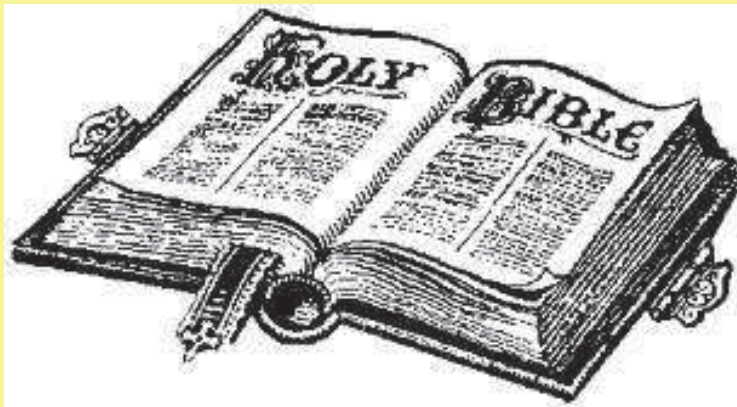


All Saints Church, Bearsden



The King James Bible Marathon



September 18th to 25th, 2011

It is with great pleasure that I commend this booklet about the All Saints' Bible Marathon. This was a splendid initiative which managed to combine both love of the King James version of the bible and practical support for the needs of suffering people in our own day. Well done, the Saints of Bearsden who receive my particular thanks for allowing me the great joy of reading the prologue of St John's Gospel during the marathon.

+Gregor

King James Bible Marathon – the full story.

How it started.

On May 26th, 2011 a few All Saints members met for a 'brainstorming' meeting intended to come up with ideas for fund-raising events for the year ahead. One idea very quickly seized everyone's imagination: "We should do a marathon reading of the King James Bible, in this, its four hundredth anniversary year." So we decided to do it. Then we had to decide how!

The first issue was whether to read literally non-stop, day and night, or with breaks. After some discussion we decided to read only during the days. From the outset we were keen to attract people to come into the church and be a part of the experience, and we couldn't visualise many people doing that at three in the morning! Our target was to complete the reading in one week, or more specifically, between the end of one Sunday service, and the start of the service the following week.

Most of the initial planning was concerned with timings. The Bible contains 66 books, with a total of 1189 chapters! A little research indicated that between 70 and 90 hours would be needed to read them all. We were aiming to read a number of complete books each day, so we had to work out what should be read when, to achieve an acceptably even distribution across the week. We found it difficult to guess how long it would take to read a particular book, or even chapter: everyone reads at different speeds, and some of the text is wordy and convoluted, with unfamiliar and lengthy names, while other parts of the Bible are familiar, poetical and concise. It doesn't take a genius to realise that speeds will vary throughout, but short of reading and analysing every chapter, it simply was not possible to anticipate accurately.

In the end, we guessed a reading rate throughout of 12 to 13 chapters per hour (4.5 to 5 minutes per chapter). We then came up with a schedule for the week, with most timings on that basis, making no allowance for slow chapters or fast chapters, and merely hoping that it would be average out!

Bishop Gregor, approached about the plans at an early stage, asked to read the opening of St John's Gospel. At this point, we did not have a date for the marathon, so, as we were already looking at September, we coordinated with the Bishop's Office to find a suitable gap in his schedule, on a rough estimate (we had not yet worked out the timetable) of where John's Gospel might come. This pinned down the marathon to the week between the 18th and the 25th September. After an initial error, we planned the fourth Gospel to begin on the Saturday morning, and booked the Bishop accordingly. This produced the timetable reproduced later in this booklet.

Why we did it.

Our next step was to decide why we were doing the reading! It may seem that we should have been clear about this from the first, but this is an account not of how to do it, but of how we did it! Although it was conceived in a fund-raising meeting (and that aspect of it was never lost – we decided that 75% of any money raised would go to the African famine appeal), it was clear to the organisers from an early stage that this should be thought of as a celebration of the Bible, and of the King James version of the Bible, and that any practical benefits from a complete reading were secondary. We felt that this was a thing worth doing for itself. We did not fully appreciate at this stage, just how deeply moving it would be for so many people, and how profound a spiritual experience what might have been simply an endurance test would turn out to be.

It was decided not to suggest sponsored reading, but simply to make it possible for any readers or visitors to leave a donation. In the end, £900 was raised: more would have been possible, but emphasising fund-raising would have taken from the four-fold nature of the event, to be at one and the same time a commemoration and celebration, a kind of church service, an act of outreach, and a fund-raiser.

The publicity machine.

Having sorted out our philosophy, and sketched the timings for the event, we had to start promoting it, and getting people to agree to read. It was always very obvious that All Saints could not achieve this alone. We have an average congregation of about sixty five – that's one book each! We therefore aimed to publicize the event as widely as we could, but paying particular attention to the wider Diocese, and to all our neighbouring churches, of whatever denomination. The organisers are very grateful to the Diocesan Office who assisted in passing out our invitations to read, and to the Bearsden and Milngavie churches, many of whom generously helped with the publicity. We also used our website and that of the Diocese, posters, the local paper, personal invitations, and of course, word-of-mouth. We made it possible for people to sign up by phone (we arranged a dedicated phone number and answer service for the marathon), email, post or in person. Over the summer, right up to the start of the marathon, every method of advertising got at least some results, and every contact method offered was taken up.

The way to read

Our scheme was for people to sign up to read during an hour or hours of the event. During that hour, they would be asked to read one chapter at a time. If there had only been only two readers present (in fact there were never that few), they would be asked to read every other chapter, meaning they'd have about 6 or 7 chapters to read in their hour. Our aim therefore was to ensure that we had at least two names in every hour of the 90 that the marathon would take. We felt we could accommodate a maximum of 10 readers in any hour, as that would mean no one would fail to get a chapter to read within the hour – and we thought it unlikely that we would often run out of slots! We produced a grand chart, on display at All Saints throughout the summer, showing the schedule for the reading, and with ten slots in every hour, available for people to volunteer to read. This was gradually filled in by All Saints members and added to by offers from outside.

The normal arrangement was for people to read whatever came their way during the time they had signed up for. However, there were some requests for particular passages, and we tried to accommodate these wherever we could. A few people also wanted to read or have a passage read in memory of someone, and we were of course very happy to make this possible and include a note about it on the day.

By the start of the marathon we knew we could rely on every hour having the necessary two names, and, in the vast majority of cases, at least three for every one of the ninety hours. In the event, it was extremely rare for there to be only three. Having four or five waiting to read was typical, and on more than one occasion we were 'fully booked'.

Getting the details right.



With the central task gathering steam, it was time to give thought to the support details. We needed to make people welcome to All Saints, and provide them with enough to keep them interested, without interrupting the readings. It was decided from the outset, that it would be important to offer refreshments to all-comers, non-stop. That's a lot to ask, and the organisers are very grateful to the tireless team who made it possible. Even when there were only a handful of people in the church, the ability to have coffee and biscuits in between reading chapters was hugely appreciated,

indeed, absolutely vital! At our busier times, and when we had the leisure to take short intervals, the refreshments were just what were needed to make our guests feel welcome.

We produced a giant flip-chart, called 'Now Reading', which showed the book we were on, two books to a page. (This would have benefited by being even bigger, but A3 was the largest paper we could obtain!) The ceremonial changing of the page, particularly after finishing the longer Old Testament books, was greatly enjoyed by the supervisors.

A little research and editing produced a history of the King James Bible, and rather more research and work produced a summary, book by book, of the Bible. These information sheets were on display at the back of the church, and provided a welcome opportunity to browse and learn for readers and visitors alike. You'll find them reproduced at the end of this booklet. Attractive laminated commemorative bookmarks (home-produced!) were given to all readers and visitors as a memento of the occasion. Finally, we had a beautifully produced visitors' book, which ended with about 100 names and some very nice comments in it. We placed one modest collecting bowl beside it, which attracted about £900 by the end of the marathon.

As the week's reading progressed, it became evident that all these efforts were greatly appreciated by our visitors.

The week of the reading.

We arrived at one-o'clock on the 18th September, confident we would accomplish our mission, and complete the reading but very uncertain about timings, and fearing that our small team of dedicated supervisors (a large part of whose role was to guarantee the continuity of the readings in the event of people not turning up) might be in for an exhausting week. We had a reasonable number of names signed up, with a fair proportion from outside All Saints, but, never having done anything like this before, we did not know what was going to happen.

Sunday and Monday saw us through to the end of II Samuel. There were a lot of long chapters to get through on both days and we became fairly worried about our schedule, as we were not averaging the hoped-for four and a half minutes per chapter. Both days finished at 11pm (an hour late), despite constant encouragement to people to read as fast as they could, and to waste not a second in changing over at the lectern (30 seconds change-over between chapters adds well over an hour onto the end of the day!) We did, however, thoroughly enjoy the reading, despite finding ourselves wading through what one might describe as the less user-friendly parts of the Bible! We were never short of readers.

We started Tuesday with trepidation. We had even more chapters to get through, and if we ran as slow as the first two days, we would finish well after midnight. There were therefore some impressive performances of speed reading, and a few barely-suppressed sighs as we realised how much of the information about tribal boundaries and temple dimensions and ancient laws is repeated, just in case one was not attending the first time. Contrary to expectations however, by early evening Tuesday, we had caught up with ourselves, and actually finished before 10pm.

Wednesday turned out to be one of the highlights of the week. We expected it to be popular, as it started with Psalms, and ended with the Song of Songs. Once again, however, we were worried about timings. Technically, we had 201 chapters to read, too many for one day on the normal timing arrangement but we hoped that 9 hours for all 150 Psalms would be enough. In



the event, we discovered that each beautiful, poetic and (by comparison with prose chapters) *short* psalm could be read gravely and impressively in much less time than we had allowed. Our problem, if it could be called such, was to slow ourselves down sufficiently to end the day at the time publicized. After the first hour or so, we adopted the practice of reading one psalm, slowly and with emphasis, then stopping, and allowing some time for reflection, and sometimes a little music. We also called fairly frequent coffee breaks throughout the day. The result of this was an exceptionally enjoyable, and deeply thought-provoking experience. The psalms rewarded such leisured reading, and the frequent breaks gave us a chance to chat without having to whisper with our guests. Ecclesiastes, that evening, was a popular slot for readers, and provided the first occasion when we were fully booked. It was a very successful day, and provided a welcome change of pace after the relative hurry-hurry of the first three days.

By then, and for the rest of the week, it was obvious that our timetable would work, we were getting plenty of visitors, many of whom had not signed up in advance, and best of all, our readers were tending to come back again and again. However, we finished a little late again on Thursday night, probably because we'd been getting complacent.

Friday was another highlight. We galloped through the minor prophets, and were able to allow ourselves a good break before starting the New Testament a little early during the afternoon. Launching into the Gospel of Matthew after reading the entire Old Testament is quite an experience, as is reading not one, but three Gospels one after another. We slowed up a lot at this point, not at all surprisingly, but as we had given ourselves a head start in the morning, we still finished at a reasonable hour.

Saturday morning opened with Bishop Gregor reading the start of St John's Gospel. He did not know, because we had solved the problem by the time he arrived, that it looked for a while as though the sound system had failed, and we'd all have to read at full volume all day (not a pleasant prospect after the week we'd been having!); however, it was a false alarm and all went well. Our refreshments team, in honour of the Bishop, provided a truly magnificent spread of cakes and scones that we enjoyed throughout that day.

On Sunday morning, we only had to read the Epistle of Jude, and of course, Revelation. We were delighted that Kirstin, who was returning to duty after her sick leave that very day, was able to be there and read the penultimate chapter. Reading the end of the last chapter in the Bible, saying 'The End', and closing the beautiful copy we had been using (borrowed from the Diocese) for the last time, was an emotional moment. We'd done it! It was 10.50am on Sunday 25th September.



Kirstin rounded the event off with a lovely Eucharist service, themed on the Bible, particularly the King James version, with quotations from it interspersed through the service.

The Readers.

We had just over 100 readers, many of whom came day after day, but everyone's contribution, whether of one chapter or dozens of chapters, read badly or well, quickly or slowly, was hugely welcome. Some of our younger readers did a fantastic job, outperforming some of us of more mature years! (Our very youngest - only eight years old - enjoyed reading the book of Jonah so much that she

persuaded her father to take her back later that day to read a chapter of Matthew.) We had much support from around the Diocese, with people coming surprising distances to join in, and we had many visitors from the local churches. We also had the involvement, in one way or another, of almost the entire congregation of All Saints. It was a fantastic effort, and a once in a lifetime experience.

The following pages have the timetable upon which we based our plans, and the list of the books of the Bible, showing who read during each one. Next we give the history of the King James version, and last, but far from least, our guide to all the books of the Bible.

Mairi Ross



The timetable we aimed for.

Sunday 18th September

The Old Testament

1. **Genesis. 50ch.** Sun 1pm-4.45pm. **3h45m**
2. **Exodus. 40ch.** Sun 4.45pm-7.45pm. **3h**
3. **Leviticus. 27ch.** Sun 7.45pm-9.45pm. **2h**

Monday 19th September

4. **Numbers. 36ch.** M 9am-11.35am. **2h35m**
5. **Deuteron. 34ch.** M 11.35am-2pm. **2h25m**
6. **Joshua. 24ch.** M 2pm-3.45pm. **1h45m**
7. **Judges. 21ch.** M 3.45pm-5.20pm. **1h35m**
8. **Ruth. 4ch.** M 5.20pm-5.40pm. **20m**
9. **I Samuel. 31ch.** M 5.40pm-8pm. **2h20m**
10. **II Samuel. 24ch.** M 8pm-9.50pm. **1h50m**

Tuesday 20th September

11. **I Kings. 22ch.** T 9am-10.40am. **1h40m**
12. **II Kings. 25ch.** T 10.40am-12.35pm. **1h55m**
13. **I Chron. 29ch.** T 12.35pm-2.45pm. **2h10m**
14. **II Chron. 36ch.** T 2.45pm-5.25pm. **2h50m**
15. **Ezra. 10ch.** T 5.25pm-6.10pm. **45m**
16. **Nehemiah. 13ch.** T 6.10pm-7.10pm **1h**
17. **Esther. 10ch.** T 7.10-7.55pm **45m**
18. **Job. 42ch.** T 7.55pm-11.05pm **3h10m**

Wednesday 21st September

19. **Psalms 150ch.** W 9am-6pm **9h**
20. **Proverbs 31ch.** W 6pm-8.20pm **2h20m**
21. **Ecclesiastes 12ch** W 8.20pm-9.15pm **55m**
22. **S of Sol 8ch.** W 9.15pm-9.50pm **35m**

Thursday 22nd September

23. **Isaiah 66ch.** Th 9am-2pm **5h**
24. **Jeremiah 52ch.** Th 2pm-5.55pm **3h55m**
25. **Lamentation 5ch.** Th 5.55pm-6.20pm **25m**
26. **Ezekiel 48ch.** Th 6.20pm-9.55pm **3h35m**

Friday 23rd September

27. **Daniel 12ch.** F 9am-10am **1h**
28. **Hosea 14ch.** F 10am-11.10 **1h10m**
29. **Joel 3ch.** F 11.10am-11.25am **15m**
30. **Amos 9ch.** F 11.25am-12.10pm **45m**
31. **Obadiah 1ch** F 12.10pm-12.15pm **5m**
32. **Jonah 4ch** F 12.15pm-12.35pm **20m**
33. **Micah 7ch** F 12.35pm-1.10pm **35m**
34. **Nahum 3ch** F 1.10pm-1.25pm **15m**
35. **Habbakuk 3ch** F 1.25pm-1.40pm **15m**
36. **Zephaniah 3ch** F 1.40pm-1.55pm **15m**
37. **Haggai 2ch** F 1.55pm-2.05pm **10m**
38. **Zechariah 14ch** F 2.05pm-3.15pm **1h10m**
39. **Malachi 4ch** F 3.15pm-3.35pm **20m**

Friday 23rd September Cont'd

The New Testament.

40. **St Matthew 28ch** F 3.40pm-6pm **2h20m**
41. **St Mark 16ch** F 6pm-7.20pm **1h20m**
42. **St Luke 24ch** F 7.20pm-9.20pm **2h**

Saturday 24th September

43. **St John 21ch** Sa 9am-10.35am **1h35m**
44. **Acts 28ch** Sa 10.35am-12.45pm **2h10m**
45. **Romans 16ch** Sa 12.45pm-2pm **1h15m**
46. **I Corinth 16ch** Sa 2pm-3.15pm **1h15m**
47. **II Corinth 13ch** Sa 3.15pm-4.15pm **1h**
48. **Galatians 6ch** Sa 4.15pm-4.45pm **30m**
49. **Ephesians 6ch** Sa 4.45pm-5.15pm **30m**
50. **Philippians 4ch** Sa 5.15pm-5.35pm **20m**
51. **Colossians 4ch** Sa 5.35pm-5.55pm **20m**
52. **I Thess 5ch** Sa 5.55pm-6.15pm **20m**
53. **II Thess 3ch** Sa 6.15pm-6.25pm **10m**
54. **I Timothy 6ch** Sa 6.25pm-6.50pm **25m**
55. **II Timothy 4ch** Sa 6.50pm-7.10pm **20m**
56. **Titus 3ch** Sa 7.10pm-7.20pm **10m**
57. **Philemon 1ch** Sa 7.20pm-7.25pm **5m**
58. **Hebrews 13ch** Sa 7.25pm-8.25pm **1h**
59. **James 5ch** Sa 8.25pm-8.45pm **20m**
60. **I Peter 5ch** Sa 8.45pm-9.10pm **25m**
61. **II Peter 3ch** Sa 9.10pm-9.20pm **10m**
62. **I John 5ch** Sa 9.20pm-9.45pm **25m**
63. **II John. 1ch** Sa 9.45pm-9.50pm **5m**
64. **III John 1ch** Sa 9.50pm-9.55pm **5m**

Sunday 25th September

65. **Jude 1ch** Sun 9am-9.05am **5m**
66. **Rev 22ch** Sun 9.05am-10.55am **1h50m**

The books of the Bible with the readers.

Genesis (50 chapters) 15 readers

Hanan Atalla	Laura Ayoub	Celia Fisher
Louise Fisher	Mike Graham	Susan Gray
Michael Keen	Lou Melia	Mairi Ross
David Simmons	Eddie Simmons	Ellen Simmons
Bryan Stack	Janet Stack	Jean Stirling

Exodus (40 chapters) 9 readers

Graham Caie	James Carrick	Christine Cogan
Susan Gray	Joyce James	Mairi Ross
Jon Sedgwick	Iain Stewart	David Wheatley

Leviticus (27 chapters) 5 readers

Mike Graham	Susan Gray	John Harrington
Mairi Ross	Niall Ross	

Numbers (36 chapters) 12 readers

Helen Ball	Mary Darke	Christine Fry
Charles Harris	Michael Keen	Ailsa Millar
Ian Milne	Mairi Ross	Niall Ross
Christine Smith	Janet Stack	David Wheatley

Deuteronomy (34 chapters) 9 readers

Meg Anderson	Eileen Condie	Mary Darke
Ivan Draper	Joyce James	Ian Mackie
Stephen Rodgers	Mairi Ross	David Wheatley

Joshua (24 chapters) 11 readers

Meg Anderson	Tom Cosh	Ivan Draper
Christine Fry	Ian Mackie	Mairi Ross
John Sherwood	Margaret Sherwood	Christine Smith
Rob Smith	David Wheatley	

Judges (21 chapters) 8 readers

Tom Cosh	Sally Gorton	Eric Horton
Mairi Ross	John Sherwood	Margaret Sherwood
Christine Smith	Rob Smith	

Ruth (4 chapters) 2 readers

Margaret Dunn	Barbara Thompson	
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I Samuel (31 chapters) 8 readers

Helen Ball	Simon Ball	Mary Darke
Sally Gorton	Eric Horton	Margaret Mills
Sheena MacDonald	Janet Stack	

II Samuel (24 chapters) 5 readers

John Brooker	Mary Darke	Susan Gray
Sheena MacDonald	Mairi Ross	

I Kings (22 chapters) 7 readers

Helen Ball	Sheena MacDonald	Andrew Roach
Mairi Ross	Niall Ross	Jon Sedgwick
David Wheatley		

II Kings (25 chapters) 8 readers

Meg Anderson	Mary Darke	Richard Kingslake
Sheena MacDonald	Elizabeth Moles	Mairi Ross
Niall Ross	David Wheatley	

I Chronicles (29 chapters) 7 readers

Meg Anderson	Eileen Condie	Mary Darke
Richard Kingslake	Myra MacFarlane	Mairi Ross
David Wheatley		

II Chronicles (36 chapters) 8 readers

Christine Fry	Eric Horton	Penny Inglis
Alexis Oates	Mairi Ross	Jon Sedgwick
Janet Stack	David Wheatley	

Ezra (10 chapters) 5 readers

Tom Cosh	Susan Gray	Graeme Hely
Eric Horton	Mairi Ross	

Nehemiah (13 chapters) 6 readers

Tom Cosh	Christine Fry	Susan Gray
Eric Horton	Alexis Oates	Jon Sedgwick

Esther (10 chapters) 5 readers

Christine Fry	Susan Gray	Eric Horton
Jon Sedgwick	Gail Ullrich	

Job (42 chapters) 12 readers

John Brooker	Eileen Condie	Mike Graham
Susan Gray	Graeme Hely	Eric Horton
Alexis Oates	Mairi Ross	Jon Sedgwick
Susie Sharkey	Christine Smith	Gail Ullrich

Psalms (150 psalms) 30 readers

Helen Ball	Eileen Condie	Tom Cosh
Celia Craig	David Craig	Mary Darke
Susan Gray	Ian Halliburton	David Hamblen
John Harrington	Susan Harrington	Graeme Hely
Eric Horton	Lisella Hutton	Gillian Kingslake
Jan Macdonald	John MacFarlane	Myra MacFarlane
Ian Mackie	Margaret Mills	Elizabeth Moles
Peter Negus	Shirley Negus	Mairi Ross
Niall Ross	Jon Sedgwick	Alex Stirling
Jean Stirling	Pauline Waugh	Robert?

Proverbs (31 chapters) 13 readers

John Brooker	James Carrick	Phillip Escreet
Susan Gray	David Hamblen	Graeme Hely
Eric Horton	Margaret Mills	Peter Negus
Shirley Negus	Mairi Ross	Jon Sedgwick
Ann Wheatley		

Ecclesiastes (12 chapters) 11 readers

John Brooker	James Carrick	Phillip Escreet
Peter Glancy	David Hamblen	Graeme Hely
Mike Lane	Margaret Mills	David Simmons
Peter Stead	Ann Wheatley	

Song of Solomon (8 chapters) 8 readers

Mary Darke	Peter Glancy	Graeme Hely
Mike Lane	Mairi Ross	David Simmons
Peter Stead	Ann Wheatley	

Isaiah (66 chapters) 17 readers

Ian Anderson	Helen Ball	John Brooker
Eileen Condie	Susan Gray	David Hamblen
Gill Hamblen	John Harrington	Susan Harrington
Joyce James	Elizabeth Moles	Andrew Roach
Stephen Rodgers	Mairi Ross	Niall Ross
Jon Sedgwick	Pauline Waugh	

Jeremiah (52 chapters) 15 readers

Ian Anderson	Eileen Condie	Tom Cosh
Mary Darke	David Hamblen	Graeme Hely
Fergus Hempel	Fiona Hempel	Eric Horton
Sheila Knapman	Mairi Ross	Jon Sedgwick
Susie Sharkey	Alan Sinclair	Pauline Waugh

Lamentations (5 chapters) 5 readers

Meg Anderson	Eileen Condie	Tom Cosh
David Hamblen	Eric Horton	

Ezekiel (48 chapters) 13 readers

Meg Anderson	John Brooker	Celia Fisher
Susan Gray	David Hamblen	Graeme Hely
Fergus Hempel	Fiona Hempel	Eric Horton
Andrew Long	Mairi Ross	Jon Sedgwick
Ann Wheatley		

Daniel (12 chapters) 4 readers

Helen Ball	Gill Hamblen	Jon Sedgwick
David Wheatley		

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. (67 chapters) 19 readers

Meg Anderson	Helen Ball	Simon Ball
Gill Hamblen	Sheena MacDonald	John Macleod
Maggie Macleod	Elizabeth Moles	Andrew Roach
Imogen Roach	Mairi Ross	Niall Ross
Christina Scott	Hamish Scott	Jon Sedgwick
Paul Sharkey	Alex Stirling	David Wheatley
Robert?		

St Matthew (28 chapters) 18 readers

Meg Anderson	Alva Caldwell	Tom Cosh
Vivian Davy	Gill Hamblen	Graeme Hely
Fergus Hempel	Fiona Hempel	Jean Kerr
John Macleod	Maggie Macleod	Kenneth Roach
Kate Ross	Ken Ross	Mairi Ross
Pauline Waugh	Ann Wheatley	David Wheatley

St Mark (16 chapters) 13 readers

John Brooker	Tom Cosh	John Harrington
Susan Harrington	Graeme Hely	Fergus Hempel
Fiona Hempel	Eric Horton	Peter Negus
Shirley Negus	Mairi Ross	David Simmons
Gail Ullrich		

St Luke (24 chapters) 14 readers

John Brooker	Christine Cogan	Eileen Condie
John Duncan	Susan Gray	Graeme Hely
Eric Horton	Elizabeth Moles	Maxie Richards
Andrew Roach	Imogen Roach	Mairi Ross
David Simmons	Ann Wheatley	

St John (21 chapters) 13 readers

Ian Anderson	Meg Anderson	Helen Ball
Bishop Gregor	Christine Cogan	Mike Graham
Gill Hamblen	Eric Horton	Sheena MacDonald
Elizabeth Moles	Mairi Ross	Niall Ross
David Wheatley		

Acts (28 chapters) 10 readers

Ian Anderson	Louise Benson	Sheila Benson
Mike Graham	Sheena MacDonald	Lou Melia
Mairi Ross	Niall Ross	David Simmons
David Wheatley		

Romans (16 chapters) 7 readers

Ben Fryer	Mike Graham	Susan Gray
Joyce James	Sheena MacDonald	Mairi Ross
David Wheatley		

I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, I and II Peter, I, II and III John. (104 chapters) 25 readers

Meg Anderson	John Brooker	Tom Cosh
Peter Glancy	Mike Graham	Susan Gray
John Harrington	Susan Harrington	Graeme Hely
Eric Horton	Joyce James	Andrew Long
Sheena MacDonald	Ailsa Mapplebeck	Angus Mapplebeck
Margaret Mills	Elizabeth Moles	Mairi Ross
David Simmons	Peter Stead	Alex Stirling
Barbara Thompson	Ann Wheatley	David Wheatley
Frances?		

Jude (1 chapter) 1 reader

Kit Lindsay		
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Revelations (22 chapters) 9 readers

Kirstin Freeman	Susan Gray	Kit Lindsay
Sheena MacDonald	Mairi Ross	Niall Ross
David Simmons	Pauline Waugh	David Wheatley

This list may contain errors, and is incomplete.

A Brief History of the King James Bible

Late in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603), a draft act of Parliament was proposed: "An act for the reducing of diversities of bibles now extant in the English tongue to one settled vulgar translated from the original." The Bishop's Bible of 1568, although it may have eclipsed the Great Bible, was still rivalled by the Geneva Bible. This draft had not progressed when Elizabeth was succeeded by James I in 1603. James had already been James VI of Scotland for thirty-seven years. He was born during the period between the Geneva and the Bishop's Bible.

One of the first things done by the new king was the calling of the Hampton Court Conference in January of 1604 "for the hearing, and for the determining, things pretended to be amiss in the church." Here were assembled bishops, clergymen, and professors, along with four Puritan divines. Although Bible revision was not on the agenda, the Puritan president of Corpus Christi College, John Reynolds, "moved his Majesty, that there might be a new translation of the Bible, because those which were allowed in the reigns of Henry the eighth, and Edward the sixth, were corrupt and not answerable to the truth of the Original." The king rejoined that he:

"Could never yet see a Bible well translated in English; but I think that, of all, that of Geneva is the worst. I wish some special pains were taken for an uniform translation, which should be done by the best learned men in both Universities, then reviewed by the Bishops, presented to the Privy Council, lastly ratified by the Royal authority, to be read in the whole Church, and none other."

Accordingly, a resolution came forth:

"That a translation be made of the whole Bible, as consonant as can be to the original Hebrew and Greek; and this to be set out and printed, without any marginal notes, and only to be used in all churches of England in time of divine service."

The next step was the actual selection of the men who were to perform the work. In July of 1604, James wrote to Bishop Bancroft that he had "appointed certain learned men, to the number of four and fifty, for the translating of the Bible." These men were the best biblical scholars and linguists of their day. The preface to their completed work says "there were many chosen, that were greater in other men's eyes than in their own, and that sought the truth rather than their own praise. Again, they came or were thought to come to the work, learned, not to learn." Other men were sought out, according to James, "so that our said intended translation may have the help and furtherance of all our principal learned men within this our kingdom."

Of the fifty-four men nominated, only forty-seven are known to have taken part in the work of translation. The translators were organized into six groups, and met at Westminster, Cambridge, and Oxford. Ten translators at Westminster were assigned to work on the books from Genesis up to and including 2 Kings; seven had Romans to Jude. At Cambridge, eight worked on 1 Chronicles to Ecclesiastes, while seven others handled the Apocrypha. Oxford employed seven to translate Isaiah to Malachi; eight occupied themselves with the Gospels, Acts, and Revelation.

In common with most other translations of the period, the New Testament was principally translated from Greek, the Old Testament from the Hebrew text, and the Apocrypha from Greek and Latin.

Fifteen general rules were advanced for the guidance of the translators:

1. The ordinary Bible read in the Church, commonly called the Bishops Bible, to be followed, and as little altered as the Truth of the original will permit.
2. The names of the Prophets, and the Holy Writers, with the other Names of the Text, to be retained, as nigh as may be, accordingly as they were vulgarly used.

3. The Old Ecclesiastical Words to be kept, viz. the Word Church not to be translated Congregation &c.

4. When a Word hath divers Significations, that to be kept which hath been most commonly used by the most of the Ancient Fathers, being agreeable to the Propriety of the Place, and the Analogy of the Faith.

5. The Division of the Chapters to be altered, either not at all, or as little as may be, if Necessity so require.

6. No Marginal Notes at all to be affixed, but only for the explanation of the Hebrew or Greek Words, which cannot without some circumlocution, so briefly and fitly be expressed in the Text.

7. Such Quotations of Places to be marginally set down as shall serve for the fit Reference of one Scripture to another.

8. Every particular Man of each Company, to take the same Chapter or Chapters, and having translated or amended them severally by himself, where he thinketh good, all to meet together, confer what they have done, and agree for their Parts what shall stand.

9. As any one Company hath dispatched any one Book in this Manner they shall send it to the rest, to be considered of seriously and judiciously, for His Majesty is very careful in this Point.

10. If any Company, upon the Review of the Book so sent, doubt or differ upon any Place, to send them Word thereof; note the Place, and withal send the Reasons, to which if they consent not, the Difference to be compounded at the general Meeting, which is to be of the chief Persons of each Company, at the end of the Work.

11. When any Place of special Obscurity is doubted of, Letters to be directed by Authority, to send to any Learned Man in the Land, for his Judgement of such a Place.

12. Letters to be sent from every Bishop to the rest of his Clergy, admonishing them of this Translation in hand; and to move and charge as many skilful in the Tongues; and having taken pains in that kind, to send his particular Observations to the Company, either at Westminster, Cambridge, or Oxford.

13. The Directors in each Company, to be the Deans of Westminster, and Chester for that Place; and the King's Professors in the Hebrew or Greek in either University.

14. These translations to be used when they agree better with the Text than the Bishops Bible: Tyndale's, Matthew's, Coverdale's, Whitchurch's, Geneva.

15. Besides the said Directors before mentioned, three or four of the most Ancient and Grave Divines, in either of the Universities, not employed in Translating, to be assigned by the vice-Chancellor, upon Conference with the rest of the Heads, to be Overseers of the Translations as well Hebrew as Greek, for the better observation of the 4th Rule above specified.

The work began to take shape in 1604 and progressed steadily. The translators expressed their early thoughts in their preface as:

"Truly (good Christian Reader) we never thought from the beginning, that we should need to make a new Translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one, but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against, that hath been our endeavor."

They had at their disposal all the previous English translations that they did not disdain, from Tyndale onwards:

"We are so far off from condemning any of their labours that travailed before us in this kind, either in this land or beyond sea, either in King Henry's time, or King Edward's...or Queen Elizabeth's of ever renowned memory, that we acknowledge them to have been raised up of God, for the building and furnishing of his Church, and that they deserve to be had of us and of posterity in everlasting remembrance."

The translators also made use of a multitude of other sources, as they themselves acknowledged: "Neither did we think much [i.e. hesitate] to consult the Translators or Commentators, Chaldee, Hebrew, Syrian, Greek, or Latin, no nor the Spanish, French, Italian, or Dutch." The Greek editions of Erasmus, Stephanus, and Beza were all accessible, as were the Complutensian and Antwerp Polyglots, and the Latin translations of Pagninus, Termellius, and Beza.

Four years were spent on the preliminary translation by the six groups. The translators were exacting and particular in their work, as related in their preface:

"Neither did we disdain to revise that which we had done, and to bring back to the anvil that which we had hammered: but having and using as great helps as were needful, and fearing no reproach for slowness, nor coveting praise for expedition, we have at the length, through the good hand of the Lord upon us, brought the work to that pass that you see."

The conferences of each of the six being ended, nine months were spent at Stationers' Hall in London for review and revision of the work by two men each from the Westminster, Cambridge, and Oxford companies. The final revision was then completed by Myles Smith and Thomas Bilson, with a preface supplied by Smith.

The completed work was issued in 1611, the complete title page reading:

"THE HOLY BIBLE, Conteyning the Old Testament, and the New: Newly Translated out of the Originall tongues: & with the former Translations diligently compared and revised, by his Majesties Special Commandment. Appointed to be read in Churches. Imprinted at London by Robert Barker, Printer to the Kings most Excellent Majestie. ANNO DOM. 1611."

The New Testament had a separate title page, the whole of it reading:

"THE NEWE Testament of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. Newly Translated out of the Originall Greeke: and with the former Translations diligently compared and revised, by his Majesties speciall Commandment. IMPRINTED at London by Robert Barker, Printer to the Kings most Excellent Majestie. ANNO DOM. 1611. Cum Privilegio."

The Authorized Version, as it came to be called, went through several editions and revisions. Two notable editions were that of 1629, the first ever printed at Cambridge, and that of 1638, also at Cambridge, which was assisted by John Bois and Samuel Ward, two of the original translators. In contrast to the skill of the translation, not all early printings were as skillfully proof-read; one version even managed to omit the rather important word "not" from the commandment against adultery! The most important editions were those of the 1762 Cambridge revision by Thomas Paris, and the 1769 Oxford revision by Benjamin Blayney. One of the earliest concordances was A Concordance to the Bible of the Last Translation, by John Downham, affixed to a printing of 1632.

The Authorized Version eclipsed all previous versions of the Bible. The Geneva Bible was last printed in 1644, but the notes continued to be published with the King James text. Subsequent versions of the Bible were likewise eclipsed, for the Authorized Version *was* the Bible until the advent of the Revised Version and ensuing modern translations. It is still accepted as such by its defenders, and recognized as so by its detractors. Alexander Geddes (d. 1802), a Roman Catholic priest who in 1792 issued the first volume of his own translation of the Bible, paid tribute to the Bible of his time:

"The highest eulogiums have been made on the translation of James the First, both by our own writers and by foreigners. And, indeed, if accuracy, fidelity, and the strictest attention to the letter

of the text, be supposed to constitute the qualities of an excellent version, this of all versions, must, in general, be accounted the most excellent. Every sentence, every word, every syllable, every letter and point, seem to have been weighed with the nicest exactitude; and expressed, either in the text, or margin, with the greatest precision."

As to how and by whom the Authorized Version was "authorized," Brooke Westcott, one of the members of the committee that produced the Revised Version, and the editor, with Fenton Hort, of an edition of the Greek New Testament, stated that:

From the middle of the seventeenth century, the King's Bible has been the acknowledged Bible of the English-speaking nations throughout the world simply because it is the best. A revision which embodied the ripe fruits of nearly a century of labour, and appealed to the religious instinct of a great Christian people, gained by its own internal character a vital authority which could never have been secured by any edict of sovereign rulers.

The Authorized Version has been called "the most influential version of the most influential book in the world, in what is now its most influential language", It has contributed more idioms to English, than any other single source, including Shakespeare; examples include 'feet of clay' and 'reap the whirlwind'.

This article was edited from an essay in the book *A Brief History of English Bible Translations* by Dr. Laurence M. Vance.

The Books of the Bible. Old Testament.

Genesis.

Genesis begins with God's creation of the universe ("Let there be light"), the world, life and the human race. From chapter 12, the focus is on Abraham and his son Isaac, Isaac's son Jacob and Jacob's son Joseph, ancestors of the people God has chosen to redeem mankind. To achieve that, these Patriarchs must learn (and unlearn) a good deal. At the start, Abraham (and even more Isaac!) is taught that God rejects such cruel ideas of the times as sacrificing your son to curry favour with your god. After many adventures, the book ends with Joseph, vizier of Egypt, saving the country from famine and forgiving his brothers, who had sold him as a slave out of envy. By this time, these early Jews' understanding of God's will already differs markedly from the ideas and practices of the people around them.

Exodus.

In Exodus, we meet a history all too common from that time till now. The Jews' success breeds envy, fear and oppression: the ancient Egyptians enslave a people once welcomed by them, and murder a proportion of the male children to lessen the risk of revolt. Miriam, Moses' elder sister, hides him from this fate and he is raised as the son of an Egyptian princess. When he grows up, he discovers his ancestry, kills an Egyptian who is ill-treating a slave, and flees. God orders Moses to return and free his people, and ten plagues break the Egyptians' determination to hold onto their Jewish slaves. After the exodus, God gives his people the moral law (the Ten Commandments).

[In Egypt's 12th dynasty, there is unusual monitoring of the Nile, remarkable construction work that seems intended for storage and distribution, an important vizier and an astonishing pyramid tomb for a man from the Levant - not a Pharaoh, not even an Egyptian! A group of shepherds from the Levant arrive in the delta and are made welcome. In the 13th dynasty, these people seem much worse off and papyri suggest Egypt now has many slaves with names such as Issachar, Menachem and Shiprah. Manetho (ancient Egyptian historian) writes of Pharaoh Dudimose at the end of the 13th dynasty, "In his reign, for what cause I know not, a blast of god smote us." At this time, the population from the Levant depart and the body of the Levantine in the pyramid tomb is reverently removed. After this departure, the tomb is vandalised by Egyptians who evidently hated its former occupant.]

Leviticus.

This book records laws of service and worship of special importance to the priestly Tribe of Levi. It has been aptly called "the Handbook of the Priests". It teaches the seriousness of sin in God's sight, the necessity of atonement for sin, and the holiness of God.

Numbers.

The Israelites, led by God, journey onwards from Sinai towards Canaan. After thirty-eight years at the oasis of Kadesh Barnea, the next generation travel on to the borders of Canaan.

Deuteronomy.

Within sight of the Promised Land, Moses recalls their journeys and gives them new laws. His death (the last reported event of the Torah) concludes the 40 years of the exodus from Egypt.

Joshua.

24 chapters tell of the entry into Canaan, its conquest and division under the leadership of Joshua, and of serving God in the land.

Judges.

Free from their Egyptian taskmasters, the Israelites must now learn to govern themselves after the passing of Moses and Joshua. They have no King, no standing army, no police force. When evils prompt the often-lackadaisical people to pray for it, God sends a man (or a woman, Deborah) to

be their "Judge" and lead them. Whether defeating an external invasion, or avenging the murder of a lowly concubine, these judges rely on God to show them what to do.

Ruth.

After her husband dies, Ruth, a Moabite, defies the stereotype by refusing to abandon her Jewish mother-in-law Naomi. She accompanies Naomi back to Israel, where Ruth is at first an outsider. Helped by Naomi's advice, Ruth handles this and wins the love of local farmer Boaz. Ruth is the great-grandmother of King David.

I and II Samuel.

Philistines are attacking Israel and after reverses the people beg the prophet Samuel to choose a king to lead them. After sternly warning that such government has its own dangers, he chooses Saul. A marriage alliance between Saul's daughter Michal and Jewish hero David turns sour when Saul suspects David of meaning to succeed him. David's army of Hebrews is trusted by neither Saul nor the Philistines, so is absent from the battle at which Saul and his sons perish. Too late, the Philistines discover they have only enabled David to unite the forces against them. Jerusalem falls and becomes the capital of David's kingdom. David tries to rule justly but his love for Bathsheeba makes him send her husband to die in hopeless battle. The prophet Nathan leads David to confess and repent.

[Scholars have long recognised that the reports about the acts of the "Habirus" which occupy much of the Egyptian foreign archives of the Amarna period closely parallel the doings of Saul's Israelites and David's Hebrews in the Bible. Whether these *are* their deeds, as reported by their enemies the Philistines, or were done by "another people of the same name" remains the subject of complex (and sometimes heated) chronological argument among archaeologists.]

I and II Kings.

Solomon, son of David and Bathsheeba, becomes king. He is widely renowned for wisdom and wealth. The queen of Sheba makes a state visit. However his son Rehoboam is "ample in folly". Rehoboam ignores the advice of his older councillors to rule gently, and rebellion breaks the kingdom in two; David's line reigns in the southern kingdom of Judah, while a separate kingdom of Israel exists in the north. The kings of Israel allow other gods to be worshipped, and in time the Assyrians destroy that kingdom. Some kings of Judah are good and fear God, but many are otherwise. (Official praise of righteousness did not always lead to right behaviour in government then, any more than now.) Eventually the Babylonians conquer Judah and exile the Jews.

I Chronicles.

The first 9 chapters of 1 Chronicles are dedicated to lists and genealogies. Further lists and genealogies are scattered throughout the rest of 1 Chronicles. In between, the Book of 1 Chronicles records David's ascension to the throne and his actions thereafter. The book concludes with David's son Solomon becoming King of Israel.

II Chronicles.

The Book of 2 Chronicles records the history of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, from the reign of Solomon to the conclusion of the Babylonian exile. The decline of Judah is disappointing, but emphasis is given to the spiritual reformers who zealously seek to turn the people back to God. Little is said about the bad kings or of the failures of good kings; only goodness is stressed. Since 2 Chronicles takes a priestly perspective, the Northern Kingdom of Israel is rarely mentioned because of her false worship and refusal to acknowledge the Temple of Jerusalem. Second Chronicles concludes with the final destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

Ezra.

The Book of Ezra relates the Restoration of Jerusalem after the Babylonian Exile.

Nehemiah.

The book tells how Nehemiah, at the court of the king in Susa, is informed that Jerusalem is without walls and resolves to restore them. The king appoints him as governor of Judah and he travels to Jerusalem. There he rebuilds the walls, despite the opposition of Israel's enemies, and reforms the community in conformity with the law of Moses. After an absence in Susa he returns to find that the Israelites have been backsliding, taking non-Jewish wives who encourage worship of other gods with cruel customs. He stays to enforce the Law.

Esther.

The Book of Esther takes place in Shushan, or Susa, one of the three capitals of the Persian Empire. The exiled Jews there are objects of hatred to some Persians, including the high court official Haman. The Persian King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) quarrels with his nobly-born wife Vashti, who (understandably) refuses to obey him when he is blind drunk. He divorces her and obliges Esther, of the local Jewish population, to marry him – he thinks Esther, without powerful family or friends, will never dare disobey him. Haman plots to bring about a massacre of the Jews when, as he confidently anticipates, the king quarrels with Esther. Thanks to Esther's courage, intelligence and trust in God, Haman's plot misfires and it is he who perishes. God's providential care of His people is stressed throughout, though the word "God" never appears in the book.

Job.

The Book of Job relates the story of Job, his trials at the hands of Satan, his discussions with friends on the origins and nature of his suffering, his challenge to God, and finally a response from God.

Job is given no genealogy, his tribe is not named, and the story humorously mocks elements of its own literary artifice (at the start, several messengers narrate disasters to Job, each adding "and I alone escaped to tell you this"). Just as we have no difficulty today distinguishing a news bulletin from an adventure film, so the ancient Jewish readers of the Bible would at once recognise from these and other indications that Job is not a history, like the books above, but a literary work. The book is a didactic poem set in a prose frame and has been called "the most profound literary work of the entire Old Testament". The subject of the book of Job is, "Why do the righteous suffer?"

Psalms.

The Book of Psalms consists of 150 songs and prayers referred to individually as psalms. The psalms use the poetic device of parallelism (which survives translation – had Jewish poetry instead used metre or rhyme, it would have been practically untranslatable). Taken together, the 150 poems "express virtually the full range of Israel's religious faith."

New Testament references show that the earliest Christians used the Psalms in worship, and they remain an important part of worship in most Churches. The Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, Presbyterian, Lutheran and Anglican Churches all make systematic use of the Psalms, with a cycle for the recitation of all or most of them over the course of one or more weeks. In the early centuries of the Church, it was expected that any candidate for bishop would be able to recite the entire Psalter from memory, something they often learned automatically during their time as monks.

Proverbs.

Throughout Proverbs, wisdom (or the wise person) is compared and contrasted with foolishness (or the fool). 'Fool' in Proverbs indicates one who is lacking in morality and uninterested in correction, not one who is merely silly or playful.

Ecclesiastes.

The narrator calls himself "son of David, king in Jerusalem." Aphorisms and maxims written in terse paragraphs reflect on the meaning of life and the best way to live. Many concerns of men are "vain", "futile", "empty", "meaningless", "temporary", "transitory", "fleeting", or "mere breath". The lives of both wise and foolish men end in death. Wisdom is the means to a well-lived earthly life,

but does not have eternal meaning. One should enjoy the simple pleasures of daily life, such as eating, drinking, and taking enjoyment in one's work, which are gifts from the hand of God.

Song of Solomon.

The protagonists of the Song of Songs are a woman (identified in one verse as "the Shulamite") and a man, and the poem suggests movement from courtship to consummation. The Song of Songs can also be interpreted as an allegory comparing the relationship between husband and wife to that between God and Israel, God and the Church, or Christ and the soul.

Isaiah.

Isaiah warns of the doom that approaches sinful Judah, but he also prophesies that God will recreate the nation of Israel in the future. The Songs of the Suffering Servant are four separate passages referring to the nation of Israel, interpreted by Christians as prefiguring the coming of Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah.

The Book of Jeremiah records the final prophecies to Judah, warning of oncoming destruction if the nation does not repent. Jeremiah calls out for the nation to turn back to God. Jeremiah sadly recognizes that Judah will not repent its idolatry and immorality, and its destruction is inevitable.

Lamentation.

The book consists of five separate poems. In chapter 1 the prophet dwells on the manifold miseries of the oppressed by comparing Jerusalem to a solitary widow weeping sorely. In chapter 2 these miseries are connected to national sins and acts of God. Chapter 3 speaks of hope for the people of God: the chastisement will be for their good; a better day will dawn for them. Chapter 4 laments the ruin and desolation that had come upon the city and temple as a result of the people's sins. Chapter 5 prays that Zion's reproach may be taken away by the repentance of the people.

Ezekiel.

The book opens with a vision of God, moves on to anticipate the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, explains this as God's punishment, and closes with the promise of a new beginning and a new Temple.

Daniel.

Daniel and his friends remain faithful to God through various adventures during the Babylonian exile. By clever cross-questioning, Daniel shows the innocence of Susannah, falsely accused by a pair of lascivious elders she rejected. At one point, Daniel is brought to a drunken royal party to interpret strange words that appear on the wall. Daniel explains that the empire of Babylon is that very night to be conquered by the Persians and Medes. Daniel is put in a cage with lions but the beasts do not harm him.

[\[The astonishing history of how the Babylonians were celebrating at a party, confident in their security, on the very night that Persian troops broke into the city through an unguarded water culvert, is recounted in the work of the Greek historian Herodotus.\]](#)

Hosea.

Hosea prophesied during a dark era of Israel's history, the period of the Northern Kingdom's decline and fall in the 8th century BC. The apostasy of the people was rampant, having turned away from God in order to serve the calves of Jeroboam II, and Baal, a Canaanite deity served by human sacrifices. The prophecy of Hosea centres on God's unending love towards a sinful Israel. In this text, God's agony is expressed over the betrayal of Israel.

Joel.

The Book of Joel is apocalyptic in nature, referring to the "Day of the Lord." Chapters 1-2 refer to a plague of locusts that ravaged Judah at the time; the end of Chapter 2 warns of a coming time of

Divine intervention, and Chapter 3 relates the Day of Judgement and the salvation of God's children.

Amos.

Among the "writing" prophets Amos was the first of a new school, for, like Elijah and John the Baptist, he denounced sin with rustic boldness. A shepherd and native of Judah, he was called by God to prophesy to the northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam, rival of Rehoboam (see I and II Kings above). Sparing no one, the prophet fearlessly announced the impending judgment of God. Although the dominant note of the book is judgment, the final words promise the restoration of a righteous remnant of the nation.

Obadiah.

The book of Obadiah prophesies the fall of Edom, a mountain dwelling nation whose Founding Father was Esau, elder brother of Jacob. Edom is reproached for arrogance and for violent actions against their brother nation, the House of Jacob. Obadiah also foresees the fall of Jerusalem to foreign invaders and God's anger against Edom for taking advantage of the Jews of Judah during their plight, thus sealing their doom. Edom's lineage shall end but Israel will be restored as a holy place, and God's judgment will be upon all nations.

Jonah.

While prophets usually denounce the sins of others, the book of Jonah is a humorous warning to prophets to serve God, not their own pride. In this dramatic tale, Jonah is commanded by God to warn Nineveh that its sins will bring destruction. Afraid of what the people of Nineveh will do to him for bringing such a message, Jonah tries to avoid God's call, but only meets with misfortune and finally carries out his task. Jonah's hellfire sermon makes the people of Nineveh repent and so God spares them - whereupon Jonah complains bitterly to God; the once-terrified prophet now wants to see his prophesies of doom fulfilled. After sulking for a while, Jonah too repents; he realises he must not imagine he knows better than God. Christ alludes to Jonah when speaking of His own death and resurrection.

Micah.

The Prophet Micah was a younger contemporary of Isaiah and spoke at a time when conditions in Judah paralleled those in the northern kingdom of Israel during Amos' day. While announcing God's certain judgment upon sin, he also speaks of a sure deliverance to come through the Messiah, whose place of birth he predicts.

Nahum.

The subject of this prophecy is the approaching complete and final destruction of Nineveh, the capital of the great and at that time flourishing Assyrian empire. It was written when King Assurbanipal was at the height of his glory. Nineveh was a city of vast extent, and was then the centre of the civilization and commerce of the world, a "bloody city all full of lies and robbery" for the Assyrians, cruel both by the standards of their times and of ours, had slaughtered and plundered all the neighbouring nations. It was strongly fortified on every side, bidding defiance to every enemy. Nahum was followed by Zephaniah, who also predicted the destruction of the city

[The sudden and dramatic downfall of the powerful Assyrian empire changed the face of the whole area. Historians, trying to understand why Assyria fell, rely on the contemporary testimony of Nahum, on Babylonian writings of more than half-a-century later, and on Herodotus and other later Greek recorders of earlier Median and Persian histories; the rapid collapse seems to have swept away the final records of the Assyrians themselves.]

Habakkuk.

The Book of Habakkuk is a short prophetic book that deals with the age-old problems of evil and human suffering. The book contains only three short chapters, but they present a striking contrast. In the first two, Habakkuk protests, complains, and questions God. But the final chapter is a

beautiful psalm of praise. Habakkuk uses this complaining and questioning technique to drive home his powerful message about the approaching judgment of God.

Zephaniah.

Zephaniah's message of judgment and encouragement contains three major doctrines: 1) God is sovereign over all nations. 2) The wicked will be punished and the righteous will be vindicated on the day of judgment. 3) God blesses those who repent and trust in Him.

Haggai.

Haggai urges the people to complete the rebuilding of the second Jerusalem temple. Haggai attributes a recent drought to the peoples' refusal to rebuild the temple, which he sees as key to Jerusalem's glory.

Zechariah.

Zechariah emphasized that God has used His prophets to teach, warn and correct His people. Unfortunately, they refused to listen. Their sin brought God's punishment.

Malachi.

Although earlier prophets taught the people of Judah and Israel that their exile was punishment for failing to uphold their covenant with God, it was not long after they had been restored to the land and to Temple worship that the people's devotion to God began, once again, to wane. The book of Malachi was written to correct the lax religious and social behaviour of the Israelites – particularly the priests – in post-exile Jerusalem.

The New Testament.

The Gospel of St Matthew.

Because the Gospel of St Matthew is the one most intensely concerned with issues related to Judaism, it provides an appropriate transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Matthew explains Christian liturgy, law, discipleship, and teaching.

Matthew begins with Jesus' miraculous birth and the origin of his ministry. Narrative, interspersed with dialogue and brief homilies, tells of Jesus' miracles and actions during his ministry. The Sermon on the Mount gives the basic elements of the Christian message. The Mission Sermon empowers Jesus' apostles to preach and heal. The Sermon in Parables deals with the fact that many people do not easily understand or accept Jesus' message. The Sermon on the Church looks to establishing a community of Christians. The Eschatological Sermon shows Jesus' knowledge that he will be crucified. The last part of Matthew describes the last supper, Jesus' trial and crucifixion, and His resurrection.

The Gospel of St Mark.

Mark's Gospel is the second book of the New Testament but is believed to be the earliest of the gospels. Mark narrates the Ministry of Jesus from John the Baptist's baptism of Jesus to the Ascension of Jesus, and it concentrates particularly on the week leading up to His crucifixion (chapters 11–16, the trip to Jerusalem). Mark is believed to have been the man briefly referred to as a witness of Jesus' arrest, and is also believed to have based much of his history on the testimony of Saint Peter.

The Gospel of St Luke.

Luke's Gospel is the third and longest of the Gospels. It details Jesus story from the events of his birth to his Ascension. Luke contains the parables of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan. This gospel has a special emphasis on prayer, the activity of the Holy Spirit, the part played by women, joyfulness, and Jesus' compassion for the weak, the suffering and the outcast.

Luke's preface explains that his purpose is to write a historical account that will show the theological significance of the history. The evangelist divides history into three stages: the first ends with John the Baptist, the second describes Jesus' earthly ministry, and the third is the life of the church after Jesus' resurrection.

The Gospel of St John.

John provides a close-up view of Jesus' ministry. When the Pharisees present the woman taken in adultery, it is John who tells us the seemingly trivial fact that Jesus drew shapes in the dust before replying to them. After the feeding of the five thousand, it is John who explains why Christ withdrew and sent the disciples across the lake by themselves. Often it is John who knows the background detail to events the other gospels describe. On other occasions, John omits picturesque detail common to the other three gospels, as John is more concerned with fundamental meaning.

John begins by explaining the meaning of Jesus as flesh of the eternal and living God, as the source of light and life. John then describes Jesus' ministry—his preaching, miracles, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection. Lastly, John tells of Jesus' appearances to the disciples after his resurrection.

Acts of the Apostles.

The Acts of the Apostles is the fifth book of the New Testament. The author is traditionally identified as Luke the Evangelist.

Acts tells the story of the Apostolic Age of the Early Christian church, with particular emphasis on the ministry of the Twelve Apostles and of Paul of Tarsus. The early chapters, set in Jerusalem, discuss Jesus' Resurrection and Great Commission, his Ascension with a prophecy that He will return, the start of the Twelve Apostles' ministry, and the Day of Pentecost. The later chapters discuss Paul's conversion, his ministry, and finally his arrest and imprisonment and trip to Rome.

Romans.

The letter was composed by the Apostle Paul to explain that Salvation is offered through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is by far the longest of the Pauline epistles, and is considered his "most important theological legacy".

Paul addresses the faithfulness of God to Israel, where he says that God has been faithful to His promise. Paul hopes that all of Israel will come to realize the truth since he himself was also an Israelite and had in the past been a persecutor of Early Christians. In Romans 9–11, Paul talks about how the nation of Israel has been cast away, and the conditions under which Israel will be God's chosen nation again: when the Israel returns to its faith, sets aside its unbelief.

The main theme of this letter is the Salvation offered through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul argues that all persons are guilty of sin and therefore accountable to God. It is only through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that sinners can attain salvation. Therefore, God is both just and the one who justifies. In response to God's free, sovereign and graceful action of salvation, humanity can be justified by faith. Paul uses the example of Abraham to demonstrate that it is by faith that humanity can be seen as righteous before God.

I Corinthians.

Paul's letters to the Christians at Corinth address his concern over a pressing issue: the rampant immorality associated with the paganism of Corinth. This immorality had begun to infect the Corinthian church. Paul was deeply concerned for the spiritual health of the Corinthian church, which had been deprived of his guidance for several years. As a result, Paul corresponded at greater length with the Corinthian church than with any of the other communities that he established. The New Testament preserves two of these letters, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and makes reference to at least one other lost letter.

II Corinthians.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul expresses his relief and joy that the Corinthians had received his "severe" letter (now lost) in a positive manner. That letter addressed issues that were tearing the church apart, primarily the arrival of self-styled (false) apostles who were assaulting Paul's character, sowing discord among the believers, and teaching false doctrine. They appear to have questioned his veracity, his speaking ability, and his unwillingness to accept support from the church at Corinth. There were also some people who had not repented of their licentious behaviour.

Positively, Paul found the Corinthians had well received his "severe" letter. Paul was overjoyed to learn from Titus that the majority of Corinthians repented of their rebellion against Paul. The apostle encourages them for this in an expression of his genuine love. Paul also sought to vindicate his apostleship, as some in the church had likely questioned his authority.

Galatians.

It is a letter from St Paul to a number of Early Christian communities in the Roman province of Galatia in central Anatolia. Paul is principally concerned with the controversy surrounding Gentile Christians and the Mosaic Law within Early Christianity.

Ephesians.

The main theme of Ephesians is "the Church, the Body of Christ". The Church is to maintain the unity that Christ has brought about. Another major theme in Ephesians is the keeping of Christ's body (that is, the Church) pure and holy. From Ephesians 4:17-6:20 the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians gives practical advice in how to live a holy, pure, and Christ-inspired lifestyle.

Phillipians.

The letter was written to the church at Philippi, one of the earliest churches to be founded in Europe. They were very attached to Paul, just as he was very fond of them. Their generous contributions (which Paul gratefully acknowledges) are among the only ones he accepts. The letter to the Phillipians has been called not only the most tender letter that Paul ever wrote, but also the most delightful. It brims over with expressions of praise, confidence and rejoicing, despite the fact that this is one of Paul's prison epistles, written in Rome during his first imprisonment.

Colossians.

The Epistle to the Colossians declares Christ's supremacy over the entire created universe and exhorts Christians to lead godly lives. The letter consists of two parts: first a doctrinal section, then a second regarding conduct. In both sections, false teachers who have been spreading error in the congregation are opposed.

I Thessalonians.

For the most part, the letter is personal in nature, with only the final two chapters spent addressing issues of doctrine, almost as an aside. Paul's main purpose in writing is to encourage and reassure the Christians there. Paul urges them to go on working quietly while waiting in hope for the return of Christ.

This epistle essentially has a fourfold purpose: (1) to express Paul's joy that the church is growing and doing well; (2) to vindicate Paul's ministry and the Thessalonians' conversion; (3) to correct some misunderstanding about eschatology both because Paul's message on that topic was "cut short" and, in the meantime, some of the Thessalonians had died (leaving nagging questions as to when they would be reunited with living believers); and (4) to correct some other, moral and practical, matters.

II Thessalonians.

The situation in the Thessalonian church has not changed substantially, Paul's purpose in writing is very much the same as in his first letter to them. He writes to encourage persecuted believers, to correct a misunderstanding concerning the Lord's return, and to exhort the Thessalonians to be steadfast and to work for a living.

I Timothy.

Paul's letter consists mainly of counsels to his younger colleague and delegate Timothy regarding his ministry in Ephesus. These include instructions on the forms of worship and organization of the Church, the responsibilities resting on its several members, including episcopoi (overseers or bishops) and diaconoi (deacons); and secondly of exhortation to faithfulness in maintaining the truth amid surrounding errors. Paul warns that erring teachers will occur.

II Timothy.

In his letter, Paul urges Timothy not to have a "spirit of timidity" and "not be ashamed to testify about our Lord". He also entreats Timothy to come to him before winter, and to bring Mark with him. He was anticipating that "the time of his departure was at hand", and he exhorts his "son Timothy" to all diligence and steadfastness in the face of false teachings, with advice about combating them with reference to the teachings of the past, and to patience under persecution, and to a faithful discharge of all the duties of his office, with all the solemnity of one who was about to appear before the Judge of the quick and the dead.

Titus.

This epistle was written by the Paul to Titus, whom he had left in Crete to lead the church that Paul had established on one of his missionary journeys. The letter advises Titus what qualifications to look for in leaders for the church, and encourages Titus to return to Nicopolis for a visit. Paul also warns Titus of the reputations of those living on the island of Crete.

Philemon.

It was written for the purpose of interceding for Onesimus, who had deserted his master Philemon. Paul had found Onesimus at Rome, and had there been instrumental in his conversion, and now he sends him back to his master with this letter.

This epistle has the character of a strictly private letter, and is the only one of such epistles preserved to us. "It exhibits the apostle in a new light. He throws off as far as possible his apostolic dignity and his fatherly authority over his converts. He speaks simply as Christian to Christian."

Hebrews.

The author is not known. The purpose of the Letter to the Hebrews was to exhort and encourage the Jewish Christians to remain faithful to Christ Jesus and not to turn back to their former Judaism.

The Jewish Christians to whom the letter was sent were subject to persecution. Having been subjected to public ridicule and insults, having had their homes and personal property seized and confiscated, having to bear the same reproach and disgrace from their fellow Jews that Christ himself had suffered, and having to face the possibility of their martyrdom, they were growing weak and dispirited and their faith was wavering. They were tempted to abandon their Christian faith in favour of reverting to Judaism, so they would be spared from further persecutions. Some of their number had already fallen away, repudiated Christ, and had become apostate. The possibility that they all might give up their faith prompted the author to write the letter to encourage them to remain faithful.

James.

James wrote to Jewish Christians who had been scattered throughout the Mediterranean world by persecution. In their hostile surroundings they were tempted to let intellectual agreement pass for true faith. This letter can have rich meaning for Christians as we are reminded that genuine faith transforms lives. We are encouraged to put our faith into action. It is easy to say we have faith, but true faith will produce loving actions towards others.

I Peter.

The letter is addressed to various churches in Asia Minor suffering religious persecution. The author counsels steadfastness and perseverance under persecution; the practical duties of a holy

life; he adduces the example of Christ and other motives to patience and holiness; and concludes with counsels to pastors and people.

II Peter.

Peter explains the divinity of Jesus, and addresses the surprise of some that the end and salvation had not yet occurred.

I John.

The author wrote the Epistle so that the joy of his audience would "be full" and that they would "sin not" and that "you who believe in the name of the Son of God... may know that you have eternal life". The purpose of the author is to declare the Word of Life to those to whom he writes, in order that they might be united in fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. He shows that the means of union with God are, on the part of Christ, his atoning work and his advocacy; and on the part of man, holiness, obedience, purity, faith, and love.

II John.

This short letter encourages a lady to walk in the path of truth and love, and to guard against false teachers. John says he writes little because he hopes to visit and speak with her.

III John.

The letter is addressed to Caius, or Gaius, but whether to the Christian of that name in Macedonia or in Corinth or in Derbe is uncertain. It commends to Gaius some Christians who were strangers in the place where he lived, and who had gone thither for the purpose of preaching the gospel.

Jude.

The epistle is addressed to Christians in general. Its purpose is to warn them about the doctrines of certain errant teachers.

Revelation.

This last book of the Bible identifies itself as "the revelation of Jesus Christ", a vision given to its author, who is designated "his servant John" who was exiled to the Greek island of Patmos because of his faith. Traditionally, John is identified with the author of the Fourth Gospel. Addressed to seven historical churches in Asia Minor, the Book of Revelation was written to warn against spiritual indifference and to elicit courage under persecution.

The Book of Revelation is the only apocalyptic document in the New Testament canon, though there are short apocalyptic passages in various places in the Gospels and the Epistles. Revelation brings together the worlds of heaven, earth, and hell in a final confrontation between the forces of good and evil. Its characters and images are both real and symbolic, spiritual and material. The cryptic nature of the vision makes the book a source of controversy among scholars who try to interpret its meaning and its message. Nevertheless, it has not only endured, but captured the imagination of generations of Bible students, both professional and lay readers alike.

From the Visitors' Book:

What a story! - Joyce James

Thank you for the opportunity - Peter Glancy

A wonderful undertaking and a pleasure to participate - Alexis Oates

An inspired way of celebrating the King James Bible, this experience places us in the continuum of faith - from the days of the Old Testament, - passing 1611, to the present day, - and beyond! - Jan Macdonald

A privilege to take part. Thank you. - Peter and Shirley Negus

Much enjoyed! - Back tomorrow! - Eileen Condie

A peaceful moment in a busy day! Thanks. - Maureen Russell

Fascinating to listen to the great diversity of thought and language. Delighted to share the experience. - Maggie Macleod

I simply loved it!!! - Imogen Roach (aged 8)

Thank you for allowing me to read St John, Chapter 1. - A great joy and privilege. All Blessings. - Bishop Gregor

Let the Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent have the last word:

*Blessed Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning:
Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them,
that by patience and comfort of the holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the
blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou has given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen*
