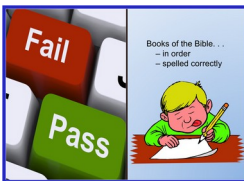




In one of my first Bible classes at Grace Seminary, I was given a quiz that seemed simple and pointless.

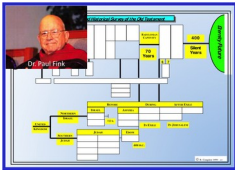


We had to write the books of the Bible in order, no great problem...but also we had to spell them correctly, in order to pass.

Here WAS the challenge, for I was a mechanical engineer and spelling was not a specialty of mine.

Surprisingly, I passed...what was interesting is that several did not pass the test the first time.

I never realized that such a simple task as writing out the order of the books would lead me to consider if the order is really important.



Later in school, I was presented with an Old Testament chart created by Dr. Paul Fink that has become a major help to me as I study the Old Testament.

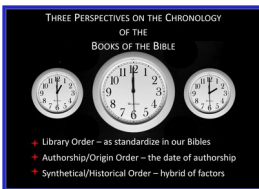
His chart has helped me to follow a normal/literal, historical, and grammatical interpretation of the Bible.

It was Dr. Fink's chart that helped me to realize that the order of the books of the Bible can affect our interpretation of the Bible.

OUR PLAN FOR THIS WORKSHOP

In this workshop, I would like to pass on my New Testament chart that may well change the way you understand a particular book of the Bible, a specific passage, or a verse.

So let us work together on the order of the books of the New Testament and see if it really does make a difference!



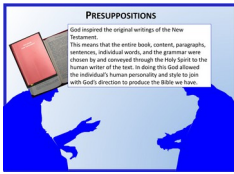
As we begin, we will consider **three perspectives on the chronology of the books of the Bible.**

- Our first perspective will look at the Library Order, as standardized in our Bible.
- Our second perspective will look at the Authorship/Origin Order, that is the order based upon the date of authorship.
- Our third perspective will look at the Synthetic/Historic Order that forms a hybrid of perspectives.

Since some of the ideas I will present may be new to you, I would like to state a couple of presuppositions that we will follow as we create this New Testament chart, together.

OUR/MY PRESUPPOSITIONS

My first presupposition:



1. I believe that God inspired the original writings of the New Testament in the original languages.
 This means that the entire book, content, paragraphs, sentences, individual words, and grammar were chosen by and conveyed through the Holy Spirit to the human writer of the text. In doing this, God allowed the individual's human personality and style to join with God's direction to produce the Bible we have.

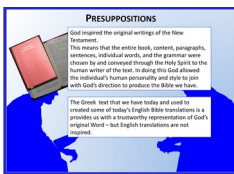
The writers themselves recognized this inspiration.

In 1 Timothy 5 verse 18 Paul quotes Deuteronomy 25:4 and from Luke 10:7.

Of both he says "the scripture saith..." thereby recognizing Luke's and Moses' writing as equally inspired.

Also, Peter recognizes Paul's writings as "other scriptures" in 2 Peter 3:15-16.

My 2nd Presupposition:

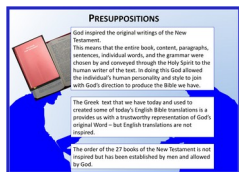


2. I believe the Greek Textus Receptus, that was used to create some of today's English New Testament Bible translations is a trustworthy representation of God's original Word – one that is fine for all purposes of study, learning, and teaching.

But remember, English translations are not inspired.

Neither are the chapter and verse designations, for they are not in the original writings.

Rather they are merely tools developed by man, to make it easier for us to interact as we discuss, study, or teach specific texts.

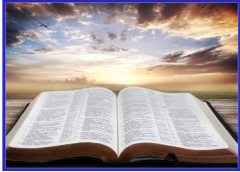


Additionally, we must recognize that **the order** of the 27 books of the New Testament is not inspired but has been established by men and allowed by God to be accepted.

Interestingly, if we look at the various early Greek manuscripts, we find that there is no clear order for the books of the New Testament.

It was Jerome (AD 382-405) that established the current book order of our Bible in his 4th century Latin Vulgate translation.

Historical records do not indicate if his order was the generally accepted order or merely one man's arbitrary order.



Thankfully for us, God has permitted the current English order to be accepted and standardized, allowing us to communicate His Word between people throughout the world – thus, we can pick up any Bible and together easily turn to a passage in our effort to study the Word of God.

I went over this, so that you will see that what we are going to do in this workshop **does not violate some God-given order or way of thinking.**

I would now ask you to join me as we seek to create a chart that gathers various aspect of the chronology of the New Testament into a very useful reference that will help us in our study and interpretation of God's Word.

OUR FIRST CHART – LIBRARY OR STANDARD BIBLICAL ORDER



Let's begin by considering the Library or Standard Biblical Order of the 27 books of the New Testament, beginning with Matthew and ending with Revelation.

As we think of a bookcase, we find the 27 books typically are placed into five categories:

- The Gospels (4 books) – four histories or portraits of the life of Christ upon the earth.

Like all portraits, each emphasizes or points us to a different aspect of the Lord.

- The Acts of the Apostles – a history [1 book] – this is volume two of Luke's history and probably should be put into the Gospel category as five books of history.

The Pauline Epistles [13 books] – these are those accepted as being written by Paul.

The General Epistles [8 books] – these are books written by authors unknown, or other than Paul.

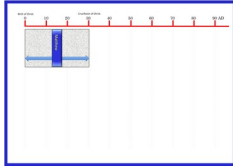
Prophecy [1 book] – this is viewed as a book of prophecy to reveal the future – if you are dispensational and premillennial.

Many Reformed or New Calvinist see it as a history, relating fulfillment in 70 AD.

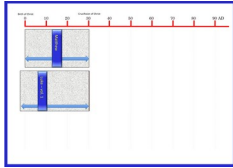
They have a very limited view of prophecy; typically relating it the New Heaven and Earth at the end of the book.

So, today's biblical order is adequate to keep everyone on the "same page", but offers little help if we are trying to see how a particular book fits into God's plan of history or even in the early church history.

For example, consider the four gospels – if we put them into a historical order based upon **events recorded**, we assume Matthew is first, for after all, it is the first book in the New Testament.



At first glance this seems logical for it relates the human genealogy of Jesus Christ and the announcement of His coming to earth.

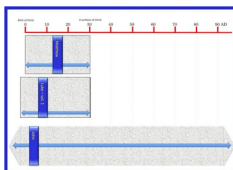


But then, Luke goes back to the conception of John the Baptist, an event preceding the birth of the Lord.

Further, based upon this connection to Malachi’s prophecy, it should be the first book of the New Testament.

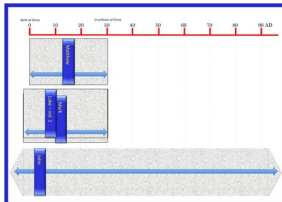
Remember, Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, ended 400 years earlier, by proclaiming that just before the Messiah, Elijah would “*turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.*”

For continuity of history, this seems right.



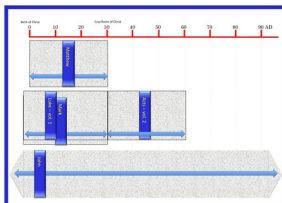
But if we are placing them in the order of the historical events of Jesus Christ, then the Gospel of John should be first, for it begins before the creation and in fact, parallels Genesis 1, equating the Lord as God.

Further, considering all of John’s writings, we find they take us out into eternity.



But don’t forget Mark, he covers the same time period as Luke, but in a more concise manner.

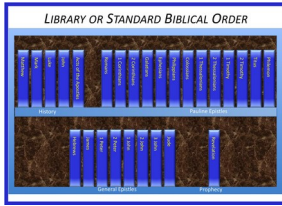
Since a shorter book is easier for the modern mind to read, perhaps it should be first.



Oh, let’s not forget to include Luke’s second volume.

Notice, the problems we have with just four or five books – when we consider the authorship of Hebrews and the topics of other books, we soon don’t know what is the right order.

Perhaps we should simply our categories to just four units:



The History of Jesus Christ and the Church [5 books]

The Pauline Epistles [13 books]

The General Epistles [8 books]

Prophecy [1 book]

But just a minute....

If we look at the epistles or letters we see they also break down into two other distinct groups than just Pauline or General.

Rather than emphasizing the author, it could be helpful to emphasize the recipient.



Thus, our order changes again:

We have a history for all peoples - The History of Jesus Christ and the Church [5 books]

We have Epistles to specific church groups or groups of people [16], including Revelation.

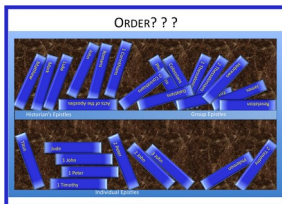
And we have Epistles to specific individuals [6]



You may wonder why I put Revelation with the letters to churches – to understand why, watch my video on CMI-TV for a full explanation showing that the book of Revelation was written to the churches as a set of instructions for the future Bride of Christ.

You see the order really depends upon what you need to study and understand.

Now I have not called our attention to this merely to shake you up, nor to discourage you.



Frankly, the order does not matter as long as the goal is to make it easy for us to open a Bible and find a particular book, chapter, and verse.

But if you want an order that **helps in your interpretation of the Bible**, there are other factors to be considered and emphasized.

SECOND CHART – ORIGIN OR DATE OF AUTHORSHIP ORDER

If your needs are to study a book of the Bible and its place in God’s plan, you need more than a simple commonly accepted order that helps you win a Bible drill.

As my writings have extensively shown the growing danger of New Calvinism as it is entering our churches, I have come to realize that they often incorrectly interpret verses or passages to get people to accept their doctrines.

Sadly, they often use passages that apply to Israel and make them apply to the church and the elect.

But a careful understanding of the chronology of the books of the New Testament quickly destroys their positions.

Aside, I need to explain that this danger to our churches is not just over election, but in fact affects your view of mission outreach, your understanding of what the gospel is, your understanding of prophecy, your assurance of salvation, and very significantly, your entire purpose for existence.

To understand how, be sure to go to our video channel, CMI-TV and watch our series on “New Calvinism: It’s Present Influence and future Impact.”

I hope this study will show you that the chronology of the books of the New Testament affects far more than being just Bible trivia.

BIBLICAL ORDER BY DATE OF WRITING (40-95 AD)	
James	45
Galatians	50
1 Thessalonians	50
Matthew	60
2 Thessalonians	60
1 Corinthians	60
2 Corinthians	60
Romans	60
Mark	65
Luke	70
Colossians	70
Philemon	70
1 Timothy	80
Titus	80
2 Peter	80
2 Timothy	80
Hebrews	80
Jude	85
1 John	90
2 John	90
3 John	90
Revelation	95

Now my second chart is the authorship/origin order of the New Testament.

While there is some argument over the dates used, I have surveyed this extensively and to conserve time, will just show you the order I believe is correct and the one I will be using to create our final chart.

I believe that chart is absolutely necessary for anyone to properly apply a dispensational hermeneutic or understanding of the Bible; that is, a literal-historical-grammatical interpretation.

I would emphasize that when I refer to dispensational hermeneutic I am stressing the distinction between Israel and the Church in God’s plan.

Third Chart – a Synthetic and historic chronology of the New Testament.

Let me now offer you a combination or hybrid of all the other charts.

I call this a synthetic and historic chart.



Synthesis means to combine diverse conceptions into a coherent whole.¹

We will combine the library order (our current bible order), along with the date of authorship, and add historical information to develop a chart that will allow us to understand much of the teaching of a particular book, passage, or verse.

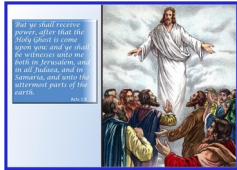
When carefully using our chart, it may act as a check and balance in order to prevent us from developing false interpretations.

¹ Synthesis | Definition of Synthesis by Merriam-Webster.pdf retrieved 5/25/18.

Further, it may give you new insight into the author’s intent, purpose, and why God had him write it when he did.

Keeping in mind the information we have already examined, let us turn to the first historical input needed to begin our synthesis.

Key verse:



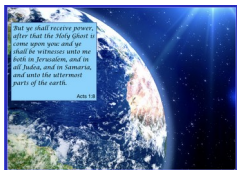
But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
Acts 1:8

this is the key to Acts and actually is an outline of both the book and the historical events it records.



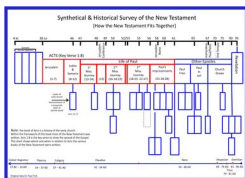
It can be divided by the events that began in Jerusalem.

As the Jewish leadership of Israel began to persecute Jewish believers, the church expanded to Judaea and Samaria.



Finally, Luke shows us how the church began to fulfill the Lord’s command to reach out into the uttermost parts of the earth.

Remember, Luke’s two-volume historical summary began with the announcement of the coming of John the Baptist and continued through to the first 31 years of the Church Age – approximately covering a 60-year period of time.



We can now begin to create our chart – recognizing that Luke’s record in volume 2 can be outlined by Acts 1:8.

The **top timeline** gives dates relating to the synthesis of the books of the New Testament and the events recorded by or involved with those books.

Careful – this timeline scale changes as you move to the right – sorry, had to do it so it all would fit.

The **bottom timeline** merely serves as a reference to link the emperors of the Roman Empire with the books/events of the New Testament.

Thus, we have two “diverse conceptions” that will be brought together by our chart to create the coherent whole = a synthetic and historic analysis of the books of the New Testament will result.

Acts 1 – 7 covers events of the church in Jerusalem following the resurrection of the Lord.

In chapter 8 he begins to expand to Judea and Samaria (8:1) and introduces Saul who would be later called Paul:

And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

We learn in Chapter 9 that the believers at that time were called “the Way”(9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22).

Conversion of Paul – Chapter 9

In chapter 9, Saul meets the resurrected Jesus Christ and begins his ministry, now named, Paul. – the little one.

----- Chapter 10

In chapter 10, we see the beginning of a very slow, gradual movement away from temple attendance and covenant lifestyle.

It also records the entry of Gentile believers into the church, believers who did not have to make a formal conversion to Judaism (9:15).

Luke records this expansion of the church to Caesarea and Antioch and the fact that from this point onward, the church would not be limited to Jews and Gentile proselytes only

The truth was that “*God is no respecter of persons*” (Acts 10:34) and that when even a Gentile received Christ, the Holy Spirit indwelt them also.

In 10:43 we see that now the church is open to “*whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*”

Sadly, this change would bring with it a developing tension between Jewish believers and Gentile believers.

----- Chapter 11

Luke introduces this in chapter 11 verses 1-3:

And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

*2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision **contended with him,***

3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

Here the word, “*Contend*” means to make a distinction – those in Jerusalem who were willing to accept Gentiles but wanted to maintain a **distinction between** Jewish believers and Gentile believers based upon circumcision.

For the next twenty years, this would be a problem for the growing church.

As the number of Gentiles believers increased, Jewish believers reacted fearing the loss of the churches connection with the OT and with its law.

This is why NT often deals with the relationship of law and grace and mention is made of the place of Jewish circumcision, etc.

It would take time for the infant church to understand that God had brought in a new dispensation – the Church Age where there are no distinctions based upon Jew or Greek, bond nor free, male nor female – for “*ye are all one in Christ Jesus* (Gal. 3:28).

Along with this understanding, God had to teach the church that He was not done with national Israel or the Jewish people.

The church age was “sandwiched in” between the Old Testament dispensation and the millennial dispensation, where Israel is the focus once again.

So we read:

*17 Forasmuch then as God gave them **the like gift** as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?*

*18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God **also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.***

It was at Antioch that believers are first called “Christians (v. 26).”

----- Chapter 12

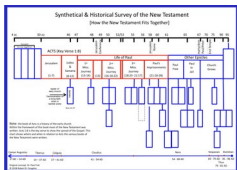
Beginning with chapter 12, Roman persecution of believers replaces the persecution by non-believing Jews.

In 44 AD, the Romans who are seeking to please the national Jewish leaders kill James, the brother of John and arrest Peter.

Under this growing persecution against the church by Jewish national leaders the apostles apparently leave Jerusalem (Gal. 1:19; 2:9; 2:12; Acts 15:13; 21:18) with the result that the church now begins to grow in Judea and Samaria.

It is during this time, that **James, the Lord’s half-brother** and full brother of Jude, is the **leader of the church** in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17).

James 46 AD



With these changing conditions and the growth of many new Jewish believers in Judea and Samaria and beyond, – James, pens the **first book of the New Testament in 46 AD**.

With a pastor’s heart, he is concerned for “*the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. (2) My brethren...*”

Both the author and the readers are Jewish and this is seen in James’ references to the synagogue (2:2), elders, and its total lack of references to Gentiles.

James realizes that these believers need to carefully understand the Word of God, for these Jewish believers lived in a Hellenistic world influenced by Greek philosophy.

It was probably a new idea to them that works reflect faith inside rather than Judaism’s emphasis on the observance of the covenant and dependence upon rabbis for teaching rather than their own study of the Scriptures.

In light of the developing persecutions, James wants to prepare them for what is coming and eventually the dissolution of the Temple.

Additionally James had to prepare them for the acceptance of Gentiles, both rich and poor, into the church.

For James, the key issue was the Lordship of the Christ and the hope of His early return (1:1; 2:1; 5:8).²

Ignoring this Jewish aspect, explain why so many Christians struggle to understand this book and to understand the works relationship.

In some ways the book of James laid the groundwork for James' role in the coming Jerusalem Council and the concerns over the relationship of circumcision with respect to the Gentiles.

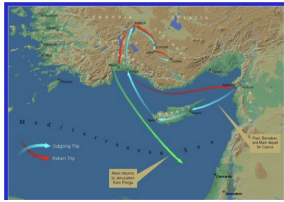
THE JERUSALEM CHURCH PREPARED – ACTS 13

As we move into Acts 13 in about 47 AD, the church's influence has moved beyond Israel's borders into **"the uttermost part of the earth"**

This advance, begun back in Acts 11 brought believers to a significant crossroad in the history of the apostolic church.

God had indicated back in Acts 1 verse 8 that the church would consist of both Jewish believers from Jerusalem and Judea.

What many missed was it would also include a mixed group of believers from Samaria and the world.



Driving this was Paul's first missionary journey recorded in chapters 13 and 14.

In each city, he first witnessed to the local Jewish groups and to God-fearing Gentiles, but with a growing rejection, he turned also to the pagan Gentile world, which received the Word.

This would mark a distinct change in the Jewish aspect of the church as Gentile began to make up a greater proportion of believers.

Thus, as we study books written after 46 AD, we have to consider two distinct groups of believers and the resultant emphasis and understanding associated with each.

The date of writing, location, and readership must factor into our proper interpretation of a passage.

When writing outside of Israel to a Gentile audience, the readers would not have an understanding of Judaism, the OT world, or a true grasp of God, for their world environment was pagan influenced by Greek philosophy.

Paul recognized this when he felt compelled to write to the new believers in Galatia, a region in Asia Minor.

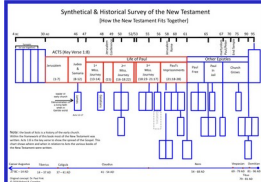
Unlike the Jewish world, this mixed group of believers in Galatia would be challenged by the world around them and would need immediate teaching to counter those around them seeking to stop the gospel or to divert these new believers from a daily walk with the Lord.

For them, Judizers would want to bring them under the Law to counter their pagan background, not truly realizing that they had an indwelling Holy Spirit and they were free of the Old Testament Law.

These dangers were not unique to Galatia, but required a foundational teaching appropriate to believers who were young in the faith.

As we study Galatians, we see that the very same dangers have continued to this day as seen in New Calvinism.

² D Edmond Hiebert, *The Epistle of James*. (Moody Press, Chicago, 1979), 40.



It is my opinion that Paul wrote Galatians just after his first journey, 47 AD, but before 49 AD when the Jerusalem Conference, where the circumcision issue and the place of law in the Christian's life would be settled.

You will find some that put it later in 54 AD but I believe he would have addressed the issue differently or not at all, if it had been written by that date.

We also see that in Galatians, Paul corrects Peter for his separatist attitude toward Gentile believers and in doing so, Paul helps to prepare Peter for the discussions at the Jerusalem Conference.

Thus, I place Galatians as being written in 48 AD and before the Jerusalem Conference of 49 AD.

Chapter 15 – Jerusalem Conference – 49 AD

While Paul's spiritually successful missionary trip to the Gentiles developed many new churches, it also brought the divisions within Christianity to a head.

In the early days of the church, a few proselytes were ok to Jewish believers, for they certainly had real sympathy for Jewish traditions, but now after Paul's success among the "pagan" Gentiles in a Hellenist world, what would happen to the church?

Clearly the writing was on the wall, the church would be taken over by Gentiles and the Jewish believers would be an ever-shrinking minority group with little if any influence.³

So we read in Acts 15:3-5.

3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

Was Christianity merely a modified form of Judaism keeping its laws, rituals, and worship except for the sacrifices or was God forming a new body of believers for a different purpose – to be the Bride of Christ.

To the Jerusalem believers, if a man was not circumcised, he was not saved – it was simple (v. 5).

Thus, the heart of the issue was what was the Gospel of salvation?

The church now had to solve this growing problem between Jerusalem believers and those from Gentile world.

7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;

9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

Salvation always has been by grace alone and faith in the Lord to provide salvation and nothing else.

³ Kent, 120.

Just as Acts 1:8 gave the first direction for the church, now the Council of Jerusalem gave further direction.



Significantly, James now quotes Old Testament Amos to help define this new direction.

In quoting Amos, he demonstrates what was happening was of God and foretold – therefore, they should realize this moment in history planned by God.

14) Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a **people for his name**.

15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

16 **After this I will return, and will build again** the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

Always keep in mind that for Jewish believers, a major concern for them was the future of the nation of Israel and their loved ones living there.

Had God abandoned Israel forever and with it the Jewish people?

Many within Reformed/Calvinist circles now teach this.



But in verse 16, James says “after this” – where the “this” is God’s newly created people – the church..after the church...

He then says that God will “return and will build again” the tabernacle of David, an accepted allusion to the Messianic or Millennial Kingdom for Israel on the earth.

So the “after this” could as easily be read “after this age...the church age” God will then bring the Millennial Age for Israel.

James recognized that a new dispensation had begun and with it a new life for the believers and the church.

The church is not Israel, nor is Israel the church – there is no replacement theology here but merely a setting aside of national Israel for God to call out the Bride for His Son.

Three key elements are often dealt with in the early books of the New Testament (James, Galatians, Matthew):

- Christians are free from the Law
- Jewish and Gentile believers are not part of Israel, but are a people of God called the Church – establishing a new dispensational period.
- God is not done with Israel, but has set it aside during the Church Age but will turn back to national Israel after the Church Age and begin the Millennial Age.

Paul’s Second Missionary Journey – 15:36-18:22 – 49 to 52 AD



From 49 to 52 AD, Paul’s second journey retraces his previous steps before being called by the Lord to the Greek world of the Gentiles in Macedonia.

Philippi now becomes the first European city visited by Paul and to hear the gospel.

From there Paul goes to Thessalonica, capital of Macedonia.

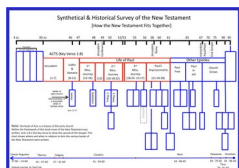
As Paul continued on, he taught in Corinth for 18 months (Acts 18:11).

Luke, ever the careful historian, tells us that

Ac 18:12 And when Gallio was the deputy [proconsul] of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat,

This is significant, for it allows us to date the time of this event in Corinth, for Gallio assumed office of proconsul in 51 and served from then into 52 AD.⁴

In Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 3 and verse 5, we read that Timothy came to Paul in Corinth with a report about Thessalonian churches (1 Thess. 3:1-6).



This report came before the insurrection against Paul, therefore we can date **1 Thessalonians at 50 AD and 2 Thessalonians** a few months later.

In these letters he instructed the newly saved Gentiles about God's plan for history and the coming millennial earthly kingdom – a concept totally new to them with their pagan backgrounds.

New also to both Jews and Gentile believers is the idea of the Rapture and as a new teaching Paul had to correct any misunderstandings.

Paul then leaves and returns to Jerusalem (18:22) then to Antioch Syria.

Paul's Third Missionary Journey – Acts 18:23-21:16 – 52-56 AD⁵

Paul's next journey was not a missionary journey, in the sense of outreach to new areas; for Paul only returned to those assemblies he had previously visited.

The center of activity of this region was the city of Ephesus and the churches established there.

We learn that Paul had a teaching ministry in the synagogue (18:26; 19:8) again stressing the coming Millennial Kingdom upon the earth.

Paul always went first to the Jew and then the Gentile.

His ministry continued there for two years – for these young churches needed discipling and needed to understand the doctrines.

One ancient manuscript indicates that these classes lasted from 11 am to 4 pm each day.⁶

These believers, a tiny minority in a pagan world, understood that to survive in this life, you need to understand God and what He is like – you need teaching.

How many hours a week do you spend studying God's Word? Your church teaching – how much?

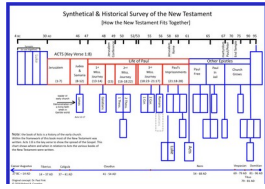
It was during this time that the churches were founded in Colossi, Hierapolis and the seven cities of Revelation 2 and 3.

After leaving Asia Minor and journeying to Macedonia where Paul hears the news of the troubles and divisions at Corinth.

⁴ Kent, 143.

⁵ Kent, 106.

⁶ Kent, 151.



Thus, at this point, 55 AD, he writes to explain to them they are part of the body of Christ and should not be divided for the wrong reasons.

He reminds them that the Lord spoke of their unity through the Lord's Table and that they would all be united at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb one day.

He concludes by reminding them that the resurrection made it possible and was their foundational truth.

As Titus joins him, he brings further news of the Corinthian assembly (late 55 AD) and writes his second letter.

Paul then visits Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, before arriving at Corinth.

Paul remained three months at Corinth (20:3) and during that time wrote the doctrinal letter of Romans (56 AD).

He knew it was time for a strong definition of the doctrines and the church.

He thus sent a letter to the center of the Roman Empire, the capital of the empire.

This important letter would explain God's plan for man and history – the need of individual salvation, the place of Israel during the church age, and the unity of Christianity composed of both Jew and Gentile.

Ephesus



In Acts 20 we note that the church is meeting on the first day of the week (vs. 7) and in verse 20 we see that they met in houses and this supports the idea that the term, church of Ephesus, is the inclusive term for all believers there and not just a single mega church.

Thus in Paul's farewell address to the elders Ephesus, these are most likely the many pastors of the house assemblies and not necessarily supporting the plurality of elders concept.

Paul then returned to Jerusalem.

In Jerusalem, Paul was accused of bringing Gentiles into the temple (20:28) – a crime punishable by death and permitted by the Roman Empire, even Roman citizens.

To warn Gentiles of this grave danger, a sign was placed on the balustrade separating the Court of the Gentiles from the inner courts.

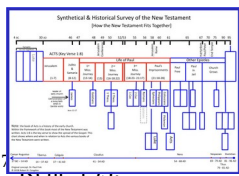
It was written in Greek and Latin.

It read: No foreigner is to enter within the balustrade and enclosure around the temple area. Whoever is caught will have himself to blame for his death which will follow. [picture page 163 in Kent has plague]

Obviously, Paul had not done this and, had he done it, the punishment would have been taken out on Trophimus (Acts 20:29), the Gentile. Paul would have only been an accessory.

As a result a long legal process against Paul begins; one that would go from the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem to Caesarea (with a 2 year imprisonment) and Roman government and on to Rome.

Paul would wait another 2 years for his appeal to be heard.⁷



During this time, Paul wrote four letters – to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, to the Colossians, and a very personal one to Philemon in 60 AD.

It is at this point that Luke ends his history.

In all probability, the case had not been decided but Luke needed to send this second volume to Theophilus, so he sent it.

With this final chapter of Acts, Luke tells us that Paul continued teaching “*those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ*” and preaching the coming kingdom of God/Christ.

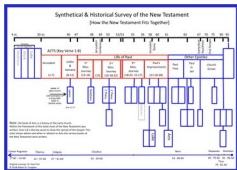
I think it is very important to understand Paul’s teaching priorities.

Clearly it included prophecy, the literal earthly coming kingdom, and the need as the Bride of Christ to prepare to rule with Christ.

This can all be summed up, as teaching God’s control of the world and the place of the church in that plan.

The church is unique and separate from Israel.

It was necessary before God could continue with His plan for Israel.



Having said that, I and many others conclude that the gospel of Luke was begun during those two years Paul was waiting for his trial in Rome and the second volume, Acts was finished just before the trial, **so we date Luke as 58 AD and Acts as 61 AD.**

Luke’s Acts showed how a small band of disciples, used by the Holy Spirit, changed the world and those willing to accept the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we turn to the other books of the New Testament, we need to keep an important fact before us in our studies.

From the beginning of the church to the end of the apostolic age (approximately 70 years) the men who penned the books reflected to a certain degree the make-up of the church.

That is, at Pentecost, the church consisted almost entirely of Jewish people.

By the time John wrote Revelation, the church was not almost entirely Gentile.

Throughout the age, the church will consist of both Jewish and Gentile believers waiting for the coming of the Lord.

So when a book was penned, it would reflect this proportion of believers in terms of illustrations, understanding, and application.

Date	Scripture Ref.	No. Jewish Believers	Gentile Believers	Total Believers	% Jewish Believers	% Gentile Believers
30 AD	Acts 1:15	120	0	120	100	0
30 AD	Acts 2:41	3120	0	3120	100	0
30 AD	Acts 4:4	8120	0	8120	100	0
39 AD	Acts 10	10,000	24 ent.	10,024 ent.	99.9	0.1
58 AD	Acts 21:20	10,000	10,000	20,000	50.0	50.0
100 AD	n/a	20,180	1,061,840	1,082,020	0.01	99.99

Here are some “guess-tamates” of the makeup of the church from Pentecost to the today.

Beginning in Acts chapter 1 verses 12-14, 40 days after the resurrection we have the eleven disciples, possibly James – the Lord’s brother, Mary, and some other women – a very small group in the upper room.

By Acts 1:15, the group has grown to 120 people.

With the coming of Pentecost and Peter's sermon, 3000 "souls" were added to the number (Acts 2:41).

What we need to understand is that this early group was predominately Jewish believers and a very small number of Gentile proselytes or God-fearers.

By the end of the first century, the church was 98% Gentiles.

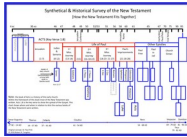
Today it is estimated that there are less than 1% Jewish believers in our churches. That means for a church of 100, there may be one Jewish believer and the rest are Gentiles.

Before we look at the place of the four gospels, we need to realize that 50 AD was a turning point in the apostolic church and marked the true formation of the church to follow for at least 1900 years.

Those changes would have significant affect on Jewish believers both beginning in 50 AD and in 70 AD, the destruction of the Temple and the beginning of the diaspora throughout the world.

During these 60+ years, the needs of believers were changing and the Lord addresses those changes as the books of the NT progress in time.

I have dated 1 & 2 Thessalonians as being written in 50 AD.



So too, I date Matthew then.

These three books graphically illustrate the two different needs of believers at that time.

Jewish believers, particularly in Israel were seeing growing tensions with the Romans, as all Jews were expelled from Rome in 50 AD and the future was worrisome to the nation.

For believers they were trying to grasp that God was building a new body, the church, and that Jerusalem was somehow being abandoned by the Lord and along with it all sacrifices, for Jesus Christ offered the ultimate sacrifice once for all.

Matthew, a disciple of the Lord and a tax collector, was the instrument that God used to help these believers.

Matthew's statement "*to this day*" found in Matthew 27:7-8 and 28:15, suggests that the record of Christ's ministry was written well after 30 AD.

Matthew had to prepare the Jewish believers for what was coming in a mere 20 years in the land.

As we read Matthew it is very clear that his major emphasis is the kingdom of Heaven (a Jewish readership did not want to hear the term, kingdom of God) and the proofs that Jesus of Nazareth will be the King of Israel.

To the Jewish people of his day, the kingdom was the millennial kingdom on the earth, to be ruled by the Messiah King.

Over and over Matthew says, "THIS THINGS HAPPED ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES" reminding them that this new age was always in God's plan and He was sovereign.

This was very important to them, for some family and friends who were not believers.

To these he demonstrates that Jesus of Nazareth is the long awaited Messiah – the one Matthew knew personally.

After showing this, Matthew prophesizes the future for Israel, after the church age in Matthew 24 and 25.

Matthew 24 and 25, applies to Jewish people in the Tribulation and NOT church-age believers.



In my video on CMI-TV I explain how he also explains the “why” or reason Israel was to be dispersed following 70 AD.

Matthew concludes his gospel by reminding his Jewish brethren that they must take the gospel beyond Israel. It was their responsibility to go into “*all the world to make disciples among all nations* [Matthew 28:19, 20].”⁸

As we study Matthew, we must remember this is written to a Jewish readership rather than a Gentile readership.

Based upon Matthew’s purpose and initial readers, we must be very careful to interpret Matthew always from a Jewish/Israel aspect and not try to replace promises to Israel with the church.

Matthew does not speak to Gentile believers or churches, rather to his Jewish readers.

Recognizing this, the long debate over the beatitudes can be answered; as well as our understanding of the parables of Matthew 13 – they are not for the church age, but like all of Matthew, they can teach us about our God, our Lord, and what He is like.

Further, when we get to Matthew 24 and 25, we see this speaks of God’s remembering Israel and calling them back to Him using the events of the Tribulation – this is for Israel with no mention of the Rapture.

For the Gentile believers, God has Paul explain the Rapture in 1 & 2 Thessalonians, an event for the church age believers alone.

Clearly, by 50 AD, the church needed a clear declaration of prophecy as it relates to both Israel and the church and it needed to understand the OT worship was coming to an end.

Now we will move on to Mark.

Mark

While no author is stated for the Gospel of Mark, since early on (by 110 AD), the church has believed that Mark, a protégé of Peter penned it.

In all probability this is the same Mark, as John Mark referred to 10 times in the New Testament (Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37, 39; Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philemon 24; 1 Peter 5:13).

Based upon a reading of Mark, we conclude that John Mark was very familiar with Jerusalem, Aramaic, and Jewish customs and institutions.

Since he was not part of the original 12, his references to events only seen by them, points to Peter as his source of information.

Unique is his statement, “*and Peter*” in 16:7, to this gospel and the fact that it follows an outline similar to Peter’s sermon in Caesarea in Acts 10:34-43.

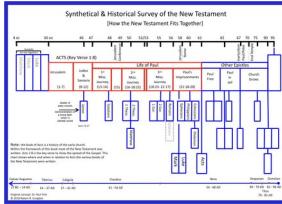
Mark may have come to know and believe in the Lord through Peter.

Peter then discipled him and was instrumental in developing him in the service to the Lord and the church – thus, Mark may have been asked by Peter to write this gospel, for Peter knew he was soon to go to be with the Lord.

Thus, he wanted to leave a written testimony; the gospel of Mark.

⁸ Barbieri, L. A., Jr. (1985). Matthew. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 16). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Dating this gospel is difficult, in part with considerations of Luke's relationship to Mark and Mark's to Peter. Two periods are considered.



65 AD is considered the conservative viewpoint, based in part upon Peter's death in 68 AD and suggests Mark wrote near to the time of Luke's writing.

We will now look at the post-Acts writings.

Later Writings

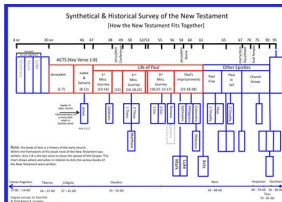
I would like to break the later writings into **three groupings**: Paul's last letters, General letters, and John's writing.

I agree with many, that Paul was released just after Luke penned Acts.

Now free, Paul was aware that his life was drawing to a close and was concerned for the churches that were formed and now developing.

He had to warn them of coming dangers and also how to be structured from an organizational standpoint for the churches are maturing and with the new spiritual generations need careful, doctrinal instruction.

Soon there will be no apostles left who could answer questions with their unique authority or experience.



Thus, **1st Timothy (63 AD)** gave instructions for a church with elders and deacons, while Titus spoke to a newly formed church with just elders being selected.

Both stressed the coming of the Lord – by twenty years after the ascension of the Lord, many may have started to wonder if they were wrong about the Rapture and 2nd coming – Paul re-emphasizes the need for patience and the ultimate reward for that patience in 2 Timothy.

2nd Timothy is both Paul's farewell to the church as a whole and to Timothy as Paul knew that this imprisonment would lead to his martyrdom in 65/67 AD.

Luke is with him in Rome and he asks Timothy to bring a now, useful Mark with him (2 Tim. 4:11).

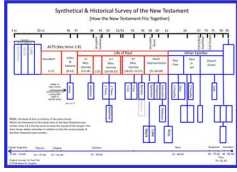
He wants to assure the believers that they do not need him as the leader, but rather they were to remain faithful and continue the work he started – he was passing the baton on to a new generation of pastors.

The charge given to Timothy in chapter 4 was to all who would carry on the task of faithfully teaching the entire Word of God in the normal, historical, and grammatical interpretation system.

By this time, the church had grown and developed, with 2nd and 3rd generation Christians coming into it – hence the need to be teaching the doctrines to counter false teaching that would be developing (2 Tim. 3).

JUDE

Jude would also warn of the coming apostasy and false teaching.



Early 2nd century writings suggest it was penned late in the 1st century and after the fall of the Temple (70 ad) – so I pick **75 AD**.

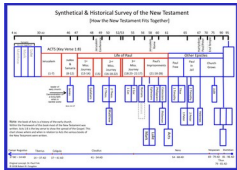
I do this, because I see Jude as written to all believers of the time, both Jewish and Gentile. He uses several OT references – showing the continuity of the developing canon (Jude 17) and the unity of the OT and NT.

By Jude’s day, all but 6 books of the NT were circulating among the churches.

Nothing is new under the sun, so too, false teaching has continued since the beginning, but without apostles around, many tried to gain a false authority as their replacements.

The church must be warned.

The General Letters



The general letters includes the book of Hebrews and 1 & 2 Peter.

These were written prior to the destruction of the Temple and essentially at the end of the time where Jewish believers would be able to cling to the “old ways” along with the new.

It appears that Peter wrote to those Jewish believers in Asia Minor, for he calls them the “strangers” which is defined as “sojourners in a strange place and scattered (diaspora) throughout Asia Minor.

By this time in church history, the Gentile proportion of the church had grown and had become the predominant group.

Jewish believers were become a minority group and needed encouragement, for the Jewish aspects of Christianity was fading.

If written during the persecutions of Nero, as most suggest, then a date of 65 AD would fit – certainly the references to suffering and cares (1 Peter 5:7) would be appropriate.

Like the book of Hebrews, this epistle would be encouraging to the many Jewish believers as they face the destruction of the Temple and the end of Israel in 70-73 AD.

This may explain the distinctly Jewish nature of 1 Peter 2:9 – a holy nation or people.

In 2nd Peter we find a reminder that “in old time” God spoke through holy men of God as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Ptr. 1:21) – as persecution grew, they needed to be reassured that God was in control.

This reassurance also encourages all believers of the coming of the Lord and the correction of all that is wrong in the world (2nd Ptr. 3).

Because of the Jewish readers, Peter mentions the fulfillment of the promises to Israel at the second coming, rather than a discussion of the Rapture.

As this is close to the time of his death, his parting word is that all believers need to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

As I mentioned, the book of Hebrews was written to deal with the coming events of the end of the Temple and Israel and **I place it at 67 AD.**

The writer writes with a strong Jewishness and reminds that the priesthood and temple worship were merely pictures of the heavenly and that Jesus Christ is the true priest in heaven for all believers.

It is that priestly ministry that we can depend and not human priest or Levitical systems.

The “warning passages” seem designed to warn the readers of the danger of failing to comprehend the truth that our faith is based on the risen Lord and not a system of worship.

A lesser recognized reason for the warning passages, is that they relate to the nation of Israel as a whole and represent the final call of God, before the Tribulation, for Israel to turn to Him, repent, and bring in the kingdom.

The Writings of John

As we approach the end of the century, John is in Ephesus and will soon be exiled to the island of Patmos.

He is the last living apostle and among the last living witnesses of the resurrected Lord.

As he looks back and considers the needs of the present-day church, now almost entirely Gentile, he covers several key concepts about faith and salvation.

Certainly there is need for a doctrinal teaching about His Lord even more than a memoir.

Hence, the gospel of John is unlike the synoptic gospels for it is heavily doctrinal.

With Israel gone, he does not want the Gentile believers to forget the OT, for it is not only a foundation of the NT, but it teaches much about God.

Almost every chapter is timed by or relates to the seven Feasts of the Lord, which are historical, prophetic, and doctrinal – that can teach believers of all ages about the Lord and His relationship to them.

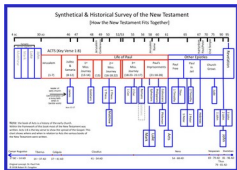


But many fail to see how unique it truly is.

He begins not with John the Baptist or the birth of Christ, but instead parallels Genesis 1 – in the beginning.

He concludes it with his testimony that this is the truth and there was so much more to tell (John 21:24,25).

John’s gospel shows us that above all he wanted to be with his Lord, but that it was he that was to be the last and as such the one to tell of His coming.



I take the book of Revelation as his volume two of his writings, just as with Luke.

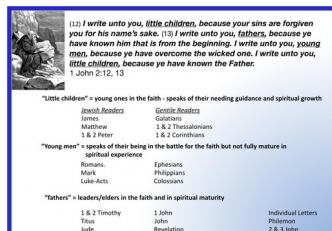
Since it is the last book of the Bible and will continue to be the last, I place the three letters at the time of the gospel written while still in Ephesus and before his exile.

As I close this survey, I would remind you that Luke outlined the progress of the church from its earliest days to the expansion to the world.

Acts 1:8 gave us the outline.

I have shown how the books of the New Testament fit into that outline and how the changing proportions of Jew and Gentile affect our interpretation of various passages.

Similarly, I believe John appropriately closes the Bible using his first epistle in a similar way to Luke's outline in Acts 1:8 – In 1 John 2 verses 12 and 13.



This passage sounds so much like an old man's final words to his descendants – in this case, spiritual descendants – “my little children.” – the ones that are **young in the faith**

Clearly, he lays out the reality of what a true Christian is, what they believe, how they should live, and why they can never lose their salvation.

He speaks of their needing guidance and the need for true spiritual growth

through God's Word.

While I believe the New Testament is for all to read and study, for Paul stresses this, so to do I believe we must first of all consider the first readers of these books.

James, Matthew, and 1 and 2 Peter speaks primarily to Jewish readers, particularly as they need to understand the new place the Church has in God's plan and in doing that understand Israel's place in that plan.

Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, along with 1 & 2 Corinthians speaks to the needs of those young in the faith Gentiles.

These books contain the essentials of a maturing belief in our Lord.

John speaks also to the **young men** – those being in the battle for the faith, but not fully mature in the faith.

Thus, Romans gives the essentials of doctrine, Mark and Luke the understanding of history and the days our Lord walked on the earth.

Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians speak of the battle for these doctrines, enabling the young, who have the strength, to contend for the faith.

Finally, John speaks to the **fathers** – the leaders and elders in the faith who are spiritually mature and able to teach others.

To Timothy and Titus, God instructs on how to work with a mature church and the emphasis upon preaching the Word and teaching others with the goal of them teaching others.

Jude warns that the fight for the faith has just begun and will continue till the Lord comes.

John writes of the overall plan of God from creation to the New Heavens and Earth – something that must be understood by all believers before they are ready to serve the Lord as His Bride.

Finally, we have very personal letters to help the individual believer deal with issues that are often one to one.

Some speak of the dangers of deceivers and false teachers – an increasing problem as we draw near to the Rapture.

Some speak of the dangers of pride among believers as the church grows and some seek power over others rather than following God-give authority.

Again, all need to read and understand, but be careful how you apply passage and promises by God; always considering is it speaking to the church, to Jewish readers, and/or to Gentile readers.

The foundation was laid and since God wrote it, it can lead, direct, help, encourage, etc. for all.

And so during the great persecution of Domitian, John is exiled.

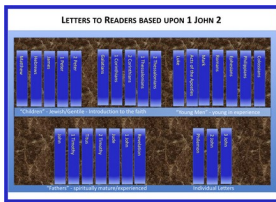
Sad though this seems, any writer knows that isolation and no schedules make the best environment for writing.

There on Patmos, John was allowed to see the state of the churches during his day and ours, and to instruct and warn all to correct their failings.

There he was allowed to see into the future and the glorious return of His Lord to the earth to rule 1000 years and then to see the “beginning” of the new heaven and earth.

John’s final words to us proclaim that “whosoever will” may come to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and eternal life.

Considering all these things, I offer you a different bookcase that might help in remembering how to understand and interpret the books of the New Testament.



God appropriately ends the Bible with a book of instruction for the Bride and as the Bride we are to call the unsaved and we are to live and pray, that the Lord Jesus will come quickly.

[based upon time, go into dispensational aspects]

John ends his book and the Bible with a prayer for all who read, “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

A more serious problem with this system is that it really can cause us to misinterpret verses or misapply them as we seek to do God’s will.

Not surprisingly, doing this can lead to entire systems of theology that are based upon how the books are viewed, often affected by their location in the “bookcase.”

For example, some would argue that the Book of Hebrews is written to a specific group; either a church filled with people needing warnings to prevent them from falling away from the faith – hence the warning passages.

This view has led to an Arminian theology.

For Reformed and Calvinists this view is supported by saying the book was written post-70 ad and the fall of Israel.

For them, the issue is one that demonstrates who is the elect and who is not.

Another view sees this written to a group of Jewish believers and unbelievers struggling with a mixture of OT practices being brought into the church.

They see the warnings as a means to help Jewish believers when they will shortly view the destruction of the Temple in 70 ad and with it the OT practices.

Placing it in the General category may cause some to lose sight of a time factor in their interpretation of and their theology based upon this book.

Thus, an order based upon the time of authorship helps us.

Doing this we have the following order if you take a Biblicist viewpoint:

At this point I would add that, sadly, some dispensationalist have also gone astray by ruling out entire books or passages as only for Israel or only for the church and thus they ignore studying them.

But 2 Timothy 3:16 & 17 rules that out:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (17) That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

I am a dispensationalist and do believe in maintaining the distinction of Israel and the church, but again a careful understanding of the chronology of the books will act as a safeguard to extreme interpretations or rejection of parts of the Scriptures.

Finally, as we see from the chart, Revelation is God's final word given to the church.

Yes, this is a book of prophecy...but...

It has been said that eschatology or an understanding of prophecy may well account for 85% of one's theology.

Now theology and belief are two different subjects.

One can be a strong believer in the Lord and the inspiration of the Scripture but sometimes our theology over-rides our understanding of the clear teaching of the Bible.

Remember, theology is a manmade attempt to systematize one's beliefs.

The categories are generated from a systematic gathering of passages under specific topics; i.e.; salvation, Christology, pneumatology, eschatology, etc.

Sadly, ones system of theology can become a filter that alters our understanding of a passage of Scripture.

I believe that our eschatology affects how we systematize these topics and how we understand God's plan for history.

Reform Theology/New Calvinism typically rejects a millennial kingdom on earth, while Biblicists hold to a 1000-year reign of Jesus Christ upon the earth ruling over a restored Israel.

Thus, as you come to a passage of Scripture, your understanding of prophecy will often lead you to the wrong conclusion.

Interestingly a chronological chart of the books of the Bible can act as a safe guard again.

For example, turn to Matthew 25 verse 31 through 46.

A New Calvinist, ruling out a millennium, sees this event as the beginning of the Last Judgment.

All peoples are gathered and separated into two groups.

The King is Jesus Christ judging believers and unbelievers (sheep and goats) and His throne is in heaven.

They equate with the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 21?..

There, according to a New Calvinist/Reformed person, your works are displayed to show that you either have enough evidence to prove you are the elect or with a lack of evidence you are not the elect.

A Biblicist would insist that this passage follows the Tribulation of chapter 24 and only involves people alive at the second coming of Christ to the earth.

Since Christ is now among these people, He is the King of Israel, seated on the throne of David and beginning his 1000-year rule.

He sends his angels to gather all people living at the end of the Tribulation and the believers are brought into the Millennial kingdom and the unbeliever depart into everlasting fire.

The great White Throne judgment occurs after the Millennium and just prior to the New Heavens and Earth.

Those judged are the non-believers of all ages and there, their works demonstrate that they rejected Christ offer of salvation.

This is quite a difference and one that can be clarified by looking at the passages from a chronological viewpoint.

But we must be careful to not isolate Revelation from the other letters to the churches.

In my video study of the book of Revelation, I spend the first class solely showing how the book of Revelation is written to us as a manual or instruction book on how the church is to prepare NOW for the day when Christ comes for us.

Thus, even the prophecy [a prophecy I might add that we will not partake of the Tribulation part] is for our instruction to prepare us to rule and reign with our Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So perhaps our chart should move Revelation into the general letters to the churches.