

Historical Events and Dates

Below is a (very truncated!) list of historical events for the Near and Middle East which are relevant for the development and writing of the Bible. There are many events which occurred in these places and during this time period which are *not* listed here, and the events which are listed are in many cases glossed over. The reason for this is because the details of the events themselves – while very interesting – are not directly relevant to the development and formation of the Bible.

The dates are shown using the standard calendar (BC meaning “Before Christ” and AD meaning “Anno Domini”, the year of our Lord). Dates preceded by a *c.* are approximate (standing for *circa*, meaning “about”) and dates presented *in italics* are very approximate indeed – scholarship varies by several hundred years in some cases. The important thing is not precise dates, but rather the general order of events – this allows the Biblical scholar to place the composition of a particular book of the Bible into historical and political context.

Where Biblical references are given **in red** below the name of the event, the particular happening is described in the Bible – although often many of the details and particularly dates are a product of secular archeology.

Date (very approximate dates are shown in <i>italics</i>)	Event
<i>c 2000-1700 BC</i>	<p>Abraham, Isaac and Jacob Genesis chapters 12 - 35 Abram is called by God from the land of Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq) to the land of Canaan. He enters into a covenant with God; he will worship YHWH as the supreme universal deity and he will be blessed with innumerable children. He has a son, Isaac who has a son Jacob, who is renamed Israel and has twelve children – the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel.</p>
<i>c 1650-1540 BC</i>	<p>Joseph in Egypt Genesis chapters 37 - 46 Joseph (one of the children of Israel) is sold into slavery in Egypt. He has many adventures in Egypt, and eventually rises to a position of prominence. His brothers come to live in Egypt following a famine in the land of Canaan. The Israelites live in Egypt.</p>
<i>c 1500-1200 BC</i>	<p>Moses and the Exodus, 40 years of wandering Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy The Jews have become slaves in Egypt. Under the leadership of Moses they leave Egypt and wander in the desert for 40 years until they enter the Land of Israel. The period of 40 years may simply mean “a long time” rather than a specific time period. During this period God gives the Law to Moses and the people, and the foundations for Judaism are laid.</p>
Arrival in the Promised Land until the foundation of the United Monarchy	<p>Period of the Judges Judges In the period between the arrival in the Promised Land and the foundation of the United Monarchy, Israel is lead and ruled by the judges – non-hereditary individuals chosen by God. The first of these is Joshua and the last is Samuel. Many of the judges are also prophets – Samuel is the last judge and the first of the great prophets.</p>

c 1025 BC	<p>Foundation of the United Monarchy of the Jewish Kingdom I Samuel chapters 8 - 11 The tribes of Israel demand a king like the other nations and gather together to form the Kingdom of Israel. Saul ben Kish is anointed as king by the prophet / judge Samuel.</p>
c 1006 BC	<p>Coronation of King David I Samuel chapters 16 – 31, II Samuel David becomes king of Israel. The foundation of the Davidic Line.</p>
c 971 BC	<p>Solomon Becomes King I Kings chapters 1 - 8 David's son Solomon becomes king, and the construction of the First Temple (Solomon's Temple) begins in Jerusalem</p>
c 925 BC	<p>Splitting of the Kingdom I Kings chapter 12, II Chronicles chapter 10 The Unified Kingdom splits into the Northern Kingdom (the Kingdom of Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (The Kingdom of Judah). The direct descendants of King Solomon rule the Southern Kingdom.</p>
722 BC	<p>Destruction of the Northern Kingdom II Kings chapter 17 The Northern Kingdom is destroyed by the invading Assyrians.</p>
587 or 586 BC	<p>Sack of Jerusalem, Destruction of the First Temple and the Beginning of the Babylonian Captivity II Kings chapter 25, II Chronicles 36:10, Psalm 137 [136] The Babylonians sack and destroy Jerusalem and raze the Temple to the ground. Many of the Jews are deported to Babylon. Here they come under the influence of the Babylonians and Persians. The use of the Hebrew language declines to be replaced by Aramaic.</p>
During the period of the Kingdom(s)	<p>Period of the Prophets The Prophetic Books During the reign of the kings God sends a number of prophets who warn Israel (and others) against their immorality and evil ways. Also included in their prophecies are a number of predictions of future events – the most important of which are the Messianic prophecies which point to Jesus Christ.</p>
537 BC	<p>The Return from the Babylonian Captivity (under Cyrus the Persian) II Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra chapter 1 The Persian Empire conquers the Babylonians and the Persian Emperor Cyrus the Great allows the Jews to return to Jerusalem. Many of them do so.</p>
516 BC	<p>Building of the Second Temple Ezra chapters 3 - 6 The building of the Second Temple is begun in Jerusalem. This is the Temple which stands at the time of Jesus.</p>
336 BC	<p>The Rise of Macedon Daniel 8:5-8 & 8:21-22, , I Maccabees 1:1-7 Alexander the Great becomes King of Macedon. In a brilliant campaign between the years 333 and 323 BC he conquers the known world and beyond,</p>

	<p>bringing Hellenic culture and the Greek language to the Near and Middle East. He fights no battles with the Jews, who show him passages of their Sacred Scriptures which show that he is a prophesised conqueror.</p>
c 280 BC	<p>The Septuagint The Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures is made in Alexandria between the years c 280 and 150 BC. This translation is probably made under the orders of Ptolemy II, the Greek Pharaoh of Egypt – the son of one of Alexander the Great's generals. It is likely created to be included in the great library of Alexandria.</p>
167 BC	<p>The Maccabean Revolt I Maccabbes, II Maccabees A dispute between the Hellenic and traditional parties of the Jews blows up into full-scale guerrilla war in Israel. The Maccabees, the traditionalist, are the victors, removing the prohibition against Jewish worship and sacrifice and the idols from the Temple and elsewhere.</p>
63 BC	<p>Roman Annexation of Palestine The Roman Republic conquers and annexes Palestine, installing the ruler Herod as King. This is the beginning of the Herodian Dynasty.</p>
c 30 AD	<p>Crucifixion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John Jesus Christ, considered by the Christians to be the Messiah, is put to death by the Roman authorities. After His crucifixion He rises from the dead and 40 days later ascends into Heaven. This period marks the foundation of the Christian Church, which will be (in a few years) be called the Catholic Church.</p>
Middle of the first century AD	<p>Saint Paul Acts & the Pauline Epistles Saul of Tarsus (also known as Saint Paul) converts to Christianity and becomes the Apostle to the Gentiles (having previously been a persecutor of the Christians). He undertakes three missionary journeys during the middle years of the first century, but there are no firm dates established for this.</p>
c 50 AD	<p>The Gospels Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John From the middle of the first century onwards the four canonical Gospels are written. Precise dates are unknown, but the best historical analysis suggests the earliest date for beginning the first Gospel (Matthew or Mark) would be 50 AD and the date for the completion of the Gospel of John would be 90-100 AD.</p>
c 64 AD	<p>Death of Saint Peter Saint Peter, the first pope, is martyred in Rome. Tradition maintains that he was crucified upsidedown.</p>
c 65 AD	<p>Death of Saint Paul Saint Paul is martyred in Rome, by decapitation with a sword.</p>
66 AD	<p>The Jewish-Roman War The first Jewish-Roman War begins. The war ends in 73 AD with the capturing of the Jewish stronghold of Masada (the defenders all committed suicide rather than be captured). The most significant event of the war for the Jewish religion</p>

	is the destruction of the Second Temple by the Tenth Legion under Titus in 70 AD.
c 100 AD	The Council of Jamnia Following the destruction of the Temple, Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai relocated to Jamnia and obtains permission to found a Scriptural school there. This is considered by many to be the foundation of Rabbinical Judaism. Although it is by no means certain, there are certain scholars who feel that a hypothetical Council of Jamnia took place around the year 100 AD which canonized the Ketuvim (thus creating the three-fold division of the Tanakh) and rejected the Septuagint translation.