

OVERVIEW OF BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

AND THEIR AUTHORS

OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS



GENESIS

Genesis answers two big questions: "How did God's relationship with the world begin?" and "Where did the nation of Israel come from?"

Author: Traditionally Moses, but the stories are much older.

Fun fact: Most of the famous Bible stories you've heard about are probably found in the book of Genesis. This is where the stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Ark, the Tower of Babel, Abraham and Isaac, Jacob's ladder, and Joseph's coat of many colors are recorded.



NUMBERS

Israel fails to trust and obey God, and wanders in the wilderness for 40 years.

Author: Traditionally Moses



DEUTERONOMY

Moses gives Israel instructions (in some ways, a recap of the laws in Exodus–Numbers) for how to love and obey God in the Promised Land.

Author: Traditionally Moses



EXODUS

God saves Israel from slavery in Egypt, and then enters into a special relationship with them.

Author: Traditionally Moses



JOSHUA

Joshua (Israel's new leader) leads Israel to conquer the Promised land, then parcels out territories to the twelve tribes of Israel.

Author: Unknown

Fun fact: You've probably heard of a few fantastic stories from this book (the Battle of Jericho and the day the sun stood still), but most of the action happens in the first half of this book. The last half is pretty much all about divvying up the real estate.



LEVITICUS

God gives Israel instructions for how to worship Him.

Author: Traditionally Moses

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JUDGES

Israel enters a cycle of turning from God, falling captive to oppressive nations, calling out to God, and being rescued by leaders God sends their way (called "judges").

Author: Unknown



2 SAMUEL

David, a man after God's own heart, becomes king of Israel.

Author: Unknown



RUTH

Two widows lose everything and find hope in Israel—which leads to the birth of the future King David.

Author: Unknown



1 KINGS

The kingdom of Israel has a time of peace and prosperity under King Solomon, but afterward splits, and the two lines of kings turn away from God.

Author: Unknown



1 SAMUEL

Israel demands a king, who turns out to be quite a disappointment.

Author: Unknown



2 KINGS

Both kingdoms ignore God and his prophets, until they both fall captive to other world empires.

Author: Unknown

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1 CHRONICLES

This is a brief history of Israel from Adam to David, culminating with David commissioning the temple of God in Jerusalem.

Author: Traditionally Ezra



NEHEMIAH

The city of Jerusalem is in bad shape, so Nehemiah rebuilds the wall around the city.

Author: Nehemiah



2 CHRONICLES

David's son Solomon builds the temple, but after centuries of rejecting God, the Babylonians take the southern Israelites captive and destroy the temple.

Author: Traditionally Ezra



ESTHER

Someone hatches a genocidal plot to bring about Israel's extinction, and Esther must face the emperor to ask for help.

Author: Unknown



EZRA

The Israelites rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, and a scribe named Ezra teaches the people to once again obey God's laws.

Author: Ezra



JOB

Satan attacks a righteous man named Job, and Job and his friends argue about why terrible things are happening to him.

Author: Nobody knows

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PSALMS

A collection of 150 songs that Israel sang to God (and to each other)—kind of like a hymnal for the ancient Israelites.

Author: Many



SONG OF SOLOMON (SONG OF SONGS)

A love song (or collection of love songs) celebrating love, desire, and marriage.

Author: Traditionally Solomon



PROVERBS

A collection of sayings written to help people make wise decisions that bring about justice.

Author: Solomon and others



ISAIAH

God sends the prophet Isaiah to warn Israel of future judgment—but also to tell them about a coming king and servant who will “bear the sins of many.”

Author: Isaiah



ECCLESIASTES

A philosophical exploration of the meaning of life—with a surprisingly nihilistic tone for the Bible.

Author: Solomon



JEREMIAH

God sends a prophet to warn Israel about the coming Babylonian captivity, but the people don't take the news very well.

Author: Jeremiah

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LAMENTATIONS

A collection of dirges lamenting the fall of Jerusalem after the Babylonian attacks.

Author: Jeremiah



HOSEA

Hosea is told to marry a prostitute who leaves him, and he must bring her back: a picture of God's relationship with Israel.

Author: Hosea



EZEKIEL

God chooses a man to speak for Him to Israel, to tell them the error of their ways and teach them justice: Ezekiel.

Author: Ezekiel



JOEL

God sends a plague of locusts to Judge Israel, but his judgment on the surrounding nations is coming, too.

Author: Joel



DANIEL

Daniel becomes a high-ranking wise man in the Babylonian and Persian empires, and has prophetic visions concerning Israel's future.

Author: Daniel (but with other contributors)



AMOS

A shepherd named Amos preaches against the injustice of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Author: Amos

OVERVIEW OF BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

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OBADIAH

Obadiah warns the neighboring nation of Edom that they will be judged for plundering Jerusalem.

Author: Obadiah



NAHUM

Nahum foretells of God's judgment on Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.

Author: Nahum



JONAH

A disobedient prophet runs from God, is swallowed by a great fish, and then preaches God's message to the city of Nineveh.

Author: Jonah



HABAKKUK

Habakkuk pleads with God to stop the injustice and violence in Judah but is surprised to find that God will use the even more violent Babylonians to do so.

Author: Habakkuk



MICAH

Micah confronts the leaders of Israel and Judah regarding their injustice, and prophecies that one day the Lord himself will rule in perfect justice.

Author: Micah



ZEPHANIAH

God warns that he will judge Israel and the surrounding nations, but also that he will restore them in peace and justice.

Author: Zephaniah

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HAGGAI

The people have abandoned the work of restoring God's temple in Jerusalem, and so Haggai takes them to task.

Author: Haggai



THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

This is an account of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, focusing on Jesus' role as the true king of the Jews.

Author: Matthew



ZECHARIAH

The prophet Zechariah calls Israel to return to God, and records prophetic visions that show what's happening behind the scenes.

Author: Zechariah



THE GOSPEL OF MARK

This brief account of Jesus' earthly ministry highlights Jesus' authority and servanthood.

Author: Mark



MALACHI

God has been faithful to Israel, but they continue to live disconnected from him—so God sends Malachi to call them out.

Author: The author is unknown; Malachi is merely a transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning "my messenger."



THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Luke writes the most thorough account of Jesus' life, pulling together eyewitness testimonies to tell the full story of Jesus.

Author: Luke

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NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS OF THE BIBLE
(These books were written about Jesus, and what it means to follow him.)

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THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

John lists stories of signs and miracles with the hope that readers will believe in Jesus.

Author: John



1 CORINTHIANS

Paul writes a disciplinary letter to a fractured church in Corinth and answers some questions that they've had about how Christians should behave.

Author: Paul



ACTS

Jesus returns to the Father, the Holy Spirit comes to the church, and the gospel of Jesus spreads throughout the world.

Author: Luke



2 CORINTHIANS

Paul writes a letter of reconciliation to the church at Corinth and clears up some concerns that they have.

Author: Paul



ROMANS

Paul summarizes how the gospel of Jesus works in a letter to the churches at Rome, where he plans to visit.

Author: Paul



GALATIANS

Paul hears that the Galatian churches have been led to think that salvation comes from the law of Moses and writes a (rather heated) letter telling them where the false teachers have it wrong.

Author: Paul

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EPHESIANS

Paul writes to the church at Ephesus about how-to walk-in grace, peace, and love.

Author: Paul



1 THESSALONIANS

Paul has heard a good report on the church at Thessalonica and encourages them to "excel still more" in faith, hope, and love.

Author: Paul



PHILIPPIANS

An encouraging letter to the church of Philippi from Paul, telling them how to have joy in Christ.

Author: Paul



2 THESSALONIANS

Paul instructs the Thessalonians on how to stand firm until the coming of Jesus.

Author: Paul



COLOSSIANS

Paul writes the church at Colossae a letter about who they are in Christ, and how-to walk-in Christ.

Author: Paul



1 TIMOTHY

Paul gives his protégé Timothy instruction on how to lead a church with sound teaching and a godly example.

Author: Paul

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2 TIMOTHY

Paul is nearing the end of his life and encourages Timothy to continue preaching the word.

Author: Paul



HEBREWS

A letter encouraging Christians to cling to Christ despite persecution, because he is greater.

Author: Originally attributed to Paul, but scholars no longer believe that. Said to be unknown.



TITUS

Paul advises Titus on how to lead orderly, counter-cultural churches on the island of Crete.

Author: Paul



JAMES

A letter telling Christians to live in ways that demonstrate their faith in action.

Author: James (likely the brother of Jesus)



PHILEMON

Paul strongly recommends that Philemon accept his runaway slave as a brother, not a slave.

Author: Paul



1 PETER

Peter writes to Christians who are being persecuted, encouraging them to testify to the truth and live accordingly.

Author: Peter

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(These books were written about Jesus, and what it means to follow him.)



2 PETER

Peter writes a letter reminding Christians about the truth of Jesus and warning them that false teachers will come.

Author: Peter



3 JOHN

An even shorter letter about Christian fellowship.

Author: John



1 JOHN

John writes a letter to Christians about keeping Jesus' commands, loving one another, and important things they should know.

Author: John



JUDE

A letter encouraging Christians to content for the faith, even though ungodly persons have crept in unnoticed.

Author: Jude



2 JOHN

A very brief letter about walking in truth, love, and obedience.

Author: John



REVELATION

John sees visions of things that have been, things that are, and things that are yet to come.

Author: John