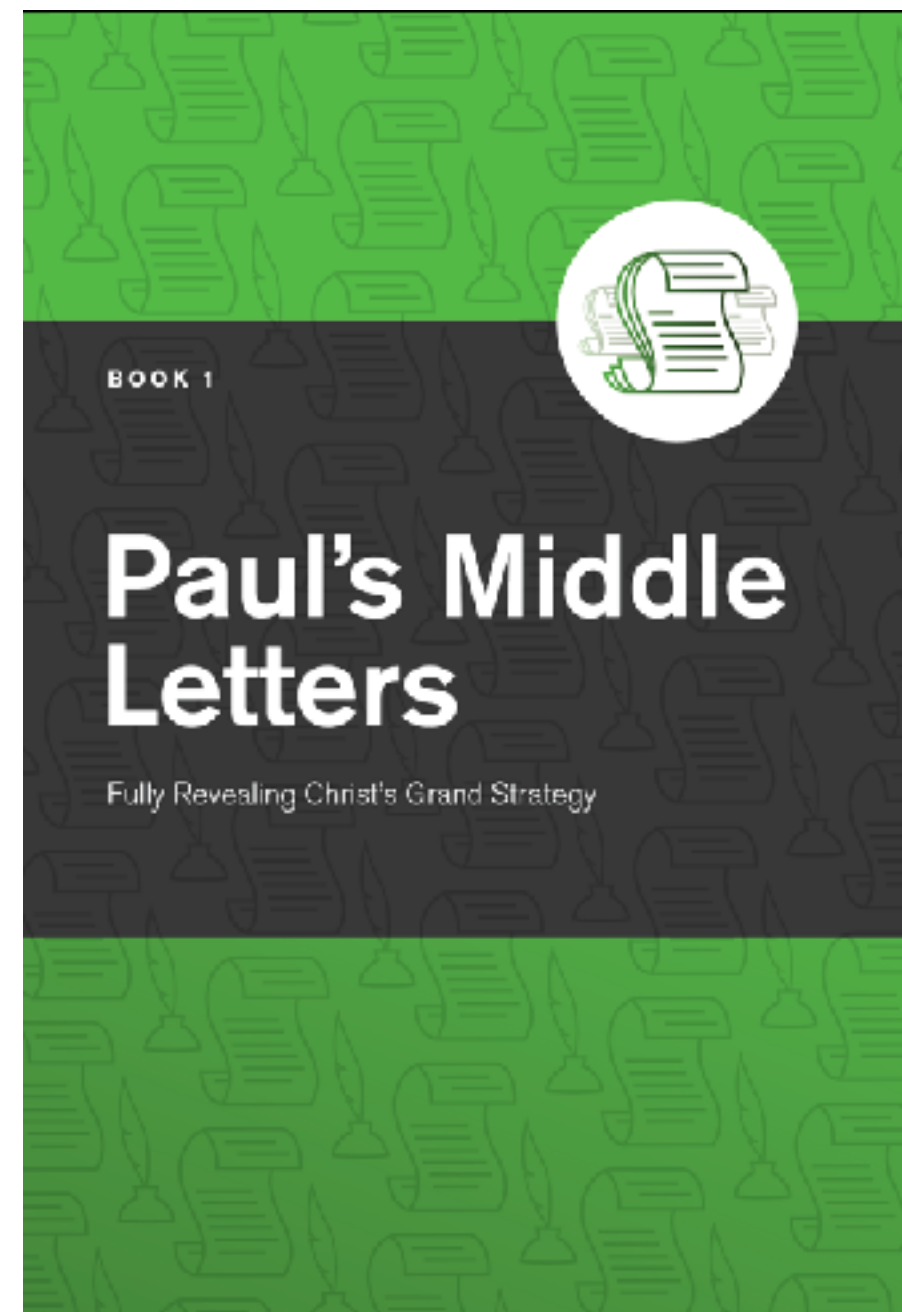
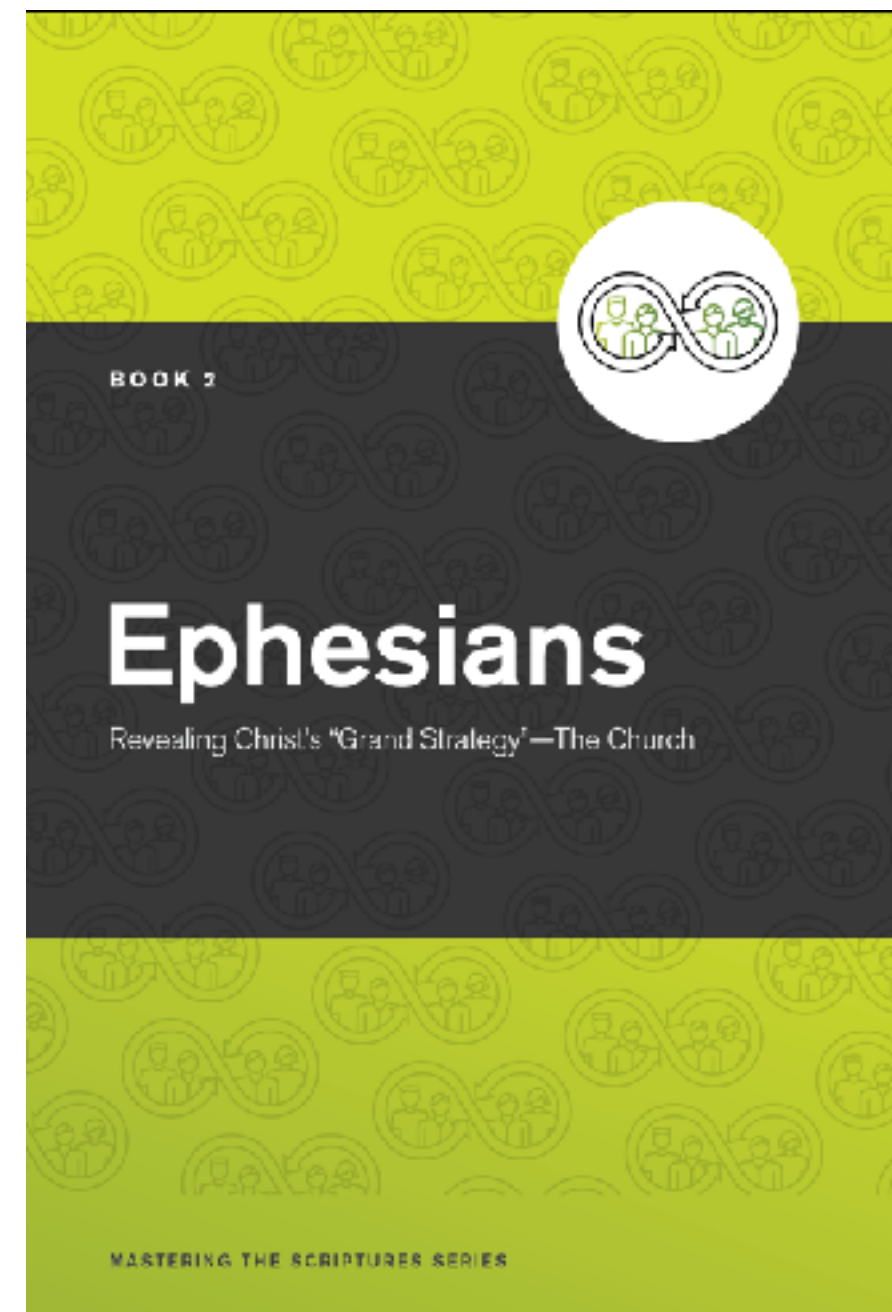


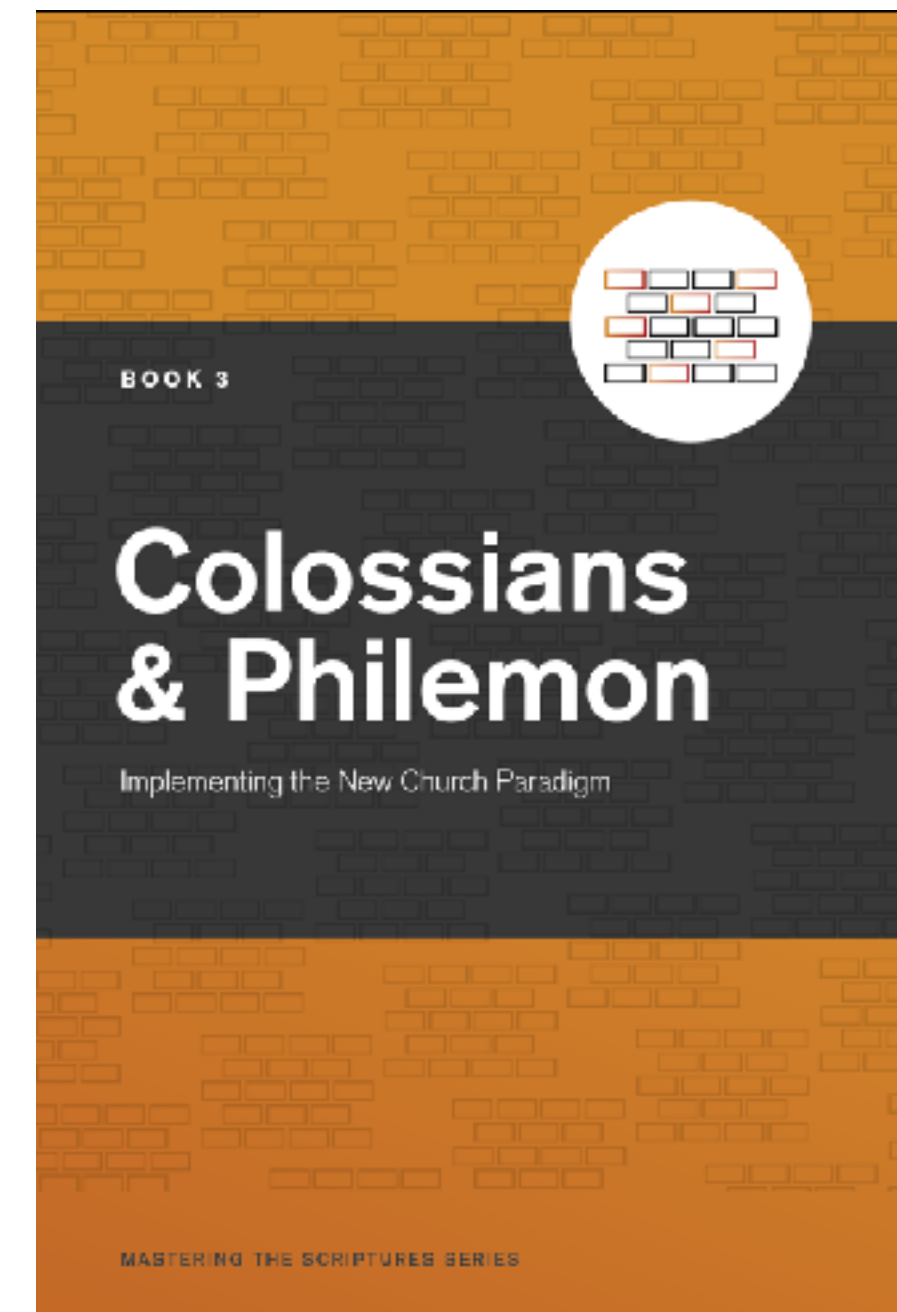
Paul's Middle Letters



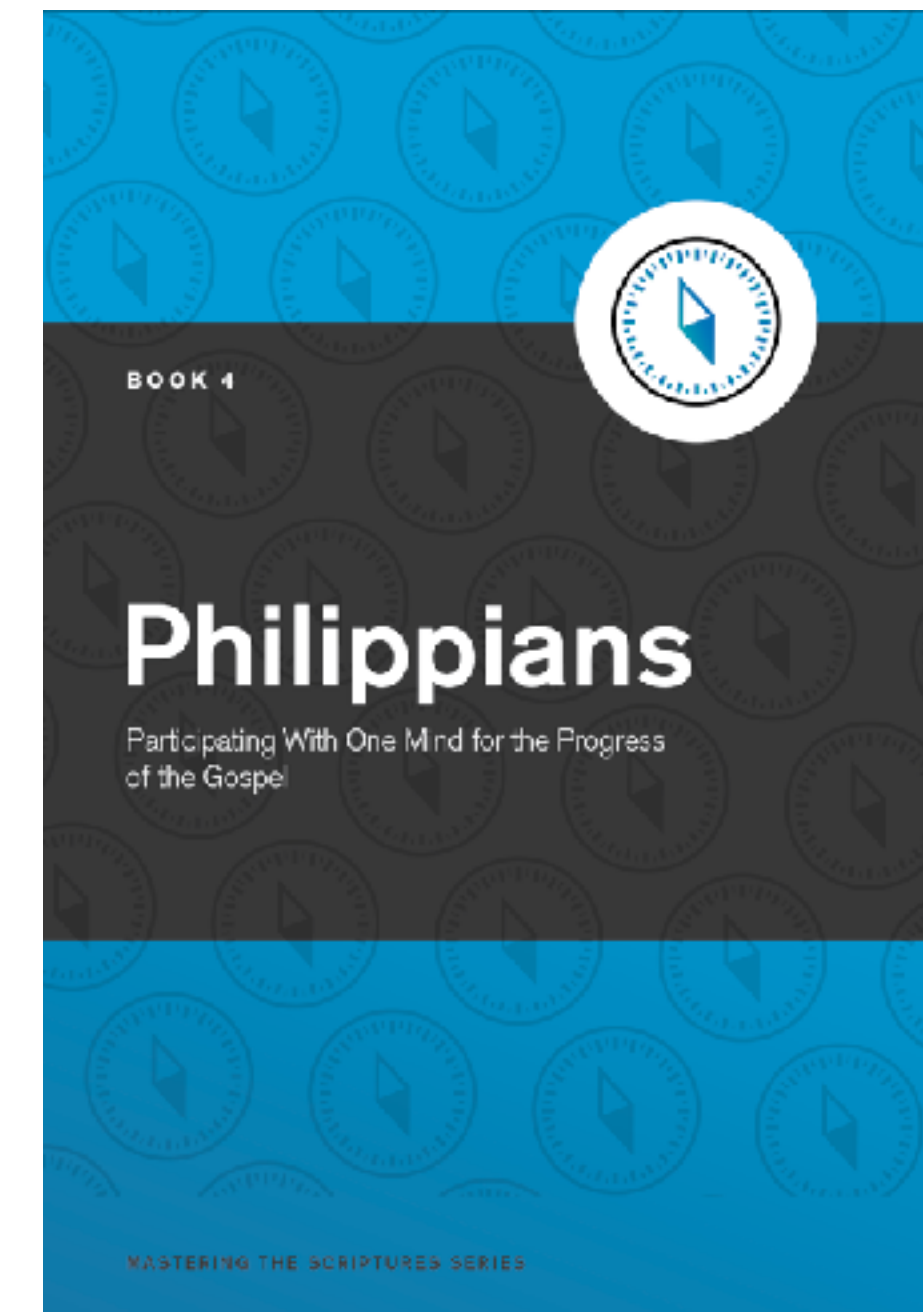
Feb. 60 to March 62



Autumn 60



Autumn 61



Spring 62

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 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

Paul's Middle Letters

New Testament Theology

It is critical that we treat these letters as a collection within Paul's larger collection.

These letters build on each others as they unfold. And while they each stand alone as a letter to a particular set of churches, they all deal with similar issues that together present a very clear picture of establishing churches in Christ's grand strategy—a full picture of the centrality of church networks in that strategy.

Nonlinear control theory (self-driving cars)

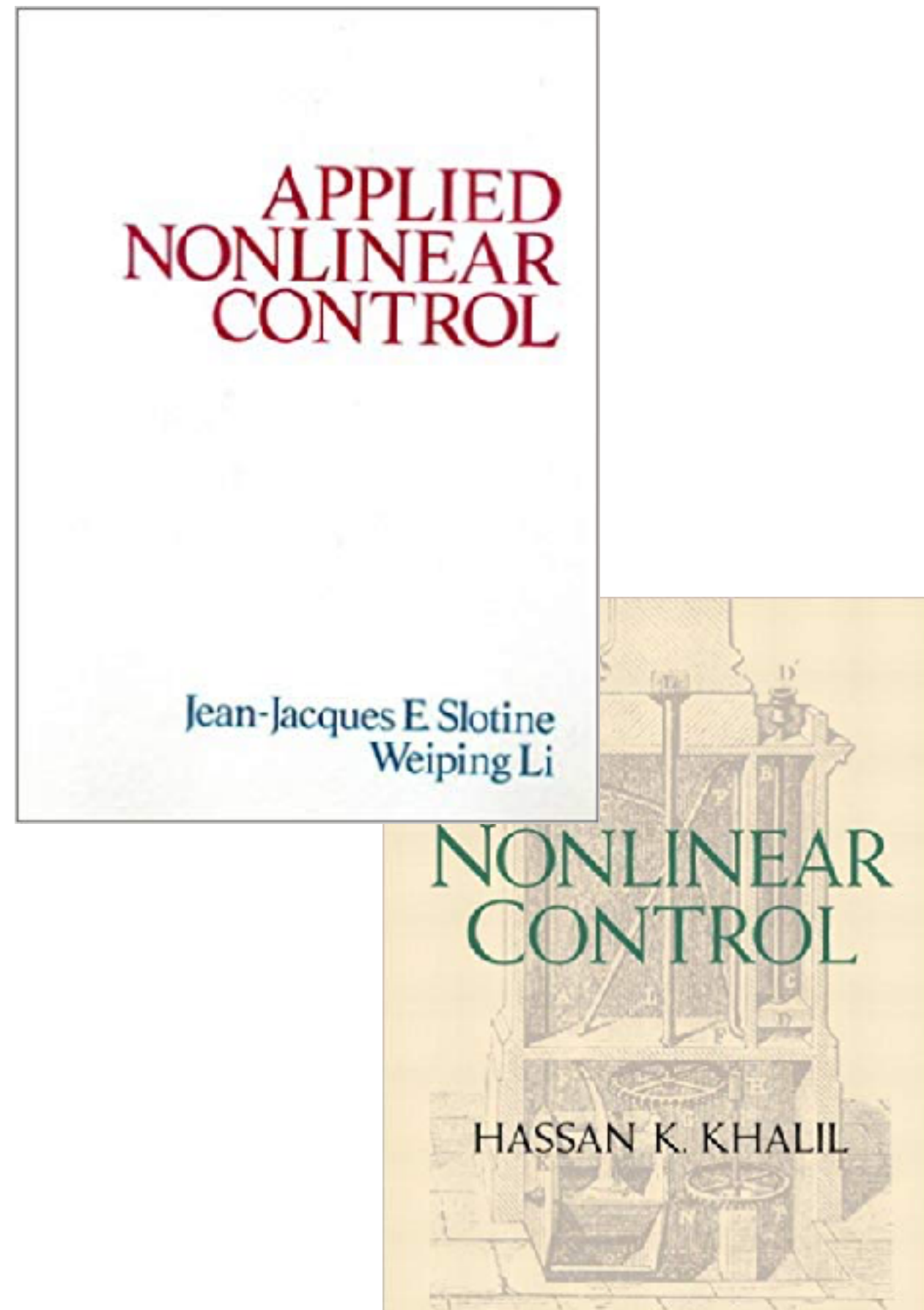
Paul's Middle Letters

Nonlinear control theory (theology)

The New Testament is written like a nonlinear control system's engineering manual—a self-driving car (the Spirit is the AI [artificial intelligence], apostolic leaders create the cultural operating system).

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The ultimate question becomes: What are the key elements of a complex apostolic network that allows it to exponentially replicate “the way of Christ and His apostles” in any culture in any generation of history?

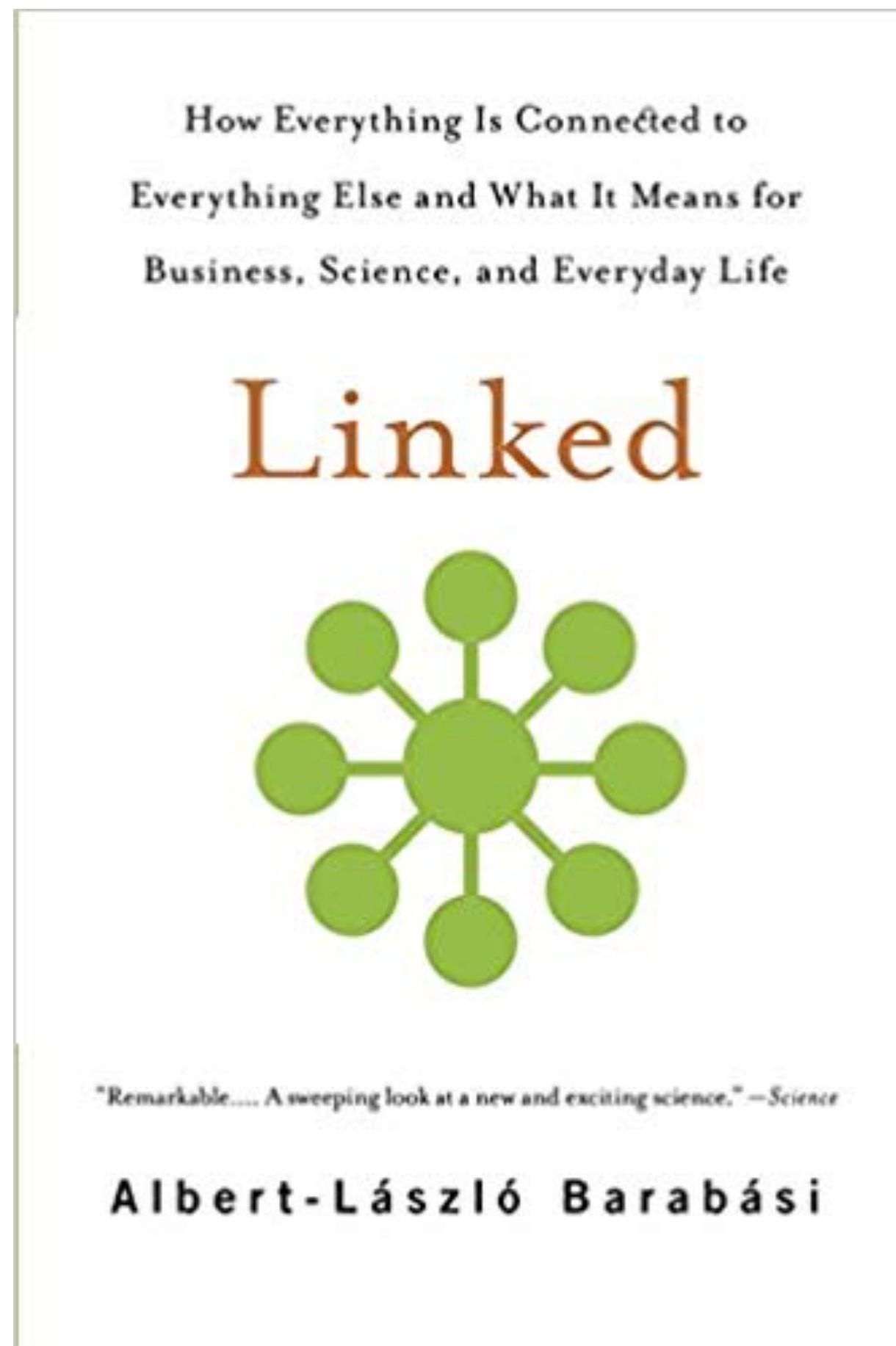


Paul's Middle Letters

Complex Networking

People thought I was crazy for pursuing the new science of complex networking (which the Spirit perfected in Paul 2,000 years ago).

Now the engineering idea of linear/nonlinear control theory seems secular, but Paul also perfected it 2,000 years ago.



Colossians

Implementing the New Church Paradigm



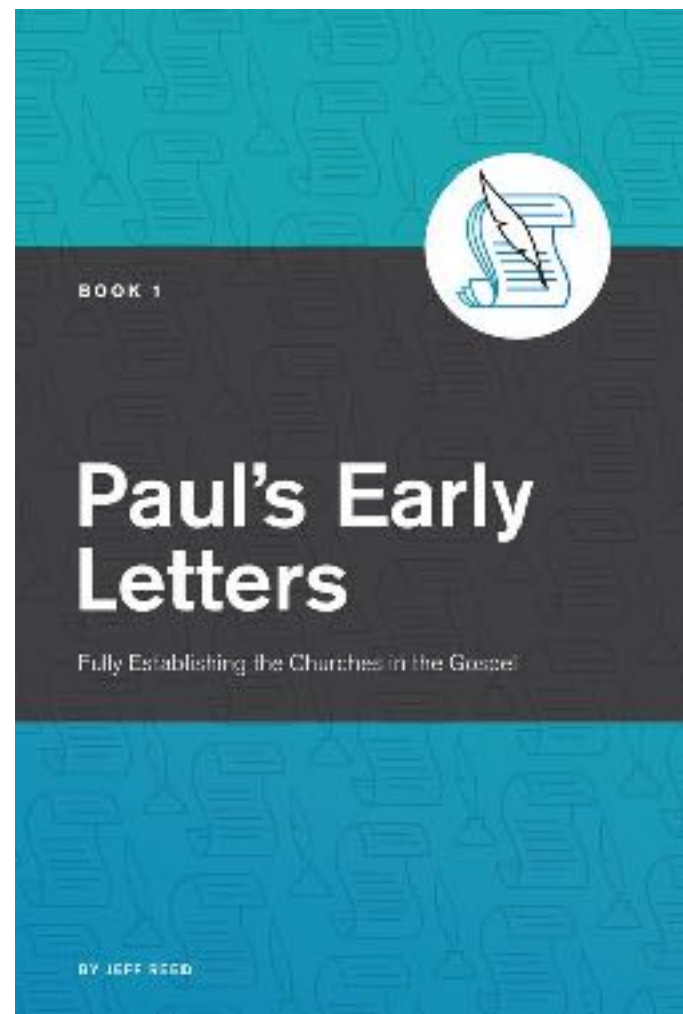
Paul's Middle Letters: Colossians—Philemon

Issue: Paul's Desire for the Establishing of the Lycus Valley Churches

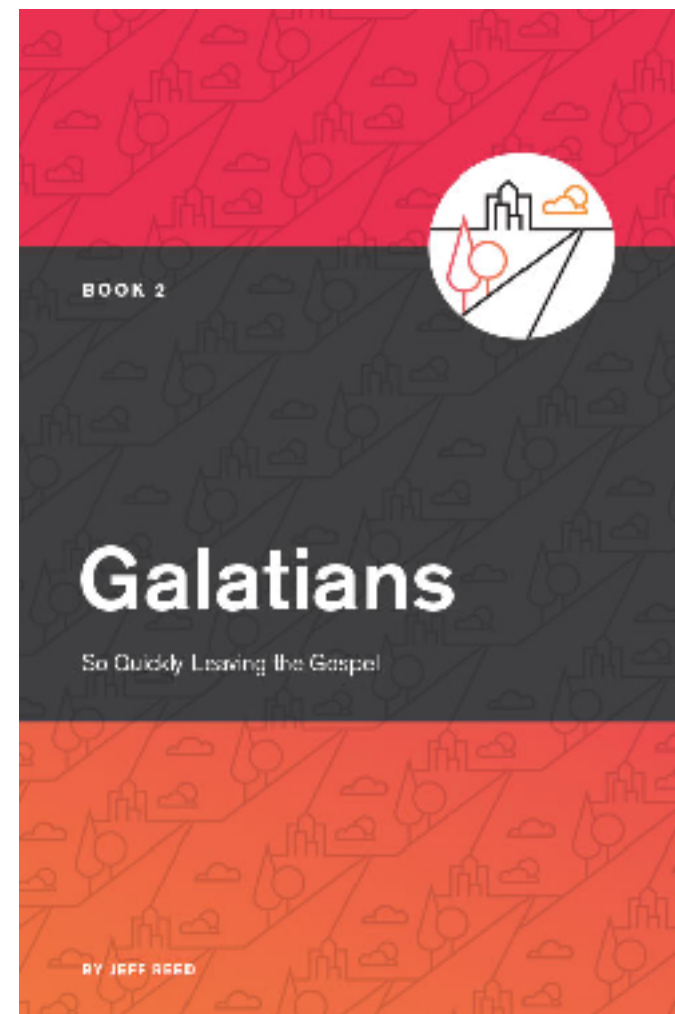
Questions:

1. Why do you think Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians?
2. Colossians was written almost exactly one year after the Ephesian manifesto. Why was it needed, in light of its very close parallel to Ephesians?
3. How did Paul apply the Ephesian manifesto to the churches of the Lycus Valley?
4. In what way can we call Ephesians followed by Colossians as the framework of the establishing process?

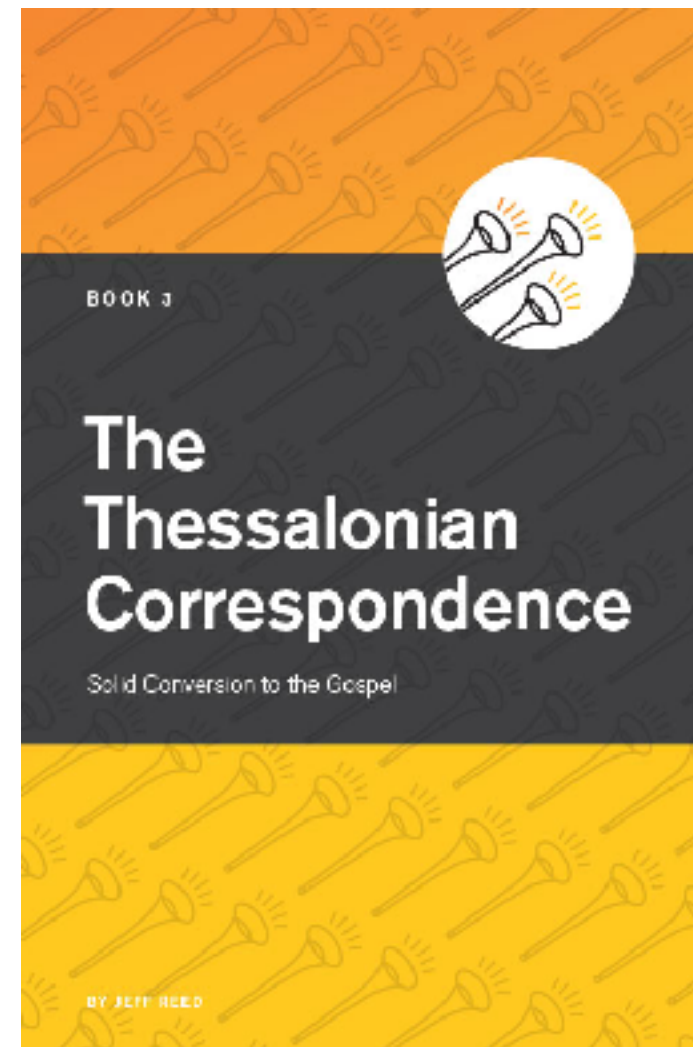
Paul's Early Letters



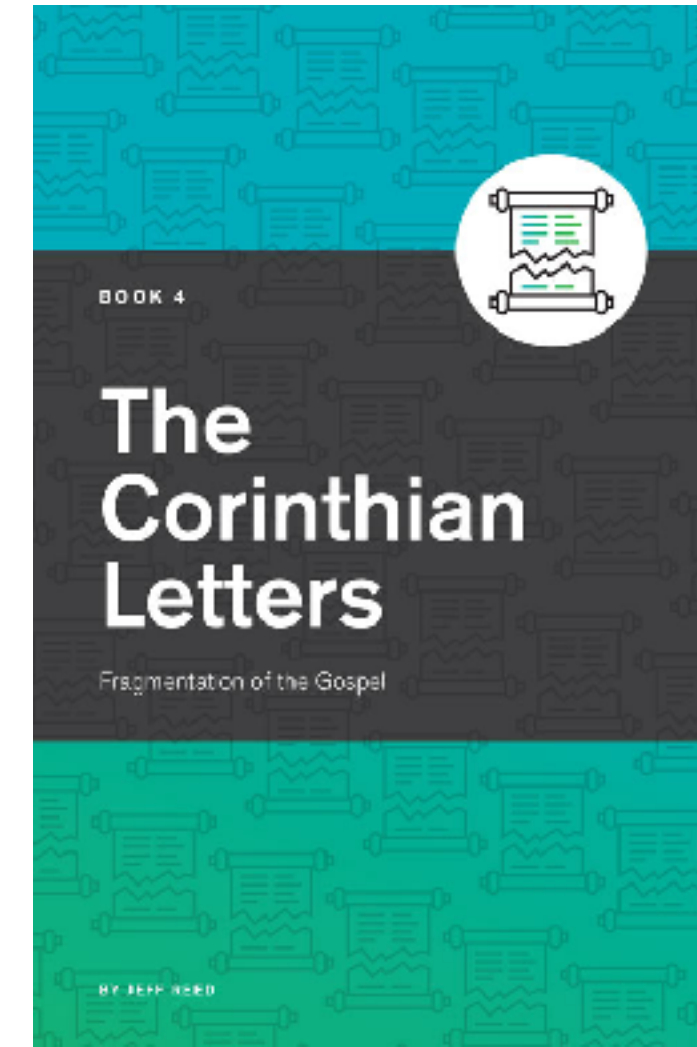
49–56 AD



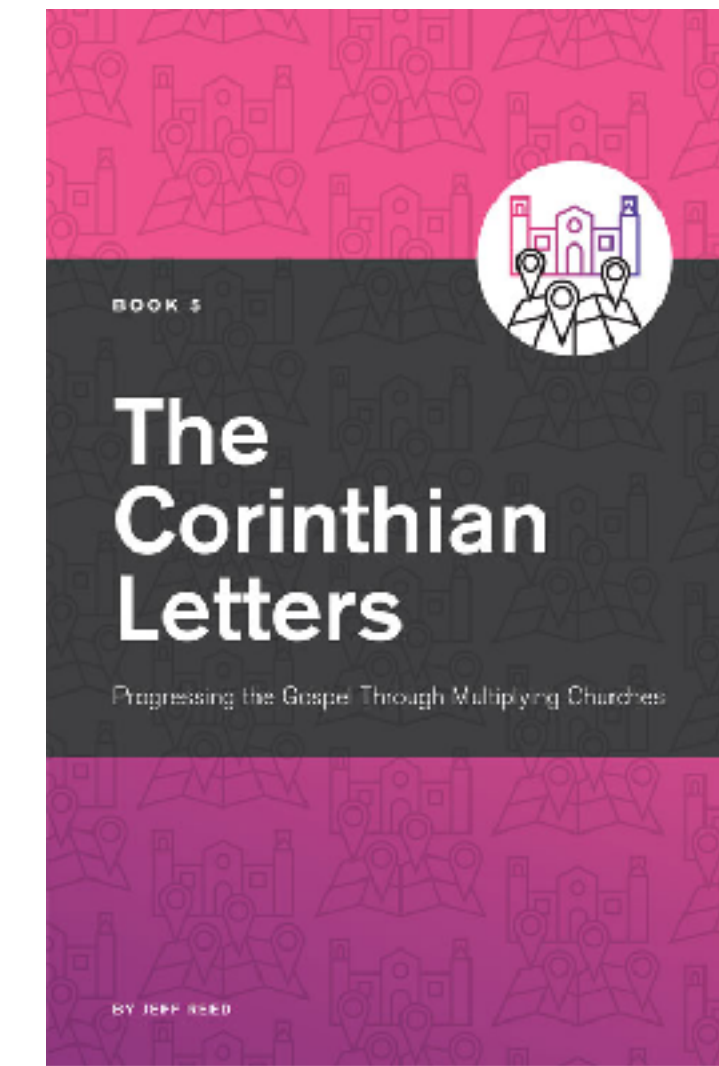
Autumn 49



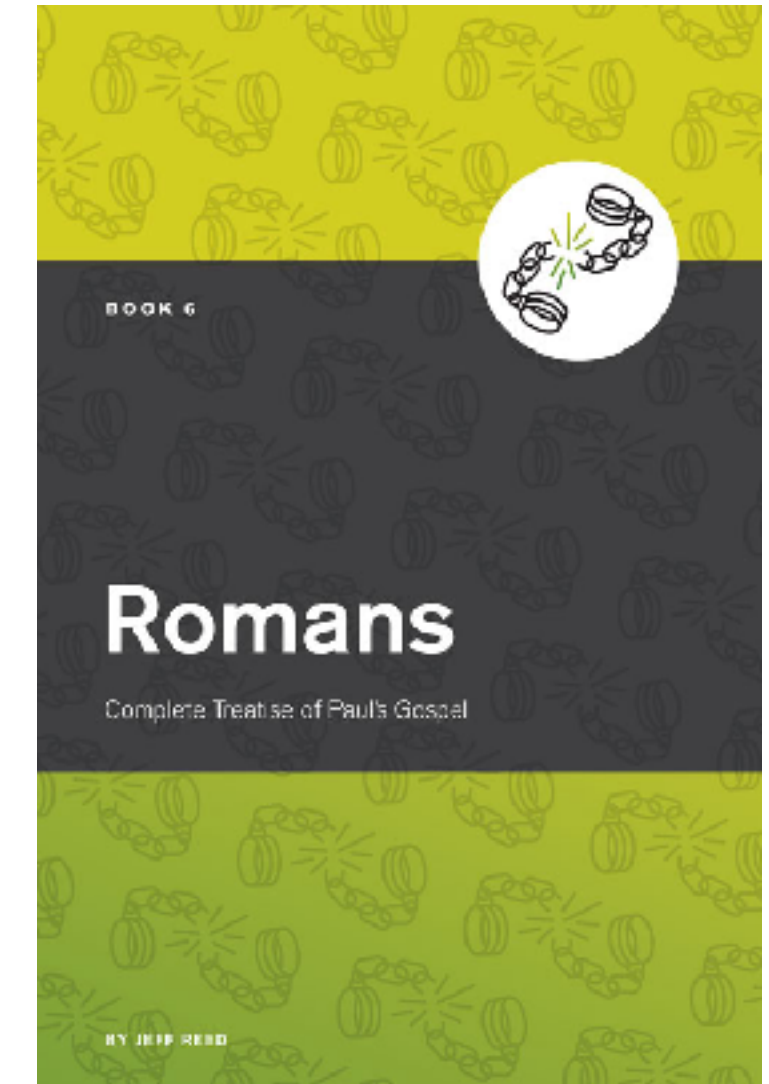
Winter/Sum. 51 AD



Sept. 53



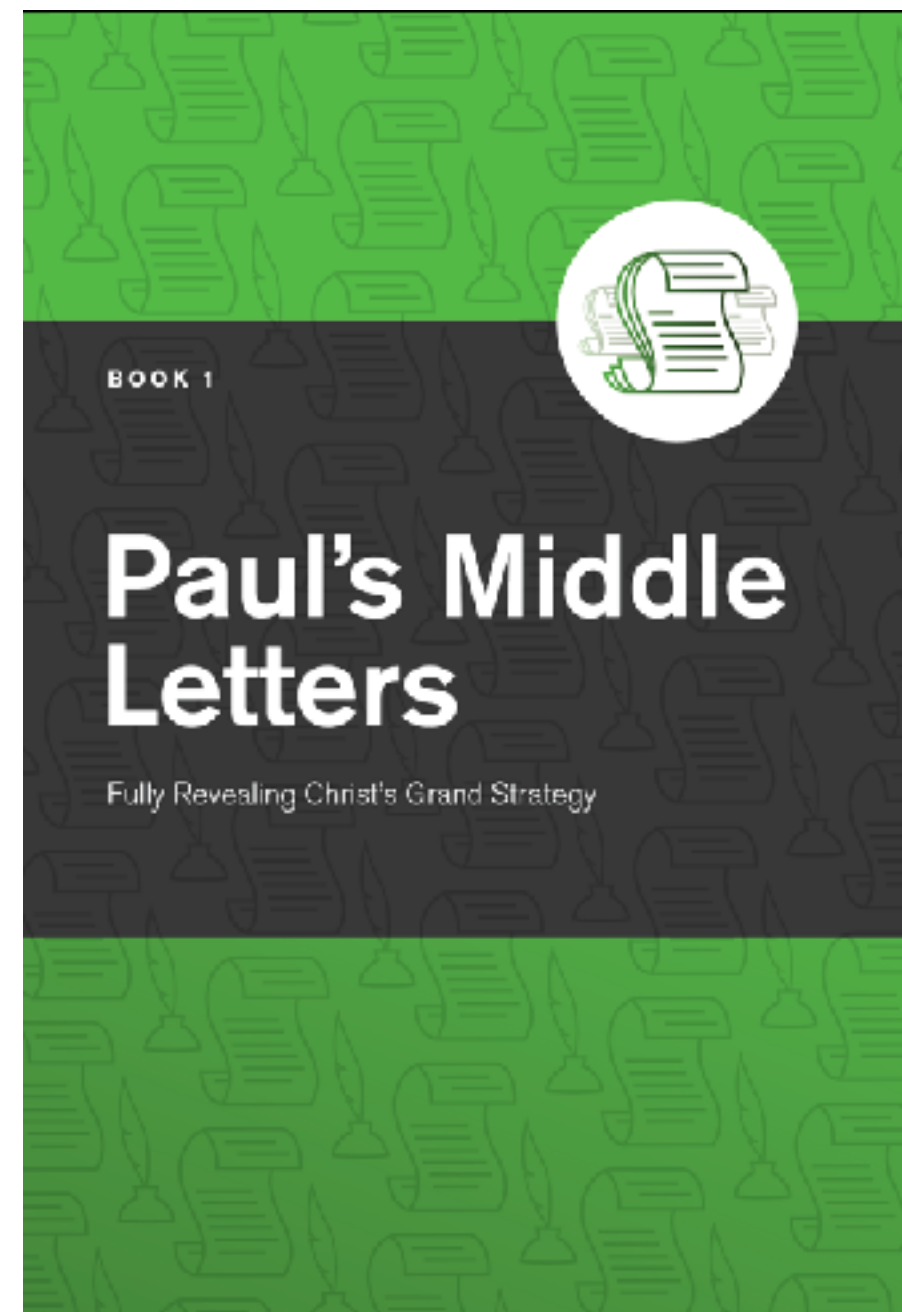
June 56



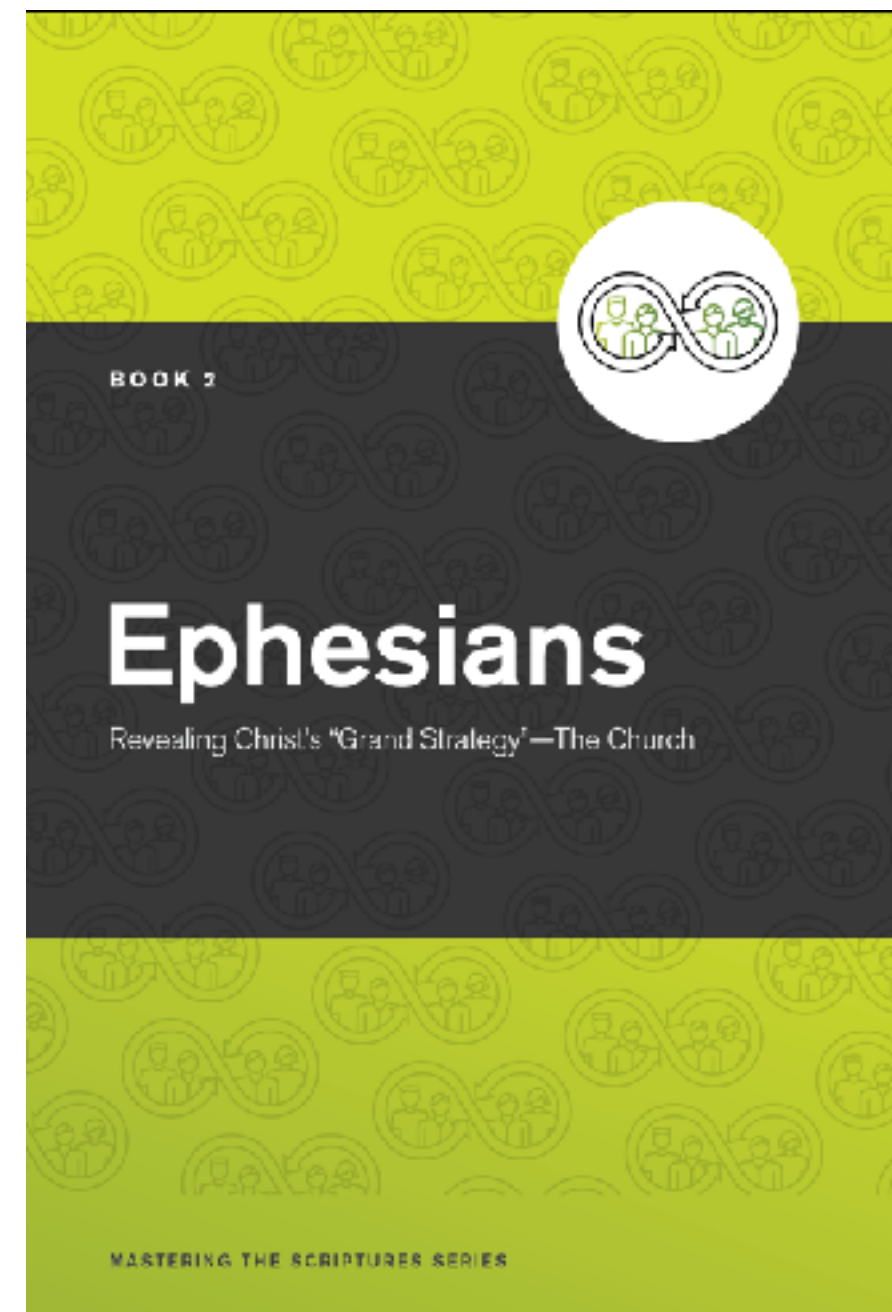
Nov. 56



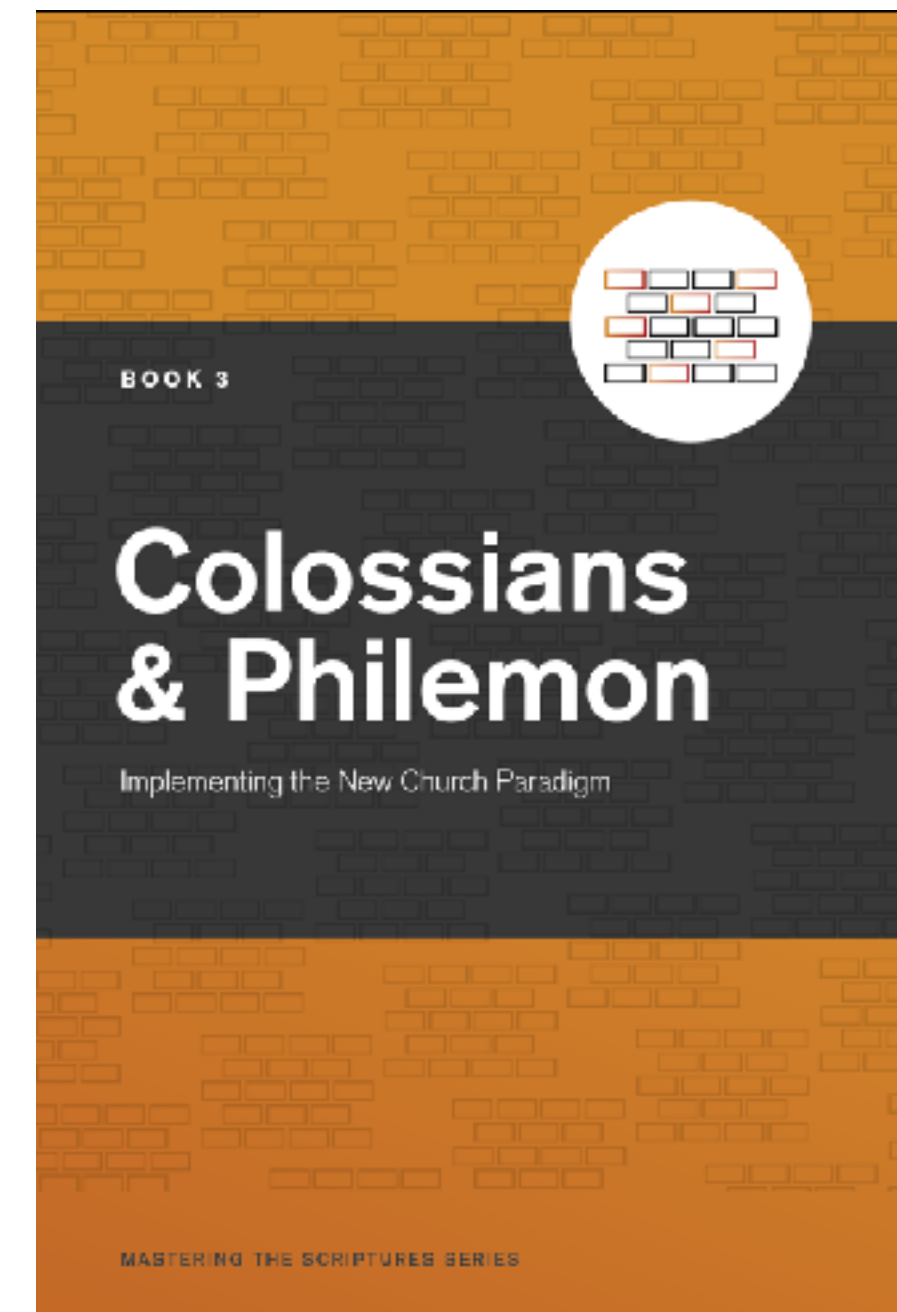
Paul's Middle Letters



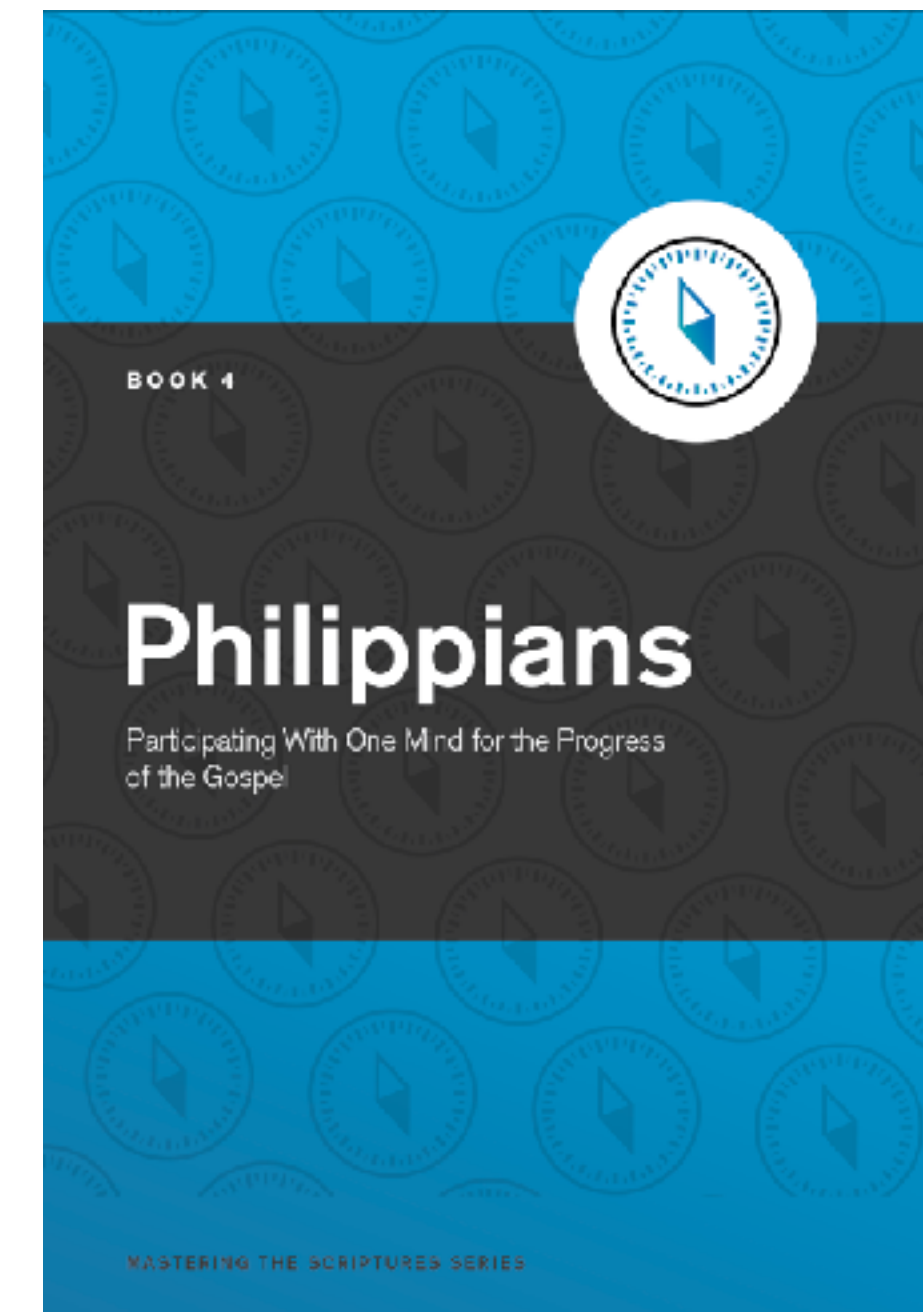
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Philippians—node churches

Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

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 in the whole plan of Christ for an entire 3-year period.

Paul's Middle Letters—Colossians, Philemon

Colossians—Cluster Churches

Colossians: An almost identical letter to Ephesians (along with Philemon), written to the house churches scattered throughout the Lycus Valley (Colossae, Laodicea, 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 to be used 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 in restructuring 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.

Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Philippi — A Strategic Partner Church

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

Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Ephesians — Hub Churches

Ephesians: A manifesto revealing Christ's "grand strategy" — the Church — to his key "hub" churches in Ephesus, with a special challenge for the Ephesian churches to fully grasp the significance of their calling and to fully carry out all God intends for them.

Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

This letter is strategic in this collection of Paul's four middle letters. In this passage, we see that the Church is the center of Christ's plan—His grand strategy after inaugurating the kingdom.

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

Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

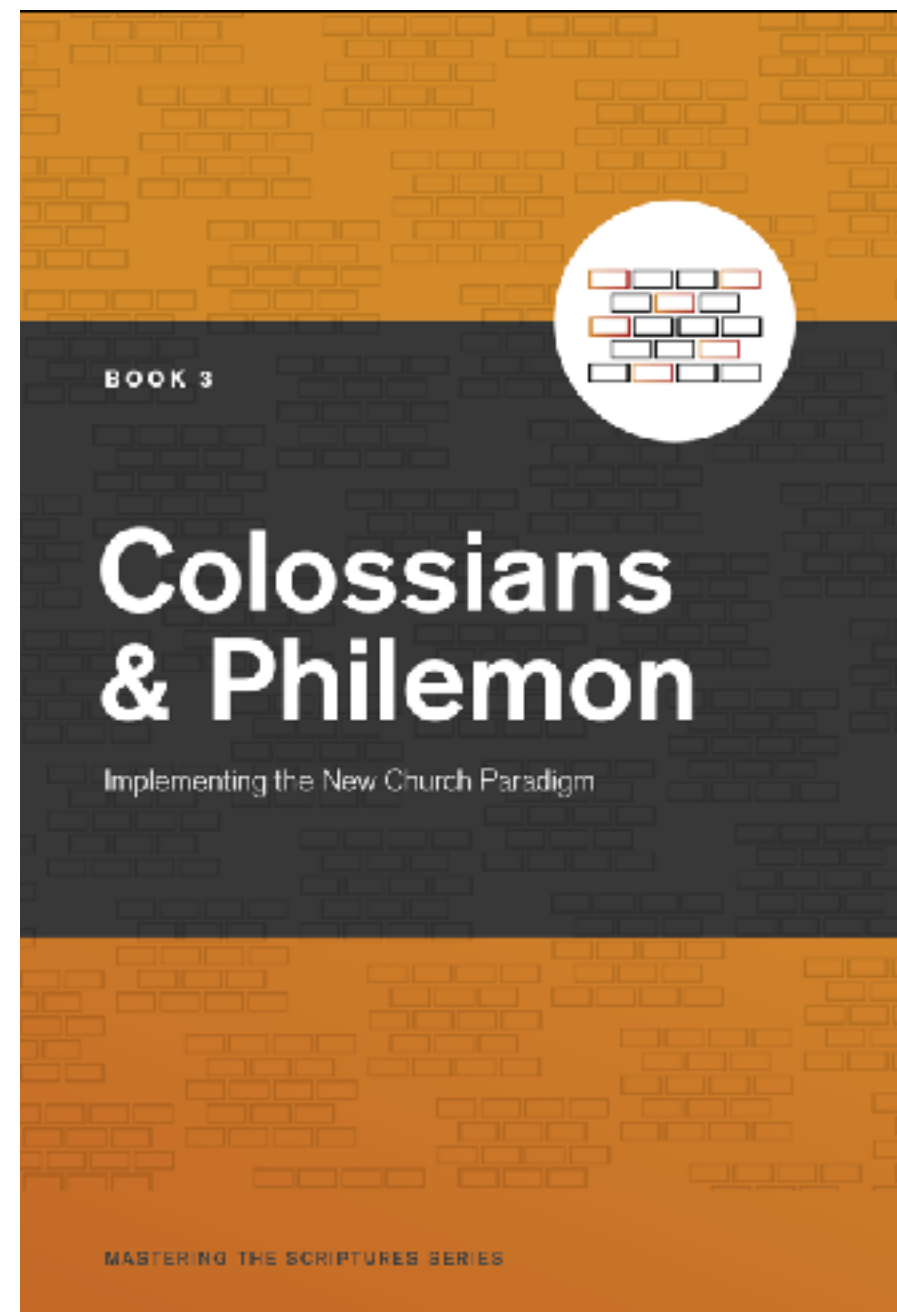
Paul lays out his job description very clearly.

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

It is Christ's strategy for progressing the gospel. It will be the heart of His unfolding kingdom, and it will stun the rulers and authorities even in the heavenly places. It was a mystery (hidden) until this time.

Paul's Middle Letters—Colossians



Session 1: Situating the Lycus Valley Church in Christ's Grand Strategy

Session 2: First Principles of the World

Session 3: First Principles of Christ

Session 4: The Importance of Network—the Lycus Valley Network

Session 5: Philemon—Doing Theology in the Network

Paul's Middle Letters—Colossians

The letter to the Colossians is very similar to Ephesians. It is so parallel that it begs the question of why we need a second second letter so similar.

We will begin this morning by looking at the first section of the letter, 1:1–2:5.

We hope to answer that question this morning in a very practical way.

Then in the next 2 sessions, we will focus on 2:6–4:6, first looking at the first principles of the world and then the first principles of Christ.

Then finally, in 4:7–18, we will look at the network of the Lycus Valley churches and how they fit within Christ's grand strategy.

Paul's Middle Letters — Colossians

As you will see

Ephesians — mostly Christ's grand strategy and a little on Paul's network.

Colossians–Philemon — similar on Christ's grand strategy and a lot on Paul's network.

Philippians — mostly on participating in Christ's grand strategy through Paul's network.

All 4 letters use similar terminology and sort of work as one growing theology of Christ's vision and mission for His churches.

Paul's Middle Letters—Colossians

These whole sections are parallel:

Ephesians 1:1–3:21

Colossians 1:1–2:5

The next sections are parallel as well:

Ephesians 4:1–6:10

Colossians 2:6–4:6

Then finally

Ephesians 6:21–23

Colossians 4:7–18

Paul's Middle Letters—Colossians

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

² To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father

³ In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel ⁶ that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God. ⁷ This you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, ⁸ and he has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

Colossians 1:1–8

Paul's Middle Letters — Colossians

Several observations

1. This letter is not coming just from Paul, since he includes Timothy alongside his name.
2. Epaphras, one of Paul's apostolic team, reported to Paul that the churches had started in Colossae.
3. The gospel that they received "is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world."

What would they be able to conclude from this so far?

They are part of something unfolding worldwide, and they are part of Paul's network.

Paul's Middle Letters—Colossians

⁹ For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. ¹¹ May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³ He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:9–14

Paul's Middle Letters—Colossians

Who are the Colossians?

Paul's Prayer

Similar to Ephesians 1:15–23 and 3:14–21

...that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding... May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power.

Paul is praying that they begin to grasp the significance of what has happened to them. They have been transferred into Christ's kingdom, their sins forgiven.

Paul's Middle Letters—Colossians

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶ for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

²¹ And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him— ²³ provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel.

Colossians 1:15–23

Paul's Middle Letters—Colossians

Who is Christ?

He is everything. He created everything and He will reconcile everything in His kingdom. He is the head of the body—His church.

In His kingdom, specifically through His church, He will reconcile everything.

This passage assumes Ephesians 1:3–14, written a year earlier.

That passage tells us Christ is now seated at the right hand of God, having been raised from the dead. His kingdom has been inaugurated and He will rule over everything in the future. In the context of these unfolding realities, His grand strategy now is the Church, through which He will amaze even the rulers and authorities in heavenly places.

Paul's Middle Letters—Colossians

²⁴ I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. ²⁵ I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶ the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. ²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹ For this I toil and struggle with all the energy that he powerfully inspires within me.

Colossians 1:24–29

Paul's Middle Letters—Colossians

So who is Paul?

He is suffering in prison now because he was chosen by Christ to make the word of God fully known—the mystery which was hidden—Christ in you.

This passage parallels and assumes Ephesians 3:1–10.

Paul's job was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (primarily his early letters) and to bring to light what was previously hidden—the grand strategy of the Church.

That is what he is doing in this Colossians letter for the churches of the Lycus Valley.

He has proclaimed the gospel to them through his team, praying for them to fully grasp what has happened to them, establishing them in Christ's grand strategy—both through teaching and engaging them in that strategy through the movement spreading throughout the world.

Paul's Middle Letters—Colossians

2:1 For I want you to know how much I am struggling for you, and for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me face to face. ² I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I am saying this so that no one may deceive you with plausible arguments. ⁵ For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, and I rejoice to see your morale and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

⁶ As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Colossians 2:1–7

Paul's Middle Letters—Colossians

I see two main things here.

It is clear he is trying to firmly establish the Colossae churches in their faith—grasping what has happened to them, understanding Christ's grand strategy, and becoming fully stable and powerful in their faith.

Why does he bring up Laodicea here? Remember 4:12–13.

¹² Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you... ¹³ For I testify for him that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.

By the summary here, I think he is likely telling them this: He wants the same thing for Laodicea as he does for them—the point of the summary—and he wants them to help Laodicea.

Paul's Middle Letters—Colossians

Let's try to put some of this together—which we will be doing all through this booklet.

1. Paul is writing this letter to firmly root the churches in the Lycus Valley in their fairly recent conversions.
2. He is building on the work of one of his team members—Epaphras—pulling the churches into fully participating in his network, in the global expansion of the Church, and in his unique apostolic authority.
3. He is skillfully drawing on the Ephesians manifesto to carefully establish them in Christ and His grand strategy.
4. Everybody on his team is praying for them to fully grasp what has happened to them and who they are now (especially when you see the network conclusion in 4:7–18).
5. Paul is writing the Ephesians–Colossians letters with a view of them becoming a template for establishing churches and growing church-based networks around Christ's grand strategy.
6. Part of establishing new churches is to help them realize that they are part of an apostolic network with authority, and that they are part of a global movement that will change the world.

Significance of Colossians—Philemon

Issue: Significance of Colossians–Philemon for Our Churches Today

Questions:

1. What is the significance of these two letters for our churches today?
2. In what way is the Ephesians and Colossians–Philemon combination a guide or framework for establishing churches in our networks today?
3. What is the value of establishing a network identity as part of the establishing process in our churches?
4. What might be some of the consequences of establishing individuals as “followers of Jesus” without this framework?

Implications for Our Churches

Let's try to put some of this together, which we will be doing all through this booklet.

1. We need to follow up churches quickly to see that they are grasping what has happened to them and challenge them to become fully established.
2. We need a skillful apostolic team going to strategic areas—proclaiming the gospel and forming churches.
3. We need to skillfully draw on Acts and the Pauline corpus to carefully establish them in Christ and His grand strategy.
4. Everybody on our apostolic team and key churches must pray for these new churches to fully grasp what has happened to them and who they are now.
5. We need to master the “Pauline corpus template” for establishing churches and growing church-based networks around Christ’s grand strategy.
6. We need a clear process for training new churches that they are part of an apostolic network with authority, and that they are part of a global movement that will change the world .

Implications for Our Churches

Randy and Aaron's Church Plant on Yuma

1. Neighborhood outreach — Parenting with a Plan — cluster strategy
2. Inaugurating a Yuma church — Curtis
3. Introducing to cluster (Lycus Valley) — Randy and Aaron
4. Expanding around the world — Jeff
5. Establishing Process — The First Principles

Implications for Our Churches

So how do we see the Ephesians—Colossians duplication?

Ephesians—Christ's grand strategy fully revealed (linear control theory)

Colossians—Philemon—process of established churches in Christ's grand strategy
(nonlinear control theory)

Control Processes

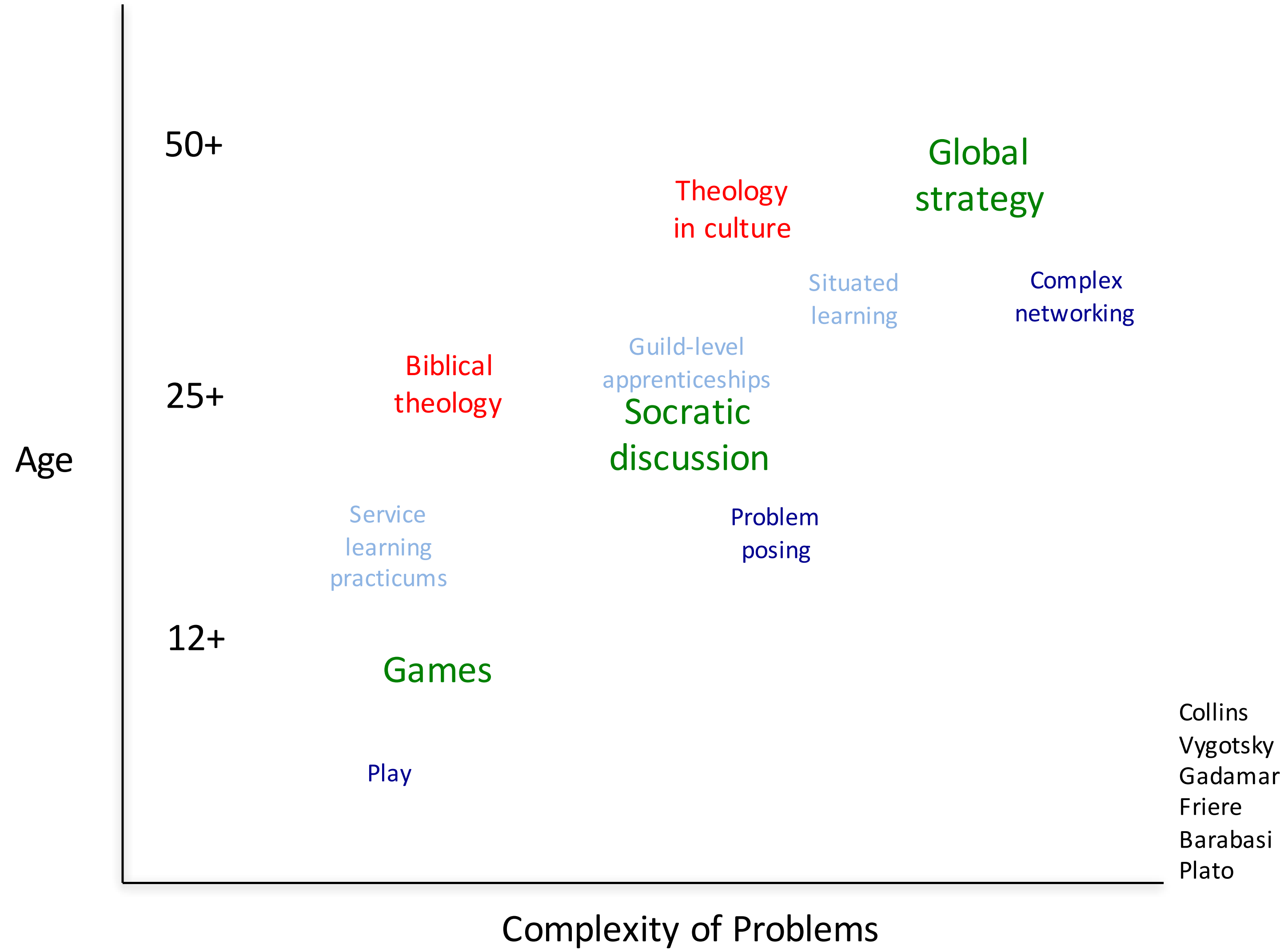
Linear control (The Deposit—don't change anything)—NT Theology (10%)

1. Christ's Grand Strategy
2. Kerygma and Didache

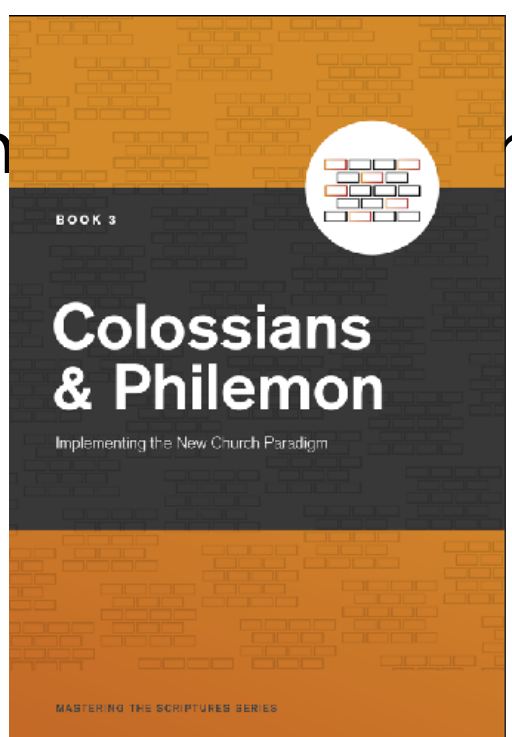
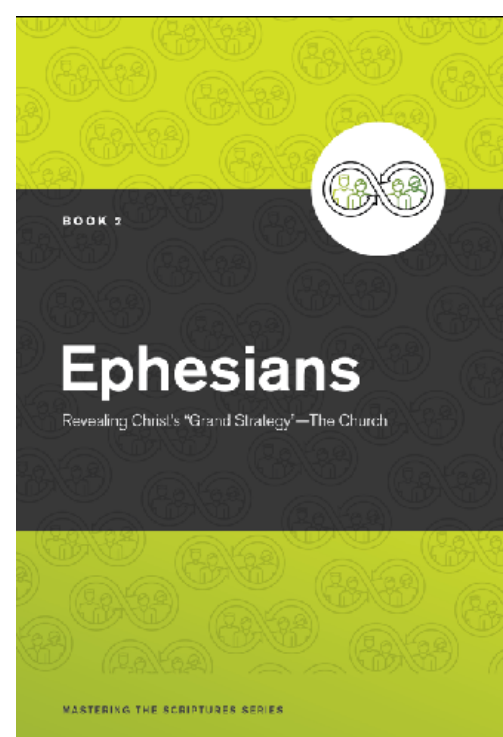
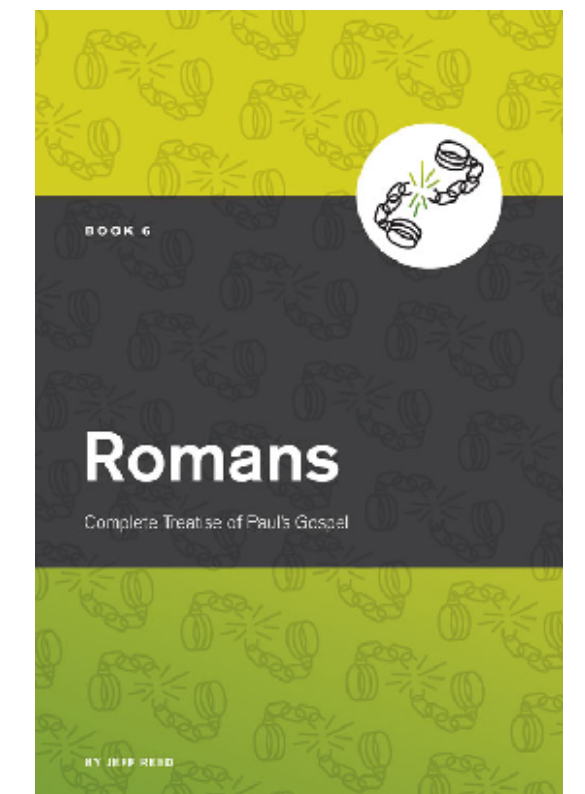
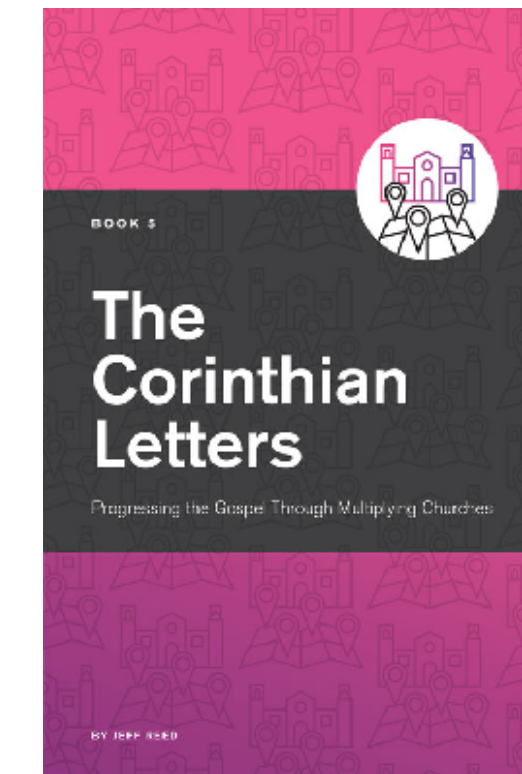
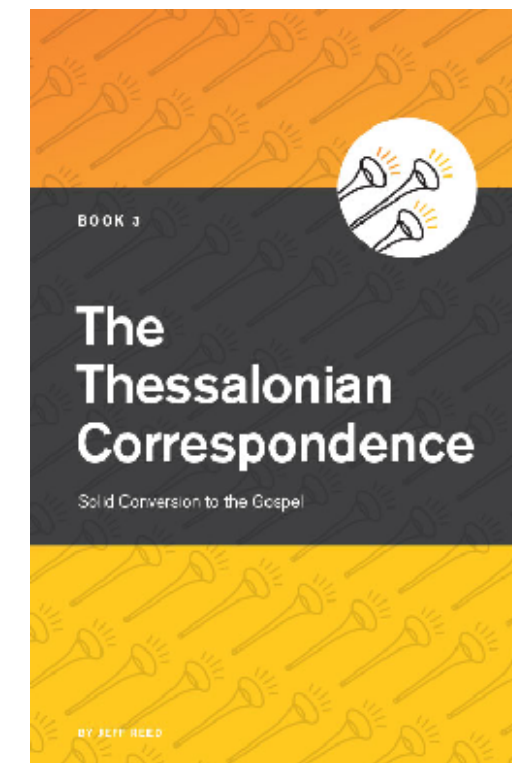
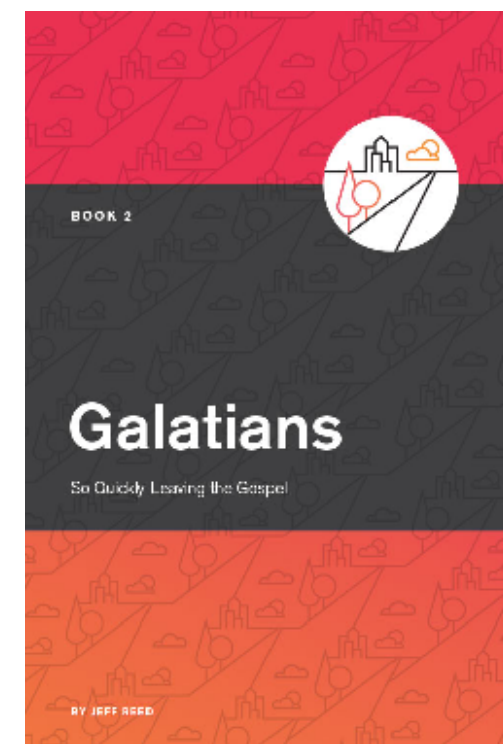
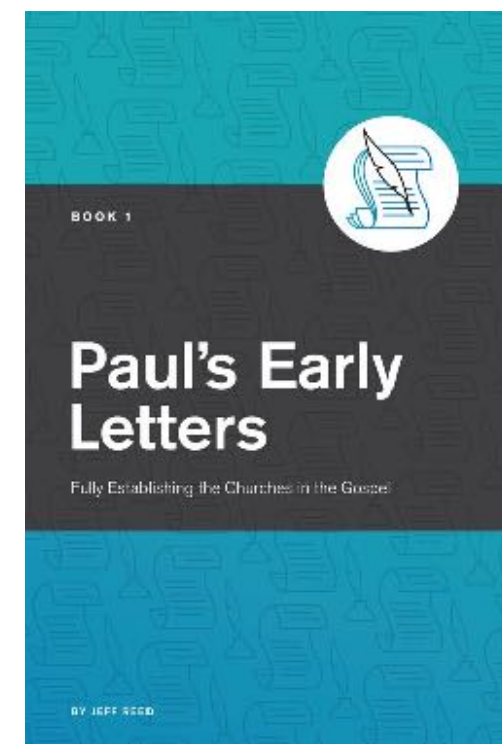
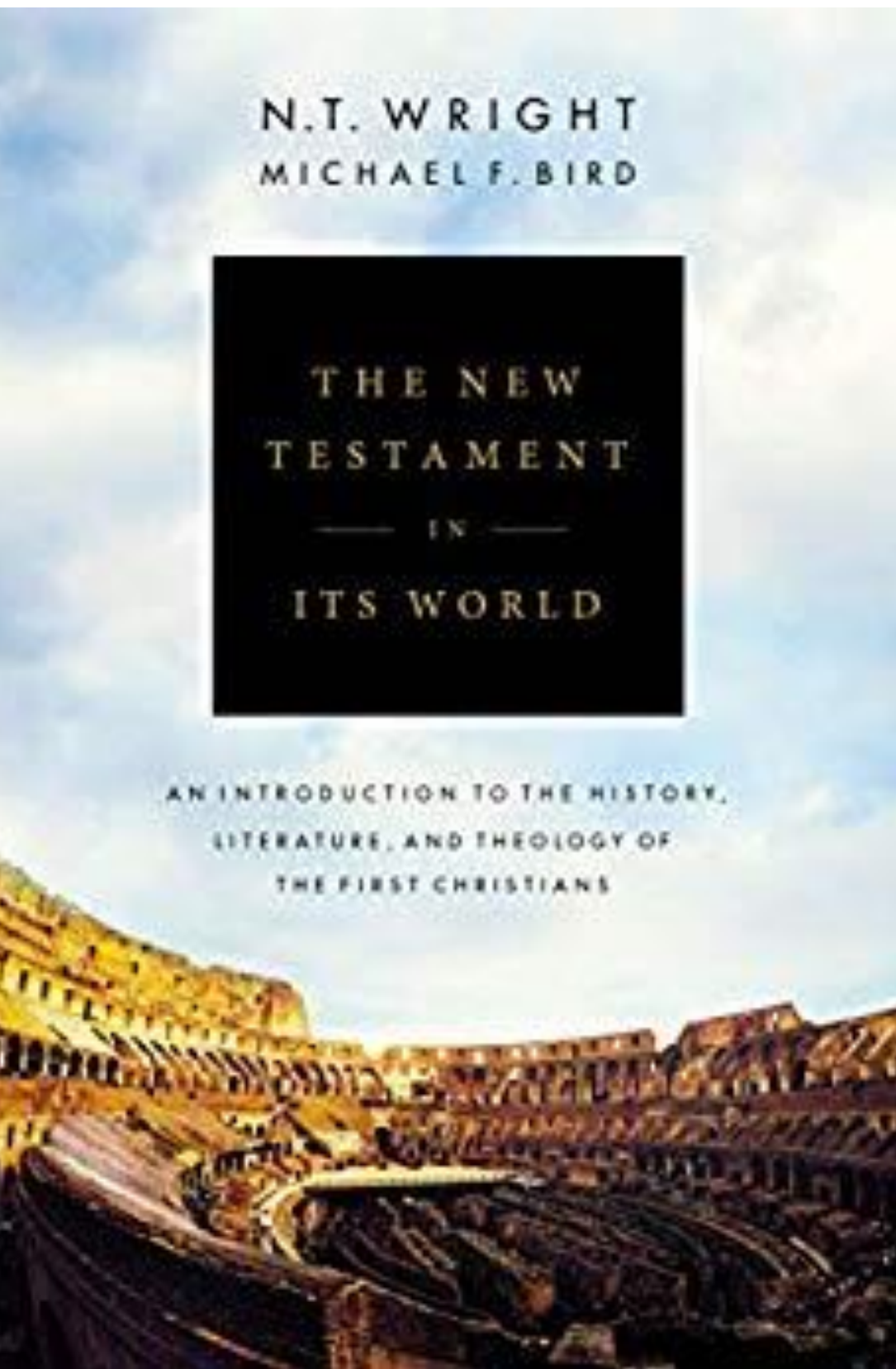
Nonlinear control (church networks in cultures, civilization)—theology in culture (90%)

1. Acts and 13 Pauline Epistles
2. Holy Spirit
3. Apostolic teams

Educational Method in the 21st Century



Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians



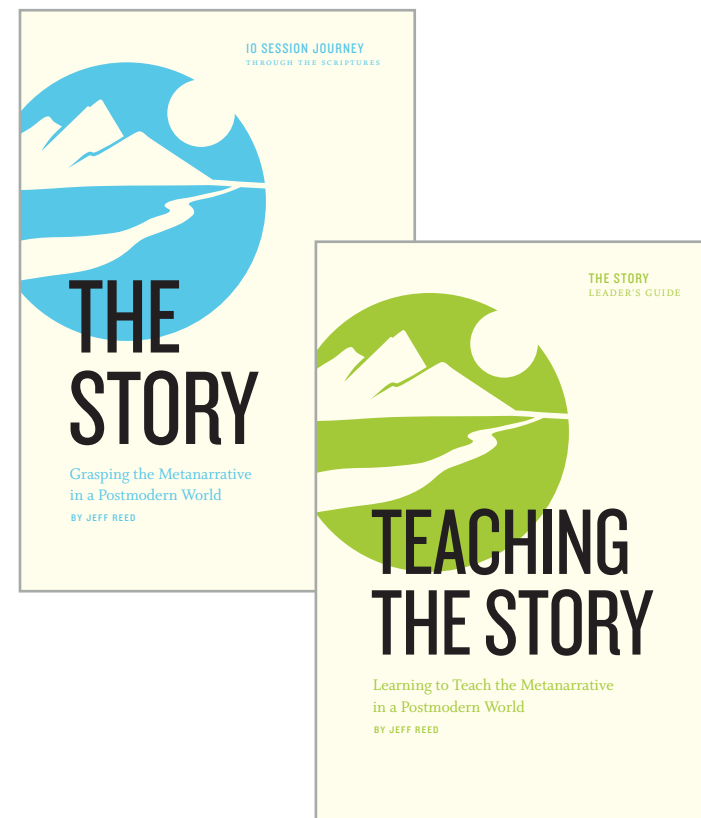
Feb 60 to March 60

Autumn 60

AD Sent 5.3



Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians



Paul's Middle Letters—Ephesians

Mastering the Scriptures Series (parallels both my spheres and white papers)

Apostolic Letters

Paul's Early Letters—2020

Paul's Middle Letters—2021

Paul's Later Letters—2022

Peter's Jewish Encyclicals—2023

Johannine Literature—2024

Implications for Our Churches

The New Testament is written

as a linear–nonlinear control system

for implementing “the way of Christ and His apostles” — driving a network of churches

in any generation, in any culture



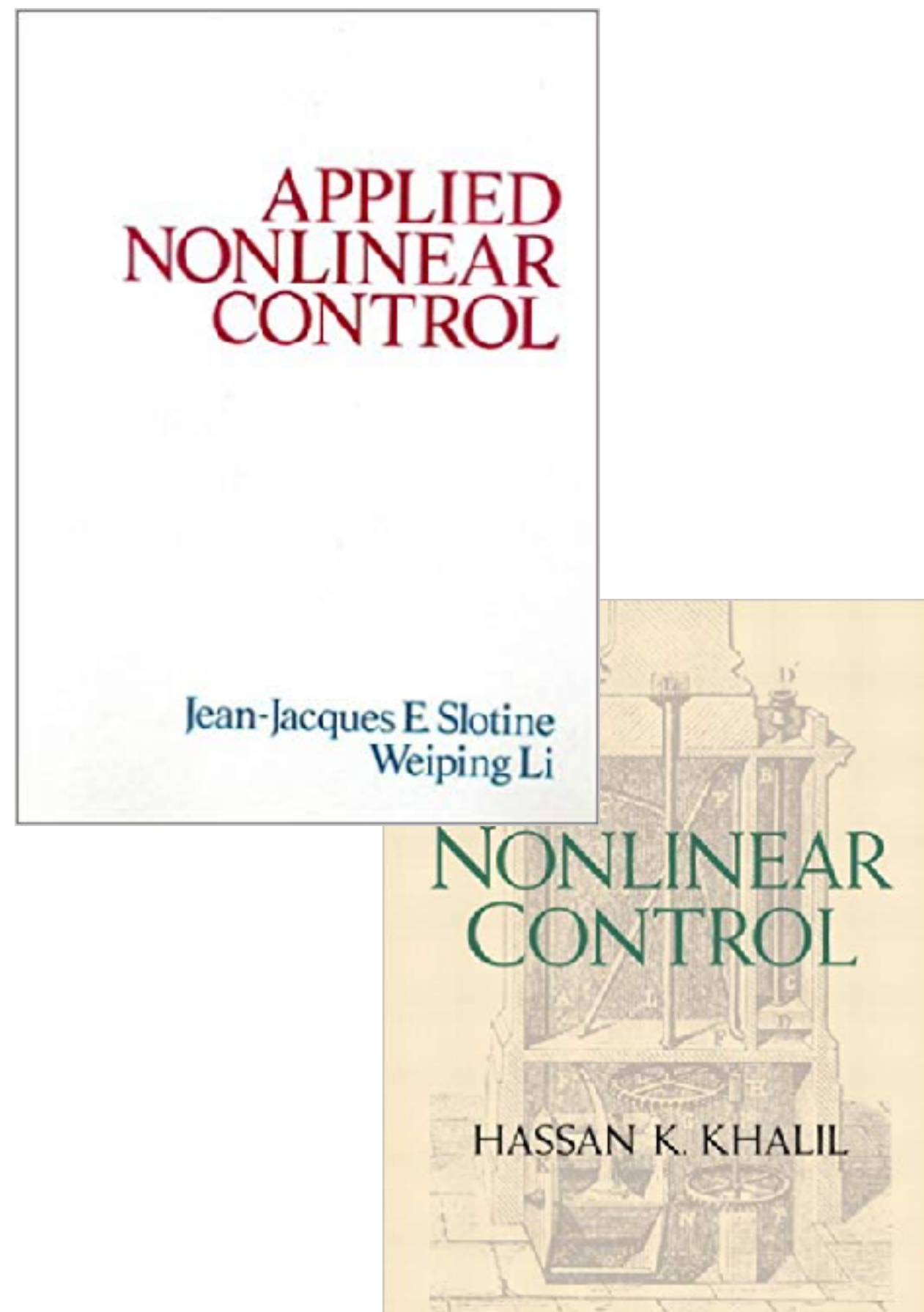
Paul's Middle Letters

Nonlinear control theory (theology)

The New Testament is written like a nonlinear control system's engineering manual—a self-driving car (the Spirit is the AI, apostolic leaders create the cultural operating system).

Much of the power of logarithms is their usefulness in solving exponential equations.

The ultimate question becomes: What are the key elements of a complex apostolic network that allows it to exponentially replicate “the way of Christ and His Apostles” in any culture in any generation of history?

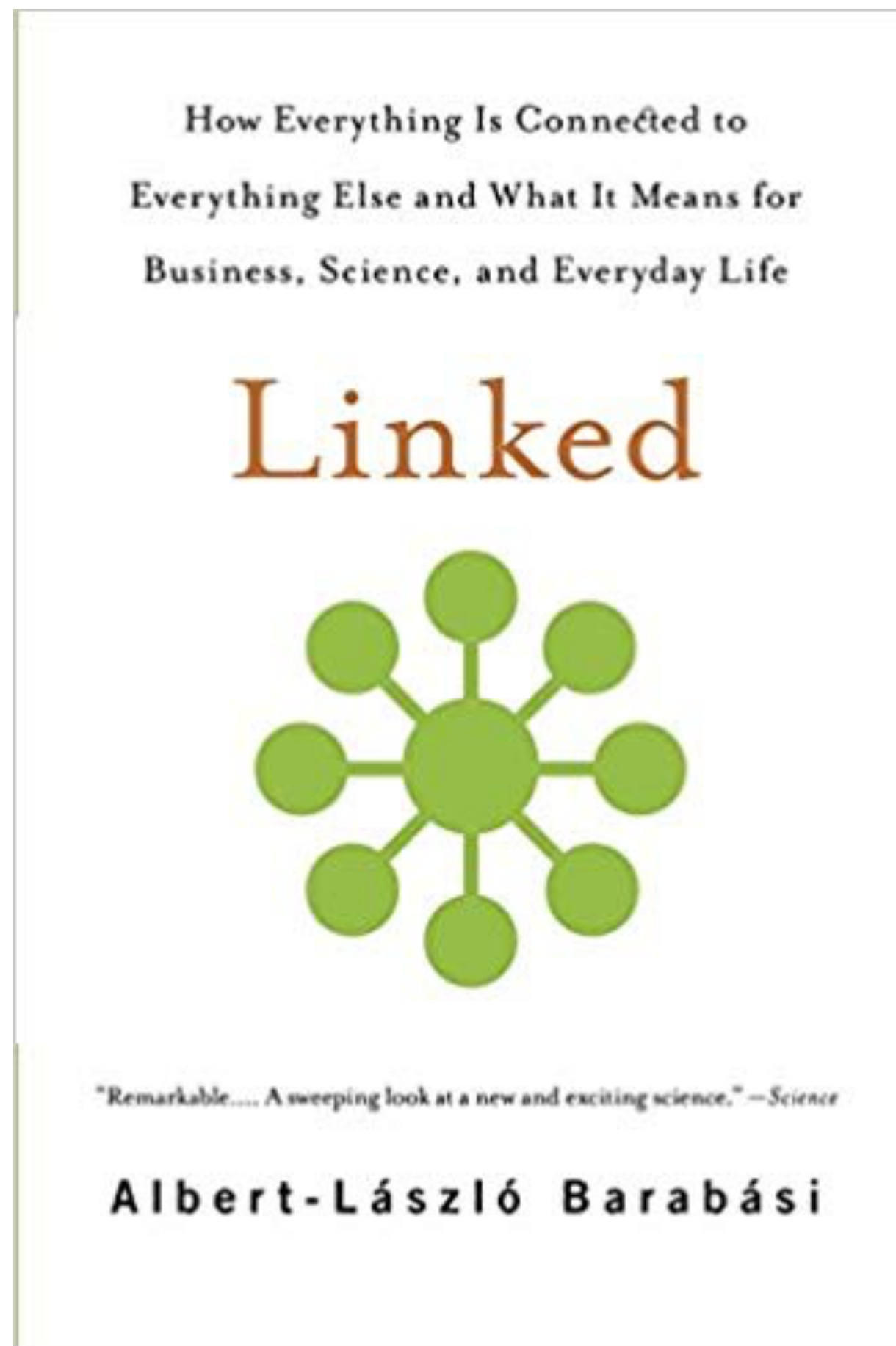


Paul's Middle Letters

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Now the engineering idea of linear–nonlinear control theory seems secular, but Paul also perfected it 2,000 years ago.



Paul's Middle Letters

Our next 5–7 years

I will do in-depth complex apostolic networking and linear–nonlinear network NT theology.

Michael will develop C-BTE–BILD global networks combining complex apostolic networking and linear–nonlinear church networking for exponential growth in over 600 global networks—framing in the next Christendom.

