

BASIC BELIEF

**A COURSE OF
CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP**

THE BIBLE

GOD'S REVELATION TO MANKIND

BASIC BELIEF

THE BIBLE: GOD'S REVELATION

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SECTION 1

THE BIBLE

WHAT IS IT?

HOW DID WE GET IT?

HOW WAS IT PRESERVED?

1. WHAT IS THIS REVELATION?

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is God-breathed

and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,
so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Peter 1:20-21

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture
came about by the prophet's own interpretation.

For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man,

but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word,

and the Word was with God,

and the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning.

Through him all things were made;

without him nothing was made that has been made.

In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

John 1:9-14

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

He was in the world,

and though the world was made through him,

the world did not recognize him.

He came to that which was his own,

but his own did not receive him.

Yet to all who received him,

to those who believed in his name,

he gave the right to become children of God --

children born not of natural descent,

nor of human decision or a husband's will,

but born of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

We have seen his glory,

the glory of the One and Only,

who came from the Father,

full of grace and truth.

John 1:18

No one has ever seen God,

but God the One and Only,

who is at the Father's side,

has made him known.

Hebrews 1:1-3

**In the past God spoke to our forefathers
through the prophets at many times and in various ways,
but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son,**
whom he appointed heir of all things,
and through whom he made the universe.

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being,
sustaining all things by his powerful word.
After he had provided purification for sins,
he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

2. HOW DID WE GET THIS REVELATION?

In our country we tend to take the Bible for granted. Nearly everyone has one in his home---even if it is on the back shelf, gathering dust. Through the centuries the Bible has been revered, and for that reason alone it has survived for more than 3000 years. The ancient Hebrews accepted a sacred trust from God to pass on the Scriptures accurately. As a result of their care, we too may read the Word of God as inspired by Him.

To be sure, there are points of controversy. Ancient manuscripts do not always agree. Textual criticism comes up with various problems---and yet the more research that is done and the more manuscripts that are found, the surer scholars are that the Bible has been preserved for us virtually without adulteration.

For many years the Authorized Version of 1611 (the King James Bible) has been the standard English version. Now, as new translations and paraphrases are introduced each year, some Christians consider them to be heretical, or at least subtle attempts to undermine the Christian faith. In most cases, however, closer examination proves the suspicions to be unfounded. Each contemporary version has its own strengths and weaknesses.

As we observe the influence of the Bible through the many years from Moses to the present, we'll see why men have preserved it and why men today are still translating. The story of how we got our Bible shows the continued work of God in preserving His inspired Word for each new age.

TRANSMISSION OF TEXT

Over 40 authors producing 66 books covering a period of more than 1500 years is quite an accomplishment. How was it done?

Word of mouth was the first way of sharing what God had told His people. Moses told parents to lay up his words in their hearts, speaking of them to their children, "when you sit in your houses, and when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you get up." At certain periods in Bible history, such as the years before the written gospels, *word of mouth* has played an especially important part in keeping the Word alive.

As a boy growing up in Egypt, Moses was taught to read and write. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on *stone tablets* such as were then in use. *Clay tablets* were used for many less important records in the Middle East.

During the 40 years of the Exodus, when Moses kept a history of the events of the journey, he probably wrote on *animal skins*, a material suited to a nomadic existence. His long scrolls were carefully preserved and read to the gathered people from time to time. This ancient custom is preserved to this day among the Hebrew people.

Copies of the original writings were made by hand by scribes, and later monks---a laborious and exacting task. These copyists did their jobs well, as those who would answer to the Lord, but occasionally an error of transmission would come about. By comparing ancient copies, however, we can locate these errors and remove them.

MATERIALS USED

Vellum was a fine-quality untanned skin, usually from a young calf. Hair was removed from one side and flesh from the other, before it was stretched and dried, and polished to use for writing upon.

Parchment was made the same way, but from older animals, especially sheep and goats. Its quality was not as fine. From the fourth century (AD) to the Middle Ages, these animal-skin products were used for copying the Bible.

A *palimpsest* is a parchment which was erased and then reused. Using chemical agents and photography, the older writing can be restored today.

Papyrus, the tall, water plant which was abundant along the Nile, was cut, soaked, pressed, and dried. Thin slices were put together, with the pith laid cross-wise. This formed a much-used writing material in the early Christian centuries and before.

Paper was invented in China in the second century. It did not reach Egypt until approximately 900; Spain, 1150; Italy, 1270; Germany, 1390; England, 1494; North America, 1690 (Philadelphia).

A beautiful set of large, rounded capital letters called *uncials* was used to copy Scripture in the monasteries. Margins filled with intricate art work called *illumination* began to be used.

SCRIBES/MASORETES

The monks, and in earlier times the Hebrew *Scribes*, held the sacred duty of preserving the Word of God. According to the *New Bible Dictionary*, the most common scribal errors were:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. <i>haplography</i> | failure to repeat a letter or word; |
| 2. <i>dittography</i> | repeating what occurs only once; |
| 3. <i>false recollection</i> | writing from memory when using another manuscript
which has a similar passage; |
| 4. <i>homoeoteleuton</i> | omission of a passage between similar words; |
| 5. <i>line omission</i> | sometimes caused by homoeoteleuton; |
| 6. <i>confusion of letters</i> | of similar form; |
| 7. <i>insertion</i> | of marginal notes into the body copy. |

The *Masoretes* were the keepers of the Hebrew text between A.D. 500 and 1000. To be sure that their copies were perfect, they would count every letter of their page and every letter of the original, find the middle word and letter of each and compare for accuracy. They never made changes in what they had copied, but offered a marginal note if they thought something was wrong. Scripture was originally written without vowels; they added marks or "points" to make it easier to read the Old Testament aloud.

The *Masorah* was an extensive body of textual notes made by the *Masoretes*, concerning the number of times a word occurred in Scripture, and where. The *Masorah* also contained an analysis of textual peculiarities and variant readings from recognized *codices* (plural of *codex*, a paged manuscript, as opposed to a scroll). The notes did not explain meanings.

A *genizah* is a depository for old scrolls after they are somewhat worn out. In 1890, at a synagogue in Cairo, one *genizah* yielded a collection of Scripture copies, some of which may be older than the ninth century.

Most of the really old extant Bible manuscripts have been discovered and published since 1611, the date of the King James Bible translation.

TRANSLATIONS

The big Latin Bible of Johannes Gutenberg, printed before 1456, was not his first book as has often been claimed. But its completion established printing from movable type, and opened the way for new Bible translations for the countries of Europe--and eventually for the world. It is said that great Bible was printed on six presses. With a type-setting rate of one page each day and a back-breaking schedule, it took two years to print 150 copies of the two-volume book.

Translations of the Bible began long before the invention of the printing press, however.

The librarian of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-246 BC) persuaded him that he should have a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures for the royal library in Egypt. He appealed to the high priest in Jerusalem, who, it is said, sent **72 elders** to Alexandria to make an official translation of the Torah (the Law: the Pentateuch or First Five Books of Scripture). Afterward other translators may have taken more than a century to complete the entire Old Testament, 3rd-1st centuries BC. The various translators differed greatly in their translating ability. The *Septuagint*, in spite of its errors of translation and interpretation, became accepted by the Christian church.

The *Peshitta* began as a literal translation from the Hebrew which was made by Syrian Christians, probably in the second century (A.D.). Unfortunately the translation was later revised and compromised with the *Septuagint*.

In A.D. 240, Origen, a church father, determined to provide a more reliable Greek translation. His *Hexapla* contains six parallel columns:

1. The Hebrew text;
2. The Hebrew text transliterated into Greek letters;
3. Aquila's translation;
4. Symmachus' translation;
5. The *Septuagint* as revised by Origen;
6. Theodotian's translation

In 1896, the Milan *palimpsest* of the Psalms of the *Hexapla* was discovered. The rest of Origen's work is largely lost, except for the critical notations, which are of great value.

By the early second century, historians were quoting from New Testament books, but the copies were still circulating independently or in small groups. Tertullian at about 200 first called the Christian Scriptures the New Testament, recognizing them as equal to the Old Testament in being the inspired Word of God. During the third century, all the books of the New Testament were recognized as Scripture and gathered into one volume.

Clement of Alexandria (150-220) wrote a seven volume commentary, *Outlines*, on the books of the New Testament. His comments included the Epistle of Barnabas and the Apocalypse of Peter.

Athenasius of Alexandria (A.D. 298-373) was the first to declare our present 27 books canonical. This canon was officially recognized at the Councils of Hippo (A.D. 393) and Carthage (A.D. 397).

After the canon was officially declared by the church, the dispute over the questionable books---both those admitted to the canon and those not---died down.

The first full version of the entire Bible which was of importance was the *Vulgate*, a Latin translation from the Hebrew and Greek by Jerome (342-420) in a monastery at Bethlehem. In about the year 400 this Bible was accepted as the church's official version.

As England emerged from the Middle Ages it was apparent to some that the church was not satisfying the spiritual needs of many of its people. Much like the Jews in Jesus' day, they felt a need for Scripture in the language of the people. (*Targums* in Jesus' day were prepared for the Jews in the Aramaic they understood. So, too, despite official bans and persecution, Scripture would now be translated into the English that people understood.) Earlier in England some attempts had been made and a few portions, notably Bede's Gospel of John, had been preserved though the Dark Ages. But for all practical purposes, the Bible was available only in Latin and Greek.

But late in the fourteenth century, *John Wycliffe* and his associates translated the whole *Vulgate* into English. This was still before printing, and the Bible had to be handcopied. This translation was not authorized for use in churches, and not enough copies of it could be made to make it widely useful.

After the invention of printing and movable type, *William Tyndale* refused to be stopped in his translating work. Facing punishment in England, he fled to the continent and continued translation. He finished the New Testament in 1525 and had it printed the next year in Germany, then smuggled copies into England. He openly exposed the Reformation and was suspected of heresy by Roman Catholic officials. He kept moving about the continent, working on this translation. He had translated the Pentateuch and Jonah from the Old Testament when he was betrayed, convicted of heresy, strangled, and burned. *Myles Coverdale* took over the work and completed Tyndale's translation even as copies of it were being burned officially in England.

With church reform came the Cromwell-commissioned *Great Bible*. *Coverdale* revised his earlier work for this huge edition, which was chained inside churches.

No longer subject to persecution, translators set to work. In 1560, Whittingham, Sampson, and Gilbey published the *Geneva Bible*. This was the best translation to date and was a relatively small Bible, for use in the home. This was the most popular version of the Bible in England until the *Authorized Bible*. It was made by Protestants exiled in Switzerland, and has been called a "partisan" Puritan Bible.

On the Catholic side, exiles in Rheims produced a New Testament translated into English from the *Vulgate*, the *Rheims Testament* of 1582. Later the *Douay Old Testament*, a Catholic version of 1609 or 1610, was added, to make the *Douay-Rheims Bible* version.

As King James I hurried from Scotland to England to assume the British throne, he was for the moment eager to please the "radical" Protestants. He established a committee of 47 scholars for the purpose of doing a new translation of Scripture. The high quality of the work which resulted can be seen from the fact that nearly 250 years passed before a revision seemed necessary. And even now, more than 384 years after its appearance, the *Authorized Version of the Holy Bible* is the most popular.

The *English Revised Version* was a carefully controlled revision of the King James Version, making only those changes which seemed most necessary.

American scholars cooperating with the revision were more ready to make changes in text and style, especially because of the differences in expression between England and the United States. They had promised to wait at least 14 years before bringing out their own version, and in 1901 the *American Standard Version* was published.

Now a number of "modern speech" translations had begun to appear. (The Richard *Weymouth New Testament* [1903] was one of these.) Two versions in ordinary speech which are still very popular are *James Moffatt's* (1914-24) and "An American Translation" by *Smith-Goodspeed* (Merlin Smith and Edgar Goodspeed, 1923-27).

The very important *Revised Standard Version*, based on the earlier revisions in the King James tradition, was published in 1952 (New Testament, 1946).

The Dead Sea Scrolls, which were discovered in 1947, marked a turning-point in Biblical scholarship. Suddenly manuscripts were available which were 800 years older than scholars had previously known. As the manuscripts are being published, new translations are being made taking the latest scholarship into account.

The most serious attempts at working with the new evidence have been made in the *Jerusalem Bible* published in 1966 by an international committee of the Roman Catholic Church, and *The New English Bible*, published in 1970 by a committee from major British denominations. Both are of excellent literary quality.

A popular new translation that is really a paraphrase in popular English and is not based on extensive critical or historical scholarship, is *The Living Bible* by Kenneth Taylor. This paraphrase makes the Bible as easy to read as your daily newspaper. It has been a best-seller for an uncommonly long time.

In 1978, a new translation was produced called *The New International Version*. It was translated by a team of over 100 scholars using the best scholarship to-date from the original texts.

A COMMENTARY

The appearance in recent years of several new translations of the New Testament and the entire Bible has produced a spate of books and pamphlets denouncing all translations except the King James Version as "of the devil." It is solemnly declared by these critics that the A.D. 1611 King James Version, so-called, is the most accurate of all; in fact, many appear to believe that it is the only "divinely-inspired" version.

It is a matter of solid history that every new translation of the Bible has met with opposition and has had its share of severe critics. John Wycliffe, who first translated the complete Bible into English, was known among his enemies by such names as "Doctor Wicked Believer" and "Devell's Instrument." So bitter was the persecution against his work that in 1428, 44 years after his death, his bones were exhumed and burned by order of the Council of Constance.

A little more than a hundred years later, William Tyndale---whose monumental work was the basis for the King James Version---was seized by ecclesiastical agents and , after trial and imprisonment for 16 months, was strangled and burned at the stake for translating the Scriptures without proper authorization.

The King James Version went through 50 stormy years before it received wide acceptance, some of its critics contending that the translators pandered to the king's interest in witchcraft by inserting terms that favored such superstition.

When the Revised Standard Version was published in 1952, some preachers called it the Bible of the Antichrist. A booklet entitled *The Blasphemous Bible* was published against it. One preacher, it was reported, burned a copy of it in his pulpit with a blow-torch. (At least today they burn the Bibles, not the translators!)

It simply cannot be denied that for millions of English readers today the language of the King James Version is, in many passages at least, strange, difficult and sometimes altogether unintelligible. To those who say it was good enough after 380 years, I would suggest that the use of archaic English may have had a lot to do with the scores of denominations and cults which have sprung up, each claiming to derive its beliefs from the Bible. (Incidentally, the apostle Paul did not translate or use the King James Version!!)

It is not surprising that some Greek and Hebrew students shudder when they occasionally come across an inadequately translated text. Let it be remembered, however, that most modern translations represent the arduous efforts of *many* Hebrew and Greek students who not only collaborated, but agreed upon, the finished product.

While it is true that some versions owe their existence to the work of scholars not noted for their belief in verbal inspiration, God is nevertheless capable of protecting His Word from gross error. Every translation says the same thing: namely, that I must trust Christ Jesus the Lord as my Saviour, love God with all my heart, soul and mind, and my neighbor as myself. They all say that I must be holy, humble, obedient, prayerful, pure, kindly, courageous and faithful. They all say that God is my Father and the Holy Spirit the inhabitant of my nature through the mystery of the new birth. And they all end with the cry for Christ's returning. They all contain enough original truth to draw a sincere, hungry-hearted soul to Christ.

SECTION 2

THE BIBLE

WHAT DOES IT CONTAIN?

WHAT DOES THIS REVELATION CONTAIN?

The Bible was written over a period of **1,500 years** spanning **40 generations**.

There were over **40 authors** from various walks of life
including rich and poor,
kings and peasants,
philosophers and fishermen,
poets and statesmen.

It was written on **three continents**: Asia, Africa and Europe,
in times of war and peace, joy and despair.

Three different languages were used in writing the various books of the Bible.

It includes hundreds of controversial subjects for which there could be countless
opposing opinions, yet the **66 books** which make up the **Bible** speak with
amazing unity.

The **Bible** has one unfolding story throughout:

"God's redemption of mankind."

This unifying theme and the continuity of the **Bible** is remarkable when you consider
the tremendous diversity displayed in its formation.

THE OLD TESTAMENT CHRONOLOGICALLY ARRANGED

	HISTORICAL	POETICAL	PROPHETIC
	GENESIS		Pre-Exilic
(JOB)	Beginnings		To Ninevah
	----- EXODUS		JONAH
	Redemption		
(LEVITICUS)	----- NUMBERS		To Israel
Worship	Wanderings		AMOS
(DEUTERONOMY)	----- JOSHUA		HOSEA
Review	Success		JOEL
	----- JUDGES		To Edom
(RUTH)	Failure		OBADIAH
Faith-Love	----- I SAMUEL		To Judah
	Preparation of Kingdom	PSALMS	ISAIAH
	----- II SAMUEL		MICAH
	Establishment of Kingdom		NAHUM
	----- I KINGS		HABAKKUK
	Division of Kingdom	PROVERBS	ZEPHANIAH
(I-II CHRON)	----- II KINGS	ECCLESIASTES	JEREMIAH
God's	Loss of Kingdom	SONG OF SONGS	
Evaluation			
of			
The Kings		LAMENTATIONS	
	70 YEARS OF CAPTIVITY	Exilic	EZEKIEL
			DANIEL
(ESTHER)	EZRA		Post Exilic
Faith-Courage	Temple		HAGGAI
	----- NEHEMIAH		ZECHARIAH
	Wall		MALACHI
	400 YEARS OF SILENCE		

JOB

Although it isn't possible to date, many scholars think of **JOB** as the "oldest" book in the Bible. The cultural situation reminds us of the time of Abraham. Job lived in Uz (Job 1:1) which was apparently in the Syrian desert somewhere between Damascus and Edom (compare Lamentations 4:21). The book establishes God's wisdom and supremacy, and His care over those who trust in Him, but nothing is said of Jewish religion. So it is logical to suppose that the events of Job occurred prior to the time of Moses. However, there is nothing to indicate that the book was written at that time. It may have been passed down in oral form and composed in writing at a later date.

PENTATEUCH

The first five books of the Bible, called the **PENTATEUCH**, have traditionally been ascribed to Moses. Moses kept a history of his people (Numbers 33:2) by commandment of the Lord. No doubt the account of Moses' death and subsequent history which we have in the last chapter of Deuteronomy (34:5-12, esp. v. 10) was written by the prophetic leader, and evidently he used oral or written sources for the early chapters of Genesis.

Critics once claimed that writing was unknown in the Mosaic period. Yet archaeologists have found hieroglyphic writing dating back to about 3000 BC in Egypt, the nation where Moses was raised and educated. Babylonian inscriptions have been found from the time of King Sargon (3750 BC). The *Ras Shamra* tablets found in 1929 date from about 1400 BC, the approximate time of Moses. And the 30-letter alphabet used in the tablets is a Semitic one, resembling Hebrew writing and dialect. The earliest document found in Hebrew is the *Gezer Calendar*, of about 925 BC. The calendar is part of a schoolboy's assignments.

Throughout these **Books of the Law (TORAH)** are statements of Mosaic authorship (Exodus 17:14; 24:4; 34:27-28; Numbers 33:2; Deut. 31:9, 22, 24; and 32:1-43). The books are assigned to Moses in Joshua 8:31; Judges 3:4; and Malachi 4:4. Jesus acknowledges Moses as author of the **Law (the Pentateuch)** in Luke 24:44 and John 7:19.

JOSHUA

Joshua succeeded Moses as Israel's leader, and the **Book of Joshua** continues the history where the *Books of Moses* left off. Joshua wrote at least a portion of the book (24:26), adding to the book of the law of God. A number of the events happened after Joshua's death.

JUDGES AND SAMUEL

In the Hebrew Bible, the two **BOOKS OF SAMUEL** were one. Samuel was a writing prophet (I Samuel 10:25). But he couldn't have written the entire history which bears his name, since his death is recorded in I Samuel 25:1. It is likely that a school of the prophets was responsible for the **BOOK OF JUDGES** and for the **BOOK OF SAMUEL**. For an indication that the prophets were involved in keeping histories, see I Chronicles 29:29. **JUDGES** has been ascribed by tradition to Samuel. In any case, **JUDGES and SAMUEL** are eyewitness accounts of the earliest history of the twelve tribes in the Promised Land.

RUTH

RUTH was an ancestress of King David (Ruth 4:7), and therefore she lived during the period of the Hebrew judges, before the monarchy was established. It is apparent that since David is mentioned in the book, it was not composed before his reign. Since Ruth was a Moabite, she is a Gentile in the line of David and the Savior.

PSALMS

About half of the **PSALMS** are credited to David in their (Hebrew) superscriptions. The **PSALMS** speak of the king's feelings at various times in his career. Does your Bible contain the superscriptions (short notes printed under the chapter numbers)? These "song titles" are very old. They refer to events such as "when the Philistines took David to Gath."

Several of the **PSALMS** are assigned to musicians and those in Temple service at the time of David. However, one (Psalm 90) is ascribed to Moses, and Psalms 72 and 127 to Solomon. So this book is a collection of songs written at different times in Israel's history, but primarily in David's reign.

SONG OF SONGS

According to its title, in verse 1, the **SONG OF SONGS** was written by Solomon, or is about him. This beautiful poem demonstrates great writing ability, and may be a celebration of one of Solomon's earlier marriages. It is a love story, often used to demonstrate the relationship of Jesus Christ to His Church.

ECCLESIASTES

Perhaps **ECCLESIASTES**, if written by Solomon (see 1:1), is from a later period in his life, after his foreign wives had compromised him and brought about God's displeasure. It could have been written by a jaded philosopher, such as Solomon may eventually have become.

PROVERBS

PROVERBS, like *Psalms*, is a compilation of the writings of several people, but the majority of these short sayings are attributed to Solomon. The king is famous for his wisdom, not only in Hebrew history but throughout the Middle East.

According to Proverbs 25:1, some of Solomon's proverbs were copied during the time of Hezekiah (about 700 BC).

JOEL // MINOR PROPHETS

For 100 years after Solomon, we know of no additions to our canon. The divided kingdoms continued, as king after king reigned for their allotted periods. **JOEL** may have broken the silence with his prophecies, which are often regarded as the first book of the "*Writing Prophets*," (or "*Latter Prophets*," since earlier prophets also wrote, as we have seen). **JOEL** establishes the theme of all the prophets which are to follow him --warnings of God's judgment.

If Joel preached in Judah (the southern kingdom) about 805 BC or before -- there is little evidence to give us a firm date-- then he was a contemporary of Israel's colorful prophet Elisha.

JOEL may be the earliest of *twelve minor prophets* (minor in the sense that their books are short) which are assembled at the end of our Old Testament canon. (**Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Joel, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi**).

ISAIAH // MAJOR PROPHETS

The first of the major prophets was the great **ISAIAH**. He lived and preached in the Kingdom of Judah (the Southern Kingdom). He was born during the reign of King Uzziah and died during the reign of Manasseh. Some scholars dispute the prophet's authorship of the later chapters of the book which bears his name, and assign chapters 40-55 to "Deutero-Isaiah" and chapters 56-66 to "Trito-Isaiah," as a post-exilic writer. Because these portions deal accurately with events in Isaiah's future, and use the present tense, "scientific" critics would deny them to the prophet. But why should not a man who wrote over a long period of time change his writing style and tenses? The book proceeds logically, following a consistent plan throughout.

In 723 BC the Kingdom of Israel (the northern kingdom) fell to the Assyrians. Isaiah died during the evil reign of Manasseh, perhaps around 684 BC. There followed another long gap of at least 50 years in the composition of the books in our canon.

JEREMIAH is specific in stating that he wrote the book which bears his name, and he also tells us when he wrote it. The prophet taught for nearly 50 years during the decline and fall of Judah. His writing, which is laced with personal observations and autobiographical notes, spans this period. He was profoundly affected by the battle of Carchemish (605 BC), in which Egypt, Judah's protector, was defeated by Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar invaded Palestine and deported hostages; *Daniel* and his friends were among those who were carried into captivity.

The fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC was another major crisis in *Jeremiah's* ministry.

At least part of the book was dictated to a secretary, Baruch (Jeremiah 36:4). **LAMENTATIONS**, written during the time of *Jeremiah*, has sometimes been assigned to Baruch. However, it is written in the same style as the **BOOK OF JEREMIAH**, and there is no sufficient reason to believe that the prophet did not write it as well.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL was written during the 70 years of exile in Babylon. Critics dispute the book's authenticity. But they do so primarily because they deny the possibility of prophecy. **DANIEL** was probably included with the books of Hebrew Scripture which *Ezra* took with him when he was allowed to return to Jerusalem.

EZEKIEL was a contemporary of *Daniel*; he lived in Jerusalem until he was deported, with many others, in the captivity of Jehoiachin, 597 BC. His earlier prophecies were contemporary with *Jeremiah*, and after he went into exile he knew *Daniel*. The events in **EZEKIEL** cover a briefer span of time, and the book was completed before *Daniel*. There is little dispute concerning *Ezekiel's* authorship and the time of writing.

KINGS

The history of the kingdoms for a span of four centuries is told in the **BOOK OF KINGS**. For that remarkable length of time, Judah was ruled by a single dynasty, the house of David. The history of Israel proceeded less evenly, both in the character of its kings and in the length of their evil reigns. As a result of the judgments of God, several houses reigned only for short periods.

One tradition states that *Jeremiah the prophet* compiled **KINGS** from earlier chronicles which had been kept by officials during the reign of each sovereign. The account could not, of course, have been finished before the captivity's start, which it records. *Jeremiah's* death occurred before the last verses of **II KINGS** could have been written.

Written sources mentioned in **KINGS** are "*The Acts of Solomon*," "*The Chronicles of the Kings of Israel*" (mentioned 17 times) and "*The Chronicles of the Kings of Judah*" (mentioned 15 times).

In 586 BC Jerusalem was destroyed and its people were taken into captivity by the Babylonians. After Cyrus the Persian conquered the Babylonian Empire, he made a decree, in 538 BC, which allowed groups of Jews to return to Judah and provided for a government at Jerusalem. Work on the Temple was started, discontinued under pressure, then resumed in 520 BC and finished in 515 BC.

The minor prophets Haggai and Zechariah, whose fearless urging brought about the completion of this Second Temple, can definitely be placed on our timeline at this point.

Ezra the Scribe returned to Judah about 458 BC, and was followed at about 444 BC by *Nehemiah*, appointed governor by the Persians.

CHRONICLES // EZRA // NEHEMIAH

In the following years the Old Testament historical books of **CHRONICLES, EZRA, AND NEHEMIAH** were composed. Traditionally, these books are thought of as a single, complete history of the Jews, assembled by *Ezra*. Other scholars feel that someone else composed the history, using the memoirs of both post-Exilic leaders. **CHRONICLES** is primarily *a priestly history of Judah, in which the Temple and the priests of Yahweh were located*. The history of Israel, the northern kingdom, is not emphasized. (It had not existed as a nation for nearly 300 years).

ESTHER

ESTHER is another postexilic book, describing events in Persia among the Jews who chose not to return to Judah. One old Jewish tradition says that it was written by Mordecai, *Esther's* uncle, but that seems conjectural. The book was composed sometime after the death of *Esther's* husband, King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) in 465 BC. While **ESTHER** does not mention the name of God, it tells us of the institution of the Feast of Purim (Lots). It is the only Old Testament book not found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The canonical books were chosen and finalized about 400 BC., not many decades after the writing of *Malachi*, the last book of the Old Testament. **ESTHER** was in the royal library in Egypt by about 285 BC, and it is judged to have been part of the original canon.

APOCRYPHA

Although the Hebrew canon was closed, a dozen or so additional books and additions to books became a part of the **SEPTUAGINT**, a Greek translation of the Old Testament. Besides these there are several other well known "*apocalyptic*" (end-of-the-world, messianic) writings of approximately the same period---such as *I Enoch* and the *Book of Jubilees*. The "**outside writings**" have never been recognized as part of the Hebrew canon of Scripture, yet most of the books or additions are a part of the **SEPTUAGINT** and have been included in many Bible translations through the years. These books fill in part of the gap of the 450 silent years between the Old Testament and the New.

The authors of most of the *apocryphal* books are not known. They were given the names of prophets and religious leaders to lend them authenticity and to gain a reading. Any dates are speculative for the most part

Christian opinion concerning the *apocrypha* has varied through the years. In the sixteenth century the Council of Trent admitted these books (except *I and II Esdras* and *the Prayer of Manasseh*) to the Canon of the Roman Catholic Church. Reformers such as Luther and the English Churchmen included them in their Bibles for private edification, but not as part of the canon..

THE ONE MINUTE OLD TESTAMENT
CALVIN MILLER

In the beginning..... It was night
 Till God said, "POW!" "LET THERE BE LIGHT!"

Then He made Adam and his wife,
 Who ate the fruit and went kaput
 And very promptly got the boot.

Once out of Eden, they raised Cain--
 That kid was rotten in the main--
 He murdered Abel, ran away,
 And married....who? We cannot say!
 Some girl who lived out east of Eden
 (Which is nowhere near to Sweden).
 Then Adam said, "Eve, Abel's dead;
 We can't find Cain. I think it's time to try again."

They tried again and in the main
 Begot a very hardy strain
 Till Noah came and brought the rain
 And sinful people were ashamed
 To find themselves washed down the drain.

Then God called Abraham of Ur
 And said, "You'll be a father, sir!"
 Said Abe of Ur, "God, I'm not sure.
 Here comes my Sarah---Look at her...
 This thing could really cause a stir.
 She's older than old Pharoah's setter--
 And never been a good begetter."

But they begat, and Isaac came,
 And he begat (somewhat the same)
 A set of twins. And Jacob who was one of them
 Begat a dozen Jewish men.
 Jacob's Joseph--quite a man--
 Left the ancient holy land
 And down to Egypt brought the clan,
 Where they camped out beside the Nile
 And there endured a life of trial.
 In Egypt they begat a mighty nation
 With a little concentration.

When they'd been down in Egypt for
 Four hundred years or somewhat more,
 Moses said, "That's long enough. Come now with me--
 I'll split the sea." And everybody said, "Gollee!"
 From a mountain Moses looked over,
 Died, and Joshua took over.
 And when Josh split the Jordan River,
 Caleb up and grabbed his liver,
 Shouting out, "Well, did you ever!"

For the next four hundred years,
 The judges ruled while thousands cheered.
 And Jephthah called, "Arise and fight, you Israelites.
 We'll show our might to Canaanites and Jebusites and Perrizites.
 We'll put to flight the Hittites and the Gittites and the Moabites
 And Ammonites (but not termites or parasites).
 So Gideon led the Gideonites to war against the Midianites.
 And Samson led the Samsonites (whose luggage was so very nice).

Then came Samuel, Saul, and David,
 Who killed a giant Philistine
 And later on became the king.
 Then Solomon and other kings,
 Each one begat another king.

The Major Prophets came along
 To tell the kings when they were wrong.
 And their rebukes were very strong.

Isaiah spoke of days to come
When all earth's people would be one---

And then the king of Babylon
Waged war till Israel was gone.

But they returned, and Ezra came---
And rebuilt Israel again.

Some Minor Prophets wrote a bit
Before God said, "Well, this is it."

My Testament at last is done,
And I must say---It's sure been fun.

Then Malachi just happened by
And wrote another, final book.

God took a look and said, "Oh my,
You've done it well--Thanks, Malachi! Let's call it quits! THE END! GOOD-BYE!

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament contains **27 books**.

They are divided into six categories:

1. The four Gospels:

Matthew - Christ as King
Mark - Christ as Servant
Luke - Christ as Man
John - Christ as God

2. The Book of Acts:

Records the history of the earthly church.

3. The Church Epistles: (Letters written to specific churches)

Romans - Righteousness
I & II Corinthians -
Galatians - Christian Liberty
Ephesians -
Philippians -
Colossians - Christ Above All
I & II Thessalonians -

4. The Pastoral Epistles: (Letters written to individuals)

I & II Timothy -
Titus -
Philemon -

5. The General Epistles: (Letters written to general population, bearing the

authors name; and Hebrews)

Hebrews - Let us go on
James -
I & II Peter -
I & II & III John -
Jude -

6. The Prophetic Book:

Revelation - Consummation

GOSPELS // ACTS// WRITINGS OF JOHN

The questions about the writing of the New Testament are much different from those we asked about the Old Testament. Except for the *Book of Hebrews*, the authors of the New Testament are known, and the books can be dated more accurately. Disputed dates may involve 10 years rather than 100's. The whole New Testament was written within a period of about 50 years.

Interestingly enough, it was most of the *letters*, rather than the *gospels*, which were written first. People of the day tended to believe a spoken, eyewitness report before they would believe a written report. Perhaps this is part of the reason for the years of delay in recording the *Gospel* message. Not every Christian leader had his work appear in the canon, but only those who had written under divine inspiration. Although the discussion continued afterward, it appears that by A.D. 400 all factions of the church--Hebrew, Roman, and Syriac--had settled upon the 27 books in the canon of the New Testament.

It began about A.D. 100, when ten of Paul's letters were gathered together in a book and circulated. This collection included all of his known writings but the "*pastoral*" letters to **Timothy** and **Titus**. Perhaps 15-25 years later, the four accounts of Jesus' life were gathered into a single volume, **THE GOSPEL**, with the familiar subtitles: "According to **Matthew**," "According to **Mark**," and so on.

MATTHEW, MARK AND LUKE are parallel histories. They differ a great deal in style, purpose, intended audience, and historical perspective, yet they agree on the events of the Lord's ministry so fully that they are known as "*synoptic*" (having the same view).

A number of passages are recorded in essentially the same words in more than one of the *synoptics*. We can conclude from this that at least two, or perhaps all three of these *gospels* were quoting from an earlier source which was probably a written document. It is difficult to know which of the *gospels* came first---whether the earliest form of **MATTHEW**, as tradition suggests, or the shortest *gospel* **MARK**, which is so fully "quoted" in **MATTHEW** and **LUKE**. Good and logical arguments have been given for each, and it has ever been contended by some respected scholars that **LUKE** was written first.

MATTHEW was one of Jesus' original twelve disciples. The **BOOK OF MATTHEW** has been called the most "Jewish" of the *gospels*, providing strong links between the Old Testament and the New in its use of the Hebrew Scriptures. Whether or not it was written first, **MATTHEW** has often been given priority over the other *gospels* for the reasons just mentioned. Traditions state that the *gospel* was written in Antioch of Syria and by *Matthew*, and that he was the first to keep records of Jesus' life and sayings.

MARK'S mother Mary opened her home to the early Christians in Jerusalem, and one old tradition claims that her house was the site of the Last Supper. Her son *John Mark* could have known Jesus, but the knowledge with which he writes of His work was received from association with the apostle *Peter*. Early church fathers said that *Mark* had been *Peter's* interpreter, and that he wrote the *gospel* while *Peter* was alive, or just after his death. This would date the book in the late 60's (A.D.), prior to the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

LUKE was a companion of the apostle *Paul* during many of his travels. He also wrote the **BOOK OF ACTS**, but it isn't known how many years intervened between the composition of **LUKE** and the completion of **ACTS**. The *Gospel* was read and circulated in the first century (before 100 A.D.).

The writings of **JOHN** were the last additions to our Bible canon. (Yes, there is one important scholar who believes that **JOHN** was the earliest *gospel*. But the weight of scholarly opinion supports the traditional and most widely accepted date of about A.D. 90).

The apostle *John* was the son of Zebedee and is usually identified as the "disciple whom Jesus loved" of John 21:7. The *gospel* is an eyewitness account which shows familiarity with the places and customs of Jesus' life. **JOHN** explains these things for his readers, who might not be familiar with them. This supports the opinion that the *gospel* was written outside the Holy Land, in Asia Minor (probably Ephesus).

FIRST JOHN is believed to have been written at about the same time. **SECOND JOHN** and **THIRD JOHN** are acknowledged by most to have been written not long afterward--before the end of the century.

According to the first chapter of **REVELATION** (vs. 1,4), *John* also wrote this final, *prophetic* book. Critics assert that *John the Evangelist* could not have been its author as well, giving reasons of style and content. Yet, as with the claims concerning "the three Isaiahs" which we discussed in connection with the prophets, such differences constitute a weak argument. It is perfectly possible for a writer to change his style as he grows older, or to fit a unique situation.

Irenaeus said that *John* wrote his *apocalypse* "not very long since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign." Domitian ruled from 81-96 A.D., and therefore many prefer a date of 95 or 96 A.D. When *John* wrote **REVELATION** he was a prisoner on the Island of Patmos. He wrote to the nearby churches of Asia Minor, where he was clearly well-known.

Many very early fragments of the New Testament have survived, and each new discovery strengthens, rather than weakens, our understanding that all the writings were finished in the first century.

LETTERS

The canonical writings of the New Testament began about 20 years after the ascension of Christ.

James the Just, a brother of the Lord, was converted after Jesus' ministry was over, and he became the leader of the Jerusalem church. He presided over the very important Council of Jerusalem in A.D. 50. One of his letters survives, our **BOOK OF JAMES**.

The Council is not mentioned in *James'* letter, and it has been suggested that the letter was written just prior to this meeting. The Jewish historian Josephus sets the date of *James'* death at about the year 62, so the book was written before that date.

James' letter has a strong Hebrew tone, and was not immediately admitted by the Gentile churches. He was martyred by the Jews.

Paul's first letter, **GALATIANS**, concerned itself with the same question as did the Council at Jerusalem: must Gentile Christians adhere strictly to Jewish law, particularly in regard to circumcision? *Paul* said no, but he was opposed by Jewish legalists, who had some influence in their visits to the churches *Paul* had founded. Learning of the controversy they had stirred up, *Paul* wrote to the **GALATIANS** from Antioch in Syria, just before he went to Jerusalem for the Council.

Paul's conversion occurred only three or four years after the crucifixion of Christ in A.D. 30. For more than a decade after that, we know little of *Paul*. He preached for three years in Damascus (with some time in Arabia) but was pressured by Jews there to leave. He went to Jerusalem, but was only there two weeks before the Jews again threatened to kill him. He went then to Tarsus---where he ministered until Barnabas asked him to come to Anitoch and help him in the Gentile church there.

After more than a year of ministry together, the two were commissioned by the church for the *First Missionary Journey*, which took place from 47-49 A.D. (approximately). They visited Cyprus and the cities of southern *Galatia*, establishing churches. It was to these churches that *Paul* later sent his first epistle.

After the Council, before leaving on their *Second Missionary Journey*, *Paul* and Barnabas had a disagreement and each went his own way. *Paul* chose Silas as his companion, and traveled again to the churches of southern *Galatia*. Then they continued on into Greece.

As they came south, they stopped at *Thessalonica* long enough to establish a church--before being forced by Jews to flee at night. They went on to *Corinth*, where they settled and ministered for one and a half years. Soon after their arrival *Timothy* brought a report from *Thessalonica* which was disturbing. *Paul* wrote his letter of **I THESSALONIANS**.

These letters were meant to clear up problems about the doctrine of Christ's Second Coming. (Some *Thessalonians* had even left their jobs, awaiting an immediate return of the Lord).

After he left *Corinth* on his way to Jerusalem and Antioch, *Paul* stopped at *Ephesus*. When he had to leave, he promised the people there that he would return. He sailed on to Jerusalem, then returned to his church in Antioch. The time was about the year 53.

Paul's Third Missionary Journey started after only a brief visit to the church in Antioch which had sent him out. He headed overland for *Ephesus*, visiting along the way the churches he had established previously. Paul stayed at *Ephesus* for more than two years, the longest time at any city during his active ministry. Near the end of that period, he wrote his first letter to *Corinth*, **I CORINTHIANS**, in response to a letter from the elders there.

Paul was forced to leave *Ephesus* because of a controversy over the goddess Diana. He went to Macedonia, where he was joined by *Titus*, who reported that his letter had been well received in *Corinth*. *Paul* wrote **II CORINTHIANS** in order to continue dealing with the church's problems, and soon afterward he himself went to the city, about the year 56.

From *Corinth*, *Paul* wrote his great **LETTER TO THE ROMANS**. In the Eternal City were people who had become Christians elsewhere, then traveled to the capital of the realm. The church was made up of both Jews and Gentiles. *Paul* planned to use *Rome* as a starting point for further missionary work, including a trip to Spain.

Although he was warned not to return to Jerusalem, *Paul* went there to take them an offering. Inside the city he was arrested, thus changing the course of his life. From about 57-59, *Paul* was held prisoner in Caesarea, waiting for trial. Finally, determined either to be acquitted or sentenced, *Paul* appealed to Rome on the basis of his Roman citizenship. From about the year 60-62, *Paul* was under house arrest in Rome. He was free to receive visitors and to write. It was at this time he wrote the *Prison Epistles* (**PHILIPPIANS, COLOSSIANS, EPHESIANS and PHILEMON**).

PHILIPPIANS is the highlight of his prison experience, but two other incidents prompted him to write the other letters. Onesimus, a slave, had been converted. His master *Philemon*, who lived in *Colosse*, was a convert of *Paul's*. *Paul* sought to return Onesimus to his master as a brother in Christ. About the same time, Epaphras arrived from *Colosse* telling of problems in the church there which he could not solve without help. *Paul* addressed himself to these problems in **COLOSSIANS**.

Paul then seized his opportunity to write to the church at *Ephesus*. His messengers would pass through there on the way to *Colosse*. Because of the lack of personal greetings to his friends in *Ephesus*, and because the letter is so much like **COLOSSIANS**, some contend that **EPHESIANS** was meant to be a copy. The more likely explanation is that it was the second letter mentioned in Colossians 4:16. These letters were carried to their destinations by Tychicus, accompanied by Onesimus.

PHILIPPIANS was probably written shortly after the other *prison epistles*. It was prompted by a gift to *Paul* from the church at *Philippi*. *Paul* was sending Epaphroditus back to *Philippi* with his thanks, and to tell the people of his circumstances. He encouraged them in the faith and urged them to stand together in Christian unity. The tone is affectionate and joyful, and that this letter is indeed from *Paul* is not disputed.

Because the **BOOK OF ACTS** ends with *Paul* in prison in Rome, the details of the last period of his life are not known with any certainty. Some claim that the *Pastoral Epistles* must have been written by someone else, since they do not correspond to the known part of *Paul's* life. The more probable explanation is that *Paul* was released from prison--as tradition tells us--and continued his missionary travels for three or four years, before again being arrested and sent to Rome. Tradition tells that much of this time was spent in Macedonia. He probably visited *Colosse*, as he had promised, and he left *Timothy* in charge of the church at *Ephesus*. He also visited Crete, leaving *Titus* temporarily in charge of the work there. *Paul* wrote **I TIMOTHY** to *Timothy* and **TITUS** to *Titus* as personal encouragement in the work they were doing.

II TIMOTHY was written after *Paul* was again a prisoner in Rome. This was his last letter, and he wrote it expecting to be put to death soon. He asked *Timothy* to come to him and bring a cloak. The *Roman* church had scattered under the persecutions of Nero, and *Paul* did not have so many friends about him as during his earlier imprisonment.

PETER'S FIRST EPISTLE is somewhat harder to date. We do not know nearly as much about *Peter's* later life and activities as we do about *Paul's*. *Peter* says he is writing from Babylon, but the traditional view is that he is speaking in a metaphorical sense, just as Rome is referred to as Babylon in the **BOOK OF REVELATION**.

Peter says that *Mark* is with him. About this same time, or just before, *Paul* also mentioned the presence of *Mark*, so it is quite possible they were all in Rome. Many see a strong *Paulian* influence in this book, which would be very possible if the two great apostles were together at this time. It is impossible to arrive at an exact date.

II PETER is the focus of the most controversy over any book in the New Testament canon. *Petrine* authorship has been seriously questioned. In style it is closer to **JUDE** than to **I PETER**. It was the last of the letters to be accepted into the canon, not gaining an undisputed place until the beginning of the fifth century. At that time Jerome suggested that the difference in style between the two books was caused by having two different secretaries. Tradition states that *Peter*, like *Paul*, was martyred in Rome in the late 60's in the persecutions of Nero. The book acknowledges *Peter's* death to be imminent. This would seem to suggest Rome as the place of writing.

The author of **HEBREWS** is not known. When the *King James Bible* was translated in 1611, **HEBREWS** was assigned as was the tradition to *Paul*, but that is improbable. In all his epistles *Paul* identified himself, and the style here is different. Early church fathers did not know who wrote it. Some said Barnabas, some Apollos, some *Paul* or a close associate of his. Not knowing the author complicates our dating of the writing. It was known and circulated as Scripture in A.D. 95. The most probable date as suggested by the content is during the persecutions in Italy about the year 68 (in which *Timothy* may have suffered: Hebrews 13:23-24).

The occasion of writing of the **BOOK OF JUDE** is open to speculation. There is an obvious relationship to **II PETER**. Several explanations have been made. Perhaps *Jude* received a copy of that letter and, concerned about the problem of the heresy of denying the lordship of Christ, wrote another more explicit---though shorter---letter on the subject. Many think that *Jude* remained in Palestine, and that this letter was written shortly before the fall of Jerusalem. There is a similarity of style and illustration with **JAMES**, which seems consistent with their being brothers who ministered in the same general region.

SECTION 3

THE BIBLE

WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?