

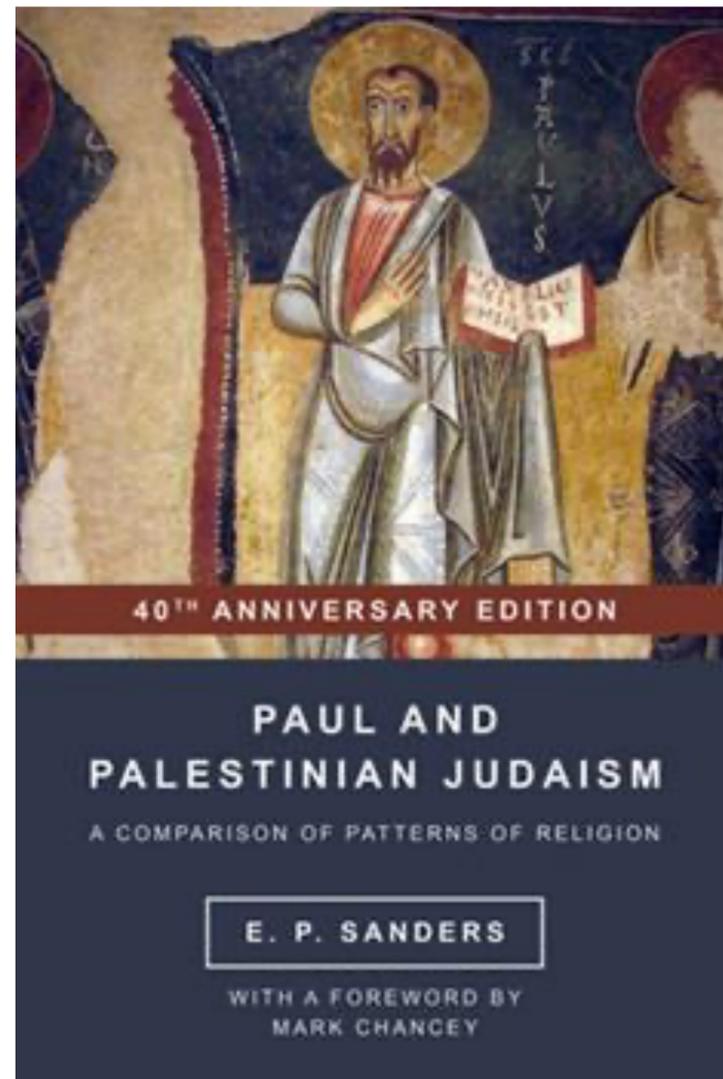
Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Issue: Significance of Paul's Middle Letters

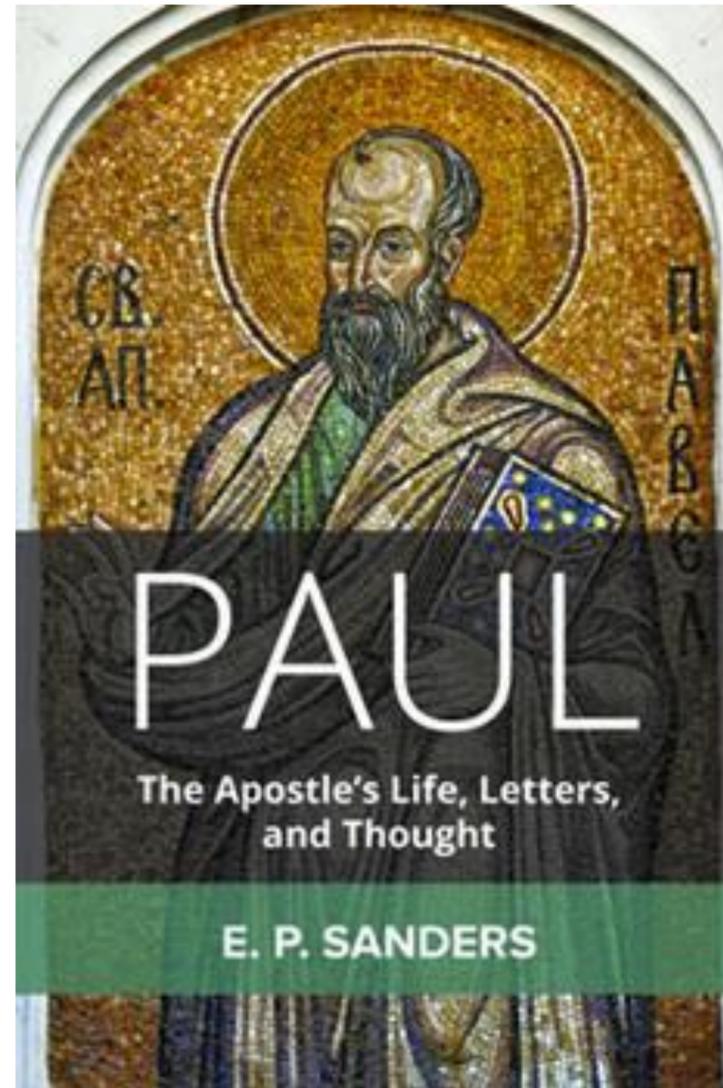
Questions:

1. In what way or ways are Paul's middle letters different from his early letters?
2. What new revelation is contained in them? How significant is that new revelation?
3. Paul had two experiences of solitude—3 years in the wilderness and 2 years in house arrest—why is this significant to the development of the kerygma and the didache for our churches today?
4. What is the main contribution of the middle letters to the theology of Paul and to our understanding of the centrality of the Church in Christ's grand strategy?

New Perspectives on Paul—Liberal

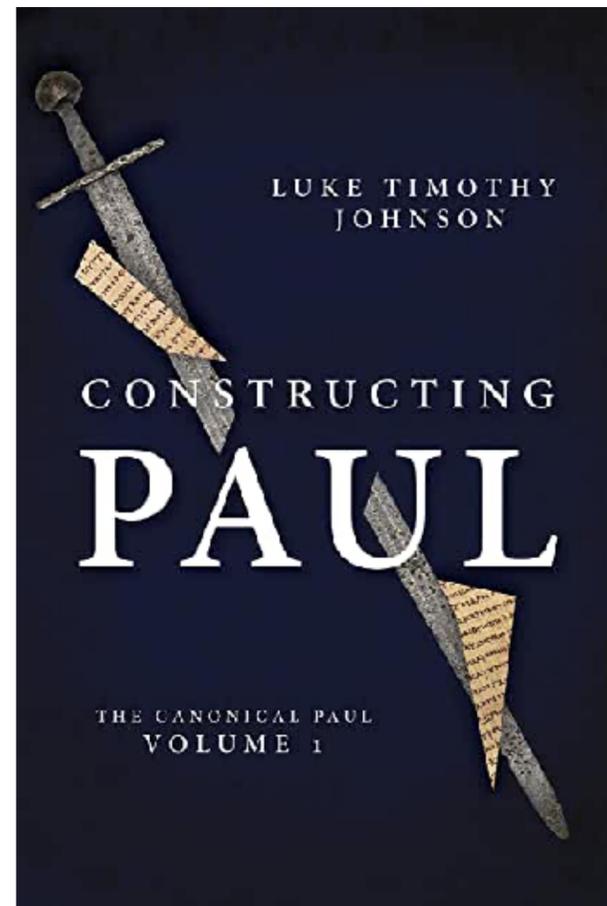


1977

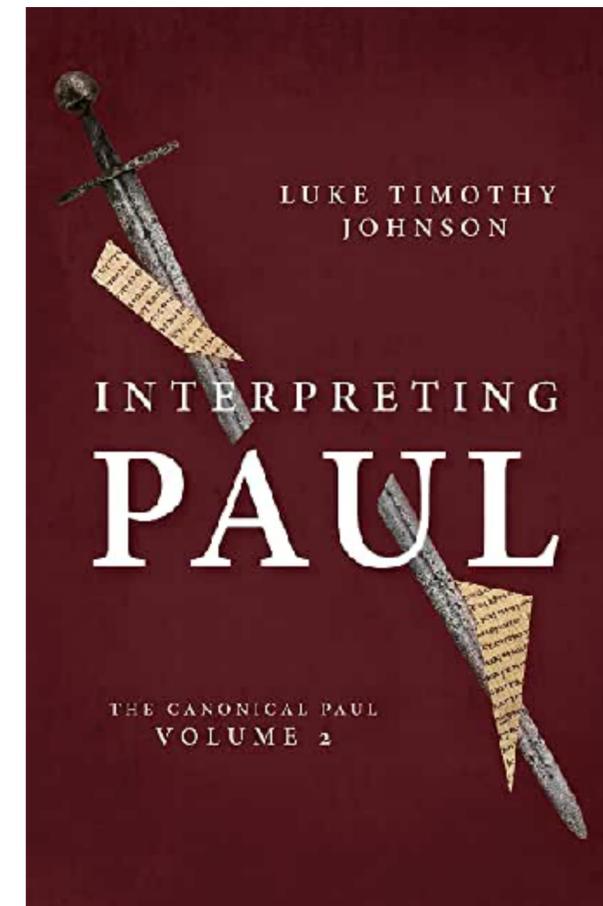


2015

New Perspectives on Paul—Catholic

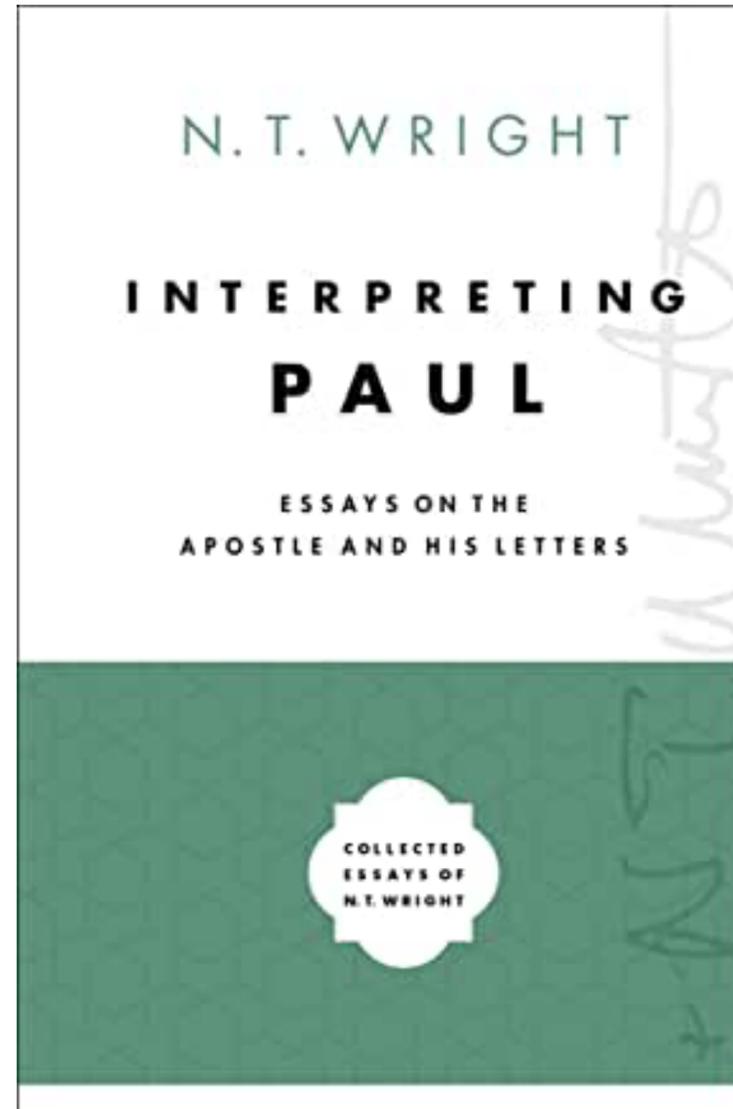


2020

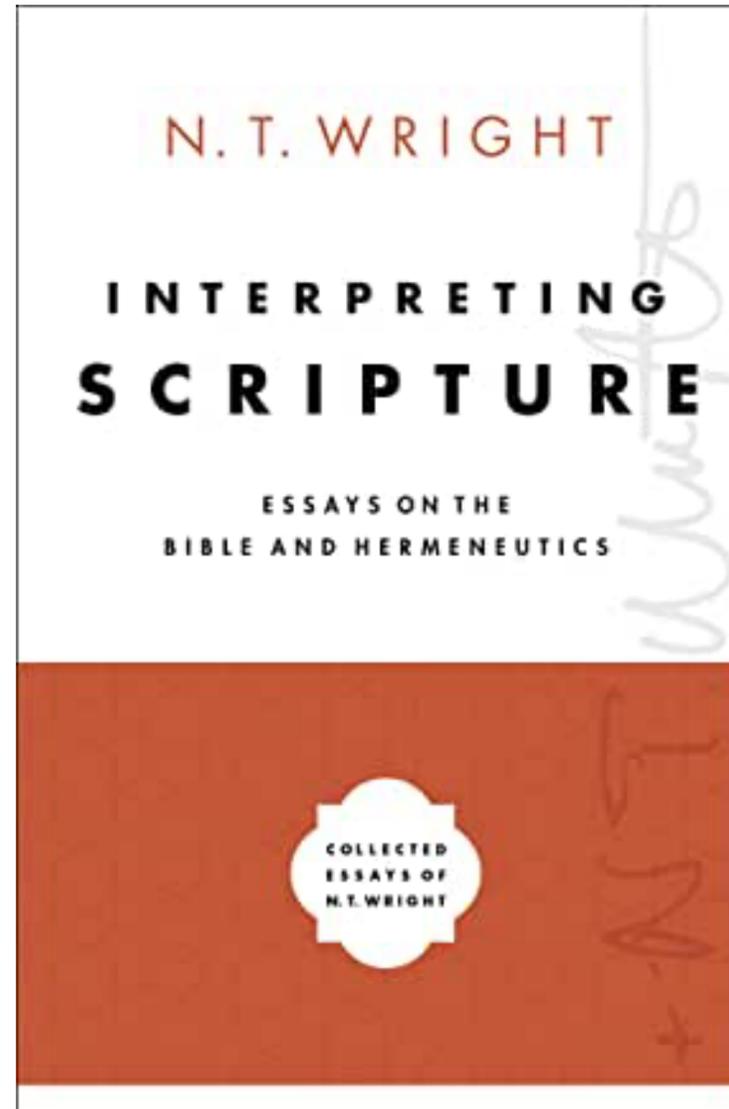


2021

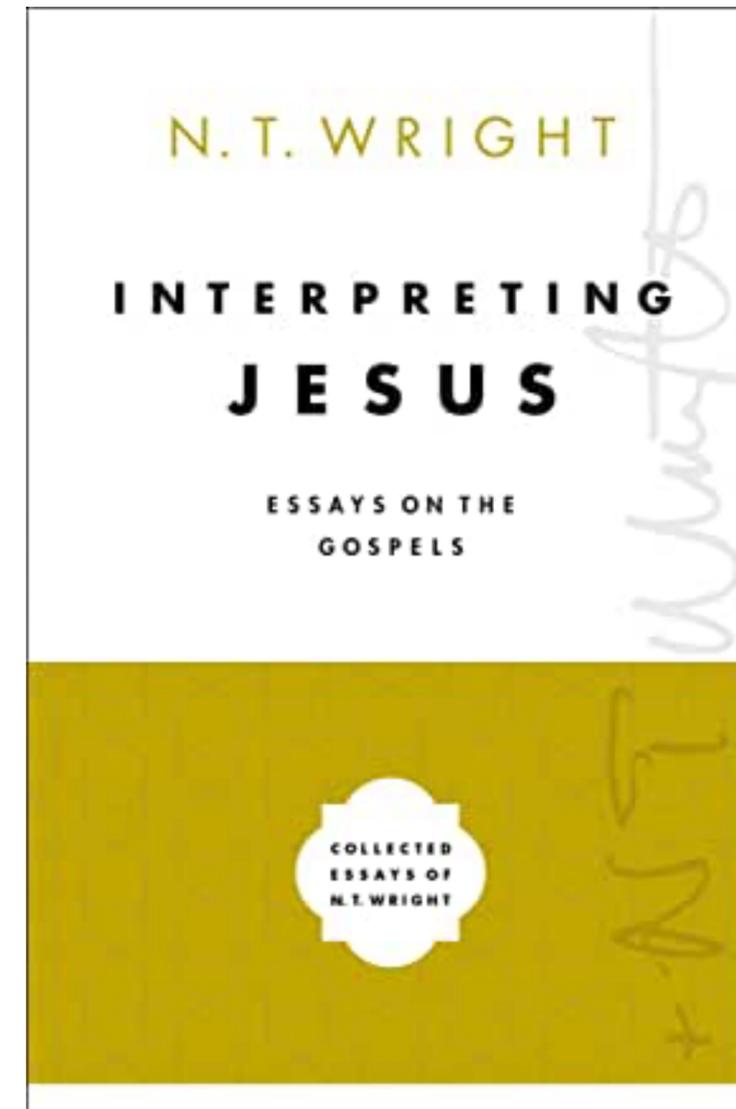
New Perspectives on Paul—Evangelical



2020



2020



2020

New Perspectives on Paul

Interpreting III: New Perspectives on Paul, A Radical Hermeneutical Turn

Units:

Unit 1: A New Perspectives in Hermeneutics

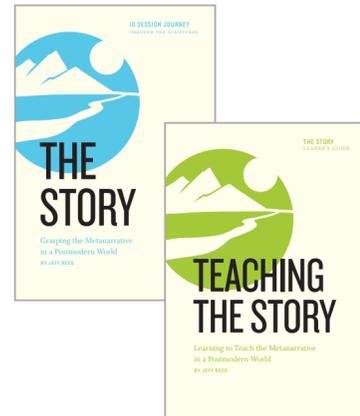
Unit 2: Interpreting Paul

Unit 3: Paul and Greco-Roman Research

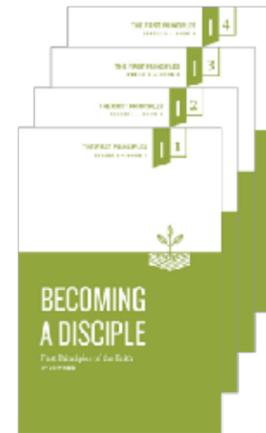
Unit 4: Practicing Pauline Theology in Culture

Unit 5: Toward a Post-Perspectives Old and New Testament Theology

New Perspectives on Paul



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



Didache
Body of Acts
Theology of Paul
1½ years



Full Kerygma
After Acts
Apostles' Gospels
1 year





Paul's Middle Letters

The Church Comes into Full View

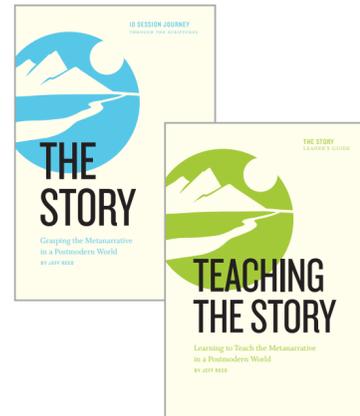
Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

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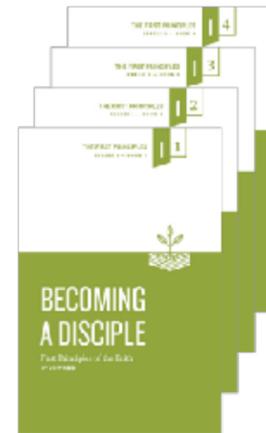
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New Perspectives on Paul



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Early Acts
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6 months
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Didache
Body of Acts
Theology of Paul
1½ years



Full Kerygma
After Acts
Apostles' Gospels
1 year



Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

In the middle letters, we get a full revelation of Christ's grand strategy after He inaugurated the Kingdom—that is the Church.

We will also look at the letters from the viewpoint of Paul building his global apostolic network, as we began to do in his early letters.

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

These middle letters were all written close together (at the end of Acts—20:30), 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.

Introduction to Paul's Early Letters

The battle for the gospel went from Autumn A.D. 47, until the writing of Romans in the middle of November 56—10 years

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

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

Jerusalem Council—Autumn 49

Then the early letters of Paul—Autumn 49 to Romans in 56

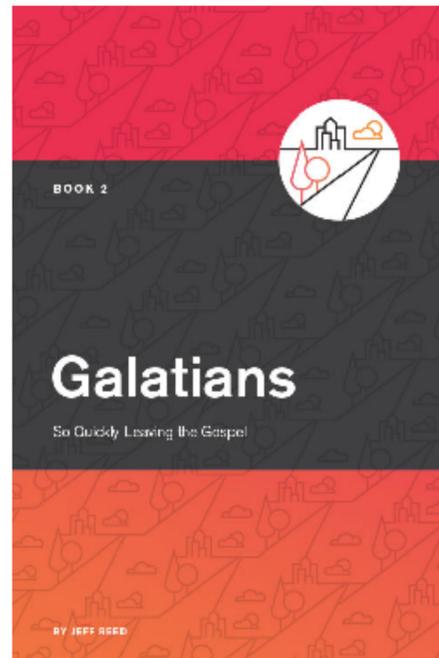
It took Paul a decade to win that argument, which he completed with his Romans manifesto on the gospel.

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

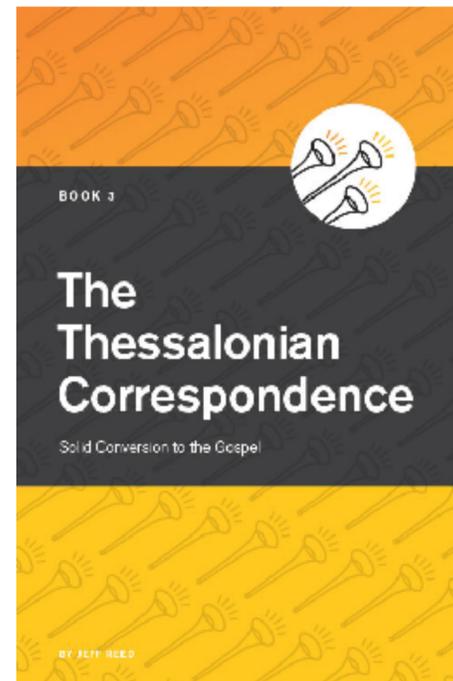
Paul's Early Letters



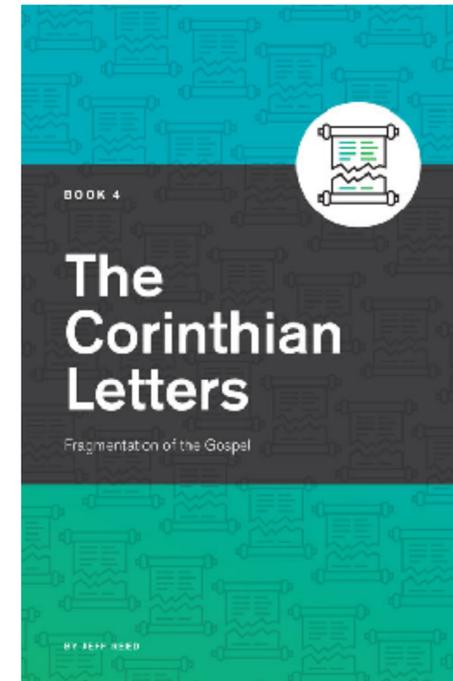
A.D. 49–56



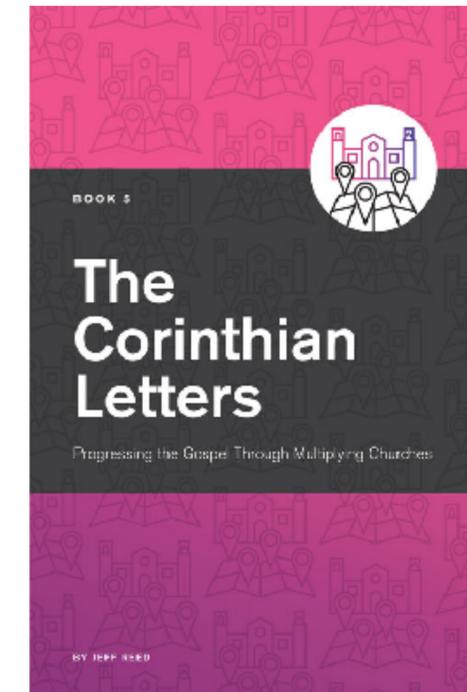
Autumn 49



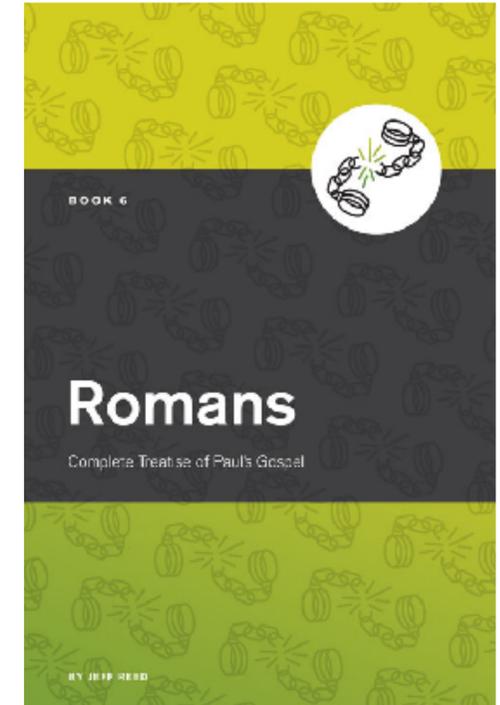
Winter/Summer 51



Sept. 53

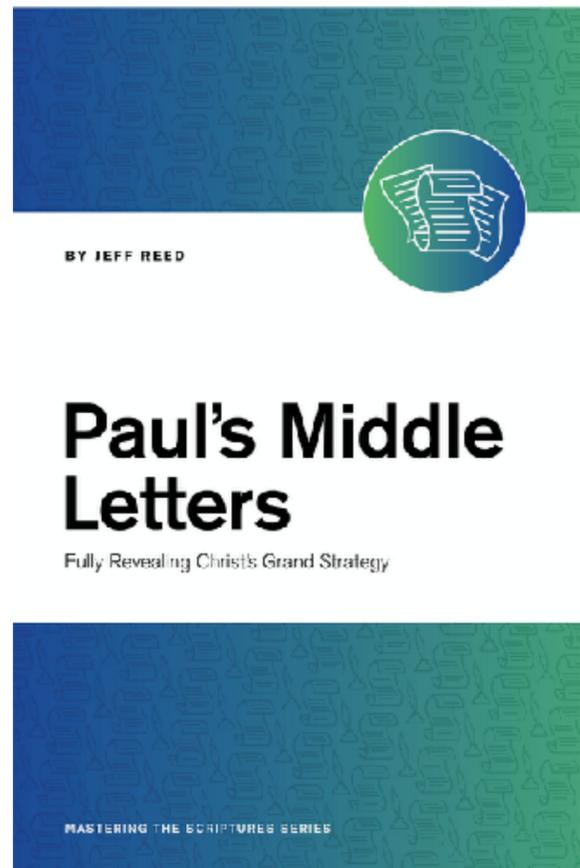


June 56

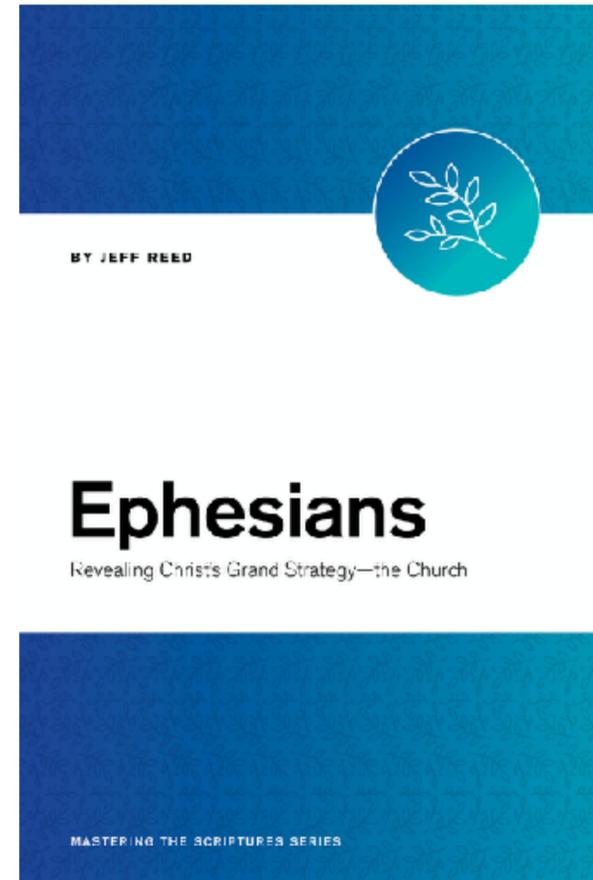


Nov. 56

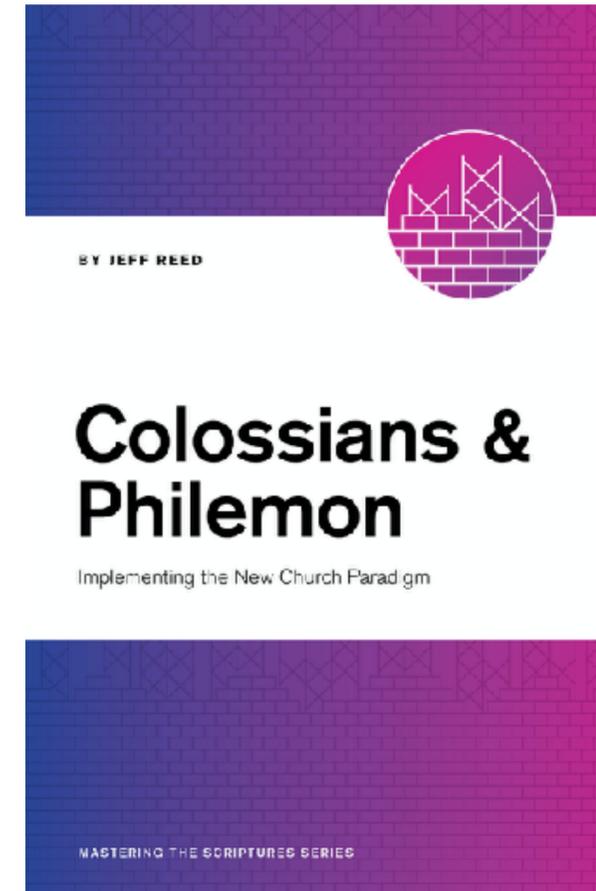
Paul's Middle Letters



Feb. 60 to March 62



Autumn 60



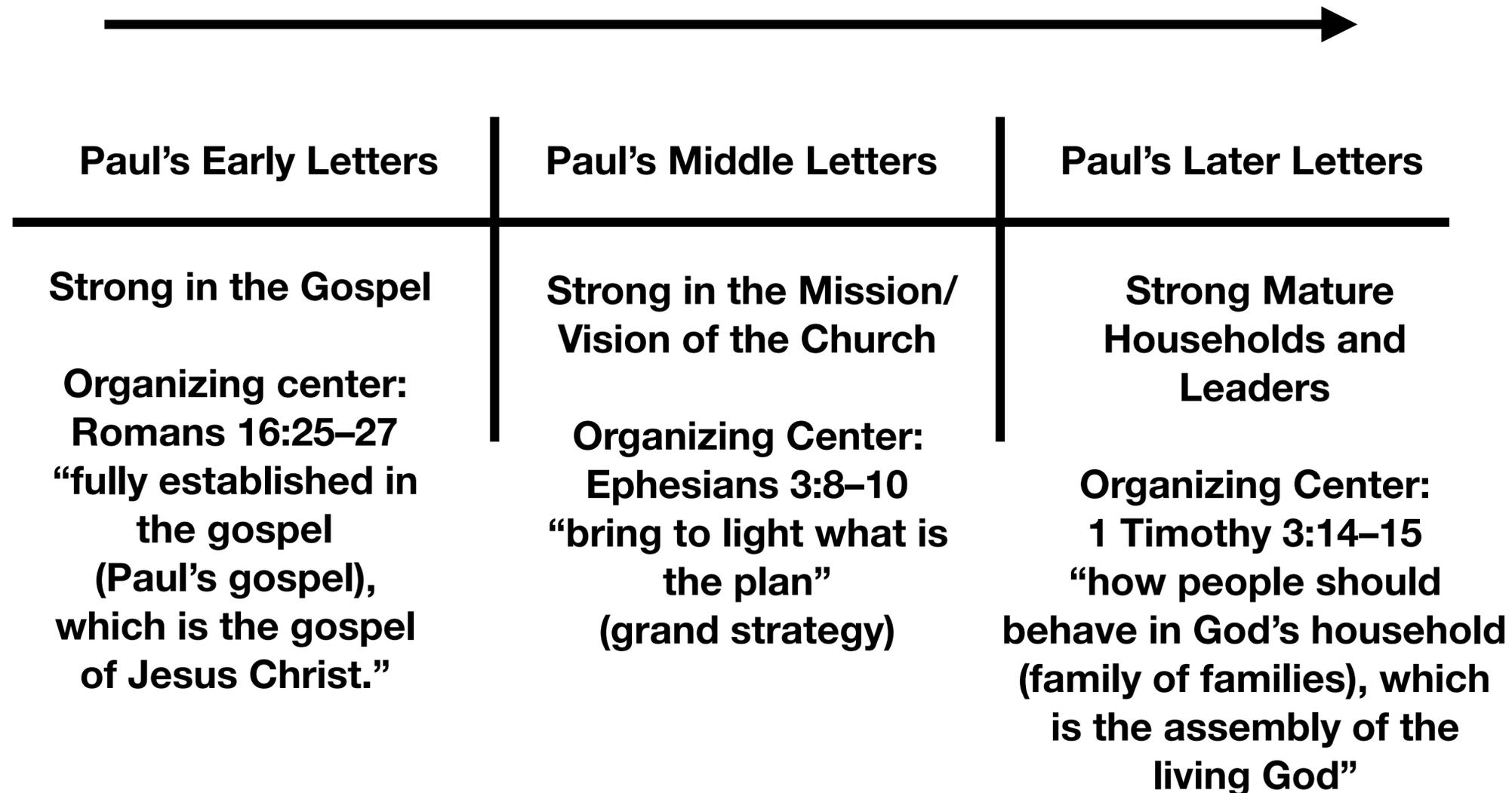
Autumn 61



Spring 62

Paul's Early, Middle, and Later Letters

The Process of Building Strong Churches



Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

These letters were all written close together (at the end of Acts—20:30), during the 2 years Paul was under house arrest—from February 60, to March 62. Most likely...

Ephesians was written Autumn, A.D. 60

Colossians and Philemon—Autumn 61

Philippians—early Spring 62

Here we are looking into the heart of Paul's network

Ephesians—hub churches

Colossians and Philemon—cluster churches

Philippians—node churches

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

In these 2 compact years and 4 small letters we get a full revelation of Christ's Church, which had never before been fully revealed.

The organizing center of these letters:

⁷ Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. ⁸ Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; ¹⁰ so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 3:7–10

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Paul lays out his job description very clearly.

Paul's 2-fold job description:

1. Preach the gospel to the Gentiles (a 10-year battle for the gospel)
2. Fully reveal the heart of Christ's grand strategy—the Church

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Ephesians—Hub Churches

Ephesians: A manifesto revealing Christ's "grand strategy"—the Church—to his key "hub" churches in Ephesus, with special attention to training the elders of this strategic city for an entire 3-year period, in the whole plan of Christ.

Networking Insights from Paul's Middle Letters

Complex Apostolic Networking Insights from Ephesus

²⁰ I did not shrink from doing anything helpful, proclaiming the message to you and teaching you publicly and from house to house.... ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to warn everyone with tears.

Acts 20:20, 31

⁸ He entered the synagogue and for three months spoke out boldly, and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God. ⁹ When some stubbornly refused to believe and spoke evil of the Way before the congregation, he left them, taking the disciples with him, and argued daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.

Acts 19:8–10

Networking Insights from Paul's Middle Letters

Complex Apostolic Networking Insights from Ephesus

We know Ephesus was strategic for many reasons. The biggest reason was Paul's own investment of time.

1. He taught out of the hall of Tyrannus for 2 years and established many churches in the surrounding area: 11 churches were started to the east, north, and west of Ephesus.
2. He spent night and day for a period of 3 years teaching the elders "the whole plan of God."

Why would he do this?

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Colossians – Cluster Churches

Colossians: An almost identical letter to Ephesians (along with Philemon), was written to the house churches scattered throughout the Lycus Valley (Colossae, Laodecia, and Hierapolis), one year after writing his “manifesto” to the Ephesian churches.

To help them at a very practical level, to implement the new church paradigm in their network of churches—a model as a framework for the entire history of clusters of churches down through the centuries.

Philemon: To practically illustrate to the network of churches in the Lycus Valley the importance of Christ's grand strategy of the kingdom through the Church, to restructure all their social relationships—including slavery—around the church as a family of families, the household social structure of the church, which was evident in the Greek “republic” ideal of the day, but fully realized in the emerging kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Networking Insights from Paul's Middle Letters

Complex Apostolic Networking Insights from Colossians-Philemon

Colossians was key because it was part of a cluster of churches in the Lycus Valley; it was evidently the most strategic of the 3 churches—which included Laodicea and Hierapolis.

¹⁵ Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters in Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. ¹⁶ And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you read also the letter from Laodicea.

Colossians 4:15–16

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Philippi—A Strategic Partner Church

Philippi: a strategic network of churches in Philippi, that participated with Paul from its inception. In Ephesians, Paul gave a full and mature presentation of the centrality of the Church as the heart of Christ's grand strategy for bringing in the kingdom. Now in Philippians, Paul illustrates the importance of churches participating with one mind in the progress of the gospel through His grand strategy—the Church.

Networking Insights from Paul's Middle Letters

Complex Apostolic Networking Insights from Philippians

³ I thank my God every time I remember you, ⁴ constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, ⁵ because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

Philippians 1:3–7

Networking Insights from Paul's Middle Letters

Complex Apostolic Networking Insights from Philippians

Philippi was a church that participated in a model way with Paul as he focused on his mission of taking the gospel to the Gentiles, building his network of churches.

1. They sent him financial gifts on many occasions.
2. They sent Epaphroditus to Paul as a personal assistant.
3. Euodia and Syntyche served as coworkers on Paul's team.

These churches were all part of the network Paul was building. We will learn more about his networking as we study each letter in this series.

Significance of Paul's Middle Letters

Issue: Significance of Paul's Middle Letters for us today

Questions:

1. Why are Paul's middle letters so significant for our churches today?
2. In what way do they establish the centrality of the Church in Christ's grand strategy?
3. What are some of the implications of failing to understand the fullness of this strategy?
4. Why are these letters so misunderstood today?