

THE BRIDGE CHURCH

CONTEXT

GUIDE



THE BRIDGE CHURCH

GENESIS

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF GENESIS?

The authorship of Genesis is traditionally attributed to Moses. It is the first book of the Torah, also called the Pentateuch, and serves as the foundational text for both Judaism and Christianity.

WHO WAS GENESIS WRITTEN FOR?

Genesis was written for the people of Israel as they formed their identity as God's covenant people. It was intended to remind them of their origins, God's promises to their ancestors, and their unique role in God's plan for the world.

CONTEXT

Genesis spans from the creation of the world to the formation of Israel's patriarchal family. It includes key events such as creation, the fall, the flood, and the Tower of Babel, followed by the stories of the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Written in a time when competing creation and flood narratives existed, Genesis uniquely presents a monotheistic worldview, emphasizing God's sovereignty, holiness, and faithfulness.

LITERARY STYLES

Genesis is a rich blend of historical narrative, poetry, and theology. It incorporates genealogies, covenantal themes, and symbolic storytelling to convey God's character and purposes. Its structure is often divided into two parts: primeval history (chapters 1–11) and patriarchal history (chapters 12–50).

KEY MESSAGE

Genesis establishes foundational truths about God's relationship with humanity, creation, and sin. It demonstrates that despite humanity's repeated failures, God's plan of redemption remains steadfast. Through the covenant with Abraham, God begins to set apart a people to bring blessing to the whole world, pointing to His ultimate plan for salvation. The book serves as a reminder of God's faithfulness and the importance of trusting in His promises.

EXODUS

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF EXODUS?

Traditionally, Moses is credited as the author of Exodus, as part of the Torah. However, like Genesis, modern scholarship suggests that it was compiled from multiple sources over time, reflecting the oral traditions and theological reflections of Israel's community.

WHO WAS EXODUS WRITTEN FOR?

Exodus was written for the Israelites as a defining narrative of their identity as God's chosen people. It reminded them of God's deliverance, covenant, and call to be a holy nation, set apart for His purposes.

CONTEXT

Exodus narrates Israel's journey from slavery in Egypt to freedom under God's covenant. It spans the miraculous deliverance through the ten plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. The book establishes Israel's relationship with God, marked by His provision, guidance, and demand for covenantal obedience. Likely written during or after the wilderness period, Exodus serves as both a historical account and a theological reflection on God's redemptive work.

LITERARY STYLES

Exodus is a mix of narrative, legal text, and liturgical instructions. It includes dramatic storytelling (e.g., the plagues and the parting of the sea), detailed descriptions of covenant laws, and precise guidelines for constructing the tabernacle, reflecting the multifaceted nature of God's relationship with His people.

KEY MESSAGE

Exodus reveals God as the Redeemer who hears the cries of His people and acts to deliver them. It emphasizes His covenantal faithfulness, holiness, and desire for relationship with Israel. The giving of the law and the establishment of the tabernacle demonstrate that God's presence among His people requires both worship and obedience. Exodus stands as a reminder of God's power to save and His call to live as a people set apart for His glory.

LEVITICUS

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS?

Leviticus is traditionally attributed to Moses, as it records the laws and instructions given to him by God at Mount Sinai. Modern scholarship often views it as part of the priestly tradition within the Torah, compiled to guide Israel's worship and community life.

WHO WAS LEVITICUS WRITTEN FOR?

Leviticus was written for the Israelites, particularly the priesthood, to provide a detailed framework for worship, holiness, and communal living. It served as a guide for maintaining a covenantal relationship with God and creating a society that reflected His holiness.

CONTEXT

Set in the aftermath of the Exodus, Leviticus follows Israel's deliverance from Egypt and the establishment of the covenant at Mount Sinai. The book provides instructions for worship, sacrifices, and purity, emphasizing God's desire to dwell among His people. In a world filled with competing religious practices, Leviticus sets Israel apart, teaching them how to approach a holy God and live in communion with Him.

LITERARY STYLES

Leviticus is a legal and liturgical text interwoven with theological themes. It includes laws on sacrifices, priestly duties, dietary regulations, and moral conduct, as well as vivid rituals that symbolize God's redemptive work and His desire for closeness with humanity.

KEY MESSAGE

Leviticus reveals God's intention to restore and maintain communion with humanity through the covenant. The sacrificial system, purity laws, and festivals demonstrate His holiness and the means by which sinful people can approach Him. Each law and ritual points to God's ultimate desire to dwell among His people, reflecting His love, mercy, and justice.

The book highlights that holiness is not just about separation from sin but also about being set apart for relationship with God. Through the covenantal law, Leviticus provides a way for Israel to live in God's presence and experience His blessing, foreshadowing the ultimate restoration of communion through Jesus Christ.

NUMBERS

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF NUMBERS?

Numbers is traditionally attributed to Moses, as part of the Torah. It records events and laws from Israel's wilderness journey, often in Moses' direct voice. Some scholars suggest it was compiled from multiple sources reflecting the community's oral traditions and covenantal identity.

WHO WAS NUMBERS WRITTEN FOR?

Numbers was written for the people of Israel, particularly those preparing to enter the Promised Land. It served as a record of God's faithfulness during their wilderness wanderings and as a warning to future generations about the consequences of disobedience and unbelief.

CONTEXT

Numbers recounts Israel's journey from Mount Sinai to the borders of Canaan, covering nearly 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. It begins with a census of the tribes and the organization of the camp, moves through episodes of rebellion and divine judgment, and ends with preparations for entering the Promised Land. The book reflects a transitional period, showing how God refined His covenant people through discipline and provision.

LITERARY STYLES

Numbers is a mix of narrative, census data, and legal instructions. It weaves together historical accounts of Israel's experiences in the wilderness with theological reflections on God's covenant and their relationship with Him. The text balances precise detail with dramatic storytelling, emphasizing both God's sovereignty and the people's responsibility.

KEY MESSAGE

Numbers demonstrates God's unwavering faithfulness to His covenant, even in the face of Israel's repeated failures. The wilderness journey serves as both a test of the people's trust in God and a means of preparing them for life in the Promised Land, reflecting His love, mercy, and justice.

At its core, Numbers reveals God's desire to dwell with His people and lead them into His promises. The laws and rituals underscore the importance of holiness and obedience as prerequisites for communion with God. The book reminds us that God's discipline is always paired with His provision, pointing to His ultimate goal of shaping a people who reflect His character and live in His presence.

DEUTERONOMY

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY?

Deuteronomy is traditionally attributed to Moses, who is believed to have delivered the speeches and teachings contained in the book near the end of his life. The book records Moses' final instructions to the Israelites before they enter the Promised Land. The book also includes a record of Moses' death which obviously suggests the inclusion of other accounts when the book was compiled.

WHO WAS DEUTERONOMY WRITTEN FOR?

Deuteronomy was written for the Israelites, specifically for the new generation that would inherit the Promised Land. As the people prepared to leave their wilderness experience behind, this book was meant to renew and reaffirm their covenant with God, urging them to remain faithful as they entered a new chapter of their history.

CONTEXT

Deuteronomy takes place on the plains of Moab, just before Israel crosses into the Promised Land. It is essentially a series of farewell speeches by Moses, reminding the Israelites of their past experiences, God's laws, and the covenant made with their ancestors. This renewal of the covenant was crucial because the first generation of Israelites, who had been delivered from Egypt, had died in the wilderness due to their unbelief and disobedience. Deuteronomy stresses the importance of loving and obeying God as the people prepare to live in a land flowing with milk and honey.

LITERARY STYLES

Deuteronomy is largely composed of speeches, exhortations, and legal instructions. It includes Moses' recapitulation of the law, as well as reflections on the journey from Egypt and God's faithfulness. The tone is both admonitory and hopeful, aiming to motivate Israel to choose faithfulness in light of God's past mercies. The book also features poetic passages, such as the Song of Moses, that encapsulate the theological themes of the entire Torah.

KEY MESSAGE

Deuteronomy serves as a powerful reminder of God's faithfulness, His laws, and the covenant relationship He desires with His people. It emphasizes that true worship is not merely outward observance of laws, but a heartfelt devotion to God, grounded in love and obedience. The book also stresses the importance of teaching future generations about God's ways and passing down His promises.

The central theme of Deuteronomy is covenant renewal: God calls His people to respond to His grace with wholehearted allegiance. Obedience to God's law, especially the Shema ("Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one"), is presented as the key to experiencing God's blessings in the land. In this way, Deuteronomy paints a vision of life with God—a life defined by love, worship, and a deep, abiding relationship with the Creator.

JOSHUA

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF JOSHUA?

The authorship of Joshua is traditionally attributed to Joshua himself, with possible additions by later editors. The book serves as a historical account of Israel's conquest and settlement in the Promised Land, and many scholars believe it was written or compiled by someone close to the events, reflecting both the military and theological significance of Israel's actions.

WHO WAS JOSHUA WRITTEN FOR?

Joshua was written for the Israelites, particularly the new generation of Israelites who were about to take possession of the Promised Land. It was a message of encouragement, reminding the people of God's faithfulness, the importance of obedience to His commands, and the fulfillment of the promises made to their ancestors.

CONTEXT

Joshua takes place after the death of Moses and chronicles Israel's conquest of Canaan, which they had been promised by God. The book opens with God commissioning Joshua to lead the Israelites across the Jordan River and into the land of Canaan. The narrative details key military campaigns, the division of the land among the tribes, and the renewal of the covenant at Shechem. The historical backdrop is one of transition from wandering in the desert to the establishment of Israel as a nation in the land of promise.

LITERARY STYLES

Joshua is a historical narrative with elements of law, poetry, and exhortation. The book is structured around the key events of the conquest, including battles, divine interventions, and the distribution of land. It also contains speeches and covenant renewals that emphasize the theological significance of the military victories.

KEY MESSAGE

The key message of Joshua is the faithfulness of God to His promises and the importance of obedience to His commands. The conquest of Canaan is not just a military success but a fulfillment of God's covenant with Israel. Joshua emphasizes that Israel's success in the land is dependent on their faithfulness to God and His law.

The book also teaches that God is both a warrior and a provider. His presence with Israel, symbolized by the ark of the covenant, assures them of victory and peace. Joshua challenges Israel to live in the land with the knowledge that their blessings are tied to their loyalty to God. The covenant is not just a promise of land, but a call to holiness, worship, and devotion to the Lord. Joshua is both a story of conquest and a call to covenant faithfulness, illustrating that God's plans are fulfilled through His people's obedience and trust in His leadership.

JUDGES

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF JUDGES?

The authorship of Judges is traditionally attributed to the prophet Samuel, though some scholars believe it was compiled by various authors or editors over time. The book is part of the Deuteronomistic history, a series of books (Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, and 1-2 Kings) that reflect on Israel's history in light of the covenant and God's judgment.

WHO WAS JUDGES WRITTEN FOR?

Judges was written for the people of Israel, particularly those living during the period of the monarchy or shortly after. It served as both a reflection on Israel's turbulent history and a warning against the consequences of unfaithfulness to God. It reminded the Israelites of their need for a righteous leader and the importance of remaining faithful to the covenant.

CONTEXT

The book of Judges takes place after the death of Joshua, during a time when Israel had not yet established a monarchy. The Israelites were living in the Promised Land, but they faced constant threats from surrounding nations and struggled with internal disunity. The period of the judges is marked by a cyclical pattern: Israel falls into sin, experiences oppression from foreign enemies, repents, and is delivered by a judge—temporary leaders raised up by God to deliver His people. This cycle repeats itself throughout the book. Judges spans roughly 200 years, providing a theological explanation for the chaos and decline of Israel during this time.

LITERARY STYLES

Judges is a historical narrative mixed with poetry and epilogue sections. It contains both detailed stories of individual judges and broader theological reflections. The narrative style is often vivid and dramatic, highlighting the heroic acts of the judges as well as the moral and spiritual failings of Israel. There is also a marked use of repetition, emphasizing the cyclical nature of Israel's disobedience and redemption.

KEY MESSAGE

The central message of Judges is that Israel's lack of faithfulness to God leads to spiritual and moral decay, resulting in political instability and oppression. However it emphasizes God's continual willingness to save his people. The recurring cycle of sin, judgment, repentance, and deliverance shows the need for Israel to have a righteous, permanent leader—a theme that points forward to the eventual establishment of the monarchy under Saul and David.

Judges emphasizes that God is still sovereign, even in a time when Israel lacked a king. Each judge is an instrument of God's deliverance, but they are ultimately a temporary solution to a deeper problem: the people's failure to remain faithful to God's covenant. The book illustrates the consequences of Israel's moral and spiritual decline, while also showing God's mercy in raising up leaders who deliver the people when they turn back to Him. Ultimately, Judges underscores the need for true leadership—one that leads with faithfulness to God and His law.

RUTH

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF RUTH?

The authorship of Ruth is traditionally attributed to the prophet Samuel, though the book itself does not specify an author. Some scholars suggest it may have been written by a later editor or compiler, possibly during the time of David or Solomon, given its emphasis on the Davidic lineage.

WHO WAS RUTH WRITTEN FOR?

Ruth was written for the people of Israel, particularly during the early monarchy, as a story that would inspire faithfulness, loyalty, and hope. It was likely intended to show how God worked in the everyday lives of ordinary people, even in times of national uncertainty, and to highlight the importance of God's covenant love and kindness.

CONTEXT

The story of Ruth takes place during the time of the judges, a period marked by moral and social chaos in Israel. The narrative unfolds in the small town of Bethlehem and centers on the life of a Moabite woman, Ruth, who marries an Israelite, Naomi's son, but is widowed soon after. Ruth's loyalty to her mother-in-law Naomi, her commitment to the God of Israel, and her eventual marriage to Boaz highlight themes of redemption, God's providence, and the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan. Ruth is a story of personal faithfulness and divine grace that plays a significant role in Israel's history, as Ruth is the great-grandmother of King David.

LITERARY STYLES

Ruth is a narrative with elements of poetry, particularly in its use of dialogue and subtle themes of loyalty, providence, and redemption. The book is considered one of the most beautiful short stories in the Bible, marked by its simplicity, emotional depth, and moving portrayal of relationships. It is also rich with literary devices such as irony, inclusivity, and allusions to God's faithfulness.

KEY MESSAGE

The key message of Ruth is that God works through the faithfulness of individuals, even in times of hardship, to bring about His redemptive purposes. Ruth, a foreigner, shows immense loyalty to Naomi, choosing to leave her own people and land in order to embrace Naomi's God and people. Through this act of devotion, God providentially guides her to a new life, and through her marriage to Boaz, He provides for both Ruth and Naomi.

The story also demonstrates God's ability to bring redemption out of hardship, illustrating the concept of "kinsman redeemer," where a relative could marry a widow to preserve the family line. This concept prefigures Christ as the ultimate Redeemer, who offers salvation to all people, regardless of their background. Ruth ultimately teaches that God's plan of salvation is for all people and that His love and grace transcend boundaries.

1 & 2 SAMUEL

WHO WROTE 1 & 2 SAMUEL?

The authorship of 1 & 2 Samuel is traditionally attributed to the prophet Samuel, with possible contributions from Nathan and Gad. These books were likely compiled by later editors, likely during the time of the monarchy, to reflect on Israel's transition from tribal confederation to monarchy.

WHO WERE 1 & 2 SAMUEL WRITTEN FOR?

1 & 2 Samuel were written for the people of Israel, particularly to explain the establishment of the monarchy and the theological implications of kingship. They were likely intended for a post-monarchic audience, emphasizing the role of God in raising up leaders and the importance of faithful leadership.

CONTEXT

1 & 2 Samuel cover a pivotal period in Israel's history, from the birth of Samuel to the death of King David. The books focus on the transition from the era of the judges to the monarchy, with the rise of Saul as Israel's first king and the eventual establishment of David as the central figure. Key events include Samuel's leadership, Saul's downfall, David's anointing and rise, and the challenges David faces as king.

LITERARY STYLES

The books are historical narratives, with poetic sections, especially David's songs and prayers. They blend storytelling with theological reflections, illustrating the personal struggles and triumphs of Israel's leaders.

KEY MESSAGE

1 & 2 Samuel emphasize the sovereignty of God in raising and removing leaders, illustrating that leadership is a gift from God and requires faithfulness. Saul's failure and David's success are framed as lessons in obedience and trust. The books highlight the need for a king who will follow God's ways, pointing to David as a model, despite his flaws. Ultimately, they underscore that true leadership must be aligned with God's will and purposes for Israel.

1 & 2 KINGS

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF KINGS?

The authorship of 1 Kings and 2 Kings is traditionally attributed to the prophet Jeremiah, Ezra or Ezekiel though this is speculative. The book was a part of one complete work that we have broken up into 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings and 2 Kings.

WHO WAS 1 KINGS WRITTEN FOR?

1 Kings was written for the people of Israel and Judah, particularly during the Babylonian exile. It serves as a historical record and a theological reflection, reminding the exiled community of their past, the reasons for their current situation, and the faithfulness of God despite their failures.

CONTEXT

1 Kings covers the period from the end of King David's reign (around 970 B.C.E.) to the reign of Jehoshaphat in Judah and Ahaziah in Israel (around 853 B.C.E.). The book narrates the united monarchy under Solomon, the division of the kingdom into Israel (northern kingdom) and Judah (southern kingdom), and the subsequent rulers of both kingdoms. It provides a theological interpretation of Israel's history, focusing on the fidelity of kings to the covenant with God.

LITERARY STYLES

1 Kings is a historical narrative with prophetic elements. The book includes detailed accounts of royal reigns, prophetic ministries, and significant events, using a theological lens to interpret the history of Israel and Judah.

KEY MESSAGE

Kings focuses on the faithfulness of God to His chosen people despite the unfaithfulness of Israel's kings. It also highlights covenant loyalty as the singular measurement by which the rule of each king is evaluated. As in our lives, each king's first duty was to God above all else.

The book of Kings also outlines the role that prophets play in bringing calling God's people back to faithfulness and details the dangers that falling into idolatry can play, not only in our own lives, but those around us.

1 & 2 CHRONICLES

WHO WROTE 1 & 2 CHRONICLES?

The authorship of 1 & 2 Chronicles is traditionally attributed to the prophet Ezra, though some scholars suggest that the books may have been written by a group of scribes or compilers after the Babylonian exile. The Chronicler seems to have drawn upon earlier sources like the books of Samuel and Kings, focusing on the spiritual aspects of Israel's history.

WHO WERE 1 & 2 CHRONICLES WRITTEN FOR?

1 & 2 Chronicles were written for the post-exilic community of Israel, especially those returning from Babylonian captivity. The books seek to encourage the people of Israel by reminding them of God's faithfulness, the importance of the Davidic line, and the centrality of the temple and worship in Jerusalem.

CONTEXT

1 & 2 Chronicles retell much of the history found in 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings, but with a distinct theological focus. The Chronicler emphasizes Judah's kingship, particularly David and Solomon, and the significance of the temple in Jerusalem. The books cover the reigns of David, Solomon, and the kings of Judah, offering a retrospective view on Israel's history, with a strong emphasis on worship, covenant faithfulness, and God's promises. The books end with the decree of Cyrus allowing the Israelites to return to their land.

LITERARY STYLES

1 & 2 Chronicles are historical narratives, with a focus on genealogy, temple worship, and religious reform. The style is more formal than Samuel and Kings, often emphasizing the faithfulness of Judah's kings and their dedication to God.

KEY MESSAGE

The key message of Ruth is that God works through the faithfulness of individuals, even in times of hardship, to bring about His redemptive purposes. Ruth, a foreigner, shows immense loyalty to Naomi, choosing to leave her own people and land in order to embrace Naomi's God and people. Through this act of devotion, God providentially guides her to a new life, and through her marriage to Boaz, He provides for both Ruth and Naomi.

The story also demonstrates God's ability to bring redemption out of hardship, illustrating the concept of "kinsman redeemer," where a relative could marry a widow to preserve the family line. This concept prefigures Christ as the ultimate Redeemer, who offers salvation to all people, regardless of their background. Ruth ultimately teaches that God's plan of salvation is for all people and that His love and grace transcend boundaries.

EZRA

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF EZRA?

The book of Ezra is traditionally attributed to Ezra the priest and scribe. It is likely that Ezra himself wrote the book instead of dictating an oral tradition. Ezra's role as a leader during the return from Babylonian exile makes him the central figure in the narrative.

WHO WAS EZRA WRITTEN FOR?

Ezra was written for the returning exiles in Jerusalem, as well as the broader community of Israelites who were rebuilding their identity and faith after the Babylonian exile. It was meant to encourage the people, reminding them of God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promise of return and the importance of restoring proper worship in the rebuilt temple.

CONTEXT

The book of Ezra takes place after the decree of Cyrus, which allowed the Israelites to return to Jerusalem from Babylon in 538 B.C.E. The narrative begins with the rebuilding of the temple, led by Zerubbabel, and continues with the reforms instituted by Ezra the scribe. Ezra's mission is to restore the law of God among the people and ensure proper worship practices. The book highlights the challenges the returning community faced, including opposition from neighboring nations, internal corruption, and the need for spiritual renewal.

LITERARY STYLES

Ezra is primarily a historical narrative, with occasional prayers and public speeches. It combines a report of events with theological reflections on God's role in the restoration of Israel. The book includes lists, decrees, and genealogies, emphasizing the importance of covenant faithfulness.

KEY MESSAGE

The key message of Ezra is the faithfulness of God to fulfill His promises, particularly in the restoration of the Israelites to their land. The rebuilding of the temple symbolizes the restoration of proper worship and relationship with God. Ezra's leadership focuses on the centrality of God's law and the necessity of covenant renewal for the people of Israel. The book teaches that spiritual restoration requires both communal effort and personal commitment to God's commands, urging the people to live faithfully according to His Word.

NEHEMIAH

WHO WROTE NEHEMIAH?

The book of Nehemiah is traditionally attributed to Nehemiah himself, though some scholars suggest it may have been compiled by later editors or scribes. Nehemiah's personal involvement in the events makes him the primary voice in the narrative, but it also includes official records and letters.

WHO WAS NEHEMIAH WRITTEN FOR?

Nehemiah was written for the Jewish people returning from exile and rebuilding their community in Jerusalem. It was meant to encourage and challenge them to continue their efforts in restoring the city, its walls, and its spiritual life, while reinforcing the importance of faithfulness to God's covenant.

CONTEXT

The book of Nehemiah picks up after the return of the exiles under Ezra's leadership. Nehemiah, a cupbearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes, hears of Jerusalem's ruined state and requests permission to lead the rebuilding of the city's walls. The book details the challenges Nehemiah faces, including opposition from neighboring nations, internal corruption, and the need for spiritual renewal. It also highlights the importance of leadership, prayer, and the rebuilding of both physical and spiritual structures in Jerusalem.

LITERARY STYLES

Nehemiah is a historical narrative that includes prayers, speeches, and official records. It also contains elements of bureaucratic documentation, with letters and decrees from the Persian king included in the text.

KEY MESSAGE

The key message of Nehemiah is that God's people are called to be faithful in rebuilding not only physical structures but also their spiritual lives. Nehemiah's leadership emphasizes the importance of prayer, persistence in the face of opposition, and the need for communal commitment to God's law. The book teaches that restoration involves both physical action and spiritual renewal, with a clear focus on the need for faithfulness to God's covenant in all areas of life.

ESTHER

WHO WROTE ESTHER?

The authorship of Esther is unknown, though it is traditionally attributed to Mordecai, Esther's cousin and guardian. Some scholars suggest that it was written by an unknown Jewish author, possibly during the Persian period, to record the events surrounding Esther's rise to queenship and the deliverance of the Jewish people.

WHO WAS ESTHER WRITTEN FOR?

Esther was written for the Jewish community, particularly those living in exile within the Persian Empire. It aimed to encourage them by highlighting God's providence and protection, even when His name is not explicitly mentioned in the story. The book also reinforces the importance of courage, faith, and God's sovereignty over the affairs of nations.

CONTEXT

The book of Esther is set in the Persian Empire, during the reign of King Xerxes (Ahasuerus), around the 5th century B.C.E. The narrative centers on Esther, a Jewish woman who becomes queen of Persia and, with the help of her cousin Mordecai, saves the Jewish people from a plot to annihilate them. The events occur in the capital city of Susa, and the story highlights the themes of divine providence, courage, and the reversal of fortunes.

LITERARY STYLES

Esther is a historical narrative, with dramatic elements that include irony, suspense, and reversals of fortune. It contains a blend of storytelling and edifying reflection, focusing on the deliverance of the Jewish people through Esther's bravery. The book also includes official decrees and royal edicts as part of its narrative structure.

KEY MESSAGE

The key message of Esther is that God is sovereign and works behind the scenes to protect and deliver His people, even when His presence is not overtly visible. The story emphasizes the role of courage, faith, and obedience, as Esther risked her life to save the Jews. It also teaches that God can use ordinary people, like Esther and Mordecai, to accomplish His purposes. The reversal of fortunes and the celebration of Purim highlight the theme of divine justice and deliverance.

JOB

WHO WROTE JOB?

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PSALMS

WHO WROTE PSALMS?

The book of Psalms is a collection of songs, prayers, and hymns written by multiple authors over a span of centuries. King David is traditionally credited with composing many of the psalms, but other contributors include Asaph, the sons of Korah, Solomon, and Moses, among others. The psalms reflect the diverse spiritual experiences of the Israelites and were compiled into one book over time.

WHO WAS PSALMS WRITTEN FOR?

The Psalms were written for the people of Israel as expressions of worship, lament, praise, and prayer. They were meant to be sung or recited in both public and private worship settings, offering a way for God's people to engage with Him through various emotional and spiritual experiences. The psalms were used in temple worship and continued to serve as a foundation for Christian liturgy and personal devotion.

CONTEXT

The book of Psalms is a diverse collection of 150 poems, hymns, and prayers that span a wide range of themes and human experiences. They include expressions of praise, thanksgiving, lament, repentance, and petitions for deliverance. While many psalms were written during the reign of David, others reflect different periods of Israel's history, including times of exile and restoration. The Psalms are often categorized into types such as royal psalms, wisdom psalms, penitential psalms, and imprecatory psalms, each serving different purposes within the life of Israel.

LITERARY STYLES

The Psalms are primarily poetic and often use parallelism, metaphors, and imagery to express deep emotions and theological truths. The language is rich and evocative, with a blend of personal reflection and communal expression. The psalms include acrostic psalms, petitions, songs of praise, and prophetic declarations, making them both varied in style and profound in their spiritual depth.

KEY MESSAGE

The key message of Psalms is the invitation to engage with God in all circumstances of life. The psalms teach that God is worthy of praise in times of joy and sorrow, and they provide a language for addressing God honestly in moments of distress or despair. The Psalms emphasize the sovereignty of God, His faithfulness to His covenant, and His care for His people. Ultimately, the book encourages believers to find their refuge in God's presence, to seek His guidance, and to trust in His justice and mercy. Through its broad spectrum of emotions and themes, the Psalms affirm that worship is a holistic experience encompassing both praise and lament.

PROVERBS

WHO WROTE PROVERBS?

The book of Proverbs is traditionally attributed to King Solomon, renowned for his wisdom, though it also includes sayings from other figures like Agur and Lemuel. Proverbs 1-24 are mainly associated with Solomon's teachings, while chapters 25-29 are collections of Solomon's proverbs compiled later by the scribes of King Hezekiah.

WHO WAS PROVERBS WRITTEN FOR?

Proverbs was written primarily for young people, especially young men, in Israel who were seeking wisdom for navigating life. It serves as a guide to living righteously and wisely, providing moral and practical instruction. The book was intended to help readers understand the value of wisdom, the importance of fear of the Lord, and the practical application of God's law in everyday decisions.

CONTEXT

Proverbs is part of the Wisdom Literature in the Bible, offering practical, often pithy sayings on a wide range of life's issues, from personal integrity to relationships and work ethics. It is a guide to wise living, focusing on the fear of the Lord as the foundation of true wisdom. The collection addresses various aspects of life, including the pursuit of knowledge, discipline, honesty, and righteousness, and it contrasts wisdom with folly, urging readers to choose the former.

LITERARY STYLES

Proverbs is written in the form of short, memorable sayings and maxims, often utilizing parallelism, where two lines contrast or complement each other. These proverbs are not mere rules but general principles for living a life that honors God. The book is also characterized by its poetic and instructional nature, with a father or teacher addressing a young listener or student.

KEY MESSAGE

The key message of Proverbs is that true wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:7), and that living according to God's wisdom leads to life, peace, and blessing. The book emphasizes the importance of moral character, integrity, and sound judgment, while warning against foolishness, dishonesty, and pride. Proverbs teaches that wisdom is not just intellectual knowledge but a practical way of living in relationship with God and others, applying divine truth to daily life. It calls the reader to embrace wisdom, live in righteousness, and trust in God's guidance for a fulfilling life.

ECCLESIASTES

WHO WROTE ECCLESIASTES?

The book of Proverbs is traditionally attributed to King Solomon, renowned for his wisdom, though it also includes sayings from other figures like Agur and Lemuel. Proverbs 1-24 are mainly associated with Solomon's teachings, while chapters 25-29 are collections of Solomon's proverbs compiled later by the scribes of King Hezekiah.

WHO WAS ECCLESIASTES WRITTEN FOR?

Ecclesiastes was written for those who seek to understand the meaning and purpose of life, especially in the face of life's fleeting nature. It addresses both the people of Israel and those in the broader human community, urging readers to reflect on the emptiness of worldly pursuits and the importance of fearing God and living wisely.

CONTEXT

Ecclesiastes is one of the most philosophical and reflective books of the Bible. It is often described as a meditation on the meaning of life, examining the futility of human effort, wealth, pleasure, and wisdom. The author, who identifies himself as "the Teacher," explores the various aspects of life and finds them all lacking lasting significance when pursued outside of a relationship with God. Written during a time of prosperity, the book expresses a sense of disillusionment with the world, offering a sobering view of life's transience.

LITERARY STYLES

Ecclesiastes is written in poetic and prose form, featuring a series of reflections, observations, and epilogues. The book is known for its philosophical tone, often using rhetorical questions, paradoxes, and observations about life's seeming futility. It blends wisdom literature with existential inquiry, presenting profound thoughts on life's purpose, the human condition, and the limits of human understanding.

KEY MESSAGE

The key message of Ecclesiastes is that life, when viewed from a purely human perspective, is fleeting and ultimately futile (“vanity of vanities”). All human endeavors—whether wealth, pleasure, work, or wisdom—are temporary and cannot provide lasting fulfillment. The author’s central conclusion is that the only lasting meaning comes from fearing God and keeping His commandments. Ecclesiastes encourages readers to find joy in life’s simple pleasures, while acknowledging that ultimate understanding is beyond human grasp. In the end, true wisdom is recognizing God’s sovereignty and trusting in His plan, even amid life’s uncertainties and frustrations.

SONG OF SOLOMON

WHO WROTE SONG OF SOLOMON?

The Song of Solomon is traditionally attributed to King Solomon. It is often considered a part of Solomon's wisdom literature, with some viewing it as a celebration of love and others as an allegory of God's love for His people.

WHO WAS SONG OF SOLOMON WRITTEN FOR?

The Song of Solomon was likely written for the people of Israel, especially to celebrate the beauty and sacredness of love, marriage, and human relationships. It was intended to elevate the understanding of love as a powerful, intimate bond between two people, highlighting both its physical and spiritual dimensions. It also holds significance for later readers as an allegory for the love between Christ and the Church.

CONTEXT

The Song of Solomon, also known as the Song of Songs, is a collection of poetic love songs that express the passionate and tender relationship between a bride (often thought to be the Shulammitte woman) and her bridegroom (often identified as Solomon). The book's context is one of romantic and marital love, celebrating the beauty of love between two individuals. Although it does not directly reference Israel or the covenant, its themes of longing, desire, and devotion are deeply embedded in the biblical understanding of human relationships. Some readers interpret the Song of Solomon as a celebration of human love, while others view it allegorically, as symbolizing God's deep love for His people.

LITERARY STYLES

The Song of Solomon is a lyrical and highly symbolic book of poetry. It employs vivid imagery, metaphors, and parallelism to describe the beauty of love, both physical and emotional. The book does not follow a strict narrative but instead consists of dialogues between the lovers, using rich language and sensory detail to express their desires, affections, and longing. The structure of the book is often interpreted as a series of poetic exchanges between the bride and groom, with occasional reflections by other voices, such as a chorus or friends.

KEY MESSAGE

The key message of the Song of Solomon is the celebration of love as a powerful, sacred, and beautiful gift from God. It portrays love in its fullest form: passionate, intimate, and devoted. The book highlights the beauty of marital love, affirming its value and importance as part of God's creation. The Song of Solomon also communicates the deep yearning and longing that accompanies true love, while offering a picture of the mutual devotion that should characterize a loving relationship. For some, the allegorical interpretation of the book underscores God's passionate love for His people, symbolized in the bond between the bride and groom. Ultimately, the book teaches that love is both a profound emotional connection and a reflection of God's love and beauty in the world.

ISAIAH

WHO WROTE ISAIAH?

The book of Isaiah is traditionally attributed to the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz. Modern scholarship suggests that the book may have multiple authors or contributors, often divided into three main sections: First Isaiah (chapters 1-39), attributed to Isaiah himself, Second Isaiah (chapters 40-55), and Third Isaiah (chapters 56-66), which are thought to have been written by his disciples or later prophets inspired by his teachings, although this is certainly not a consensus among all Christian scholars.

WHO WAS ISAIAH WRITTEN FOR?

Isaiah's messages were directed primarily to the people of Judah and Jerusalem. His audience included both the common people and the ruling elites. Isaiah's prophecies addressed a wide range of social, political, and religious issues, aiming to call the nation back to faithfulness to God. However, one major contribution that the book of Isaiah brings is the number of messianic prophecies it puts forward that point to Jesus.

CONTEXT

Isaiah prophesied during the 8th century B.C., spanning the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in Judah. This period was marked by significant political upheaval, including threats from the Assyrian Empire and internal social and religious corruption. The book addresses both immediate and future events, including the Babylonian exile and the eventual restoration of Israel. These events can also be read in the historical books earlier in the OT.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Isaiah is a rich tapestry of prophetic poetry and prose. It includes oracles of judgment and salvation, visionary narratives, and apocalyptic literature. Isaiah uses vivid imagery, allegory, and symbolic actions to convey his messages.

KEY MESSAGE

The book of Isaiah repeats a picture of “old Jerusalem” being judged, destroyed and then restored to become “new Israel” over and over. There are many messages that are communicated within this framework, but the overall themes of Isaiah are the overwhelming holiness of God, the fallen unfaithfulness of people and the restorative grace that will be brought by the coming Messiah from the lineage of David.

JEREMIAH

WHO WROTE JEREMIAH?

The book of Jeremiah is attributed to the prophet Jeremiah, son of Hilkiah, from the priestly town of Anathoth in Judah. Jeremiah's prophecies were recorded by his scribe, Baruch, who played a significant role in compiling and preserving the messages.

WHO WAS JEREMIAH WRITTEN FOR?

Jeremiah's primary audience was the people of Judah, including its kings, priests, and common citizens. His messages addressed the political, social, and religious leaders, calling them to repentance and warning them of impending judgment due to their unfaithfulness to God. However, as God predicts, the message of Jeremiah falls on deaf ears which leads to a substantial amount of emotional depth from the prophet that is recorded over his 40 years of ministry. This book reveals far more inward reflections from its author than any other prophetic book.

CONTEXT

Jeremiah's ministry spanned the late 7th and early 6th centuries B.C., a period marked by significant political turmoil. This included the reigns of the last kings of Judah, the rise and fall of the Assyrian Empire, and the growing threat of Babylon, which ultimately led to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile in 586 B.C.E. Jeremiah's prophecies reflect the imminent judgment on Judah and the call for repentance.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Jeremiah is a combination of poetic oracles, prose narratives, and biographical accounts. It includes prophecies of doom, laments, symbolic actions, and messages of hope and restoration, utilizing vivid imagery and emotional language.

KEY MESSAGE

Central to Jeremiah's message is the call for Judah to repent and turn back to God to avoid impending disaster. However within Jeremiah's story we also see the overarching theme of obedience which is displayed to great sacrifice in the life of Jeremiah and completely missing in the people of God. Jeremiah's own life and sufferings illustrate the cost of prophetic ministry and faithfulness to God's calling.

The book underscores God's control over nations and history, including the rise and fall of empires. Despite the severe judgments, Jeremiah also offers hope for future restoration and return from exile.

LAMENTATIONS

WHO WROTE LAMENTATIONS?

The authorship of Lamentations is traditionally attributed to the prophet Jeremiah, though this is not definitively proven. The book's style and content suggest a deep connection to the experiences of Jerusalem's fall.

WHO WAS LAMENTATIONS WRITTEN FOR?

Lamentations was written for the people of Judah, particularly those who experienced the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile. It served as a communal expression of grief and a theological reflection on the catastrophe.

It stands as the voice of grieving the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of God's people. Although likely authored by Jeremiah, this book gives voice to what the people of God felt in this key point of Israel's history.

CONTEXT

Lamentations was composed in the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The city's destruction by the Babylonians and the subsequent exile of its inhabitants provide the immediate backdrop for the book's poignant laments.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Lamentations is a series of poetic laments. It is structured as five separate poems, each an acrostic in the original Hebrew. The poems use vivid and emotional language to express sorrow, repentance, and a plea for God's mercy.

KEY MESSAGE

Lamentations conveys the profound grief and despair of the people of Judah following the fall of Jerusalem. It emphasizes the themes of mourning, repentance, and the hope for God's restoration. Despite the overwhelming sorrow, the book also contains a strong affirmation of God's steadfast love and faithfulness.

EZEKIEL

WHO WROTE EZEKIEL?

The book of Ezekiel is attributed to the prophet Ezekiel, who was both a priest and a prophet. Ezekiel's authorship is well-supported by the autobiographical style of the book.

WHO WAS EZEKIEL WRITTEN FOR?

Ezekiel's prophecies were directed towards the exiled community in Babylon, as well as those remaining in Judah. His messages addressed both immediate concerns of the exiles and broader theological reflections on Israel's covenant relationship with God.

CONTEXT

Ezekiel prophesied during the early 6th century B.C., beginning his ministry around 593 B.C., five years after being taken into exile. His ministry spanned the period leading up to and following the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Ezekiel combines a variety of literary forms, including visions, symbolic actions, allegories, and oracles. It is known for its vivid and often strange imagery, detailed descriptions, and complex structure.

KEY MESSAGE

Ezekiel emphasizes the themes of God's holiness, the judgment on Israel for their sins, and the hope of future restoration. The book portrays God's sovereignty and the necessity of repentance, while also offering visions of a renewed and restored Israel, including a new temple and a return to the land.

Specifically, this book presents perhaps the best picture in the OT of the restoration and resurrection of God's people. This latter section of Ezekiel's prophecy looks forward to the people's worship after Christ's return in the end times, when He will rule Israel and the nations from His throne in Jerusalem during His thousand year reign.

DANIEL

WHO WROTE DANIEL?

The book of Daniel is traditionally attributed to the prophet Daniel, a Jewish exile in Babylon. Daniel's authorship is supported by his role as the primary figure in the book, recording his visions, dreams, and interactions with Babylonian and Persian rulers.

WHO WAS DANIEL WRITTEN FOR?

Daniel wrote for the Jewish exiles in Babylon, particularly those serving in the royal court and facing challenges to their faith and identity. His prophecies and narratives provided encouragement, reassurance of God's sovereignty, and predictions of future events.

CONTEXT

Daniel lived during the Babylonian exile, beginning in 605 B.C.E., and continued into the Persian Empire under Cyrus the Great. The book spans over six decades of Daniel's life, detailing his rise to prominence in Babylonian and Persian administrations, and his experiences during various political and spiritual crises.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Daniel is a blend of narrative, prophecy, apocalyptic literature, and wisdom literature. It includes historical accounts, symbolic visions, and interpretations, using both Hebrew and Aramaic languages.

KEY MESSAGE

The overall message of the book of Daniel is a reminder of the sovereignty of God. Daniel highlights God's control over history and nations as well as his control in our lives on a more personal level. The examples of Daniel, as well as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego emphasize the need for obedience and faithfulness regardless of the situations we face here on earth. However they also highlight the constant help provided by God to his people that surpasses any powers attempting to enslave us.

The second part of Daniel is a very complex collection of apocalyptic prophecies regarding the rise and fall of many historical kingdoms. This eventually culminates, like many other prophetic books, in the establishment of God's eternal kingdom

HOSEA

WHO WROTE HOSEA?

The book of Hosea is attributed to the prophet Hosea, who prophesied in the northern kingdom of Israel. Hosea's ministry spanned the reigns of several kings of Israel and Judah, during a tumultuous period leading up to the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C.

WHO WAS HOSEA WRITTEN FOR?

Hosea's primary audience was the people of the northern kingdom of Israel. His prophecies also carried implications for Judah. The book addresses a community steeped in idolatry, social injustice, and covenant unfaithfulness, calling them to return to their covenantal relationship with God.

CONTEXT

Hosea's ministry occurred in the 8th century B.C., a time of significant political instability and moral decline in Israel. The northern kingdom was marked by frequent changes in leadership, foreign threats, and religious syncretism.

Several times in the old testament, God asks prophets to outwork a symbolic action as a message to His people. In this case, God asks Hosea (whose name means "salvation" to marry Gomer, a woman that the bible describes as "promiscuous." This relationship is to symbolize the unfaithful relationship Israel (and by extension, we) have with God's covenant.

LITERARY STYLES

Hosea is written in a poetic and prophetic style, characterized by vivid imagery, allegory, and metaphor. The book combines narrative elements with prophetic oracles and lamentations, using Hosea's personal experiences to illustrate God's message to Israel.

KEY MESSAGE

Hosea serves as a picture of both our unfaithful, repeated betrayals of God's covenant, and God's patient, redemptive love for us. Ultimately, this book is extremely hopeful despite the impending judgment that the prophet describes. God is telling his people that he will renew his covenant with them despite the clear violations of that covenant that have occurred. The book ends with a very hopeful poem about God's faithfulness and mercy and a call for Israel to repent.

JOEL

WHO WROTE JOEL?

The book of Joel is attributed to the prophet Joel, the son of Pethuel. Little is known about Joel beyond what is written in the book itself, and there are no historical details that conclusively date his life.

WHO WAS JOEL WRITTEN FOR?

Joel's message was directed towards the people of Judah and Jerusalem. His audience primarily consisted of the inhabitants of these regions, including the leaders and the priests. The content of his writing suggests that Joel was addressing a community facing a crisis, likely related to a locust plague or a severe drought, which he interpreted as a sign of impending divine judgment.

CONTEXT

Joel is very unique among prophetic books because there is no clear indication of when it was written. The prophet Joel is also clearly familiar with a lot of the other prophetic books in the OT, leading some to think it must have been written much later. The precise dating of Joel is debated among scholars, with proposed dates ranging from the 9th to the 5th century B.C.E. The book addresses a period of calamity, using the vivid imagery of a locust plague to depict an urgent call to repentance and a promise of restoration. The historical backdrop may involve various political and social upheavals affecting Judah.

LITERARY STYLES

Joel is primarily composed of prophetic poetry, characterized by vivid imagery and symbolic language. The book blends elements of lamentation, exhortation, and apocalyptic vision.

KEY MESSAGE

Like many other prophets, Joel is writing about the coming judgment of the Lord. However, a key theme of Joel is that repentance will bring hope and that ultimately, God's mercy and love is more powerful than his wrath. This is highlighted by his quotation of Exodus. Ultimately, Joel is encouraging the people to repent and then leads them in acts of repentance that will bring about God's blessing and salvation.

AMOS

WHO WROTE AMOS?

The book of Amos is attributed to the prophet Amos, who was a shepherd and fig tree farmer from the town of Tekoa in Judah. Unlike other prophets, Amos did not come from a prophetic or priestly lineage, but his calling by God to prophesy brought him to the northern kingdom of Israel.

WHO WAS AMOS WRITTEN FOR?

Amos directed his message primarily towards the northern kingdom of Israel, though he also addresses the neighboring nations and the southern kingdom of Judah. His audience included the wealthy and powerful elite of Israel who were complacent in their prosperity and guilty of social injustices.

CONTEXT

The book of Amos is set in the 8th century B.C., during the reigns of Uzziah in Judah and Jeroboam II in Israel, a period marked by economic prosperity but also significant social inequality and moral decay. Amos prophesied in a time when Israel enjoyed relative peace and affluence, leading to complacency and neglect of the covenant with God.

Due to his humble station in life, Amos speaks specifically on behalf of the oppressed and the voiceless. His overall message is nearly devoid of hope that other prophets include - he devotes only 5 verses at the end of his book to redemption and restoration. Instead, his focus is on the privileged people of Israel and their lack of fidelity to God's covenant.

LITERARY STYLES

Amos is composed of a series of oracles, visions, and poetic discourses. The book is known for its vivid and sometimes harsh imagery, using powerful language to denounce the injustices and call for repentance.

KEY MESSAGE

The poems and visions described in Amos are an indictment of God's people who use the blessing in their lives to become apathetic and mistreat the people around them. He also highlights the calling that was placed on Israel and their overall failure to live up to that calling - specifically neglecting the poor and ignoring injustice.

Instead, Amos calls readers to live with justice and righteousness as key attributes in all interactions. True worship involves putting into practice what God has asked of us.

OBADIAH

WHO WROTE OBADIAH?

The book of Obadiah is attributed to the prophet Obadiah. Little is known about Obadiah himself, and the book does not provide specific details about his life or background.

WHO WAS OBADIAH WRITTEN FOR?

Obadiah was writing for the people of Judah, particularly those who were suffering during the Babylonian conquest and exile. The prophecy also addresses the nation of Edom, condemning them for their actions against Judah during this tumultuous period.

CONTEXT

The book of Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament, consisting of only one chapter. It is believed to have been written after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E., during the Babylonian exile, though some scholars date it in the mid 800's following an invasion. The prophecy centers on the Edomites, descendants of Esau, who are condemned for their hostile actions against Judah, their kinsmen, during the Babylonian invasion. Following the exile of Israel, the Edomites plundered and robbed Israel, and this book is God's condemnation of those actions.

LITERARY STYLES

Obadiah is a prophetic book written in poetic form. It utilizes vivid and forceful language to convey messages of judgment and hope, combining elements of oracle and lamentation.

KEY MESSAGE

This book stands as a warning against sin and a hopeful painting of what the world will look like after the judgment of God. It begins by demonstrating that all prideful nations that act like Edom will face God's judgment in the same way. This book is an example to God's people that pride and sin will lead to the calamity at the hands of a just God. However, after verse 15, Obadiah describes the "New Jerusalem" which will fulfill God's original intent for his people and stand as a bastion of God's grace for the world.

JONAH

WHO WROTE JONAH?

The book of Jonah is traditionally attributed to the prophet Jonah, son of Amittai, though the text itself does not specify its author. Jonah is unique among the prophetic books in that it focuses more on the narrative of the prophet's life and mission rather than a collection of oracles.

WHO WAS JONAH WRITTEN FOR?

The book of Jonah was likely written for the people of Israel. It serves as a lesson on God's compassion and mercy, extending beyond Israel to include even their enemies, the Assyrians. This is key in understanding that God's mission was always for the whole world, not simply for the nation of Israel. The narrative challenges the Israelite audience to reflect on their attitudes towards God's mercy and their own call to repentance.

CONTEXT

Jonah's story is set in the 8th century B.C., during the reign of Jeroboam II in Israel. The backdrop of the narrative includes the city of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, which was known for its wickedness. The book's historical and cultural context highlights the tension between Israel and Assyria, a powerful enemy nation.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Jonah is primarily a narrative, written in a straightforward, almost parabolic style. It combines elements of historical narrative and didactic story-telling, with a strong focus on the themes of repentance and divine mercy.

KEY MESSAGE

The book of Jonah is unique within the scope of the prophets because Jonah is portrayed, not as a faithful mouthpiece for God, but as a selfish and cowardly prophet who barely, if ever, actually delivers God's message.

However the overall themes of God's patient grace and mercy when met by true repentance highlights God's desire to bring restoration in spite of man's unfaithfulness and apathy. In Jonah, God works in spite of his messenger and still brings revival to a whole people group.

Jonah also explores key themes of disobedience and obedience. Jonah's repeated and blatant refusal to follow God's instructions are often seen as a reflection of our own stubborn nature.

MICAH

WHO WROTE MICAH?

The book of Micah is attributed to the prophet Micah of Moresheth. Micah was a contemporary of the prophets Isaiah, Amos, and Hosea, and his ministry occurred during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

WHO WAS MICAH WRITTEN FOR?

Micah was writing for the people of Judah and Israel. His audience included both the common people and (for much of his prophecy) the leaders of Samaria and Jerusalem, whom he admonished for their injustices and idolatry. The book addresses social, religious, and political issues, calling the people to repentance and warning of impending judgment.

CONTEXT

Micah prophesied in the 8th century B.C., around the time surrounding the fall of Israel to the Assyrian Empire in 722 B.C. The prophet deals with the impending threat of the Assyrians and Micah's messages reflect the socio-political upheaval and the need for genuine covenant faithfulness.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Micah combines elements of prophetic oracles, poetic laments, and visionary discourse. It employs vivid imagery and rhetorical questions to convey its messages of judgment and hope.

KEY MESSAGE

Like many of the prophetic books, Micah centers on the rebellion of God's people, the coming judgment as a result and a future hope that will come as a result of God's faithfulness. A significant theme in Micah is the call for social justice, condemning the exploitation and oppression of the poor and vulnerable. Micah emphasizes the importance of sincere worship and living justly, contrasting it with empty religious rituals.

Micah also envisions the coming kingdom of the Messianic King. This, of course, points towards the future in which we now live, but it highlights the reign of Christ and its significance given the backdrop of God's relationship with man throughout the Old Testament.

NAHUM

WHO WROTE NAHUM?

The book of Nahum is attributed to the prophet Nahum, whose name means "comfort" or "consolation." Little is known about Nahum's background, except that he was from Elkosh, a location whose precise whereabouts are uncertain. Many scholars believe this to be a small town in southern Judah.

WHO WAS NAHUM WRITTEN FOR?

Nahum's primary audience was the people of Judah. His message, however, was directed against the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. The prophecy was intended to provide hope and comfort to Judah by foretelling the downfall of their oppressor, Assyria. In some ways, this book is closely aligned with the events of Jonah.

CONTEXT

Nahum's prophecy is set in the 7th century B.C., likely between 663 B.C. (the fall of Thebes, mentioned in Nahum 3:8) and 612 B.C. (the fall of Nineveh). During this period, Assyria was the dominant empire, known for its brutal military campaigns and oppressive rule over its conquered territories, including Israel and Judah. Nahum's message foretells the imminent destruction of Nineveh, which came to pass in 612 B.C.

Nahum pulls heavily on the language from the book of Isaiah in order to describe the fall of Nineveh and the remnant of God. This context allows us to determine that while Nahum is talking about Nineveh, he is actually seeing it as an example for what could come to God's people.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Nahum is written in a highly poetic and vivid style. It includes elements of a prophetic oracle, a taunt song, and a vivid depiction of divine judgment. Nahum uses powerful imagery and metaphor to convey the certainty and severity of Nineveh's downfall.

KEY MESSAGE

Nahum emphasizes God's sovereignty and righteous judgment - particularly against the enemies of God. The book underscores God's control over nations and history, portraying Him as the ultimate judge who holds empires accountable. However rays of hope also shine through in this book which describes God as a rescuer and the true power against darkness that we experience in our world and in our lives.

HABAKKUK

WHO WROTE HABAKKUK?

The book of Habakkuk is attributed to the prophet Habakkuk. Little is known about him outside of this book, and there are no concrete historical details about his life or background.

WHO WAS HABAKKUK WRITTEN FOR?

Habakkuk's message was directed towards the people of Judah. His writings address the concerns and struggles of a community facing imminent invasion and suffering under social injustice and violence.

CONTEXT

Habakkuk is believed to have been written in the late 7th century B.C., likely during the reign of King Jehoiakim, a time marked by the rise of the Babylonian Empire. The book reflects the prophet's dialogue with God concerning the impending judgment on Judah and the use of Babylon as an instrument of divine punishment. Due to the immediacy of the threat described, Habakkuk likely prophesied in the first five years of Jehoiakim's reign (609–598 BC) to a king who led his people into evil.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Habakkuk is a mix of prophetic dialogue and prayer, featuring a unique structure where the prophet questions God and receives responses. It combines elements of lamentation, oracle, and hymn.

KEY MESSAGE

Habakkuk grapples with the problem of evil and the justice of God, questioning why the wicked prosper and why God allows injustice to prevail. The key message is one of faith and trust in God's ultimate justice and sovereignty, despite the apparent triumph of evil. Habakkuk concludes with a powerful statement of faith, expressing trust in God's plan even in the face of adversity.

One especially poignant section of this book contains one of the longest biblical dialogues between a person and God which highlights the authentic prayer lives that God desires from each of us.

ZEPHANIAH

WHO WROTE ZEPHANIAH?

The book of Zephaniah is attributed to the prophet Zephaniah, who was a descendant of King Hezekiah. This lineage gives him a royal background, which makes him unique among the prophets and would have influenced his perspectives.

WHO WAS ZEPHANIAH WRITTEN FOR?

Zephaniah's primary audience was the people of Judah. His messages were aimed at the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the surrounding areas, particularly focusing on the corrupt leaders, priests, and people engaged in idolatry and social injustice. Because of his royal lineage, his message to the leaders in Jerusalem would have received unique attention and therefore would have had a greater impact.

CONTEXT

Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of King Josiah in the late 7th century B.C. This period was marked by religious reforms initiated by Josiah in an attempt to return Judah to the worship of Yahweh. Zephaniah's prophecies likely contributed to these reforms, emphasizing the need for genuine repentance and change.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Zephaniah is composed of prophetic oracles and poetic discourse. It employs vivid and often harsh imagery to depict the coming judgment and the hope of restoration.

KEY MESSAGE

The central theme of Zephaniah is the "Day of the Lord," a time of divine judgment against Judah and the nations for their sins. However, it also offers a message of hope, promising that a remnant will be saved and that God will restore and purify his people. The book emphasizes the importance of humility, seeking God, and living righteously.

Specifically, Zephaniah is calling for reform and repentance where the people of God have turned away.

HAGGAI

WHO WROTE HAGGAI?

The book of Haggai is attributed to the prophet Haggai, who was active during the early post-exilic period.

WHO WAS HAGGAI WRITTEN FOR?

Haggai's messages were directed towards the Jewish community that had returned to Jerusalem from Babylonian exile. His primary audience included Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and Joshua, the high priest, as well as the people engaged in rebuilding the temple.

CONTEXT

Haggai prophesied in 520 B.C., a crucial period when the returned exiles were attempting to rebuild the temple amidst economic difficulties and opposition. The book reflects the challenges and encouragements associated with this rebuilding effort. It is worth noting that of all the biblical prophets, Haggai is the only one whose direction was quantitatively followed. The temple was rebuilt at his urging.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Haggai is composed of four prophetic oracles. It employs a straightforward and urgent style, using direct speech and practical exhortations.

KEY MESSAGE

The central message of Haggai is a call to prioritize the rebuilding of the temple as a symbol of the community's covenant relationship with God. Haggai emphasizes the blessings that come from obedience and the presence of God among his people. The book encourages the community to remain steadfast and faithful in their efforts, promising divine favor and future glory for the temple.

ZACHARIAH

WHO WROTE ZECHARIAH?

The book of Zechariah is attributed to the prophet Zechariah, son of Berekiah and grandson of Iddo. He was a contemporary of Haggai and part of the group of exiles who returned to Jerusalem.

WHO WAS ZECHARIAH WRITTEN FOR?

Zechariah's messages were directed towards the post-exilic community in Jerusalem. His audience included the leaders, such as Zerubbabel and Joshua, as well as the general population involved in the temple reconstruction.

CONTEXT

Zechariah began his ministry in 520 B.C., around the same time as Haggai. His prophecies span a period of several years, addressing the immediate need for temple rebuilding and offering visions of future restoration and messianic hope.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Zechariah combines elements of prophetic visions, oracles, and symbolic actions. It is known for its apocalyptic imagery, elaborate symbolism, and complex structure.

KEY MESSAGE

Zechariah's prophecies center on the themes of restoration, hope, and the coming of the Messiah. The book encourages the community to persevere in their efforts to rebuild the temple, promising that God's presence and blessing will return to Jerusalem. Zechariah also envisions a future where God's kingdom is fully established, and peace and righteousness prevail.

Zechariah contains the most messianic prophecies of all the minor prophets and is a clear indication of the power and majesty that Jesus will bring.

MALACHI

WHO WROTE MALACHI?

Malachi is traditionally attributed to the prophet Malachi, whose name means “my messenger.” Little is known about Malachi’s life or background, and there is no information on his family or occupation. The name itself may be symbolic, as “messenger” is a common designation for prophets. The book is the final work in the Old Testament and marks the conclusion of the prophetic period.

WHO WAS MALACHI WRITTEN FOR?

Malachi was written primarily for the people of Judah, particularly those who had returned from exile and were rebuilding their nation and temple. The audience included the priests, the people of Israel, and the leaders of the post-exilic community. The book addresses the spiritual apathy and moral failures of the people, calling them to repentance and renewal in their relationship with God.

CONTEXT

Malachi is set in the post-exilic period, around the 5th century B.C., after the return of the Israelites from Babylonian exile. This was a time of rebuilding, both physically (the temple and Jerusalem) and spiritually. The people had grown complacent and disillusioned, as the anticipated fulfillment of God’s promises had not fully materialized. Malachi addresses their lack of faithfulness, poor priesthood, and the social injustices that were evident in their daily lives. It emphasizes that God’s covenant with Israel is still active, but it requires repentance and sincere devotion.

LITERARY STYLES

Malachi is written in a series of oracles, structured as a dialogue between God and the people of Israel. The style is confrontational, as God speaks directly to the people and their leaders, often using rhetorical questions and answers to expose their faults. The book uses vivid imagery, symbolic language, and direct accusations to call the people to faithfulness and repentance. The tone is both prophetic and corrective.

KEY MESSAGE

The key message of Malachi is a call to repentance and renewal, as well as a reminder that God's justice will prevail. The people of Israel are challenged to return to true worship, including honoring God's name and bringing their best offerings, rather than the flawed and complacent practices they had adopted. Malachi also prophesies the coming of a messenger who will prepare the way for the Lord's arrival, pointing to both the coming of John the Baptist and the future second coming of Christ. The book concludes with a promise of God's eventual restoration of His people, culminating in the coming of the "Day of the Lord," when God will act decisively to purify and bless those who are faithful.

MATTHEW

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF MATTHEW?

While the book itself is anonymous, the earliest reliable Christian tradition links it to Matthew, a tax collector and disciple of Jesus.

WHO WAS MATTHEW WRITTEN FOR?

Matthew's gospel is clearly written for a Jewish Christian audience living within the immediate proximity of the homeland itself. Matthew's is the most Jewish of all the gospels. The community for which Matthew was written was a Jewish Christian community that was encountering some new tensions in the period of reconstruction after the first revolt. It would appear that they've been there for quite some time.

CONTEXT

The events described in Matthew take place in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the surrounding occupied lands of the Greco-Roman Empire during the early 1st century, between 10 B.C.E. and 40 C.E. The book was likely composed between 50 and 90 C.E.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Matthew is written in narrative, along with some discourse sections.

KEY THEMES

- God's blessing to Israel and the nations
- God closeness to his people
- Hope for and life within the messianic Kingdom of God

STRUCTURE

Matthew is divided into seven parts. Chapters 1-3 and 4-7 introduce Jesus as Messiah and God's Kingdom. Chapters 8-10, 11-13, and 14-20 invite people into the Kingdom's power. Chapters 21-25 and 26-28 conclude with Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.

MARK

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF MARK?

The earliest historical traditions available link this book to a Christian scribe named Mark, or John Mark.

WHO WAS MARK WRITTEN FOR?

Mark's gospel seems to have been originally intended for Gentile converts to Christianity, perhaps specifically in Rome. Mark gives a detailed explanation of Jewish customs and his linguistic preferences denote a non-jewish audience.

CONTEXT

The events described in Mark take place in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the surrounding occupied lands of the Greco-Roman Empire during the early 1st century, between 10-40 C.E. Mark was likely composed between 50 and 70 C.E.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Mark is written in narrative, along with some discourse sections.

KEY THEMES

- The good news of the Kingdom of God
- Jesus of Nazareth as the suffering servant
- The invitation to follow the Messiah

STRUCTURE

Mark is divided into four parts. Mark 1:1-8:26 shows the mixed reactions to Jesus' message. 8:27-10 present Jesus as the Messiah. 11-16 detail Jesus' persecution, crucifixion, and resurrection. And 16:9-20 is a longer ending found in later manuscripts.

LUKE

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF LUKE?

Christian tradition holds that Luke, a first-century C.E. historian, physician, and disciple of Jesus, is the author of this compilation of stories and eyewitness accounts of the life of Jesus.

WHO WAS LUKE WRITTEN FOR?

Luke is addressed to a man named Theophilus, as is the book of acts which functions as a companion or sequel to Luke's gospel. In contrast to either Mark or Matthew, Luke's gospel is clearly written more for a wider gentile audience. Luke is traditionally thought of as one of Paul's traveling companions and it's certainly the case that the author of Luke was from those Greek cities in which Paul had worked.

CONTEXT

The events described in Luke take place in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the surrounding occupied lands of the Greco-Roman Empire during the early 1st century, between 10 B.C.E and 40 C.E. Luke was likely composed between 60 and 80 C.E.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Matthew is written in narrative, along with some discourse sections.

KEY THEMES

- The upside-down Kingdom of God
- Israel's freedom and new covenant
- God's faithfulness to his people seen in his human incarnation

STRUCTURE

Luke is divided into four parts. 1-2 introduce Jesus and John the Baptist. 3:1-9:50 detail the upside-down Kingdom of God. 9:51-19:27 focus on Jesus' inclusion of outsiders. And 19:28-24:53 conclude with Jesus' persecution, crucifixion, and resurrection.

JOHN

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF JOHN?

John's Gospel account claims to be his eyewitness testimony. There are continuing debates about whether this refers to John the son of Zebedee or a different John who lived in Jerusalem and was later known as John the Elder.

WHO WAS JOHN WRITTEN FOR?

Though less is known about the author of John, the intent of the book can be determined. John is written to second-generation believers as a way of strengthening their faith and affirming the deity of Christ. There are several key differences between John and the other three gospels that are well documented.

CONTEXT

The events described in John take place in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the surrounding occupied lands of the Greco-Roman empire during the early 1st century, between 30-40 C.E. John was likely composed between 70 and 130 C.E.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of John is written in narrative.

KEY THEMES

- Discerning light from darkness and life from death
- God's love for his people's unity throughout the world
- The true humanity and divinity of Jesus
- The choice to believe into God's power over death

STRUCTURE

John is divided into five parts. John 1 introduces Jesus. 2-12 detail seven miraculous signs. 13-17 focus on the night before Jesus' trial. 18-20 cover his arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection. And 21 concludes with the disciples' ongoing mission.

ACTS

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF ACTS?

Christian tradition holds that this book, also called the Acts of the Apostles, was written by the physician and historian named Luke.

WHO WAS ACTS WRITTEN FOR?

Just like the gospel of Luke, Acts is addressed to Theophilus. The purpose of Luke-Acts may be ecclesiastical or apologetic. For ecclesiastical purposes, it may have been written in order to edify the church, serving as a history of both Jesus and his apostles. Or apologetically it may have been composed to make the case that Christianity was not a threat to the Roman Empire—more specifically, it seems that it could have been Paul's defense before Caesar.

CONTEXT

The events described in Acts take place in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the surrounding occupied lands of the Greco-Roman empire as well as Asia minor during the 1st century between 30–60 CE. Acts was likely composed between 60 and 90 C.E.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Acts is written in narrative.

KEY THEMES

- The power of the Holy Spirit given to human beings
- Jesus' ongoing mission to Israel and the nations after his departure
- The self-giving faithfulness of the early Church

STRUCTURE

Acts is divided into five parts. Acts 1 details Jesus' commission. 2-7 focus on the arrival of the Spirit and birth of the Church. 8-12 describe life within the Jesus movement. 13-20 recount the mission of the Church. And 21-28 ends with Paul's arrest.

ROMANS

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF ROMANS?

Christian tradition holds that the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Romans.

WHO WAS ROMANS WRITTEN FOR?

The apostle identifies his recipients in 1:7 by saying: To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints. His intent was for the Christians in all of Rome to read the epistle. It also seems that there were multiple churches in the Empire's capital because there is mention of an additional church in the home of Priscilla and Aquila (Rom 16:5).

CONTEXT

The events described in Romans take place primarily in the Greco-Roman empire. Romans was likely composed during Paul's third missionary journey between 50 and 60 C.E.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Romans is a letter written in prose discourse to approximately 6-10 house churches in Rome.

KEY THEMES

- God's gift of rescuing humanity through Jesus
- God maintaining his promises to Israel
- Love unifying the diversity of the Church

STRUCTURE

Romans has four main parts. Chapters 1-4 introduces the need for human rescue. 5-8 focus on how Jesus forms a new covenant family. 9-11 describes how God will not give up on his covenant people. And 12-16 discuss how love heals and unifies Jesus' family.

1 CORINTHIANS

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS?

Christian tradition holds that the Apostle Paul wrote the book of 1 Corinthians. This is the first of two known letters that Paul wrote to the Corinthians.

WHO WAS 1 CORINTHIANS WRITTEN FOR?

The epistles to the Corinthians were written to the church that resided in Corinth of Achaia. The city resides on the isthmus that connects the Peloponnesus to the rest of Greece.

CONTEXT

The events described in 1 Corinthians take place in the city of Corinth. 1 Corinthians was likely composed between 50 and 58 C.E., during Paul's three years in Ephesus.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of 1 Corinthians is a letter written in prose discourse to the churches in Corinth.

KEY THEMES

- The Gospel as a lens for life
- God's Spirit as the unifying force of the Church
- Jesus' victory over death

STRUCTURE

1 Corinthians has five parts. Chapters 1-4 introduce the divisions in the church. 5-7 focus on sexual ethics. 8-10 describe love as the ultimate ethic. 11-14 address unity in gatherings. And 15-16 define Jesus' resurrection hope for all.

2 CORINTHIANS

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF 2 CORINTHIANS?

Christian tradition holds that the Apostle Paul wrote the book of 2 Corinthians. This is the second of two known letters Paul wrote to the Corinthians.

WHO WAS 2 CORINTHIANS WRITTEN FOR?

Like 1 Corinthians, the second epistle was written to the church that resided in Corinth of Achaia.

CONTEXT

The events described in 2 Corinthians take place in the city of Corinth. 2 Corinthians was likely composed between 53 and 58 C.E., about one year after Paul's first letter to Corinth. This second letter of Paul to the Corinthian church was occasioned by the report brought back by Titus, who informed Paul of their reception of the first letter, and how they received the rebuke that letter contained (2Cr 2:12-13; 7:5-9). Titus' report was encouraging, but evidently it also brought troubling news that some at Corinth were questioning Paul's authority as an apostle.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of 2 Corinthians is a letter written in prose discourse to the churches in Corinth.

KEY THEMES

- Reconciliation through Jesus
- God's generosity
- The upside-down way of the cross

STRUCTURE

2 Corinthians can be divided into three parts. Chapters 1-7 finalize his reconciliation with the Corinthian church. Chapters 8-9 address generosity in the community. And chapters 10-13 challenge those who reject Paul.

GALATIANS

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF GALATIANS?

Christian tradition holds that the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Galatians.

WHO WAS GALATIANS WRITTEN FOR?

Galatians is written to the churches that were established by Paul and Barnabas in the Roman province of Galatia (Ac 13:14-14:23).

CONTEXT

The events described in Galatians take place in the Roman province called Galatia. This letter was likely composed between 47 and 50 C.E. Shortly after the church began, some Jewish Christians came in and began teaching that Gentile Christians needed to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses (similar to what happened at Antioch of Syria, cf. Ac 15:1). In an effort to persuade the Galatians, it appears the tactic was to discredit Paul as an apostle, challenge his concept of the gospel of Christ, and charge his doctrine with leading to loose living. This letter is written as a defense of Paul's apostleship and a rebuttal of the false Gospel that was being taught.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Galatians is a letter written in prose discourse to the churches in Galatia.

KEY THEMES

- Unity of God's covenant people
- Jesus as fulfillment of the law
- New creation through the power of the Spirit

STRUCTURE

Galatians can be divided into three parts. Chapters 1-2 begin with God's family through Jesus. Chapters 3-4 address God's family as diverse and united in the Spirit. Chapters 5-6 are a reminder of the new creation and the power of the Spirit.

EPHESIANS

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS?

Christian tradition holds that the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Ephesians.

WHO WAS EPHESIANS WRITTEN FOR?

This letter seems to be intended not just for the churches in Ephesus, but all the churches in the surrounding region. The letter lacks any specific exhortations or personal greetings. However, without question, it is intended for "the saints...and faithful in Christ Jesus." (Eph 1:1)

CONTEXT

The events described in Ephesians take place in the city of Ephesus. Ephesians was likely composed while Paul was in custody in Rome between 60 and 64 C.E. Unlike other epistles written to specific churches, this epistle does not deal with specific problems in a local congregation. Instead, Paul addressed great themes that pertain to the Christian's position in Christ, as a member of the body of Christ, the church.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Ephesians is a letter written in prose discourse to the churches in Ephesus.

KEY THEMES

- The generous gift of God
- How to walk in a way worthy of God's gift
- Standing firm in the face of spiritual evil

STRUCTURE

Ephesians can be divided into two parts. Chapters 1-3 introduce God's lavish grace and divine purpose for the new humanity. And chapters 4-6 exhort readers to live according to God's gift and offer a challenge for unity in the new humanity.

PHILIPPIANS

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS?

Christian tradition holds that the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Philippians.

WHO WAS PHILIPPIANS WRITTEN FOR?

This letter is written to the church at Philippi, which Paul helped establish in Acts 16.

CONTEXT

The events described in Philippians take place in the city of Philippi. Philippians was likely composed while Paul was in custody in Rome between 60 and 64 C.E. The church at Philippi had sent a gift to Paul in Rome by the hand of Epaphroditus (Phl 4:10,18). Paul uses this occasion not only to thank them, but to comfort them concerning his situation as a prisoner for Jesus Christ (Phl 1:12-14). He also writes of his plans to send Timothy soon (Phl 2:19-24), and why he considered it necessary to send Epaphroditus back to them (Phl 2:25-30).

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Philippians is a letter to the churches in Philippi.

KEY THEMES

- Imitation of Jesus through humble service
- The hope for the resurrection life
- God's gift of peace in difficulty

STRUCTURE

Philippians has five parts. Chapter 1:1-26 tells of Paul's gratefulness. 1:27-2:18 focuses on imitating Jesus. 2:19-30 explores imitating Jesus. 3:1-4:1 describes Paul's life as an imitation of Jesus'. And 4:2-23 reflects on Jesus' humility.

COLOSSIANS

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS?

Christian tradition holds that the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Colossians.

WHO WAS COLOSSIANS WRITTEN FOR?

This letter is written to the church in a Roman town called Colosse. It is unclear if the apostle Paul had ever been to this church at the time the letter was written.

CONTEXT

The events described in Colossians take place in the city of Colossae. Colossians was likely composed while Paul was in custody in Rome between 60 and 64 C.E. Paul had received a report of the situation at Colosse by way of Epaphras (Col 1:7-8). This report was for the most part favorable (Col 2:5). But the subject matter in the epistle strongly suggests that the church was facing the danger of sliding back into paganism or succumbing to heresy regarding Christ's divinity and the significance of circumcision.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Colossians is a letter written in prose discourse to the churches in Colossae.

KEY THEMES

- Jesus as King over all creation
- Liberation through Jesus
- Freedom in the Messiah

STRUCTURE

Colossians can be divided into four parts. Chapters 1:1-23 begin with Jesus as head of the new humanity. 1:24-2:5 focuses on Paul's suffering. 2:6-23 addresses cultural pressures in Colossae. And chapters 3-4 describe examples of Jesus' self-giving love.

1 THESSALONIANS

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF 1 THESSALONIANS?

Christian tradition holds that the Apostle Paul wrote the book of 1 Thessalonians. This is the first of two letters Paul wrote to the Thessalonians.

WHO WAS 1 THESSALONIANS WRITTEN FOR?

This letter is written to the church at Thessalonica, which Paul helped establish in Acts 17. 1 Thessalonians is considered one of Paul's earliest epistles, if not the first.

CONTEXT

The events described in 1 Thessalonians take place in the city of Thessaloniki (or Thessalonica). 1 Thessalonians was likely composed during Paul's second missionary journey between 48 and 52 C.E. The abrupt departure from Thessalonica so soon after the beginning of the church naturally left Paul anxious about the condition of the believers there. When Timothy joined Paul at Athens (cf. Ac 17:14-16), his concern prompted Paul to send Timothy at once back to Thessalonica to encourage and ground the new disciples in the faith, and to learn how they were enduring persecution (cf. 1Th 3:1-5). He returned with a good report of their faith so Paul writes to encourage and instruct them in Holy living.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of 1 Thessalonians is a letter written in prose discourse to the churches in Thessaloniki.

KEY THEMES

- Holiness in all of life
- Jesus as the true King of the world
- The hope of Jesus' return

STRUCTURE

1 Thessalonians can be divided into two parts. Chapters 1-3 begin by celebrating the Thessalonians' faith and perseverance. Chapters 4-5 follow with instructions about good living and details about the return of Jesus.

2 THESSALONIANS

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF 2 THESSALONIANS?

Christian tradition holds that the Apostle Paul wrote the book of 2 Thessalonians. This is the second of two letters that Paul wrote to the Thessalonian people.

WHO WAS 2 THESSALONIANS WRITTEN FOR?

This letter is written to the church at Thessalonica, which Paul helped establish in Acts 17.

CONTEXT

The events described in 2 Thessalonians take place in the city of Thessaloniki (or Thessalonica). 2 Thessalonians was likely composed during Paul's second missionary journey between 48 and 52 C.E., about one year after he wrote 1 Thessalonians. From the second letter, it appears that they remained strong in the Lord despite persecution (cf. 2Th 1:3-4). But it is apparent from this letter that misunderstanding about the Lord's coming was present in the church. Some of the members were being troubled by false reports (cf. 2Th 2:1-2); others had stopped working, perhaps assuming that the Lord's imminent return meant one did not need to work anymore (cf. 2Th 3:11-12).

LITERARY STYLES

The book of 2 Thessalonians is a letter to the churches in Thessaloniki.

KEY THEMES

- Patient endurance in suffering
- Hope for the Day of the Lord
- Imitation of Jesus' self-giving love

STRUCTURE

2 Thessalonians can be divided into three parts. Chapter 1 offers hope in the midst of continued persecution. Chapter 2 clarifies the coming Day of the Lord. And chapter 3 places a challenge before people who have been refusing to work.

1 TIMOTHY

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF 1 TIMOTHY?

Christian tradition holds that the Apostle Paul wrote the book of 1 Timothy. This is the first of two letters Paul wrote to a young pastor named Timothy.

WHO WAS 1 TIMOTHY WRITTEN FOR?

This letter was written directly to Timothy, Paul's "true son in the faith." This young disciple traveled with Paul, is mentioned in multiple letters and stayed with multiple congregations to lead after Paul had planted them and moved on.

CONTEXT

The events described in 1 Timothy take place in the city of Ephesus. Paul likely composed 1 Timothy between 62 and 64 C.E. Paul had left Timothy behind at Ephesus with an awesome responsibility: to charge some not to teach anything contrary to the "sound doctrine" which was according to the "glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1Ti 1:3-11). Fulfilling this charge was made difficult by Timothy's youth and natural timidity (1Ti 4:11-12; cf. 2 Ti 1:7-8). While Paul hoped to come himself, he wrote Timothy to guide him in the meantime (1 Ti 3:14-15).

LITERARY STYLES

The book of 1 Timothy is a letter written in prose discourse to a young pastor in Ephesus named Timothy.

KEY THEMES

- Love and genuine faith in the Church
- Equality and responsibility for the marginalized in the community
- Hope in Jesus as King of the world in spite of suffering

STRUCTURE

1 Timothy can be divided into four parts. Chapter 1 begins with the purpose of the Torah. Chapters 2-3 address problems caused by corrupt teachers. Chapters 4-6a continue addressing false teachings. And chapter 6b is a call to be rich in generosity.

2 TIMOTHY

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF 2 TIMOTHY?

Christian tradition holds that the Apostle Paul wrote 2 Timothy. This is the second of two letters that Paul wrote to Timothy.

WHO WAS 2 TIMOTHY WRITTEN FOR?

This letter was written directly to Timothy, Paul's "true son in the faith." This young disciple traveled with Paul, is mentioned in multiple letters and stayed with multiple congregations to lead after Paul had planted them and moved on.

CONTEXT

The events described in 2 Timothy take place in the city of Ephesus. 2 Timothy was likely composed between 64 and 66 C.E., about one year after Paul wrote 1 Timothy. This epistle contains Paul's stirring words of encouragement and instructions to Timothy, his "beloved son." Longing to see him (2Ti 1:4), Paul writes this letter to have Timothy come quickly to Rome, and to bring along Mark, a cloak that was left at Troas, and some books and parchments (2Ti 4:9-13). He uses the occasion, however, to write concerning those things that are most heavy on his heart related to Timothy's work.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of 2 Timothy is a letter written in prose discourse to a young pastor in Ephesus.

KEY THEMES

- Jesus' grace as a source of power
- Faithfulness to Jesus
- The comfort of Jesus amidst suffering

STRUCTURE

2 Timothy can be divided into three parts. Chapters 1-2a encourage Timothy to accept leadership. Chapters 2b-4a challenge Timothy to confront corrupt teachers. And chapter 4b is Paul's personal plea for Timothy to visit him in prison.

TITUS

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF TITUS?

Christian tradition holds that the Apostle Paul wrote the letter to Titus.

WHO WAS TITUS WRITTEN FOR?

This letter was written to a man named Titus who, like Timothy, was considered a son by Paul in the faith. There is no mention of Titus by name in the book of Acts, but we can glean much about him from the epistles of Paul. He was a Gentile by birth (Ga 2:3), and accompanied Paul to Jerusalem during the controversy over circumcision (Ac 15:1-2; Ga 2:1-5), before eventually becoming Paul's official emissary to the church in Corinth.

CONTEXT

The events described in Titus take place on the island of Crete. Titus was likely composed between 64 and 68 C.E. Like his first epistle to Timothy, this letter is written to a young preacher assigned a difficult task. Evidently the churches on the island of Crete were in need of maturation, and this letter is designed to assist Titus in that work.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Titus is a letter written in prose discourse to a pastor named Titus.

KEY THEMES

- Jesus as eternal hope
- The power of the Gospel in public life
- The upside-down value of generosity

STRUCTURE

Titus can be divided into three parts. Chapter 1 instructs Titus with his responsibilities in the church. Chapter 2 focuses on guidance in public life for followers of Jesus. Chapter 3 is a reminder that Jesus provided a way for new creation.

PHILEMON

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF PHILEMON?

Christian tradition holds that the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Philemon.

WHO WAS PHILEMON WRITTEN FOR?

This letter is written to Philemon, who was a member of the church at Colosse.

CONTEXT

The events described in Philemon take place in Asia-minor, close to Ephesus or Caesarea Philippi. Philemon was likely composed while Paul was in custody in Rome between 60 and 64 C.E. From the content of the epistle, it appears that Paul was writing primarily to secure forgiveness for Onesimus, but also to provide for himself a place of lodging after his release from imprisonment.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Philemon is a letter written in prose discourse from Paul to Philemon.

KEY THEMES

- Equality between followers of Jesus
- The gift of God's love and grace
- Slavery and Jesus' new humanity

STRUCTURE

Philemon can be divided into three parts. Verses 1-7 open with a prayer of thanks. Verses 8-20 are a request of forgiveness and restoration for Onesimus, an enslaved person. And verses 1:21-25 include encouragements and greetings.

HEBREWS

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF HEBREWS?

Although it is possible that Barnabas, Paul, or Apollos wrote the letter to the Hebrews, the author is not explicitly mentioned in the text.

WHO WAS HEBREWS WRITTEN FOR?

The general consensus is that this letter was written to Jewish Christians. There is uncertainty as to where they and the author were at the time of composition.

CONTEXT

The events described in Hebrews take place primarily in the occupied lands of the Greco-Roman empire. Hebrews was composed between 60 and 70 C.E., likely during Nero's persecution of the Church. The author wrote this epistle to prevent his readers from abandoning their faith in Christ (Heb 2:1-4). To encourage his Jewish brethren not to go back to the Old Law, he endeavored to show the superiority of Christ and His Covenant (Heb 8:1-2,6).

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Hebrews is a letter written in prose discourse to a church community.

KEY THEMES

- Jesus' superiority over all creation
- God's gracious offer of forgiveness
- The comfort of Jesus in suffering

STRUCTURE

Hebrews has five parts. Jesus is compared to angels and the Torah in 1-2, to Moses and the promised land in 3-4, to the priests and Melchizedek in 5-7, and to sacrifices and the covenant in 8-10. 11-13 are a challenge to follow Jesus no matter the cost.

JAMES

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF JAMES?

Christian tradition holds that the book of James was written by Jesus' half-brother, James.

WHO WAS JAMES WRITTEN FOR?

The epistle is addressed to "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (Jam 1:1). This naturally leads one to think of Jews (Ac 26:6-7) living outside the land of Palestine. Since the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, many Jews were scattered throughout different nations (Ac 2:5-11). While Jews, the epistle makes it clear that they were also brethren in the Lord, i.e., they were Jewish Christians.

CONTEXT

The events described in James take place in the city of Jerusalem. James was likely composed around 62 C.E. The epistle deals with a variety of themes, with an emphasis upon practical aspects of the Christian life. Some of the subjects include handling trials and temptations, practicing pure religion, understanding the relation between faith and works, the proper use of the tongue and display of true wisdom, being a friend of God rather than a friend of the world, and the value of humility, patience and prayer.

LITERARY STYLES

The book of James is a letter written in prose discourse.

KEY THEMES

- The loving wisdom of Jesus
- Real faith is inseparable from actions
- Perseverance and patience in difficulty

STRUCTURE

James can be divided into two parts. Chapter 1 introduces Jesus and the wisdom he offers. And chapters 2-5 contain twelve teachings and an encouragement for perseverance in prayer.

1 PETER

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF 1 PETER?

Christian tradition holds that the Apostle Peter wrote 1 Peter. This is the first of two letters Peter wrote to multiple church communities in Asia-minor.

WHO WAS 1 PETER WRITTEN FOR?

Peter appears to be writing to both Jewish Christians and Gentiles who have come to faith.

CONTEXT

The events described in 1 Peter take place in the Roman province of Asia Minor. 1 Peter was likely composed between 61 and 64 C.E. It is apparent from the epistle that Christians in Asia Minor had experienced persecution (1Pe 1:6), and more suffering was on the way (1Pe 4:12-19). Throughout the epistle Peter encourages them to remain steadfast (1Pe 1:13; 4:16; 5:8,9). He reminds them of their blessings and duties that are incumbent upon them as God's "elect" (1Pe 1:2), "His own special people" (1Pe 2:9).

LITERARY STYLES

The book of 1 Peter is a letter written in prose discourse.

KEY THEMES

- The new identity of God's family
- Jesus as the new temple
- The hope of Jesus' future return

STRUCTURE

1 Peter has four parts. Chapter 1 begins with a greeting and a poem. Chapters 1b-2a focus on our new identity in Jesus. Chapters 2b-4a explore suffering as a way to bear witness to Jesus. And chapters 4b-5 describe the future hope for Jesus' return.

2 PETER

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF 2 PETER?

Christian tradition holds that the Apostle Peter wrote 2 Peter. This is the second of two letters Peter wrote to multiple church communities in Asia-minor.

WHO WAS 2 PETER WRITTEN FOR?

This letter is written to the same audience as 1 Peter - namely, Jewish Christians and gentiles who have converted.

CONTEXT

The events described in 2 Peter take place in the Roman province of Asia-minor. 2 Peter was likely composed between 64 and 67 C.E. Knowing his death is imminent (2Pe 1:13-14), Peter wanted to ensure that his readers remain established in the truth (2Pe 1:12), and be mindful of both the words spoken before by the prophets and the commandments given by the apostles, especially in regards to the promise of the Lord's return (2Pe 3:1-4).

LITERARY STYLES

The book of 2 Peter is a letter written in prose discourse.

KEY THEMES

- Humans receiving faith as a gift and adding to it
- God's faithfulness to deliver his people
- Jesus as the exalted king of the universe

STRUCTURE

2 Peter can be divided into three parts. Chapter 1 begins by encouraging Jesus' followers to never stop maturing in their faith. Chapter 2 challenges the corrupt teachers' lifestyles. And chapter 3 is a reminder of God's justice and righteousness.

1-3 JOHN

WHO WROTE THE BOOKS OF 1-3 JOHN?

Christian tradition holds that an anonymous author wrote 1 John, but 2 and 3 John were written by someone called “the Elder.”

WHO WAS 1-3 JOHN WRITTEN FOR?

These letters appear to all be written to Christians throughout Asia Minor (modern day Turkey).

CONTEXT

The events described in 1-3 John take place in the city of Ephesus. 1-3 John were likely composed between 64 and 66 C.E. The author writes these letters as a way of instruction but also appears to speak directly to the rise in popularity of Gnosticism and to warn against its dangers.

LITERARY STYLES

The books of 1-3 John are letters written in prose discourse.

KEY THEMES

- God’s light and love
- Righteousness by loving our neighbors
- Jesus as truth

STRUCTURE

1 John challenges followers of Jesus to stay true to what they already believe. 2 John is a warning to a specific house church. And 3 John is written to Gaius, one member of a house church.

JUDE

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF JUDE?

Christian tradition holds that Jude (Judah), one of the four brothers of Jesus, wrote the book of Jude.

WHO WAS JUDE WRITTEN FOR?

The letter is addressed "to those who are called" (Jde 1:1) without any specific designation as to who they were or where they lived. The references to Old Testament incidents and extra-biblical sources (cf. Jde 1:5-7,9,11,14) strongly suggests that the original readers were Jewish Christians, perhaps living in Palestine.

CONTEXT

The events described in Jude take place primarily in the occupied lands of the Greco-Roman empire, but a specific community or city is not mentioned. Jude was likely composed between 63 and 67 C.E. The author's original purpose in penning this epistle was to write of the common salvation he and his readers shared (Jde 1:3). But the presence of ungodly men and the danger of them leading Christians astray forced a change in purpose: To encourage his readers to contend earnestly for the faith that had been delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3).

LITERARY STYLES

The book of Jude is a letter written in prose discourse.

KEY THEMES

- God's justice and judgment
- Jesus as the new temple
- Loving God through obedience

STRUCTURE

Jude can be divided into three parts. Verses 1-4 challenge the community to resist corrupt teachers. Verses 5-19 provide examples of resistance to God. And verses 20-25 are a reminder of God's call for obedience in love.

REVELATION

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF REVELATION?

Though most Christian traditions hold that Revelation (or The Revelation of Jesus to John) was written by the disciple John, his identity is not explicitly mentioned.

WHO WAS REVELATION WRITTEN FOR?

The book specifically mentions seven churches throughout Asia minor as its recipients.

CONTEXT

The events described in Revelation take place in Asia-minor to seven specific church communities. Revelation was likely composed between 94 and 96 C.E.

LITERARY STYLES


The book of Revelation is a compilation of apocalyptic literature and prose discourse.

KEY THEMES

- The hope of Jesus' final return
- Faithfulness to Jesus throughout one's life
- The comfort of Jesus in suffering and persecution

STRUCTURE

Revelation can be divided into seven parts. Chapters 1-3 introduces John's vision. Chapters 4-5, 6-8a, 8b-11, 12-16, and 17-20 focus on various visions of John. And chapters 21-22 are a concluding vision of the new heavens and new Earth.

A photograph of a man on a stage, seen from behind, with his right arm raised in a gesture of praise or worship. He is wearing a dark jacket. In the background, a large screen displays the text "WHEN I PRAISE YOU" and "WHAT A POWER" in white capital letters, partially obscured by a glowing circular light effect. To the right, another person is partially visible, playing an acoustic guitar. The stage is dimly lit with several spotlights creating beams of light in the dark background.

WHEN I PRAISE YOU
WHAT A POWER



THE BRIDGE CHURCH