New Testament Genrews & Book Overviews

The Literary Genre of the Gospels[1]

The literary genre of all of the gospels is a modified form of the *bios*, or ancient biography. They share the form and function of ancient biographies. Like *bioi*, they focus on the public life of Jesus, and Matthew and Luke follow the form even more closely by adding infancy narratives and a genealogy. Like *bioi*, the function of the gospels is to ground contemporary beliefs of followers in the example of the paradigmatic founder. It is in the area of content that the gospels differ from *bioi*. Ancient biographies focused on the character, achievements, and lasting significance of the focal figure. However the gospels go much farther. They communicate a belief that Jesus is the Jewish messiah and son of God, that he inaugurated the kingdom of God on earth in his teachings and actions, and that he will return as a judge at the end of time. The gospels are persuasive literature, intending to provoke their audiences to conversion and a way of life modeled on the teaching and life of Jesus.

The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles[2]

The Acts of the Apostles is the only work of its kind in the New Testament, but it shares certain formal features with three genres well-represented in early Greek literature: *bioi* (see above), histories and novels (or "romances"). Histories were used to convey actual occurrences considered worthy of record, though authors often took liberties with accuracy in the interests of moral lessons. Acts of the Apostles and the other early Christian acts certainly do this. Greek romances were imaginative tales told to entertain, so that might seem like less of a fit. Of course, Acts is not imaginative, and it skips the central romantic motif of the climactic reunion of two lovers. But it sets the story of the early apostles and Paul as a series of adventures (including a shipwreck). The apocryphal acts of the apostles—Christian tales that didn't make it into the canon, like the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* or the *Acts of Judas Thomas*—are more like Greek romances, except they invert the motif of sexual desire into the motif of celibacy and union with Jesus.

The Literary Genre of the Epistles[3]

The literary genre of all of the epistles is a well known in antiquity. It most likely originated as formal correspondence on behalf of ruler, either for diplomatic purposes or for internal administration, and gradually came to be used to maintain family ties as well. Ancient theorists understood the letter as a substitute for the presence of the person, but also knew that the written expression had to be more formal than conversation because of the potential for misunderstanding (after all, the person wasn't there to clarify what they meant!). There were different types of letters, and each type had standard "parts" (opening, body, closing). Christian epistles tend to be a little longer than your average Greek letter, and they also tend to mix elements with less regard for formal requirements than official correspondence displayed.

The Literary Genre of Revelation[4]

Revelation is unique in the New Testament but not in the Bible or in Second Temple Jewish literature. Works sharing its perspectives and techniques crop up in Jewish circles between the years 200 BCE and 200 CE, and include the biblical book of Daniel, apocalyptic scenes in the gospels (cf. Mark 13) and Paul's letters (1 Thess 4:13-18; 1 Cor 15:20-28, 50-56), several pseudepigraphic works such as *1 Enoch*, the *Psalms of Solomon*, the *Testament of Abraham*, the *Sibylline Oracles*, *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, and *3 Baruch*, and many of the compositions among the Dead Sea Scrolls. These works emerge in a period of perceived social crisis, and offer hope that God will act any moment to reward the righteous and punish the wicked. This dualistic view of ethics, informed by the present crisis, presents its current readers with an urgent choice, even while it is usually staged in the distant past as a prophecy of the "future." Often there is only one character in the story who has the ability to interpret the esoteric visions and symbols, and his interpretation points to the victory of God and the righteous in the author's near future moment.

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[1] David E. Aune, "Greco-Roman Biography," in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament* (ed. David E. Aune; SBL Sources for Biblical Study 21; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988) 122.

[2] David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Library of Early Christianity; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987) 77-157.

[3] John L. White, "Ancient Greek Letters," in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament* (ed. David E. Aune; SBL Sources for Biblical Study 21; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988) 85-105.

[4] John J. Collins, "From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, vol. 1, *The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity* (ed. John J. Collins; New York: Continuum, 1998) 129-61.

Gospel of Mark

By general consensus today, Mark is regarded as the earliest surviving gospel.[5] Its rough Greek grammar, its awkward phrasing, its sometimes perplexing portrait of Jesus and the disciples, and other anomalies explain both why a majority of scholars regard it as early, and why Mark was not favored in Christian usage. However, Mark's gospel has received renewed attention since the mid-1800s, when scholars began to regard it as the earliest gospel. And Mark's episodic style and narrative design have found a more appreciative audience among narrative critics since the 1980s.

Structure

1:1–8:26	**Ministry of Healing and Preaching in Galilee**	
	1:1–3:6	Introduction by JBap; an initial day; controversy at Capernaum
	3:7–6:6	Choice of the Twelve; training through parables and mighty deeds; misunderstanding among Nazareth relatives
	6:7–8:26	Sending of the Twelve; Herod/JBap flashback; feeding 5000; walking on water; controversy; feeding 4000; misunderstanding
8:27–16:8	**Suffering Predicted; Death and Resurrection**	
	8:27–10:52	Three passion predictions; Peter's confession; transfiguration; teaching
	11:1–13:37	Ministry in Jerusalem: Entry, Temple actions and encounters, eschatological discourse
	14:1–16:8	Anointing, Las Supper, passion, crucifixion, burial, empty tomb

Author

The title "According to Mark" was added to manuscripts in the latter half of the 2nd century. A 2nd century tradition attributed to Papias and reported by Eusebius in the early 4th century has a Mark as Peter's interpreter or translator, and when Justin mentions "Peter's memoirs" in his *Dialogue with Trypho* (a few decades after Papias), one might wonder if he means Mark's gospel. However, it is hard to square Mark's gospel with these traditions. The gospel appears to have been composed in Greek (not Aramaic) by someone with little knowledge of Palestinian geography, so it doesn't match the tradition that the author is a companion of an early apostle. Even Papias acknowledges that Mark was not an eyewitness himself. The attribution to a contemporary of Peter may in fact be part of a second-century attempt to assert the orthodoxy and thereby control the interpretation of this most marginal of the four gospels.[6]

Probable Audience

An early tradition from Clement of Alexandria (late 100s CE) cites Rome as the place that Mark wrote his gospel. While this may be based on the (erroneous?) tie Papias posited between Peter and Mark, there are Latinisms and Latin loan words in the Markan text, the style of reference to the Greek/Syro-Phoenician woman sounds is more typical of the western empire than the east (7:26), there is a reference to a coin that was only in western circulation (12:42), and there is a sense of crisis during which many disciples failed (only the Christians of Rome experienced a major persecution before Mark was written). Other scholars have championed Syria, Transjordan or the Galilee as likely locations. Wherever they were, Mark's audience knew Greek but not Aramaic, had some exposure to Latin and Hebrew, but were unfamiliar with Jewish customs and some phrases so that the author had to explain them (e.g., 5:41; 7:3-4; 15:42). Expectation of an imminent *parousia* appears to be strong (Mark 13).

Date

If the Papias tradition (that Mark was Peter's interpreter) is accurate, it would likely require that Mark wrote his gospel soon after Peter's death in the mid'60s. There is some debate about whether the gospel references the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Jewish Temple (70 CE). If Matthew and Luke were written c.80–90 CE and are based on Mark, it would require that Mark was composed at least 5-10 years beforehand to allow time for it to circulate and achieve some authority. For all these reasons, 65–75 CE, or perhaps 68–73 CE, is a reasonable date.

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[5] The material in this summary is adapted from Raymond E. Brown, "The Gospel according to Mark," in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 126-70.

[6] For a thorough discussion of this possibility, see Michael J. Kok, *The Gospel at the Margins: The Reception of Mark in the Second Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015).

Theological Themes

Christology: A suffering messiah

- Mark's gospel has sometimes been called "a passion narrative with an extended introduction" (Martin Kähler).[7] Jesus enemies begin to plot to kill him as early as chapter 3; 3 predictions of the passion begin in chapter 8, and the final period (a week?) in Jerusalem takes up fully 6 of the 16 chapters of the gospel. This gospel is trying to explain how Jesus can be messiah when he was executed, failed to rally all the Jews to his cause, and failed definitively to inaugurate the messianic age. In a sense, Mark's view is that the cross is necessary because of these failures; only through the cross and resurrection can his followers come to faith in him.
- Another purpose of the death of Jesus is "as a ransom for the many" (10:45).
- Davidic Christology: Jesus is the son of David and the true King of the Jews; he enters Jerusalem triumphantly like its King, and the Jerusalem scenes are where the Davidic references cluster.
- Jesus is portrayed as a prophet who accurately predicts the behavior of others (Judas, Peter) as well as his own death and resurrection. Ironically, he is mocked as a false prophet at the Jewish trial at the very moment when his prophecy about Peter's denial is coming true (14:53–15:1).
- Mark's Christology is "low" in comparison to the other gospels, particularly John. Mark emphasizes the emotions of Jesus, emotions that seem to get the better of him at times. His final words on the cross he seems to despair of God's support (albeit through Psalm 22:2).

Ecclesiology: Discipleship means being willing to follow Jesus to the cross

- Since Jesus' "messiahship" takes him to the cross, following him means being willing to "drink the cup" of suffering as well and being a servant, rather than the greatest (9:33-35).
- Discipleship requires absolute dependence on God. Hence the disciples are to take nothing on their mission (6:7-33); and to rely on God for food even for enormous crowds (twice!).
- A strong motif in this gospel is the failure of, or at least the repeated misunderstandings of, the disciples in face of the demands of discipleship. But this does not mean they fail completely (9:49-50; 14:28; 16:7), particularly if one compares them to Jesus' other foils: demons, family, scribes-Pharisees-Jewish leaders).

Eschatology: God's rule has begun

- Jesus' teaching and acts of power inaugurate the kingdom of God; the entry into Jerusalem also signals the arrival of the day of the Lord.
- The culmination of that day lies in the future, and not even the Son knows the day or hour (13:32); but there is also a sense in which the master's return occurs within Jesus' life (see the time markers in 13:35 and then in the passion narrative [14:17; (implied in 14:32-65); 14:72; 15:1]).

[7] Martin Kähler, *The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ* (trans. and ed. Carl E. Braaten; Fortress Texts in Modern Theology; Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 198; German original, 1896).

Gospel of Matthew

Matthew reproduces about 80% of Mark, but is 50% longer than Mark because he has added an infancy narrative, long sermons of sayings material (largely from Q), and two miracles from Q (healings of centurion's servant and blind and mute demoniac, 8:5-13; 12:22-23). Matthew's gospel has historically been the most popular catechetical gospel in the church, because of its organization and clarity and the connections it establishes between Jewish tradition and Jesus' message.[8]

Structure

1:1–2:23 **Introduction: Origin and Infancy of Jesus the Messiah**
Who Jesus is: "Immanuel," true King of the Jews (in contrast to Herod the Great), fulfillment of promises to the Jewish people.

3:1–7:29 **Part 1. Proclamation of the Kingdom**
Narrative: Ministry of JBap, baptism and temptation of Jesus, beginning of Galilean ministry
Discourse: Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:29).

8:1–10:42 **Part 2. Ministry and Mission in Galilee**
Narrative: Nine miracles (healings, calming of storm, exorcism)
Discourse: Mission discourse (10:1-42).

11:1–13:52 **Part 3. Questioning of and Opposition to Jesus**
Narrative: Jesus and JBap, woes on disbelievers, thanksgiving, Sabbath controversies, Jesus' power and family
Discourse: Parable discourse (13:1-52).

13:53–18:35 **Part 4. Christology and Ecclesiology**
Narrative: Rejection at Nazareth, feeding 5000, walking on water, controversies with Pharisees, healings, feeding 4000, Peter's confession, first passion prediction, transfiguration, second passion prediction
Discourse: Discourse on the church (18:1-35).

19:1–25:46 **Part 5. Journey to and Ministry in Jerusalem**
Narrative: Teaching, judgment parables, third passion prediction, entry to Jerusalem, Temple cleansing, clashes with authorities
Discourse: Eschatological discourse (24:1–25:46).

26:1–28:20 **Climax: Passion, Death, and Resurrection**
Narrative: Conspiracy against Jesus, last supper; arrest, Jewish and Roman trials, crucifixion, death, burial, guard at tomb, opening of tomb, bribing of guard, resurrection appearances

Author

The title "According to Matthew" was added to manuscripts in the latter half of the 2nd century. The actual author was likely a non-eyewitness (because he depends on Mark and Q), whose name is unknown to us, and who wrote in Greek. Most scholars believe he was a Jewish Christian, but perhaps one raised in the diaspora given his greater linguistic facility in Greek compared to Mark.

Probable Audience

Most scholars place the original audience of Matthew's gospel in Antioch of Syria, because (1) Matthew adds "Syria" to Mark's description of the spread of Jesus' activity (Matt 4:24); (2) early traditions tie Matthew to a Gospel of the Nazaraeans that circulated primarily in Syria; (3) the gospel mentions "city" 26x compared to only 4x for the word "village," suggesting an urban context; (4) Antioch was a major imperial city and early Christian center, which helps to explain the early prominence of Matthew's gospel; (5) Ignatius of Antioch and the *Didache*, which may also be associated with Antioch, quote from Matthew in the early 2d century; (6) the complex interplay of Jewish law and openness to Gentiles fits the history of Antioch well (Brown is very helpful on this; see pp. 213-16).

[8] Unless otherwise noted, the material in this summary is adapted from Raymond E. Brown, "The Gospel according to Matthew," in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 171-224.

Date

80–90 CE, give or take some years on either side. The gospel would have been written after Mark (68–73 CE) had time to circulate; it would have been written by 100 CE given that it is quoted by figures 10–20 years later and shows no awareness of Gnosticism, which has become a problem by 125 CE.

Theological Themes

Christology

- Jesus represents the fulfillment of scripture (Matthew says that Jesus fulfills scripture 41x, more than any other synoptic author; these have a teaching purpose)
- Jesus is Messiah, Son of the living God (16:16 and the virgin birth); he is also Son of Man (*passim*), Immanuel ("God with us" 1:23; cf. 28:20)
- David Christology (Jesus as descendant of David, true king, and heir of the messianic promises) is prominent: see the genealogy, the contrast to Herod in the infancy narrative, and the passion
- Moses Christology (Jesus as the "prophet like Moses" who would return to restore the law, Deut 18:15) is prominent in the infancy narrative, the Sermon on the Mount, and the transfiguration
- Jesus as divine Wisdom (11:19, 27)
- Earliest Trinitarian formulation (Father, Son, and holy Spirit) in 28:19

Ecclesiology (ekklesia in Greek = "those called out")

- The Jewish law is not abrogated, but neither are Gentiles shunned from the group (there are positive portraits of Gentiles—centurion 8:5-13; Canaanite woman 15:21-28; the "nations" 25:31-46; Mrs. Pilate 27:19—even while the Jewish law is upheld [5–7])
- Foundation of the church is narrated (16:18-19); Peter's role is featured; characteristics of community life and discipleship are described (ch. 18)
- The kingdom of heaven ≠ the church, but the church is where Jesus is confessed as Lord before the eschatological consummation. It is transferred from Jewish authorities to those who will produce fruit (25:14-30)

Eschatology

- Natural phenomena signal the decisive change that Jesus inaugurates (2:2; 27:51-54; 28:2)
- Some of Matthew's more difficult ethical demands reflect an eschatological morality (5–7; 24–25)

Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles

Luke's is the longest of the four gospels, and to that he adds a volume 2, Acts of the Apostles.[9] This amounts to over a quarter of the entire New Testament!

Structure

	Luke
1:1-4	**Prologue**
1:5–2:52	**Infancy Narrative** Diptychs of annunciations, births, and circumcisions/manifestations of JBap and Jesus; visitation at center; 12-yr old Jesus in Temple
3:1–4:13	**Preparation for Public Ministry** Preaching of JBap, baptism of Jesus, genealogy, temptations
4:14–9:50	**Ministry in Galilee** Rejection at Nazareth; activities at Capernaum/lake; reactions to and controversies with Jesus; choice of Twelve, sermon on the plain; Jesus' identity: Herod, feeding of 5000, Peter's confession, passion predictions 1 & 2, transfiguration
9:51–19:27	**Journey to Jerusalem** Three mentions of Jerusalem shape narrative (9:51–17:10); last stage of journey to arrival (17:11–19:27)
19:28–21:38	**Ministry in Jerusalem** Entry, activities in Temple area, eschatological discourse
22:1–23:56	**Passion Narrative** Conspiracy against Jesus, Last Supper; prayer and arrest on Mount of Olives, Jewish (priests and Herod) and Roman trials; way of cross, crucifixion and burial
24:1-53	**Resurrection Appearances** Scene at empty tomb; appearance on road to Emmaus; appearance in Jerusalem and ascension to heaven

	Acts
1:1-5	**Prologue: Recap of Gospel**
1:6-26	**Preparing for the Spirit** Jesus instructs disciples and ascends to heaven; awaiting the Spirit; replacement of Judas
2:1-45	**Pentecost and Communal Life in Jerusalem** Pentecost, Peter's sermon; reception of message, Jerusalem communal life
3:1–8:1a	**Ministry in Jerusalem** Activity, preaching, trials of apostles, the Hellenists; Stephen's trial and martyrdom
8:1b–12:25	**Missions in Samaria and Judea** Dispersal from Jerusalem; Philip and Peter in Samaria; Philip and Ethiopian eunuch; Saul to Damascus, then Jerusalem and Tarsus; Peter in Lydda, Joppa, Caesarea (clean foods/Gentile inclusion); Jerusalem, Antioch, Herod's persecution, Peter's departure
13:1–15:35	**Gentile Mission (Barnabas and Saul), Jerusalem Approves** Journey 1: Antioch church sends Barnabas and Saul to Cyprus and SE Asia Minor; Jerusalem conference and approval; return to Antioch
15:36–28:31	**Mission of Paul to the Ends of the Earth** Journey 2: Antioch through Asia Minor to Greece and return; Journey 3: Antioch to Ephesus and Greece, return to Caesarea; arrest in Jerusalem, imprisonment in Caesarea; Journey 4: to Rome as prisoner; under house arrest there

Author

The title "According to Luke" was added to manuscripts in the latter half of the 2nd century. The actual author was likely an educated Greek-speaker and skilled writer who was not an eyewitness of Jesus' ministry. He does not appear to be from Palestine, and may even be a convert to Judaism; at any rate, he is very familiar with Jewish tradition and the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures), from which he not only quotes but also borrows a narrative style. Late 2nd century traditions attribute this gospel to Luke the companion of Paul, a man mentioned in Phlm 24; Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11 as a fellow worker and beloved physician. But there is really no way to verify that, and discrepancies between details about Paul in Acts and in Paul's own letters raise doubts that the author was a companion of Paul (despite the "we" passages in Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1–28:16). A prologue to a late 2nd century manuscript of Luke suggests he may have been a Syrian from Antioch.

Probable Audience

The emphasis on the inclusion of the Gentiles suggests an audience of Gentile Christians; the prominence of Paul in Acts suggests that the implied audience may have been the communities visited

[9] The material in this summary is adapted (particularly the Acts outline) from Raymond E. Brown, "The Gospel according to Luke" and "The Acts of the Apostles," in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 225-332.

by Paul in Greece or Syria. Such a Hellenistic setting is also recommended by the conventions the author borrows from Hellenistic biography (genealogy, accounts of Jesus' youth), and the author's reluctance to attribute emotion or suffering to Jesus. The possibility of Antioch seems less likely if Matthew's Gospel was directed to them, since the implied audience of each gospel is so different. The gospel and Acts provide assurance to the audience of a reliable tradition traced to eyewitnesses and that the conversion of the whole Roman world is part of the plan of salvation history, extending back to creation.

Date

85 CE, give or take some years on either side. The gospel would have been written after Mark (68–73 CE) had time to circulate; it would have been written by 100 CE. Its focus on Jerusalem as a Christian center does not match the outlook one finds in 2nd century Christian literature. Moreover, the simple structure of presbyters in Asia seems earlier than Ignatius' reference to a bishop in each church in 110 CE. Finally, the author of Acts seems unaware of the letters of Paul, which while written in the 50s and 60s, were not gathered as a collection until the early 2nd century.

Theological Themes

Christology

- Jesus is portrayed as Savior in Luke—a title used of and by Roman Emperors—to present Jesus as the true savior of the world. The political term had both material and theological connotations (see Mary's canticle 1:46-55 and Jesus' inaugural sermon in Nazareth, Lk 4:17-22).
- Jesus is the Davidic messiah (Lk 2:1-7) and God's saving eschatological prophet, the fulfillment of Jewish prophecy and history (see Zechariah's canticle 1:67-79 and the speeches in Acts).
- Jesus is God's son (1:35; 2:49; 3:22-23); his frequent prayer signals ongoing communion with God.
- There is a kind of Moses Christology in Luke, but it is harder to see than in Matthew. The placement of the genealogy between infancy and ministry parallels where Moses' genealogy is placed in Exodus 6:14-26, and only in Luke does Jesus speak with Moses and Elijah at his transfiguration about "his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem" (9:30-31). But the theme is more prominent in Acts.
- Baptism is in the name of Jesus in Acts 2:38-41, indicating the reverence for and power of Jesus in the early Lukan community.

Ecclesiology

- In giving us the story of the early church, Luke clearly emphasizes the importance of the church. We see a community that confesses Jesus as Lord, and that joyfully expresses its gratitude by sharing life, prayer, possessions, and the good news with the world (*koinonia*, the common life). The cost is persecution and sometimes death, but even in these the testimony to Jesus renders the suffering witness of conviction and gratitude.
- There is a redactional interest in Luke in the proper distribution of material goods (e.g., 3:10-14; 10:29-37; 16:19-31), which links to his emphasis on the redemption of the lowly and the humbling of the mighty. It also links to the year of favor that Jesus inaugurates (1:17, 68-79; 2:10-14; 4:19).
- There is more mention made of women in Luke's gospel. Some take this to illustrate the favor for the lowly, but Luke makes the female followers of Jesus more wealthy (8:1-3), putting them and Jesus above reproach. Other women are portrayed in typical domestic tasks, so the passages are not necessarily "liberating."
- The church is first "the way," indicating its evangelical motion outward, and then "Christians," indicating the group's fidelity to Jesus as the Christ.
- The Spirit is the principle of continuity across salvation history, filling John the Baptist at his meeting with Jesus (*in utero*), filling Jesus at his baptism, and filling the church at Pentecost. Jesus prays before major decisions, as does the early Jerusalem church.
- The church includes Gentiles; salvation is universalized (Jesus' genealogy goes back to Adam, the father of all humans; and the story of Acts is about the inclusion of the Gentiles, an innovation made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:28, see 10:1–11:18 and 15:8).

Eschatology

- Luke has a complex notion of the kingdom of God. Is it kingship or kingdom? Has it already come, or has it come to some extent, and will it come soon (9:27)? Does his two-volume portrait of the sweep of salvation history represent a shift away from eschatological speculation toward a realized eschatology? This is suggested in Acts 1:7: "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has set by his own authority."

Manuscript Evidence

There are two different manuscript traditions of Luke–Acts that differ significantly from each other. The first is referred to as the **Western text**. This is actually a *family* of manuscripts (mss) attested by

the 5th-century Codex Bezae (D), some fragmentary papyri, some marginal notes in Syriac mss, the African Old Latin ms h, and citations by Cyprian and Augustine. The second tradition is called the **Alexandrian text**. It too is a family of manuscripts whose witnesses include some of the earliest papyrus fragments and some of the earliest complete mss (e.g., 4th-century mss Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, and 5th-century mss Alexandrinus and Ephraemi Rescriptus). The NAB and NRSV largely follow the Alexandrian text for the Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles.

Gospel of Luke
The Western family of mss, which are generally fuller than other text types, are not fuller when it comes to Luke. They omit verses found in the Alexandrian (and other) families of mss at the following points:

Passage	Alexandrian	Western
Lk 22:19b-20	19Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." 20And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you." *{cup vv17-18, bread, cup}*	19Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body." *{cup vv.17-18, bread}*
24:3b	2They found the stone rolled away from the tomb; 3but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.	2They found the stone rolled away from the tomb; 3but when they entered, they did not find the body.
24:6a	6"He is not here, but he has been raised. Remember what he said to you while he was still in Galilee…"	6" Remember what he said to you while he was still in Galilee…"
24:12	12But Peter got up and ran to the tomb, bent down, and saw the burial cloths alone; then he went home amazed at what had happened.	*{missing}*
24:36b	36While they were still speaking about this, he stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."	36While they were still speaking about this, he stood in their midst.
24:40	40And as he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.	*{missing}*
24:51b	51As he blessed them he parted from them and was taken up to heaven.	51As he blessed them he parted from them.
24:52a	52They did him homage and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53and they were continually in the temple praising God.	52They returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53and they were continually in the temple glorifying God.
Mt 27:49	49But the rest said, "Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to save him, but another took a lance and pierced his side, and out came water and blood."	49But the rest said, "Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to save him."

The NRSV and NAB follow the Alexandrian tradition for all the Luke verses, but follow the Western tradition for Matt 27:49 on the argument that the added material is an interpolation based on John 19:34.

Acts of the Apostles
In contrast to the situation in the Gospel of Luke, the Western text of Acts is nearly one-tenth *longer* than the Alexandrian text, adding color and detail to the more straightforward—and at times obscure—Alexandrian tradition. In this case, text critics judge the extra material in the Western text to be later additions (the alternative would be to view the Alexandrian short forms as later deletions), persuaded by the nature of the four types of changes (one sample of each type is provided below):[10]

Type of Change	Passage	Alexandrian Original	Western Addition
Emphasis exaggerated	6:10	But they could not withstand the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke.	But they could not withstand the wisdom *that was in him* and the *holy* spirit with which he spoke, *because they were confuted by him with all boldness. Being unable therefore to confront the truth,*
Religious formulae introduced	9:40	Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed. Then he turned to her body and said, "Tabitha, rise up." She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up.	Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed. Then he turned to her body and said, "Tabitha, rise up, *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*." She *immediately* opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up.
Simpler title for Jesus replaced with later and more theological title	13:33	32"We ourselves are proclaiming this good news to you that what God promised our ancestors 33he has brought to fulfillment for us, [their] children, by raising up Jesus, as it is written in the second psalm 'You are my son; this day I have begotten you.'	32We ourselves are proclaiming this good news to you that what God promised our ancestors 33he has brought to fulfillment for us, [their] children, by raising up *the Lord* Jesus *Christ*, as it is written in the second psalm 'You are my son; this day I have begotten you. *Ask of me and I will give you Gentiles for your inheritance, and for your possession the ends of the earth.'" {adds Ps 2:8 as well as titles}*
Emphasis on inspiration of words and actions	19:1	While Apollos was in Corinth, having traveled through the interior of the country Paul came to Ephesus where he found some disciples.	And *although Paul wished, according to his own plan, to go to Jerusalem, the Spirit told him to return to Asia. And* having traveled through the interior of the country he *comes* to Ephesus where he found some disciples.

In general, text critics tend to favor the Alexandrian text for both Luke and Acts, but there are occasions when they judge the Western text to preserve the earlier form of the text.

[10] T. E. Page, "Blass's Edition of the Acts," *Classical Review* 11 (1897) 317-20.

Gospel of John

The Gospel of John is like no other in the canon. Rather than the brief episodes that characterize the synoptic gospels, John is arranged into long narrative units that consist of sustained monologues of Jesus or dialogues between Jesus and other characters.[11] Rather than the parables and simple metaphors drawn from daily life that one finds in the synoptic gospels, John layers symbolism as the narrative progresses, so that the crucifixion and resurrection become not only the climax of the plot but the culminating symbol that manifests the truths to which John attests. Nor is that language of "manifesting" and "attesting" accidental: John is gradually revealing Jesus' identity in a profoundly rich way, and both the narrator/implied author and other characters in the story "testify" to this so that the entire narrative reads like an extended trial of Jesus—or rather of those who do not recognize him. Like the Gospel of Matthew, this gospel has some of the most anti-Jewish passages, and like Matthew, it is also one of the most Jewish gospels, with major events set on days in the Jewish festival calendar that add an important symbolic dimension to the stories. Brown notices other unique features: the extensive use of irony and parenthetical remarks directed to persons "in the know," an emphasis on the "truth" and its misunderstanding,[12] conscious allusions and transitions that link episodes, poetic format and discourse.

Structure

1:1-18	**Prologue**	
1:19–12:50	**The Book of Signs**	
	1:19–2:11	Initial days of revelation of Jesus to disciples (using different titles)
	2–4	Two Cana signs bookend cleansing of Temple, Nicodemus, Samaritan woman at well, healing of royal official's son
	5–10	Old Testament feasts replaced; themes of light and life: Sabbath (new Moses, rest), Passover (bread of life), Tabernacles (water and light), Dedication (Jesus as temple)
	11–12	Raising of Lazarus, Sanhedrin plan to execute Jesus in place of nation; coming of hour signaled by arrival of Gentiles
13:1–20:31	**The Book of Glory**	
	13–17	Last Supper/Last Discourse
	18–19	Passion and death
	20:1-29	Resurrection (four scenes in Jerusalem), gospel conclusion (20:30-31)
21:1-25	**Epilogue:** Galilean resurrection appearances; second conclusion	

Author

Many have since Irenaeus (c.180 CE) connected the beloved disciple who appears in the passion narrative with the disciple John son of Zebedee who is numbered among the Twelve. But Irenaeus' tradition is late, and few would put much weight on it now. In fact, because of the heavy theologizing of Jesus that one finds in this gospel, most believe that the author was not even an eyewitness from the time period of Jesus' life, but rather collected traditions of both fact and interpretation. If the beloved disciple was indeed one Jesus' followers, that needn't mean he was the author (despite 21:20, 24); in any case, he is most likely not one of the Twelve, because the synoptics don't mention him and because the Gospel of John speaks of him as distinct from the spare references to that group (6:67-71; 20:24).

[11] The material in this summary is adapted from Raymond E. Brown, "The Gospel according to John," in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 333-82.

[12] Both of these characteristics overlap with later gnostic concerns, and led some to believe John was too close to gnosticism to be included in the canon.

Probable Audience

The author is accurate in some interesting details about Judea and Palestine and about Jewish festivals, which suggests that his audience is deeply familiar with Jewish tradition. But this gospel also presents Jesus and his adherents in constant debates and controversies with other Jews, who are often castigated by the generic term "Jews" as if the Judeans (where the word "Jew" comes from) were by now considered a separate group from the author's audience. Brown offers a possible history of this audience on pp. 374-6 which is speculative but interesting, for it explains in part the particular debates unique to John's gospel (Jesus as Mosaic prophet and preexistent Christ and new Temple; the role of the Gentiles in prompting the hour of Jesus' glorification; the divinization of Jesus vs. the human life and its ethical implications, the integration with the larger church symbolized by the Peter-beloved disciple dynamics).

Date

Brown suggests a final redaction date of perhaps 100-110 C.E.

Theological Themes

Christology

- This gospel exhibits the highest Christology of any of the canonical gospels; Jesus is a "stranger from heaven" who preexists this world and is even the Word of God through whom it was created.
- Jesus is the way to God for those living in darkness; he saves by being the eternal Word incarnate in whom followers believe (but the saving moment is already realized; one doesn't make it real by the act of faith). The incarnation is the salvific moment; the crucifixion and resurrection merely its culminating act.
- The emphasis on long monologues of Jesus emphasizes what is clear in the prologue: Jesus is divine wisdom incarnate.
- John layers levels of symbolism onto the figure of Christ through the many "I am" sayings and discourses (bread of life [6:25-40]; light of the world [8:12; 9:1-12]; sheepgate and good shepherd [10:1-18], resurrection and life [11:17-27], way-truth-life [14:1-7], true vine [15:1-11], at arrest [18:1-6]).

Ecclesiology

- The church is those who leave the darkness to follow the light.
- There is a clear sense that followers of the beloved disciple are somehow closer to the truth of Jesus' wisdom than followers of other disciples, like Peter, though Peter is reconciled to Jesus in the resurrection scenes in both endings of the gospel.

Eschatology

- The judgment is not a future event for this gospel. Instead, the gospel itself is the trial, one's reaction to Jesus the judgment. Characters "testify" throughout this gospel to the truth; and when, in the final trial with Pilate, the "Jews" are made to say "We have no king but Caesar," they have judged themselves (thus *Jesus'* trial is really more *their* trial).

Galatians

If 2 Corinthians represents Paul's most oratorically persuasive letter, Galatians represents his most extended invective. The vivid language that Paul uses here to castigate his opponents became an important touchstone for the arguments of the reformers in the 16th and 17th centuries.[13]

Structure

1:1-5	**Opening Formula**	
[ ]	*One expects a thanksgiving in a formal letter; there is none here*	
1:6–6:10	**Body**	
	1:6-10	Exordium or introduction: astonishment in place of thanksgiving; this is technically part of the introduction, with the opening formula
	1:11–2:14	Paul narrates his preaching career in defense of his gospel
	2:15-21	Debate with opponents: his gospel is justification by faith in Christ; theirs is justification by observing the law
	3:1–4:31	Proofs for justification by faith, not law (6 arguments)
	3:1-5	• Galatians received the Spirit before doing works of the law
	3:6-14	• Gentiles blessed through Abraham before circumcision
	3:15-25	• A ratified will (promise to Abraham) cannot be annulled by a later addition (Mosaic law)
	3:26–4:11	• Formerly slaves to elemental forces, they are now adopted sons of God; why become slaves again, this time to the Law?
	4:12-20	• They once treated him as an angel; how can he now be an enemy?
	4:21-31	• The Jewish Christians, not the Gentile ones, are descendants of the slave woman Hagar
	5:1–6:10	*Paraenesis* (ethical exhortation): preserve freedom, walk in Spirit
6:11-18	**Concluding Formula (postscript, recapitulation, benediction)**	

Author

This is one of the undisputed letters of Paul. There are no serious questions about its unity or integrity.

Probable Audience

The audience of this letter is the Christians of Galatia in central Asia Minor (contemporary Turkey). Paul had visited them and convalesced with them (see his reference to a "weakness of the flesh" in 4:13), and they had seen him work miracles among them (3:5). But since then they have been persuaded to revert to another gospel advanced by Christians of Jewish origin, perhaps from Jerusalem (1:7; 6:13), a gospel that required not only justification through faith, but also through works of the law, notably circumcision and observance of calendrical feasts (4:10).

Date

Paul likely wrote this letter around 54-55 CE from Ephesus.

Pastoral Issues & Theological Themes

- Divisions in community over which version of the gospel to follow: justification by faith or by works (to better appreciate the tension, consider that Paul's opponents think he has erased ethics from Christian life). Paul would say that ethics should still be practiced (5:13, 17-21, and "faith working through love" 5:6), but they have no *power* to save (4:4-7).
- Paul's authority: much of this letter is in the form of an *apologia*, an argument in defense of his character (this is the type of persuasive appeal known as *ethos*, or reference to the character of the speaker).

[13] The material in this summary is adapted from Raymond E. Brown, "Letter to the Galatians," in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 467-82.

1 Corinthians

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is one of the most interesting because it addresses so many pastoral problems in this Christian community. Here we have a multiethnic, multicultural community that is riven with factions marked by different practices and beliefs, aligning with different preachers who represent their point of view. Many today see in this letter uncanny parallels to our own pastoral circumstances.[14]

Structure

1:1-3	**Opening Formula**	
1:4-9	**Thanksgiving (reference to spiritual gifts)**	
1:10–16:18	**Body**	
	1:10–4:21	The factions
	5:1–11:34	Behavior problems (incest, lawsuits, celibacy, marriage, food, eucharist, liturgy); Paul's rights as an apostle (ch. 9)
	12:1–14:40	Problems of the charisms (spiritual gifts) and the response of love
	15:1-58	The resurrection of Christ and of the Christian
	16:1-18	The collection, Paul's travel plans, commendations of people
16:19-24	**Concluding Formula (greetings, Paul's own hand, "Our Lord come")**	

Author

This is one of the undisputed letters of Paul, and apparently the second letter he wrote to Corinth (see the reference to the first in 1 Cor 5:9). There are some scholars who think that there are later interpolations, for example 14:34-35 (which conflicts with chapter 11) and chapter 13.

Probable Audience

The letter is addressed to the Christians in Corinth, a community with a mixture of Jews and Gentiles converted to Christianity. Corinth had a long history as an important Greek city, straddling as it does the thin isthmus connecting mainland Greece and the Peloponnesian peninsula, and serving through its port at Lechaion the western Ionian and Adriatic Seas (the port of Cenchreae on the other side of the isthmus served the eastern Aegean Sea). But in 146 BCE, the city fell to the advancing Romans, and in 44 BCE Julius Caesar repopulated and rebuilt it as a Roman colony. His nephew, Augustus, designated it the capital of the province of Achaia (rather than Athens), and it became a cosmopolitan hub of manufacturing (bronze and terra cotta) and commerce. In this letter, Paul is responding to concerns that have arisen since he first visited the city in 50/51-52 CE, some 5-6 years earlier.

Date

Late 56 or early 57 CE from Ephesus, on the western coast of Turkey.

Pastoral Issues & Theological Themes

- Paul urges unity in Christ against the factions in Corinth, yielding some of the most beautiful reflections in the New Testament on the community as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-31) and on love as the charism that grounds—even trumps—all other spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:31b–13:13, "Love is patient; love is kind…").
- In this letter, Paul steps back from a position that may well have been his own that "for me everything is permissible" (1 Cor 6:12). This teaching on freedom in Christ had become problematic in Corinth, leading some to freedoms that scandalized others, such as men marrying their widowed stepmothers (5:1-5), wives and husbands taking vows of celibacy (7:1-7), or "spirit people" eating meat sacrificed to idols, which scandalized the "flesh people" (8:1-13). Paul counsels sacrifice for the benefit of others and conformity to Jewish sexual ethics.
- Paul grounds his ethical teaching in the presumption that the end-time is near—what some have called an "interim ethics." How we are to draw perennial norms from teachings meant for the "short term" is an abiding question in New Testament ethics.

[14] The material in this summary is adapted from Raymond E. Brown, "First Letter to the Corinthians," in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 511-40.

Philippians

This letter, to the first Christian community Paul founded on the European continent in Philippi, Greece, is notable for the warm affection Paul expresses for the people, as well as for the famous "hymn" or poem in chapter 2 praising the graciousness of Christ in becoming human.[15]

Structure

1:1-2 **Opening Formula (address, greeting)**

1:3-11 **Thanksgiving**

1:12–4:20 **Body**

- 1:12-26 Indicative section: Paul's situation in prison and attitude toward death
- 1:27–2:16 Imperative section: instructions, exhortations
  - 1:27–2:16, 2:17–3:1a • Exhortation based on example of Christ (Christological hymn)
    - Paul's interest in the Philippians and planned missions to them
  - 3:1b-3, 3:4–4:1 • Warning against false teachers
    - Paul's own behavior (separate letter?)
  - 4:2-9, 4:10-20 • Exhortation to Euodia and Syntyche: unity, joy, higher things
    - Paul's own situation and the Philippians' generous gifts

4:21-23 **Concluding Formula (greeting, blessing)**

Author

This is one of the undisputed letters of Paul. There is some debate whether it is a composite of two or three originally separate letters.

Probable Audience

Philippi, named after the father of Alexander the Great, was at the center of the Hellenistic Empire that dominated the eastern Mediterranean from 332–167 BCE. Just before the time of Paul, it figured in the history of the fledgling Roman Empire; it was here that, in 42 BCE, Octavian and Mark Antony defeated the Brutus and Cassius—assassins of Octavian's uncle, Julius Caesar—and established a Roman colony to reward their veteran soldiers. Eleven years later, Octavian would defeat Mark Antony on the other side of Greece and assume the title Emperor Augustus—and Rome's transition from republic to empire would be complete. The people of Philippi were thus in Paul's time a mixture of indigenous Greeks and transplanted Romans. The city was an important commercial location as well, sitting on the Via Egnatia—the Roman highway across Macedonia—and just ten miles inland from the port of Neapolis on the Aegean Sea.

Date

The letter most likely was written *c.*56 CE from Ephesus in Turkey; or possibly 61–63 CE if written during his house arrest in Rome, or 58–60 CE if from Caesarea Maritima, on the coast of Galilee.

Pastoral Issues & Theological Themes

- Paul writes this letter from prison, and so reflects on the suffering and death of Christ. Rather than become despondent, he views his suffering as a witness to Christ that emboldens others to preach without fear. But as he faces the possibility of his own death before the return of Christ, he must also adjust his belief that the resurrection takes up only the "quick" or alive.
- He wants the Philippians to stand firm and united in a community of spirit that has no room for competitions and self-interest; he offers the Christological hymn as a reminder of the self-giving service that should characterize the faithful (2:1-11).
- While Paul criticizes the "dogs" who "mutilate the flesh" (3:2 - circumcizers?) as well as those whose minds are set on earthly things (3:19), he simultaneously rejects a gnostic tendency to elevate the spirit over the flesh, celebrating the graciousness of Christ for entering flesh (2:1-11), the value of suffering (3:10-11), and the importance of virtue (4:8-9).

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[15] The material in this summary is adapted from Raymond E. Brown, "Letter to the Philippians," in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 483-501.

Philemon

This is Paul's shortest surviving letter (335 words), directed to a Christian slaveholder Philemon, Apphia (his wife?), Archippus, and the church at Philemon's house. The exhortation is to accept his escaped slave Onesimus back with mercy rather than punishment. Like the letter of Jude, it is only one "chapter," so only verses are referenced in citations.[16]

Structure

1-3	**Opening Formula (address, greeting)**	
4-7	**Thanksgiving (*exordium*)**	
8-22	**Body**	
	8-16	Appeal offering motives to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus (*confirmatio*)
	17-22	Reiteration and expansion of appeal (*peroratio*)
23-25	**Concluding Formula (greetings, blessing)**	

Author

This is one of the undisputed letters of Paul, and shares much in common with the Letter to the Colossians (setting, persons mentioned).

Probable Audience

While this letter is written to a slaveholder and likely host of a house church, the intended audience is likely that entire house church, if not a wider community. Paul writes as a prisoner who has sacrificed his freedom for Christ, and his theological frame for the incarnation and cross as types of slavery or servanthood which Christians must imitate makes Paul's invitation to mercy a call to all members of the community.

Date

The letter most likely was written *c.*55 CE from Ephesus in Turkey; or possibly 58–60 CE if from Caesarea Maritima, on the coast of Galilee (unlikely), or 61–63 CE if written during his house arrest in Rome.

Pastoral Issues & Theological Themes

- Onesimus is a runaway slave who has sought the protection of Paul. While Paul would wish (and by virtue of his authority over Philemon, be entitled) to retain Onesimus as a co-worker, Paul appeals to Philemon to accept Onesimus back without punishment, not as a slave or even as a freedman, but as a Christian brother (v 17).
- The letter relies on authority structures that it nevertheless seeks to subvert. Rhetorically, Paul presumes and even plays upon his superior authority to Philemon; at the same time, he teaches the eradication of a fundamental social hierarchy—slave and free—in the new creation that Christ has wrought (cf. Gal 3:28).
- We should observe that while this letter advocates the freedom of one slave, Paul doesn't advocate the eradication of slavery *per se*; in fact, he presumes the institution in his theological metaphors of Christ and of his own suffering. But for an apostle who thought the world would end soon, the eradication of unjust social structures was secondary to the new creation that Christ would soon consummate; his role as apostle was to exhort believers to take on Christ and anticipate the beloved community that Christ had begun.

[16] The material in this summary is adapted from Raymond E. Brown, "Letter to Philemon," in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 502-510.

1 Thessalonians

This is the oldest document in the New Testament, dating to some 20 years after Jesus' death.[17] It is a short but fascinating letter of encouragement to a fledgling community that Paul has founded in northern Greece. Of particular interest is the teaching on the resurrection (see below).

Structure

1:1 **Opening Formula (address, greeting)**

1:2-10 **Thanksgiving**

2:1–5:22 **Body**

2:11–3:13 Indicative section: Paul's relationship to Thessalonians
- 2:1-12 • Paul's behavior at Thessaloniki
- 2:13-16 • Further thanksgiving about the reception of the gospel
- 2:17-3:13 • Timothy's mission, and Paul's present relationship to the Thessalonian community

4:1–5:22 Imperative section: Instructions, exhortations
- 4:1-12 • Ethical admonitions and exhortations
- 4:13–5:11 • Instructions about the *parousia*
- 5:12-22 • Instructions about life in community

5:23-28 **Concluding Formula (blessing, greeting with a kiss)**

Author

This is one of the undisputed letters of Paul, although some consider 5:1-11 an addition to the letter.

Probable Audience

The community of Jewish and Gentile Christians at Thessaloniki seems to have been founded by Paul. Paul had to beat a hasty retreat when hostility mounted, and the Thessalonians Christians apparently had to endure ongoing harassment (see 3:2-5 and 2:14-15). Paul's letter praises them, and takes a much more gentle approach than one finds in 1 Corinthians or Galatians. However, he does have to exhort them to avoid pagan religious practices, perhaps especially the Roman civic cult (4:3-8; cf. Acts 17:7), and has to correct their understanding of resurrection of the dead, an understanding based on scripture (4:13–5:11).

Date

This letter dates to 50 or 51 CE after the meeting in Jerusalem, during Paul's second journey. He wrote it from Corinth after his hasty departure from Thessaloniki necessitated by "great opposition" there (2:2; cf. Acts 17:5-10).

Pastoral Issues & Theological Themes

- Paul corrects an early belief in the resurrection: that it would be a collective event experienced only by the "quick" (the living). Thessalonian Christians have begun to die, however, and those remaining believe that the dead will not be able to rise on the "day of the Lord." Paul's teaching is that the dead will rise first (4:16), thus providing hope to the community. The teaching represents an interesting adaptation of Jewish thinking about the resurrection that Paul declares it "by the word of the Lord" rather than on his own authority. He does presume that resurrection is a collective experience at the end-time, rather than an individual experience at one's death.
- The picture of the Lord's arrival (*parousia*) that inaugurates the resurrection is shaped by the common experience of the *adventus* or arrival of the king/emperor to a city. It also includes a famous passage that, with the Book of Revelation, is the basis for modern belief in the "rapture" before the end-time (that the righteous would be lifted up to heaven" and the rest would be "left behind"; 4:17).
- There is possible interpolation that raises pastoral problems today, and that is the passage in 2:13-16, which blames "the Jews" as the killers of Christ (not, primarily, the Romans), and calls them "the enemies of the whole human race." The charge of misanthropy is more typical of Gentile anti-Judaism than of the Jewish Paul, and this passage technically is a second thanks-giving in a letter that already has one (1:2-10).

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[17] The material in this summary is adapted from Raymond E. Brown, "First Letter to the Thessalonians," in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 456-66.

Ephesians

After Romans, this letter is one of the most influential New Testament books shaping Christian thought and practice.[18] It also has one of the highest visions of the church (see below). There are close affinities with Colossians (33-50% of Ephesians parallels Colossians in order and content), and many elements drawn from Jewish and Christian liturgies (e.g., baptism: 1:13-14; 4:5, 30; 5:8, 26).

Structure

1:1-2	**Opening Formula**	
1:3-23	**Thanksgiving**	
	1:3-14	Doxology (drawn from Jewish and Christian liturgy?)
	1:15-23	Intercessory prayer (drawn from Jewish and Christian liturgy?)
2:1–6:20	**Body**	
	2:1–3:21	Indicative section (doctrinal material, teaching [1:3-23 fits this too])
	2:1–3:13	• Exposition of saving, unifying, revealing activity of God
	3:14-21	• Further intercessory prayer and doxology
	4:1–6:20	Imperative or paraenetic section (exhortations about how to live)
	4:1–5:20	• Exhortations on unity, pastoral ministry, two ways
	5:21–6:9	• Household codes
	6:10-20	• Armor in struggle against evil powers
6:21-24	**Concluding Formula (Mission of Tychicus, blessing)**	

Author

Though it claims to be by Paul (1:1), about 80% of critical scholarship considers this epistle pseudonymous (literally, "false name," meaning that an anonymous author has assumed the name of a more famous person to convey teaching they believe to be a faithful interpretation; this was a common practice in antiquity). The case against Pauline authorship goes back to Erasmus, who in the 1500s thought the ponderous sentences of Ephesians quite unlike the style of the genuine Pauline letters (1:3-6, 7-14 and 4:11-16 are each a single sentence in the Greek!). Moreover, though "Paul" claims to be suffering ("an ambassador in chains," 6:20), there is none of the anguished detail one finds in the genuine Pauline correspondence. Non-Pauline style includes expansive and hyperbolic language (almost 50 uses of the word "all") and piled up adjectives and genitives.

Probable Audience

Though the epistle is designated "to the saints who are in Ephesus" (1:1) the phrase "who are in Ephesus" is not in the oldest manuscripts, suggesting that this was originally a circular to the Pauline churches in Asia Minor (Turkey).

Date

This letter most likely dates to the 90s CE.

Pastoral Issues & Theological Themes

- The household code in Eph 5:21–6:9 parallels that in Col 3:18–4:1, but grounds the subjection of the one party (women, children slaves) and the dominance of the other (husbands, fathers, masters) more deeply in reverence to Christ. There is more emphasis on the command to the husband to love than there is on the wife to be subject, which may suggest that that was the more countercultural and difficult teaching for the audience. Likewise, strong constraints are placed on masters to forbear threatening their slaves, which would have been unusual advice in the Greco-Roman world. Even though the household codes correspond to "family values" legislation in the Roman empire and thus give the appearance of conforming to Roman values, the ascription to Paul (martyred by Rome) and the grounding of behavior in Jesus' sacrifice would remind Christians of the limits of conformity.
- Ephesians mentions "those called out" (εκκλησια) nine times, and takes the view the Christ is not only the head of the body but gave himself over to sanctify the church—that this was the purpose of his suffering and death. There is a "high ecclesiology" reflected here that some have seen as the New Testament roots of early Catholicism—the view of a sanctified Church with its sacramentalism, hierarchy (4:11; cf. 1 Cor 12:28), ordination and dogma.

[18] The material in this summary is adapted from Raymond E. Brown, "Epistle (Letter) to the Ephesians," in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 620-37.

1 Timothy

Three of the New Testament epistles—Titus and 1–2 Timothy—are referred to as "pastoral epistles" because they are directed to individuals serving as shepherds ("pastors") of their communities.[19] There are no indications in any of the three of the other, and 1 and 2 Timothy are so arranged not because their actual sequence is known but simply because the first is longer than the second.

Structure

1:1-2	**Opening Formula**	
[n/a]	**Thanksgiving**	
1:3–6:19	**Body**	
	1:3-11	Warning against false teachers
	1:12-20	Paul's own career and charge to Timothy
	2:1-15	Ordering of public worship (gender issues)
	3:1-16	Instructions for bishop and deacons
	4:1-5	Correction of false teaching
	4:6–5:2	Encouragement of Timothy to teach
	5:3–6:2	Instructions for widows, presbyters, slaves
	6:3-10	Warning against false teachers and love of money
	6:11-21a	Charge to Timothy
6:20-21	**Concluding Formula (v. 21b blessing)**	

Author
80-90% of critical scholarship judges this work to be pseudonymous, though it claims to be by Paul writing from northern Greece (Macedonia).

Probable Audience
The ostensible recipient, Timothy, is mentioned in Acts and in Paul's own letters as the apostle's companion (1 Thess 1:1; 3:2, 6; 2 Cor 1:1, 19; 4:17; 16:10-11; Phil 1:1; 2:19-23; Phlm 1; Rom 16:21; Acts 16:1-3; 18:5; 20:4-5), but the chronology in these sources differs somewhat from the biographical details one gets in 1 Timothy 1:3; 3:14-15; 4:13.

Date
End of the first century, or possibly even the early second century, CE.

Pastoral Issues & Theological Themes
- One of the dominant themes in this book is church structure or order. The roles of bishops and deacons, widows and presbyters, presume a late first-century date when these church roles have developed into more formal statuses (cf. the discussion only of presbyters and bishops in Titus 1:5-9). Male and female deacons are also mentioned, though no precise indication is given of their roles (the verb διακονειν presumes a lower level of service).
- One pastoral issue is the problem of false teaching, which the author disproportionately seems to blame on women (thus the command that women be silent in the assembly, that they have no authority over men [because Eve was deceived; 2:9-15], and that young widows prone to gossip be excluded from the status of true widows [5:11-16]). There is a vague reference to "myths and genealogies" (1:4; 4:7; cf. Titus 1:14; 3:9; 2 Tim 4:4). The opponents are called teachers of the Law (1:7), which might make them sound Jewish, but also condemned are those who sin against the ten commandments (1:8-10), which seems to presume that the Mosaic law is still in force. We hear that the false teachers prohibit marriage and counsel abstinence from certain foods (4:3), and that they are into making money (6:5, 10). This could be a form of Stoicism or Jewish Gnosticism, and the "false teaching" advocating celibacy may explain the strange counsel that women are saved by childbearing (2:15), rather than through the cross of Christ (Col 1:20; 2:14).
- The distrust of wealth is keen in this letter, not only in the claim that the false teachers love money (6:5, 10), and that women should avoid marks of wealth (braided hair, gold, pearls, costly attire, 2:9), but also in the famous verse, "The love of money is the root of all evils" (6:10).

[19] The material in this summary is adapted from Raymond E. Brown, "Pastoral Letter: The First to Timothy," in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 653-71.

Revelation

The Book of Revelation is the only apocalyptic work in the New Testament (though there are apocalyptic scenes and teachings scattered through the other books; see p. 25 for a description of the genre).[20] This particular book may take its visual repertoire not only from past Jewish prophetic literature, but also from the spectacles mounted in the amphitheatres of the Roman Empire.[21] Its canonicity was challenged in antiquity when church fathers doubted it was authored by one of Jesus' early followers; hence while the Greek-speaking church came to accept it, the Syriac-speaking churches did not. The manuscript record is notably thin, probably based on this debate over authenticity and perhaps on the genre itself.

Structure

1:1-3	**Prologue**	
1:4–3:22	**Letters to the Seven Churches**	
	1:4-8	Opening formula (praise, promise, divine response)
	1:9-20	Inaugural vision
	2:1–3:22	Seven letters
4:1–11:19	**Part 1 of the Revelatory Experience**	
	4:1–5:14	Visions of the heavenly court (the one enthroned and the Lamb)
	6:1–8:1	Seven seals
	8:2–11:19	Seven trumpets
12:1–22:5	**Part 2 of the Revelatory Experience**	
	12:1–14:20	Visions of the dragon, the beasts and the lamb
	15:1–16:21	Seven plagues and seven bowls
	17:1–19:10	Judgment of Babylon, the great harlot
	19:11–22:5	Victory of Christ and the end of history
22:6-21	**Epilogue (with concluding blessing)**	

Author

A Jewish-Christian prophet named John (not to be confused with the many other Johns in the gospels, such as the son of Zebedee [one of the twelve; cf. Rev 21:14] or the evangelist or the author of the three Johannine epistles). Sometimes he is designated "John of Patmos" (the island of his exile) to distinguish him from these others. His Greek is the worst in the NT, exceeding even Mark.

Probable Audience

Probably the churches of Asia Minor (Turkey).

Date

Probably between 92–96 CE at the end of the Emperor Domitian's reign. Domitian's father Vespasian and brother Titus had fought the Jewish War and been elevated as the new imperial dynasty on that ground.

Pastoral Issues & Theological Themes

- The vision of a thousand year reign ("millennium," 20:4-6) before the final victory of the Lamb combines two different Jewish views of the messianic kingdom, one that emphasized an earthly fulfillment and one that despaired of a this-worldly remedy in favor of definitive divine action (cf. 1 Cor 15:23-28, as well as *1 Enoch* 91:12-17; *4 Ezra* 7:28; *Ascension of Isaiah* 4:14-17). The idea of the "millennium" has spawned all manner of apocalyptic speculation in subsequent centuries.

The critique of harlot Babylon (Rome; note both the symbol and the referent had destroyed a Jerusalem temple) is focused around its commerce in luxury goods; the famous "mark of the beast" enables some to participate in that economy, while the followers of the lamb bear a stigma or tattoo that prevents such participation.

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[20] The material in this summary is adapted from Raymond E. Brown, "The Book of Revelation (The Apocalypse)," in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 773-813.

[21] Thus Christopher A. Frilingos in a fascinating study that we will discuss in class, *Spectacles of Empire: Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation* (Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).