

Leadership Tips

on Biblical Theology and Bible Overview

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QUOTES

“Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord. Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart.” Psalms 119:1-2 (NIV)

“If the born-again constituency has a life lens [worldview] that accurately represents God’s view of reality, then there is a firm foundation on which to build the Church and a culture that understands, loves, fears, serves, honors, and glorifies God. But if the born-again community generally does not possess a worldview that squares with Scripture, then we have a much bigger and more serious problem to address.”

George Barna, researcher and writer

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)

“The Church’s singular failure in recent decades has been the failure to see Christianity as a life system, or worldview that governs every area of existence. This failure has been crippling in many ways. For one thing, we cannot answer the questions our children bring home from school, so we are incapable of preparing them to answer the challenges they face. For ourselves, we cannot explain to our friends and neighbors why we believe, and we often cannot defend our faith. And we do not know how to organize our lives correctly, allowing our choices to be shaped by the world around us. What’s more, by failing to see Christian truth in every aspect of life, we miss great depths of beauty and meaning...”

Chuck Colson, prison reformer and writer

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

II Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

“One day, by God’s grace we may have churches full of Christians who can discuss, apply, and live the doctrinal teaching of the Bible as readily as they can discuss the details of their own jobs or hobbies – or the fortunes of their favorite sports team or television program.”

Wayne Grudem, seminary teacher and writer

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

II Timothy 2:15 (NIV)

*“The ability to hear God in the Scriptures and to respond so as to obediently move into a harmonious partnership with God is a major characteristic of a Bible Centered Leader. **A leader is a person with God-given ability and a God-given responsibility to influence a specific group of God’s people toward God’s purposes. To influence toward God’s purposes requires the ability to hear from God and respond to Him in terms of what is heard or revealed. It is just such a word from God that enables a leader to motivate followers.**”*

J. Robert Clinton, teacher and author

Introduction to Biblical Theology

(*Bible Doctrine* by Wayne Grudem, Zondervan, 1999)

Definition:

Systematic Theology – “*Systematic theology is any study that answers the question, ‘What does the whole Bible teach us today?’ about any given topic.*” (p. 17)

Relationship to Other Theological Disciplines:

<i>Systematic Theology</i>	<i>Historical Theology</i>	<i>Philosophical Theology</i>	<i>Apologetics</i>
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Doctrines

*Biblical
Theology*

OT NT

Christian Ethics

Definitions:

Historical Theology – “*a historical study of how Christians in different time periods have understood various theological topics.*” (p. 17)

Philosophical Theology – “*studying theological topics largely without use of the Bible, but using the tools and methods of philosophical reasoning and what can be known about God from observing the universe.*” (p. 17)

Apologetics – “*providing a defense of the truthfulness of the Christian faith for the purpose of convincing unbelievers.*” (p. 17)

Doctrines – “*what the whole Bible teaches us today about some particular topic.*” (p. 20)

- Doctrine of the Word of God
- Doctrine of God
- Doctrine of man
- Doctrine of Christ
- Doctrine of the application of redemption
- Doctrine of the church
- Doctrine of the future

Biblical Theology – “*These three [Biblical; OT; and NT Theology] disciplines organize their topics historically and in the order the topics are presented in the Bible.*” (p. 18)

Christian Ethics – “*any study that answers the question, ‘What does God requires us to do and what attitudes does he require us to have today?’*” (p. 18)

Why the Study of Theology is Important

1. Obedience to the Word of God – Matthew 28:19-20
2. Benefits our lives by
 - (a) Overcoming our wrong ideas
 - (b) Helping us make better decisions
 - (c) Helping us grow as Christians

How to Study Theology

1. Prayerfully
2. Humbly
3. With reason
4. With help from others
5. By studying all the relevant Biblical passages honestly
6. With rejoicing and praise

Bible Overview

(Talk Thru the Bible by Bruce Wilkinson & Kenneth Boa, Thomas Nelson, 1983)

Introduction

1. 66 books (39 in Old Testament/27 in New Testament)
2. More than 40 authors
3. Written over a span of 1500 years (1400 BC to 100 AD)
4. Written in 3 languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek)

Old Testament (39 books in 5 sections)

1. Pentateuch (5 books, creation through the Exodus)

- ***Genesis*** –
 - Author: Moses
 - Date: Fertile Crescent (chapters 1-11) – 4000 to 2090 B.C.; Promised Land (chapters 12-36) – 2090 to 1897 B.C.; Egypt (chapters 37-50) – 1897 to 1804 B.C.
 - Theme: Genesis (in Hebrew) means “in the beginning” or (in Greek) “origin, source, generation, or beginning.” The primary purpose of Genesis is to describe the beginnings of God’s creation: the universe (1:1); man (1:27); the Sabbath (2:2-3); marriage (2:22-24); sin (3:1-7); sacrifice and salvation (3:15, 21); the family (4:1-15); civilization (4:16-21); government (9:1-6); nations (11); Israel (12:1-3); and God’s response to man’s sin: judgment and redemption (3).
- ***Exodus*** –
 - Author: Moses
 - Date: Wilderness Journey (1445-1405 B.C.)

- Theme: Exodus (in Hebrew) means “and these are the names” and (in Greek) “exit, departure, or going out.” The Hebrew text of Exodus begins with “And” to show that it is a continuation of Genesis. The two basic themes of Exodus are redemption and deliverance of Israel under the leadership of Moses. Exodus also teaches the Yahweh is superior to any other god and that obedience is necessary for redemption and deliverance.
- ***Leviticus*** –
 - Author: Moses
 - Date: Mount Sinai (Leviticus occurs over the first month after completion of the tabernacle – first month of 1444 B.C.)
 - Theme: The main theme of Leviticus is holiness (11:45, 19:2). Through its various laws and regulations, Leviticus teaches us that we need to approach a holy God on the basis of sacrifice and priestly mediation.
 - In Exodus people were redeemed and set free from the bondage of the Egyptian slave masters; in Leviticus people are cleansed and set apart for the holy purposes of God. They are to be a people who reflect the character of a holy God through sanctification and obedience.
- ***Numbers*** –
 - Author: Moses
 - Date: Numbers covers 39 years (1444-1405 B.C.) from Israel’s departure from Mt. Sinai in the second month of the second year (1:1, 10:11), including the wanderings in the wilderness around Kadish-barnea, until their final arrival in the plains of Moab in the fortieth year (22:1, 26:3, 33:50; Deuteronomy 1:13).
 - Theme: Numbers is referred to (in Hebrew) as “in the wilderness.” The main theme of Numbers is the consequences of disbelief and disobedience to God. In Numbers there is a pattern of God’s grace, hardship or testing, grumbling, judgment, and more of God’s grace. Numbers also teaches that there are no short cuts to God’s promised blessings – God’s conditional promises require man’s obedience.
- ***Deuteronomy*** –
 - Author: Moses
 - Date: Deuteronomy takes place on the plain of Moab (1:1, 29:1; Joshua 1:2) at the end of the forty year period of wilderness wandering (1405 B.C.) when the new generation was on the verge of entering Canaan [Promised Land].
 - Theme: “Beware, lest you forget!” is the key phrase in Deuteronomy. Moses warns the new generation that forgetfulness leads to arrogance and disobedience. Deuteronomy is Moses’ farewell address to those who will possess the Promised Land and he warns them (1) that when they prosper, it is because of God’s favor; and (2) that when they disobey God, he will discipline them. Deuteronomy is a call to obedience as a condition to blessing.

2. Historical (12 books, Promised Land through the return of the remnant)

- ***Joshua*** –
 - Author: Joshua

- Date: Joshua divides into three geographical settings: 1. the Jordan River (1-5); 2. Canaan (6-13:7); and 3. The settling of the twelve tribes on both sides of the Jordan River (13:8 – 24:33). The first setting involves a month period (March-April) in 1405 B.C. The second setting involves a seven year period of conquest from April 1405 B.C. until 1398 B.C. The third setting involves an eight year period of settling into the tribal lands of inheritance from 1398-1390 B.C.
 - Theme: The theme of Joshua is Israel’s conquest and possession of the Promised Land. Theologically, Joshua teaches that victory and blessing come through obedience to God and judgment comes through disobedience. God asked the people of Israel to do the impossible (conquer Canaan) through faith in his promises and power so that he might bless them and reveal his glory.
- **Judges** –
 - Author: Anonymous, but possibly Samuel
 - Date: The events covered in Judges occur during the years after the settlement of Israel in the Promised Land through the life of Samuel (1380-1045 B.C.).
 - Theme: Judges describes the cycle of apostasy, oppression, and deliverance in the southern region (3:7-31); the northern region (4:1 – 5:31); the central region (6:1 – 10:5); the eastern region (10:6 – 12:15); and the western region (13:1 – 16:31) of the Promised Land. Theologically, Judges contrasts God’s covenant faithfulness with Israel’s idolatry, immorality, and violence. Sin always leads to death and repentance always leads to deliverance.
 - **I Samuel** –
 - Author: Anonymous, but Jewish Talmudic tradition says that the author was Samuel (but his death in I Samuel 25:1 makes it clear that he did not write all of I Samuel). I Chronicles 29:29 suggests that there were three contributors to the writings of I and II Samuel. There may have been one compiler of all of these sources but his name and identity are unknown.
 - Date: The first 24 chapters are dated by the birth of Samuel (1105 B.C.) until his death (1015 B.C.). The book of I Samuel covers the 94 year period between the birth of Samuel and the death of Saul (1011 B.C.).
 - Theme: I and II Samuel were originally one book in the Hebrew Bible, know as the “Book of Samuel.” I Samuel describes the leadership transition in Israel from Judges (theocracy) to Kings (monarchy). In I Samuel Israel rejects God as their Sovereign Ruler and demands an earthly king (like all the other nations around them).
 - **II Samuel** –
 - Author: Unknown, but II Samuel was probably compiled by one man who combined the writings of Nathan the prophet; God the seer (I Chronicles 29:29); and another source called “the Book of Jasher” (1:18).
 - Date: The story of David begins in I Samuel 16 and ends in I Kings 2. II Samuel records the major events of King David’s forty year rule (divided kingdom, 1011–1004 B.C. and united kingdom, 1004–971 B.C.).
 - Theme: II Samuel is a continuation of I Samuel. II Samuel is a portrait of the strengths and weaknesses of King David. Again, the spiritual principles of obedience (1-7) and blessing (8-10) are contrasted with disobedience (11) and judgment (12-24).

- ***I Kings*** –
 - Author: Unknown, but evidence supports the Talmudic tradition that the Kings were written by the prophet Jeremiah (except the last two chapters of II Kings).
 - Date: I Kings covers 120 years from the beginnings of Solomon’s reign (beginning in 971 B.C.) through Ahaziah’s reign (ending in 851 B.C.). I and II Kings were probably compiled from documents such as “the Book of the Acts of Solomon” (11:14); “the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel” (14:9); “the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah” (14:29, 15:7); and was written prior to the Babylonian Captivity (586 B.C.).
 - Theme: I Kings covers the first 120 years of the period of the Kings which was characterized by disobedience and idolatry (with a few exceptions); division (931 B.C.); and gradual loss of national sovereignty. Theologically, I Kings provides a spiritual evaluation of the causes and affects that led to the spiritual, political, and economic decline of the united kingdom and later the two divided kingdoms. Specific lessons include: 1. the inadequacies of man to rule himself apart from the grace and wisdom of God; 2. the responsibility and importance that leaders have in influencing the spiritual health of the people they lead; and 3. the blessings of God upon the obedient and their judgment of God on the disobedient.

- ***II Kings*** –
 - Author: Unknown (See I Kings). The last two chapters of II Kings were evidently added by an unknown author after the Babylonian Captivity.
 - Date: II Kings covers the years from Ahaziah’s reign (Israel) in 853 B.C. through the Assyrian captivity of Israel (722 B.C.) and the release of Jehoiachin from Babylon (560 B.C.).
 - United Kingdom – 112 years
 - Israel (Northern Kingdom) – 209 years
 - Judah (Southern Kingdom) – additional 136 years
 - Kingdom Period – 457 years
 - Theme: II Kings covers the last 286 years of the divided kingdom which was characterized by idolatry (with a few exceptions in Judah), decline, and captivity (Israel by Assyria in 722 B.C. and Judah by Babylon in 586 B.C.). Theologically, II Kings provides a spiritual picture of the process of spiritual, political, and economic decline culminating in captivity.

- ***I Chronicles*** –
 - Author: Unknown, although Talmudic tradition suggests that Ezra the priest was the author.
 - Date: The genealogies in chapters 1-9 cover the time from Adam to David; while chapters 10-29 cover the 33 years of David’s rule over the United Kingdom (1004–971 B.C.). Ezra probably compiled Chronicles between 450–430 B.C. and addressed it to the returning remnant from the Babylonian Captivity (three returns in 538, 457, and 444 B.C.).
 - Theme: I and II Chronicles (“the events of the times”) was originally one continuous account written to provide a spiritual perspective on the historical events from the time of David to the return of the remnant from the Babylonian Captivity in 538 B.C. Chronicles

is written from a priestly perspective and emphasizes the role of the Law, the priest, and the temple in the life of the nation. Chronicles also focuses on the Messianic line of Judah and only mentions the Kings of Israel (Northern Kingdom) as they interrelate with the events of the Kings of Judah (Southern Kingdom).

- ***II Chronicles*** –

- Author: Unknown (See I Chronicles)
- Date: Chapters 1-9 cover the forty years of Solomon's reign (971–931 B.C.) and chapters 10-36 cover the 393 years of the Divided Kingdom (931–538 B.C.). Jeremiah's prophecy of a 70 year captivity in Babylon (36:21 and Jeremiah 29:10) is fulfilled in two ways: 1. a political captivity involving the overthrow of Jerusalem (605–536 B.C.); and 2. a religious captivity involving the destruction of the temple (586–516 B.C.).
- Theme: II Chronicles provides a topical history of the end of the United Kingdom and the decline of the Kingdom of Judah. II Chronicles also comments on the spiritual characteristic of the Kings of Judah (the Davidic Dynasty) – prominence is given to the reigns of the Kings who restored the temple worship (Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah, and Josiah).

- ***Ezra*** –

- Author: Not mentioned, but the Talmudic tradition attribute authorship to Ezra.
- Date: Ezra (which means "Jehovah helps") tells the story of two returns from Babylon. The first was led by Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple (1-6) from 538 to 515 B.C. The second was led by Ezra to rebuild the spiritual life of Judah (7-10) in 457 B.C. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah ministered during Zerubbabel's time. The story of Esther takes place during the years between the first and second returns from Babylon.
- Theme: The basic theme of Ezra is the rebuilding of the temple and the spiritual life of Judah in Jerusalem after the years of captivity in Babylon. Ezra chronicles the first two (538 and 457 B.C.) of three returns (the third occurring in 444 B.C. under the leadership of Nehemiah) of Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem. The return of the remnant recorded in Ezra is a direct fulfillment of God's promise in Jeremiah 29:14.

- ***Nehemiah*** –

- Author: Although Nehemiah is not mentioned as the author of this book, much of its content came from Nehemiah's personal memoirs and he is credited as the primary author by most conservative commentators.
- Date: Nehemiah (which means "comfort of Jehovah") describes the events of the third return of the Jews to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem from 444 to 425 B.C.
- Theme: The basic theme of Nehemiah deals with the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem and the restoration of the nation. Ezra (a priest) focuses on the spiritual aspects of restoration while Nehemiah (a political leader) focuses on the social and political aspects of restoration. Under Nehemiah's leadership the wall is completed in 52 days after being neglected for ninety-four years since the first return (538 B.C.). The prophet Malachi lived and ministered during Nehemiah's time (probably during Nehemiah's seven year absence from Jerusalem in 432 to 425 B.C.).

- ***Esther*** –
 - Author: Unknown, but must have been a contemporary of Esther (possibly Mordecai).
 - Date: The story of Esther occurs during the reign of King Ahasuerus of Persia who reigned from 486 to 464 B.C. The events recorded in Esther took place between the first return (538 B.C.) and the second return (457 B.C.) of the Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem (which is recorded in Ezra).
 - Theme: The basic theme of Esther is the providential protection of the Jews (God’s covenant people) during a time of exile and persecution (initiated by Haman) through Esther (see verse 4:4) and Mordecai. Esther is a story of faithfulness, courage, and victory which points to Christ’s work of redemption on our behalf.

3. Poetical Books (5 books, emphasis is life-style of godliness)

- ***Job*** –
 - Author: Unknown and Jewish rabbinic traditions are inconsistent (although one possibility might be Moses who lived in Midian adjacent to the land of Uz and might have obtained records of Job’s dialogues).
 - Date: The date of the book of Job is uncertain although some scholars believe that Job lived during the time of the patriarchs (perhaps during the time between Genesis 11 and 12).
 - Theme: The basic theme of Job centers around the question, “Why do the righteous suffer (if God is loving and all-powerful)?” The beginning chapters of Job give the reader a rare look into the heavenly realm where Satan is given permission by God to assault Job while the remaining chapters deal with Job’s debates and God’s deliverance.
- ***Psalms*** –
 - Author: David is the primary author (wrote 73 of the Psalms) with Korah, Asaph, and others writing the other Psalms.
 - Date: The Psalms cover a wide time span from Moses (c. 1410 B.C.) to Ezra/Nehemiah (430 B.C.).
 - Themes: The Psalms (“book of praises”) represent several different styles of writing on different themes to diverse audiences over a long period of time. Commentators suggest that there are six general types of Psalms: 1. the psalms of praise (i.e. 8, 29, 33, 104, 111, 113); 2. the songs of thanksgiving (i.e. 30, 34, 66, 116, 138); 3. the psalms of individual lament (i.e. 6, 13, 31, 39); 4. the psalms of communal lament (i.e. 12, 44, 74, 79); 5. royal psalms (i.e. 2, 18, 20, 35, 40, 45); and 6. wisdom psalms (i.e. 1, 32, 37, 49, 119). There is also a series of psalms that refer to Christ (i.e. 2, 22, 110) which are referred to as “Messianic psalms.” Within the diversity of the Psalms is the unifying theme of worship of God who is worthy of our praise because of who he is, what he has done, and what he will do. Many of the Psalms were put to music and used in the temple service.
- ***Proverbs*** –
 - Author: Solomon was the primary author
 - Date: Solomon’s proverbs were written by 931 B.C. and later collected by Hezekiah (715–686 B.C.) over 200 years later.

- Theme: The two-fold purpose of Proverbs is listed in chapter 1, verses 2 – 6:1. to impart moral discernment and discretion (1:2a, 3-5); and 2. to develop mental clarity and perception (1:2b, 6). The primary theme of the Proverbs is “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (1:7a) or “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (9:10).
- ***Ecclesiastes*** –
 - Author: Solomon
 - Date: Probably written by Solomon (971–931 B.C.) in his later years (see I Kings 11) as he reflects upon the waste of his life and the national life of Israel because of carnality and idolatry.
 - Theme: The primary theme of Ecclesiastes (“preacher before an assembly”) is the emptiness and futility (“vanity”) of life (i.e. power, prosperity, popularity, pleasure, etc.) apart from obedience to God. True wisdom and satisfaction come from seeing life from a divine perspective and trusting God. The preacher’s final exhortation is to “fear God and keep his commandments” (12:13).
- ***Song of Solomon*** –
 - Author: Solomon
 - Date: Probably written by Solomon (971–931 B.C.) early in his reign.
 - Theme: There have been three primary interpretations of the Song of Solomon throughout history: 1. fictional – story of king’s courtship of a beautiful but poor girl from the country; 2. allegorical – picture of God’s love for his people; and 3. historical – poetic record of Solomon’s actual romance with a Shulamite woman. The primary theme of all three interpretations is love.

4. Major Prophets (5 books, parallel historical books)

- ***Isaiah*** –
 - Author: Isaiah
 - Date: Isaiah’s long ministry (1:1) ranged from 740 B.C. (Uzziah’s reign) to 680 B.C. (Hezekiah’s reign). This time frame parallels the rise of Assyria (Tilgath-pileser through Sennacherib).
 - Theme: The primary theme of Isaiah is revealed in the meaning of the prophet’s name, “Yahweh is salvation.” The word “salvation” appears 26 times in Isaiah and only 7 times in the other prophets combined. Isaiah warns Judah of approaching judgment because of moral depravity, political corruption, social injustice, and spiritual idolatry. Even though the nation will experience judgment, God will preserve a remnant through whom the Messiah will come to accomplish the work of redemption and restoration.
- ***Ezekiel*** –
 - Author: Ezekiel
 - Date: Ezekiel was part of the second exile (597 B.C.) to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar (the first occurred in 605 B.C. and included Daniel; the third occurred in 586 B.C. after the destruction of Jerusalem). Ezekiel prophesied from 592 B.C. until around 570 B.C.

- Theme: The primary themes of Ezekiel (“God strengthens”) include condemnation (chapters 1-32) and consolation (chapters 33-48). Ezekiel describes the sins that led to the destruction of Jerusalem while comforting them with the assurance of God’s covenant promise of restoration and future blessings.
- ***Jeremiah*** –
 - Author: Jeremiah
 - Date: Jeremiah was a contemporary of Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Daniel, and Ezekiel. His ministry stretched from 627 B.C. (Ahaz’s reign) to 580 B.C. (Josiah’s reign). During this time Babylon (rivaled by Egypt for awhile) was replacing Assyria as the primary power in the region.
 - Theme: The primary theme of Jeremiah (“Yahweh establishes, appoints, sends”) is the long suffering love of God for his idolatrous people. Jeremiah lists the sins of Judah and warns them of impending judgment (unless they repent). Jeremiah also promises hope for the preservation of a remnant, the restoration of Israel, and the establishing of a new covenant.
- ***Lamentations*** –
 - Author: Jeremiah
 - Date: Lamentations was written soon after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.
 - Theme: The primary themes of Lamentations (“tears”) include: 1. mourning over the destruction of Jerusalem; 2. confession of national sin and the acknowledgement of God’s righteous judgment of Judah; and 3. hope in God for a future restoration of his people.
- ***Daniel*** –
 - Author: Daniel
 - Date: Daniel was taken captive by the Babylonians in 605 B.C. and ministered as a prophet and government official for the full seventy years of the Babylonian captivity.
 - Theme: The primary themes of Daniel (“God is my judge”) are historical (chapters 1-6) and prophetic (chapters 7-12). Daniel tells of the provision of God for his people in exile while encouraging them with God’s promise of the coming Messiah and future restoration. Daniel also foretells of times of blessing for the Gentiles.

5. Minor Prophets (12 books, parallel historical books)

- ***Hosea*** –
 - Author: Hosea
 - Date: Hosea addressed the Northern Kingdom of Israel. According to Hosea 1:1 he ministered during the reign the Uzziah (767–739 B.C.), Jotham (739–731 B.C.), Ahaz (731–715 B.C.), and Hezekiah (715–686 B.C.) in Judah; and the reigns of the last six kings of Israel. Hosea’s ministry stretched over forty years from about 755–710 B.C.
 - Theme: The main them of Hosea is God’s loving faithfulness towards his people, even in their immorality and idolatry. God is pictured as a loving and forgiving husband (Hosea means “salvation”) who does not give up on his wife (Gomer), even in her adultery.

Hosea makes about 150 statements (over half of them deal specifically with idolatry) about the sins of Israel in this book.

- ***Joel*** –
 - Author: Joel
 - Date: Since the book does not include any definite historical references, it can not be dated with certainty. Although, the best evidence seems to favor a date of about 835 B.C. (during the reign of Joash in Judah–835-796 B.C.) which would make Joel a contemporary of Elisha.
 - Theme: The main theme of Joel (“Yahweh is God”) is “the Day of the Lord.” Joel uses the context of a recent locust plague in Judah to illustrate the coming period of judgment when God directly intervenes in human history to vindicate himself. This will be a time of unparalleled retribution upon Israel (2:1-11) and the nations (3:1-17) but will eventually result in salvation and great blessing for all who trust in the Lord (2:18-32; 3:18-21).

- ***Amos*** –
 - Author: Amos
 - Date: Amos prophesied during the reign of Uzziah in Judah (767–739 B.C.) and Jeroboam II in Israel (782–753 B.C.) “two years before the earthquake” (1:1; also Zechariah 14:5).
 - Theme: The main theme of Amos (“to lift a burden, to carry” thus “burden-barrier”) is the coming judgment of Israel because of the sinfulness of her people. God is patient but his righteousness and justice will not allow sin to go unpunished indefinitely. God demonstrates his mercy by offering Israel deliverance if they repent of their sin. But because they rejected his mercy, judgment was sure to come.

- ***Obadiah*** –
 - Author: Obadiah
 - Date: Verses 10-14 provide the only historical reference point for determining the book’s date and historical context. The best evidence seems to place Obadiah’s ministry during the reign of Jehoram (848–841 B.C.) during a time of hostility between Edom and Judah.
 - Theme: The main theme of Obadiah is the declaration of judgment against Edom because of the faithfulness of God to his covenant promise for his chosen people.

- ***Jonah*** –
 - Author: Jonah
 - Date: Jonah was a contemporary of Jeroboam II of Israel (782–753 B.C.) who ministered during the time of Elisha (just before the time of Amos and Hosea). During these years Assyria was a threat to Israel and notorious for its cruelty.
 - Theme: The main theme of Jonah (“dove”) is the graciousness of God to all people, both Jews and Gentiles.

- ***Micah*** –
 - Author: Micah

- Date: Micah lived and ministered (primarily to Judah) during the reigns of Jotham (739–731 B.C.), Ahaz (731–715 B.C.), and Hezekiah (715–686 B.C.). Much of his ministry took place before the Assyrian captivity of Israel in 722 B.C. and probably encompassed the years of 735–710 B.C.
 - Theme: The main theme of Micah (“Who is like God”) is the goodness and severity of God. God’s justice will triumph. True peace and justice will one day be established through the reign of the Messiah.
- ***Nahum*** –
 - Author: Nahum
 - Date: Although Nahum mentions several historical events (in the prophetic future) he makes no mention of the reign of kings or of contemporary events. Consequently, the dating of his ministry can not be dated exactly. The best evidence (“the fall of Thebes” in 3:8-10) suggests that Nahum lived and ministered between 663–612 B.C. (possibly during the reign of King Manasseh).
 - Theme: The major theme of Nahum (“comfort, consolation”) is the judgment of God against the wickedness of Ninevah. This judgment is irreversible and inevitable. Assyria’s power will be useless against the mighty hand of God and she will come to a sudden end as a nation.
- ***Habbakkuk*** –
 - Author: Habakkuk
 - Date: The only contemporary historical event mentioned by Habakkuk is the imminence of the Babylonian invasion (1:6, 2:1, 3:16) which culminated in the capture of Jerusalem in 605 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar. Consequently, the most likely date for Habakkuk’s ministry is during the reign of Jehoiakim (609-597 B.C.).
 - Theme: The main theme of Habakkuk (“embrace”) is faith in a God (Yahweh) who is sovereign (in spite of what circumstances appear to be) and just (even though justice may come slowly because of his patience and mercy). Even though God may choose to use a more sinful nation to judge another nation, he is trustworthy and will eventually judge all sin.
- ***Zephaniah*** –
 - Author: Zephaniah
 - Date: Zephaniah describes his ministry as taking place during the reign of Josiah (640–609 B.C.) although his description of sin (1:3-13, 3:1-7) would indicate a date early in Josiah’s reign prior to the reform (628 B.C., see II Chronicles 34:3-7).
 - Theme: The main theme of Zephaniah (“Yahweh hides”) is the coming judgment: 1. upon Judah if she does not repent (1:1 – 3:8); and 2. upon all the nations (1:1-3, 2:4-15). This time of judgment will bring ruin to the wicked and blessing to the righteous (3:9-20).
- ***Haggai*** –
 - Author: Haggai

- Date: Haggai (and Zechariah) ministered during the reign of Darius, king of Persia (521–486 B.C.). Both Haggai and Zechariah are precisely dated (see Haggai 1:1 – September 1, 520 B.C. and Haggai 2:10, 20 – December 24, 520 B.C.).
- Theme: The main purpose of Haggai is to confront the remnant with their need to reorder their priorities and complete the temple (work was resumed in 520 B.C. and finished in 516 B.C.). He warns them that their current “prosperity” will be short lived unless they put their trust in God and obey his commands.
- ***Zechariah*** –
 - Author: Zechariah
 - Date: Zechariah was a younger contemporary of Haggai. Chapters 1-8 takes place from 520–518 B.C. during the time of Haggai’s ministry. Chapters 9-14 were probably written later (possibly between 480–470 B.C.).
 - Theme: The first eight chapters refer primarily to the rebuilding of the temple as preparation for the coming of the Messiah. Chapters 9–14 refer to God’s faithfulness toward Israel through the Messiah.
- ***Malachi*** –
 - Author: Malachi
 - Date: Although there is not an exact date mentioned in Malachi, internal (grammatical) evidence suggests that this book was written during the Persian domination of Israel (539–333 B.C.). The similarities between Nehemiah (444–425 B.C.) and Malachi make it likely that Malachi’s ministry occurred during the years that Nehemiah was absent from Jerusalem (432–425 B.C.).
 - Theme: Malachi (“My messenger”) challenges Israel’s disobedience, disappointment, and discouragement. The promised time of prosperity and blessing had not come and the “renewal” under Nehemiah had begun to fade. Malachi warns the people that God will judge their disobedience and reminds them of God’s promises if they will turn from their sin.

New Testament (27 books in 3 sections) _____

1. Historical (5 books, John the Baptist through early church)

- ***Matthew*** –
 - Author: Matthew
 - Date: There is strong evidence for dating this Gospel prior to the destruction of Jerusalem (70 A.D.) – it was probably written between 58–68 A.D.
 - Theme: Matthew’s Gospel was written to Jewish people to prove that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah. In addition to numerous O.T. quotes approximately 60% of the 1071 verses in Matthew contain the spoken words of Jesus.
- ***Mark*** –
 - Author: Mark

- Date: Mark is probably the earliest of the Gospels having been written between 55 and 65 A.D. Mark’s Gospel was probably the major source for Matthew and Luke.
 - Theme: Mark’s Gospel was written to Gentiles (probably Romans) to show that Jesus came as the suffering Servant (10:45, see Isaiah 42:1 – 53:12). Mark is the shortest Gospel account and uses the word “euthus” (meaning “immediately” or “straightaway”) 42 times (more than in the entire rest of the New Testament).
- **Luke** –
 - Author: Luke
 - Date: Luke was not an eyewitness to the events of his Gospel. Instead he relied on the testimonies and written sources of others (1:1-4). Luke is part of the Luke/Acts account which was carefully investigated and compiled for Theophilus (“friend of God”) probably before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
 - Theme: Luke’s Gospel was written to Gentiles (probably Greeks) to show that Jesus was the perfect Son of Man (fully human) who came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (19:10).”
- **John** –
 - Author: John
 - Date: John’s Gospel was probably the last of the Gospels to be written (probably between 60–90 A.D.).
 - Theme: This Gospel was written to Gentiles (probably Greeks) to show that Christ was the Son of God (fully God). John emphasizes that belief in Christ involves both knowledge and faith (3:16). If (as most conservative commentators believe) John was written late in the first century from Ephesus his purpose may have been to clarify that Christ was fully God in light of the growing influence of Gnosticism on some in the church.
- **Acts of the Apostles** –
 - Author: Luke
 - Date: Luke probably compiled this part of the Luke/Acts account prior to Paul’s hearing before Caesar (62 A.D.) and the destruction of Jerusalem (70 A.D.) because there is no mention of either of these significant events. Consequently, the Acts of the Apostles was probably completed in 62 A.D. in preparation for Paul’s hearing before Caesar.
 - Theme: Luke’s Acts account was written to Gentiles (possibly as part of Paul’s defense before Caesar) to document the expansion of the church from Jerusalem, throughout Judea, Samaria, and the Roman world (Acts 1:9).

2. Pauline Epistles (13 letters, early church)

- **Romans** –
 - Author: Paul
 - Date: Paul wrote Romans in 57 A.D. near the end of his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23 – 21:14; cf. Romans 15:19), during a three month stay in Greece (Acts 20:3-6; possibly in Corinth (I Corinthians 1:4).

- Theme: Paul wrote this letter to leaders and members of the church in Rome to prepare them for his upcoming visit. The main purpose of Romans is to explain the Gospel in terms of righteousness which comes through faith in Jesus Christ (1:16-17; 3:21-25).
- ***I Corinthians*** –
 - Author: Paul
 - Date: Paul wrote I Corinthians around 56 A.D. (probably from Ephesus – see 16:5-8). It was written in response to questions about church issues and problems (7:1) that had come to Paul’s attention through a letter sent from church leaders to Paul through a delegation of three men (16:17).
 - Theme: The main purpose for Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian church was to address specific issues (divisions, super spirituality, insensitivity toward the poor, immorality, legalism, public worship, and the importance of the resurrection) and correct problems in the life of the church.
- ***II Corinthians*** –
 - Author: Paul
 - Date: Paul wrote II Corinthians around 56 A.D. in response to concerns about his apostolic leadership that were reported to him by Timothy (I Corinthians 16:10-11) and that he experienced during his own brief visit to Corinth (see 2:1; 12:14; and 13:1-2).
 - Theme: The main purpose of Paul’s second letter to the Corinthian church was to defend his apostolic credentials and authority (to speak correction to the issues he addressed in I Corinthians).
- ***Galatians*** –
 - Author: There are two major theories regarding the date and setting for Paul’s letter to the Galatian churches. The first theory (“the Northern Galatian Theory”) holds that Paul wrote this letter to the Northern Galatian churches early in 56 A.D. from either Ephesus or Macedonia. The second theory (“the Southern Galatian Theory”) holds that Paul wrote this letter to the Southern Galatian churches in 49 A.D. prior to the Jerusalem Council from Syrian Antioch.
 - Theme: Paul wrote this letter in response to a report that the Galatian churches had been influenced by the false teaching of certain Judaizers who sought to place Gentile converts to Christianity under the requirements of the Mosaic Law (1:7; 4:17, 21; 5:2-12; 6:12-13). Paul’s response to this false teaching is the main theme of this letter – “justification by faith” apart from the works of the Law.
- ***Ephesians*** –
 - Author: Paul
 - Date: Paul wrote his “Prison Epistles” (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon) during his second Roman imprisonment in 60–62 A.D. (Acts 28:16-31). Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon were evidently written about the same time (60–61 A.D.) while Philippians was probably written in 62 A.D. just before Paul’s release from prison.
 - Theme: The main purpose of this letter was to instruct the Ephesian believers about their responsibility to live out the Christian life in a manner worthy of Christ’s calling (4:1)

Chapters 1-3 are theological and chapters 4-6 are exhortations to live out the theology of the first three chapters.

- ***Philippians*** –
 - Author: Paul
 - Date: 62 A.D. (see Ephesians “Date” for more information)
 - Theme: The main purpose of this letter was to encourage the Philippian believers to live lives of holiness, unity, and joy. “Joy” is mentioned four times (1:4, 25; 2:2; 4:1) in this short letter.

- ***Colossians*** –
 - Author: Paul
 - Date: 60–61 A.D. (see Ephesians “Date” for more information)
 - Theme: The major theme of this letter is the “preeminence” and “sufficiency” of Christ in all things (2:9-10; 3:1-2)

- ***I Thessalonians*** –
 - Author: Paul
 - Date: Paul wrote this letter from Athens (3:1-2) in 51 A.D. in response to Timothy’s good report about the progress of this new church.
 - Theme: Paul’s main purpose in writing this letter was to encourage these new Gentile believers in the truth about their salvation and the process of sanctification. Paul may have only been in Thessalonica for “three Sabbaths” (Acts 17:2) so this letter was probably an attempt to provide basic follow-up teaching to help them become established in their new faith.

- ***II Thessalonians*** –
 - Author: Paul
 - Date: Paul probably wrote this letter in 51 A.D. from Corinth (Acts 18:15)
 - Theme: Paul’s main purpose for writing this letter was to correct doctrinal misunderstandings and abuses (i.e. “the Day of the Lord”); and to encourage this young church during a time of persecution. A false teaching that the “Day of the Lord” had already come was confusing some and led to abuses by others.

- ***I Timothy*** –
 - Author: Paul
 - Date: Paul probably wrote this letter in 62–63 A.D. from Macedonia while Timothy was serving as the pastoral leader of the church in Ephesus (and possibly other churches in the province of Asia).
 - Theme: Paul wrote this letter to encourage Timothy in his pastoral responsibilities and to give him practical instruction on dealing with false teachers, organization of the church, discipline, teaching, and social issues. This letter is called a “Pastoral Epistle” (along with II Timothy and Titus) because of its focus on pastoral issues in the life and ministry of the local church.

- ***II Timothy*** –
 - Author: Paul
 - Date: Paul wrote this letter in the fall of 67 A.D. from Rome where he was a prisoner waiting for his execution. This is Paul’s last letter before his death.
 - Theme: Paul’s main purpose for writing this last letter was to encourage Timothy to endure hardship (2:3-4) in his pastoral calling. This letter also includes Paul’s reflections on his own life and ministry of faithful and fruitful endurance (4:7-8).

- ***Titus*** –
 - Author: Paul
 - Date: Paul wrote this letter about 63 A.D. probably from Corinth
 - Theme: Paul wrote this letter to Titus who was serving as a pastor and overseer of the churches on the Island of Crete. The main purpose of this letter was to encourage Titus in his role as a church leader in strengthening and organizing the churches there.

- ***Philemon*** –
 - Author: Paul
 - Date: Paul wrote this letter in either 60 or 61 A.D. (see Ephesians “Date” for more information)
 - Theme: Paul wrote this letter to Philemon to instruct him on how he should receive back his runaway slave Onesimus. The main theme of this letter is forgiveness and its practical applications to a Christian master/slave relationship.

3. Non-Pauline Epistles and Revelation (8 books, early church; end times)

- ***Hebrews*** –
 - Author: Unknown (Paul, Barnabas, Luke, and others have been suggested)
 - Date: Hebrews was probably written before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and was probably written to Jewish Christians between 64–68 A.D.
 - Theme: The basic theme of Hebrews is found in the word “better” (1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40; and 12:24). Christ is the “better” revelation, position, priesthood, covenant, sacrifice, and power.

- ***James*** –
 - Author: James, the half-brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; I Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19; and Acts 15)
 - Date: James’ letter was written to Jewish believers (the “twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” - 1:1) who may have been “scattered” as part of the first wave of persecution after Stephen’s death in Jerusalem (Acts 7). It may be one of the earliest New Testament letters written between 46–49 A.D.
 - Theme: The main theme of this letter is true faith as it relates to character and behavior – “faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (2:17). There are several parallels between the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) and the teachings of this letter.

- ***I Peter*** –
 - Author: Peter
 - Date: This letter was probably written to Gentile believers (2:9-10) just before the outbreak of persecution under Nero in 64 A.D.
 - Theme: Peter’s main purpose for writing this letter was to encourage and instruct believers in the proper response to suffering.

- ***II Peter*** –
 - Author: Peter
 - Date: This letter was probably written from Rome between 64–66 A.D just before Peter’s death.
 - Theme: Peter’s purpose in writing this letter was to oppose and correct false teachers/false teaching that had emerged from within the church. These teachers were perverting the doctrine of justification and promoting rebellion and immorality.

- ***I John*** –
 - Author: John
 - Date: This letter was probably written from Ephesus after John wrote his Gospel and prior to the Domitian persecution in 95 A.D. The exact date of the writing of this letter is unknown but it was probably written between 70–95 A.D.
 - Theme: John wrote this letter in response to the growing Gnostic heresy in the church. John’s main purpose in writing this letter was to describe and encourage true fellowship with God and one another (4:7-12).

- ***II John*** –
 - Author: John
 - Date: This letter was written soon after John’s first letter (see I John “Date” for more information).
 - Theme: John wrote this letter to warn believers not to associate with false teachers and to exhort them to continue walking in obedience to God’s commandment to love (4-6).

- ***III John*** –
 - Author: John
 - Date: This letter was written soon after John’s first and second letters (see I John “Date” for more information)
 - Theme: John wrote this letter to encourage the servanthood of Gaius and correct the selfishness of Diotrephes. John’s main purpose was to encourage believers to live out the truth (3-4).

- ***Jude*** –
 - Author: Jude, the half-brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3)
 - Date: Unknown, but probably written between 66–80 A.D. from an unknown location.

- Theme: This letter was written to address the dangers of false teachers in the church. The main purpose of this letter was to instruct believers on how to respond properly to this threat (17-23).
- **Revelation** –
 - Author: John
 - Date: This letter was written during John’s imprisonment on the Island of Patmos in 95 and 96 A.D.
 - Theme: John wrote this letter to chronicle his encounter with Jesus Christ while imprisoned on the Island of Patmos. John describes his encounter with the glorified Christ (chapter 1); Christ’s assessment of the seven churches of Asia Minor (chapters 2-3); and the “unveil” or “disclose” of God’s purposes and plans for the consummation of history (chapters 4–22).

THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

(The Portable Seminary by David Horton (editor), 2006, Bethany House)

1. The Doctrine of Scriptures
2. Biblical Languages
3. Interpreting Scripture
4. The Doctrine of God the Father
5. The Doctrine of God the Son
6. The Doctrine of God the Holy Spirit
7. Doctrines of Humanity and Sin
8. The Doctrine of Salvation
9. The Doctrine of the Church
10. The Doctrine of Last Things
11. Background to the Old Testament
12. A Survey of the Old Testament
13. Between the Testaments
14. Background to the New Testament
15. A Survey of the New Testament
16. Apologetics
17. World Religions
18. The Christian Church: The First 500 Years
19. The Christian Church in the Middle Ages
20. Reform and Revival
21. Christianity as a Worldwide Phenomenon, 1750-1950
22. The Church After 1950
23. Introduction to Missiology
24. Christian Leadership
25. Christian Ethics
26. Christian Education

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