



New Testament Theology

The Appearing of God Our Savior

A Theology of 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus

CLAIRE S. SMITH

Series edited by Thomas R. Schreiner and Brian S. Rosner

“Studies of Paul’s three Pastoral Letters often focus on the problems they address. Claire Smith rightly centers on the God who acts and speaks to save a people for himself. This places the emphasis where the text does and advances the teachings and admonitions that surely renewed faith, direction, and hope in Timothy, in Titus, and in their congregations. Smith’s exceptionally clear and flowing exposition of the letters to Timothy and Titus offers the same refreshing benefit to readers, the church, and the world today.”

Robert W. Yarbrough, Professor of New Testament, Covenant
Theological Seminary

“With sound scholarship and insightful clarity, Claire Smith zooms out from the text of these three epistles, helping readers to see the overriding themes and ideas Paul communicates, and enabling readers to trace his arguments, understand his terms, and grasp his message.”

Nancy Guthrie, author and Bible teacher

“This is an excellent guide to three New Testament epistles that are vitally important for the life of the church. Smith structures her introduction around their major themes: the sovereign purposes of God, the need for and nature of salvation, and the proclamation of the message and its outworking in the life of the Christian community. A great place to begin to understand what God is saying to his pilgrim people here on earth, as we await the final outworking of his plan for us and the whole of creation.”

Gerald Bray, Research Professor of Divinity, Beeson Divinity School;
Director of Research, Latimer Trust

“This accessible volume provides a very useful sketch of the theology of each of Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus. Readers will find in Claire Smith a competent and reliable guide for studying these eminently relevant missives to Paul’s apostolic delegates.”

Andreas J. Köstenberger, Theologian in Residence, Fellowship Raleigh,
North Carolina; Research Professor of Biblical Studies, Palm Beach
Atlantic University

“*The Appearing of God Our Savior* is classic Claire Smith. It is clear and compelling and will help you be a better reader of God’s word. Smith shows us that life is always about how God orders things. Therefore, every part of our lives is to conform to God’s purposes and plans. We may suffer now as we live this way, but we are blessed and saved for eternity through Christ Jesus.”

Jane Tooher, Faculty, Moore Theological College, Sydney

“Here is a masterful demonstration that the letters to Timothy and Titus contain much more than ecclesiological tidbits. Pastors and other Bible teachers will find in this volume a lucid summation of God’s redemptive arrangement: the one God who desires to save a people for himself, the one mediator—Jesus Christ—who accomplishes the salvation of God’s people, the Spirit who indwells and empowers, and the human agents through whom God’s saving word advances. This will remain one of my go-to theological resources as I preach and teach the letters to Paul’s delegates.”

Dillon T. Thornton, Lead Pastor, Faith Community Church,
Seminole, Florida

“Claire Smith has gifted us with a remarkable resource that delves into the theological and pastoral depths of Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus. Often these letters are viewed only through the lens of specific debates. However, Smith skillfully encourages us to take a broader perspective, highlighting how the letters convey profound truths about the God who saves us from sin and death through his Son, Jesus Christ. Smith connects these truths to the practical realities of human relationships, church life, and pastoral ministry. While clearly the result of her thorough exegetical analysis and scholarly expertise, the book remains clear, accessible, and highly engaging.”

Lionel Windsor, Lecturer in New Testament, Moore Theological
College, Sydney

“The New Testament letters to Timothy and Titus address a number of critically important issues in the life of the churches in Ephesus and Crete at the time of writing. Claire Smith’s helpful study carefully explores the big ideas about God and his purposes that shape the apostle Paul’s understanding of and response to these issues. Those of us who tend to focus on the details of the particular texts will be helped to see how the appearing of God our Savior is the wonderful reality that, in different ways, illuminates each of these letters. Bible students and teachers will benefit from this perceptive bird’s-eye view.”

John Woodhouse, Former Principal, Moore Theological College, Sydney

“The Pastoral Epistles are essential for the health of the church of Christ. They are core study material for all church leaders and Christian workers. Churches benefit from every member being familiar with them. This concise study identifies and examines the key theological themes in each letter and thus provides an outstanding resource for any wishing to understand and teach this vital material. I found myself profoundly encouraged by Claire Smith’s work.”

William Taylor, Rector, St Helen’s Bishopsgate, London

“This excellent book fills a long-standing need for a thorough assessment of the theology expressed in these letters without the undue but widespread skepticism about the letters. With clear and accessible writing, Smith beautifully articulates the theology of the Pastoral Epistles, showing also how it fits with the rest of Pauline, and indeed New Testament, theology, making this a wonderful resource for anyone studying 1–2 Timothy and Titus.”

Ray Van Neste, Dean of the School of Theology and Missions and Vice President for University Ministries, Union University

“Claire Smith expertly expounds 1–2 Timothy and Titus in this excellent entry to the New Testament Theology series. These apostolic letters not only engage pressing challenges of the early church but also instruct the church in every age to marvel at the saving plan of God, to hold fast to God-breathed Scriptures, to endure suffering, and to love Christ’s appearing. Highly recommended!”

Brian J. Tabb, President and Professor of Biblical Studies, Bethlehem College and Seminary

“Claire Smith’s study of these epistles helps us to elevate our gaze to the majestic narrative of God’s redemptive plan in Christ. Her exploration of the themes reveals that the heart of these Pastoral Letters lies not in household and church rules but in a revelation of God’s character and his mission in the world to save sinners and transform a people for himself. Smith’s work will help Christian leaders and all God’s people to stand courageously firm in God’s revealed truth and live gospel-shaped lives while we await the glorious appearing of Jesus.”

Carmelina Read, Dean of Women, Christ College, Presbyterian Theological College

The Appearing of God Our Savior

New Testament Theology

Edited by Thomas R. Schreiner and Brian S. Rosner

The Beginning of the Gospel: A Theology of Mark, Peter Orr

From the Manger to the Throne: A Theology of Luke, Benjamin L. Gladd

The Mission of the Triune God: A Theology of Acts, Patrick Schreiner

Ministry in the New Realm: A Theology of 2 Corinthians, Dane C. Ortlund

Christ Crucified: A Theology of Galatians, Thomas R. Schreiner

United to Christ, Walking in the Spirit: A Theology of Ephesians,
Benjamin L. Merkle

Hidden with Christ in God: A Theology of Colossians and Philemon,
Kevin W. McFadden

To Walk and to Please God: A Theology of 1 and 2 Thessalonians,
Andrew S. Malone

The Appearing of God Our Savior: A Theology of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus,
Claire S. Smith

Perfect Priest for Weary Pilgrims: A Theology of Hebrews, Dennis E. Johnson

The God Who Judges and Saves: A Theology of 2 Peter and Jude,
Matthew S. Harmon

The Joy of Hearing: A Theology of the Book of Revelation, Thomas R. Schreiner

The Appearing of God Our Savior

A Theology of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus

Claire S. Smith

 **CROSSWAY**[®]
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

The Appearing of God Our Savior: A Theology of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus

© 2025 by Claire S. Smith

Published by Crossway

1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law. Crossway® is a registered trademark in the United States of America.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. The ESV text may not be quoted in any publication made available to the public by a Creative Commons license. The ESV may not be translated in whole or in part into any other language.

For all Bible translations used, see “Bible Versions Cited.”

All emphases in Scripture quotations have been added by the author.

Cover design: Kevin Lipp

First printing 2025

Printed in the United States of America

Word counts of Greek words from the New Testament have been obtained from Accordance 12.3.6 © Oaktree Software, Inc. August 2019.

Trade paperback ISBN: 978-1-4335-7652-2

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-7655-3

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-7653-9

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Smith, Claire S. (Claire Seymour), 1960– author.

Title: The appearing of God our savior : a Theology of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus / Claire S. Smith.

Description: Wheaton, Illinois : Crossway, 2025. | Series: New Testament theology | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2024010286 (print) | LCCN 2024010287 (ebook) | ISBN 9781433576522 (trade paperback) | ISBN 9781433576539 (pdf) | ISBN 9781433576553 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Bible. Timothy. | Bible. Titus. | Jesus Christ.

Classification: LCC BS2745.3 .S74 2025 (print) | LCC BS2745.3 (ebook) | DDC 227/.8306—dc23/eng/20240523

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024010286>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024010287>

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

VP	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25				
15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

*For my sister Barbara
For her exemplary care of our mother
1 Timothy 5:4, 16*

Contents

Series Preface *xiii*

Preface *xv*

Abbreviations *xvii*

Bible Versions Cited *xxi*

Introduction *1*

Who, What, When, and Why?

PART 1 1 TIMOTHY: THE ONLY GOD

- 1 The God Who Saves 9
- 2 The Hope of Salvation 25
- 3 The Word of God 37
- 4 The Household of God 47
- 5 The Promise of Godliness 59

PART 2 2 TIMOTHY: REMEMBER JESUS CHRIST

- 6 The God of Power 71
- 7 The Promise of Life 81
- 8 The Living Word 89
- 9 Suffering and the Gospel 99

PART 3 TITUS: GOD OUR SAVIOR

- 10 The God of Grace 109
- 11 He Saved Us 119
- 12 Our People, God's Elect 129

Epilogue 137

Recommended Resources 139

General Index 147

Scripture Index 153

Series Preface

THERE ARE REMARKABLY FEW TREATMENTS of the big ideas of single books of the New Testament. Readers can find brief coverage in Bible dictionaries, in some commentaries, and in New Testament theologies, but such books are filled with other information and are not devoted to unpacking the theology of each New Testament book in its own right. Technical works concentrating on various themes of New Testament theology often have a narrow focus, treating some aspect of the teaching of, say, Matthew or Hebrews in isolation from the rest of the book's theology.

The New Testament Theology series seeks to fill this gap by providing students of Scripture with readable book-length treatments of the distinctive teaching of each New Testament book or collection of books. The volumes approach the text from the perspective of biblical theology. They pay due attention to the historical and literary dimensions of the text, but their main focus is on presenting the teaching of particular New Testament books about God and his relations to the world on their own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible's overarching narrative and Christocentric focus. Such biblical theology is of fundamental importance to biblical and expository preaching and informs exegesis, systematic theology, and Christian ethics.

The twenty volumes in the series supply comprehensive, scholarly, and accessible treatments of theological themes from an evangelical perspective. We envision them being of value to students, preachers, and interested laypeople. When preparing an expository sermon

series, for example, pastors can find a healthy supply of informative commentaries, but there are few options for coming to terms with the overall teaching of each book of the New Testament. As well as being useful in sermon and Bible study preparation, the volumes will also be of value as textbooks in college and seminary exegesis classes. Our prayer is that they contribute to a deeper understanding of and commitment to the kingdom and glory of God in Christ.

The authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles is often questioned, but even when they are accepted as authentic, they are too often assigned a subsidiary status in Paul's thought. Claire Smith demonstrates in her insightful treatment that these letters proclaim the gospel, the good news that God in Jesus Christ is our Savior and Lord. At the same time, God's saving work touches earth, reaching out to human beings and forming a new community—the church. We see, then, that God's saving work brings order and structure and truth to God's people. Such order and structure doesn't quench life but causes God's people to blossom and flourish. God's saving work has a transformative impact on the lives of those who are redeemed so that God's people display God's character and grace to the world.

Thomas R. Schreiner and Brian S. Rosner

Preface

AS PEOPLE WHO SPEND OUR LIVES studying and teaching God's word, we can easily pigeonhole books in the Bible. We turn to Romans for teaching on justification by faith; 1 Corinthians for our corporate life as the body of Christ; Philippians for church unity; and, when it comes to the focus of this current book, 1 Timothy for gender relations and the role of women in the church; 2 Timothy for ministry training; and perhaps Titus for church order or mentoring among women. There's nothing necessarily wrong with that. But it can mean our pigeonholing takes us straight into the nitty-gritty of specific texts before we've done the Google Earth view and considered the book as a whole.

That's certainly been my experience with this project. The letters are familiar. I've studied them closely over the years. But it has been reorienting (and rewarding) to step back and explore the main themes and to see that, despite the intensely practical nature of the letters, they say more about *God and his project to save a people for himself* than they do about us. I hope your eyes and hearts are similarly lifted to God our Savior!

I am very grateful to Drs. Tom Schreiner and Brian Rosner for the invitation to contribute to this series, and for their warm fellowship and encouragement along the way. There are others to thank, too. Anyone working on Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus owes a debt of thanks to Dr. Chuck Bumgardner, who curates the website pastoralepistles.com and is himself an invaluable resource on these letters. I was also greatly helped by the feedback of friends and fellow researchers, Talar

Khatchoyan, Archdeacon Kara Hartley, and Drs. Lionel Windsor, John Percival, and Rob Smith, who gave their precious time and wisdom to read the manuscript as it neared the finish line. I'm grateful to my women's Bible study groups at our previous and current churches, for their faithful prayers and pastoral care. As always, I am thankful for my husband, Rob, my greatest encourager. Thanks, too, go to editor Thom Notaro and the rest of the team at Crossway for bringing this book to publication. My deepest thanks go to God—for saving this foremost of sinners, and for the goodness and sufficiency of his word and the incredible blessing of being its student and sharing it with others. "To [him] be honor and glory forever and ever" (1 Tim. 1:17).

Claire S. Smith
December 2023

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
AT	Author's translation
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
<i>BBRSup</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research, Supplements</i>
BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BST	Bible Speaks Today
BTCP	Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation
<i>BTINT</i>	<i>Biblical Theological Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel Realized</i> . Edited by Michael J. Kruger. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016
CBC	Cornerstone Biblical Commentary
<i>CNTUOT</i>	<i>Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007
<i>DJG</i>	Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels. Edited by Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013 (ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/moore/detail.action?docID=3316699)

- DPL* *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993
- ECC* Eerdmans Critical Commentary
- EvQ* *Evangelical Quarterly*
- EWTG* *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles*. Edited by Andreas J. Köstenberger and Terry L. Wilder. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010
- HBT* *Horizons in Biblical Theology*
- IBS* *Irish Biblical Studies*
- ICC* International Critical Commentary
- Int* *Interpretation*
- ITC* International Theological Commentary
- JETS* *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
- JSNTSup* Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
- JSPL* *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters*
- LSJ* Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones. *Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996
- LXX* Septuagint
- NAC* New American Commentary
- NDBT* *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Edited by T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner. Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000
- NIBC* New International Biblical Commentary
- NICNT* New International Commentary on the New Testament
- NIDNTT* *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Edited by Colin Brown. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975–1978
- NIGTC* New International Greek Testament Commentary
- NTS* *New Testament Studies*
- PBM* Paternoster Biblical Monographs

PE	Pastoral Epistles
PNTC	The Pillar New Testament Commentary
REGW	“Ready for Every Good Work” (<i>Titus 3:1</i>): <i>Implicit Ethics in the Letter to Titus</i> . Edited by Ruben Zimmermann and Dogara Ishaya Manomi. <i>Contexts and Norms of New Testament Ethics</i> 13. <i>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</i> 484. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022
SNTSU	<i>Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt</i>
ST	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
STR	<i>Southeastern Theological Review</i>
TENTS	Texts and Editions for New Testament Study
THNTC	Two Horizons New Testament Commentary
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	<i>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

Bible Versions Cited

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. The ESV text may not be quoted in any publication made available to the public by a Creative Commons license. The ESV may not be translated in whole or in part into any other language.

Scripture quotations marked CSB have been taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

Scripture quotations marked HCSB are taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible®, copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Holman Christian Standard Bible®, Holman CSB®, and HCSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

Scripture quotations designated NET are from the NET Bible® copyright © 1996, 2019 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. <http://netbible.com>. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.

www.zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Scripture quotations marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked RSV are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1946, 1952, and 1971 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked YLT are taken from Young’s Literal Translation, 1898. Public domain.

Introduction

Who, What, When, and Why?

THE LETTERS TO TIMOTHY AND TITUS¹ divide readers perhaps more than any other books in the New Testament. They're embraced as the last canonical words of the beloved apostle Paul or maligned as fictitious works of forgery. They are the go-to guide for authentic gospel ministry or mark the church's departure from the apostolic era into arid formalism and hierarchical institutionalism. They present the beauty of God-ordained complementary gender relations or are guilty of misogynistic patriarchalism.

Some interpreters decry the letters' theological poverty and think them unworthy of Paul. Others see them comfortably aligned with Paul's teaching and treasure their theological gems, for instance, about Christ's coming into the world "to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15), the God-breathed nature of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16), the unstoppable gospel (2 Tim. 2:9), the future appearing of "our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13), and "fighting the good fight" of faith (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7).

There are many reasons for these conflicting reactions, but behind almost all of them is the question of authorship.

Authorship of the Letters

The opening verses of all three letters unambiguously claim that they are from the apostle Paul (1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1). Until the

¹ Explanation of this preferred collective term is found below.

early nineteenth century this claim stood largely unchallenged, but since then it's been broadly rejected by critical interpreters. This has meant that issues of authorship have dominated the study of the letters among *both* those who deny Pauline authorship *and* those who accept it.² Authorship has become the lens through which every aspect of the letters is viewed, including their theology.

Interpreters who reject Pauline authorship claim the letters were written after Paul's death by those seeking to sound like the apostle either to preserve his legacy and apply his teaching to new situations or (more self-interestedly) to assume Paul's identity and authority to advance their own agenda. Either way, the letters are viewed as pseudonymous, and the author and recipients and their situations are literary constructs, not real. It's not Paul's voice or theology we hear but Pauline "tradition" or, at best, fragments of the "real Paul" pasted into someone else's work, skeptics argue.³

Typically, their objections have concentrated on five features (vocabulary, style, false teaching opposed, ecclesiology, and theology), where the letters to Timothy and Titus are seen to differ from Paul's so-called "undisputed" letters. However, the nature and significance of these differences have been overstated and are increasingly seen as misplaced in the first place.⁴ The evidence weighs against a pseudonymous author and a post-apostolic date.⁵

- 2 For a recent survey of the issues, see Jermo van Nes, "The Pastoral Epistles: Common Themes, Individual Compositions? An Introduction to the Quest for the Origin(s) of the Letters to Timothy and Titus," *J SPL* 9 (2019): 6–29. See, also, introductions to most commentaries, in particular: Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, AB 35A (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 20–97; Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 27–53; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Commentary on 1–2 Timothy and Titus*, BTCP (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2017), 1–54; Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 69–90.
- 3 For a critique of such views, see Terry L. Wilder, "Pseudonymity, the New Testament, and the Pastoral Epistles," in *EWTG* 28–51.
- 4 See Stanley E. Porter, "The Pastoral Epistles: Common Themes, Individual Compositions. Concluding Reflections," *J SPL* 9 (2019): 167–74.
- 5 See Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Paul, Timothy, and Titus: The Assumption of a Pseudonymous Author and of Pseudonymous Recipients in the Light of Literary, Theological, and Histori-

There have always been those who have accepted the prima facie claim of the ascriptions and the testimony of the early church that all three letters were written by Paul.⁶ More recently, too, the tide has begun to turn, and interpreters across the theological divide are affirming Pauline authorship.⁷ Some among that number see the input of a scribe as the reason for differences with Paul's other letters (cf. Rom. 16:22),⁸ although the absence of a scribe or of co-senders might equally explain these differences. My view is that Paul is the author of each of the three letters, without significant input from a scribe, if any.

We don't know exactly when the letters were written, and there are difficulties fitting them into the chronology of Acts and Paul's other letters. But this doesn't preclude Pauline authorship.⁹ Most likely, Paul was released from the imprisonment recorded in Acts 28, had a subsequent ministry during which 1 Timothy and Titus were written (ca. AD 62–65), then was imprisoned again and died in Rome (ca. AD 65–67).¹⁰ Second Timothy is his last letter, written during that final imprisonment.

I have one further observation about their authorship. Liberal scholar A. T. Hanson wrote that anyone writing about the letters to Timothy and Titus “must begin by stating whether he believes they are Pauline or not, and if not, in what circumstances he believes they were written.”¹¹ That's because views on authorship and the related matters of dating and historical context play a significant role in an interpreter's hermeneutical

cal Evidence,” in *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith? A Critical Appraisal of Modern and Postmodern Approaches to Scripture*, ed. James K. Hoffmeier and Dennis R. Magary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 383–403.

6 Cf. Muratorian Fragment, lines 59–63 (ca. AD 180–200); Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.3.3 (ca. AD 175). For history of reception and interpretation, see Gerald L. Bray, *The Pastoral Epistles*, ITC (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 51–68.

7 See Yarbrough, *Letters*, 72–78; Johnson, *Letters*, 92–94, 98–99.

8 So, for example, William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), cxxvii–cxxix; George W. Knight, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 48–52.

9 Johnson, *Letters*, 61–62.

10 Köstenberger, *Timothy and Titus*, 24–32.

11 Anthony T. Hanson, “The Use of the Old Testament in the Pastoral Epistles,” *IBS* 3 (1981): 203.

approach and conclusions about the letters. Views on authorship affect the whole enterprise. This means that as students of these letters who receive them as divinely inspired, truth-telling Scripture, we need to read scholarly resources with the interpreter's views on authorship front of mind, even if they come from well-loved, accomplished scholars.¹²

The “Pastoral Epistles” Label

The three works have been known as the Pastoral Epistles since at least the early eighteenth century¹³ and, from the time of the early church, have been recognized as forming a group within the New Testament Epistles addressing the ordering and exercise of ministry, and the instruction and discipline of church members.¹⁴

There is a certain logic to the grouping and adjective “pastoral.” There is no denying that the letters have distinctive shared characteristics. They are the only letters in the New Testament primarily addressed to Paul's coworkers.¹⁵ They were written late in the apostle's life. They have distinctive vocabulary.¹⁶ Much of what they address relates to church ministry.¹⁷ They deal with opponents who have arisen from within the churches and are within reach of pastoral discipline. And they're a substitute for Paul's physical presence, so that, whether his

- 12 For example, I. Howard Marshall proposes a process of “allonymity,” where, after Paul's death, a follower of Paul composed the letters using authentic notes or fragments from him. Marshall believes the theology of the letters shares the “same coherent core” with Paul's but also differs from it: e.g., “The Christology of the PE goes beyond that of the genuine Pauline epistles in various ways.” *The Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 83–108 (quoting p. 101).
- 13 Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, TNTC (1957; repr., Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 11.
- 14 Since at least the Muratorian Fragment.
- 15 However, church members are also in view in the plural greetings (1 Tim. 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:22; Titus 3:15).
- 16 E.g., *eusebeia* (godliness); *hygiainousa didaskalia* (sound doctrine); *epignōsis alētheias* (knowledge of the truth); and distinctive use of words: *sōtēr* (Savior); *epiphaneia* (appearing); *pistos ho logos* (trustworthy saying).
- 17 E.g., church discipline (1 Tim. 1:18–20; 2 Tim. 2:24–26; Titus 1:13–16), ordering the church (1 Tim. 3:1–13, 15; 5:17–22; 2 Tim. 2:2; Titus 1:5–9), false teaching (1 Tim. 1:4; 2 Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:14).

absence is through distance or death (1 Tim. 3:15; 2 Tim. 1:4; 4:9, 21; Titus 1:5; 3:12), Timothy and Titus, and those after them, will have apostolic instruction about how the gospel of God's salvation in Christ is to be faithfully preserved, defended, advanced, and proclaimed until Christ Jesus appears in glory. It's no surprise, then, that they have been recognized as a subgroup within the Pauline corpus.

But even at a surface level, there are real differences. They have different recipients, Timothy and Titus, and churches in two locations, with different cultures and status within the Roman Empire: Ephesus, a significant city in Asia Minor (1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:18; 4:12; 2:17 with 1 Tim. 1:20), and Crete, a large island in the Mediterranean Sea (Titus 1:5).¹⁸

There are similarities *and* differences in the social and theological challenges facing the churches.¹⁹ The false teaching in both locations had Jewish elements and involved speculation, genealogies, myths (1 Tim. 1:3–7; 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:10–16; 3:9), and ascetic concerns for ritual purity (1 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:15). The opponents were immoral and greedy (1 Tim. 1:19; 4:2; 6:5–10; 2 Tim. 3:1–6; Titus 1:11, 15–16; 3:11). But the false claims about resurrection plaguing the Ephesian church (2 Tim. 2:18; cf. 1 Tim. 4:1–3)²⁰ don't feature in Titus; and the churches (1 Tim. 3:6; 5:17–20; Titus 1:5) and influence of the opponents appear less established in Crete than Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:18–20; 2 Tim. 2:17; 4:14; Titus 1:10–11; 3:10).

The delegates themselves had different cultural origins and different contact points with Paul's mission. Timothy's mother and grandmother were Jewish (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14), but his father was Greek (Acts 16:1, 3). Titus was a full Gentile convert (Gal. 2:3). Both had accompanied Paul and been deputized for him and knew him and his theology (Timothy: 1 Tim. 1:3; cf. Acts 17:14; 19:22; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10–11; Phil. 2:19;

18 See S. M. Baugh, "A Foreign World: Ephesus in the First Century," in *Women in the Church: An Interpretation and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9–15*, 3rd ed., ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 25–64; George M. Wieland, "Roman Crete and the Letter to Titus," *NTS* 55 (2009): 338–54; Yarbrough, *Letters*, 46–51.

19 See Towner, *Letters*, 41–53.

20 Towner, *Letters*, 295n45.

1 Thess. 3:2; Titus; 2 Cor. 7:6–7; 12:18; Gal. 2:1; 2 Tim. 4:10). Each was Paul’s “child” (*teknon*) in the faith, although the bond appears to have been closer with Timothy (“beloved,” 2 Tim. 1:2).

The letters were also written at different points in Paul’s life, and different stages in the life of the churches in Ephesus and Crete. We know that Paul had a long and fruitful ministry in Ephesus and a significant history with church leaders there (Acts 19; 20:17–38), but there’s no similar record of his ministry on Crete (Acts 27:7–13; cf. 2:11). He may have ministered there, but Titus’s anticipated role is not dependent upon it (Titus 1:5).

The title “Pastoral Epistles” can obscure these differences, but it can also facilitate a corpus reading that harmonizes the messages and theology of the letters and isolates them from Paul’s other epistles. The “pastoral” adjective itself can direct attention away from other key aspects of the letters. With other interpreters, then, I prefer the title “the letters to Timothy and Titus,” as this groups the letters without obscuring their individuality or prejudging their content.²¹

How to Use This Book

In keeping with this, and unlike many resources on the three letters, I have studied each one on its own. The upside of this is that the distinctive theology of each can be appreciated, even as we recognize the coherent theology of the same apostolic author. The downside is that to avoid repetition I’ve not always restated in detail what I have said earlier. For instance, Paul uses “Savior” (*sōtēr*) differently in each letter, but the Old Testament, Jewish, and Greco-Roman background to the title remains the same, and so I have not repeated it in full. Also, at points, I’ve contrasted an aspect of one letter with the other two. That is, while the three parts of this book correspond to the three letters, not everything said about each letter is in its designated part! My recommendation, therefore, is to read the whole book, so nothing is missed.

21 For recognition of differences, see Yarbrough, *Letters*, 11–40; Towner, *Letters*, 27–89; Köstenberger and Wilder, *EWGTG* 52–83, 105–72, 241–67; Bray, *Pastoral Epistles*, 38–43.

PART 1

1 TIMOTHY

The Only God

The God Who Saves

AT FIRST GLANCE, 1 TIMOTHY IS CONCERNED with pressing local issues. Paul instructs Timothy to stay in Ephesus to silence those leading God's people away from the truth by teaching "different doctrine" (1:3; 6:3), and to ensure that believers behave properly as members of God's household (3:15). He tells Timothy that his own life, faith, beliefs, and teaching are to be blameless and exemplary, unlike the "fierce wolves" about whom Paul had prophetically warned the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:29–30). The letter also functions to equip and (re-)authorize Timothy as Paul's delegate (1 Tim. 1:3, 18; 6:13–14, 20; cf. 3:14–15), and to do so before the whole church, including its leadership (6:21).

However, closer consideration shows that 1 Timothy is primarily about God.¹ This is not just a confessional claim about all Scripture. In terms of the words used in the letter, "God" (*theos*) occurs more than any other noun (twenty-two times);² Christ Jesus is mentioned fifteen times; and the Spirit, twice (3:16; 4:1). And the primacy of God is more than statistics. The main theme of the letter is God's desire to save a people for himself. The gospel is his (1:11). The plan of salvation is his

1 Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 13–14.

2 Yarbrough, *Letters*, 13. *Theos*, twenty-two times: 1:1, 2, 4, 11, 17; 2:3, 5 (2x); 3:5, 15 (2x); 4:3, 4, 5, 10; 5:4, 5, 21; 6:1, 11, 13, 17; cf. 6:16. Christ Jesus, twelve times: 1:1 (2x), 2, 12, 14, 15, 16; 2:5; 3:13; 4:6; 5:21; 6:13. Jesus Christ, two times: 6:3, 14. Christ: 5:11.

(2:4–7). The church is his household. Paul and Timothy are doing his work (1:18; 2:7; 4:6).

In short, who God is and how he is toward those he saves are integral to the message of the letter. Our study then begins by exploring what 1 Timothy says about the triune God who saves.

The Blessed God of the Gospel

Paul uses several designations for God in this letter: God is Savior, Father, the living God, the only God, King of kings, Lord of lords, and more. Paul also describes God: he is blessed, immortal, and invisible, he dwells in unapproachable light, and more. These divine titles and descriptions provide a framework for exploring the presentation of God in the letter, and, as we shall see, they are vital to its message. Some have rich backgrounds in the Old Testament in connection with God's self-revelation and acts in salvation history. Some identify his relationship to creation and humanity. And some speak to his uniqueness and supremacy against rival claimants to divinity and devotion.

The effect of these many titles and descriptions is to stress that the *same* God, who rules all things and who previously acted on Israel's behalf, now *in Christ Jesus* has accomplished his eschatological salvation plan for *all peoples*, Jew and Gentile, and that there is no other way to be saved.

God Our Savior

“Savior” is the first and the most frequent title for God in 1 Timothy (*sōtēr*, 1:1; 2:3; 4:10). At one level, this is not surprising. The consistent message of Scripture is that God is a God who saves. The Greek translation of the Old Testament (LXX) applies this title almost exclusively to God.³ God himself declares that he is the *only* Savior, and there is no other (Isa. 45:21–22).

His deliverance of his people, Israel, from slavery in Egypt serves as a paradigm for his saving interventions (Ex. 20:2–3; Deut. 6:20–23; cf.

3 See George Wieland, *The Significance of Salvation: A Study of Salvation Language in the Pastoral Epistles*, PBM (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2006), 21–27.

Isa. 43:14–21), and his saving deeds are an expression of his kingship over them (1 Chron. 16:23–36; Ps. 98; cf. Luke 1:47, 52) and define his relationship with them (e.g., “*my/your* Savior,” 1 Sam. 10:19 LXX; Ps. 25:5 [24:5 LXX]; Isa. 12:2 LXX).⁴ Yet the Old Testament prophets looked forward to a final, future salvation that would be accomplished by God’s messianic King/Son and would involve *all* nations (Isa. 11:1–10; 52:10; Zech. 9:9–10). The message of the New Testament is that God has now done this in the incarnate life, death, resurrection, and ascension of his Son, Jesus Christ (e.g., Rom. 5:6–10; 1 Cor. 15:3–6; 1 Pet. 1:10–12).

Given all this, we might expect to find the title “Savior” frequently in the New Testament. But we don’t! It appears just twenty-four times,⁵ ten of those in the letters to Timothy and Titus: for God the Father in 1 Timothy and Titus (1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4); and for Christ Jesus in 2 Timothy and Titus (2 Tim. 1:10; Titus 1:4; 2:13; 3:6). It is one of a handful of terms whose frequency is distinctive to these three letters. It is possible that Paul uses the title in these letters for polemical effect, given the use of “savior” language for Greek gods and/or the ruler-cult, where Roman emperors were worshiped as divine saviors and benefactors.⁶

But the title is best understood in continuity (and discontinuity) with its Old Testament background. The Savior God of 1 Timothy *is* the Savior God of the Old Testament, but rather than having an exclusive relationship with one nation, he has now provided salvation for *all* who believe (2:4–6; 4:10): both Jew and Gentile (2:7; cf. Rom. 3:29–30; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). The logic goes like this: now, as then, there is only

4 Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Commentary on 1–2 Timothy and Titus*, BTCP (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2017), 433n248. Cf. Intertestamental literature: Judith 9:11; Wis. 16:7; Sir. 51:1; Bar. 4:22; 1 Macc. 4:30; 3 Macc. 6:29, 32; 7:16.

5 Luke 1:47; 2:11; John 4:42; Acts 5:31; 13:23; Eph. 5:23; Phil. 3:20; 2 Pet. 1:1, 11; 2:20; 3:2, 18; 1 John 4:14; Jude 25.

6 See Ben Witherington III, *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1–2 Timothy and 1–3 John*, vol. 1 of *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/moore/detail.action?docID=2030868>, 121–22.

one God (*heis theos*, 1 Tim. 2:5; cf. 1:17; 6:16; also Deut. 6:4, cited in the *Shema*; Rom. 3:30). This one God is the only Savior. Accordingly, there is only one salvation plan—the one that God has accomplished in Christ Jesus.⁷ Now, Jew and Gentile alike can be saved and brought into personal relationship with God as *their* Savior.

God the Father

Individually and corporately those whom God saves call upon him as Father (*patēr*, 1 Tim. 1:2). There is only one reference to God as Father in each of the letters to Timothy and Titus (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4). This varies from Paul's usual style,⁸ but God's fatherhood is still core to the message of each letter and is prominently stated in its opening greeting.

The title “Father” taps into a rich theological seam in all Scripture. It connotes a relationship of intimacy, familiarity, and belonging to God that has roots in the corporate old covenant notion that Yahweh was Father to his chosen people, whom he had redeemed (e.g., Ex. 4:22–23; Deut. 32:6; Hos. 1:10; 11:1), and in the messianic promises to David (2 Sam. 7:14; cf. Ps. 2:7).⁹ Elsewhere in the New Testament, we read that in the *new* covenant, individual believers, Jew and Gentile, are adopted into God's family and call upon him as “Abba, Father,” through their union with Christ and incorporation into his divine sonship by the renewing power of the Spirit (e.g., Matt. 6:9; John 20:17; Rom. 8:15; cf. Mark 14:36).

In 1 Timothy, the juxtaposition of “God” with Christ Jesus in several texts indicates that in those texts “God” refers to the first person of the Godhead, God *the Father* (1:1–2; 2:3, 5; 5:21; 6:13–14, cf. 3:15; 4:10).¹⁰ This means that God *the Savior* is, in fact, God *the Father*.¹¹ All the other titles Paul uses for God denote God's reign over all things, but it is the

7 I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 428–29.

8 Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 104–5.

9 See Abera M. Mengestu, *God as Father in Paul: Kinship Language and Identity Formation in Early Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 91–127.

10 See Gerald L. Bray, *The Pastoral Epistles*, ITC (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 76–78.

11 Köstenberger, *Timothy and Titus*, 148–50.

unique privilege of those whom God saves to relate to him as Savior and Father. Together with Christ Jesus, he is the source and giver to them of the salvation blessings of divine grace (*charis*), mercy (*eleos*; cf. Heb. *hesed*), and peace (*eirēnē*; cf. Heb. *shalom*, 1:2).¹²

God's fatherhood is reflected in the use of household terminology.¹³ The church is "the household of God" (*oikos theou*, 1 Tim. 3:15; cf. 3:4–5), and all things are ordered by God's "household rules"¹⁴ or "way of ordering things"¹⁵ (*oikonomia theou*, 1:4;¹⁶ cf. Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25; Titus 1:7). Both concepts trade on the notion of a household where God is the head, the "heavenly *paterfamilias*,"¹⁷ and believers have him as their Father and are to live under his rule and according to his design within the human household, the church, society, and world. He richly provides for his household in this life and the next (1 Tim. 6:17). His *benevolent* fatherhood was nothing like the fatherhood of the Greco-Roman gods and emperors who claimed the title "father" but whose capricious rule created uncertainty and fear.¹⁸

It is God "who gives life to all things" (6:13; cf. Gen. 1–2; Isa. 42:5). He cares and provides for his creation and determines the proper ordering and function of all things. Despite the effects of the fall, everything created by God is still "good" and "holy"—including food and marriage—and rightly received by believers with thanksgiving to God, the giver (1 Tim. 4:3–5; 6:17; cf. Gen. 1:31; Ps. 19:1–6; Rom. 1:19–20; 1 Tim. 2:15; 5:14).¹⁹ This focus on God as Creator—his life giving, his ordered creation of Adam and Eve (1 Tim. 2:13; cf. Gen. 2), his provision of

12 George W. Knight, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 66–67.

13 See chap. 4, "The Household of God."

14 Greg A. Couser, "The Sovereign Savior of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus," in *EWTC* 112.

15 See Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, AB 35A (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 147–54; Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 68–74, 112–14.

16 ESV, "stewardship from God."

17 Robert W. Wall, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, THNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 178.

18 See Mengestu, *God as Father*, 71–74.

19 Bray, *Pastoral Epistles*, 220–21.

food and care (1 Tim. 2:1; 4:3–4; cf. Gen. 1:29–31; 2:8–9; oxen, 1 Tim. 5:18), and his presence in his creation (1 Tim. 2:3; 5:4, 21; 6:13; cf. Gen. 3:8)—complements the letter’s message of the universal scope of salvation, and the error of the opponents’ asceticism.

The Living God

The God who gives life is the “living God” (1 Tim. 4:10), and his household is “the church of the living God” (3:15). This title also has deep Old Testament roots (Deut. 5:26; Pss. 42:2; 84:2; Hos. 1:10), often in connection with the notion that God’s people are to trust him as their Savior (Josh. 3:10; 1 Sam. 17:26; Dan. 4:21). Like “Savior,” this title was associated with the exclusive relationship of Yahweh with Israel, but here and elsewhere in the New Testament it is recast to embrace “all people” (1 Tim. 4:10; cf. Rom. 9:25–26; 2 Cor. 3:3; Heb. 12:22).²⁰ Commenting on 1 Timothy 4:10, George Wieland writes, “This ‘living God,’ who spoke to a particular people at Sinai, made them ‘children of the living God’ and saved them from their enemies, is actually *sōtēr pantōn anthrōpōn*” (Savior of all people).²¹

This title would also have powerfully spoken to the life setting in Ephesus: God is not like the lifeless idols of pagan cultures (Isa. 46:5–9; Hab. 2:18–19; Acts 14:15–17; 1 Thess. 1:9) or the dead emperors, who in Ephesus were often labeled “savior.”²² The *living* God speaks (1 Tim. 4:1, 5), wills (2:4), commands (1:1), hears (2:3; 4:5), saves (2:5–6; cf. Ps. 18:46), judges (1 Tim. 2:3; 5:4), provides (4:3–4; 6:17), gives temporal and eternal life (6:13; cf. 4:8), and offers certain eternal hope (4:10). *His* temple is the church, a gathered community with whom he is a *living* presence (3:15). For Timothy and the (mostly Gentile) Ephesian Christians, who were a minority people and culture in a major center of pagan culture and worship, what comfort and encouragement it

20 See Wieland, *Significance*, 90–95. For discussion of the phrase “all people” in 1 Tim. 2:4 and 4:10, see below in chap. 2, “The Hope of Salvation.”

21 Wieland, *Significance*, 91.

22 Abraham Kuruvilla, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus: A Theological Commentary for Preachers* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2021), 92.

would have been to know that the living God, who is the only Savior for all people, was their God!

The Only God

The uniqueness and supremacy expressed in all these titles reach their peak in the two doxologies that almost bracket the letter (1 Tim. 1:17; 6:15–16), where Paul lists further divine names and attributes, piling them up to place God far above all powers and authorities, all dimensions of time, and the whole created order.²³ Again, much of the language builds upon Old Testament teaching.²⁴

He is the “only” God and sovereign (1:17; 6:15). He is not *one* god among many (Ps. 86:8, 10; Isa. 37:16). There is just “*one* God” (1 Tim. 2:5; cf. Deut. 6:4).²⁵ He alone is ruler. This reality left no room for polytheistic claims to divine power or allegiance under the old covenant; neither does it under the new. It is an exclusive claim for devotion and worship.

God is “blessed” (*makarios*, 1 Tim. 1:11; 6:15; cf. Titus 2:13), a term not applied to God elsewhere in Scripture but common in Hellenistic Judaism.²⁶ He is the source and giver of all blessing, as “he contains all blessedness in himself and bestows it” on people as he chooses.²⁷

He rules eternally as King (*basileus*): “King of the Ages” (1 Tim. 1:17) and “King” and “Lord” over *all* who claim or aspire to be kings and lords, whether human or spiritual (6:15; cf. Deut. 10:17; Ps. 136:3; 2 Macc. 13:4). Unlike them, he *alone* is indestructible and immortal (1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16; cf. Rom. 1:23; 1 Cor. 15:53–54), and his kingship is comprehensive, inviolable, and eternal (Ps. 10:16; Jer. 10:10; Dan. 6:26).²⁸ His rightful and everlasting reign over his people, over all nations, and all the earth is a consistent theme throughout Scripture (e.g.,

23 See Bray, *Pastoral Epistles*, 122–26.

24 Several terms are also common in Hellenistic Judaism: Towner, *Letters*, 152–53, 420–23.

25 Towner, *Letters*, 153.

26 Yarbrough, *Letters*, 118. Cf. Philo, *On the Special Laws* 1.209; 2.53; 3.1; *On the Life of Abraham* 202; *That God Is Unchangeable* 26; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 10.278.

27 J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles: I & II Timothy, Titus* (London: Black, 1963), 51.

28 William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 61.

Ex. 15:18; 1 Sam. 8:7; Matt. 6:10; Rev. 15:3), and inseparable from his being Creator, Savior, and Judge (Pss. 24, 93, 95–99). His reign is the theological reality behind the kingdom of God preached and inaugurated by Jesus (Matt. 4:17; Mark 10:14; John 18:36; cf. 2 Sam. 7:12–16; Ps. 2) and described by Paul (Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 6:9–10; 15:24–25; Col. 1:13), and yet, Paul only calls God “King” in these two doxologies! God’s unrivalled kingship is vital to the letter’s message.

Both doxologies direct unqualified praise to God for his saving intervention in Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 1:15; 3:16; 6:13–14; cf. Rom. 16:27; 2 Cor. 1:20; Gal. 1:3–5; Phil. 4:19–20).²⁹ He has absolute transcendence and dwells (*oikeō*) in unapproachable light, and no eye has seen or can see him (1 Tim. 6:16; cf. Ex. 33:18–23; John 1:18; Heb. 11:27; 1 John 1:5).³⁰ He is also the immanent source of grace, mercy, peace, and love (1 Tim. 1:2, 14), whose saving interventions are visible in Christ’s appearances, and he dwells with his people (3:15; cf. Matt. 5:8).

These lofty descriptions in the doxologies underwrite God’s identity as Savior and the unrivalled certainty of his salvation plan. He cannot be seen or approached as earthly rulers are; neither is his rule subject to the dictates of time or space or mortality and death, as theirs are. He *alone* is King and Savior, worthy to receive the everlasting honor, glory (1 Tim. 1:17; cf. Rev. 4:9), and dominion that are already his (1 Tim. 6:16; cf. Ps. 96:7 [95:7 LXX]; Jude 25; Rev. 4:9, 11).³¹ Little wonder Paul finishes both doxologies with “Amen,” effectively asking his readers (us included) to add our voices in affirmation and praise to the one true God (cf. 1 Chron. 16:36; Neh. 8:6; Rev. 7:12).

Christ Jesus the One Mediator

In 1 Timothy, the title “Savior” is reserved for God, and Christ Jesus is the agent or means by which that salvation is accomplished, a truth wonderfully captured in one of the most succinct gospel statements in Scripture: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1:15).

²⁹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 60.

³⁰ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 362.

³¹ Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 106, 271.

This “saying,” which is “trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance,” demonstrates the almost inseparable connection between Christology and soteriology in the letter, and introduces the related theme of Christ’s appearances, which is a feature of all the letters to Timothy and Titus.

There are four main texts about Christ (1 Tim. 1:12–15; 2:5–6; 3:16; 6:13–14). The poetic nature of some of these—and other stylized texts in the letters (e.g., 1 Tim. 1:15; 2:5; 3:16; 2 Tim. 1:9–10, 11–13; 2:19–21; 3:15; Titus 2:11–14; 3:3–7; cf. 1 Cor. 15:3–5; Phil. 2:5–11)—might indicate the use of preexisting traditional formulae or hymnic material.³² Our interest, though, is in the meaning of the biblical text rather than its prehistory, so even if Paul did compose or use preexisting traditional material, it was to serve the message of this letter. And *that* literary context governs its meaning.

Many aspects of the teaching about Christ in the three letters are shared with Paul’s other letters and the New Testament generally:³³ Christ Jesus is the God-man, who died to reconcile sinners to God, was resurrected, and ascended to reign in the heavenly places, until he comes again to bring the present age to its conclusion. Some common aspects of Paul’s Christology are not explicitly mentioned (e.g., the cross [cf. 1 Tim. 6:13], divine sonship). However, Paul’s letters all address specific situations, and their Christology is shaped accordingly.³⁴

32 See Köstenberger, *Timothy and Titus*, 50–54; Linda L. Belleville, “Christology, the Pastoral Epistles, and Commentaries,” in *On the Writing of New Testament Commentaries: Festschrift for Grant R. Osborne on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Eckhard J. Schnabel, TENTS 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 323–35; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, xciv.

33 Daniel L. Akin, “The Mystery of Godliness Is Great: Christology in the Pastoral Epistles,” in *EWTC* 151–52; Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 472–73; Philip H. Towner, “Christology in the Letters to Timothy and Titus,” in *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 244; Wall, *Timothy and Titus*, 164–69.

34 Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Paul, Timothy, and Titus: The Assumption of a Pseudonymous Author and of Pseudonymous Recipients in the Light of Literary, Theological, and Historical Evidence,” in *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith? A Critical Appraisal of Modern and Postmodern Approaches to Scripture*, ed. James K. Hoffmeier and Dennis R. Magary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 392.

The stress in 1 Timothy falls on Christ's true humanity and his historical presence in the world.³⁵ He is "the *man* [*anthrōpos*] Christ Jesus" (2:5), who "appeared *in the flesh*" (3:16 NIV), and "came *into the world*" (1:15; cf. Rom. 8:3–4; Gal. 4:4–5). He testified before a historical person (i.e., Pontius Pilate, 1 Tim. 6:13). He inhabited the same world as the sinners he came to save (3:16; 6:7), and because he shares our humanity, he can be a model and encouragement to Timothy (in particular) to persevere in adverse circumstances (6:12–14). Christ's physical presence in the world also affirms life in this world (2:2). Most significantly, his genuine humanity is necessary for him to be the one mediator between God and humanity (*anthrōpōn*, 2:4–5), representing us and giving himself for us in death (2:6; cf. Phil. 2:7–8; Heb. 2:14).

And yet, Christ is also divine and equal in status with God (Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:15). With God, he is the divine source of salvation blessings of grace, mercy, and peace (1 Tim. 1:2, 14, 16). With God, he commissioned and authorized Paul's apostolic ministry (1:1, 11–12; 2:7). Both God and Christ are "Lord" (*kyrios*, 1:1, 12, 14; 6:3, 14–15) and the objects of believers' hope (1:1; 4:10; 5:5; 6:17). Both are witnesses to Paul's charges to Timothy (5:21; 6:13). Christ reigns in glory (3:16).³⁶ His spoken words (now written) are called "Scripture" (*graphē*) and placed alongside the Mosaic Law as equally authoritative and instructive (5:18; cf. Deut. 25:4; Matt. 10:10; Luke 10:7).³⁷ Christ is the source of sound/healthy and authoritative teaching (1 Tim. 6:3), and of saving mercy, grace, faith, and love (1:13–14). Belief in him leads to eternal life (1:16). He receives thanks (1:12), devotion (5:11), and service (1:12; 4:6). He presently empowers Paul's gospel ministry (1:12; cf. Eph. 6:10; Phil. 4:13; 2 Tim. 2:1; 4:17). He is far superior to the angels (1 Tim. 3:16; 5:21; cf. Heb. 1:4). And in his preexistence and "coming/appearing" to accomplish *the Father's* will to save, we glimpse his divine sonship (1 Tim. 1:2; cf. Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4; John 5:23; 1 John 4:9, 14).

³⁵ Towner, *Letters*, 63.

³⁶ Akin, "Mystery," 151.

³⁷ Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 234.

This is not an adoptionist Christology, where a simply human Jesus was exalted to divine status as a consequence of his earthly ministry.³⁸ Rather, Christ “*came into the world*” (1 Tim. 1:15) and “*appeared in the flesh*” (3:16 NIV).³⁹ That is, unlike us, Christ existed *before* he came into the world (John 1:1, 14; 1 Cor. 10:4; Phil. 2:6–7; Col. 1:15–17; 2 Tim. 1:10; Titus 2:11; 3:4), and his divine status *preceded* his appearing in the flesh. He is the fulfillment of God’s promised salvation plan that the Messiah (Christ) would be “God with us” *and* one of us (Matt. 1:18–25; cf. Isa. 9:6–7).

Christ’s appearances are a well-recognized theme of the letters to Timothy and Titus, sometimes called “epiphany Christology,” after the distinctive vocabulary used (*epiphaneia*, 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 1:10; 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13; *epiphainō*, Titus 2:11; 3:4; related word, *phaneroō*, 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 1:10; Titus 2:11; 3:4).⁴⁰ The vocabulary denotes the appearing or revealing of what was previously hidden. It had a history of use in connection with military victories and, in secular Greek thought and Hellenistic Judaism, was associated with the visible intervention in history of otherwise invisible divine power to deliver aid.⁴¹ Each of the three letters puts the epiphany theme to a different use, but it consistently applies to Christ’s first and second appearances in history.

In 1 Timothy, this theme is also developed through related concepts, such as Christ’s “coming” (1:15)⁴² and the “mystery” now revealed (*mystērion*, 3:9, 16; cf. Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:3–5; Col. 1:26).⁴³ The content disclosed is God’s previously hidden plan of salvation. As such, Christ’s appearances are both the *disclosure* of God’s will to save (1 Tim. 2:4) and

38 So, classically, Hans Windisch, “Zur Christologie der Pastoralbriefe,” *ZNW* 34 (1935): 213–38. See I. Howard Marshall, “The Christology of the Pastoral Epistles,” *SNTSU A* 13 (1988): 159–60.

39 Andrew Y. Lau, *Manifest in the Flesh: The Epiphany Christology of the Pastoral Epistles*, WUNT 2.86 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 98–99.

40 See Towner, “Christology,” 223–26.

41 Cf. LXX: 1 Chron. 17:21; 2 Macc. 2:21–23; 3:24–28; 12:22; 14:15; 15:27; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 9.53–60. See Philip H. Towner, “The Present Age in the Eschatology of the Pastoral Epistles,” *NTS* 32 (1986): 434–38; Lau, *Manifest in the Flesh*, 222–24.

42 Lau, *Manifest in the Flesh*, 226.

43 Yarbrough, *Letters*, 208, 220.

the *means* by which that salvation is inaugurated, accomplished, and consummated (6:14) in God's appointed timing ("the testimony," 2:6; 6:15; cf. 3:16; Titus 1:3).⁴⁴

The centrality of Christ to every aspect of God's eternal salvation plan is captured in the Christ hymn (1 Tim. 3:16):⁴⁵ (line 1) The preexistent Christ appeared in the flesh and fulfilled his earthly ministry, climaxing in his crucifixion (6:13);⁴⁶ having satisfied God's righteous demands in his death, (line 2) he was vindicated (*edikaiōthē*) by (possibly *in*) the Holy Spirit through his resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4; 8:11);⁴⁷ (line 3) following his ascension, he appeared to angels (1 Tim. 5:21; cf. Eph. 1:21; Phil. 2:9–11; Heb 1:3);⁴⁸ since then, (line 4) the gospel about him is preached to the nations (1 Tim. 2:7; cf. Rom. 1:16), and (line 5) people believe on him for eternal life (1 Tim. 1:16); and (line 6) as the one taken up in glory, he now lives and reigns and intercedes for them as Lord (1:2, 12, 14; 5:21; 6:3, 13; cf. Eph. 1:20–23; Col. 3:1).⁴⁹ That is, Christ himself—"incarnate and glorified"⁵⁰—is "the mystery of godliness."

He is the source, object, and substance of Christian "hope" (1 Tim. 1:1):⁵¹ the (God-)man (*anthrōpos*) who is the one and only mediator (*mesitēs*) between the one God and humankind (*anthrōpōn*, 2:5), who gave himself as a ransom on behalf of and in the place of all those whom God desires to save (2:6; cf. Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; Gal. 1:4; Titus 2:14).

He is the Christ (*Christos*),⁵² the promised Jewish Messiah (Heb. *Mashiach*) and Son of David (2 Sam. 7:8–16; Isa. 9:2–7; Rom. 1:3;

44 Couser, "Sovereign Savior," 119.

45 Commentators differ on their preferred translation and interpretation of each line—especially lines 2, 3, and 4—however, they agree that the hymn concerns the person and work of Christ, and the spread and reception of the gospel in the world. For discussion of the hymn's structure, see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 214–18.

46 Towner, *Letters*, 280.

47 Yarbrough, *Letters*, 222–23; R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1–2 Timothy and Titus (ESV Edition): To Guard the Deposit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 86. See ESV, NIV.

48 Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 526.

49 Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 528–29.

50 Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 90.

51 Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 6.

52 1 Tim. 1:1 (2x), 2, 12, 14–16; 2:5; 3:13; 4:6; 5:11, 21; 6:3, 13–14.

2 Tim. 2:8)—but now not for Israel alone. He is Lord (*kyrios*, 1 Tim. 1:2, 12, 14; 6:3, 14). That is, he is worthy of the Greek title used to translate the divine name Yahweh in the LXX and in New Testament citations of the Old Testament (e.g., Rom. 10:16), signaling his full divinity, and yet sitting without contradiction alongside the strong monotheism of this letter and the New Testament (e.g., 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Cor. 8:6). Paul Jeon rightly observes: “By ascribing the title ‘Lord’ to Christ Jesus in direct view of God the Father (1:2), Paul effectively identifies that Christ Jesus is equally the very God of the OT. Thus, Paul makes clear that Christ Jesus is the ‘Lord’ who shares in God the Father’s position as ruler of the same household.”⁵³ His rule will be fully realized at his second coming (1 Tim. 6:14; cf. 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Tim. 4:1; Titus 2:13). As divine Lord, Christ Jesus is far superior to the Roman emperors, who assumed the title. He is the Lord and master of those he saves, and in this letter he is always “*our* Lord”—the personal Lord of Paul, Timothy, the Ephesian Christians, and all those who believe in him (1 Tim. 1:12–16; cf. Rom. 10:9, 13; 1 Cor. 12:3).

The Present Spirit

The Holy Spirit is mentioned twice in 1 Timothy, less frequently than some but not all of Paul’s letters;⁵⁴ and common elements of Paul’s pneumatology, such as the indwelling of the Spirit (e.g., 2 Tim. 1:14), do not feature. Nevertheless, the Spirit’s work is integral to the message and, in keeping with the Father’s desire to save and Christ Jesus’s mediating role in salvation, is similarly directed toward salvation.

In the Christological and structural heart of the letter in the Christ hymn, we see that the Spirit vindicated (*edikaiōthē*, 1 Tim. 3:16; cf. Rom. 1:4) Christ through his resurrection, thereby declaring that the ransom price for sinners had been fully paid, and the demands of God’s righteousness fully met in his substitutionary death (1 Tim. 2:6; cf. Rom. 1:4; 8:11).⁵⁵

53 Paul S. Jeon, *1 Timothy: A Charge to God’s Missional Household*, vol. 1 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), 76.

54 E.g., Gal., 8.06/1000 words; Col., 1.27/1000 words; 1 Tim., 1.89/1000 words.

55 Bray, *Pastoral Epistles*, 204–5.

This same Spirit, who gave the victory to Jesus, had predicted that his followers would face setbacks and threats from people who had departed the faith (1 Tim. 4:1–3).⁵⁶ Instead of listening to the *one* Spirit (*pneuma*), who speaks clearly and truthfully (Acts 11:28; 21:11), these people would learn from liars and “deceitful spirits [*pneumasin*] and teachings of demons.” When these warnings were spoken by the Spirit isn’t specified (cf. Dan. 12:1; Mark 13:21–22; Acts 20:29–30; 2 Tim. 3:1–9),⁵⁷ but their truthfulness was confirmed by the current situation in Ephesus, which in turn certified the eschatological nature of these “later times” (i.e., the post-resurrection present).

The Spirit was the implied source of the prophecies through which Timothy was divinely appointed to his ministry (1 Tim. 1:18–20; 4:14–16; cf. 2 Tim. 1:6; Acts 20:28).⁵⁸ By extension, the Spirit would also equip and empower him to fulfill that ministry (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4–11; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 1:14). Similarly, the Spirit was the implied source and enabling power of Paul’s unique apostolic ministry (1 Tim. 1:1, 11–16; 2:7; cf. Acts 13:2).

In short, the Spirit of God is present in the life of the church and with believers through prophetic intervention (both past and present), by which he taught, guided, and warned believers, and also identified, equipped, and empowered workers for gospel ministry.⁵⁹ Believers live in a time of spiritual conflict (1 Tim. 4:1; cf. Gal. 1:4), but it is also a time when the inbreaking of the eschatological age inaugurated in the Christ event⁶⁰ continues through the Spirit’s ministry. Regardless of the circumstances or threats, and no matter how long before Christ’s second appearing, God’s plan of salvation is being advanced by his Spirit, and nothing can prevent its consummation.

56 Jerome D. Quinn, “The Holy Spirit in the Pastoral Epistles,” in *Sin, Salvation and the Spirit*, ed. D. Durken (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1979), 357.

57 Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 234.

58 Towner, *Letters*, 156.

59 See Michael A. G. Haykin, “The Fading Vision? The Spirit and Freedom in the Pastoral Epistles,” *EvQ* 57 (1985): 291–305.

60 I will use the summary term “Christ event” to refer to the person and work of Christ in salvation—his incarnation, earthly ministry, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and (where applicable) glorious return.

The Triune God Who Saves

God's person and work are key to the message of 1 Timothy. The one God has just one plan of salvation for all people, and the letter portrays the three divine persons performing different roles with the single purpose to accomplish that salvation in the past, present, and eschatological future. The universal supremacy of God our Savior, the full divinity and humanity of Christ Jesus, and the all-knowing, vindicating power of the Spirit ensure that no human or spiritual force can prevent God's plan from being realized, and so they provide Timothy and all believers with certainty and urgency to join in God's saving agenda.

