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Question: "Gospel of Matthew"

Answer: This book is known as the Gospel of Matthew because it was written by the apostle of the same name. The style of the book is exactly what would be expected of a man who was once a tax collector. Matthew has a keen interest in accounting (18:23-24; 25:14-15). The Gospel of Matthew is very orderly and concise. Rather than write in chronological order, Matthew arranges this Gospel through six discussions.

As a tax collector, Matthew possessed a skill that makes his writing all the more exciting for Christians. Tax collectors were expected to be able to write in a form of shorthand, which essentially meant that Matthew could record a person's words as they spoke, word for word. This ability means that the words of Matthew are not only inspired by the Holy Spirit, but should represent an actual transcript of some of Christ's sermons. For example, the Sermon on the Mount, as recorded in chapters 5-7, is almost certainly a perfect recording of that great message.

Date of Writing: As an apostle, Matthew wrote the Gospel of Matthew in the early period of the church, probably in A.D. 55-65. This was a time when most Christians were Jewish converts, so Matthew's focus on Jewish perspective in this Gospel is understandable.

Purpose of Writing: Matthew intends to prove to the Jews that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah. More than any other Gospel, the Gospel of Matthew quotes the Old Testament to show how Jesus fulfilled the words of the Jewish prophets. Matthew describes in detail the lineage of Jesus from David, and uses many forms of speech that Jews would have been comfortable with. Matthew's love and concern for his people is apparent through his meticulous approach to telling the gospel story.

Key Verses: Matthew 5:17: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

Matthew 5:43-44: "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

Matthew 6:9-13: "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

Matthew 16:26: “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Matthew 22:37-40: "Jesus replied, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two."

Matthew 27:31: “After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.”

Matthew 28:5-6: “The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.'”

Matthew 28:19-20: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Brief Summary: The Gospel of Matthew discusses the lineage, birth, and early life of Christ in the first two chapters. From there, the book discusses the ministry of Jesus. The descriptions of Christ’s teachings are arranged around “discourses” such as the Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5 through 7. Chapter 10 involves the mission and purpose of the disciples; chapter 13 is a collection of parables; chapter 18 discusses the church; chapter 23 begins a discourse about hypocrisy and the future. Chapters 21 through 27 discuss the arrest, torture, and execution of Jesus. The final chapter describes the Resurrection and the Great Commission.

Connections: Because Matthew’s purpose is to present Jesus Christ as the King and Messiah of Israel, he quotes from the Old Testament more than any of the other three Gospel writers. Matthew quotes more than 60 times from prophetic passages of the Old Testament, demonstrating how Jesus fulfilled them. He begins his Gospel with the genealogy of Jesus, tracing Him back to Abraham, the progenitor of the Jews. From there, Matthew quotes extensively from the prophets, frequently using the phrase “as was spoken through the prophet(s)” (Matthew 1:22-23, 2:5-6, 2:15, 4:13-16, 8:16-17, 13:35, 21:4-5). These verses refer to the Old Testament prophecies of His virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14) in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), His return from Egypt after the death of Herod (Hosea 11:1), His ministry to the Gentiles (Isaiah 9:1-2; 60:1-3), His miraculous healings of both body and soul (Isaiah 53:4), His speaking in parables (Psalm 78:2), and His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Zechariah 9:9).

Practical Application: The Gospel of Matthew is an excellent introduction to the core teachings of Christianity. The logical outline style makes it easy to locate discussions of various topics. Matthew is especially useful for understanding how the life of Christ was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.

Matthew's intended audience was his fellow Jews, many of whom—especially the Pharisees and Sadducees—stubbornly refused to accept Jesus as their Messiah. In spite of centuries of reading and studying the Old Testament, their eyes were blinded to the truth of who Jesus was. Jesus rebuked them for their hard hearts and their refusal to recognize the One they had supposedly been waiting for (John 5:38-40). They wanted a Messiah on their own terms, one who would fulfill their own desires and do what they wanted Him to do. How often do we seek God on our own terms? Don't we reject Him by ascribing to Him only those attributes we find acceptable, the ones that make us feel good— His love, mercy, grace—while rejecting those we find objectionable—His wrath, justice, and holy anger? We dare not make the mistake of the Pharisees, creating God in our own image and then expecting Him to live up to our standards. Such a god is nothing more than an idol. The Bible gives us more than enough information about the true nature and identity of God and Jesus Christ to warrant our worship and our obedience.

Question: "Gospel of Mark"

Answer: Author: Although the Gospel of Mark does not name its author, it is the unanimous testimony of early church fathers that Mark was the author. "He was an associate of the Apostle Peter, and evidently his spiritual son (1 Peter 5:13). From Peter he received first-hand information of the events and teachings of the Lord, and preserved the information in written form.

It is generally agreed that Mark is the John Mark of the New Testament (Acts 12:12). His mother was a wealthy and prominent Christian in the Jerusalem church, and probably the church met in her home. "Mark joined Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but not on the second because of a strong disagreement between the two men (Acts 15:37-38). However, near the end of Paul's life he called for Mark to be with him (2 Timothy 4:11).

Date of Writing: The Gospel of Mark was likely one of the first books written in the New Testament, probably in A.D. 55-59.

Purpose of Writing: Whereas Matthew is written primarily to his fellow Jews, Mark's gospel appears to be targeted to the Roman believers, particularly Gentiles. Mark wrote as a pastor to Christians who previously had heard and believed the Gospel (Romans 1:8). He desired that they have a biographical story of Jesus Christ as Servant of the Lord and Savior of the world in order to strengthen their faith in the face of severe persecution and to teach them what it meant to be His disciples.

Key Verses: Mark 1:11: "And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.""

Mark 1:17: ""Come, follow Me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men.""

Mark 10:14-15: "He said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.""

Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

Mark 12:33: "To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Mark 16:6: ""Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.""

Mark 16:15: "He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.""

Brief Summary: This gospel is unique because it emphasizes Jesus' actions more than His teaching. It is simply written, moving quickly from one episode in the life of Christ to another. It does not begin with a genealogy as in Matthew, because Gentiles would not be interested in His lineage. After the introduction of Jesus at His baptism, Jesus began His public ministry in Galilee and called the first four of His twelve disciples. What follows is the record of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

Mark's account is not just a collection of stories, but a narrative written to reveal that Jesus is the Messiah, not only for the Jews, but for the Gentiles as well. In a dynamic profession, the disciples, led by Peter, acknowledged their faith in Him (Mark 8:29-30), even though they failed to understand fully His Messiahship until after His resurrection.

As we follow His journeys through Galilee, the surrounding areas, and then to Judea, we realize what a rapid pace He set. He touched the lives of many people, but He left an indelible mark on His disciples. At the transfiguration (Mark 9:1-9), He gave three of them a preview of His future return in power and glory, and again it was revealed to them who He was.

However, in the days leading to His final trip to Jerusalem, we see them bewildered, fearful and doubting. At Jesus' arrest, He stood alone after they fled. In the following hours of the mock trials, Jesus boldly proclaimed that He is the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One, and that He would be triumphant at His return (Mark 14:61-62). The climactic events surrounding the crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection were not witnessed by most of His disciples. But several faithful women did witness His passion. After the Sabbath, early in the morning of the first day of the week, they went to the tomb with burial spices. When they saw the stone had been rolled away, they entered the tomb. It was not the body of Jesus they saw, but an angel robed in white. The joyful message they received was, "He is risen!" Women were the first evangelists, as they spread the good news of His resurrection. This same message has been broadcast throughout the world in the following centuries down to us today.

Connections: Because Mark's intended audience was the Gentiles, he does not quote as frequently from the Old Testament as Matthew, who was writing primarily to the Jews. He does not begin with a genealogy to link Jesus with the Jewish patriarchs, but begins instead with His baptism, the beginning of His earthly ministry. But even there, Mark quotes from an Old Testament prophecy regarding the messenger "John the Baptist" who would exhort the people to "prepare the way for the Lord" (Mark 1:3; Isaiah 40:3) as they awaited the coming of their Messiah.

Jesus does refer to the Old Testament in several passages in Mark. In Mark 7:6, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for their superficial worship of God with their lips while their hearts were far from Him and refers to their own prophet, Isaiah, to convict them of their hardheartedness (Isaiah 29:13). Jesus referred to another Old Testament prophecy which was to be fulfilled that very night as the disciples would be scattered like sheep without a shepherd when Jesus was arrested and put to death (Mark 14:27; Zechariah 13:7). He referred again to Isaiah when He cleansed the Temple of the

moneychangers (Mark 11:15-17; Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 7:11) and to the Psalms when He explained that He was the chief Cornerstone of our faith and of the Church (Mark 12:10-11; Psalm 118:22-23).

Practical Application: Mark presents Jesus as the suffering Servant of God (Mark 10:45) and as the One who came to serve and sacrifice for us, in part to inspire us to do the same. We are to minister as He did, with the same greatness of humility and devotion to the service of others. Jesus exhorted us to remember that to be great in God's kingdom, we must be the servant of all (Mark 10:44). Self-sacrifice should transcend our need for recognition or reward, just as Jesus was willing to be abased as He lay down His life for the sheep.

Question: "Gospel of Luke"

Answer: Author: The Gospel of Luke does not identify its author. From Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-3, it is clear that the same author wrote both Luke and Acts, addressing both to “most excellent Theophilus,” possibly a Roman dignitary. The tradition from the earliest days of the church has been that Luke, a physician and a close companion of the Apostle Paul, wrote both Luke and Acts (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11). This would make Luke the only Gentile to pen any books of Scripture.

Date of Writing: The Gospel of Luke was likely written between A.D. 58 and 65.

Purpose of Writing: As with the other two synoptic gospels—Matthew and Mark—this book’s purpose is to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ and all He “began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven” (Acts 1:1-2). The Gospel of Luke is unique in that it is a meticulous history—an “orderly account” (Luke 1:3) consistent with the Luke’s medical mind—often giving details the other accounts omit. Luke’s history of the life of the Great Physician emphasizes His ministry to—and compassion for—Gentiles, Samaritans, women, children, tax collectors, sinners, and others regarded as outcasts in Israel.

Key Verses: Luke 2:4-7: “So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

Luke 3:16, "John answered them all, 'I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.'"

Luke 4:18-19, 21: “‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’ Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Luke 18:31-32: “Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, ‘We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.’”

Luke 23:33-34: "When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'"

Luke 24:1-3: "On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus."

Brief Summary: Called the most beautiful book ever written, the Gospel of Luke begins by telling us about Jesus' parents; the birth of His cousin, John the Baptist; Mary and Joseph's journey to

Bethlehem, where Jesus is born in a manger; and the genealogy of Christ through Mary. Jesus' public ministry reveals His perfect compassion and forgiveness through the stories of the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus, and the Good Samaritan. While many believe in this unprejudiced love that surpasses all human limits, many others—especially the religious leaders—challenge and oppose the claims of Jesus. Christ's followers are encouraged to count the cost of discipleship, while His enemies seek His death on the cross. Finally, Jesus is betrayed, tried, sentenced and crucified. But the grave cannot hold Him! His Resurrection assures the continuation of His ministry of seeking and saving the lost.

Connections: Since Luke was a Gentile, his references to the Old Testament are relatively few compared to those in Matthew's gospel, and most of the OT references are in the words spoken by Jesus rather than in Luke's narration. Jesus used the Old Testament to defend against Satan's attacks, answering him with "It is written" (Luke 4:1-13); to identify Himself as the promised Messiah (Luke 4:17-21); to remind the Pharisees of their inability to keep the Law and their need of a Savior (Luke 10:25-28, 18:18-27); and to confound their learning when they tried to trap and trick Him (Luke 20).

Practical Application: The Gospel of Luke gives us a beautiful portrait of our compassionate Savior. Jesus was not "turned off" by the poor and the needy; in fact, they were a primary focus of His ministry. Israel at the time of Jesus was a very class-conscious society. The weak and downtrodden were literally powerless to improve their lot in life and were especially open to the message that "the kingdom of God is near you" (Luke 10:9). This is a message we must carry to those around us who desperately need to hear it. Even in comparatively wealthy countries—perhaps especially so—the spiritual need is dire. Christians must follow the example of Jesus and bring the good news of salvation to the spiritually poor and needy. The kingdom of God is near and the time grows shorter every day.

Question: "Gospel of John"

Author: [John 21:20-24](#) describes the author of the gospel of John as “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” and for both historical and internal reasons this is understood to be [John the Apostle](#), one of the sons of Zebedee ([Luke 5:10](#)).

Date of Writing: Discovery of certain papyrus fragments dated around AD 135 require the gospel of John to have been written, copied, and circulated before then. And, while some think it was written before Jerusalem was destroyed (AD 70), AD 85–90 is a more accepted time for the writing of the gospel of John.

Purpose of Writing: The author cites the purpose of the gospel of John as follows: “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” ([John 20:31](#)). Unlike the three [Synoptic Gospels](#), John’s purpose is not to present a chronological narrative of the life of Christ but to display His deity. John sought to strengthen the faith of second-generation believers and bring about faith in others, but he also sought to correct a false teaching that was spreading in the first century. John emphasized Jesus Christ as “the Son of God,” fully God and fully man, contrary to a false doctrine that taught the “Christ-spirit” came upon the human Jesus at His baptism and left Him at the crucifixion.

Key Verses: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” ([John 1:1, 14](#)).

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” ([John 1:29](#)).

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” ([John 3:16](#)).

“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent’” ([John 6:29](#)).

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” ([John 10:10](#)).

“And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand” ([John 10:28](#)).

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?’”([John 11:25-26](#)).

“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” ([John 13:35](#)).

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me’” ([John 14:6](#)).

“Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, “Show us the Father”?’” ([John 14:9](#)).

“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” ([John 17:17](#)).

“So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit” ([John 19:30](#)).

“Jesus said to him, ‘Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed’” ([John 20:29](#)).

Brief Summary: The gospel of John includes only seven miracles—John calls them “signs”—to demonstrate the deity of Christ and illustrate His ministry. Some of these miracles and stories, such as the raising of Lazarus, are found only in John. His is the most theological of the four Gospels, and he often gives the reason behind events mentioned in the other gospels. The gospel of John shares much about the approaching ministry of the Holy Spirit after Jesus’ ascension. There are certain words or phrases that create a recurring theme in the gospel of John: *believe, witness, Comforter, life - death, light - darkness, I am, and love*.

The gospel of John introduces Jesus Christ, not from His birth, but from “the beginning,” before creation. John calls Jesus “the Word” ([Logos](#)) who, as God Himself, was involved in every aspect of creation ([John 1:1-3](#)) and who later became flesh (verse 14) in order that He might take away our sins as the spotless Lamb of God (verse 29). The gospel of John includes several spiritual conversations, such as Jesus’ talk with the Samaritan woman that shows Him as the Messiah ([John 4:26](#)) and Jesus’ meeting with Nicodemus that explains salvation through His vicarious death on the cross ([John 3:14-16](#)). In the gospel of John, Jesus repeatedly angers the Jewish leaders by correcting them ([John 2:13-16](#)); healing on the Sabbath, and claiming traits belonging only to God ([John 5:18](#); [8:56-59](#); [9:6](#), [16](#); [10:33](#)).

The last nine chapters of the gospel of John deal with the final week of Jesus’ life. Jesus prepares His disciples for His coming death and for their ministry after His resurrection and ascension ([John 14-17](#)). He then willingly dies on the cross in our place ([John 10:15-18](#)), paying our sin debt in full ([John 19:30](#)) so that whoever trusts in Him will be saved ([John 3:14-16](#)). Jesus then rises from the dead, convincing even the most doubting of His disciples that He is God and Master ([John 20:24-29](#)).

Connections: The gospel of John’s portrayal of Jesus as the God of the Old Testament is seen most emphatically in the seven “I Am” statements of Jesus. He is the “Bread of life” ([John 6:35](#)), provided by God to feed the souls of His people, just as He provided manna from heaven to feed the Israelites in the wilderness ([Exodus 16:11-36](#)). Jesus is the “Light of the world” ([John 8:12](#)), the same Light that God promised to His people in the Old Testament ([Isaiah 30:26](#); [60:19-22](#)) and which will find its culmination in the New Jerusalem when Christ the Lamb will be its Light ([Revelation 21:23](#)). Two of the “I Am” statements refer to Jesus as both the “Good Shepherd” and the “Door of the sheep.” Here are clear references to Jesus as the God of the Old Testament, the Shepherd of Israel ([Psalm 23:1](#); [80:1](#); [Jeremiah 31:10](#); [Ezekiel 34:23](#)) and, as the only Door into the sheepfold, the only way of salvation.

The Jews believed in the resurrection and, in fact, used the doctrine to try to trick Jesus into making statements they could use against Him. But His statement at the tomb of Lazarus, “I am the resurrection and the life” ([John 11:25](#)), must have astounded them. He was claiming to be the cause of resurrection and in possession of the power of life and death. None other than God Himself could claim such a thing. Similarly, Jesus’ claim to be “the way, the truth and the life” ([John 14:6](#)) linked Him unmistakably to the Old Testament. His is the “Way of Holiness” prophesied in [Isaiah 35:8](#); He established the City of Truth of [Zechariah 8:3](#) when He was in Jerusalem and preached the truths of the gospel. As “the Life,” Jesus affirms His deity, the Creator of life, God incarnate ([John 1:1-3](#); [Genesis 2:7](#)). Finally, as the “true Vine” ([John 15:1](#), [5](#)), Jesus identifies Himself with the nation of Israel, who are called the vineyard of the Lord in many Old Testament passages. As the true Vine of the vineyard of Israel, He portrays Himself as the Lord of the “true Israel”—all those who would come to Him in faith (cf. [Romans 9:6](#)).

Practical Application: The gospel of John continues to fulfill its purpose of evangelizing the lost ([John 3:16](#) is likely the best-known Bible verse) and is often used in evangelistic Bible studies. In the recorded

encounters between Jesus and Nicodemus and the woman at the well (chapters 3–4), we learn much from Jesus’ model of personal evangelism. His comforting words to His disciples before His death ([John 14:1-6](#), [16](#); [16:33](#)) are still of great comfort in sorrowful times. Jesus’ “high priestly prayer” for believers in chapter 17 is also a wonderful source of encouragement for believers. John’s teachings concerning the deity of Christ ([John 1:1-3](#), [14](#); [5:22-23](#); [8:58](#); [14:8-9](#); [20:28](#)) are helpful in apologetics and provide a clear revelation of who Jesus is: [fully God and fully man](#).

Question: "Book of Acts"

Answer: Author: The book of Acts, also called Acts of the Apostles, does not specifically identify its author. From Luke 1:1–4 and Acts 1:1–3, we know that the same author wrote both Luke and Acts. The tradition from the earliest days of the church has been that Luke, a companion of the apostle Paul, wrote the books of Luke and Acts (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11).

Date of Writing: The book of Acts was likely written between AD 61 and 64.

Purpose of Writing: The book of Acts was written to provide a history of the early church. The emphasis of the book is the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Acts records the apostles being Christ's witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the surrounding world. The book of Acts sheds light on the gift of the Holy Spirit, who empowers, guides, teaches, and serves as our Counselor. Reading the book of Acts, we are enlightened and encouraged by the power of the gospel as it spread throughout the world and transformed lives. Many miracles were performed during this time by the apostles to validate their message. The book of Acts covers the transitional time between the ascension of Christ and the completion of the New Testament canon, and the apostolic miracles were God's means of authenticating His message through the men who penned the Bible.

Key Verses:

Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 2:4: "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."

Acts 4:12: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Acts 4:19–20: "But Peter and John replied, 'Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.'"

Acts 9:3–6: "As [Saul] neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 'Who

are you, Lord?’ Saul asked. ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied. ‘Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’”

Acts 16:31: “So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.’”

Brief Summary: The book of Acts gives the history of the Christian church and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as well as the mounting opposition to it. Although many faithful servants were used to preach and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, Saul, also called Paul, was the most influential. Before he was converted, Paul zealously persecuted Christians. Paul’s dramatic conversion on the Damascus road (Acts 9:1–31) is a highlight of the book of Acts. After his conversion he went to the opposite extreme of loving God and preaching His Word with power and fervency in the Spirit of the true and living God. The disciples were empowered by the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses in Jerusalem (Acts 1–8:3), in Judea and Samaria (8:4–12:25), and to the ends of the earth (13:1–28:31). Included in the last section are Paul’s three missionary journeys (13:1–21:16), his trials in Jerusalem and Caesarea (21:17–26:32) and his journey to Rome (27:1–28:31).

Connections: The book of Acts serves as a transition from the Old Covenant to the New. This transition is seen in several key events in Acts. First, there was a change in the ministry of the Holy Spirit, whose primary function in the Old Testament was the external “anointing” of God’s people, among them Moses (Numbers 11:17), Othniel (Judges 3:8–10), Gideon (Judges 6:34), and Saul (1 Samuel 10:6–10). After the ascension of Jesus, the Spirit came to live in the very hearts of believers (Romans 8:9–11; 1 Corinthians 3:16), guiding and empowering them from within. The indwelling Spirit is the gift of God to those who come to Him in faith.

Paul’s conversion in Acts 9 is a dramatic example of the power of God unto salvation (see Romans 1:16) and the opening of spiritually blinded eyes. Paul admitted that, prior to meeting the risen Savior, he was the most zealous of Israelites and was blameless “concerning righteousness based on the law” (Philippians 3:6), going so far as to persecute those who taught salvation by grace through faith in Christ. But, after his conversion, Paul realized that all his legalistic efforts were worthless, and he considered them “rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith” (Philippians 3:8–9). Before he met Christ, Paul had been blinded by a pharisaical misinterpretation of the law and an inflated opinion of his own righteousness. After he met Christ, the “scales fell from Saul’s eyes,” as it were (Acts 9:18). His boasting of his own goodness was replaced by his glorying in the cross of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:27; Galatians 6:14).

Peter’s vision of the sheet full of unclean animals in Acts 10:9–15 is another sign of the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant’s unity of Jew and Gentile in one universal Church. The “unclean” animals in Peter’s vision symbolized the Gentiles, who were declared “cleansed” by God through the sacrificial death of Christ. The Old Covenant law had served its purpose (see Galatians 3:23–29), and both Jews and Gentiles are united in the New Covenant of grace through their faith in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Practical Application: God can do amazing things through ordinary people when He empowers them through His Spirit. The book of Acts shows how God essentially took a group of fisherman and commoners and used them to turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6). God took a Christian-hating murderer and transformed him into history's greatest Christian evangelist, the author of almost half the books of the New Testament. God used the persecution the Christians endured to help stimulate the incredibly rapid expansion of the fledgling church. God can and does do the same through us—changing our hearts, empowering us by the Holy Spirit, and giving us a passion to spread the good news of salvation through Christ. If we try to accomplish God's work in the world in our own power, we will fail. Like the disciples in Acts 2, we must faithfully proclaim the gospel, trust God for the results, and devote ourselves “to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42).

Question: "Book of Romans"

Answer: Author: Romans 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of Romans as the apostle Paul. Romans 16:22 indicates that Paul used a man named Tertius to transcribe his words.

Date of Writing: The Book of Romans was likely written A.D. 56-58.

Purpose of Writing: As with all Paul's epistles to the churches, his purpose in writing was to proclaim the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ by teaching doctrine and edify and encourage the believers who would receive his letter. Of particular concern to Paul were those to whom this letter was written—those in Rome who were “loved by God and called to be saints” (Romans 1:7). Because he himself was a Roman citizen, he had a unique passion for those in the assembly of believers in Rome. Since he had not, to this point, visited the church in Rome, this letter also served as his introduction to them.

Key Verses: Romans 1:16, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of every one who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”

Romans 3:9-11, “What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.’”

Romans 3:21, “But now a righteousness from God apart from the law, has been made known, to which the Law and Prophets testify.”

Romans 3:23: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Romans 5:8, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 8:9, “You however, are controlled not by the sinful nature, but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”

Romans 8:28: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

Romans 8:37-39, “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 10:9-10, “That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”

Romans 12:1, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.”

Romans 12:19, “Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.”

Romans 16:17, “I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.”

Brief Summary: Paul was excited about being able to minister at last in this church, and everyone was well aware of that fact (Romans 1:8-15). The letter to the Romans was written from Corinth just prior to Paul’s trip to Jerusalem to deliver the alms that had been given for the poor there. He had intended to go to Rome and then on to Spain (Romans 15:24), but his plans were interrupted when he was arrested in Jerusalem. He would eventually go to Rome as a prisoner. Phoebe, who was a member of the church at Cenchrea near Corinth (Romans 16:1), most likely carried the letter to Rome.

The Book of Romans is primarily a work of doctrine and can be divided into four sections: righteousness needed, 1:18–3:20; righteousness provided, 3:21–8:39; righteousness vindicated, 9:1–11:36; righteousness practiced, 12:1–15:13. The main theme of this letter is obvious of course—righteousness. Guided by the Holy Spirit, Paul first condemns all men of their sinfulness. He expresses his desire to preach the truth of God’s Word to those in Rome. It was his hope to have assurance they were staying on the right path. He strongly points out that he is not ashamed of the gospel (Romans 1:16), because it is the power by which everyone is saved.

The Book of Romans tells us about God, who He is and what He has done. It tells us of Jesus Christ, what His death accomplished. It tells us about ourselves, what we were like without Christ and who we are after trusting in Christ. Paul points out that God did not demand men have their lives straightened out before coming to Christ. While we were still sinners Christ died on a cross for our sins.

Connections: Paul uses several Old Testament people and events as illustrations of the glorious truths in the Book of Romans. Abraham believed and righteousness was imputed to him by his faith, not by his works (Romans 4:1-5). In Romans 4:6-9, Paul refers to David who reiterated the same truth: "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him." Paul uses Adam to explain to the Romans the doctrine of inherited sin, and he uses the story of Sarah and Isaac, the child of promise, to illustrate the principle of Christians being the children of the promise of the divine grace of God through Christ. In chapters 9–11, Paul recounts the history of the nation of Israel and declares that God has not completely and finally rejected Israel (Romans 11:11-12), but has allowed them to "stumble" only until the full number of the Gentiles will be brought to salvation.

Practical Application: The Book of Romans makes it clear that there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. Every "good" deed we have ever done is as a filthy rag before God. So dead in our trespasses and sins are we that only the grace and mercy of God can save us. God expressed that grace and mercy by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place. When we turn our lives over to Christ, we are no longer controlled by our sin nature, but we are controlled by the Spirit. If we make confession that Jesus is Lord, and believe that He is raised from the dead, we are saved, born again. We need to live our lives offered to God as a living sacrifice to Him. Worship of the God who saved us should be our highest desire. Perhaps the best application of Romans would be to apply Romans 1:16 and not be ashamed of the gospel. Instead, let us all be faithful in proclaiming it!

Question: "Book of 1 Corinthians"

Answer: Author: 1 Corinthians 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of 1 Corinthians as the apostle Paul.

Date of Writing: The Book of 1 Corinthians was written in approximately A. D. 55.

Purpose of Writing: The apostle Paul founded the church in Corinth. A few years after leaving the church, the apostle Paul heard some disturbing reports about the Corinthian church. They were full of pride and were excusing sexual immorality. Spiritual gifts were being used improperly, and there was rampant misunderstanding of key Christian doctrines. The apostle Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians in an attempt to restore the Corinthian church to its foundation—Jesus Christ.

Key Verses: 1 Corinthians 3:3: "You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?"

1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body."

1 Corinthians 10:31: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

1 Corinthians 12:7: "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

1 Corinthians 13:4-7: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

1 Corinthians 15:3-4: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

Brief Summary: The Corinthian church was plagued by divisions. The believers in Corinth were dividing into groups loyal to certain spiritual leaders (1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:1-6). Paul exhorted the Corinthian believers to be united because of devotion to Christ (1 Corinthians 3:21-23). Many in the church were essentially approving of an immoral relationship (1 Corinthians 5:1-2). Paul commanded

them to expel the wicked man from the church (1 Corinthians 5:13). The Corinthian believers were taking each other to court (1 Corinthians 6:1-2). Paul taught the Corinthians that it would be better to be taken advantage of than to damage their Christian testimony (1 Corinthians 6:3-8).

Paul gave the Corinthian church instructions on marriage and celibacy (chapter 7), food sacrificed to idols (chapters 8 and 10), Christian freedom (chapter 9), the veiling of women (1 Corinthians 11:1-16), the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17-34), spiritual gifts (chapters 12-14), and the resurrection (chapter 15). Paul organized the book of 1 Corinthians by answering questions the Corinthian believers had asked him and by responding to improper conduct and erroneous beliefs they had accepted.

Connections: In chapter 10 of the Book of 1 Corinthians, Paul uses the story of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness to illustrate to the Corinthian believers the folly of the misuse of freedom and the danger of overconfidence. Paul has just warned the Corinthians about their lack of selfdiscipline (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). He goes on to describe the Israelites who, despite seeing God's miracles and care for them—the parting of the Red Sea, the miraculous provision of manna from heaven and water from a rock—they misused their freedom, rebelled against God, and fell into immorality and idolatry. Paul exhorts the Corinthian church to note the example of the Israelites and avoid lusts and sexual immorality (vv. 6-8) and putting Christ to the test and complaining (vv. 9-10). See Numbers 11:4, 34, 25:1-9; Exodus 16:2, 17:2, 7.

Practical Application: Many of the problems and questions the Corinthian church was dealing with are still present in the church today. Churches today still struggle with divisions, with immorality, and with the use of spiritual gifts. The Book of 1 Corinthians very well could have been written to the church today and we would do well to heed Paul's warnings and apply them to ourselves. Despite all the rebukes and corrections, 1 Corinthians brings our focus back to where it should be—on Christ. Genuine Christian love is the answer to many problems (chapter 13). A proper understanding of the resurrection of Christ, as revealed in chapter 15, and thereby a proper understanding of our own resurrection, is the cure for what divides and defeats us.

Question: "Book of 2 Corinthians"

Answer: Author: 2 Corinthians 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of 2 Corinthians as the apostle Paul, possibly along with Timothy.

Date of Writing: The Book of 2 Corinthians was very likely written approximately A.D. 55-57.

Purpose of Writing: The church in Corinth began in AD 52 when Paul visited there on his second missionary journey. He stayed one and a half years, accomplishing much for the sake of the gospel. A record of this visit and the establishment of the church is found in Acts 18:1–18. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul expresses his relief and joy that the Corinthians had received his “severe” letter (now lost) in a positive manner. That letter addressed issues that were tearing the church apart, primarily the arrival of self-styled (false) apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13) who were assaulting Paul’s character, sowing discord among the believers, and teaching false doctrine. They appear to have questioned his veracity (2 Corinthians 1:15–17), his speaking ability (2 Corinthians 10:10; 11:6), and his unwillingness to accept support from the church at Corinth (2 Corinthians 11:7–9; 12:13). There were also some people in Corinth who had not repented of their licentious behavior, another reason he had sent the “severe” letter (2 Corinthians 12:20–21). Paul was overjoyed to learn from Titus that the majority of Corinthians had repented of their rebellion against Paul (2 Corinthians 2:12–13; 7:5–9). The apostle encourages them for this in an expression of his genuine love (2 Corinthians 7:3–16). Paul also urged the Corinthians to finish collecting an offering for the poor (chapters 8–9) and to take a harder stance against false teachers (chapters 10–13). Finally, Paul vindicated his apostleship, as some in the church had likely questioned his authority (2 Corinthians 13:3).

Key Verses: 2 Corinthians 3:5: “Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.”

2 Corinthians 3:18: “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

2 Corinthians 5:21: “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

2 Corinthians 10:5: “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” 2 Corinthians 13:4: “For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God’s power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God’s power we will live with him to serve you.”

Brief Summary: After greeting the believers in the church at Corinth and explaining why he had not visited them as originally planned (vv. 1:3–2:2), Paul explains the nature of his ministry.

Triumph through Christ and sincerity in the sight of God were the hallmarks of his ministry to the churches

(2:14-17). He compares the glorious ministry of the righteousness of Christ to the “ministry of condemnation” which is the Law (v. 3:9) and declares his faith in the validity of his ministry in spite of intense persecution (4:8-18). Chapter 5 outlines the basis of the Christian faith—the new nature (v. 17) and the exchange of our sin for the righteousness of Christ (v. 21).

Chapters 6 and 7 find Paul defending himself and his ministry, assuring the Corinthians yet again of his sincere love for them and exhorting them to repentance and holy living. In chapters 8 and 9, Paul exhorts the believers at Corinth to follow the examples of the brothers in Macedonia and extend generosity to the saints in need. He teaches them the principles and rewards of gracious giving. Paul ends his letter by reiterating his authority among them (chapter 10) and concern for their faithfulness to him in the face of fierce opposition from false apostles. He calls himself a “fool” for having to reluctantly boast of his qualifications and his suffering for Christ (chapter 11). He ends his epistle by describing the vision of heaven he was allowed to experience and the “thorn in the flesh” he was given by God to ensure his humility (chapter 12). The last chapter contains his exhortation to the Corinthians to examine themselves to see whether what they profess is reality, and ends with a benediction of love and peace.

Connections: Throughout his epistles, Paul frequently refers to the Mosaic law, comparing it with the surpassing greatness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and salvation by grace. In 2 Corinthians 3:4-11, Paul contrasts the Old Testament law with the new covenant of grace, referring to the law as that which “kills” while the Spirit gives life. The law is the “ministry of death, written and engraved on stone” (v. 7; Exodus 24:12) because it brings only the knowledge of sin and its condemnation. The glory of the law is that it reflects the glory of God, but the ministry of the Spirit is much more glorious than the ministry of the law, because it reflects His mercy, grace and love in providing Christ as the fulfillment of the law.

Practical Application: This letter is the most biographical and least doctrinal of Paul's epistles. It tells us more about Paul as a person and as a minister than any of the others. That being said, there are a few things we can take from this letter and apply to our lives today. One thing is stewardship, not only of money, but of time as well. The Macedonians not only gave generously, but “they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will” (2 Corinthians 8:5). In the same way, we should dedicate not only all we have to the Lord, but all that we are. He really doesn't need our money. He is omnipotent! He wants the heart, one that longs to serve and please and love. Stewardship and giving to God is more than just money. Yes, God does want us to tithe part of our income, and He promises to bless us when we give to Him. There is more though. God wants 100%. He wants us to give Him our all. Everything we are. We should spend our lives living to serve our Father. We should not only give to God from our paycheck, but our very lives should be a reflection of Him. We should give ourselves first to the Lord, then to the church and the work of the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Question: "Book of Galatians"

Answer: Author: Galatians 1:1 clearly identifies the apostle Paul as the writer of the epistle to the Galatians.

Date of Writing: Galatians is the first New Testament book to be written, composed sometime soon after AD 49.

Purpose of Writing: The churches in Galatia were comprised of both Jewish and Gentile converts. Paul's purpose in writing to these churches was to confirm them in the faith, especially concerning justification by faith alone, apart from the works of the Law of Moses. Galatians was written because the churches of that region were facing a theological crisis. The essential truth of justification by faith rather than by human works was being denied by the Judaizers—legalistic Jews who insisted that Christians must keep the Mosaic Law. In particular, the Judaizers insisted on circumcision as a requirement for Gentiles who wished to be saved. In other words, convert to Judaism *first*, and then you are eligible to become a Christian. When Paul learned that this heresy was being taught to the Galatian churches, he composed an epistle to emphasize our liberty in Christ and to counter the perversion of the gospel that the Judaizers promoted.

Key Verses: Galatians 2:16: "Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified."

Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Galatians 3:11: "Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, 'The righteous will live by faith.'"

Galatians 4:5–6: "... to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.'"

Galatians 5:22–23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

Galatians 6:7: "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."

Brief Summary: The fact that we are justified by grace through faith means we have spiritual freedom. We are not under bondage to the dictates of the Old Testament Law. Paul soundly condemns anyone who would denigrate the grace of God and attempt to change the gospel (Galatians 1:8–10). He gives his apostolic credentials (Galatians 1:11–2:14) and emphasizes that righteousness comes through Christ not the works of the Law (Galatians 2:21). The Galatians must stand fast in their freedom and not be "entangled again with a yoke of bondage (that is, the Mosaic law)" (Galatians 5:1). Christian freedom is not an excuse to gratify one's sin nature; rather, our freedom is an opportunity to love one

another (Galatians 5:13; 6:7–10). The Christian life is to be lived in the power of the Spirit, not the flesh (Galatians 5:16–18). The flesh has been crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20); as a consequence, the Spirit will bear His fruit in the life of the believer (Galatians 5:22–23).

In the end, the issue is not whether a person is circumcised but whether he is a “new creation” (Galatians 6:15). Salvation is the work of the Spirit, and we must be born again (see John 3:3). External religious rites such as circumcision are of no value in the realm of the Spirit.

Connections: Throughout Paul’s epistle to the Galatians, saving grace—the gift of God—is juxtaposed against the Law of Moses, which cannot save. The Judaizers urged a return to the Mosaic Law as the source of justification, and they were prominent in the early church. Even Peter was temporarily drawn into their web of deceit (Galatians 2:11–13). The themes connecting Galatians to the Old Testament center on Law vs. grace: the inability of the Law to justify (2:16); the believer’s deadness to the Law (2:19); Abraham’s justification by faith (3:6); the Law’s bringing not God’s salvation but His wrath (3:10); and love as the fulfillment of the Law (5:14). Believers are the spiritual children of Sarah, not Hagar—that is, we are children of the freewoman, not children of the slave; we have more in common with Isaac, the son of promise, than with Ishmael, the son of human effort (4:21–31).

The books of Galatians and James deal with two complementary aspects of Christianity. Galatians highlights the gospel of grace that produces righteous living (Galatians 3:13–14). James highlights the righteous living that proves faith. There is no conflict; James, too, emphasizes the new birth through the gospel (James 1:18), and Galatians spends its final two chapters applying the doctrine of *sola gratia* to practical Christian living.

Practical Application: One of the main themes of the book of Galatians is found in 3:11: “The righteous shall live by faith.” We must stand firm in this truth. Any compromise with legalism or the mixture of human effort and the grace of God for salvation leads to heresy. If we could be saved through the keeping of the Law, then Jesus did not need to die (Galatians 2:21). Trying to save ourselves nullifies grace.

Not only are we saved by faith (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8–9), but the life of the believer in Christ—day by day, moment by moment—is lived by and through that faith (Galatians 2:20). Not that faith is something we conjure up on our own—it is the gift of God, not of works (see Ephesians 2:8–9)—but it is our responsibility and joy to exhibit our faith so that others will see the work of Christ in us and to grow in our faith by the application of spiritual disciplines (Bible study, prayer, obedience, etc.). Jesus said we would be known by the fruit of our lives (Matthew 7:16), which should give evidence of the faith within us. All Christians should be diligent in striving to build upon the saving faith within us so that our lives will reflect Christ and others will “glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16, NKJV).

Question: "Book of Ephesians"

Answer: Author: Ephesians 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of Ephesians as the apostle Paul.

Date of Writing: The Book of Ephesians was very likely written between A.D. 60-63.

Purpose of Writing: Paul intended that all who long for Christ-like maturity would receive this writing. Enclosed within the Book of Ephesians is the discipline needed to develop into true children of God. Furthermore, a study in Ephesians will help to fortify and to establish the believer so he can fulfill the purpose and calling God has given. The aim of this epistle is to confirm and to equip a maturing church. It presents a balanced view of the body of Christ and its importance in God's economy.

Key Verses: Ephesians 1:3: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."

Ephesians 2:8-10: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Ephesians 4:4-6: "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

Ephesians 5:21: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."

Ephesians 6:10-11: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."

Brief Summary: Doctrine occupies the greatest portion of the Book of Ephesians. Half of the teaching in this epistle relates to our standing in Christ, and the remainder of it affects our condition. All too often those who teach from this book bypass all the foundational instruction and go directly to the closing chapter. It is this chapter that emphasizes the warfare or the struggle of the saints. However, to benefit fully from the contents of this epistle, one must begin at the beginning of Paul's instruction in this letter.

First, as followers of Christ, we must fully understand who God declares us to be. We must also become grounded in the knowledge of God's accomplishment for all humanity. Next, our present existence and walk must become exercised and strengthened. This must continue until we no longer totter or stagger back and forth with every spirit of teaching and subtlety of men.

Paul's writing breaks down into three main segments. (1) Chapters one through three introduce principles with respect to God's accomplishment. (2) Chapters four and five put forth principles regarding our present existence. (3) Chapter six presents principles concerning our daily struggle.

Connections: The primary link to the Old Testament in Ephesians is in the startling (to the Jews) concept of the church as the body of Christ (Ephesians 5:32). This amazing mystery (a truth not

previously revealed) of the church, is that “the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 3:6). This was a mystery completely hidden from the Old Testament saints (Ephesians 3:5, 9). The Israelites who were true followers of God always believed they alone were God’s chosen people (Deuteronomy 7:6). Accepting Gentiles on an equal status in this new paradigm was extremely difficult and caused many disputes among Jewish believers and Gentile converts. Paul also speaks of the mystery of the church as the “bride of Christ,” a previously unheard-of concept in the Old Testament.

Practical Application: Perhaps more than any other book of the Bible, the Book of Ephesians emphasizes the connection between sound doctrine and right practice in the Christian life. Far too many people ignore "theology" and instead want to only discuss things that are "practical." In Ephesians, Paul argues that theology is practical. In order to live out God's will for us in our lives practically, we must first understand who we are in Christ doctrinally.

Question: "Book of Philippians"

Answer: Author: Philippians 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of Philippians as the apostle Paul, likely along with the help of Timothy.

Date of Writing: The Book of Philippians was written in approximately A.D. 61.

Purpose of Writing: The Epistle to the Philippians, one of Paul's prison epistles, was written in Rome. It was at Philippi, which the apostle visited on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:12), that Lydia and the Philippian jailer and his family were converted to Christ. Now, some few years later, the church was well established, as may be inferred from its address which includes "bishops (elders) and deacons" (Philippians 1:1).

The occasion of the epistle was to acknowledge a gift of money from the church at Philippi, brought to the apostle by Epaphroditus, one of its members (Philippians 4:10-18). This is a tender letter to a group of Christians who were especially close to the heart of Paul (2 Corinthians 8:1-6), and comparatively little is said about doctrinal error.

Key Verses: Philippians 1:21: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Philippians 3:7: "But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ."

Philippians 4:4: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"

Philippians 4:6-7: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians

4:13: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

Brief Summary: Philippians can be called "Resources Through Suffering." The book is about Christ in our life, Christ in our mind, Christ as our goal, Christ as our strength, and joy through suffering. It was written during Paul's imprisonment in Rome, about thirty years after Christ's ascension and about ten years after Paul first preached at Philippi.

Paul was Nero's prisoner, yet the epistle fairly shouts with triumph, the words "joy" and "rejoice" appearing frequently (Philippians 1:4, 18, 25, 26; 2:2, 28; Philippians 3:1, 4:1, 4, 10). Right Christian experience is the outworking, whatever our circumstances may be, of the life, nature, and mind of Christ living in us (Philippians 1:6, 11; 2:5, 13). Philippians reaches its pinnacle at 2:5-11 with the glorious and profound declaration regarding the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Philippians may be divided as follows:

Introduction, 1:1-7

I. Christ the Christian's Life: Rejoicing in Spite of Suffering, 1:8-30

II. Christ the Christian's Pattern: Rejoicing in Lowly Service, 2:1-30

III. Christ the Object of the Christian's Faith, Desire, and Expectation, 3:1-21

IV. Christ the Christian's Strength: Rejoicing Through Anxiety, 4:1-9 Conclusion, 4:10-23

Connections: As with many of his letters, Paul warned the new believers in the church of Philippi to beware of the tendency toward legalism which continually cropped up in the early churches. So tied to the Old Testament law were the Jews that there was a constant effort on the part of the Judaizers to return to the teaching of salvation by works. But Paul reiterated that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone and branded the Judaizers as “dogs” and “men who do evil.” In particular, the legalists were insisting that the new believers in Christ should continue to be circumcised according to the requirements of the Old Covenant (Genesis 17:10-12; Leviticus 12:3). In this way, they attempted to please God by their own efforts and elevate themselves above the Gentile Christians who did not participate in the ritual. Paul explained that those who have been washed by the blood of the Lamb were no longer to perform the ritual that symbolized the need for a clean heart.

Practical Application: Philippians is one of Paul's most personal letters, and as such it has several personal applications to believers. Written during his imprisonment in Rome, Paul exhorts the Philippians to follow his example and be “encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly” (Philippians 1:14) during times of persecution. All Christians have experienced, at one time or another, the animosity of unbelievers against the gospel of Christ. This is to be expected. Jesus said that the world hated Him and it will hate His followers as well (John 15:18). Paul exhorts us to persevere in the face of persecution, to “stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27).

Another application of Philippians is the need for Christians to be united in humility. We are united with Christ and we need to strive to be united to one another in the same way. Paul reminds us to be “likeminded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose” and to put away conceit and selfishness, “but in humility consider others better than yourselves” looking out for the interest of others and caring for one another (Philippians 2:2-4). There would be far less conflict in churches today if we all took to heart Paul's advice.

Another application of Philippians is that of the joy and rejoicing which are found throughout his letter. He rejoices that Christ is being proclaimed (Philippians 1:8); he rejoices in his persecution (2:18); he exhorts others to rejoice in the Lord (3:1); and he refers to the Philippian brothers as his “joy and crown” (4:1). He sums up with this exhortation to believers: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say Rejoice” (4:4-7). As believers, we can rejoice and experience the peace of God by casting all our cares on Him, if we “in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let [our] requests be made known to God” (4:6). Paul's joy, in spite of persecution and imprisonment, comes shining through this epistle, and we are promised the same joy he experienced when we center our thoughts on the Lord (Philippians 4:8).

Question: "Book of Colossians"

Answer: Author: The apostle Paul was the primary writer of the Book of Colossians (Colossians 1:1). Timothy is also given some credit (Colossians 1:1).

Date of Writing: The Book of Colossians was likely written between A.D. 58-62.

Purpose of Writing: The first half of the Book of Colossians is a theological treatise that includes one of the most profound presentations of Christology anywhere in the New Testament. The second half is a mini-ethics course, addressing every area of Christian life. Paul progresses from the individual life to the home and family, from work to the way we should treat others. The theme of this book is the Lordship of Jesus Christ and His sufficiency in meeting our needs in every area.

Key Verses: Colossians 1:15-16, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him."

Colossians 2:8, "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ."

Colossians 3:12-13, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

Colossians 4:5-6, "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

Brief Summary: Colossians was written explicitly to defeat the heresy that had arisen in Colosse, which endangered the existence of the church. While we do not know what was told to Paul, this letter is his response.

We can surmise based on Paul's response that he was dealing with a defective view of Christ (denying His real and true humanity and not accepting His full deity). Paul appears also to dispute the "Jewish" emphasis on circumcision and traditions (Colossians 2:8-11; 3:11). The heresy addressed appears to be either a Jewish-Gnosticism or a mix between Jewish asceticism and Greek (Stoic?) philosophy. He does a remarkable job in pointing us to the sufficiency of Christ.

The Book of Colossians contains doctrinal instruction about the deity of Christ and false philosophies (1:15-2:23), as well as practical exhortations regarding Christian conduct, including friends and speech (3:1-4:18).

Connections: As with all the early churches, the issue of Jewish legalism in Colosse was of great concern to Paul. So radical was the concept of salvation by grace apart from works that those steeped

in Old Testament law found it very difficult to grasp. Consequently, there was a continual movement among the legalists to add certain requirements from the law to this new faith. Primary among them was the requirement of circumcision which was still practiced among some of the Jewish converts. Paul countered this error in Colossians 2:11-15 in which he declares that circumcision of the flesh was no longer necessary because Christ had come. His was a circumcision of the heart, not the flesh, making the ceremonial rites of the Old Testament law no longer necessary (Deuteronomy 10:16, 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4, 9:26; Acts 7:51; Romans 2:29).

Practical Application: Although Paul addresses many areas, the basic application for us today is the total and complete sufficiency of Christ in our lives, both for our salvation and our sanctification. We must know and understand the gospel so as not to be led astray by subtle forms of legalism and heresy. We must be on guard for any deviation that would diminish the centrality of Christ as Lord and Savior. Any “religion” that tries to equate itself with the truth using books that claim the same authority as the Bible, or which combines human effort with divine accomplishment in salvation must be avoided. Other religions cannot be combined with or added to Christianity. Christ gives us absolute standards of moral conduct. Christianity is a family, a way of life, and a relationship—not a religion. Good deeds, astrology, occultism and horoscopes do not show us God’s ways. Only Christ does. His will is revealed in His word, His love letter to us; we must get to know it!

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Question: "Book of 1 Thessalonians"

Answer: Author: 1 Thessalonians 1:1 indicates that the Book of 1 Thessalonians was written by the apostle Paul, probably along with Silas and Timothy.

Date of Writing: The Book of 1 Thessalonians was written in approximately A.D. 50.

Purpose of Writing: In the church of Thessalonica there were some misunderstandings about the return of Christ. Paul desired to clear them up in his letter. He also writes it as an instruction in holy living.

Key Verses: 1 Thessalonians 3:5, "For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless."

1 Thessalonians 3:7, "Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith."

1 Thessalonians 4:14-17, "We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever."

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Brief Summary: The first three chapters are about Paul longing to visit the church in Thessalonica but not being able to because Satan stopped them (1 Thessalonians 2:18), and how Paul cared for them and was encouraged to hear how they had been. Paul then prays for them (1 Thessalonians 3:11-13). In chapter 4, Paul is instructing the believers in Thessalonica on how to live, in Christ Jesus, a holy life (1 Thessalonians 4:1-12). Paul goes on to instruct them of a misconception they had. He tells them that the people who have died in Christ Jesus will also go to heaven when He comes back (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 5:1-11). The book ends with final instructions of living the Christian life.

Connections: Paul reminds the Thessalonians that the persecution they were receiving from their "own countrymen" (v. 2:15), the Jews who rejected their Messiah, is the same that the Old Testament prophets suffered (Jeremiah 2:30; Matthew 23:31). Jesus warned that true prophets of God would always be opposed by the unrighteous (Luke 11:49). In Colossians, Paul reminds them of that truth.

Practical Application: This book can be applied to many life situations. It gives us the confidence as Christians that dead or alive when Christ comes back we will be together with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). It assures us as Christians that we won't receive God's wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:8-9). It instructs us how to walk the Christian life daily (1 Thessalonians 4-5).

Question: "Book of 2 Thessalonians"

Answer: Author: 2 Thessalonians 1:1 indicates that the Book of 2 Thessalonians was written by the apostle Paul, probably along with Silas and Timothy.

Date of Writing: The Book of 2 Thessalonians was likely written in AD 51-52.

Purpose of Writing: The church in Thessalonica still had some misconceptions about the Day of the Lord. They thought it had come already so they stopped with their work. They were being persecuted badly. Paul wrote to clear up misconceptions and to comfort them.

Key Verses: 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7, "God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with powerful angels."

2 Thessalonians 2:13, "But we ought always thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth."

2 Thessalonians 3:3, "But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one."

2 Thessalonians 3:10, "For even when we were with you we gave you this rule: If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

Brief Summary: Paul greets the church at Thessalonica and encourages and exhorts them. He commends them for what he hears they are doing in the Lord, and he prays for them (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12). In chapter 2, Paul explains what will happen in the Day of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12). Paul then encourages them to stand firm and instructs them to keep away from idle men who don't live by the gospel (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

Connections: Paul refers to several Old Testament passages in his discourse on the end times, thereby confirming and reconciling the OT prophets. Much of his teaching on the end times in this letter is based on the prophet Daniel and his visions. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3-9, he refers to Daniel's prophecy regarding the "man of sin" (Daniel 7-8).

Practical Application: The Book of 2 Thessalonians is filled with information that explains the end times. It also exhorts us not to be idle and to work for what we have. There are also some great prayers in 2 Thessalonians that can be an example for us on how to pray for other believers today.