

Section F

Books of the Bible

Genesis

Author: Moses

Time: Creation to 1580 BC.

Summary: Genesis means “the beginning” and it is a book of beginnings. It records the creation of the world and the beginning of the nation of Israel. Chapters 12–50 focus on one man, Abraham, and his descendants. Abraham, his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob are called the patriarchs of Israel. Jacob’s twelve sons are the beginnings of the twelve tribes of Israel. Through Joseph, one of Jacob’s sons, the whole family settles in Egypt.

Key verses: “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” (1:31)
“The LORD had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you . . . and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’” (12:1–3)

Main people: Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph.

1. Early History	1:1–11:26
a) Creation	1:1–2:3
b) Adam and Eve in Eden	2:4–25
c) The first sin and its consequences	3:1–24
d) Cain and Abel	4:1–16
e) Two genealogies	4:17–5:32
f) The great flood	6:1–9:29
g) The spread of nations	10:1–11:26
2. Abraham and his descendants	11:27–50:26
a) The life of Abraham	11:27–25:11
b) The descendants of Ishmael	25:12–18
c) The life of Jacob	25:19–35:29
d) The descendants of Esau	36:1–37:1
e) The life of Joseph	37:2–50:26

Exodus

Author: Moses

Time: 1446 BC.

Summary: The title “Exodus” means “going out”. It records the great numerical growth of the Israelites during their enslavement and oppression in Egypt. Moses emerges to lead God’s people from slavery to the promised land of Canaan. At Mt Sinai, God gave Moses the laws which were to form the basis for the covenant between God and the new nation of Israel. They are summarised in the ten commandments. The book concludes with a description of the worship centred around the Tabernacle and the Law of Moses.

Key verse: “I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey” (3:8)

Main people: Pharaoh, Moses and his brother Aaron.

1. The liberation of Israel	1:1–18:27
a) Introduction	1:1–7
b) Bondage in Egypt	1:8–22
c) Preparation of the deliverer	2:1–4:31
d) The mission of Moses to Pharaoh	5:1–7:7
e) The plagues in Egypt	7:8–11:10
f) The Passover and the departure of Israel	12:1–15:21
g) Journey to Sinai	15:22–18:27
2. Israel at Mt Sinai	19:1–40:38
a) Establishment of the covenant at Sinai	19:1–24:18
b) Directions for the tabernacle and the priesthood	25:1–31:18
c) The covenant broken and restored	32:1–34:35
d) Building of the tabernacle	35:1–40:38

Leviticus

Author: Moses

Time: 1445 BC.

Summary: The third book of the Bible takes its name from one of the twelve sons of Jacob, Levi, whose family was ordained by God to minister to him as priests. The book covers the laws of the Jewish people regarding worship and religious activities, both personal and national. It contained laws regarding cleanliness, morality, ethics and hygiene. Animal sacrifice was introduced as an atonement for the individual and national sins of the people.

Key verses: “Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the LORD your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the LORD, who makes you holy.” (20:7–8)

Main people: The people who bring the offerings (people of God) and the people who sacrifice the offerings (priests).

1. Laws on sacrifice	1:1–7:38
a) The five main offerings	1:1–6:7
b) Instructions for priests	6:8–7:38
2. Institution of priesthood	8:1–10:20
a) Ordination of Aaron and his sons	8:1–36
b) Aaron’s first sacrifices	9:1–24
c) Judgement on Nadab and Abihu	10:1–20
3. Uncleanness and its treatment	11:1–15:33
a) Unclean animals	11:1–47
b) Uncleanness of childbirth	12:1–8
c) Unclean diseases and discharges	13:1–15:33
4. Festivals and laws of practical holiness	16:1–27:34
a) The Day of Atonement	16:1–34
b) Sacrifice and eating blood	17:1–16
c) Moral laws: sexual behaviour, honesty, stealing, idolatry, etc.	18:1–20:27
d) Rules for priests	21:1–22:33
e) Religious festivals	23:1–44
f) Rules for the tabernacle	24:1–9
g) Punishment for blasphemy, murder, etc.	24:10–23
h) Sabbath year, jubilee, land tenure and slavery	25:1–55
i) Blessings and curses for obedience and disobedience	26:1–46
j) Regulations for offerings vowed to the Lord	27:1–34

Numbers

Author: Moses

Time: 1445–1407 BC.

Summary: Numbers is named for the numbering of the people of Israel. However, it was known to the Jewish people as “In the Wilderness”, because it primarily tells of the forty years of wandering in the wilderness before entering the promised land. After the exodus from Egypt, the Israelites rebelled against God. Because of this rebellion, only two men of all the adults who left Egypt were to enter into the promised land of Canaan.

Key verse: “Whenever the cloud lifted from above the Tent, the Israelites set out; wherever the cloud settled, the Israelites encamped.” (9:17)

Main people: Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Caleb, Miriam and the priests.

1. At Sinai	1:1–10:10
a) Census of the people	1:1–4:49
b) Purity of the people	5:1–10:10
2. From Sinai to Kadesh	10:11–20:13
a) Journeying at God’s command	10:11–36
b) Murmuring and discontent	11:1–12:16
c) Exploring Canaan and a lack of faith	13:1–14:45
d) Instructions for the next generation	15:1–41
e) Revolt against God’s appointments	16:1–17:13
f) Rules for priests	18:1–19:22
g) The sin of Moses	20:1–13
3. From Kadesh to Moab	20:14–32:42
a) Journey from Kadesh to Moab	20:14–22:1
b) Balaam’s curse turned into a blessing	22:2–24:25
c) Israel goes astray	25:1–18
d) The second census	26:1–65
e) Instructions for the new generation	27:1–30:16
f) War against Midian	31:1–54
g) Settlement of 2½ tribes on east of Jordan	32:1–42
4. Appendixes	33:1–36:13
a) The stages of the journey	33:1–56
b) Towns for Levites and cities of refuge	34:1–35:34
c) The inheritance for women	36:1–13

Deuteronomy

Author: Moses

Time: 1407 BC.

Summary: This book has a Greek name meaning “second law” because the book contains a repetition of the law recorded in Leviticus. The book consists of several speeches by Moses, his last major addresses to the nation prior to his death. The speeches were given on the plains of Moab just before the nation of Israel entered the promised land of Canaan under the command of Joshua. At this time only two men were left out of the adults who escaped from Egypt. Therefore, the repetition of the law was extremely important to the welfare of the new generation.

Key verse: “I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.” (30:19)

Main people: Moses, Joshua

1. Israel’s faithlessness and God’s care	1:1–4:43
2. The law of Moses	4:44–26:19
a) Review of the covenant	4:44–11:32
b) Supplementary requirements	12:1–26:19
3. Curses and blessings	27:1–30:20
4. Change of leadership	31:1–34:12
a) Joshua to succeed Moses	31:1–29
b) Song of Moses	31:30–32:47
c) Moses’ blessings on tribes	32:48–33:29
d) Death of Moses and succession of Joshua	34:1–12

Joshua

Author: Joshua

Time: 1406–1400 BC.

Summary: Joshua was selected by God to succeed Moses and lead the nation into the promised land of Canaan. The book outlines the conquest and occupation of Canaan by Israel under his military leadership. God states that all the inhabitants of the land were to be utterly destroyed in order to assure spiritual purity and complete devotion to God. This was never fully carried out.

Key verse: “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve . . . But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” (24:15)

Main person: Joshua

1. Entrance into the promised land	1:1–5:12
a) Exhortations to conquer	1:1–18
b) Spying out Jericho	2:1–24
c) Crossing the Jordan	3:1–5:1
d) Preparation at Gilgal	5:2–12
2. Conquest of the promised land	5:13–12:24
a) Initial battles	5:13–8:35
b) The southern campaign	9:1–10:43
c) The northern campaign	11:1–23
d) Catalogue of the defeated kings	12:1–24
3. Distribution of the promised land	13:1–21:45
a) Areas yet to be conquered	13:1–7
b) Territory of the tribes east of the Jordan River	13:8–33
c) Territory for three tribes given at Gilgal	14:1–17:18
d) Territories of the remaining tribes given at Shiloh	18:1–19:51
e) Cities for the Levites	20:1–21:45
4. Tribal unity and loyalty to the Lord	22:1–24:33
a) Departure of the tribes east of the Jordan River	22:1–34
b) Joshua’s farewell address to the leaders of Israel	23:1–16
c) Renewal of the covenant at Shechem	24:1–28
d) Death of Joshua	24:29–33

Judges

Author: Probably Samuel

Time: 1400–1100 BC.

Summary: After arriving in Canaan, many Israelites became disobedient to God, partly because of their failure to drive out the inhabitants of the land. The book of Judges shows how God raised up leaders to call them back to faithfulness and to continue the conquest of the land. It covers the period from the death of Joshua to the establishment of the monarchy under Saul. The book of Judges closes by setting the stage for the people’s desire for a human king.

Key verses: “Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies . . . But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers.” (2:18–19)

Main people: The judges including Deborah, Gideon and Samson.

1. Introduction	1:1–3:6
a) Israel’s failure to purge the land	1:1–2:5
b) God’s dealings with Israel’s rebellion	2:6–3:6
2. Oppression and deliverance	3:7–16:31
a) Othniel	3:7–11
b) Ehud	3:12–30
c) Shamgar	3:31
d) Deborah	4:1–5:31
e) Gideon	6:1–8:35
f) Abimelech	9:1–57
g) Tola	10:1–2
h) Jair	10:3–5
i) Jephthah	10:6–12:7
j) Ibzan	12:8–10
k) Elon	12:11–12
l) Abdon	12:13–15
m) Samson	13:1–16:31
3. Religious and moral disorder	17:1–21:25
a) Corruption of doctrine	17:1–18:31
b) Corruption of practice	19:1–21:25

Ruth

Author: Unknown

Time: Approx 1250 BC.

Summary: The book of Ruth is set in the period of the Judges. It shows that in a time of national decline and immorality, God preserved a remnant who could serve as the core for a future revival. This would be accomplished in Ruth's descendant, David, from whom the Messiah would come. It is thought that the book is written after the period of the Judges and describes customs of that time period.

Key verse: "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God." (1:16)

Main people: Ruth, Naomi, Boaz

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1. Naomi's family dies 1:1-5
 2. Naomi returns from Moab 1:6-22
 3. Ruth and Boaz meet in the harvest fields 2:1-23
 4. Ruth goes to Boaz at the threshing floor 3:1-18
 5. Boaz arranges to marry Ruth 4:1-12
 6. Naomi blessed with a new family 4:13-22

1 and 2 Samuel

Author: Possibly Samuel, Nathan and Gad

Time: 1100–970 BC.

Summary: The books of Samuel illustrate Israel’s transition from a loose confederation of tribes to a strong and united nation. It portrays the life of the last judge, Samuel, and the anointing of the first king of Israel, Saul. It recounts the degenerating reign of Saul and the succession to his throne of David, a man after God’s own heart. In the original Hebrew text, the books of Samuel were considered one book by the Hebrew scribes. The second book begins with the death of Saul and the ascension of David to the throne. The rest of the book records the reign of David regarding conquered lands, as well as political intrigues. It concludes with the blessing of Solomon by David.

Key verses: “We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.” (1 Samuel 8:19–20)

“When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” (2 Samuel 7:12–13)

Main people: Eli, Samuel, Saul, David, Abner, Mephibosheth, Uriah, Bathsheba, Nathan, Joab, Amnon, Absalom

1. The early life of Samuel	1 Sam 1:1–7:17
a) The birth and childhood of Samuel	1:1–4:1a
b) The capture and return of the ark	4:1b–7:17
2. The life of Saul	8:1–15:35
a) Israel’s request for a king	8:1–22
b) Political life of Saul	9:1–12:25
c) War of Independence	13:1–14:52
d) Saul rejected by God	15:1–35
3. The early life of David	16:1–2 Sam 5:5
a) David anointed to be king	16:1–13
b) David in the court of Saul	16:14–19:17
c) David in exile	19:18–31:13
d) David, king at Hebron	2 Sam 1:1–4:12
e) David, king at Jerusalem	5:1–5

4. David as king: accomplishment and glory	5:6–9:13
a) David conquers Jerusalem and defeats the Philistines	5:6–25
b) David brings ark to Jerusalem	6:1–23
c) God promises David an everlasting dynasty	7:1–29
d) David’s victories and officials	8:1–18
e) David and Mephibosheth	9:1–13
5. David as king: weakness and failure	10:1–20:26
a) David commits adultery and murder	10:1–12:31
b) David loses his sons Amnon and Absalom	13:1–20:26
6. The last days of David	21:1–24:25
a) The famine	21:1–14
b) Heroic exploits	21:15–22
c) David’s psalm	22:1–51
d) Last words of David	23:1–7
e) Heroic exploits	23:8–39
f) Census and plague	24:1–25

1 and 2 Kings

Author: Unknown

Time: 970–586 BC.

Summary: In the original Hebrew texts, these books were regarded as one book. The two books contain the history of the Jewish monarchy from the death of David (around 970 BC) to the Babylonian exile (586 BC). They trace the division of the Jewish nation into the Kingdom of Judah in the south and the Kingdom of Israel in the north. 1 & 2 Kings record Israel’s history from a religious, rather than a civil, viewpoint. As such, it records the religious progress of the nation and sets forth the various steps in the moral growth and decay of the kingdom. 1 Kings opens with Israel in its glory, and 2 Kings closes with Israel and Judah in ruins. The purpose of the Book of Kings is to record the lives and characters of the nation’s leaders as a warning and exhortation to all subsequent generations of believers.

Key verses: “Be strong, show yourself a man, and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements . . . so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go.” (1 Kings 2:2–3)

“The LORD rejected all the people of Israel; he afflicted them and gave them into the hands of plunderers, until he thrust them from his presence.” (2 Kings 17:20)

Main people: David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Nathan, Jeroboam, Ahab, Jezebel, Elijah, Elisha, Jehu, Jeroboam II, Joash, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Manasseh, Josiah.

1. United kingdom of Solomon	1 Kings 1:1–12:24
a) Solomon’s ascension to the throne	1:1–2:46
b) The wisdom and wealth of Solomon	3:1–4:34
c) Solomon’s building activity	5:1–9:9
d) The Golden Age of Solomon	9:10–10:29
e) Solomon’s sin, decline and death	11:1–43
f) Rehoboam’s succession to the throne	12:1–24
2. Divided kingdom from Jeroboam/Rehoboam to Ahab/Asa ...	12:25–16:34
a) Jeroboam I of Israel	12:25–14:20
b) Rehoboam of Judah	14:21–31
c) Abijah of Judah	15:1–8
d) Asa of Judah	15:9–24
e) Nadab of Israel	15:25–32

f) Baasha of Israel	15:33–16:7
g) Elah of Israel	16:8–14
h) Zimri of Israel	16:15–20
i) Omri of Israel	16:21–28
j) Ahab of Israel	16:29–34
3. Elijah and Elisha from Ahab/Asa to Joram/Jehoshaphat ...17:1–2Ki 8:15	
a) Elijah in the reign of Ahab	17:1–22:40
b) Jehoshaphat of Judah	22:41–50
c) Ahaziah of Israel; Elijah’s last prophecy	22:51–2Ki 1:18
d) Elijah taken away; Elisha’s inauguration	2Ki 2:1–18
e) Elisha in the reign of Joram	2:19–8:15
4. Divided kingdom from Joram/Jehoram to exile of Israel 8:16–17:41	
a) Jehoram of Judah	8:16–24
b) Ahaziah of Judah	8:25–29
c) Jehu’s revolt and reign	9:1–10:36
d) Athaliah and Joash of Judah; repair of temple	11:1–12:21
e) Jehoahaz of Israel	13:1–9
f) Jehoash of Israel; Elisha’s last prophecy	13:10–25
g) Amaziah of Judah	14:1–22
h) Jeroboam II of Israel	14:23–29
i) Azariah of Judah	15:1–7
j) Zechariah of Israel	15:8–12
k) Shallum of Israel	15:13–16
l) Menahem of Israel	15:17–22
m) Pekahiah of Israel	15:23–26
n) Pekah of Israel	15:27–31
o) Jotham of Judah	15:32–38
p) Ahaz of Judah	16:1–20
q) Hoshea of Israel	17:1–6
r) Exile of Israel; resettlement of land	17:7–41
5. Judah from Hezekiah to Babylonian exile 18:1–25:30	
a) Hezekiah	18:1–20:21
b) Manasseh	21:1–18
c) Amon	21:19–26
d) Josiah	22:1–23:30
e) Jehoahaz: exiled to Egypt	23:31–35
f) Jehoiakim: first Babylonian invasion	23:36–24:7
g) Jehoiachin: second Babylonian invasion	24:8–17
h) Zedekiah	24:18–20
i) Babylonian exile of Judah	25:1–26
j) Jehoiachin in Babylon	25:27–30

1 and 2 Chronicles

Author: Probably Ezra

Time: 1050–536 BC.

Summary: Like the books of Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles were originally one book according to Jewish tradition. The Chronicles were written to remind the nation of their entire history, and of their position among other nations. However, the Chronicles are not simply a repeat of the history already recorded in the books of Samuel and Kings. The books emphasise the history of priestly worship from the death of Saul to the end of the Babylonian captivity. The Chronicles contain more of the relationship of kings to the worship of God than do the books of Kings. The history of the Northern Kingdom is omitted from the Chronicles because the Northern Kingdom had no bearing on the development of true worship of God in Jerusalem.

Key verses: “David . . . said to Solomon his son, ‘Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD God, my God, is with you’” (1 Chron 28:20)

“But will God really dwell on earth with men? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!” (2 Chron 6:18)

Main people: David, Solomon, rulers of Judah

1. Genealogies	1:1–9:44
a) Patriarchs	1:1–54
b) Judah	2:1–4:23
c) Simeon	4:24–43
d) Tribes east of the Jordan River	5:1–26
e) Levi	6:1–81
f) Six other tribes	7:1–9:44
2. The reign of David	10:1–29:30
a) The death of Saul	10:1–14
b) David’s rise	11:1–20:8
c) David’s latter days	21:1–29:30
3. The reign of Solomon	2 Chron 1:1–9:31
a) Solomon’s inauguration	1:1–17
b) Solomon’s Temple	2:1–7:22
c) Solomon’s Kingdom	8:1–9:31

4. The kingdom of Judah	10:1–36:23
a) The division of the kingdom	10:1–11:23
b) Rehoboam	12:1–16
c) Abijah	13:1–22
d) Asa	14:1–16:14
e) Jehoshaphat	17:1–20:37
f) Jehoram and Ahaziah	21:1–22:9
g) Joash	22:10–24:27
h) Amaziah	25:1–28
i) Uzziah	26:1–23
j) Jotham	27:1–9
k) Ahaz	28:1–27
l) Hezekiah	29:1–32:33
m) Manasseh	33:1–20
n) Amon	33:21–25
o) Josiah	34:1–36:1
p) Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah	36:2–14
q) Exile	36:15–23

Ezra

Author: Ezra

Time: 538–457 BC.

Summary: Ezra covers the events of the Jews returning from the Babylonian captivity. The decline of Babylon and its eventual overthrow by the Persians brought about this return to Jerusalem. The Jews are numbered and allowed to return to Judah to rebuild the Temple. Samaritan assistance is rejected and their opposition is a contributing factor to the slow progress of the Temple construction. Despite the delays, the Temple is completed and dedicated during this period.

Key verse: “The LORD our God has been gracious in leaving us a remnant and giving us a firm place in his sanctuary, and so our God gives light to our eyes and a little relief in our bondage.” (9:8)

Main person: Ezra

1. The exiles return from Babylon	1:1–2:70
a) The decree of Cyrus	1:1–4
b) Preparations for the journey	1:5–11
c) Those who returned	2:1–70
2. Temple building begins	3:1–4:23
a) The altar and the foundation	3:1–13
b) Opposition to the work	4:1–23
3. The building completed	4:24–6:22
a) Work resumed	4:24–5:5
b) Tattenai’s letter to Darius	5:6–17
c) Decrees of Cyrus and Darius	6:1–12
d) The Temple finished	6:13–22
4. Ezra’s journey to Jerusalem	7:1–8:36
a) Ezra introduced	7:1–10
b) Letter of Artaxerxes to Ezra	7:11–28
c) The journey to Jerusalem	8:1–36
5. Ezra’s reforms	9:1–10:44
a) The offence of mixed marriages and Ezra’s prayer	9:1–15
b) The abandonment of mixed marriages	10:1–17
c) List of those with foreign wives	10:18–44

Nehemiah

Author: Nehemiah

Time: 445–432 BC.

Summary: The book begins with Nehemiah returning from Babylon as governor of Judah. He plans and oversees the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem despite discouraging opposition, and disunity within the Jewish population. The wall is completed and more exiles are returned and registered as Jewish citizens. Nehemiah's dedication to God drives him to make several religious reforms including a public reading of the Law and arrangements for worship.

Key verse: “So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.” (4:6)

Main people: Nehemiah, Ezra, Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem

1. Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem	1:1–2:20
a) Tragic news from Jerusalem, and Nehemiah's prayer	1:1–11
b) The granting of Nehemiah's request	2:1–8
c) Nehemiah's survey of the walls, and his report	2:9–20
2. The building of the wall	3:1–7:3
a) The workmen and their tasks	3:1–32
b) The opposition of enemies	4:1–23
c) Nehemiah's social reforms	5:1–19
d) The wall finished despite opposition	6:1–7:3
3. List of exiles	7:4–7:3a
4. Ezra's preaching and reforms	7:73b–10:39
a) The reading and observance of God's Law	7:73b–8:18
b) A public confession and covenant	9:1–10:39
5. Lists of inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem	11:1–12:26
a) New residents of Jerusalem	11:1–24
b) New residents of Judah	11:25–36
c) List of priests and Levites	12:1–26
6. Dedication of walls and organisation of temple services	12:27–47
7. Nehemiah's second administration	13:1–31
a) Abuses during his absence	13:1–5
b) Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem	13:6–9
c) Reorganisation and reforms	13:10–31

Esther

Author: Not known

Time: Approx 460 BC.

Summary: Esther is regarded as a historical book, written during the period of the captivity. It records the plot of Haman, the Prime Minister to the Persian king, to exterminate the Jewish race. This plot is foiled by Esther, the Queen of Persia, who was a Jew. This book gives us the origin of the Feast of Purim.

Key verse: “If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?” (4:14).

Main people: Vashti, Esther, Mordecai, Haman, Ahasuerus (Xerxes)

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1. Vashti divorced 1:1–22
 2. Esther made queen 2:1–18
 3. Mordecai uncovers a conspiracy 2:19–23
 4. Haman’s plot against the Jews 3:1–15
 5. Mordecai persuades Esther to help 4:1–17
 6. Esther’s first banquet 5:1–8
 7. Haman’s rage against Mordecai 5:9–14
 8. Haman humiliated before Mordecai 6:1–14
 9. Esther’s second banquet, Haman hanged 7:1–10
 10. Mordecai’s counter-decree 8:1–17
 11. The Jews victorious and the institution of Purim 9:1–32
 12. Mordecai promoted 10:1–3

Job

Author: Possibly Moses

Time: Apparently around 1500 BC.

Summary: Job is the first poetic book of the Old Testament. It relates the anguish of a righteous man as he and his friends struggle to explain the affliction which has befallen Job and has stripped him of his wealth, his family, and his health. The dialogue continues between Job and his friends as each presents his opinion on the reasons behind such troubles.

The purpose of the book of Job is to grapple with the question of why good people sometimes suffer. God promises that he will bless the faithful. Job agonises over the apparent exceptions. The book concludes that ultimately the reason behind much suffering is known only to God.

Key verses: “As surely as God lives, who has denied me justice . . . as long as I have life within me, the breath of God in my nostrils, my lips will not speak wickedness, and my tongue will utter no deceit.” (27:2–4)

Main people: Job, his family, his friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar), Elihu

1. Affliction of Job	1:1–2:13
a) Description of Job	1:1–5
b) Affliction of Job	1:6–2:10
c) Arrival of Job’s three friends	2:11–13
2. Debates between Job and his three friends	3:1–31:40
a) First cycle of debate	3:1–14:22
b) Second cycle of debate	15:1–21:34
c) Third cycle of debate	22:1–31:40
3. The speeches of Elihu	32:1–37:24
4. Restoration of Job	38:1–42:17
a) God’s first challenge to Job	38:1–40:2
b) Job’s response	40:3–5
c) God’s second challenge to Job	40:6–41:34
d) Job’s submission and renewed prosperity	42:1–17

Psalms

Author: David, Asaph (David's choir leader), sons of Korah (a family of musicians) and others.

Time: 1000–700 BC.

Summary: The Psalms are divided into five books, each according to a specific classification. The Psalms are a form of Hebrew poetry, many of which were accompanied by music. The content of the Psalms includes prophecy, praise to God and visions of the future Kingdom and its glory. David is named as author of approximately half of the Psalms. A handful of other men are responsible for approximately 15, while the authors of the remaining Psalms are unnamed.

Key verses: “Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.” (100:1–2)

Book	Main author/collector	Psalms
1	David	1–41
2	David, sons of Korah	42–72
3	Asaph	73–89
4	Unknown	90–100
5	David, unknown	107–150

Where to find Psalms of:

Instruction	1; 19; 39
Praise	8; 29; 93; 100
Thanks	30; 65; 103; 107; 116
Repentance	6; 32; 38; 51; 130
Trust	3; 27; 31; 46; 56; 62; 86
Distress	4; 13; 55; 64; 88
Hope	42; 63; 80; 84; 137
History	78; 105; 106

Proverbs

Author: Solomon and others

Time: 1000–700 BC.

Summary: Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings from several sources, including King Solomon, laying practical rules for right living based on godly wisdom. The sayings deal with many different problems and situations. Most of the proverbs are very short and easy to remember. The proverbs are not organized in a way which puts all the sayings on one topic together. Instead, almost every verse raises a new and important idea. Proverbs presents the idea that humans are either good or evil, wise or foolish, with God or without him. Both are known by their deeds, their “fruits”, their chosen “ways” in life and their fitting ends.

Key verse: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” (9:10)

1. Superiority of the way of wisdom	1:1–9:18
a) Introduction	1:1–7
b) Appeals and warnings for the young	1:8–33
c) Commendation of wisdom	2:1–4:27
d) Warnings against folly	5:1–7:27
e) Appeals to youth	8:1–9:18
2. Main collection of Solomon’s proverbs	10:1–22:16
3. The thirty sayings of the wise	22:17–24:22
4. Additional sayings of the wise	24:23–24
5. Hezekiah’s collection of Solomon’s proverbs	25:1–29:27
6. The words of Agur	30:1–33
7. The words of Lemuel	31:1–9
8. The ideal wife	31:10–31

Ecclesiastes

Author: Solomon

Time: 960 BC.

Summary: Ecclesiastes is a philosophical book looking at the futility of life without God. It was written by Solomon from his perspective as a man who had opportunity to experience everything life could offer. He concludes that, without God, life would be meaningless; all his worldly possessions and all the pleasures possible would amount to nothing. The conclusion of the book is that man should fear God and obey his commandments.

Key verse: “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” (12:13)

1. The futility of human efforts without God1:1–11
2. The test of practical experience 1:12–2:26
3. Men’s opportunity limited by time 3:1–22
4. Human futility greatly increased by oppression 4:1–16
5. Futility of insincere worship 5:1–9
6. Futility of riches 5:10–6:2
7. Futility of human desires 6:3–11:6
8. Advice and warning to youth 11:7–12:8
9. Conclusion: reverently trust in and obey God 12:9–14

Song of Solomon

Author: Solomon

Time: About 960 BC.

Summary: This song is a poem in the form of a conversation about the wonder of sexual love. It depicts the beauty of love between a man (probably Solomon) and a woman (probably one of Solomon's queens) which develops into a mature undying relationship. Many people interpret it as an allegory of God's love for his people or the relationship between Christ and his church. The basic message is the purity and sacredness of love.

It is a kind of love song in which the man and the woman take turns in singing about their love for the other. There is also a chorus sung by a group of their friends. The speeches and events described do not necessarily follow in chronological order.

Key verse: "Love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame." (8:6)

Main people: The lover (the man), the beloved (the woman), friends.

1. The beginning of love	1:1–5:1
a) The wedding day	1:1–2:7
The beloved in the palace (1:1–8)	
At the banquet table (1:9–14)	
In the bridal chamber (1:15–2:7)	
b) Reflections on a courtship	2:8–3:5
A springtime visit (2:8–14)	
The little foxes (2:15–17)	
A dream: on counting the cost (3:1–5)	
c) The wedding day (continued)	3:6–5:1
The wedding procession (3:6–11)	
The wedding night (4:1–5:1)	
2. The development of oneness	5:2–8:14
a) A dream of love refused	5:2–8:4
The dream (5:2–8)	
A change of attitude (5:9–6:3)	
The return of the lover (6:4–10)	
The beloved in the garden (6:11–13a)	
The dance of the beloved (6:13b–8:4)	
b) A vacation in the country	8:5–14

Isaiah

Author: Isaiah

Time: 740–690 BC.

Summary: Isaiah ministered in the southern kingdom of Judah during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. He deals with the coming judgement on Judah due to its idolatry and wickedness. He urges the kings and the people to put their trust in God rather than in alliances with other nations. He comforts his people with the realisation that God loves those who are faithful to him and keep his commandments. He speaks of the future Messiah who would come to redeem the nation and restore the Kingdom.

Key verse: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (9:6)

Main people: Isaiah; the kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah

THE BOOK OF JUDGEMENT	1–39
1. Rebuke and promise	1:1–6:13
a) Rebellion confronted with judgement and grace	1:1–31
b) Punishment for sin as preparation for glory	2:1–4:6
c) Judgement and exile in store for the nation	5:1–30
d) Isaiah’s unique commission from God	6:1–13
2. Prophecies about Judah	7:1–12:6
a) Ahaz warned not to fear the Arameans and Israelites	7:1–25
b) Isaiah’s son and David’s son	8:1–9:7
c) Judgement against Israel	9:8–10:4
d) Assyrian empire crushed; glorious empire to come	10:5–12:6
3. Judgement against the nations	13:1–23:18
a) Against Babylon and its ruler	13:1–14:27
b) Against Philistia	14:28–32
c) Against Moab	15:1–16:14
d) Against Aram and Israel	17:1–14
e) Against Cush	18:1–7
f) Against Egypt	19:1–20:6
g) Against Babylon	21:1–10
h) Against Edom	21:11–12
i) Against Arabia	21:13–17
j) Against Jerusalem	22:1–25

k) Against Tyre	23:1–18
4. Judgement and promise	24:1–27:13
a) Universal judgement upon universal sin	24:1–23
b) God praised as deliverer and comforter of Zion	25:1–26:21
c) Oppressors to be punished but God’s people preserved	27:1–13
5. Six woes upon unbelievers	28:1–33:24
a) Woe to Ephraim (Samaria) and to Judah	28:1–29
b) Woe to Jerusalem	29:1–14
c) Woe to those who rely on foreign alliances	29:15–24
d) Woe to the obstinate nation	30:1–33
e) Woe to those who rely on Egypt	31:1–32:20
f) Woe to Assyria—but blessing for God’s people	33:1–24
6. More prophecies of judgement and promise	34:1–35:10
a) Destruction of the nations	34:1–17
b) Blessing on the way of holiness	35:1–10
7. Historical interlude	36:1–39:8
a) Jerusalem preserved from Assyrian threat	36:1–37:38
b) God extends Hezekiah’s life	38:1–22
c) The Babylonian exile predicted	39:1–8
THE BOOK OF COMFORT	40–66
8. The deliverance and restoration of Israel	40:1–48:22
a) Comfort for God’s people	40:1–41:29
b) The Lord’s servant	42:1–25
c) The regathering and renewal of Israel	43:1–44:5
d) The only God	44:6–47:15
e) The Lord’s exhortations to his people	48:1–22
9. The servant’s ministry and Israel’s restoration	49:1–57:21
a) The call and mission of the servant	49:1–7
b) The restoration of Zion	49:8–26
c) Israel’s sin and the servant’s obedience	50:1–11
d) Everlasting salvation for Zion	51:1–52:12
e) The suffering and glory of the Lord’s servant	52:13–53:12
f) The future glory of Zion	54:1–17
g) The Lord’s call to salvation	55:1–56:8
h) The condemnation of the wicked in Israel	56:9–57:21
10. Everlasting deliverance and everlasting judgement	58:1–66:24
a) False and true worship	58:1–14
b) Zion’s confession and redemption	59:1–21
c) Zion’s peace, prosperity, restoration and glory	60:1–63:6
d) Prayer for divine deliverance	63:7–64:12
e) The Lord’s answer: mercy and judgement	65:1–66:24

Jeremiah

Author: Jeremiah and Baruch

Time: 630–575 BC.

Summary: Jeremiah warns of the impending attack by Babylon that would destroy Jerusalem and enslave the Jews. He urges Jerusalem to turn from its wicked ways, but there is no response. He further warns of the false prophets who are leading the people astray. He urges the Israelites to submit to the Babylonian authority as the instrument of God’s judgement. They reject his warnings, persecute him, and imprison him. The people are carried away to Babylon, leaving Jeremiah and a few others in Jerusalem. He predicts that the captives will return after 70 years to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple.

Key verse: “If you do not listen, I will weep in secret because of your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly, overflowing with tears, because the Lord’s flock will be taken captive.” (13:17)

Main people: Jeremiah; important kings: Manasseh, Josiah, Zedekiah.

1. The prophet’s call	1
2. Prophetic oracles against Jerusalem and Judah	2–35
a) Early discourses	2–6
b) Temple message	7–10
c) Covenant and conspiracy	11–13
d) Messages concerning the drought	14–15
e) Disaster and comfort	16:1–17:18
f) Command to keep the Sabbath holy	17:19–27
g) Lessons from the potter	18–20
h) Condemnation of kings, prophets and people	21–24
i) Foretelling the Babylonian exile	25–29
j) Promises of restoration	30–33
k) Historical appendix	34–35
3. Sufferings and persecutions of Jeremiah	36–38
a) Burning Jeremiah’s scroll	36
b) Imprisoning Jeremiah	37–38
4. The fall of Jerusalem and its aftermath	39–45
a) The fall itself	39
b) Appointment of Gedaliah as governor and his assassination	40:1–41:15
c) Migration to Egypt	41:16–43:13
d) Prophecy against those in Egypt	44
e) Historical appendix: promise to Baruch	45

5. Prophecies against the nations	46–51
a) Against Egypt	46:1–28
b) Against Philistia	47:1–7
c) Against Moab	48:1–47
d) Against Ammon	49:1–6
e) Against Edom	49:7–22
f) Against Damascus	49:23–27
g) Against Arabia	49:28–33
h) Against Elam	49:34–39
i) Against Babylon	50–51
6. Historical appendix	52
a) Judah’s fall and captivity	52:1–30
b) Jehoiachin set free	52:31–34

Lamentations

Author: Jeremiah

Time: 580 BC.

Summary: Lamentation means “an expression of suffering”. In this book, Jeremiah expresses his sorrow regarding the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity of the nation at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar’s army. The book describes and explains the afflictions brought against the city of Jerusalem as well as surrounding nations who scoffed at Jerusalem’s affliction. He emphasises that this is the result of divine judgement for the sins of the people. The book underlines lessons that Jerusalem should learn from its afflictions: the vanity of glory, leadership and pride.

The entire book is poetic. Each of its five laments contains 22 verses (except the third which has 66 = 3 times 22) reflecting the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The first four laments are alphabetic acrostics (the verses of which begin with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet).

Key verse: “How deserted lies the city, once so full of people! How like a widow is she, who once was great among the nations! She who was queen among the provinces has now become a slave.” (1:1)

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1. Jerusalem’s misery and desolation 1:1–22
 2. The Lord’s anger against his people 2:1–22
 3. Judah’s complaint—and basis for consolation 3:1–66
 4. The contrast between Zion’s past and present 4:1–22
 5. Judah’s appeal for God’s forgiveness 5:1–22

Ezekiel

Author: Ezekiel

Time: 593–560 BC.

Summary: This book records the activity of the prophet Ezekiel who lived in Babylon during the Jewish exile. His message was directed to fellow captives and to Jews still present in Palestine. Both groups refused to listen and remained unwilling to accept the rule of Babylon. Ezekiel expressed his message through a number of enacted parables. He proclaimed the good news to the exiles that Israel, after being punished, would be restored and God’s kingdom would be established. This yet future kingdom will last forever and God’s people will never again be cast out.

Key verses: “O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel . . . I will put my Spirit in you and you will live.” (37:12,14)

Main person: Ezekiel

1. Prophecies against Judah and Jerusalem	1:1–24:27
a) Introduction: The call of Ezekiel	1:1–3:27
b) Symbolic acts showing the siege of Jerusalem	4:1–5:17
c) Oracles explaining divine judgement	6:1–7:27
d) Vision of the corrupted temple	8:1–11:25
e) Symbolic acts showing Jerusalem’s exile	12:1–28
f) Oracles explaining divine judgement	13:1–24:27
2. Oracles against foreign nations	25:1–32:32
a) Ammon	25:1–7
b) Moab	25:8–11
c) Edom	25:12–14
d) Philistia	25:15–17
e) Tyre	26:1–28:19
f) Sidon	28:20–26
g) Egypt	29:1–32:32
3. Prophecies of the restoration of Israel	33:1–39:29
a) The watchman	33:1–33
b) The Lord as the good shepherd	34:1–31
c) Oracles against Edom	35:1–15
d) Israel to be restored and made fruitful	36:1–37:28
e) The final battle	38:1–39:29
4. Vision of the new temple	40–48
a) Description of the new Temple	40:1–43:27
b) Duties and land allotment	44–48

Daniel

Author: Daniel

Time: 605–535 BC.

Summary: The first half of the book of Daniel tells the story of Daniel, a Jewish captive in Babylon who becomes a senior administrator in the empire. The second half of the book predicts the destiny of two opposing powers: The Kingdom of Men and the Kingdom of God, teaching that “the Most High rules in the Kingdom of Men”. Daniel’s prophecies generally do not deal with Israel, but the nations that control Israel. Daniel contains prophecies that span the time from Daniel’s day until the coming kingdom of God.

Key verse: “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.” (2:44)

Main people: Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego; Babylonian kings Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar; Persian king Darius.

1. Prologue: the setting	1
a) Daniel and his friends taken captive	1:1–7
b) The young men are faithful	1:8–16
c) The young men are promoted to high positions	1:17–21
2. The destinies of the nations of the world	2–7
a) Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a large statue	2
b) Nebuchadnezzar’s gold image	3
c) Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of an enormous tree	4
d) Belshazzar’s and Babylon’s downfall	5
e) Daniel’s deliverance	6
f) Daniel’s dream of four beasts	7
3. The destiny of the nation of Israel	8–12
a) Daniel’s vision of a ram and a goat	8
b) Daniel’s prayer and his vision of the 70 “sevens”	9
c) Daniel’s vision of a man	10:1–11:1
d) Daniel’s vision of the kings of the south and the north	11:2–45
e) The end times	12

Hosea

Author: Hosea

Time: 755–710 BC.

Summary: The book of Hosea describes the patience of God towards the rebellious and unfaithful northern kingdom of Israel. However, it is made clear to the Israelites that God will punish anyone who remains rebellious. God ordered Hosea to marry an adulterous wife, Gomer. This was symbolic of God’s relationship with Israel.

Key verse: “The LORD said to [Hosea], ‘Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD.’” (1:2)

Main people: Hosea, Gomer.

- 1. The unfaithful wife and the faithful husband 1:1–3:5**
 - a) Hosea’s wife and children 1:1–2:1
 - b) Judgement on faithless Israel 2:2–13
 - c) The restoration of faithless Israel 2:14–23
 - d) Hosea’s redemption of his faithless wife 3:1–5
- 2. The unfaithful nation and the faithful God 4:1–14:9**
 - a) Israel’s unfaithfulness 4:1–6:3
 - b) Israel’s punishment 6:4–10:15
 - c) The Lord’s faithful love 11:1–14:9

Joel

Author: Joel

Time: Unknown. The two most likely dates are about 830 BC or about 500 BC. In either case, its message is not significantly affected by its dating.

Summary: The book of Joel begins by describing a devastating swarm of locusts which causes national disaster to the agriculture of Israel. Joel calls the nation of Judah to a day of repentance. The last portion of the book is concerned with events associated with the “Day of the Lord”. The message is that, if Judah repents, God will richly bless them and forgive them.

Key verses: “I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions . . . And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.” (2:28,32)

1. **The locust plague as a foretaste of the Day of the Lord 1:1–2:17**
 - a) The calamity 1:1–20
 - b) The scourge as the forerunner of the judgement day 2:1–17
2. **The averting of judgement and bestowal of blessings 2:18–3:21**
 - a) The Lord’s restoration of Judah 2:18–27
 - b) The outpouring of the Holy Spirit 2:28–32
 - c) Judgement upon the nations 3:1–16
 - d) The blessings on God’s people 3:17–21

Amos

Author: Amos, a herdsman from Tekoa (a small town 17 km from Jerusalem)

Time: 765–750 BC.

Summary: The book of Amos was written during a period of national optimism in Israel. King Jeroboam II was ruler, and it was a time of great prosperity in which the kingdom had reached new political and military heights. It was also a time of idolatry, extravagant luxury, immorality, corruption and oppression of the poor. Amos was called by God to pronounce judgement on the northern kingdom of Israel by denouncing Israel's luxurious living, idolatry and moral depravity. Amos urges the people to repent before the judgements of God came upon them. "Seek God and live" was Amos' plea to the nation. He also foretells the dispersion of the Israelites, but points to a day when God would regather them in the land of their forefathers.

Key verses: "I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies . . . Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (5:21,24)

1. Judgements against the nations	1:1–2:16
a) Introduction	1:1–2
b) Judgement on neighbouring nations	1:3–2:3
c) Judgement on Judah and Israel	2:4–16
2. Three oracles of judgement against Israel	3:1–5:17
a) A declaration of judgement	3:1–15
b) The depravity of Israel	4:1–13
c) A lamentation for Israel's sin and doom	5:1–17
3. Two oracles of woe against Israel	5:18–6:14
a) An oracle of woe against Israel's perverted religion	5:18–27
b) An oracle of woe against Israel's complacent pride	6:1–14
4. Five visions of judgement against Israel	7:1–9:10
a) The devouring locusts	7:1–3
b) The flaming fire	7:4–6
c) The plumb line	7:7–17
d) The basket of ripe fruit	8:1–14
e) The judgement of the Lord	9:1–10
5. The promise of Israel's restoration	9:11–15

Obadiah

Author: Obadiah

Time: 585–565 BC.

Summary: Obadiah was a prophet who pronounced judgement upon the nation of Edom for its enmity against Israel. Edom is the nation descended from Esau, the twin brother of Jacob (Israel). Edom was to be punished for the violence they committed against Israel when invading the land.

Key verse: “The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights, you who say to yourself, ‘Who can bring me down to the ground?’” (1:3)

1. Judgement on Edom	2–14
a) Edom’s destruction announced	2–7
b) Edom’s destruction reaffirmed	8–14
2. The Day of the Lord	15–21
a) Judgement on the nations but deliverance for Zion	15–18
b) The Lord’s kingdom established	19–21

Jonah

Author: Jonah

Time: 775–760 BC.

Summary: The book describes Jonah’s commission to warn the city of Nineveh (the capital of Assyria) to repent and obey God’s commandments or else they would be destroyed. Jonah is reluctant to preach this message because Assyria is an enemy of Israel. So he heads for Tarshish instead, going in the opposite direction. A storm arises, he is thrown overboard and is swallowed by a great fish, remaining in the belly of the fish for three days. He miraculously escapes and goes to Nineveh. He preaches the message to the people of Nineveh who believe his message and repent of their sins. Jonah is angry but God teaches him about love and forgiveness.

Key verse: “Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?” (4:11)

Main people: Jonah, sailors, people of Nineveh

- 1. Jonah attempts to avoid his mission 1:1–2:10**
 - a) Jonah’s commission 1:1–3
 - b) A storm at sea 1:4–14
 - c) Jonah thrown overboard 1:15–2:1
 - d) Jonah’s prayer of thanksgiving 2:2–10
- 2. Jonah reluctantly fulfils his mission 3:1–4:11**
 - a) Jonah’s renewed commission and obedience 3:1–4
 - b) The Ninevites’ repentant appeal to the Lord 3:5–9
 - c) The Ninevites’ repentance acknowledged 3:10–4:4
 - d) Jonah’s complaint and rebuke 4:5–11

Micah

Author: Micah

Time: 735–700 BC.

Summary: Micah was contemporary with Isaiah and was to the southern kingdom of Judah what Amos had previously been to the northern kingdom of Israel. Both were fierce critics of the rich and powerful who exploited the poor. Micah’s leading ideas are the regeneration of Israel’s remnant through judgement, the establishment of the kingdom of God in the line of David, and the conversion of the nations through that kingdom. The conclusion of his prophecy is a triumphant expression of faith, seen in its true quality against the background of the materialism and the corruption of the reign of Ahaz.

Key verse: “In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it.” (4:1)

1. Judgement against Israel and Judah	1:2–3:12
a) Introduction	1:1–2
b) Predicted destruction	1:3–7
c) Lamentation for the destruction	1:8–16
d) Corruption in Judah	2:1–11
e) Hope in the midst of gloom	2:12–13
f) The leaders condemned	3:1–12
2. Hope for Israel and Judah	4:1–5:15
a) The coming Kingdom	4:1–5:1
b) The coming King	5:2–15
3. The Lord’s case against Israel	6:1–16
a) The Lord’s accusation	6:1–8
b) The coming judgement	6:9–16
4. Gloom turns to triumph	7:1–20
a) Micah laments the corruption of Judah	7:1–7
b) A bright future for God’s people	7:8–20

Nahum

Author: Nahum

Time: 620 BC.

Summary: The book of Nahum was written approximately 140 years after the recorded events in the book of Jonah. During that period of time, Nineveh had turned from its repentant attitude and had taken the northern kingdom of Israel into captivity. Whereas Jonah proclaimed a message of mercy and repentance, Nahum proclaimed doom upon Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. Those who were once used as God’s tool against the people of Israel and Jerusalem would now be destroyed because of their great wickedness.

Key verses: “The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him, but with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of Nineveh; he will pursue his foes into darkness.” (1:7–8)

1. God’s anger against Nineveh	1
2. Nineveh to fall	2
3. Woe to Nineveh	3

Habakkuk

Author: Habakkuk

Time: 620–605 BC.

Summary: The book begins with Habakkuk complaining of injustice in Judah and God’s failure to judge the wicked nation of Babylon. Habakkuk is shown that God’s people must continue to trust in his mercy regardless of the circumstances about them. The wicked appear to prosper while the righteous endure difficulties. However this prosperity of the wicked is only temporary. God will not abandon those who obey and follow his commandments: “the just shall live by faith”.

Key verse: “LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.” (3:2)

1. **Habakkuk’s first complaint:** Why does evil in Judah go unpunished? **1:1–4**
2. **God’s answer:** The Babylonians will punish Judah **1:5–11**
3. **Habakkuk’s second complaint:** How can a just God use wicked Babylon to punish people more righteous than themselves? **1:12–2:1**
4. **God’s answer:** Babylon will be punished, faith will be rewarded **2:2–20**
5. **Habakkuk’s prayer** **3:1–19**

Zephaniah

Author: Zephaniah

Time: 635–615 BC.

Summary: Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of King Josiah. Josiah was responsible for a great religious reform following the wicked reigns of Manasseh and Amon, who led the nation into various forms of idolatry. Zephaniah pronounces judgements against Jerusalem for their sins and exhorts national repentance. He further speaks of the “day of the Lord” when God will intervene to judge sin.

Key verse: “Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the Lord’s anger.” (2:3)

1. Announcement of total judgement	1:1–3
2. The day of the Lord coming on Judah and the nations	1:4–18
a) Judgement on idolaters in Judah	1:4–9
b) Wailing through Jerusalem	1:10–13
c) The inescapable day of the Lord’s wrath	1:14–18
3. God’s judgement on the nations	2:1–3:8
a) Call to repentance	2:1–3
b) Judgement on Philistia	2:4–7
c) Judgement on Moab and Ammon	2:8–11
d) Judgement on Cush	2:12
e) Judgement on Assyria	2:13–15
f) Judgement on Jerusalem	3:1–5
g) Jerusalem’s refusal to repent	3:6–8
4. Redemption of the remnant	3:9–20

Haggai

Author: Haggai

Time: 520 BC.

Summary: Haggai’s four messages were given during a four-month period in 520 BC. He was contemporary with Zechariah. Both Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the Jews who had returned to Judah from their captivity in Babylon to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 5:1–2; 6:14). Haggai exhorts them to “consider their ways” and to complete the Temple whose foundation had been laid 18 years before. (The people responded and the Temple was completed in 516 BC.) Haggai further pronounces that pagan empires will be overthrown by God and Judah will be elevated during the time of the Messiah.

Key verses: “‘Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little . . . You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it . . . Build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honoured,’ says the LORD.” (1:5–8)

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1. First message: the call to rebuild the temple 1:1–11
 2. The response of Zerubbabel and the people 1:12–15
 3. Second message: The temple to be filled with glory 2:1–9
 4. Third message: a defiled people purified and blessed 2:10–19
 5. Fourth message: the promise to Zerubbabel 2:20–23

Zechariah

Author: Zechariah

Time: 520–490 BC.

Summary: Zechariah was a younger contemporary of Haggai. He also encouraged the people to rebuild the Temple. Like Daniel and Revelation, this book contains symbolic visions. It contains detailed references to the coming Messiah. The book concludes with descriptions of the enemies of Jerusalem being judged and of the future glory of God’s kingdom.

Key verse: “Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (9:9)

1. Introduction: The call to repent	1:1–6
2. The night visions of Zechariah	1:7–6:8
a) Vision of the horses	1:7–17
b) Vision of the horns and craftsmen	1:18–21
c) Vision of the surveyor	2:1–13
d) Vision of Joshua the high priest	3:1–10
e) Vision of the golden lampstand and two olive trees	4:1–14
f) Vision of the flying scroll	5:1–4
g) Vision of the woman in a basket	5:5–11
h) Vision of the four chariots	6:1–8
3. The crowning of Joshua	6:9–15
4. Questions concerning fasting	7:1–8:23
a) The question	7:1–3
b) The lesson from history	7:4–14
c) God promises to bless Israel	8:1–23
5. The future of the nations, Israel and Messiah’s kingdom	9:1–14:21
a) The first oracle	9:1–11:17
b) The second oracle	12:1–14:21

Malachi

Author: Malachi

Time: 430 BC.

Summary: Malachi's message comes to the people in a time of great spiritual decline. It is approximately 80 years after the rebuilding of the temple and the promises of the coming Messiah have not yet been realised. As a result, the people had become slack and had an increasingly casual attitude toward God and worship. Malachi states that their sacrifices were unacceptable to God, husbands were unfaithful, and the priests had neglected God's covenants.

Key verse: " 'See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before men. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,' says the LORD Almighty." (3:1)

1. **God's love for Israel affirmed**1:1–5
2. **Israel's unfaithfulness rebuked** 1:6–2:16
 - a) The unfaithful priests 1:6–2:9
 - b) The unfaithful people 2:10–16
3. **The Lord's coming announced**2:17–4:6
 - a) The Lord will purify the priests and judge the people 2:17–3:5
 - b) A call to repentance 3:6–18
 - c) The day of the Lord announced 4:1–6

GOSPELS

The word “gospel” comes from the Old English word “God-spell” and is a translation of the Greek word for “good news”. One of the oldest uses of the word in the ancient world was by a king’s herald, who announced the “glad tidings” of the king’s birthday as he went through the cities of the realm. This is just the meaning in our New Testament. The four Gospels announce the good news that God had sent his Messiah, Jesus, to the world, just as the Old Testament had promised.

The Gospels describe the birth of Jesus and his three and a half year ministry. Very little is recorded about his life before he began his ministry at the age of about 30. Even in recording his ministry, the Gospels are highly selective in the events recorded. They concentrate heavily on the last week of his ministry and the events surrounding his death. The Gospel of John, for example, spends 6 of its 21 chapters (13–18) describing events which took place on one night—the night before Jesus died.

Why are there four gospels? Perhaps for the same reason different descriptions of a beautiful scenery would appeal to different people. Matthew describes one perspective of the life of Christ, Mark another, and Luke a third. These three gospels are so much alike that they are called the *Synoptic* (“see with” or “see alike”) Gospels. They all look at the life of Christ from a historical perspective. On the other hand, John’s gospel dwells more on the inner meaning of Jesus’ life and teaching, and tends to describe different events in his ministry from those described in the Synoptic Gospels.

Matthew

Author: Matthew

Time: 6 BC – AD 30

Summary: Matthew writes for a Jewish audience. His purpose is to witness that Jesus was the promised Messiah of the Old Testament and that he fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies. Matthew makes no fewer than 60 references to the Old Testament writings as fulfilled in Christ, so that the word “fulfilled” becomes characteristic of the book. The Jews placed great importance on Scripture, and this gospel abounds in such references. Matthew emphasises the words of the Lord regarding the kingdom of heaven, possibly to counter the popular Jewish belief of the day that the Messiah would be a militant leader who would overthrow the current Roman occupation and re-establish the throne of David.

The whole Gospel is woven around five great speeches of Jesus: (1) ch. 5–7; (2) ch. 10; (3) ch. 13; (4) ch. 18; (5) ch. 24–25. Each speech concludes with the words “When Jesus had finished saying these things ...”

Key verses: “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’—which means ‘God with us’.” (1:22–23)

1. The birth and early years of Jesus	1–2
a) His genealogy	1:1–17
b) His birth	1:18–2:12
c) His sojourn in Egypt	2:13–23
2. The beginnings of Jesus’ ministry	3:1–4:11
a) The ministry of John the Baptist	3:1–12
b) The baptism of Jesus	3:13–17
c) The temptation of Jesus	4:1–11
3. Jesus’ ministry in Galilee	4:12–14:12
a) The beginning of the Galilean campaign	4:12–25
b) Jesus’ teaching on discipleship	5–7
c) A selection of Jesus’ miracles	8–9
d) The 12 apostles chosen	10
e) Responses to Jesus	11–12
f) Parables	13:1–53
g) Further responses to Jesus	13:54–58
h) Death of John the Baptist	14:1–12

4. Jesus' withdrawals from Galilee	14:13–17:21
a) To the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee	14:13–15:20
b) To Phoenicia	15:21–28
c) To the Decapolis	15:29–16:12
d) To Caesarea Philippi	16:13–20
e) Jesus predicts his death	16:21–28
f) Jesus is transfigured	17:1–21
5. Jesus' last ministry in Galilee	17:22–18:35
a) Prediction of Jesus' death	17:22–23
b) Temple tax	17:24–27
c) Teaching on relationships among the disciples	18
6. Jesus' ministry in Judea and Perea	19–20
a) Teaching on divorce	19:1–12
b) Teaching on little children	19:13–15
c) The rich young man	19:16–30
d) The parable of the workers in the vineyard	20:1–16
e) Prediction of Jesus' death	20:17–19
f) A mother's request	20:20–28
g) Healing blind men at Jericho	20:29–34
7. Jesus' last week	21–27
a) The triumphal entry	21:1–11
b) The cleansing of the temple	21:12–17
c) The last controversies with the Jewish leaders	21:18–23:39
d) A prophecy concerning the end of the age	24–25
e) The anointing of Jesus' feet	26:1–16
f) The Last Supper and Gethsemane	26:17–46
g) The arrest, trials and death of Jesus	26:47–27:66
8. The resurrection of Jesus	28

Mark

Author: Mark

Time: AD 26–30

Summary: Mark’s picture of the life of Christ is more complete than the other Gospels, even though it is the shortest, and therefore more concise. Mark emphasises the larger-than-life, wondrous nature of Jesus. The book of Mark is thought to be aimed at a non-Jewish audience (in particular, Romans). There are very few references to the Old Testament Scriptures contained in this Gospel. Jewish words are explained (3:17; 5:41; 7:11,34; 10:36); and also Jewish customs (7:3–4; 14:12; 15:42). Latin expressions are frequently used such as Legion, Centurion, etc. The Romans admired action, and this Gospel depicts Jesus as a worker.

Key verses: “Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!’” (1:14–15)

1. The beginnings of Jesus’ ministry	1:1–13
a) The ministry of John the Baptist	1:1–8
b) The baptism of Jesus	1:9–11
c) The temptation of Jesus	1:12–13
2. Jesus’ early ministry in Galilee	1:14–3:12
a) Call of the first disciples	1:14–20
b) Miracles in Capernaum	1:21–34
c) A tour of Galilee	1:35–45
d) Ministry in Capernaum	2:1–22
e) Sabbath controversy	2:23–3:12
3. Jesus’ later ministry in Galilee	3:13–6:29
a) Selection of the 12 apostles	3:13–19
b) Teachings in Capernaum	3:20–35
c) Parables of the kingdom	4:1–34
d) Trip across the Sea of Galilee	4:35–5:20
e) More Galilean miracles	5:21–43
f) Unbelief in Jesus’ home town	6:1–6
g) Six teams of apostles tour Galilee	6:7–13
h) King Herod’s reaction to Jesus’ ministry	6:14–29

4. Jesus' withdrawals from Galilee	6:30–9:32
a) To the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee	6:30–52
b) To the western shore of the Sea of Galilee	6:53–7:23
c) To Phoenicia	7:24–30
d) To the region of the Decapolis	7:31–8:10
e) To the area of Caesarea Philippi	8:11–9:32
5. Jesus' last ministry in Galilee	9:33–50
6. Jesus' ministry in Judea and Perea	10
a) Teaching on divorce	10:1–12
b) Teaching on children	10:13–16
c) The rich young man	10:17–31
d) Prediction of Jesus' death	10:32–34
e) A request of two brothers	10:35–45
f) Healing a blind man at Jericho	10:46–52
7. Jesus' last week	11–15
a) The triumphal entry	11:1–11
b) The cleansing of the temple	11:12–19
c) The last controversies with the Jewish leaders	11:20–12:44
d) A prophecy concerning the end of the age	13
e) The anointing of Jesus	14:1–11
f) The Last Supper and Gethsemane	14:12–42
g) The arrest, trial and death of Jesus	14:43–15:47
8. The resurrection of Jesus	16

Luke

Author: Luke

Time: 6 BC – AD 30

Summary: Luke (who also wrote the book of Acts) was a Greek physician. His book emphasises the humanity of Jesus and his compassion, as well as the power of the Holy Spirit and prayer. He describes Jesus' acceptance of Gentiles, women, children and the poor. The writing is characterised by historical detail and a warm, sensitive understanding of Jesus and of those around him.

Luke's Gospel was written particularly for Greeks who delighted in wisdom, beauty and system. Luke tells the story of Jesus, unfolding his development in a systematic manner. Luke was an artist with the pen, drawing the portrait of Jesus as the perfect man.

Key verses: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it." (9:23–24)

1. The preface	1:1–4
2. The coming of Jesus	1:5–2:52
a) The predictions of Jesus' birth	1:5–56
b) The birth of John the Baptist	1:57–80
c) The birth and childhood of Jesus	2
3. The preparation of Jesus for his public ministry	3:1–4:13
a) His forerunner	3:1–20
b) His baptism	3:21–22
c) His genealogy	3:23–38
d) His temptation	4:1–13
4. Jesus' ministry in Galilee	4:14–9:9
a) The beginning of the ministry in Galilee	4:14–41
b) The first tour of Galilee	4:42–5:39
c) A controversy about the Sabbath	6:1–11
d) The choice of the 12 apostles	6:12–16
e) The sermon on the plain	6:17–49
f) Miracles in Capernaum and Nain	7:1–18
g) The inquiry of John the Baptist	7:19–29
h) Jesus and the Pharisees	7:30–50
i) The second tour of Galilee	8:1–3
j) The parables of the kingdom	8:4–21
k) The trip across the Sea of Galilee	8:22–39
l) The third tour of Galilee	8:40–9:9

5. Jesus' withdrawals from Galilee	9:10–50
a) To the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee	9:10–17
b) To Caesarea Philippi	9:18–50
6. Jesus' ministry in Judea	9:51–13:21
a) Journey through Samaria to Judea	9:51–62
b) The mission of the 70	10:1–24
c) The lawyer and the parable of the Good Samaritan	10:25–37
d) Jesus at Bethany with Mary and Martha	10:38–42
e) Teachings in Judea	11:1–13:21
7. Jesus' ministry in Perea	13:22–19:27
a) The narrow door	13:22–30
b) Warning about Herod	13:31–35
c) At a Pharisee's house	14:1–23
d) The cost of discipleship	14:24–35
e) Some parables	15–16
f) Miscellaneous teachings	17:1–10
g) Ten healed of leprosy	17:11–19
h) The coming of the kingdom	17:20–37
i) The persistent widow	18:1–8
j) The Pharisee and tax collector	18:9–14
k) Jesus and the children	18:15–17
l) The rich young ruler	18:18–30
m) Prediction of Jesus' death	18:31–34
n) Healing a blind man at Jericho	18:35–43
o) Zacchaeus	19:1–10
p) The parable of the 10 minas	19:11–27
8. Jesus' last week	19:28–23:56
a) The triumphal entry	19:28–44
b) The cleansing of the temple	19:45–48
c) The last controversies with the Jewish leaders	20
d) A prophecy concerning the end of the age	21
e) The Last Supper and Gethsemane	22:1–46
f) The arrest, trial and death of Jesus	22:47–23:56
9. The resurrection of Jesus	24
a) Jesus is raised	24:1–12
b) The post-resurrection ministry	24:13–49
c) Jesus ascends to heaven	24:50–52

John

Author: John

Time: AD 26–30

Summary: John says that he wrote so that people might come to believe in Christ (20:30–31). He was not as interested in the historical order of the events in the life of Christ, or in his deeds, as he was in the inner meaning of his teaching. John emphasises Jesus as the son of God, sent by God to be the saviour of the earth.

There are several key words in John’s Gospel, including “believe” which occurs over eighty times. The word implies a belief that has developed into faith or conviction. Another peculiarity is the frequent use of the word “Jew”. It is only found once in Matthew, and twice in Mark and Luke, but over sixty times in John.

John concerns himself more with the Judean ministry which Matthew and Mark hardly touch upon, and he records only eight miracles (which he terms “signs”) to show that Jesus was the Son of God. John is the only book of the four Gospels that does not contain any parables.

Key verses: “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry.” (6:35)

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live.” (11:25)

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (14:6)

“These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (20:31)

1. Prologue	1:1–18
2. Beginnings of Jesus’ ministry	1:19–51
a) His forerunner	1:19–34
b) Jesus’ introduction to some future disciples	1:35–51
3. Jesus’ ministry: signs and discourses	2–11
a) Changing water into wine	2:1–11
b) Cleansing the temple	2:12–25
c) Interview with Nicodemus	3:1–21
d) Parallel ministry with John the Baptist	3:22–4:3
e) Journey through Samaria: woman at the well	4:4–42
f) Healing of the official’s son	4:43–54

g) Trip to Jerusalem	5
h) Feeding of the 5000 and sermon on the bread of life	6
i) Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles	7–8
j) Healing of the man born blind	9
k) Parable of the Good Shepherd	10:1–21
l) Debating at the Feast of Dedication	10:22–39
m) Ministry in Perea	10:40–42
n) The raising of Lazarus	11
4. Jesus' last week	12–19
a) The anointing of Jesus' feet	12:1–11
b) The triumphal entry	12:12–19
c) The coming of the Greeks	12:20–36
d) Continued Jewish unbelief	12:37–50
e) Discourse at the Last Supper	13–14
f) Discourse on the way to Gethsemane	15–16
g) Jesus' prayer of intercession	17
h) His arrest, trial and crucifixion	18–19
5. The resurrection	20:1–29
6. Epilogue	20:30–21:25

Acts of the Apostles

Author: Luke

Time: AD 30–60

Summary: The book of Acts was written by Luke as a sequel to follow his gospel. Acts records the establishment and growth of the first century church. It illustrates the struggles and problems that they faced, and describes the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the early church and the missionary work of Peter and Paul. In particular, the book traces the missionary journeys of Paul as he helped form churches throughout Asia Minor and Rome.

Key verse: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (1:8)

1. Prologue	1:1–2
2. The beginnings of the church in Jerusalem	1:3–8:4
a) Jesus’ ministry after his resurrection	1:3–11
b) A new apostle	1:12–26
c) The filling with the Spirit	2
d) The healing of the lame man	3:1–4:31
e) The believers share their possessions	4:32–5:11
f) The arrest of the 12 apostles	5:12–42
g) The choice of the seven	6:1–7
h) Stephen’s arrest and death	6:8–7:60
i) The scattering of the Jerusalem believers	8:1–4
3. Philip’s ministry	8:5–40
a) In Samaria	8:5–25
b) To the Ethiopian eunuch	8:26–40
4. Saul’s conversion	9:1–31
5. Peter’s ministry	9:32–11:18
a) To Aeneas and Dorcas	9:32–43
b) To Cornelius	10:1–11:18
6. The church in Antioch	11:19–30
7. Herod’s persecution and subsequent death	12
8. Paul’s first missionary journey	13–14
9. The Jerusalem conference	15:1–35

10. Paul's second missionary journey	15:36–18:22
11. Paul's third missionary journey	18:23–21:16
12. Paul arrested and sent to Rome	21:17–28:31
a) Arrested in Jerusalem and sent to Caesarea	21:17–23:35
b) Imprisoned in Caesarea	24–26
c) Voyage to Rome	27:1–28:15
d) Two years under 'house arrest' in Rome	28:16–31

Romans

Author: Paul

Time: AD 57

Summary: Paul begins the letter by showing how Jews and Gentiles alike are sinners in the eyes of God and therefore worthy of death. However, Paul explains that our sins can be forgiven through Jesus Christ if we accept all that he said and follow him in faith. With this in mind, Paul explains that Israel too, though presently in a state of unbelief, has a place in God’s plan of redemption. The letter concludes with an appeal to the readers to work out their Christian faith in practical ways.

Key verses: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” (3:23–24)

1. Introduction	1:1–17
2. The unrighteousness of all mankind	1:18–3:20
a) Gentiles	1:18–32
b) Jews	2:1–3:8
c) Summary: all people	3:9–20
3. Justification	3:21–5:21
a) Through Christ	3:21–26
b) Received by faith	3:27–4:25
c) The fruits of righteousness	5:1–11
d) Summary: man’s righteousness contrasted with God’s gift	5:12–21
4. Sanctification	6–8
a) Freedom from sin’s tyranny	6
b) Freedom from the law’s condemnation	7
c) Life in the power of the Holy Spirit	8
5. The problem of the rejection of Israel	9–11
a) The justice and cause of the rejection	9–10
b) The restoration of Israel	11
6. The Gospel in practice	12:1–15:13
a) In the body—the church	12
b) In the world	13
c) Among weak and strong Christians	14:1–15:13
7. Conclusion and greetings	15:14–16:27

1 Corinthians

Author: Paul

Time: AD 55

Summary: Written to the church at Corinth by the apostle Paul. He deals with a series of problems, sins and false teachings that were present in the newly formed church. Most members were from a sinful pagan background and were exhorted to put away their previous ways. Paul’s purposes for writing were: (1) to instruct and restore the church in its areas of weakness, correcting wrong practices such as divisions, immorality, litigation and abuse of the Lord’s supper; (2) to correct false teaching concerning the resurrection; and (3) to give instruction concerning the offering for the poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem.

Key verse: “I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.” (1:10)

1. Introduction	1:1–9
2. Responses to their letter	1:10–6:20
a) The problem of division in the church	1:10–4:21
b) The problem of the immoral brother	5:1–13
c) The problem of lawsuits	6:1–11
d) The problem of sexual immorality	6:12–20
3. Instruction about marriage	7
4. Instruction on questionable practices	8:1–11:1
a) The principles involved	8
b) The principles illustrated	9
c) A warning from Israel’s history	10:1–22
d) The principles applied	10:23–11:1
5. Instruction on public worship	11:2–14:40
a) Women in the church	11:2–16
b) The Lord’s Supper	11:17–34
c) Spirit gifts	12:1–14:40
6. Instruction on the resurrection	15
7. Conclusion: practical and personal matters	16

2 Corinthians

Author: Paul

Time: AD 55

Summary: This second letter to the church at Corinth was penned by Paul also. It was written after he made a visit to the small church in an attempt to give instruction and guidance on several divisive issues. Upon learning that a majority of members had repented, he wrote the letter of 2 Corinthians. It gives encouragement, yet teaches of the suffering that each member must face for the Lord Jesus' sake. He concludes by noting that when he is weakest, then God is able to work through him most powerfully. This letter was probably written about six months after the first letter to the Corinthians.

Key verse: "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." (5:20)

1. Greeting and thanksgiving	1:1–11
2. Paul's explanation of his conduct and ministry	1:12–7 :16
a) His motives	1:12–2:4
b) Forgiving the offender at Corinth	2:5–11
c) God's direction in his ministry	2:12–17
d) The Corinthian believers: a letter from Christ	3:1–11
e) Seeing the glory of God	3:12–4:6
f) Treasure in clay jars	4:7–16a
g) The prospect of death for a Christian	4:16b–5:10
h) The ministry of reconciliation	5:11–6:10
i) A spiritual father's appeal to his children	6:11–7:4
j) The meeting with Titus	7:5–16
3. The collection for the Christians at Jerusalem	8–9
a) Generosity encouraged	8:1–15
b) Titus and his companions sent to Corinth	8:16–9:5
c) Results of generous giving	9:6–15
4. Paul's vindication of his apostolic authority	10–13
a) Paul's defence of his authority	10
b) Paul forced into foolish boasting	11–12
5. Final warnings and conclusion	13
a) Final warnings	13:1–10
b) Conclusion	13:11–14

Galatians

Author: Paul

Time: AD 49

Summary: The letter to the believers in Galatia focuses on the divisions that Jewish Christians were causing among new Gentile converts. These ‘Judaizers’ were trying to convince the Gentiles that they needed to be circumcised and to keep the ritual law in order to be saved. Paul argues that both Jew and Gentile alike enjoy complete salvation in Christ. Reliance on the Law of Moses was only a bondage to death and could not produce life-giving freedom, as only Christ could grant that freedom. Paul was showing that all legalistic variations of the Gospel are perversions of it and should be shown as such.

Key verse: “We, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.” (2:16)

1. Introduction	1:1–9
a) Greetings	1:1–5
b) Purpose of letter	1:6–9
2. Paul’s defence of his apostleship	1:10–2:14
a) Paul called by God	1:10–24
b) Paul accepted by apostles	2:1–10
c) Paul opposes Peter at Antioch	2:11–14
3. Salvation by faith not law	2:15–4:31
a) Justified by faith in Christ	2:15–21
b) The Galatians’ experience at conversion	3:1–5
c) Experience of Abraham	3:6–9
d) Curse of the law	3:10–14
e) Promises before the law	3:15–18
f) Purpose of the law	3:19–25
g) Sons not slaves	3:26–4:11
h) Personal appeal	4:12–20
i) Allegory of Hagar and Sarah	4:21–31
4. The life of liberty and faith	5:1–6:10
a) Exhortation to freedom	5:1–12
b) Liberty is not licence	5:13–15
c) Life by the Spirit, not by the flesh	5:15–26
d) Doing good to all	6:1–10
5. Conclusion	6:11–18

Ephesians

Author: Paul

Time: AD 61

Summary: The letter is divided into two sections. The first section outlines the spiritual riches in Christ and our part in God’s eternal purpose; the second section discusses practical ways in which we can fulfil God’s purpose. The intent was to illustrate the abundance of spiritual riches that Christ himself received or would receive, namely grace, glory, mercy, immortality; and to foster the incentive to walk as Christ himself did. By doing so, believers would learn to walk worthy of their calling. It is thought that this letter was circulated to other churches in addition to the one in Ephesus.

Key verses: “God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace.” (2:6–7).

1. Greetings	1:1–2
2. Spiritual blessings in Christ	1:3–23
a) The divine purpose	1:3–14
b) Prayer that Christians may know God better	1:15–23
3. Steps toward the fulfilment of God’s purpose	2–3
a) Salvation of individuals by grace	2:1–10
b) Reconciliation of Jew and Gentile through Christ	2:11–22
c) Revelation of God’s wisdom through the church	3:1–13
d) Prayer for deeper experience of God’s fullness	3:14–21
4. Practical ways to fulfil God’s purpose	4:1–6:20
a) Unity and maturity	4:1–16
b) Renewal of personal life	4:17–5:20
c) Consideration in personal relationships	5:21–6:9
d) Strength in spiritual conflict	6:10–20
5. Conclusion and final greetings	6:21–24

Philippians

Author: Paul

Time: AD 62

Summary: Paul’s main purpose in writing this letter seems to have been to thank the Philippians for the gift they had sent him when they heard he had been imprisoned at Rome (1:5; 4:10–19). But Paul also discusses several other issues. He encourages the Philippians to stand firm in the face of persecution and exhorts them to humility and unity. He also commends Timothy and Epaphroditus to the church and warns the Philippians against people who encourage a return to the Jewish law. The letter is outstanding in its emphasis on joy; the word ‘joy’ occurs 16 times.

Key verses: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (4:6–7)

1. Greetings and thanksgiving	1:1–11
2. Paul’s personal circumstances	1:12–26
3. Exhortations	1:27–2:18
a) Living a life worthy of the gospel	1:27–30
b) Following the servant attitude of Christ	2:1–18
4. Timothy and Epaphroditus	2:19–30
5. Warnings against false teachers	3:1–4:1
6. Final exhortations, thanks and conclusion	4:2–23
a) Exhortations	4:2–9
b) Thanks	4:10–20
c) Greetings and benediction	4:21–23

Colossians

Author: Paul

Time: AD 61

Summary: The letter to Colosse was written in response to heresy that had been brought to Paul’s attention. The major errors that had crept into the church seemed to have been: (1) the exaltation of angels or other “elemental spirits”; (2) the emphasis on ascetic or liturgical practices thought to produce spirituality; and (3) those in error claimed a special knowledge beyond that found in the gospel of Christ. Paul states that these are philosophies based on human tradition and are therefore worthless. He teaches love, humility, submission to authority, and finally prayer to establish a believer in the wisdom of God.

Key verse: “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.” (2:8)

1. Introduction	1:1–14
2. The supremacy of Christ	1:15–23
3. Paul’s labour for the church	1:24–2:7
4. Freedom from human regulations through life in Christ	2:8–23
5. Rules for holy living	3:1–4:6
6. Final greetings	4:7–18

1 and 2 Thessalonians

Author: Paul

Time: AD 51

Summary: Paul had left Thessalonica abruptly after a rather brief stay (see Acts 17:5–10). Recent converts were left with little support in the midst of persecution. Paul’s purpose in writing these letters was to encourage the new converts in their trials, to give instruction concerning godly living, and to give assurance about future events.

Key verse: “May [the Lord] strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.” (1 Thess 3:13)

“So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.” (2 Thess 2:15)

1 Thessalonians

1. Thanksgiving for the Thessalonians	1
2. Paul’s ministry to the Thessalonians	2:1–3:13
a) Paul’s ministry when in Thessalonica	2:1–16
b) Paul’s longing to see the Thessalonians	2:17–3:13
3. Exhortations	4:1–5:22
a) Concerning personal life	4:1–12
b) Concerning the coming of Christ	4:13–5:11
c) Miscellaneous instructions	5:12–22
4. Concluding prayer and greetings	5:23–28

2 Thessalonians

1. Introduction	1
2. Instruction	2
a) Prophecy regarding the day of the Lord	2:1–12
b) Thanks and prayer for the Thessalonians	2:13–17
3. Exhortations	3:1–15
a) Call to prayer	3:1–3
b) Warning against idleness	3:4–15
4. Conclusion and greeting	3:16–18

1 Timothy

Author: Paul

Time: AD 64

Summary: Timothy was a leader in the church at Ephesus. Paul wrote both letters to warn, instruct and encourage Timothy in the work of leading the church and fulfilling his duty. In the first letter, Paul gives warnings about false teachers and detailed instructions about the selection of qualified leaders and requirements for the behaviour of different groups of people.

Key verses: “I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.” (3:14–15)

1. Introduction	1:1–11
a) Greeting	1:1–2
b) Warnings	1:3–11
2. Instructions for Timothy	1:12–6:10
a) Paul’s calling and Timothy’s	1:12–2:7
b) Instructions for worship	2:8–15
c) Qualifications of leaders	3:1–16
d) Coming problems and advice about people	4:1–6:10
3. Paul’s charge to Timothy	6:11–21

2 Timothy

Author: Paul

Time: AD 67

Summary: In his second letter to Timothy, Paul shows concern for believers during a time of persecution under Nero. He is full of encouragement for Timothy, urging him to remain true to his faith and to lead others in the same path. After warning him of coming godlessness, Paul concludes with a reminder that scripture is given to teach goodness and tells Timothy that he must preach the gospel at all times.

Key verses: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (3:16–17)

1. Encouragement for Timothy	1–2
a) Introduction and encouragement	1:1–2:13
b) Instructing others	2:14–26
2. Coming godlessness	3:1–13
3. Timothy’s responsibility	3:10–4:5
4. Paul’s situation and final remarks	4:6–22

Titus

Author: Paul

Time: AD 64

Summary: This letter was written by Paul from Rome to Titus whom he had left to care for the churches on the island of Crete. The letter provides Titus with instruction and advice for his conduct in dealing with the believers in Crete.

Key verses: “The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives.” (2:11–12)

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|--|-----------------|
| 1. Greetings and introduction | 1:1–4 |
| 2. Titus’ task | 1:5–3:15 |
| a) Appointing leaders | 1:5–16 |
| b) What to teach different groups | 2:1–15 |
| c) Insist that believers do good | 3:1–15 |

Philemon

Author: Paul

Time: AD 61

Summary: Paul writes to Philemon whose slave, Onesimus, had run away to Rome where he met Paul and became a Christian. Paul sends Onesimus back to his rightful owner with a personal letter of recommendation asking Philemon to accept his slave back with love as a brother.

Key verse: “I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.” (1:6)

1. Greeting and thanksgiving	1–7
2. Paul’s plea for Onesimus	8–21
3. Conclusion and final greetings	22–25

Hebrews

Author: Unknown

Time: Before AD 70

Summary: This letter was written to Jewish Christians and argues that the new covenant is superior to the old covenant which was the basis of the Law of Moses. It is sometimes called the “book of better things” because of the frequent description of the new covenant as better or superior to the law. The main goal of the letter was to demonstrate that Jesus was the fulfilment of the symbols in the law and the prophecies of the Messiah. With Jesus sacrificed as a sinless man, the need for repeated animal sacrifice was removed and the transient priesthood has been replaced by the eternal priesthood of Jesus.

Key verses: “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.” (1:1–2)

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” (11:6)

1. Prologue	1:1–14
a) The superiority of God’s new revelation through Jesus	1:1–4
b) Old Testament support for this superiority	1:5–14
2. Jesus is superior to the old covenant	2:1–7:28
a) Jesus made like us so that we can be saved	2:1–18
b) Jesus greater than Moses	3:1–6
c) Warning about missing out on Sabbath rest	3:7–4:13
d) Jesus of a better priesthood than Aaron	4:14–7:28
3. Jesus the high priest of a new covenant	8:1–10:39
a) Christ the high priest	8:1–13
b) Examples from the tabernacle	9:1–10
c) The blood of Christ offered once for all	9:11–10:18
d) A believer’s rights and responsibilities	10:19–39
4. Faith	11:1–12:29
a) Examples of faith	11:1–40
b) God’s discipline	12:1–13
c) Warning against refusing God’s offer	12:14–29
5. Conclusion	13:1–25

James

Author: James (probably the half-brother of Jesus)

Time: AD 43–50

Summary: The letter is a very practical review of the Christian faith in the life of a believer. It addresses the everyday problems of temptation, listening, favouritism, faith, taming the tongue, submission, patience and sickness. James gives clear and encouraging advice on how to be godly. It is not directed at any particular church, but rather to Jewish believers in general.

Key verses: “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” (1:22)

“Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” (2:17)

1. Trials and temptation	1:1–18
2. Faith in action	1:19–5:12
a) Hearing and doing what is right	1:19–27
b) Favouritism forbidden	2:1–13
c) Faith without works is dead	2:14–26
d) Taming the tongue	3:1–12
e) Submitting to God and his wisdom	3:13–4:17
f) Warning to rich	5:1–6
g) Perseverance in suffering	5:7–12
3. The prayer of faith	5:13–20

1 Peter

Author: Peter

Time: AD 60

Summary: This was a general letter written to Christians in Asia Minor to help build a joyful hope in the face of persecution. After confirming the grace of God in giving salvation to the chosen, Peter commands submission to authorities—despite persecution. He also shows that enduring suffering for Christ holds the promise of life forever.

Key verses: “If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed . . . If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.” (4:14,16)

1. Introduction	1:1–2
2. The hope of salvation	1:3–12
3. God’s requirements for life	1:13–5:11
a) Being holy as God’s people	1:13–2:12
b) Submission to authorities	2:13–25
c) Living for God	3:1–4:11
d) Suffering for being a Christian	4:12–19
e) Instruction to different groups	5:1–11
4. Final greetings	5:12–14

2 Peter

Author: Peter

Time: AD 66

Summary: Peter encourages the Christians to be sure of salvation by putting true doctrine into practice and dealing with false teachers. The letter is written to encourage Christian growth, while fighting wrong doctrine and false teachers.

Key verse: “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” (3:9)

1. How to make one’s salvation sure 1:1–11
2. Peter’s reason for writing 1:12–21
3. False teachers: their behaviour and end 2:1–22
4. The day of the Lord 3:1–22

1 John

Author: John

Time: AD 85–95

Summary: This seems to have been a letter to several communities who faced a common problem—probably the beginnings of some false teaching. John wants to restate the importance of leading a moral and sinless life, avoiding the false teachings which would lead them away from the grace of Christ, their advocate and atoning sacrifice. John repeatedly encourages them to love one another and to hold their faith in the Son of God.

Key verse: “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.” (2:1)

1. Introduction	1:1–4
2. Walking in God’s light	1:5–2:14
3. Warnings about the world and antichrists	2:15–27
4. God’s love for his children and their response	2:28–5:21
a) Christians are children of God and should love others	2:28–3:24
b) Test the spirits	4:1–6
c) God is love	4:7–21
d) Love for God’s son gives life	5:1–21

2 John

Author: John

Time: AD 85–95

Summary: During the early growth of the church, the gospel was spread by travelling preachers. Preachers could also travel spreading different teachings. This letter is addressed to “an elect lady” who is advised not to have fellowship with those teachers who bring wrong doctrine. The ideas of love, truth, and obedience are emphasised.

Key verses: “I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands.” (1:5–6)

1. Introduction	1–4
2. Love defined	5–6
3. False teachers and antichrists	7–11
4. Conclusion	12–13

3 John

Author: John

Time: AD 85–95

Summary: John had previously sent brothers with letters to one of the churches, but Diotrophes (one of the church leaders) refused to accept the brothers or the letters they carried. This letter commends Gaius for welcoming these brothers and also warns Diotrephes about his divisive behaviour.

Key verse: “Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you.” (1:5)

1. Greetings to Gaius	1–8
2. Criticism of Diotrephes	9–11
3. Praise of Demetrius	12
4. Conclusion	13–14

Jude

Author: Jude (probably the half-brother of Jesus)

Time: AD 70–80

Summary: Jude wrote his letter to reaffirm and combat the danger of false teachers within the church. Using examples from history he emphasises the trouble such teachers can cause and reminds his audience of the need to fight for the truth they had received.

Key verses: “‘In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.’ These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.” (1:18–19)

1. Introduction	1–2
2. Godless men—their sin and ultimate doom	3–16
3. Exhortation to perseverance	17–23
4. Praise and thanks to God	24–25

Revelation

Author: John

Time: AD 95

Summary: This is the final book of the Bible, written to provide a continuing message for the young church. Although it starts with letters from Jesus to seven churches in Asia, the majority of the book describes amazing visions of the future. John, one of Jesus' apostles, receives a detailed vision of events surrounding the return of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. The vision is highly symbolic and reveals the corruption of the church and the judgements of those who are held accountable. The final triumph of Jesus and the reward of righteous people is a fitting climax to the book and the entire Bible.

Key verse: "They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers." (17:14)

1. Introduction	1:1–20
a) Prologue	1:1–3
b) Greeting	1:4–8
c) Jesus the author	1:9–20
2. Letters to the seven churches	2:1–3:22
a) To Ephesus	2:1–7
b) To Smyrna	2:8–11
c) To Pergamum	2:12–17
d) To Thyatira	2:18–27
e) To Sardis	3:1–6
f) To Philadelphia	3:7–13
g) To Laodicea	3:14–22
3. The throne, the scroll and the lamb	4:1–5:14
a) The throne in heaven	4:1–11
b) The scroll that no-one could open	5:1–4
c) The lamb who would open the scroll	5:5–14
4. Opening the seven seals	6:1–8:1
5. The seven trumpets	8:2–11:19
6. Various portents and beasts	12:1–14:20
a) The woman and the dragon	12:1–17
b) Two beasts	13:1–18
c) The lamb, 144 000 redeemed and harvesting the earth	14:1–20

7. The seven bowls	15:1–16:21
8. The judgement of Babylon the great prostitute	17:1–19:4
9. The triumph of the lamb	19:5–20:15
a) Praise to God	19:5–10
b) The rider on a white horse	19:11–21
c) The 1,000 years	20:1–10
d) Judgement of the dead	20:11–15
10. New heavens and new earth	21:1–22:21