Introduction to the Bible

One Book, One Author, One Story of Redemption — From Genesis to Revelation

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." — John 3:16

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1. One Book in Sixty-Six Parts

2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:20–21

The Bible is a collection of 66 books, gathered into two testaments — the Old (39 books) and the New (27 books). Prophets, priests, kings, and leaders from the nation of Israel wrote the Old Testament books, mostly in Hebrew, with a few passages in Aramaic. The apostles and their close associates wrote the New Testament books in Greek. Roughly forty different human writers were used across about 1,500 years of history, yet Scripture insists it has one true Author behind all of them: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16), and "holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).

The record begins with the creation of the universe (Genesis 1:1) and closes with the eternal future (Revelation 21–22). Along the way, it tells a single, unified story — not a loose anthology of religious writings, but one continuous account of God's plan to redeem a people for himself, centered from beginning to end on the person of Jesus Christ.

2. The Old Testament: Five Categories, Thirty-Nine Books

Luke 24:44

The Old Testament divides naturally into five categories: the Law (Genesis through Deuteronomy — 5 books), History (Joshua through Esther — 12 books), Wisdom (Job through Song of Solomon — 5 books), the Major Prophets (Isaiah through Daniel — 5 books), and the Minor Prophets (Hosea through Malachi — 12 books).

Jesus himself recognized this basic threefold shape of the Hebrew Scriptures when he told his disciples "that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me" (Luke 24:44) — Law, Prophets, and Writings (represented by the Psalms), the very structure in which the Jewish Scriptures were arranged in his own day. The Old Testament record runs from the creation of the universe to about 400 years before the coming of Christ, the last of its books, Malachi, having been completed roughly 430 BC.

3. The Flow of Old Testament History

Genesis 1–3; 12; Exodus 12:40–41; Numbers 14:33–34; Joshua 21:43–45

The Old Testament's history moves along a clear line. It opens with the creation of the universe: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). It is quickly followed by the fall of man into sin (Genesis 3), and God's first promise of a coming Redeemer — the "Seed" of the woman who would one day crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15).

God then called one man, Abraham, out of his country, promising to make of him a great nation and to bless all the families of the earth through him (Genesis 12:1–3). Through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (renamed Israel), God formed the nation through whom the Redeemer would eventually come.

Israel's history then unfolds in clear stages, each anchored in Scripture's own record: the sojourn and eventual bondage in Egypt, lasting "four hundred and thirty years" (Exodus 12:40–41); the exodus from

Egypt followed by forty years of wilderness wandering as judgment for unbelief (Numbers 14:33–34); the conquest of Canaan under Joshua, after which "the Lord gave them rest all around... Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel" (Joshua 21:43–45); the turbulent era of the Judges, a repeating cycle of sin, oppression, and deliverance (Judges 2:16–19); the united kingdom under Saul, David, and Solomon, including God's covenant promise to David of an everlasting throne (2 Samuel 7:12–13); the kingdom's division into Israel (north) and Judah (south) after Solomon's death (1 Kings 12:16); the exile of the northern kingdom, Israel, to Assyria (2 Kings 17:6); and finally the exile of the southern kingdom, Judah, to Babylon, precisely as God had warned.

Even that judgment came with a promise attached. Through Jeremiah, God declared that Babylon's domination would last exactly "seventy years" (Jeremiah 25:11), after which he would "perform My good word toward you" and bring the exiles home (Jeremiah 29:10) — a promise fulfilled when the Persian king Cyrus decreed the Jews' return and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple (Ezra 1:1–4).

4. Four Hundred Years of Silence, Then the Coming of the Son

Malachi 4:5–6; Luke 1:16–17; Matthew 3:1–3; Hebrews 1:1–2

The Old Testament closes with a forward-looking promise. Its final words, through the prophet Malachi, announce that God will send "Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord," a messenger who will turn hearts back to God in preparation for what is coming (Malachi 4:5–6). Then Scripture falls silent for about 400 years — no prophet spoke, and no new Scripture was written.

That silence was broken by the arrival of John the Baptist, whom the angel announced would go before the Lord "in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children" (Luke 1:17), and who indeed appeared "preaching in the wilderness of Judea," fulfilling Isaiah's ancient word to "prepare the way of the Lord" (Matthew 3:1–3). John's ministry announced the arrival of the one to whom the entire Old Testament had been pointing.

This is the hinge on which the whole Bible turns: "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:1–2). Everything before John the Baptist was preparation. Everything from this point on is fulfillment.

5. The New Testament: Twenty-Seven Books, One Person

John 1:1, 14; John 20:31; Acts 1:8

While the 39 Old Testament books major on the history of Israel and the promise of the coming Savior, the 27 New Testament books major on the person of Christ and the establishment of his church. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14) — the eternal Word (John 1:1) had entered human history.

The four Gospels — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John — give the record of Christ's birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, each from a different vantage point: Matthew presents him as King, Mark as Servant, Luke as the perfect Man, and John as the eternal Son of God. Their purpose is stated plainly: "these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you

may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

The book of Acts records the impact of Christ's life, death, and resurrection — beginning with his ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit, exactly as he had promised: "you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Acts traces the gospel's spread from Jerusalem, through the early church, into the Roman Empire. The 21 letters that follow — from Romans to Jude — were written to churches and individuals to explain the meaning of Christ's person and work and its implications for daily life, "written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4). The New Testament closes with Revelation, which describes the current church age and culminates in Christ's return to establish his kingdom and bring history to its God-ordained conclusion (Revelation 1:1, 3).

6. Christ: The Subject of the Whole Bible

Luke 24:27; John 5:39; 2 Timothy 3:15

The Bible is not a random collection of ancient religious writings; it is one continuous story with one central subject. After his resurrection, walking with two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus himself gave the key to reading the whole of the Old Testament: "beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27). He said to the religious leaders of his day, who studied Scripture carefully yet missed its point, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39).

This is why Paul could remind Timothy that "from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). The purpose of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, is not merely to inform — it is to reveal Jesus Christ, and to lead every reader to saving faith in him.

7. Five Threads Woven Through Every Page

Genesis 3:15; Deuteronomy 32:4; Romans 6:23; Isaiah 53:5–6; Revelation 21:1–4

As God's plan of redemption unfolds across both testaments, five themes recur constantly, and recognizing them helps make sense of any passage of Scripture, wherever it is found.

First, the character of God — his holiness, righteousness, and faithfulness are revealed throughout, from creation itself to his dealings with Israel to their fullest expression in the Son (Hebrews 1:1–3; Deuteronomy 32:4). Second, divine judgment for sin and disobedience — the tragedy of the fall, the flood, Israel's exile, and ultimately death itself are all consequences of violating God's holy standard: "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Third, divine blessing for faith and obedience — from the promise made to Abraham, that all nations would be blessed through him (Genesis 12:2–3), to every believer who trusts and obeys God across both testaments. Fourth, the Lord Savior and sacrifice for sin — promised as early as Genesis 3:15, pictured throughout Israel's sacrificial system, and prophesied in detail centuries in advance: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities... and the Lord has

laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:5–6). Fifth and finally, the coming kingdom and glory of the Lord Savior — promised to David (2 Samuel 7:12–13) and consummated in the new heaven and new earth, when "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying" (Revelation 21:1–4).

Every passage of Scripture relates to one or more of these five categories: God's character, judgment for sin, blessing for obedience, the Savior and his sacrifice, and the coming kingdom. Learning to recognize them turns the Bible from 66 separate books into the single story it actually is.

8. How the Story Ends — and Where It Is Going

Revelation 22:20–21

The Bible does not merely describe the past — it points forward. Its final chapters describe Christ's return, judgment, and the eternal state in unmatched detail, because how the story ends is essential to understanding why it was told at all. The last words of Scripture capture both its urgency and its hope: "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (Revelation 22:20–21).

From "In the beginning God created" (Genesis 1:1) to "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20), the Bible is one book, telling one story, about one Redeemer, for the glory of one God.

If reading through this overview has given you a fresh appetite to open God's Word for yourself, we would love to help. Please reach out to us through our Contact page, or join one of our Bible study groups — we would count it a joy to search the Scriptures together with you.