

An Overview of the Bible

Grace Fellowship Church

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The Bible, Part 1

The Inspiration of the Bible.

The intent of this study is to come to a better understanding of our Bible, so that we first and foremost come to a closer and more intimate relationship with God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. In this study, we will review such topics as: The Origin of the Bible, The Inspiration of the Bible, The Books of the Bible, The Authors of the Books of the Bible, the overall intent of each book, etc. We undertake this study so that we become more familiar with The Word of God and have a greater understanding of it and its message, so that we are better equipped to read, understand, and utilize it for the power that it was designed to be in our lives.

Overall, the Bible was written to give us the two-fold account of God's work. Everything that God has done, is doing, or will do can be placed under one of two categories: 1) His work in creation, and 2) His work in redemption.

The Origin of Scripture:

All Scripture originates from God. God the Father spoke to men in the Old Testament, God the Son taught on earth, and God the Holy Spirit communicated to human writers who wrote the Bible that we have today. No Scripture originates from human volition, design, or purpose.

2 Peter 1:20-21, "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, ²¹for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

So, the origin of the written Word, the Bible, is God the Holy Spirit who is a perfect source, which means we have a perfect book.

In **2 Tim 3:16-17**, the apostle Paul declares that, **"All Scripture is inspired by God (God-breathed) and profitable for teaching (doctrine), for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷so that the man of God may be adequate (mature), equipped for every good work."**

There are four key terms crucial to a proper exegesis and understanding of this passage, **"all, scripture, inspired by God, and profitable."**

The first term **"all"** is the Greek Adjective **PAS**, and can be translated, "every or all." Both terms refer to the entire Canon of the Old Testament (O.T.), which Timothy had known from

his youth, cf. **vs. 5**, because the New Testament (N.T.) had not yet been completed. But by extension, it now includes the N.T., cf. **Rom 15:4; 2 Pet 3:15-16**.

2 Peter 3:15-16, "And regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, ¹⁶as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction."

The second term is "**Scripture**", the Greek Noun **GRAPHE** that means, "a writing or written document." This term tells us that the focus of the Holy Spirit's inspiration is in the written record, rather than in the ideas, concepts, or even oral expressions of the writer.

The third term is the critical term in the passage, "**inspired**," which is the Adjective **THEOPNEUSTOS**. It comes from **THEOS**, the word for "God" and **PNEO** that means, "to blow or breath." Therefore, **THEOPNEUSTOS** comes to mean, "God breathed" or "Divinely breathed." This tells us that God is the author of all Scripture. As **Mat 4:4** says, "**Every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.**"

The fourth is "**profitable**," the Greek Adjective **OPHELIMOS** that comes from the root word **OPHELEO** that means, "to help, benefit, or do good." So, **OPHELIMOS** comes to mean, "useful or profitable" or even "advantageous." This tells us the reason why the Bible was given to man, to be useful, profitable, and advantageous to his life.

The Inspiration of Scripture – God Breathed of the Bible:

The true doctrine of inspiration contends that God the Holy Spirit so supernaturally directed the human authors of Scripture that without destroying their individuality, their literary style, their personal interests, their personal feelings, or their vocabulary, God's complete and coherent message to mankind was recorded with perfect accuracy in the original languages of Scripture, the very words bearing the authority of Divine authorship.

Therefore, God the Holy Spirit so supernaturally directed the human writers of Scripture that without waving their human intelligence, vocabulary, individuality, literary style, personality, personal feelings, or any other human factor, His complete and coherent message to mankind was recorded with perfect accuracy in the original languages of Scripture, the very words bearing the authority of Divine authorship. This is called "Verbal-Plenary Inspiration" of the Scripture.

Verbal means, "by means of words." That tells us the Bible in its original words, from first to last, is the exact record of the mind and will of God as He intended it to be.

Plenary means, "full or complete in every part." That tells us the entire text is equally full and complete, but not necessarily equally important or equally indispensable, because the Bible quotes human and Satanic lies, and erroneous views of false prophets.

Inspiration describes the process by which the revelation of God was recorded, "It was inspired by God Himself." Therefore, inspiration guarantees the accuracy of what is there, but it does not condone or sponsor errors, evils, or falsehood; it merely explains them in detail.

Inspiration was the power which enabled men of God to write the Divine revelation without error or defect. Man is the instrument, but not the author of the Word of God.

2 Peter 1:20-21, "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, ²¹for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

David said in **Psa 138:2, "I myself will worship toward Your holy temple (the temple in heaven), and I will give thanks to Your person because of Your grace and because of Your doctrine; because You have magnified Your word together with Your name (person)."**

Scriptural text concerning inspiration, **Ex 4:12-16; 17:14; 20:1; 31:18; 34:27; Num 22:38; 23:5; 24:12-13, 15-16; 32:2; Deut 18:18; Isa 8:1; 30:8-9; Jer 1:9; 5:14; 25:13; 30:1-2; Ezek 24:1; Hab 2:2; Mat 4:4; John 15:26; 16:12-15; Acts 4:25; 1 Cor 2:13; 14:37; 2 Cor 13:2-3; 1 Thes 2:13; 2 Tim 3:16-17; Heb 3:7-8; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 3:16.**

In addition, the Bible is from the Trinity:

According to **Heb 4:12**, the Bible is related to God the Father as the author of the plan; **"The Word of God is alive and powerful . . ."**

The Bible is related to God the Son as the central subject of scripture; **1 Cor 2:16** says, the Bible is the thinking or **"mind of Christ."**

The Bible is formed through the ministry of God the Holy Spirit; **Heb 3:7** calls it the **"voice of the Spirit."**

The Holy Spirit's involvement in inspiration is very important, as taught in **Acts 28:25, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, saying, ..."**

The Holy Spirit communicated, to the human authors of Scripture, God's complete and coherent message for both the immediate generation and all generations to follow. Inspiration guarantees that the Canon is accurate, especially when understood dispensationally, (e.g., the ritual plan for Israel compared to the grace plan of the Mystery Doctrine for the Church). Inspiration guarantees that all believers in all dispensations will always have a clear revelation of the Plan of God for their lives. While the writers of Scripture had other messages for their own generation, which are not recorded in the Scripture, only what was pertinent to all generations of history was actually recorded in the Canon.

Verbal-Plenary Inspiration applies only to the original languages of Scripture written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, by the original writers of Scripture, under the power of the Holy Spirit. As a result, God's complete, accurate, and coherent message to mankind is recorded in the Canon of Scripture with perfect accuracy in the original languages, also called "inerrancy," the very words bearing the authority of Divine authorship.

The Implications of Verbal-Plenary Inspiration:

Verbal-Plenary Inspiration does not teach that all parts of the Bible are equally important, but only that they are equally inspired.

Verbal-Plenary Inspiration does not guarantee the inspiration of any modern or ancient translation of the Bible, but deals only with the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages.

Verbal-Plenary Inspiration does not allow for any false teaching, but it does on occasion record the lie or false teaching of someone, cf. **Gen 3:4**.

Verbal-Plenary Inspiration does not permit any historical, scientific, or prophetic error whatsoever. While it is admitted that the Bible is not a textbook on science, it is nevertheless held that every scientific statement in the Scriptures is absolutely true.

Verbal-Plenary Inspiration does not deny the use of extra-biblical sources. Several examples: On at least two occasions, Paul quotes from heathen authors, **Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12**. Jude quotes from an ancient Hebrew book, one not included in the Bible, **Jude 14-15**. But be careful as to your treatment of those sources as dogmatic and inspired in totality, for they are not.

Verbal-Plenary Inspiration does not overwhelm the personality of the human author. The Bible writers experienced no coma-like trances as do some mediums during a séance, but on the contrary, always retained their physical, mental, and emotional powers. See **Isa 6:1-11; Dan 12**.

Verbal-Plenary Inspiration does not exclude the usage of pictorial and symbolic language. This is to say the Holy Spirit does not demand we accept every word in the Bible in a rigid and legalistic way. For example, a case could not be made that God has feathers like a bird by referring to **Psa 91:4**. Here the thought is simply that the persecuted believer can flee to his heavenly Father for refuge, protection, and warmth.

Verbal-Plenary Inspiration does not mean uniformity in all details given in describing the same event. For example: There are four different accounts concerning the superscription on the Cross at Calvary.

Matthew says, "**This is Jesus the King of the Jews**", **Mat 27:37**.

Mark says, "**The King of the Jews**", **Mark 15:26**.

Luke says, **“This is the King of the Jews”, Luke 23:38.**

John says, **“Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews”, John 19:19.**

The entire title probably read, “This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”

Verbal-Plenary Inspiration assures us God included all the necessary things He wanted us to know, and excluded everything else, **2 Tim 3:15-17.**

The Completion of Inspiration:

Is inspiration still going on today? Has God inspired, (or will He someday), the writing of a sixty-seventh book of the Bible? The answer is, NO!

For nearly 20 centuries, Christians everywhere have held to the belief that when John the Apostle wrote **Rev 22:21** and wiped his pen, inspiration stopped. Furthermore, it is generally believed his warning to not add to or subtract from His book, including not only the book of Revelation, but the entire Bible, **Rev 22:18-19**. It is of the utmost importance that this is clearly understood, or else the following tragic conclusions can take place. If inspiration is still going on today, then one is forced to admit that:

God could have inspired the weird and wicked writings of a Joseph Smith, or a Mary Baker Eddy, or a Charles Russell, or a Herbert W. Armstrong, etc.

Perhaps, we still do not possess all the details concerning the plan of salvation, details vital to escape hell and enter heaven, e.g., purgatory and the like.

God has allowed millions of devoted and faithful Christians to believe a horrible lie for some 2,000 years.

False prophets and antichrists would abound, claiming new authority and inspiration leading to many false doctrines and deceptions.

The Inerrancy of Scripture:

The inerrancy of the Canon of Scripture states that the Bible is absolutely true in all its doctrines, and that the statement of all kinds of words, idioms, and concepts related to the time in which it was written are accurate. Scriptural text concerning inerrancy includes, **Psa 12:6; 18:30; 19:7, 9; 119:89, 151, 160, 172; Prov 30:5-6; Mat 4:4; Luke 24:25; John 10:35; 17:17; Acts 24:14.**

Prov 30:5-6, “Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. “Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.”

Bible Statistics (According to Unger’s Bible Handbook, p. 895):

Old Testament Statistics:

There are:

- Thirty-nine books
- Seventeen historical books
- Five poetical books
- Seventeen prophetic books
- Nine hundred twenty-nine chapters
- 23,214 verses
- 593,493 words
- The longest book is Psalms
- The shortest book is Obadiah

New Testament Statistics:

There are:

- Twenty-seven books
- Four Gospels
- One historical
- Twenty-one epistles
- One Prophetic
- Two hundred sixty chapters
- 7,959 verses
- 181,253 words
- The longest book is Acts
- The shortest book is 2 John

"It was not until 1250 A.D. that the Bible was divided into chapters. At that time, Cardinal Hugo incorporated chapter divisions into the Latin Bible. His divisions, although for convenience, were not always accurate; however, essentially those same chapter divisions have persisted to this day. In 1551 Robert Stephens introduced a Greek New Testament with the inclusion of verse divisions. He did not fix verses for the Old Testament. The first entire English Bible to have verse divisions was the Geneva Bible (1560)." (Willmington's Guide to the Bible.)

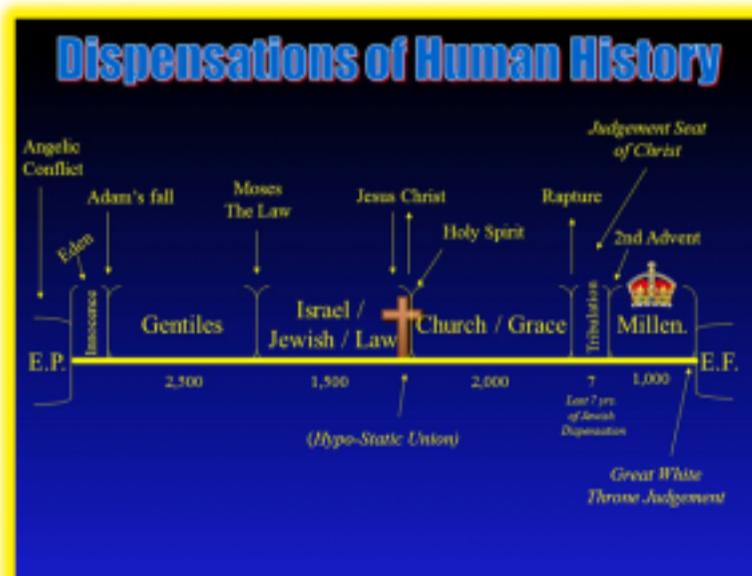
The Bible, Part 2

The Books of the Bible:

We will review the books of the Bible and their make up. There are 66-books in the entire Bible including the Old and New Testament and exclude the apocryphal books. Here we will only discuss the books in our Bible. Later, we will discuss the Apocryphal books. We begin with the Old Testament.

The Old Testament:

The Old Testament contains thirty-nine books; it came into the hands of men before the incarnation of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. It records the first three dispensations of human history, (the Age of Innocence [Garden of Eden], the Age of the Patriarchs, and the Age of Israel).



It begins with the creation of the heavens and the earth and ends with the nation of Israel in about 425 B.C, and includes end times prophecies. It also recorded the poetic and prophetic expressions of the spiritual life written by the inspired men during those many years.

It has been said that in the Old Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ is concealed, while in the New Testament, He is revealed and this is very true. Throughout all the Bible, Old and New Testament, there is the witness of Christ, who Himself said: **"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me," John 5:39.**

The Old Testament, in type and in promise, looks forward to the advent and sacrificial suffering of Israel's Messiah, the Savior and to His reign of righteousness upon the throne of David. Blood is the thread which runs through the pages of the Old Testament, always

pointing ahead to the blood of the Lamb of God, which as determined in the counsels and foreknowledge of God, was to be poured out on the Cross of Calvary for man's redemption. As early as the third chapter of Genesis, a Redeemer is promised, **Gen 3:15, 20**, the seed of the woman. From that point forward, the Word of God is occupied with His program of man's salvation through Himself in the person of His Son. No one will ever wholly understand the Old Testament, unless he looks for and finds Christ in its pages. Keep that in mind whenever you read it.

The Books of the Old Testament are Generally Divided into Four Classifications:

The Pentateuch or The Books of the Law:

The word "Pentateuch," is from two Greek words that mean "Five Books", and refers to the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, which our Lord Himself ascribed to Moses.

In these books, the Law of Moses is found, and so they are often referred to collectively as the Law. For example, **"the law and the prophets," Mat 7:12**. The Pentateuch introduces that which is taught in all God's Word, it shows man's fallen condition and his need of redemption, and it reveals the loving grace of God to provide a covering for sin through the blood of the altar and His assurance of a Redeemer.

- **Genesis** is the book of beginnings.
- **Exodus**, the book of deliverance.
- **Leviticus**, the book of worship.
- **Numbers**, the book of experience.
- **Deuteronomy**, the book of instruction or exhortation.

The Books of History:

While the whole of the Old Testament is, in a sense, historical, there are twelve books in particular, namely, **Joshua** to **Esther**, which record the history of the nation of Israel during approximately 1000 years, from about 1450 to 445 B.C.

In this period, the nation entered Palestine, the promised land of blessing. Israel was ruled by judges and then later by kings in this era. Israel was divided into two kingdoms, the northern and southern kingdoms, Israel and Judah respectfully. During this time, because of sin, Israel was conquered by Assyria, and Judah later fell into captivity to Babylon. Though a remnant was later restored to the land, this was not the fulfillment of the covenant of **Deut 30**, as the nation was dispersed again in A.D. 70 at the hands of the Romans. The final national regathering is still future and will occur after the Second Advent of our Lord when He establishes His Millennial reign.

The Books of Poetry:

There are six poetical books, **Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon**, and **Lamentations**. Although many of these writings are in lyric style as songs or

poems, it does not mean that the writers, (primarily Job, David, and Solomon), made all lines rhyme with each other, or that the lines of the original writings can be read rhythmically. The writings referred to are rather the expressions, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, of the spiritual experiences of their writers. In the Revised Versions, all of these books, except for two and a half chapters in **Job, (1-2, 42)**, and much of the book of **Ecclesiastes**, are printed in poetic rather than prose form. Parts of **Ecclesiastes, (1, 3, 7)** are poetic.

The Books of Prophecy:

There are sixteen prophetic books in the Old Testament. They begin at **Isaiah** and continue, (omitting **Lamentations** already mentioned), to the end of the Old Testament with the book of **Malachi**. Some of the writers, namely, **Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel**, are known as "Major Prophets" in contrast with the others, often called the "Minor Prophets." These terms do not have to do with the importance of the events prophesied; rather, the words major and minor simply distinguish the length of the books between the longer and shorter ones. Every message of the Word of God is of major importance.

The nature of the prophecies varies, though almost without exception, they have to do with the Jewish people. Sometimes, they specifically refer to Judah and sometimes to Israel, but most often to the nation as a whole, and her relationships to the Gentile nations.

In some cases, the prophecies are purely local. In other instances, they have a near and distant meaning, the former symbolic of the latter. Others make predictions that are wholly distant, not yet fulfilled. A reading of the context and knowledge of Bible history are the keys to understanding them. Also, some of the prophetic writings were future when penned and are now history, while others are still future.

As to the prophets themselves, some lived and wrote before the Babylonian captivity, some during it, and others after the remnant returned. They may be classified, then as follows:

Pre-exilic: **Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah.**

Exilic: **Jeremiah**, (whose prophecies extended from pre-exilic days to exilic days), **Ezekiel, and Daniel.**

Post-exilic: **Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.**

The Old Testament concludes with the words of Malachi the prophet looking forward to the coming of Israel's, (and the entire world's), Messiah and Deliverer, (both in His first advent, **Mal 3:1**, and second advents, **Mal 4:2**), our Lord Jesus Christ, the Servant – Son, and the Sun of Righteousness. Following these promises, the very Word of God, God was silent for four centuries.

The Basic Divisions of the Old Testament:

The Law (Pentateuch)—5 books

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy

Poetry—6 books

- Job
- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Ecclesiastes
- Song of Solomon
- Lamentations

History—12 books

- Joshua
- Judges
- Ruth
- 1 Samuel
- 2 Samuel
- 1 Kings
- 2 Kings
- 1 Chronicles
- 2 Chronicles
- Ezra
- Nehemiah
- Esther

Prophets—16 Books

1) Major

- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Ezekiel
- Daniel

2) Minor

- Hosea
- Joel
- Amos
- Obadiah
- Jonah
- Micah
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Zephaniah
- Haggai
- Zechariah

- Malachi

Prior to the Bible's inclusion of the New Testament, the Israelites typically divided the Old Testament in three categories:

The Hebrew Old Testament was arranged as follows: a) The Law, b) The Prophets, c) The Writings.

The Law (Torah)

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy

The Prophets (Nevi'im)

1) Former Prophets

- Joshua
- Judges
- Samuel
- Kings

2) Latter Prophets

- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Ezekiel
- The Twelve

The Writings (Kethuvim)

1) Poetical Books

- Psalms
- Job
- Proverbs

2) Five Rolls (Megilloth)

- Ruth
- Song of Songs
- Ecclesiastes
- Lamentations
- Esther

Historical Books

- Daniel
- Ezra-Nehemiah
- Chronicles

To that arrangement, the early Christian Fathers added the books of the New Testament, which were classified in four groups: Gospels (four books), History (one book), Epistles (twenty-one books), and Prophecy (one book). Further, the twenty-one Epistles were

subdivided into the Pauline (thirteen), and the General (eight). In the Eastern Church, the tendency was to classify them as fourteen Pauline Epistles (including Hebrews) and seven General. The Western Church tended to follow the former classification.

The New Testament:

The New Testament, contains twenty-seven books, and is that portion of Scripture which has come down to us since the earthly ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The gospels, in particular, record all that was done by and all that happened to our Lord, including the results of His passion and miraculous conquest over death and the grave; and His ascension. It then picks up with the giving of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

This testament is new in contrast to the old, because of the work that our Lord Jesus Christ performed here, leading God the Father to establish a new covenant; whereby, our sins are washed away in the blood of His Son: **Mat 26:27-28, "And He, (the Lord Jesus Christ), took the cup... saying... This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins."**

Under the old covenant, man was responsible to keep the Law, and failing, he offered the blood of the sacrifice which God accepted as a covering for the sin committed and confessed. The blood sacrifice was symbolic of the blood of Christ, the true Lamb of God, which was to be shed on the Cross. Thus, under the old covenant, man was saved by faith, as it were, on credit, looking forward to Christ's death. This new covenant is better than the old, **Heb 8-9.**

As a result of Jesus Christ's crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, God the Father ushered in a new dispensation called the Age of Grace or the Age of the Church, and a New Covenant came into being, and it is of this New Covenant that the last twenty-seven books of the Bible are concerned, as written in what we call the New Testament.

The Books of the New Testament can be Divided into Four Classifications.

The Gospels, or The Books of Grace and Truth.

The Gospels contain inspired accounts of certain incidents in the life of Christ. Though they may be termed biographies, no one of the Gospels, nor even all of them combined contains the full record of our Lord's life on earth, **John 21:25.** The first three Gospels (called the Synoptics) generally agree as to the events in the three and a half years' service of the Servant Son, while the fourth Gospel, John's, is occupied more with the personal and intimate words of our Lord than with His deeds. More than a third of **John** deals with the last week of Christ's life.

Each of the Gospel writers presents a particular emphasis of our Lord's person:

- **Matthew** presented the King, written for emphasis especially to the Jews.

- **Mark** presented the Servant, written for emphasis especially to the Romans.
- **Luke** presented the Son of Man, written for emphasis especially to the pagan Gentiles.
- **John** presented God the Son and His Deity, written for emphasis especially to Christians.

The Gospel records take us through the Cross, and so lead us from one dispensation to another, from Law to Grace. **John 1:17, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."**

A Book of History:

The **Acts of the Apostles** introduces us to the ascension of Jesus Christ and the advent of the Holy Spirit to dwell within the believers. It is through the power of the Spirit, and not in their own strength, that the disciples of Christ witnessed with such wisdom and blessing, and to such results during the Apostolic age. This book gives us a history of the early church from the time of our Lord's ascension until a few years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70.

The Books of the Letters or Epistles.

There are twenty-one epistles, or letters, in the New Testament, from **Romans** through **Jude**, (the first 3 chapters of **Revelation** could also be considered epistles). These are divided into two groups, we might say, called The Pauline Epistles (**Romans to Philemon**), and the Jewish-Christian Epistles (**Hebrews to Jude**). The former give us church doctrine, while the latter carry us through the difficult transition from Law to Grace, and show us that as we are all one in Christ, Jews and Gentiles alike, it is much better than in former days. Of the Pauline epistles there are two categories, church epistles, written to specific churches, (**Romans to Thessalonians and Philemon**), and the Pastoral epistles, written to young pastors like (**Titus and Timothy**), instructing them on church leadership and church conduct.

The Book of Prophecy – The Last Things:

All that is written in the book of **Revelation**, after the third chapter, is future. This book tells of the time of Great Tribulation to come upon the earth, the overthrow of Satan and his vice-regents at Armageddon, the Millennial reign of the Son of David, Satan's final uprising and defeat, and looks through the beautiful gates of eternity. **Revelation** is the complement of **Genesis**. The Bible begins in a garden from which man is cast out because of sin. The Bible ends, as it were, in a garden wherein, cleansed from his sin, man rests beneath the leaves of the tree of healing power.

GOSPELS – 4 books

- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke

- John

HISTORY – 1 book

- Acts

EPISTLES – 21 books

Pauline – 13 books

1) Church Epistles:

- Romans
- 1 Corinthians
- 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 Thessalonians
- 2 Thessalonians
- Philemon

2) Pastoral Epistles:

- 1 Timothy
- 2 Timothy
- Titus

3) General – 8 books

- Hebrews
- James
- 1 Peter
- 2 Peter
- 1 John
- 2 John
- 3 John
- Jude

4) PROPHECY – 1 book

- Revelation

Why the New Testament is Divided into Parts:

The Gospels present the great power experiment of the Hypostatic Union.

The Book of Acts is the history of the transition between the great power experiment of the Hypostatic Union and the great power experiment of the Church Age.

The Epistles delineate the great power experiment of the Church Age; i.e., what is expected of you after your salvation through faith in Christ.

The Book of Revelation presents the transition between the Church and the Kingdom of Christ, the Tribulation.

The Bible, Part 3

The Writers of Scripture and the Formation of the Bible / Canon

Introduction:

The Bible that we have today is called the completed Canon of Scripture. The word Canon comes from the Greek word **KANON**, meaning, "rule, standard, or measuring rod." We will talk about how we came to have this Canon below.

The Old Testament Writers Were All Prophets.

- There were three categories of prophets:

The Unique Prophet, Moses. He wrote the first five books of the Old Testament, called the TORAH. He was unique because he had both the gift and office of prophet. Moses received all his information by dialogue directly from God.

Those with the Office of Prophet, called the NEBI'IM. These men include Joshua, Samuel (Judges and Samuel), Nathan and Gad (parts of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve Minor Prophets: Hosea, Habakkuk, Zechariah, Malachi, Amos, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, and Haggai.

Those with the Gift but Not the Office of Prophecy (they did something else by profession), wrote the KETHUBIM, which means the writings. They include David, Solomon, Job, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Chronicles.

The Formation of the Old Testament was closed in the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus I (465-425 B.C.). Ezra came to Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I; Nehemiah came in the twentieth year of his reign. These were the two last writers of the Old Testament. Malachi, being the last book of the OT, was a contemporary of these two and wrote his book about the same time, and was included in Ezra's canon.

The New Testament Writers were primarily those with the gift of Apostleship or closely associated with an apostle (Mark with Peter; Luke with Paul). James and Jude the half-brothers of Jesus were also writers in the New Testament.

It was Primarily Written in Koine Greek. Prior to Koine, there were three major branches of Greek language in classical times: Aeolic, Doric, and Ionic (Attic). With the conquest of Alexander the Great, it led to the formation of a common Greek language called Koine, which became the lingua franca, (a language for people with different first languages), from around B.C. 300 until 500 A.D.

Only Luke and Paul Break Out in Attic Greek at Times, showing their higher classical education. Most of the New Testament is in Koine Greek so that the Word of God could be understood by the common man.

The Authors of the Bible.

The Old Testament:

- Moses wrote Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Psalm 90.
- Joshua wrote the book named after him (Joshua).
- Samuel may have written Judges, Ruth, and 1 and possibly 2 Samuel, which was one book originally.
- Jeremiah possibly 1 and 2 Kings, and the Book of Jeremiah, and probably Lamentations.
- Ezra wrote 1 and 2 Chronicles (one book originally), and maybe 2 Samuel, and the Book of Ezra.
- Nehemiah wrote the book of Nehemiah.
- Mordecai may have written Esther.
- Job may have written his own story (other possibilities include Elihu, Moses, or Solomon).
- David wrote most of the Psalms, 73 in fact, (cf. **2 Sam 23:2**).
- Sons of Korah wrote 12 Psalms, including chapters 42, 44-49, 84-85, 87.
- Asaph wrote 12 Psalms, including chapters 50, 73-83.
- Heman wrote Psalm 88.
- Ethan wrote Psalm 89.
- Moses wrote Psalm 90
- Hezekiah wrote Psalms 120-123, 128-130, 132, 134-137, (cf. Isa 38:20).
- Solomon wrote Psalms 72, 127.
- Solomon also wrote Proverbs 1-29.
- Agur wrote Proverbs 30.
- Lemuel wrote Proverbs 31.
- Solomon also wrote Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.
- The rest of the prophetic books, Major and Minor, are named after their author.

The New Testament:

- The Apostle Matthew wrote the Gospel of Matthew.
- Mark, the companion of the Apostle Peter, wrote the Gospel of Mark.
- Luke, the companion of Paul, wrote the Gospel of Luke.
- The Apostle John wrote the Gospel of John.
- Luke also wrote the book of Acts.

- Paul wrote the epistles of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon and possibly Hebrews, (Apollos also may have written Hebrews).
- James, the half-brother of our Lord, wrote the epistle of James.
- The Apostle Peter wrote the epistle of Peter.
- The Apostle John wrote 1, 2 and 3 John.
- Jude, also a half-brother of our Lord, wrote the epistle of Jude.
- The Apostle John wrote Revelation.

Remarkably, because every book was inspired by God the Holy Spirit, unity is achieved in spite of the:

Many Authors (some 40) and Their Various Occupations, Approximately 17.

Psa 68:11 (KJV), "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those who published it."

- Moses was an Egyptian prince.
- Joshua was a soldier.
- Samuel was a priest.
- David was a king.
- Job was a rich farmer.
- Amos was a poor farmer.
- Ezra was a scribe.
- Isaiah was a prophet.
- Daniel was a prime minister.
- Nehemiah was a cupbearer.
- Matthew was a tax collector.
- Mark was an evangelist.
- Luke was a physician.
- John was a wealthy fisherman.
- Peter was a poor fisherman.
- Jude and James were probably carpenters.
- Paul was a tentmaker.

The Canon of the Bible

The Word "Canon," as noted above, is from the Greek word **KANON**, which refers to a measuring instrument. It therefore came to mean a rule of action, **Gal 6:16; Phil 3:16**. In the early church, the word Canon was used to refer to the various creeds. Then in the middle of the fourth century AD, it came to be used for the Bible.

The Recognition of the Canon.

The Old Testament. By the year 300 B.C. (at the latest) all Old Testament books had been written, collected, revered, and recognized as official, canonical books. Many believe Ezra the prophet led the first recognition council.

The New Testament. During the Third Council of Carthage, held in A.D. 397, the 27 New Testament books were declared to be canonical. However, it absolutely must be understood that the Bible is not an authorized collection of books, but rather a collection of authorized

books. In other words, the 27 New Testament books were not inspired because the Carthage Council proclaimed them to be, but rather the Council proclaimed them to be such because they were already inspired.

Norm Geisler, (A General Introduction to the Bible, p. 221), has suggested the following:

- "The church is the discoverer of and not the determiner of the canon."
- "It is the child and not the mother of the canon."
- "It is the minister and not the magistrate of the canon."
- "It is the recognizer and not the regulator of the canon."
- "It is the witness and not the judge of the canon."
- "It is the servant and not the master of the canon."

How was it Determined Which Books Would be in the Canon of Scripture?

There were several tests used to determine that. They included:

Authorship: who wrote the book or the epistle?

Local Church Acceptance: Had it been read by the various churches? What was their opinion?

Church Fathers' Recognition: Had the pupils of the disciples quoted from the book? As an example, a man named Polycarp was a disciple of John the apostle. Therefore, one test of a book might be, what did Polycarp think of it?

Book Subject Matter (content): What did the book teach? Did it contradict other recognized books?

Personal Edification: Did the book have the ability to inspire, convict, and edify local congregations and individual believers?

It was a combination of these five steps, and not just one alone, which helped determine whether a book was inspired or not. Contrary to what may have seemed vital, canonicity was not determined at all by either the age or the language of a given book. For example, there were many ancient books mentioned in the Old Testament (see **Num. 21:14; Josh. 10:3**) that were not in the Old Testament canon. Also, some of the apocryphal books (such as Tobit) were written in Hebrew but were not included in the Old Testament, while some books (like portions of Daniel) written in Aramaic were included in the canon.

Disputed Books of the Canon.

Some canonical books were at first doubted but later fully accepted. During the first few years of early church history, there were some 11 biblical books that were temporarily objected to for various reasons. These included:

Old Testament Books.

- The Song of Solomon because it seemed to some to be a mere poem on human love.
- Ecclesiastes because some felt it taught atheism. (See **9:5**.)
- Esther because it did not mention the word God in the entire book.
- Ezekiel because it seemed to contradict the Mosaic Law.
- Proverbs because it seemed to contradict itself. (See **26:4-5**.)

New Testament Books.

- Hebrews because of the uncertainty about the book's authorship.
- James because it seemed to contradict the teachings of Paul. (Compare **James 2:20** with **Eph 2:8-9**.)
- 2 and 3 John because they seemed to be simply two personal letters.
- Jude because the author refers to an uncanonical Old Testament book, the book of Enoch.
- Revelation because of the uncertainty about the book's authorship, and because of its many mysterious symbols.

The Accuracy of the Canon.

The Bad News. As every Christian knows, none of the original penned 66 books of the Bible have been preserved. Our Bible today is a translation of a copy (or copies) of a copy, etc., of the original writings.

Often it is asked why God did not preserve the original books. Only the Holy Spirit knows the ultimate and complete answer to this. However, at least three possible reasons have been suggested.

- To prevent the text from being tampered with. If only one copy existed and controlled by one person or group, it would be very easy to manipulate the text.
- To guard against a misguided worship. The very nature of man demands he worship something, be it power, money, sex, a pagan idol, or the true God. Had God preserved any or all of the 66 original manuscripts, they undoubtedly would have become the objects of superstition and worship.
- There are at least two biblical examples where even well-intentioned individuals were guilty of worshipping the wrong thing. Israel's sin in worshipping Moses' brazen serpent, **2 Kings 18:4**, and John the apostle's sin in attempting to worship an angel. This occurred twice, **Rev 19:10; 22:8-9**.
- To stimulate intense Bible study. Only eternity itself will reveal the multiplied millions of hours invested by devout scholars examining the manuscript copies to determine the exact contents of the original scriptural text.

The Good News. Even though the original books are lost, there is overwhelming evidence that our translated Bibles today represent amazingly accurate copies of the first manuscripts themselves.

- The number of existing both Old and New Testament Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and fragments runs literally into the thousands and potentially millions.
- There are some 5,839 New Testament Greek manuscripts alone, many fragments. By the end of the third century AD, 41-60 manuscripts were found that covered the Old and New Testament. 43% of the New Testament was found in these manuscripts.
- There are also 15-20 thousand ancient New Testament manuscripts in other languages, like Latin, Coptic, etc. Some are as late as the 2nd century AD.

- The oldest complete manuscript of the entire Bible is the Codex Synaiticus written in Greek from the early 4th Century AD. It is also the oldest complete copy of the New Testament.
- The favorable comparison of all these manuscripts. Note the testimony of the scholars regarding the text of the New Testament.

1) Westcott and Hort estimated it is 98.33% pure.

2) Ezra Abbott raises it to 99.75% pure.

3) A. T. Robertson gives the number at 99.9% pure.

4) Dan Wallace gives estimates it is 99% pure.

The Discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Prior to the discovery of the scrolls at Qumran, the oldest extant manuscripts were dated from approximately A.D. 900. Some manuscripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which included copies of Isaiah, Habakkuk, and others, were dated back to 125 B.C., providing manuscripts 1,000 years older than previously available. The major conclusion was that there was no significant difference between the Isaiah scroll at Qumran and the Masoretic Hebrew text dated one thousand years later. This confirmed the reliability of our present Hebrew text. (Paul Enns, Moody Handbook of Theology, p. 173)

The Biblical Quotations from the Early Church Fathers. During the first, second, and third centuries, important church fathers such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Eusebius quoted from the New Testament. In the collective writings of the early church fathers, there is over one million quotations of the scriptures.

With the possible exception of 11 verses, every single New Testament passage is to be found in these quotations. Thus, had Satan succeeded in destroying every copy of the Greek manuscripts, the entire New Testament could have been almost totally reconstructed from the writings of the church fathers.

Edward Goodrick offers the following concerning the amazing accuracy of the Old Testament canon. *"Do we have hard evidence that copies of the Old Testament autographs were called "Scripture" (graphe) in the New Testament? A search of the 50 appearances of graphe in the New Testament reveals that Jesus read from the Scripture (graphe) in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:21) and Paul from the Scripture (graphe) in the synagogue at Thessalonica (Acts 17:2). The Ethiopian eunuch riding in his chariot on his way home from Jerusalem was reading a portion of Scripture (graphe, Acts 8:32-33). These were not autographs; they were copies. And copies contain scribal errors. Yet the Bible calls them graphe, and every graphe is inspired (2 Timothy 3:16). Yes, copies of the autographs are inspired."* (Is My Bible the Inspired Word of God? p. 62)

Professor Dan Wallace of Dallas Theological Seminary, noted in a recent interview regarding the variants found in the text, *"70% are spelling; others are word order, etc., minor errors.*

Of all the passages in the Bible, there are about 1,000 variants that effect meaning of the text, yet of these, there is no essential doctrine that is jeopardized by these variants."

Its Care and Copy.

No book in history has been copied as many times with as much care as has been the Word of God. The Talmud lists the following rules for copying the Old Testament:

- The parchment had to be made from the skin of a clean animal, prepared by a Jew only, and had to be fastened by strings from clean animals.
- Each column must have no less than 48 or more than 60 lines.
- The ink must be of no other color than black, and had to be prepared according to a special recipe.
- No word or letter could be written from memory; the scribe must have an authentic copy before him, and he had to read and pronounce aloud each word before writing it.
- He had to reverently wipe his pen each time before writing the Word of God, and had to wash his whole body before writing the sacred name of Jehovah.
- One mistake on a sheet condemned the sheet; if three mistakes were found on any page, the entire manuscript was condemned.
- Every word and every letter was counted, and if a letter were omitted, an extra letter inserted, or if one letter touched another, the manuscript was condemned and destroyed at once.

The old rabbi gave the solemn warning to each young scribe: *"Take heed how thou dost do thy work, for thy work is the work of heaven; lest thou drop or add a letter of a manuscript and so become a destroyer of the world!"*

The scribe was also told that while he was writing if even a king would enter the room and speak with him, the scribe was to ignore him until he finished the page he was working on, lest he make a mistake. In fact, some texts were actually annotated—that is, each letter was individually counted. Thus, in copying the Old Testament they would note the letter aleph (first letter in the Hebrew alphabet) occurred 42,377 times, and so on.

According to Westcott and Hort, the points in which we cannot be sure of the original words are microscopic in proportion to the bulk of the whole, some one-in-one-thousand. Thus, only one letter out of 1,580 in the Old Testament is open to question, and none of these uncertainties would change in the slightest any doctrinal teaching.

Today there are almost 6,000 ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. This perhaps does not seem like many, until one considers that: Fifteen hundred years after Herodotus wrote his history, there was only one copy in the entire world. Twelve hundred years after Plato wrote his classic, there was only one manuscript. Today there exist but a few manuscripts of Sophocles, Euripedes, Virgil, and Cicero.

Circulation: The Bible is written in over 1,950 languages. Bible societies are currently working with translators on 406 language projects in which one part of the Bible is being translated for the first time.

More than 80 percent of the world's population now has access to at least some portions of the Bible in a language they can speak or understand. A summary of worldwide translations as of 1990 is as follows:

Africa 556

Asia 483

Australia/New Zealand/Pacific Islands 311

Europe 187

North America 69

Mexico/Central & South America 337

Constructed languages 3

Total 1,946

Only one-half of one percent of all books published survive seven years—Eighty percent of all books are forgotten in one year. For example, let us imagine that during this year, 200 new books are published in America. Statistics show that by next year, only 40 of these 200 will remain. At the end of the seventh year, of the original 200, only one lonely book will survive.

During the Civil War, the ABS produced 7,000 Bibles a day for both sides—When Grant's armies marched through Tennessee, horse-drawn Bible vans followed. In 1864, the Memphis Bible Society sent a shipment of cotton to New York in return for 50,000 Scripture portions.

What other ancient religious book can even remotely be compared to all this? Where could one go today to purchase a copy of Zen Vedas, or the Egyptian Book of the Dead? In fact, dozens of religions that once flourished have simply disappeared from the face of the earth without leaving the slightest trace. Other ancient religions may be viewed behind glass cases in the rare book section of dusty museums. But the smallest child can walk into almost any store in America and pick up a copy of the Word of God.

The Apocrypha and the Bible.

After the Old Testament canon had been recognized by the Jews as being officially closed, and prior to the New Testament period, there arose a section of literature called the Apocrypha. This word literally means, "that which is hidden" and consists of 14 books.

The Contents of the Apocrypha Include:

1 Esdras: This book covers much of the material found in Ezra, Nehemiah, and 2 Chronicles but it also includes a fanciful story concerning three Jewish servants in Persia. They were all

asked a question by King Darius concerning what the greatest thing in the world was. One said wine, another replied women, while the third claimed truth. He won, and when offered a reward, suggested the King allow the Jews to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

2 Esdras: This contains certain visions given to Ezra dealing with God's government of the world and the restoration of certain lost Scriptures.

Tobit: Tobit is the story of a pious Jew (Tobit) who is accidentally blinded (by sparrow dung) and is later healed by an angel named Raphael, who applies a concoction of fish heart, liver, and gall to his eye.

Judith: This is the story of a beautiful and devout Jewish princess who saves Jerusalem from being destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's invading armies. This she does by beguiling the enemy general through her beauty, then returning to Jerusalem with his head in her handbag!

The remainder of Esther: There are additional inserts to this book to show the hand of God in the narrative by putting the word God in the text. The word God does not appear in the Old Testament book of Esther.

The Wisdom of Solomon: This book has been called "The Gem of the Apocrypha," and is one of the loftier books of the Apocrypha.

Ecclesiasticus: Also called "the Wisdom of Jews, the Son of Sirach," it resembles the book of Proverbs and gives rules for personal conduct in all details of civil, religious, and domestic life.

1 Maccabees: This historical account of the Maccabean period relates events of the Jews' heroic struggle for liberty, in 175-135 B.C.

2 Maccabees: This work covers in part the same period as 1 Maccabees but is somewhat inferior content-wise.

Baruch: Supposedly, written by Jeremiah's secretary, Baruch. It contains prayers and confessions of the Jews in exile, with promises of restoration.

The Song of the Three Children: Inserted in the book of Daniel, right after the fiery furnace episode, **Dan 3:23**, it contains an eloquent prayer of Azariah, one of the three Hebrew men thrown in the fire.

The story of Susanna: This story relates how the godly wife of a wealthy Jew in Babylon, falsely accused of adultery, was cleared by the wisdom of Daniel.

Bel and the Dragon: This is also added to the book of Daniel. The book contains two stories:

1) The first concerns how Daniel proves to the king his great god Bel is a dead idol and that the Bel priests are religious crooks. Unger's Bible Handbook describes this event in the following words: *The other legend concerns a dragon worshiped in Babylon. Daniel, summoned to do it homage, feeds it a mixture of pitch, hair, and fat, which causes it to explode. The enraged populace compels the King to throw Daniel in the den of lions where he is fed on the sixth day by the prophet Habakkuk, who is angelically transported to Babylon by the hair of his head while carrying food and drink to the reapers in Judea. On the seventh day, the King rescues Daniel and throws his would-be destroyers to the hungry lions.* (p. 459)

2) The Prayer of Manasseh: This is the supposed confessional prayer of wicked King Manasseh of Judah after he was carried away prisoner to Babylon by the Assyrians.

Reasons for Rejecting the Apocrypha.

"Why don't you Protestants have all the books of the Bible in your King James Version?" Often Christians and Bible lovers are confronted with this question by those who have accepted the Apocrypha into their translations of the Bible. Why indeed do we not include these 14 books? There are many sound scriptural reasons for not doing this.

- The Apocrypha was never included in the Old Testament canon by such recognized authorities as the Pharisees, Ezra the prophet, etc.
- It was never quoted by either Jews or any other New Testament writers.
- The great Jewish historian Josephus excluded it.
- The well-known Jewish philosopher Philo did not recognize it.
- The early church fathers excluded it.
- The Bible translator Jerome did not accept them as inspired, although he was forced by the pope to include them into the Latin Vulgate Bible.
- None of the 14 books claim divine inspirations; in fact, some actually disclaim it.
- Some books contain historical and geographical errors.
- Some books teach false doctrine, such as praying for the dead.
- No apocryphal book can be found in any catalogue list of canonical books composed during the first four centuries A.D. In fact, it was not until 1596 at the Council of Trent that the Roman Catholic church officially recognized these books, basically in an attempt to strengthen its position, which had been grievously weakened by the great reformer Martin Luther.

The Bible Part 4

Outline of the Old Testament

Books of the Bible

Genesis

Author: Moses.

Date: 1450-1410 B.C.

Contents: There are 50 chapters in the book. It contains the account of the restoration of planet earth, as well as the creation of human and animal life. It includes the Garden of Eden and the fall of man, the account of Noah and the flood, the tower of Babel, the establishment

of the Israelite people with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their account, the account of Joseph's journey to Egypt and the Jewish enslavement there, as well as the rise of Joseph as a leader of Egypt.



Genesis is a book about the beginning of many things: the world, man, sin, civilization, the nations, and Israel.

It also contains important theological themes: the doctrine of the living, personal God; the doctrine of man-made in the image of God, then of sinful man; the anticipation of a Redeemer, **Gen 3:15**, and the covenant promises made to the nation Israel, **Gen 12:1-3; 15:18-21**.

Exodus

Author: Moses.

Date: 1450-1410 B.C.

Contents: There are 40 chapters in the book. It begins with the choosing of Moses as deliverer and ends with the Lord indwell the Tabernacle.

The theme of the book is deliverance from Egypt and begins with the choosing of Moses to deliver the Israelites from bondage in fulfillment of the promise of **Gen 15:13-14**.

The book records the birth of the nation Israel, the giving of the law, and the origin of ritual worship. The revelation of God is paramount throughout the book. He is the one who

controls history, **Ex 1**; He revealed Himself in a new name, **Ex 3:14**; He is the sovereign of the covenant relationship, **Ex 19:5**; He is the faithful redeemer, **Ex 6:6; 15:13**; He is judge of His own people, **Ex 4:14; 20:5; 32:27-28**, and of His foes, **Ex 7-12**; He is the transcendent one, Ex 33:20, who nevertheless lived among His people, **Ex 29:45**. It includes the birth and protection of Moses, **Ex 2**; the call of Moses, **Ex 3:14; 5:1**; the crossing of the Red Sea, **Ex 14**; wandering in the wilderness; the giving of the Ten Commandments, **Ex 20**; and the Tabernacle, **Ex 25-27**.

Date of the Exodus: ca. 1446-1440 B.C. during the reign of Amenhotep II (1450-1425),

Leviticus

Author: Moses.

Date: 1450-1410 B.C.

Contents: There are 27 chapters in the book. Its title comes from the Levitical Priesthood that was established at this time, "pertaining to the Levites." Though the book is a manual for the priests (who were from the tribe of Levi), it contains many laws that concern all the Israelites. The book may be viewed in three complementary ways. It is a book about the holiness of God and His requirements for fellowship with Himself. Thus, it is also a book that reveals the sinfulness of man. And it may be viewed as a book about atonement, the provision of access to God for sinful man. The language of sacrifice dominates the book, with the word "**sacrifice**" occurring about 42 times. "**Priest**" is found about 189 times, "**blood**" about 86 times, "**holy**" about 87 times, and "**atonement**" about 45 times. The regulations found in the book emphasize holiness of body, as well as of spirit. The New Testament refers to Leviticus about 90 times. The book of Exodus concluded with the erection of the Tabernacle, which was constructed according to the pattern God gave to Moses. How was Israel to use the Tabernacle? The instructions in Leviticus answer that question; they were given to Moses during the 50 days between the setting up of the Tabernacle, **Ex 40:17**, and the departure of the people from Sinai, **Num 10:11**.

Numbers

Author: Moses.

Date: 1450-1410 B.C.

Contents: There are 36 chapters in this book. Appropriately, the Hebrew title of the book, taken from the first verse, means "**in the wilderness of,**" because most of the book records the history of the Israelites in their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness of Sinai. The account covers the period between Israel's departure from Egypt and her arrival in Canaan. Exactly one year after they fled from Egypt, the Israelites were gathered at Mount Sinai to receive instructions concerning the law and the Tabernacle (as recorded in the book of Leviticus). Numbers continues the historical narrative one month after the close of the last chapter of Exodus (cf. **Exodus 40:2** and **Numbers 1:1**). The book covers the winding 39-year journey from Sinai to Kadesh-barnea, through various places in the wilderness, and finally to the plains of Moab across the Jordan River from Jericho.

The book recounts the unbelief and discontent of the people in general, **Num 11:1**, their refusal at Kadesh-barnea to enter the Promised Land, **Num 14:2**, Moses' own failure, **Num 20:12**, and the idolatrous worship, **Num 25:3**. Yet, in spite of repeated failure, the Israelites' covenant-keeping God miraculously supported them during those years of rebellion and wandering and finally brought them to the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy

Author: Moses, until his death. Chapter 34 was then appended by Joshua;

Date: 1410 B.C.

Contents: There are 34 chapters in the book. The English title is from the Greek Septuagint and means "second law-giving" as it reiterates much of the Law already given. The book may also be viewed as a constitution for the theocracy of Israel once she was established in the land. Its structure parallels that of a typical suzerainty treaty of that period: 1) preamble, **Deut 1:1-5**, 2) historical prologue, **Deut 1:6-4:49**, 3) main provisions, **Deut 5:1-26:19**, 4) curses and blessings, **Deut 27:1-30:20**, 5) arrangements for continuation of the covenant, **Deut 31:1-33:29**. Included are repetitions of many of the laws contained in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers and ends with the death of Moses, just prior to Israel entering the Promised Land. Of the 27 books of the New Testament, 17 quote from Deuteronomy.

Joshua

Author: Joshua, and for **15:13-17**, (cf. **Judges 1:9-13**), and **24:29-31** most likely added by Eleazar the priest or by Phinehas, his son.

Date: 1400-1370 B.C.

Contents: It contains 24 chapters. It begins with the commissioning of Joshua to lead Israel into the promise land and ends with the death of Joshua. It describes the conquest and division of the land of Canaan and is set against the background of the corrupt and brutal features of Canaanite religion. Prostitution of both sexes, infant sacrifice, and religious syncretism were some of the evils for which God commanded the Israelites to exterminate the inhabitants of Canaan. The events of Joshua begin where those of Deuteronomy conclude. The conquest of Canaan under Joshua took place around 1400 B.C. The book emphasizes 1) the faithfulness of God to give Israel the land of Canaan, cf. **Gen 13:15**, 2) the importance of the written law of God, **Joshua 1:8; 8:32-35; 23:6-16; 24:26-27**, and 3) the holiness of God in judging the sins of the Canaanites, cf. **Deut 7:1-6**.

Judges

Author: Though the author of this book is unknown, the Talmud suggests Samuel, and it is possible that he may have written portions. It was written after the death of Samson and after the coronation of King Saul, but before the conquest of Jerusalem by David about 990 B.C.

Date: 1050-1000 B.C.

Content: It contains 21 chapters. It begins after the death of Joshua and ends with the conclusion of the Benjamite war. The events of this book cover the turbulent period in Israel's history from about 1380 to 1050 B.C., from the conquest of Palestine to just before the beginnings of the monarchy. It describes the rulership of Israel under various judges. The judges were military and civil leaders ruling during this time when the nation was a loose confederacy. Some of the judges ruled concurrently since each one did not necessarily rule over the entire land. Though the land had been generally conquered and occupied under Joshua many important Canaanite strongholds had been bypassed, leaving their subjugation to individual Israelite tribes. It describes this warfare, as the Hebrews tried to complete their occupation of the land. Historically, the book serves to link the conquest of Palestine and the monarchy. Theologically, it provides many examples of the principle that obedience to the law brings peace; whereas, disobedience means oppression and death. Spiritually, the faithfulness of God in forgiving His penitent people is seen even in this period when **"every man did what was right in his own eyes", Judges 17:6; 21:25.**

Judges & The Israelite Oppressors:

Judge	Years of Judging	Oppressor	Reference in Judges
Othniel	40	Mesopotamia	Judges 3:7-11
Ehud	80	Moab	Judges 3:12-30
Shagar	Unknown	Philistia	Judges 3:31
Daborah & Brak	40	Canaan	Judges 4:1-5:31
Gideon	40	Midian	Judges 6:1-8:28
Tola	23	Unknown	Judges 10:1-2
Jair	22	Unknown	Judges 10:3-5
Jephthah	6	Ammon	Judges 10:6-12:7
Ibzan	7	Unknown	Judges 12:8-10
Elon	10	Unknown	Judges 12:11-12:12
Abdon	8	Unknown	Judges 12:13-15
Samson	2	Philistia	Judges 13:1-16:31

Ruth

Author: Uncertain. The author is unknown to us, though Samuel is suggested by some.

Date: ca. 1000 B.C.

Content: It contains 4 chapters and tells the story of Ruth. The events of the book occurred during the period of the judges (the latter part of the twelfth century B.C.). The book

provides a glimpse into the lives of ordinary, though godly, people during the turbulent period of the judges. It shows an oasis of faithfulness in an age marked by idolatry and unfaithfulness. The last verses of the book trace Ruth's descendants only to King David.

Important Aspects of the Book Include:

- Shows that Gentiles could believe in the true God.
- Gives a partial lineage of David, and thus of Christ, and shows that Gentile blood was in the line of the One who became the Savior for all mankind.
- Boaz, as the kinsman-redeemer serves as a beautiful type of Christ, in that
 - a) He was a blood relative, **Rom 1:3; Heb 2:14.**
 - b) He had the price with which to purchase the forfeited inheritance, **1 Peter 1:18-19.**
 - c) He was willing to redeem, **Heb 10:7.**
- The book is a moving example of the sovereignty of God in caring for His people (**Ruth 2:12**).

1 Samuel

Authors: Samuel and others, maybe Nathan and Gad.

Date: 930 B.C. and later.

Contents: There are 31 chapters. It focuses on three principal characters: Samuel, Saul, and David; **2 Samuel** centers exclusively on David. The principal lesson of the book has to do with the effects of sin and holiness in relation to the people and their leaders. Well-known stories in the book include that of David and Goliath, **1 Sam 17**, David and Jonathan, **1 Sam 18**, and Saul and the witch of Endor, **1 Sam 28**. Samuel was the last judge in the 350-year span of the judges. The book covers a period of about 115 years, from the childhood of Samuel to the beginning of the reign of King David. Appearing on the scene during one of the darkest periods of Israel's history, Samuel called the people to a revival of the true worship of Yahweh. He was also a kingmaker, anointing both Saul, **1 Sam 10:1**, and David, **1 Sam 16:13**. Thus 1 Samuel forms the link between the judges and the monarchy.

2 Samuel

Authors: Samuel and others.

Date: 930 B.C. and later

Contents: There are 24 chapters. In the Hebrew Bible, 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel form a single book. 1 Samuel closes with the death of Israel's first king, Saul. 2 Samuel records the history of King David's reign, including his making Jerusalem the political and religious center of the nation, the establishing of the Davidic dynasty, David's great military victories, his shameful sin with Bathsheba, and his mistake in numbering the people. **2 Sam 7:4-14** records the important (and still partly unfulfilled) covenant God made with David and his posterity.

1 Kings

Author: Some say Jeremiah but it is unknown. The author was likely one of the exiles who lived in Babylon, perhaps an unknown one, or Ezra or Ezekiel or Jeremiah (though someone other than Jeremiah would have had to write the last chapter of 2 Kings, since Jeremiah apparently died in Egypt, not Babylon; **Jeremiah 43:6-7**).

Date: Ca. 550 B.C.

Contents: There are 22 chapters. Originally, 1 and 2 Kings were one book. They are appropriately titled from their subject matter, which traces the history of the kings of Israel and Judah from Solomon to the Babylonian captivity. The purpose of this book was not only to record the history of these kings, but to show that the success of any king (and of the nation as a whole) depended on the measure of his allegiance to God's law. Failure resulted in decline and captivity. During this time, Israel was split into the Northern Kingdom called Israel, comprised of 10 tribes, and the Southern Kingdom called Judah which was comprised of two tribes, Benjamin and Judah. Important passages in 1 Kings include the description of Solomon's great wisdom, **1 Kings 3-4**, the dedication of Solomon's Temple, **1 Kings 8**, the visit of the queen of Sheba, **1 Kings 10**, and the ministry of Elijah, (particularly his confrontation with the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel), **1 Kings 18**. 1 Kings concludes abruptly with the beginning of the reign of Ahaziah in 853.

2 Kings

Author: Same as above, Jeremiah.

Date: ca. 550 B.C.

Contents: There are 25 chapters. Continuing where 1 Kings concluded (with Ahaziah), 2 Kings traces the decline and captivity of both Israel and Judah. Israel endured a succession of evil kings reigning during a 130-year period until the Assyrian captivity. Briefly told is the history of Judah, culminating in the Babylonian captivity. The book also records the miracle-filled ministry of Elisha. Well-known passages include the raising of the Shunammite's son, **2 Kings 4**, the healing of Naaman, the Aramean leper, **2 Kings 5**, the death of Jezebel, **2 Kings 9**, and the revivals under Hezekiah, **2 Kings 18** and under Josiah, **2 Kings 23**. During this period, Amos and Hosea prophesied in Israel, and Obadiah, Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah in Judah.

1 Chronicles

Author: Ezra. Though not specified by name in the book, Ezra has traditionally been assumed to be the author.

Date: 450-425 B.C.

Contents: It has 29 chapters. Originally it two was one book with 2 Chron, until 180 B.C. It gives us the annals of the history of Israel from Adam to the Babylonian captivity and Cyrus's decree allowing the exiled Jews to return. In a sense, it is a "miniature Old

Testament,” tracing in capsule form the flow of Old Testament history. 1 Chron is heavily weighted with genealogies and focuses on the reign of King David. Important sections include the statement of the great covenant with David, **1 Chron 17:11-14**, and David’s magnificent prayer of praise in **1 Chron 29:10-19**. Ezra, who led a group of exiles back to Palestine in 458, was concerned about building a true spiritual foundation for the people. To further that purpose, the author evidently compiled the Chronicles in order to emphasize the importance of racial and religious purity, the proper place of the law, the Temple, and the priesthood. Thus, he omits detailed activities of the kings and prophets, stressing instead the rich heritage of the people and the blessing of their covenant relationship to God.

2 Chronicles

Author: Ezra, as noted above.

Date: 450-425 B.C.

Contents: It contains 36 chapters. Beginning where 1 Chron concludes, 2 Chron records the history of the reign of King Solomon (971-931 BC) and of all the kings of Judah from Rehoboam (931 BC) through Zedekiah (586 BC). Thus, the book covers the same period as 1 Kings and 2 Kings, though 2 Chron focuses only on the kings of Judah and excludes those of Israel. It records the Babylonian captivity. Disobedience to the Mosaic Law was the reason for the Babylonian captivity. The book concludes with a brief reference to the decree of Cyrus in 539 BC that permitted the Jews to return to Judea and build their Temple. Significant passages include Solomon’s prayer for wisdom, **2 Chron 1:7-12**, the dedication of Solomon’s Temple, the first temple, **2 Chron 5-7**, the visit of the queen of Sheba, **2 Chron 9:1-12**, and the prediction of the length of captivity, **2 Chron 36:20-21**.

Ezra

Author: Ezra.

Date: 450-444 B.C.

Contents: There are 10 chapters. The book, named after its principal character, originally formed one book with the books of Nehemiah and Chronicles. The book records the fulfillment of God’s promise to restore Israel to her land after the 70 years of captivity in Babylon, **Jer 25:11**. This was accomplished through the help of three Persian kings (Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes) as well as Jewish leaders such as Zerubbabel, Joshua, Haggai, Zechariah, and Ezra. Cyrus overthrew Babylon in October 539, and in accord with his policy of encouraging subject people to return to their homelands, he issued a decree in 538 allowing the Jews to do the same. About 50, 000 did return under the leadership of Zerubbabel, and the foundation of the Temple was laid, though it was not completed until 515 in the reign of Darius. **Ezra 1-6** describe these events. **Ezra 7-10** describe Ezra’s return to Jerusalem under the favor of Artaxerxes to help bring spiritual revival to the people.

The Persian kings involved in this period (in relation to Ezra and other portions of the Old Testament) are as follows:

King (dates); Relation to Other Books of OT (dates)

In **Ezra 1-6** (although there is no mention of Cambyses or Smerdis):

- Cyrus 559-530
- Cambyses 530-522; Haggai (520)
- Smerdis 522; Zechariah (520-518)
- Darius I 521-486

In **Ezra 4:6**:

- Xerxes I (Ahasuerus) 486-465; Esther (465)

In **Ezra 4:7-23** and **Ezra 7-10**:

- Artaxerxes I 464-424; Malachi (450-400)
- Darius II 423-404 Nehemiah (445-425)

Nehemiah

Author: Nehemiah.

Date: 445-425 B.C.

Contents: Having 13 chapters, the book completes the history of the returned remnant from exile in Babylon, a restoration that begun under Ezra's leadership. It describes the decree of Artaxerxes to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, which marks the beginning of Daniel's "seventy weeks" prophecy, **Dan 9:25**, concerning the first and 2nd Advent of our Lord. It also provides historical background for the book of Malachi.

Esther

Author: Uncertain.

Date: ca. 465 B.C.

Contents: There are 10 chapters in this book. The events of this book cover a 10-year portion (483-473 BC) of the reign of Xerxes I (486-465 BC), a near successor to Nebuchadnezzar. Ahasuerus is the Hebrew form of his name, equivalent to the Persian Khshayarsha and the Greek Xerxes. The events occurred between those recorded in the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra. Interestingly, the name of God is nowhere mentioned in the book, yet His sovereignty and providence are evident throughout. Esther had a regal position, queen to Xerxes. This book describes Xerxes' / Ahasuerus' indebtedness to Mordecai which he discovered during a sleepless night, and the miraculous deliverance of the Jews during that time. The book also explains the origin of the Feast of Purim, **2 Macc 15:36**, on the thirteenth and fourteenth days of Adar (Feb.-Mar.), when Jews celebrate the deliverance from Haman.

Job

Author: Uncertain. Suggestions include Job himself, Elihu, Moses, and Solomon.

Date: Uncertain.

Contents: There are 42 chapters. The book tells the story of suffering Job at the hands of Satan's affliction. These events may have taken place in a patriarchal society in the second millennium B.C., around the time of Abraham. This book gives us important insights into the work of Satan, **Job 1:6-2:10** and the temptations that man can overcome with faith in God. It details the speeches of Job and his friends regarding Job predicament. The book wrestles with the age-old question: Why do righteous men suffer, if God is a God of love and mercy? It clearly teaches the sovereignty of God and the need for man to acknowledge such. Job's three friends gave essentially the same answer: All suffering is due to sin. Elihu, however, declared that suffering is often the means of purifying the righteous. God's purpose was to strip away all of Job's self-righteousness and to bring him to the place of complete trust in Him. The best-known verses in the book are **Job 19:25-26**.

Psalms

Authors: Various. See previous lesson.

Dates: Various.

Contents: There are 150 psalms in this book. It is made up of a variety of songs, laments, and praises. The Jews referred to it as "The Book of Praises," while the LXX entitled it "The Book of Psalms" (from a Greek word indicating songs sung to the accompaniment of stringed instruments). The book was the hymnal of the Jewish people. The psalms are divided into five books, each ending with a doxology, **Psa 1-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106; 107-150**.

Types of Psalms:

- Messianic Psalms speak of the Person and the work of the Messiah
- Lament Psalms a cry to God for help
- Testimonial Psalms tell others what God has done
- Pilgrim Psalms sung during pilgrimage to the holy city of Jerusalem
- Imprecatory Psalms asking for judgment on wicked men
- Penitential Psalms sorrowing over sin
- Wisdom Psalms guidelines for godly people
- Historical Psalms looking back on God's dealings with the nation of Israel
- Nature Psalms the handiwork of God in His creative work

Proverbs

Authors: Solomon and Others.

Date: 950-700 B.C.

Contents: There are 31 chapters. Though the theme running throughout the book is wisdom for living, the specific teachings include instruction on folly, sin, goodness, wealth, poverty, the tongue, pride, humility, justice, vengeance, strife, gluttony, love, lust, laziness, friends, the family, life, and death. Almost every facet of human relationships is mentioned, and the

teaching of the book is applicable to all people everywhere. The sayings in this book form a library of instruction on how to live a godly life here on earth and how to be assured of reward in the life to come. Thus, these proverbs are not so much popular sayings as they are a distillation of wisdom from those who knew the law of God.

Ecclesiastes

Author: Solomon.

Date: ca. 935 B.C.

Content: It contains 12 chapters. The message of this book is three-fold:

- When you look at life with its seemingly aimless cycles, **Ecc 1:4ff.**, and inexplicable paradoxes, **Ecc 4:1; 7:15; 8:8**, you might conclude that all is futile, since it is impossible to discern any purpose in the ordering of events.
- Nevertheless, life is to be enjoyed to the fullest, realizing that it is the gift of God, **Ecc 3:12-13, 22; 5:18-19; 8:15; 9:7-9**.
- The wise man will live his life in obedience to God, recognizing that God will eventually judge all men, **Ecc 3:16-17; 12:14**.

Song of Solomon

Author: Solomon.

Date: ca. 965 B.C.

Contents: It contains 8 chapters. It is a lyric poem in dialogue form, the book describes Solomon's love for a Shulammitite girl. The king comes in disguise to her family's vineyard, wins her heart, and ultimately makes her his bride. It gives us examples of love inside of marriage and also gives us illustrations of the love of God, and Christ, for His people. It also symbolically gives prophecy regarding our Lord's Second Advent.

The Prophets:

Having reviewed the Pentateuch, Historical and Poetical books of the Old Testament, we now turn to the last portion, the Prophetical books which consists of 16 books, excluding Lamentations which is a historical/poetical out crying book that we will note in this section due to its placement. As we noted previously, this section is broken down into two groups, the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. The difference between the two is mainly the length of their writings.

The Major Prophets Include:

- 1) Isaiah
- 2) Jeremiah
- 3) Ezekiel
- 4) Daniel

The Minor Prophets Include:

- 1) Hosea
- 2) Joel
- 3) Amos
- 4) Obadiah
- 5) Jonah
- 6) Micah
- 7) Nahum
- 8) Habakkuk
- 9) Zephaniah
- 10) Haggai
- 11) Zechariah
- 12) Malachi

They may be further classified in regard to the time frame in which they were written in relation to the Babylonian captivity as: Pre-exilic, Exilic, and Post-exilic as follows:

- Pre-exilic: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah.
- Exilic: Jeremiah, (whose prophecies extended from pre-exilic days to exilic days), Ezekiel, and Daniel.
- Post-exilic: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

The Major Prophets.

Isaiah

Author: Isaiah.

Date: 740-680 B.C.

The Prophet: Born into an influential, upper-class family, Isaiah associated with royalty and gave advice concerning the foreign affairs of the nation. Though usually scoffed at, he warned vigorously against foreign alliances and urged Judah to trust the Lord, **Isa 7:4; 30:1-17**. He also attacked the social ills of the day, because he saw abuses as symptoms of spiritual declension, **Isa 1:3-9; 58:6-10**. After living most of his life in Jerusalem, tradition says that Isaiah was martyred during the reign of Manasseh (696-642 BC) by being sawed in two inside a hollow log, cf. **Heb 11:37**.

The History: During the latter half of the eighth century Judah was about to follow the example of apostasy of the 10 northern tribes of Israel (who were captured by Assyria in 722 B.C.). King Ahaz foolishly looked to Assyria for protection, even though Isaiah told him the Northern Kingdom would shortly fall at the hands of the Assyrians, **Isa 8:3-4**. Hezekiah, Ahaz's God-fearing son, instituted spiritual reforms but sought the help of Egypt in foreign affairs. Egypt fell before Sennacherib of Assyria, and only through Divine intervention was Judah saved from the same fate, **Isa 37:36-37**. During the reign of Manasseh, idolatrous

practices were reinstated, and Isaiah warned of the inevitability of the Babylonian captivity. He also gave assurance of the preservation of the people and restoration of the nation.

Content: Isaiah has often been called “the evangelical prophet” because he says so much about the redemptive work of Messiah. More about the person and work of Christ is found here than in any other book of the Old Testament. And interestingly, if you opened a current day Jewish Bible which only consists of the Old Testament and tried to turn to **Isa 53**, as we have in the Judeo-Christian Bible, you would not find it. It has been removed and renumbered. Important and favorite passages in the book, including, **Isa 1:18; 2:4; 6:3, 8; 7:14; 9:6-7; 11:9; 26:3; 35:1; 40:3; 48:16; 53; 55:1; 57:15; 59:1; 61:1-3.**

Great Prophecies of Isaiah Still Unfulfilled:

- The Day of the Lord. Some 45 times Isaiah uses the phrase “**in that day**” to describe this period of apocalyptic judgment, **Isa 2:10-22; 4:1; 13:9-13; 24:1-23; 32:1-20; 63:1-6.**
- Blessing upon restored Israel, **Isa 2:1-5; 4:2-6; 9:7; 11:4-16; 12:1-6; 14:1-3; 25:1-12; 32:15-20; 35:1-10; 52:1-12; 59:20-21; 60:1-12; 61:3-62:12; 65:17-66:24.**
- Restoration of Israel to Palestine, **Isa 11:10-12; 14:1-2; 27:12-13; 35:10; 43:5-6; 49:1-12; 66:20.**
- Restoration of Palestine itself, **30:23-26; 35:1-10; 49:19; 60:13; 61:4; 62:4-5; 65:21-25.**
- Jerusalem as capital of the earth, **Isa 1:26; 2:3; 4:2-6; 12:6; 24:23; 26:1; 40:2; 52:1-12; 60:1-22; 62:1-7.**
- Blessing upon the remnant, **Isa 12:1-6; 25:1-12; 26:1-19; 33:24; 35:10; 43:25; 44:22; 46:13; 54:6-10; 61:6; 62:12; 66:8.**
- Blessing upon the nations, **Isa 2:1-4; 11:3-4, 9-10; 25:6-9; 60:1-12.**
- Blessing to entire creation. Isaiah had a fleeting glimpse beyond the Kingdom Age to the new heaven and earth of the eternal state, **Isa 65:17; 66:22.** But like John in the Revelation, **Rev 21-22**, he saw a blended view of millennial and eternal conditions, cf. **Isa 11:6-8** with **65:25; 66:22.**

Jeremiah

Author: Jeremiah.

Date: 627-585 B.C.

The Prophet: Often called the “weeping prophet”, **Jer 9:1; 13:17**, or the “prophet of loneliness” (because he was commanded not to marry, **Jer 16:2**), Jeremiah was also the “reluctant prophet”, **Jer 1:6**. Yet for more than 40 years, he faithfully proclaimed God’s judgment on apostate Judah, all the while enduring opposition, beatings, and imprisonment, **Jer 11:18-23; 12:6; 18:18; 20:1-3; 26:1-24; 37:11-38:28**. Jeremiah began his ministry at about the age of 20 under good King Josiah, with whom he enjoyed cordial relations. After Josiah’s death, opposition to the prophet mounted. He barely escaped

arrest, was forbidden to go to the Temple, and had to deputize Baruch, his secretary, to deliver his prophecies. King Jehoiakim destroyed Jeremiah's written predictions, **Jer 36:22ff**. King Zedekiah permitted nationalistic-minded nobles to imprison Jeremiah; then he reduced the punishment. When the forces of Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem in 586 B.C., Jeremiah was freed and given the choice of going to Babylon or remaining in Jerusalem. He chose the latter but was soon abducted and taken to Egypt by Jews who fled there rather than face Nebuchadnezzar. In Egypt, Jeremiah prophesied a few more years, and apparently died there.

Content: Being sensitive and sympathetic by nature, Jeremiah nevertheless was commanded by God to deliver a stern message of judgment. The opposition he faced was cruel and crushing, so much so that more than once he wanted to resign from his office as prophet; yet he continued faithfully to proclaim God's Word. The concept of backsliding / reversionism / unfaithfulness is prominent, and there are more references to Babylon (164) in Jeremiah than in the rest of the Bible together. The major themes of this book are warnings against sin and judgment, but also the message of hope and restoration. The arrangement of the prophecies in this book is not chronological.

Important Prophecies Include:

- The curse on Jehoiachin, **Jer 22:30**.
- The prediction of the Messiah, **Jer 23:5-6**, "**Behold, the days are coming,**" declares the LORD, "**When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. 'In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness'.**"
- The duration of the Babylonian captivity, (70 years), **Jer 25:11**.
- The revelation of the new covenant, **Jer 31:31-34**.

Lamentations

Author: Jeremiah.

Date: 586/5 B.C.

Title: This is not a prophetic book but a historical/poetical lament regarding the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians. The term Lamentations is from a Greek verb meaning "to cry aloud" and accurately describes the contents of the book, which consists of five melancholy poems of mourning over the utter destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Babylonians.

Content: The book consists of five poems, one for each chapter, the first four being written as acrostics (each verse begins with a word whose first letter is successively one of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet except in **Lam 3**, where three verses are allotted to each letter). These four chapters are also written in what is called "limping meter," a slow cadence of a sad song used in funerals. From 588 to 586 B.C., the Babylonian army besieged

Jerusalem, **2 Kings 25:1-10**. Judah's ally, Egypt, had been defeated, and Jeremiah's repeated warnings to the Jews had been rejected. As Babylon's stranglehold on Jerusalem tightened, people were starving, yet they continued to turn to idols for help. Finally, the walls were breached, the city secured and plundered, the Temple, palace, and other buildings burned, and prisoners deported to Babylon. Having witnessed these horrible events, Jeremiah composed these laments.

Use: The Jews read this book publicly on the ninth day of the month of Ab (about mid-July), in commemoration of the destructions of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (by the Babylonians) and in A.D. 70 (by the Romans). The concern of the book reminds us of Jesus' lament over Jerusalem, **Mat 23:37-38**, "**Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.** ³⁸**Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!** ³⁹**For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"**

The Best-Known Verse in the Book is **Lam 3:22-23**, "**The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail.** ²³**They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness."**

Ezekiel

Author: Ezekiel.

Date: 592-570 B.C.

The Prophet: From a priestly family, **Ezek 1:3**, Ezekiel, whose name means "God strengthens," spent his early years in Jerusalem, until he was taken with other hostages by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon in 597 B.C. There he settled in his own house in a village near Nippur, along the river Chebar (Nebuchadnezzar's royal canal), in Babylonia, **Ezek 3:15, 24**. He prophesied for at least 22-years, **Ezek 1:2; 29:17-21**. His wife died in 587 BC, **Ezek 24:16-18**.

Content: Ezekiel's ministry to the exiles in Babylon was at the same time as that of Jeremiah to the Jews in Palestine and of the early years of the ministry of Daniel. Ezekiel's ministry was to keep before the exiles the sins that had brought God's judgment on them and to assure them of God's future blessing in keeping with His covenant. **Ezek 1-24** were written before the fall of Jerusalem to remind his fellow captives that God's judgment on the city and Temple was surely coming. **Ezek 33-48** contain prophecies of the still future restoration of Israel in the millennial kingdom. Important messianic sections in the book are: **Ezek 17:22-24; 21:26-27; 34:23-24**. The overthrow of Gog is described in **Ezek 38-39**, and the millennial Temple and worship in **Ezek 40-48**. Some well-known passages include **Ezek 1:4-28; 3:16-21; 11:17-20; 14:14; 28:11-19; 36:24-28; 37:1-28**.

Daniel

Author: Daniel.

Date: 537 B.C.

The Prophet: Daniel, whose name means "God is my judge," was a statesman in the court of heathen monarchs. Taken captive as a youth to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C., he spent the rest of his long life there as a governmental official and as a prophet of the true God. He claimed to have written this book, **Dan 12:4**, and Jesus Christ identified him as a prophet, **Mat 24:15; Mark 13:14**. Throughout his life he was uncompromising and faithful to his God.

The History: In 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar took Daniel and others as captives to Babylon. Because of the events recorded in **Dan 2** of the book, Daniel was given a place of prominence and responsibility in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. After the king's death, Daniel apparently fell from favor but was recalled to interpret the writing that appeared at Belshazzar's feast, **Dan 5:13**. When Babylon fell to the Mede Empire, Daniel was made one of three commissioners under Darius, **Dan 6:1**, and lived until the third year of Cyrus (536). His ministry was to testify, in his personal life and in his prophecies, to the power of God. Though in exile, the people of Israel were not deserted by God, and Daniel revealed many details about His plan for their future. He also traced the course of Gentile world powers from his own day to the second coming of Christ.

Content: **Dan 2:4-7:28** are written in a form of Imperial Aramaic while the rest of the book is in Hebrew.

Important Prophecies in the Book Include the Following:

- The course of Gentile kingdoms (the future of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, **Dan 2; 7**).
- Details concerning Medo-Persia and Greece, **Dan 8**.
- More details concerning Greece, **Dan 11**.
- The prophecy of the 70 weeks of years, **Dan 9:24-27**; and the activities of Antichrist, **Dan 11:36-45**.

Among the Doctrines Mentioned in the Book are:

- Personal separation, **Dan 1:8; 3:12; 6:10; 9:2-3; 10:2-3**.
- Angels, **Dan 8:16; 9:21; 10:13, 20-21; 11:1**.
- Resurrection, **Dan 12:2**.
- Antichrist, **Dan 7:24-25; 9:27; 11:36**.

Favorite Stories Include:

- Those of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, **Dan 3**, and
- The lions' den, **Dan 6**.

The Minor Prophets.

We now turn to the 12 "Minor Prophets" whose writings were also very important but not as extensive as the "Major Prophets." We break the Minor Prophets down into three groups:

Prophets of Israel:

Jonah 780-750

Amos 765-750

Hosea 755-715

Prophets of Judah:

Obadiah 840s

Joel 835-796

Micah 740-690

Nahum 630-612

Habakkuk 606-604

Zeph. 625

Post-exilic Prophets:

Haggai 520

Zech. 520-518

Malachi 450-400

Hosea

Author: Hosea.

Date: ca. 710 B.C.

The Prophet: All that we know about Hosea is what is told in the autobiographical sections of the book itself. Like his contemporary, Amos, he prophesied to the Northern Kingdom, Israel; sometimes called Ephraim, after the largest tribe, while Isaiah and Micah were ministering to the Southern Kingdom, Judah. Material prosperity and spiritual bankruptcy characterized the time under Jeroboam II, 782-753 B.C., when Hosea began his ministry, **2 Kings 14:23-17:41**. Judgment seemed remote, but by 732 B.C. Damascus had fallen to the Assyrians and by 722 Samaria, the capital of Israel, fell and the people were deported. Some of the specific sins Hosea denounces are listed in, **Hosea 4:2, 4, 11-13; 5:2; 6:8-9; 7:1, 5; 8:14; 10:1, 4; 13:2.**

Content: **Hosea 1-3** detail his domestic life; whereas, the remainder of the book records excerpts of his messages delivered during his 50-year career as a prophet. In the prophetic section three themes dominate: the sins of the people, the certainty of judgment, and the assurance of God's loyal love. The overall theme of the book is God's steadfast love for Israel in spite of her continued unfaithfulness, vividly depicted by Hosea's marital experience. Hosea married Gomer only to discover that she was unfaithful. Though separation followed,

Hosea's love, like God's for His people, persisted, and reconciliation eventually ensued. Three views have been proposed concerning Hosea's marriage: 1) merely an allegory, the book contains no factual history of an actual marriage; 2) Hosea married a woman who was already a harlot, perhaps a temple prostitute; 3) Gomer became a harlot after her marriage.

Joel

Author: Joel.

Date: 835 B.C.

The Prophet: Joel, whose name means "Yahweh is God," apparently wrote during the days of young King Jehoshaphat, 835-796 B.C., who was under the regency of priests when he ascended the throne of Judah at the age of seven, **2 Kings 11:21**. Though some date the book after the Exile, the enemies of Judah are not identified in the prophecy as Arameans, Assyrians, or Babylonians, as would be the case if the book were written after the captivity, see **Joel 3:4, 19**. His prophecy was occasioned by a severe drought and an invasion of locusts, which Joel saw as a punishment for the sins of the people. He also depicted this invasion of locusts as an army, a harbinger of a future military campaign in the Day of the Lord.

Content: The Day of the Lord, the major theme of this prophecy, involves God's special intervention in the affairs of human history.

Three Facets of the Day of the Lord, are Discernible:

- **The historical**, that is, God's intervention in the affairs of Israel, **Zeph 1:14-18; Joel 1:15**, and heathen nations **Isa 13:6; Jer 46:10; Ezek 30:3**.
- **The illustrative**, whereby an historical incident represents a partial fulfillment of the eschatological Day of the Lord, **Joel 2:1-11; Isa 13:6-13**.
- **The eschatological**. This eschatological "day" includes the time of the Great Tribulation, **Isa 2:12-19; 4:1**, the second coming of Christ, **Joel 2:30-32**, and the Millennium, **Isa 4:2; 12; 19:23-25; Jer 30:7-9**, encompassing 1,007 years.

Amos

Author: Amos.

Date: 755 B.C.

The Prophet: Amos was a southerner of Tekoa, a village 10 miles south of Jerusalem, who traveled north to Bethel to preach on what was virtually foreign soil to him. Though a layman, not a professional prophet, he had a direct call of God to his work, **Amos 7:15**. By occupation he was a sheep breeder, perhaps a master shepherd with others in his employment. Amos's preaching in Bethel, a center of idol worship and the residence of the reigning king, Jeroboam II, aroused such opposition that he returned to Judah, where he committed his message to writing. That writing shows that he was a man of affairs, not an untutored rustic. At that time Uzziah, king of Judah, 791-740 B.C., reigned over a prosperous nation, but was under the influence of Jeroboam II, king of Israel, 793-753 B.C.,

whose kingdom then was outwardly at the pinnacle of power but inwardly was idolatrous and corrupt, cf. **2 Kings 14:24-25**. Material prosperity and social evils further characterized the times, **Amos 2:6-8; 3:10; 4:1; 5:10-12; 8:4-6**.

Content: Attacking the social evils of the people as well as their paganized worship, Amos issued an urgent call to repentance as the only escape from imminent judgment. Israel's privileged position, he declared, should have been an incentive to righteous living, certainly not an excuse for sinning. Some favorite and important verses include: **Amos 3:2; 3:3; 5:24; 9:11**.

Obadiah

Author: Obadiah.

Date: 841 or 586 B.C.

Content: Obadiah prophesied against Edom either in connection with the invasion of the Philistines and Arabians during the reign of Jehoram, from 848-841, **2 Chron 21:16-17**, or the Babylonians during the years 605-586, **2 Kings 24-25**. Edom stands judged, and her doom is certain, because of her pride in rejoicing over the misfortunes that befell Jerusalem. The Edomites are Descendants of Esau, Jacob's twin. The Edomites were in constant conflict with Israel, the descendants of Jacob. They rejected Moses' request to pass through their land, **Num 20:14-20**, they opposed King Saul, **1 Sam 14:47**, they fought against David, **1 Kings 11:14-17**, opposed Solomon, **1 Kings 11:14-25**, and Jehoshaphat, **2 Chron 20:22**, and rebelled against Jehoram, **2 Chron 21:8**. From the thirteenth to the sixth centuries B.C., they settled in Mount Seir, a mountainous region south of the Dead Sea, of which Sela, Petra was the capital. So rugged is the terrain that the valley in which Petra is located can be reached only through a narrow canyon guarded by towering mountain walls 200-250 ft. high, see **Obadiah 3-4**. During the fifth century B.C., the Nabataeans dislodged the Edomites from their territory, causing them to withdraw to Idumea in southern Palestine. Herod the Great was an Edomite.

Jonah

Author: Jonah.

Date: 760 B.C.

Content: The theme of the book shows that the God of the Hebrews has concern for the whole world.

Jonah is the story of a reluctant prophet sent by the Lord to prophesy repentance to the loathed Ninevite people. He was an accredited prophet from Gath-hepher near Nazareth. In **2 Kings 14:27**, Jonah is connected with the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel, 793-753 B.C., who had succeeded in reestablishing the power of Israel over most of the territory north of Judah previously controlled by David and Solomon.

A Number of Miracles are Recorded in the Book:

- The calming of the sea before the crew lost their lives, **Jonah 1:15**.
- The provision of the great fish and the preservation of Jonah in the fish, **Jonah 1:17**.
- The disgorging of Jonah on land, **Jonah 2:10**.
- The preparing of the plant, **Jonah 4:6**.
- The worm, **Jonah 4:7**.
- The wind, **Jonah 4:8**.
- The salvation of many Ninevites.

Jesus Christ treated Jonah's experience in the belly of the fish as factual, **Mat 12:39-41** and used it as a prophecy for His death, burial, and resurrection; three days and nights.

Micah

Author: Micah.

Date: 700 B.C.

The Prophet: Whereas Hosea prophesied to the northern tribes of Israel, and Isaiah to the court in Jerusalem, Micah, a Judean from Moresheth in the SW of Palestine, preached to the common people of Judah. His name means "who is like Yahweh?" Micah ministered during the reigns of Jotham, 750-732, Ahaz, 736-716 and Hezekiah, 716-687 B.C., **Micah 1:1**. Though for the most part a good king, Jotham did not remove the idolatrous high places from his kingdom. Ahaz, a wicked king, **2 Kings 16:2-4**, adopted a pro-Assyrian foreign policy, and during his reign the captivity of the northern tribes took place. Hezekiah, one of Judah's best kings, was anti-Assyrian and withstood the siege of Jerusalem that Sennacherib led in 701, **2 Kings 18:13-19:36**. For peasants and villagers, these were days of harassment from enemy armies, of hardship because of exploitation by the wealthy, **Micah 2:1-13**, and of oppression by the rulers, **Micah 3:1-4**, and false prophets, **Micah 3:5-8**. Micah, as Amos, cried for social justice.

Content: Three important quotations from Micah are found elsewhere in the Bible. One saved the prophet Jeremiah's life, **Jer 26:1**, a quote of **Micah 3:12**. The priests and scribes quoted **Micah 5:2** in answer to Herod's question about the birthplace of Messiah, **Mat 2:5-6**. And Christ quoted, **Micah 7:6** when He commissioned the disciples the first time, **Mat 10:35-36**. **Micah 4** is one of the most important descriptions in the Bible of the future glory of Israel and **Micah 6:8** is one of the favorite verses. The major sections of the book are introduced with the word "Hear", **Micah 1:2; 3:1; 6:1**.

Nahum

Author: Nahum.

Date: 663-612 B.C.

The Prophet: Nothing is known of Nahum, whose name means "consolation", except that he came from Elkosh, which was possibly Capernaum. His message against Nineveh was given to Judah, since the Northern Kingdom, Israel, had already been taken captive.

Content: **Nahum 1** contains a magnificent description of the character of God, especially **Nahum 1:2-8**. Reading **Nahum 2**, you can almost hear the noise of the battle of Nineveh. The theme is Nineveh will be destroyed! Almost every verse from **Nahum 1:15-3:19** describes that event, which took place in 612 B.C. The Ninevites, (Assyrians) converted through the preaching of Jonah more than one hundred years before Nahum wrote, had not transmitted their knowledge of the true God to their children, and the people had quickly reverted to their cruel and heathen practices. They had destroyed Samaria, the Northern Kingdom, Israel, in 722 B.C. and nearly captured Jerusalem in 701. Nahum briefly describes Nineveh's wickedness in **Nahum 3:1, 4**. God had to destroy such an apostate people.

Habakkuk

Author: Habakkuk.

Date: 606-604 B.C.

The Prophet: Though nothing is known of the prophet himself, whose name means "embracer," because of his love for God, we know something of his times. Prophesying just before Nebuchadnezzar first invaded Judah in 605 B.C. who took Daniel and others as captives to Babylon, Habakkuk was commissioned to announce the Lord's intention to punish Judah by this coming deportation into Babylon. The reigning king in Judah, Jehoiakim is described by the prophet Jeremiah as: "your eyes and your heart are intent only upon your own dishonest gain, and on shedding innocent blood and on practicing oppression and extortion", **Jer 22:17; cf. Hab 1:2-4 and 2; Kings 23:34-24:5**.

Content: The best-known verse in Habakkuk is **Hab 2:4b**, "**But the righteous will live by his faith.**" quoted in **Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38**. Not only because it was the heart of God's answer to Habakkuk's questions, but because the New Testament shows that its truth is central to the doctrine of justification by faith. Another favorite verse is **Hab 2:20**, "**The LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.**" **Hab 3** is a great psalm of praise, scarcely equaled anywhere else in the Old Testament. Overall the book presents a picture of a man who trusted God, yet was perplexed.

Habakkuk's Questions were Two:

- Why did God permit the increasing evil in Judah to go unpunished, **Hab 1:2-4**?
- How could a holy God justify using the Babylonians, a people more wicked than the Jews, to punish the Jews, **Hab 1:12-2:1**?

The answer to the first question is recorded in **Hab 1:5-11**, and to the second in **Hab 2:2-20**. Thus, the book is a theodicy, a defense of God's goodness and power in view of the existence of evil.

Zephaniah

Author: Zephaniah.

Date: ca. 625 B.C.

The Prophet: Zephaniah, of noble birth, **Zeph 1:1**, apparently helped prepare Judah for the revival that took place under good King Josiah in 621 B.C., **2 Chron 34:3**. For more than half a century, times had been evil under kings Manasseh and Amon, and Zephaniah called his people to repentance. Reform came, but, after Josiah, the leaders and many of the people reverted to their old ways.

Content: Judgment is the central theme of Zephaniah's message. The immediate fulfillment occurred when Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar, captured Judah. The ultimate fulfillment will yet occur in the Day of the Lord, during the coming tribulation years. Zephaniah also predicted the doom of heathen nations, both immediately, as Nineveh, which fell in 612 B.C., cf. **Zeph 2:13**, and in the future, **Zeph 3:8**. The book closes with a glorious description of the future Millennium, also an aspect of the Day of the Lord.

Haggai

Author: Haggai.

Date: 520 B.C.

The Prophet: Haggai, whose name means "my feast", was the first prophetic voice to be heard after the Babylonian Exile. He was a contemporary of Zechariah, (and of Confucius), and his ministry was to call the people to finish the Temple, whose completion had been delayed for 15-years. These prophecies were given between August and December 520 B.C., and the Temple was completed four years later. Haggai likely returned to Jerusalem from Babylon with Zerubbabel.

Content: The book contains four appeals, each introduced by "**the word of the LORD came.**" It is addressed to all the people, **Hag 1:13; 2:2**, to encourage them to rebuild the Temple. But it is also particularly addressed to Zerubbabel, the governor, and to Joshua, the high priest, **Hag 1:1; 2:2, 21**.

Zechariah

Author: Zechariah.

Date: 520-518 B.C.

The Prophet: Zechariah's father, Berechiah, probably died when his son was young, making Zechariah the immediate successor of his grandfather, Iddo, **Neh 12:4**. Iddo was a priest who returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel and Joshua and was, according to tradition, a member of the Great Synagogue, the governing body of the Jews before the Sanhedrin. The name Zechariah, used in the Old Testament of 27 other people, means "Yahweh remembers." This Zechariah was a contemporary of the prophet Haggai, **Ezra 5:1; 6:14**.

Content: The book is one of consolation and hope, beginning with a call to repentance and concluding with prophecies concerning the return and reign of Christ. During the reign of Cyrus, more than 50,000 Jews returned to Palestine from Babylon in 538 B.C. They laid the foundation of the Temple in 536, but opposition stalled the work for about 15-years, **Ezra 1:1-4; 4:1-5**. Darius Hystaspes, **Zech 1:1**, who came to the throne in 521 B.C., confirmed Cyrus's decree, and Zechariah, like Haggai, encouraged the people to finish the Temple, which they did in 516 B.C. Zechariah predicted more about Messiah than any other prophet except Isaiah. Prophecies concerning His first coming include: **Zech 3:8; 9:9, 16; 11:11-13; 12:10; 13:1, 6**; and prophecies to be fulfilled at His second coming include **Zech 6:12; 14:1-21**.

Malachi

Author: Malachi.

Date: 450-400 B.C.

The Prophet: Malachi means "my messenger" and could simply be a designation of an anonymous writer. More likely it is a proper name. He is not mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament.

Content: Malachi rebuked the people for their neglect of the true worship of the Lord and called them to repentance, **Mal 1:6; 3:7**, using a question-and-answer method, 23 in all. About 100-years had passed since the return of the Jews to Palestine. The city of Jerusalem and the second Temple had been built, but initial enthusiasm had worn off. Following a period of revival under Nehemiah, **Neh 10:28-39**, the people and priests had backslidden and became mechanical in their observance of the law. Though lax in their worship, **Mal 1:7**, and delinquent in their tithing, **Mal 3:8**, they could not understand why God was dissatisfied with them.

Between the Testaments:

At the conclusion of the book of Malachi we have approximately 425 silent years until the 1st Advent of Christ.

Political Developments:

The term, "silent years," frequently employed to describe the period between the Old Testament and the New Testament writings, is a misnomer. Although no inspired prophet arose in Israel during these centuries, and the Old Testament was regarded as complete, events took place that gave to later Judaism its distinctive ideology and providentially prepared the way for the coming of Christ and the proclamation of His gospel.

Persian Supremacy

For about a century after Nehemiah's time, the Persian Empire exercised control over Judea. The period was relatively uneventful, for the Jews were permitted to observe their religious

institutions without molestation. Judea was ruled by high priests, who were responsible to the Persian government, a fact that both insured the Jews a large measure of autonomy and degraded the priesthood into a political office. Jealousy, intrigue, and even murder played their part in the contests for the distinction of being high priest. Johanan, son of Joiada (**Neh. 12:22**), is reported to have slain his brother Joshua in the Temple itself.

Persia and Egypt were engaged in constant struggles during this period, and Judea, situated between the two nations, could not escape involvement. During the reign of Artaxerxes III (Ochus) many Jews were implicated in a revolt against Persia. They were deported to Babylonia and the shores of the Caspian Sea.

Alexander the Great

Following the defeat of Persian armies in Asia Minor (333 B.C.), Alexander marched into Syria and Palestine. After stubborn resistance, Tyre was taken, and Alexander moved southward toward Egypt. Legend states that as Alexander neared Jerusalem he was met by Jaddua, the Jewish high priest, who told him of Daniel's prophecies that the Greek army would be victorious (**Daniel 8**). The story is not taken seriously by historians, but it is true that Alexander dealt kindly with the Jews. He permitted them to observe their laws; he granted them exemption from tribute during Sabbatical years; and when he built Alexandria in Egypt (331 B.C.), he encouraged the Jews to settle there and gave them privileges comparable to those of his Greek subjects.

Judea under the Ptolemies

After the death of Alexander (323 B.C.), Judea was first subject for a time to Antigonus, one of Alexander's generals who controlled part of Asia Minor. It subsequently fell to another general, Ptolemy I (by now master of Egypt), surnamed Soter, or Deliverer, who seized Jerusalem on a Sabbath day in 320 B.C. Ptolemy dealt kindly with the Jews. Many of them settled in Alexandria, which continued as an important center of Jewish thinking for many centuries. Under Ptolemy II (Philadelphus), the Jews of Alexandria translated their law, i.e., the Pentateuch, into Greek. This translation was subsequently known as the Septuagint, from the legend that its seventy (more correctly seventy-two, six from each of the twelve tribes) translators were supernaturally inspired to produce an infallible translation. In later years, the entire Old Testament was included in the Septuagint.

Judea under the Seleucids

After about a century, during which time the Jews were subjected to the Ptolemies, Antiochus III (the Great) of Syria wrested Syria and Palestine from Egyptian control (198 B.C.). The Syrian rulers are known as Seleucids because of the fact that their kingdom, built on the ruins of Alexander's empire, was founded by Seleucus I (Nicator).

During the early years of Syrian rule, the Seleucids allowed the high priest to continue to govern the Jews in accord with their law. Strife broke out, however, between the Hellenistic party and the orthodox Jews. Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) allied himself with the Hellenizing group and appointed to the priesthood a man who changed his name from Joshua to Jason

and who encouraged the worship of the Tyrian Hercules. Jason was displaced in two years, however, by another Hellenist, a rebel named Menahem (Gk., Menelaus). When the partisans of Jason contended with those of Menelaus, Antiochus marched on Jerusalem, plundered the Temple, and killed many of the Jews (170 B.C.). Civil and religious liberties were suspended, the daily sacrifices prohibited, and an altar to Jupiter was erected on the old altar of burnt offering. Copies of the Scriptures were burned, and the Jews were forced to eat swine's flesh contrary to their law. A sow was offered on the altar of burnt offering in contempt for the Jewish religious conscience.

The Maccabees

The oppressed Jews were not long in finding a champion. When the emissaries of Antiochus arrived at the small town of Modin, about fifteen miles west of Jerusalem, they expected the aged priest, Mattathias, to set a good example to his people by offering a pagan sacrifice. He not only refused, but he also killed an apostate Jew at the heathen altar, along with the Syrian officer who was presiding at the ceremony. Mattathias fled to the Judean highlands and, with his sons, waged guerrilla warfare on the Syrians. Although the aged priest did not live to see his people freed from the Syrian yoke, he commissioned his sons to complete the task. Judas, surnamed "the Maccabee," took the leadership at the death of his father. By 164 B.C. Judas had gained possession of Jerusalem. He purified the Temple and reinstated the daily offerings. Soon after the victories of Judas, Antiochus died in Persia. However, struggles continued between the Maccabees and the Seleucid rulers for about twenty years.

Aristobolus I was the first of the Maccabean rulers to take the title, "King of the Jews." After a short reign, he was succeeded by the tyrannical Alexander Jannaeus, who, in turn, left the kingdom to his mother, Alexandra. Alexandra's reign was a relatively quiet one. At Alexandra's death a younger son, Aristobolus (II), dispossessed his brother. Thereupon, the governor of Idumaea, Antipater, espoused the cause of Hyrcanus, and civil war threatened. Consequently, Pompey marched into Judea with his Roman legions to settle matters and further the aims of Rome. Aristobolus sought to defend Jerusalem against Pompey, but the Romans took the city and penetrated to the Holy of Holies in the Temple. Pompey did not, however, touch the Temple treasures.

Rome

Mark Antony supported the cause of Hyrcanus. After the murder of Julius Caesar, and of Antipater (father of Herod), who for twenty years had been virtual ruler of Judea, Antigonus, the second son of Aristobolus, sought the throne. For a time, he actually ruled in Jerusalem, but Herod, the son of Antipater, returned from Rome and became king of the Jews with Roman support. His marriage to Mariamne, granddaughter of Hyrcanus, provided a link with the Maccabean rulers.

Herod was one of the cruelest rulers of all time. He murdered the venerable Hyrcanus (31 B.C.) and put to death his own wife, Mariamne and their two sons. From his death-bed Herod ordered the execution of Antipater, a son by another wife. In Scripture Herod is known

as the king who ordered the death of the innocents of Bethlehem because he feared as a rival One who was born to be King of the Jews.

Jewish Religious Groups

When, following Alexander's conquest, Hellenism challenged the thinking of the Near East, some Jews clung more tenaciously than ever to the faith of their fathers, while others were willing to adapt their thinking to the newer ideas emanating from Greece. Ultimately, the clash between Hellenism and Judaism gave rise to a number of Jewish sects.

Pharisees

The Pharisees were the spiritual descendants of the pious Jews who had fought the Hellenizers in the days of the earlier Maccabees. The name Pharisee, "separatist," was probably given them by their enemies to indicate that they were nonconformists. It may, however, have been used in scorn because their strictness separated them from their fellow Jews as well as from the heathen. Loyalty to truth sometimes produces pride and even hypocrisy, and it is this perversion of the earlier Pharisaic ideal that is denounced by Jesus. Paul reckoned himself a member of this orthodox group within the Judaism of his day (**Phil. 3:5**).

Sadducees

The Sadducean party, probably named for Zadok, the high priest appointed by Solomon (**1 Kings 2:35**), denied the authority of tradition and looked with suspicion on all revelation later than the Mosaic Law. They denied the doctrine of resurrection, and they did not believe in the existence of angels or spirits (**Acts 23:3**). They were largely people of wealth and position, and they cooperated gladly with the Hellenism of the day. In New Testament times, they controlled the priesthood and the Temple ritual. The synagogue, on the other hand, was the stronghold of the Pharisees.

Essenes

Essenism was an ascetic reaction from the externalism of the Pharisees and the worldliness of the Sadducees. The Essenes withdrew from society and lived lives of asceticism and celibacy. They gave attention to the reading and study of Scripture, prayer, and ceremonial cleansings. They held their possessions in common and were known for their industry and piety. Both war and slavery were contrary to their principles.

The monastery at Qumran, near the caves in which the Dead Sea Scrolls were found is thought by most scholars to have been an Essene center in the Judean wilderness. The scrolls indicate that members of the community had left the corrupt influences of the Judean towns to prepare, in the wilderness, "the way of the Lord." They had faith in the coming Messiah and thought of themselves as the true Israel to whom He would come.

Scribes

The Scribes were not, strictly speaking, a sect but rather members of a profession. They were, in the first instance, copyists of the law. They came to be regarded as the authorities

on the Scriptures, hence exercised a teaching function. Their thoughts were usually akin to those of the Pharisees, with whom they are frequently associated in the New Testament.

Herodians

Herodians believed that the best interests of Judaism lay in cooperation with the Romans. Their name was taken from Herod the Great, who sought to Romanize the Palestine of his day. The Herodians were more of a political party than a religious sect.

Roman political oppression, symbolized by Herod, and the religious reactions expressed in the sectarian reactions within pre-Christian Judaism, provided the historical framework into which Jesus came. Frustrations and conflicts prepared Israel for the advent of God's Messiah, who appeared "**when the fullness of the time came**" (**Galatians 4:4**).

From Malachi to Matthew B.C.

- 300-30 Apocryphal books written
- 333 Alexander the Great conquered the Persians
- 323 Alexander the Great died
- 280-200 Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) translated
- ca. 200 Great wall of China built
- 167 Antiochus Epiphanes defiled the Temple in Jerusalem by offering swine flesh on the altar
- 165 The Temple was cleansed and restored to proper use by Judas Maccabees
- 63 Pompey entered Jerusalem
- 63 Julius Caesar assassinated
- 37 Herod the Great appointed to govern Palestine
- 20 Herod the Great began rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem

The Apocrypha

Historical Books:

1 Esdras (3 Esdras) ca. 100 B.C.

Narrates the same historical material found in Ezra, Nehemiah, 2 Chron.

1 Maccabees ca. 140 B.C.

A historical work recounting the patriotic revolt of the Maccabean family against Antiochus Epiphanes and his successors

2 Maccabees ca. 100 B.C.

Claims to be the work of a certain Jason of Cyrene and covers part of the same period as 1 Maccabees, with heavy moralizing against Greek paganism

Religious Legends:

Tobit (Tobias) ca. 150 B.C.

A tale of Jewish piety, recounting the recovery from blindness of Tobias (a righteous Jew)

Judith ca. 150 B.C.-ca. 100 B.C.

A fictional narrative about a beautiful and devout Jewish widow named Judith, who saves her city from Nebuchadnezzar's invading army by cutting off the head of Holofernes, an Assyrian general

Additions to Esther ca. 115 B.C.

Passages inserted into the Septuagint (Greek) text of Esther: Mordecai's dream (before **Esther 1:1**); a royal letter ordering the extermination of all Jews in the kingdom (follows **Esther 3:13**); prayers of Mordecai and Esther (follows **Esther 4**); Esther's dramatic audience before Ahasuerus (adds 14 verses to **Esther 5**); a royal letter telling of Haman's death, praising the Jews, and permitting them to defend themselves (follows **Esther 8:12**); interpretation of Mordecai's dream and a final word, the meaning of the feast of Purim (following the last chapter of Esther)

The Prayer of Azariah and The Song of the Three Young Men ca. 150 B.C.-ca. 50 B.C.

An eloquent prayer, an account of miraculous deliverance, and a psalm of praise (follows **Daniel 3:23**)

The Story of Susanna (Daniel and Susanna) ca. 150 B.C.-ca. 50 B.C.

The tale of how Susanna was cleared of false charges of adultery by the timely intervention of the young Daniel (placed in different ancient versions either before or after the canonical text of Daniel)

Bel and the Dragon ca. 150 B.C.-ca. 50 B.C.

Two legends designed to ridicule idolatry: (1) By scattering ashes on the temple floor, Daniel proves that the priests of Bel are really the one consuming the offerings made to Bel; (2) Daniel destroys a dragon worshiped in Babylon by feeding it a strange mixture, which causes it to explode. Daniel is thrown into the lions' den, where he is later fed by the prophet Habakkuk, who has been angelically transported to Babylon by the hair of his head

Wisdom:

The Wisdom of Solomon (The Book of Wisdom) ca. 50 B.C.

Sets forth the truth of immortality by contrasting the destiny of the wicked and the righteous; a lengthy praise of wisdom; a narration of Israel's history in Egypt and the wilderness with a discussion on the origins and evils of idolatry

Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Jesus the son of Sirach) ca. 180 B.C.

A collection of aphorisms or wise sayings similar to the book of Proverbs

Baruch (Including the Letter of Jeremiah) ca. 150 B.C.-ca. 60 B.C.

A work professing to have been written in Babylon by Jeremiah's secretary, Baruch, it contains prayers and confessions of Jewish exiles, with promises of restoration.

The Prayer of Manasses ca. 175 B.C.-ca. 25 B.C.

Professes to be the penitential prayer of Manasseh, the wicked king of Judah (follows **2 Chron. 33:19** in the Septuagint)

Apocalyptic:

2 Esdras (4 Esdras) ca. A.D. 100-ca. A.D. 250

Addresses the problem of evil; the Roman Empire and the coming of Messiah; Ezra's rewriting of sacred literature.

The Bible Part 5

Outline of the New Testament Books

Introduction:



The New Testament includes twenty-seven books written by nine different authors, unless Paul wrote Hebrews, then only eight, over about fifty years. The "New Testament" is the name given to the second half of the English Bible which literally means the "New Covenant" or KAINÉ DIATHEKÉ in the Greek, **Luke 22:20**.

The New Testament describes the new arrangement of God with men through Christ on the basis of the new covenant, cf. **Ex 24:1-8**; with **Luke 22:14-20**; **2 Cor 3:6-11**. The old covenant revealed the holiness of God in the righteous standard of the law and promised a coming Redeemer; the new covenant shows the holiness of God in His righteous Son and contains writings that reveal the content of the new covenant.

The Message of the New Testament Centers on:

- The Person who gave Himself for the remission of sins, **Mat 26:28**.
- The people (the church) who have received His salvation. The central theme of the New Testament is salvation and is broken down into four parts.

The Arrangement of the Books of the New Testament

These books fall naturally into four divisions:

- The four Gospels which introduce the Savior by describing the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.
- The book of Acts describes the acts of the Apostles as they spread the good news about His salvation through the Mediterranean world of the first century A.D. It is the history of the beginning of the church and the spread of Christianity throughout the Greco-Roman world.
- The twenty-one letters, Romans through Jude, that give details of the blessings of that salvation. The apostle Paul, the great missionary and theologian of the early church, wrote thirteen or fourteen of these letters. They teach Christian doctrine both in a formal way, as in Romans, and in application to life situations, as in 1 Corinthians and Philemon.
- Revelation previews the culmination of salvation describing the ultimate triumph of Jesus Christ and His people in the future.

They also fall into three divisions: History, (Matthew to Acts); Letters, (Romans to Jude); and Prophecy, (Revelation).

NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS						
HISTORY	LETTERS					PROPHECY
	Paul's				General	REVELATION
MATTHEW	EARLY	LATER			JAMES	
	during missionary journeys	after arrest at Jerusalem				
MARK	GALATIANS	FIRST IMPRISONMENT ("prison epistles")	RELEASE	SECOND IMPRISONMENT	HEBREWS	
LUKE			1 THESSALONIANS			COLOSSIANS
JOHN	2 THESSALONIANS	EPHESIANS	TITUS		1 PETER	
ACTS	1 CORINTHIANS				PHILEMON	2 JOHN
		2 CORINTHIANS	PHILIPPIANS			3 JOHN

Chronological Order of the Writing of the Books:

Though Bible scholars differ on the exact date when the books of the New Testament were written, the order of the writing of the books was approximately as follows:

Book	Date (A.D.)	Book	Date (A.D.)
James	45-49	Philippians, Philemon	63
Galatians	49	1 Peter	63-64
1 & 2 Thessalonians	51	1 Timothy	63-66
Mark	50s or 60s	Titus	63-66
Matthew	50s or 60s	Hebrews	64-68
1 Corinthians	55	2 Peter	66
2 Corinthians	56	2 Timothy	67
Romans	57-58	Jude	68-80
Luke	60	John	85-90
Acts	61	1, 2, 3 John	85-90
Colossians, Ephesians	61	Revelation	90-95

The Collection of the Books:

After they were written, the individual books were not immediately gathered together into the 27 books of the canon. Some books like Paul's letters and the Gospels were preserved at first by the churches or people to whom they were sent and gradually all 27 books were collected and formally acknowledged by the church as a whole. This process took about 350 years and these 27 were ultimately certified During the Third Council of Carthage in A.D. 397 as being the canon of Scriptures.

The Historical Books:

The Gospels:

The word "gospel" means, "good news." The first four books are called as such because they record the good news that a way of salvation has been opened to all mankind through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, **Mark 1:1; 1 Cor 15:3-4.**

Their Emphasis:

- Matthew – Jesus is presented as the Son of David, emphasizing His Kingship, written for the Jews. Cf. **Isa 11:1; Mat 1:1.**
- Mark – Jesus is presented as the Son of Man, emphasizing His Servant hood, written for the Romans. Cf. **Zech 3:8; Mark 8:38.**

- Luke – Jesus is presented as the Son of Adam, emphasizing Him as the Son of Man, written for the pagan Gentiles. Cf. **Zech 6:12-13; Luke 3:38**.
- John – Jesus is presented as the Son of God, emphasizing His Deity, written for Christians. Cf. **Isa 4:2; 7:14; John 3:16**.

The first three Gospels are called “synoptic gospels” because of the great overlap and parity in content. John’s gospel, written after the other three, was intended to fill in some of the missing information and events from the other three Gospels.

Comparison of the Four Gospels:

Comparisons	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Christ’s Sonship	of David	of Man	of Adam	of God
Christ viewed as	King	Servant	Man	God
Written to	Jews	Romans	Gentiles	Church
Number of chapters	28	16	24	21

The Gospel of Matthew

Date: 50s or 60s

Author: Matthew who was one of the twelve apostles, was surnamed Levi, **Mark 2:14**. He was a Jewish tax-gatherer for the Roman government, **Mat 9:9**.

Content: The theme of the book is Christ the King and was written to Jews to answer their questions about Jesus of Nazareth who claimed to be their Messiah. In this gospel, Jesus is often spoken of as the Son of David and the One-who fulfills the Old Testament prophecies of Messiah; and the kingdom of heaven is the subject of much of His recorded teaching. Matthew is also characterized by its inclusion of people outside of Judaism. Important sections in Matthew include: the Sermon on the Mount (**Mat 5-7**), with the Beatitudes (**Mat 5:3-12**), and the Lord’s temple prayer (**Mat 6:9-13**), the parables of the kingdom (**Mat 13**), and the Olivet discourse concerning future events (**Mat 24-25**), and the outline reflects that theme.

The Gospel of Mark

Date: 50s or possibly the 60s.

Author: John Mark was not an apostle. He was the son of a Mary, a woman of wealth and position in Jerusalem, **Acts 12:12**. He was a cousin of Barnabas, **Col 4:10** and a close friend and possibly a convert of the apostle Peter, **1 Peter 5:13**. It is generally agreed that Mark received much of the information in his gospel from Peter. With Peter’s apostolic authority behind the gospel, there was never any challenge to its inclusion in the canon of Scripture. Mark also had the rare privilege of accompanying Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey but failed to stay with them through the entire trip. It was an argument between Paul and Barnabas over the inclusion of Mark on a subsequent trip that led to their split.

Content: The theme of the book is Christ the Servant. Mark wrote for the Gentiles in general and specifically for the Romans, as a result he left out several of the accounts of Jesus that were only important to Jews, like the genealogy, Sermon on the Mount, etc. His gospel

emphasizes what Jesus did rather than what He said. It is a book of action, the word EUTHUS, "at once" or "immediately," is used more than 40 times. The key verse is **Mark 10:45**, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many," which divides the gospel into two major divisions: the service of the Servant, **Mark 1:1-10:52** and the sacrifice of the Servant, **Mark 11:1-16:20**.

The Gospel of Luke

Date: 60, possibly in Caesarea during Paul's two-year imprisonment there, **Acts 24:27**.

Author: Luke, the "beloved physician", **Col 4:14**; was a close friend and companion of Paul. He was probably the only Gentile author of any part of the New Testament. We know nothing about his early life or conversion except that he was not an eyewitness of the life of Jesus Christ, **Luke 1:2**. Though a physician by profession, he was primarily an evangelist, writing this gospel and the book of Acts and accompanying Paul in missionary work. He was with Paul at the time of the apostle's martyrdom, **2 Tim 4:11**; but of his later life we have no certain facts. In his prologue, Luke states that his own work was stimulated by the work of others, **Luke 1:1**; that he consulted eyewitnesses, **Luke 1:2**, and that he sifted and arranged the information, **Luke 1:3**; under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to instruct Theophilus in the historical reliability of the faith, **Luke 1:4**.

Content: This is a carefully researched and documented writing. The theme of Luke's gospel is Christ, the Son of Man, that tell of those events that demonstrated Christ's humanity. It is slanted toward all Gentiles. This is a gospel of the compassionate Son of Man offering salvation to the whole world Luke 19:10.

The Gospel of John

Date: 85-90

Author: The writer is identified in the book only as "the disciple whom Jesus loved", **John 21:20, 24**. John the apostle was the son of Zebedee and Salome and was the younger brother of James. He was a Galilean who apparently came from a fairly well-to-do home, **Mark 15:40-41**. John's real character was such that he was known as a "Son of Thunder", **Mark 3:17**. He played a leading role in the work of the early church in Jerusalem, **Acts 3:1; 8:14; Gal 2:9**. Later he went to Ephesus and for an unknown reason was exiled to the island of Patmos, **Rev 1:9**.

Content: John's statement of purpose for this Gospel is clearly noted in, **John 20:30-31**. It is different in structure and style from the synoptic gospels; it contains no parables, only seven miracles, five of which are not recorded elsewhere, and many personal interviews. He emphasizes the physical actuality of Jesus' hunger, thirst, weariness, pain, and death as a defense against the Gnostic denial of Jesus' true human nature.

This is the most theological of the Four Gospels. It deals with the nature and person of Christ and the meaning of faith in Him. John's presentation of Christ as the Divine Son of God is seen in the titles given Him in the book: "the Word was God", **John 1:1**; "the Lamb of

God”, **John 1:29**, “the Messiah”, **John 1:41**, etc. His deity is also asserted in the series of “I am...” claims, **John 6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5**. In other “I am” statements, Christ made implicit and explicit claims to be the I AM-Yahweh of the Old Testament, **John 4:24, 26; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19**. These are the strongest claims to deity that Jesus could have made.

This gospel is sometimes called The Book of the Seven Signs, since the author chose seven sign-miracles to reveal the person and mission of Jesus:

- The turning of water into wine, **John 2:1-11**.
- The cure of the nobleman’s son, **John 4:46-54**.
- The cure of the paralytic, **John 5:1-18**.
- The feeding of the multitude, **John 6:6-13**.
- The walking on the water, **John 6:16-21**.
- The giving of sight to the blind, **John 9:1-7**.
- The raising of Lazarus, **John 11:1-45**.

Other important themes in the book include the Holy Spirit, **John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-14**, Satan and the world, **John 8:44; 12:31; 17:15**; the Word, **John 1:1-14**, and the new birth, **John 3:1-12**.

The Book of Acts

Date: 61

Author: That the author of Acts was a companion of Paul is clear from the passages in the book in which “we” and “us” are used, **Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16. Col 4:14 and Philemon 24** point to Luke the physician as its author. Luke answered the Macedonian call with Paul, was in charge of the work at Philippi for about six years, and later was with Paul in Rome during the time of Paul’s house arrest. It was probably during this last period that the book was written.

Content: In the first 12 chapters the important figures are Peter, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, and James. From Acts 13 to the end, the dominant person is Paul. Acts gives us the record of the spread of Christianity from the coming of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost to Paul’s arrival in Rome to preach the gospel in the world’s capital. It is the record of the continuation of those things that Jesus began while on earth and that He continued as the risen Head of the Church and the One who sent the Holy Spirit, **Acts 1:2; 2:33**. The book is sometimes called The Acts of the Holy Spirit.

It covers 30 years during the transition of the church from primarily Jewish believers to include Gentile believers. Doctrines that are later developed in the epistles appear in seed form in Acts, i.e., the Spirit, **Acts 1:8**; the kingdom, **Acts 3:21; 15:16**; elders, **Acts 11:30**; Gentile salvation, **Acts 15:14**, etc. The book emphasizes the practice of doctrine more than the statement of doctrine. It also provides us principles for missionary work, and reveals patterns for church life. Archaeological discoveries confirm in a remarkable way the historical accuracy of Luke’s writing.

We now begin the second portion of the New Testament called the “Letters” or the Epistles.

The writers of the Epistles included Paul, Peter, James, Jude and John as we will see. These letters were typically written to a specific church in a geographic location or to a person, and later were circulated to the other churches. To give us a reference as to the location of the recipients of these letters, see the map of the early Church and Paul’s Missionary Journeys.



The Letters of Paul:

There are three categories of Paul’s letter:

- General Epistles written to a church, including: **Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and 1 and 2 Thessalonians.**
- Prison Epistles written to churches or a person while under Roman confinement, including: **Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.**
- Pastoral Epistles written to young pastors established by Paul, including: **1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.**

General Epistles:

Romans

Date: 57-58

Author: Paul

Content: The theme of the epistle is the righteousness of God, **Rom 1:16-17**. Written from Corinth, where Paul was completing the collection for the poor in Jerusalem, this letter was sent to a group of people Paul had not met before. This writing was more formal than Paul’s other letters and it delineated the doctrine of Justification by Faith (and its ramifications) in a systematic way. A number of basic Christian doctrines are discussed, for example: natural revelation, **Rom 1:19-20**; the universality of sin, **Rom 3:9-20**; justification, **Rom 3:24**; propitiation, **Rom 3:25**; faith, **Rom 4**; original sin, **Rom 5:12**; union with Christ, **Rom 6**; the election and rejection of Israel, **Rom 9-11**; spiritual gifts, **Rom 12:3-8**; and respect for government, **Rom 13:1-7**.

1 Corinthians

Date: 55

Author: Paul

Content: Paul first preached the gospel in Corinth on his second missionary journey, A.D. 50. While living and working with Aquila and Priscilla, he preached in the synagogue until opposition forced him to move next door, to the house of Titius Justus. The Jews accused him before the Roman governor Gallio, but the charge was dismissed, and Paul remained 18 months in the city, **Acts 18:1-17; 1 Cor 2:3**. After leaving, Paul wrote the church a letter, which has been lost, **1 Cor 5:9**, but disturbing news about the believers and questions they asked Paul in a letter they sent to him, **1 Cor 7:1**, lead to the writing of 1 Corinthians. It was written from Ephesus, **1 Cor 16:8**, and addressed various problems including: divisions in the church, **1 Cor 1:11**; immorality, **1 Cor 5; 1 Cor 6:9 -20**; and question concerning marriage, food, worship, and the resurrection. Strange beliefs and practices of many varieties characterized this church. At the same time, the city of Corinth was noted for everything sinful. Therefore, this letter being practical in nature deals with spiritual and moral problems and various questions. It is also a casebook of pastoral theology. Important emphases include: the judgment seat of Christ, **1 Cor. 3:11-15**; the temple of the Holy Spirit, **1 Cor 6:19-20**; the glory of God, **1 Cor 10:31**; the Lord's Supper, **1 Cor 11:23-34**; love, **1 Cor 13**; the exercise of gifts, **1 Cor 12-14**; and resurrection, **1 Cor 15**.

2 Corinthians

Date: 56

Author: Paul

Content: After writing 1 Corinthians, Paul found it necessary to make a hurried, painful visit to Corinth, since the problems that occasioned the first letter had not been resolved, **2 Cor 2:1; 2 Cor 12:14; 2 Cor 13:1-2**. Following this visit, he wrote the church a severe and sorrowful letter, to which he refers in **2 Cor 2:4** but which has been lost to us. Titus delivered that letter. Afterward Titus met Paul in Macedonia and related the good news that the church finally had repented of their rebelliousness against Paul. From Macedonia Paul wrote **2 Corinthians** and followed it up with his final recorded visit to the church, **Acts 20:1-4**. Therefore, what we call 1st Corinthians is actually 2nd Corinthians, and what we call 2nd Corinthians is actually 4th Corinthians, or the fourth letter he wrote to them.

The purpose of this letter was threefold:

- To express joy at the favorable response of the church to Paul's ministry, **2 Cor 1-7**.
- To remind the believers of their commitment to the offering for the Christians in Judea, **2 Cor 8-9**.
- To defend Paul's apostolic authority, **2 Cor 10-13**.

The letter also contains many personal and autobiographical glimpses into Paul's life, **2 Cor 4:8-18; 2 Cor 11:22-33**, and the longest discussion of giving in the New Testament is in **2**

Cor 8 & 2 Cor 9. Important verses include; **2 Cor 5:10, 20-21; 2 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 8:9; 2 Cor 10:5; 2 Cor 11:14; 2 Cor 12:9; 2 Cor 13:14.**

Galatians

Date: 49, some say 55.

Author: Paul

Content: The theme, justification by faith, is defended, explained, and applied. Other significant subjects include; Paul's three years in Arabia, **Gal 1:17**;; his correcting Peter, **Gal 2:11**;; the law as a tutor, **Gal 3:24**;; and the fruit of the Spirit, **Gal 5:22-23**. Another major emphasis was how can men (sinful by nature) come to God (holy by nature)? Paul's answer: There is only one way. Accept the salvation God's grace makes available through Christ's death and resurrection. Forget about merit-salvation through obedience to the Law of Moses.

Certain Jewish Christians, the Judaizers, were teaching that works are necessary for salvation and that Paul's gospel was not correct, and that he was not a genuine apostle. Paul's answer was to teach the Doctrine of Justification by Faith plus nothing, and of sanctification by the Holy Spirit, not the Mosaic Law. He forcefully negated all theologies that teach salvation by faith plus human efforts.

Prison Epistles:

Continuing with the Epistle's of Paul, we have our second category of writings called "The Prison Epistles" since they all were written during Paul's Roman imprisonment, **Eph 3:1; Phil 1:7; Col 4:10; Philemon 9**. They includes: **Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon**. During Paul first imprisonment in Rome, he was kept in or near the barracks of the Praetorian Guard, or in rental quarters at his own expense for two years, **Acts 28:30**, during which time these epistles were written.

Ephesians

Date: 61

Author: Paul

Content: This letter is what is called an Encyclical letter, meaning it was a circular letter, a doctrinal treatise in the form of a letter to the churches in Asia Minor. The absence of controversy in this epistle tells us it does not deal with problems of a particular church or churches but speaks to all. It was likely sent first to Ephesus by Tychicus, **Eph 6:21-2; Col 4:7-8**, and is probably the same letter that is called "my letter.. from Laodicea" in **Col 4:16**.

Paul visited Ephesus in his 2nd missionary journey and on his 3rd stayed there for 3-years. After Paul, Timothy had charge of the church for a time, **1 Tim 1:3**, and later the apostle John made the city his headquarters. The city was a commercial, political, and religious center, and the great temple of Artemis (Diana) was there. The great theme of this letter is

God's eternal purpose to establish and complete His body, the church of Christ. In developing this, Paul discusses:

- Predestination, **Eph 1:3-14.**
- Christ's headship over the body, **Eph 1:22-23; Eph 4:15-16.**
- The church as the building and temple of God, **Eph 2:21-22.**
- The mystery of Christ, **Eph 3:1-21.**
- Spiritual gifts, **Eph 4:7-16.**
- The church as the bride of Christ, **Eph 5:22-32.**

Philippians

Date: 61-63

Author: Paul

Content: The Church at Philippi was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey; this was the first church to be established by him in Europe, **Acts 16**. It was a small city established by King Philip of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great. Philippians is first off, a thank-you letter for the gift the Philippians sent to Paul during his Roman imprisonment, in which they sent Epaphroditus to deliver. Epaphroditus became almost fatally ill while with Paul, **Phil 2:27**, and on his recovery, Paul sent him back with this letter.

It is the most personal letter Paul written to a church. Though somewhat obscured by his gentleness in this letter, some of the problems in the church are seen beneath the surface. These included: rivalries and personal ambition, **Phil 2:3-4; 4:2**; the teaching of the Judaizers, **Phil 3:1-3**; perfectionism, **Phil 3:12-14**; and the influence of antinomian libertines, **Phil 3:18-19**. One of the most important doctrinal passages in the New Testament is **Phil 2:5-8**, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

There Paul presents the doctrine of Kenosis regarding Christ's incarnation, which is the self-humbling of Christ where He voluntarily did not use His deified powers to solve His problems, and instead relied upon the Holy Spirit. This is not to say that He lost or emptied Himself of those powers, because He was still God keeping the universe in its order, yet He did not use them under His own self will, but only under the direction of God the Father. Another important verse includes **Phil 4:6-7** on prayer. Other favorite verses include; **Phil. 1:21, 23b; 3:10, 20; 4:8, 13**. And finally, a significant autobiographical sketch appears in **Phil 3:4-14**.

Colossians

Date: 61

Author: Paul

Content: Like Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon, Colossians was written during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome. Colossae was an ancient but declining commercial center. The gospel may have been taken there during Paul's ministry at Ephesus, **Acts 19:10**, though it was Epaphras who played the major role in the evangelism and growth of the Colossians. Paul was not personally acquainted with the believers there, **Col 2:1**, but Epaphras either visited Paul in prison or was imprisoned with him, **Philemon 23**, and reported on conditions in this church. Tychicus was apparently the bearer of the letter, **Eph 6:21; Col 4:7**.

The theme is the supremacy and all-sufficiency of Christ. Important subjects include Christ's person and work, **Col 1:15-23**, heresy, **Col 2:8-23**, and believers' union with Christ, **Col 3:1-4**. The heresy he addressed was the fusing of Jewish legalism, Greek philosophy, and Oriental mysticism. Specifically, he teaches against the dietary, Sabbath and circumcision rites observances, **Col 2:11, 16**, the worship of angels, **Col 2:18**, and the practice of asceticism, which stemmed from the Greek belief that the body was inherently evil, **Col 2:21-23**. In combating this heresy, Paul emphasizes the cosmic significance of Christ as Lord of creation and Head of the Church. Any teaching, practice, or intermediary that detracts from the uniqueness and centrality of Christ is against the faith.

1 Thessalonians

Date: 51

Author: Paul

Content: Paul, Silas, and Timothy first went to the Macedonian port city of Thessalonica on the second missionary journey, **Acts 17:1-14**. This was the second place the gospel was preached in Europe. Being there only three Sabbaths, **Acts 17:2**, they were chased out of the city by the officials egged on by the Jews, Paul sent Timothy back, **1 Thes 3:1-2, 5**, to check on them, which he did and reported back to Paul, **1 Thes 3:6**. That prompted Paul to write this letter.

This is a letter from a relieved and grateful pastor to his growing flock. The key passages in this letter are eschatological; that is, related to events of the last days, such as the rapture of the church, **1 Thes 4:13-18**, and the Day of the Lord, **1 Thes 5:1-11**. In addition, he:

- Expressed his thankfulness.
- Defended himself against a campaign to slander his ministry, which asserted that it was done only for profit, **1 Thes 2:9-10**.
- Encouraged the new converts to stand not only against persecution but also against the pressure to revert to their former pagan standards, **1 Thes 3:2-3; 4:1-12**.
- Answered the question about what happens to Christians who die before the return of the Lord, **1 Thes 4:13-18**.
- Discussed some problems in their church life that needed to be dealt with, **1 Thes 5:12-13, 19-20**.

2 Thessalonians

Date: 51

Author: Paul

Content: Not long after the first letter, this letter was sent by Paul to meet a new situation. Someone in Thessalonica had misunderstood, or misrepresented, **2 Thes 2:2**, Paul's teaching concerning the coming of the Day of the Lord, **1 Thes 5:1-11**. Some thought that its judgments had already begun; yet they understood Paul to have taught that they would be exempt from those judgments. The practical ramification of this doctrinal confusion was that some, thinking the end of the world was at hand, had stopped working and were creating an embarrassing situation, **2 Thes 3:6, 11**. Paul corrects the teaching and reprimands the idlers. Another major teaching was on the man of sin / antichrist, **2 Thes 2:1-12**. Cf. **Dan 9:27; Mat 24:15; Rev 11:7; 13:1-10**.

Pastoral Epistles:

The next section of Paul's writings is the "Pastoral Epistles." These are letters written to young Pastor-Teachers that Paul had established. They give instructions on pastoring a church, qualification for ministers, church conduct and encouraging these young men to continue in their office. Paul anticipated being released, **Philem 22**, from his 1st imprisonment, and following his release he made several trips, wrote **1 Timothy** and **Titus**, was rearrested, wrote **2 Timothy**, and was martyred.

1 Timothy

Date: 63-66

Author: Paul

Content: Timothy, the son of a Greek Gentile father and a devout Jewish mother named Eunice, was intimately associated with Paul from the time of the second missionary journey on, **2 Tim 1:5; Acts 16:1-3**. When Paul wrote 1 Timothy, probably from Macedonia, **1 Tim 1:3**, he was on his way to Nicopolis, **Titus 3:12**, but Timothy had been left in charge of the work in Ephesus and Asia Minor. Though Paul desired to visit Timothy, **1 Tim 3:14; 4:13**, this letter in the meantime, would guide Timothy in the conduct of his pastoral responsibilities. In relation to Timothy personally, the theme is fighting "the good fight", **1 Tim 1:18**. In relation to the church corporately, the theme is behaving in the house of God, **1 Tim 3:15**. Important subjects include the law, **1 Tim 1:7-11**; prayer, **1 Tim 2:1-8**; appearance and activity of women, **1 Tim 2:9-15**; qualifications for bishops or elders and for deacons, **1 Tim. 3:1-13**; the last days, **1 Tim 4:1-3**; care of widows, **1 Tim 5:3-16**; and use of money, **1 Tim 6:6-19**.

2 Timothy

Date: 67

Author: Paul

Content: When Paul wrote this letter he was imprisoned and his death was near, **2 Tim 1:8, 16; 4:6-8**. Knowing this, he wrote this intensely personal letter. The theme may be taken from, **2 Tim 2:3**, “a good soldier of Christ Jesus.” Important subjects mentioned include the apostasy of the last days, **2 Tim 3:1-9; cf. 1 Tim 4:1-3**; the inspiration of the Scriptures, **2 Tim 3:16**, and the crown of righteousness, **2 Tim 4:8**.

Titus

Date: 63-66

Author: Paul

Content: After writing 1 Timothy, Paul visited Crete and left Titus there to supervise those churches, and went to Nicopolis in Achaia (southern Greece, **Titus 3:12**). Either from Macedonia or Nicopolis, he wrote this letter to encourage Titus. Titus was a Gentile by birth, **Gal 2:3**, and was converted through the ministry of Paul, **Titus 1:4**. He accompanied Paul to Jerusalem at the time of the apostolic council, **Acts 15:2** through **Gal 2:1-3**. He was Paul’s emissary to the church at Corinth during the third missionary journey, **2 Cor 7:6-7; 2 Cor 8:6, 16**. He and two others took the letter we call 2 Corinthians to Corinth and urged the Corinthians to make good their promise to give to the poor in Jerusalem. Artemas or Tychicus probably relieved Titus in Crete so he could join Paul in Nicopolis, **Titus 3:12**, from where Paul sent him to Dalmatia, the former Yugoslavia, **2 Tim 4:10**. Tradition says he returned to Crete and died there.

Important topics discussed in the letter include qualifications for elders, **Titus 1:5-9**; instructions to various age groups, **Titus 2:1-8**; relationship to government, **Titus 3:1-2**; and the relation of regeneration to human works and to the Spirit, **Titus 3:5**.

Next is another like Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians of the Prison Epistles written by Paul. Yet, this one was a personal letter.

Philemon

Date: 61

Author: Paul

Content: This is the most personal of all Paul’s letters. Only one chapter, this letter was written to Philemon, who was from the Colossian church, about one of his slaves Onesimus. Onesimus was one of the millions of slaves in the Roman Empire. He had stolen from his master, Philemon and had run away. Eventually, he made his way to Rome, where he crossed the path of the apostle Paul, who led him to faith in Christ, **Philemon 10**. Now Onesimus was faced with doing His Christian duty toward his master by returning to him. Since death would normally have been his punishment, Paul wrote this wonderful letter of intercession on Onesimus’s behalf.

Being not the only slave owner in Colosse, this letter gave guidelines for other Christian masters in their relationships to their slave-brothers. Paul did not deny the rights of Philemon over his slave, but he asked Philemon to relate the principle of Christian brotherhood to the situation with Onesimus, **Philemon 16**. At the same time, Paul offered to pay personally whatever Onesimus owed. This letter is not an attack against slavery as such, but a suggestion as to how Christian masters and slaves could live their faith within that system. It is possible that Philemon did free Onesimus and send him back to Paul, **Philemon 14**. It has also been suggested that Onesimus became a minister and later bishop of the church at Ephesus, (Ignatius, To the Ephesians,1).

Hebrews

Date: 64-68

Author: Uncertain, probably Paul.

Content: Primarily written to Hebrews to prove the person of Christ, the theme of the book is the superiority of Christ and thus of Christianity. The words "better," "perfect," and "heavenly" appear frequently. The outline shows how the theme is developed by proving that Christ is superior both in His person and His priesthood. Favorite passages include, **Heb 2:3** (so great a salvation), **Heb 4:12**, (the living Word of God), **Heb 4:16**, (the throne of grace), **Heb 7:25**, (the intercession of Christ), **Heb 11:1**, (the description of faith), **Heb 11:4-40**, (the heroes of faith), **Heb 12:1-2**, (the Christian race), and **Heb 13:20-21**, (a great benediction).

We now turn to the non-Pauline Epistles written by James, Peter, John and Jude. Except for 2 and 3 John, these were not written to one church or person, and were called the "general" or "universal" Epistles.

The Letter of James

James

Date: 45-50

Author: James

Content: James the half-brother of Jesus who became the recognized leader of the Jerusalem church, **Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18**, wrote the book concerning the practical aspects of Christian conduct; it tells how faith works in everyday life. James' purpose was to provide concrete ethical instruction. Compared to Paul, James shows much less interest in formal theology, though the letter is not without theological statements, **James 1:12; 2:1, 10-12, 19; 3:9; 5:7-9, 12, 14**. Many subjects are discussed in this book, making it like a series of brief sayings arranged in the form of a letter. While there is little formal structure to the book, its many instructions explain how to be doers of the Word, **James 1:22**. In the 108 verses of the epistle, there are references or allusions from 22 books of the Old Testament and at least 15 allusions to the teachings of Christ as embodied in the Sermon on

the Mount. Among the key subjects discussed are faith and works, **James 2:14-26**; the use of the tongue, **James 3:1-12**, and prayer for the sick, **James 5:13-16**.

The Letters of Peter:

1 Peter

Date: 63-64

Author: Peter

Content: This book was written by the Apostle Peter from "Babylon", **1 Peter 5:13**, a symbolic name for Rome much used by writers who wished to avoid trouble with the Roman authorities. Peter was in Rome during the last decade of his life and wrote this epistle about A.D. 63, just before the outbreak of Nero's persecution in A.D. 64. Peter was martyred about 67. This letter is addressed to "aliens, scattered" or, literally, the "sojourners of the dispersion", **1 Peter 1:1**. These were Christians who, like Israel of old, were scattered throughout the world, though the readers of this epistle were predominantly Gentile yet many had Jewish background, **1 Peter 1:14; 2:9-10; 4:3-4**. Peter himself states the theme of the letter in, **1 Peter 5:12**, "the true grace of God" in the life of a believer.

He writes about suffering and trial, **1 Peter 4:12**, not because of the empire-wide ban on Christianity, since that came later. The sufferings referred to are those that often come to Christians as they live faithfully in a pagan and hostile society. Persecution took the forms of slander, riots, local police action, and social ostracism. In such, he encourages them to rejoice and live above such reproach.

2 Peter

Date: 66

Author: Peter.

Content: Written just before his martyrdom in A.D. 67 and most likely from Rome, this letter is a reminder, **2 Peter 1:12; 3:1**, of the truth of Christianity as opposed to the heresies of false teachers. Important passages include those concerning the Transfiguration, **2 Peter 1:16-18**; the inspiration of Scripture, **2 Peter 1:21**, and the certainty of the second coming of Christ, **2 Peter 3:4-10**.

The Letters of John:

1 John

Date: 85-90

Author: John.

Content: Written by the Apostle John, (much like Ephesians), it was written to Christians all over Asia Minor. This letter shows John's obvious affection for his "little children" and concern

for their spiritual welfare. The heresy of Gnosticism had begun to make inroads among churches in John's day. Among its teachings were:

- Knowledge is superior to virtue.
- The nonliteral sense of Scripture is correct and can be understood only by a select few.
- Evil in the world precludes God's being the only Creator.
- The Incarnation is incredible because deity cannot unite itself with anything material such as a body, Docetism (a sect of Gnosticism).
- There is no resurrection of the flesh.

The ethical standards of many Gnostics were low, so John emphasized the reality of the Incarnation and the high ethical standard of the earthly life of Christ. The book is filled with contrasts—light and darkness, **1 John 1:6-7; 2:8-11**; love of world and love of God, **1 John 2:15-17**; children of God and children of the devil, **1 John 3:4-10**; the Spirit of God and the spirit of Antichrist, **1 John 4:1-3**; love and hate, **1 John 4:7-12, 16-21**. An important passage is **1 John 1:7-2:1** regarding the confession of sins for the believer as the means for fellowship with God and man, including the filling of the Holy Spirit.

2 John

Date: 85-90

Author: John

Content: Being only one chapter, the main teaching of 2 John is walking in Christ's commandments.

3 John

Date: 85-90

Author: John.

Content: Also only one chapter, this is a very personal letter, addressed to Gaius, which focuses on an ecclesiastical problem regarding traveling teachers. Gaius had given them hospitality, whereas Diotrefes, a self-assertive leader in one of the churches, had refused to receive them. John exhibits his apostolic authority in his rebuke of Diotrefes, **3 John 10**. Demetrius, who himself may have been a traveling teacher, probably delivered the letter to Gaius.

The Letter of Jude

Date: 68-80

Author: Jude.

Content: Jude identifies himself as the brother of James, **Jude 1**, the leader of the Jerusalem church, **Acts 15**, and the half-brother of the Lord Jesus. Jude is listed among Christ's half-brothers in **Mat 13:55 & Mark 6:3**. Although, by his own statement, he intended to write a treatise on salvation, pressing circumstances required him to deal instead with the false

teachers, **Jude 3**. Therefore, this letter was written to defend the apostolic faith against false teachings that were arising in the churches. Alarming advances were being made by an incipient form of Gnosticism, (not ascetic, like that attacked by Paul in Colossians), but antinomian. The Gnostics viewed everything material as evil and everything spiritual as good. They therefore cultivated their "spiritual" lives and allowed their flesh to do anything it liked, with the result that they were guilty of all kinds of lawlessness.

In **Jude 14 & Jude 15**, He quotes the pseudepigraphal apocalypse of 1 Enoch and in **Jude 9** alludes to a reference in another pseudepigraphal book, The Assumption of Moses. This does not mean that he considered these books to be inspired as the canonical Scriptures were. Paul quoted from heathen poets without implying their inspiration, **Acts 17:28; 1 Cor 15:33; Titus 1:12**. Condemning the heretics in no uncertain terms, Jude exhorts his readers to "**contend earnestly for the faith**", **Jude 3**.

The Prophetical Book:

That concludes the Epistles, and now we turn to the only book dedicated to prophecy in the New Testament, the Book of Revelation, even though the first three chapters are small letters to the "Seven Churches."

Revelation

Date: 90-95

Author: John.

Content: It was written by the Apostle John, while in exile on the Island of Patmos, during a period under the evil Roman emperor Domitian, (A.D. 81-96), when Christians were threatened by Rome to recant their faith and accept the cult of emperor worship.

It is the revelation of Jesus Christ, as He is the center of the entire book, **Rev 1:1**. It speaks of His risen glory **Rev 1**, as He directs His churches on earth, **Rev 2-3**. He is the slain and risen Lamb to whom all worship is directed, **Rev 4-5**. The judgments of the coming seven-year period of tribulation on earth are the display of the wrath of the Lamb, **Rev 6-19**, and the return of Christ to this earth is described in **Rev 19:11-21**. The Marriage of Christ to His bride the church is noted in **Rev 19**. The Millennial reign of Christ is described in, **Rev 20**, along with the Great White Throne Judgment of Unbelievers who are cast into the Lake of Fire. It ends with the creation of the new heavens and new earth in, **Rev 21-22**.

The Outline of the Book is indicated in, **Rev 1:19**.

The things that John had seen include:

- The vision of the risen Christ in **Rev 1**.
- "The things which **are**" is described in the letters to the seven churches of **Asia Minor** in Rev 2-3.
- "The things which shall take place after these things" are the prophecies of **Rev 4-22**.

Interpretation of the Book:

There are four principal viewpoints concerning the interpretation of this book:

- The Preterist, which views the prophecies of the book as having been fulfilled in the early history of the church.
- The Historical, which understands the book as portraying a panorama of the history of the church from the days of John to the end of time.
- The Idealist, which considers the book a pictorial unfolding of great principles in constant conflict, without reference to actual events.
- The Futurist, which views most of the book, **Rev 4-22**, as prophecy yet to be fulfilled.

The futurist is the viewpoint we take, based on the principle of interpreting the text plainly and Dispensationally. The book is a revelation, or apocalypse, **Rev 1:1**, and as such is expected to be understood. Much of it is frighteningly clear. Some symbols are explained, **Rev 1:20; 17:1, 15**, others are not. It is always important to notice carefully the words "like" and "as", **Rev 6:1; 9:7**, because they indicate a comparison, and not identification.