THE PROPHETIC WRITINGS



Lesson 6 for November 7, 2026



"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope"
(Romans 15:4)

Although it is the Word of God, God did not write the Bible. He used human beings inspired by Him to do so.

Nor did he dictate the words they should write. He simply told them to write what he showed them, or what he put into their minds.

He gave them some freedom to decide what words to use; the writing style; and other details with which to convey the divine message.





The prophetic writings:
- Where and why were they written?
- In what styles were they written?

Use of secretaries and external material:
- Why were literary assistants used?
- What external material did the prophets use?

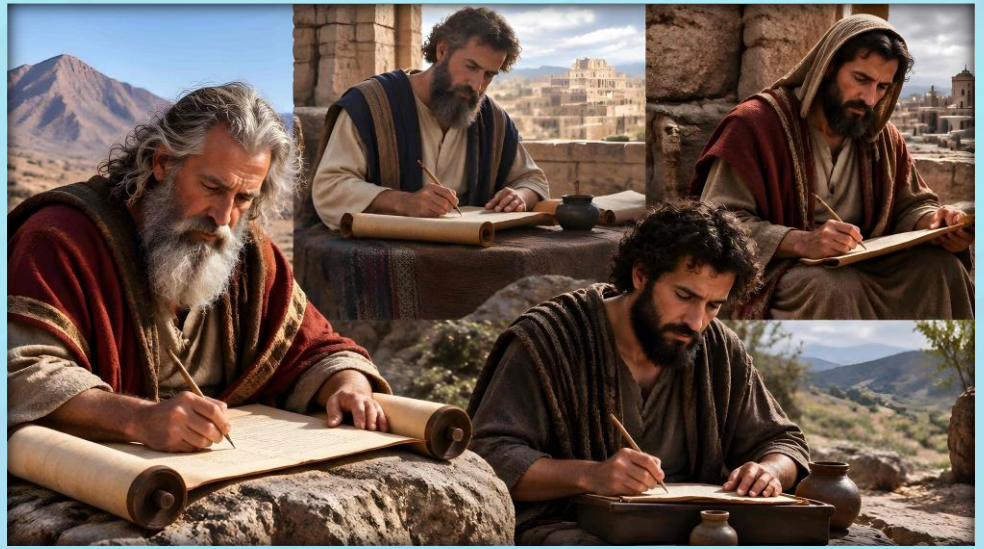
Humanity mixed with the message:
- Imperfections in the Bible?

THE PROPHETIC WRITINGS

WHERE AND WHY WERE THEY WRITTEN?

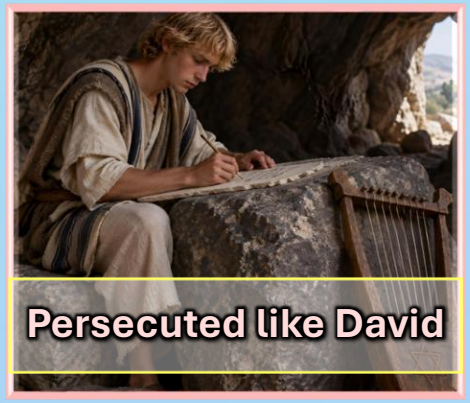
"Go now, write it on a tablet for them, inscribe it on a scroll, that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness." (Isaiah 30:8 NVI)

Moses was the first person inspired by God to write the Bible. In the desert of Midian, he wrote Job and Genesis. During the Exodus, he received the express command to record the events in writing (Exodus 17:14).

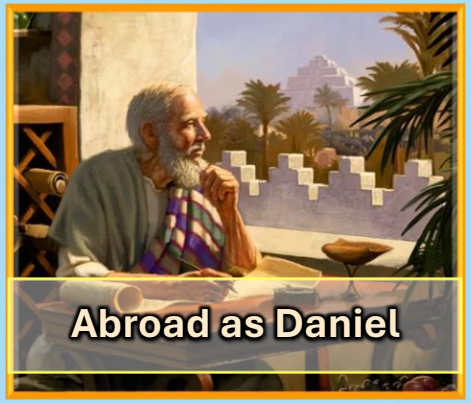


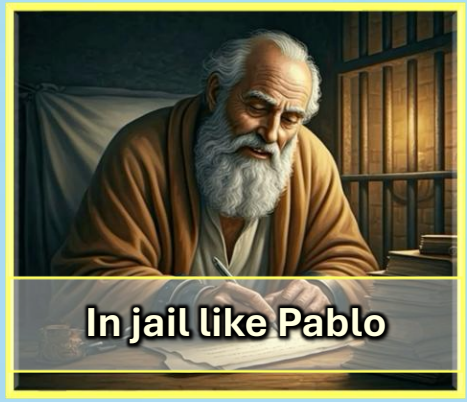
Other prophets who received the express command to write a book were Isaiah (Isaiah 30:8); Jeremiah (Jeremiah 36:2); Habakkuk (Habakkuk 2:2); and John (Revelation 1:11).

The biblical authors wrote under various circumstances:











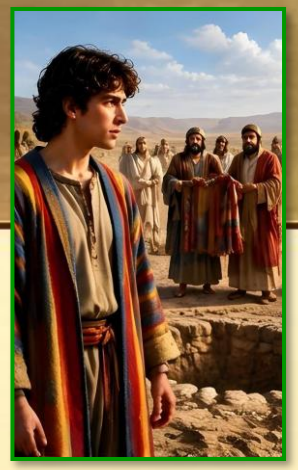
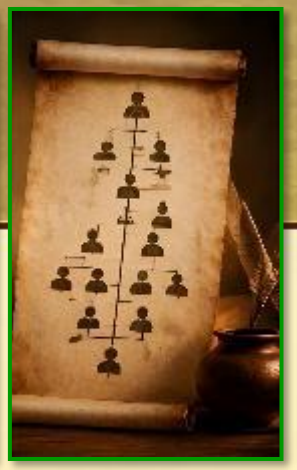
God chose both the people and the message they were to record with the intention that nothing would be lost of what He wanted to reveal to us for our salvation (2 Tim. 3:15).

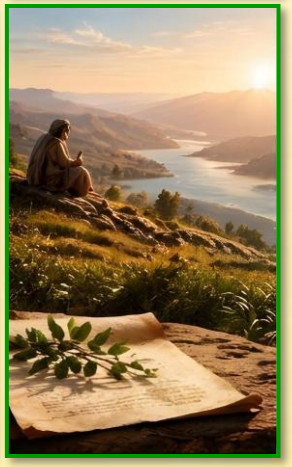
IN WHAT STYLES WERE THEY WRITTEN?

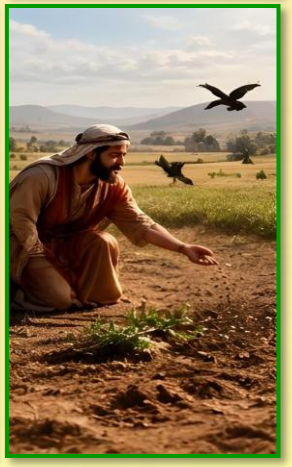
"Solomon's Song of Songs" (Song of Songs 1:1)

Written over 1,500 years by more than 40 different authors, the Bible contains a wide variety of styles. Among others:

- Historical accounts (Gen. 37:2)
- Genealogies (Gen. 5:1)
- Prophecies (Is. 13:1)
- Apocalyptic visions (Rev. 12:1)
- Poetry (much of Isaiah)
- Songs (Song of Songs 1:1)
- Parallels (Is. 17:7)
- Parables (Luke 18:1)
- Letters (2 Thessalonians 3:17)

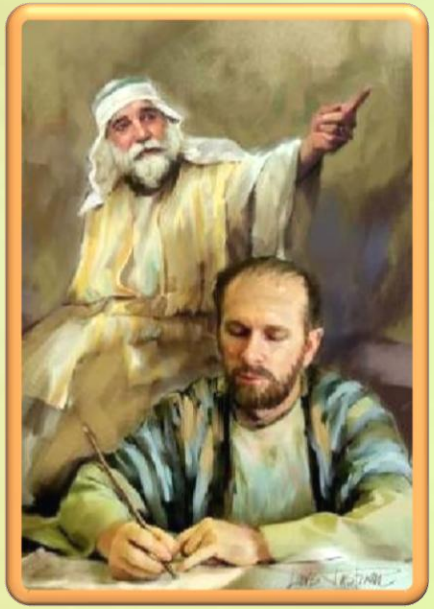

The Bible makes no distinction regarding the authority of different styles. All of them are useful for conveying divine thought, since each person perceives the message better in one style than another.

Peter also makes it clear that the writings of the New Testament have the same authority as those of the Old Testament (2P. 3:15-16).

USE OF SECRETARIES AND EXTERNAL MATERIAL

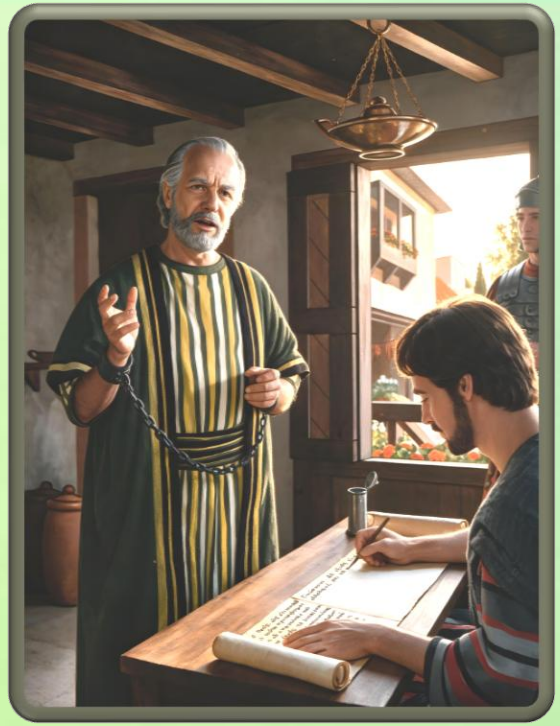
WHY WERE LITERARY ASSISTANTS USED?

"So Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and while Jeremiah dictated all the words the Lord had spoken to him, Baruch wrote them on the scroll." (Jeremiah 36:4 NVI)



Jeremiah was a priest and, as such, knew how to read and write. However, he used an assistant—Baruch—to write the messages God asked him to write (Jer. 36:1-4). Although sanctioned by God, this was misinterpreted in his own time (Jer. 43:2-3).

Paul, who was fluent in Greek, used assistants to write his letters (Rom. 16:22). To prevent others from writing forged letters in his name, he had to sign the ones he dictated in his own handwriting (2 Thess. 3:17).





Peter wrote his letters in a beautiful Greek style, something difficult to attribute to this Aramaic-speaking fisherman. The use of assistants helped him to convey his message accurately in a language he did not master. But the fact that the assistants chose the words that best expressed Peter's ideas does not in any way diminish the divine inspiration of his epistles.

WHAT EXTERNAL MATERIAL DID THE PROPHETS USE?

"With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus"
(Luke 1:3 NVI)

Ezra used historical records and copied decrees and correspondence from Persian kings when writing the books of Chronicles and Ezra. Nehemiah, for his part, included in his book a genealogical record copied from another existing one.



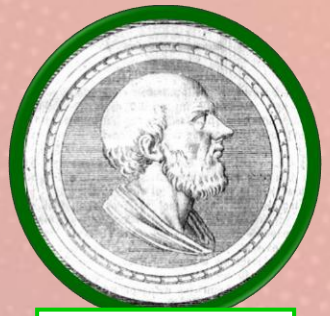


Since Luke was not a witness to the events he recounts, he wrote his gospel and part of the book of Acts based on historical records and interviews with eyewitnesses (Lk. 1:3).

Paul quotes from Epimenides and Aratus, classical Greek authors (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12). Jude, for his part, draws quotations from a non-canonical book containing prophecies of Enoch (Jude 1:14).

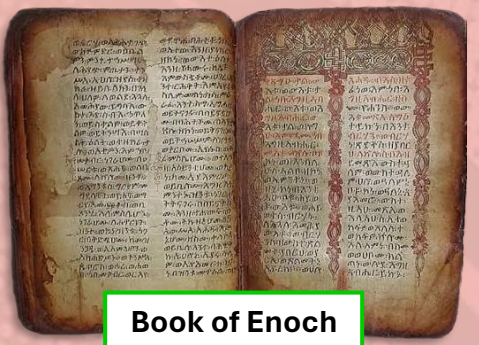


Epimenides



Arato

They were all guided by the Holy Spirit in using this external material. They recognized that they were describing the truth and, therefore, conveying what God wanted to express.



Book of Enoch

HUMANITY MIXED WITH THE MESSAGE

IMPERFECTIONS IN THE BIBLE?

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." (2 Corinthians 4:7 NVI)

God chose to use imperfect people—"earthen vessels"—to deliver His message (2 Corinthians 4:7). How did this imperfection affect the message? Is the Bible 100% reliable?

Archaic words

- Words in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek whose meaning we do not know, or which were used with a different meaning in the time of the prophet
- Examples: *Gopher* (גֹּפֶר) (Gen. 6:14); *Selah* (סֶלָה) (used in several psalms)

Mistakes made by copyists

- When copying texts, or writing them from dictation, the copyist can make mistakes (more common in the New Testament)
- Example: the "Johannine Comma" (1 John 5:7-8). It is a comment by a copyist that was later incorporated into the text by another copyist

Mistakes made by the writers themselves

- When quoting a text from memory, or recounting an event they did not witness, the biblical authors could have made minor, insignificant errors
- Example: Matthew's quote in which he calls Zechariah, murdered by Joash, "son of Berechiah" (who is the author of the book of Zechariah) (Mt. 23:35; see Lk. 11:51; 2Ch. 24:22)

Translator errors

- Bible translators, especially those translating into modern language, can be influenced by the translator's ideas
- Example: Some modern versions (MSG, NMB) translate the text referring to the Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10) as "Sunday," even though this expression began to be used after the apostle's death

These imperfections or discrepancies are very few and can generally be understood through in-depth study. We can trust that divine truths have been faithfully transmitted to us through the centuries, just as they are recorded in the pages of the Bible.

“God has been pleased to communicate His truth to the world by human agencies, and He Himself, by His Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do this work. He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The treasure was entrusted to earthen vessels, yet it is, nonetheless, from Heaven. The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language, yet it is the testimony of God; and the obedient, believing child of God beholds in it the glory of a divine power, full of grace and truth.

In His word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will.”

EGW (The Great Controversy, p. 6)

APPENDIX: INFALLIBILITY OF THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

When God commanded Ellen to write her messages, she responded, “I can’t write.” But God strengthened her, and she began to write. Over time, she used writing assistants who corrected her spelling mistakes and improved the phrasing of some sentences.

They never altered the meaning of the message, nor did they add anything of their own. The final texts were always reviewed by Ellen.



Mary Ann “Marian” Davis (1847-1904), literary assistant. Photo courtesy of “Ellen G. White Estate, Inc.”



Sarah E. Peck, 1880s. Photo courtesy of “Center for Adventist Research .”



Regarding her infallibility as a prophet, Ellen declared: “Concerning infallibility, I never claimed to have it. Only God is infallible” (Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 42).

Regarding the infallibility of her writings, she herself wrote: “There are times when common things must be stated, common thoughts must occupy the mind, common letters must be written, and information that has been passed from one worker to another must be given. Such words, such information, are not given under the special inspiration of the Spirit of God” (Selected Messages, vol. 3, p. 64).

