

COURSE 101

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

THE PENTATEUCH

Overview of the Pentateuch

Years: c. 4004 BC – c. 1451 BC (Gregorian Calendar)
(Ussher's Chronology)

USSHER'S CHRONOLOGY: Ussher's Chronology is a 17th century chronology of the history of the world, developed by James Ussher (1581 – 1656), who was an Archbishop in the Church of Ireland after rising rapidly in the ranks of the Anglican Church. He was renowned for his scholarship, mastery of Semitic and classical languages and voluminous knowledge of history and was consequently widely published.

Ussher started his dating with those dates firmly established from secular history such as the death of Nebuchadnezzar and worked forward and backward from there, using the Biblical data as his infallible guide. He worked painstakingly, investing much of his time for the generations who would glean from his findings. He was very precise with his dating: Sunday, Oct. 23, 4004 BC (Gregorian Calendar) was the first day of creation at midday (Lightfoot, a contemporary of Ussher, used the same date, but added it was nine o'clock in the morning); the date he gave for Adam's and Eve's being driven from the Garden of Eden was Nov. 10, 4004 BC; Noah's Ark touched down on Mt. Ararat on May 5, 2348 BC.

The reasons for CES's selection of using Ussher's Chronology as its guide of dates are as follows: (1) Ussher's credentials (2) His method of calculation, using both the Gregorian and Hebrew Calendars, and (3) His acceptance by many scholars. The early controversy when his original work, written in the Latin language, was translated into English, with its many weaknesses in its translation, caused a few scholars at the time to reject his findings. The work has been since retranslated, and the gained result has been a new respect and support by many scholars.

There have been over 100 attempts to establish a chronology close to Ussher's, and each one is slightly different, but all are fairly close to his, often using Ussher's Chronology with which to compare their studies. The School recognizes that Ussher's Chronology may have discrepancies, but uses it as a tool to give the student a general idea of the dates and stretches of times and the sequence of important Biblical events.

ABOVE ALL THINGS, REMEMBER THIS SAYING

The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.

THE PENTATEUCH INTRODUCED THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Pentateuch consists of five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

THE OLD TESTAMENT DEFINED

The Old Testament is the Covenant sealed at Mt. Sinai in the days of Moses. God made a Covenant with the Israelites whom He had delivered from slavery, promising to bless them as His special people. Their responsibility was to worship Him, and Him only, as their God and to obey His Law (Exo. 19:3-6; 24:3-8).

THE MEANING OF “TESTAMENT” AS IN OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

The English word “*testament*” refers to the document that designates the wishes of the owner, when alive, for the distribution of his property upon his death. The meaning of “*testament*” from both the Hebrew and the Greek languages is “*settlement*”, “*treaty*”, or “*covenant*”. Covenant is the closest meaning of the word “*testament*”.

WHAT IS THE OLD TESTAMENT AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE NEW?

OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moses announced the Old Covenant between God and the nation, Israel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jesus announced the New Covenant
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Written in Hebrew and a small amount of Aramaic over a period of 1000 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Written in Greek over a period of 100 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Told of preparation for Christ’s coming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Told of Christ’s coming, life, ministry and growth of early Church
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Did not arrive at full redemption	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The fulfillment of what was promised in the first and full redemption (Told of Christ’s coming, life, ministry, death, resurrection and the birth of the NT Church)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ended by still looking for final consummation when hope shall be fulfilled and promise become fact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fulfilled the way in which the blessing of Abraham will bless all the families of Earth, through the Lord Jesus Christ

THE NUMBER OF BOOKS AND AUTHORS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

- There are 39 books in the Old Testament.
- The Old Testament has more or less 31 authors.
- The Bible was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by approximately 40 different authors from all walks of life. Despite the differences in these authors' occupations and the span of years it took to write it, the Bible is a unified collection of books.

THE LANGUAGE AND TRANSLATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

- The language of the Old Testament is predominantly Hebrew. There are a few selected passages written in Aramaic.
- Today, readers are more familiar with the pre-Christian Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, which was followed later by the Greek Bible, The Vulgate. The Septuagint, meaning 70 in Latin, was a translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek by 70 (or 72) scholars around c. 270 BC – c. 250 BC and often referred to as LXX (Latin number for 70). The Vulgate was a fourth century AD translation into Latin by St. Jerome to make revisions of old Latin translations, that became referred to as the "*versio vulgata*", which, when translated from Latin, means "*commonly used translation*".

THE FIVE DIVISIONS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. **The Pentateuch**
 2. The Historical Books
 3. The Poetical Writings
 4. The Major Prophets
 5. The Minor Prophets
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THE PENTATEUCH

DEFINITION OF PENTATEUCH

The word “*pentateuch*” derives from the Greek word “*pentateuchos*”. Pentateuch consists of the compounding of two Greek words, “*penta*” meaning “*five*” and “*teuchos*” meaning “*box*”, or “*jar*” or “*scroll*”. Thus, the name “*Pentateuch*” means “*five vessels*”, or “*five containers*” or “*five-volume book*”.

THE PENTATEUCH FACTS

- The Pentateuch refers to the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These five books form the theological foundation of the Bible. In Hebrew, the Pentateuch is *Torah*, meaning “*the law*” or “*instruction*” and is often referred to as, “*the five books of Moses*”.
- The books of the Pentateuch introduce God as Creator of all things, including man who is His highest creation. His divine plans and purposes for man are revealed. We learn of how sin entered the world. We also see God’s response to sin and we gain insight into the character and nature of God.
- These five books theologically form the backbone of the Old and New Testaments (Deu. 26:5-10; Jos. 24:2-13; Act. 13:17-41).
- The Pentateuch is not an independent collection of self-contained books, but was structured and intended as part of a larger unity. It should be studied as ONE work.
- The Pentateuch holds supreme rank in the Old Testament canon in respect and holiness.
- The Pentateuch is truly open-ended: The history of our salvation starts here with the Pentateuch and is fulfilled with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of Abraham (Mat. 1:1) Who draws all people to Himself (Joh. 12:32), reconciling mankind to God.

THE NAMES OF THE FIVE BOOKS CONTAINED IN THE PENTATEUCH

The names of the five books correspond in the Hebrew text to a word or phrase appearing at the beginning of the books. The titles in English translations are derived from the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament).

1. GENESIS

Hebrew — “*bereshit*” meaning “*creation*” or “*in the beginning*”

Greek — “*geneseos*” meaning “*birth*” or “*genealogy*” or “*history of origin*”

Gen. 1:1 ...In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth.

The first book of the Pentateuch tells of the following: creation, Adam and Eve, the fall of man, Cain and Abel, Noah and the flood, God's Covenant with Abraham, Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph and his brothers.

2. EXODUS

Hebrew — “*sh'mot*” meaning “*names*”

Greek — “*exodos*” meaning “*exit*” or “*departure*” or “*going out*”

Exo. 1:1 “Now these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt”

The second book of the Pentateuch tells of the following: the departure of the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt led by Moses, the giving of the Ten Commandments and the rest of Mosaic Law on Mount Sinai during the Exodus, the directions for building the Tabernacle, the laws and regulations for worship, instructions on ceremonial cleanness, moral laws, holy days, the Sabbath Year and the Year of the Jubilee.

3. LEVITICUS

Hebrew — “*vayikra/wayikra*” meaning “*He called*”

Greek — “*leuitikos*” meaning “*relating to the Levites*”

Lev. 1:1 ...And the Lord called unto Moses, and spoke unto him out of the Tabernacle of the Congregation, saying...

The third book of the Pentateuch contains Levitical Law and ritual precedents. It mainly concerns the service of worship at the Tabernacle, which was conducted by the Priests, the sons of Aaron, assisted by many from the tribe of Levi. It gave instructions for the Priests.

4. **NUMBERS**

Hebrew — “*bemidbar*” meaning “*in the desert*”

Greek — “*arithmoi*” meaning “*numbering*”

Num. 1:1 “And the Lord spoke unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai”

The fourth book of the Old Testament is based on the census lists found in it. It contains a record of the number of Israelites who followed Moses out of Egypt and an account of the 40 years of Israel’s wandering in the desert following the establishment of the covenant of Sinai and later on the plain of Moab.

5. **DEUTERONOMY**

Hebrew — “*devarim*” meaning “*spoken words*”

Greek — “*deuteronomion*” meaning “*the repetition of the law*” or “*second law*”

Deu. 1:1 “These be the words which Moses spoke unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red Sea”

The fifth book of the Old Testament contains a second statement of Mosaic Law, reviewed by Moses before his death.

THE PENTATEUCH'S TWO MAJOR DIVISIONS

The Pentateuch has two major divisions, which are as follows:

1. Gen. 1 – 11 describes (a) God; (b) God's created universe; and (c) fallen man.
2. Gen. 12 – Deu. 34 described the forming of a nation.

The Scripture passage of Gen. 10 – 12 is not only one of the most important in the whole Old Testament, but one of the most important in the entire Bible for it reveals the birth of nations and the birth of one nation in particular, Israel, God's chosen people, the recipients of the Covenant promise of the Messiah.

AUTHOR

- The New Testament referred to Moses as the author of the Pentateuch (Mat. 19:18; Mar. 12:26; Luk. 2:22; 16:29; 24:27; Joh. 5:46-47; 7:19; Act. 13:39; Rom. 10:5).
- Moses is testified to be the author of the whole Pentateuch by the Talmud¹ and the church fathers.
- The last eight verses of Deu. 34:5-12 describe events that occurred after Moses died. Moses most likely was not able to write about his own death, although some rabbis believe he wrote it prophetically; others believe Joshua wrote it.

DATES

- The books of the Old Testament were written over a period of about 1,000 years in the Hebrew language, except for a few selected passages, which were written in Aramaic.
 - The Pentateuch was likely written in the 40 years prior to Moses' death in c. 1451 BC.
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¹¹ The Talmud is a collection of the opinions of thousands of rabbis on a variety of subjects such as customs, ethics, history, law, lore, philosophy, theology, etc. It is written in Tannaitic Hebrew and Aramaic, consists of 63 tractates, and in standard print is over 6,200 pages long. The Talmud is the basis for all codes of Rabbinic Law and is much quoted.

THE PENTATEUCH STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Who is Bishop James Ussher? What did he do?
2. What books make up the Pentateuch and introduce the Old Testament?
3. What is the meaning of the word “*testament*” as used in Old and New Testaments?
4. In the Covenant God made with Israel, God promised He would do something for Israel if a certain condition was met. What were the promise and the condition?
5. How are the Old and New Testaments related?
6. How many books, authors and divisions are in the Old Testament?
7. What was the time span of the writings of the Old Testament?
8. In what language(s) was/were the Old Testament written?
9. Into what language was the Hebrew Bible first translated?
10. What is the definition of Pentateuch?
11. What is the Pentateuch?
12. How should the Pentateuch be studied?
13. What do the Hebrew titles (or names) of each book in the Pentateuch mean?

14. Where were the names of each book in the Pentateuch derived?
15. Write a one-sentence summary of each book in the Pentateuch.
16. What are the Pentateuch's two divisions?
17. Who is the author of the Pentateuch?
18. Is there a belief that the last few verses of Deuteronomy were written by someone other than Moses? Why?
19. When was the Pentateuch written?
20. What is the Talmud?