

# Bible Knowledge

*Know the Book*



**12 Foundation Stones Class 6A**

# Class Section 1: Why Study the Bible?

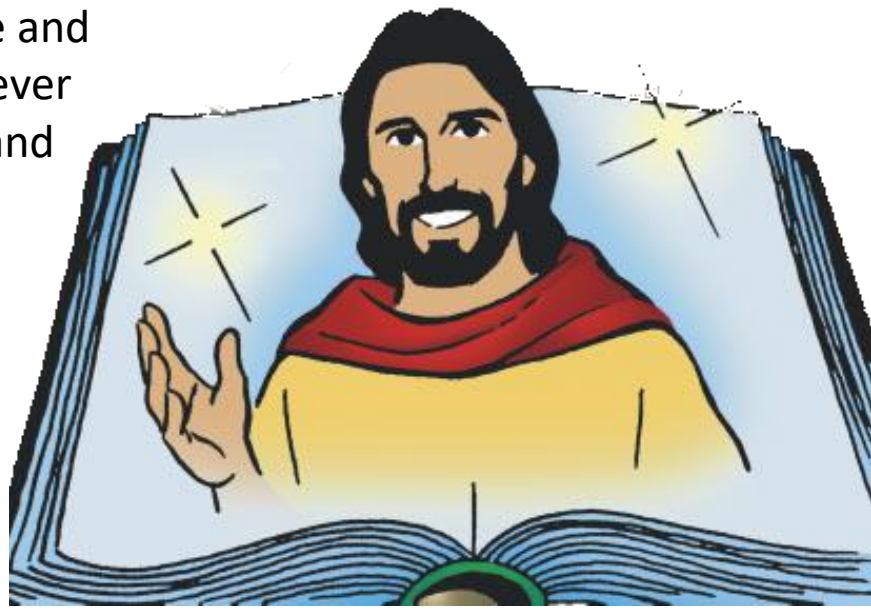
The Bible is the most marvelous book in the whole world. It not only tells us where we're going, but also how we got here, why we're here, how to survive and be happy while here, and how to have love, happiness, joy, and peace forever.

In the Bible you can find almost anything: drama, romance, poetry, prophecy, history, mystery, and much more. But most important, the Bible contains the very Spirit and life of God Himself.

*John 6:63 – The words that I speak to you are spirit and life.*

The fact that the Bible has the power to effect positive change in each of our lives, no matter what our situation or need, is the greatest proof that the Bible is the supernatural Word of God Himself. As you read the Bible you will find that it is an absolutely inexhaustible source of wisdom and knowledge.

And the most wonderful thing about the Bible is that through its words we can get to know its author. Its life-giving words make it the greatest book in the world, with the only author in the world who can guarantee life and love and happiness and Heaven forever through simply reading it and believing in its main character, the One who loved us so much that He gave His own life to save us—Jesus Christ, the Son of God!



## Soul food

The Bible tells us:

*1 Peter 2:2 Like newborn babies hungry for milk, you should want the pure teaching that feeds your spirit. With it you can grow up and be saved.*

Like a baby needs milk to be healthy and grow or even survive, you must be fed spiritually in order to stay healthy and grow spiritually. And just like a baby has an instinctive and irrepressible desire to be fed, so we should hunger for the pure milk of God's Word.

*Jeremiah 15:16 - Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.*

*Job 23:12 - I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.*

## The Bible tells us what's going to happen!

The Bible contains hundreds of specific prophecies about people, nations, places, times, and events that have already been fulfilled down to the smallest detail. Some of these were fulfilled almost immediately, others took hundreds of years, but each came to pass exactly as God said they would. There are also many other prophecies in the Bible that are yet to be fulfilled, which will be fulfilled just as surely.

Fulfilled prophecy is one of the greatest proofs of the Bible! Who else but God could have revealed the future thousands of years before it would unfold? Who else but God could have foretold the future in perfect detail, long before it happened?

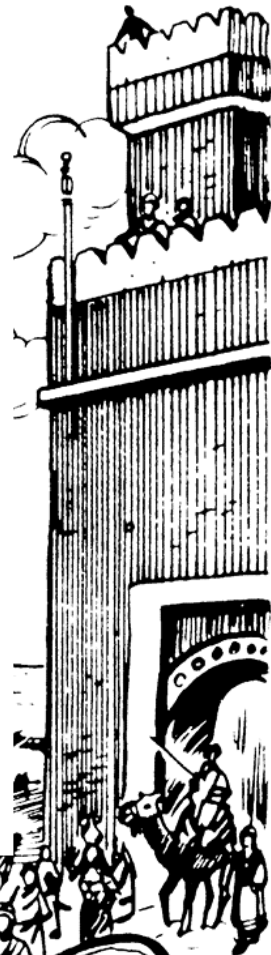
## A place for fishermen's nets—The fall of Tyre

Tyre was a city in ancient Lebanon which still exists today. In the years when the prophecy was given, Tyre was part of a country called Phoenicia. This was about 600 years before Jesus was born.

In the year 590 B.C., God spoke to the prophet Ezekiel and told him what was going to happen in the future to the city of Tyre.

*From Ezekiel chapters 26-30—Son of man, because Tyre has said, 'I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas—I am of perfect beauty!' Therefore thus says the Lord God: 'Behold, I ...will cause many nations to come up against you. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for spreading nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken,' says the Lord God.*

*Behold, I will bring against Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. ... yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus.*



God told Ezekiel that because the city of Tyre was proud and rebellious against God, then God was going to allow the king of another country to come and destroy the city. He said that the city would end up in ruins, just piles of rocks for the fishermen to spread their nets over.



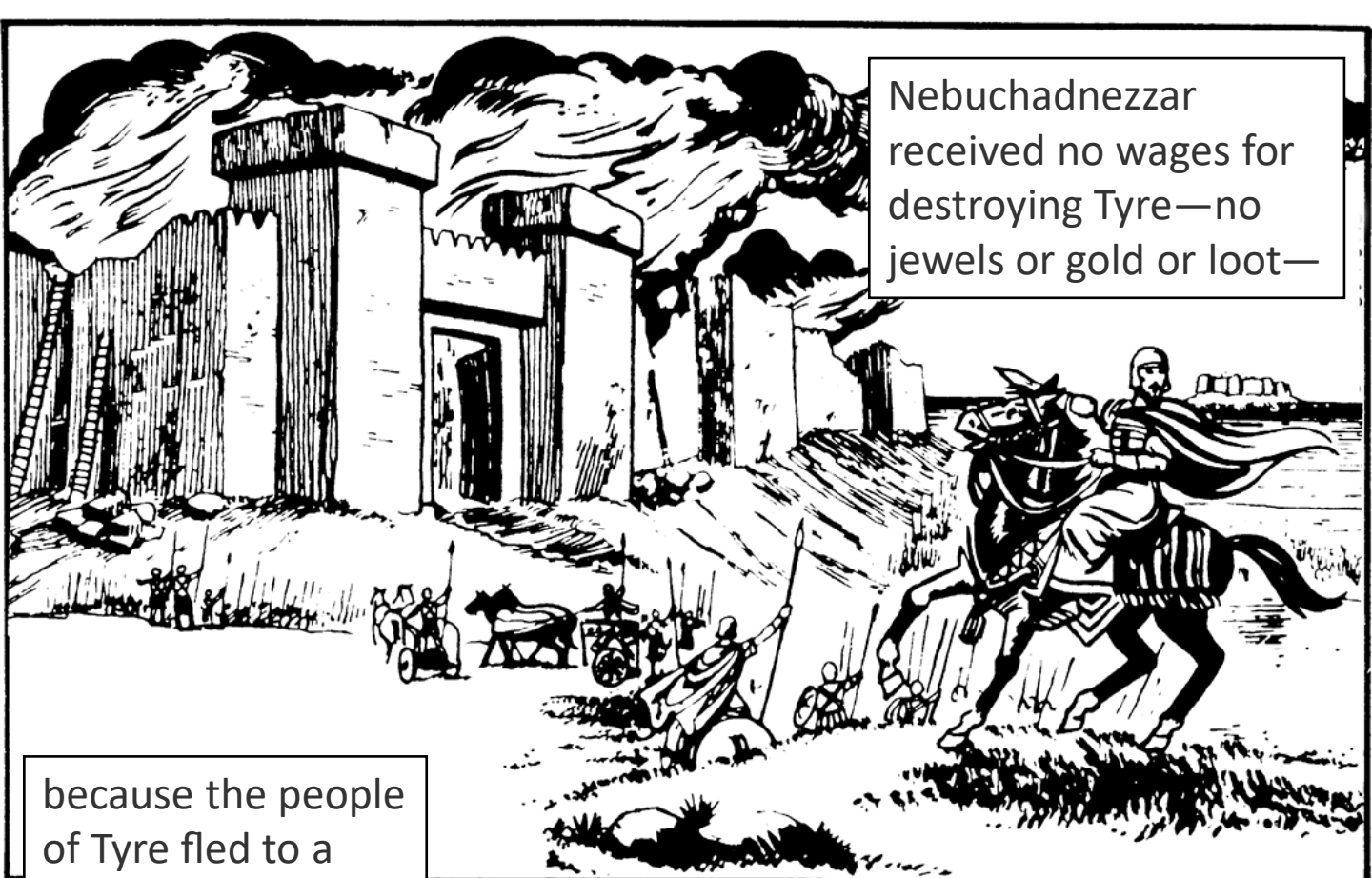
If you were living in Tyre in those days, you would have thought this was a silly prediction. Tyre was the great city of the Phoenicians, built on a hill overlooking the Mediterranean Sea in what is now the modern nation of Lebanon. The Phoenicians were a great

seafaring and trading people— "all the ships of the sea" came to Tyre. The Phoenicians were one of the outstanding civilizations of ancient times.

But just look what happened to Tyre!


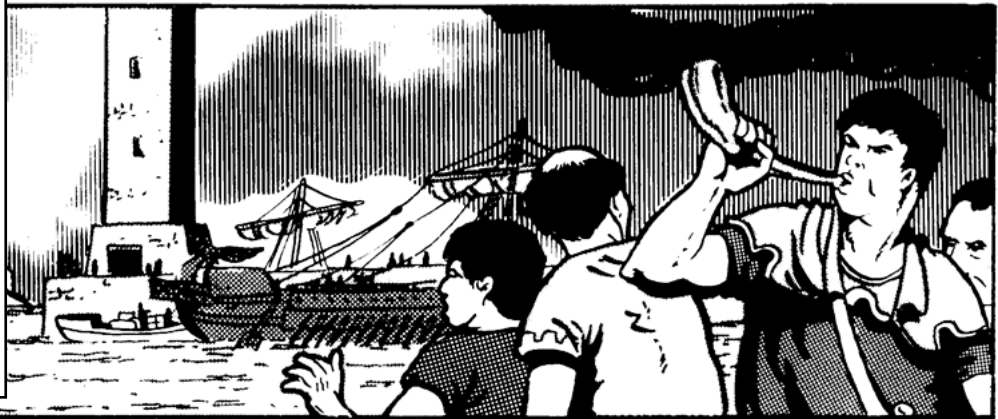
In 586 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar's armies went through the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Just like God had told Ezekiel, Nebuchadnezzar tore down ancient Tyre and leveled it to the very ground, but left the ruins there.

The whole prophecy still had not been fulfilled because the old city of Tyre had not been scraped "as bare as the top of a rock" and its ruins were not yet "a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea."



Nebuchadnezzar received no wages for destroying Tyre—no jewels or gold or loot—

because the people of Tyre fled to a little island that was a half mile offshore. There the people built a new city and took all of their wealth with them.



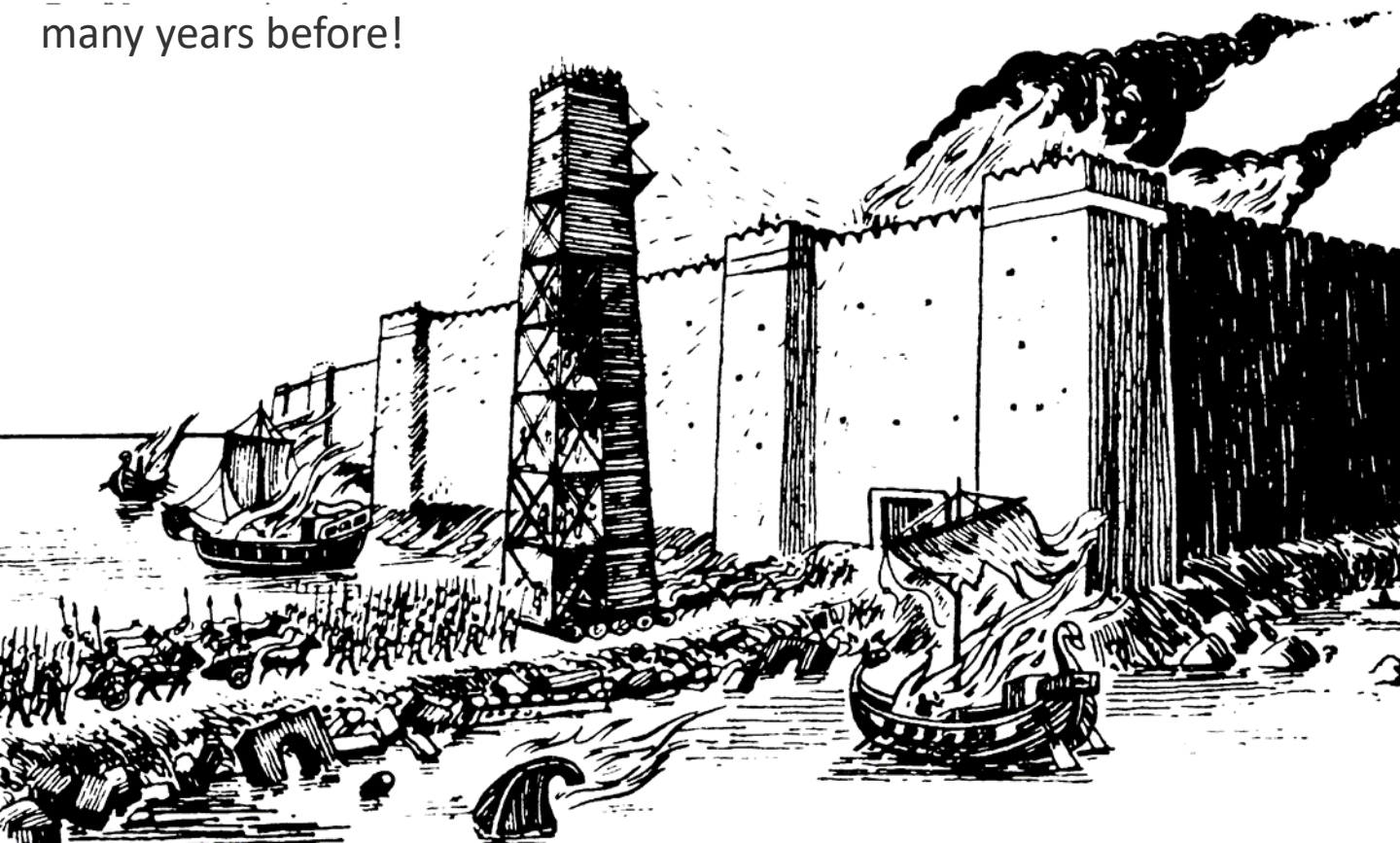
Nebuchadnezzar was not a seafaring man. He had no ships or navy and he was unable to cross that little half

mile of ocean between him and the island to conquer them.

In 332 B.C., Alexander the Great came to Tyre. He heard all about this wealthy city out there on the island. Alexander was a very smart general. He looked out across that half mile of water and said, "How can I get there? I want to get all that money they have out there!"

So he began looking around for something to use, and he saw this big pile of rubble that used to be the ancient city of Tyre—all those bricks and stones and mortar and timbers. So Alexander's army got it all together and they scraped everything they could find right into the Mediterranean Sea. They scraped the area bare and used the materials to build a causeway right across the shallow floor of the Mediterranean to the island city! And soon Alexander captured and plundered the island city of Tyre.

And do you know what? Along the sides of that road the fishermen spread their nets exactly like God had prophesied! Tyre was thrown into the sea! This exact end of ancient Tyre was predicted over 250 years before it happened! Only God could have predicted that so many years before!

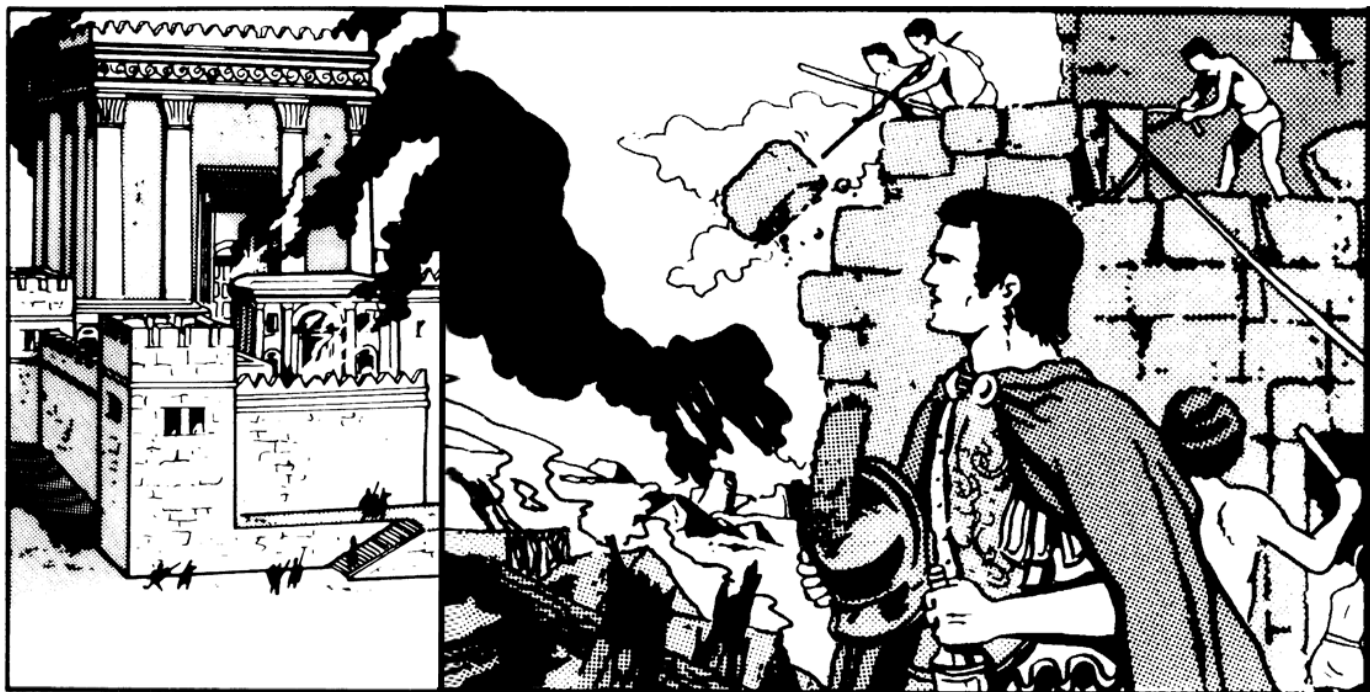


## The destruction of the temple by the Romans in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy

*Matthew 24:1-2—Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."*

As Jesus prophesied, the temple was thrown down—actually torn apart stone by stone.

The event is recorded in secular history. In 70 A.D., the armies of Roman Emperor Vespasian marched into Judea under General Titus and crushed the rebellion of the Jews, destroyed Jerusalem, and burned the temple. The fire caused the gold leaf on the temple ceiling to melt. The melting gold flowed down the walls, settling into crevices. The Romans then pried apart the stones to remove the gold, until literally "not one stone was left standing upon another"!



In the next class we'll be looking at fulfilled prophecies about Jesus, which is an amazing study all in itself. In later classes we'll look at prophecies concerning the future.

**\* Quick summary of reasons to study the Bible:**

- For our own benefit and spiritual growth
- To get closer to the Author and to know His mind
- To know the future: The Bible tells us what's going to happen!

## **Class Section 2: Basic Bible Knowledge**

### **Who wrote the Bible?**

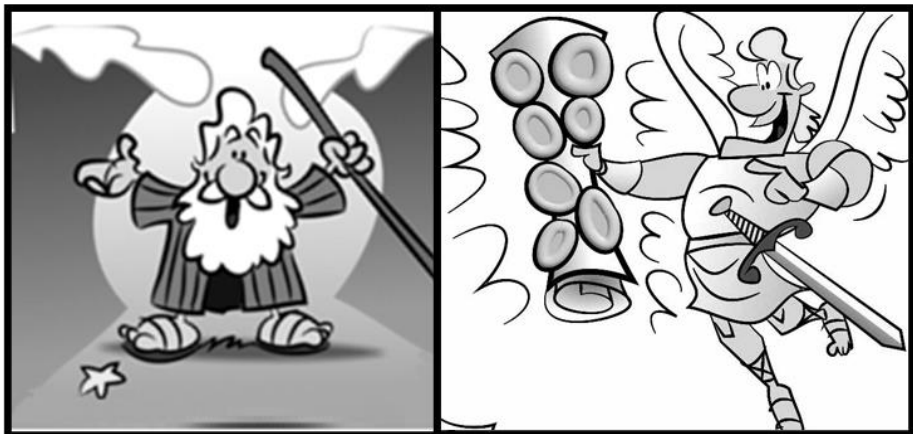
The Bible is a collection of 66 books. God used about 40 men to write the Bible. In some cases quite a few books were written by the same man.—But that's not really the most important thing because God is the Author of the Bible!

*2 Timothy 3:16—All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

*2 Peter 1:21b—Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*

The books of the Bible were written during a 1,500-year period.

That 1,500-year period began with Moses about 3,400 years ago and ended with the book of Revelation over 1,900 years ago.



## **\* Difference between Old and New Testaments and what they are**

The Bible contains two major sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. (Testament in this case means "covenant" or "contract," so the Old and New Testaments can be thought of as the old and new binding agreements between God and man.)

The Old Testament is a compilation of the Holy Scriptures of the Jews, written over a 1,100-year period. The Old Testament has many prophecies about a Messiah or "Anointed One," who would be a "son" who would be called "Mighty God," or "Eternal Father." These prophecies were written hundreds of years before Jesus Christ was born.

The New Testament contains the sacred writings of the early Christian period. The 27 books of the New Testament were written in Greek over a period of about 100 years. They tell of Jesus' life and ministry and the growth of the Early Church, and present the basics of Christian faith.

### **\* Old Testament Groups**

The Old Testament has 39 books. Scholars generally agree that they were written over a period of about 1,100 years, from the 14th to the 4th century B.C. They were written in Hebrew, except for a few passages in the book of Daniel, which were written in Aramaic.

The Old Testament is divided into three major divisions: Historical, Poetical and Prophetic. The books are organized partly chronologically and partly according to content. The Bible is very well organized and it was put in this order to make it clearer for us.

## \* Old Testament Historical books

The Old Testament begins with 17 historical books. The historical books begin with the first five "Books of Moses." They are called the "Pentateuch" or the "Five Books of Moses" and they are also spoken of by Jesus and others as the "Law" or the "Torah." Esther is the last of what are called the Historical Books. All those first Books from Genesis to Esther are classified as Historical Books.

Those first historical books are about the history of the world, history of God's people, and history of God's dealings with man before the birth of Christ.

*1 Corinthians 10:11—Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come.*

### Five Historical Books of Moses

**Genesis.** The book of Origins. The origin of the universe, human race, etc. Largely a record of the early history of God's people. The first part of the book covers the history of early mankind, narrating the events of the Creation, the Fall, the Flood, and the Dispersion of the races (people scattered across the world following the Tower of Babel). The second section concerns the lives of the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.





**Exodus.** The bondage, deliverance, and beginnings of the history of Israel on the way to Canaan, under the leadership of Moses. Includes the life story of Moses and the Hebrews' deliverance from Egypt, and the giving of the law.

**Leviticus.** The book of Mosaic laws. It teaches access to God through sacrifices. Those who are saved are no longer under these laws since Jesus died. The book has mostly priestly legislation and the practical application of the law among the people. Much importance is placed upon Israel's separation from all heathen influences so that the nation would retain its religious purity.

**Numbers.** The book of the pilgrimages of Israel. It is a continuation of Exodus, describing the forty years' wanderings in the wilderness.

**Deuteronomy.** A repetition of the laws given shortly before Israel entered Canaan. It is a sequel to Numbers. The last three chapters tell of the last days of Moses.



## Twelve Other Historical Books

**Joshua.** This tells the story of Joshua, Moses' successor. It was Joshua who led the people into the Promised Land after the death of Moses. The book records the conquest of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, and the division of the land among the 12 tribes.

**Judges** is so called because it relates of the times of various rulers, or judges, of Israel from the possession of Canaan until the time of the prophet Samuel. Covers 300 years of history—the six conquests and subjugations of the Israelites, and the various deliverances of the land through the 15 judges. Includes the adventures of Samson.



**Ruth.** A beautiful story of how Ruth, a foreigner, became the ancestress of David and of Jesus. Ruth, the widowed Moabitess, goes to Judah with her mother-in-law, Naomi. There Ruth meets and marries Boaz.

**1 and 2 Samuel.** The history of Samuel (priest and prophet) and the beginning and early years of the monarchical period in Israel (when they were first ruled by kings) under the reigns of Saul and David. First Samuel tells of the organization of the kingdom, the actions of Samuel, how Saul was made king, his fall, and the beginning of the reign of King David. Second Samuel tells of the reign of David.

**1 and 2 Kings.** The early history of the kingdom of Israel, and later of the divided Kingdom. (Israel and Judah split.) Includes the lives of Elijah and Elisha, prominent prophets.



**1 and 2 Chronicles.** Largely a record of the reigns of David, Solomon, and the kings of Judah up to the time of the captivity (when they were conquered by Babylon and carried away to Babylon). Some repetition of what is in the books of Samuel and Kings.

**Ezra.** Continues from Chronicles. A record of the return of the Jews from captivity in Babylon, and the rebuilding of the temple.

**Nehemiah.** An account of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, and a spiritual revival amongst God's people.

**Esther.** The story of Queen Esther's (Jewish wife of the Persian king) deliverance of the Jews from the plot of Haman in the courts of the king of Persia.



## Old Testament Poetical Books

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon are called the Poetical Books. They are the poetry of the Bible, and they were grouped together because they were used largely in devotional services, being either read or sung.



Psalms and Proverbs are beautiful books to read at your devotional times.

Psalms is also a tremendous prophetic book full of Messianic prophecies.

Parts of the book of Proverbs are proverbs of other kings and other men, as it says in the Bible, but King Solomon wrote most of it. Of course, in many of those proverbs he was repeating the wisdom which had been given by God to men down through the ages. He was simply making a list and recording them. As there are 31 chapters in Proverbs, a good project is to read one chapter each day, corresponding with the day of the month.

# Outline of Poetical Books



**Job.** The problem of affliction, showing the malice of Satan, the patience of Job, the problem of self-righteousness, the vanity of human philosophy, the divine wisdom, and the final deliverance of the sufferer. This is generally accepted as the oldest book in the Bible, and probably was written before the time of Moses.

**Psalms.** A collection of 150 spiritual songs, poems, praises, prayers, and prophecies. King David wrote many of these. Psalms are very inspiring to read during your devotional quiet times. Some key Psalms are also very beautiful and helpful to memorize.

**Proverbs.** A collection of moral and religious maxims, and discourses on wisdom, temperance, justice, etc. King Solomon wrote most, though there are debates about the authorship of some.

**Ecclesiastes.** Solomon's reflections on the vanity of life, and man's duties and obligations to God, etc.

**Song of Solomon.** A beautiful, passionate love poem-

## \* Old Testament Major Prophets

There are 17 prophetic books. Five are "major" and twelve are "minor."

The four major prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. They are considered major not because of the size of the books but because of the importance of the prophet and what he predicted.



## Outline of Major Prophets

**Isaiah.** A book rich in Messianic prophecies, and other prophecies of the future, mingled with woes pronounced upon sinful nations.

**Jeremiah.** Jeremiah lived from the time of King Josiah to the captivity in Babylon. The main theme of the book is the backsliding, bondage, and restoration of the Jews.

Jeremiah received the call to prophesy while very young. It was his mission to predict doom upon his nation for its many sins. For this the priests and the people hated him. Jeremiah warned the Jews not to fight Babylon, but to surrender, and God would temper their punishment.

**Lamentations.** Also written by Jeremiah. A dirge over the desolation of Jerusalem.

**Ezekiel** lived during the exile (in Babylon). The book is divided into two sections: The first denounces the sins and abominations of Jerusalem and the second looks to the future with the hope that the city will be restored after it has been cleansed. The latter also contains prophecies about the coming Kingdom of Heaven and of Jesus.

**Daniel.** Prophecies of the future: some have been fulfilled, some are specific prophecies of the Endtime.



## \* Minor prophets

**Hosea.** Lived at the same time as Isaiah and Micah. The central thought: He urges a return to God.

**Joel.** A prophet of Judah, he wrote this book during a plague of locusts, a time of great distress for the people. This book contains discussion of repentance and its blessings, and predictions of the Holy Spirit.

**Amos** was a herdsman prophet who denounced selfishness and sin. The book contains a series of five visions and predicts the ultimate universal rule of the Lord. Amos proclaimed that God was the ruler of the whole world.

**Obadiah.** Leading topic—the doom of Edom and final deliverance of Israel. The shortest book in the Old Testament, it has only one chapter.



**Jonah.** The story of the "reluctant missionary" to the great city of Nineveh who was taught by bitter experience the lesson of obedience and the depth of divine mercy. This is the man who was "swallowed by the great fish" or whale.



**Micah.** This book gives a dark picture of the moral condition of Israel and Judah, and foretells the establishment of the Kingdom of the Lord in which righteousness shall prevail.

**Nahum.** The destruction of Nineveh, capital of Assyria. Also contains a classic rebuke against warfare and militarism.

**Habakkuk.** Written in the Chaldean period. This book is concerned with the problem of unpunished evil in the world. It was revealed to Habakkuk that the Chaldean (Babylonian) armies were to be God's means of punishing the wicked and that evil would destroy itself. The book concludes with a poem of thanksgiving and great faith.

**Zephaniah.** This book is filled with God's threatenings to the rebellious, but ends with a vision of the future glory of God's people.

**Haggai.** A colleague of Zechariah. He reproves the Jewish people for slackness in building the second temple; but promises a return of God's glory when the building should be completed.

**Zechariah.** Contemporary of Haggai. He helped to arouse the Jews to rebuild the temple. He had a series of eight visions, and saw the ultimate triumph of God's kingdom. Zechariah gives very specific predictions about the coming of Jesus the Messiah: His death to remove sin, Christ as King and Priest, His Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem, being betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, His hands pierced at the crucifixion, and more.

**Malachi.** He gives a graphic picture of the closing period of Old Testament history. He shows the necessity of reforms before the coming of the Messiah. The final message to a disobedient people.

## \* **New Testament Groups**

The New Testament is composed of 27 books. It is divided into three major categories: History (the Gospels and book of Acts) , Epistles (letters) and Prophetic. It parallels the same arrangement as the Old Testament with one exception: The central section, instead of Poetic books, contains Epistles.

## \* **Historical: Gospels and Acts**

The Gospels deal with the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. The book of Acts tells of some of the major happenings of the Early Church over the next 30 years, and is a sort of sequel to the Gospels.

The first three Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—are called the "Synoptic Gospels" because they are similar in content. The Gospel of John is the Gospel of Salvation. Each Gospel tells the same basic story—of the life and ministry of Jesus, and the meaning of His coming—yet they each tell it in a slightly different way. The authors mention what was important to them about certain events, which explains why the accounts of the same events are slightly different.

## **Outline of New Testament Historical Books**

**Matthew.** Matthew had been a tax collector and became one of the apostles. His book was written mostly with the Jews in mind, to convince them that Jesus was the Messiah. You'll find many references to the Old Testament in this book as Matthew wanted to show how Jesus was fulfilling the prophecies. Matthew was an eyewitness to many of the events that he wrote about.



**Mark** was a companion of Peter, as well as Paul. His Gospel contains what he heard Peter recount. He emphasized the supernatural power of Jesus over nature, disease, and demons. All this divine energy was exercised for the good of man.

**Luke** was a Greek physician (the only non-Jewish author in the New Testament) and was a companion of Paul. He wrote the most complete biography of Jesus, portraying Him as the Son of man, full of compassion for the sinful and the poor.

**John** was one of the original 12 apostles. John understood the spiritual depths of the Love of God and His salvation and what Jesus meant to the whole world, and not just to the Jews. The book of John contains more of the actual quoted words of Jesus than any other book.

**Acts** follows on from the Book of Luke and is believed to be written by the same author. It tells what happened to Jesus' disciples after His resurrection, then going on to explain the history of the Early Church, the conversion of Paul and his journeys, etc. Acts emphasizes that the Church is guided continually by the Holy Spirit.

### \* **The Epistles**

"Epistles" means letters. Paul wrote the 14 so-called "Pauline Epistles." Then there are seven "General" Epistles. They are called "General Epistles" because they are not addressed to anybody in particular, whereas the earlier Epistles were written specifically to



certain people. Paul's Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians and Ephesians, etc., are all addressed to specific individuals or groups of believers and are named after whom the letters were addressed to. The following Epistles from James, Peter, John and Jude are named after those who wrote them..

Paul's epistles are deep, legal theology. It was important for Paul to explain in convincing legal arguments why the Gospel had to be so, why Jesus had to come and why things were different now—no longer under law, but grace. He gives legal arguments like he's talking before a judge to convince a judge of his case, and if you have that kind of a mind, you'll enjoy his writings.

You should also bear in mind when reading the Epistles that some of what Paul wrote on behavior and so on, was pertaining to the customs of the day and does not necessarily apply today, just as much of the Old Testament law is no longer relevant.

### **Outline of 14 Epistles of Paul**

Most of these were written to the churches in that specific area. If you look at a map of the area in New Testament times (you'll probably find one in the back of your Bible), you'll be able to find these locations. These places still exist today! Corinth, for instance, is near Athens.

**Romans.** Addressed to Roman Christians. Chapters 1-11 discuss the plan of salvation. Chapters 12-16 are largely exhortations relating to spiritual, social, and civic duties.

**1 Corinthians.** Addressed to the Corinthian church. Leading topics—the cleansing of the church from various evils, together with doctrinal instructions.

**2 Corinthians.** The characteristics of the ministry and vindication of Paul's apostleship.

**Galatians.** Important book because it explains clearly the concept of salvation by faith, not works.

**Ephesians.** The plan of salvation. All barriers between Jews and Gentiles have been broken down.

**Philippians.** A letter to the Philippian church. It reveals Paul's intense devotion to Christ, his experience in prison, and his deep concern that the Church should be steadfast in sound doctrine.

**Colossians.** Counsel to abandon worldly philosophy and sin. Jesus is the head of the Church.

**1 Thessalonians.** Exhortations and counsel. Also prophecies of the Endtime.

**2 Thessalonians.** More about Jesus' Second Coming and warnings to believers.

**1 Timothy.** Counsel to a young pastor concerning his conduct and ministry.

**2 Timothy.** Paul's last letter, written shortly before his death, giving counsel to his beloved "son in the Gospel."

**Titus.** Counsel given to a trusted friend.

**Philemon.** A private letter written to Philemon, beseeching him to receive and forgive Onesimus, a runaway slave.



**Hebrews.** Author is most likely Paul. Written to Jewish Christians, this explains the doctrine of salvation. Also contains very inspiring history of God's people (Chapter 11).

## Outline of 7 General Epistles

**James.** Probably written by James, the brother of Jesus. Addressed to Jewish converts who had dispersed from Israel. The main theme is practical religion, manifesting itself in good works, as contrasted with only a profession of faith.

**1 Peter.** A letter of encouragement written by the Apostle Peter to the believers scattered throughout Asia Minor. Leading topic: The privilege of believers following the example of Jesus, to have victory in the midst of trials, and to live consecrated lives in an unfriendly world.

**2 Peter.** A warning against false teachers and scoffers.

**1 John.** Written by the Apostle John. It lays great importance upon the believer's privilege of spiritual knowledge, the duty of fellowship, and brotherly love.

**2 John.** A brief message on divine truth and worldly error.

**3 John.** A letter of commendation written to Gaius.

**Jude.** The writer was probably the brother of James, and brother of Jesus. Historical examples of apostasy and divine judgments upon sinners.



## \* **The Prophetic Book: Revelation**

**Revelation.** It was written by the Apostle John (while in exile), who was also the author of the Gospel of John and three Epistles. The book of Revelation contains complex and detailed prophecies about the future, with much detail on the Endtime, the events preceding and following Jesus' Second Coming, on into the Millennium. It concludes with a wonderful description of Heaven.

## \* **How the Bible came into being**

The first recorded instance in the Bible of God telling someone to write is in the book of Exodus. Following a victory in battle, God instructed Moses to *"Write this for a memorial in the book"* (Exodus 17:14). In another example several chapters later, *"Moses wrote all the words of the Lord ... Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people"* (Exodus 24:4, 7). From that time until the end of the New Testament age, the writing of the many books and parts of the Bible continued.

None of the original biblical documents has survived. But before the original documents disappeared, they were copied. These precise copies of the original writings are the texts on which current translations of the Bible are based.

The process of copying and recopying the Bible has continued to our time. Until the middle of the 15th century A.D., all the copying was done by hand. Then, with the invention of the printing press in Europe, copies could be made in greater quantities by using this new process. This made the Scriptures available to many people, rather than just the few who could afford expensive handmade copies.

## \* **How the Bible was put together**

It's quite amazing when you realize that here is a Book that was written over a 1,500-year span—40 generations. It was written by over 40 authors from every walk of life including kings, shepherds, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars, etc. Yet the Biblical authors wrote in harmony and continuity from Genesis to Revelation. There is one unfolding story: God's redemption of man.

This grouping of the Old Testament that you study today was put in this final canonical form and organized in this order by a group of 70 scholars in Alexandria, Egypt, somewhere between 250 - 100 B.C. These 70 scholars decided on which were authentic books, recognized as genuinely inspired. Their product was a translation into Greek and became the accepted Authorized Greek Version of the Old Testament, which was the literary language of the people of that day, of both the Greek and Roman empires. They called it the Septuagint, meaning the one produced by 70 men, and that has been the accepted Authorized Version of the Old Testament ever since.

In the second century A.D., when officials of the Early Church sought to make a list of books about Jesus and the Early Church that they considered authoritative, they retained the Old Testament, on the authority of Jesus and His apostles. Along with these books they recognized as authoritative the new writings—four Gospels, or biographies on the life and ministry of Jesus; the book of Acts, the 14 letters of Paul; and letters of other apostles and their companions. The primary standard applied to a book was that it must be written either by an apostle or by someone close to the apostles. This guaranteed that their writings about Jesus and the Early Church would have the authenticity of an eyewitness account.

## \* **Language and translation**

The Old Testament was first translated from Hebrew, and the New Testament from Greek. The Jews, of course, spoke Hebrew, but in the New Testament era, because of the domination of the Greek Empire they also spoke Greek as the language of culture, philosophy, religion, art, and music. And because the Greek language is by far the most expressive, much more even than Hebrew or Latin, they used Greek to write the New Testament in.

The Bible, or portions of it, have been translated into approximately 2,233 languages, making its message available to about 98% of the world's population.

## \* **Compiling the Bible and its division into chapters and verses**

The Bible was not divided into chapters and verses until the 1200's. It certainly is handy to have it divided into chapters and verses so you can find something. In the days of the apostles and the Old Testament, all they could say was, "Well, it's in Psalm" or "It's in Isaiah" or "It's in this or that!"—And you had to hunt for it.

### \* **Points to Ponder**

- How can reading the Bible help us?
- What do you like most about the Bible?
- What do you seek for when you read the Bible?—Faith, comfort, general knowledge, or something else?
- What difficulties have you come across when trying to read the Bible: Lack of understanding, distraction, lack of time? Anything else? What solutions have you found?
- What do you think God's purpose was in giving us the Bible?

## Daily Word

One of the very best habits you can ever form is that of spending a little time each day reading and studying the Bible. Start by devoting 15 minutes a day, and then increase it to 30 minutes or more as time goes on. As you read God's Word and try to follow it, your life will become deeper, you'll be happier and have more peace of mind, and you'll have more love for and understanding of others. It doesn't all happen in one day, but it does happen.

Having an ongoing reading project—reading through all four Gospels or the New Testament or the Book of Psalms, for example—will help you get the most out of your daily Word time. One idea of a daily study plan that offers some variety is as follows:



- \* One chapter from the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).
- \* One chapter from Psalms.
- \* Half a chapter from Proverbs.