

6. Joshua

Theme: Conquest of Canaan

Author: Joshua

Verse: *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.* Joshua 1:9

Date: 14th century B.C.

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

The rest of Joshua tells about the division of the land to the 12 tribes and the conditions the Israelites would need to keep to be successful. In his final address to the people, Joshua makes his famous declaration: *... choose this day whom you will serve ... as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD (24:15)*

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11. 1 Kings

Theme: Division and decay of the kingdom

Author: Unknown

Verse: *Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, "Since this has been your practice and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant.* 1 Kings 11:11

Date: Sixth century B.C.

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

12. 2 Kings

Theme: The divided kingdom and captivity

Author: Unknown

Verse: *And the Lord said, "I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, "My Name shall be there." 2 Kings 23:27*

Date: Sixth century B.C.

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

13. 1 Chronicles

Theme: Genealogy and history

Author: Unknown

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

Date: Fifth century B.C.

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

14. 2 Chronicles

Theme: Reign of King Solomon and history of Judah

Author: Unknown

Verse: *If my people who are called by My Name humble themselves, and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. 2 Chronicles 7:14*

Date: Probably written during the Babylonian captivity

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

17. Esther

Theme: God's care for His people

Author: Unknown

Verse: *For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"* Esther 4:14

Date: Fifth century B.C.

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

Meanwhile, Haman, a nobleman, vowed to destroy all the Jews because Mordecai refused to bow to him. Esther, as queen, was in the perfect position to defeat Haman's plans - her cousin told her that she was likely in her place for just such a time. Esther asked the king to attend two banquets. Before the second one, the king decided to honor Mordecai for saving his life on an earlier occasion when two officials tried to assassinate him. Haman, thinking he was the one to be honored, suggested a robe, a position of nobility and a parade for the honoree. When Mordecai was brought forth, Haman was forced to honor him. Esther revealed Haman's plot to kill the Jews, and the king ordered Haman hung on the very gallows he had built to hang Mordecai. The plot against the Jews was defeated and Mordecai was given a powerful position in the kingdom. The name of God is never mentioned in the book of Esther, but God's care for His people is undeniably demonstrated throughout the book.

18. Job

Theme: The problem of suffering

Author: Unknown

Verse: *For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth.*
Job 19:25

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

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

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

19. Psalms

Theme: Rejoicing and praise

Author: David and others

Verse: *Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise! Give thanks to Him; bless His Name!* Psalms 100:4

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

24. Jeremiah

Theme: Warnings and predictions to Judah

Author: Jeremiah

Verse: *Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known. Jeremiah 33:3*

Date: Seventh century B.C.

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

a potter and watch him work and buy a jar from him. He was told to wear a yoke like an ox. He was told to buy a field. All of these instructions were intended as illustrations of God's message.

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

25. Lamentations

Theme: Jeremiah's lament for all Israel

Author: Jeremiah

Verse: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:22-23

Date: Sixth century B.C.

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

29. Joel

Theme: Predictions of the day of the Lord

Author: Joel

Verse: *Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes.* Joel 1:15

Date: Ninth or eighth century B.C.

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

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

32. Jonah

Theme: God's mercy

Author: Unknown (possibly Jonah)

Verse: *When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that He had said He would do to them, and He did not do it.*

Jonah 3:10

Date: Ninth century B.C.

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