

The Books of the Bible: Old Testament

Five Historical Books of Moses

Genesis. The book of Origins. The origin of the universe, human race, etc. Largely a record of the early history of God's people. The first part of the book covers the history of early mankind, narrating the events of the Creation, the Fall, the Flood, and the Dispersion of the races (people scattered across the world following the Tower of Babel). The second section concerns the lives of the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

Exodus. The bondage, deliverance, and beginnings of the history of Israel on the way to Canaan, under the leadership of Moses. Includes the life story of Moses and the Hebrews' deliverance from Egypt, and the giving of the law.

Leviticus. The book of Mosaic laws. It teaches access to God through sacrifices. Those who are saved are no longer under these laws since Jesus died. The book has mostly priestly legislation and the practical application of the law among the people. Much importance is placed upon Israel's separation from all heathen influences so that the nation would retain its religious purity.

Numbers. The book of the pilgrimages of Israel. It is a continuation of Exodus, describing the forty years' wanderings in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy. A repetition of the laws given shortly before Israel entered Canaan. It is a sequel to Numbers. The last three chapters tell of the last days of Moses.

Twelve Other Historical Books

Joshua. This tells the story of Joshua, Moses' successor. It was Joshua who led the people into the Promised Land after the death of Moses. The book records the conquest of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, and the division of the land among the 12 tribes.

Judges is so called because it relates of the times of various rulers, or judges, of Israel from the possession of Canaan until the time of the prophet Samuel. Covers 300 years of history—the six conquests and subjugations of the Israelites, and the various deliverances of the land through the 15 judges. Includes the adventures of Samson.

Ruth. A beautiful story of how Ruth, a foreigner, became the ancestress of David and of Jesus. A love story! Ruth, the widowed Moabitess, goes to Judah with her mother-in-law, Naomi. There Ruth meets and marries Boaz.

1 and 2 Samuel. The history of Samuel (priest and prophet) and the beginning and early years of the monarchical period in Israel (when they were first ruled by kings) under the reigns of Saul and David. First Samuel tells of the organization of the kingdom, the actions of Samuel, how Saul was made king, his fall, and the beginning of the reign of King David. Second Samuel tells of the reign of David.

1 and 2 Kings. The early history of the kingdom of Israel, and later of the divided Kingdom. (Israel and Judah split.) Includes the lives of Elijah and Elisha, prominent prophets.

1 and 2 Chronicles. Largely a record of the reigns of David, Solomon, and the kings of Judah up to the time of the captivity (when they were conquered by Babylon and carried away to Babylon). Some repetition of what is in the books of Samuel and Kings.

Ezra. Continues from Chronicles. A record of the return of the Jews from captivity in Babylon, and the rebuilding of the temple.

Nehemiah. An account of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, and a spiritual revival amongst God's people.

Esther. The story of Queen Esther's (Jewish wife of the Persian king) deliverance of the Jews from the plot of Haman in the courts of the king of Persia.

Five Poetical Books

Job. The problem of affliction, showing the malice of Satan, the patience of Job, the problem of self-righteousness, the vanity of human philosophy, the divine wisdom, and the final deliverance of the sufferer. This is generally accepted as the oldest book in the Bible, and probably was written before the time of Moses.

Psalms. A collection of 150 spiritual songs, poems, praises, prayers, and prophecies. King David wrote many of these. Psalms are very inspiring to read during your devotional quiet times. Some key Psalms are also very beautiful and helpful to memorize.

Proverbs. A collection of moral and religious maxims, and discourses on wisdom, temperance, justice, etc. King Solomon wrote most, though there are debates about the authorship of some.

Ecclesiastes. Solomon's reflections on the vanity of life, and man's duties and obligations to God, etc.

Song of Solomon. A beautiful, passionate love poem. Some people look at this simply as a literal love poem; others take it as an allegory of our relationship with the Lord describing the love of Jesus for His Bride (us).

Five Books of the Major Prophets

Isaiah. Messianic and other prophecies of the future. A book rich in Messianic prophecies, mingled with woes pronounced upon sinful nations.

Jeremiah. Jeremiah lived from the time of King Josiah to the captivity in Babylon. The main theme of the book is the backsliding, bondage, and restoration of the Jews. Jeremiah received the call to prophesy while very young. It was his mission to predict doom upon his nation for its many sins. For this the priests and the people hated him. Jeremiah warned the Jews not to fight Babylon, but to surrender, and God would temper their punishment.

Lamentations. Also written by Jeremiah. A dirge over the desolation of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel lived during the exile (in Babylon). The book is divided into two sections: The first denounces the sins and abominations of Jerusalem, and the second looks to the future with the hope that the city will be restored after it has been cleansed. The latter also contains prophecies about the coming Kingdom of Heaven and of Jesus.

Daniel. Prophecies of the future concerning world powers, many of which have been fulfilled already, and many of which are specific prophecies of the Endtime which were only meant to be understood in the Last Days.

Twelve Books of the Minor Prophets

Hosea. Lived at the same time as Isaiah and Micah. The central thought: The apostasy of Israel characterized as spiritual adultery. The book is filled with striking pictures describing the sins of the people. Hosea was even instructed by the Lord to marry a harlot as a picture of God's unfailing love for His errant bride! He urges a return to God.

Joel. A prophet of Judah, he wrote this book during a plague of locusts, a time of great distress for the people. Repentance and its blessings. Predictions of the Holy Spirit.

Amos was a herdsman prophet who denounced selfishness and sin. The book contains a series of five visions and predicts the ultimate universal rule of the Lord.

Obadiah. Leading topic—the doom of neighboring Edom and final deliverance of Israel. The shortest book in the Old Testament, it has only one chapter.

Jonah. The story of the "reluctant missionary" who was taught by bitter experience the lesson of obedience and the depth of divine mercy. This is the man who was "swallowed by the great fish," possibly a whale.

Micah. This book gives a dark picture of the moral condition of Israel and Judah, and foretells the establishment of the Kingdom of the Lord in which righteousness shall prevail.

Nahum. The destruction of Nineveh, capital of Assyria. Also contains a classic rebuke against warfare and militarism.

Habakkuk. Written in the Chaldean period. This book is concerned with the problem of unpunished evil in the world. It was revealed to Habakkuk that the Chaldean (Babylonian) armies were to be God's means of punishing the wicked and that evil would destroy itself. The book concludes with a poem of thanksgiving and great faith.

Zephaniah. The book is filled with threatenings of God's judgments, but ends in a vision of the future glory of God's people.

Haggai. A colleague of Zechariah. He reproves the people for slackness in building the second temple; but promises a return of God's glory when the building should be completed.

Zechariah. Contemporary with Haggai. He helped to arouse the Jews to rebuild the temple. He had a series of eight visions, and saw the ultimate triumph of God's kingdom. Zechariah gives very specific predictions about the coming of Jesus the Messiah, His death to remove sin, Christ as King and Priest, His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, being betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, His hands pierced at the crucifixion, and more.

Malachi. He gives a graphic picture of the closing period of Old Testament history. He shows the necessity of reforms before the coming of the Messiah. The final message to a disobedient people.

The Books of the Bible: New Testament

Five New Testament Historical Books

Matthew. Matthew had been a tax collector and was one of the apostles. His book was written mostly with the Jews in mind, to convince them that Jesus was the Messiah. You'll find many references to the Old Testament in this book, as Matthew wanted to show how Jesus was fulfilling the prophecies. Matthew was an eyewitness to many of the events that he wrote about.

Mark was a companion of Peter, as well as Paul. His Gospel contains accounts of what he heard Peter tell many times. He emphasized the supernatural power of Jesus over nature, disease, and demons.

Luke was a Greek physician (the only non-Jewish author in the New Testament) and was a companion of Paul. He wrote the most complete biography of Jesus, portraying Him as the Son of man, full of compassion for the sinful and the poor.

John was one of the original 12 apostles. John understood the spiritual depths of the love of God and His salvation and what Jesus meant to the whole world, and not just to the Jews. The book of John contains more of the actual quoted words of Jesus than any other book.

Acts follows on from the book of Luke and is believed to be written by the same author. It tells what happened to Jesus' disciples after His resurrection, then goes on to explain the history of the Early Church, the conversion of Paul and his journeys, etc. Acts emphasizes that the Church is guided continually by the Holy Spirit.

Fourteen Epistles of Paul

Most of these were written to the churches in that specific area. If you look at a map of the area in New Testament times (you'll probably find one in the back of your Bible), you'll be able to find these locations. These places still exist today! Corinth, for instance, is near Athens.

Romans. Addressed to Roman Christians. Chapters 1–11 discuss the plan of salvation. Chapters 12–16 are largely exhortations relating to spiritual, social, and civic duties.

1 Corinthians. Addressed to the Corinthian church. Leading topics – the cleansing of the church from various evils, together with doctrinal instructions.

2 Corinthians. The characteristics of the ministry, and vindication of Paul's apostleship.

Galatians. Explains clearly the concept of salvation by faith, not works.

Ephesians. The plan of salvation. All barriers between Jews and Gentiles have been broken down.

Philippians. A letter to the Philippian church. It reveals Paul's intense devotion to Christ, his experience in prison, and his deep concern that the church should be steadfast in sound doctrine.

Colossians. Counsel to abandon worldly philosophy and sin. Jesus is the head of the Church.

1 Thessalonians. Exhortations and counsel. Also prophecies of the Endtime.

2 Thessalonians. More about Jesus' Second Coming and warnings to believers.

1 Timothy. Counsel to a young pastor concerning his conduct and ministry.

2 Timothy. Paul's last letter, written shortly before his death, giving counsel to his beloved "son in the Gospel," Timothy.

Titus. Counsel given to a trusted friend.

Philemon. A private letter written to Philemon, beseeching him to receive and forgive Onesimus, a runaway slave.

Hebrews. Written to Jewish Christians, this epistle explains the doctrine of salvation. Also contains very inspiring history of God's people (chapter 11).

Seven General Epistles

James. Probably written by James, the brother of Jesus. Addressed to Jewish converts who had dispersed from Israel. The main theme is practical religion, manifesting itself in good works, as contrasted with only a profession of faith.

1 Peter. A letter of encouragement written by the apostle Peter to the believers scattered throughout Asia Minor. Leading topics: the privilege of believers following the example of Jesus, to have victory in the midst of trials, and to live consecrated lives in an unfriendly world.

2 Peter. A warning against false teachers and scoffers.

1 John. Written by the apostle John. It lays great importance upon the believer's privilege of spiritual knowledge, the duty of fellowship and brotherly love.

2 John. A brief message on divine truth and worldly error.

3 John. A letter of commendation written to Gaius.

Jude. The writer was probably the brother of James. Historical examples of apostasy and divine judgments upon sinners.

Prophecy

Revelation. It was written down by the apostle John, who was also the author of the Gospel of John and three Epistles. The book of Revelation contains complex and detailed prophecies about the future, with much detail on the Endtime, the events preceding and following Jesus' Second Coming, on into the Millennium. It concludes with a wonderful description of Heaven.

Cyrus: The King the Lord Named in Advance

Fulfilled prophecies and archeological discoveries that substantiate the Bible's historical record encourage our faith in the Bible. The story of Cyrus, king of Persia in the 6th century B.C. contains both elements.

God had prophesied through the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, even naming him by name, more than 200 years before Cyrus was even born! He named Cyrus as the king who was going to order the release of the Jews. This was before they were even in captivity!

In the 8th century B.C., the Lord spoke through Isaiah about Cyrus (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1-4).

In the years that followed that prophecy, the Babylonians conquered the people of Judah. Then in the year 516, King Cyrus of the Persian Empire (which had since conquered Babylon), which was the dominant world power, issued an edict letting them go.

Archaeological evidence: This decree was discovered “at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes” (Ezra 6:2).

A chronicle drawn up just after the conquest of Babylonia by Cyrus, it gives the history of the reign of Nabonidus (Nabunahid), the last king of Babylon and dual regent with his son Balshazzar, and of the fall of the Babylonian empire.

In 538 B.C. there was a revolt in Southern Babylonia, while the army of Cyrus entered the country from the north. In June the Babylonian army was completely defeated at Opis, and immediately afterwards Sippara opened its gates to the conqueror. Gobryas (Ugbaru), the governor of Kurdistan, was then sent to Babylon, which surrendered “without fighting,” and the daily services in the temples continued without a break. In October, Cyrus himself arrived, and proclaimed a general amnesty, which was communicated by Gobryas to “all the province of Babylon,” of which he had been made governor. Meanwhile, Nabonidus, who had concealed himself, was captured, but treated honorably.

Cyrus now assumed the title of “king of Babylon,” claimed to be the descendant of the ancient kings, and made rich offerings to the temples. At the same time he allowed the foreign populations who had been deported to Babylonia to return to their old homes, carrying with them the images of their gods. Among these populations were the Jews, who, as they had no images, took with them the sacred vessels of the temple.

Archeological Evidence

King David

King David is one of the key figures of the Old Testament. Known as perhaps the greatest king of Israel, a shade of mystery has covered his existence: Outside of the pages of the Bible, no reference had been found to King David or his ruling dynasty.

This changed in the 1990s, when archaeologists made an interesting discovery in Tel Dan, Israel.

They uncovered a rock fragment inscribed with an ancient text referring to “the House of David,” a phrase used for the ruling dynasty founded by King David. The rock appears to be a victory monument erected by a Syrian king nearly 3,000 years ago, after a battle described in the book of First Kings.

Yet again, archeology has confirmed the biblical record!

Paul preached in Cyprus

Italian archeologists said that they have found a marble inscription on the island that supports the Biblical assertion that St. Paul preached there. The researchers from Catania University said they had found fragments at a dig in the town of Paphos bearing the inscription “Apostolou Paulou.” The fragments were found close to a temple dedicated to the Greek god Apollo, team director Professor Filippo Giudice told reporters. “This marble was made to commemorate the presence of the saint there,” Giudice said. “There is another marble like this in the catacombs of the Vatican.” Acts 13:4–6 relates how Paul and Barnabas visited Cyprus and journeyed as far as Paphos.

For more information! See the Appendix in *Understanding God’s Word (Get Activated!* booklet) for more historical information as well as details of over 60 fulfilled prophecies in the Bible.