

PENTATEUCH

Genesis through Deuteronomy

Old Testament

Place this bookmark on the last page of the book of Deuteronomy. Welcome to the section called the “Pentateuch” or “Torah,” meaning the five books of the Law. This section captures the beginnings of the relationship between God and the people of Israel with the central focus being the Exodus event—the experience of being led from slavery to freedom. Here are some of the highlights:

- the Creation stories
- Adam and Eve
- Cain and Abel
- Noah’s ark
- the Tower of Babel
- Sodom and Gomorrah
- Abraham and Sarah
- Isaac and Rebekah
- Jacob and Esau
- Joseph (the coat of many colors)
- Moses (in the reeds, the burning bush, the ten plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea, the Passover, the Ten Commandments, the Ark of the Covenant, the journey through the desert, the death of Moses)
- the twelve tribes of Israel
- the laws, traditions, and feasts of Israel

HISTORY

Joshua through 2 Maccabees

Old Testament

Place this bookmark on the last page of 2 Maccabees. You’ve now entered the History section of the Bible—the section that records the story of the people of Israel who, under various leaders (judges and kings), fought to establish and keep the Promised Land. Here are the highlights:

- Joshua (crossing the Jordan, the walls of Jericho)
- Samson and Delilah
- Ruth and Naomi
- Samuel (request for a king)
- King Saul
- David and Goliath; King David
- Solomon (the temple, Queen of Sheba)
- Elijah and Elisha
- many kings, battles, and genealogies
- division of the kingdom
- Exile and return
- Judith and Esther

WISDOM

Job through Sirach

Old Testament

Place this bookmark at the end of the book of Sirach. You’re now ready to explore the Wisdom section of the Bible. While the Bible contains wisdom throughout, this section collects the wisdom of the people of Israel over thousands of years of wandering the desert, living in the Promised Land, worshiping in the temple, and struggling through the Exile. Among the many anecdotes, sayings, prayers, poems, and songs, here are some highlights:

- Job’s suffering
- 150 Psalms for all occasions
- hundreds of proverbs
- wise sayings, including “Vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!” and “There is a time for everything” and “A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter” and more
- a romantic love song
- thousands more sayings about wisdom, prudence, good health, wealth, holiness, family, friends, misery, death, and even table etiquette

PROPHETS

Isaiah through Malachi

Old Testament

Place this at the end of the book of Malachi and welcome to the last section of the Old Testament—the Prophets. The prophets were not concerned with foretelling the future as much as with calling the people of Israel back to their past fidelity to God, lest they face doom. Likewise, they held out hope for the future when the people of Israel faced dire consequences in exile. This hope was the notion of a messiah and an everlasting kingdom. Yet, even these assurances of a future are accompanied by a call for a return to the fidelity of the past. Here are some highlights:

The major (meaning lengthier) prophets

- Isaiah (Immanuel, “the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light,” “comfort my people,” etc.)
- Jeremiah (call of Jeremiah, Exile and return)
- Ezekiel (the dry bones)

The minor (meaning briefer) prophets

- Daniel (the lion’s den, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego)
- Hosea (the unfaithful wife)
- Joel (the Day of the Lord)
- Amos (the call to justice)
- Jonah (swallowed by a large fish)

GOSPELS

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

New Testament

Place this bookmark at the end of the Gospel of John and prepare to enter the part of the Bible where we walk with Jesus! The Gospels contain the stories that are most sacred to our Christian faith and heritage: the life, teachings, miracles, Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Here are some highlights:

- the birth of Jesus (the Magi, the shepherds, etc.)
- the Holy Family (Mary and Joseph)
- the finding of Jesus in the temple
- the temptation in the desert and the baptism of Jesus
- the Beatitudes and the Our Father
- parables (the prodigal son, the Good Samaritan, the sower, the mustard seed, etc.)
- the Golden Rule and the Great Commandment
- numerous miracles (calming of the storm, raising of Lazarus, changing water into wine, feeding of the five thousand, walking on water, healing of the blind, deaf, and paralyzed, etc.)
- the Last Supper, Eucharist, and the washing of the feet
- the Agony in the Garden
- Peter's denial and Judas's betrayal
- the way of the cross and Crucifixion
- the Resurrection and appearances
- dozens of fascinating characters: Zacchaeus, Mary Magdalene, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, Martha and Mary, etc.
- powerful images such as the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, and the Way, Truth, and the Life

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

New Testament

This section of the Bible is easy because it is just one book—the Acts of the Apostles. Place your bookmark at the end of this book and relive the experience of the early Christian community. In many ways, the book of Acts is a sequel to the Gospel of Luke because both were written by the same author. Here are some highlights of the Acts:

- Jesus' ascension
- the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost
- descriptions of the communal life of the early Church
- Stephen's martyrdom
- Philip and the Ethiopian
- Saul's conversion and baptism
- the missionary work of Peter, Saul (Paul), Barnabas, and others
- miracles performed through Peter and Paul
- Paul's travels, imprisonment, trials, shipwreck, and arrival in Rome

LETTERS (also called Epistles)

Romans through Jude

New Testament

Place this bookmark at the end of the Letter of Jude. Welcome to the communications of the early Church, before e-mails, phones, and text messages. Of the twenty-one letters, a little more than half are attributed to Paul. All of the letters are addressed to communities of Christians and to the leaders of these communities, and were designed to teach, admonish, encourage, correct, and update the various churches. Here are some highlights:

The letters of Paul (such as Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians) feature theology, teachings, and exhortations concerning

- grace
- justification by faith
- the Law
- the Eucharist
- the metaphor of the Body
- variety and unity of gifts
- ministry
- suffering
- Christ and his cross
- Christian conduct

James: faith and good works, Anointing of the Sick

1 Peter: be prepared to explain your hope

1 John: "Beloved, let us love one another . . ."

REVELATION

New Testament

Place your last bookmark at the end of the book of Revelation and you've reached the end of the Bible! As you enter the book of Revelation, be aware that it is one of the most misunderstood books of the Bible. Many falsely use this book to predict the end of the world. Written in apocalyptic style, the book of Revelation uses many symbols and figurative language to describe the eternal struggle between good and evil. Despite all of the frightening imagery, the uplifting conclusion of this book is that good has prevailed and always will prevail. Here are the highlights:

- visions and messages to the seven churches
- the scroll and the lamb
- the one hundred forty-four thousand saved
- the seven trumpets
- the woman and the dragon
- the King of kings
- the thousand-year reign
- the new heavens and new earth
- the new Jerusalem
- "Come, Lord Jesus!"