

**The Pentateuch:  
Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy**

1. Descriptive labels
  - a. Pentateuch: term comes from the Greek phrase *pentateuchos biblos* – “five-fold book”. The first five books are five divisions of a unified literary work. At some point these divisions were recognized and codified, possibly by the translators of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament begun around the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC).
  - b. Torah: the Jewish term for the first five books, meaning “instruction, law.” (The term is also sometimes used of the entire body of Jewish sacred writings and oral tradition.)
  - c. The book of Moses (or the book of the law of Moses): a term used in other parts of Scripture, both OT and NT, to refer to this portion of Scripture. Joshua 8:31, 2 Chron. 25:4, Neh. 8:1, Mark 12:26.
  - d. The Law: sometimes used to refer to the Pentateuch (Luke 24:44: Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”), although the term can also include the wisdom books and other historical books of the OT.
2. Authorship
  - a. Biblical testimony
    - i. Jesus ascribes authorship to Moses. Luke 24:44, Matt. 19:7, John 7:19 This was in keeping with the received understanding among the Jews of the day.
    - ii. The NT writers ascribe authorship to Moses. Acts 3:22, 15:21, 26:22, 28:23; Rom. 10:5; Heb. 7:14 (Acts 15:21 For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues.”)
    - iii. OT passages refer to a “Book of Moses” with content consistent with the Pentateuch.
      - (1) 2Ch 34:14 While they were bringing out the money that had been brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the LORD given through Moses.
      - (2) Ezr 6:18 And they set the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their divisions, for the service of God at Jerusalem, as it is written in the Book of Moses.
    - iv. The Pentateuch itself refers to Moses writing activity that covers a major portion of the content of the Pentateuch: 1) historical events (Ex. 17:14, Num. 33:2), 2) laws (Ex. 24:4; 34:27), 3) a song (Deut. 31:22, see Deut. 32)
  - b. The views of liberal critics
    - i. The JEDP theory, or documentary hypothesis, systematized ed by Julius Wellhausen in 1886 has prevailed in liberal circles for over 100 years. It claims that the Pentateuch was constructed by an editor, or *redactor*, in the post-exilic period (late 5<sup>th</sup> century BC) from four independent texts dating from different periods:
      - (1) Jahwist (from Yahweh in German), due to a supposed preference for using this name for God
      - (2) Elohist (from Elohim), due to a supposed preference for using this name for God
      - (3) Priestly
      - (4) Deuteronomist
    - ii. More recent scholarship, even among liberal critics, has shown this view to have many problems.
      - (1) Different styles or names for God do not necessarily indicate different sources but may result from styles chosen for literary reasons.
      - (2) Scholars have failed over the years to develop a consensus in delineating the supposed sources.
      - (3) Scholars are recognizing the unified literary purposes and excellence of the text, casting doubt on the documentary theory.
  - c. What we should believe
    - i. Moses clearly did not write every word of the Pentateuch.
      - (1) His death is reported in Deut. 34.
      - (2) The meekest man on earth probably wouldn’t have reported this! Num. 12:3
    - ii. Moses may have used sources for some of his material. The use of sources is no denial of authorship or inspiration. See Luke 1:1-4. God can providentially superintend the selection of sources as well as the selection of topic and words.
    - iii. We affirm Mosaic authorship. We also acknowledge the existence of an editor who under divine guidance put Moses’ writing together in final form with some limited editorial additions and changes.
3. Date
  - a. Moses died approximately 1400 BC. Therefore, the essential content of the Pentateuch was determined by this time.
  - b. There are many references to the Pentateuch in Joshua and Judges, which are written from the perspective that the Jebusites still held Jerusalem, before it was taken by David (2 Sam. 5:6-10).
  - c. There are several references in the Pentateuch (Genesis 14:14, 36:31, 50:10, 11, Numbers 35:14) that seem to be written from the perspective of having already conquered Canaan.
  - d. Therefore, conservative scholars are of the opinion that the Pentateuch reached its final form before 1000 BC, allowing for this evidence of later additions and editorial changes.