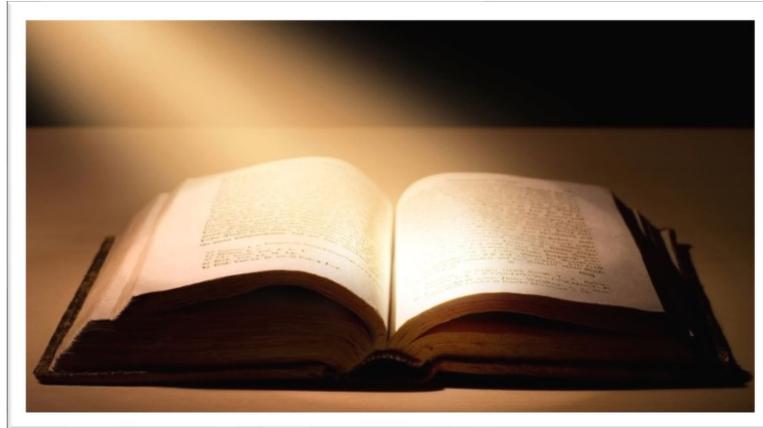


# SUMMARY OF THE HOLY BIBLE



**GUIDED BY GRACE CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES**

*AN IRS SECTION 501 APPROVED NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION*

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## PREFACE – WHY READ THE BIBLE?

**Guided by Grace Christian Ministries** provides this summary of the Bible as a resource to facilitate a basic understanding of the contents which we affectionally refer to as the “Word of God: Our “All Present”, “All Knowing”, “All Loving” and “All Powerful” Father in Heaven. It is our hope too that the reading of these summaries will encourage you to take the journey to read the living Word and with it, the realization that our main purpose in life is to be one with God. For truly God’s Word is provided for our benefit so we may know Him, and with this, by way of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, make sense of our existence we refer to as life on earth.

**The Bible is the single most important book ever written.** It is an eyewitness account of historical events of such magnitude that they have literally shaped the world in which we live. Without this book the Western world and a good deal of the Eastern world would be completely different today than if the events of this book had never occurred.

It is not too much to say that the events recorded in this book are claimed by a significant percentage of people who have ever lived on this earth to be the most important events ever recorded in the history of the world. This book is foundational to just about everything mankind will ever know or accomplish. It has directly led to massive undertakings of good will and charity. Because of this book, great projects have been undertaken, hospitals have been built, multitudes fed and clothed and orphanages founded.

Reference: [Historical Bible Society](#).

### REASON #1: THE BIBLE HAS TRANSFORMED THE WORLD

**It would be impossible** to claim to be an educated person in today's world without having at least some familiarity with the events contained in this book. Actually, all of the events contained in this book should be known by everyone.



- A good number of people around the world read portions of this book every day. It is one of the most published and printed books in the history of the world. It has been printed in just about every known language (including braille) and each year, since it was first written, it has been the world's greatest bestseller year after year. As time marches on it is continually printed in yet more languages. Collectors of rare books treasure it in every form.
- The Bible was the first book ever put to the printing press. The man who first printed it, Johannes Gutenberg, was recently voted the most important man to have ever lived within the past 1000 years!
- A good number of museums exist today which are dedicated solely to this very book and the events contained therein.
- The Bible is available in every corner of the globe, even where it is illegal to own or read this book. It is available in electronic format and on CD as well. You can find it on the internet for free. Famous

actors and personages regularly quote it. It was quoted by William Shakespeare many times in his writings.

- Worldwide organizations and associations have been formed because of this book and its message, many of them existing for centuries. Together they represent multiple hundreds of millions of members.

## REASON #2:

### PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO DIE FOR THIS BOOK

**People have died torturous deaths** simply to gain access to this book. You may, even now, be in a country where this book is discouraged or even banned outright. In many countries it is a crime to distribute or even possess this book.



- This book has been praised, cursed, restricted, banned, desecrated, burned and fought over. People swear on it and at it.
- Some have tried to eliminate it. All who have tried have failed. People have suffered exquisite tortures and loss of freedom and even their lives for printing it. This has occurred recently and over many centuries past, as well. It is, in fact, a regular occurrence in this world.
- This book is simultaneously hated and loved. Once read it would be impossible to be indifferent to it; for its claims are monumental and beyond exaggerating. It provokes a strong response in either a positive or negative direction; you will either love it or hate it. It was meant to be so by design. It is so controversial that wars have been fought over its interpretation. Governments have toppled on account of it and kings have been deposed because of it. Most importantly, lives have been dramatically changed for good because of this book.

## REASON #3:

### IT'S THE MOST ACCURATE BOOK OF ANTIQUITY

**The Bible is the most copied book of antiquity.** Written over a time period of some 1,500 years, it was completed approximately 2,000 years ago. Yet, in all the centuries that have passed, none of its contents have ever been found inaccurate.



- It has been translated into its present form directly from the original languages from a vast supply of ancient manuscripts sifted by the best minds and most competent scholars of our day and of many prior generations. It has been translated into every known existing language.
- It is surpassingly accurate to the smallest details. Its contents, as translated, are as close to the original words of the authors as humanly possible. Only a few words of the entire book (a tiny, insignificant percentage) are in any doubt as to the original words and none of the disputed text affects the message of the book. Additionally, new discoveries of previously unknown ancient manuscripts continue to provide ever greater accuracy to the contents of this book.

- It has been sifted, studied, commentated upon and dissected more than any book in history. Volumes of books have been written about it and if they were stacked on top of one another they would reach to the sky.
- Where this book can be verified by external events such as archeology, geography, custom, politics, culture, known world history and writings in other ancient texts it has been so verified as to be accurate in all respects. New discoveries always support it, never vice versa. It has never once been proven faulty on single detail or fact, although many have mightily tried and failed.

## REASON #4:

### IT CONTAINS A LIFE-CHANGING MESSAGE OF FREEDOM

**The Bible has liberated many** from oppression by its clear teachings. It raises the dignity and rights of every human being ever born. It is truly an amazing and remarkable piece of writing. It contains clear teaching on the value and worth of every individual. It will astonish and surprise you and likely move you to tears.



- It has freed minds and hearts throughout history. The events recorded in this book have generated more great works of art (and some not-so-great ones, as well) than any other subject matter in the history of the world. All the museums in the world, added together, could not possibly contain all of the artwork inspired by the events of this book.
- This book itself represents true freedom. It has never been in the custody and control of a single group of people, unlike other important books. It belongs to everyone and it has been possessed by everyone, every culture and every tribe and race of people. Reading it will strike you directly in your heart. It has the "ring of truth" to all who love the same.
- This book contains a message at its very core. It is a message to all people everywhere, in every time period, relevant to their everyday lives. It claims to be the very words of God... an audacious claim, for sure. It is for you to decide whether to believe the message of this book and apply it to your own life.
- If you now know nothing about God, you will know a great deal about God after reading this book. If you believe you know much about God, you will know even more about him after you read this book. You may even decide to re-evaluate your knowledge of God after reading it.

## REASON #5:

### IT CONNECTS YOU TO HISTORY'S MOST IMPORTANT FIGURE

**You may have heard of the "godman," Jesus of Nazareth**, also called the "Christ" (i.e. "Anointed One"). You may even think you know him. But if you have not read the account offered firsthand throughout this book, you will, in effect, know nothing definite about him. The entire Old Testament points to his coming, and the entire New Testament testifies to his teachings and actions.



- His name has been used to bless people and it has been used as a curse word by those who despise him. People have been healed and set free in his name. One thing is for sure: when you meet Jesus in the pages of this book and understand who he claims to be it is impossible for you to remain indifferent to him.
- This story is either the biggest fraud ever perpetrated on mankind or it describes Jesus as exactly who he claims to be: the Supreme Lord and Ruler over all of mankind and the very

creator God of the Universe. Logically speaking, this is either a nice poetic story created from a fantasy with an intent to deceive you or a clear and accurate picture of God, who is our judge (both mine and yours). You decide. If you think you know about God already, consider the source of that "knowledge" and examine if this book may, in fact, be a better source for true knowledge about the one true Creator God that made you and everything else, both known and unknown in this Universe.

- People are free to reject this book and what it says. God made us "free moral agents" to choose as we desire. Yet, people violate the teachings and wisdom of this book at their own peril.
- Because of the main person in this book, Jesus of Nazareth, time has been split into two main epochs (B.C. "before Christ" and A.D. "anno Domini" for "year of our Lord").
- Each year, over a billion people celebrate his birth, his death and his bodily resurrection from the dead.
- Jesus is the only religious leader ever to make the claim that he has risen from the dead. All others are dead and buried. Abraham is dead. Moses is dead. Mohammed has died and remains dead, Buddha is dead, Gandhi is dead. Only Jesus claims to be alive. Even Muslims revere Jesus as a holy man and a great prophet. All told, about half of the world today accepts that this Jesus was a great and remarkable personage.

## CONCLUSION

**Keep turning the pages** of this remarkable book. Read it with an open mind and open heart. It contains pure truth about God, about life, the nature of mankind and our own hearts as human beings. The Gospel of John is a wonderful place to start, but read the whole thing — Old and New Testaments. You'll be amazed what you discover about God, and about yourself.

If this God is indeed your judge, before whom you will someday give an account of your life, it truly behooves you to be aware of who he is and the simple thing he asks of us before that solemn time comes. In essence, this book will help you to deal with that very event for which we are all destined. Be warned: you will not be the same after you read this book.

## OLD TESTAMENT

### GENESIS

The genre of Genesis is a Narrative History, and Genealogies. It was written by Moses about 1450-1410 B.C. Key personalities include Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Joseph. This book was written to record God's creation of the world and to demonstrate His love for all that He created.

Genesis is the first book of the Law and also the first book of the entire Bible. The name Genesis literally means "*In the Beginning*". It explains the actual events of one of the most debated subjects of our current day...the origin of life. Genesis describes the Lord God, who is infinite and all-powerful, creating everything that exists, by the power of His spoken Word, out of nothing. He essentially creates material matter out of nonmaterial nothing.

- In chapters 1-11:28, Moses explains the creation of all things, "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*" (1:1). He quickly switches to the fall of man in sin and separation from God in chapter 3; then, how God implemented His judgment on the wicked earth. Through a universal flood and by selecting and sparing Noah, a faithful man, and his family, God wipes out humanity and starts again, with one secluded family.
- From chapters 11:28-36, God begins to carry out His plan of redemption in the beginning stages of establishing His own nation of Israel. It is through Abraham, again one faithful man, which God calls and promises to bless with a multitude of people and through them bless the entire world, "*...and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed*" (12:3).
- In chapters 37-50 God faithfully raises up and protects the generations from Abraham as He had promised, all the way through unto Joseph while in Egypt. God blesses Abraham's son and their son's. Through their disappointments and failures, He displays His power and sovereignty in their lives; but in at the end of the book of Genesis, God's people are in a foreign land and wondering about the promise land.

### EXODUS

The book of Exodus consists mainly of two genres, Narrative History and Laws. It was written by Moses about 1450-1410 B.C. The key personalities include Moses, Miriam, Pharaoh, Pharaoh's daughter, Aaron, and Joshua. It was written to record the events of Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt. It describes the events to the reader in chronological order and also lists the Laws that God has given to the Israelites, in order to guide them in their relationship with Him.

- Chapters 1-7 of Exodus, introduce Moses and the Israelites in bondage in Egypt. This setting is approximately 400 years after Joseph and his families were living in Goshen at the end of Genesis. God protects baby Moses and spares his life, as Moses is adopted by Pharaoh's daughter and is raised as an Egyptian. God calls Moses with a special revelation, through a burning bush to release His people from slavery in Egypt. Moses obeys and with his brother Aaron, confronts Pharaoh to let God's people go free, but Pharaoh ignores the warning.
- In Chapters 7-13, Moses through the power of God releases 10 plagues of different sorts on the land of Egypt which included, turning all the water to blood, plagues of insects, boils, and hail. Finally, the death of every first-born son, this included the death of Pharaoh's eldest who would someday inherit the kingdom of Egypt. However, the Israelites obeyed God and followed the ordinance of the Passover and God spared them.

- Chapters 14-18 describe the Exodus or “Exit” from Egypt. Pharaoh can no longer endure the plagues that God poured on Egypt and himself and allows them to leave. Moses and the Israelites escape making it to the Red Sea. Shortly after, Pharaoh changes his mind and pursues them, but God destroys his army with the sea.
- Chapters 19-24, Moses presents all of the Laws to all the people at Mt. Sinai as God has commanded.
- From chapters 25-40, Moses gives the Israelites the tabernacle, priest and worship instructions.

## LEVITICUS

Leviticus is composed of two basic genres Narrative History and Law. It was written by Moses about 1445-1444 B.C. The setting of Leviticus mainly appears to take place at Mt. Sinai. The key personalities of Leviticus include Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu Eleazar, and Ithamar.

It was written to draw the Israelites to the understanding of the infinite holiness of God, and that He desires them to act in a holy manner toward Himself. In doing this, God gives them many instructions to carry out. It describes Moses giving procedural instructions for the Israelites, especially to the Levitical priests, about how they are to carry out offerings, ceremonies, and celebrations. The word “*Holy*” is mentioned more times in Leviticus, than any other book in the Bible.

- From chapter 1-7, Sacrifice and Offerings are laid out for Priests and individuals in detail. These passages also describe how to use the altar for the sacrifices and the offerings to God.
- In chapters 8-10, Moses describes the instructions for the Levitical Priesthood, since Israel is to be “*a kingdom of priests*” (Ex. 19:6). He does this from the doorway of his tent. Moses consecrates his brother Aaron and his sons who are the priests.
- From chapters 11-15 Moses teaches the importance and procedures for things that are unclean. These include food, diseases, animals, insects, dead bodies, birth, cleaning and many others. God’s purpose of all this is to protect His people from the illnesses and diseases that come from these sources.
- In chapter 16, Moses gives instruction about the Day of Atonement. This was the day out of the year that the High Priest cleanses and prepares himself ceremonially to meet with God. This ceremony only takes place once a year. The High Priest enters into the Holy of Holies and offers a sacrifice to God for sins on behalf of the entire nation of Israel.
- Chapters 17-27 pertain to the laws that apply generally for living a holy life. These are many laws including sexual immorality, idolatry, land laws, more priestly laws, religious festivals and celebrations, the Sabbath year and the year of Jubilee.

## NUMBERS

The book of numbers is largely Narrative History as far as its genre. It was written by Moses about 1450-1410 B.C. Key personalities include Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Joshua, Caleb, Eleazar, Korah, and Balaam.

The purpose of the book of Numbers is to tell about how Israel prepared to enter the promise land, but sinned and was punished. It describes Moses taking two population censuses, hence the name Numbers.

- From chapters 1-9 the Israelites are preparing for their journey and entry into the promise land. Moses begins by taking a census of all the tribes, primarily to see how many men are available and in shape for

military service. Next, Moses dedicates the Levites and instructs the Nazirite vows and laws. During this time, the Israelites celebrate the 2nd Passover one year after their exit from bondage.

- In chapters 10-12, the Israelites travel from the wilderness in Sinai to approach the promise land. The people complain about their food, God gives them quail, and because of their greed, He also sends them a plague. Miriam and Aaron learn a lesson about whom God places in leadership.
- In chapters 13-19, we see severe punishment for disobedience and unfaithfulness to God. Moses sends out 12 spies to perform reconnaissance on the promise land. The 12 spies return and only two of them bring good news. The people fear the occupants and rebel against taking the land. For this God punishes them and sends them into the wilderness for forty years to roam.
- The last chapters of Numbers, from 20-36, the new generation of Israelites again attempt to enter the land to take it as God promised. This time they easily destroy two nations that confront them as they are entering. Balak uses his prophet Balaam to learn to seduce the Israelites to worship Baal. Because of this disobedience, about 24,000 people die, including Balaam. Before the book of Numbers ends, Moses again conducts a census, and Joshua assumes the leadership of Israel in place of Moses who is banned from the promise land, due to his disobedience.

## DEUTERONOMY

The genre of the book of Deuteronomy is not much different from that of Exodus. It is Narrative History and Law, although there is a Song from Moses just after he commissions Joshua. This song describes the History that the Israelites had experienced. Moses wrote Deuteronomy approximately 1407-1406 B.C. The key personalities are Moses and Joshua.

Moses wrote this book to remind the Israelites of what God had done and to remind them of what God expects of them. The name literally means “*Second Law*”. Moses gives “*the Law*” for the second time.

- In chapters 1-4, Moses reviews some of the details of the past history of Israel such as the Exodus and the wandering in the wilderness. He then urges that they obey the Laws of God.
- Then, in chapters 5-28 Moses restates the Ten Commandments to the Israelites. Moses explains the principles and instructions for living a Godly life as God’s chosen nation. These include how to love the Lord, laws of worship, laws regarding relationships (like divorce), and also the consequences and penalties if these laws are broken.
- Chapters 29-30 there is a move to commit themselves, as a nation, and to stand apart unto God. This consists of not only knowing the many laws that God has commanded, but also obeying them and placing God first.
- Finally, in chapter 31 through 34, we see the first change in leadership in Israel. Moses, the one who has been leading them the entire time, hands over his authority to Joshua, and commissions him. Moses blesses the tribes, which reminds us of Jacob blessing his sons almost 450 years earlier. In the last chapter, God shows Moses the promise land, although he cannot enter it, after this, Moses the servant of the Lord dies on Mt. Nebo.

## JOSHUA

The genre of the book of Joshua is Narrative History. It was authored by Joshua the leader of the Israelites circa 1405-1383 B.C. The key personalities are Joshua, Rahab, Achan, Phinehas, and Eleazar. It was written to assure the Israelites the Living God will reward obedience, and also to record the entrance and conquest of the promise land.

-

Joshua demonstrates his faith in God as He follows the orders given to Him and takes leadership of the nation. Joshua truly was *“strong and courageous”* (1:7).

- In chapters 1-4, Joshua and the Israelites enter the promise land and in doing so we read of an amazing entry. As they arrive at the Jordan River, we find details of an incredible, miraculous crossing. God shows His incredible grace to a prostitute named Rahab, the ancestress of King David.
- Then in chapters 5-12, Joshua follows God’s orders and first conquers the central of the promise land. This includes the unlikely manner in which they conquer the grand fortress of Jericho. God alone moved and conquered this impossible achievement. Ai was the next town and although it took two tries, the first due to sin in the camp, on the second attempt God again moved and dominated. Next, the Israelites occupied the southern land and then the northern land to complete the occupancy; however, although they controlled the region, they never did completely conquer it.
- Finally, in chapters 13-24, the land is divided up and distributed among the tribes of Israel. Some of the larger cities are placed aside for the Levitical priests who did not receive a portion of land, due to their duties. Lastly, Joshua dies but before he passes he gives one of the greatest challenges that lasts for all generations including our own, *“Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve...as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”* (24:15).

## JUDGES

The book of Judges includes several interesting genres; Poetry, Riddles, and mainly Narrative History. Its author is anonymous but it is usually assumed that Samuel, the prophet wrote it. It was written about 1086-1004 B.C. Key personalities include Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Jephthah, Samson, and Delilah.

Its purpose was to teach Israel that God is faithful and certain to punish sin therefore each person must remain loyal and devoted to Him. This book shows the immediate generations after the conquest of the promise land and unfortunately, the results of unfaithfulness are similar to what we have seen in the past... awful.

- In chapters 1:1-3:6, we find that the Israelites have failed to keep their part of the covenant (among many other things), and did not entirely conquer and take control of all the land that they were promised. This problem unfortunately grows wildly out of control as time goes on.
- From 3:7-16, God raises up judges to rescue Israel several times. A cycle of sin-rescue-worship-sin continues constantly. These rescues were temporary because we find that the nation’s obedience only lasted as long as the life of that particular judge. Out of the 14 judges mentioned, the major judges that stand out are famous stories of Deborah, Gideon, and Samson.
- In chapters 17-31, we see Israel slumping into a horrid state of moral demise and ruin. Predominantly in the tribes of Dan and Benjamin, we see how far man has really turned from the God of Abraham. The Dan tribe had almost completely given in to the worship of idols made by a man named Micah, even to the point that they practically defend it. Later, the entire tribe of Benjamin is wiped out down to 600 men in a violent and vicious civil war. It is here we read the sad passage of truth, *“In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit”* (Judges 21:25).

## RUTH

The book of Ruth is the Narrative of a love story, yet also has some important Genealogy. The timeline of this book is intertwined during the period of the Judges. The author was anonymous but some believe it

was perhaps written by Samuel the prophet; however, it is unlikely that he was alive when this book was written. It was written about 1046-1035 B.C. Key personalities include Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz.

Its purpose was to demonstrate the kind of love, and faithfulness that God desires for us. It shows the difference between what happens when a nation does not follow in obedience to the covenant of God (Judges), and when God's people follow in faithfulness within the covenant (Ruth).

- In chapter 1, Ruth remains loyal to her mother-in-law Naomi after the death of her husband and in-laws. Naomi decides to return to her home land of Bethlehem alone, however, Ruth insists on staying with her and adopting Naomi's God as her own. "But Ruth said, *"Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God"* (1:16).
- Chapter 2 we see Ruth gleaning in the fields of Naomi's relative Boaz. Boaz out of compassion and obedience to the law allows Ruth to glean but also leaves extra grain for her purposely.
- In chapter 3, Naomi encourages Ruth to seek marriage with Boaz as a kinsman redeemer. Ruth obeys Naomi and asks for her rights and Boaz agrees but mentions that he must first be sure there are no others with first rights.
- Chapter 4 Boaz and Naomi are married and Ruth conceives a son named Obed, the grandfather of the great King David, in the lineage of Christ our Messiah.

## 1 SAMUEL

1<sup>st</sup> Samuel is a story of Narrative History and includes a great deal of Drama. It is written by the last of the Judges for which the book is named, Samuel. It was written at about 930 B.C. Key personalities include Eli, Hannah, Samuel, Saul, Jonathan, and David. It was written to show Israel how they chose a king but in the process, they blatantly neglected and abandoned God.

- In chapters 1-7, Samuel is born to Hannah as a Nazirite, dedicate to God. Soon after, Samuel was brought to the tabernacle to serve God. During this time, the Israelites are in a vicious battle with the Philistines and they lose the Ark of the Covenant, which is captured by the Philistines. Struck down by deadly plagues, the Philistine are happy to return it to the rightful owner in an oxcart pulled by two cows.
- From chapters 8-15, the Israelites select, who they believe, will be a great king. Samuel anoints Saul to be king and although things go well at first, as usual, trouble looms in the near future. Due to continuous bad decisions and direct disobedience to God's will, Samuel informs Saul that God has rejected him as the rightful King.
- In Chapters 16-31, God selects His King who is David, and he is called, "*a man after God's own heart*" (13:14). Samuel anoints David as a young boy, and several years later stands up to a Philistine giant in front of both the armies of the Israelites and Philistines. With God as his protector, David drops the oversized soldier with one simple stone claiming victory for Israel and displaying true leadership. Saul, eaten away by envy and jealousy and driven by hate, begins to pursue David in fear of losing his throne. Although David could have easily taken his life twice, he respected his king in a Godly manner. In the end, Saul tragically takes his own life while losing on the battlefield.

## 2 SAMUEL

The book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel is a Narration of David as he becomes the King of Israel and the time during his reign, yet it also includes two psalms in hymns of praise in the final chapters. Its author is Samuel the prophet who wrote it at about 930 B.C. The key personalities are David, Joab, Bathsheba, Nathan, and

Absalom. It was written to record the history of David's reign and to demonstrate effective leadership under the submission of God. Approximately half of the book tells of King David's success and the other half shows his failures.

- In chapters 1-10, we find that David becomes the king of Judah while the Northern part of the nation (Israel) rejects God and chooses to go with the dynastic tradition, by selecting Saul's son Ish-Bosheth to rule. Ish-Bosheth eventually was executed and the northern tribes asked David to rule the entire nation of Israel. King David chooses to establish a new capital, Jerusalem, and through a tragic process, brings the Ark there.
- In chapters 11-24, we observe the sinful side of King David during his reign, and how it affected the nation of Israel. First, David commits adultery with a married woman named Bathsheba and she becomes pregnant. Afterward, he has her husband murdered in an attempt to repair things. The prophet Nathan confronts him and David repents and soon after the child dies. Bathsheba later gives birth to Solomon, who will be the next king of Israel. Absalom, David's other son, plots a rebellious takeover and the nation approves. David flees for his life, yet ultimately raises enough troops and a strong backing to take back his seat and restore order; in the process, his rebellious son was killed.

The genre of the book of Amos is Narrative and Prophetic Oracle. The prophet Amos wrote it around 760-750 B.C. This was shortly before the fall of the Northern Kingdom to Assyria, which took place in 722 B.C. Key personalities are Amos, Amaziah, and Jeroboam II.

## 1 KINGS

The book of 1st Kings is Narrative History and Prophecy. The author is anonymous; however, some suggest the prophet Jeremiah. It was written about 560-538 B.C. The key personalities are David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Elijah, Ahab, and Jezebel. The purpose of 1st Kings is to contrast those who obey and disobey God throughout the ruling kings of Israel and Judah. The book describes the rule of Solomon as the last king of Israel and then the split of the kingdom after his death. It includes a great prayer to the Lord in chapter 8. The writer of the books of Kings describes the events of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms after the division.

In chapters 1-11, Solomon becomes the king, in a violent method, after his father David dies. David instructs Solomon to "walk in His (God's) ways" (2:3). Solomon asks God for wisdom and God is pleased at this request and approves. Solomon begins a building production, which included the temple that his father David desired and prepared for him to do. He began building the temple 480 years after the Exodus from Egypt. Seven years later, the Ark was brought to the temple, the glory of the Lord descended on it, Solomon prays a powerful prayer, and then sacrifices were offered. Solomon although the wisest king ever, does not so wise things and begins to worship the gods of his wives and is subdued by his lust for women. His downfall was looming and he died shortly thereafter.

- Chapters 12-22 show the beginning of the end of the united kingdom of Israel.

The nation, with tough decisions to make chooses a wrong one. In 931 B.C., the kingdom splits in two: North and South. Rehoboam inherits the kingdom and is persistent about enforcing high taxes. The Northern tribes begin a revolt and Jeroboam is crowned king of Israel. Ten tribes became the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin became the Southern Kingdom of Judah. God raises up his prophet Elijah to warn evil king Ahab to turn from idol worship and to return to the YHWH.

## 2 KINGS

The book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings is Narrative History and Prophecy concerning the affairs of the divided kingdoms. The author is anonymous; however, some suggest the prophet Jeremiah. It was written about 560-538 B.C.

Key personalities are many; they include Elijah, Elisha, the woman from Shunem, Naaman, Jezebel, Jehu, Joash, Hezekiah, Sennacherib, Isaiah, Manasseh, Josiah, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, and Nebuchadnezzar. Its purpose was to demonstrate the value of those who obey God, and the fate of those who refuse to obey and make Him ultimate ruler.

In this book, God performs amazing miracles through his prophets as He sends these messengers to herald His messages. The two kingdoms are far from the Lord and lost in the monotonous confusion of their sins. God's prophets bring the only hope to this lost yet, chosen nation.

- In chapters 1-17, we read of the rulers of the divided kingdoms who lead them to their fate in exile. The prophet Elijah concludes his ministry and hands over the reins to another up and coming prophet who God will use named Elisha. Elisha is an apprentice of sorts, and follows Elijah as he follows God's lead. God took Elijah in a whirlwind to heaven and the apprentice asks for a double portion of Elijah's spirit, and it was granted to him (2:9). In Elisha's ministry, he carries out twice as many miracles, as Elijah, as God does His will through his prophet. We also find in these chapters, details about kings and dynasties, which ultimately disobey and ignore God's orders and provisions. Finally, during the reign of the last evil king, Hoshea, the Assyrians take the Northern Kingdom into captivity. They have neglected the warning and coming judgment announced by the prophet Hosea. It is fitting that the more evil of the two kingdoms (Northern Kingdom) is the kingdom that goes into permanent captivity. There is no record or evidence of these 10 tribes of Israel ever returning from exile.

- In chapters 18-25, it is apparent that the Southern Kingdom is not doing much better, and soon would also face God's judgment. *"Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets and every seer, saying, 'Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets. However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God'"* (17:13-14).

## 1 CHRONICLES

The book of 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles is a book of Narrative History, and Genealogies. The author appears to be the prophet Ezra who wrote it circa 430 B.C. It covers the events from 1000 to 960 B.C. Key personalities are King David and Solomon.

This book parallels some of 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel, and therefore describes similar events. It was written after the exile, its purpose was to encourage the remnant that had come out of the Babylonian captivity. It begins with the ancestry of the nations past, but it is not chronological.

- In chapter 1-9, the book begins with Adam and runs through the genealogies of Israel. It continues through all the 12 tribes of Israel, then King David, and then the Priestly line. The descendants teach the history of the nation, extending from God's creation all the way through the exile in Babylon. *"Now Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, 'Oh that You would bless me indeed and enlarge my border, and that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep me from harm that it may not pain me!'"* And God granted him what he requested" (4:10).

- From chapters 10-29, there is a review from King Saul's death with the Philistines, through King David's reign, including the preparation for the building of the new temple, which Solomon would build, *"David also told his son Solomon, 'Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Don't be afraid or terrified. The LORD God, my God, will be with you. He will not abandon you before all the work on the LORD's temple is finished'"* (28:20). The book ends with Solomon's reigning as king of Israel.

## 2 CHRONICLES

The book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles is a Narrative History. The author appears to be the prophet Ezra who wrote it circa 430 B.C. It covers the events from the beginning from King Solomon's reign in 970 B.C. up to the beginning of the Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. The key personalities are King Solomon, the queen of Sheba, Rehoboam, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Joash, Uzziah, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, and Josiah.

It was written to emphasize the blessings of the righteous kings and to expose the sins of the wicked kings. It parallels some parts of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings. Like 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles, it is written from the viewpoint of a priest who spoke from spiritual perspectives, including revivals. It too, was written after the exile and focuses on correct worship to YHWH.

- Chapters 1-9 teach the details of the reign of King Solomon. It covers the wisdom of Solomon, the building and construction of the temple in Jerusalem, which was dedicated to the Lord God. *“and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land”* (7:14).
- Chapters 10-36 describe the events in the split of the nation of Israel. The nation split into two kingdoms: North and South. The Northern Kingdom revolted against King Rehoboam, and took a new king; his name was Jeroboam. 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles focuses mainly from here, on the events of the Southern Kingdom. These include 20 kings and are a dynasty from King David. These chapters describe the events all the way up through the Northern Kingdom and its captivity to Babylon. Nevertheless, the mercy of the Lord is seen in the last two verses of this book. Cyrus, King of Persia declares that the remnant of Israel may return to Jerusalem, *“in order to fulfill the word of the LORD”* (36:22).

## EZRA

Ezra is a book of Narrative History and Genealogies. It was written by Ezra at approximately 440 B.C. and records events up to 450 B.C. Key personalities include Cyrus, Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, Darius I, Artaxerxes I, and Zerubbabel.

Ezra's purpose was to accurately record the events of the return from the Babylonian exile, after a seventy-year period and the events that surround the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. God is faithful in fulfilling His promises and so the Jews return to Jerusalem from their exile in Babylon.

- In Chapters 1-6, a relatively small number of Jews return to the city of Jerusalem and immediately prepare to construct the new temple. They began the planning, the gathering of materials, and the beginning of construction. The building drags on because the surrounding enemies begin oppressing and frightening them. Twenty years later, it is completed. *“The sons of Israel who returned from exile and all those who had separated themselves from the impurity of the nations of the land to join them, to seek the LORD God of Israel, ate the Passover. And they observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for the LORD had caused them to rejoice, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them to encourage them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel”* (6:21-22).
- From chapters 7-10, the second group of Jews returns to Israel. Ezra is included in this return. He teaches the Law, but has problems with intermarriage and addresses the pagan women who brought their religious practices with them.

*“For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel”* (7:10), what a great example to follow!

## NEHEMIAH

The book of Nehemiah is Narrative History. Nehemiah authored it at about 430 B.C.

Key personalities include Nehemiah, Ezra, Sanballat, and Tobiah. Nehemiah wrote it to records the events of returning to Jerusalem and rebuilding the walls in 445 B.C.

Jerusalem had a temple but there was no protection for the city from further attack. Nehemiah travels to Jerusalem and uses his leadership skill to rally a citywide construction crew. Within a few weeks, the walls around Jerusalem were built and standing tall and their enemies lost their confidence.

- In chapters 1-7, Nehemiah recounts the events of his temporary return to Jerusalem from Persia as governor. Nehemiah leads and directs the project; each family built the section of the wall directly in front of their houses, and with hard work, the wall was astonishingly completed within 52 days. This method allowed the remnant to feel an identity and uniqueness in their part of repairing the walls of Jerusalem. *“So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. When all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations surrounding us saw it, they lost their confidence; for they recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God”* (6:15-16).
- From Chapters, 8-13 is a time of Israel finding and reestablishing themselves again as a nation, after the long period of the exile in Babylon. Ezra leads all the Jews in a renewal ceremony. This incorporated a public teaching of the Law, in which it was read and explained. For example, the recognition of the Sabbath Day was reinstated. *“And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel”* (8:1). They understood that if they were to survive they must remember and obey God’s Laws. Nehemiah establishes polices and address the issue of mixed marriages then condemns it. One of the main concerns was that the mixed marriage families were not teaching their children the Hebrew language, *“the language of Judah”* (13:24).

## ESTHER

he genre of the book of Esther is Narrative History. Its author is anonymous however; some believe Mordecai, (Esther’s cousin and guardian), wrote it. It was written approximately 470 B.C. in Persia. Esther became queen in 479 B.C. The key personalities are Esther, Mordecai, King Ahasuerus (or Xerxes), and Haman.

Its purpose is to demonstrate God’s love and sovereignty in all circumstances. It is a post-exile story about Jews who stayed behind after most returned to Jerusalem after captivity. Babylon was conquered by Persia and Esther miraculously becomes the queen of the land, and saves her people.

- In chapter 1-2, Esther becomes the queen to Ahasuerus of Persia. She was personally chosen by the King. *“The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him”* (2:17), probably because of her beauty and intelligence.
- Chapters 3-4, Mordecai (Esther’s guardian) refused to bow down and pay homage to Haman a high official of the king. Haman becomes infuriated and plots to destroy all the Jews in the kingdom because of his pride. Mordecai hears of the plot and reports it to his Esther. *“For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?”* (4:14).
- From chapters 5-10, Esther outwits Haman and takes her petition to the king and pleas for the protection of her Jewish people from Haman’s wicked stratagem. The king out of anger, has Haman hung on the gallows, which he had built to destroy all the Jews. Esther’s faith and courage saves her people.

## JOB

The book of Job is Narrative History. Its author is unknown yet it is possible that Job himself wrote it. It is possible that Job is the oldest of any book of the Bible written approximately 2100-1800 B.C. Key personalities of this book include Job, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, Zophar the Naamathite, and Elihu the Buzite.

In Job, we see a man who God allows to be directly attacked by Satan. He is an example of faithfulness as he loses everything important to him yet remains faithful to God. Its purpose is to illustrate God's sovereignty and faithfulness during a time of great suffering.

- In chapters 1-3, God tests Job's faithfulness through allowing Satan to attack him. God told Satan, "Behold, *all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him*" (1:12). Through Job's trials, all is lost including his health, his wife even tells him to curse God and commit suicide, but he remains strong and faithful, "*Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.*" (1:22).
- From chapters 4-37, Job's friends give him plenty of bad advice, in rounds of discussion. They mistakenly blame his sufferings on his personal sins rather than God testing and growing Job. One of them was half-correct in that God wanted to humble him, but this was only a part of God's test.
- In chapters 38-42, God speaks to Job and restores him. God knows that Job has received incorrect guidance from his friends, "*Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?*" God fittingly declares that humans do not know everything. Then He humbles Job by asking a series of questions that could never be answered by anyone other than Almighty God; for example, "*Have you understood the expanse of the earth? Tell Me, if you know all this*". God then brings him to an understanding that believers don't always know what God is doing in their lives.

In the end, Job answers God by saying, "*I have declared that which I did not understand*". God then blessed Job with twice as much as he had before his trials began.

## PSALMS

The genre of Psalms is Songs and Poetry of all kinds. It is written by multiple authors; David wrote 73, Asaph wrote 12, the sons of Korah wrote 9, Solomon wrote 3, Ethan, and Moses each wrote one (Ps. 90), and 51 of the Psalms are anonymous. They were written over the span of approximately 900 years (Beginning at the time of Moses 1440 B.C. and through the captivity in 586 B.C.).

The Psalms include praises of joy, laments, blessings, and thanksgivings. They are directed at God and they help us to express and communicate ourselves to Him. We read about the Psalmist's emotions from one extreme to another, from praising, delighting in and worshiping God with fervor, to repentance and crying out to Him in despair.

Psalms sits at the very center of the Bible. The major themes found in Psalms are Praise, God's Power, Forgiveness, Thankfulness and Trust. "*My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever*" (145:21).

- The book of Psalms was originally divided into five books: o Book 1 consisted of chapters 1-41. o Book 2 corresponds to chapters 42-72. o Book 3 is chapters 73-89. o Book 4 included chapters 90-106. o Book 5 is compiled with chapters 107-150.

Mainly, the Psalms were written to help us deliver praise to God who is worthy of such. As psalms 150:6 reads, "*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.*"

How do we know what God wants for us in our lives? *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (119:105)*. The answer is found in reading His Word, studying it, and applying its unchanging truths to your life.

## PROVERBS

The genre of Proverbs is mainly "Proverbs" as the name describes, there are also some Parables and Poetry. This book was written mainly by Solomon, the wisest king ever to rule, however some of the later sections are written by Lemuel and Agur. It was written during Solomon's reign 970-930 B.C. He asked God for wisdom to rule God's nation and He granted the request.

The main purpose of this book is to teach wisdom to God's people. Proverbs are short clever explanations, which are easy to remember. They contain truisms. These are things which are typically true however, not always. For example, *"He who tills his land will have plenty of bread"* (12:11), it is typically true that one who works his land will have bread but it is not a guarantee to always be true. They deal with life, principles, good judgment, and perception. They often draw distinctions between a wise man and a foolish man with parable type examples.

- In chapters 1-9, Solomon writes about wisdom for younger people. He speaks of details of Godly living and heeding a parent's advice, *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge"* (1:7). Salvation is through faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone and Proverbs directly teaches us to, *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight"* (3:5-6).
- In chapters 10-24, there is wisdom that applies to average people covering various topics. Many of these parables contrast a righteous man and a wicked man, and urges us to commit our way to God, *"There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death"*(14:12).
- Chapters 25-31, give wisdom to leaders. It was these very proverbs that were transcribed by King Hezekiah's people, and for good reason (25:1). They contain many warnings and instructions to assist in walking and seeking a Godly life. As would be understood by a leader of an army, Solomon writes in 27:17, *"Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."*

## ECCLESIASTES

The book of Ecclesiastes contains Proverbs, maxims, sayings, and is largely an autobiographical story. Solomon wrote it late in his life, approximately 935 B.C. He had become aware of the mistakes that he made throughout his life and began to document them. The purpose of Ecclesiastes is to spare future generations the suffering and misery of seeking after foolish, meaningless, materialistic emptiness, and to offer wisdom by discovering truth in seeking after God.

It appears that Solomon once again, wants to teach the reader wisdom, *"I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven. It is a grievous task which God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with"* (1:13).

- Chapter 1-2, deal with Solomon's personal experiences throughout his life. He describes that everything he sought was selfish pleasure and meant nothing eternally. Generally, he speaks concerning the meaning of life, *"I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after the wind."* (1:14). Solomon, the man whom God gave the most wisdom; sought after, researched, and tried everything in an attempt to find lasting happiness, and came to this conclusion: *"All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor. Thus I considered all my activities which*

*my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after the wind and there was no profit under the sun.” (2:10-11).*

- In chapters 3-5, Solomon gives common explanations and observations. One in particular is 5:15, “*As he had come naked from his mother’s womb, so will he return...*”, speaking of everyone who dies takes nothing with him; possessions, in the end, are ultimately useless. As tough as it is, our sinful nature naturally gravitates toward materialism.
- Chapters 6-8, Solomon gives advice for having a meaningful life, “*Consider the work of God, for who is able to straighten what He has bent?*” (7:13).
- In chapters 9-12, Solomon writes a conclusion that clears up the entire book, everyone will eventually die and all the deeds of man are vanity (useless) without God; our obedience must be to Him. “*The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: Fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.*” (12:13).

## SONGS

The book of Song of Solomon is a large love poem filled with smaller poems of different kinds. Solomon is the author and he wrote it sometime during his reign 970-930 B.C. It is a story of a bridegroom who is in love with his bride. Key personalities are King Solomon, the Shulammite girl, and friends.

The story greatly emphasizes the sanctity of marriage and that it is designed, blessed and consecrated in the eyes of the Lord. The purpose of “Song of Songs”, as it is also called, is a picture of God’s love for His people. Although there is explicit sexual content, it is a book in which we can learn the depths of God’s authentic love for us and what should be in the sacredness of marriage.

- In chapters 1-3, Solomon writes of the courtship and engagement of the Beloved (Solomon) and the Lover (Shulammite girl), “*My beloved responded and said to me, ‘Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come along’*” (2:10).
- Chapters 3-4, we read of the marriage ceremony of the bride to the bridegroom, “*Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and gaze on King Solomon with the crown with which his mother has crowned him on the day of his wedding*” (3:11).
- Chapters 5-8, are the relationship between the husband and wife and the power of their love, “*Many waters cannot quench love, nor will rivers overflow it; if a man were to give all the riches of his house for love, it would be utterly despised*” (8:7).

## ISAIAH

The book of Isaiah is Narrative History, Prophetic Oracle, and even a Parable (*chapter 5*). The prophet Isaiah wrote it at approximately 700 B.C. (Chapters 40-66, written later in his life approx. 681 B.C.). Isaiah is the first book in the section called Major Prophets. They are called Major Prophets because of the large amount of material they wrote not because their message was more important than any other prophet’s was. Key personalities are Isaiah, his two sons, Shearjashub and Maher-shalal-jash-baz.

Isaiah contains some of the most incredible prophecies of any book. It contains foreknowledge, in incredible details about the Messiah, and the future reign of Jesus Christ. The purpose of the book of Isaiah was to call God’s nation, the nation of Judah, back to faithfulness and to declare the coming Messiah “Immanuel”. God calls and commissions His prophet to declare to Judah and Israel condemnation, conviction, and ultimately great hope.

- In Chapters 1-39, Isaiah points out the sins of both North and South Kingdoms. He then declares severe punishment to them and all the neighboring nations around them, *“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight Cease to do evil”* (1:16). He proclaims great hope of the coming Savior, *“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel”* (7:14), this passage was fulfilled in Matthew 1:22-24, in the New Testament.
- Chapters 40-55, speak of the return and restoration after the exile from Babylon. Isaiah repeatedly claims the premise, *“There is no God beside Me”* (44:6,8; 45:5,6,14,18,21). There is also another foretelling of the Messiah, who will come and bring new life through His death, *“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth”* (53:7).
- In chapters 56-66, Isaiah writes of the new Heavens and Earth, This is that great reward for all those who trust and obey God. He proclaims the hope for the afflicted and judgment for the evil. *“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind”* (65:17).

## JEREMIAH

The book of Jeremiah is Prophetic Oracle and Narrative History, although not completely in chronological order. The prophet Jeremiah wrote it sometime during his ministry about 626-586 B.C. Key personalities are the many kings Judah, Baruch, Ebdemelech, King Nebuchadnezzar, and the Rechabites.

Its purpose was to warn of the destruction that they were about to face and to urge Judah to return and submit to God. Jeremiah was a priest who God calls to be His prophet. Jeremiah identifies their sins and treachery, as he wants them to realize the serious condition of their sinful ways. He then gives prophecies of the coming king and the New Covenant that would be made.

- In chapters 1-10, God calls Jeremiah and proclaims, *“I have put My words in your mouth”*(1:9). Jeremiah condemns Judah for their sins and attacks their faithlessness, obviously angry over their blatant sin.
- Chapters 11-28, Jeremiah warned of the destruction that would be poured out on Judah. He writes about God’s hard dispense of holy anger. At one point God says, *“I will not listen when they call to Me because of their disaster”* (12:14). A lot of the wickedness that angered God was the constant worship of false idols and gods, and the sacrifices they were burning to them.
- From chapters 29-38, Jeremiah writes about the New Covenant and the hope that God would bring when He delivers them after the captivity. King Zedekiah who did not heed his warning throws Jeremiah into prison and then into a cistern. Nevertheless, Jeremiah warned that the King would fall into the hands of the King of Babylon.
- Chapters 39-52, Jeremiah records the events of the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. As many prophets had announced in the past, the Empire of Babylon indeed laid siege to Jerusalem and the land of Judah. This completes the exile of both kingdoms, the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C. and now the Southern Kingdom in 586 B.C. As Jeremiah had declared in 37:17, King Zedekiah was captured and his son murdered in his presence, he was blinded, bound and dragged off to Babylon in captivity.
- In chapter 50, God promises to rescue His nation from captivity. In verse 17-18 God declares, *“Israel is a scattered flock, the lions have driven them away. The*

*first one who devoured him was the king of Assyria, and the last one who has broken his bones is Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I am*

*going to punish the king of Babylon and his land, just as I punished the king of Assyria.*" The capital of Assyria was destroyed so severely it was not discovered until the 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

## LAMENTATIONS

The book of Lamentations is book of sorrowful songs or poems. The name implies that the topic is expressing grief over something (to lament). Jeremiah, also known as the "weeping prophet" writes this after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. It was written soon after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.; he was an eyewitness. He predicted this destruction (as did others), watched it take place, and now in this book he is sadly reflecting on it. Key personalities are the prophet Jeremiah and the people of Jerusalem.

Its purpose was to express despair and teach God's people that disobedience to the Lord results in immense suffering and distress. Jeremiah pours out his emotions in compassion, and empathy for God's nation, as he watches them inhabit a foreign land.

- In chapter 1, Jeremiah mourns for Jerusalem and Judea as it lays in ruin by the raid and destruction of Babylon, *"How lonely sits the city that was full of people! She has become like a widow who was once great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces has become a forced laborer!"* (1:1).
- Chapter 2, He described the anger of the Lord who brought judgment to the wicked land (as God had warned), *"In fierce anger He has cut off all the strength of Israel; He has drawn back His right hand from before the enemy..."* (2:3).
- Chapter 3, we see Jeremiah expressing his troubled spirit and suffering in gloom. He too is afflicted, as his homeland has been pillaged. On the other hand, he reminds us in verses 19-23, that God is faithful and will restore and bring His promise to pass, *"The LORD'S loving-kindness indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail"* (3:22).
- Finally, in chapter 4, we read that God has brought justice and ruled mightily. During the siege, the city of Jerusalem suffered incredibly. Starvation was so bad and widespread that the Israelites resorted to eating their own children. The nation was warned about their sin and disobedience and the penalty of the coming judgment of God, and in verse 11 we read, *"The LORD has accomplished His wrath.."*

## EZEKIEL

The book of Ezekiel is Narrative History, Prophetic and Apocalyptic in genre and even contains Parables. The prophet Ezekiel wrote it approximately 571 B.C. (this date is accurately precise because this book contains more defined dates than any other book in the Bible.) Key personalities include Ezekiel, Israel's leaders, Ezekiel's wife, King Nebuchadnezzar, and "the prince".

It was written to announce judgment upon Judah, to allow them one last chance to repent. It also foretells of the coming deliverance of God's nation from captivity in Babylon. It mainly discusses the events during the Babylonian captivity. Ezekiel is a priest who is called by God to deliver His messages.

- In chapters 1-3, God commissions his servant Ezekiel. He receives visions, and his message is to confront God's sinful nation, *"I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a rebellious people who have rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day"* (2:3).
- Chapters 4-24, Ezekiel delivered the message of doom to the captives. He told several parables, one that compared Israel to an adulterous woman (16:1-63). He taught them that God was cleansing His chosen nation, *"Fou have borne the penalty of your lewdness and abominations', the LORD declares"* (16:58).

- From chapters 25-32, Ezekiel condemns judgment upon seven particular nations who mocked YHWH, the God of Israel because of the captivity; they too would soon see their fate. These nations are Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt.
- In chapters 33-48, a message of deliverance and restoration is written. This includes not only the current nation of Israel but also the future of the coming Messiah, the Temple, and the Kingdom of God in the End age. In chapter 37, he writes the famous vision of the valley of bones, *“He said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord God, Fou know” (37:3)*

## DANIEL

The genre of the book of Daniel is Narrative History, Prophetic Oracle, and it includes Apocalyptic material. The prophet Daniel wrote it around 530 B.C. and his writings records the events of the Babylonian captivity in 560-536 B.C. to which Daniel was a servant. It also describes the apocalyptic visions given by God, and reveals the events and plans for everyone's future. Key personalities of this book include Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Belshazzar, and Darius.

The purpose of this book is to provide a historical account how the Lord God protected and provided for His faithful followers while in captivity. It also includes a vision of future redemption and hope.

- In chapters 1-6, Daniel writes about his own life in captivity. He was selected to work for the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel (or his Babylonian name Beltshazzar), and his friends made bold and tough decisions and several times displayed their integrity to stand for Godliness instead of culture. They rejecting the king's food, prayed when it was illegal to do so, and refused to bow to the king's idol, for which they were thrown into a scorching furnace. Daniel interpreted the king's dreams twice then was promoted as chief over all the wise men in Babylon. Yet, through all the great things that Daniel did He claimed it was God that did it through him and he gave all the glory to God, *“It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him” (2:22)*.
- Chapters 7-12 contain the visions that Daniel received from God and the events that are involved in his prophetic ministry. A portion of these includes the results of the earthly kingdoms that he lived in. They also mention the coming Messiah and the apocalyptic events to come. *“As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, “My lord, what will be the outcome of these events?” He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time” (12:8-9)*.

## HOSEA

The book of Hosea is a Narrative History and Prophetic Oracle. Hosea is the first book in the sections of Minor Prophets. They are called Minor Prophets not because their material is less important or insignificant, but because of the size of the book they wrote was shorter in length. The prophet Hosea wrote it at approximately 715 B.C. It records the events from 753-715 B.C. including the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722. The key personalities are Hosea, Gomer, and their children.

Its purpose was to illustrate the spiritual adultery of Israel and God's boundless love for His sinful people. Hosea brings God's message to the wicked Northern Kingdom.

During this time, they are active in oppressing the poor in slavery and worshipping idols. God, because of His grace, sent another opportunity for Israel to repent and turn to Him. Shortly thereafter, the Northern Kingdom went into permanent captivity.

- In chapters 1-3, God gives Hosea instructions to marry an unfaithful woman and he obeys. His unfaithful wife Gomer leaves him and finds another man. Hosea is faithful; he finds her, redeems her and brings her

back home to him. *“Then I said to her, ‘You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you’* (3:3).

- Chapters 4-14 Hosea describes how Israel has been unfaithful to God. God wants Israel to repent and turn from their wickedness. He wants to restore Israel however, they continue to disobey and follow their own ways, *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children”* (4:6).

## JOEL

The genre of Joel is Narrative and Prophetic Oracle. The prophet Joel wrote it around 841-835 B.C. sometime before the fall and exiles of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. Key personalities are Joel and the people of Judah. Its purpose was to call the Southern Kingdom to repentance or prepare for the coming judgment. Joel describes the locust that inflicts severe damage to everything in their paths, and warns that it is only the beginning of what is to come.

- Chapter 1, Joel compares the destruction and judgment of God like a plague of locust. This is the warning and penalty for disobedience and evilness, *“For a nation has invaded my land, mighty and without number; its teeth are the teeth of a lion, and it has the fangs of a lioness”*(1:6).
- Chapter 2-3, God calls His people to repent and return, if not, they will all be judged. The promise and deliverance of the Lord is waiting and He will restore the land, *Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning; And rend your heart and not your garments.”Now return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil”* (2:12-13).

## AMOS

The purpose of the book of Amos was to announce God’s holy judgment on the Kingdom of Israel (the Northern Kingdom), call them to repentance, and to turn from their self-righteous sins and idolatry. God raised up the prophet Amos, as an act of His great mercy to a people who repeatedly shunned and disobeyed Him.

- Chapter 1-3, Amos came as the days of the wicked Northern Kingdom were winding down. The people were religious but it was sadly superficial. Amos announces that the neighboring nations would be punished. There were many of these wicked nations including Damascus, Gaza, Edom, and Tyre.
- In chapters 4-8, Amos warns that Israel will be destroyed, and gives examples of this judgment. Amos comes, announces God’s coming judgment to the Northern Kingdom and uses the phrase, *“the day of the Lord”* referring to God intervening to punish and judge the wicked city, which would eventually be exile by the Assyrians.

*“Seek good and not evil, that you may live; and thus may the LORD God of hosts be with you, just as you have said!”* (5:14).

- In chapter 9, Amos tells of the restoration and hope of Israel, *“In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, and wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins And rebuild it as in the days of old”* (9:11).

## OBADIAH

The book of Obadiah is a book of Prophetic Oracles. The prophet Obadiah wrote it. Its authorship is difficult to date but was possibly written about 853-841 B.C. or 605-586 B.C. The key personalities are the

Edomites. The purpose of Obadiah is to show that God will judge all those who are against His children, His chosen people; Edom is used as the example of this truth.

Obadiah is only one chapter (*the shortest book in the Old Testament*) yet it tells of God's prophet Obadiah as he announces God's powerful and authoritative judgment on the nation of Edom. This is the fateful end of the nation of Edom. They had been in conflict with Israel since ancient times, in reality Edom is the descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother.

- In verses 1-9, Obadiah declares the wickedness of the Edomites and gives examples of their pride, *"In the loftiness of your dwelling place, who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to earth?' He proclaims God's judgment on Edom, 'Will I not on that day,' declares the LORD, 'Destroy wise men from Edom and understanding from the mountain of Esau?'"* (vs 8).
- Verses 10-14 tell of the transgressions and offenses of Edom. Implying that they should have acted like a brother who would stand for them, since they descended from the brothers; Jacob and Esau. *"Because of violence to your brother Jacob, You will be covered with shame, And you will be cut off forever"* (vs. 10).
- In verses 15-21, we read about the victory of Israel in the end, *"Esau's house will be as stubble" and "The house of Jacob will be a fire"* (vs. 18). Edom was utterly nonexistent by the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.

## JOHAH

The book of Jonah is Narrative History and a Prophetic Oracle. The prophet Jonah wrote it approximately 785-760 B.C. before Assyria conquered Israel's Northern Kingdom. Key personalities include Jonah, the captain and the ship's crew and the people of Nineveh.

The purpose of this book is to show that God is a merciful and gracious God. Although the wicked city of Nineveh deserved to be crushed immediately, God was patient towards them. A reluctant prophet, Jonah originally ran from God before delivering a message of repentance to the nation of Nineveh.

- In chapter 1, God directed Jonah to go to Nineveh however; Jonah disobeyed, boarded a ship and headed for Tarshish. The sailors of the ship became concerned because of the great storm that brewed and Jonah explained that God was bringing judgment upon him. The sailors threw him into the sea where he was swallowed by an enormous fish. *"And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights"* (1:17).
- Chapter 2-3, After God had the fish cough him up, three days later; Jonah obeyed God and went to Nineveh to fulfill his mission. Jonah preached a message of repentance and to his surprise, the sinful city repented. *"Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them"* (3:5).
- In chapter 4, God deals with Jonah and teaches him about His love and compassion.

*"...knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity"* (4:2). Nineveh's repentance must have been short-lived; it was destroyed in 612 B.C.

## MICAH

The book of Micah is a Prophetic Oracle. The prophet Micah wrote it 742-686 B.C. shortly before the Northern Kingdom's fall in 722 B.C. Key personalities are all the people of Samaria and Jerusalem.

The purpose of the book of Micah was to proclaim warning and judgment to both the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms. His message was similar to that of Isaiah and was written at about the same time. Micah described the impending judgment that would eventually exile the nation.

- Chapters 1-5 specifically explain the judgment for the wicked nations, *“For I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the open country, planting places for a vineyard. I will pour her stones down into the valley and will lay bare her foundations”* (1:6). Then chapter five Micah miraculously predicts the birthplace of the Messiah in Bethlehem. Also in verse 2, he teaches that the Messiah is an infinite Savior, from everlasting, *“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity”* (5:2).
- In chapters 6-7, Micah declares what God requires of men, *“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”* (6:8). Micah then proclaims God’s restoration and salvation to His people, *“Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love”* (7:18).

## NAHUM

The book of Nahum is a Prophetic Oracle. The prophet Nahum wrote it approximately 663-612 B.C. just before the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C. He was raised up to preach God’s judgment for a second time to Nineveh. Jonah was the first about 120 years earlier.

Its purpose is to pronounce the final warning and judgment upon Nineveh, and he also addresses the rest of the Assyrian empire. They returned to wickedness shortly after they repented back in Jonah’s day. They would neglect Nahum and his message.

Within fifty years, Nineveh would be completely decimated and utterly wiped from the face of the Earth.

- In chapter 1, Nahum warns of Judgment, and describes the awesome power of God, *“Mountains quake because of Him and the hills dissolve; indeed the earth is upheaved by His presence, the world and all the inhabitants in it”* (1:5). He then goes on to encourage a hope for the Southern Kingdom because of the coming judgment of Nineveh. *“Thus says the LORD, “Though they are at full strength and likewise many, Even so, they will be cut off and pass away. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no longer”* (1:12).
- Chapter 2-3, Nahum predicts the annihilation of Nineveh, *“And it will come about that all who see you will shrink from you and say, ‘Nineveh is devastated! Who will grieve for her?’ Where will I seek comforters for you?”* (3:7). It was damaged so severely that it was lost in time. It wouldn’t be until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the remains of Nineveh would be identified.

## HABAKKUK

The book of Habakkuk is Narrative History and displays Prophetic Oracle. Habakkuk wrote it approximately 612-589 B.C. just before the fall of Judah in the Southern Kingdom. Key personalities are Habakkuk and the Babylonians. As is true of the many other prophets, Habakkuk is a short book. The information in it was vital since it carried God’s message to His people. Its purpose was that Habakkuk was announcing a familiar message of judgment. He was identifying the wickedness and sin of Judah before them. Habakkuk declared that God is the *“Rock”* (1:2) and that they would be judged.

- In chapters 1-2, Habakkuk poses some difficult questions to God. He was wondering why evil was prevailing. God claimed that He would do amazing things that, *“you would not believe if you were told”* (1:5). All of the surrounding neighbors who were super powers at that time would fall in ruin, as no one expected. Babylon was a growing empire that would rule over everything, for a time. In chapter two, God answers

Habakkuk's question. He urges everyone to be patient and ultimately trust in Him. *"Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith" (2:4).*

- Chapter 3, Habakkuk gives God the glory and praise for faithfully responding to his questions, *"LORD, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy"(3:2).*

## ZEPHANIAH

The small book of Zephaniah is Narrative History and Prophetic Oracle. Zephaniah wrote it circa 630 B.C. very soon before the fall of Judah in the Southern Kingdom. The purpose of this book was to show that God raised up his prophet Zephaniah to proclaim a warning of coming judgment and to encourage repentance.

The Southern Kingdom was complacent in their wicked lives. They not only suffered under wicked kings they also would suffer under the holy judgment of God. Zephaniah was God's method in bringing a stern warning of the day of the Lord *"Near is the great day of the Lord...a day of wrath is that day" (1:14-15).* He also brought a message of hope, when the nation would be restored.

- In chapters 1-2, Zephaniah, 20 years prior to their captivity, foretells about the looming judgment that was awaiting Judah if they did not turn back to YHWH. He also predicted the desolation of Nineveh the capital city of Assyria in 612 B.C. *"And He will stretch out His hand against the north And destroy Assyria, And He will make Nineveh a desolation, Parched like the wilderness" (2:13).*
- Chapter 3, God demonstrates how He gives the sinner what they do not deserve... *Mercy.* Zephaniah wrote that there would be a day of hope, when the remnant of Israel would come back out of captivity under the YHWH's protection, to fulfill His promise. *"The LORD has taken away His judgments against you, He has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; You will fear disaster no more" (3:15).*

## HAGGAI

The book of Haggai is Narrative History and Prophetic Oracle. The prophet Haggai wrote it approximately 520 B.C. Haggai is among the most carefully and precisely dated books in the entire Bible. It is a post-exilic book, meaning it was written after (*post*) the captivity (*exile*) in Babylon. Key personalities are Haggai, Zerubbabel, and Joshua.

The purpose of this book was that Haggai was called by God to encourage the people to finish the construction of the temple in Jerusalem. The construction had ceased because of opposition and because the neighboring countries, and the Jews were frightened.

- In chapter 1, God called on Haggai to deliver His message. The Jews were living in their comfortable houses while the temple, the house of God, sat unfinished, *"Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'This people says, 'The time has not come, even the time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt'" (1:2).* The Jews began working 24 days after Haggai's message (vs. 15).
- In chapter 2, Haggai motivated the Jews to continue building the temple, and that God will bless them, *"As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!" (2:5).* The building of the temple in Jerusalem was completed in 515 B.C.

## ZECHARIAH

The book of Zechariah is Narrative History, Prophetic and Apocalyptic in genre. It is a post-exilic book, meaning it was written after (*post*) the return from captivity (*exile*) in Babylon. The prophet Zechariah wrote

chapters 1-8 approximately 520-518 B.C. (Before the temple completed), and then wrote chapters 9-14 approximately 480 B.C. (After the temple is completed). Zechariah is among the most precisely dated books in the Bible. Key personalities are Zechariah, Zerubbabel and Joshua.

The purpose of this book is that Zechariah wrote to encourage the remnant, who had recently returned from exile. Their faith in God was weak and they were not motivated to build the temple. They needed to learn and conform to the law of God again.

- In chapters 1-8, Zechariah recorded his visions, encouraged the people to reinstate the priesthood, and other religious laws that were forgotten during the 70-year exile. Zechariah gives great hope and encouragement about the coming Messiah Jesus Christ, who will set up His throne and rule as the mighty Branch, the High Priest, who will offer up the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. *"Then say to him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the LORD. "Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices" (6:12-13).*

- Chapters 9-14 are difficult passages to understand, many are prophetic and apocalyptic. Zechariah writes judgment against the neighboring enemies. Most importantly he declared the first coming of the Messiah who would be mounted on a donkey (9:9), His betrayal (11:12), and His crucifixion (12:10). Finally, he writes about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ descending from heaven the same way He had left in Acts 1:11, in the clouds. *"In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south" (14:4).*

## MALACHI

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament and is a book of Prophetic Oracle. It is a post-exilic book, meaning it was written after the return from captivity in Babylon. The prophet Malachi wrote it approximately 430 B.C. Key personalities include Malachi and the priests. The purpose of this book is that Malachi wrote to ensure that the hearts of the Jews was right and that they were keeping God first in their lives.

- In chapters 1-3, Malachi identified the sins of the Jews, including their priests.

He prophesied that God would send a messenger to prepare the way (this is John the Baptist), *"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts" (3:1).* Finally, he addressed the topic of tithes and offering and that God is stolen from when people disobey it.

- In chapter 4, the last chapter of the Old Testament, Malachi addressed, "the great and terrible day of the Lord" (vs. 5). He teaches about the coming judgment when God will set them ablaze in His holy anger. He also gives hope to the faithful with the Book of Remembrance. Those who do the will of God and are righteous will be spared.

Malachi, the last book of the Bible, ends very differently than it began in the book of Genesis. Let us compare them:

Genesis 1:1, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* This was a beautiful and perfect relationship with God.

Malachi 4:6, *"He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."*

Reference and Source: <https://biblehub.com/>

Consider the large contrast between the very first verse and the very last verse. Afterward, consider that “the sin of mankind” made all the difference. The Old Testament begins with the magnificent power of God’s creation and ends with fear and separation from God and in need of a Savior. The Old Testament closes with a sad dreary clunk...

## NEW TESTAMENT

### MATTHEW

The book of Matthew is a Gospel that contains Narrative History, Genealogy, Parables, Sermons, and some Prophetic Oracles. It was written by Matthew (Levi), the Disciple of Christ around 48-50 A.D. The key word in Matthew is "Kingdom" and is used 28 times.

The personalities of this book include the Messiah Jesus Christ, His parents Mary and Joseph, the Twelve Disciples, the prophet John the Baptist, and other kinds of leaders. These leaders include those in government like Pilate and religious leaders such as the Pharisees (who attempt to hinder the work of Jesus).

The book of Matthew is the first of the synoptic gospels and it was written to reveal the Lord Jesus as the Messiah, the King of the Jews, from the line of David. It also was written to convince the Jews that Jesus Christ was indeed their long-awaited Messiah.

- Chapters 1-4 in Matthew mainly deal with the miracle birth of Jesus and the events surrounding His early life. This primarily involves the commonly told Christmas story but also includes the genealogy of Jesus, which goes all the way back to Abraham. *"She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins"* (1:21).
- Chapters 5-25 consist of the ministry of Jesus from the interdiction of John the Baptist up to the point of His death at Calvary. These chapters are vital to our knowledge of Jesus Christ and are much of what we know about God living as a perfect man on Earth. These passages include Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount, numerous miracles, and priceless teachings to all who would listen and follow.
- Chapters 26-28, contain the death and resurrection of Jesus. These chapters present the truth of the "Good News" and about how Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself. This is the central theme of salvation through faith alone in the complete and finished work of Christ Jesus on the cross. Salvation is possible only through His death, His burial, and His resurrection from the dead, all for the sake of sinners. Numerous and amazing Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled frequently in these final chapters. Some of these are His betrayal for thirty pieces of silver by Judas, crucifixion with two robbers, and those wagging their heads at Jesus while He was yet on the cross.

### MARK

The book of Mark is a Gospel that contains Narrative History, Sermons, Parables, and some Prophetic Oracles. This Gospel has somewhat of an emphasis in miracles (27 total) which is significantly more than any of the other Gospels. The key word in Mark is "Immediately" which is used 34 times causing the reader to move from one account to the next rapidly. Mark is the shortest of the synoptic gospels and was written about 64 A.D. The key personalities of this book are Jesus Christ, His Twelve Disciples, Jewish religious leaders, Pilate, and John the Baptist.

It was written by John Mark who was one of the missionaries who accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their mission trips. It is possible that Mark wrote this Gospel at the urging of Peter (his companion in Rome) since he had firsthand knowledge of the things that Mark wrote about.

The purpose of the Gospel of Mark is to show that the Lord Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God who was sent to suffer and to serve in order to rescue and restore mankind.

The 16 chapters of the Gospel of Mark can be divided into two parts, 8 chapters each. In the first 8 chapters Jesus is essentially traveling north and preaching until chapter 8. In Chapter 8, Jesus is in the city of Caesarea Philippi where He asks His disciples, *"Who do people say that I am?"* (vs. 27). Peter replies, *"You*

*are the Christ*". Throughout the last 8 chapters, Jesus is traveling south, back to Jerusalem; all the way to Calvary's Cross.

- In chapter 1, there is a quick introduction of John the Baptist and his preparation for the coming Messiah. It also includes the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan, and the temptation in the desert by Satan. The focus quickly changes to the message and ministry of Jesus.
- In chapters 2-10, Jesus selects His Disciples, "*And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him, and that He could send them out to preach*" (3:14). The rest of these passages almost completely refer to Jesus as a Servant. It presents Jesus either teaching, healing, helping, performing miracles, blessing, feeding, challenging authority, and feeling compassion (8:2).
- Chapters 11-16 are the final chapters that declare the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ again another example of servanthood. He is betrayed, dragged through a faulty trial, and then unmercifully beaten, humiliated and crucified; all for the purpose of serving sinners. The final chapter is the miraculous resurrection of His physical body, numerous appearances, and command of the Great Commission, and finally His ascension to the right hand of God.

## LUKE

The book of Luke is a Gospel that contains Narrative History, Genealogy, Sermons, Parables, and some Prophetic Oracles. The emphasis of Luke is Parables and contains more of them than any other Gospel (19 total). It is the third of the synoptic gospels. Luke, a doctor and a Greek Christian, wrote it circa 59-61 A.D. He accompanied Paul on mission journeys, as described in the book of Acts, which Luke also wrote. The key word in Luke is "Son of Man" which is used 80 times.

The key personalities of the book include Jesus Christ, His parents Mary and Joseph, the Twelve Disciples, John the Baptist, Herod the Great, Jewish religious leaders, and Pilate.

This book was written to record an accurate account "*so that you may know the exact truth*" (1:4), of the life of Jesus Christ as the perfect Savior of the world. He wrote to the Greeks to present Jesus in His perfect manhood as the "Son of Man," the Savior of all men.

- In chapters 1-4, Luke writes a very detailed account of the birth of Jesus, a common Christmas story, yet always fascinating. He then explains John the Baptist's preparation of the coming Messiah, then Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River, which transitions into Jesus' beginning ministry in Galilee.
- Chapters 5-21 consist of the ministry of Jesus. As Jesus travels, He teaches, preaches, heals the sick, and brings hope to the desperate and discouraged. He was also seeking those who were obedient and faithful, such as the Roman Centurion who sincerely pleads with Jesus to heal his servant from a far distance, "*just say the word, and my servant will be healed*" (7:7). Jesus met many religious leaders who relentlessly opposed Him and constantly tried to trick and kill Him.
- In chapters 22-24, one of His own (Judas) betrays Jesus. He was unlawfully convicted by a dishonest and hateful court, and sentenced to an excruciating death. However, death could not hold Him and after three days He resurrected and arose from the grave, just as He had miraculously raised others during His ministry.

## JOHN

The book of John is a Gospel that contains Narrative History, Sermons, Parables, and a few Prophetic Oracles. It was written by the Disciple/Apostle John around 85-95 A.D. The key personalities of this book

are Jesus Christ, His Twelve Disciples, Mary Magdalene, John the Baptist, Lazarus, his sisters Mary and Martha, Jewish religious leaders, and Pilate.

It was written so that all may believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God who gives eternal life. John's gospel uses the word "Believe" 98 times and the word "Life" 36 times, in an effort to embed the importance that one must believe in order to live eternally. John is not one of the three synoptic (common view) gospels, but instead was written with a more theological substance, yet equally as inspired and important as the first three gospels.

- Chapter 1 is the preamble of the Messiah's coming ministry. John gives clear evidence that Jesus is more than just a man, "*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*" (1:1). John then describes that the "*Word*" is Jesus who became a man to "*live among us*" (1:14). The beginning verses in the first chapter teaches us that Jesus is more than just a man who came into existence but rather, He is infinite God.
- Chapters 2-12 consist of Jesus' ministry. He meets with a religious leader named Nicodemus and teaches him that no one can enter the Kingdom of Heaven unless they have are personally "*Born-Again*" (3:3). Several times throughout the book, Jesus claims that He Himself is God, "*I am the Father are one*" (10:30). Jesus also repeats and applies to Himself, the Jehovaic statement, "*I AM*" as found in Exodus 3:14, for example, when Jesus declares, "*I am the resurrection and the life*" (11:25), "*I am the way the truth and the life*" (14:6), "*I am the door*" (10:9), and "*I am the bread of life*" (6:35).
- The events in Chapters 13-17 occur less than 24 hours before Jesus' death. They describe the details of the Last Supper with Jesus and His disciples. Jesus taught many important topics to the Disciples during this time. Some of these were topics about the Kingdom, and about the work of the Holy Spirit that would be sent to them. He also prays for Himself, His disciples, and for all the future believers.
- Chapters 18-21 portray the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In these final chapters, He is on trial and then convicted illegally. After which He is appallingly beaten, humiliated, and then crucified. Jesus resurrected and arose from the tomb and appeared to Mary Magdalene and to His disciples. When John finishes his gospel he writes one of the most amazing truths about Jesus Christ,

*"And there are many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written"* (21:25).

## ACTS

The genre of the book of Acts is Narrative History with several Sermons. Luke, the author of the Gospel of Luke, was a doctor and Gentile. He wrote this book circa 60-62 A.D. It is Luke's sequel to the *Gospel of Luke*. It is titled "Acts" to emphasize that this book records the "Acts of the Apostles through the work of the Holy Spirit". The key personalities of Acts are Peter, Paul, John, James, Stephen, Barnabas, Timothy, Lydia, Silas, and Apollos.

Luke wrote the book of Acts (Acts of the Apostles) to record how believers were empowered by the Holy Spirit, worked to spread the Gospel of Christ, and are a model for the future church.

The book of Acts is also the history of the birth, the founding, and the spread of the Church from Jerusalem to Rome. It also records the transition of the Church from being almost exclusively a Jewish institution into becoming a Gentile and an international institution. Consequently, it records the transition of Christianity from a Jewish religion into an international faith. The Gospel of salvation is for all because Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

- Chapters 1-6:7, contains the events that surround Jerusalem and the infancy of the church. The contents of these passages surround the early evangelistic work in Jerusalem. It describes the events of Pentecost, and the amazingly bold sermon presented by the Apostle Peter to all the Jews who gathered for the Feast of Weeks. The result of this sermon was 3000 new believers surrendering to Jesus Christ.
- In chapters 6:8-9:31, there is a shift in the focus of evangelism to other areas. Although the ministry continued in Jerusalem, witnessing the Gospel also included those who were not completely Jewish (Samaritans and Proselytes). In 8:5, Philip traveled down to Samaria, *“and began proclaiming Christ to them”*. Stephen is falsely accused and stoned to death while he preaches to the religious leaders. As Stephen was dying, he prayed to Jesus Christ, *“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” (7:59)*. Stephen’s executioners laid their robes at the feet of a young persecutor named Saul, who would soon become known as “Paul the Apostle”. Saul spent his early days oppressing Christians and imprisoning them, until he had a life changing experience with Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus in chapter 9:3.
- From chapters 9:32-12:24, evangelism of the gospel among the gentiles begins. Peter received a revelation that the gospel was also to be shared among the Gentiles. Cornelius, a Roman Commander and some of his men become followers of Christ. Saul (the persecutor) has become a passionate follower of Christ and immediately begins preaching the gospel. We also find that the term *“Christians”* is first used in Antioch.
- In 12:25-16:5 the gospel is shared geographically to the Gentiles in a different region farther outside Jerusalem. Saul changes his Hebrew name to Paul, a Greek name, to reach the Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas begin their first and second missionary journeys to the Gentile world with both success and opposition. In chapter 15, the Jerusalem Council takes place to authorize spreading the gospel message to the Gentile nations.
- From 16:6-19:20, after they are forbidden to enter Asia, Paul receives a vision. He and Silas head farther West to Macedonia to preach the gospel message in the Gentile European regions. Lydia, a woman who sold purple fabric, became the first convert along with her entire household. Paul preached to the Greek philosophers on Mars Hill and next sets out on his third missionary journey. *“The word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing” (19:20)*.
- The final chapters from 19:21-28, describe Paul’s travel to Jerusalem where he was arrested, and then his difficult travel to Rome to be put on trial. When he arrives, he is imprisoned in house arrest and the book of Acts abruptly ends without describing the events of his trial before Caesar.

## ROMANS

The book of Romans is a Pauline Epistle (letter from Paul). The Apostle Paul wrote it roughly about 56-57 A.D. The key personalities in the book of Romans are the Apostle Paul, and Phoebe who delivered this letter. Paul wrote the letter to the believers in Rome, hence the name “Romans”. He wrote it to give them a concrete theological foundation on which to construct their faith and to live for and serve God effectively.

The book of Romans reveals the answers to important questions and supplies information on many topics, such as salvation, the sovereignty of God, judgment, spiritual growth, and the righteousness of God. Many scholars also describe it as *The Gospel and the Righteousness of God*, which can be received only by faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ.

The focus of the “righteousness of God” is foundational throughout the book of Romans. In fact, it is threaded through every section of the basic outline of this epistle. Paul reiterates this so that the reader may realize that salvation cannot be attained through man’s good deeds but only through faith in God’s righteousness: *“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes... For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith”*

(1:16-17). You cannot repair your relationship with God through your good deeds; this is only accomplished through faith in the perfect and finished work of Jesus Christ.

- In chapters 1-8, Paul explains the fundamentals and foundations of the Christian faith. This is the Gospel Message, which all believers are commanded to share with the entire world. Some of the most popular and precious memorization passages about Salvation can be found in the first several chapters of Romans, "*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (6:23). Paul teaches about the sinful nature of all men in the eyes of God, justification by faith in Jesus Christ, freedom from sin, and victory in Christ.
- Chapters 9-11, Paul explains God's sovereignty over salvation. He also spells out how an individual may come into a right relationship with God: "*if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.*" (10:13). Place your faith and trust only in what Jesus Christ has already done on the cross and make Him the Master of your life and trust He raised Himself from the grave conquering death. His promise is "*You will be saved*".
- In chapters 12-16, Paul gives instructions for all Christians about how to live a holy lifestyle. In the beginning of chapter 12 he writes, "*Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice*", and "*Do not be conformed to this world*" (vss. 1-2). Much of the errors and trials that Paul dealt with in his "Epistles", were because the believers had conformed their lives to the world and not to God.

## 1 CORINTHIANS

The book of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians is a Pauline Epistle (letter from Paul). The Apostle Paul wrote it about 56 A.D. The key personalities of this book are the Apostle Paul, Timothy and also Chloe's household. Paul's purpose in writing this letter to the church in Corinth was to address and correct the immorality and divisions that had arisen among them.

- Chapters 1-4, Paul received reports of problems in the church in Corinth and therefore addresses their problems and disorders, "*there are quarrels among you*" (1:11). Paul asks believers to "*consider your calling*" (1:26-30). He then declares three times that God "*has chosen*" them and "*because of Him you are in Christ Jesus*". This truth is joyful and relieving to believers that God is in control and is the orchestrator of our lives.
- In chapters 5-11, Paul exposes all of the immorality that was occurring in the church at Corinth. These include sexual immorality, issues of marriage, and lawsuits with other believers. "*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God*" (6:9). Paul warns believers to be careful how you live, "*For you have been bought with a price*" (vs 20),
- In chapters 12-14, he clears up some of the confusion about practices of worship. He corrects difficult doctrines that had caused divisions. Some of these differences were the role of women in worship, the use of spiritual gifts, and observing the Lord's Supper. "*For God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints*" (14:33).
- Chapters 15-16 consist of Paul dealing with the topic of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the topic that is, "*offirst importance*" to Paul. It is here we find the most important information on planet Earth, the Gospel of Jesus Christ in verses 1-4. "*Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures*" (15:1-4).

## 2 CORINTHIANS

The book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians is a Pauline Epistle (letter from Paul). The Apostle Paul wrote it about 56 A.D. The key personalities of this book are the Apostle Paul, Timothy, and Titus. Paul wrote this letter to the church in Corinth to defend and protect his Apostleship, and to teach and warn against false teachers who were spreading heresy.

- In chapters 1-7, Paul describes the characteristics of an Apostle. He explained that his ministry was to preach Jesus Christ alone and not himself, *"For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as bondservants for Jesus' sake"* (4:5).

Paul then explains that Christians will suffer. *"we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed"*. It is promised to followers of Christ that they will suffer. Paul states that compared to eternity with Christ the sufferings of this world are temporary and have a purpose for us: *"For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."*

- In chapters 8-9, He urges the Corinthians to give the offering to the believers in Judea, as they had promised. He taught that if they gave generously they would also *"reap generously"*(9:6).
- Chapters 10-13 Paul defends his ministry and responds to attacks about his Apostleship. They had been questioning his authority and opposing him. Paul declares that if anyone preaches a different Gospel or a different Jesus, other than what Paul and the Apostles were preaching, they are false teachers and deceitful workers and should not be accepted.

In chapter 12 7-10, Paul explains a theology of his own suffering. He asks God to remove a suffering from His life but God refuses. God responds to him, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness"*. Paul understood that God is sovereign and in control over even his sufferings. Therefore, Paul embraces his suffering because God allows them into his life for a purpose regardless of how difficult they may be. In times of calamity, he understood that these were times when he depended on God's strength and mercy the most. Paul responds, *"Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with*

*distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong"*. Paul knew he was the strongest when he felt the weakest because he depended on God, the one who has infinite strength.

The last thing Apostle Paul teaches in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians is how to test yourself. If you want to know if you are a Christian, if you want to know if you are a believer and follower of Jesus Christ, than you must test yourself, *"to see if you are in the faith"*; examine yourself with Scripture (13:5).

## GALATIANS

The book of Galatians is a Pauline Epistle (letter from Paul). It was written by the Apostle Paul about 49 A.D. prior to the Jerusalem Council which had taken place in 50 A.D. This quite possibly could have been Paul's first letter. The key personalities of this book are the Apostle Paul, Peter, Barnabas, Abraham, Titus, and false teachers. Paul writes this book to deal with the problem of circumcision and Jewish legalism toward Gentile believers.

- In chapters 1-2, Paul's gives his testimony about how he had received the authentic Gospel message. He warns that if anyone presents another Gospel message other than the one he was preaching, that person is *"As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to*

*what you received, he is to be accursed!"* (1:9). Paul was speaking of the one true Gospel that he had received; Please read 1st Corinthians 15:1-4.

Paul then declares that Christ now lives within him, and directs, and empowers him to live as Christ's ambassador and instrument: *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me"* (2:20).

- Chapters 3-5:12, Paul begins by declaring that salvation is through faith and trust in Jesus Christ "Alone", and cannot be obtained through the keeping of the Law. *"Fou foolish Galatians! Who put you under a spell? Was not Jesus the Messiah clearly portrayed before your very eyes as having been crucified? I want to learn only one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? Having started out with the Spirit, are you now ending up with the flesh?"* (Galatians 3:1-3). The Law (10 Commandments) is our tutor to lead us to salvation in Jesus Christ, *"the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith"* (3:24). No one can obey the 10 Commandments. It is impossible. Every person has broken them; therefore, we can only attain salvation through trusting in our Savior Christ Jesus.
- Chapters 5:13-6, He teaches the Fruits of the Spirit and tells us to *"walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh"* (5:16). Good works does not save, but a Christian must have the desire to produce good fruit, obey God's Law and live a holy and righteous life in the eyes of God. Christians should live this redeemed life.

## EPHESIANS

The book of Ephesians is a Prison Epistle (letter written while in prison). Paul wrote it about 60-62 A.D. The key personalities of Ephesians are the Apostle Paul and Tychicus. It was written to encourage believers to walk as fruitful followers of Christ and to serve in unity and love in the midst of persecution.

- In chapters 1-3, Paul begins with the joyful truth that every believer has been chosen by God before the foundation of the world, *"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will"* (1:4-5). Paul then teaches about the unity of believers. These are the truths and blessings that all believers have in common. He wrote that all Christians are *"adopted as sons through Jesus Christ"* (1:5). All believers are, *"redeemed through His blood"* (1:7), and *"sealed by the Holy Spirit"* (1:13). Paul continues on to clear up one of the most misconceived and/or often ignored subjects even to this day, *"Salvation by Grace"*. He wrote that salvation is by the *"Grace"* of God and that it is through *"Faith"*, and that no one can contribute to salvation, in any way, even with good deeds: *"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast"* (2:8-9).
- In chapters 4-5, Paul encourages the believer to *"walk in a manner worthy of the calling"*. Every believer has a responsibility to live as servants of Jesus Christ. In these chapters, Paul teaches that it takes hard work to be in unity with others, and that we are to be *"imitators of God"* (5:1). He mentions imperative truths and advice for well functioning families, including husbands and wives who upon the oath of marriage become as *"one flesh"* (5:31). Paul explains the concept of a biblical marriage. Marriage is a picture of Christ and the church (body of believers) and the way that Jesus Christ loved the church is the way that the husband must love his treasured wife, *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her"* (5:25). Paul doesn't end there, he goes on to reinforce that husbands are to love their wives, *"as their own bodies"* and also to love their wives, *"even as himself"* (vss 28;33).

When a husband learns to love his wife in this way, his wife usually has no issues fulfilling her role and even enjoys it, *"the wife must see to it that she respects her husband"* (vs 33).

- In chapter 6, Paul instructs believers how to prepare for spiritual battle by dressing in the “*full armor of God*” (6:11). Prayer is the key weapon of the Christian soldier. He emphasizes his principle with the repeated statement “*stand firm*”.

## PHILIPPIANS

The book of Philippians is a Prison Epistle (letter written while in prison). Paul wrote it about 62 A.D. as he anticipated his release from prison. The key personalities are the Apostle Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus, Euodia, and Syntyche. It was written to show his appreciation and love to the Philippians in a thank-you letter for their continued help and support, and also to encourage their growth.

- Chapter 1, Paul writes about his sufferings and that through his imprisonment the Kingdom was increased. “*Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel*” (1:12). Christians are to surrender their lives in service to Christ Jesus. And what should Christians expect in this life for doing this? Suffering. Paul explains that there are two things granted by God for a believer. The first is to believe in Him and the other is to suffer, “*For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me*” (1:29-30). Jesus said, “*Count the cost*”... (Luke 14:25-33).
- Chapter 2, Paul explains the benefits of believers in unity with the “*mind of Christ*”. He teaches a theological lesson about the humanity of Jesus Christ as He laid down His glory and became a perfect human man in order to rescue and restore mankind back to a relationship with God.
- Chapter 3, Paul expounds on the joys of a Christian and encourages the church to press forward with the Gospel. He displays his testimony when he said, “*I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ*” (3:8).
- Chapter 4, Paul again mentions joy in Christ as he encourages believers to rejoice in the Lord. It is important for the believer to be well grounded in prayer and thanksgiving. To offer praise and to give God thanks for the many provisions they are blessed with, “*my God shall supply all your needs*” (4:19).

## COLOSSIANS

The book of Colossians is a Prison Epistle (letter written while in prison). Paul wrote it circa 60-62 A.D. The key personalities include Paul, Timothy, Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark, and Epaphras. It was written to counter and respond to heretical teachings and encourage believers to serve with fervor and passion.

The basic problem was a Judaic-Gnostic heresy that sought to mix Greek philosophy with Christian theology. Gnostic philosophy taught that matter was evil. In order to avoid having their pure god create evil, they had created a system of lesser deities that overflowed from their god. These lesser gods were far enough removed from the pure god that they were able to create the universe (which was composed of evil matter).

They named this lesser deity the Jehovah God of the Hebrews.

- In chapters 1-2, Paul sends words of thanks to the faithful believers “*who are at Colosse*”. Paul did not establish the Colossian Church and had never visited there. He teaches one of the most powerful passages attributing the divinity of Jesus Christ who is God in flesh. It is apparent that false teachers were spreading heresy by rejecting the deity of Jesus Christ, probably teaching that He was just a “unique man”. Paul warns not to allow anyone to lead them astray with Philosophy, trickery, or by traditions of men. Paul then assured the church that Jesus is God, “*in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form*” (2:9), and that

He, *“reconciled all things unto Himself”* (1:20), and He did it by, *“having nailed it to the cross”* (2:14) referring to our sins. Because Jesus Christ is God,

He was able to pay the penalty of sin in order to rescue mankind.

- In chapters 3-4, Paul encourages the church to focus on God, and keep their eyes on the goal, *“set your mind on the things above”* (3:2). He teaches believers how to live at home, how to manage family matters, and how to get along with other believers in Christ. His approach is for believers to put aside the petty situations that become obstacles in our lives, ultimately slow us down, and prevent the spread of the Gospel. Paul then explains what it means to forgive, *“just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you”* (3:13). Paul declares, *“Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts”* (3:14-15).

## 1 THESSALONIANS

The book of 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians is a Pauline Epistle (letter from Paul). The Apostle Paul wrote it about 52-54 A.D. and it was one of his earliest written letters. The key personalities in this book are the Apostle Paul, Timothy, and Silas. Paul wrote this letter to strengthen and encourage the church in Thessalonica. To encourage and hearten the believers, Paul chose to emphasize the second coming of Jesus Christ. Throughout this letter, Paul focused on the principles of Faith, Hope, and Love.

- In chapters 1-3, the first principle is seen as Paul accentuates and commends them for their faithfulness to the Lord. He wrote, *“thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe”* (2:13).
- In chapters 4-6, Paul highlights Love and Hope. He encourages the church to walk in love; to (excel still more). He then expounds on the return of Jesus and *“the day of the Lord”*. Paul teaches the church about the resurrection on the last day and that Christ will return in the clouds, this was exactly the encouragement that the church in Thessalonica needed. Lastly, before Paul finishes his letter he does not forget to add that they must pray constantly and *“examine everything carefully”*. In today’s world of lies, deception and carnival mirrors, everyone must apply these truths daily.

## 2 THESSALONIANS

The book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians is a Pauline Epistle (letter from Paul). The Apostle Paul wrote it about 52-54 A.D., several months after his first letter to the church in Thessalonica. The key personalities in this book are the Apostle Paul, Silas, and Timothy. Paul wrote this letter to reemphasize the coming return of Jesus Christ. Some of the people in Thessalonica had thought that Jesus had already returned, this letter was written to correct any misunderstandings.

- In chapter 1, Paul highlights the great hope of Jesus’ future return although the exact time is unable to be known by anyone. He commends the church in Thessalonica for their perseverance in the midst of persecution, *“we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure”* (1:4). Paul teaches that God will punish those who are persecuting on the last day. *“Dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power”* (1:8-9).
- In chapters 2-3, speaking of the return of Jesus Christ, Paul was sure to include the signs and setting that *“the man of lawlessness”* (the antichrist) had to arrive. For that to occur the *“restrainer”* (Holy Spirit) must be removed from restraining him. The Holy Spirit indwells all believers and when He is removed, all believers will be *“caught up”* in the clouds with the Lord Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Paul pushes them

to pray and serve until this all transpires. *“May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ”*(3:5).

## 1 TIMOTHY

The book of 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy is a Pastoral Epistle (letter from Paul to a church leader). The author is Paul who wrote it approximately 62 A.D. The key personalities are the Apostle Paul and Timothy. It was written to give encouragement and leadership guidelines to a young pastor named Timothy at the church in Ephesus.

- Chapter 1 begins with a greeting to Timothy, then quickly turns to a warning against false teachings, and an emphasis on correct beliefs. Paul encourages him to *“fight the good fight”*(vs. 18).
- In chapters 2-4, Paul declares that God desires salvation for everyone, *“Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”* (2:4).

Paul then teaches that, *“For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”* (2:5).

Next, Paul lays some important guidelines and principles for church leadership. He taught the controversial subject of women in the church and what the two offices of leadership in the church were to be, the Overseer and the Deacon. He even taught some of the practices that should be carried out in the church such as, *“give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching”* (4:13).

- Chapter 5-6, Paul gives guidelines for relationships within the church as he explains how to deal with discipline and care for widows. He gives advice of how to minister and lays more guidelines for the wealthy instructing them to be generous. *“Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy”* (6:17).

*“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”* (1:17).

## 2 TIMOTHY

The book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy is a Pastoral Epistle (letter from Paul to a church leader). The author is the Apostle Paul who wrote it approximately 67 A.D. and is probably his last letter. After Paul's release from his first imprisonment in Rome in AD 61 or 62, and after his final missionary journey (probably into Spain), he was again imprisoned under Emperor Nero c. 66-67. The key personalities are Paul, Timothy, Luke, Mark, and many others.

Its purpose was to give direction to Timothy and urge him to visit one final time. From the somber nature of this letter, it is apparent that Paul knew that his work was done and that his life was nearly at an end (4:6-8).

- In chapters 1-2, Paul begins with thanksgivings and an announcement to remain faithful, strong, and to *“Join with me in suffering for the Gospel”* (1:8). In contrast to his first imprisonment (where he lived in a rented house), he now languished in a cold dungeon (4:13) chained like a common criminal (1:16; 2:9). He also reiterates the important work of *“entrusting the faithful men who will be able to teach others”* (2:2). Paul's desire was to equip the saints with the knowledge of how to teach others.
- In chapters 3-4, Paul tells Timothy to remain faithful and *“preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction”* (4:2), because difficult times would be in the future. He challenges him to endure reminding him that endurance is one of the main quality

essentials for a successful preacher of the Gospel. Men would become just as they were in the time of Moses. He writes that, *“all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”* (3:12).

- At the end of chapter 4, Paul writes about personal concerns asking that some of his personal items be brought to him. It appears that his imprisonment was completely unexpected. Soon after this letter, probably the spring of 68 A.D., it is likely that Paul was beheaded as a Roman citizen.

*“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing”*(4:7).

## TITUS

The book of Titus is a Pastoral Epistle (letter from Paul to a church leader). The author is Paul who wrote it approximately 66 A.D. Key personalities include Paul and Titus. It was written to guide Titus, a Greek believer, in his leadership of the churches on the island of Crete, *“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you”* (1:5). As was the case with the letter of 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy, Paul writes to encourage and guide young pastors in dealing with opposition from both false teachers and the sinful nature of men.

- In chapter 1, Paul gives qualifications about how to choose leaders in the church, *“the overseer must be above reproach”*. He also warned to be aware of the rebellious men and deceivers who *“turn away from truth”*, there were many to be aware of (vs. 10).

- In chapters 2-3, Paul teaches how believers may live healthy inside and outside of the church. He told them to live Godly lives and to be prepared for the coming Savior Jesus Christ. Paul describes how Jesus rescues us from sin in chapter 2 verses 11-13. When a person first places their faith and trust in Jesus Christ for salvation they are saved from the penalty of sin, this is Justification, *“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men”*. While the believer is worshiping and serving God on earth they are saved from the binding power of sin, this is Sanctification, *“Instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age”*. When a believer's life comes to an end they go to be with Jesus Christ. Here they live with Him for eternity and are safe and protected from the presence of sin, this is Glorification, *“Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus”*.

## PHILEMON

The book of Philemon is a Prison Epistle (letter written while in prison), which Paul wrote circa 61 A.D. The key personalities of Philemon are Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus. It was written to Philemon as a plea to request forgiveness for his runaway servant Onesimus, who was a new believer in Jesus Christ. The book of Philemon consists of only one chapter.

- In verses 1-7, Paul gives his greetings to Philemon and presents his appreciation and gratitude for Him as a brother and worker in Jesus Christ. Philemon was most likely a wealthy member of the church in Colosse. It seems Paul begins by softening up Philemon, as to prepare him initially, before mentioning Onesimus his runaway slave. Philemon was apparently angry with his absent slave. *“I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake”* (vs. 6).

- Verses 8-25, consist of Paul's appeal for Onesimus, *“I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me”* (vs. 10). Onesimus had run away and traveled to Rome where he met Paul. While there, Onesimus surrendered his life to Christ. Philemon, under Roman law, could execute his slave for fleeing however,

Paul pleads with Philemon to accept his servant. Paul goes one-step further and asks Philemon not only to accept his slave, but also to accept him as a brother in Christ and to overlook his faults and errors. *“For perhaps he was for this reason separated from you for a while, that you would have him back forever, no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord”* (15-16). Onesimus would carry this letter back and give it to Philemon. Onesimus is later mentioned at the end of the book of Colossians as a faithful and beloved brother.

## HEBREWS

The book of Hebrews is a General Epistle (Apostolic Letter). It was written mainly to the Hebrew believers. The author is anonymous, although either Paul or Barnabas was traditionally accepted as the author. It was written approximately 67 A.D. Its purpose was to present the Lord Jesus Christ as perfect and superior in comparison to anything Judaism and the old covenant had to offer. The author was writing to a group of Christians who were under intense persecution and some were contemplating a return to Judaism. He admonished them not to turn away from their only hope of salvation.

- In chapters 1-10:18, the author repeatedly demonstrates Jesus Christ as preeminent over the angels, *“let all the angels of God worship Him”* (1:6); over Moses, *“He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses”* (3:3); over the Old Testament priesthood, *“being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek”* (5:10). The writer explains that the New Covenant is greater than the Old Covenant because Jesus was the perfect, permanent sacrifice, rather than the Old Testament sacrifices. The author also presents the power and authority of the Word of God, *“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart”* (4:12).
- In chapters 10:19-13, the writer explains that Faith is superior to the work of the Old Covenant. He writes, *“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”* (11:1). Chapter 11 is Faith’s Hall of Fame where all of the faithful individual’s from the Old Testament are highlighted in this chapter. Faith in Jesus Christ is our source of salvation because He is *“the author and perfecter of faith”* (12:2).

All are able to trust in Jesus Christ knowing that He is *“the same yesterday and today and forever”* (13:8).

## JAMES

The book of James is a General Epistle (Apostolic Letter). James the half-brother of Jesus wrote it approximately 48-49 A.D. It was likely the first New Testament book (letter) to be written. The key personalities of this book are James and Persecuted Christians. James wrote this book to Jewish believers to encourage them to endure and live bold Christian lives. James is a book about practical Christian living that reflects a genuine faith that transforms lives. In many ways, it is similar to the OT book of Proverbs.

- In chapter 1, James teaches believers to test their faith and *“prove yourselves doers of the word”* (1:22). James encourages believers to put their faith into action, and to be servants of Jesus Christ.
- Chapters 2-3, James describes the relationship between faith and works. He teaches that a person of faith without works demonstrates useless faith. What good is a person’s faith if they don’t present it to the world? A believer’s good works are evidence of their faith in Jesus Christ. He also teaches that everyone is a sinner and that if one of the 10 Commandments are broken, then that person is guilty of breaking every one of them, *“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all”* (2:10).
- In Chapters 4-5, James gives wise instruction to believers. He said, *“Submit to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you”* (4:7). A faithful believer will desire to follow hard after God in service, obedience, and

prayer. In the last chapter James stresses the weight and magnitude of prayer for every believer. He uses the word “*Prayer*” 7 times, signifying its importance. In the final verse of his book James expresses the magnitude of living faith in action saying:

*“My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”* (5:19-20).

## 1 PETER

The book of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter is a General Epistle (Apostolic Letter). It was written to all believers in general. The author is Peter who wrote it about 60 A.D. The key personalities are the Apostle Peter, Silas, and Mark. Its purpose was to encourage suffering Christians and to call them to personal holiness; Peter’s central focus is persecution.

- Chapters 1-2, Peter addresses the issue that believers are to live a life of personal holiness as God’s people, even during times of suffering and persecution. He teaches that all Christians are to expect suffering; it is normal and Scriptural for Christians to suffer persecution and even imprisonment and death. Peter explains that our salvation in Christ is secure and that He took our sin on the cross and, *“for by His wounds you were healed”* (2:24).
- In chapters 3-5, Peter explains that in living holy lives the believer is to, *“sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence”* (3:15). A part of living a holy life is obeying the commands of Christ and Peter claimed that we are obligated to preach the *“Hope that is in you”*. He expounds that believers should not be surprised when persecution comes upon them, *“be on the alert”* because Satan is continuously, *“seeking whom he may devour”* (5:8). In addition, if the believer does suffer persecution, they are to glorify God and entrust their souls to Him.

## 2 PETER

The book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter is a General Epistle (Apostolic Letter). It was written to all believers in general. The author is Peter who wrote it about 63-64 A.D. The key personalities are the Apostles Peter and Paul. Its purpose was to warn against the increasing number of false teachers attacking the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

- In chapters 1-2, Peter gives guidance and reassurance to the growing church and claims that the Gospel they are preaching is of Jesus Christ. He claimed, *“We were eye witnesses of His Majesty”* (1:16), and that men who were, *“Moved by the Holy Spirit”* wrote all of the teachings of Scripture (1:21). The trouble they were dealing with was the beginning of what we now know as *“Gnosticism”* a philosophical principal that was hurting the churches. Peter went on to teach that in the end God would judge all of the false prophets.
- Chapter 3, Peter encourages believers with the coming Day of the Lord. The Earth will receive its punishment and the righteous will dwell in the *“New Heavens and the New Earth”*. His final warning is critical which he claims, *“Be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men”* (3:17).

*“For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust”* (1:4).

## 1 JOHN

The book of 1<sup>st</sup> John is a General Epistle (Apostolic Letter). It is written by the Disciple/Apostle John around 85-95 A.D. probably from Ephesus. The key personalities are the Apostles Peter and Paul. Its purpose was

to warn about the increasing threat of false teachings and to reassure Christians of their faith and love in Jesus Christ.

It was written to combat false teachings that had to do with the denial that Jesus had a genuine human body (1:1). This Gnostic view of matter as being evil led to two responses, asceticism or licentiousness. He very clearly writes to give the true tests of a true Christian. These tests also contradicted the Gnostic licentious approach to Christianity. He gives several means to measure the reality of one's conversion experience.

- Chapters 1-2, John reassures believers explaining, "*God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all*" (1:5). He wrote that if sins were confessed He would cleanse them, because Jesus is the propitiation for "*the whole world*" (2:2). Because John was aware of the continuing attack of false teachings, he then urged believers not to love and follow after the world because it was not of the Father, and would ultimately pass away. Discernment is necessary to thwart the constant attacks of heresy.
- In chapters 3-4, He teaches about the love of God and that through His love He sent Jesus, "*To destroy the works of the devil*" (3:8). Therefore, believers should love each other not only with words but also, "*in deed and truth*" (3:18), as Jesus commanded.
- Chapter 5, John exhorts Christians to live by faith because through our faith in Christ we overcome the wickedness of the world. In addition, John writes one of the most powerful and assuring statements concerning the work of Jesus on the cross, "*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life*" (vs. 13). John wanted all believers to *know 100%*, that because of their faith and trust in Jesus Christ they would spend all of eternity with Him.

## 2 JOHN

The book of 2<sup>nd</sup> John is a General Epistle (Apostolic Letter). It is written by the Disciple/Apostle John around 85-95 A.D. Key personality is John. It was written to encourage all Christians not to lose focus of Jesus Christ and to warn against persistent heresy. His key purpose is that his children (the children of God) may abide in the truth and the truth may abide in them.

- In verses 1-3, John sends greetings to "*the chosen lady*" (vs. 1, 4, 5), who is most likely one of the churches in his region. John is the "*elder*" who probably was still in Ephesus when he wrote this letter.
- Verses 4-11, are the body of the letter. John supports the commandment to "*love one another*". He cautions them to watch for the deceivers and the antichrists that are abundant and active in the world spreading false teachings. Key Thought: "*Walk in the truth*". John is still dealing with "*Gnosticism*" which denied that Jesus had a real human body composed of matter, since they viewed matter as being innately evil.
- Those who do not follow the teachings of Jesus Christ are false teachers and stretch the truth into heretical doctrine. John was writing to protect his readers from the evil deception of those who refused to remain in the teaching of Christ, but were going beyond the truth of apostolic teaching (vs. 9). He makes it clear that these people are anti-Christ and do not know the Lord (vs. 7, 9). He also reminds his readers of their responsibility as Christians to love other Christians (vs. 5). Although, above all things he wants them to "*walk in truth*". This truth is still consistent in our modern day. We must also "walk in truth" in this world of deception.
- Verses 12-13, John wraps up his letter with the intentions of making a visit and discussing many topics "*face to face*" (vs. 12). He sends greetings from "*the children of your chosen sister*" (vs. 13), this is probably his church in Ephesus

### 3 JOHN

The book of 3<sup>rd</sup> John is a General Epistle (Apostolic Letter). It is written by the Disciple/Apostle John around 85-95 A.D. The key personalities in this book are the Apostle John, Gaius, Diotrefes, and Demetrius. This book is the shortest book in the New Testament and was written to praise Gaius and Demetrius for their faithful service.

- In verses 1-12, John praises two teachers for *“walking in truth”*. He wrote that nothing gave him more joy than to see Christians walking in truth and acting faithfully, *“Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God”* (vs. 11). Next, He criticized a false teacher named Diotrefes. John tells of a previous letter (that we do not have) that he sent to the church. However, Diotrefes rejected the letter out of pride and discouraged anyone from accepting or accommodating any of the brethren of the church.
- In verses 13-15, John brings to a close his letter with confident intentions of making a visit and discussing many topics *“face to face”* rather than by pen.

### JUDE

The book of Jude is a General Epistle (Apostolic Letter). The author is Jude the brother of James, both of who are half-brothers of Jesus Christ. Jude wrote it circa 75 A.D. The purpose of this book is to address false teachings and to illustrate a contrast between the error of heresy and the truth of Jesus Christ. Jude consists of only one chapter.

- In verses 1- 16, Jude identifies himself and quickly delves into the dilemma of false teachings. *“For certain persons have crept in unnoticed”* (vs. 4), heresy was obviously seeping into the region, disturbing the churches, and deceiving believers. He begins by illustrating similarities between false teachers and condemned individuals from the Old Testament citing Cain, Balaam, and Korah.
- Verses 17-25, Jude urges Christians to *“remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (vs. 17). He was referring to all of the apostles and disciples in the past, which had warned about false teachers and prophets that were coming to deceive. His advice is to focus on Jesus Christ and to watch out for each other so that no one is misled into error.

Those who place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ are secure in salvation, not by their own good deeds, because no one is good enough to do that, but believers are secure by the vicarious work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. It is only by, *“Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”* (vs. 24-25).

### REVELATION

The literary genres of the book of Revelation are an Apocalypse, a Prophecy, and an Epistle (or Letter). The Disciple/Apostle John, who followed Jesus Christ and witnessed His crucifixion, authored it.

John wrote Revelation while a prisoner on the Island of Patmos, approximately 85-95 A.D. Its purpose is to give encouragement and hope for all Christians to continue watching for the return and triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ. It also is to warn of the Final Judgment that nonbelievers will endure on that Last Day.

John wrote that Revelation is special because, *“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near”*(1:3).

- In chapters 1-3, John describes the details of the setting as he received this revelation (unveiling of truth). John was elderly and imprisoned on the Island of Patmos when he received an apocalyptic vision from an angel. With this vision he was instructed to write to seven churches about what he had seen. Revelation 1:19, describes a basic outline of the entire letter written by John, *“Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things”* this is the pattern that is followed by John. He describes of the seven churches their qualities and/or their weaknesses and failings (such as Sardis and Laodicea).
- In chapters 4-20, John depicts what he sees in his vision about the Spiritual Realm. He describes Jesus Christ as the *“Slain Lamb”* who is the only one able to open the book with 7 seals. Aside from the 5th seal, each will bring a judgment upon the populace of the Earth. The 7th seal introduces 7 angels who each possess 7 trumpets, another series of daunting judgments. Incredibly, after the 6th trumpet in which 1/3 of the Earth’s population is killed, John claims, *“The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, DID NOT REPENT”* (9:20).

After this, John receives visions of which include the antichrist and Satan who is aware of his looming end. Next, John describes 7 more angles that will each carry 7 bowls of plagues to be poured onto the Earth. Again, amazingly, while hail is raining from heaven during the 7th plague, humankind does not repent but instead, *“men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe”* (16:21).

These fierce plagues demonstrate the wrath of God’s holy judgment upon the still wicked Earth.

John describes the eternity of Hell, the final resting place of the unbelieving. In 19:20, the antichrist and the false prophet are cast into the Lake of Fire. One thousand years later after the millennium reign of Jesus Christ in 20:10, the devil is also cast into the Lake of Fire. We also see that the antichrist and the false prophet are still in torment, *“day and night forever and ever”* because John describes Hell as an eternal place of conscious torment.

- Finally, in chapters 21-22, John writes the last of the canon of Scripture. Here he describes the New Heaven and the New Earth. In it is the holy city of the New Jerusalem. There will no longer be any crying or tears, pain, mourning, or death because, *“the first things have passed away”* (21:1). Only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life can enter this place to live eternally with Jesus Christ who sits on His throne. *“Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost”* (22:17).

*“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”* (22:12-13).