Structure of the Bible

The Bible is divided into two sections: The Old Testament, which consists of 39 individual "books", and The New Testament, which consists of 27 individual "books". The Old Testament takes us from Creation to Christ and covers the period from "the beginning" to roughly 400 years before the birth of Christ. It also includes many prophesies fulfilled in the New Testament. The New Testament covers the time from Christ's birth to the prophesied end of times. The Bible is not one document but rather 66 documents, with the first attempt at compiling them into a single presentation of God's Word being made in 187 AD. This first compilation was known as the Muratorian Canon.

The Old Testament: The Nature of God and Establishment of His Law

TORAH

The first 5 books of the Old Testament (the Torah or Pentateuch) tell of Creation, the delivery of the Jewish people to their Promised Land, and the establishment of the Jewish Law (God's Law).

GENESIS JOSHUA EXODUS JUDGES LEVITICUS RUTH **NUMBERS** 1 SAMUEL 2 SAMUEL **DEUTERONOMY** 1 KINGS

Note: When you see a reference like Genesis 1:2, this means the Book of Genesis, Chapter 1, Verse 2.

HISTORICAL

These 12 books detail the history of the Jewish people from approximately 1300 BC to roughly 400 BC.

2 KINGS

1 CHRONICLES

2 CHRONICLES

EZRA

NEHEMIAH

ESTER

POETRY & WISDOM

These 5 books of poetry and wisdom demonstrate how the Jewish people expressed themselves to God and to each other. Their shared wisdom is still applicable today.

JOB PSALMS PROVERBS ECCLESIASTES SONG OF SOLOMON

MAJOR PROPHETS

The 5 books of the Major Prophets ("Major" describing book length, not quality) lay out warnings and prophecies aligned with the Word of God, including the coming of the Messiah.

("Minor" describing book length, not quality) lay out God's Word of hope and promise to the Jewish people.

MINOR PROPHETS

The 12 Minor Prophets

| ISAIAH | |
|---------|----|
| JEREMIA | ·Η |
| EZEKIEI | _ |
| DANIEL | _ |
| | |

*LAMENTATIONS

*While often included with the Major Prophets, Lamentations, is widely believed to be an addendum to Jeremiah

| HOSEA |
|-----------|
| JOEL |
| AMOS |
| OBADIAH |
| JONAH |
| MICAH |
| NAHUM |
| HABAKKUK |
| ZEPHANIAH |
| HAGGAI |
| ZECHARIAH |
| MALACHI |

GENERAL EPISTLES The 8 General Epistles were

mostly written by the Apostles

James, Peter, and John. They

offer guidance, words of

encouragement to early

Christians who were being

persecuted, and warnings of

false prophets. Revelation was

written by the Apostle John and

describes the return of Christ

and His final Judgement.

The New Testament: The Nature of Jesus Christ and His Teachings

GOSPELS & ACTS

The Gospels are personal and detailed accounts of Jesus' 3+ year ministry throughout Jerusalem, Galilee, and the surrounding lands. Both Matthew and John physically accompanied Jesus throughout His ministry.

The Apostle Paul met the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus roughly two years after Jesus was crucified and resurrected, at which time Paul was converted from being a major persecutor of Christians to being one of the greatest proponents of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul spent time being mentored by Jesus (amount of time unknown) and went on three lengthy missions, enthusiastically spreading the Gospel. Paul started many Christian churches, and these epistles are letters to Pastors and members of some of those churches, as well as letters to his colleagues, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

PAUL'S EPISTLES (Letters)

| MATTHEW * | | |
|-----------|--|--|
| MARK | | |
| LUKE | | |
| JOHN * | | |

ACT

* Eyewitne

| LUKE | 2 CORINTHIANS |
|----------------------|---------------|
| JOHN * | GALATIANS |
| _ | EPHESIANS |
| TS [Of the Apostles] | PHILIPPIANS |
| ess Testimony | COLOSSIANS |

| 1 THESSALONIANS | | | | |
|-----------------|--|--|--|--|
| 2 THESSALONIANS | | | | |
| 1 TIMOTHY | | | | |
| 2 TIMOTHY | | | | |
| TITUS | | | | |
| PHILEMON | | | | |
| | | | | |

| HEBREWS ** | | |
|------------|--|--|
| JAMES ** | | |
| 1 PETER ** | | |
| 2 PETER ** | | |
| 1 JOHN | | |
| 2 JOHN | | |
| 3 JOHN ** | | |
| JUDE | | |

The book of Revelation describes the 2nd coming of Christ and the prophesied end of times – dates

** Not included in the Muratorian Canon but were added in AD 363 by Council of Laodicea

ROMANS 1 CORINTHIANS

REVELATION

for which are known only by God. It was confirmed as Holy Scripture in 393 AD (Council of Hippo).

The Old Testament

Books, primary writers and dates covered in the Old Testament include:

| # | Section | Books | Attributed Writers | Approximate Dates |
|----|--|--|--|---|
| 1. | Torah (Hebrew) Pentateuch (Greek) The 5 Books of Moses | Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy | Moses | From Creation to 1445 BC |
| 2. | History of Israel after Moses | From Joshua through Esther (13 Books) | Joshua, Samuel, Ezra, Nehemiah | 1405 BC to 450 BC |
| 3. | Poetic Books | Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon (5 Books) | King David, Solomon, Moses, Asaph, Ethan, Agur, King Lemuel | 1445 BC to 538 BC Job maybe 2000 BC |
| 4. | Major Prophets | Isiah through Daniel (5 Books) | Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations (possibly part of Jeremiah), Ezekiel, Daniel | 750 BC to 520 BC |
| 5. | Minor Prophets | Hosea – Malachi (12 Books) | Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi | 793 BC to 430 BC |

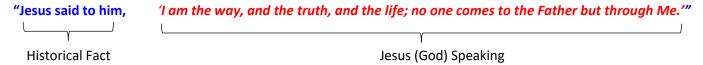
The New Testament

The New Testament was written after Christ was crucified and consists of 27 "books" organized as follows:

| # | Section | Books | Primary Writers | Dates Written | Description |
|----|--|--|--|-------------------|--|
| 1. | The Gospels (Gospel means "good news" in Greek) | Matthew Mark Luke John (4 Books) | Matthew, Mark, Luke & John | 60 AD to 90 AD | Two of these Gospels (Matthew and John) are written <i>eyewitness</i> testimonies from two of the Apostles who actually walked with Christ during His 3+ year ministry. They describe the actual events of Christ's ministry, His crucifixion and His resurrection. The remaining two Gospels (Mark and Luke) are biographies of Jesus Christ from learned men who ministered with, and knew quite well, many of the Apostles (especially Peter and Paul). |
| 2. | Acts (Of the Apostles) | Acts (1 Book) | Luke | 62 AD to 80 AD | This Book covers the activities of the Apostles from 30 AD through the 60s AD. Acts serves as a bridge between the story of Jesus as told in the Gospels and the early life of Christ's Church. |
| 3. | Epistles (Letters from the Apostles) | Romans through Jude (21 Books) | 13 by Paul, 3 by John, 2 by Peter, 1 by James, 1 by Jude, and 1 unknown (Hebrews) | 49 AD to 92 AD | Epistles are letters from the Apostles and their close associates and describe the preaching of the Apostles that led to the spreading of Christ's church throughout the land (Egypt, Syria, Iran, Greece, Rome, etc.) |
| 4. | The Apocalypse (the End of Days) | The Book of Revelation (1 Book) | John | 95 AD | The Apostle John's prophecy (as told to him by Jesus in a revelation), recounts the time of tribulation and the Rapture of the Church, the Judgment Seat of Christ, the 2 nd coming of Christ physically to Earth, the Battle of Armageddon, the establishment of Christ's millennial Kingdom on Earth, the Final Judgement Day (White Throne Judgment), and the creation of a new Earth and heaven. |

Why the Bible is so Unique

The Bible is far more than just an historical account of events – it is also the inspired, inerrant, and occasionally metaphorical Word of God. The interweaving of historical content with the Word of God is what makes the Bible both unique and inspiring: unique because, unlike any other document, it starts with Creation and finishes with a description of the end of days; inspiring because, either from God's voice directly or manifested through His Holy Spirit, the content comes from God Himself. John 14:6 is an example of this interweaving:



As you read the Bible, it would not be unusual to ask yourself, "How in the world could the people writing the Bible's text remember everything so accurately?" Jesus explains how in John 14:26:

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."

Most people who read the Bible with some degree of consistency, often refer to it as a "living" document. What they mean is that, often, as they re-read verses in the Bible, something new jumps out at them that they didn't see before. This is one of the most amazing features of the Bible. You'll read a verse, then maybe in a discussion with someone about the verse, you'll go, "Wow – I never saw that before". Believe us, this happens all the time, and it is incredibly exciting. Simply said, the more you read the Bible, the more you'll understand the Bible. This is especially true if you choose to participate in a Bible study group, and we highly recommend you explore this opportunity. Most churches have a Bible study group and will often let non-members join in. You will also find Bible studies online.

Another amazing feature of the Bible is its incredible consistency. The same themes are expressed repeatedly which, on its own, is not terribly unusual. But when you consider that the themes are often referenced by different people, who are from different cultures and who may have lived hundreds, if not in some cases thousands, of years apart – well, that is something else again.

Lastly, when you gain a strong familiarity with the most critical components of the Bible - certainly the Torah (especially Genesis and Exodus), the Psalms and Proverbs, key Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel), and pretty much the entire New Testament (which is actually less than a third of the entire Bible) - we believe you will be amazed at how coherent and consistent the material is. Taken only in bits and pieces, the Bible is not all that impressive and probably won't mean much to most people. But, when taken in its entirety, the Bible becomes a breathtaking and awe-inspiring testament to what makes life work out well. And we guarantee you that more than once you will declare to yourself, "Oh, I had no idea that's where that came from".

To help you become familiar with the Bible, we strongly recommend, in addition to Bible study groups, two additional endeavors: (1) reading certain books that we found put much of what the Bible teaches into everyday application, and (2) reviewing certain YouTube videos of sermons that really bring Scripture to life. We have provided a list of these in our PDFs: "Recommended Further Reading" and "Recommended Sermons and Videos".

Once people get to a certain level of understanding of the Bible, we think they will reach the following conclusions:

- 1. The Bible is truly the inerrant Word of God, the One who created all things and the One who will end all things.
- 2. The Bible is clearly a living and supernatural document. It becomes more and more revealing the more you become familiar with it. If you ever longed to have a conversation with God, get familiar with the Bible and you will find Him talking to you every day. But know this: God's knowledge is without limit. He loves the innocence and obedience of children, and He does not suffer fools.
- 3. The Bible is absolutely and without a doubt accurate and true. There are just too many correlations, consistencies, and coincidences for it not to be accurate and true. Because the Bible is so consistent and thorough, it literally proves itself. Whenever an inconsistency appears, and new readers inevitably seem to "discover" a few (trust us), additional research will always bring clarity and always in the Bible's favor.
- 4. The Bible is completely believable. At first, you might tend to raise your eyebrows in doubt at many things. But, once you become familiar with the Bible, with all of its consistency and interconnections, you will fully understand why Jesus tells us, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26)

These are certainly the conclusions we came to as we became intimately familiar with the Bible.

Reading the Bible - What to Read First

While the Bible has the consistency of an historical timeline, we do not recommend reading the Bible from "front" to "back" or from the "beginning" to the "end" like you would most books. While there is no harm in reading the Bible starting with page 1 of the Old Testament, we recommend starting with the New Testament. This approach will introduce you to the Book of Matthew, which is an eyewitness testimony of the acts and words of Jesus Christ throughout His ministry, written by someone who was rumored to be quite meticulous and who was a bookkeeper/tax collector accustomed to taking detailed notes of transactions. It is a great place to start developing your relationship with Jesus.

After reviewing the four Gospels, we suggest reading Acts (of the Apostles) next. After reading the Gospels and Acts, you may want to circle back and read Genesis and Exodus (from the Old Testament) for some historical perspective. At this point, you should know enough about the Bible – especially if you are using the New American Standard Bible (NASB) – to pick and choose what you are inspired to read next. Hint: Many people regard the Book of Daniel as one of their favorites.

Why Are There "Old" and "New" Testaments?

While both the Old Testament and the New Testament are the work of the Holy Spirit and together constitute God's inerrant Word, it is important to know that Christians today are to be guided by the New Covenant of the New Testament which was initiated by Jesus Christ during the Last Supper with His disciples and cemented through His crucifixion. We say this because while the Old Testament contains critical historical information, especially about creation and the nature of God, we believe it is foremost a foreshadowing of the arrival of Jesus Christ and His new blood Covenant with all nations. For example, under Old Testament Law, blood sacrifices had to be given repeatedly, and only "covered" sin, and were only for people of the Jewish faith. Jesus's new blood Covenant was for all nations, Jews and Gentiles. His new blood Covenant forgave humanity's sins and erased them once and forever. This is clearly pointed out in Hebrews 10:11-25

"Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He [Jesus], having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, 'THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM,' He then says, 'AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.' Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin. Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

One of the main reasons we recommend starting your Bible reading with the New Testament is it contains God's Word that we are to live under and practice today. Certainly, the Law that God gave to Moses to deliver to the Jewish people in approximately 1445 BC establishes precedent that should never be ignored or forgotten, and Jesus reminds of this when He told His disciples and the people gathered to hear His Sermon on the Mount:

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:17-20

Jesus' last words in the above passage are critical as they introduce to the Jewish people that it is their righteousness, and not their strict adherence to the Law, that will gain them access to the kingdom of heaven. For a people who had counted on the Old Testament Law for over 1,400 years, this was a revolutionary concept, and we believe it began to mark the transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

Yes, the Old Testament Law should continue to be honored, but those of us living today now know it is our faith in Jesus and our living a life guided by His righteousness that will guarantee our access to heaven. Jesus confirms this in Matthew 22:34-40:

"But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?' And He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'
This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.'"

Anchored by the Ten Commandments, there are approximately 613 commandments in the Old Testament Law. Clearly the lawyer was trying to bait Jesus into picking only one that would put all of the other laws of God into a diminished status, but Jesus did not take the bait. Instead, He proclaimed just two new laws to follow, and offered that when taken together, they are what the original Law and the prophesies intended. Again, we believe this helps mark the transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

Its prophecies about Jesus Christ are the second reason we recommend reading the New Testament first as the New Testament explains how many of the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled. We believe the Old Testament will make more sense to you if you know beforehand how its prophecies actually played out. We believe Jesus alludes to this in Luke 24:44-49 when He meets with His Apostles after His resurrection:

"Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.'" Luke 24:44-49

So, as a member of the 21st century, when you explore the Bible, please always keep in mind that the Old Testament and the New Testament serve two different purposes. The Old Testament is more introductory, historical, and prophetical in nature while the New Testament fulfills much of the Old Testament prophecies and now serves as our instruction guide on how to have a wonderful life now and forever – both of which are only available to us by the grace of God through our faith in His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.