commit decisively to Jesus alone, leaving Moses behind.

The author of Hebrews identifies his main point explicitly in 8:1, and reiterates this point throughout the book (1:3; 4:14; 6:20; 9:28; 10:12; 12:2). The message of Hebrews is that Jesus Christ has fulfilled and superseded the Mosaic legal system through His once-for-all sacrifice for sin and heavenly high priesthood. Christ is superior to the angelic mediators of the Law (1:1–2:18), to the apostle of the Law (3:1–4:13), to the high priests of the Law (4:14–6:20), to the whole atonement system of the Law (7:1–10:39), and to the hope of the Law (11:1–12:29). The focus of the epistle is on teaching doctrine about Christ, and the theme of Hebrews is, Christ is better. Those who leave the church and return to Judaism cannot be saved.

**Textual Base**

The textual base of Hebrews is similar to that of most Pauline epistles. Of the eight papyri of Hebrews, only two contain significant portions of the book: P46 (ca. 200), which contains portions of every chapter, and P13 (3rd/4th cent.). The other six papyri (P12, P17, P9, P89, P114, P116) are preserved only in very small fragments. The uncial situation is typical, except that B ends in 9:14. Lengthy textual variants occur in 2:7, 3:6, 7:21, 8:12, and 12:20. Some exegetically significant variants occur in 1:3; 1:8; 3:2; 3:6 (2x); 4:2; 4:3; 5:3; 6:2; 6:3; 6:10; 7:16; 7:21; 8:4 (2x); 8:8; 8:12; 9:11; 9:14; 10:30; 10:34 (2x); 11:3; 11:11; 11:20; 12:3; 12:18; 12:28; 13:4; 13:9; 13:21; 13:23.

---

33 Note that winter travel was very difficult, if not impossible. The author’s travel plans imply that he is writing after winter has passed.

34 What is meant here by “Judaism” is Old Covenant Judaism, i.e., Judaism as defined by the Law of Moses, not the continuation and fulfillment of true Judaism in the church.
Outline of Hebrews

I. Superiority of Christ to the Mediators of the Law (Angels) 1:1–2:18
   A. Christ’s higher status with relation to God 1:1-14
   B. Warning not to neglect Christ’s message 2:1-4
   C. Christ’s higher status with relation to the world to come 2:5-9
   D. Christ’s higher status with relation to man 2:10-18

II. Superiority of Christ to the Apostle of the Law (Moses) 3:1–4:13
   A. Christ’s higher position in God’s house 3:1-11
   B. Warning not to miss, through unbelief, the rest offered by Christ 3:12–4:13
      1. Admonition not to follow the example of the Israelites in the wilderness 3:12-19
      2. Admonition to fear not entering the promised rest through unbelief 4:1-13

III. Superiority of Christ to the High Priests of the Law 4:14–6:20
   A. Christ’s superiority as Intercessor 4:14-16
   B. Christ’s superiority as Savior 5:1-10
   C. Warning not to turn back from knowledge of Christ 5:11–6:8
      1. Rebuke of the congregation’s immaturity 5:11-14
      2. Exhortation to press on to maturity 6:1-3
      3. The irreversibleness of turning back 6:4-8
   D. Exhortation to hope 6:9-20
      1. Hope because of the congregation’s situation 6:9-12
      2. Hope because of God’s promises 6:13-20
IV. Superiority of Christ to the Atonement System of the Law 7:1–10:39
   A. Christ a Priest of a superior order 7:1-28
      1. The eternality of the Melchizedekian priesthood 7:1-3
      2. Melchizedek’s priority over Levi 7:4-10
      3. The better covenant of the Melchizedekian priesthood 7:11-25
      4. The perfection of Christ’s priesthood 7:26-28
   B. Christ the Mediator of a better covenant 8:1-13
   C. Christ a Minister in the heavenly tabernacle 9:1-28
      1. The symbolic and temporary nature of the Mosaic tabernacle 9:1-10
      2. The real and permanent nature of Christ’s ministry 9:11-22
      3. The perfection of Christ’s fulfillment 9:23-28
   D. Christ the Offerer of the final sacrifice 10:1-18
   E. Exhortation to accept Christ’s atonement 10:19-25
   F. Warning not to reject Christ’s atonement 10:26-31
   G. Exhortation to press on 10:32-39
V. Superiority of Christ to the Hope of the Law 11:1–12:29
   A. Demonstration of OT saints’ faith in the promises, producing perseverance 11:1-40
   B. Exhortation to press on to the goal through faith 12:1-13
   C. Warning not to turn away from the living God in heaven to an earthly hope 12:14-27
      1. Warning not to follow Esau’s example 12:14-17
      2. Warning not to refuse the heavenly admonition 12:18-29
VI. Superiority of Christ Applied 13:1-21
   A. Exhortations for living by faith amid persecution 13:1-6
   B. Exhortation to choose Christ instead of Judaism 13:7-17
   C. The author’s request for prayer 13:18-19
   D. The author’s prayer for the addressees 13:20-21
VII. Epistolary Conclusion 13:22-25
   A. Exhortation to accept the epistle 13:22
   B. Report on plans to visit 13:23
   C. Salutations 13:24
   D. Benediction 13:25

**Argument of Hebrews**

The body of the book of Hebrews consists of a single sustained argument for Jesus’ superiority over and supersession of Judaism. Each major division argues for the superiority of Jesus over a particular aspect of the Mosaic Law. Each section of Hebrews ends on a theme that introduces the next section. Most major sections and subsections of Hebrews begin with some kind of logical connector, indicating that the author sees everything fitting together in the argument of the book. The macrostructure of Hebrews, as already noted, consists of five major points in the argument: Christ is superior to the angelic mediators of the Law (1:1–2:18), to the apostle of the Law (3:1–4:13), to the high priests of the Law (4:14–6:20), to the whole atonement system of the Law (7:1–10:39), and to the hope of the Law (11:1–12:29). Chapter 13 concludes the epistle, applying the demonstration of the superiority of Christ and the consequences of unbelief to the situation of the readers.35

---

Chapters 1–2 demonstrate the superiority of Jesus to the angels by appealing to Jesus’ status as the Davidic King. Chapter 1 demonstrates that the Messiah has a higher status than the angels with relation to God (Son vs. ministers), while ch. 2 demonstrates that the Messiah has a higher status than the angels with relation to the world to come (Ruler of all) and to man (Savior). In ch. 1, the author uses OT quotations to prove his point, while in ch. 2 he argues theologically. In between is a warning against neglecting Christ’s message (2:1-4). The reason why the author of Hebrews argues for the superiority of Christ to the angels is that the angels mediated the Law from God to Moses (so 2:2; cf. Acts 7:53; Gal 3:19). The revelation through the Son is superior to the revelation through angels.

**Christ’s higher status with relation to God, 1:1-14.** In 1:1-3, the author states the thesis of the book, and uses this to introduce his argument for the superiority of Christ to the angels. The argument of this section is that the Son has a higher status with relation to God than the angels do. The main point of ch. 1 is that we have been spoken to by the Son of God Himself, who is God, and who represents God perfectly in every way. Christ is superior to all other mediators of God’s revelation. Christ has a better name than the angels (“Son,” 1:4-5), has a higher status than the angels (“King,” in contrast to servants, 1:6-9), is eternal and immutable (1:10-12), and is presently seated at God’s right hand, awaiting a future conquest (1:13). The angels, by contrast, are mere servants (1:14).

**Warning not to neglect Christ’s message, 2:1-4.** In 2:1-4, the author draws out the implications of the Son’s superior status and applies it to the situation of his readers. He warns his audience against rejecting Christ’s message, which is the Christian gospel of salvation by faith, apart from the works of the Law. In this warning, the author argues that because the Son is so much superior to the angels, rejecting His Word will have far more severe consequences than the rejection of theirs did under the Mosaic economy. At issue is what the readers will do with the message of salvation which they have heard spoken and seen confirmed.

**Christ’s higher status with relation to the world to come, 2:5-9.** In 2:5-9, Jesus is shown to have a higher status than the angels with relation to the world to come, which will be subjected to the Son, not to angels—therefore one had better be careful to obey what the Son has said, more than the Law mediated by angels.

**Christ’s higher status with relation to man, 2:10-18.** Finally, Jesus is shown to have a higher status than the angels with relation to man (2:10-18). Jesus is the Leader and Savior of redeemed men. The angels could never save man because they have never experienced human trials or temptations. However, Jesus has, and He has overcome them, which makes Him qualified to save.

---

36 According to 8:1, the chief point of this epistle is that Christ “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (cf. 10:12; 12:2). The fact that Christ sat down shows that He had finished making a purification for sins, and nothing further needed to be done. The old Judaic legal system which required continual sacrifices has been done away by Christ’s finished work. This chief point is expressed in 1:3 by a finite verb (ἐκάθισεν), whereas the other verbs in the verse are participles. Also significant is the place where Christ sat down. Sitting on the right hand of the Father shows God’s full acceptance and approval of Christ’s sacrifice for sin. The Father was fully satisfied by Christ’s offering.
Superiority of Christ to the Apostle of the Law (Moses), 3:1–4:13

The author completed his argument for the superiority of Christ to the angelic mediators of the Law by describing Christ as a high priest sent from God who experienced and overcame the same trials as the people (2:17-18). This then leads the author to discuss the superiority of Christ to the apostle of the Law (i.e., to the one who represents God to man) and to the high priests ordained by the Law (i.e., those who represent man to God). Jesus is the chief Apostle and the great High Priest, and thus stands between God and the people as the perfect Mediator. The author begins in 3:1–4:13 by focusing on the superiority of Christ as God’s Apostle in comparison to Moses, who was the most exalted figure in Judaism.

Christ’s higher position in God’s house, 3:1-11. In 3:1-6a, the author argues that Jesus is greater than Moses, because while Moses was in God’s house (i.e., among God’s people), Jesus is the Builder of the house. Further, while the revelation given by Moses pointed to a future fulfillment, Jesus is the fulfillment. Moses was a servant in the house, while Jesus is a Son who rules the house. Moses could only minister with regard to things that anticipated a fulfillment in Christ. However, because the author has a question as to whether some of the addressees are in Christ’s house (3:6b), he moves to an exhortation based on the importance of being in Christ’s house (3:6b-11). The “rest” spoken of in Ps 95:11, which he quotes, is, contextually, the messianic kingdom (cf. Dan 12:13).

Warning not to miss, through unbelief, the rest offered by Christ, 3:12–4:13. In 3:12–4:13, the author argues that Christ is offering a greater rest than Moses, and warns the readers of fearful consequences of missing out on this rest. First, in 3:12-19, he admonishes his audience not to follow the example of the Israelites in the wilderness, who missed out on the rest because of unbelief. Then, in 4:1-13, he warns his readers not to miss, through unbelief, the rest that is promised to all believers. It is possible to hear the promise and to sojourn among the people of God, and yet miss out on the rest because of unbelief. Further, while a false profession may fool other men, it is not hidden from God (4:12-13).

Superiority of Christ to the High Priests of the Law, 4:14–6:20

The author of Hebrews next takes up the superiority of Christ to the high priests ordained by the Law, connecting his argument back to 2:17–3:1 with the conjunction οὖν.

Christ’s superiority as Intercessor, 4:14-16. In 4:14-16, the author argues that Jesus is the ultimate High Priest because He is in heaven, with direct access to God (4:14), yet He still understands human trials (4:15), and every believer has direct access to God through Him (4:16).

37 The third class condition at the end of 3:6 (cf. 1 Cor 15:2) is often misunderstood because the apodosis does not follow the protasis. Many people focus on the protasis alone, and take the conditionality to mean that Christians can lose their salvation. However, this interpretation implies a false and unsubstantiated apodosis, such as the following: “If we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope, then we will enter Christ’s rest.” The true apodosis is stated directly before the protasis: “whose house we are.” Thus, writing the apodosis after the protasis, the condition reads as follows: “If we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope, then we are of Christ’s house.” The present tense of the verb έσμεν is crucial. The author does not wonder whether some of those in his audience will hold fast per se, but whether they are in Christ’s house.

38 The issues involved in this are too lengthy to be discussed here. The “rest” denied the Israelites in the wilderness included Canaan, though it had implications for entering God’s final rest in the kingdom.
Christ’s superiority as Savior, 5:1-10. In 5:1-10, the author argues that Jesus is superior to the high priests ordained by the Law because He can offer eternal salvation to those who approach God through Him. He can do this because God has appointed Him to an eternal (Melchizedekian) high priesthood. Further, Christ is perfect and has no need to make atonement for His own sins, as other high priests do.

Warning not to turn back from knowledge of Christ, 5:11–6:8. The author has many difficult things to say about Christ’s Melchizedekian high priesthood, but before he can say them, he must address a problem in the congregation that is making them hard of hearing. They are immature, having never moved beyond the basics of Christianity, despite having been saved for a long time (5:11-14). The problem is not that they were leading immoral lives, but that they were weak in their understanding of the Word (5:13).

After rebuking the congregation for its immaturity in 5:11-14, the author exhorts the people to press on to maturity in 6:1-3. The author asserts that the group will in fact go on to maturity, but only if God permits. He then describes, in 6:4-8, a group of people who cannot press on to maturity, namely, apostates. Apostates can never reach maturity because they have been hardened beyond reason. If someone in the group apostatizes, he will not move on. The “if” in 6:3, like the “if” of 3:6, indicates that some in the group are not saved and could fall away. All believers, including infantile believers, will go on to maturity, so the fact that some in the group may not mean that some are not saved. Unbelievers can never get beyond the basics (which are described in 6:1-2) and become mature. Notice the change of persons: 6:1-3 are in the first person, 6:4-8 are in the third person, then 6:9 switches back to the first and second person. Those described in 6:4-8 are not part of the group because they have apostatized. The author’s point is that turning back is irreversible, so don’t do it!

Exhortation to hope, 6:9-20. The warning against apostasy is followed in 6:9-20 by an exhortation to hope. The addressees, as a group, have hope of moving on to maturity because of their situation (6:9-12) and God’s promises (6:13-20). By 6:20, the author has brought his argument back to where he left off in 5:10. The congregation can have firm assurance of receiving the promises because we have the ultimate High Priest, an eternal and heavenly High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Superiority of Christ to the Atonement System of the Law, 7:1–10:39

Chapters 7–10 deal with the priesthood, the covenant, and the tabernacle, and the sacrificial system, showing how the Law instituted types which were mere shadows of the heavenly realities and pointed to fulfillment in Christ. The information section (7:1–10:18) makes the point that the Law and its priesthood, sacrificial system, tabernacle, and covenant are no longer operative, and that there is a new system in effect with Jesus as High Priest. The author realizes that he cannot exhort the people to action without first teaching them and giving information to support what he is saying. Thus, the section concludes with exhortations and warnings (10:19-39) based on the truths communicated in 7:1–10:18.

Christ a Priest of a superior order, 7:1-28. In ch. 7, the author of Hebrews compares the Melchizedekian priesthood to the Levitical priesthood to show how they are different, and how Christ’s priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood because He is a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

39 In the analogy of 6:7-8, the land refers to a person, the thorns and thistles refer to unbelief, and the burning of the land refers to apostates suffering the judgment of eternal flames. Note that the relative pronoun ἥς (whose) at the end of 6:8 grammatically must refer to the land, not the thorns and thistles.

40 The comparison in 4:14–6:20 was to human high priests, whereas the issue in ch. 7 is about the Levitical priesthood generally.