

# Visual Bible Charts

A Step-by-Step Guide  
to the  
**NEW TESTAMENT**



**Jonas Dagson**

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# Interpreting the New Testament

The transition from the old covenant to the new is not found between Malachi and Matthew. It happens at Jesus's death and resurrection. The Gospels and Acts are historical books that describe the transition between the old and new covenants. Here are seven important things to keep in mind when reading the New Testament.

Nothing less than the death of Christ was the close of the Old [Covenant]. Nothing less than His resurrection from the dead,... the opening of the New. (Andrew Murray)

**1 Whole Bible is inspired**  
The entire text of the Bible is equally God's Word. Jesus's words do not have a higher status than other parts.

**2 Epistles written first**  
Most of the letters (epistles) were written before the Gospels were. The teaching did not come afterward.

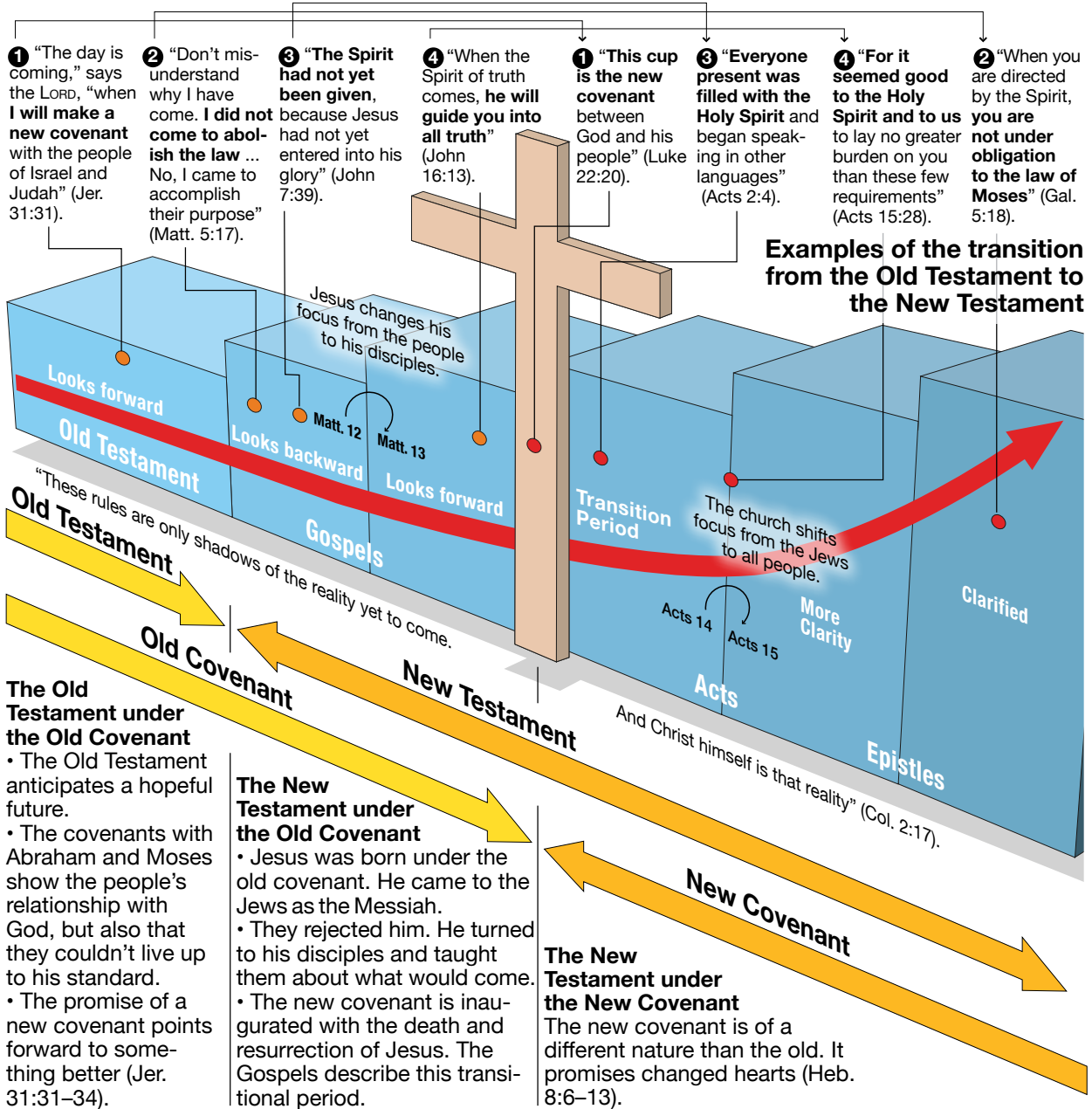
**3 Know the type of text**  
The narrative texts (stories) only describe what happened. This doesn't mean that we must imitate all of the events.

**4 The author's intention**  
Ask: What did the author want his original audience to know, believe, and do? We want to agree with the author's intent.

**5 Read in context**  
The texts were not written in a vacuum. They must be understood in the context in which they were written.

**6 Understand then apply**  
First ask what the text means. Once you have identified the author's intent, then you can ask what it means for you.

**7 No secret codes**  
God's message is what the author wrote. The Bible was not written in secret messages or codes (2 Cor. 1:13).



# Structure of the New Testament

The New Testament has 27 books:

- **Historical Books**—the four Gospels and Acts (5)
- **Letters (Epistles)**—usually split into two groups: Paul's letters (13) and the general letters (8), a total of 21
- **Prophetic Literature**—Revelation (1)

## New Testament Records

### • Shortest book:

3 John (minimum word count 219\*—15 verses)

2 John (minimum number of verses 13—245 words)

### • Longest book:

Luke (19,482 words—1,149 verses)

### • Shortest chapter:

Revelation 15 (minimum word count 217)

• **Longest chapter:** Luke 1 (80 verses)

• **Shortest verses:** Luke 20:30 (12 letters);

1 Thessalonians 5:16 (14); John 11:35 (16)

• **Longest verse:** Revelation 20:4 (58 words)

• **The book in the middle:** 2 Thessalonians

• **The chapter in the middle:** Romans 13

• **Middle verse:** Acts 17:17

• **Average in the NT:**

On average, a book has 255 verses.

Three ways of categorizing the New Testament Letters

### 1. By Author

13 letters from Paul  
3 letters from John  
2 letters from Peter  
3 letters from other people

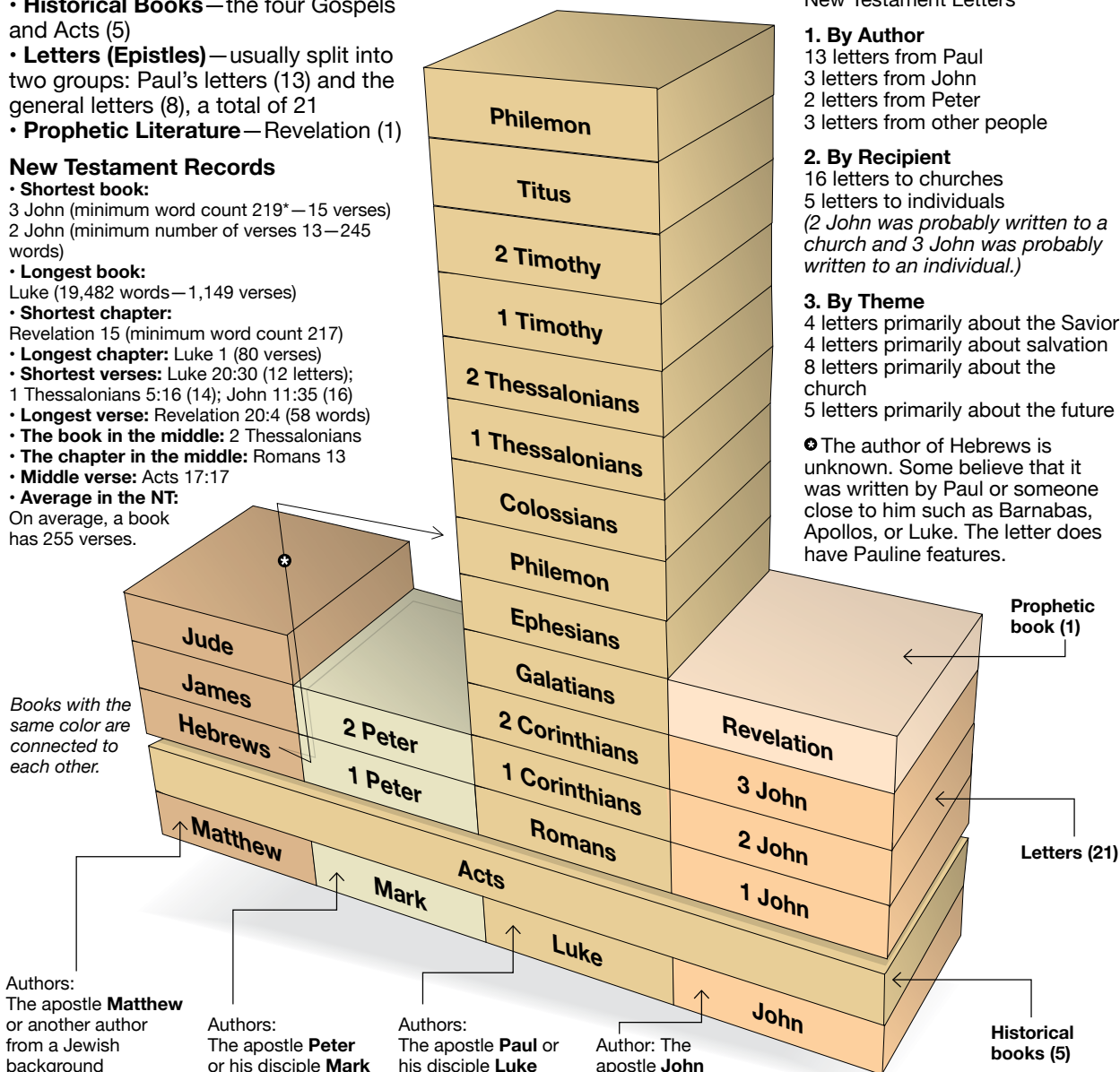
### 2. By Recipient

16 letters to churches  
5 letters to individuals  
(2 John was probably written to a church and 3 John was probably written to an individual.)

### 3. By Theme

4 letters primarily about the Savior  
4 letters primarily about salvation  
8 letters primarily about the church  
5 letters primarily about the future

• The author of Hebrews is unknown. Some believe that it was written by Paul or someone close to him such as Barnabas, Apollos, or Luke. The letter does have Pauline features.



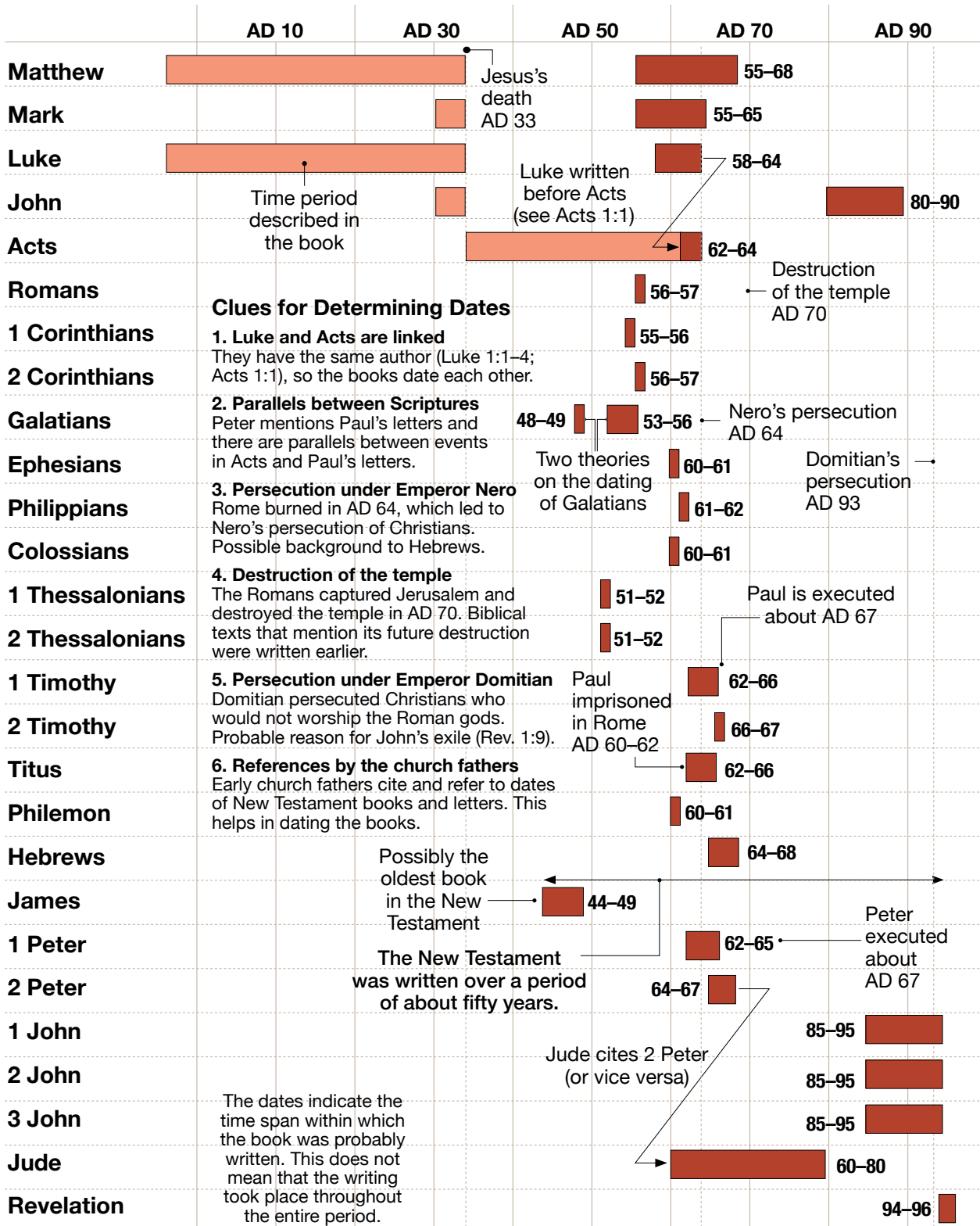
## The New Testament Book by Book

|   | Book          | Chapters | Verses |    | Book            | Chapters | Verses |    | Book       | Chapters | Verses |
|---|---------------|----------|--------|----|-----------------|----------|--------|----|------------|----------|--------|
| 1 | Matthew       | 26       | 1,068  | 10 | Ephesians       | 6        | 155    | 19 | Hebrews    | 13       | 303    |
| 2 | Mark          | 16       | 673    | 11 | Philippians     | 4        | 104    | 20 | James      | 5        | 108    |
| 3 | Luke          | 24       | 1,149  | 12 | Colossians      | 4        | 95     | 21 | 1 Peter    | 5        | 105    |
| 4 | John          | 21       | 878    | 13 | 1 Thessalonians | 5        | 89     | 22 | 2 Peter    | 3        | 61     |
| 5 | Acts          | 28       | 1,002  | 14 | 2 Thessalonians | 3        | 47     | 23 | 1 John     | 5        | 105    |
| 6 | Romans        | 16       | 432    | 15 | 1 Timothy       | 6        | 113    | 24 | 2 John     | 1        | 13     |
| 7 | 1 Corinthians | 16       | 437    | 16 | 2 Timothy       | 4        | 83     | 25 | 3 John     | 1        | 15     |
| 8 | 2 Corinthians | 13       | 256    | 17 | Titus           | 3        | 46     | 26 | Jude       | 1        | 25     |
| 9 | Galatians     | 6        | 149    | 18 | Philemon        | 1        | 25     | 27 | Revelation | 22       | 404    |

\* All counts (words and letters) are based on the Greek text Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece version 27.

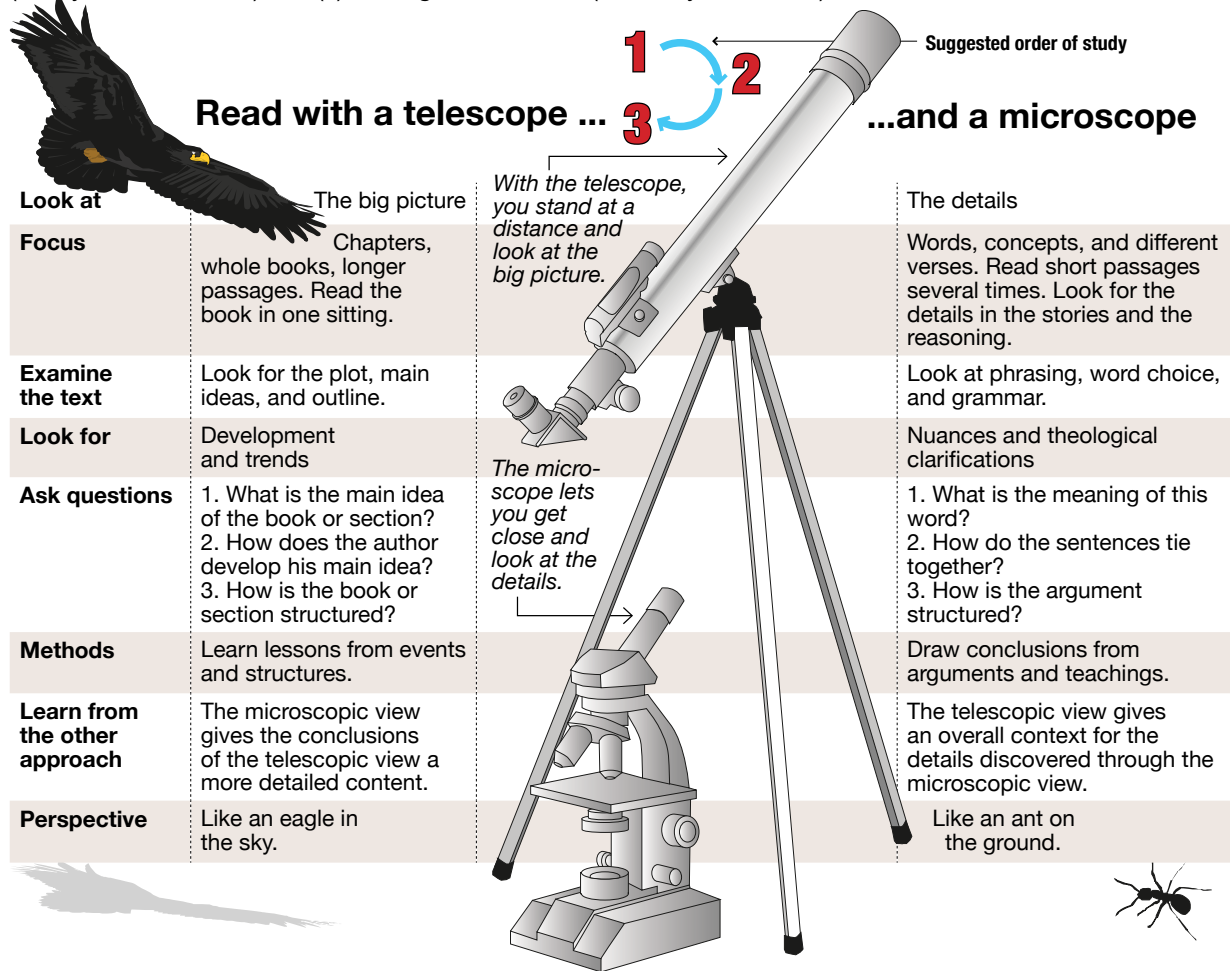
# When the New Testament Was Written

When to date some of the New Testament books is debated. The dating of the Gospels is particularly uncertain, and there are many theories. This chart shows possible time frames for the writing of each book.



# Two Ways to Read the New Testament

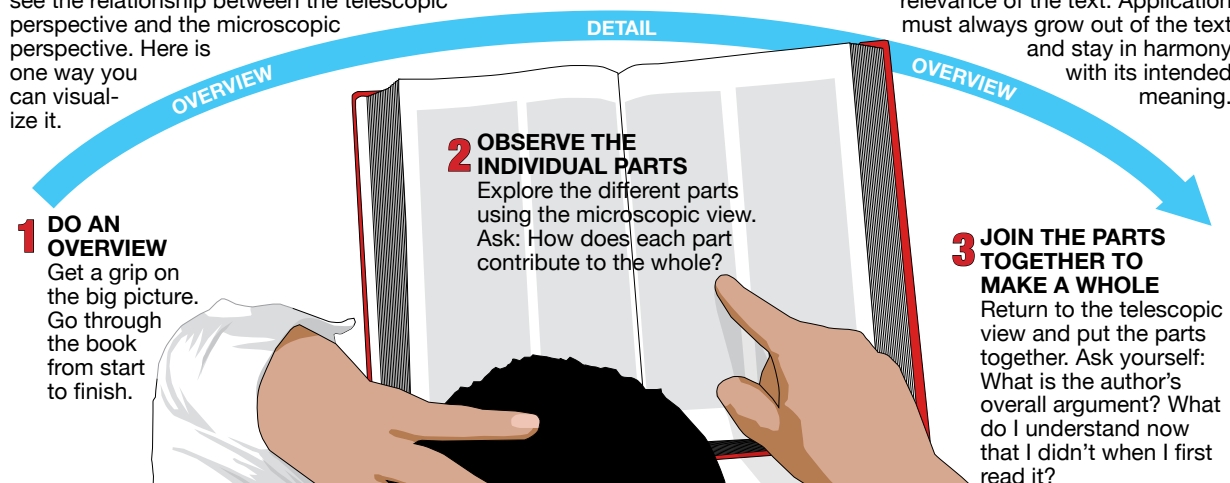
Bible reading can be done from different starting points. Two common approaches are (1) seeing the whole (the synthetic method) and (2) looking at the details (the analytic method).



## How do we go about reading and studying a book of the Bible?

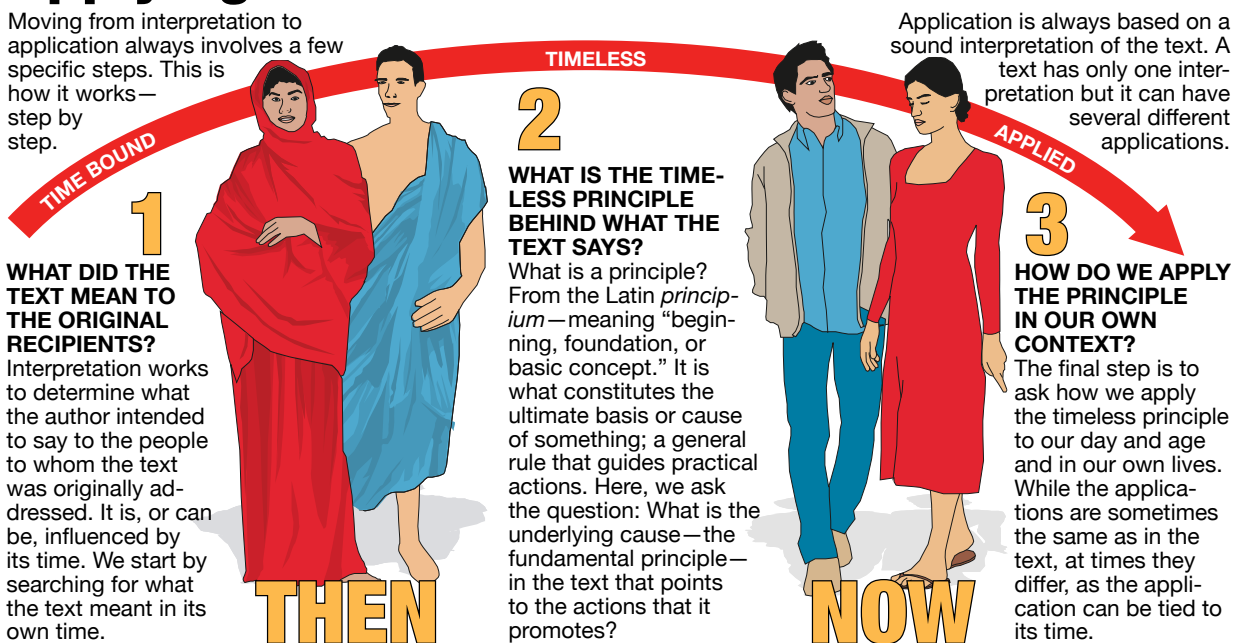
The key to studying a book of the Bible is to see the relationship between the telescopic perspective and the microscopic perspective. Here is one way you can visualize it.

To apply the text is to show the relevance of the text. Application must always grow out of the text and stay in harmony with its intended meaning.



# Applying the New Testament

Moving from interpretation to application always involves a few specific steps. This is how it works—step by step.



## Four steps toward a sound application

### 1 Start from the text

What does this actually mean? How can I understand its meaning? You must be able to trace the application to the text(s) on which it is based.

- **Danger:** Jumping immediately from your observations to an application.
- **Example:** In the first century, Paul instructs the believers in Thessalonica to stay away from all kinds of evil (1 Thess. 5:22).

### 2 Application (I)—Find the principle

Next is to look for the timeless underlying principle. Why does the Bible say this? Different difficulties come up when interpreting different types of text.

- **Danger:** Not distinguishing between what is timeless and what is specific to its time period.
- **Example:** All believers at all times should stay away from all evil is the principle behind 1 Thess. 5:22.

### 3 Application (II)—Make it personal

The third step is to ask: How does the timeless principle apply to me today? It is about looking for the implications of the biblical text.

- **Danger:** Allowing the spirit of the times to influence me, to color my conclusions.
- **Example:** Since all believers at all times should stay away from all evil, as a believer I should also stay away from all evil.

### 4 Application (III)—Make it practical

The final step is to ask: How can I put this truth into practice in my everyday life? It's about taking practical steps here that help me put the meaning of the Bible text into everyday life.

- **Danger:** Not being concrete enough.
- **Example:** I make concrete decisions such as choosing to avoid certain TV programs and certain websites.

Application asks us to take that original interpretation and connect it to our lives. **Therefore, each person may have a different application stemming from the same interpretation.** Furthermore, one might come back to the same passage some time later and find a completely different application because their life situation has changed. (Ken Carson)

## Different types of applications to consider

### 1 Absolute Moral Imperatives

We encounter timeless exhortations that apply in all situations and in all times.

- **Dealing with them:** The timeless principles challenge us and call us to obedience in action.
- **Example:** “Stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth” (Eph. 4:25). This also applies to all of us.

### 2 General Principles

We encounter fundamental truths in the text. These are not direct exhortations, but guiding principles and beliefs.

- **Dealing with them:** We must understand the implications of what they mean in our context.
- **Example:** “Share each other’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2).



### 3 Standardizing Patterns

Look for examples in the text of how people act or reason. From them we can draw valid principles.

- **Dealing with them:** We should consider if the principle might apply to us.
- **Example:** After one parable, Jesus tells a man to “go and do the same” (Luke 10:37). Does this apply to us?

### 4 Time Bound Applications

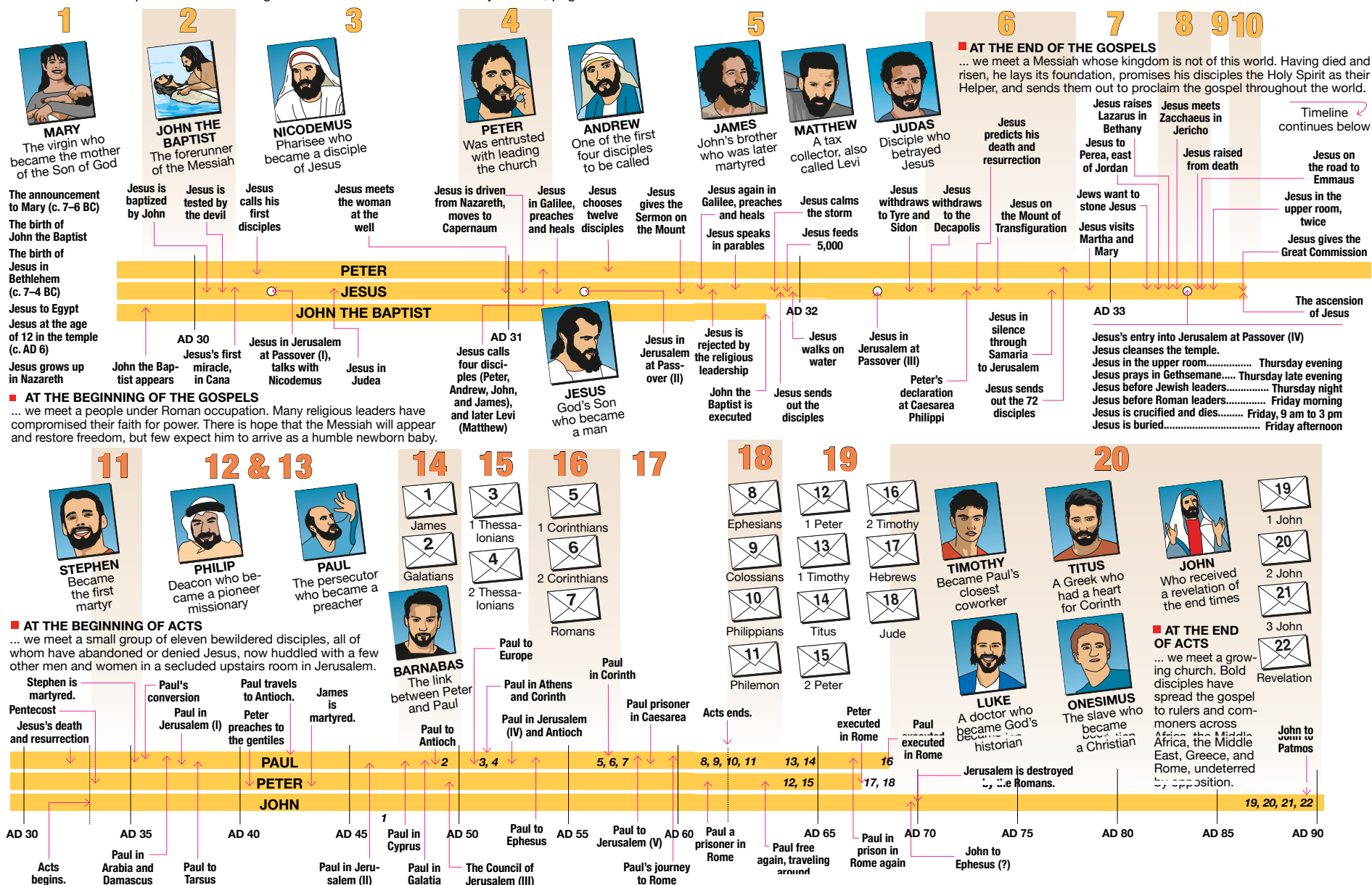
We will also encounter principles or exhortations addressed to people in specific situations.

- **Dealing with them:** In these cases, it is difficult to find any timeless principles to apply to ourselves.
- **Example:** Paul’s specific instructions to Timothy do not apply to us (2 Tim. 4:21).

## A Chronological Overview of the New Testament

The numbers correspond to those in *Stages in the Life of Jesus and the Early Church*, pages 10–11.

Several chronological options have been proposed, covering the length of Jesus's public ministry and the timing of his death and resurrection (AD 30 or 33). This overview mostly follows Dr. Harold Hoehner's chronology.



# How the Gospels Harmonize (6)

Statistical consultant:  
Josef Dagson

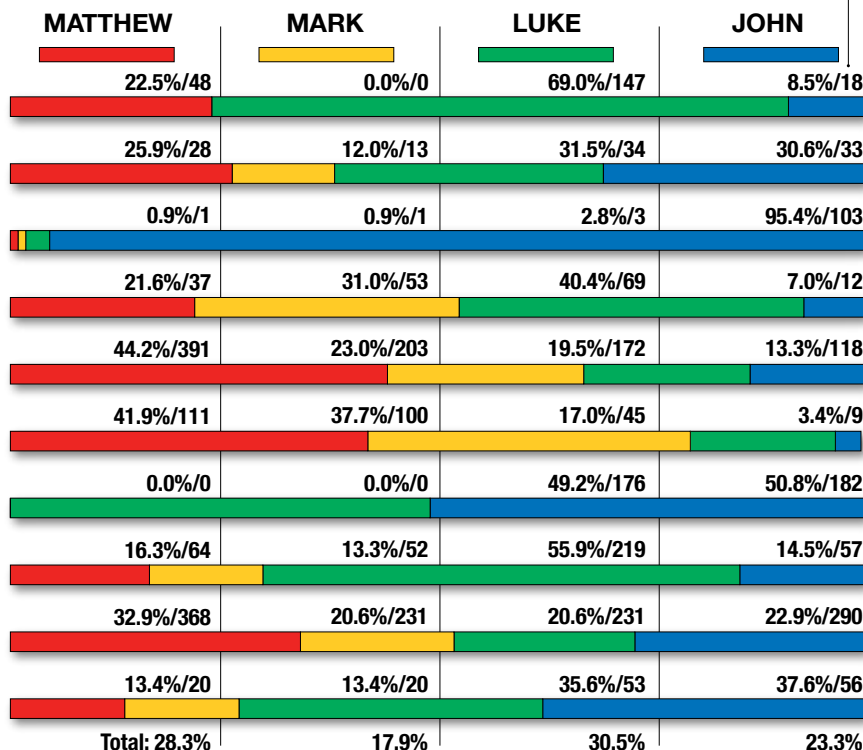
The Gospel writers chose to emphasize different aspects of Jesus's life in their accounts. Here is how they organized their material.

## Reading and comparing the Gospels horizontally

Percentage of material in stage/  
Number of verses

Distribution of the Gospels in each stage.

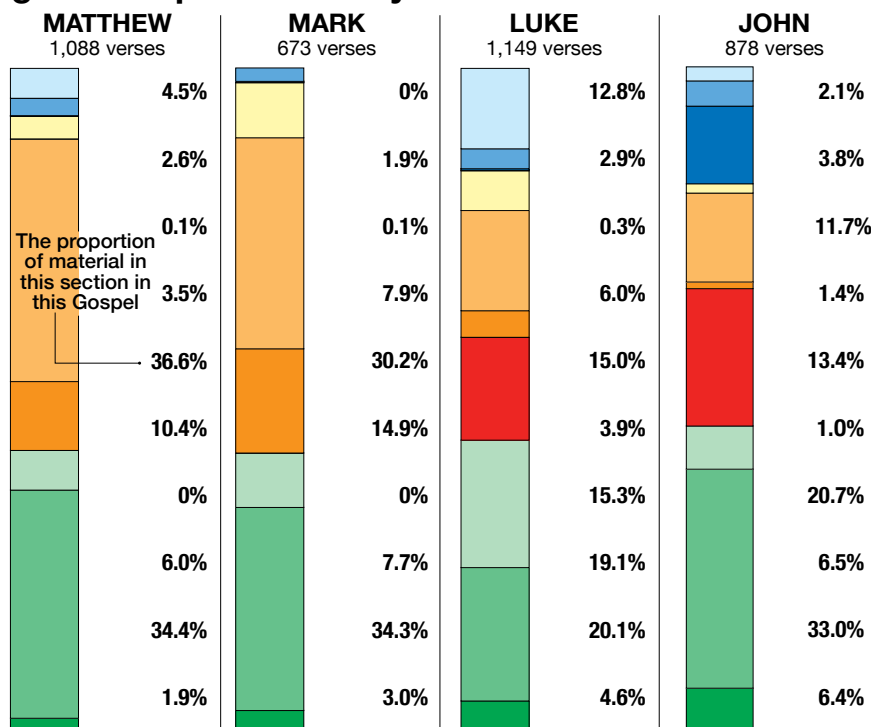
|                                   |        |
|-----------------------------------|--------|
| <b>1. Birth and Childhood</b>     | 213    |
| 4-7 BC-AD 29                      | verses |
| <b>2. Initial Ministry</b>        | 108    |
| 4 months, Jan.-April AD 30        | verses |
| <b>3. Early Judean Ministry</b>   | 108    |
| 8 months, May-Dec. AD 30          | verses |
| <b>4. Early Galilean Ministry</b> | 171    |
| 4 months, Jan.-April AD 31        | verses |
| <b>5. Mid-Galilean Ministry</b>   | 884    |
| 12 months, May AD 31-May 32       | verses |
| <b>6. Late Galilean Ministry</b>  | 265    |
| 6 months, May-Oct. AD 32          | verses |
| <b>7. Late Judean Ministry</b>    | 358    |
| 3 months, Nov. AD 32-Jan. 33      | verses |
| <b>8. Late Perean Ministry</b>    | 392    |
| 3 months, Feb.-April AD 33        | verses |
| <b>9. The Last Passover</b>       | 1,120  |
| One week, April AD 33             | verses |
| <b>10. Post-Resurrection</b>      | 149    |
| 40 days, April-May AD 33          | verses |



## Reading and comparing the Gospels vertically

Distribution of the stages in each Gospel.

|                                   |       |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| <b>1. Birth and Childhood</b>     | 5.6%  |
| Total: 213 verses                 |       |
| <b>2. Initial Ministry</b>        | 2.9%  |
| Total: 108 verses                 |       |
| <b>3. Early Judean Ministry</b>   | 2.9%  |
| Total: 108 verses                 |       |
| <b>4. Early Galilean Ministry</b> | 4.5%  |
| Total: 171 verses                 |       |
| <b>5. Mid-Galilean Ministry</b>   | 23.5% |
| Total: 884 verses                 |       |
| <b>6. Late Galilean Ministry</b>  | 7.0%  |
| Total: 265 verses                 |       |
| <b>7. Late Judean Ministry</b>    | 9.5%  |
| Total: 358 verses                 |       |
| <b>8. Late Perean Ministry</b>    | 10.4% |
| Total: 392 verses                 |       |
| <b>9. The Last Passover</b>       | 29.7% |
| Total: 1,120 verses               |       |
| <b>10. Post-Resurrection</b>      | 4.0%  |
| Total: 149 verses                 |       |



# Sixteen Writers of the New Testament



## MATTHEW

**Book:** Gospel of Matthew. The Gospel is anonymous, but there is strong support for the apostle Matthew being the author. In the second and third centuries, Irenaeus, Papias, and Eusebius supported Matthew's authorship.



## MARK (JOHN MARK)

**Book:** Gospel of Mark. The Gospel is anonymous, but there is strong support in extra-biblical sources pointing to John Mark (Acts 12:25) as the author (Polycarp, Papias, and others). Peter is seen as the apostolic source.



## LUKE

**Books:** Gospel of Luke and Acts. Some think he may have been the scribe for 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus ("only" 2 Tim. 4:11). The Gospel is anonymous, but strong extra-biblical support exists for Luke's authorship.



## JOHN

**Books:** Gospel of John, 1, 2, & 3 John, Revelation. The Gospel is anonymous, but there is strong support in extra-biblical sources for John being the author (Irenaeus). "We" in John 21:24 suggests he may have had a scribe.



## PAUL

**Books:** Majority of NT letters. Thirteen name Paul as author: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. He used several scribes.



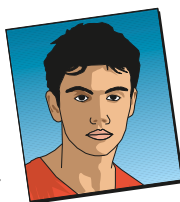
## TERTIUS

**Book:** Romans. "I, Tertius ... the one writing this letter for Paul" (Rom 16:22). All we know from the NT is that he was Paul's scribe. Later tradition says he was among the 70 disciples Jesus sent out (Luke 10:1).



## SOSTHENES

**Book:** 1 Corinthians. The introduction can be seen as a presentation: "From Paul ... and our brother Sosthenes" (1 Cor. 1:1, see Acts 18:17). Paul's personal greeting at the end shows he used a scribe, Sosthenes (16:21).



## TIMOTHY

**Books:** 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, possibly also 1 & 2 Thessalonians. A disciple of Paul and one of his closest associates (2 Tim. 1:2). Was the scribe for many of his letters.



## SILAS (SYLVANUS)

**Books:** 1 & 2 Thessalonians, and 1 Peter. The scribe for the letters to the Thessalonians is not named, but Silas is a strong contender (1 Thess. 1:1-2; 2 Thess. 1:1). Peter mentions Silas helped him (1 Peter 5:12).



## JAMES

**Book:** James. Named in the introduction as the author: "James, a slave ... of Jesus Christ" (James 1:1). Likely Jesus's half-brother (Mark 6:33). Supported by extra-biblical sources, like Origen in third century.



## PETER

**Books:** 1 & 2 Peter. The introduction identifies the author: "From Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1). The difference in writing style between the two letters suggests the use of different scribes.



## PROCORUS

**Books:** Gospel of John, possibly Revelation. "We" (John 21:24) suggests a scribe was involved. According to apocryphal tradition, Procorus, one of the first deacons (Acts 6:5), was John's scribe.



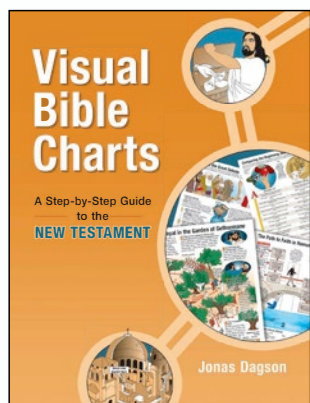
## JUDE

**Book:** Jude. The author named in the introduction is "Jude ... a brother of James" (Jude 1). He is most likely the half-brother of Jesus ("Judas" Matt. 13:55), which also makes him James's brother.



## POSSIBLY THREE OTHERS

Mark 16:8-20 and John 7:53-8:11 might be later additions to the books by two unknown authors. The author of Hebrews is also unknown to us but was known to the letter's recipients (Heb. 13:19, 22-23).

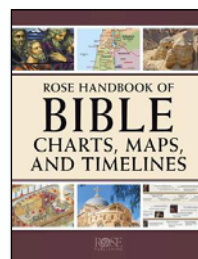


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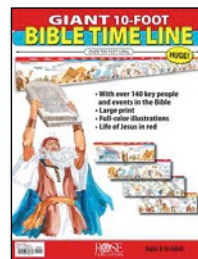
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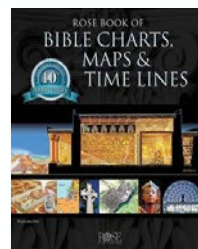
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