

# Paul's Letters

Issue: Importance of Paul's Letters

Questions:

1. Why are Paul's letters so important?
2. What is the significance of Paul's letters being written before the rest of the New Testament?
3. Why did Paul make such extensive use of both Jewish culture, the Jewish Scriptures, and Greco-Roman culture?
4. What is the significance of Paul being a "coherent, but not systematic, thinker"?
5. What is meant by the Early Church "traditioning" Paul's letters?

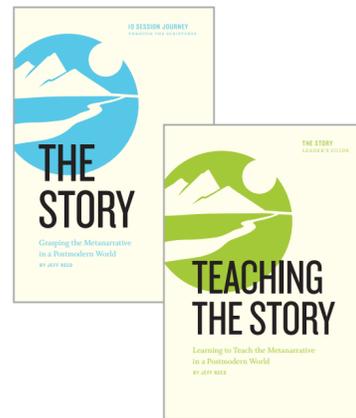


# Paul's Middle Letters

The Church Comes into Full View

**We stopped March of 2020.**

# Paul's Early Letters



**Kerygma**  
**Early Acts**  
**Apostles' Teaching**  
**6 months**  
**Paul: 3 years "night and day"**

**2015**



**Didache**  
**Body of Acts**  
**Theology of Paul**  
**1½ years**

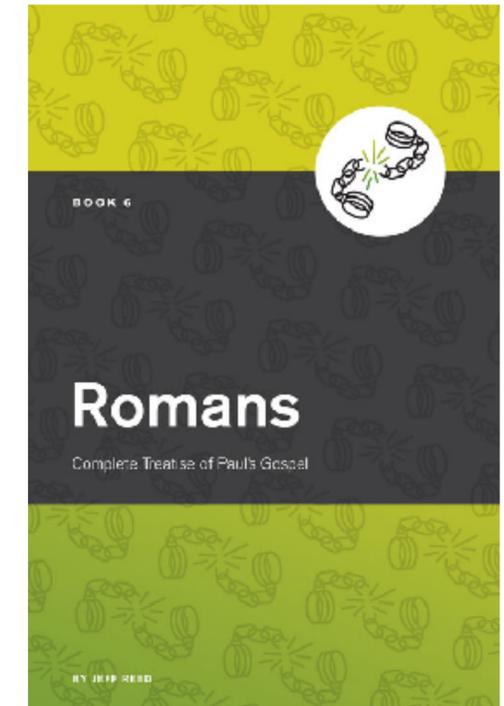
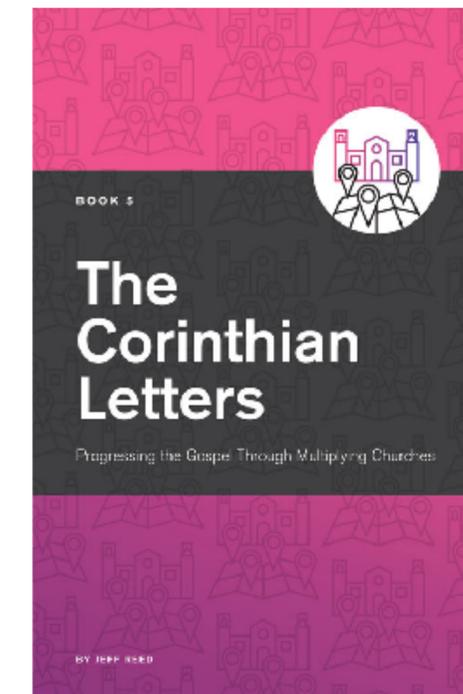
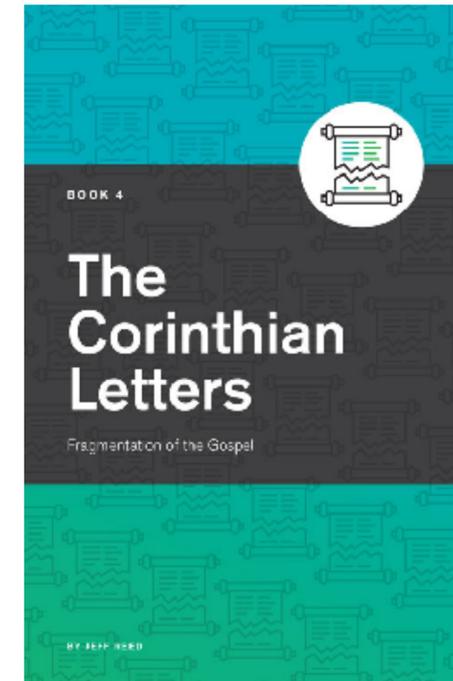
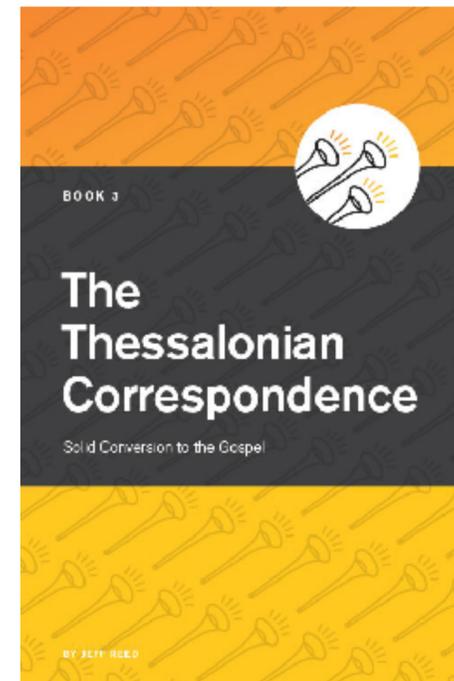
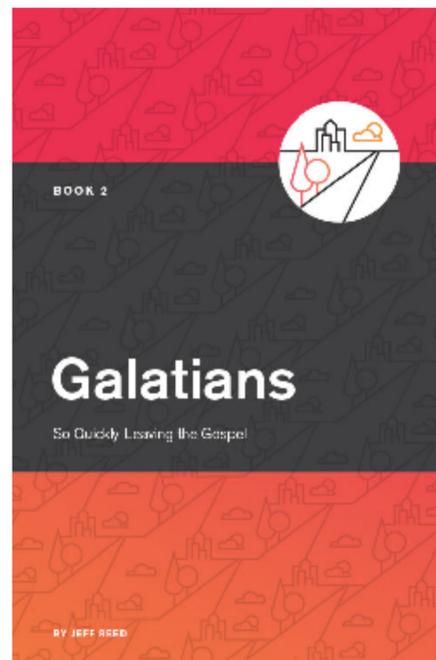
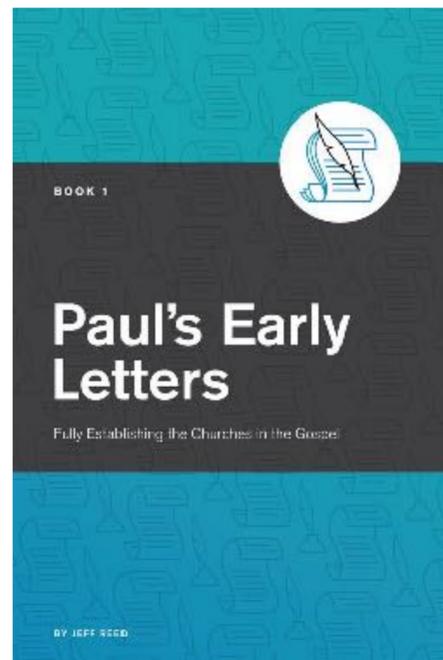
**1997–2009**



**Full Kerygma**  
**After Acts**  
**Apostles' Gospels**  
**1 year**

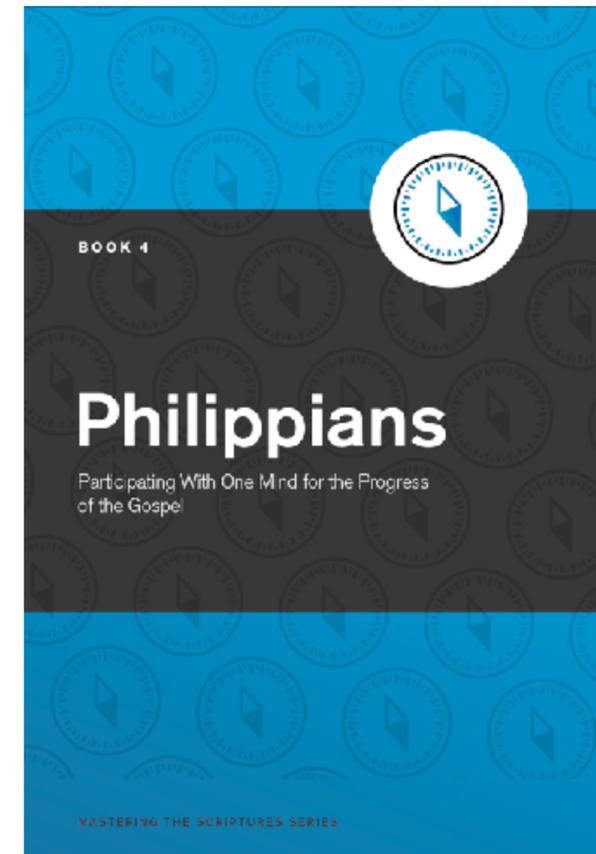
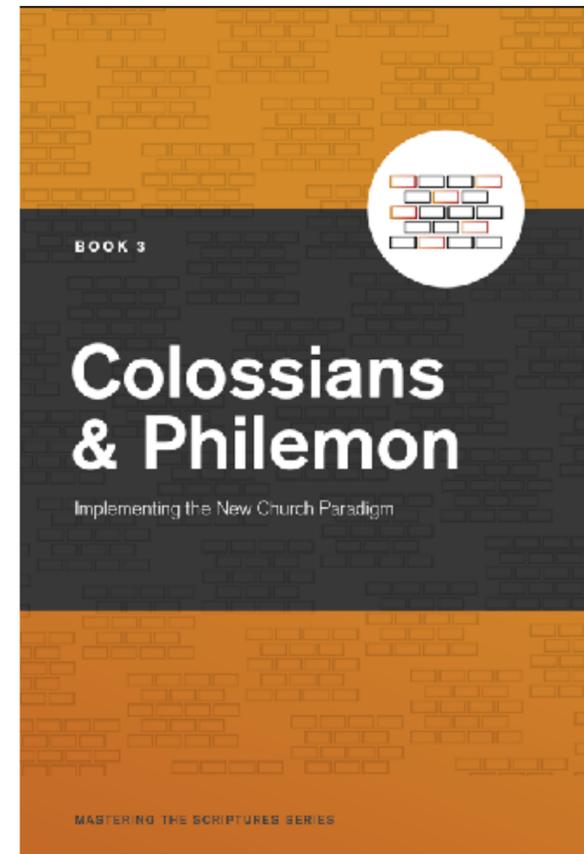
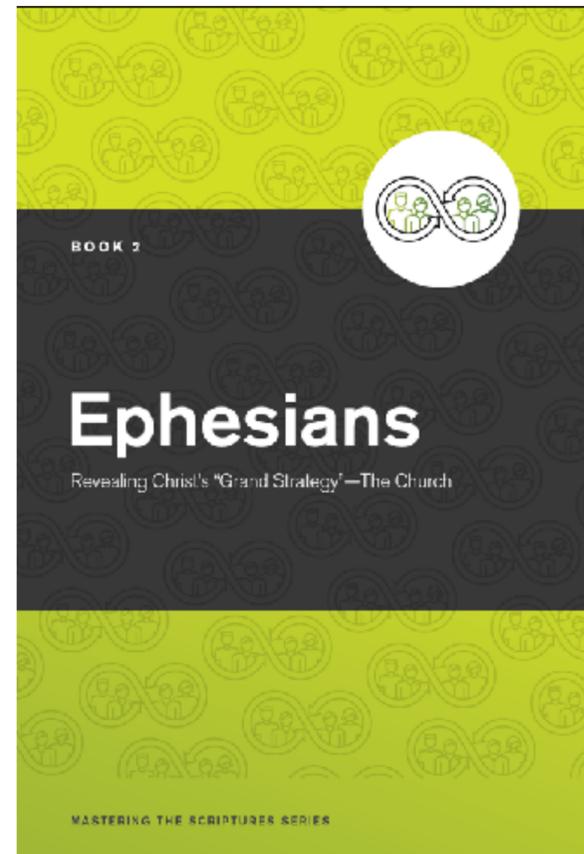
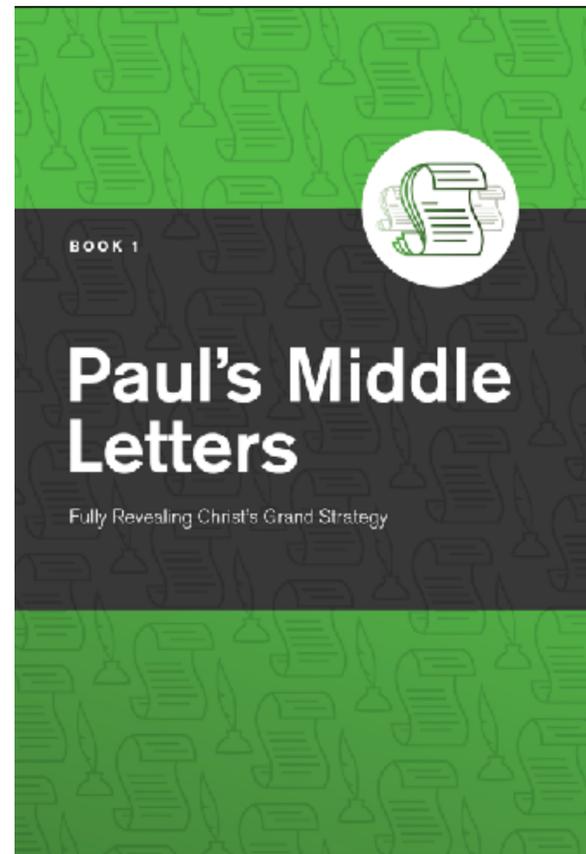
**2011–2016**

# Paul's Early Letters



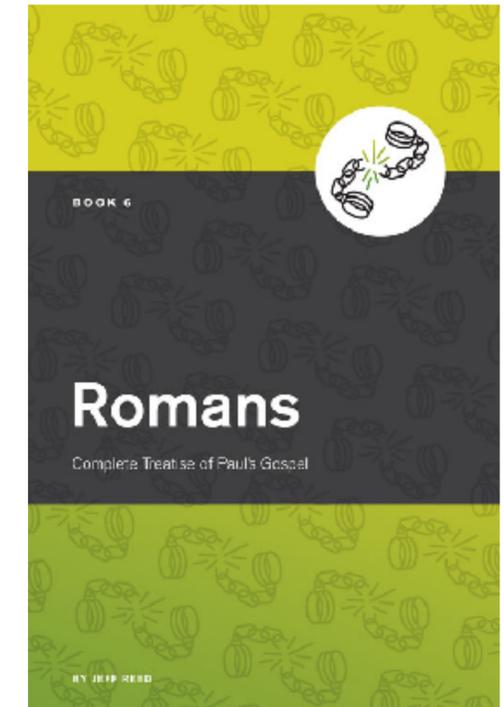
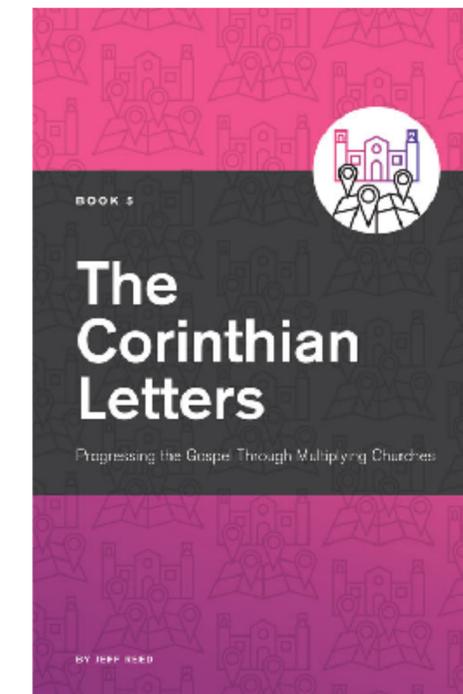
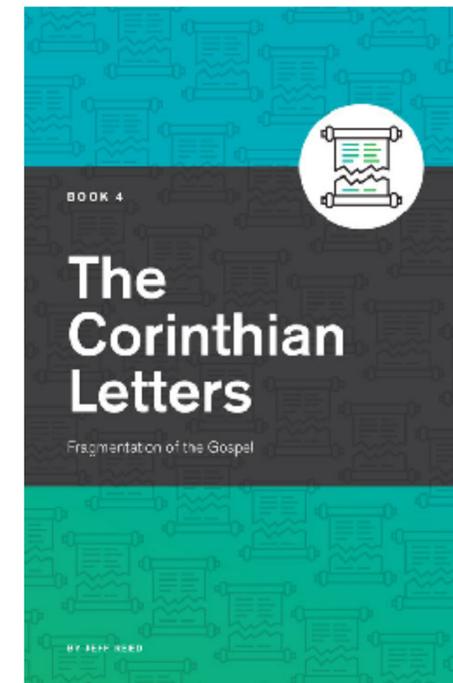
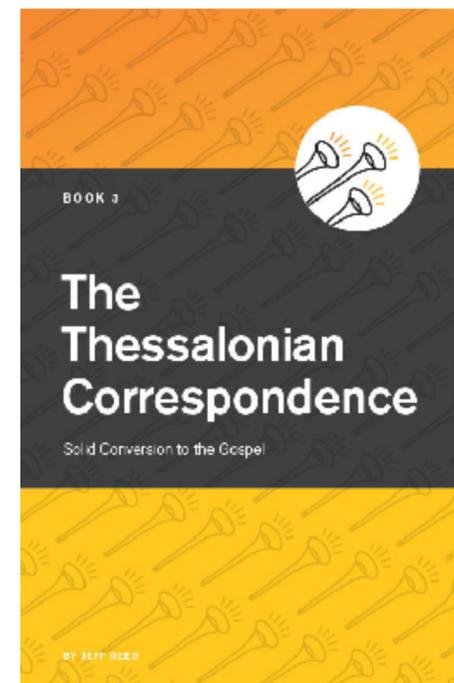
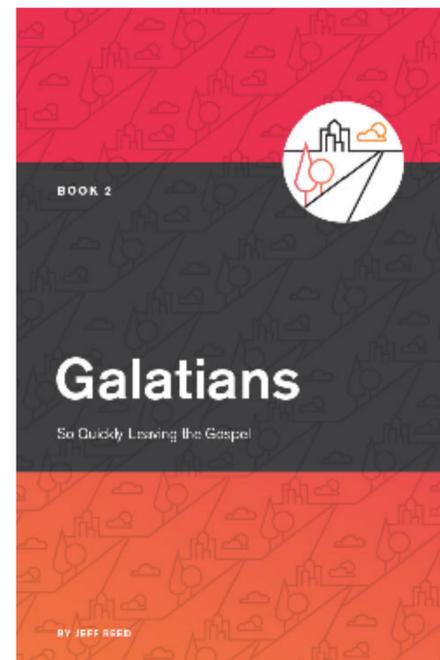
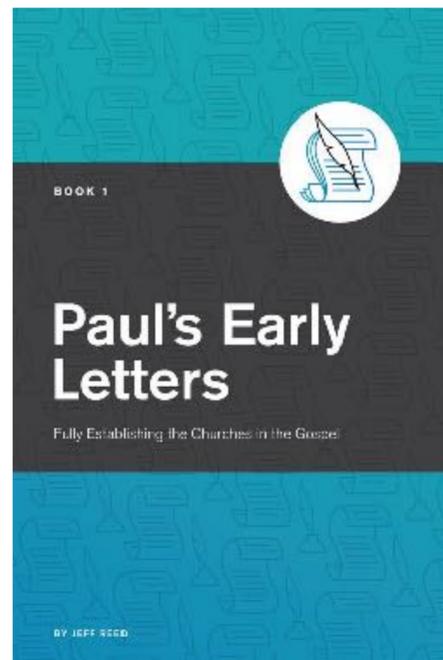
**Taught 2014, 2018–March 2020**

# Paul's Middle Letters



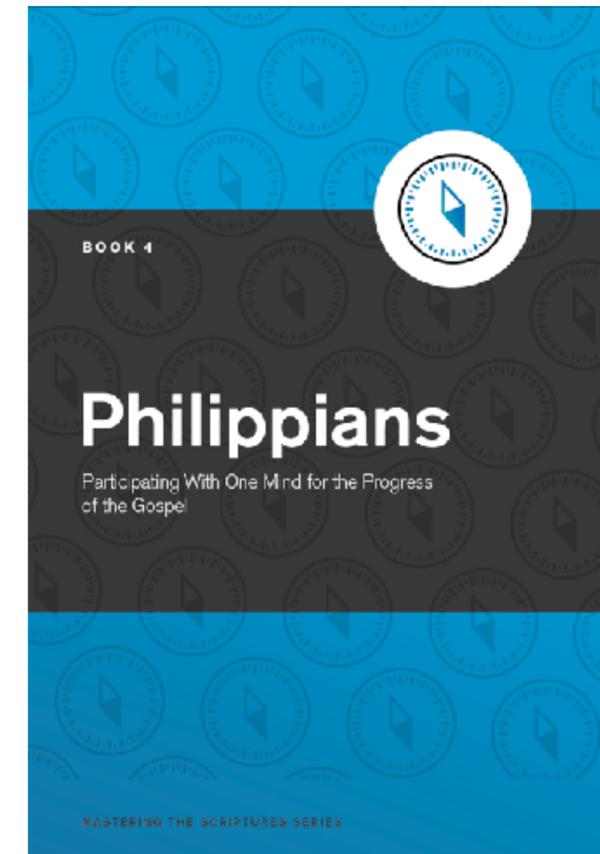
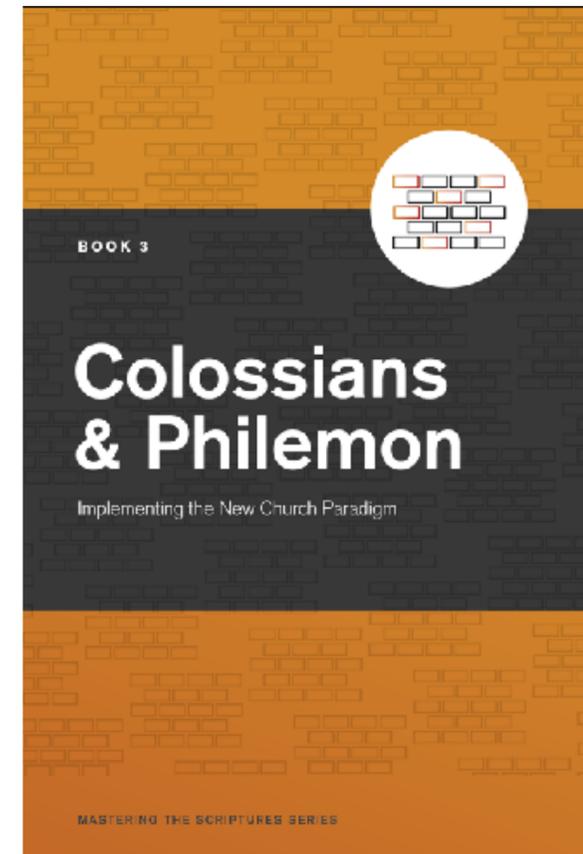
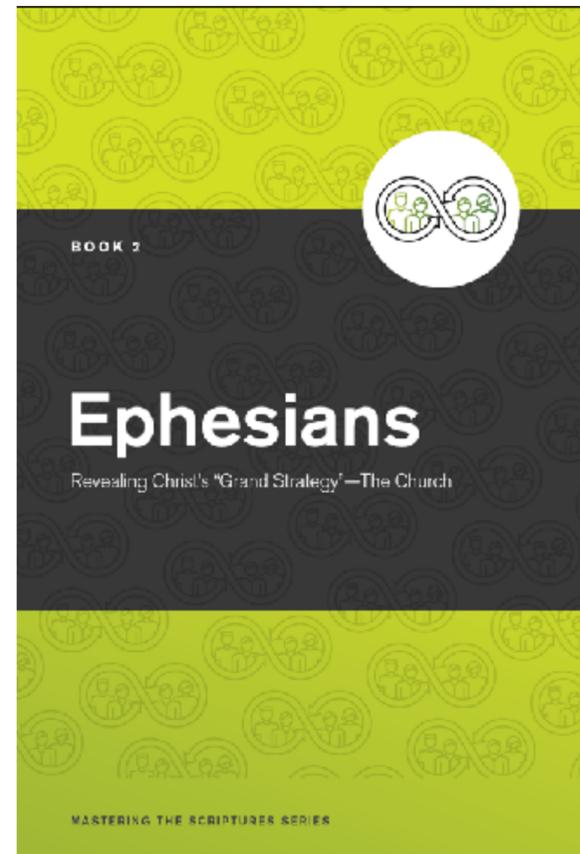
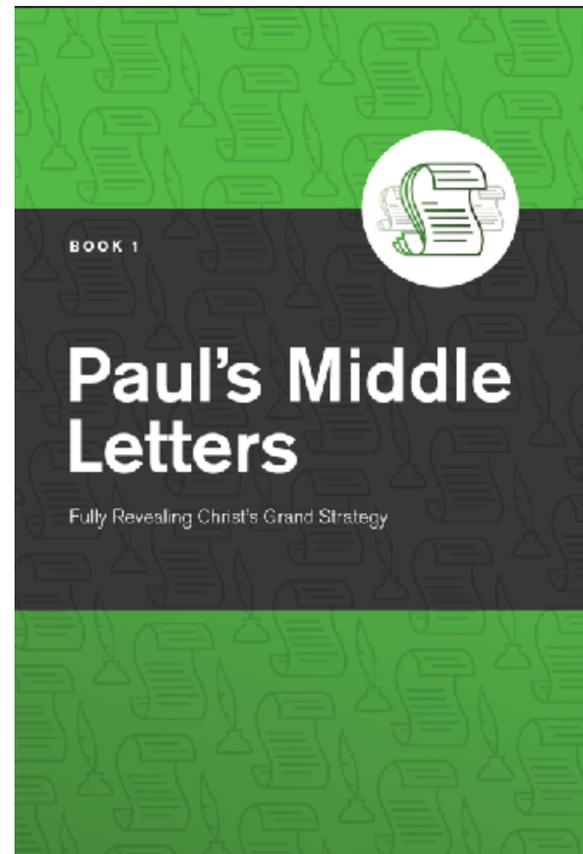
**Taught 2014, 2018–March 2020**

# Paul's Early Letters



**Review and Write, September–December 2021**

# Paul's Middle Letters



**Taught 2014, 2018–March 2020; will complete Colossians and Philemon and teach Philippians November–January 15, 2022**

# Paul's Letters

These middle letters were all written close together (Acts 28:30), during the 2 years Paul was under house arrest—from February 60, to March 62. Most likely...

Ephesians was written autumn 60

Colossians and Philemon, autumn 61

Philippians, early spring 62

These letters give us the full revelation of the Church. But think of the battles that were fought before this.

# Paul's Letters

The battle for the gospel went from autumn 47 AD, until the writing of Romans in the middle of November 56 AD—10 years

Paul's first confrontation with Peter—autumn 47 AD (Gal. 2:1–10)

Peter in Antioch—autumn 49 AD (Gal. 2:11–16)

Jerusalem Council—autumn 49 AD

Then the early letters of Paul—autumn 49 AD to writing Romans in 56 AD

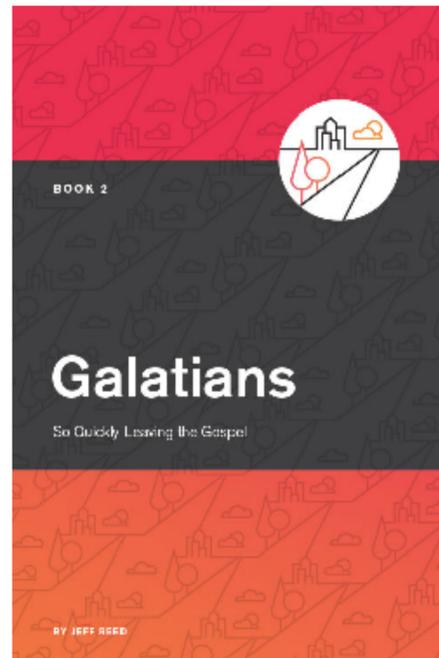
It took Paul a decade to win that argument, which he completed with his Romans manifesto on the gospel.

Now on to his rather compact, full unveiling of the Church.

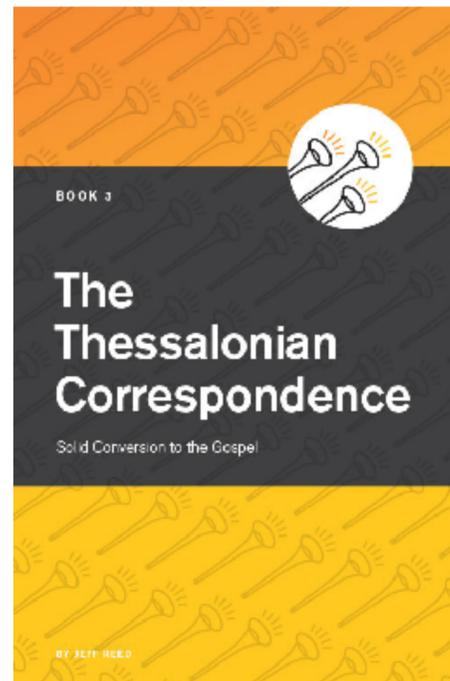
# Paul's Early Letters



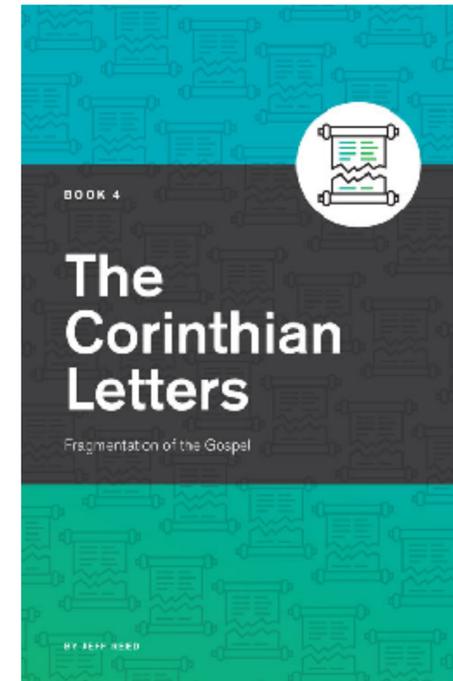
49–56 AD



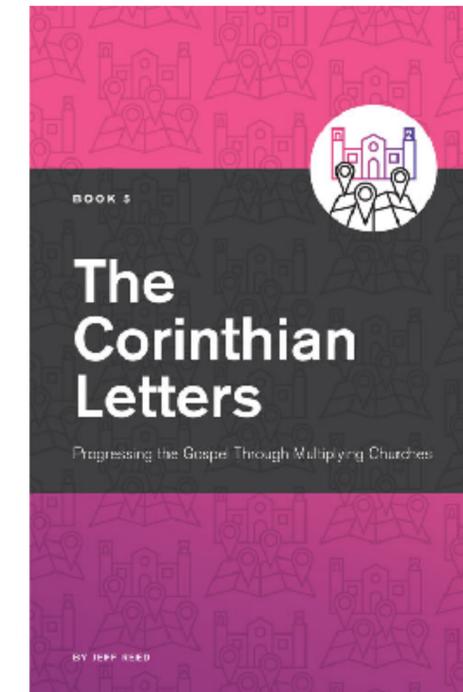
Autumn 49



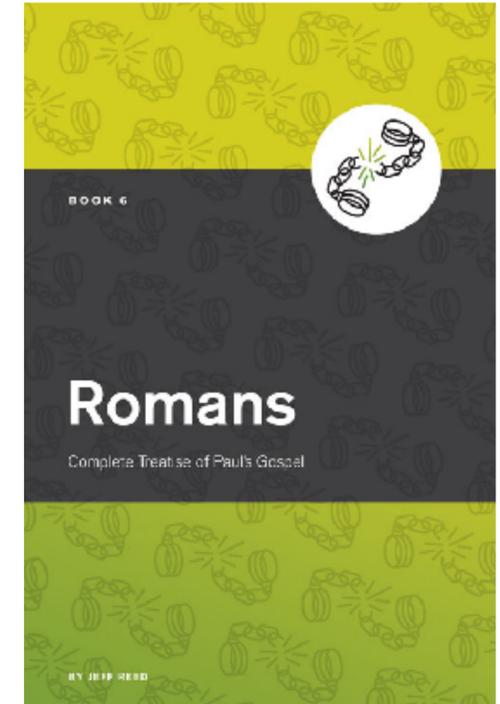
Winter/Summer 51 AD



September 53

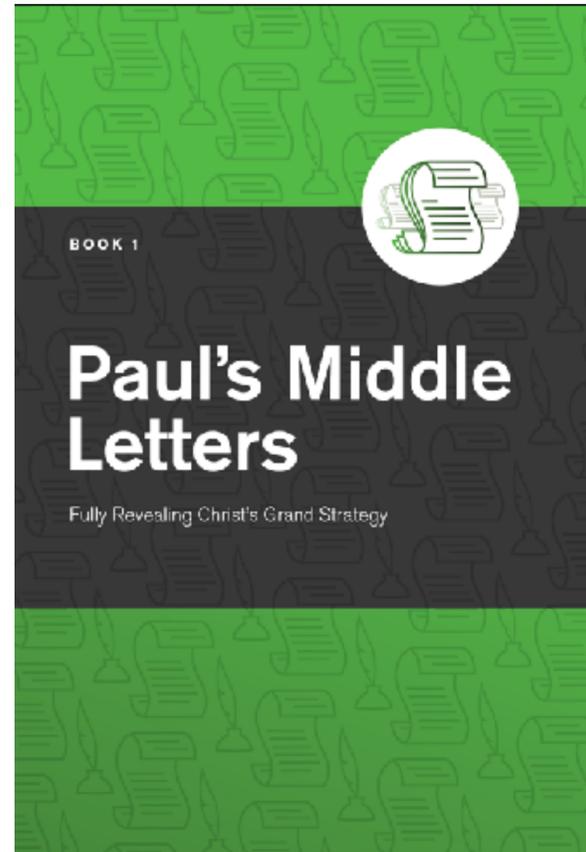


June 56

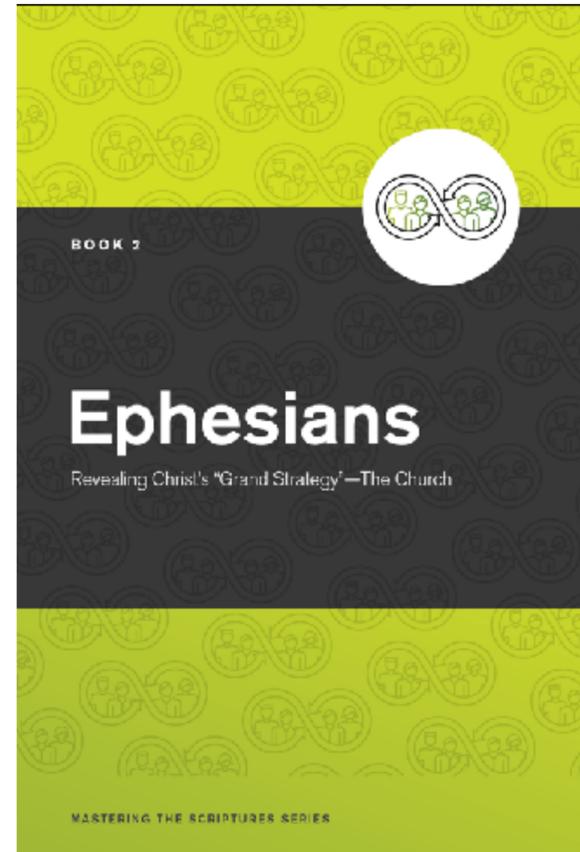


November 56

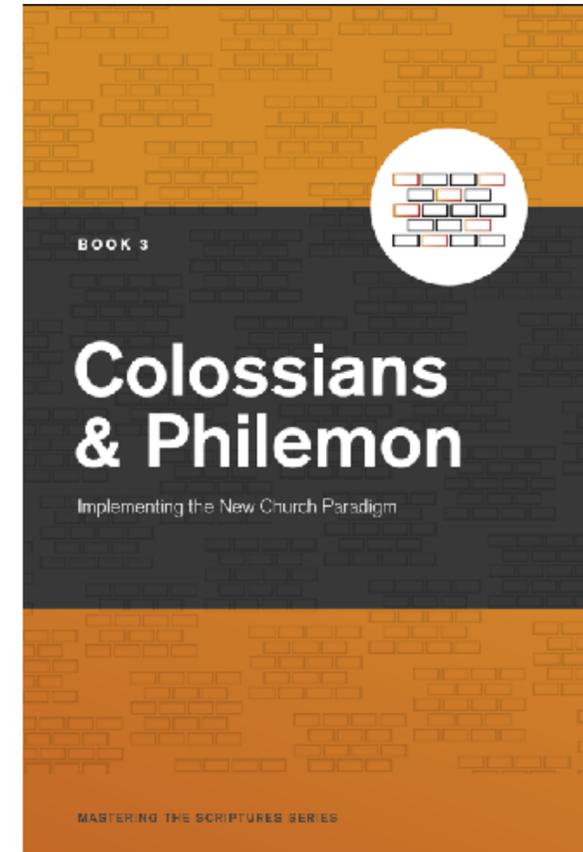
# Paul's Middle Letters



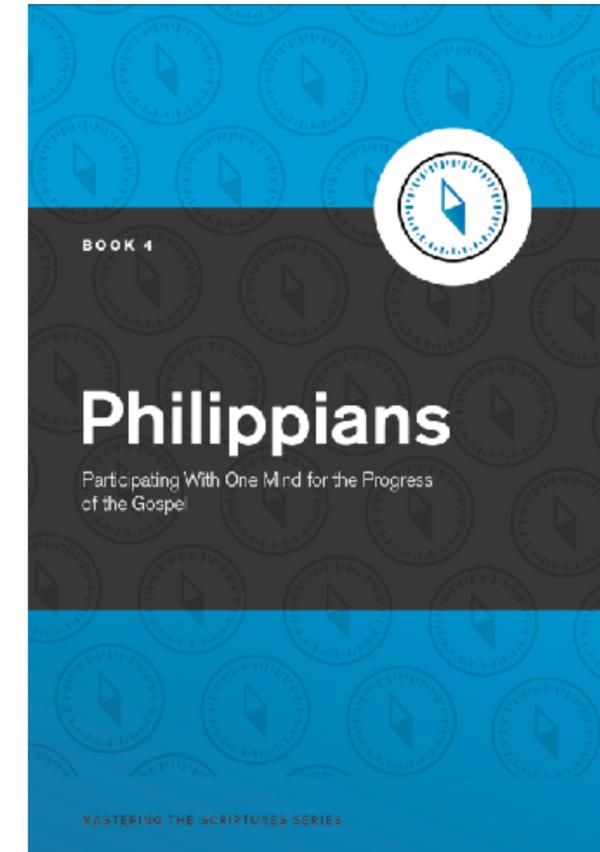
Feb. 60 to March 62



Autumn 60



Autumn 61

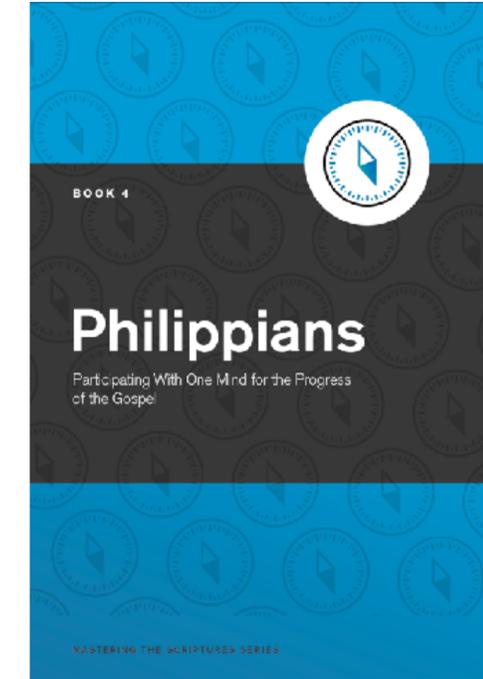
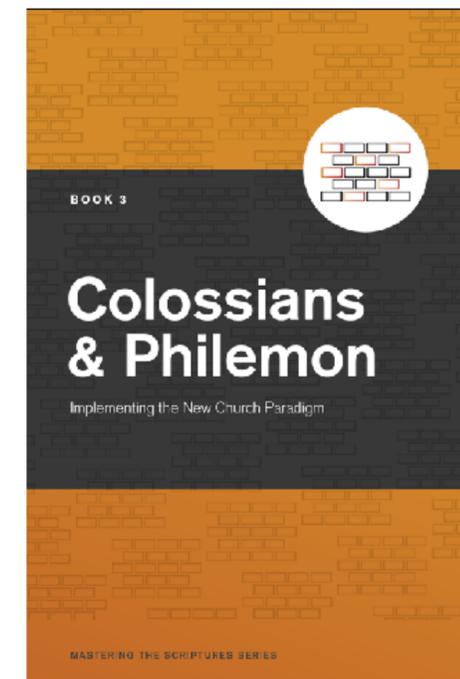
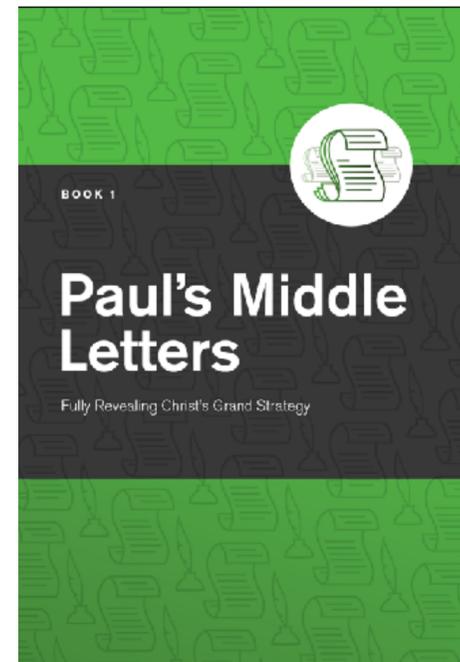
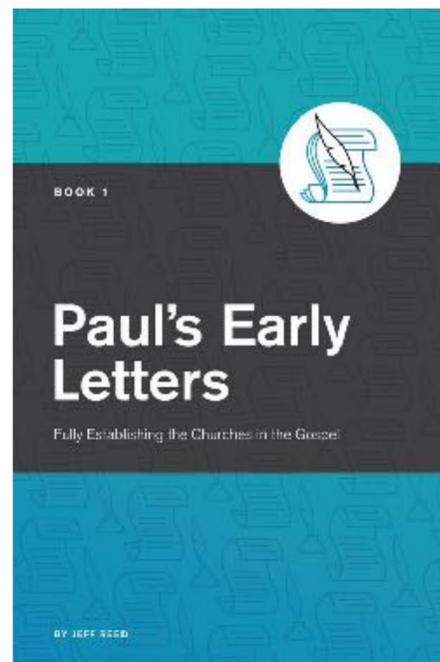


Spring 62

# Paul's Letters

What will the review look like?

- It takes this kind of review.
- I will reteach Books 1 of both his early letters and middle letters, then finish Colossians & Philemon and Philippians



# Paul's Letters

Then I will complete, teach, and write booklets for Paul's Later Letters (4 booklets, 20 weeks), after *Seasons of a Marriage*, the final book in the Life development Series (10 weeks)

Then we will finish the New Testament

- The Catholic or Jewish Epistles (2023–2024)
- The Johannine Corpus (2025)

# The White Papers

This teaching, writing, and publishing will parallel The White Papers (2022–2026), which follow and build on both The Paradigm Papers (1992–2004) and The Encyclicals (2009–2021)

The White Papers: Mapping the Progress of the Gospel in the 21st Century—the New Emerging Christendom

Paper 1: “Grand Strategy and the 9 Civilizations” (may be 1<sup>st</sup> paper)—2022

Paper 2: “Paul and Strategic Global Cities”—2023

Paper 3: “Peter and the Jewish Diaspora”—2024

Paper 4: “John and Small Networks”—2025

Paper 5: “The Grand Strategy: In a Small Worlds of Global Networks”—2026

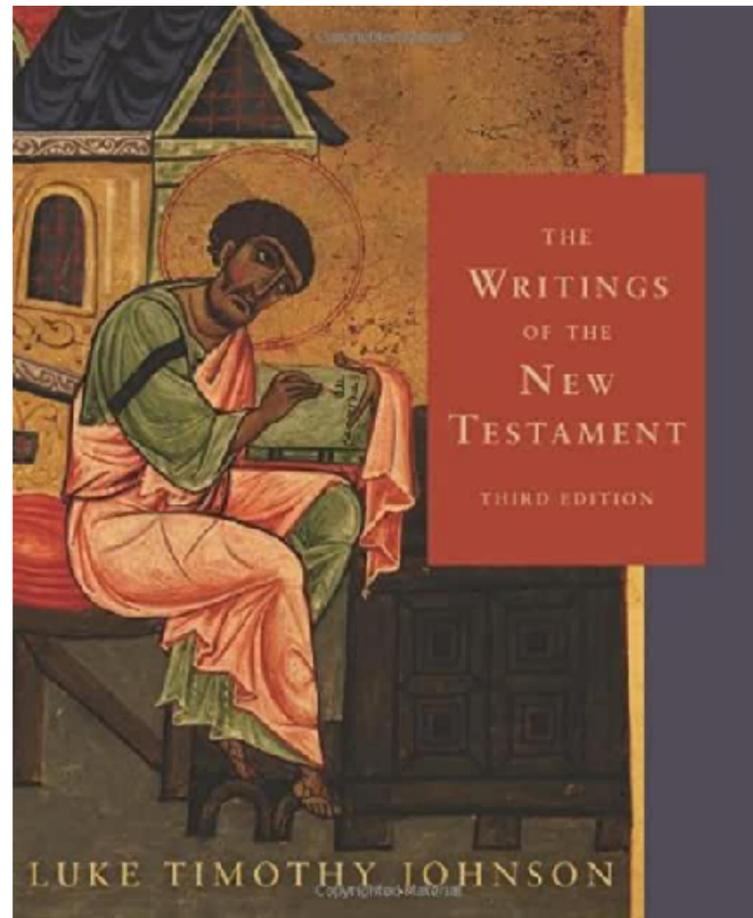
# Paul's Letters

Why am I doing this review?

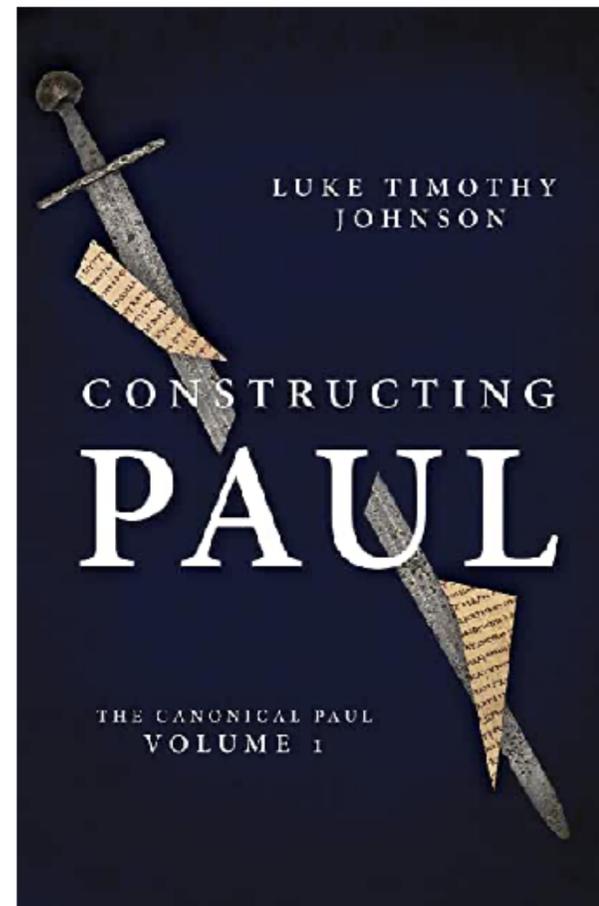
- It takes this kind of review.
- Massive new research has been published in the last 3 years, since we picked the series back up in 2018 and even since we left it 1½ years ago.
- I will be drawing on this research from 2 traditions, Catholic and Post-Critical Greco-Roman.

# Catholic Research

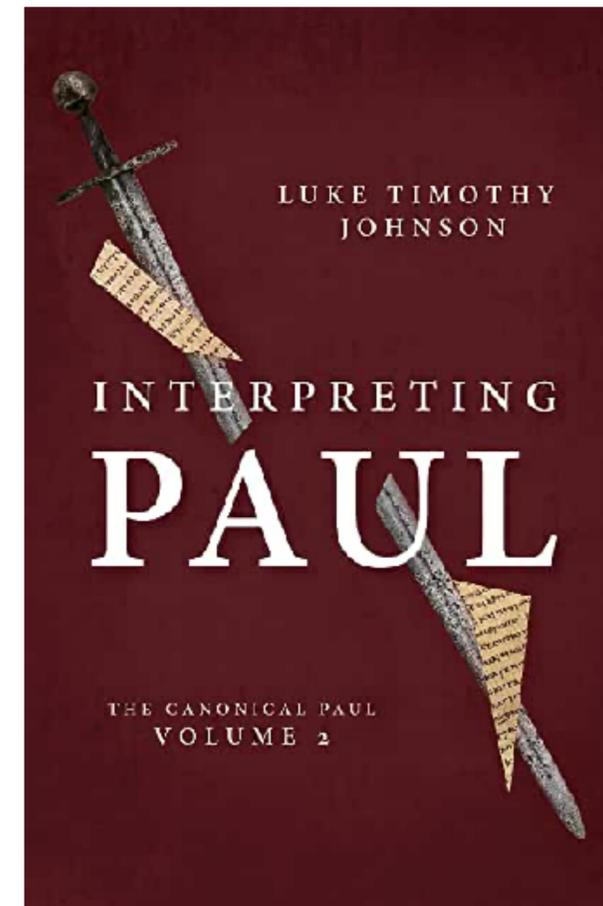
The key author is Luke Timothy Johnson, who has influenced my thinking more than anyone by far. I am working through 14 of his books, but the key three are the following:



**2014**

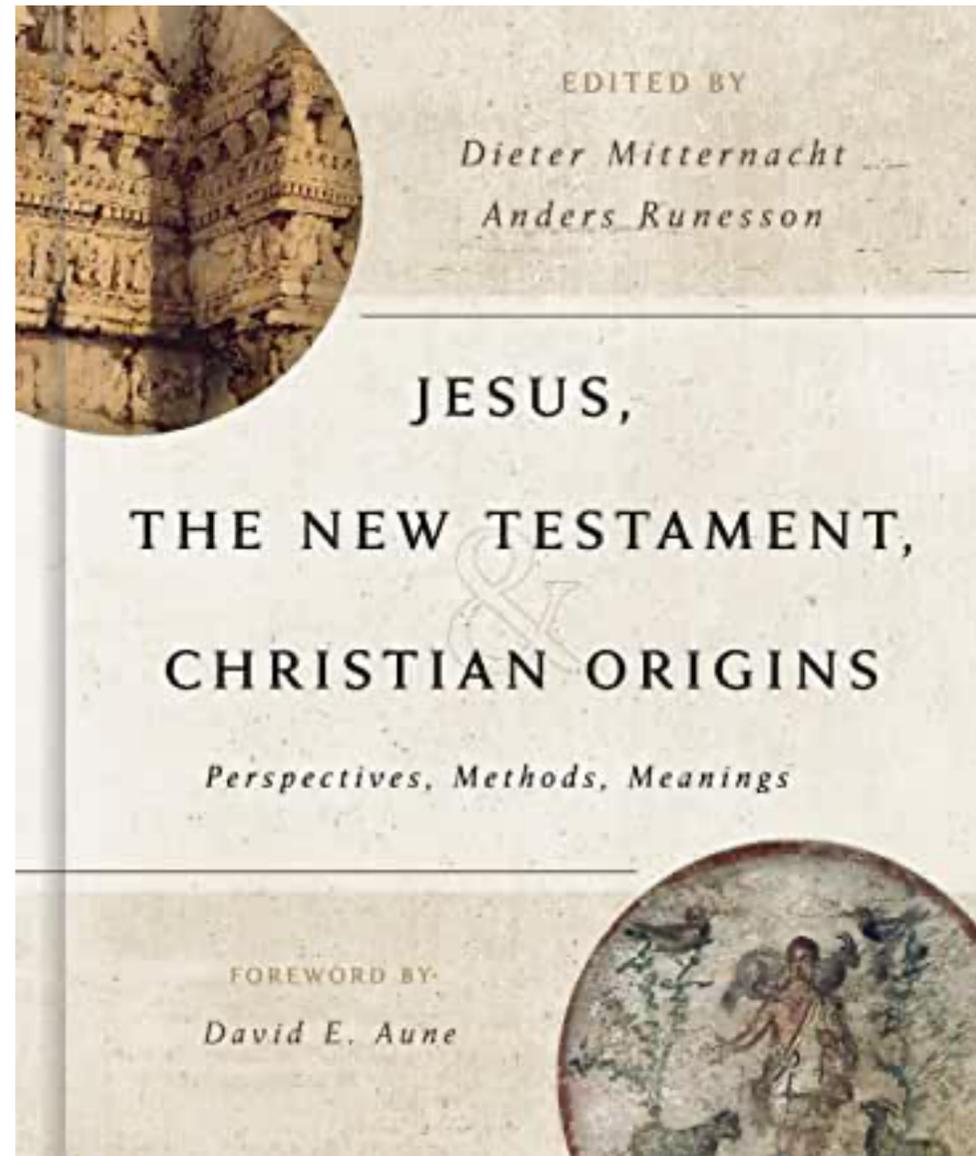


**2020**



**2021**

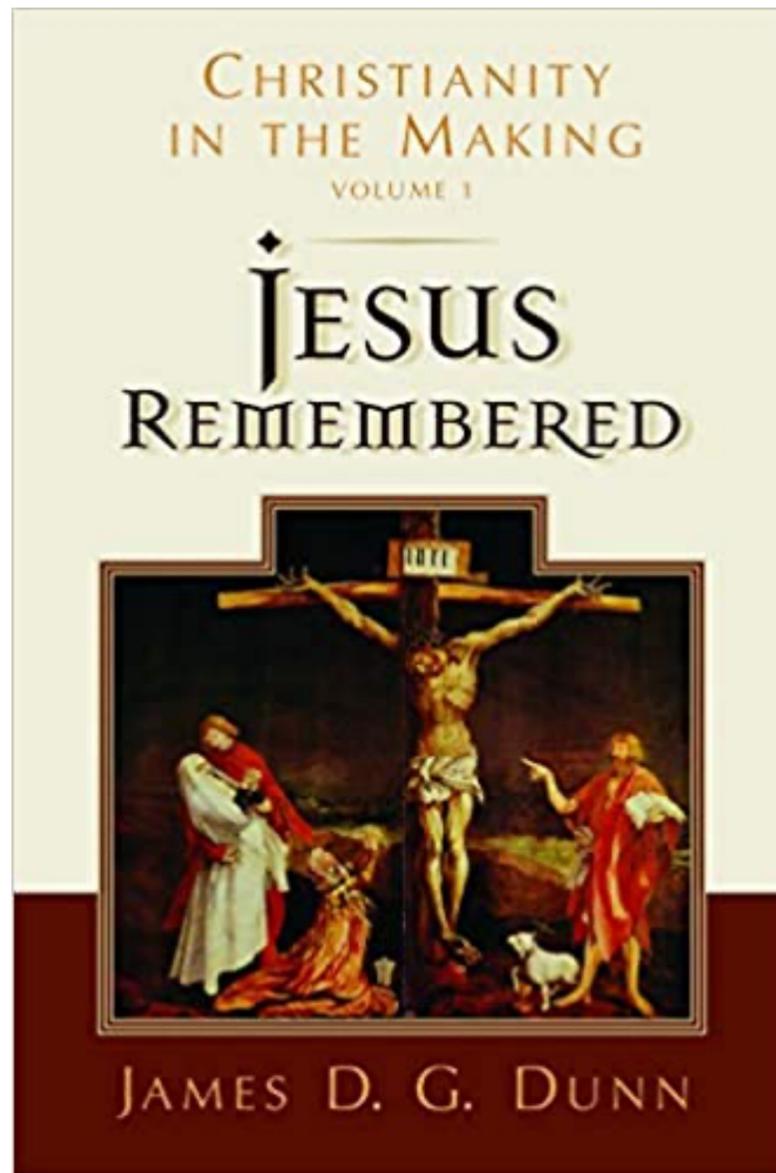
# Post-Critical Greco-Roman Research



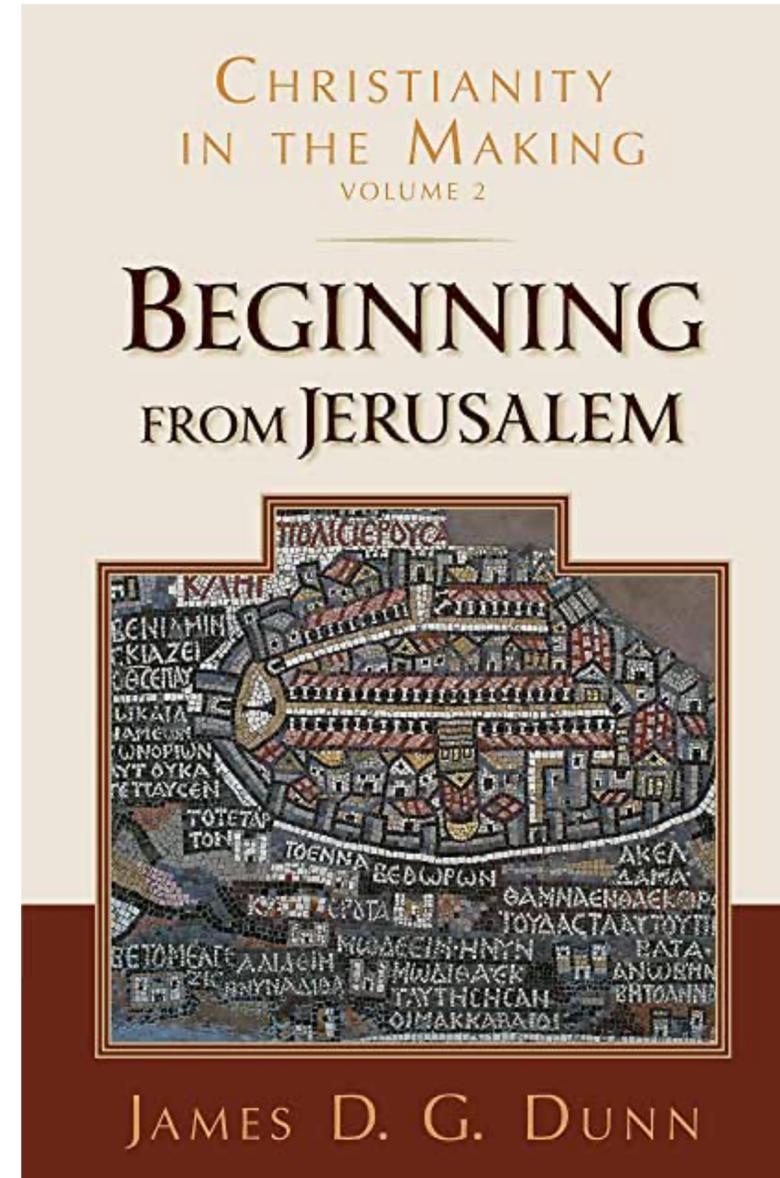
The key book is *Jesus, The New Testament, Christian Origins: Perspectives, Methods, Meanings*—a totally new kind of New Testament Introduction.

2021

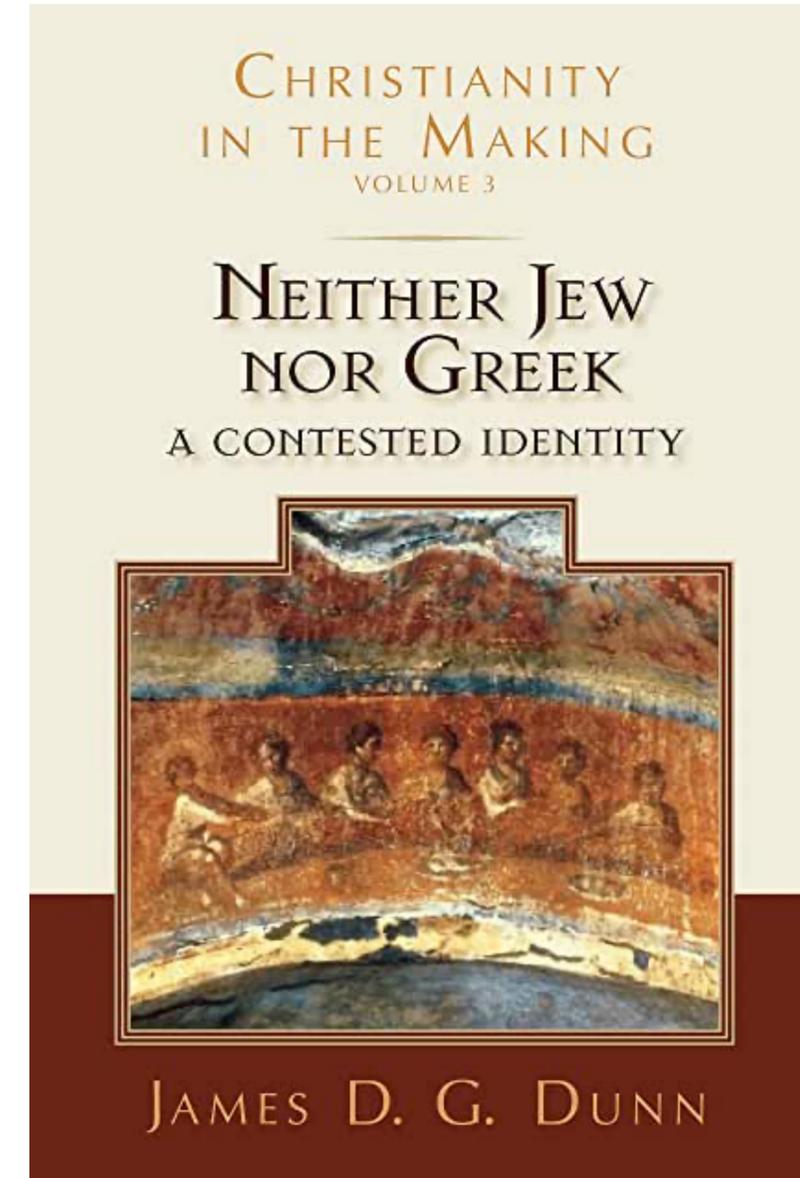
# Post-Critical Greco-Roman Research



2003

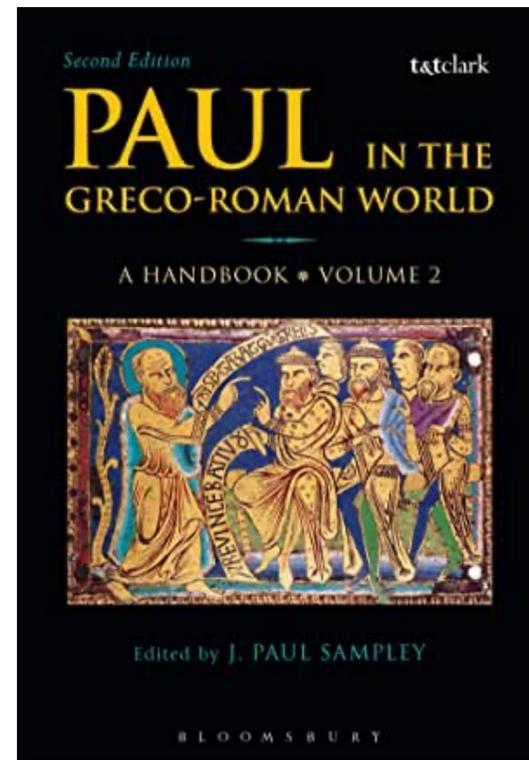
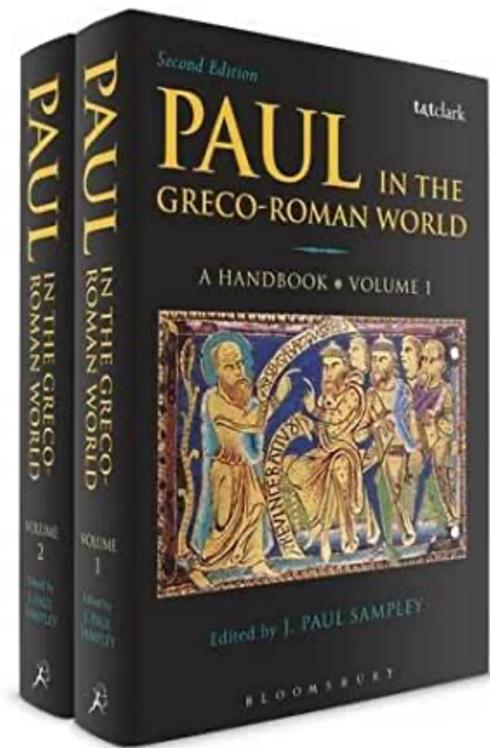


2009



2015

# Post-Critical Greco-Roman Research

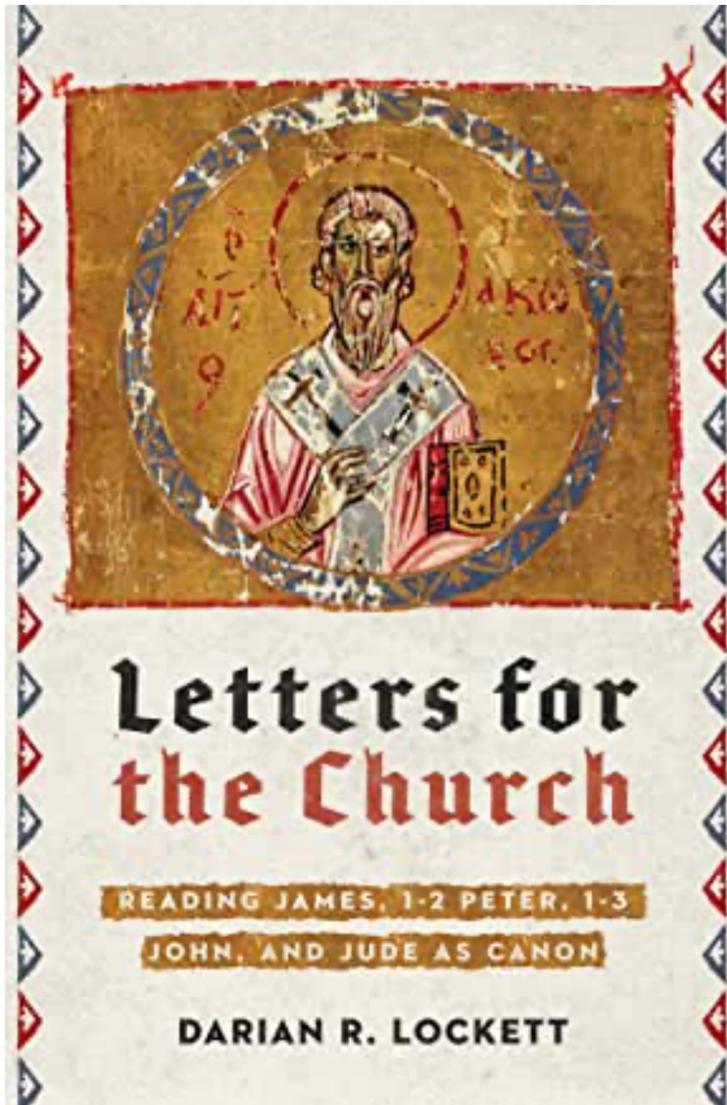


Again, this is a very key resource: two volumes, fantastic creative research, and updates.

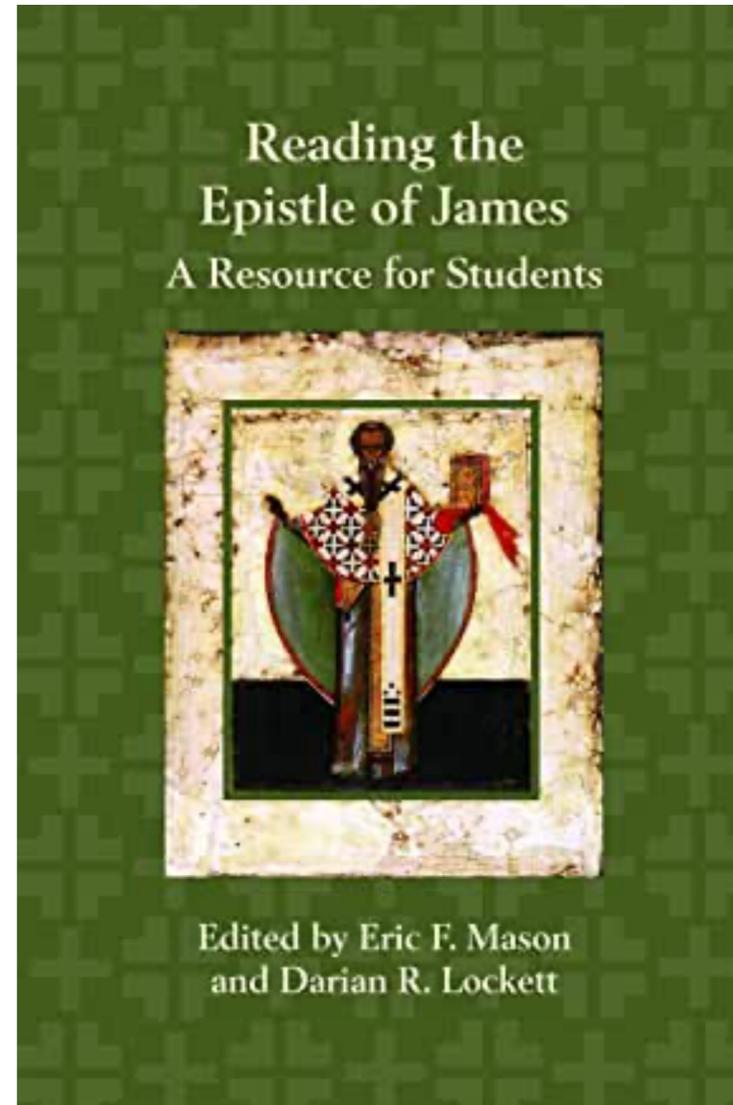
Together, all these resources put us on top of understanding the early churches, which has not been known since the first 150 years of these churches.

2016

# Catholic/Jewish Epistles/Johnnannine



2021



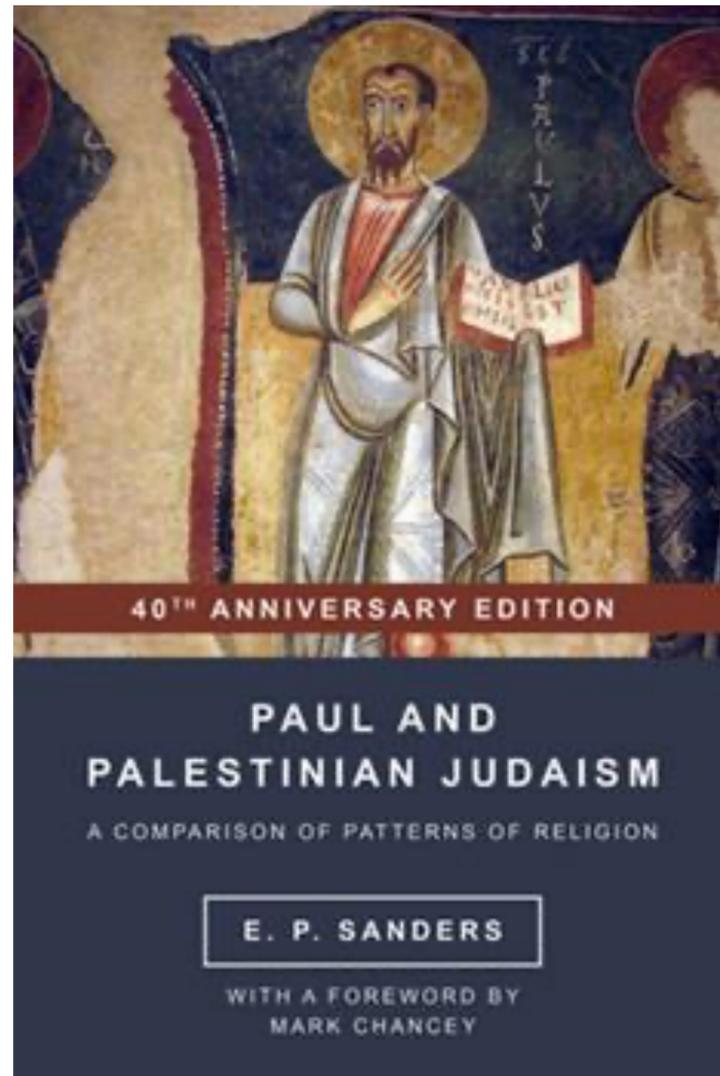
2019

*Letters to the Church: Reading James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, and Jude as Canon* by Darian Lockett

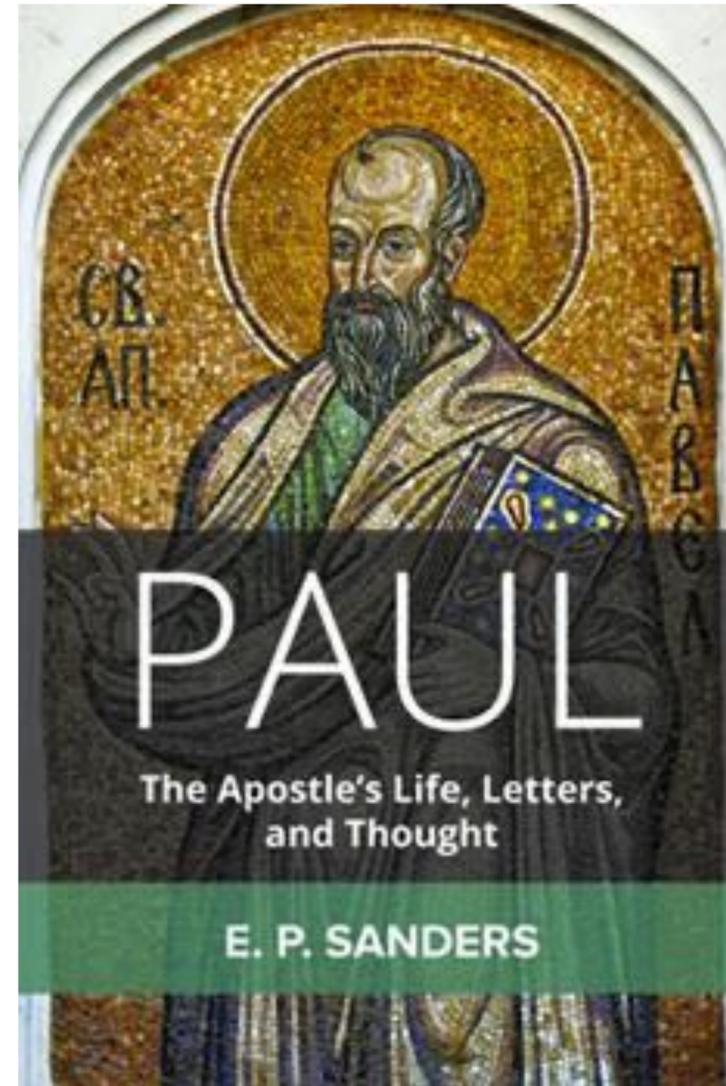
*Reading the Epistle of James*, edited by Eric Mason and Darian Lockett (SBL)

Again, just in time!

# Post-Critical Greco-Roman Research



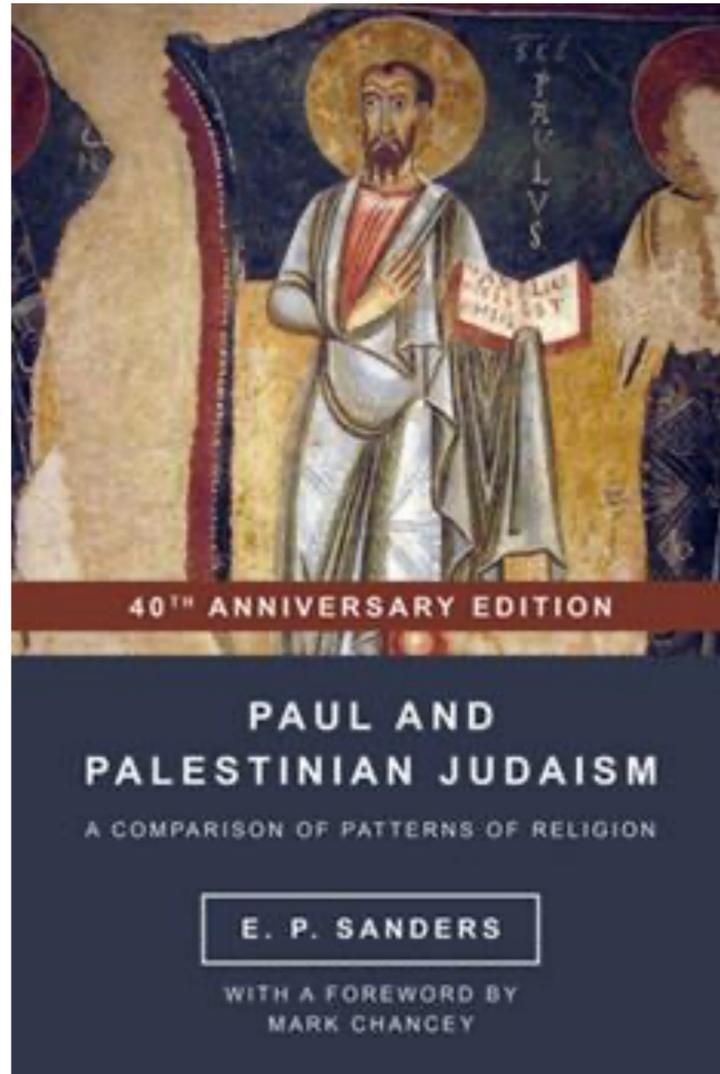
1977



Over 40 years ago, Sanders' work, some of the first, shifted the "Pauline paradigm in Western Christendom, bringing forth what is referred to as the "New Perspective on Paul."

This has paved the way for massive research, leading the way for such scholars as N.T. Wright.

# Post-Critical Greco-Roman Research

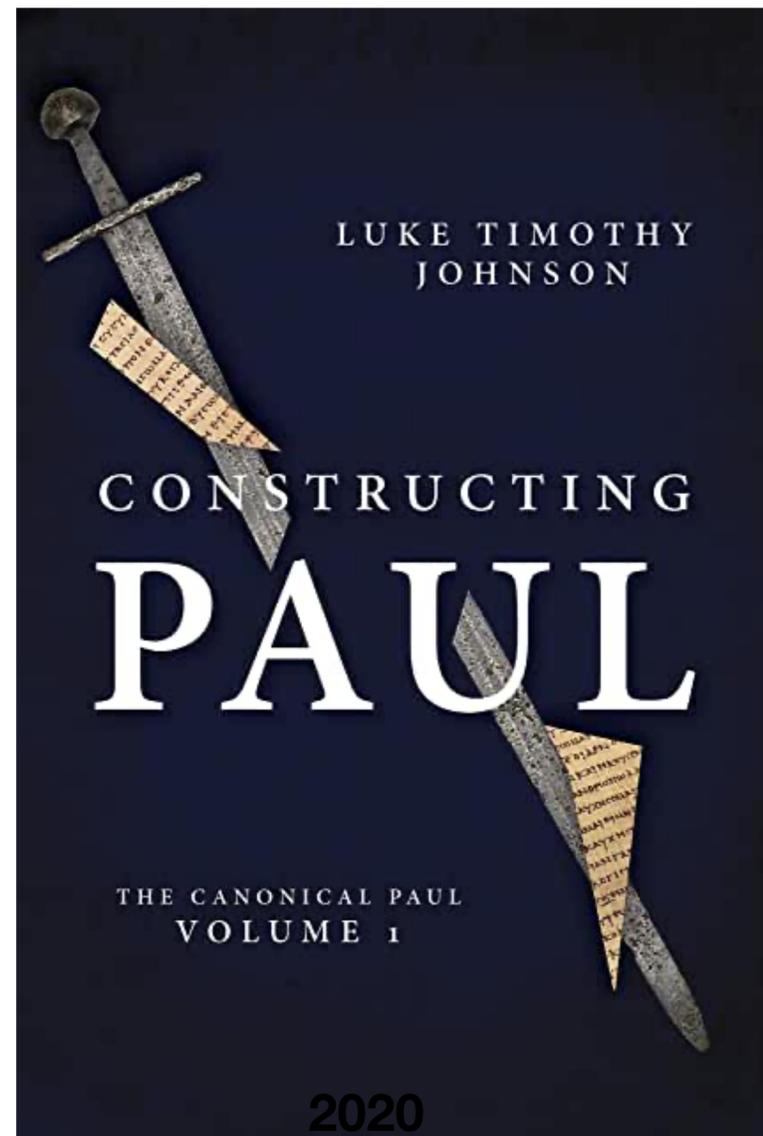


1977

“In taking the position that **Paul was a coherent, but not systematic, thinker**, we are taking the position most common among exegetes, and it needs little defence.[1] That Paul was a thinker is readily seen in the way he tried to work out solutions to problems by re-thinking the Christian tradition. This can be seen most clearly in the Corinthian correspondence, where Paul dealt with a succession of problems. He never simply answers with a formula or with a biblical quotation, although he makes use of both.... The rigour of the conclusion, again, marks **Paul as a theological thinker with a coherent viewpoint.**”

Sanders, E. P.; Paul and Palestinian Judaism: 40th Anniversary Edition (p. 665). Fortress Press. Kindle Edition.

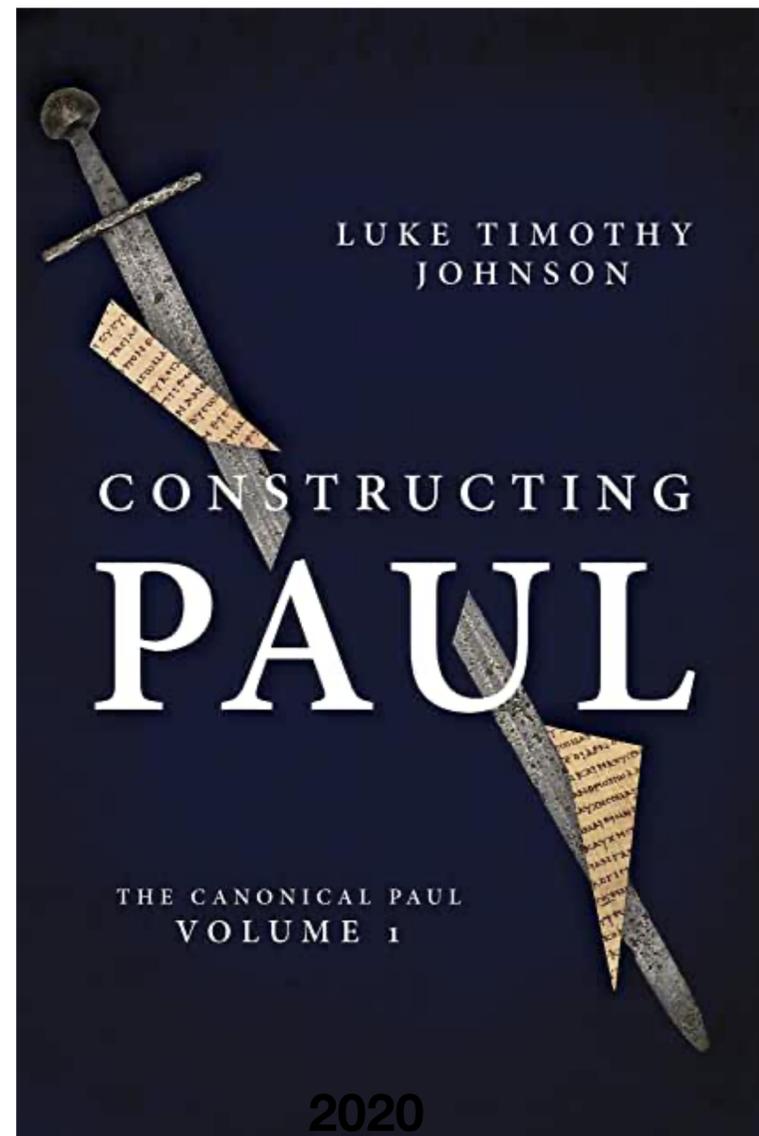
# Catholic Research



2020

“And just as my approach resists reducing the Pauline corpus to a subset of letters or reducing the elements of Paul’s symbolic world to a single explanatory key, so does it resist elevating one theme within his letters to singular significance. My effort throughout will be to argue for a **polythetic rather than monothetic** approach to these compositions. I hope to provide the conditions for a fresh and vigorous engagement with each of the letters in the canonical collection, an engagement that will lead to **new discoveries** and **new questions**. I emphatically do not seek to replace such an engaged reading of the letters with a synthesis of my own that already determines what can be found in the letters and answers all questions.”

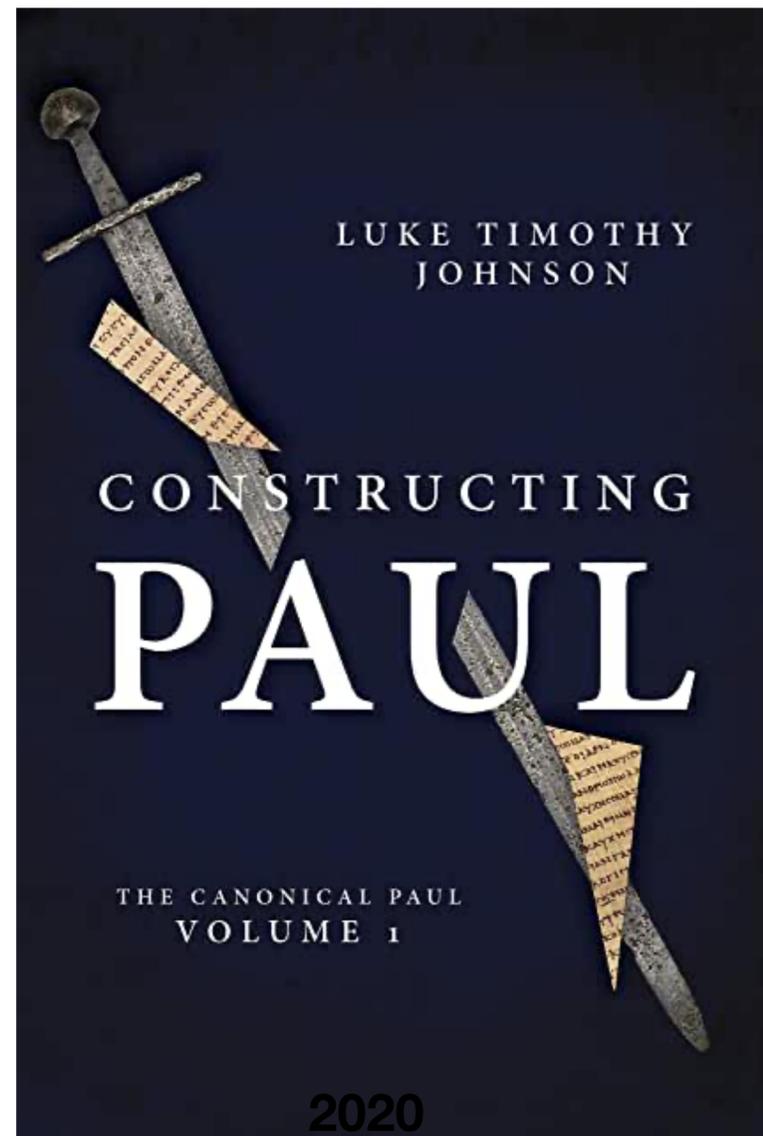
# Catholic Research



**2020**

“An analogy can be drawn to the study of the ancient philosopher Plato. Any number of college students have been exposed in philosophy classes to something called ‘Platonism,’ which is defined in terms of certain categories (epistemology, cosmology, metaphysics, ethics, politics), and which can be compared to other philosophical schools on the same points. But the few students who decide to push past their class notes and textbook to an actual reading of the dialogues attributed to Plato discover, usually with some surprise, that it is difficult to find that synthetic ‘Platonism.’”

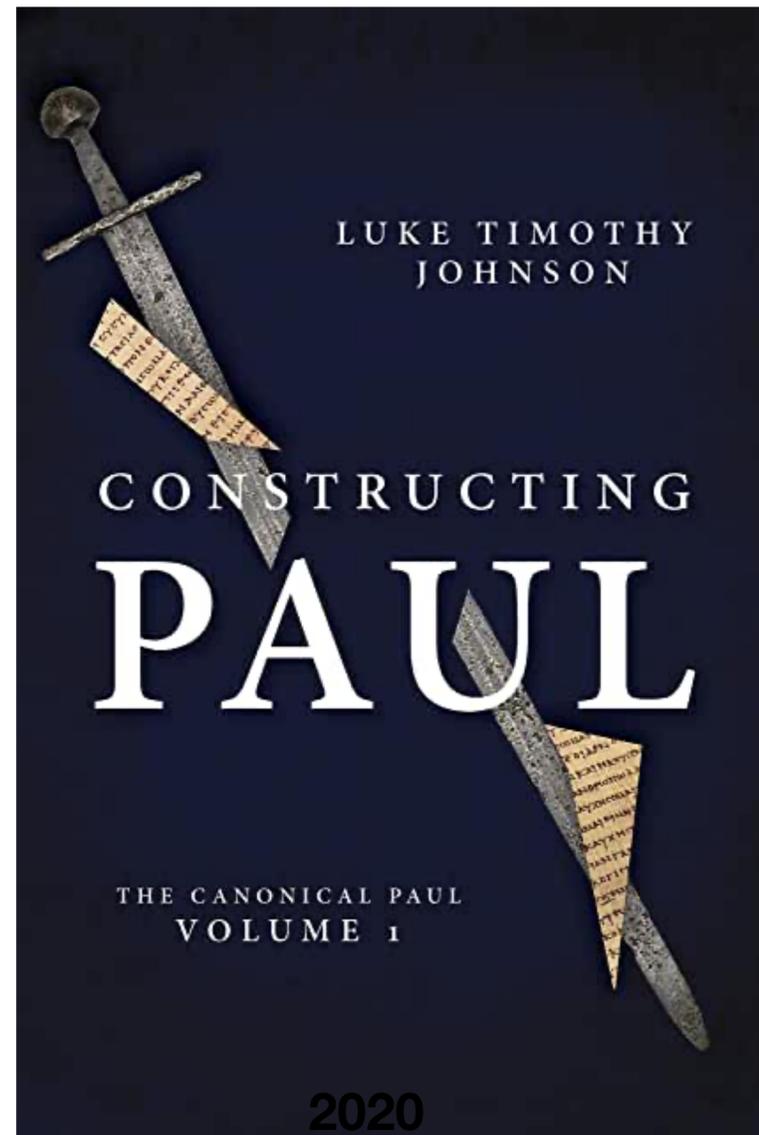
# Catholic Research



**2020**

“They begin to realize that the ‘Plato’ they have been taught has been abstracted from certain dialogues and arranged into a logical system that is nowhere to be found as such in the dialogues themselves. More than that: when they actually begin to read the dialogues in all their particularity and complexity, they begin to discover how much exciting and challenging thought has escaped the usual categories; above all, they find that the true significance of the dialogues lies not in their containing certain doctrines but in their capacity to challenge the mind and give rise to thought.”

# Catholic Research



2020

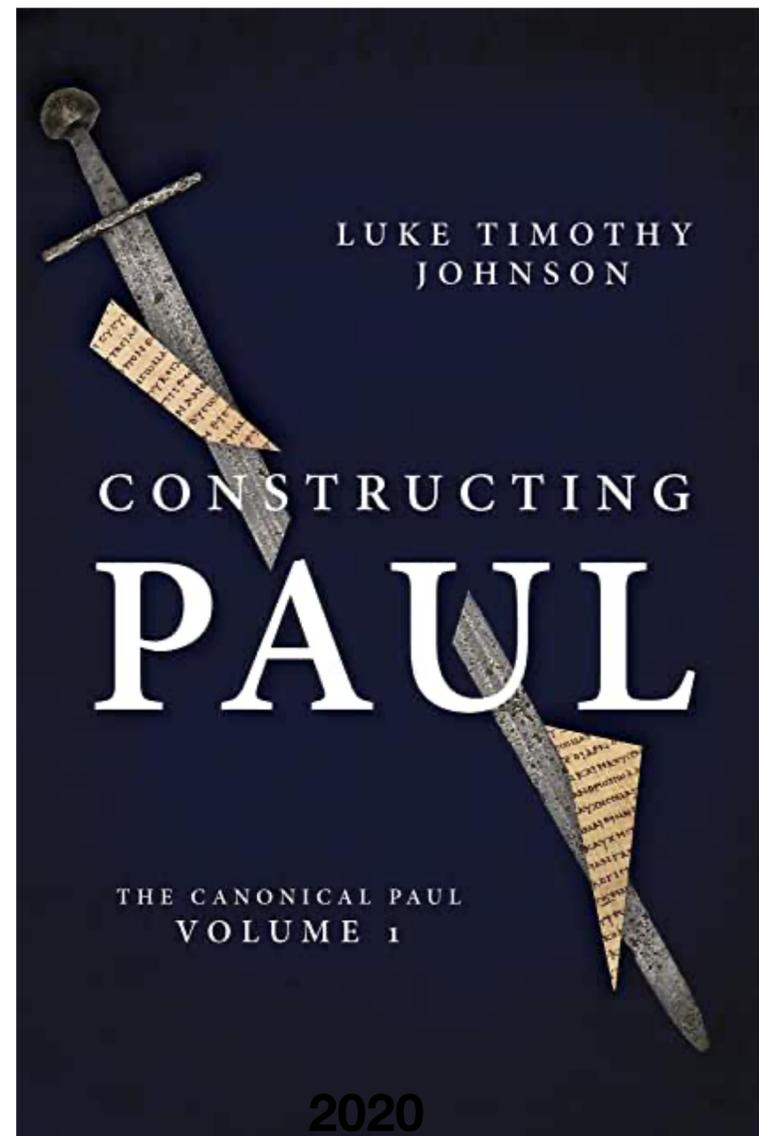
## *Monothetic*

“Pertaining to or based on a single basic idea or principle; describing a classification that is defined by the presence of all of a set of attributes; in mathematics, a monothetic group is a topological with **a dense cyclic subgroups.**” Wikipedia

## *Polythetic*

“(of a class of things) Having many, but not all properties in common.”

# Catholic Research



2020

*Monothetic*

a monothetic group is a topological with a dense cyclic subgroups Wikipedia

Paul was not writing letters to lay out a set of topics, oftentimes unrelated (systematic theology).

Significance: if they are not all part of each other, then we can construct our own “mind of Christ.”

“dense cyclic subgroups” like *the Gathering* and *the Household* (family of families); without these “cyclical subgroups”

# Paul's Letters

Foundational to entire New Testament

- Written before all other letters and Gospels
- Not a set of systematic theology topics, which fragment
- In fact his *collection of letters* is a *topoi* in that they are a series of topics that always are integrated with any given topics in his letters.
- We have to get our minds around the entire Pauline corpus.
- If we do, we are on our way to possessing the mind of Christ and developing the ability to think creatively, as Paul did, in our cultural situations (hermeneutically-trained judgment, theology in community).
- New insights, new questions
- NextGen and 3rdGen leaders visit this, every new series.

# Paul's Letters, Catholic Epistles

Teaching the Next 5 years (Crow's nest)\_

- Tight, 30–40 minutes
- No intro or conclusion
- Michael and I, introduction
- Michael and I, conclusion
- Very different style
- Core video for global partners
- Designed to discuss in churches
- Next 9 months: over 100 leaders, mostly in this room, must become solid as we start these 5 years

# Paul's Letters

Issue: Importance of Paul's Letters

Questions:

1. Why are Paul's letters so important?
2. What is the significance of Paul's letters being written before the rest of the New Testament?
3. Why did Paul make such extensive use of both Jewish culture, the Jewish Scriptures, and Greco-Roman culture?
4. What is the significance of Paul being a "coherent, but not systematic, thinker"?
5. What is meant by the Early Church "traditioning" Paul's letters?