



PARADIGM SHIFT

READING PLAN

LANGUAGES OF THE BIBLE

H E B R E W

The Old Testament was written primarily in ancient Hebrew, which is slightly different from modern-day Hebrew. The earliest form of Hebrew was written with 22 consonants that were all ran together. As the language progressed, dots and pronunciation marks were added to help with understanding. Later, as the culture and use of the language advanced, vowels were added.

Hebrew is written from right to left and uses a much different word order than English. Therefore, a direct word-for-word translation from Hebrew would not make sense to the English readers. Because of this, translators work diligently to study not only the language, but the use of the specific words, phrases, and even word order to determine the original meaning of the text.

A R A M A I C

Aramaic was the primary language of the Babylonian empire and was used by the Israelites while they were exiled there. As such, a few of the passages of the Old Testament, specifically those written during the Babylonian captivity, were written in Aramaic. Daniel 2-7, Ezra 4-7, and Jeremiah 10:11 are a few passages which were originally written in Aramaic.

Aramaic was also the common language of Palestine during Jesus' time on earth and most likely what He and His disciples spoke daily.

However, it was not used as the original language to record the New Testament. Therefore, when the authors of the Gospels recorded the events of Jesus' life, they used Greek- a more universal language. A few key terms were however recorded in the original Aramaic words. The original authors chose to use the Aramaic words for additional clarification, to emphasize them, or whenever there wasn't an appropriate Greek word to explain the Aramaic text.

G R E E K

The New Testament was written in Greek, but not the more scholarly Greek forms of the classical or Hellenistic era. Instead, the Bible was written in Koine Greek which was the language of the common man. The word Koine literally means "common" and in using this language, the New Testament author bridged the gap between the Gospel and the everyday person throughout the Roman Empire.

The other benefit to writing the New Testament in Koine Greek is that the language was much more precise and extensive, allowing the authors to fully express the truths inspired by the Holy Spirit through a vast and detailed language filled with emotion and description. This language was also used throughout the known lands, creating an opportunity for even the Gentiles to understand and receive the good news!

Like both Hebrew and Aramaic, the word order, sentence structure, and cultural implications of Koine Greek differ from English, making a direct word-for-word translation impossible. As such, scholars for decades have diligently studied the original languages, cultures, and other literature of the time to most accurately translate these holy words into English.

LITERARY STYLES OF THE BIBLE AND HOW TO READ THEM

The books of the Bible are written in multiple literary styles. Though many books include different literary styles, each book typically has one predominant literary style and knowing what they are can help us be better students of the Word. It is important for us to understand not only why the Bible was written but how it was written as well so that we can be sure to avoid mistaking the meaning by mistaking the style. So, let's take a look at the main literary styles of the Bible. (Some scholars argue that there are more or less than the list below):

NARRATIVE / HISTORY

Accounts or stories of events. Narratives tell a story that really happened. However, it's important to understand that the way the ancients told stories is much different from how we do today. Many of the details that we would expect to find in a story are often missing and great lapses in time and thought can be observed. The original authors did not do this to intentionally mislead or confuse people. Instead, the style of storytelling in ancient times only shared the truly pertinent facts, leaving intentional ambiguity that invited the reader to keep reading and learn more. When we understand that the narrative of the bible is meant to be read as a whole, we can see how the details we do have are intentionally placed to tell the grander story of God's redemption and the salvation of Christ.

LAW: The first five books of the Bible (also known as the Pentateuch) include Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These books tell the historical account of God's people from Creation through the death of Moses and the 40 years they Israelites wandered in the desert.

Though these books are filled with historical accounts, the emphasis is on the Law given to God's people lining out for them the ways in which God called them to live different from the people around them. The Law was given by God to guide His people, but also to point them to the coming Messiah and their need for salvation.

HISTORY: The second type of narratives are histories. These books tell the story of God's people and their interactions with God and with the nations around them. In these historical accounts, the authors shared what really happened without much commentary on the ethical or moral undertones. The reader is given the responsibility of holding the actions of those in the story up to the standards of God.

In histories, we see the movement of God through and in His people as He guides them, calls them to repentance, blesses them, and sometimes disciplines them. But through all the historical events, if taken as one complete story that points directly to Jesus, we can see the overarching story of redemption woven through the events. Historical narratives can be found in most books of the Bible, but is the primary literary style of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1st and 2nd Samuel, 1st and 2nd Kings, 1st and 2nd Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and the book of Acts.

P O E T R Y

Biblical poetry can be found scattered throughout the Bible, both in the Old and the New Testaments. For instance, Mary's song is a beautiful poem/song she sings in response to becoming the mother of Jesus. Paul records a poem about love in the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians. However, there are some entire books of the Bible that are specifically poetry/songs. These include Psalms, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations.

Ancient poetry was different than our modern poetry. You won't find rhyming lines specifically because these poems were written in a different language. Also, ancient poems used different literary devices such as repetition of sounds or word pictures to help the readers understand and remember their meaning. These poems and songs were written with beautiful, expressive language and were meant to be shared orally

WISDOM

These books were written to share important moral and life lessons. Though they do include some history and even some poetry, the main focus of these books was to help guide the reader in wisdom and truth. Wisdom literature includes the books of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes.

It is important for us to pay attention to who is speaking in wisdom literature. The protagonist in these chapters is often incorrect about their assumptions and is recorded more as a way to express a moral dilemma or to share a common misunderstanding. For instance, Job's friends wrongly advise him how to handle the affliction he is given, citing sin and a myriad of different reasons for his pain all while spouting off their ideas about God and truth, and raining down condemnation on their friend. His wife even advises him to curse God and die! Certainly, these recordings are not to be taken as good advice but meant to stir the reader into deeper contemplation.

PROPHECY

Biblical prophecy is generally given in the form of visions, dreams, and supernatural understandings of God and His truths. Prophets of God throughout history recorded these revelations from God to share with His people and to call them to repentance and obedience. Though much of prophecy includes historical events, the primary focus of these books is to share a specific revelation from God. Sometimes these revelations told of events coming in the future, others explained aspects and truths of God that are timeless.

When reading prophecy, it is important to remember that this literary style uses language that is very symbolic in nature and must be understood as a representation of something, not strict literal descriptions. There are three sub-categories of prophecy:

MAJOR PROPHETS - These include the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. These books are classified as "Major Prophets" because of their length. They are significantly longer than those of the "Minor Prophets".

MINOR PROPHETS - These include the books of Hosea, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. It's important to remember that though these are labeled as "Minor Prophets" that title only indicates length of their books, not importance of their message. Many important and pivotal messages were shared through these "Minor Prophets"

APOCALYPSE - These are special books that specifically speak about the end of the world. These books contain the last remaining prophecies that have not been fulfilled yet. (Note: some New Testament books contain apocalyptic prophecies but are not classified prophecy because they only contain a small portion of prophecy. For instance, Jesus taught multiple times about what to expect in the future and Paul wrote about the end of the world in his letters.) Apocalyptic literature includes the book of Revelation and major sections of the book of Daniel.

G O S P E L S

The word "Gospel" literally means good news or good story, and include the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These books tell of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ on earth. Though historical or narrative in nature, these have a special classification because the point of them is more than just to relay details about a story. Instead, these books are about proclaiming the good news of Jesus and His specific works and message to the world. The events and facts contained in the Gospels all center on the person and life of Jesus Christ.

Each of the Gospels is written from a different point of view and shows a different focus on Jesus. They all cover basically the same timeframe and often have overlapping events. Matthew and John were both disciples of Jesus and eyewitnesses to the events they wrote about. Many scholars speculate that Mark (also known as John Mark) could have been a follower of Jesus, though not in the original 12. Luke was a student of Paul and a very educated man who set out to record the events of Jesus' life in detail, gathering information and facts from multiple eyewitnesses.

G O S P E L S

C O N T ' D

A subcategory of the Gospels is Parables. Parables are short stories that have a moral point. Jesus taught many lessons in parables as a means to make a teaching point more understandable and relatable to those who He taught. These stories were not meant to be taken as literal fact, though some scholars argue that some of the details of parables could have been true. The point of the parable, though, was the moral teaching it included.

E P I S T L E S

Epistles were letters and teaching that were shared with churches in the New Testament. The Epistles include Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, 1st and 2nd Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1st and 2nd Peter, 1st 2nd and 3rd John, and Jude. Paul wrote the majority of the letters, though some were written by other people as well. These letters consist of teachings on theology, religious controversies or issues in the church, and answer questions the early church had about how to worship God. The book of Acts serves as a historical timeline for many of the letters, explaining the events that led to and resulted from these epistles being sent and shared throughout the growing church.

When reading epistles, it is incredibly important to remember that they were written by a specific person, to a specific audience, at a specific time, in a specific culture. Each letter includes important Biblical truths that apply to our lives today. However, those truths can be easily misunderstood, misrepresented, or lost all together if we aren't careful to read them in the context they were written and understand them through that specific lens. As such, we should always approach the epistles (and all of scripture) with an understanding of it's context and relation to history, culture, and circumstances.

TRANSLATIONS

WHY ARE THERE SO MANY?

Because the Bible was written in a different language, in a different culture, and in a different time, when translators sit down to write the Bible into English, they have to make educated decisions on how to relay the message from the original text to one that would communicate clearly to the modern reader. A few obstacles make this specifically challenging include (but are not limited to):

- The original languages are much broader and more expressive than our modern English, including many more words and meanings than we can express in English.
- The culture had changed and certain idioms or sayings in the original languages would not make sense in our modern culture.
- Certain words and phrases do not have direct translations in English, so translators have to do the best they can to explain them in a way that makes sense.
- Common assumptions of the time are no longer common assumptions and modern readers do not naturally pick up on implied meanings or assumptions given in the original text.
- English is ever changing. Translations that made sense to people in the 1800's no longer make sense to modern readers and are in need of updated language.

Translators and scholars through the years have spent countless hours pouring over original documents, manuscripts, and records studying the culture, language, and history of the original Biblical text. Weighing out the differences and obstacles they encounter, coalitions of trained and passionate people have developed the translations we have today to help us more accurately understand the Bible. Each translation is the result of thousands of hours of study, debate, consideration, and prayer.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A TRANSLATION AND A PARAPHRASE?

When translating the Bible, translators have to ask if it is more important to translate word-for-word, phrase-for-phrase, or thought-for-thought.

A true word-for-word translation of any of the original texts would not make sense in English because the original languages did not structure their sentences in the same way we do in English. However, some translations are considered word-for-word because they translate each word separately, then rearrange them to make sense in English, inserting transitional words like "of" or "in" where necessary. These added words are only added to make the sentence make sense and are often italicized in your Bible to indicate their addition to the text. Examples of this kind of translation would be the Interlinear, NASB, AMP, or ESV.

Phrase-for-phrase translations take each sentence in the original text and look for phrases, or words that tie together. Then those phrases are translated as close to word-for-word as possible while still maintaining a more fluid English translation that is easier to read. More transitional words are added to these translations and some original words are summarized instead of directly translated. The translators look more for the meaning of each phrase than for each word. Examples of this kind of translation would be the HCSB, NIV, or NLT.

Thought-for-thought translations (or paraphrases) take the entire sentence or even a group of sentences and translate into modern English the overarching meaning of the passage. These translations are not good for word studies but are intended to be used to understand the messages of the text in a way that is relevant and understandable. Examples of paraphrases would be the CEV, LIVING, and MESSAGE.

HOW DO I KNOW IF THE ONE I HAVE IS GOOD?

Often when we are looking for a “good” translation of the Bible, we are asking the wrong questions. There are a lot of great translations of the Bible that can meet different needs or wants. A better question to ask is “Is this a reliable translation?” and “Is this translation going to help me in my current season of faith?” Also, remember, you are not restricted to just one Bible translation! We highly encourage you to study from multiple versions to get a deeper understanding of the text and grow in your understanding of the Word.

SOME STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO GET STARTED:

- Check out reputable Bible apps like Logos, Blue Letter Bible, or YouVersion to see which translations they have included in their library. You can bet these are considered reputable in the industry.
- Talk to a trusted mentor or pastor and ask them which version they recommend and why.
- Do a little research on when that translation was compiled and what the purpose was.
- Ask yourself what you are looking to gain from your translation. For example, are you wanting to understand the basic message of the Bible? Are you looking for ease in readability and memorization? Do you want to dig in and do more in-depth word studies?
- Pick multiple translations that you want to start studying side by side, or find a good parallel Bible or digital Bible app that allows you to easily compare texts in different languages.

CHAPTER & VERSES

HOW WE NAVIGATE THE BIBLE

When the Bible was originally written, it was not broken down into chapters and verses. In fact, many of the original manuscripts have words and sentences that just run together without any spaces or punctuation. As translations were made and study of the Biblical text excelled, spaces, punctuation, verses, and chapters were added to help people understand the text better and navigate it more efficiently.

Unfortunately, these distinctions, delineations, and separations have created an unintentional hurdle to understanding the Bible. It is easy to read a single verse or even a single chapter and take it out of its surrounding context and placement in the text. However, this was never how the text was meant to be understood. Instead, we need to be diligent to read each verse and chapter as part of a larger text that ties into a whole.

BOOK SYNOPSIS

OLD TESTAMENT

GENESIS

AUTHOR: Moses

DATE OF WRITING: Unknown (possibly around 1450-1500 BC)

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: From creation to Joseph's Death (about 1805 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelites at Mount Sinai

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Historical and theological record of the creation of all things and the history that followed.

Genesis tells the story of how life began and sets the stage for the remainder of Scripture.

EXODUS

AUTHOR: Moses

DATE OF WRITING: Unknown (possibly around 1450-1500 BC)

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: From Joseph's death to the creation of the tabernacle (about 1805 BC to 1445 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelites at Mount Sinai

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Permanent historical record of how the nation of Israel came into existence. Exodus tells the story of God's deliverance for His people out of captivity and the establishment of God's presence among His people.

LEVITICUS

AUTHOR: Most likely Moses

DATE OF WRITING: Unknown (possibly around 1450-1500 BC)

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: about 1445 BC

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelites

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Preservation of God's oral commandments given to Moses. Leviticus lines out in detail the holiness of God and His commandments to His people to live holy and set apart. It details specific instructions given to God's people that are later referred to as the Law.

NUMBERS

AUTHOR: Most likely Moses

DATE OF WRITING: Around 1400 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: From the time Israel was encamped at Sinai until they were encamped near the Jordan River (about 1445 BC to 1407 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelites camped at the Jordan River

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Continuation of the historical record of the nation of Israel. Numbers chronicles the historical account of how the Israelites progressed from Mount Sinai to the border of Canaan and the events that happened along the way. It also includes important genealogical information.

DEUTERONOMY

AUTHOR: Moses

DATE OF WRITING: Around 1400 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: In the last days of Moses (about 1406 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelites on the plains of Moab (about to enter the promised land)

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Preservation of God's oral commandments given to Moses. Deuteronomy 31:24-26 explains that Moses had written down these commandments for the people of God to place inside the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord so that it would be a witness to the people. This book contains Moses' farewell message to a new generation of Israelites who would proceed over the Jordan river without him to take possession of the Promised Land.

JOSHUA

AUTHOR: Possibly Joshua or Samuel

DATE OF WRITING: Possibly around 1380 BC or 1050 BC depending on authorship

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: Israel's entry into Canaan until Joshua's death (about 1406 BC to 1380 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelites as they settled in Canaan but before kingship was established

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Chronicles the events that followed the death of Moses as the Israelites took possession of the Promised Land under their new leader Joshua. This book tells of the conquests and battles waged by God's people to receive the inheritance God had promised to Abraham. Until this point, the main unifying factor for cities was location. But this book establishes the power and authority of God over the

J U D G E S

AUTHOR: Unknown, (possibly Samuel)

DATE OF WRITING: Around 1050 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: From Joshua's death until Samson's death (about 1380 BC to 1060 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelites after they settled into Canaan and after kingship had been established

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Chronicles the historical events of Israel's early existence in the Promised Land and the failures that proceeded. Judges tells the story of a struggling nation as it repeatedly walked away from God, God sent His judges to point them back to the truth, the oppression that followed as a discipline, and the people's inevitable change in heart and return to righteousness. Through this cycle, the Israelite people, and all who came after, glimpsed both the righteousness of God and His mercy to both discipline and restore a rebellious nation back to Himself.

R U T H

AUTHOR: Unknown

DATE OF WRITING: Sometime between 1000 BC and 500 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: During the period of the Judges (about 1140 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelites, sometime after David came to power

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: The record of Ruth's beautiful story tells of God's faithfulness to even those who are born outside the Israelite nation who choose to follow the One True God. Ruth, a Moabite by birth, dedicates her life to following God and cares for her mother-in-law. This story tells of many important moral and ethical truths, but also displays the mercy of God toward the gentiles even from the beginning of time, reminding us that salvation was never about being born into the right family but instead about choosing to follow the true God.

1ST & 2ND SAMUEL

AUTHOR: Unknown

DATE OF WRITING: around 950 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: From Samuel's birth through David's death (about 1105 BC to 970 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelites, during the monarchy

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Originally a single composition that is currently divided into 1st and 2nd Samuel. These books tell the history of the Israelite kingdom during the reign of King Saul and King David, both anointed by the prophet Samuel (for whom the books were named). These books examine the nations cry for a king, the inevitable shortcomings of those kings, and the redemptive work of God through the people He rose to power and authority over His people.

1ST & 2ND KINGS

AUTHOR: Unknown (possibly Jeremiah)

DATE OF WRITING: about 560 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: From David's death to the Babylonian captivity (about 970 BC to 561 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelites, most likely those living in Babylonian captivity

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Picking up from where 1st and 2nd Samuel leave off, these books (also originally one piece of work that was later divided into two parts) continues the story of the Kings of Israel from King Solomon through until the Babylonian captivity. The nation of Israel is split into two kingdoms, the Northern Kingdom

1ST & 2ND CHRONICLES

AUTHOR: Unknown (possibly Ezra)

DATE OF WRITING: about 450 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: During King David's reign to the first year of King Cyrus' rule over Babylon (about 1010 BC to 538 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelites, after the return from Babylonian exile

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: This selective history of the nation of Israel from Adam to after the return from Babylon highlights the promises of God and the messy history of Israel.

Specifically highlighting the promised king from the line of David, even though a Davidic king no longer held the throne, it points to this promise of God and calls His people to live in righteousness while waiting for God's promises to be fulfilled.

EZRA & NEHEMIAH

AUTHOR: Unknown (possibly Ezra)

DATE OF WRITING: about 430 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: From King Cyrus' decree permitting the return of the Israelites to their land until Nehemiah's second term as governor (about 538 BC to 430 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelites, after the return from Babylonian exile

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: These two books were originally one single work but later separated and named after the two main characters. Picking up the history of Israel where Chronicles ends, these two books show the return of God's people to the promised land and the rebuilding of the nation of Israel.

ESTHER

AUTHOR: Unknown (possibly Mordecai)

DATE OF WRITING: Around 465 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: During the reign of King Xerxes I of Persia (about 486 BC to 465 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Hebrew people living in Persia

Why it was written: This beautiful story preserves the historical record of Queen Ester (also known as Hadassah) and how God worked through this young woman to soften the heart of a ruthless king. Through her bravery and obedience to God, the Hebrew people were spared annihilation. Thus the celebration of the Jewish feast of Purim was created and celebrated by Jews even to this day.

JOB

AUTHOR: Unknown

DATE OF WRITING: Possibly during Solomon's reign (about 950 BC)

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: Unknown but probably during the time of the Patriarchs (around 2000 to 1500 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelite people

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Job is arguably one of the most thought provoking and in-depth theological reflections on the problem of evil and suffering found in the Bible. This book deals with questions about why innocent people suffer pain and if God is truly all knowing and powerful. It reveals a glimpse into the age-old conflict between God and Satan, highlighting for the reader the truth that a battle wages in the unseen that we are often unaware of. This book helps the reader to view the problem of suffering through a spiritual lens.

PSALMS

AUTHOR: Multiple authors though many were written by King David

DATE OF WRITING: Probably around 400 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: Unknown, though some psalms refer to specific historical events

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelite people living in their land (some psalms refer to a specific audience)

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: This collection of songs and poems served as a compilation of inspired words from multiple authors as they expressed both the highs and lows, victories and struggles of their relationship with God and the circumstances of their lives.

PROVERBS

AUTHOR: Multiple authors though primarily written by King Solomon

DATE OF WRITING: about 950 BC to 700 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: The proverbs are recorded without reference to time

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelite people living in their land

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Proverbs records many of the wise sayings and advice given by King Solomon, though a few select proverbs are written by others. King Solomon adamantly asked God to grant him wisdom and knowledge. God granted this request, and Solomon has been regarded as the wisest person who ever lived. During his life, people traveled many miles to come hear Solomon's divinely inspired wisdom. This book serves as a record and preservation for future generations.

≡ ECCLESIASTES

AUTHOR: Most likely King Solomon

DATE OF WRITING: Probably sometime toward the end of King Solomon's life (around 935 BC)

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: Most likely during Solomon's life, though the teachings are timeless

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelite people living in their land

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: The main message of Ecclesiastes is that no matter what you chase on this earth, it will never satisfy. Only God satisfies. If Solomon was in fact the author of Ecclesiastes (which most scholars agree he was), this book served as his way of passing down the life lessons he had learned. He shares his search for meaning and pleasure in his younger years and the dissatisfaction that followed. He goes on to explain that anything less than a heart seeking after God is foolishness and vanity.

S O N G O F S O L O M O N

ALSO KNOWN AS
SONG OF SONGS

AUTHOR: Most likely Solomon

DATE OF WRITING: Probably sometime during the earlier years of Solomon's reign (about 965 BC)

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: Most likely during Solomon's life, though the teachings are timeless

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelite people living in their land

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: A celebration of romantic love between a husband and a wife, this book explores in poetic and romantic language the physical, spiritual, and emotional bond that love creates. Written in expressive and beautiful language, the book of Song of Solomon captures the passion each shared for the other and celebrates God-given love between a husband and wife. This book serves to highlight God's design for passion and romance in marriage.

ISAIAH

AUTHOR: Isaiah

DATE OF WRITING: Throughout Isaiah's life but finally compiled around 680 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: During Isaiah's time serving as a prophet under King Uzziah, King Jotham, King Ahaz, and King Hezekiah (about 740 BC to 700 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The people of Judah

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: The preservation of the divinely inspired prophecies of the prophet Isaiah during his ministry of over 40 years. Isaiah served the kingdom of Judah and spoke the divinely given messages of God to His people. His prophecies served to rebuke the people of Judah and call them back to righteousness, warning of their continued rebellion and pollution from surrounding nations. Isaiah also prophesied of a coming king, a descendent of David, that would one day sit on the throne and rule God's kingdom forever (Jesus Christ).

JEREMIAH

AUTHOR: Jeremiah

DATE OF WRITING: Throughout Jeremiah's life but finally compiled around 585 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: During Jeremiah's time serving as a prophet under the last five kings of Judah and the early days of Judah's exile (about 626 BC to 585 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The people of Judah

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: The preservation of the divinely inspired prophecies of the prophet Jeremiah during his ministry to the people of Judah. Often called the "Weeping Prophet", Jeremiah carried the impending prophecy of Judah's invasion to the people, warning them to turn from their unrighteousness before it became too late. Though his message was grim, Jeremiah also foretold of the inevitable salvation that awaited the people of God on the other side of the discipline that was to come.

LAMENTATIONS

AUTHOR: Unknown (possibly Jeremiah)

DATE OF WRITING: Around 586 BC, shortly after Jerusalem's destruction

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: The destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Jewish people who witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: As a direct response to the destruction of Jerusalem, this book serves as a lament. A common practice of the time was to write laments in Hebrew poetic style in remembrance and in record of an event. Most likely that is what prompted the creation of this book which records and mourns the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians but ultimately as a fitting discipline from God against a rebellious people.

EZEKIEL

AUTHOR: Ezekiel

DATE OF WRITING: Throughout Ezekiel's life but finally compiled around 570 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: During Ezekiel's ministry of over 20 years to the Israelite people during the first part of the Babylonian captivity (around 593 BC to 571 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelite people in Babylonian captivity

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Preservation of the divinely inspired prophecies of the prophet Ezekiel during his ministry to the Israelites living in captivity in Babylon just before the fall of Judah. Ezekiel warned of the destruction of Jerusalem. His visions and prophecies pointed to the ultimate sovereignty of God and His eventual plan for redemption of all people.

DANIEL

AUTHOR: Daniel

DATE OF WRITING: During Daniel's life but finally compiled around 530 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: During the Babylonian captivity (around 605 BC to 530 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelite people in Babylonian captivity

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: To preserve both the historical events of the life of Daniel as well as the prophecies he was given by God during his ministry of over 60 years. The message of Daniel is one of faithfulness to God even under persecution and fear of death. Daniel served God faithfully, delivering His messages both to the kings under whom he served, the people of Israel living in captivity, and for future generations. Many of Daniel's prophecies are still yet to be fulfilled and speak of apocalyptic events.

HOSEA

AUTHOR: Hosea

DATE OF WRITING: About 715 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: During the last decades of the kingdom of Israel (about 750 BC to 722 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelite people living in the Northern Kingdom

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: The preservation of the divinely inspired prophecies of the prophet Hosea during his ministry to the Israelite people for over 35 years. The tragic tale of Hosea and his adulterous wife is perhaps one of the most striking narratives about what unconditional love looks like. Hosea repeatedly rescues his wife out of the consequences of her sin and brings her back home. This story not only shows what true love looks like in the face of unfaithfulness, but also parallels the prophet's message from God to an adulterous nation, calling them to repentance. The faithfulness of Hosea shadows the even stronger faithfulness of God toward His people.

J O E L

AUTHOR: Joel

DATE OF WRITING: either the 9th or 5th century BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: unknown, but probably in either the 9th or 5th century BC

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The people of Judah living in Jerusalem

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: The preservation of the divinely inspired prophecies of the prophet Joel during his ministry to the people of Judah. Though the exact timing of this book is unknown, what is clear is that the people of Judah believed that God's judgement would be reserved for those outside the people of God. Due to this, they had become sinful. Joel corrected their assumption, insisting on the need for the people of God to repent and turn back to God or else suffer discipline and judgement.

A M O S

AUTHOR: Amos

DATE OF WRITING: about 750 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: During the reign of King Jeroboam II of Israel (about 793 BC to 753 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Israelite people living in the Northern Kingdom

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: The preservation of the divinely inspired prophecies of the prophet Amos during his ministry to the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Amos warns not only Israel but also the surrounding nations, including Judah, that the Lord both sees and is angry at the lack of social justice, reminding them that God is the Lord of justice and holds even those outside the faith responsible for their actions. Amos called the people of Israel and the surrounding nations away from their idolatry, immorality, and injustice into repentance and reform.

O B A D I A H

AUTHOR: Obadiah

DATE OF WRITING: around 590 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: about 605 BC to 586 BC

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The Edomite people and the Judahite people

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: The preservation of the divinely inspired prophecies of Obadiah during his short ministry. The Israelites and the Edomites had a long-standing rivalry going back to their ancestors Jacob and Esau. Hostility between the two nations flourished and Obadiah is given a message from the Lord warning the Edomites of their coming destruction. These prophecies also served to encourage the Israelites and secure their trust in the provision and protection of God.

J O N A H

AUTHOR: Jonah

DATE OF WRITING: Around 780 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: During the reign of King Jeroboam II of Israel (about 793 BC to 753 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The people of the Northern Kingdom in and around Samaria

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: The preservation of the divinely inspired prophecies of the prophet Jonah as well as the historical events that encompassed his ministry. Jonah is known as the "Missionary Prophet" and was called by God to take the message of repentance to all the nations. Specifically, God called Jonah to take His message to the people of Nineveh. This story shows God's desire for all nations to know Him and the extortionary lengths He will go to bring His message of salvation.

M I C A H

AUTHOR: Probably Micah

DATE OF WRITING: about 700 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: During the reign of King Jotham, King Ahaz, and King Hezekiah (about 740 BC to 700 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The people of Judah

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: The preservation of the divinely inspired prophecies of the prophet Micah during his ministry of over 20 years to the people of Judah. Micah prophesied against the people of Judah who faced the invasion of the Assyrians as discipline and judgement for their idolatry, injustice, and unrighteousness. Micah, like Isaiah, also foretold of a time after the captivity where God would restore their kingdom and bring an eternal King who were restore righteousness and bring forgiveness.

N A H U M

AUTHOR: Nahum

DATE OF WRITING: about 650 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: about 663 BC to 612 BC

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: People of Nineveh (or perhaps the people of Judah)

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: The preservation of the divinely inspired prophecies of the prophet Nahum during his short ministry. God spoke to the people of Nineveh through the prophet Nahum (much like He had done generations before through Jonah) warning them of the coming judgement of God against them for their unrighteousness.

H A B A K K U K

AUTHOR: Habakkuk

DATE OF WRITING: about 610 BC

When the events took place:

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The people of Judah

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: The preservation of the divinely inspired prayers and dialogues between the prophet Habakkuk and God. Habakkuk, like so many of us, wrestled with the questions of why evil is allowed to go unpunished for so long and why God allows certain evils in the world. Habakkuk was honest with himself and honest with God, resulting in a heart that longed to understand God and His ways. And God faithfully answered the prophet with divine truth and righteousness, drawing Habakkuk into prayer and worship.

Z E P H A N I A H

AUTHOR: Zephaniah

DATE OF WRITING: about 625 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: During the reign of King Josiah (about 640 BC to 609 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The people of Judah

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: The preservation of the divinely inspired prophecies of the prophet Zephaniah during his ministry to Judah. Zephaniah prophesied of the coming destruction of Judah and the judgement of God against His people. During Zephaniah's time, King Josiah strove for national reform, joining in the call for the nation to turn from their unrighteousness. However, the effects of so many generations of wickedness had taken their toll and the nation refused to turn. Zephaniah prophesied about the coming day of the Lord, bringing the promise of Salvation to the surviving remanent.

H A G G A I

AUTHOR: Haggai

DATE OF WRITING: about 520 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: Between August and December of 520 BC

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Israelites in Jerusalem after returning from exile

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: The preservation of the divinely inspired prophecies of the prophet Haggai during his ministry to the Israelite people immediately following their return from exile. Haggai spoke to the people of God, issuing His command to rebuild the temple. The returning exiles had been lethargic and slow to initiate the build and Haggai calls them to action. Unlike most prophets, the people obeyed and began the rebuild of the temple and reinstatement of worship.

Z E C H A R I A H

AUTHOR: Zechariah

DATE OF WRITING: around 518 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: 520 BC to 518 BC

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Israelites in Jerusalem after returning from exile

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: The preservation of the divinely inspired prophecies of the prophet Zechariah during his ministry to the Israelite people after their return from exile. Zechariah preached a message of encouragement to the newly returned Israelite nation, promising the best years were ahead. Zechariah's prophecies foreshadow the coming messiah and promise restoration to the people of God.

MALACHI

AUTHOR: Malachi

DATE OF WRITING: about 450 BC or 420 BC

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: Shortly before (or perhaps after) Nehemiah's governorship (about 450 BC or 420 BC)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Israelites in Judah after returning from exile

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: The preservation of the divinely inspired prophecies of the prophet Malachi during his ministry to the people of Judah either before or after Nehemiah's governorship. Malachi speaks to Israelites that are two or three generations after the return from exile. As the nation has rebuilt and begun to flourish, the people have become complacent, and their worship has fallen lack-luster. Malachi calls the people to redemption and promises the salvation of the Lord. His prophecies paint the Messiah as the cleansing fire that will forever atone His people, foreshadowing the coming Lord.

NEW TESTAMENT

MATTHEW

AUTHOR: The Apostle Matthew

DATE OF WRITING: Around 55-65 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: The earthly life of Jesus (around 3 BC to 30 AD)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Jewish Christians

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: To provide a written telling of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Matthew wrote this book with his fellow Jews in mind, excited to explain the events of Jesus' life from His detailed record of the genealogy to the ascension of Christ. But, even more, Matthew wrote to proclaim that the promised Messiah had come and through the sacrifice of Jesus, all men could be reconciled to God for all time.

M A R K

AUTHOR: John Mark

DATE OF WRITING: Around 50-60 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: The end of the earthly life of Jesus (around 26-30 AD)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Gentile Christians

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: To provide a written telling of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Mark compiled his account of Jesus' ministry, starting with the account of John the Baptist and through the ascension of Jesus, for the Gentile believers who were coming to know God. The message of Salvation Mark preached is that Christ came for all men, acting as the perfect servant, and giving His life to redeem even the Gentiles.

L U K E

AUTHOR: Luke

DATE OF WRITING: Around 60-61 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: The earthly life of Jesus (around 3 BC to 30 AD)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Theophilus

Why it was written: To provide a written telling of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Luke clearly states his purpose in writing the book in Luke 1:1-4. Luke's goal was to put together an ordered and concise record of the life of Christ for a man by the name of Theophilus. Luke begins his account before the birth of Christ with the events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist. Drawing from many eyewitness accounts and sources, Luke compiles the gospel story into a detailed account, proclaiming not only that Jesus lived a perfect life, but that he died and rose as Savior for all.

J O H N

AUTHOR: John the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING: Around 80-90 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: The end of the earthly life of Jesus (around 26-30 AD)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Christians, both Jewish and Gentile

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: To provide a written telling of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. John explains his reason for writing his Gospel in 20:30-31 when he explains that "these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing you may have life in His name." Scholars debate whether his original audience was Jewish, Gentile, or both. But either way, we see that John's purpose in writing was to share the good news of Jesus' redemption for all and invite the reader into salvation.

A C T S

AUTHOR: Luke

DATE OF WRITING: Around 61-62 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: During the first decade of the Church (around 30 AD to 61 AD)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Theophilus

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: To provide a detailed account of the beginning of the Church. Luke, again writing to Theophilus, composed a detailed account of the early years of the Church and the expansion of the Gospel.

R O M A N S

AUTHOR: Paul the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING: Around 57 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: Around 57 AD

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The church in Rome

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Paul wrote the letter to the Romans as a systematic account of his theological beliefs as well as a thorough and in-depth teaching about Jesus, salvation, and redemption. Paul had anticipated visiting Rome and sent the letter ahead as a sort of introduction and resume of sorts.

1 C O R I N T H I A N S

AUTHOR: Paul the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING: AROUND 55 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: Around 50 AD to 55 AD

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The church in Corinth

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthian Christians as a response to previous letters he had received from them and to address both concerns they had expressed as well as problems he had heard about in the church. Paul spent approximately 18 months with the Corinthians before this.

2 CORINTHIANS

AUTHOR: Paul the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING: Around 56 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: around 50 AD to 56 AD

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The church in Corinth

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: After his first letter to the Corinthian church was not well received and a false prophet had begun turning the hearts of the people away from the truth, Paul wrote a harsh letter of rebuke (now lost) calling them to repentance. After this letter, many of the church repented and turned back to the truth. This letter is Paul's response to the changes that had been reported to him, to both encourage the believers in Corinth and continue to provide instruction and call the remaining rebellious back to the faith.

GALATIANS

AUTHOR: Paul the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING: Around 49 AD (or possibly around 52 AD to 55 AD)

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: 47 AD to 49 AD (or possibly 50 AD to 55 AD)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The church in Galatia

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Paul wrote this letter as a response to the reports that Judaizers (those who believed that Gentiles needed to convert to Judaism to become Christians, including being circumcised and following the Law) had infiltrated the church in Galatia and were spreading a false gospel. Paul wrote to defend his claim to apostleship, correct false teaching, and encourage the believers to stand firm in the true Gospel he had taught them.

E P H E S I A N S

AUTHOR: Paul the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING: About 61 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: About 53 AD to 61 AD

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The church in Ephesus

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Paul wrote to the Ephesian church to help strengthen their understanding of the Gospel and reinforced the truth he had taught them during his time with them. Many scholars believe that this letter was intended to be a circular letter, shared with multiple churches, as a strong teaching on how believers were to live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

P H I L I P P I A N S

AUTHOR: Paul the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING: About 61 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: About 49 AD to 61 AD

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The church in Philippi

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Paul wrote this letter as a sort of thank-you note to the Philippian church for their spiritual and financial support to him and the mission of Christ. He also wrote to encourage and teach them some key doctrinal points about living the Christian life with joy and contentment. He encourages them to focus on their identity in Christ, to let go of ties to this world, and to celebrate the eternal life we've been given in Christ.

C O L O S S I A N S

AUTHOR: Paul the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING: About 61 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: About 53 AD to 61 AD

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE:

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Paul wrote the letter to the Colossian church to combat a dangerous heresy that had sprung up there (namely that Jesus was a created being and not a member of the Godhead), to correct bad theology, and to preach Jesus as the only thing worth living for. He urged the Colossians to give up anything that would steal their allegiance to Christ. He further instructs them on key elements of the Christian walk and truths of faith.

1

T H E S S A L O N I A N S

AUTHOR: Paul the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING: About 50 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: About 50 AD

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The church in Thessalonica

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Paul wrote to clarify his teaching on end-time events and encourage believers who had shown concern when some of their congregation had died. He wrote to explain to them what those who had died would indeed still see Christ on His return. He also wrote to continue to teach them on what right living as believers looked like in a practical sense.

2 T H E S S A L O N I A N S

AUTHOR: Paul the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING: About 50 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: About 50 AD

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The church in Thessalonica

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Paul wrote his second letter to the Thessalonians to continue to clarify their understanding of end times and to encourage some who had ceased working due to their belief that Jesus' return was imminent. The overarching theme of this letter is for the Thessalonians to stand firm in their faith and continue in the teachings they had received.

1 T I M O T H Y

AUTHOR: Paul the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING:

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE:

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Timothy

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Paul wrote to his friend and mentee, Timothy, to encourage him in his own walk, as a leader of the church (in Ephesus) and to help explain to him what healthy church structure should look like. After finding false teaching in Ephesus, Paul had stationed Timothy there to help correct and direct the struggling church. Many scholars believe this letter is in response to Timothy's frustration and struggle as Paul seeks to bolster his friend and ministry partner.

2 TIMOTHY

AUTHOR: Paul the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING:

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: About 63 AD to 66 AD

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Timothy

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, believing that his days were shortly coming to an end and unsure if he would live long enough to see Timothy in person. In this letter, Paul sends his final words of advice, encouragement, and appreciation to his dear friend Timothy. He also writes repeatedly, begging Timothy to come to him soon, as Paul did not wish to be alone at the end of his life. Many have likened this to Paul's "last will and testament" as it contains many "faithful sayings" that he certainly wanted to pass on before his impending execution.

TITUS

AUTHOR: Paul the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING: About 63 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: About 62 AD to 63 AD

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Titus

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Paul wrote to his friend and ministry partner Timothy who was serving as a leader at the church in Crete. Titus had stayed in Crete to correct false teachings, doctrinal issues, and church structure problems. Paul's purpose in writing was to instruct Titus on such matters and to encourage his friend in the ministry.

PHILEMON

AUTHOR: Paul the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING: About 61 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: About 53 AD to 61 AD

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Philemon

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Paul wrote this letter to his friend and mentee, Philemon, as a plea for Philemon to receive with kindness Onesimus, a run-away slave who had left Philemon's household, but who, after becoming a Christian, wished to return and honor his master. Paul encourages Philemon to receive Onesimus as a brother in Christ and not to treat him harshly.

HEBREWS

AUTHOR: Unknown

DATE OF WRITING:

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE:

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE:

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Hebrews was written to Jewish believers who had falsely believed they were still dependent on the law of Moses and the old covenant for salvation. The author explains Christ's superiority and fulfillment of the Law. This beautiful letter highlights the lineage of faith through the Old Testament as a sort of "roll call" of faithful servants of Christ. Facing persecution as believers, some had considered leaving the faith and returning to Judaism. The author writes to encourage them to stay the course and remain faithful to Christ.

JAMES

AUTHOR: James, half-brother to Christ

DATE OF WRITING: About 45 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: In the 40's AD

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Jewish believers outside of Palestine

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: James wrote, specifically to Jewish believers who had been scattered outside the bounds of Palestine and who were suffering persecution and struggling in their faith. James wrote to encourage them to take heart and to live a life of faithful obedience. James specifically calls out faith that does not result in a changed life, teaching that a true faith cannot help but result in works.

1 PETER

AUTHOR: Simon Peter the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING: About 64 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: In the 60's AD

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Believers in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Peter wrote to Christians suffering encouraging them to live in light of eternity. This letter is perhaps the most in-depth discussion on the theology of suffering, teaching that God can be glorified through the allowance of suffering, and echos the Old Testament book of Job in its view of suffering. Peter writes to encourage believers to suffer well with their eyes and hearts fixed on heaven. He also wrote to remind them of some key doctrinal truths about God and salvation.

2 P E T E R

AUTHOR: Simon Peter the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING: Around 67 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: In the 60's AD

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Christians

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Peter wrote to warn believers of false prophets who were teaching heresy doubting the facts of Christ's first coming and declaring that Christ would not return. These false prophets argued that His death did not purchase for the believer salvation and eternal security. Nearing the end of his life, Peter most likely wrote to send a final word on faith and to correct the false teaching.

1 J O H N

AUTHOR: John the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING: Possibly around 80 AD to 90 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: In the 80's AD

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Christians living around Roman Asia

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: John wrote this letter to counter the heresies that Christ was not the incarnate God and that He is not the Messiah. Also arising at the time was the beginnings of the Gnostic heresy- belief that all material things were sinful and only the spiritual was good. This dualistic idea threatened the true Gospel by implicating that Christ could not have been sinless and still lived in the flesh. These heresies opened the door for unhealthy and ungodly behaviors inside the church, leading some to doubt the seriousness of sin. John wrote to correct such thinking and line out a correct way of living.

2 JOHN

AUTHOR: John the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING: Possibly around 80 AD to 90 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: In the 80's AD

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: An unnamed Christian lady and her children

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: John wrote this letter to the unnamed lady and her children, of whom he was obviously closely acquainted. Having heard of the family's reputation for following the Lord earnestly and their encounter with the same heresy that he wrote about in 1 John, he now wrote to encourage and inform this family as to how to address the heresy. Some scholars suggest that perhaps this woman was hosting a home church and John wrote to not only help her and her family, but to advice all the believers who gathered there.

3 JOHN

AUTHOR: John the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING: Possibly around 80 AD to 90 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: In the 80's AD

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Gaius

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: This short note was penned to a fellow believer, Gaius, by John to help clarify and encourage the appropriateness of warm hospitality to traveling ministers. John also includes in this short letter a warning about a man named Diotrephes and warns Gaius against him. He goes on to encourage his friend to continue to do good to the brothers and sisters.

J U D E

AUTHOR: Jude

DATE OF WRITING: Around the 60's AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: In the 60's AD

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Christians

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: Jude wrote to these believers because reports of false teaching had reached him. These false teachers were encouraging that the grace of God allowed for all kinds of unrighteous living, feeding sensuality, lust, and unrighteousness and covering their sins in the name of grace. Jude wrote to strongly rebuke and correct such teachings, encouraging all believers to live holy lives that were pleasing to God.

R E V E L A T I O N

AUTHOR: John the Apostle

DATE OF WRITING: Around 95 AD

WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE: (future prophecy)

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Christians living in 7 cities of the Roman Province (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea).

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN: John, while exiled to the island of Patmos, received a vision from the Lord. This final book of the Bible records in detail that vision. John's vision opened with direct messages from God to seven churches in Asia. God then showed John apocalyptic visions of the end times, what events would unfold, the rise and fall of the Anti-Christ, and the triumphant return of Christ and inevitable defeat of evil. The book concludes with the promise of a new heaven and new earth where Christ will reign forevermore, and those who chose to believe are welcomed into eternity beside Him.

DIFFERENT WAYS TO STUDY THE BIBLE

TOPICAL STUDIES: Sometimes it can be helpful to study topics and common themes throughout the Bible. There are many Bible studies and sermons that have already been created to help you with this. Looking at a specific topic and what the Bible says about that topic can help you to find answers as well as see the consistency of the Bible throughout its text.

VERSE BY VERSE STUDIES: Choosing a chapter or book of the Bible and then studying it through, verse by verse, can help you to get a bigger picture of what is happening and help you to read the Bible in context. There are some awesome commentaries, sermons, and studies that can help you read through your Bible verse by verse.

CHRONOLOGICAL: When the Bible was composed, it was not put in chronological order, but ordered differently to help the reader understand the overarching message. But reading the Bible chronologically can help you to understand when and how the events of the Bible took place and how the different books overlap each other, giving you a stronger historical understanding.

INDUCTIVE STUDY: Inductive studies methods like Voice, Soap, and other methods are helpful in teaching you how to slow down, and dive deeper into the scriptures. These methods help you to look into the background, context, original history, and languages of the text to give you a deeper understanding of God's word.

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK WHILE STUDYING

What is the context (surrounding historical events, language, and culture) around this passage or verse?

What other verses in this text apply to a correct understanding of the Bible?

As I am reading, is my understanding of the text line up with the large narrative of the Bible?

How does this passage point to Jesus?

What did the original audience hear when they read/heard this passage or verse?

How do I apply the truth of this passage or verse to my life?

Are there any questions this passage raises in me that I need to study more?

Who can I ask to help me understand any parts of this passage that are confusing?

What other translations might I reference to better understand this text?

B I B L E F A C T S

- The word "Bible" literally means "the scrolls" or "the books" and consists of 66 individual books (39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament)
- The Bible has been translated into more than 700 languages and portions of the Bible have been translated into even more. However, there are still a staggering number of languages that still do not have access to the Biblical texts! Some amazing organizations worldwide have made it their goal to translate the Bible into every language.
- The first translation of any Biblical text was the Septuagint, an early Christian translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek!
- Over 100 million copies of the Bible are sold every year, making it the best-selling book worldwide.
- The Bible was written by more than 40 different authors, over a span of at least 1500 to 2000 years, on three different continents (Africa, Asia, and Europe). Its authors came from different cultures, economic statuses, education levels, and backgrounds. Even with this almost impossible amount of author variation, the Biblical message remains constant throughout its entirety, something that many scholars agree is nearly impossible without divine intervention.

