

# Dictionary *of* Bible Knowledge

People, Places, Events, and Facts  
about the Bible and the Church



Mark D. Taylor

# Dictionary *of* Bible Knowledge

Mark D. Taylor

**ROSE**  
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*Dictionary of Bible Knowledge*

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# Introduction

The Bible has been a bestseller for centuries. In fact, according to Guinness World Records, it is the most printed book of all time, with an estimated five to seven billion copies produced since the invention of the printing press in the mid-1400s.

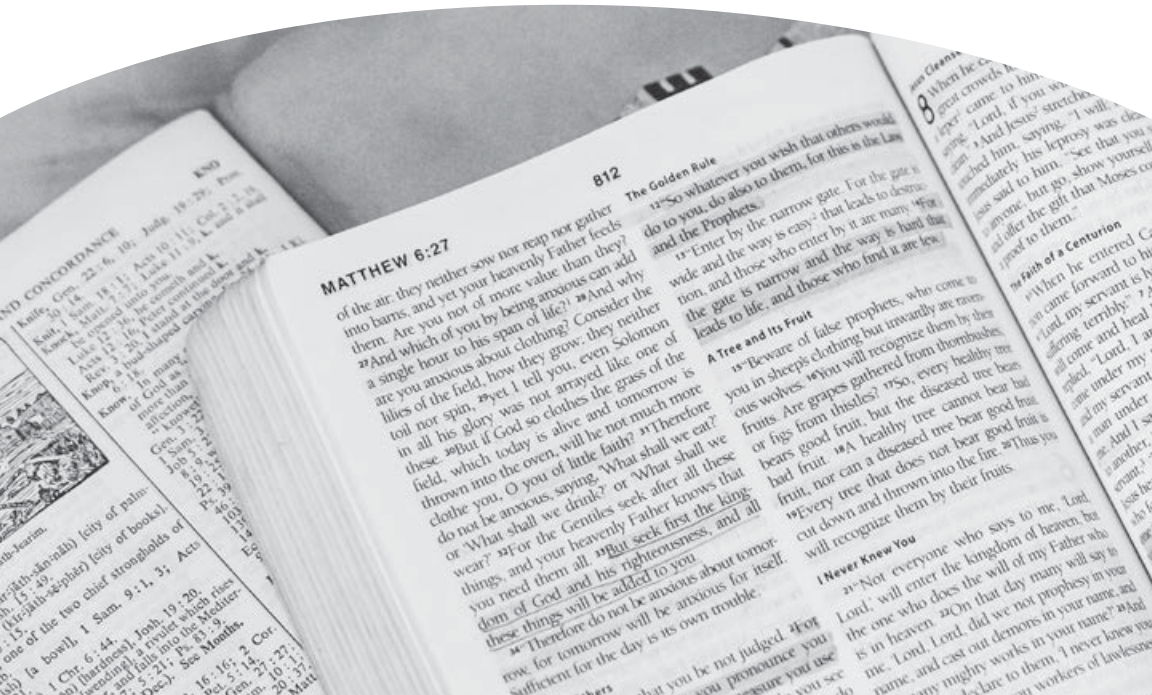
Yet, despite all those Bibles printed and distributed, many people never open a Bible! And whether due to intimidation, distraction, or a false sense of familiarity, many Christians know very little about the most important book of their faith. *Dictionary of Bible Knowledge* aims to help change that.

## How to Use This Book

- Most definitions contain other key words or phrases that are also defined in the book. The index includes every key entry, and it is generously cross-referenced. For instance, *Babylonian Captivity* references the entry for *Exile*.
- Some entries include a note explaining how the term is used in today's culture. Each note is preceded by a pin icon (📌).
- Self-grading quizzes are included at the end of each chapter, and a comprehensive quiz in the appendix covers all subject areas. Answers appear immediately after each quiz.

- There are differing opinions among scholars about who wrote certain books; this book reflects the traditional views of authorship.

Enjoy browsing this resource to gain a solid knowledge of the Bible and the many important ways it has impacted history, culture, and Christian theology.





# Bible Overview

While this entire book touches on biblical themes, this first chapter is about the Bible itself. It includes an entry for every book of the Bible, with a brief statement about the theme of the book. Each book is also identified as part of the Old Testament (OT) or the New Testament (NT).

This chapter also includes a list of the best-known English translations of the Bible, such as the King James Version, the New International Version, and the New Living Translation. Also included are descriptions of Bible study tools, such as Bible dictionaries and commentaries. You will also find terms that relate to how the Bible was first written and then handed down through the centuries.

**ACTS, or ACTS OF THE APOSTLES** (NT) The book of Acts follows the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) and tells of the founding and growth of the Christian church in the first century AD. It was written by Luke and continues where the narrative of the Gospel of Luke ends. In the second chapter, just ten days after Jesus's ascension into heaven, we see the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The main character in the first twelve chapters is Peter, who became one of the leaders in the emerging church in Jerusalem. The remaining chapters then follow the apostle Paul on his various missionary journeys. The time period covered by the book of Acts is approximately AD 30–65.



The coming of the Holy Spirit is often represented by a dove.

**AMOS** (OT) One of the Minor Prophets, this book contains the messages of the prophet Amos.

Amos was a shepherd who pronounced God's judgment upon the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel shortly before Israel was taken into exile by the Assyrians in 722 BC.

**APOCALYPSE** Another name for the New Testament book of Revelation. The word *apocalypse* means “disclosure” or “revelation.”

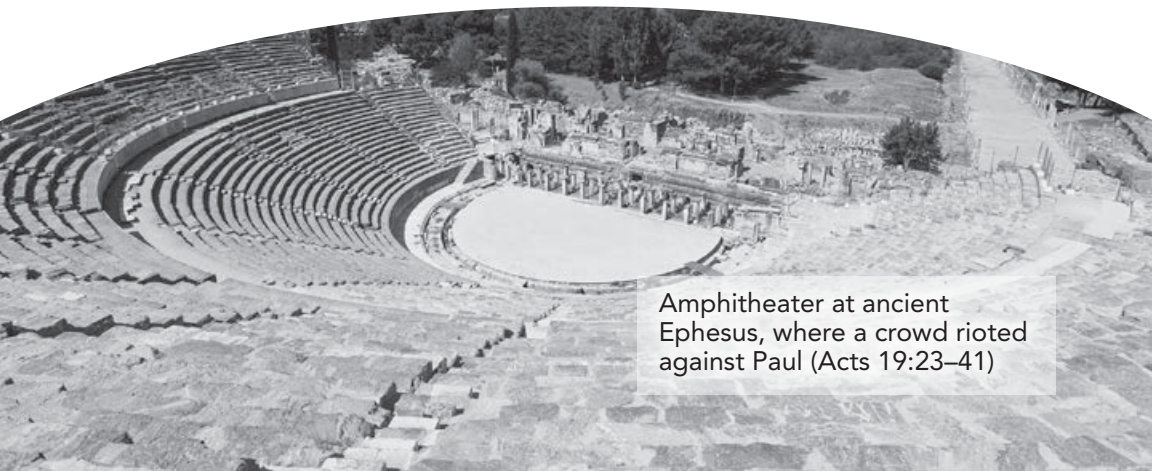
**APOCRYPHA** Seven books in the Old Testament (plus additions to the books of Esther and Daniel) that are included in Roman Catholic Bibles but not in the Jewish Bible and most Protestant Bibles. These books, often called “Apocrypha” by Protestants, are called “Deuterocanonical books” by Catholics. When the Old Testament canon was being consolidated several centuries before the birth of Christ, the apocryphal books were considered to be of lesser authority than the books that were accepted into the canon. For a list of books in the Apocrypha, see “Books of the Old Testament” after the entry *Old Testament*. ➤ Although the word *Apocrypha* comes from a Greek word meaning “hidden,” the word *apocryphal* has generally come to mean spurious, or something that is probably not true.

**ARAMAIC** An ancient language closely related to Hebrew. Several portions of the Old Testament were originally written in Aramaic. The Jews of Jesus's day spoke Aramaic, so presumably Jesus's own teachings were originally spoken in Aramaic, then later recorded in Greek.

**BIBLE** The holy book of the Christian faith, containing the Old Testament and New Testament. It is often called the Holy Bible. Most Christians believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God. The books of the Bible were written by dozens of writers over a period of about 1,500 years. For a complete list of the books of the Bible, see *Old Testament* and *New Testament*. The books that Christians call the Old Testament constitute the entirety of the Jewish Bible. The Old Testament tells of the creation, the fall of man, God's covenant with Abraham, and the history of Abraham's

descendants, the Jews, until about 430 BC. It also contains the Mosaic law, Hebrew poetry (including the Psalms and Proverbs), and the messages of the prophets. The New Testament contains the four Gospels, which tell the stories of the life and ministry of Jesus, culminating in his suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection. Next comes the book of Acts, which tells of the early church in the first century, and then the Epistles, which are letters to the Christians of the first century.

✦ The Bible defines many concepts that are foundational to Western culture—concepts such as justice and mercy, fair play (see *Do to others what you would have them do to you* in the chapter “Famous Sayings from the Bible”), marriage, and family relationships. ✦ The Bible, particularly the King James Version, has had more impact on the literature of the English language than any other single source.



Amphitheater at ancient Ephesus, where a crowd rioted against Paul (Acts 19:23–41)

## MOST POPULAR ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE

**CHRISTIAN STANDARD BIBLE** (CSB) A translation sponsored by the Southern Baptist Convention, first published in 2016. Its predecessor was the Holman Christian Standard Bible, and its publishers refer to it as an “optimal equivalence” translation.

**ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION** (ESV) A revision of the Revised Standard Version, first published in 2001 and updated in 2016. Its publishers refer to it as an “essentially literal” translation.

**KING JAMES VERSION** (KJV) Until the 1980s, the King James Version was the most widely used English translation of the Bible. It was first published in 1611 under the authorization of King James I of England. In Britain it is called the Authorized Version (AV). Its stately language has had a great influence on spoken English and on English literature over four centuries. Many biblical phrases and quotations that are popularly known are from the King James Version or the New King James Version (see the chapter “Famous Sayings from the Bible”). See also *James I, King* in the chapter “Church History.”

**LIVING BIBLE, THE** (TLB) A popular paraphrase by Kenneth N. Taylor that has been widely used since its initial publication in 1971. In the early 1970s it was the best-selling book in the United States.

**MESSAGE, THE** (MSG) A popular translation by Eugene Peterson that uses contemporary and sometimes edgy language to convey the meaning of the biblical text. It was first published in 1993 (NT) and 2002 (complete Bible).

**NEW AMERICAN BIBLE** (NAB) A translation sponsored by the Roman Catholic Church. Sometimes called the Confraternity Bible, it was first published in 1970 and updated in 2010. It is the translation now most widely used by Catholics.

**NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE** (NASB) A translation first published in 1971, it gained popularity among evangelical Christians as an accurate word-for-word style of translation. It was updated in 2020.

**NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION** (NIV) A popular translation that has been widely accepted by evangelicals since its publication in 1978. It soon surpassed the King James Version as the most widely used English translation of the Bible. A revised edition was published in 2011. The New International Readers Version (NIRV) is a children's edition based on the NIV.

**NEW KING JAMES VERSION** (NKJV) A revision of the King James Version, first published in 1982. Many difficult and archaic words (for example, *thee* and *thou*) have been replaced with contemporary terms.

**NEW LIVING TRANSLATION** (NLT) A dynamic-equivalence, or thought-for-thought, translation first published in 1996 and updated in 2004 and 2015. It was created by a team of ninety scholars, and it combines the accuracy of the best translations with the readability of *The Living Bible*.

**NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION** (NRSV) A revision of the Revised Standard Version, first published in 1989 and updated in 2021. It is widely used in academic circles.

**REVISED STANDARD VERSION** (RSV) A translation sponsored by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, first published in 1952.

**BIBLE COMMENTARY** A book that provides information and interpretation to help readers understand the biblical text. Some commentaries cover the entire text of the Bible in one volume. Other commentary series devote an entire volume to each of the books of the Bible.

**BIBLE CONCORDANCE** A listing of key words in the Bible, along with references to where they are found. Many Bibles include abridged (shortened) concordances at the back. Complete concordances list every occurrence of every word in the Bible, usually with a phrase to show the context for the word.

**BIBLE DICTIONARY** A dictionary that defines all the terms and names found in the Bible.

**BIBLICAL CRITICISM** The process of applying scientific methods in studying the text of the Bible. Biblical criticism is often divided into lower and higher criticism. Lower (or textual) criticism focuses exclusively on the text itself. Its objective is to determine as nearly as possible the exact wording of the original text. Higher criticism addresses issues such as date of writing, authorship, and the oral

traditions assumed to lie behind the written text. Higher critics have often been accused of starting with presuppositions that deny the supernatural or that assume that prophetic passages could not have been written before the occurrence of the events they foretell. Many higher critics doubt the historical accuracy of many parts of the Bible. Other scholars, who prefer to take the text at face value, feel that higher criticism is not a valid way of approaching the text.

**BOOKS OF MOSES** The first five books of the Old Testament are called the Books of Moses, reflecting the traditional view that they were written by Moses (see *Genesis*; *Exodus*; *Leviticus*; *Numbers*; *Deuteronomy*). They are also called the Pentateuch (Greek for “five books”) and Torah. The Books of Moses contain the stories of the creation, the fall of man, God’s covenant with Abraham, the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Mosaic law, and the experiences of the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness for forty years.

**BOOKS OF THE BIBLE** The word *Bible* comes from the Greek

word for “book.” The Bible is made up of sixty-six individual books (seventy-three books when the Apocrypha is included). Each book is divided into chapters and verses. Titles of books that start with a number (for example, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel) are usually pronounced *First Samuel* (rather than *One Samuel*) and *Second Samuel* (rather than *Two Samuel*). The longest book in the Bible is Psalms, with 150 chapters. Five books have only one chapter. The books of the Bible were written by many different authors over a long period—possibly as long as 1,500 years (1400 BC–AD 95). For a complete list of the books of the Bible, see *Old Testament* and *New Testament*.

**CANON** The official list of books that are included in the Old and New Testaments. Since the books of the Old Testament were written over a period of 800 or more years, the development of the Old Testament canon was a gradual process. The earliest Old Testament writings were accepted as having unique significance early in the history of the nation of Israel. For instance, the Lord was speaking of the Mosaic law when he said to Joshua, “Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it

day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (Joshua 1:8 NIV). According to tradition, Ezra played a role in compiling the canon of Jewish Scripture in the fifth century BC. The Jewish canon contains the same books that comprise the Old Testament for Protestants. The New Testament canon was recognized by the church fathers as early as AD 200 and was largely undisputed by the fourth century AD. It is accepted by all Christian churches (see *New Testament canon established* in the chapter “Church History”).

**CANTICLES** See *Song of Solomon*.

**CHAPTER AND VERSE** Each book of the Bible is divided into chapters, and each chapter is divided into verses. Passages in the Bible are identified by their chapter and verse. The longest and shortest chapters are both in the Psalms. Psalm 119 has 176 verses; Psalm 117 has only two verses. The original manuscripts were not divided into chapters and verses. In fact, the New Testament was first divided into verses in the sixteenth century. (For a comment about other features that have been added to the

Bible text, see *red-letter editions*.)

✎ More broadly, to quote “chapter and verse” is to give the specific source of any quotation.

**1 CHRONICLES** (OT) The books of 1 & 2 Chronicles tell the story of the history of Israel during the period from King David to the fall of the Kingdom of Judah. They emphasize the role of the priests and the establishment of the pattern of worship in the temple. The book of 1 Chronicles begins with a genealogy of Israel and then tells the story of the reign of King David. It covers much of the same time period that is covered in the book of 2 Samuel.

**2 CHRONICLES** (OT) The book of 2 Chronicles begins where 1 Chronicles ends. It covers the period from the reign of King Solomon to the fall of Judah and the Exile to Babylon. It covers much of the same period that is covered in the books of 1 & 2 Kings.

**COLOSSIANS** (NT) The apostle Paul’s letter to the church in Colosse (an ancient city in present-day Turkey; see map near *2 Corinthians*). This letter was written about AD 60, while Paul was in prison in Rome. (The letters to the

Ephesians and the Philippians may also have been written about the same time.) The purpose of this letter was to combat theological errors that had crept into the Colossian church. The primary theme is that the fullness of divinity and of the divine purpose is embodied in Christ, and that Christ is the head of the church. The letter then draws numerous conclusions as to how Christians should live.

**COMMENTARY** See *Bible commentary*.

**CONCORDANCE** See *Bible concordance*.

**1 CORINTHIANS** (NT) One of the apostle Paul’s letters to the church in Corinth (in present-day Greece; see map near the entry for *2 Corinthians*). This letter was written about AD 55, while Paul was on his third missionary journey. The primary purpose of the letter was to offer solutions to problems in the Corinthian church. The thirteenth chapter is often called “the love chapter.” It begins, “If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn’t love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” (verse 1 NLT).



**Churches Established** Paul founded the churches in Corinth and Ephesus during his missionary journeys. The books we call 1 & 2 Corinthians and Ephesians are letters to those churches. The book of Colossians is a letter to the church in Colosse, a group Paul had never visited.

**2 CORINTHIANS (NT)** Another of Paul's letters to the church in Corinth (in Greece). This letter was written about AD 55–57, while Paul was on his third missionary journey. The primary purpose of the letter was to affirm Paul's own authority as an apostle so he could continue refuting the false teachers in Corinth. This is an intensely personal letter.

**CROSS-REFERENCES** Notations in the margin or center column of a Bible to indicate other verses where a similar subject is found.


**DANIEL (OT)** Daniel and his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were among the group of Israelites who were exiled to Babylon in 605 BC, nineteen years before the fall of Jerusalem. The first half of the book of Daniel contains familiar stories about Daniel—interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream about the statue with the feet of clay, the fiery furnace, the handwriting on the wall, and Daniel in the lions' den. We also see the Babylonians defeated by King Darius, which marks the start of the Persian Empire. The second

half of the book contains prophetic visions about the future.

**DEAD SEA SCROLLS** A collection of scrolls, manuscripts, and manuscript fragments dating from the third century BC to the first century AD. Most of them were found in 1947–1952 in caves along the northern shore of the Dead Sea. They include Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek manuscripts of parts of the Old Testament and are the oldest existing manuscripts of the Bible. The Dead Sea Scrolls include an entire text of the book of Isaiah. Most of the scrolls are made of leather (some are papyrus) and are believed to have been part of the library of a religious community of Essenes (an ascetic and communal sect within Judaism) at Qumran. They were stored (or perhaps hidden) in pottery jars, where they remained hidden for 2,000 years.

**DEUTERONOMY** (OT) The fifth and last of the Books of Moses. After wandering in the wilderness for forty years, the generation of Israelites that left Egypt in the Exodus had died, and their children were ready to enter the Promised Land. Deuteronomy contains Moses's messages to this new, young generation, reminding them of all that the Lord had done for his chosen people. Moses also reviewed the Law for them (see *Mosaic law* in the chapter "People, Places, and Events in the Old Testament") and challenged them to commit themselves to the Lord.

**ECCLESIASTES** (OT) This book shows the futility of life apart from God. The author, traditionally said to be Solomon, tells of his own search for meaning through wisdom, pleasure, work, success, and wealth. He says at various points



Cave of the Dead Sea  
Scrolls at Qumran

along the way that everything is meaningless, “a chasing after the wind” (1:14 NIV). In the end he concludes, “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (12:13 KJV) (see *What is the chief end of man?* in the chapter “Church History”). The book of Ecclesiastes (the name comes from the Greek word for “preacher”) is the source of such well-known phrases as “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity”; “There is nothing new under the sun”; “Eat, drink, and be merry”; and “To everything there is a season.”

**EPHESIANS** (NT) Paul’s letter to the church in Ephesus (see map near *2 Corinthians*). Like Philippians and Colossians, the letter to the Ephesians was written about AD 60 while Paul was in prison in Rome. Its primary purpose was to strengthen and encourage the Ephesian Christians, whom Paul knew very well. This letter contains such well-known phrases as “Children, obey your parents” and “Put on the whole armor of God.”

**EPISTLES** An epistle is a letter, and the New Testament Epistles are letters written by the apostles Paul, Peter, and John, as well as James and Jude, brothers of Jesus. This

section of the Bible outlines various aspects of Christian doctrine and contains practical instructions for Christian living. See also the list “Books of the New Testament” at the entry for *New Testament*.

**ESTHER** (OT) This book tells the story of Esther, a beautiful young Jewish woman who had been selected to become a member of the harem of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) of Persia. He later made her the queen. When Esther’s cousin and foster father, Mordecai, heard that the prime minister, Haman, had launched a plan to kill all the Jews in the kingdom, he urged Esther to ask the king to revoke the plan. Although she was the queen, she was not permitted, on pain of death, to approach the king without being summoned by him. So Esther devised a plan to gain the attention and favor of the king. She succeeded, and the plan to exterminate the Jews was reversed. The story of Esther takes place about 474 BC, sixty years after the first group of Jews had returned to Jerusalem from the Exile in Babylon and Persia. Esther was part of the Jewish community that had stayed in Persia. The Jewish holiday of Purim commemorates this rescue of the Jews.

**EXODUS** (OT) The second of the Books of Moses. It contains the account of Moses, the first Passover, and the Exodus from Egypt. God had promised to rescue the Israelites from their enslavement in Egypt, so the Lord sent Moses to tell Pharaoh (the king), “Let my people go” (Exodus 5:1 NLT). When Pharaoh refused, the Lord sent ten plagues to convince him to heed the word of the Lord. The last plague was the death of the firstborn son and the firstborn of the livestock in every Egyptian home and barn. The Lord instructed the Israelites to put blood on their doorposts; he would then pass over their houses as he killed the sons of Egypt. After this dramatic and painful display of God’s power, Pharaoh allowed the Israelites to leave Egypt, and God miraculously spared their lives in the parting of the Red Sea. Yet even after God’s miraculous provision, the Israelites did not trust God to lead them safely into the land he had promised them. In his anger, God told Moses the people would have to wander in the wilderness for forty years. The remainder of the book tells of God’s covenant with the people in giving them the Law, including the Ten Commandments. There are also long sections detailing the manner

in which the tabernacle was to be constructed. See also *Moses*; *Moses in the bulrushes*; *burning bush*; *plagues of Egypt*; and *Mosaic law* in the chapter “People, Places, and Events in the Old Testament.”

**EZEKIEL** (OT) One of the Major Prophets, this book contains the messages of the prophet Ezekiel. Along with thousands of other Jews, he was captured by the Babylonians in 597 BC, eleven years before the fall of Jerusalem. His prophetic ministry took place in Babylon among his fellow captives, telling them that the Exile was because of their sins. The prophecies at the end of the book are from the period after the fall of Jerusalem, when Ezekiel gives a message of hope to his people.

**EZRA** (OT) Like Nehemiah and Esther, this is one of the historical books from the period during and after the Exile in Babylon and Persia. King Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon in 539 BC and issued a decree that permitted the captive Jews to return to their homeland. In 538 BC, the first group of about 42,000 Jews returned under Zerubbabel and began rebuilding the temple. Eighty years later, in 458 BC, Ezra, a priest

and prophet, traveled to Jerusalem with another group of about 1,800 Jews. When Ezra arrived, he found the Jews in Jerusalem living in a state of religious indifference because of their intermarriage with the heathen nations around them. Though the prophets Zechariah and Haggai had urged the people to repent, it was not until Ezra's arrival that the people returned to God. The third and final contingent of Jews to return from Babylonia was led by Nehemiah in 445 BC. Their story is recounted in the book bearing his name. See also *canon*.

**GALATIANS** (NT) Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia (an ancient region in present-day Turkey). The primary purpose of the letter (which may have been written about AD 49) was to refute the arguments of those who said gentile Christians (see *gentile* in the chapter "People, Places, and Events in the Old Testament") had to obey the Mosaic law in order to be saved. This issue was officially resolved in about AD 50 at the Council at Jerusalem. The letter to the Galatians stresses the Christian's freedom in Christ.

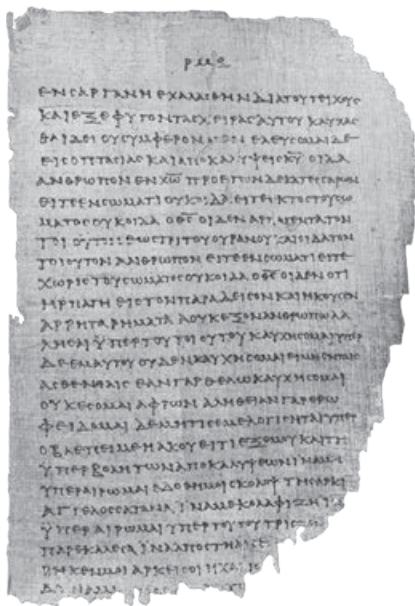
**GENESIS** (OT) The first book in the Bible and the first of the Books

of Moses. The word *genesis* means beginning, or origin—a fitting title for a book that tells of the origin of all creation. It contains the accounts of the creation, Noah and the ark, the Tower of Babel, and the patriarchs of Israel—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph and his brothers. The book begins with the creation ("In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," Genesis 1:1) and ends with the death of Joseph in Egypt. Genesis is interesting to read since it contains so many familiar Bible stories.

**GOSPELS** The first four books of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each of the Gospels (the word *gospel* means "good news"; see *gospel* in the chapter "Church Life and Theology") tells the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. There is much overlap of content between the four accounts, but each Gospel also has unique material not found in any of the others.

**GREEK** The language of ancient Greece, in which the books of the New Testament were first written. The New Testament was not written in classical Greek, but in *Koiné* Greek, the form of the language that was spread throughout the Near

East by the conquests of Alexander the Great. It was the language of the marketplace at the time of the early church. Since Greek was spoken as a trade language throughout much of the Roman Empire, Christianity was able to spread without a language barrier.



2 Corinthians 11:33–12:9,  
from Papyrus 46

**HABAKKUK (OT)** One of the Minor Prophets, this book contains the messages of the prophet Habakkuk to the people of the Kingdom of Judah. Like Jeremiah, Habakkuk prophesied during the final years before the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians.

**HAGGAI (OT)** One of the Minor Prophets from the period after the Exile. This book contains the messages of the prophet Haggai to the Israelites who had returned to Jerusalem. It is a challenge to finish rebuilding the temple, which had been started twenty years earlier by Zerubbabel but never completed. The messages of Haggai fall between the two events recorded in the book of Ezra—the return of Zerubbabel and the return of Ezra. See also *Zechariah*; *Nehemiah*.

**HEBREW** The language of the ancient Israelites. Most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew. Modern Hebrew, used in the modern state of Israel, is based on ancient Hebrew, but thousands of words have been added to the vocabulary to allow for communication in our present complex world. Hebrew is written and read from right to left.

**HEBREWS (NT)** A New Testament epistle that was written to Jewish Christians during the first century AD. The author is not identified. The primary theme of the letter is the superiority of Christ, including his superiority over the prophet Moses and the Old Testament priesthood. Many quotations from

the Old Testament are woven throughout the book of Hebrews.



Scroll of the book of Esther in Hebrew

**HOLY BIBLE** See *Bible*.

**HOSEA** (OT) One of the Minor Prophets, this book contains the messages of the prophet Hosea to the people of the Kingdom of Israel shortly before that nation fell to the Assyrians in 722 BC. At God's command, Hosea married a woman named Gomer, a prostitute. She and her children served as object lessons as Hosea preached about Israel's faithlessness and God's willingness to forgive them.

**ISAIAH** (OT) The book that contains the messages of the prophet Isaiah. It is one of the Major Prophets. Isaiah's ministry was to

the people of the Kingdom of Judah at the time the Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians (722 BC). The book of Isaiah contains many prophecies regarding the coming of the Messiah, some of which were set to music in Handel's *Messiah*. A familiar passage is this prophecy concerning the future Messiah: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14 KJV).

**JAMES** (NT) This epistle was written by James (brother of Jesus) to Jewish Christians living outside Judea. (For a comment about varying interpretations of who "Jesus's brothers" were, see *James (brother of Jesus)* in the chapter "People, Places, and Events in the New Testament.") James is a practical letter that shows the importance of living out one's faith in day-to-day life. ✚ Since the book of James emphasizes the importance of works in proving one's salvation, the Reformer Martin Luther did not believe it should be part of the canon.

**JEREMIAH** (OT) This book, one of the Major Prophets, contains the messages of the prophet Jeremiah. His ministry was to the Kingdom of Judah in the years just before it was conquered by Babylon. He

urged the people to repent of their sins and turn back to God.

**JOB** (OT) The story of Job (pronounced *Jōb*), the man who bore great suffering with great patience, is not placed at any particular time or place in history. The author of this book is unknown, but the purpose is to answer the perennial question, Why do good people suffer? See *Job* in the chapter “People, Places, and Events in the Old Testament” for more details about Job and his trials.

**JOEL** (OT) One of the Minor Prophets, containing the messages of the prophet Joel to the Kingdom of Judah. The people had become prosperous and had turned away from God. Joel called them to repentance and predicted that a great plague of locusts would destroy their crops.

**JOHN, GOSPEL OF** (NT) This Gospel was written by John, the disciple of Jesus. It opens with the familiar verse, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). John tells the stories of the life and ministry of Jesus, but he includes more of Jesus’s discourses than are found in the other Gospels.

One of the most familiar verses in the Bible is John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (KJV).

## 1 JOHN, EPISTLE OF (NT)

There are three epistles in the New Testament written by John the Elder. There are various scholarly views as to the identity of John the Elder, but the traditional view is that John the disciple of Jesus wrote these epistles late in his life. The first epistle of John was written to all the gentile churches. Its primary purpose was to reassure the believers about their faith. John was perhaps the last survivor of Jesus’s twelve disciples by this time, so he wrote to the younger generations of believers as an eyewitness of Jesus’s ministry.

## 2 JOHN, EPISTLE OF (NT)

This is the second of three epistles written by the apostle John late in his life. It is the shortest book in the Bible (just one chapter, comprising thirteen verses). The letter is written to “the elect lady and her children” (verse 1), which may be a reference to a specific person or to a church that is not otherwise identified. John warns the

recipient to guard against the false teachers who were prevalent in the early church.

**3 JOHN, EPISTLE OF (NT)** This is the third of the three epistles of John. It is a personal letter to a man named Gaius, encouraging and affirming him in his practice of hospitality, especially to visiting teachers and missionaries.

**JONAH (OT)** This book, one of the Minor Prophets, contains the familiar story of Jonah and the great fish. Jonah tried to run away when God sent him to preach to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria and a hot spot of wickedness. He was swallowed by a great fish and stayed in its belly for three days and three nights. After Jonah finally obeyed God and preached in Nineveh, the people of Nineveh repented and turned to God. God chose not to destroy the city when the people repented, but this made Jonah angry. He had been preaching that the city would be destroyed because of the people's sinfulness, and he may have resented God's compassion for the Assyrians. Jesus referred to Jonah's experience in the belly of the fish as a picture of his own death and subsequent resurrection (Matthew 12:40).

**JOSHUA (OT)** The book of Joshua begins where Deuteronomy leaves off. Moses has died, and the people of Israel are just about to enter the Promised Land after wandering in the wilderness for forty years. The book of Joshua tells of the Israelites' conquest of the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, who had been Moses's assistant. The Lord shows his care for the people by holding back the waters of the Jordan River so the entire nation can cross on dry ground. Then comes the story of Rahab and the Battle of Jericho, when the walls of the city come tumbling down. After the land is conquered, the tribes of Israel receive their allotted territories.

**JUDE (NT)** This short epistle was written by Jude, one of Jesus's brothers who became a leader in the early church. (For a comment about varying interpretations of who "Jesus's brothers" were, see *James (brother of Jesus)* in the chapter "People, Places, and Events in the New Testament.") Jude's letter was written to all the churches, and it reminds believers to stay away from false teachings.

**JUDGES (OT)** After the Exodus, the Israelites returned to the

Promised Land and conquered the land under Joshua's leadership. Then came a period of 200 or more years (some scholars believe it was as long as 325 years) during which Israel had no king. Instead, the people were led by "judges." The book of Judges tells the history of this period and includes the stories of Deborah, Gideon, and Samson, among others. See also *judges, period of the* in the chapter "People, Places, and Events in the Old Testament."

**1 KINGS** (OT) This book contains the history of the reign of Solomon and the first eighty years of the Divided Kingdom (Judah and Israel). It includes stories of the great prophet Elijah, including his contest with the prophets of Baal, when Elijah called down fire from heaven. The books of 1 and 2 Kings were originally one book. The book of 2 Chronicles covers the same time period from a different perspective.

**2 KINGS** (OT) This book begins where 1 Kings ends. It contains the rest of the history of the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel, until the fall of Israel to the Assyrians in 722 BC and the fall of Judah to

the Babylonians in 586 BC. It includes stories about the prophet Elisha. The books of 1 and 2 Kings were originally one book, and the book of 2 Chronicles covers the same time period from a different perspective.

**KOINÉ** The New Testament was written in *Koiné* Greek, the language spoken throughout most of the Roman Empire at the time of the early church. Since *Koiné* (Greek for "common") was the common language of nearly the entire Mediterranean world, the gospel (the message of salvation through Christ) was able to travel quickly without language barriers.

**LAMENTATIONS** (OT) This book was written by the prophet Jeremiah (known as "the weeping prophet") after Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. It is a funeral dirge for the fallen city and its people.

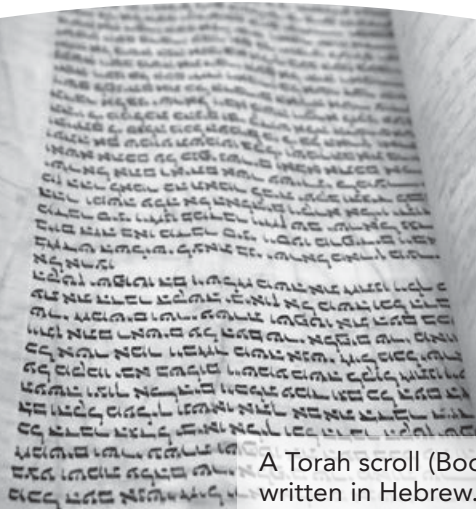
**LAW, BOOKS OF** The first five books of the Old Testament are called the Books of Moses, the Books of Law, the Torah, or the Pentateuch. In addition to the early history of the Hebrew people, they contain the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Mosaic law.

**LEVITICUS (OT)** This book contains a substantial portion of the Mosaic law—detailed instructions for the Israelite priests as well as specific regulations for the people of Israel. Leviticus is the third of the five Books of Moses.

**LUKE, GOSPEL OF (NT)** This Gospel was written by Luke, a gentile physician who was a companion of the apostle Paul's. Like the other Gospels, it contains an account of the life and ministry of Jesus, culminating in his suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection. The most familiar account of the birth of Jesus is taken from the second chapter of Luke's Gospel (see *Nativity* in the chapter "People, Places, and Events in the New Testament").

**MACCABEES** The books of 1 and 2 Maccabees are included in the Apocrypha. They tell of the history of Israel during the second century BC, which is in the 400-year period between the Old Testament and the New Testament. One of the Jewish leaders of that period was Judas Maccabaeus, who led a revolt against the tyranny of Antiochus, the Syrian king. 🕎 Hanukkah is the Jewish holiday that commemorates the cleansing of the temple during the days of the Maccabees.

**MAJOR PROPHETS** The Old Testament books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel. They are called the Major Prophets because of their length. See also *Minor Prophets*; *Prophecy, Books of*.



A Torah scroll (Books of Law), written in Hebrew. *Torah* means "law," "teaching," or "instruction."

**MALACHI** (OT) The last book in the Old Testament, it contains the messages of the prophet Malachi. After the Exile, many Jews returned to Jerusalem. The temple had now been rebuilt (see *Ezra*), and the wall of the city had been rebuilt (see *Nehemiah*), but the people again neglected the Lord. Malachi called them to repentance and held out the promise of God's forgiveness and grace.



A portion of the Dead Sea Scrolls

**MANUSCRIPTS, BIBLICAL** The word *manuscript* literally means “written by hand.” Originally, each of the books of the Bible was written by hand, and for many centuries all copies were also written by hand. There are no original manuscripts of the Bible still in existence, but thousands of handwritten

Hebrew and Greek manuscript copies or fragments of copies have been found (for example, the Dead Sea Scrolls). For the most part, the oldest manuscripts are deemed to be closest to the exact wording of the original manuscripts. There are minor variations in wording among the various manuscripts—due primarily to scribal errors when the manuscripts were being copied—but overall the manuscripts show an amazing degree of accuracy and faithfulness.

**MARK, GOSPEL OF** (NT) This is the shortest of the Gospels, and the action is fast. Like the other Gospels, it contains an account of the life and ministry of Jesus, culminating in his suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection. It was written by Mark; he was not one of the twelve disciples, but he was an eyewitness of Jesus's ministry. Mark's Gospel was written for a gentile audience. Many scholars believe it was the first of the Gospels to be written.

**MATTHEW, GOSPEL OF** (NT) This Gospel was written by Matthew, one of Jesus's disciples. It was written primarily for a Jewish audience, so it emphasizes the ways in which Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies. It begins

with a genealogy that shows that Jesus was a descendant of Abraham and of King David.

**MICAH** (OT) One of the Minor Prophets, this book contains the messages of the prophet Micah to the people of both Israel and Judah. He describes God's hatred of the sins of his chosen people. The Northern Kingdom fell to the Assyrians during Micah's ministry. This book includes the prophecy that the insignificant village of Bethlehem would be the birthplace of a future king. Hundreds of years later, this prophecy led the wise men to Bethlehem.

**MINOR PROPHETS** The twelve short books of prophecy found at the end of the Old Testament. They are called Minor Prophets because they are short books. The prophets whose messages are recorded in these books lived and prophesied over a period of about 400 years. Some preached in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and some preached in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. See also *Major Prophets*; *Prophecy, Books of*.

**MOSES, BOOKS OF** See *Books of Moses*.

**NAHUM** (OT) One of the Minor Prophets, this book contains the messages of the prophet Nahum. His ministry was to the people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, but this book contains a pronouncement of God's judgment on Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria, the world power that had already defeated the Northern Kingdom of Israel. (Jonah had preached to the people of Nineveh more than 120 years earlier.) Assyria was indeed defeated—by the Babylonians—before many years passed.

**NEHEMIAH** (OT) The events in this historical book took place long after the Jews had begun returning to Jerusalem from the Exile in Babylon (see *Ezra*). Nehemiah was a cupbearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia, but he went to Jerusalem in 445 BC to lead the people there in rebuilding their city wall. After the wall had been built, Nehemiah and Ezra led the people into a renewed relationship with God.

**NEW TESTAMENT** The portion of the Christian Bible that contains the record of the life and ministry of Jesus, the spread of the gospel, and the establishment of the church. The Greek word that

is translated “testament” is also commonly translated “covenant,” so the New Testament tells of the new covenant between God and humankind, made possible by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The New Testament contains twenty-seven books—four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, twenty-one letters (or epistles), and Revelation. The books were written over a period of about fifty years, from AD 40–90, by nine or ten different authors. Although none of the original manuscripts has

survived, thousands of subsequent manuscripts and fragments have been found, one dating from about 125. The New Testament canon in its present form was largely in place by about 200, but the first list of the books we now know as the New Testament is found in a letter written by the early church leader Athanasius in 367. Thirty years later the same canon was listed by a church council, at which time it seemed to be undisputed (see *New Testament canon established* in the chapter “Church History”).

## BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

### 4 Gospels

1. Matthew
2. Mark
3. Luke
4. John

Acts, or Acts of the Apostles

### 21 Epistles

1. Romans
2. 1 Corinthians
3. 2 Corinthians
4. Galatians
5. Ephesians
6. Philippians
7. Colossians
8. 1 Thessalonians

9. 2 Thessalonians

10. 1 Timothy
11. 2 Timothy
12. Titus
13. Philemon
14. Hebrews
15. James
16. 1 Peter
17. 2 Peter
18. 1 John
19. 2 John
20. 3 John
21. Jude

Revelation, or the  
Apocalypse

**NUMBERS** (OT) The fourth of the five Books of Moses. It contains the stories of the people of Israel during their forty years in the wilderness—after the Exodus and before they entered the Promised Land of Canaan. The first portion contains data about a census of the nation (hence the name of the book). On their first approach to the land of Canaan, the people had grown rebellious when they heard the reports of the spies whom Moses had sent into the land (Joshua and Caleb were the only spies who came back expressing confidence that God would help them defeat the Canaanites). As a result, the Lord had told Moses that the people would not enter the Promised Land until that entire generation of adults (except for Joshua and Caleb) had died in the wilderness.

**OBADIAH** (OT) One of the Minor Prophets, this is the shortest book in the Old Testament (just one chapter, with twenty-one verses). It contains a prophetic vision of the destruction of Edom, a country southeast of Israel. The Edomites were descendants of Abraham and Isaac through Isaac's son Esau.

**OLD TESTAMENT** The Greek word that is translated “testament”

is also translated “covenant.” The Old Testament contains the same books that are in the Jewish (Hebrew) Scriptures, although they are arranged in a different order. These books are a record of God's covenants with the Israelites—his chosen people—and the history of the Israelite people. The Old Testament contains thirty-nine books—five Books of Moses (the Pentateuch, or Torah), twelve books of history, five poetic books, and seventeen Books of Prophecy (see the list on the following page). The various books were written over a period of hundreds of years by numerous authors. All of them were written before the birth of Jesus. Although none of the original manuscripts has survived, hundreds of Old Testament manuscripts and fragments have been found, some dating from slightly earlier than 200 BC (see *Dead Sea Scrolls*). For Jesus and his Jewish contemporaries, as well as for the early church, what is now called the Old Testament was the entire Scripture. ✠ Today Roman Catholics and some Protestants include the Deuterocanonical books (see *Apocrypha*) in the Old Testament, in which case there are forty-six Old Testament books.

## BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

### **Pentateuch/Books of Law/ Books of Moses/Torah**

1. Genesis
2. Exodus
3. Leviticus
4. Numbers
5. Deuteronomy

### **12 Historical Books**

1. Joshua
2. Judges
3. Ruth
4. 1 Samuel
5. 2 Samuel
6. 1 Kings
7. 2 Kings
8. 1 Chronicles
9. 2 Chronicles
10. Ezra
11. Nehemiah
- Tobit*
- Judith*
12. Esther
- 1 Maccabees*
- 2 Maccabees*

### **5 Poetic Books**

1. Job
2. Psalms
3. Proverbs

4. Ecclesiastes
5. Song of Solomon  
(or Song of Songs  
or Canticles  
*Wisdom (of Solomon)*  
*Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus)*)

### **17 Books of Prophecy**

#### **5 Major Prophets**

1. Isaiah
2. Jeremiah
3. Lamentations  
*Baruch*
4. Ezekiel
5. Daniel

#### **12 Minor Prophets**

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

**Note:** Deuterocanonical books (the apocryphal books) are listed in italic.

**PENTATEUCH** The first five books of the Old Testament (see *Genesis*; *Exodus*; *Leviticus*; *Numbers*; *Deuteronomy*). They are also called the Books of Moses or Books of Law. The word *Pentateuch* comes from two Greek words meaning “five books.” For Jews, the Pentateuch is called the Torah.

**1 PETER** (NT) The first of two epistles written by the apostle Peter. This letter was written to Jewish Christians scattered across Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). Its purpose was to encourage these Christians, who were facing increasing persecution under the heavy hand of the Roman Empire.

**2 PETER** (NT) The second of two epistles written by Peter. This letter was written to the church at large. Its purpose was to warn Christians about false teachers and to encourage them in their faith.

**PHILEMON** (NT) A short and tender letter from the apostle Paul to Philemon. It was hand carried to Philemon by Onesimus, a slave who had run away from Philemon but was now a believer and was returning to his master. Paul appeals to Philemon to treat Onesimus as a brother.

**PHILIPPIANS** (NT) A letter from Paul and Timothy to the church in Philippi (in Greece; see map near *2 Corinthians*). Paul had started the church there on his second missionary journey. He was now in prison in Rome, and the Philippians had sent a gift to him there. In this letter, he thanks them for their gift and reminds them that true joy comes only from Jesus Christ.

**POETRY, BOOKS OF** The Books of Poetry (*or* Books of Wisdom) in the Old Testament include Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

**PROPHECY, BOOKS OF** These Old Testament books include the five Major Prophets and the twelve Minor Prophets. In the Hebrew (Jewish) Bible, the grouping of books called “The Prophets” includes some of the historical books as well as the Major and Minor Prophets. After Jesus identified the two greatest commandments, he said, “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:40) (see *You shall love the Lord your God ... and Love your neighbor as yourself* in the chapter “Famous Sayings from the Bible”). By “all the Law” he meant the Books of

Law, and “the Prophets” meant the Books of Prophecy and the historical books.

**PROVERBS** (OT) An Old Testament book of poetry that contains a collection of wise and often pithy sayings. The first several chapters contain advice to young men about the importance of wisdom and pure living. Many of the Proverbs were written by King Solomon.

**PSALMS** (OT) A collection of 150 Hebrew poems and songs

that express a full range of human emotion in relation to God. Many of the psalms were written by King David. The book of Psalms contains a treasury of well-loved passages.

**RED-LETTER EDITIONS** Bibles in which all the words spoken by Jesus are printed in red. Red-letter editions are a twentieth-century innovation in Bible publishing. The original manuscripts of the Bible did not highlight the words of Christ in any way. Other features that have been added to the Bible text for ease of readability include

### SELECTIONS FROM PROVERBS

(New Living Translation)

- † *Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. (Proverbs 3:5–6)*
- † *A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare. (Proverbs 15:1)*
- † *Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it. (Proverbs 22:6)*
- † *Who can find a virtuous and capable wife? She is more precious than rubies.... Charm is deceptive, and beauty does not last; but a woman who fears the LORD will be greatly praised. Reward her for all she has done. Let her deeds publicly declare her praise. (Proverbs 31:10, 30–31)*

## SELECTIONS FROM THE PSALMS

(New King James Version)

- † *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1)*
- † *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Psalm 119:105)*
- † *Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. (Psalm 127:1)*
- † *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23–24)*

paragraphs, quotation marks, parentheses, and the division of the text into chapters and verses.

**REVELATION** (NT) Also called the Apocalypse, it is the last book in the Bible. It is presumed to have been written by John (Jesus's disciple). It is his description of a vision in which he saw future events: the persecution of the church; the coming of the Antichrist; the triumph of God over evil at a great battle (Armageddon); the Millennium, when Satan is bound for 1,000 years; the final judgment (Judgment Day); and the New Jerusalem. The vision ends with the promise that

Jesus is coming again soon (the Second Coming). Many popular descriptions of heaven come from Revelation: angels singing, white robes, pearly gates, streets of gold. John's vision also includes the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, representing judgment to come upon the earth because of people's wickedness. ⚡ Note that Revelation should not be pronounced *Revelations*, a common error.

**ROMANS** (NT) An epistle in which the apostle Paul sets forth an extensive theology of the Christian faith. It emphasizes justification by grace, through faith. Martin Luther's study

of Romans led him to the conclusion that the prevalent teachings of the sixteenth-century church were not consistent with Scripture.

**RUTH** (OT) The book that tells the story of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz. Ruth was a poor widow from the land of Moab (east of the Dead Sea), whose husband had been an Israelite. When her widowed mother-in-law, Naomi, returned to Israel, she encouraged Ruth to stay with her own people in Moab. But Ruth responded, “Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God” (Ruth 1:16 NLT). When they arrived in Naomi’s hometown, Ruth gathered food in the fields of Boaz, a wealthy relative of her deceased husband. Boaz noticed Ruth because of her generosity to her mother-in-law, and he soon married her. Their great-grandson was David, the great king of Israel.

**1 SAMUEL** (OT) The book that tells the stories of Samuel, the great prophet, and Saul, the first king of Israel. First Samuel also contains stories about David before he succeeded Saul as king. This book includes the story of the friendship of David and Jonathan, the story of

David and Goliath, and accounts of Saul’s jealousy of David.

**2 SAMUEL** (OT) This book continues the history of Israel where 1 Samuel ends—with the death of King Saul and David’s rise to the throne of Israel. It recounts the history of David’s many conquests in battle as well as his personal struggles, including his adultery with Bathsheba. Much of the latter part of the book revolves around the rivalry between David’s sons and the problem of succession to the throne. The time period covered is presented from a different perspective in the book of 1 Chronicles.

**SCRIPTURE** The term *Scripture* (from the Latin word for “writings”) is often used to mean the Bible, or a passage from the Bible. There are frequent references to “the Scriptures” in the New Testament, and in that context the writers meant the Hebrew (Jewish) Scriptures, which Christians now call the Old Testament.

**SCROLL** A long strip of paper or leather rolled up on two sticks. The text of the Scripture was written on scrolls. Even today, ornamental Torahs (the Books of Moses written in Hebrew) are scrolls.

**SEPTUAGINT** A Greek translation of the Old Testament, parts of which date from the third century BC. At the time of Christ and in the early church, the Scriptures (the Old Testament) were known both in the original Hebrew and in this Greek translation. The word *Septuagint* comes from the Latin word for “seventy,” because seventy scholars are said to have worked on the translation. It is often abbreviated LXX, the Roman numeral for seventy.

**SONG OF SOLOMON** (OT) This book of poetry celebrates romantic love and the sexual relationship between a husband and wife. On another level, it is also an allegory of God’s love for Israel and the church. Traditionally said to have been written by King Solomon, this book is also called Canticles or Song of Songs.

**SONG OF SONGS** See *Song of Solomon*.

**STUDY BIBLE** A Bible with notes that help readers understand the text. The notes of some study Bibles are largely technical in nature, dealing with the original Hebrew or Greek text. Other study Bibles help the reader apply the truth of Scripture to contemporary life.

✚ Readers of study Bibles must take care to distinguish between the text of Scripture, which is the Word of God, and the text of the study notes. The notes, however wise, are still only the words of man.

**SYNOPTIC GOSPELS** The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. *Synoptic* means seeing things from the same point of view, and the first three Gospels are similar in their approach to the life of Jesus. The Gospel of John also tells of the life and ministry of Jesus, but it gives fewer details and presents longer passages of Jesus’s discourses.

**TEXTUS RECEPTUS** A Greek text of the New Testament that was compiled in 1550. It was based on Greek manuscripts that were known in the sixteenth century but are now considered less accurate than older manuscripts discovered in the last 150 years. The King James Version of 1611 was translated from the Textus Receptus (Latin for “received text”).

**THEE AND THOU** Many contemporary readers are frustrated by the archaic English of the King James Version of the Bible, which includes frequent use of *thee* and *thou* and the verb suffix *-est* (“The

eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season,” Psalm 145:15). There used to be a distinction in English between singular pronouns (*thou, thee*) and plural pronouns (*ye, you*). In the King James Version, the singular pronouns in Hebrew and Greek were translated “thou”(nominative) and “thee”(objective), and the plural pronouns were translated “ye” (nominative) and “you” (objective). Most modern translations simply use “you” for all four cases. ✞ Since God was always addressed as *thou* (singular) in the King James Version, the terms *thee, thou, and thy* took on a special sense of dignity and reverence. Many people still use those terms when they pray.

**1 THESSALONIANS** (NT) The first of the apostle Paul’s letters to the church in Thessalonica, Greece—and one of Paul’s earliest letters. It was written to encourage the Christians in Thessalonica and to assure them of Christ’s return (the Second Coming). It also answers their questions about the state of believers who had already died.

**2 THESSALONIANS** (NT) Paul’s second letter to the church in Thessalonica, Greece. It was written

shortly after 1 Thessalonians and again contains information about the Second Coming of Christ.

**1 TIMOTHY** (NT) The first of the apostle Paul’s letters to his friend Timothy, who was a young pastor. It is a very practical letter, addressing such issues as qualifications for church leaders and the care of different groups of people within the church.

**2 TIMOTHY** (NT) The second of the apostle Paul’s letters to Timothy. Written shortly before Paul’s death, it includes instructions and encouragement to the younger pastor. It includes the familiar statement about the authenticity and value of Scripture: “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right” (2 Timothy 3:16 NLT).

**TITUS** (NT) A letter from the apostle Paul to Titus, who was supervising the churches on the Mediterranean island of Crete. It is a very practical letter about various aspects of church leadership and how Christians ought to live.



**Letters to Thessalonica** When Paul and Silas visited Thessalonica, many people became believers as a result of Paul's preaching. The books called 1 & 2 Thessalonians were letters to the churches there. The book of Titus was a letter written to Titus, a church leader on the island of Crete.

**TORAH** A scroll containing the Hebrew text of the Pentateuch. The text of the books, whether or not on a scroll, is also called the Torah. More broadly, the Hebrew Scripture in its entirety (the Old Testament) is sometimes called Torah.

**TRANSLATION** The Bible was originally written in Hebrew and Aramaic (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament). Accordingly, all English Bibles are translations from the original languages. The Bible has been translated into thousands of languages

by missionaries and organizations such as Wycliffe Bible Translators and the United Bible Societies. There are various methods of translation, from a strict word-for-word style to a thought-for-thought style. Word-for-word translations are helpful for understanding the syntax of the original language, but thought-for-thought translations are easier to read and understand.

**VERSE** See *chapter and verse*.

**VULGATE** A Latin translation of the Bible prepared by Jerome in the

fourth century AD. It was called the Vulgate (from the Latin word for “common” or “popular”) because it was written in the “vulgar,” or common, language. It was the predominant translation used by the church for the next 1,100 years. As the Reformers began to stress the value of these types of translations (such as Martin Luther’s in German and William Tyndale’s in English), the Council of Trent confirmed the Vulgate in 1546 as the official translation of the Roman Catholic Church, a position it held until the twentieth century. The Douay-Rheims Bible is an English text translated for the most part from the Vulgate.

**WISDOM, BOOKS OF** See *Poetry, Books of*.

**WORD OF GOD** Another name for the Bible. It is called the Word of God because of the belief by most Christians that the Bible is God’s written revelation to mankind. In John 1:1, Jesus is called “the Word.” See *Scripture, inspiration of* in the chapter “Church Life and Theology.”

**ZECHARIAH** (OT) One of the Minor Prophets, this book contains the messages of the prophet

Zechariah (not to be confused with Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist). Zechariah’s ministry was to the people of Israel while the temple was being rebuilt after the Exile (the details of which are included in the first half of Ezra). The book of Zechariah contains many prophecies regarding the coming Messiah.

**ZEPHANIAH** (OT) One of the Minor Prophets, this book contains the messages of the prophet Zephaniah. He preached to the Kingdom of Judah during the reign of King Josiah, a good king who led the people away from idol worship and back to the Lord. The last years of Zephaniah’s ministry coincided with the early years of the prophet Jeremiah’s ministry.