

## What Are The Books of the Bible?

### *Brief Summaries of the Books of the Bible*

The following summaries of the Bible books are not intended to completely describe all that can be found in each book. Rather, the summaries aim to briefly sketch each book's part in the whole Bible's unified message of salvation from sin through Jesus Christ. The Bible summaries also note several places in the Old Testament where one can see "a shadow of the things that were coming" while fully appreciating the New Testament perspective that the reality, however, is found in Christ (Colossians 2:17; also Hebrews 8:5; 10:1).

### **OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES**

#### **HISTORICAL BOOKS**

##### ***THE PENTATEUCH: THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES***

***Genesis*** is the first book of the Bible. The name "Genesis" comes from the Greek word for beginning. This book reveals the beginning of the world by God's creation out of nothing. God's perfect creation of man and woman is followed by the first fall into sin, and God's first promise of a Savior (3:15). Sin brought painful consequences and led to still more wickedness. God's judgment on the wicked, and mercy for Noah's family, resulted in a world-wide Flood. God continued to repeat and clarify his promise of a Savior from sin. He identified the ancestors of the Savior, by promising that the Savior would be the descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and then Judah. The book concludes with the story of Joseph.

***Exodus*** (which means "departure") describes how God delivered his people from slavery in Egypt. This book's descriptions of God's powerful miracles become favored phrases in many Old Testament songs of praise. Here we find the giving of God's Law, and particularly the Ten Commandments. These moral commands primarily show sin, and the need for a Savior. Yet, the shadow of the coming Savior can be discovered in the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12:21; see John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7). God's explanation of his name delivers good news: "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and overflowing with mercy and truth, maintaining mercy for thousands, forgiving guilt and rebellion and sin." (Exodus 34:6-7). The contrast between God's faithful care for Israel in the Wilderness and Israel's repeated disobedience and rebellion begins in Exodus.

***Leviticus*** means "relating to the Levites" and deals with the worship of God's people at the Tent of Meeting, also called the Dwelling, as led by the representatives from the tribe of Levi. The various offerings are described along with other rules and laws. Once again, the shadow of the coming Savior appears, for Christ is both our priest and our sacrificial victim. The Day of Atonement in chapter 16 depicts God's substitutionary atonement for sin.

***Numbers*** obtained its title from the numbers of the first chapter (cf. also chapter 26). This book describes episodes that happened while the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years. The people often fell into the sin of complaining against God and his prophet, Moses. Yet, the Savior's shadow shines through the bronze snake of chapter 21. Numbers 24:17 records a marvelous prophecy of the coming Savior and King, "I see him, but not now. I behold him, but

not near. A star will come out of Jacob. A scepter will rise up out of Israel.”

**Deuteronomy** means “second law.” This fifth book of the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses) reviews God’s commands to his chosen people. God inspired Moses to warn the people one last time before Moses departs for his eternal home in heaven. Christ quoted from this book three times when defending against Satan’s temptations (See Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). Jesus himself is “the Prophet” who was foretold in chapter 18:15.

**Joshua** bears the name of the man who succeeded Moses as leader of Israel. God kept his promise. The people of Israel entered the Promised Land to dwell there. But Joshua could not provide the ultimate home of rest for God’s believers. That work remained for Jesus (See Hebrews 4:8-9).

**Judges** takes its name from the leaders, or deliverers, described in this book. The people were not faithful to their faithful God. Here the Bible relates the repeating cycle of events. God’s people rebelled in sin. God allowed them to be oppressed. The people repented. God rescued them through judges. But then the cycle begins again with rebellion against God. The reader of this book will gain an appreciation for God’s patient mercy.

**Ruth** was a Gentile (non-Jew). This inspired short story tells how Ruth came to be King David’s great-grandmother, and an ancestor in the line of the promised Savior.

**1 Samuel and 2 Samuel** were combined in the original Hebrew Bible. They pick up the inspired Bible history from the end of Judges to the end of David’s reign. God permitted Israel to have a king. 2 Samuel chapter 7 records God’s promise that the coming Savior would be the Son of David, the eternal King.

**1 Kings and 2 Kings** were also originally one book. They contain the inspired Bible history from the end of King David’s reign through the succeeding kings of Israel and Judah until the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The people of Israel and Judah were eventually taken captive by enemies because they did not remain faithful to the LORD, but persistently worshipped idols. Through all of this time, God kept his promises and provided descendants for David. The Savior was going to come from David’s family.

**1 Chronicles and 2 Chronicles** were also originally one book. They provide inspired Bible history that repeats and supplements the books of Samuel and Kings. It emphasizes how the LORD preserved the kingship and priesthood in Israel. The Chronicles begin with genealogies reaching back to Adam. These books distinctly focus on the worship practices of God’s people. The promise that the Savior would be the Son of David appears in 1 Chronicles 17.

**Ezra** the scribe wrote this book under inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It describes the rebuilding of the Temple and restoration of the worship there. God kept his promise to bring his people back from their exile in Babylon. The Savior would one day arrive, as promised, in this land and from this “holy seed” (9:2). Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel was one ancestor of Christ (Ezra 3:2; Nehemiah 12:1; Matthew 1:12-13; Luke 3:27).

*Nehemiah* was the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia. He fervently worked to see that the wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt after the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylon. This is really the last installment of inspired Bible history in the Old Testament. God kept his promises to bring his people back from captivity. Surely he would keep his primary promise of a Redeemer from sin.

*Esther* is the name of the Jewish woman who became queen of Persia and helped protect the Jews from a possible holocaust. This book relates the origin of the Jewish feast of Purim. God preserved his chosen people, even in a foreign country.

### ***POETICAL BOOKS***

*Job* went through an extreme test of faith when he lost earthly possessions, children, and health. This, the first of the poetical books, records Job's discussions about suffering with his friends. Finally, the LORD spoke to Job, and provided him with twice the possessions he had before. Job never learned why he had to endure his trials, yet he learned not to question God's wisdom.

*Psalms* was the divinely inspired hymnal of the Old Testament. Some Psalms teach. Some are penitential in character. Some are very comforting. Some are thankful. Some are worship. Many of the Psalms display more than one of these classifications. Above all, the Psalms point to the promised Savior. "Messianic Psalms" include Psalms 2, 8, 16, 22, 23, 24, 40, 41, 45, 47, 68, 72, 87, 89, 93, 97, 110, 118, and 132. Our Lord Jesus said, "Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the... Psalms" (Luke 24:44).

*Proverbs* are brief, condensed statements that express practical truths in a memorable way. There are several different types of proverbs, but the general theme of this book demonstrates the sharp contrast between the wise person and the fool (especially in the sense of morally foolish). "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but stubborn fools despise wisdom and discipline" (1:7). Proverbs 3:5 teaches the proper relationship between faith and reason. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not rely on your own understanding."

*Ecclesiastes* demonstrates that a life lived only for the here and now is "vapor that vanishes" (1:2). Viewing this life only with natural human reason, everything seems to ultimately be futile. All people are alike in this respect: whether wise or foolish, rich or poor, they suffer, age, and die. "The Teacher" concludes that the best thing to do is to "Fear God and keep his commandments" (12:13). Godly "fear" means to hold the LORD in reverent awe and respect. Godly fear includes faith. Ecclesiastes provides a concise description of temporal death: "the dust goes back into the ground—just as it was before, and the spirit goes back to God who gave it" (12:7).

*Song of Songs* takes its title from the opening words of this book, declaring that it is the greatest of songs. If the song was simply about Solomon and his bride or about the love of a man and a woman, it could hardly qualify as the greatest of songs. For this reason, many faithful Bible interpreters have seen this book as a song that pictures Christ, the bridegroom, and his bride, the Church (See Matthew 9:15; John 3:29; Revelation 21:2,9).

## ***PROPHETIC BOOKS***

***Isaiah*** was the “Evangelist of the Old Testament.” The LORD moved him to write clear prophecies of Christ. Through Isaiah, the Holy Spirit revealed Christ’s virgin birth (7:14), his divine nature (9:6-7), his human ancestry (11:1), his forerunner (40:3), the scope of his salvation (49:6), his humiliation, suffering, death, resurrection, and exaltation (53), the power of his Word (55:11), his gospel preaching (61:1-2), etc. Isaiah chapter 53 is perhaps the clearest gospel of the Old Testament. It clearly describes our Savior’s crucifixion, and the reason for it, seven centuries in advance.

***Jeremiah*** was called to convict the unfaithful people of sin before they were sent into exile. Yet, Jeremiah did proclaim clear gospel. He foretold the coming of a God-man Savior, who would be the “righteous Branch” of David and “The LORD Our Righteousness (23:5-6; 33:15-16). Through Jeremiah, God promised the New Testament forgiveness of sins (31:31-34).

***Lamentations*** records the sadness of Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. God does punish sin and unbelief. Those who claim differently speak “empty and misleading” words (2:14). Yet God loved the sinful world enough to promise a Savior (Jesus). Through him, God’s mercies are “new every morning” (3:23). God is faithful to his promises and “good to those who wait for him” (3:25).

***Ezekiel*** wrote this book, by divine inspiration, while in exile in Babylon. He rebuked the unfaithful people and the false prophets. He encouraged the downtrodden with gospel. He foretold the coming of Christ, the Good Shepherd and King (34:23; 37:24; “David” had died almost four centuries earlier). The last nine chapters of the book are figurative. The book of Revelation provides the necessary clues to reveal and clarify this picture of the New Testament Church.

***Daniel*** also wrote during the Babylonian exile. This book is part historical (chapters 1-6) and part prophetic (chapters 7-12). God was faithful to his promises, and remained with his believers. Through Daniel, the LORD pointed to the eternal kingdom of Christ (2:44; 7:14, 18, 27). Daniel foretells the coming of Christ, using the words Jesus used most to describe himself: Son of Man (Daniel 7:13-14). He clearly describes the resurrection of all the dead on the Last Day, and the final Judgment (12:2-3,13).

***Hosea*** lived during the last days of the wicked northern kingdom of Israel. He proclaimed sharp law and comforting gospel. Israel brought destruction on themselves because they rebelled against God (13:9). God called for repentance (14:1-2). God promised ransom and redemption from death and the grave (13:14; see 1 Corinthians 15:55; and 14:4).

***Joel*** described the coming “day of the LORD.” He foretold the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (2:28-32).

***Amos***, the shepherd, called for repentance with plenty of convicting law passages from God. Yet, he also revealed God’s plan for restoration through the coming descendant of David, the Messiah (9:11).

**Obadiah** is only one chapter long. It records God's statement against Edom that the unbelieving nations (like Edom) will be destroyed, but the LORD's kingdom will endure (21; see Revelation 11:15, Christ's kingdom)

**Jonah** describes God's love to the Gentiles of Nineveh, and to the disobedient and headstrong prophet, Jonah. This book tells what really happened. It is true history, not a mere parable, as some claim. Christ used this true historical account of Jonah's time in the belly of the huge fish as a sign of his resurrection from the dead after spending a similar length of time in the tomb (Matthew 12:40). This book teaches the importance of obeying the LORD's call to do mission work even among foreigners. It reveals God's "salvation" (2:9) and forgiveness (4:2). It highlights the amazing power of God's Word. The greatest miracle in the book is really not that Jonah survived in the belly of the fish, but that the wicked people of Nineveh repented and believed (3:5,10).

**Micah** was a contemporary of Isaiah. Like Isaiah, he clearly foretold the coming of Christ. His most amazing prophecy was the truth about where the Savior would come from. According to his human nature, the Savior would be born in Bethlehem (5:2; "Ephrathah" distinguishes the town in Judah from the northern town of Bethlehem in Zebulun). But, according to his divine nature, this "ruler" would actually come from eternity (5:2).

**Nahum** means "comfort" and this prophet and book comforted God's people in the face of the menacing Assyrians. God would punish the wicked oppressors and relieve the suffering of his people. "The LORD is good. He is a place of safety in the day of distress. He knows those who seek safety in him" (1:7-8). Truly, God is the mighty Fortress of his believers!

**Habakkuk** describes a discussion between God and his prophet. God's ways did not seem right to the prophet. But God's ways are beyond the minds and judgments of people. It is best to trust the LORD, for the person he declares righteous will live by his faith (2:4; see Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:37-38).

**Zephaniah** foretold the coming of Judgment Day. The wicked unbelievers will be punished, but "the humble and weak" who "seek refuge in the name of the LORD" will be forgiven and saved (3:12).

**Haggai** was the first prophet to write after the Jews returned from exile in Babylon. He encouraged the people to build the temple, because God had specially selected this as the place where his people were to worship him. The Savior would come to this temple (2:9; see Malachi 3:1).

**Zechariah** also wrote after the exiles returned from Babylon. He recorded plenty of prophecies about the coming Savior, so that he is sometimes called the prophet of Holy Week. He revealed that the Savior would be King and Priest (6:12-13). He foretold our Lord's humble ride into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (9:9-10). The Savior would be "pierced" (12:10). The God-man Shepherd would be struck and killed (13:7). The Savior would provide "living water" (14:8). His name would be the only name that saves (14:9; see Acts 4:12).

**Malachi** means “my messenger” and he records several key truths about the coming Savior before the Old Testament draws to a close. In this book, God revealed the coming of John the Baptizer, and the arrival of the Savior at the temple (3:1). He announced that “the sun of righteousness will rise, and there will be healing in its wings” (4:2). This Savior would bring great joy to the hearts of believers (See Luke 1:78b in Zechariah’s Song). But first, the “Elijah” must come to prepare the way (4:5; Luke 1:17; Matthew 11:11-14).

## **NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES**

### **HISTORICAL BOOKS**

#### **THE FOUR GOSPEL ACCOUNTS**

**Matthew** was an apostle and evangelist. This gospel account, with its many quotations of the Old Testament Scriptures, is particularly directed toward those who know and appreciate the Old Testament. As Matthew tells of the life, teaching, suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ, he does not explain Jewish customs or practices. It seems likely, then, that Matthew was writing with Jewish readers in mind, yet Matthew 20:28 demonstrates that the Savior came to pay the ransom for all. His inspired writing demonstrates that *Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises of Savior.*

**Mark** was the student of the apostle Peter (1 Peter 5:13), who wrote down the inspired words of this gospel. Since Mark does explain Jewish customs (for example 7:3,4,11), it seems clear that this account was first intended for readers who were not of Jewish background. Mark tends to record our Savior’s actions more than his words, though he does not neglect them. One famous passage is Mark 16:16, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” The gospel according to St. Mark emphasizes that *Jesus is the powerful Son of God.*

**Luke** was the physician companion of the apostle Paul (Colossians 4:14). This gospel stresses the universality of our Savior’s redemption. While Matthew was moved to trace our Savior’s genealogy back to Abraham, Luke traces it to Adam. Luke emphasizes the special role for women. He describes the famous account of our Savior’s birth. He records more parables than the other gospels. Luke 24:46-47 provides our Savior’s summary of the Scriptures, “The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” This gospel lays stress on the fact that *Jesus came to seek and to save all of the lost.*

**John** was the apostle whom Jesus loved. He wrote later than the other three gospels, and tends to avoid merely repeating what was already included in the other three accounts. John 20:31 provides the purpose of this gospel, and of the Scriptures in general, “These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” John emphasized that Jesus is true God (chapter 1), and the Savior of the world (chapter 3). He includes some longer messages of our Lord. He does provide the inspired history of our Savior’s suffering, death, and resurrection. John records our Savior’s triumphant statement from the cross, after the perfect sacrifice for sin had been made, “It is finished” (John 19:30).

This gospel highlights the truth that *Jesus is true God in the flesh, and the only Way to eternal life*.

*Acts* was written by Luke and picks up where Luke's gospel leaves off. Both record the ascension of Christ. Then the book of Acts continues to tell the early history of the Christian church with special emphasis first on the mission work of the apostle Peter and then of the apostle Paul. This book proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ. "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved" (4:12). It relates how God's servants proclaimed that gospel to others. While this book closes with Paul preaching the gospel at Rome, the history of mission work will not be finished until Christ returns on Judgment Day.

### ***DOCTRINAL EPISTLES (Letters)***

#### ***THE THIRTEEN EPISTLES OF PAUL***

*Romans* introduces us to the epistles of Paul and to the doctrinal epistles of the New Testament. This letter is both, par excellence. This is truly a book of doctrine for God's people. In an orderly fashion it presents complete instruction in the law and the gospel, in justification (how Christ Jesus saved us from sin) and sanctification (how we believers thankfully serve our Savior). It presents the law to Gentiles and to Jews, convicting all people of sin before God. The transition comes in Romans 3:19-24. The gospel proclaims the good news that though all deserve eternal death from God, he provided salvation for all through Jesus Christ. There are many memorable passages, but most famous might be the words of Romans 3:28, "For we conclude that a person is justified by faith without the works of the law." After numerous comforting gospel passages, Paul discusses the difficulty involved in trying to live a godly life (chapter 7). Yet, in spite of our sins and our sinful natures, "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). This epistle is packed with instruction. "Whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that, through patient endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures, we would have hope" (Romans 15:4).

*1 Corinthians* was the apostle Paul's first inspired letter to the congregation at Corinth. There were many doctrinal problems in Corinth. So many of the topics are applicable to our situation today, that one could well give this letter the nickname, "Dear Americans." Here the apostle stresses that the people should be united in doctrine (1:10), united under the cross of Christ (1:18; 2:2), and united on the foundation of Jesus Christ (chapter 3). Paul explains what the ministry is and is not. He explains that the task of a public minister is to faithfully preach the message of Christ crucified (2:2; 4:2). He provides God's Word on matters of church discipline (chapter 5). He answers the question about homosexuality and sexual immorality (6:9-11). He discusses matters involving marriage. He explains Christian freedom. He teaches the doctrine of the Lord's Supper and provides the basis for our practice of Close(d) Communion (10:16-17; 11:26-29). Chapter 13 is the famous "Love chapter" which describes how Christians should use their spiritual gifts. The inspired apostle even gets into the difficult topic of the roles of men and women (11:3; 14:33-40). Chapter 15 is the magnificent Resurrection chapter of the Bible. Chapter 16 includes a brief lesson on Christian stewardship. Truly, this epistle deserves a careful reading today!

*2 Corinthians* is the sequel to the previous epistle. Here Paul explains the ministry of the gospel.

Forgiveness must be proclaimed to the sinner who has repented. The gospel is that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them” (2 Corinthians 5:19). This epistle particularly emphasizes Christian stewardship (chapters 8-9). Paul defends his ministry, mentions his thorn in the flesh, and finally closes with the apostolic blessing (13:14).

**Galatians** was written out of the apostle Paul’s loving concern for the souls of the Galatians. False teachers had tried to mislead them into thinking that they needed to obey Jewish laws to be justified (declared “not guilty”) before God. The inspired apostle consistently maintained the truth of God about salvation, “no one will be justified by the works of the law” (2:16). After all, “if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nothing!” (2:21). Paul declared that we are “justified by faith” (3:24). He wrote, “I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (2:20). God’s Word is clear. “A person is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ” (2:16).

**Ephesians** is the epistle of Paul that describes the church. God chose people to be his own “before the foundation [creation] of the world” (1:4). God saved his people “by grace” and “through faith” (2:8-9). The church is comprised of believers, whether they are descended from Gentiles or from Jews. The church is built on Christ and his saving Word. Christ redeemed the church (chapters 1-3). The church thankfully serves Christ (chapters 4-6).

**Philippians** takes its name from the Christians at Philippi, who were so dear to Paul’s heart. While Paul was captive at Rome, this congregation had sent Paul a gift. He wrote to urge these believers at Philippi to “rejoice in the Lord always” (4:4). Chapter two teaches the doctrine of the humiliation and exaltation of Christ. Christians can rejoice in any situation because Christ humbled himself to pay for all sins on the cross, and he is now exalted as Lord over all.

**Colossians** emphasizes the person and position of Jesus Christ (1:15-20). “For all the fullness of God’s being dwells bodily in Christ” (2:9). Only Christ could win peace through his blood shed on the cross (1:20). Again, Paul defends the pure gospel against false teachers’ emphasis on the law. The law has no place in the realm of justification (how Christ saved us). Yet, the apostle does apply the law in the realm of sanctification (how Christians thankfully serve Christ).

**1 Thessalonians** was written with an eye on Judgment Day, for every chapter concludes with a reminder of that last day when Christ returns (1:10; 2:19-20; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:23-24). Paul thanked God that the Thessalonian believers were “standing firm in the Lord” (3:8). After all, Christ could return at any time (5:1-2), and only believers will be ready. “You see, God did not appoint us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him” (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10).

**2 Thessalonians** continues the emphasis on Christ’s return on Judgment Day. Believers will enter the kingdom of God, while “those who do not know God” will receive everlasting punishment. The Antichrist is the “man of sin” of chapter two. The reason why the one who calls himself the “Vicar of Christ” at Rome has been able to deceive so many people is that “they refused to love the truth and so be saved” (2:10). The antidote to the Antichrist’s poison is to “stand firm and hold on to the teachings” of Scripture (2:15). Ultimately, the believer’s salvation



is in God's hands, who chose him, and called him to faith (2:13-14).

**1 Timothy** is the first of the Pastoral Epistles (along with 2 Timothy and Titus). Paul wrote to instruct his pupil, Timothy, how to serve as pastor at Ephesus. He warned young Timothy to be on guard against false teachings (1:3-7; 4:1-8; 6:3-5, 20-21). He instructed him in the qualifications for public ministry (chapter 3; see also 2:11-12). He encourages Timothy and the reader with clear gospel passages. He wrote, "This saying is trustworthy and worthy of full acceptance: 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' of whom I am the worst" (1 Timothy 1:15).

**2 Timothy** was the last of Paul's epistles, written near the end of the great apostle's life. He encouraged Pastor Timothy to be faithful. As for Paul, he was ready to die, "convinced" of the gospel of Jesus Christ (1:12). Once more, Paul warned him about false teachers, for "their message will spread like gangrene" (2:17). He described the end times (chapter 3). He charged Timothy to "Preach the word" (4:2). Today's pastors and churches would do well to read and study these epistles with an eye on pastoral ministry.

**Titus** is also a Pastoral Epistle, since Titus was pastor at Crete. As he was in *Timothy*, the inspired apostle was ever concerned about doctrine. He wrote to Titus, "speak what is appropriate for sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). A pastor "must cling to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he will be able both to encourage people by the sound teaching and also to correct those who oppose him" (Titus 1:9). Christians must not fool around with false teachers. "Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning" (Titus 3:10). Paul proclaimed the gospel. "God... saved us—not by righteous works that we did ourselves, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and the renewal by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup>whom he poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup>so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs in keeping with the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:4-7).

**Philemon** is one more epistle of Paul, the last one listed in the New Testament. This is a very brief letter of only one chapter. Paul wrote to Philemon, a slave owner, urging him to welcome Onesimus, his returning slave, as a dear brother in the Lord.

**Hebrews** boldly declares that Christ Jesus is superior to angels, Moses, and the Jewish priests. Though Jesus is true God (1:8), he took on human flesh to destroy the devil and "pay for the sins of the people" (2:17). This God-man, Jesus Christ, had to suffer and die to save sinners because "without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness" (9:22). This Christ did "once for all" (9:26-28). Chapter 11 is the famous chapter on "faith." Chapter 12 makes sense of the hardships believers endure. Chapter 13 declares the eternal nature of Christ, who is the same in the past, present, and future (13:8).

## **THE GENERAL EPISTLES**

**James**, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote this letter to encourage sanctified living. Faith that produces no fruit is dead, and really is no faith at all.

**1 Peter**, the first epistle of the famous apostle by that name, encourages Christians to "stand firm" in the true grace of God (5:12). Many truths of Christian doctrine can be found in this

epistle, such as the royal priesthood of all believers (2:9) and the fact that “baptism saves” (3:21). Believers are to resist the devil “by being firm in the faith” while trusting God to “restore, establish, strengthen, and support you” (5:8-11).

**2 Peter** was written by Peter near the end of his life. He encourages the reader to “remember” the true teachings of the apostles (1:12-15). He warns against false teachers, and looks forward to Judgment Day. He discusses the Scriptures and the epistles of Paul (3;15-16). To the end of the world, believers need to learn the Scriptures to continue to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (3:18).

**1 John** begins with words similar to the gospel according to John. Through the apostle John, the Holy Spirit plainly revealed the gospel. “Jesus Christ, the Righteous One... is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:1-2). John linked the end of the Bible to the very beginning. “The Devil has been sinning from the beginning. This is why the Son of God appeared: to destroy the works of the Devil” (1 John 3:8). God loved the world enough to send a Savior (1 John 4:10). This leads believers to love, for “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Why was this letter written? 1 John 5:13 says, “I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

**2 John** warns against supporting the “wicked works” of false teachers in any way (vv. 10-11). God does not want his people to express fellowship with false teachers.

**3 John** joyfully encourages supporting the mission work of those who teach God’s Word in all of its truth and purity (v. 8). God does want people to express fellowship with those who teach the pure Christian doctrine.

**Jude**, a brother of James, and half-brother of Jesus Christ, urges Christians to contend for the truth. He mentions particularly the fulfillment of the prophecies revealed in 2 Peter about the coming of false teachers (see 2 Peter 3:3 and Jude 17-18; and compare 2 Peter 2 with Jude 14-18). The last two verses reveal that it is “God, our Savior” alone “who is able to keep you from stumbling.”

## ***PROPHETIC BOOK***

**Revelation** was written about 95 A.D. by the apostle John. The first three chapters are very clear and set the stage for the remaining chapters which are symbolic and prophetic in nature. The basic message of the book is that Christ and his believers will win in the end, and enjoy eternal life in heaven. Satan and all of his followers will receive eternal punishment.

For more information and help:

- The ***Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV)*** of the Bible includes introductions at the beginning each book of the Bible (see the footnotes). These notes provide more information about each book.

- The *EHV Study Bible* includes much more information. This is available as a hardcover print edition and also in several digital editions (for computers, tablets, and smartphones). Links to these are at **wartburgproject.org**
  - Northwestern Publishing House – website: [nph.net \(https://online.nph.net/\)](https://online.nph.net/)
  - Phone: 1-800-662-6022
  - Microsoft store: <https://wartburgproject.org/digital-ehv-study-bible/>
  - Logos.com or <https://wartburgproject.org/ehv-on-logos-bible-software/>
- The People’s Bible Teachings volume on the “*Bible: God’s Inspired, Inerrant Word*” by Brian R. Keller (Northwestern Publishing House, 2002).