THE ENGLISH MAJOR'S BIBLE CHEAT SHEET

A Note from the Author/Collator/Editor/Fellow Cheater:

The material here has been compiled from a number of sources, and should give you a decent introduction to just what's going on in the Bible. But it's no substitute for the real thing.

I've manipulated, tweaked, taken, revised, and flat-out stolen most of this material from a number of decent academic and religious sources. I give them credit in the "Stolen From:" section at the end.

Why the Bible?

The Bible, that collection of stories, poems, songs, parables, and predictions that was compiled over a period of about 800 years, is probably the most alluded-to source in the history of Western literature. So there's no way to get around it; you *need* to read this collection. And it's not like this is a chore. Yes, there are some dry sections, but one of the reasons why it's been such a constant go-to across centuries and cultures is because it's got some great stuff. Nothing, and I mean, ***nothing***, will give you the level of credibility among your peers and professors that recognizing a biblical allusion will give you.

How to Use this Document:

Keep it with you at all times. Bring it to class, especially your English classes. Refer to it when you think you may have seen an allusion to a myth on a text, or when you see a reference to something "biblical:" a character, situation, description, event, allusion, etc.

Areas Covered:

Overview

Translations: Formal v. Dynamic

There are two general philosophies translators use when they do their work: formal or complete equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence translations try to give as literal a translation of the original text as possible. Translators using this philosophy try to stick close to the originals, even preserving much of the original word order. Literal translations are an excellent resource for serious Bible study. Sometimes the meaning of a verse depends on subtle cues in the text; these cues are only preserved by literal translations. The disadvantage of literal translations is that they are harder to read because more Hebrew and Greek style intrudes into the English text.

Because literal translations can be difficult to read, many have produced more readable Bibles using the dynamic equivalence philosophy. According to this view, it does not matter whether the grammar and word order of the original is preserved in English so long as the meaning of the text is preserved. This frees the translator to use better English style and word choice, producing a more readable translation. The disadvantage of dynamic translation is that there is a price to pay for readability. Dynamic translations lose precision because they omit subtle clues to the meaning of a passage that only literal translations preserve. They also run a greater risk of reading the translators' doctrinal views into the text because of the greater liberty in how to render it.

Versions: Academic v. Reading

If you are looking for the best academic version of the Bible, the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is an extremely accurate translation, faithful to the earliest and best manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible/OT and the Greek NT. It is fairly literal and is the translation most often quoted by a wide variety of biblical scholars (Evangelicals, Catholics, Mainline Protestants, Jews, secular historians, etc.) in the top academic publications. It uses gender-inclusive language where the grammar and/or context supports it. If you want it in a Study Bible edition, the best choices are *The HarperCollins Study Bible* (2nd ed.) or *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (3rd ed.). Both try to present the best of historical-critical biblical scholarship in an objective way. The more concise *Access Bible* from Oxford is also a good academic Bible.

But there are serious shortcomings in many of the popular versions of the Bible. One of the least useful is The King James Version (KJV) or The New King James Version (NKJV). The KJV was a great version in its day, but that day was the 17th century. Many earlier and more accurate biblical manuscripts were discovered afterwards and most modern translations—including those produced by very conservative Christians—are based on them. The NKJV updates some of the 17th-century language, but it relies on the same later and less accurate manuscripts that were available to the KJV translators in the 17th century.

The New International Version (NIV) was the first moderately "dynamic" translation to achieve popularity, especially among Evangelical Christians. It has its merits, but some phrases and sentences of the Hebrew and Greek are more paraphrased than translated. This in turn contributed to several inaccurate and misleading translations.

Today's New International Version (TNIV) is an improvement on the NIV. Although it is still a little too wordy from time to time, some of the highly questionable renditions have been corrected, and it attempts to be gender-accurate. However, it still has problems. Specialists in Paul are especially horrified by the mistranslations in Galatians.

All the "dynamic/functional equivalency" versions (TEV, CEV, NLT, Amplified, The Message, etc.) don't work for academic study. These versions, to varying degrees, often read more like paraphrases or commentary than translations. The least objectionable are the American Bible Society's TEV (Today's English Version) and the CEV (Contemporary English Version). More serious problems are found in the NLT (New Living Translation). Most troubling is The Message, a truly inaccurate text.

You might think that the choice of a reading version is purely a matter of personal preference, but there are some criteria at play in this matter as well. For instance, many dynamic translations are heavily influenced by congregational or denominational biases. For me, even a reading translation must be closer to literal, and must contain notes which are neither sectarian nor superficial. So I like the Jerusalem Bible, which seems more rhythmically "poetic" to me, while still being mostly literal. It doesn't hurt that J.R.R. Tolkien was one of its translators.

Chronology

On BC, BCE, AD, and CE

You're probably used to thinking about dates with the designations of the Gregorian calendar, "BC" ("Before Christ") and "AD" ("*Anno Domini*," or "Year of our Lord"). Modern scholars in a number of disciplines recognize that the community of scholars is not made up of only Christians, and therefore use the designations "BCE" ("Before the Common Era") and "CE" ("Common Era").

Many of those who still use the BC/AD designations incorrectly state that AD means "After Death," (i.e., after the death of Jesus). But this would mean that the ~33 years commonly associated with the life of Jesus would not be present in either BC or AD scales. Besides, the overwhelming consensus among modern scholars is that the historical year of the birth of Jesus was around 6 - 4 *Before Christ*.

Before the Common Era		
1200 BCE		Emergence of Israel
		Period of "Judges"
1100 BCE		
1000 BCE		Founding of Israelite monarchy by Saul
		David as King, Jerusalem taken as capital
		Solomon as King, Temple built in Jerusalem
		Divided monarchy of "Judah" and "Israel"
900 BCE		
		Period of Elijah
800 BCE		
		Period of Amos and Hosea
	722	Fall of Samaria, capital of Israel, to Assyrians
700 BCE		
		Period of Isaiah
	621	Under King Josiah, "discovery" of Deuteronomy
600 BCE		Writing of "Deuteronomistic History," period of Jeremiah
	586	Fall of Jerusalem, capital of Judah, to Babylonians
		Exile of Israelites in Babylonia, period of Ezekiel
	539	Conquest of Babylonia by Cyrus, Israelites' return
500 BCE		Period of Persian rule in Palestine, rebuilding of Temple
		Period of Ezra and Nehemiah
400 BCE		Editing of Pentateuch
		Alexander the Great conquers East
300 BCE		Palestine part of Greek Kingdom of Egypt
200 BCE		Palestine part of Greek Kingdom of Syria
		Maccabean uprising against Greek Kings of Syria
		Writing of Daniel
100 BCE		
	63	Romans conquer Palestine
	37-4	Herod the Great as King of the Jews

Common Era		
	c. 30	Death of Jesus
	50-60	Epistles of Paul
	60-90	Writing of Gospels
100 CE		
		Last books of New Testament written
200 CE		

Summaries of the Old Testament Books

In the most complete collection, the OT contains 46 books. Of the 46, seven complete books and parts of two others are not included in Protestant editions of the Bible. Catholics call them "deuterocanonical," meaning they form a second or subsequent canon; Protestants call them apocryphal, meaning of doubtful authorship or authenticity. The seven books in full are Tobit, Judith, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) and Baruch; portions of Esther and Daniel are also considered deuterocanonical.

Pentateuch

The first five books are known as the Torah to Jews and the Pentateuch to Christians; they form "the law."

Book of Genesis: 50 chapters; composed from several literary traditions, Genesis describes the beginning of Yahweh's covenant relationship with the Jews; 4 sections: the primeval history of the world, including two versions of creation, Noah's ark and the flood, and the Tower of Babel (1:1-11:26), the story of the patriarch Abraham (11:27-25:18), the story of the patriarchs Isaac and Jacob, including Jacob's theft of Esau's birthright (25:19-36:43), and the story of Joseph and his brothers (37:1-50:26).

Genesis answers the question, "Where did all this come from?" It is the story of how Israel began as a nation, but the author tells this story as a series of beginnings—starting with the creation of the universe and narrowing down to one family: Israel's.

Genesis opens with Yahweh creating the heavens and the earth, the stars, the plants, the animals, and humans: Adam and Eve. Yahweh places Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, but they disobey orders, and are cast out of this paradise.

Adam and Eve have children (including Cain and Abel), and those children have children. Eventually the human race becomes so violent that Yahweh sends a great flood to destroy the world, but He spares the only righteous man, Noah. Noah builds an ark to escape the floodwaters with his family (and many animals). After the waters recede, Yahweh promises to never again destroy the earth with a flood.

Hundreds of years later, Yahweh calls Noah's descendant, Abram, to leave his family and journey to the land of Canaan. Yahweh promises to bless Abram with many descendants, and to bless all the nations of the world through him. Abram believes Yahweh's promise, even though he is old and childless. Yahweh considers him to be righteous, and changes his name from Abram to Abraham. Later, Abraham has a son, Isaac.

Isaac dwells in the land of Canaan and has twin sons: Jacob and Esau.

Jacob grows up, tricks Esau into giving away his blessing, and then leaves town to live with his uncle Laban. He marries, has children, and lives with Laban for 20 years before Yahweh calls him back to Canaan. As Jacob returns to the land of Abraham and Isaac, his name is changed to Israel.

Israel has 12 sons, and young Joseph is his favorite. Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery, and he becomes a prisoner in Egypt. His ability to interpret dreams becomes valuable to the Pharaoh, however, and so Joseph is released from prison and made second in command of all Egypt. Joseph warns Pharaoh that a terrible famine is coming, and stockpiles food for the coming years.

Joseph's predictions are correct: the famine reaches Canaan, and his brothers come to Egypt to buy food. The brothers reconcile, and Joseph provides for all the children of

Israel to move to Egypt until the famine is over. Genesis ends with the death of Joseph, whose last prediction is that Yahweh will bring the children of Israel back to the promised land.

Book of Exodus: 40 chapters; focuses on Yahweh's covenant and law and the Israelites' liberation through their Exodus from Egypt; 4 sections: the history of the Israelites in Egypt, including the leadership of Moses and Aaron, the struggle with Pharaoh and the 10 plagues, and the Passover ritual (1:1-12:36), the Israelites' journey from Egypt to Sinai, including the Red Sea crossing, the manna in the desert and the appointment of minor judges (12:37-18:27), the covenant at Mount Sinai, with the Ten Commandments and many other social and religious laws (19:1-24:18), and the construction of the Ark of the Covenant as Yahweh's dwelling place, along with detailed descriptions of the sanctuary's appointments and priestly regulations (25:1-40:38).

Exodus is the story of Yahweh rescuing the people of Israel from Egypt and making them His people. It picks up where Genesis leaves off: the young nation of Israel is in Egypt (they were invited by Joseph). A new Pharaoh notices the Israelites multiplying, and enslaves them. Afraid of an uprising, he orders that all Hebrew sons should be cast into the Nile at birth. But one son escapes this decree.

Moses is hidden in a basket and set afloat in the Nile—where Pharaoh's daughter discovers him. Moses grows up as her son. When an adult Moses sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, he kills the Egyptian and leaves the country to escape capital punishment.

Forty years later, Yahweh appears to Moses as a burning bush and sends him to deliver Israel from the hand of Pharaoh. Moses, with the help of his brother Aaron, confronts Pharaoh on Yahweh's behalf: "Let My people go." Pharaoh refuses, and so Yahweh sends 10 plagues upon the Egyptians. When the last plague kills Pharaoh's son, he finally allows Israel to leave.

The people of Israel leave Egypt and make their way to Mount Sinai, where Yahweh gives His laws to Moses. Yahweh makes a covenant with the nation of Israel and the generations to come: because He rescued them from Egypt, Israel is to observe His rules. Yahweh speaks the Ten Commandments directly to the whole nation of Israel, and He relays specific ordinances to Moses on the mountain. Yahweh does not stop with a list of rules, however. He gives Moses instructions for a tabernacle, a special tent of worship.

Exodus ends with the glory of Yahweh filling the tabernacle.

Book of Leviticus: 27 chapters; consists entirely of regulations Yahweh gave Moses in the tent of meeting to help the Israelites remain personally and communally holy; 5 sections: laws regarding ritual sacrifices and offerings (1:1-7:38), laws regarding priestly ordination, focusing on Aaron and his sons (8:1-10:20), laws on purity, with the establishment of Yom Kippur or Day of Atonement (11:1-16:34), laws on holiness, including prohibitions regarding blood and sex and a listing of holy feasts and times such as the sabbatical and jubilee years (17:1-26:46), and rules on offerings (27:1-34).

You could sum up Leviticus with Yahweh's repeated command: "Be holy, as I am holy." Leviticus is a book of laws, but it's also a book of worship. It is filled with details on how the people of Yahweh should live, eat, sacrifice, celebrate, and more. The name "Leviticus" refers to the many laws for the priests, all of whom belonged to the tribe of Levi.

The children of Israel have just erected a tabernacle at Mount Sinai, and now Yahweh is relaying specific laws through Moses to His people. There's very little narrative in Leviticus, but a few important things take place, such as Aaron's ordination and the deaths of Aaron's sons.

Book of Numbers: 36 chapters; covers the period the Israelites wandered in the desert after they left Egypt, focusing on the testing of both the people and their leaders; the book's name comes from the two censuses of the tribes taken at the beginning and end of their journey; 3 sections: preparations for the journey from Sinai to the Promised Land (Canaan), including the first census and second Passover (1:1-10:10), the journey from Sinai to Moab, including the people's grumbling over hardships, the scouting of Canaan and the story of the bronze serpent (10:11-22:1), and preparations on the Plains of Moab for the conquest of Canaan, including the second census, Yahweh's choice of Joshua and Yahweh's designation of Israel's boundaries (22:2-36:13).

Numbers tells the story of Israel's wanderings through the wilderness en route to the promised land of Canaan. It begins with Moses and Aaron taking a census of the whole nation, which is how the book gets its name.

Numbers' narrative spans 40 years. The story begins at Mount Sinai (after the Levitical law is delivered), and follows the children of Israel through the wilderness. They reach the promised land, but doubt Yahweh's promises when they see the land's mighty inhabitants. Because they do not believe Yahweh, He prevents them from entering the land for another 40 years. Numbers concludes with the Israelites on the Plains of Moab, just across the river from the promised land.

Book of Deuteronomy: 34 chapters; the book's name means "second law"; on the plains of Moab, before the Israelites can enter the Promised Land, Moses exhorts the people to renew their relationship with Yahweh in several major discourses; 4 sections: Moses' first speech reviewing the history of the Israelites' journey (1:1-4:43), Moses' second speech about Yahweh's covenant, including the Ten Commandments (4:44-11:32), Moses' third speech explaining the law (12:1-26:19), and Moses' final words, death and burial, and the selection of Joshua as his successor (27:1-34:12).

Israel is just across the Jordan River from the promised land of Canaan. Moses has led the young nation out of Egypt and on a 40-year journey through the wilderness, and they have just defeated several enemies before setting up camp here. Three of the 12 tribes are already settling the land east of the Jordan, and the whole nation is almost ready to enter the land Yahweh promised to their ancestor Abraham (back in the book of Genesis).

The last time Israel was this close to the promised land, they doubted Yahweh's promise and tried to go back to Egypt. Because of their unbelief, Yahweh banned that generation of Israelites from the land, causing them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years (see Numbers). Now the old generation has died and the new nation is about to claim the land.

Before they do, Moses rallies the people to remind them of Yahweh's law—and why they should obey Him. This is how the book of Deuteronomy gets its name: it's the "second giving" of Yahweh's law.

Historical Books

In the Jewish tradition some of the books that Christians consider historical are listed with the prophets. The historical books do not provide a chronological history, but look at certain important times and leaders.

Book of Joshua: 24 chapters; Joshua, who leads the Israelites from victory to victory in the Promised Land, is the central figure throughout; 3 sections: the conquest of Canaan, including the fall of Jericho (1:1-12:24), the division of the conquered land among the 12 tribes of Israel (13:1-21:45), and Joshua's farewell address at Shechem in which he recounts Israel's history and stages a covenant renewal ceremony before dying at age 110 (22:1-24:33).

The nation of Israel has followed Moses for 40 years. Yahweh has delivered them from slavery in Egypt, disciplined them in the wilderness, and brought them to the land He promised their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But now Moses is dead, and his aide Joshua is commissioned to lead the people into the promised land of Canaan.

The book of Joshua can be broken into two simple parts: conquering the land and settling the land. The 12 tribes of Israel have been charged with keeping Yahweh's commandments, driving out the land's evil inhabitants, and divvying up the land among themselves as an inheritance. Joshua oversees this process, which includes the miraculous crossing of the Jordan, the battle of Jericho, and the sun and moon standing still.

This book begins with Yahweh calling Joshua to be strong, courageous, and obedient (Jos 1:6–7). Joshua is obedient, and the people are faithful to Yahweh under Joshua's leadership. The book ends with Joshua's death, and the people of Israel happily serving Yahweh in the land He has given them.

Book of Judges: 21 chapters; recounts the activities of 12 "judges" (military leaders), who guided the Israelites from the time of Joshua's death to the institution of the monarchy; 3 sections: the settlement of Palestine and the Israelites' unfaithfulness (1:1-3:6), the stories of the six major judges, including Samson (3:7-16:31), and a collection of other stories about the tribes of Dan and Benjamin (17:1-21:25).

Judges is the history of Israel between the death of Joshua and the leadership of a king. Instead of remaining loyal to Yahweh, this generation of Israelites wanders in their faith, worshiping idols, indulging in violence, and mingling with the evil nations around them.

The book of Judges opens with a snapshot of the political and spiritual landscape:

- The land is not fully possessed yet, as Israel does not drive out a few "pockets" of the people they were told to eliminate.
- The military and spiritual leader Joshua is dead.
- The people begin worshiping false gods (introduced by the Canaanites living among them).

Judges presents various examples of how Yahweh deals with His people during this time period. The stories of Judges follow a pattern:

1. Israel turns from Yahweh and serves idols.
2. Yahweh turns Israel over to the oppressive surrounding nations.
3. Israel turns to Yahweh and cries out for help.
4. Yahweh raises up a judge to deliver them.
5. Israel rebels, Yahweh disciplines; Israel repents, Yahweh delivers.

Book of Ruth: four chapters; takes its name from Ruth, a Moabite, who is the daughter-in-law of Naomi, an Israelite widow who leaves Moab for Bethlehem after the death of her husband and sons; shows the universality of salvation and establishes the lineage of King David, the great-grandson of Ruth; 2 sections: the relationship of Ruth and Naomi (1:1-22), and the meeting and marriage of Ruth and Boaz, a prominent kinsman of Naomi (2:1-4:22).

It's a dark and troubled time for Naomi: a famine drives her and her family from their land in Israel, and her husband and sons die in a foreign country. But when she hears that there is food in her homeland again, she makes her way back. One daughter-in-law leaves Naomi to find a new husband; the other, Ruth, swears an oath of loyalty to Naomi:

> Do not press me to leave you
> or to turn back from following you!
> Where you go, I will go;
> where you lodge, I will lodge;
> your people shall be my people,
> and your God my God.
>
> Where you die, I will die—
> there will I be buried.
> May the Lord do thus and so to me,
> and more as well,
> if even death parts me from you! (Ru 1:16–17)

Even though Ruth is a foreigner in the land of Israel, a wealthy farmer named Boaz takes interest in her. Boaz is also related to Naomi, making him eligible to redeem Naomi's family, that is, to purchase her late husband's field and continue her late husband's bloodline. Boaz is impressed by Ruth's character, and marries her. Ruth and Boaz have a son, and the book closes with a surprise: Ruth is the great-grandmother of King David.

The story of Ruth takes place during the time of the Judges: it's a bright story of hope during a very dark period in Israel's spiritual and political history.

First Book of Samuel: 31 chapters: the two books of Samuel were originally one book covering three important leaders, the prophet Samuel, King Saul and King David, during about 100 years from the last of Israel's judges through the early years of the monarchy; the first book also deals with the relationship between kings and prophets; 3 sections: the history of the last judges, Eli and Samuel, including the hymn of Hannah, Samuel's mother (1:1-7:17), the establishment of Israel's monarchy (8:1-12:25), and the kingship, rejection and death of King Saul and the ascendancy of David, including his famous defeat of the Philistine Goliath (13:1-31:13).

Israel has not heard from Yahweh in decades. The priests are corrupt. The nearby nations threaten the land's safety. Even Eli, the high priest and judge of Israel, is not faithfully serving Yahweh and the people. Israel needs more than a judge. Israel needs to hear from Yahweh again. Israel needs a prophet.

So Yahweh gives them Samuel.

Samuel serves the people as a prophet and judge. He speaks the word of Yahweh to the people, and teaches them how to live as the people of Yahweh. But when Samuel grows old and Israel's enemies attack, the people demand that Samuel appoint a king. Samuel advises the people to trust in Yahweh and not in human leadership, but the

people do not listen—they are determined to have a king rule over them and deliver them from the enemy.

So Yahweh gives them Saul.

Saul is a foolish, selfish, cowardly king. He ignores the word of Yahweh and craves the approval of men. He disobeys Yahweh several times, oversteps his duties, and puts the people at odds with Yahweh and each other. King Saul does not keep the Law of Moses, and does not direct the Israelites to live as Yahweh's holy people.

So Yahweh gives them David.

David is a "man after [Yahweh's] own heart" (1 Sa 13:14). He's a skilled warrior, musician, and leader of men—a man who trusts in Yahweh and encourages his countrymen to act like Yahweh's people. David's famous defeat of Goliath makes him a popular, famous figure in Israel. Saul fears that David will seize his kingdom eventually, and spends the rest of his life hunting David down.

Second Book of Samuel: 24 chapters; the second book is mainly the story of King David, whose royal house will produce the Messiah; 3 sections: the continuing story of David's ascendancy (1:1-2:7), the reign of King David, including Yahweh's promise of a Davidic dynasty, David's sin regarding Uriah and Bathsheba, and the rebellion of David's son, Absalom (2:8-20:26), and a compilation of various appendixes regarding David, including his hymn of thanksgiving and last words (21:1-24:25).

King Saul and the prophet Samuel are dead, but Yahweh has not left Israel without a leader. David, the boy who killed Goliath, is a famous and mighty warrior in Israel—and the man Yahweh has chosen as Israel's new king.

David is a good king who serves Yahweh and cares for his people. Yahweh blesses David and the entire nation under his rule. More importantly, Yahweh makes a covenant with David, promising to establish his throne forever.

However, David disobeys Yahweh and sleeps with Bathsheba, who is married to one of David's soldiers. David repents, but Yahweh punishes him with wars, betrayal, rebellions, and national upheaval. David still serves Yahweh throughout these difficulties, though, and Yahweh is faithful to His promise: David remains king over Israel.

First Book of Kings: 22 chapters; originally one book, the two books of Kings cover Jewish monarchs from Solomon, beginning about 970 BCE, to Zedekiah and the beginning of the Babylonian exile in 597 BCE; the first book focuses on the centrality of the Temple in Jerusalem and Yahweh's fidelity; 3 sections: the 40-year reign of Solomon and the building of the Temple (1:1-11:43), the division into two kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judah in the south, with a listing of their successive kings (12:1-16:34), and stories regarding the prophets Elijah and Elisha (17:1-22:54).

Second Book of Kings: 25 chapters; the second book, which focuses on the consequences of rebelling against Yahweh, picks up chronologically from the first; 2 sections: the ongoing saga of the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah, including the fall of the northern kingdom and more stories featuring Elisha (1:1-17:41), and the history of the southern kingdom of Judah until it fell to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 587 BCE (18:1-25:30).

The books of First and Second Kings are the story of Israel's decline. Whereas First and Second Samuel document Israel's shift from corrupt judges to the righteous

leadership of David, Kings shows how Israel divides and falls into the hands of her enemies.

These books of history pick up where Second Samuel left off: Israel is united under the godly King David, who appoints his son Solomon to rule after him. Solomon is blessed with wisdom, and charged with building a majestic temple to Yahweh in Jerusalem. Yahweh tells Solomon to remember Him and follow his father David's example.

Unfortunately, Solomon is unfaithful to Yahweh in his later years, and Yahweh divides the kingdom after his death. The northern ten tribes follow Solomon's former warrior and taskmaster Jeroboam, and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remain loyal to the throne of David. The rest of these books document the way these kings (and those who followed) lead Yahweh's people to worship. Each king is remembered according to whether or not they lead Israel to worship Yahweh in Jerusalem or worship idols elsewhere.

Neither the Northern Kingdom (Israel) nor the Southern Kingdom (Judah) keep the Law of Moses and worship Yahweh at Jerusalem, and therefore both are taken captive by enemy nations. Israel is taken by Assyria, and Judah falls to Babylon—which is just what Yahweh promised would happen if they disobeyed His law.

First Book of Chronicles: 29 chapters; the two books of Chronicles, with the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, likely formed a single work that supplemented the material in Samuel and Kings, but they reinterpret the history of Israel from the time of King Saul to the end of the Babylonian exile in 538 BCE; the first book highlights David's reign as the ideal and Temple worship as the center of Jewish life; 2 sections: genealogical tables from Adam through the descendants of Benjamin (1:1-9:34), and the history of King David, focusing on his religious and cultic significance rather than his political influence (9:35-29:30).

Second Book of Chronicles: 36 chapters; the second book focuses on King Solomon's achievements, especially the Temple, and what brought about the Babylonian exile; 4 sections: the reign of Solomon, including the building and dedication of the Temple (1:1-9:31), the monarchy before King Hezekiah, including invasions from Ethiopia and Edom (10:1-27:9), the reforms of Kings Hezekiah and Josiah and the invasion of King Sennacherib of Assyria (28:1-36:1), and the end of the kingdom of Judah, the Babylonian exile and the beginning of the restoration with the decree of King Cyrus of Persia in 538 BCE (36:2-23).

First and Second Chronicles tells Israel's entire history—its rulers, wars, religious events, economic cycles—starting with the beginning of humanity. It's the story of Israel's kings and Yahweh's faithfulness to His promises.

It's a long story, and many find it boring. Maybe that's because the Chronicles account opens with a list of names—literally, "Adam, Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared…" The genealogies go on for nine chapters. But that's not all there is to this document. First and Second Chronicles is an executive summary of Yahweh's covenant with David, and how things played out afterward. The books tell this story in four major acts:

1. *From Adam to David.* The first nine chapters cover all the time that takes place from Genesis 2 to First Samuel 15 (mostly via long genealogies). They trace David's ancestry along with the other major families in the 12 tribes of Israel.
2. *David's reign.* David was a good king who followed Yahweh, united the tribes of Israel, and delivered the nation from her enemies. Yahweh makes an everlasting

covenant with David: his son Solomon's throne will be established forever. David draws up plans to make a great temple for Yahweh. Before he dies, he charges Solomon and the people with building the temple and being faithful to Yahweh.

3. *Solomon's reign.* When Solomon becomes king, he asks Yahweh for wisdom instead of riches, long life, or the deaths of his adversaries. Yahweh is pleased with his request, and grants him wisdom, plus extravagant riches and power. Solomon builds the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem: a majestic house for His name. Israel flourishes under Solomon's rule, becoming the most prominent nation in their region of the world.
4. *From Jerusalem to Babylon.* The kingdom splits after Solomon dies: 10 tribes rebel and form a new kingdom to the North, while the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remain loyal to David's royal line. This act gives us the highlights of each king's reign. The kings that follow do not serve Yahweh the way David did, however. They neglect Yahweh's temple, they ignore Yahweh's law, they persecute Yahweh's prophets, and they seek out new gods. A few good kings bring about revival, but eventually Yahweh disciplines His people for forsaking Him—which is exactly what David warned would happen long ago. The Babylonians sack Jerusalem, raze the temple, and carry the children of Israel into captivity for 70 years. Afterward, the Persian king Cyrus decrees that the temple be rebuilt.

The Chronicles focus on two important themes: Yahweh's covenant with David and the temple. The temple of Yahweh is the main location of interest: David plans it, Solomon builds it, kings are crowned in it, prophets are killed in it, and the law is rediscovered in it. The temple is center stage in the drama of Chronicles.

Book of Ezra: 10 chapters; takes its name from the priest and scribe Ezra, who, along with Nehemiah, was most responsible for the reorganization of Jewish life, including marriages between Jews and foreigners, after the Babylonian exile; 2 sections: the first return of exiles from Babylon (1:1-6:22), and the mission of Ezra, focusing on the restoration of the Jewish community, Temple and laws (7:1-10:44).

Zerubbabel and Jeshua, descendants of King David and Aaron the priest, answer the call to rebuild the house of Yahweh. But the temple wasn't the only thing that needed attention. Many of the returning Hebrews had forgotten Yahweh's laws, and were disregarding them in front of the people. They needed to remember the covenant they'd made with Yahweh. They needed to remember why they were in their situation: why they had to go to Babylon (see Kings and Chronicles), and why they'd been allowed to come back. The temple needed a new foundation, but the people needed to return to the foundations of their faith, too.

Ezra, the scribe, answers the call to teach Israel the ways of Yahweh again.

The book of Ezra chronicles both stories: rebuilding the temple and remembering the law. This account weaves together several categories of written works:

- Historical narrative—events surrounding Israel's return, temple reconstruction, and revival
- Official documents—letters & decrees sent to and from the Persian emperors during this time
- Jewish records—names of individuals and families who returned to Israel
- Ezra's autobiographical texts—prayers, reflections, and actions from Ezra's point of view

These pieces come together to show how Yahweh began restoring Israel.

Book of Nehemiah: 13 chapters; where Ezra was a religious reformer, Nehemiah was a political reformer and lay governor of Judah who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and introduced administrative changes; focuses on obedience to the law which gave Judaism its identity; 2 sections: the deeds of Nehemiah, including a list of workers and a census of returning exiles (1:1-7:72), and the promulgation of the law, including a renewal of covenant promises and more on the problem of mixed marriages (8:1-13:31).

After 70 years in exile, the Jews had returned home and rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem. They were able to worship Yahweh in their own land, but the city still lay in ruins. The once-great capital of the promised land was a depressing rubble heap exposed to her enemies.

When Nehemiah hears this, he sets out to restore the city walls. The book of Nehemiah is his story in his own words. It's about reestablishing Yahweh's people both physically and spiritually:

In the first part of the book, Nehemiah restores Jerusalem in a physical sense. When Nehemiah hears that "the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire," he gets permission from Persian King Artaxerxes to rebuild the city. The governors of surrounding territories viciously oppose Nehemiah's efforts, but the wall is finished in just 52 days. Nehemiah also restores economic justice in the land, admonishing the wealthy for taking advantage of their less fortunate brothers.

In the second section, Nehemiah and Ezra bring spiritual revival to Jerusalem. Ezra reads the law of Moses aloud to the people, and the nation rededicates to obeying Yahweh. Later on, Nehemiah works diligently to point people back to the law of Moses.

Nehemiah writes in first person. His story is peppered with personal commentary—sometimes it reads like a historical account, and sometimes it reads like Nehemiah's journal. We know when he is afraid. We know when he is angry. We even see him break his own narrative with prayers to Yahweh. This book gives us a look into the mind of an OT man of Yahweh, giving us examples of how to lead, pray, and deal with discouragement.

Book of Tobit: 14 chapters; a deuterocanonical book, this religious novel focuses on Tobit, a wealthy Israelite living among the captives deported to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, in 721 BCE, his trials and tribulations and those of his family; in the person of the fictional Tobit, the book illustrates Jewish piety and the power of prayer, and includes many maxims also found in the wisdom books; 7 sections: Tobit's ordeals (1:1-3:6), the plight of Sarah, who became Tobit's daughter-in-law (3:7-17), Tobiah's journey and marriage to Sarah, including a visit from the angel Raphael (4:1-9:6), Tobiah's return and the cure of Tobit's blindness (10:1-11:18), Raphael's revelation of his identity (12:1-22), Tobit's song of praise (13:1-18), and an epilogue containing Tobit's final advice and death (14:1-15).

This is an account of Tobias and his trip from Nineveh (to where the family was exiled after the Assyrian conquest of 722 BCE) to Media. Guided by the angel Raphael, Tobias weds a woman whose previous husbands had been killed by a demon. The couple (and Raphael) then returns to Nineveh to cure Tobit, Tobias' father, of blindness.

Book of Judith: 16 chapters; another deuterocanonical book, this is a tract for difficult times, with Yahweh, the master of history, delivering the Jews from the Assyrians through the pious widow Judith, who kills the Assyrian general Holofernes; the name Judith means "Jewess"; 3 sections: the perils the Jews are facing during the Assyrian invasion (1:1-7:32), the deliverance of the Jews through Judith's plan and

leadership (8:1-14:10), and the victory over the Assyrians, including Judith's hymn of thanksgiving (14:11-16:25).

The Book of Judith was never intended as factual history; it is more like fiction with a theological message. Many of the historical details are incorrect: for example, Nebuchadnezzar was a Babylonian, but the story presents him as ruler of the Assyrians. The name "Holofernes" means "stinking in hell," so it's pretty obvious that this book has metaphorical content rather than historical information.

The major themes of the book are:

- *The nature of Yahweh.* Judith rebukes the town officials for trying to make Yahweh in their own image It's a remarkable description of what Yahweh is and is not.
- *Making the best of what you've got.* Judith was not a soldier, but she killed a fearsome warrior of the ancient world. She did this by using the gifts she had: beauty, intelligence, and ruthless cunning.
- *Ingenuity (and faith in Yahweh) are better than brute strength.* Judith's story is a variant on the David and Goliath story, where a seemingly weak person triumphs over a person of superior strength. She is a symbol of the Jewish people, who relied on Yahweh's help and their own abilities to overcome their enemies. They were surrounded throughout their history by huge and fearsome kingdoms, but Yahweh stood by them when they called on his help.

Book of Esther: 10 numerical chapters (Hebrew text) plus chapters A-F (Greek text); the supplementary Greek material is considered deuterocanonical; Esther is the cunning and brave Jewish heroine who thwarts a plot in the Persian court to kill on a single day all the Jews living in Persia; explains the origin of the feast of Purim, held to mark the Jews' victory; 5 sections, noting only chapters: the prologue (A), the elevation of Esther as queen (1-2), the plot of Haman, the grand vizier of Persia, against the Jews (3-5, B-D), the vindication of the Jews (6-10, E), and an epilogue containing the dream of Mordecai, Esther's uncle and adoptive father (F).

Courage. Faith. Betrayal. Politics. Plots of genocide. The book of Esther is a drama about how two Jews risked everything to save their people.

The story is set in Susa, the capital of the Persian Empire. Not long before this, the Jews were taken from their land to live as captives in Babylon for 70 years. Yahweh (via the Persian Cyrus) had brought a remnant of His people back to their homeland, but not everyone had returned. The Jewish people remained scattered across the Middle Eastern world, including a woman named Esther and her cousin Mordecai.

But although the Jews were enjoying a time of restoration, there were still those who wanted them all dead.

The book of Esther focuses on four central characters:

- Queen Esther, the heroine. When Esther becomes queen, she keeps her Jewish descent a secret. But when she learns of a plot to kill all the Jews in the Persian provinces, she courageously uses her position to intercede on behalf of her people.
- Mordecai, Esther's cousin. Mordecai is a devout Jew characterized by conviction. He is loyal, strong, and persistent. He saves the king from an assassination plot early in the story—foreshadowing his work to save the Jewish people. Mordecai refuses to bow to Haman, which instigates the central conflict of the book. Mordecai is a father figure to Esther (an orphan), advising and informing her through the story.
- Haman, enemy of the Jews. Haman rises to power in Susa, but Mordecai refuses to bow to him. Haman escalates the conflict by getting the king to sign an edict against

all Jews in the empire and planning to hang Mordecai. Esther intercepts his plans, however, and the king kills Haman instead. Haman is called an "Agagite," possibly referring to King Agag the Amalekite—the Amalekites had opposed Israel for hundreds of years.

- King Ahasuerus. The king deposes Queen Vashti when she publicly disobeys him at his banquet. He then takes Esther as his new queen. Ahasuerus is a very reactive character in the story: he deposes Vashti, he goes along with Haman's plot, he makes grand promises to Esther, he allows Esther and Mordecai to write their own counter-laws and enact their own feasts. Ironically, the king of 127 provinces is the weakest of the main characters.

First Book of Maccabees: 16 chapters; 1 Maccabees, considered deuterocanonical, recounts the Jewish revolt against the Seleucid kings and pagan influences in the second century BCE; the revolt was led by the heroic sons of the priest Mattathias, Judas Maccabeus, Jonathan and Simon, and by his grandson, John Hyrcanus; 5 sections: an introduction on Hellenism in Asia Minor (1:1-9), the Maccabean revolt (1:10-2:70), the leadership of Judas Maccabeus, called "the hammer" (3:1-9:22), the leadership of Jonathan (9:23-12:53), and the leadership of Simon (13:1-16:24).

First Maccabees covers a period of a little over 40 years in Jewish history, beginning with the accession of King Antiochus IV to the Seleucid throne in 175 BCE The book is a "dynastic history"' that concentrates on the exploits of one priestly family: Mattathias; his sons Judas Maccabeus, Jonathan, Simon, John, and Eleazar; and Simon's son John Hyrcanus. Mattathias's sons, known collectively as "the Maccabees," rescued the Jerusalem temple from pagan hands and eventually gained political independence for the Jews. They founded the Hasmonean dynasty, which provided political and spiritual leadership for Israel for about a century.

Second Book of Maccabees: 15 chapters; also deuterocanonical, this book is not a sequel to 1 Maccabees, but covers a 20-year period in the second century BCE; the author condenses a five-volume work by Jason of Cyrene, and there is overlap with 1 Maccabees, as the book reiterates the importance of the Maccabean revolt and introduces ideas about the afterlife; 7 sections: two letters from Judean Jews to Egyptian Jews (1:1-2:18), the author's preface mentioning Jason's work (2:19-32), the attempt by the chief minister Heliodorus to profane the Temple (3:1-40), the desecration of the Temple and persecution of the Jews (4:1-7:42), the victories of Judas Maccabeus and purification of the Temple (8:1-10:8), the renewed persecution of the Jews (10:9-15:36), and an epilogue containing the author's apology (15:37-39).

In contrast to First Maccabees, the book of Second Maccabees is a summary of a history written originally in Greek for Diaspora Hellenistic Jews living in the Greek-speaking area in Egypt. The author was trying to legitimize the celebration of Hanukkah in Ptolemaic Hellenistic Egypt.

Second Maccabees seeks to explain to Diaspora Jews and Greeks alike that the Maccabean revolt was not the result of an inevitable clash of two cultures—Hellenism and Judaism—or of two peoples, Hellenes and Jews. The bloodshed was really unnecessarily caused by an unholy alliance between money-hungry so-called priests and irrational Greek leaders who caused the desecration of an ancient Temple and the persecution of a legally protected religion. The Jewish villains, Jason and Menelaus, threatened the peace of the city by undermining traditional Greek respect for native

religious and legal practice. Greek readers, who always respected ancient traditions, were sure to condemn these Jewish innovators who wrought havoc.

In Second Maccabees there is a unique emphasis on religious martyrdom: Hannah and her seven sons and Elazar the elderly scribe are presented as philosophers rationally defending the decision to die rather than to abandon their ancestral faith. Their deaths are seen not only as a way to sanctify Yahweh's name, but as a way to vicariously remove the sins of Israel and to evoke a supernatural intervention by Yahweh. This new phenomenon of religious martyrdom reflects the kind of religious loyalty valued in particular in the Diaspora. Their voluntary, tortured deaths assuage Yahweh's wrath over the desecration of the Temple by false high priests and explain Judah's victories as Yahweh's salvation in response to the death of the Jewish martyrs as well as Yahweh's appropriate punishment for Antiochus IV's insufferable arrogance.

Wisdom Books

The wisdom literature is mostly instructional, reflecting the ancient tradition of passing down collected wisdom from one generation to the next, but also includes the poetry of the psalms, mainly devotional lyrics, and the Song of Songs, primarily a nuptial hymn.

Book of Job: 42 chapters; takes its name from Job, a prosperous chieftain whose complete reversal of fortune prompts three cycles of speeches, in the form of an artistic dialogue, debating suffering and innocence; 8 sections: background on Job's wealth and piety, including his first two trials (1:1-2:13), the first cycle of speeches featuring Job and his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar (3:1-14:22), the second cycle of speeches (15:1-21:34), the third cycle of speeches (22:1-28:28), Job's final summary of his cause (29:1-31:37), the speeches of the young Elihu defending Yahweh's absolute justice (32:1-37:24), Yahweh's speech and Job's reply (38:1-42:6), and the restoration of his prosperity (42:7-17).

Nobody has it better than Job. He's righteous. He's rich. He has a big, happy family.

But things abruptly change. In one day, his children die when a building collapses, his employees are slaughtered, and his cattle are stolen. Then, painful boils break out on his skin. Job loses everything, and is left wondering why.

The answer: Satan wants to prove that Job will curse Yahweh. This is the central conflict of the book. It's Job's test: will he abandon his faith or remain loyal to Yahweh?

Here's how the story plays out:

Satan attacks Job. Yahweh points out to Satan that Job is a blameless and upright man, but Satan points out that Yahweh has already blessed Job abundantly. Satan argues that Job is just returning the favor, and asserts that Job would turn on Yahweh if his blessings were taken away. Yahweh gives Satan a chance to prove it, and Satan immediately rips everything he can away from Job. But Job does not curse Yahweh.

1. *Job mourns while his friends accuse him.* Job's three friends come to comfort him, and Job begins to lament his loss to them. Their response stings: "Yahweh exacts of you less than your guilt deserves." Job's friends tell him that this suffering must be brought on by Job's sin, and he should repent. Job argues back that he has not incurred any punishment. Job wishes he could plead his case to Yahweh. Still, Job does not curse Yahweh. Job and his friends go back and forth three times on this issue, and then a young bystander named Elihu jumps in.
2. *Yahweh Himself answers Job.* After Elihu weighs in, Yahweh speaks to Job. Yahweh challenges Job's understanding by reminding Job of His wisdom, sovereignty, and power.

3. *Job is restored.* When Yahweh finishes, Job humbly concedes that Yahweh's will is unstoppable, and repents. Yahweh also reprimands Job's friends for misrepresenting Him. Finally, Yahweh restores Job: he becomes twice as wealthy, he again is blessed with children, and he dies at a ripe old age.

Throughout the book of Job, we wonder whether Job will stand firm in his faith or abandon it. In the end, Job remains faithful to Yahweh, and Yahweh remains faithful to Job.

Book of Psalms: 150 psalms; these hymns, songs and prayers praising and beseeching Yahweh were composed for liturgical worship and form one of the most popular OT books; about half the psalms are attributed to King David, though many came from different periods and collections; in the New American Bible, the numbering of the verses follows the Hebrew Psalter; 5 sections: the first book (psalms 1-41), the second book (psalms 42-72), the third book (psalms 73-89), the fourth book (psalms 90-106), and the fifth book (psalms 107-150).

Psalms is a collection of 150 poems written over hundreds of years. Many were originally put to music, and used in the Jewish temples to praise Yahweh. History, poetry, prayer, song, chant, prophecy—Psalms runs the gamut when it comes to the kind of content covered in the Bible. In Psalms, you'll find every major event from the OT.

Half of Psalms is attributed to King David at various points in his life—and not all of them were good times. David's psalms show how a man of Yahweh prays during times of hardship, loss, joy, and guilt.

Psalms is really five smaller books in one. And since each of these smaller books is an anthology, there's really not a single narrative to follow throughout the book; however, there are a few things we can learn from the book's structure:

1. *Book One (Ps 1–41)* is mostly written by David, and focuses on Yahweh's ability to deliver those who fear Him. We see David pour out his heart to Yahweh, beg for protection, and ask for help against his enemies. Of all the books, this is the most personal, and has the feel of a one-on-one interaction with Yahweh. In Book One, we see Yahweh beside us during times of trouble.
2. *Book Two (Ps 42–72)* focuses on Yahweh as the mighty Judge and King. He is the powerful worker of justice on all nations, and the rescuer of those who delight in Him. In Book Two, we see Yahweh go before His people to execute justice on His enemies.
3. *Book Three (Ps 73–89)* is mostly written by the sons of Asaph, a family devoted to leading the people in worship to Yahweh in His temple (1 Ch 25:1). This book focuses more on Yahweh's relationship with the whole nation of Israel, not just the psalmist. It emphasizes Yahweh's faithfulness—a faithfulness that spans generations. In Book Three, we see Yahweh around us, remaining faithful to His people through the generations.
4. *Book Four (Ps 90–106)* directs our eyes to Yahweh who rules over all the earth. Several of these psalms begin with simply, "Yahweh reigns," or "Praise Yahweh!" This part of Psalms shows Yahweh above us, the kind and righteous Yahweh who deserves our worship and praise.
5. *Book Five (Ps 107–150)*, reminds the reader to thank Yahweh. He's the Savior, deliverer, and God of all. In Book Five, Yahweh is among His people, in His temple..

Book of Proverbs: 31 chapters; an anthology of didactic poetry meant to teach wisdom both to those who are young and inexperienced and those seeking more advanced insights; various sections are ascribed to Solomon, Agur, Lemuel and the anonymous "wise"; 8 sections: the value of wisdom, including some proverbs of Solomon (1:1-9:18), the first collection of Solomon's proverbs (10:1-22:16), the sayings of the wise (22:17-24:22), other sayings of the wise (24:23-34), the second collection of Solomon's proverbs (25:1-29:27), the words of Agur, an unknown person from Massa (30:1-6), numerical proverbs (30:7-33), and the words of Lemuel, identified as the king of Massa, including a passage on the ideal wife (31:1-31).

Solomon rules with wisdom and justice, and all Israel prospers. The writer of First Kings gives us an idea of just how wise Solomon was:

> Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall; he spoke also of animals and birds and creeping things and fish. Men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom. (1 Ki 4:30, 32–34)

The book of Proverbs is a collection of Solomon's wise sayings, together with those from other wise men. Proverbs urges the reader to make decisions based on wisdom, justice, and righteousness. The sayings are sometimes direct instructions, sometimes general observations.

Book of Ecclesiastes: 12 chapters; the author of the book, Qoheleth in Hebrew, is a teacher of popular wisdom whose reflections on life lead to the conclusion that "all things are vanity"; 4 sections: an introduction (1:1-11), Qoheleth's investigation of life (1:12-6:9), Qoheleth's conclusions (6:10-12:8), and an epilogue (12:9-14).

Qoheleth introduces himself as "son of David, king in Jerusalem," perhaps implying that he is Solomon, but the work is in fact anonymous and was most probably composed in the last part of the 3rd century BCE. The book is in the form of an autobiography, telling of his investigation of the meaning of life and the best way of life.

The universe seems to be in a constant state of resetting itself. The sun rises, sets, and rises again. Rivers flow, but never empty. Information multiplies, but the mind is never satisfied. So in the never-ending cycles of life, what can we do? It sure looks meaningless. And the more Qoheleth learns about the world, the more depressing a world it becomes. So he explores this problem. The first portion of Ecclesiastes explore our situation on earth:

- The smarter you get, the harder it is to cope with the world (Eccl 1:18).
- Pleasure and riches do not satisfy (Eccl 2:10–11; Eccl 5:10;).
- Wise men and fools die alike (Eccl 2:16).
- You can't take the results of your hard work with you when you die (Eccl 2:18–19; 5:13–17).
- What you leave behind goes to a generation who didn't earn it (Eccl 2:18–19).
- And the results of your labor don't really satisfy your desires, either (Eccl 2:10–11; 5:10; 6:7).
- People practice evil instead of justice (Eccl 3:16; 4:1; 5:8).
- Even obedience to Yahweh doesn't guarantee a long, happy life (Eccl 7:16).
- And the wicked sometimes get away with it (Eccl 7:15; 8:14).

So then he turns to explain it. Why is the world this way? What can we do about it? What's the point? He's sure that there's a just God—he's seen him with his own eyes. But the world doesn't always reflect Yahweh's justice, so Solomon explains what man can do to enjoy life, even if Yahweh's works are not apparent:

- Eat, drink, and enjoy life, because you're in the hand of Yahweh (Eccl 9:7–9).
- Work hard, and use wisdom while you can (Eccl 9:10, 18).
- Avoid acts of foolishness—especially when dealing with authority (Eccl 10:2, 5–6, 20).
- Take chances, pursue opportunities, and enjoy life while you can (Eccl 11:4, 8–10).
- As you live, remember who made you (Eccl 12:1).

And then Qoheleth sums everything up. The conclusion is to fear Yahweh and keep His commandments, because Yahweh will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

The question: in a world of injustice and pain, what's the point? The answer: fear Yahweh, even though you might not see Him make it right.

Song of Songs: eight chapters; on one level, this long poem describes an ideal human love and on a deeper level the mutual love of Yahweh and his people; it is attributed to Solomon in the traditional title but its language and style suggest a later time; different voices—a bride, a chorus of daughters of Jerusalem and a bridegroom—speak singly and in conversation about love.

The Song of Solomon celebrates the union of a man and a woman becoming one. It's a ballad of love and longing. It's an exchange of love notes. It's a story of adoration, satisfaction, delight, and sex.

It's the tale of a young woman preparing to marry her love, a handsome king who adores her. They describe their emotions, their passions, their appearances, their fears. They vulnerably display their love and desire for one another—sometimes rather graphically.Three parties join in the song:

1. *The bride*, a hard-working shepherd girl with a rough home life (So 1:6).
2. *The bridegroom*, a handsome and stately shepherd. The text doesn't explicitly say whether or not Solomon is the bridegroom, but the bride does refer to Solomon's wedding parade (So 3:6–11).
3. *The chorus*, the community of people celebrating this love and union.

It' a duet with a choir, in three general movements:

1. The bride and groom prepare for the wedding.
2. The bride and groom profess their desire for one another.
3. The bride and groom are finally united.

It culminates in their marriage and mutual delight in one another: the bride is her beloved's and his desire is for her.

Book of Wisdom: 19 chapters; also known as the Wisdom of Solomon, this deuterocanonical book is another compilation of proverbs and sage advice attributed to Solomon, but was written in Greek probably by a Jew living in Alexandria, Egypt, about a hundred years before Christ; 3 sections: the reward of justice, seen as the key to life and immortality (1:1-6:21), Solomon's praise of wisdom and explanation of how and why he sought wisdom (6:22-11:1), and the special providence of Yahweh shown in five examples from the Exodus experience, with a long reflection on idolatry (11:2-19:22).

Wisdom begins almost as a continuation of the Book of Proverbs, but then shifts its focus. Almost half the book is an argument against idolatry. Wisdom here, instead of being embodied in the Torah, is seen as an emanation from Yahweh (perhaps related to Philo's conception of the *logos*).

Book of Sirach: 51 chapters; this deuterocanonical work is the longest of the wisdom books; its Latin name, Ecclesiasticus, means "church book," suggesting its use in teaching catechumens and the faithful; the prologue says that Jesus ben Sira taught this wisdom to boys in Jerusalem and that it was translated into Greek by his grandson around 132 BCE; 4 sections: a foreword (no versification), the wisdom of Sirach consisting of duties, conduct and advice (1:1-43:35), praise of Israel's great ancestors (44:1-50:24), and an epilogue and canticles in which the author thanks Yahweh and appeals to the unlearned to acquire true wisdom (50:25-51:30).

The key to understanding the book of Sirach is the author's identification of wisdom with the fear of Yahweh; this is repeated several times in chapter 1. But what is new in Sirach is the author's further statement that wisdom is to be found in the observance of the Law of Moses, that is, in keeping the Ten Commandments and in living by the Mosaic Covenant with Yahweh. As in the book of Proverbs, personified wisdom holds an important place.

Prophetic Books

The prophetic books contain the words of Israel's prophets, chosen by Yahweh to receive divine communications and transmit them to the people. This section is comprised of the major and minor prophets, with major and minor referring to length rather than importance; the Book of Lamentations, a series of elegies on the fate of Jerusalem; and the Book of Baruch, the secretary of the prophet Jeremiah, which focuses on the Babylonian exile.

Book of Isaiah: 66 chapters, divided into the Book of Judgment and Book of Consolation, and also by authorship, with Isaiah writing during the Assyrian assaults on Israel and Judah during the second half of the eighth century BCE (Chapters 1-39), Second or Deutero-Isaiah writing toward the end of the Babylonian exile (Chapters 40-55), and Third or Trito-Isaiah with oracles from a later period (Chapters 56-66); 10 sections: an indictment of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah (1:1-5:30), the Immanuel prophecies and fall of the northern kingdom, including the poetry celebrated in Handel's "Messiah" (6:1-12:6), oracles against the pagan nations (13:1-23:18), the apocalypse of Isaiah (24:1-27:13), Yahweh alone as the savior of Israel and Judah (28:1-33:24), Yahweh as the avenger of Zion (34:1-35:10), a historical appendix focusing on King Sennacherib of Assyria and King Hezekiah of Judah (36:1-39:8), Yahweh's glory in Israel's liberation, including the first "suffering servant" song (40:1-48:22), the expiation of sin and spiritual liberation of Israel, including the other three "suffering servant" songs (49:1-55:13), and the restoration of Zion with the return from Babylon of the first exiles (56:1-66:24).

Isaiah is the only Major Prophet whose story takes place before the fall of Jerusalem. Isaiah looks into the future to see Judah's Babylonian captivity. And the other writers of the Bible look back at Isaiah when telling the story of Israel. Isaiah personally interacts with the kings of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, and so his story covers some of the events in in Kings and Chronicles.

Isaiah's most famous prophecies, however, concern Jesus. No other prophet is referred to in the NT as much as Isaiah. Isaiah preaches of the coming King who will rule Israel and the nations in justice and peace. He also looks forward to a special Servant of Yahweh, one who will fulfill all Israel's duties and bear their sins.

In Isaiah, the nation of Israel has long been split into two nations: North and South, Israel and Judah. They have been waging wars against each other and the surrounding nations for a few hundred years, but neither kingdom can stand through the storms to come.

The Assyrians are rising in power, and the Babylonians will overthrow them in time. And the people hadn't remained faithful to their god, and so their security as a nation cannot last.

The North will fall soon. The South will fall later. Yahweh raises up the prophet Isaiah to tell the people this message.

Yahweh is going to bring the Assyrians against the North. He will bring the Babylonians against the Assyrians. He will send the South into exile in Babylon. He will bring the Persian Cyrus against the Babylonians.

But He will also bring Israel back home. He will also rule Israel as Immanuel: Yahweh with us. He will judge Israel's enemies, and bring all the nations to Himself.

And somehow, a mysterious Servant will bear the sins of many, reconciling Israel and the world to Yahweh. Yahweh's judgment is coming, but so is His comfort.

Book of Jeremiah: 52 chapters; the greatest prophet of the seventh century BCE, Jeremiah supported the reforms of King Josiah and suffered greatly for his repeated warnings about the Jews' return to idolatry and the growing power of Babylon; 6 sections: oracles in the days of the reform-minded King Josiah and the call of Jeremiah (1:1-6:30), oracles mostly in the days of King Jehoiakim (7:1-20:18), oracles in the last years of Jerusalem, including the oracle of the New Covenant (21:1-33:26), the fall of Jerusalem, including Jeremiah's message to Baruch (34:1-45:5), oracles against the nations, including the first and second prophecies against Babylon (46:1-51:64), and a historical appendix on the capture and destruction of Jerusalem (52:1-34).

The Temple had stood in Jerusalem for more than 300 years. The nation was known by Yahweh's name: the surrounding nations had heard of the wonders Israel's God had worked for them in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in their own land. Israel's God was a great God, and His throne was in Jerusalem.

Yet they did not follow Him. They worshipped other gods, perverted justice in the land, and ignored His laws. Once in a while, a king, a descendant of David, would turn the people back to Yahweh, but the other kings led the people into all kinds of disobedience.

The people have gone far enough. Yahweh promised to exile His people from their land if they turned from Him, and now Jerusalem's time has come. The Babylonians will destroy the city, raze the holy temple, and carry the Jews away.

But even as Yahweh plans Jerusalem's destruction, He sends his people a prophet to warn, challenge, and comfort them. That prophet is a young man named Jeremiah.

Jeremiah ministers to the Jews for about 40 years, and his career is a sad one. He is, for the most part, the only prophet in the land: everyone else who claims to have a word from Yahweh is a fake.

That's especially difficult for Jeremiah, because while the false prophets preach peace, safety, and victory over Babylon, Jeremiah insists that the Babylonians will destroy everything. The false prophets tell everyone that Yahweh is with His people; Jeremiah

tells everyone that Yahweh is on the enemy's side. You can imagine which message is more popular.

Jeremiah endures mockery, imprisonment, kidnapping, and death threats from the people he desperately tries to help.

But Yahweh's word comes true: Nebuchadnezzar defeats the Jews, and carries off the royal family. The temple is destroyed. The city is burned with fire. The Babylonians set up a new governor over the area and go back to their land. They also release Jeremiah from prison and tell him to live a happy life.

But it doesn't end there. A neighboring nation assassinates the governor, and the Jews are left with two options: stay in their land or emigrate to Egypt as refugees. They ask Jeremiah what Yahweh would have them do, and He promises them that if they stay in the land of Israel they will flourish. They will live in peace under Babylonian rule, and Yahweh Himself will have compassion on them. But if they disobey, Yahweh will bring the Babylonians against the Egyptians, and the Jews will perish when Egypt is conquered.

The Jews choose to go to Egypt anyway.

Book of Lamentations: five chapters; each chapter is a lament by an eyewitness to the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE; the laments express the Jews' grief and humiliation, their torments and miseries at being subjugated and exiled, and their ultimate faith in Yahweh's constancy and mercy; the book also uses an interesting literary device: the first four laments, or poems, are acrostics in which the individual stanzas begin with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet, from beginning to end.

The city of Yahweh is in ruins. The temple is destroyed. The king's palace is in shambles. The gates are burned down. The walls are torn apart. The Babylonians have ransacked the holy city.

"How?"

That's the original name of Lamentations, this small collection of five poems that mourn the fall of Jerusalem. According to tradition, the prophet Jeremiah writes these dirges for the city he had ministered to for years. And it all begins with the word "How."

> How lonely sits the city
> That was full of people!
> She has become like a widow
> Who was once great among the nations!
> She who was a princess among the provinces
> Has become a forced laborer! (La 1:1)

The book deals with the question, "How could this happen?" How could Jerusalem fall to the Babylonians? The answer has little to do with the political or military forces surrounding the events.

The people had rejected their God and His prophets. Before they ever entered the promised land, Israel was given a choice: remain loyal to Yahweh and enjoy His blessings and prosperity, or worship other gods and be exiled from their land. Israel followed other gods, showed injustice to the poor, and ignored Yahweh's laws.

The people had sworn to love and obey and follow Yahweh, and they broke that promise time and time again. But Yahweh is faithful and just: and He cannot let the guilty go unpunished. So Jerusalem falls, and all the people can do is mourn.

Book of Baruch: six chapters; this deuterocanonical book, ascribed to Baruch, the secretary of the prophet Jeremiah, contains different compositions, in prose and poetry, Hebrew and Greek, collected around the theme of the Babylonian exile; 5 sections: a prose prayer of the exiles in Babylon (1:1-3:8), a poem on praise of the wisdom in the law of Moses (3:9-4:4), a poem in which Jerusalem bewails and consoles her captive children (4:5-29), a poem in which Jerusalem is consoled as the Babylonian captivity is about to end (4:30-5:9), and the prose letter of the prophet Jeremiah against idolatry (6:1-72).

The first part of Baruch a prose letter with a historical introduction. Baruch, the secretary of Jeremiah, having written a book, reads it before King Jehoiachin and the exiles in Babylon. The people weep, fast, and pray. Then they make a collection of money, which they send to Jerusalem to be used for the Temple service, with an injunction to pray for the life of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and that of Belshazzar, his son, so that the people may dwell in peace under the shadow of these princes. A letter follows, which is presumably the one written by Baruch, although not expressly mentioned as such. This letter is a confession of national sin, a recognition of the justness of the nation's punishment, and a prayer for mercy.

The second part of the book consists of two poems, the first of which is an exhortation to Israel to learn wisdom, which is described as the source of all happiness, and as "the book of the commandments of Yahweh." The second poem is a picture of the suffering of Israel, and an exhortation to Jerusalem to take heart and await hopefully the salvation of Yahweh, Jerusalem being here represented as a desolate widow mourning over the distress of her children.

Book of Ezekiel: 48 chapters; Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, was both priest and prophet, but his focus on the Temple and liturgy earned him the title "father of Judaism" in postexilic Israel; deported with the exiles in 597 BCE, Ezekiel began prophesying in Babylon, first reproaching Israel for its sins and predicting further devastation, then after the fall of Jerusalem shifting to the promise of salvation in a new covenant; 5 sections: the call of the prophet (1:1-3:27), before the siege of Jerusalem (4:1-24:27), prophecies against the foreign nations (25:1-32:32), salvation for Israel (33:1-39:29), and a lengthy vision of the new Israel focusing on a new Temple in Jerusalem (40:1-48:35).

Jerusalem has already been conquered twice. The first time, the Babylonians took Daniel and the noble families of the land back to Babylon. Eight years later, the Jews rebelled, and the Babylonians took the king and 10,000 captives. One of those captives was a priest named Ezekiel.

All this had happened because the Jews had broken Yahweh's laws. They were supposed to worship Yahweh and Yahweh alone, but they turned to the idols of the surrounding nations. They desecrated the temple of Yahweh and brutally persecuted His prophets.

So Yahweh disciplined them. The Babylonians came once. Then they came again.

But instead of turning to Yahweh, the people still chased the gods of the nations. They still mistreated the poor. They still disregarded Yahweh's laws.

Now it's been five years since the Babylonians last attacked Jerusalem. The Jews in the city would soon revolt again, but they'd been rebelling against their god for a long, long time.

Ezekiel sees some incredibly sad things on the horizon:

- The people have broken Yahweh's heart with their lewd idolatry and self-serving leaders.
- Because of Israel's rebellion, Yahweh is withdrawing from and destroying Jerusalem.

But the good news is, that's not all he sees.

- Yahweh will render justice not only on Jerusalem, but on all the other nations who have led her into idolatry and celebrated her destruction.
- Yahweh will form a new covenant with the people of Israel. He will lead them Himself as a good shepherd, and they will be reunited under David.
- Yahweh will defend Israel from her enemies in the dark future.

There will one day be a new temple in Jerusalem, and the glory of Yahweh will one day return.

Book of Daniel: 14 chapters; considered apocalyptic literature, looking ahead to the Day of Yahweh and the end of history; describes the heroic exploits of Daniel, a young Jew taken early to Babylon; the final two chapters are considered deuterocanonical; 3 sections: Daniel and the kings of Babylon, including the stories of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace and Daniel in the lions' den (1:1-6:29), Daniel's visions of the four beasts, Gabriel and the 70 weeks, and the Hellenistic wars (7:1-12:13), and the appendix, containing the stories of Susanna's virtue and Bel and the dragon (13:1-14:42).

The Babylonians had attacked Jerusalem and carried off many Jewish captives. One of them was a young man named Daniel. Daniel quickly distinguishes himself from the men of Babylon. He is wise, and loyal to his God. He can even interpret visions and dreams—accurately. Daniel's gifts are from the God of Israel, and the young man becomes a living testimony to his God in a strange land.

Daniel also has vivid, symbolic visions about the future of Israel, world kingdoms, and the kingdom of Yahweh.

Through Yahweh's wisdom, Daniel is proven to be a trustworthy prophet, even capable of interpreting other people's dreams—a gift only shared by Joseph in Genesis and an unnamed man in Judges. Daniel attributes his vast wisdom, insight, and understanding to his wise God.

The God of Israel is consistently called the Most High God in this book. He is the one who raises and removes kings. He is the one who establishes new world empires. He is the Ancient of Days on the throne. He is the God of heaven, whose kingdom will never be destroyed.

Daniel prophecies about the Messiah, the temple, Jerusalem, and a coming kingdom of righteousness. Through Daniel, Yahweh promises a full restoration of Israel.

Daniel can be neatly divided into two parts. The first half is primarily narrative, and concerns Daniel's life in Babylon under foreign kings. The second half is mostly a record of Daniel's visions concerning Israel and world empires. There are many interesting similarities and contrasts between the two halves:

In the first six chapters:	**In the last six chapters:**
Daniel interprets visions for foreign kings	Yahweh gives visions directly to Daniel
Yahweh's fame among the nations is emphasized	Yahweh's faithfulness to His nation is emphasized
Daniel's stories are written in third person	Daniel writes in first person
Most text is written in Aramaic	Most text is written in Hebrew

Although Daniel is rich with prophetic visions, the book is better known for its narrative passages in the first half.

The "fiery furnace" story involves Daniel's friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The three friends defy King Nebuchadnezzar's command to worship a golden image, and the king hurls them into a blazing furnace. Yahweh intervenes, however, and the three are miraculously unharmed.

The "handwriting on the wall" is a reference to the fifth chapter of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar's descendant Belshazzar uses vessels stolen from the Jew's temple to praise other gods, but is interrupted when a hand mysteriously appears and writes a cryptic message ("Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin") on the wall. Daniel is the only one who can interpret the message: Yahweh will repay Belshazzar by handing over his kingdom to the Medes and Persians.

In the "lions' den" episode, Daniel has been awarded a position of power in Babylon after the Medes and Persians overthrew Belshazzar. Daniel's peers are jealous, and trick the king into making prayer to Yahweh illegal. Daniel does not stop praying, and so he is thrown to the lions. Yahweh delivers Daniel, though, and he survives the night in the lions' den.

Book of Hosea: 14 chapters; Hosea was a prophet of the northern kingdom in the eighth century BCE and a contemporary of Isaiah, Amos and Micah; his marriage to the unfaithful Gomer symbolized Israel's infidelity; he began the tradition of describing the relationship between Yahweh and Israel in terms of marriage; 2 sections: the prophet's marriage and its lessons (1:1-3:5), and Israel's guilt and punishment (4:1-14:10).

When Yahweh chose Jeroboam to rule the northern ten tribes of Israel, He was prepared to establish Jeroboam's bloodline the same way He'd done for David. But King Jeroboam set up two golden calves and instituted a pagan priesthood—forever cementing his legacy as the one "who made Israel sin" (1 Ki 13:26).

Israel had left the one who had saved her, loved her, and made her His own. The Southern Kingdom of Judah wasn't far behind.

So Yahweh tells a man named Hosea to marry a harlot. Hosea marries her, and has children. But she leaves him and commits adultery. Then Yahweh tells him to go after her and bring her back.

Hosea's marriage is symbolic of Yahweh's covenant relationship with Israel. Through Hosea, Yahweh tells the story of Israel's disobedience, His discipline, and His steadfast, faithful love:

- *Rejection and betrayal.* Hosea's wife, Gomer, leaves him for another—just like Israel has left Yahweh to worship idols.
- *Rejection and discipline*. Just as Israel rejected Him, Yahweh will reject her. Israel and Judah will fall to other empires and be taken away from their promised land.
- *Restoration and reconciliation*. Hosea brings back his adulterous wife and loves her again. Yahweh will not forget his love for Israel and Judah, nor His promises to them. He will bring them back to their land. He will restore them to Himself and to David their king.

Hosea's message is harsh, tender, and heartbreaking.

Book of Joel: four chapters; not much is known about Joel, but his postexilic prophecy contains many apocalyptic images and stresses the Day of Yahweh, or day of judgment; the book deals with the land of Judah ravaged by locusts and a call to

penance, the Day of Yahweh, blessings for Yahweh's people and a judgment upon the nations.

A devastating swarm of locusts had come to Judah, the Southern Kingdom. This was no small infestation; the people had never seen anything like it. The crops were gone. The people were hungry. The cattle were hungry. What was happening, and why?

The day of Yahweh was upon them. When Yahweh was delivering Israel from slavery in Egypt, He sent a plague of locusts on the Egyptians' crops. Now, hundreds of years later, He was judging His people with the same kind of plague for straying from Him.

The prophet Joel explains to the people what Yahweh wants from them: repentance. Yahweh would soon have His day, both with Judah and the whole world. Joel's message has two strong points:

- Yahweh is judging Judah, but He will bless and restore them again when they repent.
- Yahweh will judge all the nations on Judah's behalf.

Yahweh disciplines His people, but He also defends them. Joel says that although Judah is under Yahweh's wrath right now, in the future holds many exciting things for the people of Yahweh.

Joel's message is stern for the disobedient, but it also highlights Yahweh's love and desire to be with His people. Rather than let them starve after sending the locusts, Yahweh sends Joel to direct their hearts back to Him.

Book of Amos: nine chapters; a shepherd of Judah, he prophesied in Israel at the cult center Bethel during the reign of Jeroboam II in the eighth century BCE; Amos denounces the hollow prosperity of the northern kingdom and calls the people back to the high moral and religious demands of Yahweh's revelation; 4 sections: a judgment of the nations (1:1-2:16), words and woes for Israel (3:1-6:14), the threats and promises of symbolic visions (7:1-9:8b), and an epilogue giving the messianic perspective (9:8c-15).

Amos was a simple shepherd in the Southern Kingdom of Judah; he wasn't a prophet. There were no prophets in his family. But Yahweh had a message for the rebellious Northern Kingdom of Israel, and He chose Amos to deliver it.

Yahweh had made Israel His chosen people (back in Exodus), and He was to be their God. But when the kingdom divided, the northern tribes turned their backs on Him. Yahweh's temple and priests were still in Zion, but Israel worshipped new idols at the cities of Bethel and Dan, created a new order of priests, and listened to false prophets.

And now, while Yahweh had mercifully given them peace and prosperity under King Jeroboam II, the nation was abusing its own people. The rich were oppressing the poor. The judges were accepting bribes.

Yahweh had promised to bless the nation if they obeyed Him and curse them if they rebelled. Israel rebelled, and now judgment is coming. But Yahweh isn't going to punish Israel without explaining what's going on.

So Amos, the shepherd, the tree trimmer, goes to Bethel (a royal city of idol worship) and proclaims Yahweh's message of justice, punishment, and restoration. He makes two bold prophecies:

- King Jeroboam II will die.
- Israel will be carried off into exile.

As you can imagine, this message doesn't sit well with Jeroboam II and his false priests. But Amos answers to Yahweh, not Israel. And when Israel rebels at Bethel, Yahweh roars from Zion.

Book of Obadiah: 21 verses; the shortest and sternest prophecy in the OT; Obadiah, about whom little is known, utters a bitter prophecy against the Edomites, longtime enemies of the Israelites, who committed heinous crimes after being forced to leave their ancient home near the Gulf of Aqaba and settling in southern Judah in the fifth century BCE

Israel has a longstanding rivalry with the nation of Edom, but now Edom has gone too far. When the Babylonians attacked Jerusalem and the temple of Yahweh, Edom was there, cheering on the Babylonians.

Obadiah's message is simple: no matter how safe they think they are, no matter how wise they think they are, Edom can't get away with this.

The rivalry between Israel and Edom began long ago in the book of Genesis. Esau (Edom's ancestor) sold Jacob his birthright for a bowl of soup, and then Jacob tricked their father into giving him the blessing of the firstborn.

Jacob and Esau resolved their differences, and Yahweh gave both of their descendants a land. Israel's capital was Mount Zion (Jerusalem); Edom's was Mount Seir. Both had an inheritance. Both had a mountain. Only one was Yahweh's chosen people.

As time wore on, the relationship between their descendants became strained. Edom refused to let Moses and the Israelites take the highway through their land, and opposed them militantly. Edom and Israel also had several conflicts during the time of the kings.

But during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, Edom attacked and looted Yahweh's chosen people, and happily returned to their own fortified cities in Mount Seir.

So Yahweh sends his messenger to them: a man named Obadiah (Hebrew for "servant of Yahweh"). Through Obadiah, Yahweh swears to turn the tables on Edom. Mount Seir may seem to have won, but Mount Zion prevails in the end.

Book of Jonah: four chapters; this postexilic book, probably from the fifth century BCE, tells the fantastical story of Jonah, a disobedient prophet swallowed by a great fish while trying to flee his divine commission; after his rescue, Jonah proceeds to Ninevah, where everyone in the wicked city heeds his message of doom and repents; Jonah and Yahweh then have an exchange over Jonah's bitterness about the success of his mission and Yahweh's mercy.

Yahweh had created all mankind, but He'd chosen Israel as His own. Through Israel, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Yahweh had given Israel His laws through Moses, and called them by His name.

Nineveh, on the other hand, was the capital of Assyria, and a place of great wickedness. So Yahweh tells a prophet named Jonah to "Arise, go to Nineveh, and cry against it."

But Jonah does something entirely unexpected: he boards a ship headed in the opposite direction. Yahweh sends a mighty storm after him, which threatens to destroy the vessel. Jonah confesses to the sailors that he is a Hebrew, and that he is trying to escape Yahweh's presence.

His proposed solution: "Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you." They do so, and the sea calms—and all the sailors recognize the Yahweh who spared them.

Then Jonah is swallowed by a "great fish." He prays from within the fish, and Yahweh has it vomit him onto the land.

Now we're back to square one. Yahweh tells Jonah to arise and go to Nineveh, and this time Jonah obeys. He walks through the evil city, heralding Nineveh's impending doom: in just 40 days, Nineveh will be overthrown. The Ninevites do the unexpected: they repent. And Yahweh relents. And Jonah is not OK with this.

Book of Micah: seven chapters; this prophet, from an obscure village in the Judean foothills, denounces the social evils in both Samaria and Jerusalem, the capitals of the divided kingdoms, and points to Israel's restoration through the house of David; the prophet Jeremiah notes that King Hezekiah's reforms were influenced by Micah's prophecy; 3 sections: the punishment of Israel's sins (1:1-3:12), the new Israel, including the passage quoted in the infancy narrative in the Gospel of Matthew (4:1-5:14), and an admonition (6:1-7:20).

Yahweh had made Israel His own special nation, and He had special expectations of them. Yahweh is holy, faithful, merciful, and just, and expects His people to be the same.

But the prophet Micah feels that there are no righteous people, there is no justice in the land. The judges accept bribes, the rulers oppress the poor, the prophets lead the people astray, and the priests are easily bought.

Israel's behavior is unacceptable, and Micah tells the people that they have no excuse. They know better, and Yahweh will not sit by while they treat one another this way. So He comes to the prophet Micah with a twofold message:

- Israel and Judah must be disciplined for their injustice.
- Yahweh Himself will rule Israel with justice someday.

This is done because Yahweh is just, even when His people have no justice, and because Yahweh is merciful, even when His people show no mercy.

Book of Nahum: three chapters; this oracle about the hated city of Ninevah, the capital of Assyria, was made shortly before Ninevah and the Assyrian empire were destroyed by Babylon; Assyria had been the scourge of the ancient Near East for nearly three centuries, which helps explain Nahum's jubilant tone; 2 sections: Yahweh's coming in judgment of Ninevah (1:1-2:3), and the fall of Ninevah (2:2-3:19).

When Jonah warned Nineveh of Yahweh's wrath, the Ninevites repented and Yahweh spared them. But their repentance didn't take.

Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, and the Assyrian empire had only grown more mighty and more wicked since the time of Jonah. Nineveh continued to lead nations into idolatry. Plus, the Assyrians had touched Israel, the "apple of Yahweh's eye." They had carried off the northern tribes into captivity, and had since oppressed the people of Judah during the time of the righteous King Hezekiah. The people of Yahweh must have wondered, "are they really going to get away with this?"

Yahweh sends the prophet Nahum to reveal Nineveh's future: utter desolation. With Jonah, there was a chance to repent. Now the time for repentance is over. Yahweh is good and compassionate, but He will not leave the guilty unpunished.

Nahum presents Yahweh as jealous, avenging and wrathful against his enemies, slow to anger, great in power, good, and safety to those who fear Him. But because the Assyrians disregard Him, they cannot be safe.

Nahum is a brutal prophecy against the enemies of Yahweh and His people, but Nahum's name means "comforter." This oracle comforts Yahweh's people by showing them that He is still in control. He still watches over His own. And even when justice seems completely out of balance, He has a plan to right the scales.

Book of Habakkuk: three chapters; this oracle, received in a vision by Habakkuk, dates from the years just before Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah in 597 BCE; the first two chapters are a dialogue in which the prophet complains about the ways of Yahweh and Yahweh responds; the third chapter is a later liturgical prayer of praise that recalls some of Israel's past glory.

The people of Judah had grown wicked, violent, and corrupt. There was no justice in the land that was supposed to be known by Yahweh's name. Habakkuk couldn't take it anymore. These people shouldn't be allowed to disregard Yahweh's law. Surely Yahweh would set things right.

So Habakkuk pleads with Yahweh, asking Him to save Judah from her own wickedness. Yahweh answers, but not in the way Habakkuk expected.

To judge Judah's wickedness, Yahweh says He will hand them over to the Chaldeans: a nation even more wicked, violent, and corrupt.

Then Habakkuk asks, "Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they? Will they continually slay nations without sparing?"

But Yahweh is way ahead of Habakkuk. Yahweh shows him that something else is in store for the Chaldeans (Babylonians)—justice:

The Babylonians looted many nations, but the remaining ones will loot them. They cut off other families so that they could secure their own empire, but soon the work of their hands will cry out against them. They built their cities with bloodshed, but their work will be for nothing. They disgraced the nations around them, but Yahweh will disgrace them. They crafted idols and then called on them, but all the earth will be silent before Yahweh.

When Habakkuk sees Yahweh's master plan, he can only worship. Yahweh will correct Judah. Yahweh will punish Babylon. But most importantly, Yahweh will be known in all the earth.

Book of Zephaniah: three chapters; this prophecy, during the reign of King Josiah in the seventh century BCE, condemns the religious degradation of Jews reverting to old idolatries, and focuses on Yahweh's impending judgment on the Day of Yahweh; 3 sections: the Day of Yahweh as a day of doom, including the lines that inspired the Christian hymn "Dies Irae" (1:1-18), the Day of Yahweh as a day of judgment (2:1-15), and a reproach and promise for Jerusalem (3:1-20).

Judah had been doomed long ago. The old king Manasseh had led the nation away from Yahweh and into heinous idolatry, including human sacrifice. Manasseh's son only made it worse. Yahweh had shown mercy during those days, but although He is slow to anger, He does not let the guilty go unpunished.

Judah is enjoying some peace, though. The good king Josiah reigns, and he has directed people back to Yahweh. It's about this time that Yahweh sends the prophet Zephaniah with a startling message for Judah: Yahweh is about to bring everything to an end. The day of Yahweh is coming to Judah, and it's a terrible day for those who have put Yahweh to the test all these years.

The judgment doesn't stop at Judah—the whole world will be consumed. Zephaniah tells the people that the nations of the world cannot stand: Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia, and especially Assyria. All nations will know that He is God, and "He will make a complete end, indeed a terrifying one, of all the inhabitants of the earth."

But Zephaniah doesn't end the message there. Yahweh has bigger plans than the end of the world. Yahweh will remove all things, yes, but then He will restore all things. And

the restoration doesn't stop at Judah. Yahweh will bring about a time when all the nations will call on the name of Yahweh. Judah, Israel, the nations, and Yahweh will dwell together in peace, justice, and joy.

Book of Haggai: two chapters; Haggai, who received his commission to prophesy in 520 BCE, is the first postexilic prophet; his prophecy contains 5 oracles: a call to rebuild the Temple; the future glory of the new Temple; the unworthiness of a people, possibly the Samaritans, to offer sacrifice in the newly restored Temple; a promise of immediate blessings for the rebuilding of the Temple; and a pledge to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah and a descendant of David, that continues messianic hopes.

After spending 70 years as captives in Babylon, the Jews returned to Jerusalem. The Persian emperor Cyrus issued a decree: the Jews were to rebuild the temple of Yahweh. Zerubbabel, who was of the royal line of David, led the Jews back home.

They set up a new altar, and laid the foundations of the new building. But when the surrounding nations interfered, the temple construction stopped. The Jews built their own houses, worked their fields, and let the Temple lie in shambles.

But their lives were in shambles, too. There was little food, little wine, little clothing, little rain, and little money.

At this time, a new prophet named Haggai speaks up: "Consider your ways!"

Because the people have ignored Yahweh's temple, He has withheld rain, food, and prosperity. The solution? Get back to work on the temple!

Zerubbabel and the people do so, and Haggai responds to their obedience with four more messages from Yahweh:

1. "I am with you."
2. "I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory."
3. "From this day on I will bless you."
4. "I will take you, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, My servant […] and I will make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you."

Book of Zechariah: 14 chapters; the first eight chapters, dating to 520 BCE, contain the oracles of Zechariah, while the rest of the book is attributed to an unknown author or authors referred to as Deutero-Zechariah; 2 sections: the prophet's 8 symbolic visions, intended to promote the rebuilding of the Temple and encourage the returned exiles (1:1-8:23), and oracles on the restoration of Israel under a Messiah who would be "meek, and riding on an ass," which the Gospel writers all saw fulfilled in Jesus (9:1-14:21).

The Jews had been released to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple of Yahweh.

The city is in ruins. The royal family has been reduced to governor status. The temple is under construction. But the words of the prophets still remain.

And now the Jews have another chance to pay attention. Yahweh sends them a new prophet: Zechariah. This prophet has colorful visions: messages of comfort and hope to the Jews. It all begins with a simple request: "Return to Me," says Yahweh, "that I may return to you."

Zechariah's writings encourage and admonish the Jews of Jerusalem. He specifically affirms the governor and priest of that time. He chastises the foolish leaders among them, and calls all the people to follow Yahweh and remember the words of the prophets before.

But most importantly, he anticipates a full restoration of Yahweh and His people. The temple will be rebuilt, Israel will be purified, the enemies will be overcome, and Yahweh Himself will dwell in Jerusalem. But this restoration isn't only for the Jews; Yahweh will rule the whole earth, and all the nations will worship Him.

Book of Malachi: three chapters; Malachi is not a proper name but the Hebrew expression for "my messenger"; this anonymous author, writing around 455 BCE, criticizes the postexilic abuses of the priests and Levites and the indifference of the people to their religious heritage, especially regarding marriage with pagans; this prophecy may have set the stage for the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah, and the messenger reference in the third chapter was quoted by Jesus in the Gospels as referring to John the Baptist.

The Jews had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon. They'd obeyed the messages of Yahweh from the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. They'd rebuilt the temple of Yahweh.

But nothing happened. No Messiah, no great divine war against Israel's enemies, no worldwide kingdom of Yahweh—none of the good things those prophets said would come about.

So the people grew indifferent. They offered faulty sacrifices, married pagan women, were unfaithful to their wives, and withheld tithes and offerings. Furthermore, the priests of Yahweh were misleading the people and disrespecting Yahweh, who had called them to ministry.

Yahweh has made sacred covenants with His people. Their behavior was unacceptable, so a prophet named Malachi ("my messenger") points out the great disconnect between Yahweh and His people: He cares for them, but they don't care for Him.

The people and the priests have become estranged from Yahweh, and the gap between them has grown to a point where the people can't understand Yahweh's nature and expectations. Malachi will state the way Yahweh sees things, but anticipates that the people will not understand. Malachi often says something to the effect of, "This is what you have done, yet you say, 'How have we done this?'"

Fortunately, Malachi's message resonates with some of the people. The Jews who still revere Yahweh write their names in a book, and Yahweh promises to purify Israel: punishing the wicked, but sparing the righteous.

But before He comes to purify them, Yahweh will send another messenger to clear the way…

Summaries of the New Testament Books

The NT contains 27 books, divided according to the Gospels, or first four books; the Acts of the Apostles; the 14 letters attributed to Paul or his followers; the seven Catholic letters; and the Book of Revelation.

Gospels

The English word "gospel" is a translation of the Greek "euangelion," meaning good news. Collectively, the Gospels tell the story of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Messiah. Three of them—Matthew, Mark and Luke—are similar, with overlapping source material; they are called the "synoptic" Gospels, meaning they can be viewed "with one eye." The Gospel of John is very different. Each of the Gospels was written with a particular audience in mind.

Gospel of Matthew: 28 chapters; the longest Gospel was frequently quoted in early Christian writings; according to ancient tradition, it was written by Matthew the tax collector, one of the Twelve Apostles, but later scholarship points to an unknown Jewish Christian author writing for Jewish Christian converts to explain Jesus' mission and their new faith as the fulfillment of OT promises; 7 sections: the infancy narrative, including Jesus' birth and the visit of the Magi (1:1-2:23), Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom, including the Sermon on the Mount (3:1-7:29), Jesus' ministry and mission in Galilee, with healings and other signs (8:1-11:1), opposition from Israel and Jesus' teaching in parables (11:2-13:53), Jesus, the kingdom and the church, including the feeding of 4,000 and his transfiguration (13:54-18:35), Jesus' ministry in Judea and Jerusalem, including increased tensions with Jewish authorities and the much-quoted "judgment of the nations" (19:1-25:46), and the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus (26:1-28:20).

It is the near-universal position of scholarship that the Gospel of Matthew is dependent upon the Gospel of Mark. This position is accepted whether one subscribes to the dominant Two-Source Hypothesis or instead prefers the Farrer-Goulder hypothesis [the positions on Matthean authorship and dating with the most evidence].

It is also the consensus position that the evangelist was not the apostle Matthew. Such an idea is based on the 2nd-century statements of Papias and Irenaeus. As quoted by Eusebius in *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39, Papias states: "Matthew put together the oracles [of the Lord] in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as best he could." In *Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1, Irenaeus says: "Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome and laying the foundations of the church." We know that Irenaeus had read Papias, and it is most likely that Irenaeus was guided by the statement he found there. That statement in Papias itself is considered to be unfounded because the Gospel of Matthew was written in Greek and relied largely upon Mark, not the author's first-hand experience.

Gospel of Mark: 16 chapters; the shortest Gospel likely was the first one written, and was used as a source by the authors of both Matthew and Luke; it was written for gentiles coming to Christianity from the Greek and Roman worlds and aimed to strengthen them against persecution; Mark stresses the message that God has broken into human history in the person of Jesus; 4 sections and two appended endings: the preparation for Jesus' public ministry, including the ministry of John the Baptist (1:1-13), the mystery of Jesus, including many signs and parables and the death of John the

Baptist (1:14-8:26), the mystery of Jesus begins to be revealed, including the transfiguration and predictions of the passion (8:27-9:32), the full revelation of the mystery of Jesus, including his entry to Jerusalem, passion, death and resurrection (9:33-16:8), the longer ending, which includes Jesus' post-resurrection appearances and ascension (16:9-20), and the shorter ending, unnumbered.

Irenaeus wrote (*Against Heresies* 3.1.1): "After their departure [of Peter and Paul from earth], Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter." Note that Irenaeus had read Papias, and thus Irenaeus doesn't provide any independent confirmation of the statement made by the earlier author.

However, there are two other pieces of external evidence that may confirm that the author of the Gospel of Mark was a disciple of Peter. Justin Martyr quotes from Mark as being the memoirs of Peter (*Dial.* 106.3). In Acts 10:34-40, Peter's speech serves as a good summary of the Gospel of Mark, "beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached." Finally, there was not an extremely strong motivation for the early church to attribute the second gospel to one obscure Mark, the disciple of Peter, instead of directly to an apostle. Thus, the tradition of Markan authorship is to be taken seriously.

Nevertheless, even though the author may have been a disciple of Peter at some point, the author of the Gospel of Mark needn't have limited himself to Peter's preaching for his material. The NAB introduction says: "Petrine influence should not, however, be exaggerated. The evangelist has put together various oral and possibly written sources—miracle stories, parables, sayings, stories of controversies, and the passion—so as to speak of the crucified Messiah for Mark's own day."

Gospel of Luke: 24 chapters; this Gospel also was written for a gentile audience; from the late second century, Christian tradition identified Luke as a Syrian from Antioch who wrote both his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles to certify earlier teachings for a person named Theophilus; Luke notes especially the mercy and compassion of Jesus and his concern for women; 8 sections: the prologue, which mentions Theophilus (1:1-4), the infancy narrative, including the births of Jesus and John the Baptist, the canticles of Mary and Zechariah, and the shepherds' visit (1:5-2:52), the preparation for Jesus' public ministry, including his baptism and temptation in the desert (3:1-4:13), Jesus' ministry in Galilee, including the call of the apostles, the Sermon on the Plain and his transfiguration (4:14-9:50), the travel narrative of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, which includes the mission of the 72 disciples and the call of Zacchaeus the tax collector (9:51-19:27), Jesus' teaching ministry in Jerusalem, including his cleansing of the Temple and denunciation of Jewish authorities (19:28-21:38), the passion narrative, including the Last Supper, Peter's denial, and Jesus' crucifixion and burial (22:1-23:56), and the resurrection narrative, including Jesus' post-resurrection appearances and ascension (24:1-53).

Stevan Davies writes (*Jesus the Healer*, p. 174): "Luke wrote at least sixty years after Pentecost and perhaps closer to a century after that event. Scholarship on the subject presently vacillates between a late first century and an early to mid-second century date for Luke's writings." I would throw my lot in with those who favor a late first century date. If the Acts of the Apostles were written in the mid second century, it is hard to understand why there would be no mention or even cognizance of the epistles of Paul, which were being quoted as authoritative by writers before that time, especially since Acts has thousands of words devoted to recording things about the life of Paul, unlike Justin Martyr (whose apologies don't quote Paul). The idea that Acts didn't mention the

letters of Paul because they were in Marcionite use (as is plausible for Justin) founders on the unity of the Luke-Acts composition. And, of course, if the author of Acts was a companion of Paul, it is improbable to place it very long after the turn of the century, even if St. Luke lived to the ripe old age of eighty-four in Boeotia as the Anti-Marcionite *Prologue* avers. I have not done enough research to come to a conclusion on whether Luke used Josephus' Antiquities, which would demand a date after 93 CE. Marcion had a form of the Gospel of Luke from which he derived his Gospel of the Lord, which sets an upper bound of around 130 CE. A date for Luke-Acts in the 90s of the first century or first decade of the second would account for all the evidence, including the alleged use of Josephus and the apparent authorship by a sometime companion of Paul. If Luke did not use Josephus, a date in the 80s is permissible.

Gospel of John: 21 chapters; written last, this Gospel is highly literary and symbolic, stressing the divinity of Jesus and a developed theology; it contains many details about Jesus not found in the other Gospels, for example, that he traveled to Jerusalem many times before the last time; it was written around 90 CE for the community formed around the apostle John, "the beloved disciple," in Asia Minor; 4 sections: the prologue, which introduces Jesus as the Word of God (1:1-18), the book of signs, including the wedding at Cana, the raising of Lazarus and Jesus' entry to Jerusalem (1:19-12:50), the book of glory, including the Last Supper discourses, Jesus' trial, crucifixion and burial, and some post-resurrection appearances (13:1-20:31), and the epilogue on Jesus' post-resurrection appearance in Galilee (21:1-25).

Robert Kysar writes the following on the Gospel of John (*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, v. 3, 919-920):

> The supposition that the author was one and the same with the beloved disciple is often advanced as a means of insuring that the evangelist did witness Jesus' ministry. Two other passages are advanced as evidence of the same - 19:35 and 21:24. But both falter under close scrutiny. 19:35 does not claim that the author was the one who witnessed the scene but only that the scene is related on the sound basis of eyewitness. 21:24 is part of the appendix of the gospel and should not be assumed to have come from the same hand as that responsible for the body of the gospel. Neither of these passages, therefore, persuades many Johannine scholars that the author claims eyewitness status.

There is a case to be made that John, the son of Zebedee, had already died long before the Gospel of John came to be written. It is worth noting for its own sake, even though the "beloved disciple" need not be identified with John, the son of Zebedee. In his 9th-century *Chronicle* in the *Codex Coislinianus*, George Hartolos says, "[John] was worth of martyrdom." Hamartolos proceeds to quote Papias to the effect that, "he [John] was killed by the Jews." In the de Boor fragment of an epitome of the 5th-century *Chronicle of Philip of Side*, the author quotes Papias: Papias in the second book says that John the divine and James his brother were killed by Jews. Morton Enslin observes (*Christian Beginnings* 369-370): "That Papias' source of information is simply an inference from Mark 10:35-40 or its parallel, Matt. 20:20-23, is possible. None the less, this Marcan passage itself affords solid ground. No reasonable interpretation of these words can deny the high probability that by the time these words were written [c. 70 CE] both brothers had 'drunk the cup' that Jesus had drunk and had been 'baptized with the baptism' with which he had been baptized." Since the patristic tradition is unanimous in identifying the beloved disciple with John, at least this evidence discredits the patristic tradition concerning the authorship of the Gospel of John.

Acts of the Apostles

Acts of the Apostles: 28 chapters; written by Luke, also for Theophilus, as the sequel to his Gospel; it details the beginnings of Christianity in Jerusalem and throughout the wider Roman world through the exploits of the apostles, mainly Peter and Paul; 5 sections: the preparation for the Christian mission, including Jesus' ascension and the Pentecost experience (1:1-2:13), the mission in Jerusalem, featuring Peter's speeches, the apostles' trial before the Sanhedrin and Stephen's martyrdom (2:14-8:3), the mission in Judea and Samaria, including stories about the apostle Philip, Saul's conversion and Peter's healings (8:4-9:43), the start of the mission to the gentiles, including the story of Peter and Cornelius, Paul's first missionary journey and the Council of Jerusalem (10:1-15:35), and Paul's mission to the ends of the earth, including his second and third missionary journeys, and his arrest, imprisonment and stormy trip to Rome (15:36-28:31).

Letters of Paul

Though 13 of these 14 letters identify Paul as their author, most scholars believe some were written by his disciples. In the 14th, the Letter to the Hebrews, no author is mentioned, but a reference to Timothy suggests a connection to Paul. The Pauline letters are arranged roughly by length, from Romans, the longest, to Philemon, the shortest. In general, Paul's letters greet and pray for a community, provide teaching and sometimes correction about Christian beliefs, state his travel plans and conclude with more advice and a farewell.

Letter to the Romans: 16 chapters; Paul wrote this letter, his most influential and longest, to a community he had not yet visited; it contains a systematic unfolding of his thought; 7 sections: his greeting and prayer of thanks for the Christians in Rome (1:1-15), humanity lost without the Gospel, including a section on circumcision (1:16-3:20), justification through faith in Christ (3:21-5:21), justification and the Christian life, including teachings on freedom (6:1-8:39), Jews and gentiles in God's plan (9:1-11:36), the duties of Christians (12:1-15:13), and the conclusion, in which Paul calls himself the "apostle to the gentiles," commends Phoebe to the Roman church and counsels against factions (15:14-16:27).

First Letter to the Corinthians: 16 chapters; Paul wrote this letter to the Christian community he founded in Corinth, Greece; in it he responded to questions he'd been asked and to situations he'd been told about, such as factionalism and sexual ethics, involving the fledgling Christian community; 6 sections: his greeting and prayer of thanks for the Corinthian Christians (1:1-9), disorders in the Corinthian community, including divisions and moral disorders (1:10-6:20), answers to the Corinthians' questions about marriage, virginity and offerings to idols, including advice to seek the good of others (7:1-11:1), problems in liturgical assemblies regarding head coverings and abuses, including Paul's much-quoted teaching on the spiritual gifts (11:2-14:40), the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the dead (15:1-58), and the conclusion, which mentions a collection for the church in Jerusalem, his travel plans and farewell greetings (16:1-24).

Second Letter to the Corinthians: 13 chapters; this letter, written in an emotional tone, is Paul's most personal and reveals much about his character; in addressing what he describes as a crisis that followed the receipt of his first letter, Paul

defends his mission and discipleship; 5 sections: his greeting and prayer of thanks (1:1-11), the crisis between Paul and the Corinthians, including past relationships and reflections about ministry (1:12-7:16), the collection for Jerusalem (8:1-9:15), Paul's defense of his own ministry, including boasts about his labors and weaknesses (10:1-13:10), and his final advice and farewell (13:11-13).

Letter to the Galatians: six chapters; Paul wrote this letter to a community he founded in what is now Turkey, exhorting its members to remain faithful to the Gospel of Christ and not be drawn back to observance of the Jewish law by other missionaries; 6 sections: his greeting (1:1-5), loyalty to the Gospel (1:6-10), Paul's defense of his Gospel and his authority, including a description of the Council of Jerusalem (1:11-2:21), faith and liberty, including his thoughts on Christian freedom (3:1-4:31), an exhortation to Christian living (5:1-6:10), and his final appeal and farewell (6:11-18).

Letter to the Ephesians: six chapters; this letter about the church deals not so much with the Christian community at Ephesus, in Asia Minor, where Paul labored for 2 years, but with the universal church; it was traditionally considered one of the "captivity letters" penned from prison; though Paul is designated as the author, scholars now think it may have been written by a later disciple; 5 sections: Paul's greeting and prayer of praise (1:1-14), the unity of the church in Christ (1:15-2:22), the world mission of the church, including a mention of Paul as a "prisoner for the Lord" (3:1-4:24), daily conduct as an expression of unity, including advice for wives and husbands, children and parents, slaves and masters (4:25-6:20), and a final message and farewell (6:21-24).

Letter to the Philippians: four chapters; another of the "captivity letters," this missive was sent to the Christians at Philippi, in northern Greece, a community founded by Paul; some scholars think this letter is a composite of three letters Paul sent the Philippians; the extant letter is full of rejoicing and his love and concern for the Gospel and for his converts; 8 sections: Paul's greeting and prayer of thanks for the Philippians (1:1-11), the progress of the Gospel (1:12-26), instructions for the community regarding unity, humility and obedience (1:27-2:18), the travel plans of Paul and his assistants, Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-3:1), a polemic about righteousness and the goal in Christ (3:2-21), instructions for the community (4:1-9), Paul's gratitude for the Philippians' generosity (4:10-20), and a brief farewell (4:21-23).

Letter to the Colossians: four chapters; Paul wrote this letter from prison to the Christians at Colossae, in Asia Minor, a community he had not visited but one that was experiencing problems as a result of false teaching about Christ's relationship to the universe; five sections: Paul's greeting and prayers (1:1-14), the pre-eminence of Christ (1:15-2:3), Paul's warnings against false teachers (2:4-23), the ideal Christian life in the world, with advice for families, slaves and masters (3:1-4:6), and the conclusion, in which Paul mentions details about a number of his co-workers (4:7-18).

First Letter to the Thessalonians: five chapters; this is the earliest of Paul's letters and the earliest work in the NT, dating from about 50 CE; Paul wrote it to the community he founded at Thessalonica, in Greece, urging his converts to be faithful to the end; 4 sections: Paul's greeting and prayer of thanks (1:1-10), a description of his previous ministry among the Thessalonians and his recent travel plans (2:1-3:13), exhortations regarding sexual conduct, charity, hope for the dead and order in the church (4:1-5:25), and his final greeting (5:26-28).

Second Letter to the Thessalonians: three chapters; this letter, which may have been written in the name of Paul and his companions by later disciples near the end of the first century, attempts to correct errors arising from an expectation of Christ's imminent return; 4 sections: a greeting and prayers (1:1-12), a warning against deception concerning the *Parousia*, or second coming (2:1-17), concluding exhortations regarding prayer and work (3:1-16), and a final greeting (3:17-18).

First Letter to Timothy: six chapters; the two letters to Timothy and one to Titus are called the "pastoral letters" because they deal with the work of a pastor in caring for a community; many scholars today believe that Paul did not write these letters, though they bear his name, but attribute them to a secretary or later disciples; Timothy was a disciple and companion of Paul during his second and third missionary journeys; 6 sections: a greeting (1:1-2), sound teaching (1:3-20), the problems of discipline, including the qualifications of various ministers (2:1-4:16), duties toward others (5:1-6:2), false teaching and true wealth (6:3-19), and a final recommendation and warning (6:20-21).

Second Letter to Timothy: four chapters; this letter adopts a more personal tone than 1 Timothy, but again includes concerns about sound Christian teaching; 4 sections: a greeting and prayer (1:1-5), exhortations to Timothy about his gifts and conduct (1:6-2:13), instructions concerning false teaching (2:14-4:8) and personal requests having to do with Paul's loneliness and a final greeting (4:9-22).

Letter to Titus: three chapters; Titus was another of Paul's disciples and companions who at the time of the letter was ministering on the Mediterranean island of Crete, which Paul had not visited; 3 sections: a greeting (1:1-4), a pastoral charge regarding Crete (1:5-16), and teaching the Christian life, which includes a final greeting and blessing (2:1-3:15).

Letter to Philemon: 25 verses; in Paul's shortest letter, written from prison, possibly in Rome, the apostle seeks a favor for the slave Onesimus, someone converted by Paul, who has run away from his master; Paul sends the slave back to Philemon with this letter, containing a touching appeal that he be welcomed back not just as a slave but as a brother.

Letter to the Hebrews: 13 chapters; more a treatise than a letter, this book contains no claim of authorship but is attributed to followers of Paul; it is a "message of encouragement," in the author's words, and is addressed to Christians in danger of abandoning their faith, not because of persecution but because of weariness over the demands of Christian life; its main theme is the priesthood and sacrifice of Jesus; 6 sections: a brief introduction (1:1-4), the Son is higher than the angels, including an exhortation to faithfulness (1:5-2:18), Jesus, the faithful and compassionate high priest (3:1-5:10), Jesus' eternal priesthood and eternal sacrifice, in the context of Jewish history and Scripture (5:11-10:39), examples, discipline and disobedience, again in a Jewish context (11:1-12:29), and a final exhortation, blessing and greetings (13:1-25).

Catholic Letters

These seven letters are called the "Catholic letters" because they were directed, for the most part, not to individuals or individual churches, but to the developing Christian communities at large.

Letter of James: five chapters; scholars believe this letter, concerned almost exclusively with ethical conduct, was the work not of either of the Twelve Apostles named James, but of James, a relative of Jesus called the "brother of the Lord" who led the first Christian community in Jerusalem; 4 sections: a greeting to "the 12 tribes in the dispersion" (1:1), the value of trials and temptation (1:2-18), exhortations on the sin of partiality and on faith and works, and warnings about divisions and riches (1:19-5:12), and the power of prayer (5:13-20).

First Letter of Peter: five chapters; since the second century Christian tradition had attributed this letter, a blend moral exhortation and catechesis, to the apostle Peter, but some modern scholars think its cultivated Greek and allusions to widespread persecution, among other reasons, point to a later Christian writer; 5 sections: a greeting "to the chosen sojourners of the dispersion" in Asia Minor (1:1-2), the gift and call of God in baptism (1:3-2:10), the Christian in a hostile world (2:11-4:11), advice to the persecuted (4:12-5:11), and a concluding greeting (5:12-14).

Second Letter of Peter: three chapters; though the author of this letter claims to have been present at the Transfiguration, scholars think it was written by a later author attributing it to Peter, a common literary practice at the time; it was intended for the same Christians addressed in 1 Peter, and sought to strengthen their faith and warn against false teachings; 5 sections: Peter's greeting (1:1-2), an exhortation to Christian virtue (1:3-21), a condemnation of false teachers (2:1-22), the delay of the *Parousia* (3:1-16), and a final exhortation and doxology (3:17-18).

First Letter of John: five chapters; because of its similarity to the Gospel of John, this letter was attributed in the early church to the apostle and evangelist, but many scholars now think both works were produced by the same Johannine school; this work emphasizes doctrinal teaching, making it more a treatise than a letter, and aims to correct certain false ideas then current in the community; 4 sections: a prologue on the Word of life (1:1-4), God as light (1:5-3:10), love for one another (3:11-5:12), and an epilogue that is a prayer for sinners (5:13-21).

Second Letter of John: 13 verses; in both 2 John and 3 John, the author is identified as "the presbyter," or elder, and scholars think these letters were written by a later disciple in the Johannine community; this letter, addressed "to the chosen lady and to her children," urges them to continue following the commandment to love one another and to reject false teachings about the incarnation and death of Christ.

Third Letter of John: 15 verses; in this letter, which offers a glimpse of how early church leaders interacted, the presbyter commends "the beloved Gaius" for past hospitality to his missionaries and asks for such hospitality and support in the future; the presbyter also notes that another member of the community, Diotrephes, will not acknowledge his letters or receive his missionaries and the presbyter suggests he may come and deal with him in person.

Letter of Jude: 25 verses; the author of this letter is identified as "Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ and brother of James," most likely a reference to the author of the Letter of James; the letter is addressed to all Christians, but its main focus, a warning against false teachers, suggests that problem existed in one or more Christian communities; scholars

have noted similarities between Jude and 2 Peter; the letter ends with a doxology, or hymn of praise to God.

Book of Revelation

Book of Revelation: 22 chapters; this final book of the NT, full of fantastical imagery, is also known as the Apocalypse; like the OT Book of Daniel and other apocalyptic writings, Revelation was composed as resistance literature to meet a crisis, probably the persecution of the early church by Roman authorities, making Babylon a symbol for pagan Rome; because of grammatical and stylistic differences, scholars think it unlikely that this author John, an exile to the Roman penal colony on the island of Patmos, is the same John who wrote the fourth Gospel or the same author of the letters attributed to John the Presbyter; 7 sections: a prologue (1:1-3), letters to the seven churches of Asia (1:4-3:22), God and the lamb in heaven (4:1-5:14), the seven seals, trumpets and plagues, with interludes (6:1-16:21), the punishment of Babylon and destruction of pagan nations (17:1-20:15), the new creation, including a new Jerusalem (21:1-22:5), and an epilogue that contains warnings and exhortations (22:6-21).
Norman Perrin makes the following comments (*The New Testament: An Introduction*, 81-2):

> That John of Patmos can be identified as a prophet is more important to understanding his work than identifying him with some other individual named John in the NT. Traditionally it has been claimed that he is the John, son of Zebedee, known to us from the gospel stories, but this is most unlikely. It has also been claimed that he is the "John" of the fourth gospel, but the difference in language and style alone makes this identification quite impossible. However, that he is able to identify himself, and as a prophet (in sharp contrast to the pseudonymity and practice of apocalyptic writers in general), speaks volumes for the vitality, power, and self-confidence of NT Christianity.
>
> Another most unusual aspect of the book of Revelation is its letters to seven churches in Asia Minor […]. This is unparalleled in apocalyptic writing and has to be due ultimately to the impact that Paul's letter writing made on the NT church. Paul's letters had become so important that the literary form was imitated even by an apocalyptic writer. The book of Revelation as a whole has the external form of a letter in that it begins with an opening salutation (1:4-6) and closes with a benediction (22:21). The contrast in literary form between the direct address of the letters and the symbolic drama of the remainder of the book is startling, but no more so than the fact that an apocalyptic writer identifies himself and calls his work a prophecy.
>
> The fact that we have here the outward form of a Pauline letter helps us to grasp the essential thrust of the work. It begins with a salutation in the Pauline style […] (Rev 1:5b-6; compare Gal 1:3-5). But then it continues: "Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, every one who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen" (1:7). This is a classic statement of early Christian hope for the return of Jesus as apocalyptic judge and redeemer. Similarly, the closing benediction […] is in the Pauline style, but it is preceded by a prayer for the coming of the Lord, "Come, Lord Jesus" (22:20). However, this is the early Palestinian Christian Eucharist prayer *Maranatha*, which Paul himself used at the end of a letter […] (1 Cor 16:22-24). It is a reminder that for all its surface strangeness, the book of Revelation is not to be separated from the rest of the NT. The hope it represents is a fundamental feature of a major part of the NT.

Dating of Early Christian Writings

30-60	Passion Narrative	100-160	Gospel of the Nazoreans
40-80	Lost Sayings Gospel Q	100-160	Shepherd of Hermas
50-60	1 Thessalonians	100-160	2 Peter
50-60	Philippians	100-200	Odes of Solomon
50-60	Galatians	100-200	Gospel of Eve
50-60	1 Corinthians	100-230	Thunder, Perfect Mind
50-60	2 Corinthians	101-220	Book of Elchasai
50-60	Romans	105-115	Ignatius of Antioch
50-60	Philemon	110-140	Polycarp to the Philippians
50-80	Colossians	110-140	Papias
50-90	Signs Gospel	110-160	Oxyrhynchus 840 Gospel
50-95	Book of Hebrews	110-160	Traditions of Matthias
50-120	Didache	111-112	Pliny the Younger
50-140	Gospel of Thomas	115	Suetonius
50-140	Oxyrhynchus 1224 Gospel	115	Tacitus
50-150	Apocalypse of Adam	120-130	Quadratus of Athens
50-150	Eugnostos the Blessed	120-130	Apology of Aristides
50-200	Sophia of Jesus Christ	120-140	Basilides
65-80	Gospel of Mark	120-140	Naassene Fragment
70-100	Epistle of James	120-160	Valentinus
70-120	Egerton Gospel	120-180	Apocryphon of John
70-160	Gospel of Peter	120-180	Gospel of Mary
70-160	Secret Mark	120-180	Dialogue of the Savior
70-200	Fayyum Fragment	120-180	Gospel of the Savior
70-200	Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs	120-180	2nd Apocalypse of James
73-200	Mara Bar Serapion	120-180	Trimorphic Protennoia
80-100	2 Thessalonians	120-180	Gospel of Perfection
80-100	Ephesians	120-200	Genna Marias
80-100	Gospel of Matthew	130-140	Marcion
80-110	1 Peter	130-150	Aristo of Pella
80-120	Epistle of Barnabas	130-160	Epiphanes On Righteousness
80-130	Gospel of Luke	130-160	Ophite Diagrams
80-130	Acts of the Apostles	130-160	2 Clement
80-140	1 Clement	130-170	Gospel of Judas
80-150	Gospel of the Egyptians	130-200	Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus
80-150	Gospel of the Hebrews	140-150	Epistula Apostolorum
80-250	Christian Sibyllines	140-160	Ptolemy
90-95	Revelation	140-160	Isidore
90-120	Gospel of John	140-170	Fronto

Dating of Early Christian Writings

90-120	1 John
90-120	2 John
90-120	3 John
90-120	Epistle of Jude
93	Flavius Josephus
100-150	1 Timothy
100-150	2 Timothy
100-150	Titus
100-150	Apocalypse of Peter
100-150	Secret Book of James
100-150	Preaching of Peter
100-160	Gospel of the Ebionites
150-200	Acts of Paul
150-200	Acts of Andrew
150-225	Acts of Peter and the Twelve
150-225	Book of Thomas the Contender
150-250	Paraphrase of Shem
150-250	Fifth and Sixth Books of Esra
150-300	Authoritative Teaching
150-300	Coptic Apocalypse of Paul
150-300	Prayer of the Apostle Paul
150-300	Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth
150-300	Melchizedek
150-350	Preaching of Paul
150-350	Epistle to the Laodiceans
150-350	Questions of Mary
150-350	Allogenes, the Stranger
150-350	Hypsiphrone
150-350	Valentinian Exposition
150-350	Act of Peter
150-360	Concept of Our Great Power
150-400	Acts of Pilate
150-400	Anti-Marcionite Prologues
150-400	Dialogue Between John and Jesus
160-170	Tatian's Address to the Greeks
160-180	Claudius Apollinaris
160-180	Apelles
160-180	Julius Cassianus
160-250	Octavius of Minucius Felix
140-170	Infancy Gospel of James
140-170	Infancy Gospel of Thomas
140-180	Gospel of Truth
150-160	Martyrdom of Polycarp
150-160	Justin Martyr
150-180	Excerpts of Theodotus
150-180	Heracleon
150-200	Ascension of Isaiah
150-200	Interpretation of Knowledge
150-200	Testimony of Truth
150-200	Acts of Peter
150-200	Acts of John
180-250	1st Apocalypse of James
180-250	Gospel of Philip
182-202	Clement of Alexandria
185-195	Maximus of Jerusalem
185-195	Polycrates of Ephesus
188-217	Talmud
189-199	Victor I
190-210	Pantaenus
190-230	Second Discourse of Great Seth
193	Anonymous Anti-Montanist
193-216	Inscription of Abercius
197-220	Tertullian
200-210	Serapion of Antioch
200-210	Apollonius
200-220	Caius
200-220	Philostratus
200-225	Acts of Thomas
200-230	Ammonius of Alexandria
200-230	Zostrianos
200-230	Three Steles of Seth
200-230	Exegesis on the Soul
200-250	Didascalia
200-250	Books of Jeu
200-300	Pistis Sophia
200-300	Tripartite Tractate
200-300	Hypostasis of the Archons
200-300	Prayer of Thanksgiving

Dating of Early Christian Writings

161-180	Acts of Carpus	200-300	Coptic Apocalypse of Peter
165-175	Melito of Sardis	200-330	Apostolic Church Order
165-175	Hegesippus	200-350	Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit
165-175	Dionysius of Corinth	200-450	Monarchian Prologues
165-175	Lucian of Samosata	203	Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas
167	Marcus Aurelius	203-250	Origen
170-175	Diatessaron	210-245	Lucian of Antioch
170-200	Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony	217-222	Callistus
170-200	Muratorian Canon	230-265	Dionysius of Alexandria
170-200	Treatise on the Resurrection	230-268	Firmilian of Caesarea
170-220	Letter of Peter to Philip	240-260	Commodian
170-230	Thought of Norea	246-258	Cyprian
175-180	Athenagoras of Athens	250-274	Gospel of Mani
175-185	Irenaeus of Lyons	250-300	Teachings of Silvanus
175-185	Rhodon	250-300	Excerpt from the Perfect Discourse
175-185	Theophilus of Caesarea	250-350	Coptic Apocalypse of Elijah
175-190	Galen	250-400	Apocalypse of Paul
178	Celsus	251-253	Pope Cornelius
178	Letter from Vienna and Lyons	251-258	Novatian
180	Passion of the Scillitan Martyrs	254-257	Pope Stephen
180-185	Theophilus of Antioch	259-268	Dionysius of Rome
180-185	Acts of Apollonius	260-280	Theognostus
180-220	Bardesanes	265-282	Gregory Thaumaturgus
180-220	Kerygmata Petrou	269-274	Pope Felix
180-230	Hippolytus of Rome	270-310	Victorinus of Pettau
180-230	Sentences of Sextus	270-312	Methodius

Famous Bible Stories

It's difficult to pin down what are the most alluded-to stories in the OT and NT. So I'm relying on a number of sources to give you these lists. Obviously, this list isn't inclusive (for example, a list of the most-included stories from over thirty children's Bibles published from 1831 to 2013 stops at the top 348 stories).

Creation – Genesis 1
Noah's Ark – Genesis 6-8
Coat of Many Colors – Genesis 37
The Exodus – Exodus 1-14
Jericho – Joshua 6
David and Goliath – 1 Samuel 17
Jonah – Jonah 1-4
Jesus' Birth – Matthew 1, 2; Luke 1, 2
Feeding of the 5,000 – John 6
Peter Walking on Water – Matthew 14

Common Biblical Allusions

Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac, Genesis 22: He is the first patriarch of Judaism (first person to accept monotheism). She is his wife. They were married for a long time and had no children. She suggested that he have sex with her maid-servant, Hagar, so that he would have an heir. After that child was born, Sarah became pregnant, gave birth to Isaac, and forced Abraham to throw out the maid and her son, because she was jealous. Yahweh commanded Abraham to take Isaac to Mount Moriah and sacrifice him. When Abraham and Isaac reached the place Isaac was to be sacrificed, Yahweh told Abraham to stop and not sacrifice Isaac because he had proved how much he loved Yahweh.

Absalom: A son who brings heartache to his father; from the third son of David. Exiled for three years before he was allowed to return to the court or see his royal father, Absolom plotted to cause a rebellion against his father to overtake the kingdom because he heard Solomon was to succeed David. When Absalom was killed in battle, King David grieved for his son in spite of his treachery against him.

Adam and Eve: The first man and woman; she's created from a rib taken from him. They live in bliss in the Garden of Eden until Eve is persuaded by a Serpent into eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, which she then offers to Adam. After they eat, they realize they're naked and become ashamed. Yahweh (with some help from the Archangel Gabriel and his flaming sword) expels them from Eden as punishment; often referred to as the "fall from grace," or "loss of innocence."

Ahab and Jezebel: A man named Naboth had a vineyard that King Ahab wanted to use as a garden. Naboth said that Yahweh forbid him to give his inheritance to the king. Ahab went home and sulked, so his wife Jezebel wrote a letter in his name to the elders of Israel telling them to stone Naboth. When Naboth was dead, Ahab took his vineyard. The word of the Lord came to Elijah, telling him to go to Ahab and ask him if he killed Ahab and took his possessions. The Lord also said dogs will eat Jezebel.

Alpha and Omega: The beginning and the end, from the Greek alphabet, referred to in Revelation.

Antedeluvian: Latin for "before the flood," referring to the flood Noah rode out in Genesis. Something very old or outdated is sometimes exaggeratedly called antediluvian: "The professor's antedeluvian beliefs made him ill-suited for classroom teaching."

Anti-Christ/Armageddon: The Anti-Christ is the antagonist of Christ who will appear before the Second Coming, claiming to be Christ, and make serious trouble. The antichrist will seemingly provide for the needs of the people but deny them ultimate salvation, until Christ actually appears and defeats him, probably at the battle of Armageddon, a great battle between the forces of good and evil that is to occur at the end of the world. Armageddon now means any great and decisive battle.

The Apostle John: Brother of James; fisherman; last of the apostles to die, and only that died peacefully; Mary the mother of Jesus lived with him for a few years; when exiled to Apocalypse, that text was given to him by Jesus; when an old man his disciples would carry him to church meetings where he would say little more than "Little children, love one another!"

The Apostle Peter (Simon): Fisherman; given a name meaning "rock"; preached to the masses in Jerusalem on the day of the Pentecost; healed a man by saying "Silver

and gold I do not have, but what I have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."; called a "pillar" of the Church; crucified upside in Rome

Babylon: An ancient city of Mesopotamia known for its wealth, luxury, and vice.

Betrayal and Denial (of Jesus): Judas betrayed Jesus to the soldiers in the garden of Gethsemane by giving him a kiss on the cheek for thirty pieces of silver; Peter denied knowing Jesus three times—both were foretold by Jesus himself

The Burning Bush: One day Moses lost his temper and killed a Hebrew slave. He ran away. Yahweh spoke to him through a burning bush and said he had to go back and free the Hebrews from slavery.

Cain and Abel, Genesis 4:1-4:16: Adam and Eve's sons. Cain was older and a farmer; Abel was a shepherd. They made offerings to Yahweh, who liked Abel's lamb better than Cain's wheat. Cain was jealous that Yahweh liked Abel's better, so he killed him. Yahweh asked, "Where is your brother?" and Cain answered, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Cain was forced to roam as an outcast, with a mark on his forehead that showed that he killed his brother.

Calming the Sea (Calming the Waters): One evening Jesus and his disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee when a storm broke out, with waves breaking over the boat. Jesus was sleeping and the disciples woke him, saying, "Don't you care if we drown?" He got up and told the storm to calm, and it did. He said, "Why are you so afraid? Don't you have faith?" The disciples were scared and said, "Who is this? Even the wind and waves obey him."

The Creation Story, Genesis 1:1-2:3: Yahweh created the world in seven days. Day 1- light, Day 2- sky, Day 3- land and seas, Day 4- sun, moon, stars, Day 5- creatures of sea and sky, Day 6- animals, Adam, Eve, Day 7- rest

Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension: Jesus was crucified on a cross, was resurrected from the dead, and ascended into heaven to be with Yahweh. This happened during the Jewish Passover feast.

Daniel (in the Lion's Den): A young Hebrew prophet who prayed even when the king had ordered that no one pray. For this, he was thrown into a lion's den, where he should have been killed. Instead, Yahweh saved him and he came out of the lion's den unhurt. A symbol of divine protection and the rewards of faith.

David: A young boy who had the courage to fight the huge enemy, Goliath, whom he killed with a slingshot. He became king and was quite good, except for lusting after a married woman (Bathsheba), whose husband he then sent to the front lines to get conveniently killed so David could marry her. They became the parents of Absalom and Solomon.

David & Bathsheba: The "Bathsheba Affair" formed a critical turning point in King David's life. Prior to this, he had prospered greatly, but afterward, his personal fortunes were greatly diminished. Nathan the prophet confronted David after he took Bathsheba for his wife and trapped him into admitting his own guilt.

David & Goliath: The Philistine and Israel armies were about to fight. A Philistine giant named Goliath scared the whole Israelite army. David, who was just a small young teenager, volunteered to fight him. He told Goliath that he had Yahweh on his side. When Goliath moved in for the kill, David hit him in the head with a rock from a slingshot.

The Disciples: Jesus's followers; students who learned from a teacher. They are not the same group as Jesus's apostles, who were messengers sent forth to spread the Gospel after his Resurrection

***The Divine Comedy*:** written by Dante Alighieri between 1308 and his death in 1321, is widely considered the central epic poem of Italian literature, and one of the greatest of world literature. Its influence is so great that it affects the Christian view of the afterlife to this day. *The Divine Comedy* is composed of three *canticas*: *Inferno* (Hell), *Purgatorio* (Purgatory), and *Paradiso* (Paradise). In the Inferno, Dante is led by the poet Virgil into the underworld, where he experiences and describes each of the nine circles of hell. The sign at the entrance to Hell reads: "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here."

Doubting Thomas: Used to mean a "skeptic"; based on when the apostle Thomas doubted Jesus' resurrection and demanded to feel Jesus' wounds before being convinced, and after that happened he professed his faith in Jesus

Eden (The Garden of Eden): Genesis 1-3: Where Adam and Eve lived in peace with all the animals. They could eat from any tree except the Tree of Knowledge, but were tempted by a serpent (original sin). Yahweh then banished them from the Garden of Eden.

The Epiphany: Wise men from the East visit Jesus after his birth. Signifies a moment of revelation or coming to awareness.

Eye of the Needle: A very difficult task; from a famous narrow gateway called "the needle." Jesus said it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than for a rich man to enter heaven.

The Fall, Genesis: When Adam and Eve lost their innocence in Yahweh's eyes. In Christian religion, at this point, all humans lost their innocence, and can now tell good from bad and life from death. Many believe the only way they became able to get into Heaven again was when Jesus Christ sacrificed himself on the cross.

Filthy Lucre: Money or profits; from a story in the NT of Jesus casting moneylenders out of the Temple

Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Four figures in the book of Revelation who symbolize the evils to come at the end of the world. Conquest rides a white horse; War rides a red horse; Famine rides a black horse; and Plague rides a white horse.

Gideon: A judge of Israel. In a major battle, when his forces were massively outnumbered, he fooled the opposition by making noise with trumpets that made the enemy think that the Hebrew forces were much larger than they really were.

Goliath: A huge warrior of the Philistines who was killed by a boy (David) with a slingshot; a symbol of great power that can be overpowered.

Good Samaritan: A NT parable that appears only in Luke (10:25-37). Jesus speaks of a traveler who was attacked, robbed, stripped, and left for dead by the side of a road. Later, a priest and then a Levite saw the stricken figure and avoided him. Then a Samaritan passed by, and, despite the mutual antipathy between his and the Jewish populations, immediately rendered assistance by giving him first aid and taking him to an inn to recover while promising to cover the expenses. Jesus illustrates the precepts that a person's fitness for eternal life is defined by his or her actions, that compassion should be for all people, and that fulfilling the spirit of the Law is more important than fulfilling the letter of the Law. By extension, a Good Samaritan is a generous person who is ready to provide aid to people in distress without hesitation.

Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John): The "Good News": first four books of the New Testament, all telling the life of Jesus, from four different perspectives. "The Gospel" has come to mean any statement that is unquestionably true.

Hagar and Ishmael: Hagar is the maid of Sarah that Abraham had a child with and Ishmael is the child, who became a wandering outcast.

Herod, Herodias, and Salome: Herod, the ruler of Galilee in Palestine, feared that a great ruler would be born in his kingdom, so he had every male child under the age of two killed (known as the Slaughter of the Innocents). Salome was the daughter of Herodias and stepdaughter of Herod. John the Baptist had condemned the marriage of Herodias and Herod, as Herodias was the divorced wife of Herod's half-brother Philip. Herod imprisoned John, but feared to have him killed. Herodias was not scared and asked Salome to "seduce" her father with a dance so she could get whatever she wanted. She asked for John's head on a platter. Unwillingly, Herod did her bidding, and Salome brought the platter to her mother.

Holy Grail: The dish, plate, cup or vessel used by Jesus at the Last Supper, said to possess miraculous powers. It has long been the object of fruitless quests. By extension, the object of an extended or difficult quest.

Isaac: The son of Abraham and Sarah. Yahweh tested Abraham's faith by ordering him to sacrifice Isaac on a mountain. They went up to the mountain; Isaac was suspicious that there was no animal to sacrifice. Abraham said that Yahweh would provide. Just as Abraham was about to slit Isaac's throat, an angel stayed his hand and he then saw a ram caught in nearby bushes, which he sacrificed instead.

Isaiah: An OT prophet who prophesied the coming of a Messiah for the Jews. He walked around naked as a sign of Yahweh's willingness to take away all the people had if they did not live righteous lives. His "Servant Songs" ("Servant Poems" or the "Songs of the Suffering Servant") are four poems written about a certain "servant of Yahweh." God calls the servant to lead the nations, but the servant is horribly abused. The servant sacrifices himself, accepting the punishment due others. In the end, he is rewarded.

Ishmael: One who is cast out as being unworthy; the son of Abraham and his handmaiden Hagar, he was cast out into the desert when his wife Sarah had their son Isaac; therefore said to be the ancestor of the nomadic desert tribes of Arabs.

Israel: Jacob's name was changed to Israel by Yahweh, and from his two wives were born twelve sons and a daughter.

Jacob and Esau, Genesis 25:21-34, Genesis 27:1-28:7: Jacob and Esau were Isaac and Rebekah's twin sons. Esau was the older twin, a hunter, and Jacob was younger and quiet. Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of soup, making Yahweh angry. Rebekah convinced Jacob to lie to Isaac and steal Esau's blessings, also making Yahweh angry. Esau and Jacob eventually made up. Later, Jacob dreamt of a ladder that one could climb to get to heaven, with each rung being a good deed. He decided to apologize to Esau and then went on to have 12 sons, who became the 12 tribes of Israel.

Jesus Christ/carpenter/lamb: Jesus Christ is a figure of martyrdom, sacrifice, and loving forgiveness. He is often symbolized as either a carpenter (which he had been) or a lamb (a common sacrificial animal).

Jezebel: The wife of Ahab (a king of Israel), notorious for her evil and vicious actions.

Job: A loyal Jew. Yahweh and Satan made a bet as to whether or not Job would curse Yahweh, no matter what bad things occurred. Yahweh gave Satan free rein to test Job; great evils befell him and still Job didn't curse Yahweh. Eventually, Yahweh won the bet and gave Job back all the things he had lost.

Job's Comforters: At several points, friends came to "comfort" Job by claiming that his pains were the just consequences of his sins, and that it was therefore unseemly to complain about them. A Job's comforter has come to mean a person who tries to console another but instead has the opposite effect.

John the Baptist: Jesus's cousin (born of Elizabeth at old age), a messenger sent to prepare the way; baptized Jesus and pointed to him as the Messiah; preached repentance. Born before Jesus, and was one of his followers. After Jesus's death, he was captured by Herod for preaching Jesus's word. Salome danced for Herod, who offered her any gift in payment for her wonderful dancing. She requested the head of John the Baptist, which was delivered to her on a silver platter.

Jonah: A Hebrew whom Yahweh commanded to go to Nineveh to tell the people there to stop sinning. He didn't want to and tried to escape by boat, but Yahweh made a great storm. When the others on board realized that Jonah was the person Yahweh was mad at, they threw him overboard. He was then swallowed by a "great fish" (whale). He lived inside it for several days, repented, and was regurgitated on the beach. He then went quickly to Nineveh and followed Yahweh's orders. A symbol of learning the hard way.

Joseph and His Coat of Many Colors, Genesis 37: Joseph was the firstborn son of Rachel and Jacob, who loved him more than all his other sons because he loved the mother (Rachel) more than the mother of his other children (Leah). Joseph flaunted his father's favor, especially by showing off his many-colored coat that was a gift from Dad. Other brothers were very jealous and planned to murder him; instead, they sold him into slavery and he was taken to Egypt, where his ability to interpret dreams led him to become the pharaoh's right-hand man.

Joshua and the Battle of Jericho: After the death of Moses, Joshua oversees the conquering and settling of Canaan. This includes the miraculous crossing of the Jordan, the battle of Jericho, and the sun and moon standing still.

Judas: Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve original disciples of Jesus. He sold out to the Romans for 30 pieces of silver. He kissed Jesus in public so the Romans would know which man was Jesus and could arrest him. The "kiss of Judas" is an act of betrayal, especially one that looks like a loving action.

Killing the Fatted Calf: The prodigal son's father calls for a fatted calf to be killed for the welcoming feast. Killing the fatted calf is now represents sparing no expense on a celebration.

Kiss of Death: An act of betrayal, or any action which causes another's downfall (See Judas).

The Lake of Fire: A place of after-death punishment for those who do not live a righteous life.

The Last Supper (bread and wine): The final meal that Jesus shared with his Twelve Apostles in Jerusalem before his crucifixion; during the meal Jesus predicts his betrayal by one of the disciples present, and foretells that Peter will deny knowing him later that day; provides scriptural base for communion; bread- body, wine- blood

Lazarus: A man, dead for three days, whom Jesus raised from the dead. A symbol of Jesus' power.

The Loaves and the Fishes: "Feeding the Multitude"; Jesus feeds a large group of people in a remote area with five loaves and two fishes. Symbolizes a miraculous appearance of resources.

The Lost Sheep: A parable in which a shepherd leaves 99 sheep to find one lost sheep. Yahweh's love is like that of the shepherd's, seemingly foolish in human terms in its pursuit of the one who has lost his or her way.

Lucifer/Devil/Beelzebub/Flies: Lucifer was originally the most important angel and sat at Yahweh's right hand. He rebelled and was sent to Hell, where he is more commonly called the Devil or Satan. Beelzebub was originally a Philistine deity worshipped as the lord of the flies; that name (and image) was transferred to Christianity; in *Paradise Lost*, Beelzebub ranks next to Satan.

The Magi: Astronomers (often called "Wise Men") who followed a star to Bethlehem to see Jesus after he was born and brought him gifts to honor his birth; often referred to as the "Adoration of the Magi." See Epiphany.

Manna: A sustaining life-giving source or food; from the sweetish bread-like food that fell from heaven for the Israelites as they crossed the Sinai Desert to the Promised Land with Moses

The Mantle of Leadership: Elijah's mantle, or outer cloak, was a symbol of his prophetic authority. When it was time for Elisha to succeed Elijah, he "passed down his mantle of leadership."

Mary and Joseph: The father and virgin mother of Jesus. Mary was told by the angel Gabriel that she and her husband would bear the son of God; a carpenter.

Mary Magdalene: A prostitute who came to hear Jesus preach and became a devout follower. NOT the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-11..

Moses and Aaron: Brothers who worked together to save the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Moses's mother saved him by putting him in a basket and sending him down a river at a time when all male babies were to be killed. The Pharaoh's daughter found and raised him an Egyptian prince. Moses was the leader and Yahweh spoke to him, but he stuttered, so Aaron actually spoke to the people and told them what Yahweh told Moses. Moses led them across the Red Sea, which parted, and into the desert, where they roamed for many years. He went up to Mount Sinai, where Yahweh gave him the Ten Commandments. While he was gone the Israelites built an idol to worship: a golden calf. When he found them worshipping an idol, he was so upset that he broke the tablets the commandments were on. After they destroyed the calf, he went back and got another copy of the commandments.

The Nativity of Jesus: Jesus' conception is foretold to Mary. He is born in a stable, shepherds worship him, the Magi bring gifts.

Nebuchadnezzar and the Fiery Furnace: King Nebuchadnezzar had a nine-story high statue of gold that everyone had to worship. During the dedication ceremony, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were noticed not bowing down, and the king was notified. He threw them into a fiery furnace, but Yahweh delivered them from harm.

The New Jerusalem: In Revelation, a city that is or will be the dwelling place of the saints; also known as the City of God.

Noah and the Flood, Genesis 6-9: Because Noah was a righteous man, Yahweh commanded him to build an ark so he could save himself, his family, and the animals from the great flood Yahweh was sending to cleanse the earth. So it rained for 40 days and 40 nights. Symbols: olive branch and rainbow = peace

Number of the Beast (666): the beast who comes from "out of the sea" as seen in apocalyptic visions by John in the NT; aligned with The Dragon and The False Prophet; all three who can project demons into the world in order to gather kings for Armageddon

Original Sin/The Fall: The idea that all humans are innately sinful as a result of Adam and Eve's fall from the state of innocence. When they ate of the forbidden fruit, they were cast out of Eden; a post-biblical expression for the doctrine of Adam's transgression and humanity's consequential inheritance of a sinful nature because he ate the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge.

The Passover and the Red Sea Passage: With the final plague, Moses had warned the Hebrews to put lamb's blood above their door so the Angel of Death would "pass over" their house and not kill their firstborn sons. Finally the Pharaoh said the slaves could be freed. They left quickly, but their bread did not have time to rise. The Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army after them. Yahweh parted the Red Sea for Moses and his people to escape through.

***Paradise Lost*:** (1167) an epic poem by the 17th-century English poet John Milton. The poem concerns the Christian story of the rise of Man: the temptation of Adam and Eve by Satan and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

Patience of Job: Job, in the book named for him, was given a series of misfortunes. While this caused him to lament his fate, he did not waver in his faith in Yahweh. Somebody with a seemingly infinite store of patience is said to have the patience of Job.

Paul: Largely the developer of Christianity as an organized system of beliefs; he preached in towns all over the mideast, just ahead of Romans out to kill him for being a rabble-rouser. After he left a town where he had preached, he often wrote letters to his followers there, to keep them with the faith.

Pearl of Great Price: Something so precious that one would devote everything to or give up everything for it. .In one of Jesus' parables, the kingdom of heaven is compared to a pearl of great price, or value, found by a merchant.

Peter: The first "pope" of the Christian church. His name means "rock" in Latin and he provided the foundation for building the church itself, figuratively.

The Pharisees: Name means "separated ones." Member of a Jewish sect of the intertestamental period noted for strict observance of rites and ceremonies of the written law and for insistence on the validity of their own oral traditions concerning the law

Philistines: One of the traditional enemies of the Hebrews, known for their barbarism and indifference to art and culture.

The Plagues of Egypt: The Pharaoh wouldn't release the Jewish slaves, so Yahweh sent 10 plagues: curses, blood, frogs, lice, flies, pestilence, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, death of firstborn.

Pontius Pilate (hand washing): The phrase "washing one's hands of" something, means declaring one's unwillingness to take responsibility for the thing. Matthew 27:24 gives an account of Pontius Pilate washing his hands of the decision to crucify Jesus.

Prodigal Son: The book of Luke recounts the parable of the prodigal son, in which a son leaves home to fritter away his money on a hedonistic lifestyle, only to end up destitute. The son crawls home, filled with shame and remorse, and his father welcomes him with open arms. His brother, who had remained home to serve their father, is angry and jealous of the wastrel's warm reception. Somebody who leaves home to lead a dissolute life and regretfully returns home is called a prodigal son.

The Promised Land: The land promised to Abraham and his descendants. Canaan, also the land of milk and honey.

Rachel and Leah: Wives of Jacob. He fell in love with Rachel, the younger. Her father said Jacob could marry her if he worked for the father for seven years. Jacob did so. After the wedding, when he lifted the veil, he found that he'd married Leah, who had to marry first since she was older. He still wanted Rachel, so the father said Jacob could have her after another seven years of labor, which he did.

The Road to Damascus: Saul was travelling this road when he was struck blind by a vision and converted to Christianity. He became Paul the Apostle

Ruth and Naomi: Naomi was a Hebrew whose son married Ruth, a Moabite. After the son died, Ruth chose to stay with Naomi rather than returning to her own people. She is the first convert to Judaism and a symbol of loyalty.

Samson and Delilah: He was a Judge of Israel and had great strength because he had never cut his hair (he was a Nazarite, his life consecrated to Yahweh). She was from the enemy tribe (the Philistines) and became his mistress. She then betrayed him by cutting his hair while he slept. The Philistines captured and blinded him, but Samson eventually found enough strength to destroy his enemies by pulling down the pillars of the temple they were all in, even though doing so meant that he would die too.

Saul: In the OT, Saul and a servant were sent by his father, Kish, to find his donkeys. Saul was very big and tall. After they had been away for a while and couldn't find the donkeys, they went to see a wise man. Near there was a prophet Samuel who was going to bless a sacrifice. Yahweh had told Samuel that he would send a man to be king of Israel. Saul was that man. Samuel took Saul to his feast and the next day he anointed Saul and announced him as king.

Saul/Paul Persecuted Christians: In the NT, Jesus appeared to Saul, saying "Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?" and the light was so bright that it blinded him for three days. A Christian restored his sight and Saul was told he would be Jesus' witness to what he had seen and heard. He got up, and was baptized.

The Sermon on the Mount: Jesus' description of righteous living, found in Matthew. Given on a mountain to his disciples and others; includes The Beatitudes (eight blessings).

Sinai: The desert where the Jews roamed for many years, before getting to the Promised Land.

Sodom and Gomorrah, Genesis 18:16-19:29 2: Cities destroyed by Yahweh for being sinful. Lot and his wife are virtuous and advised to leave the city by Yahweh but they couldn't look back. Lot's wife got curious, turned around, and was turned into a pillar of salt.

Solomon: Son of King David died, and king after him. He prayed to Yahweh and asked for wisdom to rule in his father's place, and Yahweh answered his prayer. Solomon began to build the temple, which took seven years. He ruled with wisdom and fairness. When two women appeared before him, both claiming that the same baby belonged to both of them, he ordered it cut in half, so each woman could have half. The woman who screamed not to cut the baby was given it, since Solomon determined that she must really love it, since she didn't want it to die.

The Ten Commandments: Moses and his people wanted to find Canaan, the promised land. On Mount Sinai, Yahweh gave the ten commandments to Moses.

Thirty Pieces of Silver: Judas was paid thirty pieces of silver for betraying Jesus. Payment for any treacherous act is now referred to as thirty pieces of silver, or blood money.

Tree of Knowledge: the one tree whose fruit (apple) God forbade Adam and Eve from eating. After they do so (on the advice of Satan, disguised as a serpent), they gain knowledge of good and evil, but are banished from paradise.

The Tower of Babel, Genesis 11:1-9: Up until this point, everyone had spoken the same language. The people decided to build a tower to the sky so they could reach Heaven. Yahweh knew this stairway to Heaven would lead people away from worshipping him. He made everyone speak different languages and scattered them all over the world so the tower would not be built.

The Tribes of Israel: The 12 sons of Jacob (Israel) are the patriarchs of the 12 Tribes of Israel.. Jacob's son Benjamin is the patriarch of the Tribe of Benjamin. Jacob's son Reuben is the patriarch of the Tribe of Reuben. And so forth. Well-known descendants of certain Tribes: Tribe of Benjamin - King Saul, Paul the apostle [a.k.a. Saul of Tarsus]; Tribe of Levi - Moses, Aaron; Tribe of Judah - King David, King Solomon, many other kings, Jesus.

Walking on Water: Jesus sent the disciples in a boat, ahead of him, to Bethsaida, but when they were half way across the Sea of Galilee, Jesus walked over the lake water and met them. The disciples were frightened at first, thinking they were seeing a ghost, but when Jesus revealed himself and climbed into the boat, they were reassured. Peter also walked out onto the water towards Jesus, but when Peter saw the wind and the waves, he became afraid and began to sink, and Jesus rescued him

The Wedding at Cana: First miracle performed by Jesus in Gospel of John; Jesus and his disciples are invited to a wedding and when the wine runs out Jesus turns water into wine

The Whore of Babylon: Christian allegorical figure of evil mentioned in the Book of Revelation in the Bible; connected to the Beast and the Antichrist; dressed in purple and scarlet

The Woman Caught in Adultery: The *Pericope Adulterae*, from John 8:1-11: "The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.' And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, sir.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.'"

The Writing on the Wall: Foreshadowing doom or misfortune; originates in the book of Daniel, when supernatural writing foretells the demise of the Babylonian Empire.

Symbolic Numbers

In the Christian tradition, certain numbers carry symbolic meanings:

One: Unity — the unity of God; the unity of members of the Church.

Two: Duality — the divine and human natures of Christ; the material and the spiritual worlds.

Three: Divine Perfection; the spiritual realm, the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.).

Divine Attributes	Omniscient	Omnipotent	Omnipresent
Qualities of the Universe	Time: Past, Present, Future	Space: Height, Width, Depth	Matter: Solid, Liquid, Gas
Tripartite Humanity	Body	Soul	Spirit
Tripartite Soul	Vegetative	Animal	Human
Human Abilities	Thought	Word	Deed
Human Family	Man	Woman	Child
Office of Christ	Prophet	Priest	King
Patriarchs	Abraham	Isaac	Jacob
Divisions of the OT	Pentateuch (Torah)	Nevi'im (Prophets)	Ketuvim (Writings)

Four: Creation; Universality; Tetragrammaton (four-letter name of God).

Elements	Earth	Air	Fire	Water
Corners of the Earth	North	South	East	west
Seasons	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Times of Day	Morning	Noon	Evening	Night
Rivers of Paradise	Pishon	Gihon	Tigris	Euphrates
Evangelists	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Cardinal Virtues	Justice	Prudence	Temperance	Fortitude
Horsemen	War	Famine	Pestilence	Death

Five: Grace; reward; wounds of Christ (hands, feet, and side) — and, by extension, sacrifice; senses.

Pentateuch	Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy
Virtues	Friendship	Generosity	Chastity	Courtesy	Piety
Joyful Mysteries	Annunciation	Visitation	Nativity	Presentation	Finding in the Temple
Sorrowful Mysteries	Agony in the Garden	Scourging at the Pillar	Crowning with Thorns	Jesus Carrying the Cross	Crucifixion
Glorious Mysteries	Resurrection	Ascension	Descent of the Holy Spirit	Assumption of Mary	Crowning of Mary
Luminous Mysteries	Baptism in the Jordan	Wedding at Cana	Proclamation of the Kingdom	Transfiguration	Institution of the Eucharist

Six: Creation (God created in six days); Imperfection (it falls short of the perfect number, seven).

Seven: Perfection (God rested on the seventh day); Combination of matter (4) and spirit (3); Utterances from the cross; Works of Mercy (WOM); in Revelation: churches, letters, spirits, stars, seals, horns, eyes, angels, crowns, plagues, etc.

Gifts of the Spirit	Wisdom	Understanding	Counsel [Right Judgement]	Fortitude [Courage]	Knowledge	Piety	Fear of the Lord
Corporal WOM	feed the hungry	give drink to the thirsty	clothe the naked	shelter the homeless	visit the sick	visit the imprisoned	bury the dead
Spiritual WOM	instruct the ignorant	counsel the doubtful	admonish sinners	bear wrongs patiently	forgive offenses	comfort the afflicted	pray for the living & dead
Deadly Sins	Lust	Gluttony	Greed	Sloth	Wrath	Envy	Pride

Eight: Regeneration or resurrection. Eternity is the eighth day of a week. Day of circumcision.

Nine: Mystery; Choirs of Angels (Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Archangels, Principalities, Angels).

Ten: Completion; Divine Perfection; The Moral Life (10 Commandments); Ten Plagues, etc.

Twelve: Zeal of mission (12 Apostles); the whole church (12 Tribes of Israel).

Thirteen: Betrayal, since there were thirteen people at the Last Supper.

Forty: Trial or testing; Noah's flood; Israel's wandering in the wilderness; Moses' stay on Mt. Sinai; Jesus' temptation in the wilderness; Lent = 40 days.

Fifty: Completion; Year of Jubilee; 50 days of Easter (Pentecost is 50 days after Easter)

Seventy: Mission; Jesus' disciples

One hundred: Fullness (in age); Completion or plenty (10 x 10); Great return (a hundredfold).

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