
BOOK OVERVIEW

Genesis

Author: Moses

Date: about 1440 B.C.

Recipients: the nation of Israel

Key word: generations (19 times)

Summary: an account of the beginnings of things

Key verses: Genesis 1:1; 12:1-3

Notes:

The Greek word “Genesis” means “origin” or “beginning.” The Hebrew name for the book means “in the beginning.”

Genesis is the first of five books that are referred to as the Pentateuch, a Greek word which means “five volumes.” These books were often referred to by Jews as “the Law.”

This is a book of beginnings. The beginning of... 1) the universe, 2) man, 3) sin and death, 4) God’s plan to redeem mankind, 5) the nation of Israel.

The book describes three events which dramatically effect the world we live in today: 1) the universal flood, 2) the multiplication of languages and the dispersion of people at the tower of Babel, and 3) the hostility between Isaac and Ishmael—the origin of the conflict between Arabs and Jews.

God’s promise of a Savior originates in Genesis 3:15.

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Exodus

Author: Moses

Date: about 1440–1400 B.C.

Recipients: the nation of Israel

Key word: redeem (10 times)

Summary: the deliverance of the Israelites under the leadership of Moses, who was empowered by God.

Key verses: Exodus 3:8, 19:4–6

Notes:

Exodus in Greek means “a going out.” The Hebrews called the book “and these are the names”; the first words of the book.

This book was written while Israel was in the wilderness and covers about 215 years—from the time Israel entered Egypt to the time they camped at Mt. Sinai.

Three of the most significant events recorded in the book include the origin of the Passover, the giving of the Law, and the construction of the Tabernacle.

The book includes several miracles: 1) the ten plagues, 2) the opening of the Red Sea and destruction of the Egyptian army, 3) leading by the pillar of cloud and fire, 4) water from a rock (on two occasions), and 5) manna from heaven.

Although the date is not certain, many Bible scholars believe that the Exodus took place about 1440 B.C.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Leviticus

Author: Moses

Date: about 1439 B.C.

Recipients: the nation of Israel, especially Aaron and his descendants

Key word: holy (in various forms) (131 times), sacrifice (300 times), clean and unclean (200 times), atonement (36 times)

Summary: God's standard for proper worship and holy living

Key verse: Leviticus 19:2

Notes:

Holy means "set apart." Sanctify, sanctified, sanctuary, hallow, and hallowed are from the same root word.

The book focuses upon the service and responsibilities of the Levitical priests. While all Levites, descendants of Levi, were set apart to serve God on behalf of the nation of Israel, only those who were descendants of Aaron served as priests in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple.

After Israel entered the Promised Land, the Levites were not given a separate section of land as a tribe but they were allotted 48 cities that were dispersed throughout the nation. They were supported primarily through the tithes of the other tribes. That allowed them to devote full-time to God's service.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Numbers

Author: Moses

Date: about 1401 B.C.

Recipients: the nation of Israel, especially Aaron and his descendants

Key word: wilderness (45 times)

Summary: the price Israel paid for not trusting in God

Key verses: Numbers 14:28–30

Notes:

While Leviticus covers about a month of Israel's time in the wilderness, this book reviews almost the entire 40 years.

The book tells of two "numberings." The first was taken at Mt. Sinai and the second just before entering Canaan.

Along with Jacob, 60 people entered Egypt. The first census indicates that 600,000 men, not including their wives and children, left Egypt in the Exodus. The second census indicates that 601,000 men, not including their wives and children, prepared to enter the Promised Land. All of this in spite of the thousands who died during the 40 years in the wilderness.

The key to understanding the book is the sending of twelve men to spy out the Promised Land and their subsequent report. Had most of the spies trusted God, the book would have been very short.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Deuteronomy

Author: Moses

Date: about 1400 B.C.

Recipients: the nation of Israel

Summary: a repeat of the laws given at Mt. Sinai.

Key words: hear (50 times), do/keep/observe (177 times), love (21 times)

Key verses: Deuteronomy 10:12–13

Notes:

This book covers about two months of time just prior to the entry into Canaan.

Moses repeats God's laws partly because most of the Israelites had been born **after** the laws were originally given at Mt. Sinai.

Deuteronomy is quoted in fourteen of the New Testament books. When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, he quoted from this book exclusively.

Chapter 32 is sometimes referred to as Moses' "swan song," his last words to the Israelites.

Obviously, Moses did not write the last chapter of this book, which describes his death. Many scholars believe that Joshua, to whom Moses passed the mantle of leadership, wrote the first eight verses and Ezra wrote the last four verses; but this is uncertain.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Joshua

Author: probably Joshua

Date: about 1370 B.C.

Recipients: not indicated

Summary: the conquest and the division of the land of Canaan

Key words: possess/possession (22 times), inherit/inheritance (63 times)

Key verses: Joshua 1: 2–3

Notes:

The book covers about 30 years, from the death of Moses to the death of Joshua.

Not all of the tribes of Israel took their inheritance in the Promised Land. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh settled on the east side of the Jordan River.

Instead of land, the Levites were given 48 cities, six of which were designated as “cities of refuge.” (Joshua 20:2, 7–8, 21:41)

The incident with Achan, reinforces the truth that God does not accept partial obedience. (Joshua 7)

Two miracles stand out in the book: 1) the parting of the Jordan River (Joshua 3:14–17), and 2) the sun standing still. (Joshua 10:12–14)

As soon as the Israelites could eat of the produce of Canaan, God stopped providing manna. (Joshua 5:11–12)

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Judges

Author: possibly Samuel

Date: possibly about 1075 B.C.

Recipients: not indicated

Summary: what happens to a nation that refuses to obey God

Key word: evil (14 times), judge/judged/judgment (22 times)

Key verses: Judges 2:14–19

Notes:

The book covers about 300 years, from the death of Joshua to the death of Samson.

The book describes a cycle that is repeated many times: 1) the Israelites turn away from God, 2) God lets their enemies oppress them, 3) the Israelites cry out to God for deliverance, 4) God provides a deliverer, 5) the Israelites enjoy a measure of peace; then, the cycle is repeated.

That “every man did that which was right in his own eyes,” explains the tragedies we witness in the book of Judges. (Judges 17:6)

Judges should be a warning concerning how easy it is to fall away from God.

The book describes thirteen judges and prepares the way for a king. Samuel, although a prophet, followed Samson, and was the last of the judges.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Ruth

Author: probably Samuel

Date: about 1075 B.C.

Recipients: not indicated

Summary: God's providence in preserving the line of the Messiah

Key word: kinsman (14 times), redeem (9 times)

Key verses: Ruth 1:16

Notes:

This is one of two books in the Bible that have a woman as the main character. The other is the book of Esther.

The story, which covers about ten years of time, takes place during the era of the Judges. (Ruth 1:1)

The kinsman-redeemer was a near relative who had the right to redeem a person or property from bondage by paying the debt that had been incurred.

Boaz could act on Ruth's behalf only after a relative closer to Ruth refused to accept his responsibility.

Boaz, as the kinsman-redeemer for Ruth, serves as a type of Christ who serves as our Kinsman-Redeemer.

In Israel, property should not be sold outside of the family. If it were, the property had to be returned to the family in the year of Jubilee.(Leviticus 25:10)

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I Samuel

Author: unknown (see note below)

Date: about 1110–1000 B.C.

Recipients: not indicated

Summary: the history of Israel from the birth of Samuel to the death of Saul

Key word: anoint (7 times), rejected (7 times)

Key verses: I Samuel 8:19–22

Notes:

In the Hebrew Bible I & II Samuel were considered one book.

A Jewish tradition indicates that Samuel was the author, but that seems improbable, since many of the things recorded happened after he died. Some Bible scholars believe that Gad or Nathan wrote the books of I & II Samuel.

The book covers about 110 years.

Eli knew what was right and instructed both his sons and Samuel. His sons, Hophni and Phinehas, rejected God and Eli's instruction; but Samuel accepted Eli's instruction and followed after God.

The book is a good example of what happens when we run ahead of God. It is clear that God would have eventually given Israel a king. It was probably God's plan to have David as Israel's first king rather than Saul.

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II Samuel

Author: probably Gad or Nathan

Date: about 1000–960 B.C.

Recipients: not indicated

Summary: the reign of King David

Key word: David (280 times)

Key verses: II Samuel 7:8–16

Notes:

The book covers about forty years of in the life of the nation of Israel, from the death of Saul to the reign of Solomon. It reflects the highest point in Israel's political power.

God speaks of David as “a man after mine own heart” (Acts 13:22); but David also had his problems: 1) he had an immoral relationship with Bathsheba (II Samuel 11:2-14), 2) he had a poor relationship with his son Absalom (II Samuel 15:1-14), and 3) contrary to God's instruction, he took a census to count his fighting men (II Samuel 24:1-4).

The book tells of David's desire to built a temple to honor God, but also tells us why God did not allow him to do so. David gather's the materials, but it is Solomon who builds the temple. (II Samuel 7:1-13)

Absalom cut his hair, when it became too heavy, and the clippings weighed about five pounds. (II Samuel 14:26)

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BOOK OVERVIEW

I Kings

Author: unknown, possibly Jeremiah

Date: unknown (before the Babylonian captivity ended)

Recipients: possibly the Jews in exile.

Key word: King (250 times)

Summary: The reign of Solomon, the history of the divided kingdom beginning with Rehoboam in Judah (the Southern Kingdom) and Jeroboam I in Israel (the Northern Kingdom).

Key verses: I Kings 2:12, 11:9-11

Notes:

The book covers about 126 years, 960–834 B.C., from the death of David to the death of Jehoshaphat.

I Kings and II Kings were one book in the Hebrew scriptures. It was divided by the translators of the Greek Septuagint about 400 A.D.

The book ends with the reign of Judah's good King Jehoshaphat (their fourth king) and Israel's evil King Ahaziah (their eighth king).

Solomon's choice of wisdom from God is recorded in I Kings 3:5-14.

The book records the ministry of the prophet Elijah. (Chs. 17-19, 21) Elijah on Mt. Carmel. (18:16-46) The prophet Elisha becomes Elijah's protégé. (19:19-21)

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BOOK OVERVIEW

II Kings

Author: unknown, possibly Jeremiah

Date: unknown. (before the Babylonian captivity ended)

Recipients: possibly an historical record preserved for the Jews in exile.

Key word: King (340 times)

Summary: The history of the divided kingdom from the death of Ahab (Northern Kingdom) and Jehoshaphat (Southern Kingdom) into the Babylonian captivity. Israel (Northern Kingdom) went into captivity in 722 B.C. and Judah (Southern Kingdom) went into captivity in 586 B.C.

Theme: God's judgment upon His rebellious children.

Key verses: II Kings 17:7-8

Notes:

The book covers about 270 years, 856–586 B.C.

It describes the last days of Elijah and the ministry of Elisha. (II Kings 1–13)

Elijah taken to Heaven in a fiery chariot. (II Kings 2:11)

Judah had some kings that were good and some that were evil. All of Israel's kings were evil.

King Hezekiah had a tunnel bored through rock to provide water for besieged Jerusalem. (II Kings 20:20)

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BOOK OVERVIEW

I Chronicles

Author: possibly Ezra

Date: about 450 B.C. (after the captivity)

Recipients: not noted

Key word: David (180 times)

Summary: The history of David's family and his contributions to the temple.

Key verses: I Chr. 29:26-27

Theme: The sovereignty of God.

Notes:

The book covers about 40 years, 1000–960 B.C., from the death of Saul to the beginning of Solomon's reign.

The first nine chapters include genealogical records.

First and Second Chronicles were one book in the Hebrew scriptures.

Since the book focuses on the temple and priests, it is likely that a priest, like Ezra, wrote it.

The book addresses Judah with little mention of the Northern Kingdom.

The prayer of Jabez. (4:10)

David honors the men who risked their lives by passing through enemy lines to bring him water from the well in Bethlehem. (11:17–19)

David brings the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. (Ch 15)

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Author: possibly Ezra

Date: about 450 B.C. (after the captivity)

Recipients: not noted

Key word: house (referring to the temple, 148 times)

Summary: The history of Judah and Jerusalem from the reign of Solomon to the decree of Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem.

Key verses: I Chr. 29:26-27

Notes:

The book covers about 425 years, 960–535 B.C..

First and Second Chronicles were one book in the Hebrew Scripture.

The narrative of II Chronicles ends where the book of Ezra begins.

After Solomon's death, the kingdom is divided between King Rehoboam, Southern Kingdom, and King Jeroboam, Northern Kingdom. (Ch. 10)

Chapters 1-9 describe the reign of Solomon. Chapters 10-36 describe the sequence of Judah's good and bad kings.

God makes His presence known at the dedication of the temple. (5:13-14, 7:1-3)

Chapter 36 describes Judah's entering the 70 years of captivity in Babylon, but ends with Cyrus' decree to rebuild Jerusalem.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Ezra

Author: Jewish tradition says Ezra.

Date: about 450 B.C. (after the captivity)

Recipients: not noted

Key word: Jerusalem (47 times)

Summary: The ups and downs of trying to rebuild Jerusalem after the 70 year Babylonian exile.

Key verses: Ezra 6:21-22

Theme: The restoration of the Temple and religious reform.

Notes:

The book covers about 80 years, 536–456 B.C., from the decree of Cyrus to shortly after Ezra arrives in Jerusalem.

Ezra was a priest and scribe (7:1-6)

About 57 years lapse between the end of chapter six and the beginning of chapter seven. During this time the events described in the book of Esther take place.

Chapters 1-6 describe the activities of the first group to return to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel.

Chapters 7-10 describe the activities of the second group as they return under the leadership of Ezra.

Some believe that Ezra was the originator of the Jewish synagogue system.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Nehemiah

Author: Nehemiah

Date: about 450 B.C. (after the captivity)

Recipients: not noted

Key words: wall(s) (32 times) build (23 times)

Summary: The ups and downs of trying to rebuild Jerusalem after the 70 year Babylonian exile.

Key verses: Nehemiah 4:6, 6:15–16

Theme: The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and spiritual revival.

Notes:

The book covers about 12 years, 444–432 B.C.

In the Hebrew scriptures Ezra and Nehemiah were one book.

When first mentioned in the Bible, Nehemiah is the cupbearer for king Artaxerxes. He was appointed governor of Judah, a position he held for 12 years.

The book begins 12 years after what is described in the book of Ezra.

Almost 100 years have passed since the first Jews returned from exile under the leadership of Zerubbabel. The temple has been restored but the walls to defend the city have not yet been rebuilt when Nehemiah arrives.

Chapters 8-10 shows the impact God's Word has on those who chose to obey it.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Esther

Author: possibly Mordecai

Date: 470–460 B.C.

Recipients: the Jews of the dispersion in various parts of the Persian Empire

Key word: the Jews (43 times)

Summary: The account of a Jewish girl who becomes queen of Persia and saves her people from destruction.

Theme: God’s providential care for His people.

Key verses: Esther 4:14

Notes:

The book covers about 11 years, 483–474 B.C. from the 3rd year to the 12th year of the reign of Ahasuerus.

This is the last of the Historical books in the Old Testament.

Unlike any other book in the Bible, the name of God is not mentioned and it makes no mention of prayer.

The book vividly contrasts the humility of Mordecai and the pride of Haman.

The book describes the origin of the annual Jewish feast of Purim. (Chs. 9-10)

Purim is still celebrated by the Jews today at which the book of Esther is read. During the reading, the Jews cheer at the name of Mordecai and hiss when Haman’s name is read.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Job

Author: unknown (possibly Job)

Date: about 2000–1800 B.C. (during the time of Abraham, it is probably the oldest book in the Bible)

Recipients: not noted

Key word: affliction (11 times)

Summary: The account of Job whose physical suffering reveals God’s working behind the scenes.

Key verses: Job 2:3; 42:10

Theme: Why do the righteous suffer?

Notes:

Job is the first of the Poetic books, which account for about twenty percent of the Old Testament.

The land of Uz (Job 1:1) was an area east of the Jordan River.

The book refutes the recurring idea espoused by Job’s three friends that his physical problems were a consequence of his sin. The book reveals that Job’s afflictions were a test rather than a punishment.

Job 13:15 shows Job’s heart for God in spite of the taunting of his friends and family.

The book may include the first mention of the resurrection. (19:25-27)

Job lived an additional 140 years after what is recorded in this book. (42:16)

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Psalms

Author: of the 150 psalms only about 100 mention the author's name (David=73, Asaph=12, Korah=10, Solomon=2, Heman=1, Ethan=1, Moses=1)

Date: from Moses (1440 B.C.) to the Babylonian captivity (580 B.C.)

Key words: praise (176 times) blessed (92 times)

Summary: The book provides inspired examples of worship and praise of God.

Key verses: Psalms 33:1-4

Notes:

It is not known who collected the psalms and divided them into five books: Book 1 (1-41), Book 2 (42-72), Book 3 (73-89), Book 4 (90-106), Book 5 (107-150). Each book ends with a doxology

The Psalms were originally accompanied by music. That is why they are referred to as lyric poetry. It was the hymn book of the second Temple.

Over one fourth of the Old Testament quotations in the New Testament are from this book. Only Isaiah is quoted more often.

Psalms 120-134, "psalms of ascent", were sung by those approaching Jerusalem for the feasts.

The "Messianic Psalms" refer to Christ: 2, 16, 22, 41, 45, 72, 110, 132, and others.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Proverbs

Author: most of the proverbs were written by King Solomon

Date: 970–930 B.C.

Recipient: probably Solomon's son Rehoboam, with a broad application to all

Key words: wise, wisdom, wisely (119 times); my son (22 times); instruction, instruct (26 times); fear of the Lord (14 times)

Summary: Godly wisdom for how to live in a sin-cursed world.

Key verses: Proverbs 1:4; 9:10

Notes:

Understanding the book depends upon an understanding of the difference between *knowledge*, the gathering of information, and *wisdom*, the appropriate application of information.

Agur, chapter 30, and King Lemuel, chapter 31, may have been other names for King Solomon.

I Kings 4:32 says that Solomon spoke 3,000 proverbs and composed 1,005 songs.

In spite of his wisdom, in the latter part of his life Solomon strayed from God. His son, Rehoboam followed his example rather than his instruction.

In Jewish tradition husbands quote Proverbs 31:10-31 to their wives on sabbath evenings.

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I Kings 4:32 says that Solomon spoke 3,000 proverbs and composed 1,005 songs.

In spite of his wisdom, in the latter part of his life Solomon strayed from God. His son, Rehoboam followed his example rather than his instruction.

In Jewish tradition husbands quote Proverbs 31:10-31 to their wives on sabbath evenings.

BOOK OVERVIEW

Ecclesiastes

Author: King Solomon

Date: 935 B.C.

Recipient: not specifically stated

Key words: wisdom (28 times); wise (21 times); vanity (37 times); under the sun (31 times)

Summary: The writer, who has experienced all that life has to offer, concludes that what matters most is our relationship to God.

Key verses: Ecclesiastes 1:12-14; 2:11; 12:13-14

Notes:

In Proverbs *wisdom* refers to Godly wisdom, but in Ecclesiastes *wisdom* refers to human wisdom.

In Ecclesiastes *vanity* refers to futility or emptiness rather than pride and arrogance.

Solomon refers to himself as “the preacher (teacher).” (Ecclesiastes 1:1)

Ecclesiastes 7:20 reinforces the truth of Romans 3:23 in that everyone is a sinner and in need of a Savior.

One must be cautious when drawing life principles from this book. What is presented must be understood in the context of the whole book. For example, “eat, drink, and be merry” (8:15) is not how God wants us to live.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Song of Solomon

Author: King Solomon

Date: 970–950 B.C.

Recipient: not specifically stated

Key words: beloved (32 times), usually the bride speaking of her bridegroom

Summary: A description of the love between a bridegroom and his bride.

Key verse: Song of Solomon 2:16

Notes:

This may be the most significant of Solomon's 1005 songs. In Latin songs are called *canticles*. The book is referred to in Hebrew as ***The Song of Songs***.

There are three ways this book is commonly interpreted:

1) Literally—the account of the love relationship between a husband and his wife.

2) Allegorically—a picture of the love between God and the Jewish people. This is the view that many Jews have held through the centuries.

3) Typical—a picture of the love that Christ has for the Church (the Shulammitte bride). This is a view that has been held by Christians since the early days of the Church.

Nothing in the book suggests that it is to be interpreted in any way but literally; but, as is true of much poetry, people expect it to have more than a superficial meaning.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Isaiah

Author: Isaiah

Date: 740–700 B.C. (before the exile)

Recipients: the residents of Judah, Israel, and surrounding nations

Key words: judgement/judge (52 times); The Holy One of Israel (25 times); comfort/comfortably (18 times)

Summary: Isaiah warned the people that, even though they had a “form of godliness,” they were morally, religiously, and politically corrupt and headed for God’s judgement.

Theme: The justice and grace of God.

Key verses: Isaiah 61:1-3

Notes:

Isaiah is quoted 80 times in the New Testament.

Isaiah 7:14 presents the classic prophecy of Christ’s virgin birth.

Isaiah 9:6-7 is prophetic of Christ’s eventual reign on the throne of David.

Isaiah 52-53 offers a vivid, prophetic description of Jesus as the suffering Savior.

The complete copy of the Book of Isaiah found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (1947) is considered to be the oldest copy of Isaiah (150-125 B.C.) and is the oldest copy of any book in the Bible. The scroll is now housed in the Great Shrine of the Book in the Jerusalem Museum.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Jeremiah

Author: Jeremiah

Date: 626-560 B.C.

Recipients: Judah and Jerusalem

Key words: iniquity/sin/sinned/
transgress/transgression (53 times);
captive/captivity (51 times); evil (81 times);
scatter (14 times)

Summary: The sinfulness of Judah
brings about the Babylonian Captivity.

Key verses: Jeremiah 21:7, 14

Notes:

Jeremiah was very unpopular because he predicted that Jerusalem would fall to the Babylonians and he advised surrender to Nebuchadnezzar.

After the Babylonians captured Jerusalem, they took most of the Jews to Babylon, but they left a small remnant of the poorest of the Jews. The remnant asked Jeremiah to seek God's will as to whether they should flee to Egypt. God, through Jeremiah, warned the remnant not to flee to Egypt where they would be destroyed by sword and famine. The remnant refused God's warning and went to Egypt taking Jeremiah with them. Tradition says that Jeremiah died in Egypt. Some think he may have been stoned by the Jews.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Lamentations

Author: Jeremiah

Date: 586 B.C.

Recipient: Judah and Jerusalem

Key words: Zion (15 times); Jerusalem (7 times); desolate (7 times)

Summary: An expression of the grief of the prophet Jeremiah in witnessing the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of its people.

Key verses: Lamentations 1:1

Notes:

Jeremiah is referred to as the “weeping prophet.” (see Jeremiah 9:1) In the Septuagint the introduction to this book says, “*And it came to pass after Israel was led into the captivity that Jeremiah sat weeping and lamenting this lamentation over Jerusalem.*”

The first four chapters of this book are **acrostic poems**, each verse beginning with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Orthodox Jews read this book on the ninth day of the month Ab, the traditional date of the destruction of Solomon’s temple. Some Jews also read it each week at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.

Jeremiah is a type of Christ who also wept over Jerusalem. (Luke 19:41)

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Ezekiel

Author: Ezekiel

Date: 593-571 B.C.

Recipients: Israeli exiles and some Gentile nations

Key words: “Ye (they, thou) shall know that I am the LORD” (70 times), “Son of man” (91 times, used by Jesus of Himself 79 times)

Summary: The first half of the book reviews the sins of Israel and God’s accompanying judgement, especially upon Jerusalem. This is followed by God’s impending judgment on several Gentile nations. The book concludes with prophecies of a renewed Jerusalem and temple.

Key verses: Ezekiel 36:17-19, 24-28

Notes:

Ezekiel, who was a priest, ministered in Babylon where he had been taken as a captive with Judah’s king Jehoaichin. (597 B.C.) He arrived about 8 years after Daniel and about 12 years before Jerusalem was finally destroyed. (586 B.C.)

The “30 years” in verse 1 is thought by some to be Ezekiel’s age, the age at which the priests began their duties. (Numbers 4:3)

Several times God used Ezekiel as a provocative visual aid to communicate His truths to the Israelites in captivity.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Daniel

Author: Daniel

Date: 606-534 B.C.

Recipients: not specifically stated

Key words: king (183 times), kingdom (55 times), Daniel (74 times)

Summary: The book shows that God is in complete control of His creation and of the governments of the world, with particular attention to “the times of the Gentiles.”

Key verses: Daniel 7:13-14, 17-18

Notes:

Daniel was among the first of the Jewish captives taken to Babylon.(605 B.C.)

He lived during the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus.

He was prominent in the Babylonian and Persian empires.

Daniel 2:4-7:28 was written in Aramaic, while the rest of the book was in Hebrew. Aramaic was common to the Babylonians.

Daniel includes several well-known passages: Daniel’s determination not to defile himself with the “king’s meat,” his interpretation of the great statue made of various materials, his three friends in the fiery furnace, his interpretation of the handwriting on the wall, his experience in the lion’s den, his vision of four beasts, and his vision of the “70 weeks.”

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Hosea

Author: Hosea (means “salvation”)

Date: 785-725 B.C.

Recipients: primarily Israel, the Northern Kingdom, sometimes called Ephraim; and some warnings to Judah

Key words: whoredom (14 times)

Summary: Hosea presents Israel as God’s unfaithful “wife,” who He will chasten but eventually restore.

Key verses: Hosea 3:1; 2:13-14

Notes:

Hosea was a contemporary of Amos and Micah in Israel, and Isaiah in Judah. He was younger than Amos but older than Micah.

God tells Hosea to take to himself an adulterous woman, Gomer, and her children (Hosea 1:2), as an illustration of Israel’s idolatrous relationship with idols.

Hosea does so and Gomer gives him three children; but, then, she returns to her adulterous life.

Finally, God instructs Hosea to restore Gomer to her rightful position of his wife, just as God planned to restore Israel, after they turned from their idolatry and back to Him.

A notable quote from this book: “...for they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind” (Hosea 8:7)

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Jonah

Author: The prophet Jonah (means “a dove”)

Date: 820-804 B.C. (date uncertain)

Recipients: While Jonah’s account focuses on Nineveh, his message was probably for the Northern Kingdom.

Key words: prepared (4 times)

Summary: The wicked city of Nineveh repents and turns to God under the reluctant preaching of God’s prophet Jonah.

Key verse: Jonah 3:10

Notes:

This is one of the most controversial books in the Old Testament primarily because of its miraculous story. Some critics view it as a myth, allegory, or parable. Those same critics reject the fact that Jesus was in the tomb three days and three nights before rising from the dead.

Clearly, Jesus accepted the book as truth. His references to Jonah are found in Matthew 12:38-41, 16:4; and Luke 11:29-32.

The book makes it clear that God’s compassion was not just for the Jews but extended to the Gentiles.

The Greek word that is translated “whale” in Matthew 12:40 (KJV) is more accurately rendered as “big fish” or “large sea creature,” as is done in Jonah 1:17 (KJV).

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Joel

Author: Joel (means “Jehovah is God”)

Date: uncertain, but possibly early 837-756 B.C.

Recipients: the inhabitants of Judah

Key words: Day of the Lord (5 times)

Summary: After a plague of locusts, a sign of God’s impending judgement, the people are urged to turn back to God.

Key verses: Joel 2:28-32

Notes:

The utter devastation by the “army” of locusts is symbolic of the thoroughness with which God will judge in righteousness.

The invasion of locusts and severe drought are symbolic of the armies of Judah’s enemies that will invade and destroy the nation.

In Joel 1:4 four different Hebrew words are used to describe the locust. It is unknown whether these words describe different kinds of locusts or describe the locust at various stages in their development.

Joel 2:28-32 speaks of the outpouring of God’s Spirit which we see come to reality in the book of Acts—the beginning of the Church and the spread of the Gospel. It’s as if Paul in Acts 16:31 is quoting Joel 2:32A.

Chapter three foreshadows future deliverance and the millennial reign of Christ.

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Key verses: Joel 2:28-32

Notes:

The utter devastation by the “army” of locusts is symbolic of the thoroughness with which God will judge in righteousness.

The invasion of locusts and severe drought are symbolic of the armies of Judah’s enemies that will invade and destroy the nation.

In Joel 1:4 four different Hebrew words are used to describe the locust. It is unknown whether these words describe different kinds of locusts or describe the locust at various stages in their development.

Joel 2:28-32 speaks of the outpouring of God’s Spirit which we see come to reality in the book of Acts—the beginning of the Church and the spread of the Gospel. It’s as if Paul in Acts 16:31 is quoting Joel 2:32A.

Chapter three foreshadows future deliverance and the millennial reign of Christ.

BOOK OVERVIEW

Joel

Author: Joel (means “Jehovah is God”)

Date: uncertain, but possibly early 837-756 B.C.

Recipients: the inhabitants of Judah

Key words: Day of the Lord (5 times)

Summary: After a plague of locusts, a sign of God’s impending judgement, the people are urged to turn back to God.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Amos

Author: Amos (means “burden”)

Date: 810-785 B.C., during the reign of Uzziah (Southern Kingdom) and Jeroboam (Northern Kingdom)

Recipients: Israel, the Northern Kingdom

Key words: transgression (12 times), transgress (1 time), “I will not turn away the punishment thereof” (8 times)

Summary: The coming judgement of God on sin, both of Jews and Gentiles.

Key verses: Amos 4:11-12

Notes:

Amos was a contemporary Hosea and possibly Joel and Jonah.

Although the people of Israel were enjoying material prosperity, they had fallen away from their commitment to God. Amos specifically identifies their sins as idolatry, luxury, revelry, debauchery, oppression, extortion, bribery, and injustice.

Amos 6:4 speaks of “beds of ivory.” Ivory was not native to Palestine, but was cherished by wealthy Jews. It has been found at many archaeological sites.

Chapters 1-2 present God’s inevitable judgement on six Gentile nations and ends with His judgement on Judah and Israel.

The book ends with the promise of future blessing for Israel. (Amos 9:11-15)

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Obadiah

Author: Obadiah (means “worshiper of Jehovah”) This is a common name but apparently has no connection with any other Obadiah mentioned in the Old Testament.

Date: 586-585 B.C.

Recipients: Edom, south of the Dead sea (The nation that originates from Esau)

Key words: Edom & Esau (9 times), “cut off” (3 times)

Summary: The book warns the Edomites of the judgement of God that is to come upon them because of their pride and malicious treatment of Judah.

Key verse: Obadiah 15

Notes:

Edom has many mountains over 5,000 feet. Some Edomites cut dwellings out of the stone bluffs, which Obadiah refers to in verses three and four. Petra, which is now in Southern Jordan, is located in the area which was once controlled by the Edomites.

Egypt also utilized the area for the mining of copper.

King David conquered Edom (II Samuel 8:14), but by 734 B.C. it was under the control of Assyria.

Obadiah is one of the few prophets who is not quoted in the New Testament.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Micah

Author: The prophet Micah (means “who is like unto Jehovah”)

Date: 749-697 B.C. (he was contemporary with Hosea and Isaiah)

Recipients: He addresses both the Southern and the Northern Kingdoms.

Key words: hear (9 times), gather/assemble (9 times), desolation (4 times)

Summary: Micah proclaims God’s judgement on all of Israel and its restoration through God’s grace.

Key verses: Micah 6:8

Notes:

Micah’s home, Moresheth, was located just a few miles west of Gath. Today, its exact location is uncertain.

It is from Micah 5:2 that Herod’s advisers determined that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, King David’s birthplace (John 7:42). Much of the story of Ruth also took place there.

Beating “swords into plowshares” (4:3) speaks of a time of peace, quite the opposite of Joel 3:10 where plowshares were beaten into swords. In those days plows did not have plowshares as we know them but simply had a metal tip.

Micah may have walked the streets of Jerusalem barefoot as a sign of mourning, much like wearing sackcloth and ashes. (1:8)

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Nahum

Author: The prophet Nahum (means “comforter”)

Date: 630 B.C. (About 100 years after Nineveh turned to God in response to the preaching of Jonah)

Recipients: Primarily Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. Judah is also promised deliverance from Assyria.

Key words: vengeance (revenge) (3 times)

Summary: Nahum declares God’s coming judgement on the sin of Nineveh and the reason for that judgement.

Key verses: Nahum 3:5-7

Notes:

The location of Nahum’s home, Elkosh, is not known today.

The fortified walls of Nineveh enclosed about 1,700 acres.

The city palace covered about three large city blocks.

In the midst of Nahum’s declaration of God’s anger against sin, he reminds his hearers that God is good to those who trust Him. (Nahum 1:7)

The book of Nahum is basically two poems: the first focuses on the greatness of God; the second on the destruction of Nineveh.

Nineveh fell in 612 B.C.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Habakkuk

Author: The prophet Habakkuk (means “embrace”)

Date: 610-599 B.C. (Just before the Babylonian captivity)

Recipients: Not indicated, but probably Judah.

Summary: The book shows the holiness and righteousness God, Who must and will punish sin.

Key verses: Habakkuk 2:4

Notes:

The Bible tells us nothing else about Habakkuk and his life.

Habakkuk 2:4 contains the classic theme of the Reformation, “the just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:17)

Jehoiakim was probably king in Judea as Habakkuk was prophesying.

Habakkuk asks God two questions: First, “Why aren’t the wicked men of Judah punished?”(1:1-4) God answers by saying He will use the Chaldean’s to punish Judah. (1:5-11) Second, “Why use a wicked nation like the Chaldeans to punish Judah?” (1:12-2:1) God answers that in the end the Chaldeans will also be judged. (2:2-20)

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Zephaniah

Author: The prophet Zephaniah (means “He whom Jehovah has hidden”)

Date: 630 B.C. (during King Josiah’s reign and after the Northern Kingdom—Israel—was taken into captivity)

Recipients: Judah and Jerusalem.

Summary: Zephaniah warns of impending judgment and comforts the faithful remnant.

Key verses: Zephaniah 1:7, 12

Key words: Day of the Lord (20), desolation (7), remnant (4)

Notes:

Zephaniah was probably the great-great-grandson of Judah’s king Hezekiah. Apparently, Zephaniah was familiar with the political leaders of Judah.

The book foreshadows “The Day of the Lord” mentioned in the New Testament, when God will reestablish His kingdom on earth.

The book makes it clear that the worship of God and idolatry do not mix. (1:4-6)

Pagan offerings were often made on altars that were erected on rooftops. (1:5)

Tradition says that Zephaniah was associated with Huldah the prophetess (II Chronicles 34:20-30) and Jeremiah in the initiation of the reformation of the kingdom.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Haggai

Author: The prophet Haggai (means “my feast”)

Date: Between August and December 520 B.C.

Recipients: The Jews in Jerusalem, especially their governor Zerubbabel and Joshua the High Priest

Summary: Haggai encourages those in Jerusalem to finish rebuilding the temple.

Key verses: Haggai 1:14; 2:9

Key words: The Lord’s house (this house, mine house, etc.) (8), consider (5)

Notes:

Zerubbabel left Babylon for Jerusalem with almost 50,000 Jews in 538 B.C. (Ezra 2:64)

Haggai prophesied several years after the Jews had returned to Jerusalem from exile. They had laid the foundation of the second temple (Ezra 3:10), but they were opposed by the local inhabitants, became discouraged, and stopped their work.

Although the temple was unfinished, the Jews had built nice homes for themselves. (1:4, 9)

Because of Haggai’s notes, this is one of the most precisely dated books in the Bible.

According to Jewish tradition, Haggai was a Levite.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Zechariah

Author: the prophet Zechariah (his name means “Jehovah remembers”)

Date: 520-518 B.C.

Recipients: The Jews in Jerusalem who had returned from Babylon.

Summary: Haggai prompts those in Jerusalem to finish rebuilding the temple.

Key verses: Zechariah 9:9-10

Key words: The Word of the Lord (my words) (14), The Lord of hosts (52)

Notes:

Zechariah wrote 18 years after the Jews had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon.

Zechariah’s grandfather, Iddo, was a priest who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel.

Darius was the king in Babylon at the time Zechariah prophesied. (This is not the Darius of Daniel’s day. He was a Mede. The Darius of Zechariah’s day was a Persian.)

Chapters 1-6 include ten visions that Zechariah received from God.

Chapters 9-11 are prophetic of Christ’s first coming and His rejection by His people.

Chapters 12-14 are prophetic of Christ’s second coming when He will be accepted by the Jews and set up His kingdom.

According to the Talmud, he was a member of the Great Synagogue, the antecedent of the Sanhedrin.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Malachi

Author: the prophet Malachi (his name means “my messenger” or “messenger of Jehovah”)

Date: 445-397 B.C.

Recipients: The Jews in Jerusalem who had returned from Babylon.

Summary: Malachi writes about God’s faithfulness and his people’s faithlessness.

Key verses: Malachi 3:9-10

Key words: ye say (11 times)

Notes:

The temple worship had become nothing more than mere ritual rather than the true worship of God.

Some believe that Malachi is not a person’s name, but a title. The Septuagint, the ancient Greek version of the Old Testament, renders verse 1 as, “The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by the hand of his messenger.”

The book is a departure from the typical prophetic approach, “Thus saith the Lord,” to more of a conversation between God and His people, “But you ask.”

The book is quoted several times in the New Testament: Matthew 11:10, 14; Mark 1:2; Luke 1:17; Romans 9:13.

Fuller’s soap (launderer’s soap) in 3:2 was used for cleansing and “fulling” (shrinking or thickening) new wool cloth.

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Malachi

Author: the prophet Malachi (his name means “my messenger” or “messenger of Jehovah”)

Date: 445-397 B.C.

Recipients: The Jews in Jerusalem who had returned from Babylon.

Summary: Malachi writes about God’s faithfulness and his people’s faithlessness.

Key verses: Malachi 3:9-10

Key words: ye say (11 times)

Notes:

The temple worship had become nothing more than mere ritual rather than the true worship of God.

Some believe that Malachi is not a person’s name, but a title. The Septuagint, the ancient Greek version of the Old Testament, renders verse 1 as, “The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by the hand of his messenger.”

The book is a departure from the typical prophetic approach, “Thus saith the Lord,” to more of a conversation between God and His people, “But you ask.”

The book is quoted several times in the New Testament: Matthew 11:10, 14; Mark 1:2; Luke 1:17; Romans 9:13.

Fuller’s soap (launderer’s soap) in 3:2 was used for cleansing and “fulling” (shrinking or thickening) new wool cloth.

BOOK OVERVIEW

Matthew

1. The book was written by...
Matthew Mark Luke John Paul
2. The book was written about AD...
36 59 68 87
3. Which of the following statements are true of the writer of this Gospel?
A) he lived in Capernaum
B) he was a tax collector
C) he was also called Levi
D) he was one of the 12 Apostles
4. In this book Jesus is presented as...
A) the Son of God
B) a Servant
C) a King
D) the Son of Man
5. The accounts of which of the following are found **ONLY** in Matthew?
A) Jesus taken to Egypt
B) the earthquake at the crucifixion
C) feeding of the 5,000
D) the angel appears to Joseph
E) the resurrected Jesus appears to 500
6. Matthew was the Gospel especially written for the...
A) Romans
B) Jews
C) Greeks
D) world

BOOK OVERVIEW

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Matthew Mark Luke John Paul
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6. Matthew was the Gospel especially written for the...
A) Romans
B) Jews
C) Greeks
D) world

7. This book ends...

- A) with Jesus near Jerusalem
- B) with Jesus in Heaven
- C) with Jesus in Samaria
- D) with Jesus in Galilee

8. The author emphasizes...

- A) the power Jesus used for miracles
- B) how Jesus fulfilled OT prophecy
- C) the humility of Christ
- D) the importance of the Apostles

9. The genealogy of Jesus in this book...

- A. goes from Joseph to Adam
- B. goes from Joseph to Abraham
- C. goes from Joseph to David

10. T F The Gospel makes very few references to the Old Testament.

11. T F The baptism of Jesus is NOT mentioned in this book.

12. T F The book begins with the genealogy of Mary

13. T F This the longest of the four Gospels.

14. T F A copy of this book was NOT found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

15. T F People encouraged Jesus to go to Matthew's house to eat.

Answers:

1) Matthew; 2) 68; 3) A, B, C, D; 4) C; 5) A, B, D; 6) B; 7) D; 8) B; 9) B; 10) F; 11) F; 12) F; 13) T; 14) T; 15) F

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Mark

1. The book was written by...
Matthew Mark Luke John Paul
2. The book was written about AD...
60s 70s 80s 90s
3. In this book Jesus is presented as...
A) the Son of God
B) a Servant
C) a King
D) the Son of Man
4. The account of which of the following is **NOT** found in the book of Mark?
A) a genealogy of Jesus
B) feeding of the 5,000
C) Jesus taken to Egypt
D) the baptism of Jesus
5. Which of the following statements is **true** of the writer of this Gospel?
A) he was a gentile
B) he was a nephew of Barnabas
C) he was also called John
D) he was one of the 12 Apostles
6. It appears that the primary source for the information in this Gospel was...
A) Paul
B) James
C) Peter
D) Barnabas

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8. The disciples often met...

- A) at the home of Mark's mother, Mary
- B) at the empty tomb of Jesus
- C) in Nazareth
- D) in the garden of Gethsemane

9. T F Mark is the shortest of the four Gospels.

10. T F This Gospel contains very few quotes from the Old Testament

11. T F Many Bible scholars believe that Mark was the first Gospel to be written.

12. T F Paul became angry with Mark when he did not complete the first missionary journey.

13. T F Eventually, Paul and Mark were reconciled to each other.

14. T F Mark is the only Gospel that tells us that at Jesus' death the veil of temple was torn from top to bottom.

1) Mark; 2) 60s; 3) B; 4) A, C; 5) B, C; 6) C; 7) A; 8) A; 9) T; 10) T; 11) T; 12) T; 13) T; 14) F

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Answers:

BOOK OVERVIEW

Luke

1. The book was written by...
Matthew Mark Luke John Paul
2. The book was written about AD...
60-62 70-73 82-83 91-94
3. In this book Jesus is presented as...
A) the Son of God
B) a Servant
C) a King
D) the Son of Man
4. The account of which of the following is found **ONLY** in the book of Luke?
A) the birth of Jesus
B) Jesus' baptism
C) the parable of the good Samaritan
D) the rich man and Lazarus
E) Jesus visits the temple at 12 years old
5. Which of the following statements are true of the writer of this Gospel?
A) he was a gentile
B) he was a physician
C) he was an old man when he met Paul
D) he was one of the 12 Apostles
6. The genealogy of Jesus in this book...
A) goes from Joseph to Adam
B) goes from Joseph to Abraham
C) goes from Joseph to David
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BOOK OVERVIEW OF LUKE (continued)

7. Luke is writing his account of Jesus to...
Christians in Rome Paul Theophilus

8. This book ends...
- A) with Jesus near Jerusalem
 - B) with Jesus in Heaven
 - C) with Jesus in Samaria
 - D) with Jesus in Galilee

9. Draw a line to link the phrase with the word that completes the phrase:

the rich young	Samaritan
the prodigal	coin
the lost	ruler
the good	son

10. T F Only Luke tells about Simeon and Anna in the temple with baby Jesus.

11. T F Luke is the only Gospel that tells what Jesus, Moses, and Elijah talked about at His transfiguration.

12. T F Luke is the only Gospel that tells about the birth of John the Baptist.

13 T F Luke is the only Gospel which includes the parable of the sower.

14. T F This is the only Gospel that mentions the census that required Mary and Joseph to travel to Bethlehem.

Answers:

(1) Luke; (2) 61-62; (3) D; (4) A, C, D, E; (5) A, B; (6) A; (7) Theophilus; (8) B; (9) young/ruler, prodigal/son, lost/coin, good Samaritan; (10) T; (11) T; (12) T; (13) F; (14) T

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BOOK OVERVIEW

John

1. The book was written by...
Matthew Mark Luke John Paul
2. The book was written about AD...
50-6 60-70 70-80 80-90
3. In this book Jesus is presented as...?
A) the Son of God
B) a Servant
C) a King
D) the Son of Man
4. The account of which of the following is found **ONLY** in the book of John?
A) Jesus turning the water to wine
B) the raising of Lazarus from the dead
C) Jesus washing the disciples' feet
D) Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit
E) the prayer of Jesus in the Garden
5. Which of the following statements are true of the writer of this Gospel?
A) he was one of "the sons of thunder"
B) he was a fisherman by trade
C) he wrote four other books in the NT
D) he was the last of the Apostles to die
6. Which of the following would serve well as the key verse for this Gospel?
12:32 14:6 6:38 20:31
7. The book begins with...
A) a genealogy of Jesus
B) the eternal nature of Jesus
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- 8. At the end of this book...
 - A) Jesus is in Jerusalem
 - B) Jesus is in Heaven
 - C) Jesus is in Gethsemane
 - D) Jesus is in Galilee
- 9. In this Gospel Jesus refers to Himself in which of these ways?
 - A) the Bread of Life
 - B) the Light of the World
 - C) the Way, the Truth, and the Life
 - D) the Good Shepherd
 - E) the Vine
- 10. T F John was referred to as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”
- 11. T F Only this book records the visit of Nicodemus
- 12. T F This Gospel tells about the baptism of Jesus.
- 13. T F This Gospel describes the temptation of Jesus by Satan
- 14. T F In this Gospel, the writer never refers to himself by name.
- 15. T F Most of the book is devoted to the last few days of Jesus on earth.

Answers:

- (1) John; (2) 80-90; (3) A; (4) A, B, C, D, E; (5) A, B, C, D; (6) 20:31; (7) B; (8) D; (9) A, B, C, D, E; (10) T; (11) T; (12) F (13) F; (14) T; (15) T

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Acts

1. The book was written by...
Matthew Mark Luke John Paul
2. The book was written about AD...
63 76 86 95
3. Who was the man the Apostles chose to replace Judas?
Apollos Justus Matthias Jared
4. What is the basic content of the book?
A) Christ, after His resurrection
B) biographies of the Apostles
C) history of church in Jerusalem
D) beginning and growth of the Church
5. Who preached the Gospel to the first Gentiles?
Paul Peter Timothy Philip
6. Which chapters contain an account of Paul's conversion experience?
9 12 22 26
7. Draw a line to link the person with their mate or coworker.

Ananias	Bernice
Paul	Priscilla
Aquilla	Sapphira
Agrippa	Barnabas
- 8) The first Christian martyr mentioned by name in Acts was...
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1 2 3 4
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BOOK OVERVIEW OF ACTS (continued)

9. In which city did the people begin to worship Paul and Barnabus as gods?
Berea Lystra Iconium Derbe
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12. Which significant event is in Acts 2?
A) the conversion of Paul
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13. How many missionary journeys did Paul take (including his trip to Rome)?
1 2 3 4
14. Which might be a better title for the book of Acts?
A. The Acts of Paul and Barnabas
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Answers:

(1) Luke; (2) 63; (3) Matthias; (4) D; (5) Peter; (6) 9, 22, 26; (7) Ananias/ Sapphira, Paul/Barnabas, Aquilla/Priscilla, Agrippa/Bernice; (8) Stephen; (9) Lystra; (10) Lystra; (11) Dorcas & Eutychus; (12) B (13) 4; (14) B; (15) 3

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Romans

Author: the Apostle Paul

Date: about 57-58 A.D.

Recipients: Christians in Rome

Summary: The book presents the foundational doctrines of the Church. It is sometimes called the “Constitution of the Gospel.”

Key verses: Romans 1:16-17

Key words: justify (justification) (17), faith (37); Christ (39)

Notes:

No one knows who established the church in Rome. It consisted predominately of Gentile believers, but it also included Jewish converts.

This book contains what is often called “The Roman’s Road,” a classic soul-winning sequence of verses that leads to salvation:

- Romans 3:23; 3:10-18 “all are sinners”
- Romans 6:23 “sin brings death”
- Romans 5:8 “God provides a solution”
- Romans 10:9 “salvation received by faith”
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It is believed that Paul wrote this letter in Corinth and it was taken to Rome by Phoebe. (16:1-2)

Chapter 8 refers to the Holy Spirit nineteen times.

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I Corinthians

Author: the Apostle Paul

Date: 56-57 A.D.

Recipients: The church at Corinth. Paul assumed the letter would circulate in the area around Corinth. (I Corinthians 1:1)

Summary: Paul seeks to correct the inappropriate behavior of the Believers in the church at Corinth.

Key verses: I Corinthians 14:33, 40

Key words: spirit/Spirit (35), wise/wisdom (30), tongue/tongues (22), spiritual (16)

Notes:

Paul first entered Corinth, where he stayed for a year and a half, during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1).

This letter was probably written in Ephesus while Paul was on his third missionary journey. (I Corinthians 16:8)

Paul had written an earlier letter to the Corinthians and they had written to him. (I Corinthians 5:9, 7:1)

Corinth, an important Greek city, had a population of 600-700 thousand people. A major attraction was its temple to Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty, which was served by several hundred women prostitutes.

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II Corinthians

Author: the Apostle Paul

Date: A.D. 56-57 (shortly after the writing of I Corinthians)

Recipients: The believers at Corinth, to be shared in Achaia (southern Greece).

Summary: In addition to expanding upon the instructions he gave in his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul defends his Apostleship and the ministry to which God had called him.

Key verses: II Corinthians 4:5, 5:20–21

Key words: ministry (in various forms) (18 times)

Notes:

This is one of the most personal of all of Paul's letters.

Paul wrote this letter from somewhere in Macedonia during his third missionary journey.

Paul places special emphasis upon the Corinthian believers not being "unequally yoked with unbelievers." (II Corinthians 6:14-7:1)

In chapters eight and nine Paul encourages the Corinthians to be generous in their giving "not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Galatians

Author: the Apostle Paul

Date: A.D. 55-56

Recipients: Various groups of Believers in the Roman province of Galatia

Summary: Paul makes a clear defense of the truth that “*the just shall live by faith*” and not by works. (Galatians 3:10) As a result, this book is sometimes referred to as the ***Magna Carta of the Church***.

Key verses: Galatians 5:1

Key words: law (32 times), faith (21 times)

Notes:

Paul addresses the problem of Judaizers, those who expected Believers to live by the Mosaic law **in addition to** their life of faith in Jesus Christ, a view which is held by some religious sects even today.

Galatia, in Asia Minor, included Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, cities Paul visited during his first missionary journey. (Acts 13:14–14:21)

The Galatian people were originally Gauls who had migrated from western Europe.

The Greek word for “mark” referred to a brand that was used to indicate ownership of slaves or animals. (Galatians 6:17)

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Ephesians

Author: the Apostle Paul

Date: A.D. 62 (while Paul was a prisoner in Rome)

Recipients: the Believers in Ephesus

Summary: The daily walk and heavenly position of the members of the Body of Christ

Key verses: Ephesians 1:3, 4:1, 13

Key words: in (indicative of our position, "in Christ," "in the heavenlies") (93 times), grace (12 times)

Notes:

Ephesus was the chief city in the Roman province of Asia (now Asia Minor).

Paul spent about three years establishing the church in Ephesus. (Acts 20:31) The church there was also built through the ministries of Timothy, Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos. Tradition indicates that the Apostle John ministered there in the latter years of his life.

Ephesus was at the center of the trade routes that attracted people from all over the known world.

By the first century Ephesus was a dying city, as its harbor was filling with silt. Commerce based on the cult of the Greek goddess Artemis, Diana of the Romans, was what sustained it.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Philippians

Author: the Apostle Paul

Date: A.D. 63-64 (probably while Paul was a prisoner in Rome)

Recipients: “all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi” (Philippians 1:1)

Summary: Paul thanks the Believers for their faithful support and encourages them to continue emulating Christ.

Key verses: Philippians 4:4

Key words: joy (rejoice) (18 times)

Notes:

Paul visited Philippi for the first time on his second missionary journey, about A.D. 51.

Philippi, an ancient city of Macedonia, was renamed after Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, who annexed it in 356 B.C. It later became a Roman colony. Philippi means “pertaining to Philip.” Its people were proud of their Roman citizenship. (see Acts 16:20-21)

Unlike many of the epistles, the book addresses no particular doctrinal error among the Believers in Philippi.

Paul sent this letter from Rome to Philippi, about 700 miles, by Epaphroditus, who had been sent by the Philippians to help Paul. (see Philippians 2:25–30)

Philippi was the first European city to receive the Gospel. (see Acts 16:9-15)

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Colossians

Author: the Apostle Paul

Date: A.D. 62 (probably while Paul was a prisoner in Rome)

Recipients: “the saints and faithful brethren in Christ Jesus which are at Colosse” (Colossians 1:2)

Summary: the supremacy of Jesus Christ

Key verses: Colossians 1:18; 2:10

Key words: head (3 times)

Notes:

There is no record in the book of Acts of Paul visiting Colosse. Apparently, the church was started by Paul’s fellowworker Epaphras, probably while Paul was in Ephesus on his third missionary journey.

This was the hometown of Philemon. Colossians 4:9 tells of Onesimus, his run-away slave, who Paul is returning to him.

Colosse was a large city on the Lycus River in Phrygia, an area in what we now call Asia Minor. It was located about 100 miles east of Ephesus and about 11 miles east of Laodicea.

In this letter Paul confronts errors that were creeping into the church in the area around Colosse (taboos about food, confusion about holy days, devotion to angelic beings, and early Gnostic heresies) by proclaiming the supremacy of Christ.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

I Thessalonians

Author: the Apostle Paul

Date: A.D. 52

Recipients: “the church of the Thessalonians” (I Thessalonians 1:1)

Summary: the second coming of Christ

Key verses: I Thessalonians 1:9–10

Key words: coming (of Christ, 4 times), comfort (6 times)

Notes:

When Paul writes of “we,” he is undoubtedly referring to Silas and Timothy, who are with him. (1:2, 5, 8, 9; 2:2)

From Athens Paul had sent Timothy to see how the church at Thessalonica was doing. Paul was in Corinth by the time Timothy returned and this letter is written in response to Timothy’s report. (3:1-2)

The church in Thessalonica was established during Paul’s second missionary journey. Paul spent only about three weeks in the city. (Acts 17:1-10)

This epistle is one of the earliest writings of Paul that we have today.

Apparently many in the church were confused about the return of Christ. Some were concerned that loved ones who had died would miss Christ’s return and others had stopped working and were idly waiting for Christ’s return.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

II Thessalonians

Author: the Apostle Paul

Date: A.D. 52

Recipients: “the church of the Thessalonians” (II Thessalonians 1:1)

Summary: the day of the Lord

Key verses: II Thessalonians 1:7b–10

Notes:

This letter was probably written in response to the report that Paul received from the Thessalonians after they received his first letter.

Apparently, Paul’s first letter did not clear up the matter of Christ’s return; so he gives further instruction concerning the subject.

Paul encourages the Believers by assuring them that God will render justice upon those who are persecuting them.

Apparently Paul dictated some of his letters; but, as is noted in II Thessalonians 3:17, sometimes he concluded the letter with a note in his own handwriting.

Until the New Testament was completed, the teachings of Christianity were passed on by word of mouth, the “traditions” mentioned in II Thessalonians 2:15.

Paul uses his own example of working rather than being idle and living off of the work of others. (II Thessalonians 3:6-10, see also Acts 18:2-3)

BOOK OVERVIEW

II Thessalonians

Author: the Apostle Paul

Date: A.D. 52

Recipients: “the church of the Thessalonians” (II Thessalonians 1:1)

Summary: the day of the Lord

Key verses: II Thessalonians 1:7b–10

Notes:

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BOOK OVERVIEW

I Timothy

Author: the Apostle Paul

Date: A.D. 64-5 (probably sometime between Paul's two imprisonments in Rome)

Recipient: Timothy, "my own son in the faith" (I Timothy 1:2)

Summary: guidance for a young man to help him properly lead the church

Key verse: I Timothy 3:15

Key words: doctrine (8 times), godliness (8 times), teach/teacher (7 times)

Notes:

Paul met Timothy in Lystra during his first missionary journey. Under Paul's ministry Timothy became a Christian and was a devoted disciple of Paul throughout his life. Paul thought of him as his "son."

Timothy had a Greek father and a devout Jewish mother and grandmother.

This is the first of three letters that are commonly referred to as the "pastoral epistles," I & II Timothy and Titus.

Timothy was in Ephesus, when he received this letter.

This book gives the clearest instructions as to the character and qualifications of those who would be leaders in the church.

Paul admonishes Timothy to focus upon "sound doctrine" rather than the "old wives' fables" espoused by false teachers.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

II Timothy

Author: the Apostle Paul

Date: A.D. 67 (probably during Paul's final imprisonment in Rome)

Recipient: Timothy, "my dearly beloved son" (II Timothy 1:2)

Summary: the true minister of Jesus Christ, the servant of the Lord

Key verses: II Timothy 4:1-5

Key words: good (5 times)

Notes:

Knowing that his life may be short, Paul uses this letter to ask Timothy to join him in Rome. (II Timothy 4:9, 11, 13, 21)

In Timothy's day, the "scriptures" were what we have as the Old Testament. They did not include those writings which are referred to as the Apocrypha. Although God was revealing new truth to Christians at that time, what we have as the New Testament, we should be reminded of how important the Old Testament has been and is to Christianity. It was the Old Testament that Jesus used to reveal Himself as the Messiah.

Even while Paul was alive, he was aware that the churches that he founded and disciplined would be infiltrated with doctrinal error. His concern is confirmed in the letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Titus

Author: the Apostle Paul

Date: A.D. 64-65

Recipient: “Titus, mine own son after the common faith” (Titus 1:4)

Summary: the consistent godly life that should be true of the Believer

Key verses: Titus 2:11-14

Key words: good (11 times), good works (5 times), sound (5 times)

Notes:

Titus was Greek by birth. (Galatians 2:3) He is not mentioned in the book of Acts, but he was apparently led to the Lord by Paul. He was a faithful co-worker with Paul who sent him on various missions to serve the churches that Paul had established.

Titus went with Paul and Barnabus to the council in Jerusalem, (Acts 15:1-35, Galatians 2:1)

Titus is known for his service to the church on the island of Crete (Titus 1:5), where it is assumed he died.

Paul used Titus to show that a Gentile did not have to follow the Jewish law to become a complete Christian. (Galatians 2:1-5) That is why Titus 3:5 is so important.

Paul gives clear instructions to Titus as to the kinds of leaders that the church should have. (Titus 1:5-9)

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Philemon

Author: the Apostle Paul

Date: A.D. 64-65

Recipient: Philemon (Philemon 1:1)

Summary: the reconciliation of a runaway slave with his Christian master

Key verses: Philemon 17-19

Notes:

Paul's salutation is also addressed to Apphia, the wife of Philemon, and their son Archippus.

It appears that Philemon was a leader in the church at Colosse and had come to know the Lord through the ministry of Paul.

Apparently, Onesimus not only ran away from his master, but he also stole from him. While Onesimus was in Rome he came under the ministry of the Apostle Paul and became a Christian. The life of Onesimus was so changed that Paul wanted to keep him in Rome, but he felt obligated to return him to his master.

Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus with forgiveness and promised to repay Philemon whatever Onesimus had stolen.

Onesimus means "profitable."

Tradition says that Philemon and his family were stoned to death during Nero's persecution.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Hebrews

Author: uncertain (possibly the Apostle Paul)

Date: A.D. 63-68

Recipients: A group of Jewish Christians that the writer knew (location unknown)

Summary: the supremacy of Jesus Christ as our High Priest

Key verses: Hebrews 4:14-15

Key words: perfection (11 times), eternal/forever (13 times), Heaven (16 times), better (12 times), faith (31 times)

Notes:

The writer shows how Jesus Christ is superior to the prophets (Hebrews 1:1-2) and the angels. (Hebrews 1:3–14)

Although revering Moses, the writer demonstrates how Christ is superior to Moses. (Hebrews 3:1–6)

Hebrews 11–12:2, “the role call of the faithful,” lists several of those who are among the “cloud of witnesses” whose legacy we carry on.

This book was written to Jewish Christians who were prone to revert to Judaism.

The author reassures his readers that Christ’s work is not only superior, but it is also complete, finished, “once for all.” (Hebrews 10:10)

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BOOK OVERVIEW

James

Author: James (“the Lord’s brother”—Galatians 1:19—half-brother of Jesus)

Date: A.D. 45

Recipients: “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (James 1:1)

Summary: one’s faith is demonstrated by a life of obedience to Christ

Key verse: James 2:20

Key words: faith (16 times), works (15 times)

Notes:

This James was **not** the son of Zebedee, one of Jesus’ disciples, the one who may have been a cousin to Jesus.

At first, James, along with the rest of his family, did not believe in their half-brother Jesus (John 7:5); but, after Jesus’ resurrection, James became a believer. Eventually he was the primarily leader in the church at Jerusalem. (Acts 15)

This may have been the first epistle written to Christians.

The message of James is that while we are justified before God by our faith, we are justified before men by our works.

James indicates that the singing of psalms was common among Christians. (James 5:13)

According to Josephus, James was put to death by the High Priest.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

I Peter

Author: the Apostle Peter

Date: A.D. 63

Recipients: Jewish Christians in Asia Minor (I Peter 1:1)

Summary: encouragement to live the Christian life even in trials and persecution

Key verses: I Peter 4:12-13

Key words: suffer/suffering (15 times), glory/glorify (16 times)

Notes:

Peter was a nickname, from the Greek word "*petros*," for Simon. He was also called Cephas, the Aramaic word for rock. He was a fisherman by trade. He was introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew. (John 1:40-42)

Peter had a wife and she travelled with him. (Mark 1:30, I Corinthians 9:5)

Even though only two short letters from the Apostle Peter are included in the New Testament, many Bible scholars believe that much of the information that Mark included in his Gospel was received from Peter. It is believe that Mark travelled with Peter and served as his secretary.

In Peter's day women would weave gold threads and spangles in their hair so they would sparkle and jingle when they moved their heads. (I Peter 3:3)

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BOOK OVERVIEW

II Peter

Author: the Apostle Peter

Date: A.D. 66

Recipients: Jewish Christians in Asia Minor, as was I Peter (II Peter 3:1)

Summary: encouragement to live for Christ in spite of scoffers and false teachers

Key verse: II Peter 2:1

Key words: know/knowledge (9 times), judgment (4 times)

Notes:

This epistle was written shortly before Peter's death. Although the Bible does not record his death, tradition indicates that he was executed during the reign of Nero. There is some archaeological evidence to suggest that Peter became a martyr in Rome.

Although there is no Biblical or historical evidence that Peter was the key leader in the church at Rome, apparently he lived there for a while.

Peter concludes his letter by reminding its readers that knowledge should lead to spiritual growth. (II Peter 3:18)

Peter offers a clear defense of the Divine inspiration of Scripture in II Peter 1:19-21. In II Peter 3:16 he speaks of Paul's writing as being on the same level as the Old Testament scriptures.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

I John

Author: the Apostle John

Date: A.D. 90

Recipients: “you that believe on the name of the Son of God” (I John 5:13)

Summary: assurance to those who believe in Christ that they have eternal life, and instruction as to how to live accordingly

Key verses: I John 5:12-13

Key words: know (35 times), world (23 times), love (21 times), light (6 times)

Notes:

John was the son of Zebedee and the brother of James. (Matthew 4:21)

John was the only disciple that followed Jesus from His betrayal in the garden to his crucifixion on Calvary.

I John 4:2–3 refutes a belief that was held by the Gnostics of John’s day. They believed that “Christ” was only a spirit that came upon Jesus at His baptism and left Him at the crucifixion. Thus, they believed that it was Jesus only, not Christ, who died on the cross. Others believed that Jesus was only a spirit.

The Gnostics also believed that the God of creation was an inferior god, because they believed that the material world was inferior. The Gnostics claimed to have secret knowledge about God.

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Key words: know (35 times), world (23 times), love (21 times), light (6 times)

Notes:

John was the son of Zebedee and the brother of James. (Matthew 4:21)

John was the only disciple that followed Jesus from His betrayal in the garden to his crucifixion on Calvary.

I John 4:2–3 refutes a belief that was held by the Gnostics of John’s day. They believed that “Christ” was only a spirit that came upon Jesus at His baptism and left Him at the crucifixion. Thus, they believed that it was Jesus only, not Christ, who died on the cross. Others believed that Jesus was only a spirit.

The Gnostics also believed that the God of creation was an inferior god, because they believed that the material world was inferior. The Gnostics claimed to have secret knowledge about God.

BOOK OVERVIEW

II & III John

Author: the Apostle John

Date: A.D. 90

Recipients: II John = “the elect lady and her children” (II John 11), III John = “Gaius” (III John 1)

Summary: II John = warning against deceivers; III John = admonition to accept true believers

Key verses: II John 9, 10; III John 8

Key words: II John = truth (5 times), III John = true/truth (7 times)

Notes:

It is uncertain as to whether the “lady and her children” refers to a particular woman and her family, a particular woman and the Christians meeting in her home, or to a particular Church and its members.

Apparently, this Gaius is not related to any other Gaius mentioned in the Bible, but he became a Christian under the ministry of the Apostle John.

II John warns against having fellowship with those who are unbelievers; on the other hand, III John warns those who refuse to have fellowship with true believers.

The hospitality of Christians was especially important to traveling teachers and evangelists, since public housing was not always available.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Jude

Author: Judas (Jude)

Date: A.D. 66-68

Recipients: “them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ” (Jude 1)

Summary: apostasy past, present, and future

Key verse: Jude 3

Key word: ungodly (6 times)

Notes:

Jude is the English form of the name Judas and the Hebrew name Judah. He was **not** one of the twelve Apostles.

Jude makes the only mention in Scripture of the contention between the archangel Michael and the devil over the body of Moses. (vs 9)

Jude is the only Biblical writer that mentions the prophecy of Enoch. (vs 14-16)

Jude had originally intended to write about the “common salvation;” instead, he was prompted by God to write concerning the apostasy that was creeping into the church. (vs 3-4)

Even though Jude and his brother James were half brothers of Jesus in the flesh, they referred to themselves as nothing more than His servants. (vs 1)
Neither one believed in Christ until after the resurrection. (John 7:5, Acts 1:14)

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Revelation

Author: the Apostle John

Date: A.D. 96

Recipients: “the seven churches which are in Asia” (Revelation 1:4)

Summary: letters to seven churches and revelation concerning the end times

Key verse: Revelation 1:19

Key word: I saw/beheld/looked (49 times), seven (59 times), angel (70 times)

Notes:

John outlived the other Apostles and died about 100 A.D at a very old age as a prisoner on the island of Patmos. (Revelation 1:9) Patmos had a penal colony for political prisoners.

Some scholars view the seven churches in Revelation as representative of the various stages through which the Church has developed historically.

The book contains four great visions, each preceded by “in the spirit.” (1:10; 4:2: 17:3; 21:10) Each vision presents a unique perspective on Christ.

Revelation is a difficult book to understand, but its clear message of encouragement is that God is in complete control.

In art the Apostle John is often represented by an eagle.

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