

Journey Bible Summaries (7)

2024 – 2025

1. Genesis

Theme: Beginnings

Author: Moses

Date: About 1450 B.C.

The Bible is the history of God's dealing with humanity. The history begins in the logical place — with creation. From the start, humans could see God's power, authority, creativity and personality. God created men and women in a state of innocent dependence on Him. But because humans are created in the image of God, we also have free will. Adam and Eve exercised that free will, with the encouragement of Satan, to disobey God and sin. Since God is perfect, He cannot tolerate sin. God's justice requires that sin separates us from Him, and since He is life, separation from Him means death. Sin was passed on from Adam to every human who has ever lived. But God's love and grace can also be seen early in Genesis. God did not punish Adam and Eve with instant death. Instead, He promised a redeemer, the first prophecy of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in Scripture (3:15). Humanity's sin was soon evident. Cain killed Abel and things went from bad to worse until God said of man ... the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (6:5). Things had gotten so bad that God could only find one righteous man, Noah. He provided refuge for Noah and his family on the ark and destroyed the rest of the world with a flood. It was obvious that individual humans were incapable of obeying God, so God instituted human government to prevent evil from getting out of control. He wanted men to spread out over the world, but instead they built a huge city and a tower to show how great they were. This time, God punished man by confusing their languages. Unable to understand one another, people were forced to do what God had wanted them to do by choice — scatter around the world and fill it. Not long after Babel, God spoke to a man named Abram (later Abraham) and promised him that he would have so many descendants that they couldn't be counted, and that the entire world would be blessed through his seed. (This promise was fulfilled in part by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but there is a further fulfillment yet to come when the nations are blessed through Israel during the millennium.) The remainder of Genesis is a history of Abraham's descendants, beginning with his son, Isaac, his son, Jacob, and his sons who became the 12 tribes of Israel.

2. Deuteronomy

Theme: The second giving of the law

Author: Moses

Date: 1450-1410 B.C.

Deuteronomy is composed almost entirely of Moses' addresses to the children of Israel before they enter Canaan. (Because of Moses' disobedience at Kadesh when he struck the rock twice, God did not permit him to enter Canaan.) Moses continues the review of Israel's history begun in Numbers and then enlarges upon some of the basic laws previously given. Deuteronomy contains prophecies made concerning Israel's future — blessings if Israel is obedient to God, curses if disobedient. Closing with the final words of Moses, the book gives a description of his death on Mount Nebo.

3. Proverbs

Theme: Wisdom

Author: Solomon and others

Date: 10th century B.C.

God offered Solomon anything he asked for, and Solomon asked for wisdom. God was pleased with this and made Solomon the wisest man alive. Wisdom is the ability to take God's truth and use that knowledge to improve your life and the lives of others according to God's will. Eight hundred of Solomon's wisest sayings — inspired by the Holy Spirit — have been gathered in the collection we know as Proverbs. In addition, he collected wise sayings from other sources. King Hezekiah collected Solomon's proverbs and added some from other writers. The first nine chapters are Solomon's advice to his son. The next 20 are a loose collection of wise sayings on godly living. Proverbs makes it very clear that wisdom comes from God (1:7) and leads to God (2:5). The final two chapters of the book include wisdom from Agur and King Lemuel.

4. Ecclesiastes

Theme: Man's wisdom

Author: Solomon

Date: 10th century B.C.

Solomon had, by the world's standards, an amazing life. God made him the wisest man alive. He had wealth, power and fame. And then we come to Ecclesiastes. Solomon probably wrote this book as an old man looking back at his life — and he doesn't seem to be very happy. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity (1:2b). Solomon's point is that the things of this world, when pursued for their own value or in expectation of achieving satisfaction, are worthless. Everything is temporary and without lasting value. He shows the pointlessness of pursuing satisfaction through fame, wisdom, pleasure, physical indulgence, work, government, wealth, nostalgia, the praise of others and justice. His conclusion is that nobody has any control over what happens in life and that nobody understands it either. But Solomon doesn't leave us there. He recommends that we enjoy the things God has given us — food and drink, friends, our spouses, our labor — but not to expect them to satisfy us on our own. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil (12:13-14).

5. Ezekiel

Theme: Judgment and glory

Author: Ezekiel

Date: Sixth century B.C.

Ezekiel was both a priest and a prophet. His ministry took place while he was one of the Jewish exiles during the Babylonian captivity of Judah, around 580 B.C., overlapping Jeremiah at the beginning and Daniel at the end. The prophet told the people why God had punished them and promised His future faithfulness and blessing. A recurring message throughout the book is for God's people to ...know that I am the LORD (Ezekiel 6:7, and more than 30 other places in the book). Ezekiel points forward to the coming of the Messiah when ... I [Jesus Christ] Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them ... (34:11-12). Some of his prophecies, written in terms of symbols and visions, extend into the book of Revelation and resemble the prophecies of Daniel and the apostle John.

6. Zephaniah

Theme: The day of the Lord

Author: Zephaniah

Date: Seventh century B.C.

This prophet ministered during the reign of King Josiah, sometime around 630 B.C., before that king put a temporary end to idol worship in Judah. His message may have even helped bring about the nation's return to worshiping God. Unfortunately, as soon as Josiah died, the people returned to idolatry. Zephaniah's prophecies foretell the wrath of God that resulted in the Babylonian captivity just a few years later. His prophecies also refer to the day of the Lord (also known as the tribulation), a greater day of wrath still to come. But like so many of the prophets, he ends with a promise of a still-future day when Israel will be restored: At that time, I will bring you back, even at the time I gather you; for I will give you fame and praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I return your captives before your eyes ... (3:20)

7. Zechariah

Theme: The coming Messiah

Author: Zechariah

Date: Sixth century B.C.

Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai and he made his prophecy just a few months later. His message was one of hope — the Messiah was coming, and the nation would be restored. Many of Zechariah's prophecies have a two-fold fulfillment; one when Jesus Christ first came to earth and another when He will come again to reign on the throne in Jerusalem and judge the Gentile nations who tried to destroy the Jewish people. When Christ was on earth, most Jews failed to grasp the two-fold nature of these prophecies. As a result, they expected Him to defeat Rome and restore Israel at that time.