

# Overview Of The Bible

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This overview of the Bible is divided into seven sections. The divisions I use for the OT are roughly equivalent to those used by the Jews, but there are a few differences (mostly because I kept the books in the current order...which is the order from the Septuagint). The NT divisions are pretty straightforward. The "Interesting Facts" sections are catch-all categories for things that I find interesting about the book, or may relate peripherally to the book (such as recent archeological discoveries).

The information here is taken from a number of different sources (including my own research), but the primary source is probably the Application Study Bible. Keep in mind that the dates are rough estimates (as best as recent scholarship can determine), and are subject to change as more and newer information becomes available.

## Old Testament

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# Old Testament

## Pentateuch (Torah - Law)

### **(1) Genesis**

Author: Moses

Time Period: From creation to about 1805 BC

Date Written: 1450 – 1410 BC

Theme: Creation, fall of humanity into sin, God's plan for humanity's redemption, early history of God's plan for and dealings with humanity, origin and history of the family that becomes Israel.

Key People: Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Joseph

Interesting Facts: Most of the names of the books of the Old Testament (as well as the order in which they appear) in our English Bibles come from the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint), produced about 250 years before Christ. The original Hebrew texts used a different order for the Old Testament books, and for many of the books, different names. "Genesis" is from a Greek word that means "Origin" or "Creation." The original Hebrew name is the first word in the Hebrew text: "Beginning."

### **(2) Exodus**

Author: Moses

Time Period: Around 1450 BC

Date Written: 1450 – 1410 BC

Theme: Persecution and slavery of Jewish people, early life of Moses, his call to lead the people from slavery, delivery from slavery by Moses, giving of the first part of the law, beginning of the Aaronic Priesthood, establishment of the tabernacle, and the early development of Israel into a nation.

Key People: Moses, Miriam, Pharaoh, Pharaoh's daughter, Jethro, Aaron, Joshua, Bezalel

Interesting Facts: There are more miracles recorded in Exodus than any other book in the Bible. Recent archeological expeditions have found what they believe to be 3500-year-old chariot parts in the sea between Sinai and Saudi Arabia, corresponding to the point that some believe to be where the sea was parted. The name Exodus (from the Greek Septuagint) literally means "The Road Out." The Hebrew name of this book is simply, "Names."

### **(3) Leviticus**

Author: Moses

Time Period: Around 1440 BC

Date Written: 1450 – 1410 BC

Theme: Giving of the bulk of the law (both the moral commands, which are still binding on Christians, and the ceremonial laws which were largely symbolic, and pointed forward toward truths to be revealed in Christianity).

Key People: Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, Ithamar

Interesting Facts: Holiness is mentioned more often in Leviticus than any other book in the Bible (152 times). Leviticus means “Of the Levites.”

### **(4) Numbers**

Author: Moses

Time Period: 1450 - 1410 BC

Date Written: 1450 – 1410 BC

Theme: Takes up the story of Israel where it left off in Exodus, recounts their time wandering in the wilderness.

Key People: Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Joshua, Caleb, Eleazar, Korah, Balaam

Interesting Facts: Tablets recently discovered in Palestine, and dating from this time period report that a fierce race of warriors called the “Ebrews” were moving into the Canaan area and all the surrounding cities were afraid of them because they were killing everything in their path. The Greek name (Numbers) refers to the census taken at the beginning and end of the book. The original Hebrew name refers to the primary event: “In the Wilderness.”

### **(5) Deuteronomy**

Author: Moses (last chapter by Joshua)

Time Period: Around 1410 BC

Date Written: 1450 – 1410 BC

Theme: Summary of wilderness wanderings, preparation for entrance into Canaan, final additions to the law given in Leviticus, and the Palestine Covenant.

Key People: Moses, Joshua

Interesting Facts: Moses, as the giver of the law, and Joshua (Hebrew form of Jesus) as the leader who takes Israel into the promised land foreshadow the plan of God for humanity through the Old (law) and New (grace) Covenants. The Greek name means “Two Laws,” a reference to the new laws added in this book. The Hebrew name referenced that it was the fifth book of the Torah: “Five Fifths of the Law.”

## Writings (History)

### **(6) Joshua**

Author: Joshua (last chapter possibly by Phinehas)

Time Period: From about 1410 - 1375 BC

Date Written: Around 1380

Theme: Fulfillment of the redemption promise to Israel. Conquest of Canaan, and division of the land.

Key People: Joshua, Rahab, Achan, Phinehas, Eleazar

Interesting Facts: Out of the million or so people who left Egypt with Moses, only TWO, Joshua and Caleb, entered the promised land. The rest of the Jews who entered with them were all born after the exodus.

### **(7) Judges**

Author: Possibly compiled by Samuel

Time Period: From about 1375 - 1050 BC

Date Written: Original records written between 1375 – 1050 BC, compiled by Samuel around 1050 BC

Theme: The chaotic “dark ages” period of Israel’s history. It records six apostasies, bondages, and deliverances; enumerates 12 deliverers, and 5 civil wars. Israel has largely lost its sense of national unity and exists as isolated groups of independent tribes each fending for themselves.

Key People: Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Jephthah, Samson, Delilah.

Interesting Facts: Although we call them judges (from the title in the Septuagint), the Hebrew calls them “ruler heroes,” which happens to be the Hebrew title of this book.

### **(8) Ruth**

Author: Possibly Samuel or Isaiah

Time Period: Sometime between 1100 - 1000 BC

Date Written: Sometime between 1050 – 1000 BC or 700 – 680 BC

Theme: A “slice of life” during the end of the period of the Judges, recording how a gentile woman came to be in the line of David, and thus, the line of Christ.

Key People: Ruth, Naomi, Boaz

Interesting Facts: Both Boaz’ grandmother (Rahab, a prostitute) and Ruth were Gentiles, thus there are two Gentile women (one a prostitute) in the line of Christ.

## **(9) 1 Samuel**

Author: Samuel, David, Nathan and Gad (compiled by Isaiah)

Time Period: From about 1105 - 1010 BC

Date Written: Compiled between 700 – 680 BC

Theme: Last two judges of Israel (Eli, Samuel), the reign of the first king (Saul), and the early life of Israel's second, and greatest king, David.

Key People: Eli, Hannah, Samuel, Saul, Jonathan, David

Interesting Facts: There were only THREE kings who ruled over a united Israel: Saul, David and Solomon.

## **(10) 2 Samuel**

Author: Samuel, David, Nathan and Gad (compiled by Isaiah)

Time Period: From about 1003 – 970 BC

Date Written: Compiled between 700 – 680 BC

Theme: The reign of King David.

Key People: David, Joab, Bathsheba, Nathan, Absalom

Interesting Facts: 1 and 2 Samuel were originally one book simply called "The Book of Samuel." It was separated into two books by the Septuagint translators.

## **(11) 1 Kings**

Author: Compiled by Isaiah or Jeremiah (from public records)

Time Period: 970 - 853 BC

Date Written: Compiled sometime between 700 – 586 BC

Theme: David's death, the reign of Solomon (last king of a united Israel), how the nation divided into two kingdoms (Israel and Judah), and the early reigns of the kings in the two divisions.

Key People: David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Elijah, Ahab, Jezebel

Interesting Facts: 1 and 2 Kings were originally one book called, "Kings." It was separated into two books by the Septuagint translators.

## **(12) 2 Kings**

Author: Compiled by Isaiah or Jeremiah (from public records)

Time Period: 886 - 586 BC

Date Written: Compiled sometime between 700 – 586 BC

Theme: The decline of the two kingdoms into eventual captivity (in Assyria and

Babylon) as a result of abandoning God's laws, and their spiritual heritage.

Key People: Elijah, Elisha, Shunammite woman, Naaman, Jezebel, Jehu, Joash, Hezekiah, Sennacherib, Isaiah, Manasseh, Josiah, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, Nebuchadnezzar

Interesting Facts: 12 of the 16 prophets responsible for the 17 prophetic books at the end of the Old Testament lived and prophesied during the period covered in 2 Kings (the four exceptions are Daniel, during the Babylonian captivity, and Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, all of whom came after the captivity).

### **(13) 1 Chronicles**

Author: Compilation started by Isaiah and completed by Ezra (from public records)

Time Period: 1000 – 960 BC

Date Written: Compiled between 700 – 430 BC

Theme: Recounting the events of Samuel and Kings with special focus on David and Solomon

Key People: David, Solomon

Interesting Facts: 1 and 2 Chronicles were originally one book named, "Words of the Days." It was renamed and separated into two books by the Septuagint translators.

### **(14) 2 Chronicles**

Author: Compilation started by Isaiah and completed by Ezra (from public records)

Time Period: 970 - 586 BC

Date Written: Compiled between 700 – 430 BC

Theme: Recounting the events of Kings, focusing on the kings of Judah.

Key People: Solomon, Queen of Sheba, Rehoboam, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Joash, Uzziah, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Josiah

Interesting Facts: Includes a record of the construction of Solomon's temple so detailed it is being followed today by Israelis planning the rebuilding of the temple.

### **(15) Ezra**

Author: Ezra

Time Period: 538 – 445 BC

Date Written: Around 450 BC

Theme: First two waves of Jewish exiles returning from Babylon (led by Zerubbabel – 536 BC and Ezra - 457 BC). Recounts the re-building of the temple.

Key People: Cyrus, Zerubbabel, Haggai, Zechariah, Darius, Artaxerxes I, Ezra

Interesting Facts: Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book called, “Ezra.” They were separated by the translators of the Septuagint. Along with Esther, they comprise the “post Babylonian captivity” history books. The prophets of this period were Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

## **(16) Nehemiah**

Author: Nehemiah and Ezra

Time Period: 445 – 432 BC

Date Written: Between 445 – 432 BC

Theme: The third wave of Jewish exiles returning from Babylon (lead by Nehemiah – 445 BC). Recounts rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem.

Key People: Nehemiah, Ezra, Sanballat, Tobiah

Interesting Facts: This book recounts the fulfillment of prophecies made by Daniel (roughly 100 years before) and Zechariah (roughly 40 years before) concerning the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls.

## **(17) Esther**

Author: Mordecai, Ezra or Nehemiah

Time Period: Sometime between 480 - 478 BC

Date Written: Between 470 - 440 BC

Theme: Slice of life in the capital city of the Persian Empire during the period of Ezra and Nehemiah. Recounts how a Jewish woman comes to be queen of the empire, her battles against the political maneuvers of the enemies of the Jews, and how she is successful in saving the Jews in the empire from extermination.

Key People: Esther, Mordecai, King Xerxes I, Haman

Interesting Facts: The only book in the Bible in which God is never directly mentioned. This bothered the Jewish scribes, so when they made copies of Esther, they “hid” the name of God in the text in five places by making the Hebrew letters “YHWH” (for “Yahweh”) and “EHYEH” (meaning “I am that I am”) larger so they stood out on that line. The verses where they did this are 1:20, 5:4, 5:13, and 7:7 for “YHWH,” and 7:5 for “ENYEH.” When the line was read, it looked something like the following example from Esther 1:20 in English:

“Then when the king’s edict is proclaimed throughout all his vast realm, all the women will Respect their husbanDs, from the least to the greatest.”

## Poetry (Songs, Wisdom)

### **(18) Job**

Author: Unknown (possibly Job, Moses, Solomon or Elihu)

Time Period: Sometime between 2000 – 1800 BC

Date Written: Unknown (could be anywhere from 1800 – 910 BC)

Theme: The story of a believer during the period of Abraham (prior to the law of Moses). It examines the issue of sin and suffering, and concludes that not all suffering is the result of sin (sometimes God uses suffering to purify, instruct, and test his saints). The first glimpse of Satan, and his dedication to the destruction of the righteous, as well as the principle that “all things ultimately work together for the good of those who love the Lord.”

Key People: Job, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, Zophar the Naamathite, Elihu the Buzite.

Interesting Facts: There is the strong possibility that this was the first book of the Bible to actually be written. Job is an ancient forerunner to the Shakespearean approach to recording real life events, in that it presents them in a poetic, “play-like” form.

### **(19) Psalms (“Songs”)**

Author: Moses, David, Solomon, Asaph, Heman, Ethan, Sons of Korah (compiled by Ezra)

Time Period: Written between 11440 – 586 BC;

Date Written: Compiled around 440 BC

Theme: A collection of the songs of worship and praise of early Israel. It is extremely prophetic in nature and contains many prophecies concerning the Messiah. Jesus quoted from Psalms often, including His last Old Testament quotation prior to His death (“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” – Psalm 22:1).

Key People: David, Moses

Interesting Facts: Psalms is the most quoted book in the New Testament (of the 283 Old Testament quotations in the New Testament, 116 come from this book). The Psalms were originally separated into 5 books in the ancient Hebrew texts, and named according to the five books of the Torah.

Genesis book: Psalms 1 – 42;

Exodus Book: Psalms 43 – 72;

Leviticus Book: Psalms 73 – 89;

Numbers Book: Psalms 90 – 106;

Deuteronomy Book: Psalms 107 - 150

## **(20) Proverbs**

Author: Solomon (1-29), Agur and Lemuel – added by Hezekiah (30-31)

Time Period: From about 970 - 950 BC

Date Written: Around 970 – 950 BC

Theme: Practical application of godly wisdom in everyday life.

Key People: No particular people are mentioned

Interesting Facts: Proverbs is a virtual grammar book of literary forms (poems, parables, rhetorical questions, pointed questions, couplets) and devices (antithesis, comparison, metaphor, analogy, allegory, personification, simile).

## **(21) Ecclesiastes**

Author: Solomon (1:16)

Time Period: Around 935 BC

Date Written: Around 935 BC

Theme: No amount of worldly pursuits (human knowledge and wisdom, physical pleasure, alcohol, power, prestige, riches, sex, etc.) are ultimately satisfying. They leave us feeling empty and hollow. Only in reverence to God can we find the real source of purpose and meaning to life. Notable verse (12:13).

Key People: No particular people are mentioned.

Interesting Facts: Ecclesiastes is a Greek word that refers to the leader of a fellowship or congregation, although frequently translated “preacher” or “teacher,” strictly speaking, it does not mean either (Greek has other words for both). One of the most telling lessons to come out of Ecclesiastes is that knowledge, intelligence, and wisdom are NOT the same as, nor are they indicators of morality and holiness.

## **(22) Song of Solomon**

Author: Solomon

Time Period: Around 965 BC

Date Written: Around 965 BC

Theme: The joy and wonder of intimate physical love between a husband and wife. Paul reveals in Ephesians 5:23-33 that marriage is symbolic of our relationship with God, which confirms that there is underlying symbolism in this book as well.

Key People: King Solomon, the Shulamite woman, friends

Interesting Facts: The Hebrew text, guided primarily by the use of masculine and feminine pronouns, as well as singular and plural, separates the book into spoken lines identified by the titles Lover (male), Beloved (female), and Friends (mixed group). The

book was usually read much like a play script, with a man, a woman, and a “chorus” (group of people) reading the various parts.

## Prophets

### **(23) Isaiah**

Author: Isaiah

Time Period: From around 740 – 681 BC

Date Written: 1-39 around 700 BC; 40-66 around 681 BC

Theme: History and God’s messages to Israel during the period of 2 Kings. Chapters 1-39 deal mostly with the events of Isaiah’s lifetime, 40-66 are mostly prophetic of the future of Israel and the entire earth.

Key People: Isaiah, his two sons: Shear-Jashub and Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz

Interesting Facts: Isaiah probably has more examples of “double reference prophecies” (prophecies using the same passage to foretell soon-to-occur events and distant future events simultaneously) than any other book. The other book with sizable sections of double reference prophecies is Ezekiel.

### **(24) Jeremiah**

Author: Jeremiah

Time Period: 627 – 586 BC

Date Written: Between 627 – 586 BC

Theme: Shortly after Zephaniah, contemporary of Nahum and Habakkuk, just before Daniel and Ezekiel. The dealings of God with Israel during the last part of the period covered in 2 Kings. It recounts how Jeremiah did NOT want to be a prophet, but was obedient to God’s call anyway, and of how anguished he often was at the hard-heartedness of his countrymen, particularly in their refusal to listen to his warnings.

Key People: The last five kings of Judah (Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah), Baruch, Ebed-Melech, King Nebuchadnezzar, the Racabites

Interesting Facts: Like Ezekiel (who started his ministry just a few years before the end of Jeremiah’s), Jeremiah often used symbolism and actions to communicate his message.

### **(25) Lamentations**

Author: Jeremiah

Time Period: 586 BC

Date Written: Shortly after 586 BC

Theme: The heart-felt anguish of a man with a broken heart over the sin of his people and the destruction of his nation.

Key People: Jeremiah, people of Jerusalem

Interesting Facts: This book shows vividly why Jeremiah is often called “the weeping prophet.” Lamentations is a poetic lament written in the rhythm and style of ancient Jewish funeral songs. It is a composition of five poems (each chapter is a separate poem).

## **(26) Ezekiel**

Author: Ezekiel

Time Period: 593 – 571 BC

Date Written: Around 571 BC

Theme: Prophecies to the Jews held captive in Babylon, warning of more punishment to come on Jerusalem, as well as of future hope for restoration if they repented and followed God. He was contemporary to Daniel.

Key People: Ezekiel, Israel’s leaders, Ezekiel’s wife, Nebuchadnezzar

Interesting Facts: Only Ezekiel and Daniel ministered to the Jews held captive in Babylon. Ezekiel used very creative, radical tactics to deliver God’s message. These included laying siege to a drawing of Jerusalem on a tablet with siege works made of sand, laying on his side for 390 days (during which time he could only eat one 8 ounce meal a day, cooked over manure), and shaving off all his hair.

## **(27) Daniel**

Author: Daniel

Time Period: 605 – 536 BC

Date Written: Between 550 - 536 BC

Theme: The theological and symbolic foundation of all end-times prophecies (it is, in fact, impossible to understand Revelation without an understanding of Daniel). The first half is about Daniel’s (and his friends’) experiences in the palace in Babylon, the second half is primarily about distant future events leading up to the final defeat of Satan. The book of Daniel starts just after the last events of 2 Kings.

Key People: Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar, Shadrach, Meshack, Abednego, Belshazzar, Darius

Interesting Facts: The events of chapter 9 happen as a result of Daniel reading the book of Jeremiah (specifically 25:11-12 and 29:10), showing that many of the books were accepted as being the Word of God, and were being copied and circulated from the moment they were written (the book of Jeremiah had been in existence less than 40 years at this time).

## **(28) Hosea**

Author: Hosea

Time Period: 753 – 715 BC

Date Written: 715 BC

Theme: A contemporary of Isaiah and Micah, just after the short ministry of Amos. The last prophet to try and get Israel to repent prior to their captivity by Assyria. His life with his unfaithful wife was (intentionally) a sad, but accurate reflection of the relationship between Israel and God.

Key People: Hosea, Gomer, their children (Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah, Lo-Ammi)

Interesting Facts: Hosea was commanded to marry a woman whom he was told in advance was going to be unfaithful. He was obedient, and married her as God commanded. Some scholars believe the Hebrew constructions in 1:6 and 1:8 indicate that their last two children were not Hosea's, symbolizing in painful, graphic detail that Israel's sin against God had long lasting ramifications.

## **(29) Joel**

Author: Joel

Time Period: Between 835 - 796 BC

Date Written: Between 835 – 796 BC

Theme: It is thought Joel prophesied during the period just after Israel divided into two kingdoms (early 2 kings), but we are not sure. Primary emphasis is punishment for sin, mercy and deliverance after repentance, and promise of ultimate redemption at the Day of the Lord.

Key People: Joel, the people of Judah

Interesting Facts: Joel was a contemporary of Elisha and Jonah.

## **(30) Amos**

Author: Amos

Time Period: Between 760 - 750 BC

Date Written: Between 760 – 750 BC

Theme: Corruption run amok, particularly with the rich and powerful oppressing the weak and poor, was going to bring God's judgment!

Key People: Amos, Amaziah, Jeroboam II

Interesting Facts: Most of the metaphors in this book are drawn from Amos' own life, particularly his shepherding and farming experience: loaded cart, roaring lion, mutilated sheep, pampered cows, and a basket of fruit. Shepherd by trade, his entire recorded ministry lasted just a few days.

### **(31) Obadiah**

Author: Obadiah

Time Period: Sometime around 855 - 840 BC

Date Written: Sometime around 855 – 840 BC

Theme: Encouragement to Israel in the face of trials (their enemies would eventually be punished).

Key People: The Edomites

Interesting Facts: The Hebrew in this book is written in the form of a poetic dirge.

### **(32) Jonah**

Author: Jonah

Time Period: Between 785 - 760 BC

Date Written: Sometime after 785 BC

Theme: The story of Jonah who, called by God to deliver a message to Ninevah, does not want to do it. A profound story of God's patience, mercy and grace.

Key People: Jonah, ship's Captain and crew

Interesting Facts: Unique of the prophetic books in that the message given by the prophet is only ONE verse long (3:4). The rest is a historical narrative, and in reality, this book should probably be listed with in the Writings (history) section.

### **(33) Micah**

Author: Micah

Time Period: 742 – 687 BC

Date Written: Between 742 – 687 BC

Theme: Denounces moral and social sins in Judah, and warns of upcoming invasion of Babylon. Emphasizes God as the Almighty Lord who hates sin but loves the sinner.

Notable verses: prophesy of the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem (5:2), and summary of the ultimate requirement of the law (6:8).

Key People: The people of Samaria and Jerusalem

Interesting Facts: Micah is a textbook example of classic Hebrew poetry. It is composed of three parts (addressing the Capitals, the Leaders, and the People); each part starts with “hear” or “listen,” and ends with a promise.

### **(34) Nahum**

Author: Nahum

Time Period: Between 663 - 612 BC

Date Written: Between 663 – 612 BC

Theme: A contemporary of Jeremiah and Zephaniah. Denunciation of the decadent Assyrian empire in general, and Nineveh in particular. Prediction of the fall of Nineveh.

Key People: The people of Nineveh (the Assyrians) and Judah,

Interesting Facts: Nahum had the same basic message as Jonah did almost one hundred and fifty years before. This time the prophet was not reluctant, Nineveh did not repent, and the result was the complete destruction of Nineveh.

### **(35) Habakkuk**

Author: Habakkuk

Time Period: Between 612 - 589 BC

Date Written: Between 612 – 589 BC

Theme: Treatise on God's justice focusing on the question of why our Holy God allows injustice to go seemingly unpunished for so long. Notable verses: The righteous live by faith (2:4), which set the foundation for Paul's explanation of some of the foundations of Christianity.

Key People: Habakkuk, the Babylonians

Interesting Facts: Unlike most of the prophets, Habakkuk was more concerned with punishing sin, and God's justice than with getting the people to repent. Instead of crying out to the people to repent, he cried out in anguish to God because of how long it took for God to punish the evildoers.

### **(36) Zephaniah**

Author: Zephaniah

Time Period: Between 640 - 621 BC

Date Written: Around 621 BC

Theme: Just before Jeremiah (Jeremiah's ministry actually started a couple years before Zephaniah's ended) and Habakkuk, contemporary of Nahum. Prediction of terrible punishments coming in the Day of the Lord, and of the redemption that would follow for the faithful.

Key People: Judah, all nations

Interesting Facts: One of the few times that a prophetic message was heeded, Zephaniah's prophecies were at least partly responsible for the reforms of Josiah in Judah (in 2 Kings 22:1 – 23:30). Unfortunately, the reforms did not last, the next king went back to evil ways, and Jeremiah witnessed the fulfillment of these (and his own) prophecies.

### **(37) Haggai**

Author: Haggai

Time Period: Around 520 BC

Date Written: Between 520 – 516 BC

Theme: Contemporary of Zerubbabel and Zechariah. As recounted in Ezra 4:4-5, fierce opposition had halted the building of the temple. Haggai comes onto the scene with messages from God that encouraged the people, and got the project back on track.

Key People: Haggai, Zerubbabel, Joshua

Interesting Facts: Haggai was the first of the three “post Babylonian captivity” prophets (the other two are Zechariah and Malachi), who are the last three prophetic books in the Old Testament, and the last three prophets to Israel before Christ.

### **(38) Zechariah**

Author: Zechariah

Time Period: 520 - 480 BC

Date Written: Ch. 1-8 between 520 – 518 BC; Ch. 9 – 14 between 480 BC

Theme: Contemporary of Haggai and Zerubbabel. Joined with Haggai in delivering messages to get the people to finish the temple. Although the first half deals primarily with Israel and the temple project, they carry numerous double references to the future messiah and his reign. The second half is almost exclusively concerning the distant future with the messiah and the end times.

Key People: Zerubbabel, Joshua

Interesting Facts: This book addresses the end times and the Messiah more than any other minor prophet (a minor prophet is an author of a small book, as opposed to Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, etc. who wrote very long books)

### **(39) Malachi**

Author: Malachi (some ancient Jews believed that “Malachi” was a pen name)

Time Period: 430 - 425 BC

Date Written: Around 425 BC

Theme: A contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah. Trust God, and don't worry about the current circumstances. Elijah will come. After that, the messiah, who will destroy the wicked and give victory to the righteous.

Key People: Malachi, the priests

Interesting Facts: Not only is Malachi the last book in the Old Testament, Malachi was the last prophet before Christ, and ends his book with the promise of the return of Elijah (who would pave the way for the coming of the Messiah).

# New Testament

Now for the New Testament section. This section ends with a small bit I did that presents some of the evidence that Paul is the author of Hebrews.

## New Testament

### Gospels ("Good News")

- (1) Matthew
- (2) Mark
- (3) Luke
- (4) John

### Paul's Letters

- (6) Romans
- (7) 1 Corinthians
- (8) 2 Corinthians
- (9) Galatians
- (10) Ephesians
- (11) Philippians
- (12) Colossians

### Hebrews

- (19) Hebrews

### Revelation (End times)

- (27) Revelation

### Acts (Early history of church)

- (5) Acts

- (13) 1 Thessalonians
- (14) 2 Thessalonians
- (15) 1 Timothy
- (16) 2 Timothy
- (17) Titus
- (18) Philemon

### General Letters

- (20) James
- (21) 1 Peter
- (22) 2 Peter
- (23) 1 John
- (24) 2 John
- (25) 3 John
- (26) Jude

### Some Evidence that Paul wrote Hebrews

# Gospels (“Good News”)

## **(1) Matthew**

Author: Matthew (called Levi)

Time Period: 6 BC – 28 AD

Date Written: Traditional – 45 to 50 AD; Modern – 60 to 65 AD

Theme: Matthew was an eyewitness to most of Jesus’ ministry. Primarily aimed at a Jewish audience, it contains more Old Testament references than the other Gospels (53 direct quotes, 76 indirect references). Emphasis on Jesus as a Jew (called “Son of David” everywhere), and that He is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promise of the Messiah, who would save the whole world.

Key People: Jesus, Mary, Joseph, John the Baptist, the disciples, religious leaders, Caiaphas, Pilate, Mary Magdalene

Interesting Facts: Matthew records Joseph’s genealogy (the “Jeconiah” of verses 11 and 12 are father and son: Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin in Hebrew). This is the only Gospel in which the author himself produced an Aramaic translation (no longer in existence) of his own work. Matthew is NOT a chronological account; he tends to group similar topics together no matter when they happened. The early church fathers claimed Matthew was the first gospel written.

## **(2) Mark**

Author: John Mark (companion of Paul and Barnabas)

Time Period: 6 BC – 28 AD

Date Written: Traditional – 65 AD; Modern – 55 to 60 AD

Theme: May have been an eyewitness of the very end of Jesus ministry (14:51-52), but he certainly knew all the disciples (and traveled with Paul and Barnabas). More focus on what Jesus did and a little less on what He said than other gospels. Emphasis on Jesus’ supernatural power (Mark records more miracles), His identity and role as the Christ, the Son of God.

Key People: Jesus, 12 disciples, Pilate, Jewish religious leaders

Interesting Facts: Mark is written in two halves. The first half addresses the question, “Who is Jesus?” The second, “Why is he here?” (First part: 1:1 – 8:30; Second part: 8:31 – 16:20). In both cases, the full answer is unfolded carefully, one point at a time. The shortest Gospel, the information in all but 31 verses is found in Matthew or Luke. Because of this, modern scholars believe Mark was the first gospel written.

### **(3) Luke**

Author: Luke

Time Period: 6 BC – 28 AD

Date Written: Between 55 and 60 AD

Theme: Not an eyewitness to Jesus' life, Luke carefully researched everything about Jesus' ministry (it is thought much of his information came from Peter and Matthew). Aimed at a non-Jewish audience, Luke is the only confirmed Gentile writer of the entire Bible. Emphasis on Jesus as a compassionate Christ who came to save the WHOLE world from its sin.

Key People: Jesus, Elizabeth, Zechariah, John the Baptist, Mary, disciples, Herod the Great, Pilate, Mary Magdelene

Interesting Facts: Luke records Mary's Genealogy (3:23-38), and gives more time to what the women did than the other gospels. Most of 9:51 – 18:35 is unique to Luke. Part one of the two-part book on the early history of Christianity by Luke.

### **(4) John**

Author: John

Time Period: 6 BC – 28 AD

Date Written: between 75 – 85 AD

Theme: Eyewitness to most of Jesus' ministry from one of the three "inner circle" disciples. Many sections, such as the first chapter, are worded in such a way as to be direct refutations of the dominant Gentile philosophy of the day (Gnosticism), and as such, was very much aimed at a non-Jewish audience. More focus on what Jesus said, and less on what He did. The most evangelical and theological of the gospels with a strong emphasis on the deity of Jesus.

Key People: Jesus, John the Baptist, disciples, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Jesus Mother, Pilate, Mary Magdelene

Interesting Facts: Over 90 percent of the material in this gospel is found no where else. The other three gospels were in full circulation by the time this one was written, so John intentionally chose to focus on events not already covered in the other gospels. John makes no mention of Jesus' childhood, the appointment of the disciples, nor any of Jesus' parables.

## Acts (Early history of church)

### **(5) Acts**

Author: Luke

Time Period: 28 – 65 AD

Date Written: Between 65 – 70 AD

Theme: Luke personally witnessed much of this book (mostly as Paul's companion). Primary focus is on how the ministries of Peter, Paul, Barnabas and the other disciples spread the message of Jesus throughout the Roman Empire.

Key People: Peter, John, James the brother of John, Stephen, Philip, Paul, Barnabas, Cornelius, James the brother of Jesus, Timothy, Lydia, Silas, Titus, Apollos, Agabus, Ananias, Felix, Festus, Agrippa, Luke

Interesting Facts: Part two of the two-part book on the early history of Christianity by Luke (sequel to the Gospel according to Luke). The historical details in this book are so accurate they have guided archeologists to the discovery of numerous ancient cities.

## Paul's Letters

### **(6) Romans**

Date Written: 57 AD

Theme: Comprehensive examination of the foundational teachings of Christianity with special emphasis on how everyone is a sinner and in need of salvation, and how only through faith in Jesus can this be accomplished. Called "the ABC's of Christianity."

Key People: Paul, Phoebe

Interesting Facts: Written from Corinth. Paul was not involved in the establishment of the fellowship in Rome, but he did know a number of the believers there.

### **(7) 1 Corinthians**

Date Written: 55 AD

Theme: Focuses on doctrines related to the daily lives of Christians. A strong emphasis on how an entire fellowship of unified believers, living holy lives and practicing love, all by the power of God's grace, is the best way to represent God to an unsaved world, and spread the message of the Gospel.

Key People: Paul, Timothy, members of Chloe's household.

Interesting Facts: Written from Ephesus, this is actually Paul's second letter to the

Corinthians (first letter no longer exists). Contains the famous “love” passage (chapter 13).

## **(8) 2 Corinthians**

Date Written: 56 - 57 AD

Theme: Believers are first and foremost followers of CHRIST, not of dynamic speakers, great teachers, or charismatic leaders. Paul stresses that we should give proper attention and honor to the teachings of those whose credentials as solid leaders within the church are well established (Paul himself is the example here), so long as those teachings always point us toward Christ, and help us to serve Christ more effectively. Serving Christ, not following certain leaders, must always be paramount.

Key People: Paul, Timothy, Titus, false teachers

Interesting Facts: Written from Macedonia. This is actually Paul’s third letter to the Corinthians. Less doctrinal and more personal than Paul’s other letters (except Philemon). Contains quite a bit of autobiographical information about Paul (his authority as an apostle was under attack in Corinth, so he was forced to defend his position).

## **(9) Galatians**

Date Written: 60 AD

Theme: A strong rebuke against and refutation of the legalism being spread by those emphasizing Old Testament laws. Emphasis that salvation is by grace through faith and NOTHING else.

Key People: Paul, Peter, Barnabas, Titus, Abraham, false teachers

Interesting Facts: Early Christians believed this was written from Rome, likely while Paul was in prison. This is a “sister letter” to Romans (covers similar issues). Believed to have been the first part of a two part letter (Hebrews was the second part). Some modern scholars believe it was actually written from Antioch in 49 AD, prior to the Jerusalem council.

## **(10) Ephesians**

Date Written: 60 AD

Theme: Emphasis on Christians as the body of Christ under Jesus as our head. About half of the letter addresses doctrine, while half addresses practical Christian duty. One of the few letters from Paul that was not to counter heresy nor deal with any particular problem.

Key People: Paul, Tychicus

Interesting Facts: Written while Paul was in prison in Rome, and sent out at about the same time as the letter to the Colossians.

## **(11) Philippians**

Date Written: 61 AD

Theme: Paul emphasizes the all-sufficiency of Christ in every situation, and thus, our lives should be filled with joy in all circumstances. A letter of thanks and encouragement for the believers in Philippi.

Key People: Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus, Euodia, Syntyche

Interesting Facts: It is worth noting that this joyful letter, full of praises to God, was written while Paul was in prison in Rome. Paul lived what he taught. The fellowship in Philippi was the first Christian congregation established on the European continent.

## **(12) Colossians**

Date Written: 60 AD

Theme: Similar topic to Ephesians with the emphasis reversed (where Ephesians focuses on the church as the body of Christ, Colossians focuses on Christ as the head of the church). As John is compared to the other gospels, Colossians is more clearly directed toward refuting the dominant Gentile philosophy of the day (Gnosticism) than other letters.

Key People: Paul, Timothy, Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark, Epaphras

Interesting Facts: Written while Paul was in prison in Rome. It is also revealed that Paul wrote a letter to the Laodiceans as well (it no longer exists). This was a “sister letter” to Ephesians (covers similar issues, both letters were written at the same time, and sent via the same messenger).

## **(13) 1 Thessalonians**

Date Written: 51 AD

Theme: A letter of encouragement and instruction to a young congregation with many new converts. Paul emphasizes that Christ could come at any time, so stand ready and don't lose hope.

Key People: Paul, Timothy, Silas

Interesting Facts: Written from Corinth. Paul had established this congregation only about two years before.

## **(14) 2 Thessalonians**

Date Written: 51 or 52 AD

Theme: Ironically, this letter was to correct some misinterpretations of Paul's comments

in the first letter, where some young believers, in anticipation of Christ's return at any moment, had stopped everything and just sat around and waited (leaving the burden of work on other people). One of the things he does to head that off is to list a number of things that must occur BEFORE Christ returns, as well as rebuke and warn those who are being idle ("if a man does not work, he shall not eat" – 3:10).

Key People: Paul, Silas, Timothy

Interesting Facts: Written from Corinth just a few months after 1 Thessalonians. These two letters may be the earliest letters still in existence that he sent.

### **(15) 1 Timothy**

Date Written: 64 AD

Theme: Called the "first pastoral letter," Paul focuses primarily on practical advice about leadership and ministry, including qualifications for overseers and deacons.

Key People: Paul, Timothy

Interesting Facts: Written from Macedonia or Philippi about two years after being released from prison, and just prior to his second arrest. Timothy was serving in leadership at Ephesus at the time of this letter.

### **(16) 2 Timothy**

Date Written: 65 or 66 AD

Theme: Called the "third pastoral letter," Paul gave final instructions to his beloved Timothy concerning leadership and ministry, warning about false teachings, and encouragement to persevere.

Key People: Paul, Timothy, Luke, Mark

Interesting Facts: Paul had just been arrested for a second time, but this time, he had been sentenced to death. This is his last letter, and he knows it. Only Luke is with him. It is a very intimate, personal letter that reveals Paul's ultimate priorities: sound doctrine, steadfast faith, confident perseverance, and enduring love.

### **(17) Titus**

Date Written: 64 AD

Theme: Called the "second pastoral letter," this one is similar in emphasis and theme to 1 Timothy.

Key People: Paul, Titus

Interesting Facts: Written from Philippi or Macedonia, (about the same time as 1

Timothy) to Titus, who was organizing and overseeing churches on the Island of Crete. Titus was, like Timothy, a very close friend and traveling companion of Paul's. He had accompanied Paul to Jerusalem to be presented to the Jewish Christians there as an example of how Christ could bring about genuine change in the gentiles.

## **(18) Philemon**

Date Written: 60 AD

Theme: This is a very personal letter to a believer named Philemon (who had become a Christian due to Paul's ministry) about his slave, Onesimus, who had robbed Philemon and run away, only to meet Paul and also become a Christian. Very revealing of Paul's heart and character (Paul is merciful and kind to the run-away slave, yet honest and fair to his legal master, even taking on all of Onesimus' debts to Philemon personally so that Onesimus can be freed, yet Philemon will not suffer loss). Onesimus voluntarily returned to Philemon carrying Paul's letter.

Key People: Paul, Philemon, Onesimus

Interesting Facts: Written while Paul was in prison in Rome. Written and sent at about the same time as the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians (Philemon lived in Colossae). History records that Philemon received this letter very well, forgave Onesimus, and set him free.

## **Hebrews**

### **(19) Hebrews**

Author: Unknown (nominated candidates are: Paul, Luke, Apollos, Barnabas, Priscilla or Phillip) – Most evidence points to Paul (see section at the end on evidence of Paul's authorship).

Date Written: Sometime before 70 AD, possibly 60 AD

Theme: Christ is superior to the Old Covenant in every way, and even more, is the fulfillment of that covenant. The righteous shall live by faith, for it is by faith that we are justified and made holy.

Key People: Men and Women of faith from the Old Testament

Interesting Facts: This is the only book of the New Testament whose author is uncertain, although the majority of the evidence points to Paul. If this was written by Paul, and was originally included at the end of Galatians (as it is in some old manuscripts), it was written from Rome.

# General Letters

## **(20) James**

Author: James

Date Written: 49 AD

Theme: James takes on the hypocrisy of those who claim they believe, but feel no obligation to actually live a Christian lifestyle. James emphasizes that real faith is being a doer of the word, and not a hearer only. He finishes with encouragement to refrain from sin, and to trust God.

Key People: No particular people mentioned

Interesting Facts: Mostly likely written from Jerusalem. This James was a younger brother of Jesus, and grew up in the same house at the same time as Jesus. He came to believe his older brother was the Messiah, God in the flesh. A tomb was recently found in Israel with the inscription, "James, the son of Joseph, the brother of Jesus." If the inscription is authentic, the "James" who wrote this letter is buried there.

## **(21) 1 Peter**

Author: Simon Peter

Date Written: between 63 AD

Theme: Letter of encouragement for all Christians who were suffering under persecution. Emphasizes that believers should imitate Christ in all aspect of their lives (the original WWJD). Expect persecution, be thankful for the privilege of suffering for Christ, and trust God at all times.

Key People: Peter, Silas, Mark

Interesting Facts: Peter, Silas, and Mark were all in Rome together at the time Peter wrote this letter. Paul had recently been set free from prison, and was on another missionary journey at this time.

## **(22) 2 Peter**

Author: Simon Peter

Date Written: 66 AD

Theme: While 1 Peter warns about external threats, 2 Peter warns about internal ones. In particular, he warns about complacency and gives very strong warnings about false teachers. He finishes by encouraging us to study the scriptures.

Key People: Peter, Paul

Interesting Facts: Written from Rome. It is noteworthy that in this letter Peter includes

Paul's letters when speaking about scripture (3:15-16), and admits they are sometimes hard to understand. Peter says that his time is very short, and he was correct. This letter was written shortly before he was executed by crucifixion. Saying he was not worthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord, Peter requested to be crucified upside down. His request was granted.

### **(23) 1 John**

Author: John

Date Written: Around 90 AD

Theme: Encouragement to love others, live holy lives, follow the instructions of Jesus, and avoid false teaching.

Key People: John, Jesus

Interesting Facts: Written from Ephesus. John firmly believed that morality was black and white, good and evil, God and Satan. He saw no middle ground, no gray area, and it comes across clearly in both his gospel and this letter.

### **(24) 2 John**

Author: John

Date Written: Around 90 AD

Theme: A strong warning about false teachers and deceivers.

Key People: John, the chosen lady, her children

Interesting Facts: Written from Ephesus shortly after 1 John, this is a personal letter to "the chosen lady."

### **(25) 3 John**

Author: John

Date Written: Around 90 AD

Theme: Strong encouragement for those who live lives of hospitality, generosity, and kindness to others, as well as a rebuke for those who place themselves and their own ambition above others.

Key People: John, Gaius, Diotrephus, Demetrius

Interesting Facts: This is a personal letter to Gaius, who had gained a reputation for his hospitality and generosity toward traveling evangelists and teachers. We discover here that John had written another letter to the church that no longer exists.

### **(26) Jude**

Author: Jude

Date Written: About 65 AD

Theme: To warn believers to be ever vigilant against sin and false teaching, and to continue to build up their own faith through prayer and loving others.

Key People: Jude, James, Jesus

Interesting Facts: The location from which this was written is unknown. Like James, Jude was a younger brother of Jesus. Two of Jesus' four brothers (James, Joses, Simon, and Judas [Jude]; Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3), and his mother are recorded believing in, and becoming followers of Jesus. We know He also had sisters (Matthew 13:56; Mark 6:3; we don't know how many, other than that he had more than one), but none of them are ever recorded as believing in their big brother.

## Revelation (End times)

### **(27) Revelation**

Author: John

Date Written: 95 AD

Theme: An extended prophetic vision of the future of Israel, humanity and the earth, culminating in the defeat of Satan, eradication of sin, and establishment of the kingdom of God on earth for all eternity. The visions in this book are intentionally built upon the visions in the Old Testament book of Daniel, without a clear understanding of that, grasping the meaning of Revelation is impossible.

Key People: John, Jesus, false prophet, antichrist (illustrated symbolically)

Interesting Facts: The Greek title for this book literally means, "to reveal," or "to take the cover off." John wrote this book from Patmos, where he was being held as a prisoner because Caesar's attempt to kill him by boiling him in oil failed, and the emperor, fearing John was protected by "the gods," exiled him to Patmos where it was ordered that no harm could come to him. John was given every comfort (including a personal scribe), and had daily visits from Christians seeking the wisdom, fellowship and teaching of one of the last living eye-witness to Jesus' ministry, and only living member of the original twelve disciples.

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## Some Evidence that Paul wrote Hebrews

In the oldest manuscripts, Hebrews is connected as a post-script to Galatians (included at the end of Galatians) with the sub-title, "to the Hebrews." This would explain why Paul says that his letter to the Galatians is a "large letter" (Galatians 6:11), when many of his

letters were much larger.

Both Galatians and Hebrews mentions that the author will be coming soon.

Paul's authorship was not disputed for the first 500 years of Christianity.

From 70 – 700 AD, over 100 early church writers (in both Greek and Latin) claim that Hebrews was written by Paul.

Paul's letters are the only ones to mention Timothy (Hebrews 13:23), and Paul always calls him a brother when speaking to others about Timothy.

Eusebius says that Paul wrote the letter in Aramaic and left his name off of it so that it would be more likely to be received by Jews who hated him, and did not want to hear anything he had to say. He says that Luke translated it into Greek. This would explain why the Greek so closely resembles Luke's, while the arguments so closely resemble Paul's.

Paul is the only letter writer in the New Testament who requested prayer for himself (Hebrews 13:18)

Paul is the only letter writer who wrote from prison and expected to be released soon (Hebrews 13:19)

Many of the arguments and phrases are similar to Paul's. A quick Sampling (there are many more than this):

Hebrews 5:12 – 1 Corinthians 3:2

Hebrews 8:1 – Ephesians 1:20

Hebrews 8:6; 9:15; 12:24 – Galatians 3:19-20; 1 Timothy 2:5

Hebrews 10:1 – Colossians 2:17

Hebrews 12:3 – Galatians 6:9

Hebrews 12:14 – Romans 12:18

Hebrews 13:1-5 – Ephesians 5:2-5

Hebrews 13:9 – Ephesians 4:14

Hebrews 13:16 – Philippians 4:18

Hebrews 13:20-21 – Romans 15:33; 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9

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