

CITATION AWARD MATRIX

Journey Requirements

☐ Faith Foundation

Use this document to keep track of your progress toward earning the Citation Award. The Citation Award reflects ten years* of a discipleship journey for graduating Seniors or adults. Remember, it doesn't matter where you start, just that you finish!

Complete each of the four Journey books in any order:

DISCIPLES

- ☐ Bible readings and summaries completed
- ☐ Share your faith
- ☐ Attend a ministry training seminar or conference that will help you grow as a Christian.
- ☐ Serve in a long-term capacity in a ministry or service project of your church (at least three months per year).

WITNESSES

- ☐ Bible readings and summaries completed
- ☐ Share your faith
- ☐ Attend a ministry training seminar or conference that will help you grow as a Christian.
- ☐ Serve in a long-term capacity in a ministry or service project of your church (at least three months per year).

ADVOCATES

- ☐ Bible readings and summaries completed
- ☐ Share your faith
- ☐ Attend a ministry training seminar or conference that will help you grow as a Christian.
- ☐ Serve in a long-term capacity in a ministry or service project of your church (at least three months per year).

IDENTITY

- ☐ Bible readings and summaries completed
- ☐ Share your faith
- ☐ Attend a ministry training seminar or conference that will help you grow as a Christian.
- ☐ Serve in a long-term capacity in a ministry or service project of your church (at least three months per year).

*Award Milestones & Completing the Citation Award

To earn a Citation Award students must read and summarize every book of the Bible. We suggest students read the New Testament in Junior High, (or Middle School) and the Old Testament in High School.

Truth & Training

- ☐ Mission: Grace in Action
- ☐ Mission: Evidence of Grace
- ☐ Mission: Agents of Grace
- ☐ Mission: Discovery of Grace

☐ Timothy Award Complete

Trek

- ☐ Trek Check
 - ☐ His Story
 - ☐ His Love
 - ☐ His People

Only two Trek books are required if four T&T books are completed.

☐ New Testament Bible Summaries Complete

☐ Meritorious Award Complete

Journey

- ☐ Faith Foundation
- ☐ Disciples
- ☐ Witnesses
- ☐ Advocates
- ☐ Identity
- ☐ Old Testament Bible Summaries Complete

☐ Citation Award Complete

Bible Reading Checklist



Identity

EXODUS

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40

NUMBERS

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36				

JUDGES

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21									

1 SAMUEL

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31									

2 SAMUEL

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24						

EZRA

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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NEHEMIAH

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13							

SONG OF SONGS

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
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OBADIAH

1

MICAH

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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HAGGAI

1	2
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Bible Reading Checklist

Advocates

JOURNEY™

JOSHUA

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24						

1 KINGS

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22								

2 KINGS

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25					

1 CHRONICLES

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	

2 CHRONICLES

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36				

ESTHER

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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JOB

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42								

PSALMS

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110
111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120
121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130
131	132	133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140
141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150

JEREMIAH

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52								

LAMENTATIONS

1	2	3	4	5
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JOEL

1	2	3
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JONAH

1	2	3	4
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Bible Reading Checklist

Witnesses

JOURNEY™

LEVITICUS

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27			

RUTH

1	2	3	4
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ISAIAH

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66				

DANIEL

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12								

HOSEA

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14						

AMOS

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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NAHUM

1	2	3
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HABAKKUK

1	2	3
---	---	---

MALACHI

1	2	3	4
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Bible Reading Checklist

Disciples

JOURNEY™

GENESIS

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50

DEUTERONOMY

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34						

PROVERBS

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31									

ECCLESIASTES

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12								

EZEKIEL

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48		

ZEPHANIAH

1	2	3							
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ZACHARIAH

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14						

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1. Genesis

Theme: Beginnings

Author: Moses

Verse: Genesis 1:1

Date: About 1450 B.C.

The Bible is the history of God's dealing with humanity. The history begins in the logical place - with creation. From the start, humans could see God's power, authority, creativity and personality. God created men and women in a state of innocent dependence on Him. But because humans are created in the image of God, we also have free will. Adam and Eve exercised that free will, with the encouragement of Satan, to disobey God and sin. Since God is perfect, He cannot tolerate sin. God's justice requires that sin separates us from Him, and since He is life, separation from Him means death. Sin was passed on from Adam to every human who has ever lived.

But God's love and grace can also be seen early in Genesis. God did not punish Adam and Eve with instant death. Instead, He promised a redeemer, the first prophecy of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in Scripture (3:15).

Humanity's sin was soon evident. Cain killed Abel and things went from bad to worse until God said of man ... *the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually* (6:5). Things had gotten so bad that God could only find one righteous man, Noah. He provided refuge for Noah and his family on the ark and destroyed the rest of the world with a flood.

It was obvious that individual humans were incapable of obeying God, so God instituted human government to prevent evil from getting out of control. He wanted men to spread out over the world, but instead they built a huge city and a tower to show how great they were. This time, God punished man by confusing their languages.

Unable to understand one another, people were forced to do what God had wanted them to do by choice - scatter around the world and fill it.

Not long after Babel, God spoke to a man named Abram (later Abraham) and promised him that he would have so many descendants that they couldn't be counted and that the entire world would be blessed through his seed. (This promise was fulfilled in part by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but there is a further fulfillment yet to come when the nations are blessed through Israel during the millennium.)

The remainder of Genesis is a history of Abraham's descendants, beginning with his son, Isaac, his son, Jacob, and his sons who became the 12 tribes of Israel.

2. Exodus

Theme: Redemption from bondage

Author: Moses

Verse: Exodus 20:2

Date: 15th century B.C.

Exodus opens with the descendants of Jacob having multiplied from 70 at the time of Joseph's death to a nation of more than two million. The nation of Israel was enslaved by Egypt for many years, but God called Moses, who was raised in the pharaoh's palace, to lead his fellow Israelites out of Egypt. God brought 10 plagues on the Egyptians to pave the way for the Israelites' release. Through the miraculous parting of the Red Sea, the Israelites escaped from the Egyptian army. God showed His presence to His people with pillars of cloud and fire, but they soon began to grumble and complain against God.

Through Moses, God revealed another portion of His plan - the law and the tabernacle. When we think of the law, we tend to think of the Ten Commandments (Chapter 20), but that was only the beginning.

Did God really expect that Israel would be able to obey His laws? No, He was making a point. God knows that we

need to be wholly dependent on Him, but we don't know that. So He gave the law to show us what we would have to do in order to be saved by our own efforts. None of us can keep the law, and that's the point. And that's why God included the sacrifices and ceremonies in the law. They can't rid people of sin, but they did cover the sins of the Jews until Christ's perfect sacrifice on the cross.

When Moses told the people about the law, they promised to keep it. Of course, they didn't. While Moses was on Mount Sinai talking with God, the people gave up on him and began worshiping a gold calf, as the Egyptians did.

3. Leviticus

Theme: Holiness

Author: Moses

Verse: Leviticus 20:7-8

Date: 15th century B.C.

One of the 12 tribes of Israel, the tribe of Levi, was set aside to be priests in God's tabernacle. Holiness is the theme and key word of this book - it appears 87 times. Major topics include offerings, consecration and cleansing, atonement, relationships of God's people, instructions and warnings. In addition to the Ten Commandments, there were more than 600 other laws, governing almost every aspect of life. Many of these laws are revealed in Leviticus, including instructions on food, social relations, feasts, purity, the Sabbath and blasphemy. Near the end of the book, in Chapter 26, the Lord reminds the Israelites about the blessings they will receive if they obey and the punishments they will suffer if they don't. But, again, God knew the outcome and reminded them of His unconditional promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

4. Numbers

Theme: God's corrective discipline and continuing love

Author: Moses

Verse: Numbers 6:24-26

Date: 15th century B.C.

Numbers is a sequel to Exodus. (The book is called Numbers because of two censuses, or numberings of the people, that are recorded.) It recounts the Israelites' journey from Mount Sinai to the land of Canaan, which God had promised them. It wasn't a smooth journey. The people complained almost constantly. When they reached the border of the land, 12 spies were chosen (one from each tribe) and sent to report on the land God had told them to possess. Ten of the spies reported that the people who lived in the land were too powerful. Once again, the Israelites refused to rely on God - they panicked and nearly stoned the other two spies, Caleb and Joshua, who trusted God and recommended that the Israelites enter the land.

As punishment, God would not allow them to enter because of their disobedience and lack of faith. The Israelites had to wander in the wilderness 40 years until the disobedient generation died out. A whole generation missed the blessings God had planned for them in the land. Everybody who was an adult on the day of the spies' report died in the wilderness except Caleb and Joshua. During the time in the wilderness, the people grumbled against God some more. God responded by sending poisonous snakes. Many Israelites died. On God's instruction, Moses set up a bronze serpent on a pole. Those who looked on the serpent in faith were healed. This serpent was a picture of the death of Christ on the cross.

5. Deuteronomy

Theme: The second giving of the law

Author: Moses

Verse: Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Date: 1450-1410 B.C.

Deuteronomy is composed almost entirely of Moses' addresses to the children of Israel before they enter Canaan. (Because of Moses' disobedience at Kadesh when he struck the rock twice, God did not permit him to enter Canaan.) Moses continues the review of Israel's history begun in Numbers and then enlarges upon some of the basic laws previously given. Deuteronomy contains prophecies made concerning Israel's future - blessings if Israel is obedient to God, curses if disobedient. Closing with the final words of Moses, the book gives a description of his death on Mount Nebo.

6. Joshua

Theme: Conquest of Canaan

Author: Joshua

Verse: Joshua 1:9

Date: 14th century B.C.

This book bears the name of its author, Joshua, who led the Israelites into Canaan. The first five chapters show how Joshua prepared the people spiritually and strategically to enter the Promised Land. God demonstrated His continued care for His people by miraculously parting the Jordan River. Chapters 6 through 12 give the history of the conquest, including the defeat of Jericho and the faith of Rahab, the pagan woman who believed in God and was saved. Rahab is a great example of the truth that it isn't the strength of a person's faith that saves, but the object. Joshua also records the history of the battle against a group of enemies during which God stopped the sun to give Israel time to win.

The rest of Joshua tells about the division of the land to the 12 tribes and the conditions the Israelites would need to keep to be successful. In his final address to the people, Joshua makes his famous declaration:

... choose this day whom you will serve ... as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD (24:15).

7. Judges

Theme: Consequences of sin

Author: Unknown

Verse: Judges 17:6

Date: 11th century B.C.

Judges covers the chaotic time in Israel's history between Joshua's death and the beginning of an organized government under King Saul, a period of about 340 years. God intended the nation to be governed by Him alone, with priests as administrators. He promised the people great blessings if they would only trust and obey Him. He also warned them that if they turned away from Him and worshiped false gods, He would *... bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle ... (Deuteronomy 28:49).* That's exactly what happened

when Israel repeatedly turned to false idols. Other nations invaded - just as God had promised. This was intended as discipline, to teach the Israelites to trust God alone, but the people sank deeper and deeper into sin. God is just and will punish sin, but He is also a God of grace and mercy. The 12 judges were actually military leaders whom God raised up to deliver His people from their enemies. Among them were Samson and Gideon, two of the Bible's best-known heroic figures. This cycle of sin-punishment-repentance-deliverance occurred seven times. The deliverance was always temporary, and even some of the judges were sinful. The lesson to be learned is that whenever people attempt to go their own way without God's guidance, disaster will follow.

8. Ruth

Theme: Beginning of the messianic family of David

Author: Unknown

Verse: Ruth 1:16

Date: 11th century B.C.

After the Jewish man, Elimelech, died in the land of Moab, his wife, Naomi, wanted to return to her home-land in Bethlehem. Her Moabite daughter-in-law, Ruth, chose to return with her to live with and be part of God's people, no matter what the cost (1:16-17). She presented herself to Boaz, a relative of Naomi, and he righteously accepted his role as her kinsman-redeemer, which included the duties of redeeming the ancestral lands of a deceased relative and marrying his widow. Because of Ruth's choice and her marriage to Boaz, she became one of the ancestors of King David, whose lineage eventually leads to the Messiah Himself. Boaz, Ruth's kinsman-redeemer, is a type (a real event that is also an illustration of a deeper truth) of Christ, the great Kinsman-Redeemer, who will redeem the nation of Israel and its land and bring the people into rest in the kingdom.

9. 1 Samuel

Theme: History of Israel

Author: Unknown

Verse: 1 Samuel 8:5

Date: 12th-11th century B.C.

First and Second Samuel, originally considered one book, cover approximately 150 years. First Samuel begins with the birth and childhood of Samuel and records his ministry as the last of the Israelite judges. Also included is Israel's demand for a king, the anointing of Saul to the throne as Israel's first king and David's life prior to becoming king.

10. 2 Samuel

Theme: History of Israel (continued)

Author: Unknown

Verse: 2 Samuel 7:16

Date: 11th century B.C.

Second Samuel recounts the strife and struggle leading to the establishment of King David as ruler of Israel in Jerusalem. It also records David's military victories, his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Absalom's revolt and David's disobedience in numbering the people. (The full account of David's life extends from 1 Samuel 16:12 through 1 Kings 2:11.)

11. 1 Kings

Theme: Division and decay of the kingdom

Author: Unknown

Verse: 1 Kings 11:11

Date: Sixth century B.C.

Major topics included in the book of 1 Kings are King Solomon's reign, the building of the temple, the division of Israel into the northern kingdom (Israel) under King Jeroboam and the southern kingdom (Judah) under King Rehoboam, the ministry of Elijah, and the reign of King Ahab and his evil wife, Jezebel. Originally, the books of 1 and 2 Kings were one book.

12. 2 Kings

Theme: The divided kingdom and captivity

Author: Unknown

Verse: 2 Kings 23:27

Date: Sixth century B.C.

The book of 2 Kings covers a total of 250 years, including the reigns of the last 12 kings of Israel and the last 16 kings of Judah. It records God's punishment upon Israel and Judah because of their backsliding away from God and disobedience to His commands. The northern kingdom, Israel, fell to the Assyrians in 721 B.C. Also recorded is Elijah's translation to heaven without dying. Elisha, his successor, was given a double portion of God's Spirit, enabling him to perform many miracles.

13. 1 Chronicles

Theme: Genealogy and history

Author: Unknown

Verse: Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is Yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head above all. 1 Chronicles 29:11

Date: Fifth century B.C.

The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles repeat much of the history of 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings. The first nine chapters contain an extensive genealogy of the patriarchs and the 12 sons of Jacob (Israel). Chapter 10 relates details about Saul's last days and his death. The rest of the book describes King David's reign over the nation of Israel.

14. 2 Chronicles

Theme: Reign of King Solomon and history of Judah

Author: Unknown

Verse: 2 Chronicles 7:14

Date: Probably written during the Babylonian captivity

The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles formed one book in the old Hebrew canon. The first nine chapters of 2 Chronicles relate events during King Solomon's reign with a detailed description of the building and dedication of the temple. The remainder of the book continues the history of Judah (the southern kingdom), the reign of King Rehoboam, the revival under King Hezekiah, the destruction of the

capital city, Jerusalem, and the nation's captivity under Nebuchadnezzar.

15. Ezra

Theme: Return of the remnant

Author: Ezra

Verse: Ezra 3:11

Date: 536-457 B.C.

The two major events recorded by Ezra are the return of the Jewish remnant from Babylon to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and the rebuilding of the temple. Ezra, a priest, returned to Jerusalem following the return of the faithful remnant. Ezra is the first of six books (Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi) written after Israel's captivity.

After the Israelites returned to their homes, the people started marrying wives from pagan nations. Ezra was upset because this was the same sin that had resulted in the captivity in Babylon. Ezra prayed before the people, thanking God for what He'd done and for His kindness toward Israel. He confessed the nation's sins. The gathered crowd made a covenant to rid the nation of the wives and children who worshiped other gods. Three days later, the entire nation gathered and came to an almost-unanimous decision - they would rid themselves of the sinful influence. It's just as true today as it was in Ezra's time - if another person is influencing you to focus on things other than the Lord, the relationship is wrong.

16. Nehemiah

Theme: Rebuilding Jerusalem's walls

Author: Nehemiah

Verse: Nehemiah 2:17

Date: 446-434 B.C.

In 538 B.C., a small group of Jews was allowed to return to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel from their captivity in Babylon. The temple was rebuilt in 515 B.C. and Ezra

called the people to spiritual restoration in 457 B.C. But in 444 B.C., almost 100 years after the first Jews had returned, much of the destruction done by the Babylonian army hadn't been repaired. Israel was surrounded by enemies and in danger.

Nehemiah, a court official under King Artaxerxes, heard about the condition of the city and asked permission to return to his homeland and rebuild the walls. His enemies did everything they could think of to discourage him. After a nighttime inspection, Nehemiah called the Jewish officials together and encouraged them to rebuild the city's defenses.

Finally, in spite of discouragement and threats, the work was finished. Nehemiah ends his work with an account of the nation's spiritual revival and the dedication of the walls. In this book, Nehemiah prays 11 times. This book records the last historical events of the Old Testament, although Malachi was probably written some 60 years later.

17. Esther

Theme: God's care for His people

Author: Unknown

Verse: Esther 4:14

Date: Fifth century B.C.

The events in the book of Esther took place during the reign of Xerxes, king of Persia, sometime between the returns of Zerubbabel and Ezra to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. Xerxes was a conceited man. When his wife, Vashti, refused to display her beauty at a banquet, he banished her and set out to find a new queen. A Jewish man named Mordecai lived near the palace with his cousin, Esther. This beautiful young woman was chosen as the new queen.

Meanwhile, Haman, a nobleman, vowed to destroy all the Jews because Mordecai refused to bow to him. Esther, as queen, was in the perfect position to defeat Haman's plans - her cousin told her that she was likely in her place for just such a time. Esther asked the king to attend two banquets. Before the second one, the king decided to honor Mordecai for saving his life on an earlier occasion when two officials tried to assassinate him. Haman, thinking he was the one to be honored, suggested a robe, a position of nobility and a parade for the honoree. When

Mordecai was brought forth, Haman was forced to honor him. Esther revealed Haman's plot to kill the Jews, and the king ordered Haman hung on the very gallows he had built to hang Mordecai. The plot against the Jews was defeated and Mordecai was given a powerful position in the kingdom. The name of God is never mentioned in the book of Esther, but God's care for His people is undeniably demonstrated throughout the book.

18. Job

Theme: The problem of suffering

Author: Unknown

Verse: Job 19:25

Date: Unknown, probably the first book of the Bible written

Job, a righteous man who was probably a contemporary of Abraham, lived in the land of Uz before the nation of Israel came into existence. He had flocks and a huge household and was ... *the greatest of all the people of the east (1:3)*. He wasn't outstanding only for his wealth, but also for his righteousness because he took God at His word and did what God said was necessary to demonstrate his faith. Regularly and consistently Job offered sacrifices for his sins and the sins of his family, and so his sins were covered and he was *blameless and upright (1:1)*.

With God's permission, Job was severely afflicted by Satan. He lost his possessions, family and health. His life, however, was preserved because Satan could not proceed beyond the boundary God had set for him. Three of Job's friends came to commiserate with him, but their advice wasn't very good - they told Job that his misfortunes were a result of sin. (We know they were wrong because God said so in Job 42:7.) Job became angry and depressed, but he never turned his back on God. A fourth friend, Elihu, told Job that God sometimes instructs men through rough circumstances and that He has a purpose — to show men that they have no reason for pride but should rely on God's grace and love. Through his experiences, Job was brought to utter subjection and dependence on God, as well as a new understanding of God's holiness and power.

19. Psalms

Theme: Rejoicing and praise

Author: David and others

Verse: Psalms 100:4

Date: 10th century B.C. to approximately sixth century B.C.

The Psalms, Israel's prayer and praise book written by David, Hezekiah, Ezra and others, consist of five books, each ending in a doxology. Hebrew poets didn't use rhyme, and their meter doesn't usually translate into modern language because it counted accents, not syllables. The primary concept was parallelism in which two or three lines align in one of several ways. The Psalms have been categorized by theme.

Messianic - The author points to Jesus Christ in some way, either through specific prophecies or with a reference to the kings of Israel that will see their ultimate realization when Christ rules over the millennial kingdom.

Lament - The author speaks of his distress in trying circumstances, but then states that he trusts God and, finally, that he knows God will see him through eventually.

Praise and Thanksgiving - The author praises the Lord and thanks Him for who He is and what He has done for the individual or for the nation of Israel.

Royal - The author sings about the king and how he is God's representative through whom God will accomplish His plans.

Wisdom - The author describes life and how his relationship with God is central to it.

Penitential - The author is sorry for his sin and begs God for forgiveness.

Imprecatory - The author asks God to judge his enemies or the enemies of Israel.

Pilgrimage - These Psalms were sung by Israelites as they traveled to Jerusalem for the annual feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles.

The Psalms are often very personal, but it's important to remember that they aren't just poems - they're poems inspired by the Holy Spirit.

20. Proverbs

Theme: Wisdom

Author: Solomon and others

Verse: Proverbs 3:5-6

Date: 10th century B.C.

God offered Solomon anything he asked for, and Solomon asked for wisdom. God was pleased with this and made Solomon the wisest man alive. Wisdom is the ability to take God's truth and use that knowledge to improve your life and the lives of others according to God's will. Eight hundred of Solomon's wisest sayings - inspired by the Holy Spirit - have been gathered in the collection we know as Proverbs. In addition, he collected wise sayings from other sources. King Hezekiah collected Solomon's proverbs and added some from other writers. The first nine chapters are Solomon's advice to his son. The next 20 are a loose collection of wise sayings on godly living. Proverbs makes it very clear that wisdom comes from God (1:7) and leads to God (2:5). The final two chapters of the book include wisdom from Agur and King Lemuel.

21. Ecclesiastes

Theme: Man's wisdom

Author: Solomon

Verse: Ecclesiastes 7:20

Date: 10th century B.C.

Solomon had, by the world's standards, an amazing life. God made him the wisest man alive. He had wealth, power and fame. And then we come to Ecclesiastes. Solomon probably wrote this book as an old man looking back at his life - and he doesn't seem to be very happy. *Vanity of vanities! All is vanity (1:2b).*

Solomon's point is that the things of this world, when pursued for their own value or in expectation of achieving satisfaction, are worthless. Everything is temporary and without lasting value. He shows the pointlessness of pursuing satisfaction through fame, wisdom, pleasure, physical indulgence, work, government, wealth, nostalgia, the praise of others and justice. His conclusion is that nobody has any control over what happens in life and that nobody understands it either. But Solomon doesn't leave us there. He recommends that we enjoy the things God has given us - food and drink, friends, our spouses, our labor - but not to expect them to satisfy us on our own. *The end of the*

matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil (12:13-14).

22. Song of Solomon

Theme: Human and divine love

Author: Solomon

Verse: Song of Solomon 2:4

Date: 11th century B.C.

Picture in your mind any music video you've seen. Chances are that you noticed a few things. The lead singer switched wardrobes several times, often returning to one or two main outfits again and again. A backup chorus danced on and off the screen a few times. The activity that was going on sometimes had very little to do with the words that were being sung.

The Song of Solomon is very like a music video - 900 B.C.-style. There are two main leads, one male and one female, who sing about their pasts, their hopes, their dreams and their feelings. There is a backup group known as the Daughters of Jerusalem. And there is a lot of symbolic, poetic language that doesn't mean exactly what it appears to say - for example, the poet compares his love's hair to a flock of goats.

The main characters include the Shulamite bride and the king. The book demonstrates that physical desire between a man and woman who are married to each other is a good thing in God's sight. We were created with our desires. Yes, sin has perverted them as it has perverted everything else in this world. But as long as we stick to God's guidelines, the physical desires He gave us

are good.

23. Isaiah

Theme: Israel and the coming Messiah

Author: Isaiah

Verse: Isaiah 53:11

Date: Eighth century B.C.

This book of prophecy was written by one of the greatest Hebrew prophets. Isaiah was called by God to prophesy

to Judah during the reign of kings Uzziah, Jothan, Ahaz and Hezekiah. He urged the people to turn back to God and stop worshiping idols, and he warned them what would happen if they didn't. But even while he was saying this, he knew the people wouldn't respond. *Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And He said: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land" (6:11-12).*

Isaiah's prophecies foretold the fate of Judah and the nations who stood against God's people. In many cases, these prophecies have a dual fulfillment - referring to the Babylonian and Assyrian captivities, and to the future judgment of the world upon Christ's second coming at the end of the tribulation.

After proclaiming the holiness and justice of God and His judgments on those who don't obey Him in the first 39 chapters, Isaiah turns to a message of hope. He prophesies a day when the Messiah would come and suffer and then come again to reign over the nation in glory. In order to understand Isaiah, we must understand that all his predictions revolve around Christ's two comings. Christ came the first time as the suffering, rejected Messiah to die for the sins of the people (Isaiah 53). At His second coming to earth, when Christ will set up His kingdom, Israel will be regathered to Palestine from its worldwide dispersion and will see fulfillment of the promised messianic kingdom.

24. Jeremiah

Theme: Warnings and predictions to Judah

Author: Jeremiah

Verse: Jeremiah 33:3

Date: Seventh century B.C.

Jeremiah began his ministry as a young man, during the reign of Josiah, the last good king of Judah. (Those that followed him were evil.) When Josiah died, Jeremiah lamented, and with good reason - the people quickly slipped back into idolatry. God sent warnings to the nation through the prophet that, if they didn't repent and stop sinning, Jerusalem would be destroyed and they would be carried into captivity in Babylon. But the people didn't listen. Throughout his ministry as a prophet to Judah, the Lord commanded Jeremiah to demonstrate his message with symbolic actions. He was told to walk up and down

the streets of Jerusalem searching for one honest man. He was told to buy a belt and hide it in the rocks. He was forbidden to marry. He was told to visit a potter and watch him work and buy a jar from him. He was told to wear a yoke like an ox. He was told to buy a field. All of these instructions were intended as illustrations of God's message.

Jeremiah also predicted that the 12 tribes of Israel would return to their land in the end times and that Christ would be Israel's king during the millennium (Jeremiah 23:5-8). Because of his unpopular message, Jeremiah was persecuted and imprisoned by his own people.

25. Lamentations

Theme: Jeremiah's lament for all Israel

Author: Jeremiah

Verse: Lamentations 3:22-23

Date: Sixth century B.C.

The people of Israel refused to listen to Jeremiah's warnings. As a result, God allowed the army of Babylon to conquer the land and destroy Jerusalem. The prophet mourned for his land and wrote a series of acrostic poems about Israel's sin and God's wrath. These poems make up the book of Lamentations. But even in the midst of sorrow, Jeremiah looked to God for hope. *The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. (3:22-23).* Each of the five chapters is a separate poem of mourning and sorrow. Each poem in the original writings, except Chapter 3, has 22 verses. Each verse begins with one of the 22 different letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

26. Ezekiel

Theme: Judgment and glory

Author: Ezekiel

Verse: Ezekiel 37:27-28

Date: Sixth century B.C.

Ezekiel was both a priest and a prophet. His ministry took place while he was one of the Jewish exiles during the

Babylonian captivity of Judah, around 580 B.C., overlapping Jeremiah at the beginning and Daniel at the end. The prophet told the people why God had punished them and promised His future faithful-ness and blessing. A recurring message throughout the book is for God's people to ... *know that I am the*

LORD (Ezekiel 6:7, and more than 30 other places in the book). Ezekiel points forward to the coming of the Messiah when ... *I [Jesus Christ] Myself will search for My sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out My sheep ... (34:11-12).*

Some of his prophecies, written in terms of symbols and visions, extend into the book of Revelation and resemble the prophecies of Daniel and the apostle John.

27. Daniel

Theme: Rise and fall of kingdoms

Author: Daniel

Verse: Daniel 2:21

Date: Sixth century B.C.

Daniel, taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar into Babylon, lived during the reign of four kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus. The first six chapters of his book contain the familiar accounts of his refusal to eat the king's food, the fiery furnace and the lions' den, while Chapters 7 through 12 contain prophecies revealed to Daniel in the form of dreams and visions. Those prophecies that have already been fulfilled (such as those in Daniel 8 and 11) have had a literal fulfillment. Because of this, we can know for sure that the prophecies that haven't yet been fulfilled will also be fulfilled literally.

One of Daniel's prophecies, that of the 70 weeks in Daniel 9, was God's revelation that Israel's punishment would last for 70 sevens (the actual meaning of the Hebrew word translated *weeks* - and here referring to 70 periods of seven years, or 490 years in total). The angel Gabriel indicated that the 490 years would be divided. The first 483 years began when Artaxerxes issued a decree to Nehemiah allowing him to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and ended on the day that Jesus Christ rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. The remaining seven years will take place during the still-future tribulation when God's wrath will be poured out on earth and only a remnant of Israel will be saved. Those who are alive on earth during the tribulation will recognize the working of

God because of Daniel's vision.

Other prophecies concern the evil Gentile nations, Alexander the Great and the wars between nations in the years between Daniel's life and the birth of Jesus Christ. Near the end of the book, God tells Daniel: *Many shall purify themselves and make them-selves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand (12:10).*

28. Hosea

Theme: Apostasy of Israel

Author: Hosea

Verse: Hosea 2:19

Date: Eighth century B.C.

Hosea prophesied in Israel at about the same time as Amos did, beginning in the reign of Jeroboam II and continuing through the period of the last six kings. The book covers about 40 years. God instructed this prophet to marry Gomer, a prostitute who continued her ways after their marriage. Hosea likened her unfaithfulness to Israel's unfaithfulness to God and warned them of God's wrath. He even gave his children names that symbolized the coming judgment. But although people are unfaithful, God never is. Hosea demonstrated this by purchasing Gomer back after she had left him to pursue her profession - God will one day do the same for Israel.

29. Joel

Theme: Predictions of the day of the Lord

Author: Joel

Verse: Joel 1:15

Date: Ninth or eighth century B.C.

Joel probably made his prophecy around 835 B.C., when Joash was king. A huge swarm of locusts had just scoured the nation of Judah. *Be ashamed, O tillers of the soil; wail, O vinedressers, for the wheat and the barley, because the harvest of the field has perished (1:11).* The prophet compares the destruction by the insects to the destruction that will be visited on the earth during the coming day of the Lord (the great tribulation) with its

judgments on the Gentiles and the final restoration of Israel. But he also offers hope: ... *everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved ... (2:32)*. The apostle Peter quotes from Chapter 1 of the book of Joel in his sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

30. Amos

Theme: Ultimate universal rule of David

Author: Amos

Verse: Amos 5:24

Date: Eighth century B.C.

Amos was a farmer from the country south of Jerusalem during the reign of King Uzziah, about 755 B.C. He raised sheep and grew figs until he was called by God as a prophet. Although he was from Judah, his message was for the kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam II. The nation was enjoying prosperity and was, for the moment, at peace. But Amos warned the people: ... *I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins — you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate (5:12)*. He warned of coming destruction (which took place about 30 years later when the inhabitants were carried into the Assyrian captivity). But he also ended with hope, looking forward to a still-future time when Jesus Christ will reign over Israel in the land God gave them.

31. Obadiah

Theme: Doom of Edom

Author: Obadiah

Verse: Obadiah 1:15

Date: Ninth century B.C.

Obadiah, known as the doom song, is the smallest Old Testament book. Way back in Genesis, we read about Isaac's twin sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob's name was changed to Israel and his offspring became the 12 tribes of Israel. Esau's descendants became the Edomites, a nation located to the south of Israel. During the reign of Jehoram, around 850 B.C., the Philistines and Arabians invaded Judah. Edom joined up with Judah's enemies. Obadiah, about whom we know very little, prophesied Edom's approaching destruction: *Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever (1:10)*.

In 1812, the unique ruins of this ancient nation were discovered. They stand as a silent witness to the fulfillment of Obadiah's prophecy.

32. Jonah

Theme: God's mercy

Author: Unknown (possibly Jonah)

Verse: Jonah 3:10

Date: Ninth century B.C.

Although at first he disobeyed God, Jonah occupies a unique place in his nation's history as the first foreign missionary. Jonah prophesied during the reign of King Jeroboam II. God instructed him to give a message of warning to the people of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire. The people of that nation were known for being wicked and for torturing their captives. Jonah didn't want to go to the Gentiles, and he didn't want to be tortured. Jonah made other plans and attempted to run away. God brought on a storm that threatened to destroy the ship on which Jonah was fleeing. The prophet told the sailors that it was his God who caused the storm. Reluctantly, they threw him overboard and he was swallowed by a fish. He got the point. He prayed inside the fish and after he was vomited out on the beach, God spoke to him again. This time Jonah obeyed. Because of his preaching, the people of Nineveh, Israel's avowed enemies, repented of their sins, and God's judgment upon them was postponed. Instead of being gratified, this upset Jonah - who thought the Ninevites should be punished. God sent a vine and a scorching wind to make His point - that His purpose is for people to turn to Him and that He takes no pleasure in anyone's death.

33. Micah

Theme: Judgments

Author: Micah

Verse: Micah 6:8

Date: Eighth century B.C.

Micah ministered for approximately 25 years (at the same time as Isaiah), spanning the time when Israel was conquered by Assyria. He mentions the sins of both Israel and Judah and implores the people *to do justice*,

and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God (6:8b). He closes with a courtroom scene in which God brings His people to trial and finds them guilty. Micah also condemned wealthy landowners and merchants for taking advantage of the poor. Although Micah was a prophet of doom, he offered words of hope, predicting that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. The name Micah means “Who is like the Lord?”

34. Nahum

Theme: Nineveh’s doom

Author: Nahum

Verse: Nahum 1:7

Date: Seventh century B.C.

The book of Nahum was written around 660 B.C. Little is known about its author except that he lived in a Galilean village. Nahum is the sequel to the book of Jonah. The people of Nineveh had repented when Jonah preached to them, and God’s judgment was delayed for more than 100 years. In the book of Nahum, however, the Ninevites were again disobeying God. They had invaded and conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and were throwing their weight around. Nineveh was a huge fortress with walls 100 feet (30.5 m) high, thick enough for three chariots to ride side-by-side on the top. It seemed impregnable. Nahum relayed a message: *Behold I am against you, declares the LORD of hosts (3:5a).* He warned that God’s judgment was approaching in the form of a flood and fire. In 612 B.C., the Tigris River overflowed and destroyed part of the wall. The Babylonian army entered through the gap and destroyed the city so thoroughly that for centuries (until 1842), nobody knew where it had stood.

35. Habakkuk

Theme: Impending judgment - the Babylonian invasion

Author: Habakkuk

Verse: Habakkuk 2:4

Date: Seventh century B.C.

Nothing is known about the prophet Habakkuk except what his book reveals. Habakkuk was confused - how long could God put off punishing sinners? When God explained that Babylon was about to bring the

punishment (which places Habakkuk some-where around 600 B.C.), the prophet is even more confused - Babylon was even more wicked than Judah! God give him encouragement: *the righteous shall live by his faith (2:4b).* The name *Habakkuk* means “one who embraces.” This is appropriate because, at the very end of the book, the prophet embraces God in the midst of calamity.

Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation (3:17-18).

36. Zephaniah

Theme: The day of the Lord

Author: Zephaniah

Verse: Zephaniah 2:3

Date: Seventh century B.C.

This prophet ministered during the reign of King Josiah, sometime around 630 B.C., before that king put a temporary end to idol worship in Judah. His message may have even helped bring about the nation’s return to worshipping God. Unfortunately, as soon as Josiah died, the people returned to idolatry. Zephaniah’s prophecies foretell the wrath of God that resulted in the Babylonian captivity just a few years later. His prophecies also refer to the day of the Lord (also known as the tribulation), a greater day of wrath still to come. But like so many of the prophets, he ends with a promise of a still-future day when Israel will be restored: *At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes ... (3:20).*

37. Haggai

Theme: Encouragement to rebuild the temple

Author: Haggai

Verse: Haggai 1:8

Date: Sixth century B.C.

Haggai’s two chapters contain five messages. Cyrus, king of Persia, allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem.

They got off to a good start worshipping God, but after 16 years, the temple still wasn't completed. In 520 B.C., Haggai stepped forward to encourage everyone to get to work. Twenty-three days later, the people resumed constructing the temple. ... *Consider your ways. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the LORD (1:7-8).*

Note: Eighty years later, the Jews still hadn't rebuilt the wall around Jerusalem. It was Nehemiah who finally accomplished that task and brought about a spiritual revival in the nation.

38. Zechariah

Theme: The coming Messiah

Author: Zechariah

Verse: Zechariah 9:9

Date: Sixth century B.C.

Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai and he made his prophecy just a few months later. His message was one of hope - the Messiah was coming and the nation would be restored. Many of Zechariah's prophecies have a two-fold fulfillment; one when Jesus Christ first came to earth and another when He will come again to reign on the throne in Jerusalem and judge the Gentile nations who tried to destroy the Jewish people. When Christ was on earth, most Jews failed to grasp the two-fold nature of these prophecies. As a result, they expected Him to defeat Rome and restore Israel at that time.

39. Malachi

Theme: Rebukes and prediction

Author: Malachi

Verse: Malachi 3:7

Date: Fifth century B.C.

The prophet Malachi wrote this book after the Israelites had returned from captivity in Babylon. The temple and city of Jerusalem had been rebuilt and was once again the center of worship for the people. But God wasn't happy about the way the people were worshiping. Malachi

rebukes both the priests and the Jewish people for their sins. He does this with a six-part message delivered in a series of questions:

1. How has God loved Israel?
2. How have the priests honored God?
3. How were the people breaking faith with each other?
4. How had God been patient with Israel?
5. How had the people robbed God?
6. How would God remember those who were faithful to Him?

Malachi's many predictions include the judgment of the tribulation, the establishment of Messiah's kingdom (the millennium), and the first and second comings of Christ to earth. God, through Malachi, summed up His message (4:4-6) with a final call to remember His law and a reminder that the Judge was coming. Israel didn't get the message, and they didn't hear from God again for the next 400 years.

SHARE YOUR FAITH REQUIREMENT

In order for your leader to sign off on this section, you need to have at least one spiritually significant conversation with a unbeliever about your faith and the gospel. Describe the experience and your conversation in the space below.

LEADER'S INITIALS

DATE

MATTHEW

Theme: Christ the King

Author: Matthew

Verses: *"But what about you?" He asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:15-16)*

Date: About A.D. 50

Matthew presents Jesus Christ as the King of Israel. His Gospel begins with a genealogy of Jesus through His legal father, Joseph, which goes all the way back to Abraham. This demonstrates His right to the throne of Israel through David. Matthew also shows how Christ fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, including:

- His virgin birth
- His birth in Bethlehem
- His travel to Egypt
- His miracles
- His arrival in Jerusalem on a donkey

Matthew quotes from the Hebrew Scriptures repeatedly. The book was written to assure Jews who had believed in Jesus Christ that their faith was not in vain. He really is the Messiah, and someday He will return to set up the promised kingdom.

MARK

Theme: Jesus the Servant

Author: John Mark

Verses: *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45)*

Date: A.D. 55-56

Mark is the shortest of the four Gospels. The author focuses on Jesus Christ as a servant, with particular emphasis on His ultimate service of dying on the cross. One third of the book deals with the events of the week leading up to the crucifixion. Mark's emphasis can be seen in Mark 10:45: *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.* Mark includes many miracles that show Jesus' love for people. We read how Jesus healed many who were deaf, dumb or blind, raised a little girl to life, fed a hungry crowd of 5,000, and welcomed little children. Believers met in Mark's mother's house, and Peter visited there often. In fact, Peter was probably the source of much of Mark's information about the events of Christ's life.

LUKE

Theme: Christ the Man

Author: Luke

Verses: *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost. (Luke 19:10)*

Date: A.D. 63-68

Luke was a physician who often accompanied the apostle Paul on his missionary journeys. Luke's main purpose in his Gospel is to show Jesus Christ as a perfect man. It is from Luke that we get the most details of Jesus' birth and boyhood. He traces the genealogy of Christ back to Adam and continues through His life chronologically. Luke makes his purpose clear early on: *Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught (Luke 1:3-4).* Luke's Gospel is actually Volume 1 — his history continues in the book of Acts. The parables in this Gospel reflect the deep concern Christ had for lost mankind as expressed in Luke 19:10: *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.* Luke also wanted his readers to understand that there was a solid historical basis for believing in Jesus Christ. The well-known opening to the account of the birth of Jesus Christ is just one example of how he ties his history to events and people in the secular world. *In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) (Luke 2:1-2).*

JOHN

Theme: Christ the Son of God

Author: John

Verses: *Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name. (John 20:30-31)*

Date: A.D. 85-90

The apostle John gives a straightforward reason for writing his Gospel: *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name (John 20:31).* While the other three Gospels cover many of the same events (each with its own thematic emphasis), John describes different events to present Jesus as the Messiah, the Word made flesh, and the Son of God. Believe is the key word.

Seven key miracles are recorded:

- Turning water into wine (John 2:1-11)
- Healing the official's son (4:43-54)
- Healing the lame man by the pool of Bethesda (5:1-9)
- Feeding 5,000 people (6:1-13)
- Walking on water (6:16-20)
- Healing the blind man (9:1-7)
- Raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1-44)

John, in Chapters 13-16, gives us the Lord's teaching of His disciples about His death and the coming of the Holy Spirit. The book closes with an account of Jesus Christ's prayer in the garden, arrest, trial, death, resurrection, and last instructions to His disciples.

ACTS

Theme: The Early Church

Author: Luke

Verse: *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)*

Date: About A.D. 60

Acts was written by the physician, Luke, and is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke. In it, he records the last acts of Christ on earth as He ascended to heaven to be with the Father.

The death and resurrection of the Messiah was prophesied in the Old Testament, but that didn't excuse the Jews of their guilt for killing Him. In the second chapter, Peter exhorts the Jews to repent of their sin and accept their Messiah. He offers them the kingdom they were promised by the prophets. Some Jews believed and were saved on the day of Pentecost, but most did not. The leaders of Israel were strong in their opposition and began persecuting the believers almost right away, eventually stoning Stephen.

But God is a God of grace, and He gave the Jews every chance. Throughout the book of Acts, we see Jews in almost every region of the civilized world hearing the message of the risen Messiah and rejecting it. Even Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, went to the Jew first. Finally, in Chapter 28, with the rejection of Christ by the Jews in Rome, God's chosen people are cast aside. Paul declared: *Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles ... (Acts 28:28).* (Of course, God's promises are unconditional and the Jews will once again receive the offer — and accept it — after the rapture.)

God, in His foreknowledge, knew what choice the Jews would make. He didn't wait until Acts 28 to act. In Chapter 9, shortly after the stoning of Stephen, He appeared to Paul, the chief tormentor of the believing Jews, and saved him. Paul became God's messenger of a

new gospel — that anyone, Jew or Gentile, could be saved by grace alone through faith alone without the law. Side by side with the history of the Jews' rejection of Christ as their Messiah is the spread of Paul's gospel through his three missionary journeys around Asia and Europe.

The final chapters record Paul's arrest and journey to Rome as a prisoner.

ROMANS

Theme: Righteousness of God

Author: Paul

Verse: *But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)*

Date: A.D. 58

Romans was written during the apostle Paul's third visit to Corinth. It contains the most detailed explanation of the newly-revealed gospel of Christ. Although he had not yet visited the church in Rome, the apostle had heard of the believers' great faith in Christ, and he anticipated visiting them soon. Paul's major concern was to establish them firmly in the truth of his gospel. (Paul refers to it as his gospel because he was appointed by God to be the minister of this new message.) He explains it in a logical, step-by-step method.

- Humanity is sinful and separated from God. We are His enemies and deserve death.
- We are powerless and incapable of solving this problem, and we cannot obtain salvation by observing the law.
- God stepped in and offered His solution — His Son, Jesus Christ.
- We access this solution by faith — by simply believing that Christ's death is sufficient to pay for our sinfulness.
- When we do this, we are no longer slaves to sin. Christ is in us and nothing can separate us from Him.
- We still carry around our sin-corrupted bodies for now, and we still sin.
- But it's not about us anymore. *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:1-2).*
- But what about the Jews? God made them many promises in the Old Testament. Those promises will still be fulfilled. In Chapter 11, Paul makes the following points: 1) A small number of Jews were still being saved as members of the Body of Christ; 2) Israel's rejection of Christ was not a surprise to God; 3) The Gentiles should realize that Israel's current situation is part of God's plan; 4) Israel has been cut off from the olive tree (Christ) but they will be grafted back in (Romans 11:23-24); 5) All of God's promises will be fulfilled in the future and Israel will resume its place as God's chosen people.

In the final five chapters of Romans, Paul explains how we should live in the light of all he's just explained.

1 CORINTHIANS

Theme: Christian Conduct

Author: Paul

Verse: *Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:58)*

Date: A.D. 55

The apostle Paul established the Corinthian church during his second missionary journey. The people in the church were saved — Paul makes this very clear — but they weren't living like it. Paul calls them carnal, which means they were living in their old, sinful natures instead of in their new, Holy Spirit-powered natures. Paul corrects and instructs them on:

- Divisions in the church caused by various members bragging about following different leaders
- Allowing a man living in open sin to be part of the fellowship
- Taking other Christians before secular courts instead of resolving their differences themselves
- Marrying nonbelievers
- Eating meat offered to idols
- Abusing the Lord's Supper
- Speaking in tongues which was causing confusion in the church
- Claiming there was no resurrection from the dead

Paul ends on a positive note, encouraging the Corinthians to walk with the Lord. Near the end of this letter he writes: *Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).*

2 CORINTHIANS

Theme: Christian Righteousness

Author: Paul

Verse: *God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)*

Date: A.D. 56

Not long after Paul sent the letter known as 1 Corinthians, he received word, probably from Timothy, that the church in Corinth was still having problems. Enemies, perhaps those who were encouraging the people to return to Judaism, had been opposing Paul and attacking his credentials. In response, Paul sent Titus with a second letter, which has not been preserved. Titus reported back to Paul that most of the members of the Corinthian church had resumed their loyalty to Paul's message of the gospel but that some were still in rebellion.

Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to defend his ministry and authority as an apostle and to rejoice in those who had repented ... *I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance ... (2 Corinthians 7:9).* The apostle then switches topics and encourages the Corinthians to keep their promise to give a large gift to the church in Jerusalem. *But just as you excel in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us — see that you also excel in this grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7).* Paul then finishes with a message for those still in rebellion against him. *Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you — unless, of course, you fail the test? (2 Corinthians 13:5).*

GALATIANS

Theme: Christian Liberty

Author: Paul

Verse: *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1)*

Date: A.D. 55

Galatians is Paul's angriest letter. He wrote it to the church in Galatia, which he'd founded on his second missionary journey. The members of the church were being swayed from their faith by the Judaizers — men from Jerusalem who were trying to force the Gentiles to obey the Jewish law. In the letter, Paul corrects two errors. He explains that: 1) Man's salvation is not dependent upon him keeping parts of the law, in addition to faith in Christ. 2) The justified believer cannot become perfect by keeping the law. In this epistle, Paul wrote the most severe warnings against those who preach another gospel, and he made it clear that the law is not binding on Christians. The Christian life is not doing things to be saved or to gain special favor from God. The two systems, law and grace, cannot exist together. Paul ends the letter with a clear explanation of how we are to live under grace.

EPHESIANS

Theme: Christian Standing

Author: Paul

Verses: *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

Date: A.D. 61

Paul visited Ephesus during his second and third missionary journeys. He wrote this letter to the believers there, but he also wanted it to be passed around to other churches in the area. This is the first of four Prison Epistles, which he wrote while imprisoned in Rome. The other Prison Epistles are Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Ephesians contains the deepest truths

about the Church and the believer's wonderful position in Christ. The first three chapters show the believer's standing in Christ. This standing is unalterable, whether the believer is strong or weak. Paul explains that believers are:

- Blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).
- Adopted as God's sons (1:5).
- Forgiven of all sins (1:7).
- Sealed by the Holy Spirit (1:13).
- Alive in Christ by grace (2:5).
- Members of the Body of Christ (3:6).
- Able to approach God with freedom and confidence (3:12).

Because of this wonderful truth, the last three chapters instruct the believer on how he should live the Christian life. Paul encourages the readers to ... *live a life worthy of the calling you have received* (Ephesians 4:1). He then goes into detail about what this looks like. Chapter 6 describes the believer's conflict with the forces of darkness.

PHILIPPIANS

Theme: Christian Joy

Author: Paul

Verse: *Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.* (Philippians 2:2)

Date: A.D. 61

Paul visited Philippi on his second missionary journey. When he wrote this letter to the Philippians, he was under house arrest in Rome. One of his reasons for writing was to thank the believers for sending him a gift. He also wanted to encourage believers who were being persecuted. Paul wrote about his imprisonment and how he was still able to spread the gospel. Paul stated that he did not know whether he would live on for a while and continue his ministry or die and be with the Lord. Whatever was to occur, he wasn't worried. His rejoicing wasn't an act — He only wanted Christ to be glorified. He told the Philippians to follow his example, to lay aside their worries, rejoice, pray and be content with God's provision in all circumstances. Paul also urged his readers to be humble and show interest in other's needs, not just their own. By doing so, they would follow the example of Christ, who humbled Himself and came to earth as a servant to die for our sins. Paul was a man of status and achievement before he was saved, but he made it clear that his past life was worth nothing compared to knowing Christ. His goal was to know Christ more.

COLOSSIANS

Theme: The Preeminence of Christ

Author: Paul

Verses: *He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy.* (Colossians 1:17-18)

Date: Around A.D. 61

Colossae was a small city not far from Ephesus. As far as we know, Paul never visited — the church was likely founded by those, like Epaphras, who heard the apostle speak in the larger city. During his first imprisonment in Rome, Paul received word that the church members were being attacked by those with ... *fine-sounding arguments* (Colossians 2:4). Some Colossian believers had been attracted to angel worship, while others had fallen back into legalism. Paul urges them to stay focused on Jesus Christ. *So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority* (Colossians 2:6-10).

As he did in Ephesians, Paul encourages the Christians to live in a manner that reflects who they are in Christ. *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things* (Colossians 3:1-2).

1 THESSALONIANS

Theme: Christ's Return

Author: Paul

Verses: *For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18)

Date: A.D. 51

Thessalonica was the capital city of the Roman province of Macedonia (Greece). Paul visited and started the church on his second missionary journey, but was forced out of town by the Jewish leaders. Paul received word that the members of the church were remaining true to the faith and resisting all opposition. He wrote from Corinth to say: ... *we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord* (1 Thessalonians 3:7-8).

Paul also used the letter to explain God's revelation to him regarding the rapture of the Church before the tribulation and establishment of Christ's millennial kingdom and how it would affect those who had already died in Christ.

2 THESSALONIANS

Theme: Stand Firm

Author: Paul

Verse: *So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. (2 Thessalonians 2:15)*

Date: A.D. 51

Just a few months after Paul sent the first letter to the church in Thessalonica, he received the news that a misunderstanding had risen. Somebody had written a letter in Paul's name claiming that the day of the Lord (Christ's second coming to earth, at the end of the tribulation) had already occurred. As a result, some members of the church had stopped working. The apostle explained to the Christians that they were mistaken. He assured them that the day of the Lord won't happen until after the *man of lawlessness* (the Antichrist) has come.

1 TIMOTHY

Theme: Leadership

Author: Paul

Verse: *Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6:12)*

Date: A.D. 63

Paul's first letter to his young friend and coworker, Timothy, was a manual on effective leadership in the churches in Ephesus and other Asian cities. He stresses the importance of holding sound doctrine (Chapter 1); instructs on proper worship (2-3); warns against false teachers (4); teaches about church discipline (5); and explains the duties of a pastor (6). Paul's message can be summed up by 1 Timothy 4:11-16: *Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity ... devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift ... Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely ...*

2 TIMOTHY

Theme: Endurance

Author: Paul

Verses: *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*

Date: A.D. 67

At the end of Paul's life, when he knew he was about to die, he wrote this letter to Timothy. He was in Rome, enduring a much harsher imprisonment than he'd faced on earlier occasions. Christian persecution under Emperor Nero was in full force. Most of Paul's friends, afraid for their own lives, had abandoned him. Paul told Timothy to stand firm and ... *But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God (2 Timothy 1:8).*

Paul foresaw an increase in apostasy (rejection of faith) and wickedness (the result of apostasy) and warned Timothy to watch out. The apostle filled the letter with advice and encouragement for the young man who was facing the challenges of pastoring the church in Ephesus, but he kept returning time and again to one theme — the importance of remaining true to Scripture.

- Paul received the truth directly from God and communicated it to Timothy. Now Timothy was to consider that truth something valuable that was committed to his care and to guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 1:13-14).
- Timothy needed to be diligent to labor to discover the truth of the Word, and to have the courage of his convictions (2:15).
- Timothy was to study the Word because it would teach him doctrine, point out and correct errors in his life, straighten him out when he got off the path and educate and discipline his character (3:16-17).
- Timothy was to preach the Word every chance he had, to correct those on the wrong path and to encourage those on the right path (4:2).

Near the end of the letter, Paul wrote about his own ministry in words that should be the pattern for every believer: *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith (2 Timothy 4:7).*

TITUS

Theme: Encouragement

Author: Paul

Verses: *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. (Titus 2:11-13)*

Date: A.D. 63

Titus was a young Greek coworker whom Paul used as proof that a Gentile could be saved without being circumcised or following the Jewish law (Galatians 2:3). Some years later, Paul left Titus on the island of Crete to ... *straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town ...* (Titus 1:5). This letter was the apostle's instructions on how to carry out those tasks. Scattered through the book, Paul includes statements that explain the spiritual truth behind his practical teaching.

PHILEMON

Theme: Forgiveness

Author: Paul

Verse: *But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do will be spontaneous and not forced.* (Philemon 1:14)

Date: A.D. 61

In his other letters, Paul lays out the doctrine given to him by the Holy Spirit and explains how we should live in light of that doctrine. In Philemon, we see an illustration of what that teaching and application looks like in an actual, real-life situation. Philemon, to whom the letter is addressed, was a believer living in Colossae. He was a man of considerable wealth. Onesimus, his runaway slave, had recently been led to the Lord by Paul, who was imprisoned in Rome. With this letter, Paul was sending Onesimus back to Colossae, and he begged Philemon to receive his slave as a Christian brother. "If Onesimus has done you any wrong or owes you anything," Paul wrote, "you can hold me responsible." Paul's love and concern for His friends and fellow believers is evident throughout the short letter.

HEBREWS

Theme: Christ's Sufficiency

Author: Unknown (though many believe it was the apostle Paul)

Verses: *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.* (Hebrews 4:14-16)

Date: A.D. 64

Hebrews is addressed to the Jewish believers of the first century. They had been brought up in the Jewish religion, based on the Old Testament, with its rituals and sacrifices and prophecies about the coming Messiah who would restore the nation to its land. Many of them believed in God as revealed in the Old Testament — some of them even believed that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah. They did what they were told to do. They had faith in God and obeyed His commands.

Now Paul was saying that Israel had been set aside for a time and that a new body of believers known as the Church was being assembled. The promised kingdom hadn't arrived and the believers in Jerusalem were in pretty bad shape. The Jews needed to understand how things had changed and to be encouraged to remain faithful to Christ. The Holy Spirit inspired the writer to explain the new circumstances. He systematically demonstrates the superiority of Christ over the old Jewish system. Here are just a few of the comparisons (there are many others):

- Superior messenger — Under the law, God spoke through the prophets. Now He has spoken through His Son (Hebrews 1:1-20).
- Superior priesthood — Under the law, priests had to offer sacrifices because they were men with sin natures just like everyone else. Now Jesus is our eternal priest (7:24-25).
- Superior altar — Under the law, the priests offered sacrifices in the Holy of Holies. Now we have an altar in Christ's sacrifice apart from the Jewish tabernacle (13:10, 12).
- Superior blood — Under the law, the blood of goats and bulls was shed over and over to cover sins temporarily. Now the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us forever (9:14).

The writer shows how this new message was part of God's eternal plan. It was hidden in the Old Testament, but now that it has been revealed, we can look back at the events of the Old Testament and see how they point to Christ. Hebrews 13:20-21 reveals the purpose of the new covenant: so that ... *the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ ...*

The book also includes many warnings to the Jews not to shrink back, through unbelief or slothfulness, into their former beliefs and practices. Rather, through faith and confidence in the perfect sacrifice of Christ, they were admonished to go forward into maturity and usefulness.

JAMES

Theme: Living Your Faith

Author: James

Verse: *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.* (James 1:22)

Date: A.D. 42

Like Hebrews, the book of James was written to Jews. James, the half brother of Jesus Christ, was one of the leaders of the Jewish assembly in Jerusalem. He was writing to Jews who lived in other countries, many of them forced to leave because of persecution. The book has a very Jewish feel, with references to Abraham, the synagogue and the law. James and his audience believed in the risen Christ, of course, but there is no mention of what the cross means.

James was most likely the first New Testament book, written long before the apostle Paul wrote any of his letters explaining the gospel that was entrusted to him for the Gentiles. When we read James, we need to remember that it was written to the Jews (just as we do when we read the requirements of the law in the Old Testament). But there is a great deal of practical application in the book for the Jews and for us. For example:

- Find comfort in spiritual, not physical, things (James 1:9-11).
- Don't favor the rich over the poor (2:1-4).
- Control your mouth and you'll have a better chance of controlling your body (3:6).
- Avoid the world and its temptations (4:4).
- Remember that every day could be your last (4:13-17).

1 PETER

Theme: Suffering and Glory

Author: Peter

Verse: *He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2:24)*

Date: A.D. 60

Peter sent his first letter to believing Jews who were suffering persecution for their faith. He begins with an explanation of why they experienced hard times. *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed (1 Peter 1:6-7).* The rest of the letter tells the believers how they should respond in the face of their suffering.

- Without fear, and with a clear conscience, be ready to explain why you believe what you believe (1 Peter 3:13-16).
- If you suffer for your testimony of Christ, don't be ashamed but praise God for the privilege (4:12-16).
- Stand firm against Satan's attacks, assured that they restore you to strength (5:6-10).

2 PETER

Theme: Faithfulness of Christ

Author: Peter

Verse: *The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)*

Date: A.D. 66

Not long after Peter wrote his first letter, he wrote a second one to the same audience with a different purpose. False teachers were corrupting the truth and influencing the believers. *These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity — for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him (2 Peter 2:17-19).*

Peter encouraged his readers to:

- Grow in their faith (2 Peter 1:5-8).
- Pay attention to God's Word (1:16-21).
- Be ready for the Lord's return (3:9-10).
- Be on guard against false doctrine (3:17-18).

1 JOHN

Theme: Fellowship

Author: John

Verse: *But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)*

Date: A.D. 90

The word love appears 52 times in some form in 1 John. Love is one of the characteristics that define God: ... *God is love ... (1 John 4:16).* God's love is unconditional, untainted by impure motives and does not take into account our worthiness to be loved. It's also an active love because God wants the best for those He loves. That's why God sent His Son as a sacrifice for our sins.

On our own, we are incapable of loving God, but we can love God ... *because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).* God's love makes it possible for us to love and it provides us with motivation to love God and others. We are so secure in God's love that we have no reason to fear. At the same time, we must be careful not to love anything more than we love God. If we do, it's possible that we don't love God at all (1 John 2:15).

But don't we all fail to love God frequently? Remember, God's love is unconditional. He doesn't expect us to be perfect, but He does expect us not to habitually choose the things of the world over Him. And when we fail ... *we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One (1 John 2:1).*

2 JOHN

Theme: Steadfastness

Author: John

Verse: *And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. (2 John 1:5)*

Date: A.D. 90

John's second letter was written to a Christian woman and her children. This woman often showed hospitality in her house, probably offering food and lodging to other Christians who were traveling in the area. John commended her for walking in the truth, but warned her that false teachers were also out and about. He wanted her to stand fast in her faith and not associate with those who taught falsehood. He probably had in mind the Gnostics, who denied that Christ was human or even that He had a physical body.

3 JOHN

Theme: Walk in Truth

Author: John

Verse: *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. (3 John 1:4)*

Date: A.D. 90

John wrote this letter to a man name Gaius, who also provided hospitality to traveling Christians. The apostle was very happy when he said to Gaius: I have heard ... *about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth (3 John 1:3).* But there was a man in the local church named Diotrephes who was opposed to Gaius' ministry. Evidently he wanted to be in charge and didn't want any interference from John or anybody else. John encourages Gaius to avoid Diotrephes and his faction and, instead, to imitate Demetrius, a man who ... *is well spoken of by everyone — and even by the truth itself... (3 John 1:12).*

JUDE

Theme: Keep the Faith

Author: Jude

Verse: *Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. (Jude 1:3)*

Date: A.D. 70-80

We don't know very much about Jude. He is described as the brother of James, which would make him a half brother of Jesus Christ. He was writing to a group of believers who were under attack by false teachers ... *who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord (Jude 1:4).*

These evil men were fellowshiping with the believers and tempting them to fall into sin. Jude reminded the believers that the apostles (Paul and Peter) had warned them in advance that this would happen. He compares the false teachers to Cain, Balaam and Korah, and, in some of the most descriptive language in the Bible, calls them ... *clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted — twice dead. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever (Jude 1:12-13).*

Jude also reminded the believers how God has dealt with the wicked in the past: the Egyptians, the fallen angels, and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. He used a lot of strong words, but he ended his short book with strong words of praise in Jude 1:24 for ... *Him who is able to keep you from falling ... even in the face of strong opposition.*

REVELATION

Theme: Eternal Triumph

Author: John

Verse: *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending His angel to His servant John. (Revelation 1:1)*

Date: Around A.D. 95

Through an angel, the Lord revealed to John a picture of events that would mark the end of the world as we know it and the manifestation of the kingdom of God. These events, while prophecies in their own right, give further details about other prophecies that appear throughout Scripture. As the end approaches, the world will become a place of unspeakable evil and misery. God will judge all sin and make things right. Satan will meet his final doom. Revelation depicts Jesus Christ in all His power and glory. It tells how He will return to conquer evil and set up His rule on the new heaven and new earth.

John opens with letters to seven churches. Each church is commended for the good it has done, counseled to clean up those things it has done wrong, and given promises for the future.

The book then describes the horrors of God's judgments on sinful man through the seven seals and the seven bowls. These are followed with a description of the Lord's second coming to earth and the final judgments of Satan and unbelievers. There are a lot of very frightening scenes in Revelation — because God is a God of justice. But He's also a God of grace and He had John write: ... *Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life (Revelation 22:17).*

In Chapters 21 and 22, we see how humans will finally realize the purpose for which we were created — to love, worship and enjoy the Lord in perfect fellowship forever.