

# Bible Book Overview

## Genesis

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This book of beginnings presents the origin of the world and its ruin by sin before revealing God's plan to redeem the world through a Savior who is linked to the chosen people, Israel, a nation descended from Abraham's family.

### Organization

1. Our world created and ruined—Genesis 1–11
2. God's rescue plan and Abraham's family—Genesis 12–50

### Key Content

The fall into sin—Genesis 3:1–24  
First promise of a Savior—Genesis 3:15  
Covenant with Noah—Genesis 9:8–17  
Covenant with Abraham's family—Genesis 12:1–7; 15:1–21; 17:1–16

## Exodus

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With Moses in the lead, the Lord brings Israel out of slavery in Egypt to Mount Sinai, where he organizes them as his covenant people.

### Organization

1. Israel in Egypt—Exodus 1–11
2. From Egypt to Sinai—Exodus 12–18
3. The Mosaic covenant and law code—Exodus 19–40

### Key Content

God calls Moses to lead Israel—Exodus 3:1–4:17  
The ten plagues—Exodus 7:14–12:30  
Red Sea crossing—Exodus 13:17–14:31  
Ten Commandments—Exodus 20:1–17  
Golden calf—Exodus 32:1–35

## Leviticus

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God gives detailed instructions on how Israel is to think, live, and worship as his holy nation set apart from all others as his covenant people.

### Organization

1. Instructions on becoming holy—Leviticus 1–16
2. Instructions on maintaining holiness (Holiness Code)—Leviticus 17–27

### Key Content

Call to be holy—Leviticus 11:45; 19:2; 20:26

Kosher food laws—Leviticus 11:1–47; 17:1–16  
Day of Atonement—Leviticus 16:1–34

## Numbers

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Although Israel had developed into a sizable nation, its faith has not grown with their numbers. This record of Israel's thirty-eight years in the wilderness is marked by repeated rebellion and divine punishment as Israel edges closer but fails to enter the promised land.

### Organization

1. Census and preparation to leave Mount Sinai—Numbers 1–9
2. Rebellion and wilderness wandering—Numbers 10–25
3. Preparations to enter the promised land—Numbers 26–36

### Key Content

Rebellion against Moses's leadership—Numbers 12:1–16  
Rebellion of people following promised-land report—Numbers 13:1–14:45  
Rebellion against Aaron—Numbers 16:1–50  
Rebellion of Moses—Numbers 20:1–13  
Rebellion of Balaam—Numbers 22:1–35

## Deuteronomy

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This book presents a series of addresses given by Moses to the Israelites as he is about to die and as they are about to enter the promised land. These addresses contain a mix of history and law designed to encourage Israel's absolute allegiance to the covenant and their obligations defined within it.

### Organization

1. Historical overview—Deuteronomy 1–4
2. Terms of the covenant—Deuteronomy 5–26
3. Final warning and encouragement—Deuteronomy 27–34

### Key Content

Ten Commandments—Deuteronomy 5:1–21  
*Shema*—Deuteronomy 6:4–9  
Blessing and curses—Deuteronomy 28:1–68  
Death of Moses—Deuteronomy 34:1–12

## Joshua

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Israel defeats the major Canaanite urban centers in multiple battles, thereby fulfilling the land promise the Lord made to Abraham. The conquered land is then divided proportionally among the twelve tribes of Israel.

**Organization**

1. Conquest of the promised land—Joshua 1–12
2. Division of the promised land—Joshua 13–21
3. The witness altar and Joshua's final word—Joshua 22–24

**Key Content**

Rahab hides the spies—Joshua 2  
 Crossing the Jordan River—Joshua 3–4  
 The fall of Jericho—Joshua 6  
 Covenant renewal at Shechem—Joshua 8:30–35; 24:1–27

**Judges**

Israel's failure to complete the conquest left Canaanites in the land, which has fostered Israel's assimilation to pagan worship and ideology. Judges presents a series of individual stories organized into a pattern that shows the people of God trapped in a deteriorating cycle of apostasy and punishment caused by their covenant infidelity.

**Organization**

1. The final conquest fails—Judges 1–2
2. Six episodes of apostasy, oppression, and deliverance—Judges 3–16
3. Chaos reigns—Judges 17–21

**Key Content**

Ehud—Judges 3:12–30  
 Deborah—Judges 4–5  
 Gideon—Judges 6–8  
 Samson—Judges 13–16

**Ruth**

During the troubled time of the Judges, Ruth the Moabite and Boaz the Israelite illustrate the faithfulness and kindness that flow from a healthy relationship with the Lord; in turn the Lord shows the blessings he is eager to shower on those who live this faith-filled life. Ruth becomes the great-grandmother of David and an ancestor of Jesus.

**Organization**

1. Ruth connects with Israel and the Lord—Ruth 1
2. Ruth meets Boaz—Ruth 2
3. Ruth and Boaz become a family—Ruth 3–4

**Key Content**

Your God is my God—Ruth 1:16–17  
 Genealogy of David—Ruth 4:13–22

**1–2 Samuel**

This pair of books tells the story of Israel's transition from the moral and political uncertainty of the time of the judges to the nation's greater stability and success under the monarchy. Israel's king is to rule as a champion of the Mosaic covenant and as a model of David's greater son, the Messiah, who will rule an eternal kingdom.

**Organization**

1. The days of Samuel—1 Samuel 1–7
2. The days of Samuel and Saul—1 Samuel 8–15
3. The days of Saul and David—1 Samuel 16–21
4. The days of David—2 Samuel 1–24

**Key Content**

The call of Samuel—1 Samuel 3  
 Ark narratives—1 Samuel 4–6  
 Israel asks for a king—1 Samuel 8:6, 20  
 David and Goliath—1 Samuel 17  
 Saul's death—1 Samuel 31  
 Jerusalem becomes the capital city—2 Samuel 5:6–12  
 The ark of the covenant to Jerusalem—2 Samuel 6  
 The Davidic covenant—2 Samuel 7:8–16  
 David and Bathsheba—2 Samuel 11

**1–2 Kings**

This pair of books presents the rule of Solomon, the division of his kingdom, and the spiritual decline of both Israel and Judah, which culminates in their exile from the promised land. They illustrate that the rising and falling fortunes of these kings and their subjects are related to their wavering dedication to the Mosaic covenant.

**Organization**

1. Solomon—1 Kings 1–11
2. The divided kingdom of Israel and Judah—1 Kings 12–2 Kings 17
3. Judah—2 Kings 18–25

**Key Content**

Solomon's wisdom—1 Kings 3  
 Temple construction and dedication—1 Kings 5–8  
 Queen of Sheba visits—1 Kings 10:1–13  
 Kingdom divides—1 Kings 12:1–24  
 Golden calf worship—1 Kings 12:25–33  
 Elijah and the prophets of Baal—1 Kings 18  
 Naboth's vineyard—1 Kings 21  
 Elijah taken into heaven—2 Kings 2:1–18  
 Elisha raises the Shunammite's son—2 Kings 4:8–37  
 Exile of Israel—2 Kings 17  
 Hezekiah's reforms—2 Kings 18:1–8

Josiah's reforms—2 Kings 22:1–23:25

Exile of Judah—2 Kings 25:1–21

## 1–2 Chronicles

This pair of books retells the history of God's people with special emphasis on the time of David, Solomon, and the kings of Judah. While it presents the exile as the price of Israel's sins, the tone is more positive, looking ahead to the future success that obedience to the Mosaic covenant will bring.

### Organization

1. Genealogies from Adam to the return from exile—1 Chronicles 1–9
2. David's reign—1 Chronicles 10–29
3. Solomon's reign—2 Chronicles 1–9
4. Kings of Judah—2 Chronicles 10–36

### Key Content

Death of Saul—1 Chronicles 10  
 David captures Jerusalem—1 Chronicles 11:4–9  
 Davidic covenant—1 Chronicles 17  
 Solomon's wisdom—2 Chronicles 1:1–12  
 Temple construction—2 Chronicles 3–4  
 Kingdom divides—2 Chronicles 10  
 Hezekiah's reforms—2 Chronicles 29  
 Josiah's reforms—2 Chronicles 34  
 Exile and return of Judah—2 Chronicles 36:15–23

## Ezra

Judah returns to the promised land from exile and reestablishes temple worship in Jerusalem. But these joy-filled days are complicated with challenges that accompany the temple's reconstruction and with spiritual repair work that needs to occur in the lives of the returning exiles so that they might become the faithful people of God they were called to be.

### Organization

1. First return under Zerubbabel—Ezra 1–2
2. Rebuilding the temple and restoration of worship—Ezra 3–6
3. The second return under Ezra and his reforms—Ezra 7–10

### Key Content

Decree of Cyrus releasing exiles—Ezra 1:1–4  
 Temple foundation laid—Ezra 3:7–13  
 Completion and dedication of the temple—Ezra 6:13–18  
 The intermarriage problem—Ezra 9:1–10:17

## Nehemiah

Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem on a mission to rebuild its defensive walls. However, it is the spiritual rehabilitation of Israel led by Ezra and Nehemiah, not the rebuilt walls, that brings real security for God's people.

### Organization

1. Nehemiah rebuilds the walls—Nehemiah 1–7
2. Ezra reads the law and rebuilds the people—Nehemiah 8–12
3. Nehemiah reads the law and rebuilds the people—Nehemiah 13

### Key Content

Nehemiah returns from Persia—Nehemiah 2:1–10  
 Nehemiah's wall inspection—Nehemiah 2:11–18  
 Dedication of the wall—Nehemiah 12:27–47

## Esther

Esther tells the story of a Jewish girl in exile who becomes queen of Persia in order to champion God's plan to rescue his chosen people once again from a government-authorized annihilation. This story forms the basis for the Jewish festival of Purim.

### Organization

1. Esther becomes queen—Esther 1:1–2:18
2. Threats revealed—Esther 2:19–3:15
3. Esther counters the critical threat—Esther 4–8
4. The festival of Purim—Esther 9–10

### Key Content

Mordecai's passionate appeal to Esther—Esther 4:12–14  
 Purim established—Esther 9:18–28

## Job

This story and extended dialogue explore the cause of the suffering in the life of God's people. Because mortals are unable to rise above the horizon of their own limitations, a satisfactory explanation of every instance of suffering will not be found. Our wearied spirits find rest only in trusting the all-powerful and all-knowing God who loves us.

### Organization

1. Job's well-being is taken away—Job 1–2
2. The cause explored via dialogue—Job 3–37
3. God asserts his limitless power and knowledge—Job 38–41
4. Job's well-being is restored—Job 42

### Key Content

The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away—Job 1:21

I know my Redeemer lives—Job 19:25  
 Poem: “Where Can Wisdom Be Found?”—Job 28

## **Psalms**

Psalms is a collection of divinely inspired poetry that puts words to every season of life. Here we find elegantly composed songs of instruction and correction, poems that give voice to our grief and our joy, and refrains to lift our hearts in thanksgiving.

### **Organization**

1. Book one—Psalms 1–41
2. Book two—Psalms 42–72
3. Book three—Psalms 73–89
4. Book four—Psalms 90–106
5. Book five—Psalms 107–150

### **Key Content**

Blessed living—Psalm 1  
 The Lord is my Shepherd—Psalm 23  
 God is our refuge and strength—Psalm 46  
 Have mercy on me—Psalm 51  
 Praise the Lord—Psalm 103  
 Songs of ascent—Psalms 120–134

## **Proverbs**

This book is a collection of proverbs or sayings that investigates and teaches the basic knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to live successfully. Such wise living is grounded in an absolute trust in the Lord.

### **Organization**

1. Introduction to wisdom and its value—Proverbs 1–9
2. Six collections of wise sayings—Proverbs 10–31

### **Key Content**

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom—Proverbs 1:7  
 Trust in the Lord with all your heart—Proverbs 3:5  
 The wife of noble character—Proverbs 31:10–31

## **Ecclesiastes**

Ecclesiastes is a reflection that explores many different pathways that promise a meaningful and satisfying life. The conclusion is that a life lived without God is a life destined for disappointment.

### **Organization**

1. General survey of the paths that promise a meaningful life—Ecclesiastes 1–11
2. Remember your creator—Ecclesiastes 12

### **Key Content**

Everything is meaningless—Ecclesiastes 1:2  
 There is a time for everything—Ecclesiastes 3:1–8  
 Fear God and keep his commandments—Ecclesiastes 12:13–14

## **Song of Songs**

This book is a series of lyric poems that celebrate the sexual intimacy and pleasure that the Lord meant for a husband and wife to enjoy.

### **Organization**

1. Anticipation—Song 1–3
2. Wedding—Song 4
3. Pleasure—Song 5–8

### **Key Content**

You have stolen my heart—Song 4:9  
 Her beauty celebrated in metaphors—Song 4:1–7; 7:1–9

## **Isaiah**

Isaiah urges Judah to repent of its rebellion against God, warning them that it is facing exile from the promised land. When the exile to Babylon comes, Isaiah pours out words of comfort and encouragement, speaking of the forgiveness the messiah will bring and life in an eternal home.

### **Organization**

1. Divine judgment for Judah and the nations—Isaiah 1–39
2. Comfort for Judah and the nations—Isaiah 40–66

### **Key Content**

Song of the vineyard—Isaiah 5:1–7  
 Isaiah's call to service—Isaiah 6  
 To us a child is born—Isaiah 9:1–7  
 Comfort, comfort my people—Isaiah 40:1–8  
 Suffering Servant—Isaiah 53  
 Arise, shine, for your light has come—Isaiah 60:1–3  
 New heavens and a new earth—Isaiah 65:17–25

## **Jeremiah**

Jeremiah lambasts God's people for failing to take personal responsibility in living out their covenant responsibilities and decries the kings who are leading their people toward exile. When his persistent call to repentance fails, the Babylonian exile comes. Then Jeremiah speaks of restoration within seventy years made possible by God's mercy and a return to covenant fidelity.

### **Organization**

1. Call of Jeremiah—Jeremiah 1
2. Vivid words of warning and hope—Jeremiah 2–35

3. Jeremiah suffers and Jerusalem falls—Jeremiah 36–45
4. Judgment on the nations—Jeremiah 46–51
5. Revisiting the destruction of Jerusalem—Jeremiah 52

### Key Content

Temple sermon—Jeremiah 7  
 Righteous branch—Jeremiah 23:5–6  
 Letter to the exiles—Jeremiah 29  
 New covenant—Jeremiah 31:31–34  
 Jeremiah carried to Egypt—Jeremiah 42–43

## Lamentations

This collection of poetic laments gives voice to the sorrow and horror caused by the destruction of Jerusalem and the demolition of the temple.

### Organization

1. The city weeps—Lamentations 1
2. It's God's doing—Lamentations 2
3. Hope amid the ashes—Lamentations 3
4. Horror—Lamentations 4
5. Plea for forgiveness—Lamentations 5

### Key Content

Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?—Lamentations 1:12  
 Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed—Lamentations 3:22

## Ezekiel

As a fellow exile in Babylon, Ezekiel employs highly visual language to hammer home the reason for the exile before delivering the promise of restoration.

### Organization

1. Call of Ezekiel—Ezekiel 1–3
2. Prophecies against Judah and Jerusalem—Ezekiel 4–24
3. Prophecies against the nations—Ezekiel 25–32
4. Prophecies of restoration—Ezekiel 33–48

### Key Content

Symbolized siege of Jerusalem—Ezekiel 4  
 God's glory leaves the temple—Ezekiel 10  
 Shepherds of God's people—Ezekiel 34  
 Valley of dry bones—Ezekiel 37  
 Temple vision and the Lord's return—Ezekiel 40–43  
 A purifying river flows from the temple—Ezekiel 47

## Daniel

Using events from the life of Daniel and visions of the future seen by Daniel, God's people in exile are reminded that he alone will determine their destiny. There is hope for those in exile, because the messiah will establish the kingdom of God at the expense of any nation that opposes him.

### Organization

1. Events from the life of Daniel and his friends—Daniel 1–6
2. Visions of the future—Daniel 7–12

### Key Content

A statue representing four world empires—Daniel 2  
 Fiery furnace—Daniel 3  
 Writing on the wall—Daniel 5  
 Lions' den—Daniel 6  
 Son of man and the Ancient of Days—Daniel 7:13–14

## Hosea

In the days just before the northern kingdom falls to Assyria, the worship of the Lord has deteriorated into empty formalism while the people passionately pursue the worship of Baal. Hosea likens Israel to his unfaithful wife, who, though punished, will be given a second chance.

### Organization

1. Unfaithful wife, faithful husband—Hosea 1–3
2. Unfaithful Israel, faithful God—Hosea 4–14

### Key Content

Hosea's troubled marriage—Hosea 1:2–9  
 Come, let us return to the Lord—Hosea 6:1  
 Mercy not sacrifice—Hosea 6:6  
 Reaping the whirlwind—Hosea 8:7

## Joel

A horrible locust plague affecting Judah becomes a symbol of the impending judgment on the day of the Lord. Only those who repent and rely on God's mercy will be spared.

### Organization

1. The day of the Lord and the locust plague—Joel 1:1–2:17
2. God's mercy prevails—Joel 2:18–3:21

### Key Content

Rend your heart not your garments—Joel 2:13  
 Pouring out of the Holy Spirit—Joel 2:28–32  
 Valley of Jehoshaphat (judgment)—Joel 3:2

## Amos

As the wealthy in the northern kingdom enjoy a more prosperous economic season, they join worship of Baal with acts of social injustice, ignoring the needs of the poor and the demands of God. Amos declares these matters will be addressed on the coming day of the Lord.

### Organization

1. Judgment on the nations—Amos 1:1–2:5
2. Judgment on Israel—Amos 2:6–6:14
3. Visions of judgment and restoration—Amos 7–9

### Key Content

Let justice roll like a river—Amos 5:24  
 The divine plumb line—Amos 7:7–9  
 Restoration of David's fallen tent—Amos 9:11

## Obadiah

Although related to Israel and obligated to support them in accomplishing their mission, the Edomites have gloated over their misfortunes and even joined in harming God's people during the Babylonian invasion of the promised land. The day of the Lord is coming for them.

### Organization

1. Edom's sin—Obadiah 1–14
2. Edom's punishment—Obadiah 15–21

### Key Content

The eagle will soar no more—Obadiah 4

## Jonah

The life of Jonah becomes the message. As God corrects Jonah's narrow view of who deserves divine mercy, he is correcting our own. God's mercy extends beyond the boundaries we erect, even to those who seem least deserving of it.

### Organization

1. Jonah flees the mission—Jonah 1–2
2. Mission accomplished in spite of Jonah—Jonah 3–4

### Key Content

Jonah's call—Jonah 1:1–2  
 Great fish—Jonah 1:17  
 Should I not be concerned?—Jonah 4:11

## Micah

As Assyria prepares to invade Israel and Judah, Micah links this invasion with a lack of social justice and pervasive worship of pagan gods, which are a product of Israel's broken relationship with the Lord. Words of judgment alternate with words of hope.

### Organization

1. Judgment on Israel and Judah—Micah 1–3
2. Hope for Israel and Judah—Micah 4–5
3. The case for Israel's destruction—Micah 6
4. Zion has reason for hope—Micah 7

### Key Content

The King from Bethlehem—Micah 5:2  
 Act justly, love mercy, walk humbly—Micah 6:8  
 I watch in hope for the Lord—Micah 7:7

## Nahum

The Lord had commissioned the Assyrians to punish Israel, but this gentile nation conducted its assigned task with extreme cruelty. Consequently Nahum uses vivid and graphic language to describe the corresponding cruelty that will fall on the Assyrian capital city of Nineveh.

### Organization

1. The case against Nineveh—Nahum 1
2. The attack on Nineveh—Nahum 2–3

### Key Content

God is a refuge for his troubled people—Nahum 1:7

## Habakkuk

Habakkuk is a dialogue between God and this prophet. It addresses two questions the faithful in Israel are asking: Why is God allowing wickedness to prosper in Judah? How could God use pagan Babylon to punish his chosen people?

### Organization

1. Why is evil unpunished?—Habakkuk 1:1–11
2. Why punish with unrighteous Babylon?—Habakkuk 1:12–2:20
3. God's answers produce trust and joy—Habakkuk 3

### Key Content

Why are you silent, Lord?—Habakkuk 1:13  
 I will be joyful in God my Savior—Habakkuk 3:18

## Zephaniah

The day of the Lord will be a day of judgment for Judah and the nations insofar as they reject the rule of God and remove him from the rightful place in their lives. But it will also be a day of deliverance for the faithful remnant, who will be brought home and honored before all people of the earth.

### Organization

1. Judgment on Judah and the nations—Zephaniah 1:1–3:8
2. Redemption of the faithful—Zephaniah 3:9–20

### Key Content

The great day of the Lord—Zephaniah 1:14–18

## Haggai

The return from exile created the opportunity to rebuild the Lord's temple and live holy lives, but mistaken attitudes and misplaced priorities have caused work on the project to stop and faith life to decline. Haggai calls for a change of heart so that the temple and people can be prepared for the messiah's arrival.

### Organization

1. Call to rebuild the temple—Haggai 1:1–2:9
2. Call to holy living—Haggai 2:10–19
3. Call to confidence—Haggai 2:20–23

### Key Content

Glory of the new temple—Haggai 2:9  
Zerubbabel as signet ring—Haggai 2:23

## Zechariah

Words of encouragement to restart the building of the temple in Jerusalem join with visions and language that urge Israel to prepare in all dimensions of living and thinking for the age of the messiah's coming.

### Organization

1. Call to repent—Zechariah 1:1–6
2. Eight visions—Zechariah 1:7–6:8
3. Prepare for the messiah's coming—Zechariah 6:9–8:23
4. The age of the messiah's coming—Zechariah 9–14

### Key Content

Messiah's entry into Jerusalem—Zechariah 9:9  
Look on the one they have pierced—Zechariah 12:10  
Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered—Zechariah 13:7

## Malachi

The passage of time has begun to erode confidence in the better days to come promised by the prophets. In six dialogues, Malachi argues the delay is not cause to become careless in living holy lives or cause to doubt that the day of the Lord is near.

### Organization

1. God's love confirmed—Malachi 1:1–5
2. Call to repent—Malachi 1:6–2:17
3. Day of the Lord is near—Malachi 3–4

### Key Content

The forerunner, a new Elijah—Malachi 3:1; 4:5  
Sun of righteousness will rise—Malachi 4:2

## Matthew

The story of Jesus is told so as to emphasize his identity as the Messiah, David's royal son, who fulfills the Old Testament promises that anticipated his coming.

### Outline

1. Birth and early years—Matthew 1–2
2. Jesus's ministry—Matthew 3–20
3. Jesus's passion and resurrection—Matthew 21–28

### Key Content

Jesus the Immanuel—Matthew 1:22  
Visit of the Magi—Matthew 2:1–12

Flight to Egypt—Matthew 2:13–18

Sermon on the Mount—Matthew 5–7

You are the Christ—Matthew 16:16

Parable of the ten virgins—Matthew 25:1–13

The sheep and the goats—Matthew 25:31–46

Great Commission—Matthew 28:16–20

## Mark

This simpler and shorter presentation of Jesus's life emphasizes the need for the Son of Man to suffer in order to accomplish his mission on earth as its redeemer. Mark pays particular attention to the public recognition of Jesus as one who teaches with authority.

**Outline**

1. Jesus's ministry—Mark 1–10
2. Jesus's passion and resurrection—Mark 11–16

**Key Content**

Authority—Mark 1:22, 27; 2:10; 3:15; 6:7; 10:42; 11:27–29, 33  
 Appointing the Twelve—Mark 3:13–19  
 Raising Jairus's daughter—Mark 5:21–43  
 Blind man healed at Bethsaida—Mark 8:22–26  
 Jesus speaks of his death—Mark 9:30–32; 10:32–34  
 Widow's mite—Mark 12:41–44

**Luke**

In this first of his two-part presentation on the historic origins of the Christian church and the unique message it shares (Luke-Acts), Luke offers a more comprehensive account of Jesus's life that emphasizes the human side of the Savior, his compassion for others, and his passion to save Jew and gentile alike.

**Outline**

1. Jesus's birth and early years—Luke 1–2
2. Jesus's ministry—Luke 3:1–19:27
3. Jesus's passion and resurrection—Luke 19:28–24:53

**Key Content**

The annunciation to Mary—Luke 1:26–38  
 Prophecy of Zechariah—Luke 1:67–80  
 Christmas story—Luke 2:1–20  
 Jesus as a boy in the temple—Luke 2:41–52  
 Rejected at Nazareth—Luke 4:14–30  
 Widow's son raised at Nain—Luke 7:11–17  
 Good Samaritan—Luke 10:30–37  
 Mary and Martha—Luke 10:38–42  
 Rich man and poor Lazarus—Luke 16:19–31  
 Zacchaeus—Luke 19:1–10  
 Road-to-Emmaus revelation—Luke 24:13–35

**John**

This simply written but thought-provoking account of Jesus's life adds information not included in the other Gospels, focusing particularly on the close of Jesus's life in Judea and Jerusalem. John's goal is to convince the members of the early church that Jesus is the promised Christ, the Son of God, who opens the path to eternal life (John 20:31).

**Outline**

1. Jesus's ministry—John 1–11
2. Jesus's passion and resurrection—John 12–21

**Key Content**

Word became flesh—John 1:1–18  
 Water becomes wine—John 2:1–11  
 The Samaritan woman at Jacob's well—John 4:1–38  
 Healing at the Bethesda pools—John 5:1–15  
 Bread of life—John 6:25–59  
 Healing man born blind—John 9:1–12  
 Raising of Lazarus—John 11:1–44  
 Jesus's prayer for all believers—John 17:6–26  
 Restoration of Peter—John 21:15–25

**Acts**

In this second of his two-part presentation on the historic origins of the Christian church and the unique message it shares (Luke-Acts), Luke presents the triumphs and challenges of the church as the good news about Jesus expanded from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and Galilee on its way to the ends of the earth (1:8).

**Outline**

1. The gospel in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee—Acts 1:1–11:18
2. The gospel in Syria and Cyprus—Acts 11:19–13:12
3. The gospel in Asia Minor and Europe—Acts 13:13–28:31

**Key Content**

Jesus's ascension—Acts 1:1–11  
 Pentecost—Acts 2:1–47  
 Death of Stephen—Acts 7:54–60  
 Philip and the Ethiopian—Acts 8:26–40  
 Conversion of Saul—Acts 9:1–31  
 Peter and Cornelius—Acts 10:1–48  
 Council at Jerusalem—Acts 15:1–35  
 Paul appeals to Caesar—Acts 25:9–12  
 Shipwreck of Paul—Acts 27:13–44

**Romans**

Paul composes this theological essay for the Christians at Rome in order to anchor their understanding of life and forgiveness in the basics of the Christian faith, which are valid for all time and for Jew and gentile alike.

**Outline**

1. Righteousness from God—Romans 1–8
2. Israel's hope—Romans 9–11
3. Life as a living sacrifice—Romans 12–16

**Key Content**

Not ashamed of the gospel—Romans 1:16–17  
 Righteous not by law but faith—Romans 3:19–24  
 Legacy of Christ and Adam—Romans 5:12–19



Struggle with the sinful nature—Romans 7:18–25  
 Confidence in the coming glory—Romans 8:18–39

## 1 Corinthians

Many converts in the church at Corinth have come from a pagan background, which continues to inform their attitudes and lifestyle. This letter of Paul addresses a long list of concerns that, left unaddressed, would compromise the integrity and well-being of the church.

### Outline

1. Divisions in the church—1 Corinthians 1–4
2. Cases of immorality—1 Corinthians 5–6
3. Marriage—1 Corinthians 7
4. Meaning of Christian freedom—1 Corinthians 8–10
5. Worship—1 Corinthians 11–14
6. Resurrection—1 Corinthians 15–16

### Key Content

Cross as foolishness and power—1 Corinthians 1:18  
 Lord's Supper—1 Corinthians 11:17–34  
 Spiritual gifts—1 Corinthians 12:1–31  
 Essay on love—1 Corinthians 13:1–13  
 Gift of tongues—1 Corinthians 14:1–25

## 2 Corinthians

Following his first letter and a delayed return visit to Corinth, a group of individuals began attacking the integrity of Paul's leadership and thus his message. This highly personal and highly spirited letter pushes back against the criticisms.

### Outline

1. Overview of Paul's ministry—2 Corinthians 1–7
2. Collection for the poor in Jerusalem—2 Corinthians 8–9
3. Defense of Paul's role as apostle—2 Corinthians 10–13

### Key Content

Seen temporary, unseen eternal—2 Corinthians 4:17–18  
 Ministry of reconciliation—2 Corinthians 5:17–21  
 Instruction on charitable giving—2 Corinthians 9:6–11  
 Boast only in the Lord—2 Corinthians 10:17  
 Sufficiency of God's grace—2 Corinthians 12:8

## Galatians

Some Jewish Christians have been insisting that gentiles had to observe the Old Testament ceremonial laws, including the law regarding circumcision. Paul responds with a vigorous and passionate defense of the gospel: salvation by grace alone through faith alone without assistance from observing the law.

### Outline

1. Paul's authority established—Galatians 1–2
2. Grace, faith, and freedom—Galatians 3–6

### Key Content

Redeemed from the curse of the law—Galatians 3:13–14  
 One in Jesus—Galatians 3:28  
 Set free to remain free—Galatians 5:1  
 Fruits of the Spirit defined—Galatians 5:22–23

## Ephesians

Paul sets out the grand and uplifting vision of a unified church intimately bound to Christ and reveals how that vision may become a reality.

### Outline

1. God's purpose for the church—Ephesians 1–3
2. God's plan to fulfill that purpose—Ephesians 4–6

### Key Content

Grace and faith—Ephesians 2:8–9  
 Unity in Christ—Ephesians 2:14; 4:3–6  
 Husbands and wives—Ephesians 5:22–33  
 Armor of God—Ephesians 6:10–18

## Philippians

During the discouraging time of his detention in Rome, Paul is prompted to write a warm note of thanks for the support gift the Christians in Philippi had sent to him. In this note, Paul speaks about what is getting him through this difficult time: a focus on humility, contentment, and his eternal citizenship in heaven.

### Outline

1. Greetings and personal news—Philippians 1:1–26
2. Live humbly—Philippians 1:27–2:30
3. Warnings and encouragement—Philippians 3:1–4:23

### Key Content

To live is Christ, to die is gain—Philippians 1:21  
 The model of Christ's humility—Philippians 2:6–8  
 Heavenly citizenship—Philippians 3:20–21  
 Achieving contentment—Philippians 4:12–13

## Colossians

When the Christians in Colossae begins to blend the good news about Jesus with other pagan and religious ideas, Paul pens this corrective note, which highlights the full adequacy and superiority of Christ.

**Outline**

1. Greeting—Colossians 1:1–14
2. The adequacy and superiority of Christ—Colossians 1:15–2:23
3. Holy living in Christ—Colossians 3:1–4:18

**Key Content**

Christ is God—Colossians 2:9–10

Made alive in Christ—Colossians 2:13

Relationship to the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament—  
Colossians 2:16–17

Set your hearts and minds on things above—Colossians 3:1–2

**1–2 Thessalonians**

A shorter stay and more abrupt departure from this city make it necessary for Paul to write these two letters. While clarifying his teaching on the second coming of Jesus, Paul uses this anticipated return to encourage and direct the actions of these believers facing persecution. The second letter, written only months after the first, celebrates the growth of this church but reinforces the content of the first.

**Outline****1 Thessalonians**

1. Greeting—1 Thessalonians 1
2. Paul's character and role—1 Thessalonians 2:1–3:13
3. Live as those awaiting the Lord's return—1 Thessalonians 4:1–5:28

**2 Thessalonians**

1. Greeting—2 Thessalonians 1
2. Live as those awaiting the Lord's return—2 Thessalonians 2–3

**Key Content****1 Thessalonians**

Resurrection of those who sleep—1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

Live in the light of the day—1 Thessalonians 5:7–8

**2 Thessalonians**

Man of lawlessness—2 Thessalonians 2:1–12

Stand firm—2 Thessalonians 2:15

**1 Timothy**

This letter contains sage advice from the seasoned leader Paul to the younger Timothy, who has been left to lead the church at Ephesus.

**Outline**

1. Greetings and initial concerns—1 Timothy 1
2. Guidance on worship, leadership, and general management—1 Timothy 2–6

**Key Content**

Jesus as the sole mediator—1 Timothy 2:5

Men and women in worship—1 Timothy 2:8–15

Your young age is not an issue—1 Timothy 4:12

Contentment and money—1 Timothy 6:6–10

**2 Timothy**

As Paul comes to the close of his life, he expresses his heartfelt concern for the church at Ephesus and its leader Timothy as the Christians prepare to face more difficult days of persecution.

**Outline**

1. Endure the difficult days to come—2 Timothy 1:1–3:9
2. Anchor in the trustworthy Word—2 Timothy 3:10–4:22

**Key Content**

All Scripture is God-breathed—2 Timothy 3:16–17

I have fought the good fight—2 Timothy 4:7–8

**Titus**

Paul offers guidance and encouragement to his trusted friend Titus whom he has left on the island of Crete to lead the church there

**Outline**

1. Personal instructions for Titus—Titus 1
2. Sound doctrine and doing good—Titus 2–3

**Key Content**

Washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit—Titus 3:5

**Philemon**

In this personal letter, Paul asks Philemon to welcome back in his household the runaway slave, Onesimus, because he has been of great assistance to Paul and has become a fellow child of God

**Outline**

1. Greeting—Philemon 1–7
2. Request—Philemon 8–25

**Key Content**

"I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you"—  
Philemon 12

**Hebrews**

This letter was written to Jewish Christians who were trying to blend the thought patterns and ritual of the old covenant with the new. This letter argues that the new covenant is superior because it is mediated by Jesus. He is the author of our salvation and the

perfecter of our faith who has fulfilled the promise of salvation described in the symbols of the old covenant.

### Outline

1. Christ is the premier leader—Hebrews 1–7
2. Christ is the premier high priest and sacrifice—Hebrews 8–10
3. Christ is worthy of our faith—Hebrews 11–12
4. Final encouragements—Hebrews 13

### Key Content

God's Word is a living, active, two-edged sword—Hebrews 4:12  
 Jesus was tempted just like we are, but without sin—Hebrews 4:15  
 Jesus is the all-sufficient sacrifice—Hebrews 7:27  
 Faith is being sure of what we hope for—Hebrews 11:1  
 Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith—Hebrews 12:2

## James

James argues that faith unaccompanied by appropriate deeds is a sham. The writer demonstrates the nature of faith in action by discussing how faith responds in the face of anger, favoritism, wealth, boasting, and hardship.

### Outline

1. Trials and temptations—James 1:1–18
2. The lifestyle that faith yields—James 1:19–5:20

### Key Content

Every good and perfect gift comes from above—James 1:17  
 Faith without works is dead—James 2:17  
 Be patient until the Lord's coming—James 5:7  
 Prayer is powerful and effective—James 5:16

## 1 Peter

Anticipating the coming of persecution, Peter writes to believers in five Roman provinces to encourage them to persevere and to focus on living holy lives during these more difficult days.

### Outline

1. Greetings and praise—1 Peter 1:1–12
2. Live holy lives in the midst of suffering—1 Peter 1:13–5:14

### Key Content

An inheritance that cannot perish or fade—1 Peter 1:4  
 Called to be holy—1 Peter 1:16  
 You are a chosen people—1 Peter 2:9  
 Cast all your worries on God who cares for you—1 Peter 5:7

## 2 Peter

With his life coming to a close, Peter writes to his beloved church about its secure foundation in the revealed Word of God and its secure future in the return of Jesus.

### Outline

1. The source of truth—2 Peter 1
2. False teachers and their fate—2 Peter 2
3. Jesus's certain return—2 Peter 3

### Key Content

Truth revealed by the Holy Spirit—2 Peter 1:21  
 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promises—2 Peter 3:9

## 1 John

An early form of gnosticism, which perceived spirit as always good and the body as always evil, has led to misperceptions regarding the nature of Jesus and the need for living a moral life. John uses the language of light and love to confirm the righteousness of the God-man, Jesus; and he summons God's people to live in light and love.

### Outline

1. God is light; live in the light—1 John 1–2
2. God is love; live in love—1 John 3–5

### Key Content

The blood of Jesus purifies from all sin—1 John 1:7  
 God's love and Jesus's atoning sacrifice—1 John 4:10  
 Perfect love drives out all fear—1 John 4:18

## 2–3 John

These two letters have a number of things in common. Both are very short, are addressed to a specific person, and flow from the common practice of inviting visiting teachers into the home in order to provide food and shelter for them. Second John warns about extending this hospitality to false teachers and so expanding the reach of their heresy. Third John commends Gaius and others, who support the teachers sent out by John with the truth to share.

### Key Content

Walk in love—2 John 6  
 Imitate what is good—3 John 11

## Jude

The younger brother of Jesus urges the chosen of God to resist the persuasive words of false teachers, who teach that those who are saved by grace are able to sin without restraint or penalty (Jude 4).

**Outline**

1. Greeting—Jude 1-2
2. False teachers and their fate—Jude 3-16
3. Hold to the truth—Jude 17-25

**Key Content**

Build yourselves up in faith and prayer—Jude 20  
 Jesus alone keeps us from falling—Jude 24

**Revelation**

Through notes written to seven churches and a series of visions, John paints a picture of this world's history culminating in the return of Jesus. The challenges and uncertainty of the last days will only increase as Satan and his allies fight to destroy the people of God.

But the victory of Jesus is never in doubt. He will sustain his people, destroy those who oppose his kingdom, and rule in a new heaven and new earth, which will be the eternal home of all believers.

**Outline**

1. Letters to the seven churches—Revelation 1-3
2. Visions of revolt against Jesus—Revelation 4-16
3. Visions of certain victory by Jesus—Revelation 17-22

**Key Content**

Jesus is the Alpha and Omega—Revelation 1:8  
 Worthy is the Lamb who was slain—Revelation 5:12  
 Blessed are those who die in the Lord—Revelation 14:13  
 Armageddon—Revelation 16:16  
 New Jerusalem—Revelation 21:1-2