

The Bible

The Old Testament (TaNaK: Torah, Navi'im, Katovim)

Genesis: 1-11, Pre-History Who is God? Notice the different stories and how there are sometimes two recountings of the same event.

12-50 Abraham had many sons, who went to Egypt.

Exodus: Escape from Egypt Circa 1200 BCE. Notice the constant cycle. God loves, people respond, people complain, God responds.

Leviticus/Numbers/Deuteronomy How shall we live together?

These 5 are the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, traditionally ascribed to Moses.

Joshua, Judges The people solidify from wandering nomads to a loose federation of tribes. Again, notice the constant cycle. God loves, people respond, people worship other Gods, God responds.

Ruth A story of love and God's help.

1 Samuel – 2 Chronicles The rise and fall of the Kingdom of Israel! Saul, David (circa 1000 BCE), Solomon – split (circa 900 BCE)

10 Northern tribes fall to the Assyrians in the 700s.

Ezra, Nehemiah Post exile.

Where did we go wrong? Blame it on the foreigners.

How do we keep it from happening again? Kick out the foreigners.

Esther Hope for a conquered people. Origin of Purim.

Job When bad things happen to good people.

Psalms The hymnbook of ancient Israel.

Proverbs, Ecclesiastes Wisdom for living, even if all is vanity and chasing after the wind.

Song of Solomon Love songs, pure and simple.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel Major prophets, two before the Babylonian exile and two during (kind of). What makes them major?

Lamentations songs of grief. Grief is like anything else; it can be done well or badly. Here are some good examples of doing it well.

Hosea – Malachi Minor prophets. What makes them minor?

The New Testament

Q

How do we determine authorship?

Language, theology, hints about local issues.

Pseudonymous writing was normal! It was a way of honoring your master or someone else you respected.

Matthew Q+Mark, ~ 90 AD (CE) in Antioch (Syria). Probably a Jewish/Christian community.

Mark Q, ~ 70 AD. Probably a gentile community.

Luke Q + Mark, ~ 80-100 AD. Written by an educated gentile to other educated gentiles.

John Written independently of the other Gospels, about 100 AD, by a Jewish Christian in a Jewish Christian community that was in conflict with the local synagogue authorities. Read like poetry.

Acts Luke Part II. Notice movement from Jerusalem (theological center of the world) to Rome (political center of the world).

Romans – Philemon = Letters of Paul (1st Thessalonians = 51 CE), The academic community has some doubt about the authorship of First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus, Ephesians, Colossians & Second Thessalonians.

Hebrews No one knows. Church in the parking lot.

James No one knows, though tradition says he was the brother of Jesus.

Martin Luther was vehemently opposed to it. “An epistle of straw!”

1 Peter Historically ascribed to Peter, probably written around 90 AD.

2 Peter Probably not written by the same person who wrote 1st Peter, but around the same time.

1, 2, 3rd John Probably written by someone within the Johannine community, dating uncertain.

Jude traditionally ascribed to Jude, the brother of James and Jesus, though no hard evidence. Probably written middle of first century.

Revelation (The Apocalypse) Traditionally ascribed to the author of the Gospel of John but it is unclear. Dates from 60-90 AD have been suggested.

As Presbyterians we understand that the Bible, when read with the Holy Spirit, is God’s word for us. It was written by men (!) who believed that they were inspired by God. Nevertheless, their writings reflected the biases and beliefs of their day. Thus, when reading the Bible, it is important that we read with understanding and nuance so that it can help us hear God speaking to us about the issues of our own day.

We may have a lovers’ quarrel with the Bible all our days, but it remains God’s love letter to us.