

# COMING ATTRACTION

THE FOLLOWING PREVIEW HAS BEEN APPROVED FOR  
ALL AUDIENCES

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**"Compelling, heartwarming,  
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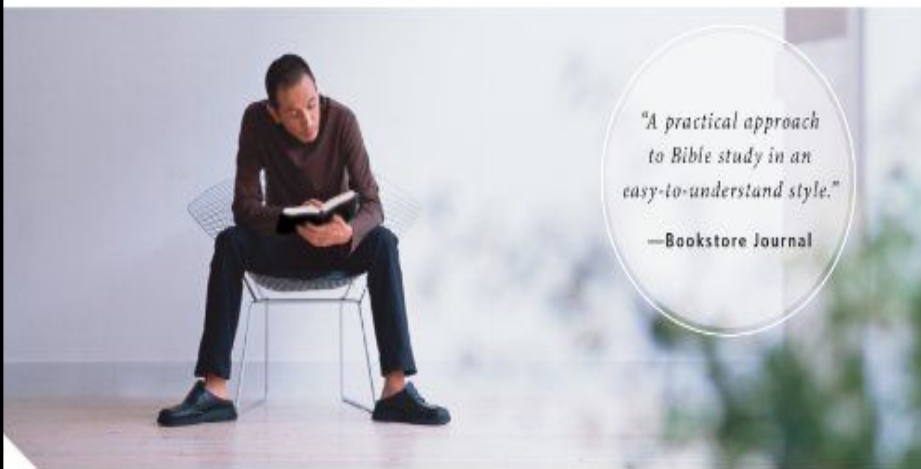
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FOURTH EDITION

# How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth



*"A practical approach  
to Bible study in an  
easy-to-understand style."*

—Bookstore Journal

Gordon D. Fee  
Douglas Stuart

# How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth

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An 8 week introductory study with  
classroom participation

Week 1: **Who/What/When/Where/Why?**

Week 2: How? The Tool Kit: Exegesis and Hermeneutics

## **BIBLICAL LITERARY GENRES**

Week 3: Hebrew (OT) Narrative

Week 4: Prophecy

Week 5: Hebrew Poetry (Wisdom, Psalms)

Week 6: Gospels (NT) Narrative

Week 7: Parables

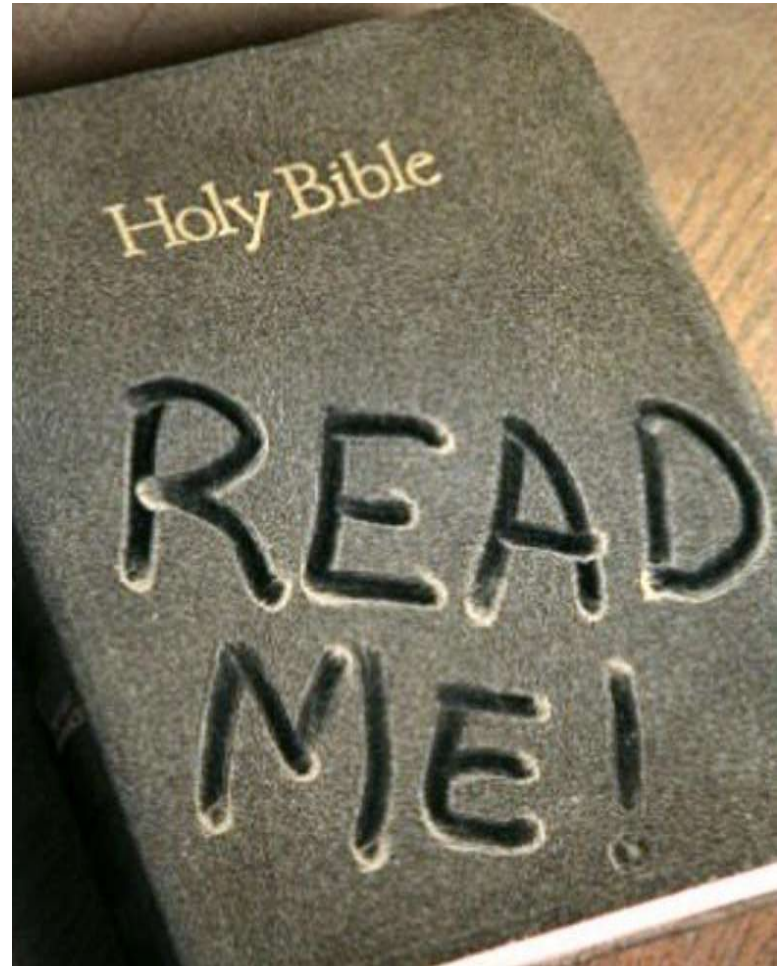
Week 8: Epistles



Prepared by Pastor Ted Rathman and Todd  
Frehafer with the grateful assistance of Table  
Group Leaders

## “That” You Begin To Read Each Bible Book is as Important as “How” You Read Your Bible

- Does your Bible look like this?
- Take your Bible off the shelf, out of your pocket, open it up, and **start to read daily.**
- Regular reading of God’s Word will increase understanding. It is written for OUR benefit.
- **There is no substitute for reading books of the Bible as they were intended to be read: from beginning to end.**



*“But why should I read the Bible? It’s **old**, and it’s **difficult** to understand, and it’s **not written to me**, and it **time-consuming**, and **I don’t like to read**, and that’s **Ted’s job**, and after all.....**all I need is Jesus!**”*

- The Bible is **old** but it provides timeless instruction for us. Mankind’s problems of sin, death and rebellion against God are as old as Adam and Eve. The Bible has necessary answers for our spiritual problems and provides a solution—JESUS!
- The Bible can be **difficult** in parts, but familiarity improves understanding. Many Bible resources exist to aid our understanding of God’s Word.
- The Bible **may not have been written to us** specifically, but it is written FOR us.
- Do you have **time** to watch TV or read a novel? Surf social media? Practice your golf swing? Make a TikTok video? Many free audio bibles are online and on smartphones.
- The Bible is not solely for **pastors** or **scholars**—an “elite” class—but for us to grow in Christ.
- **We do need Jesus**, but *which Jesus do you know?* The idolized Jesus crafted in part (or in whole) by your imagination, or the Jesus revealed to us **ONLY** through God’s Word?

# W.W.W.W.W. and How?

**WHO?            YOU**

- We each are given the responsibility of studying God's Word. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

**WHAT?            BIBLE**

- Scripture is our only source of authority for knowing God. (1 Thes. 2:13)

**WHERE?            ANYWHERE**

- Read and meditate upon God's Word without distractions. (Matt. 4:4)

**WHEN?            DAILY**

- Read as often as possible! (Ps. 1:2)

**WHY?            REVELATION**

- The Bible is a lamp so that we may walk as God intends. (Ps. 119:105)

**HOW? That's the purpose of this beginner's class! (1 Tim. 4:13-15)**

# The Bible Is:

“The Bible is the **Word of God**. This means the Bible is **our authority** in everything it touches. This means the Bible is **our guide** to show us how to live. Most of all, this means the Bible is **our instructor**, teaching us about God and His plan of salvation in Christ. The Old Testament points toward Christ’s coming; the New Testament tells of His arrival. From Genesis to Revelation we see **God’s great plan unfold**—His plan to win a lost humanity back to Himself. The central theme of the Bible is salvation, and the central personality of the Bible is Christ.

The Bible is **God’s gift to us**. It came from God, and it **points us to God**. The Bible says of itself, “**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God**, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man or woman of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NKJV).”

# The Bible is NOT:

1. **A rule book** Don't turn Scripture into a legalistic rule book. It contains rules, but the Bible is primarily a redemptive story of how God reconciles lost Man to Himself through His Son. Our God seeks relationship and an inward change in us through new life, and not mere external conformity to regulations.
2. **A series of propositional statements** While these are certainly propositional statements in Scripture, God chose to speak His eternal truths within the particular circumstances and events of human history. *This is also what gives us hope.* Precisely because God chose to speak in the context of real human history, we may take courage that these same words will speak again and again in our own history, as they have throughout the history of the church.
3. **A science book** The Bible is not anti-science; it is pre-science. It describes creation as a lived relational experience, not as detached theoretical subject. It purposely depicts a worldview (God did it) rather than a world picture (How God did it). Relationship vs. analytic focus.
4. **A magic book** It's no talisman; the physical presence of a Bible in your home won't protect you from harm. Not a crystal ball. The Bible is meant to be read, studied, and referenced often.

# 7 Common Interpretation Pitfalls

## **Bad Habits**

1. Proof-texting
2. Literalizing
3. Allegorizing/spiritualizing

## **‘Baggage’**

4. Denominational Indoctrination
5. Denominational Bias
6. Personal-Emotional Experience
7. Cultural Historical Conditioning



# “Bad Habit” Pitfall

## 1. Proof-texting

Definition: the method by which a person appeals to a biblical text to prove or justify a theological position without regard for the original context of the passage they are citing. “Solitary proof-texts have wrought more havoc in theology than all the heresies.” (H.A.A. Kennedy, ‘*St. Paul’s Conceptions of the Last Things*’ p. 310)

**Philippians 1:6**, “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in **you** will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

*Frequently cited to support the doctrine of ‘Once Saved, Always Saved’*

Same author.....

**Galatians 1:6**, “I am amazed that **you** are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel.”

Bob Utley, “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” Biblical Interpretation Seminar

# “Bad Habit” Pitfall

## 2. Literalizing

Definition: In accordance with, involving, or being the primary or strict meaning of the word or words. Ignoring figurative or metaphorical speech.

**John 15:5** “I am the **vine**, you are the **branches**; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much **fruit**, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”

**Deut. 23:18**, “You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the wages of a **dog\*** into the house of the Lord your God...” [\*Canaanite male prostitute]

**Ps. 58:3**, “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they are born, **speaking lies.**”

# “Bad Habit” Pitfall

## 3. Allegorizing/Spiritualizing

Definition: to transform (a story, narrative, etc) into or compose in the form of allegory where each element of the story means something *quite foreign to the story itself*. Does not allow words/sentences to bear normal plain sense meanings.

Augustine [c. 417AD] on The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37)

“A man [=**Adam**] was going down from Jerusalem [=**heavenly city**] to Jericho [=**moon**, symbolizing Adam’s mortality]; “robbers” = **devils and his angels**  
“stripped him” = **of his mortality**; “beat him” = **persuaded him to sin**  
“the priest and Levite” = **priesthood and ministry of the Old Testament**  
“bandaged his wounds” = **restrained the man’s pursuit of sin**

**Matt. 28:2** “....an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it” **does not mean** “Rolling Away Stones in Your Life”

Gordon Fee, Douglas Stuart “How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth”

# “Baggage” Pitfall

## 4. Denominational Indoctrination

Definition: To encourage or even coerce people to act and think on the basis of a certain denominational ideology. “Read the Bible through the lens of our traditions!”

Reformed Calvinist churches: Five Point “Doctrines of Grace” aka TULIP: Total **Depravity**/Inability of Man, Unconditional **Election** of Particular Individuals to Salvation, Limited **Atonement** of Christ, Irresistible (Effectual) **Grace** for the Unconditional Elect Only, **Perseverance** of the Saints (OSAS).

Churches of Christ: Water immersion **baptism** is essential for forgiveness of sins and impartation of the Holy Spirit. No water, no salvation.

Pentecostal Churches (some): Every **born-again** believer will speak in **tongues**

# “Baggage” Pitfall

## 5. Denominational Bias

Definition: Reading denominational beliefs and traditions back into the Scripture text to impose meaning over the author’s original intent. Unlike denominational indoctrination, not a systematical nor intentional bias. “How we do church today.”

- Church governance (Pastor CEOs, elders, discipleship committees etc.)
- Contemporary vs. traditional Christian music
- Particular communion/baptism/tithing/worship practices
- Female leadership roles in the church

# “Baggage” Pitfall

## 6. Personal-Emotional Experience

Definition: The process of living through events unique to each individual.  
What we project of ourselves onto the text.

- Biology: Male and female genders often perceive things differently.
- Self: Personality influences our perceptions (skeptical, optimistic, etc)
- Ancestry: How we were parented
- Our sum life experiences (good and bad) color our views
- “If it happened to me, it *ought* to happen to you.”
- “If it has not happened to me, it *cannot or should not* happen to you.”

# “Baggage” Pitfall

## 7. Cultural Historical Conditioning

Definition: a process through which we absorb and interpret the influences, norms, and messaging from our environment and translate them into what we believe to be acceptable behaviors. Factors like language, geography, time, culture. We cannot change or eliminate these factors, *but we can recognize their presence*, which will help us not to be unduly influenced by them.

Examples:

- 21st century Western attitudes on sex, marriage, divorce.
- Mobile social and economic class society
- Highly technology-driven, broadly educated populace.
- Social contract government in the form of a Constitutional republic

# A Brief Word on Bible Translations and Formats

The Bible was not written in English. We are reading translations of the original languages. Some translations are better than others.

*Every translation is an interpretation of the original language.*

OT books are written in Classical Hebrew (with some Aramaic).

NT books are written in Koine Greek.

**Chapter, verse, paragraph divisions and section headers/titles in your Bible are not in the original manuscripts.**

No translation is perfect, so use more than one translation!



# A Brief Word on Bible Translations and Formats

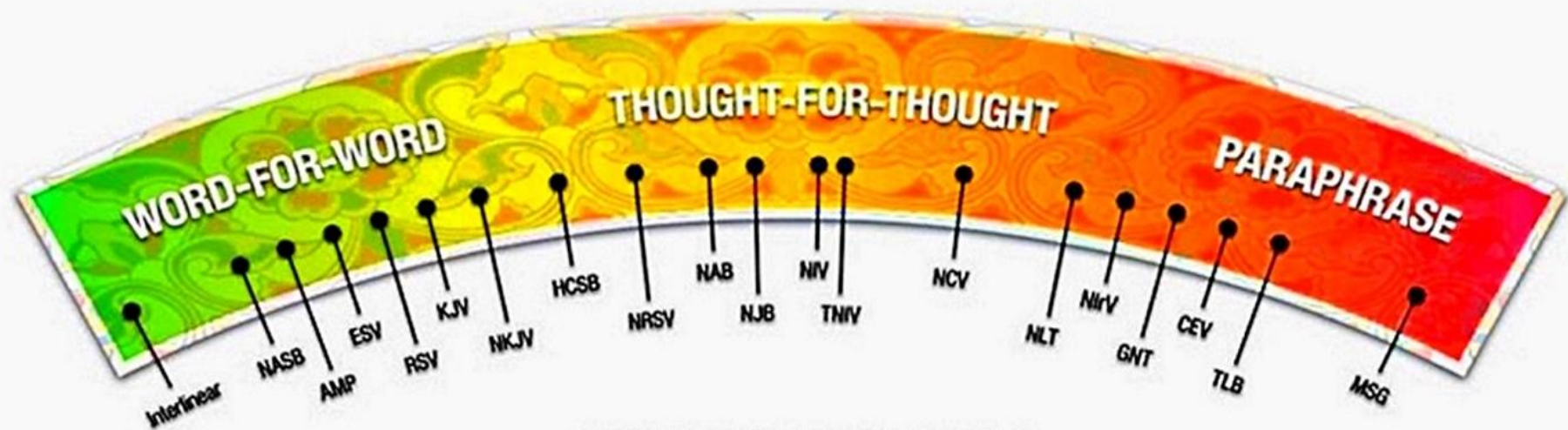
1. Original language: the language one is translating from; Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek
2. Receptor language: the language that one is translating into: English
3. Historical distance: differences that exist between the original language and the receptor language (semantic range, grammar, idioms).  
Examples: weight, measurements, currency, euphemism, vocabulary, wordplays, gendered language)

Bible Translations generally split between:

Formal equivalence (word for word translation)

Functional equivalence (thought-for-thought translation)

# Types of Bible Translations



NASB - New American Standard Bible  
AMP - Amplified Bible  
ESV - English Standard Version  
RSV - Revised Standard Version  
KJV - King James Version  
NKJV - New King James Version

HCSB - Holman Christian Standard Bible  
NRSV - New Revised Standard Version  
NAB - New American Bible  
NJB - New Jerusalem Bible  
NIV - New International Version  
TNIV - Today's New International Version  
NCV - New Century Version  
NLT - New Living Translation

Nlrv - New International Reader's Version  
GNT - Good News Translation  
(also Good News Bible)  
CEV - Contemporary English Version  
TLB - The Living Bible  
MSG - The Message

# Closing Thoughts

The Bible is the Word of God, our authoritative source for the revelation of God and His redemptive acts in history, and is written for our benefit.

The Bible is *not* a giant list of facts about God nor a rule book.

You don't need to be a Bible scholar to read, understand, and benefit from Scripture study. The Bible is given for all—not just pastors and theologians and academics.

Regular Bible reading strengthens and equips Christians for service.

**Commit to reading your Bibles daily and as entire books.**

Psalms 34:8

“O **taste and see** that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!”

# Biblical Illumination is for All of God's People

“The illumination comes to the minds of God’s people—not just to the spiritually elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And, so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority over even those to whom God has given special abilities.”

*James W. Sire, “Scripture Twisting”, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1980. p. 17*

# Assignment for Week 2

Read the entire book of 1 Samuel (Old Testament Narrative)

16 hours awake of every day

16 hours awake x 6 days = **96 total hours available**

to read a book that should take you about 2 1/3 hours

**Supplemental**

# The Bible Claims Divine Inspiration

**The Scriptures themselves claim inspiration in three areas**

## 1. For the Writers

Both Old and New Testament writers state that the words they spoke or wrote were not of themselves but came from God. (II Peter 1:20-21; I Peter 1:10-12; II Peter 3:2; I Chronicles 28:11,19; I Samuel 23:2; Acts 1:16; Luke 1:70; Deuteronomy 4:2)

## 2. For the Writings

The writers often claimed that God had spoken to them and told them to write it in a book. (Exodus 17:14; 34:27; 24:4; Deuteronomy 31:22, 26; I Corinthians 2:13; Galatians 1:11-12; Revelation 1:18-20) The writings as a whole also claim inspiration. (II Timothy 3:16; Jeremiah 30:2; Hebrews 2:1-4; Acts 28:25; I Thessalonians 2:13.

## 3. For the Contents

Scripture claims that its contents are inspired. (II Peter 3:1; Jude 17; I Thessalonians 2:13; Psalm 139:17; Isaiah 55:8-11) “The Word of the Lord” came to the prophets and they spoke or wrote accordingly. The thoughts and the words originated with God in their prophetic utterances. (Isaiah 1:2; 7:3; 43:1; Jeremiah 11:1; Ezekiel 1:3; Hosea 1:1; I Corinthians 14:37; Leviticus 1:1; Deuteronomy 32:48; John 10:35; Matthew 25:42-45; Galatians 3:16; Hebrews 12:26-27)

Kevin J. Conner, “The Foundations of Christian Doctrine”

# The Bible as “The Word of God”

Though written by men, the Scriptures are God's Word to Man. **Over 2,000 times they are spoken of, or alluded to, as "the Word of God"**. They are called:

1. **The Word of God**. (I Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17; Mark 7:13; Colossians 1:25; John 10:35; Luke 8:11)
- 2.. **The Word of the Lord**. (Jeremiah 1:2,11; Ezekiel 1:3; Isaiah 1:10; Hosea 1:1; Acts 8:25; II Thessalonians 3:1; I Peter 1:23-25; Isaiah 40:8; I Thessalonians 1:8; 4:15; Acts 13:48)
3. **The Word of Christ**. (Colossians 3:16)
4. **The Word of Life**. (Philippians 2:16)
5. **The Word of Truth**. (Ephesians 1:13)
6. **The Word of Faith**. (Romans 10:8)
7. **The Word**. (James 1:21-23; John 1:1-3; Luke 4:4; I Timothy 4:5; Romans 10:17; Acts 4:31; 6:4)



# W.W.W.W.W. and How?

**WHO? YOU.** We each are given the responsibility of studying God's Word. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

*"All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the **man or woman of God** may be fully capable, equipped for every good work."*

**WHAT? THE BIBLE.** Scripture is our only source of authority for knowing God. (1 Thes. 2:13)

*"For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the **word of God**, which also performs its work in you who believe."*

**WHERE? ANYWHERE.** Read and meditate upon God's Word without distractions. (Matt. 4:4)

*"But He answered and said, 'It is written, 'Man shall not **live** on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"*

**WHEN? DAILY.** Read as often as possible! (Ps. 1:2)

*"But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates **day and night.**"*

**WHY? REVELATION.** The Bible is a lamp so that we may walk as God intends. (Ps. 119:105)

*"Your word is a **lamp** to my feet and **light** to my path."*

**HOW? That's the purpose of this beginner's class! (1 Tim. 4:13-15)**

*"Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. **Take pains** with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all."*

# BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (TANAKH)

Genesis	Joshua	2 <sup>nd</sup> Kings
Exodus	Judges	1 <sup>st</sup> Chronicles
Leviticus	Ruth	2 <sup>nd</sup> Chronicles
Numbers	1 <sup>st</sup> Samuel	Ezra
Deuteronomy	2 <sup>nd</sup> Samuel	Nehemiah
	1 <sup>st</sup> Kings	Esther

The Law (Torah)

Historical Writing

Job	Isaiah	Hosea	Nahum
Psalms	Jeremiah	Joel	Habakkuk
Proverbs	Lamentations	Amos	Zephaniah
Ecclesiastes	Ezekiel	Obadiah	Haggai
Song of Solomon	Daniel	Jonah	Zechariah
		Micah	Malachi

Poetic Writings

Major Prophets

Minor Prophets

**Job:** Date unknown (earliest)

**Genesis:** 1445-1405 BC

**Exodus:** 1445-1405 BC

**Leviticus:** 1445-1405 BC

**Numbers:** 1445-1405 BC

**Deuteronomy:** 1445-1405 BC

**Psalms:** 1410-450 BC

**Joshua:** 1405-1385 BC

**Judges:** 1043 BC

**Ruth:** 1030-1010

**Song of Songs:** 971-965 BC

**Proverbs:** 971-686 BC

**Ecclesiastes:** 940-931 BC

**1 Samuel:** 931-722 BC

**2 Samuel:** 931-722 BC

**Obadiah:** 850-840 BC

**Joel:** 835-796 BC

**Jonah:** 775 BC

**Amos:** 750 BC

**Hosea:** 750-710 BC

**Micah:** 735-710 BC

**Isaiah:** 700-681 BC

**Nahum:** 650 BC

**Zephaniah:** 635-625 BC

**Habakkuk:** 615-605 BC

**Ezekiel:** 590-570 BC

**Lamentations:** 586 BC

**Jeremiah:** 586-570 BC

**1 Kings:** 561-538 BC

**2 Kings:** 561-538 BC

**Daniel:** 536-530 BC

**Haggai:** 520 BC

**Zechariah:** 480-470 BC

**Ezra:** 457-444 BC

**1 Chronicles:** 450-430 BC

**2 Chronicles:** 450-430 BC

**Esther:** 450-331 BC

**Malachi:** 433-424 BC

**Nehemiah:** 424-400 BC

# BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT



James - 50 A.D.

First Thessalonians - 52-53.

Second Thessalonians - 52-53.

Galatians - 55.

First Corinthians - 57.

Second Corinthians - 57.

Romans - 57-58.

Philippians - 62-63.

Colossians - 62-63.

Philemon - 62-63.

Ephesians - 62-63.

Luke - 63.

Acts - 64.

First Timothy - 65.

Titus - 65.

Second Timothy - 66.

Mark - 66.

Matthew - 67.

Hebrews - 67.

First Peter - 67-68.

Second Peter - 68.

Jude - 68.

Apocalypse - 68.

John - c. 85.

Epistles of John - 90-95.

# Uniqueness of the Bible

- Written over 1500 years.
- Written over 40 generations.
- Written by more than 40 authors from every walk of life.
- Written in different places.
- Written on three different continents.
- Written in three different languages:
  - Hebrew
  - Aramaic
  - Greek
- Common theme from start to finish. God's plan to redeem a fallen humanity.



# ANCIENT MANUSCRIPT COMPARISON CHART

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Approximate Time Span between original & copy	# of Copies	Accuracy of Copies
Lucretius	died 55 or 53 B.C.		1100 yrs	2	---
Pliny	A.D. 61-113	A.D. 850	750 yrs	7	---
Plato	427-347 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200 yrs	7	---
Demosthenes	4th Cent. B.C.	A.D. 1100	800 yrs	8	---
Herodotus	480-425 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs	8	---
Suetonius	A.D. 75-160	A.D. 950	800 yrs	8	---
Thucydides	460-400 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs	8	---
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1300 yrs	9	---
Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200	10	---
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	A.D. 900	1000	10	---
Livy	59 BC-AD 17	---	???	20	---
Tacitus	circa A.D. 100	A.D. 1100	1000 yrs	20	---
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1400	49	---
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	A.D. 1000	1400 yrs	193	---
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs	643	95%
New Testament	1st Cent. A.D. (A.D. 50-100)	2nd Cent. A.D. (c. A.D. 130 f.)	less than 100 years	5600	99.5%



## NOTES:

- There are thousands more New Testament Greek manuscripts than any other ancient writing.
- The internal consistency of the New Testament documents is about 99.5% textually pure.
- In addition, there are over 19,000 copies in the Syriac, Latin, Coptic, and Aramaic languages. The total supporting New Testament manuscript base is over 24,000.

# Average Reading Times per Bible Book

1. Genesis – 3.5h
2. Exodus – 3h
3. Leviticus – 2h
4. Numbers – 3h
5. Deuteronomy – 2.5h
6. Joshua – 1.75h
7. Judges – 1.75h
8. Ruth – 15m
9. 1 Samuel – 2.25h
10. 2 Samuel – 1.75h
11. 1 Kings – 2h
12. 2 Kings – 2.25h
13. 1 Chronicles – 2h
14. 2 Chronicles – 2.5h
15. Ezra – 40m
16. Nehemiah – 1h
17. Esther – 30m
18. Job – 1.75 h
19. Psalms – 5h
20. Proverbs – 1.75h
21. Ecclesiastes – 30m
22. Song of Solomon – 20m
23. Isaiah – 3.75h
24. Jeremiah – 4h
25. Lamentations – 20m
26. Ezekiel – 3.75h
27. Daniel – 1.25h
28. Hosea – 30m
29. Joel – 12m
30. Amos – 25m
31. Obadiah – 4m
32. Jonah – 8m
33. Micah – 20m
34. Nahum – 8m
35. Habakkuk – 9m
36. Zephaniah – 10m
37. Haggai – 7m
38. Zechariah – 40m
39. Malachi – 11m

1. Matthew – 2.5h
2. Mark – 1.5h
3. Luke – 2.5h
4. John – 2h
5. Acts – 2.25h
6. Romans – 1h
7. 1 Corinthians – 1h
8. 2 Corinthians – 40m
9. Galatians – 20m
10. Ephesians – 20m
11. Philippians – 14m
12. Colossians – 13m
13. 1 Thessalonians – 12m
14. 2 Thessalonians – 7m
15. 1 Timothy – 16m
16. 2 Timothy – 11m
17. Titus – 7m
18. Philemon – 3m
19. Hebrews – 45m
20. James – 16m
21. 1 Peter – 16m
22. 2 Peter – 10m
23. 1 John – 16m
24. 2 John – 2m
25. 3 John – 2m
26. Jude – 4m
27. Revelation – 1.25h