

INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

The Bible is a message system made up of 66 books (39-OT; 27-NT) scribed by 40 different human writers. Some of these writers were rich, some poor. Some were well educated; others were not. They came from various backgrounds such as shepherds, farmers, rulers, kings, and fishermen.

This book has been uniquely engineered and designed, very intricately, by a single author, GOD. It is interwoven and complimentary. It is our guidebook to life on this earth, and it shows us how to spend eternity in heaven with our Creator.

Amazing things have been put in this book for our discovery. You may learn some different from it each time you study it. The Holy Spirit is our teacher and He is actively involved with the Scriptures.

God can speak to people in many different ways, but that the main way God speaks to His people today is through His written word. His word is accurate, applicable and true.

The Bible is divided into 2 Testaments—the Old and the New. The word testament means covenant. A covenant is an agreement, a contract, a solemn promise. The Old Testament tells how God made an agreement with Abraham and his descendants, the Hebrews (Israelites, Jews). Everything in the OT is either an introduction to this old covenant or a record of God's promises and His faithfulness, and the stories of God's people, both faithful and not.

The OT contains the 10 Commandments and other laws that were given to the people for them to live by.

God promised that He would one day send a Savior, a Redeemer, a Messiah for His people. The New Testament tells how God kept this most important promise through Jesus Christ. God offers this new covenant to everyone who will commit their lives to God by receiving Jesus Christ as their Savior. The NT also tells how Jesus' followers started the job of sharing the Gospel (good news) of Jesus with people all over the world.

The two Testaments actually tell one story: the story of God and His people. We will see the lengths that He will go to, to demonstrate His love for people. The relationship between the OT & NT was nicely expressed by St. Augustine:

"The New is in the Old concealed. The Old is in the New revealed."

The OT was originally written in Hebrew. By 500 BC, much of the Torah was translated into Aramaic, the common language of the time spoken by Jews in the Middle East.

The Word of God

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Psalm 119:105 (KJV)

The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever. Isaiah 40:8 (NIV)

So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:11 (NKJV)

Man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD. Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4 (NKJV)

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth....For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. Psalm 33:6, 9 (NIV)

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. John 17:17 (NIV)

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword . . . and is the discerner of thoughts and intents of the heart. Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV)

Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Ephesians 6:17 (NIV)

So faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Romans 10:17 (NKJV)

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. Hebrews 11:3 (ESV)

For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.... We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:16, 19-21 (NIV)

Overview of the Old Testament

The Books of Law (The Pentateuch or Torah)

Genesis: Describes four major events and four major characters. The events are: Creation; The Fall; The Flood, & The Tower of Babel. The characters are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. God's covenant with His chosen people begins with Abraham.

Exodus: The history of Israel's departure from Egypt; the giving of the law; the tabernacle.

Leviticus: The ceremonial laws and feasts regarding holiness and worship.

Numbers: The census of the people; the story of the wanderings in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy: A review and expansion of the law; the death of Moses.

The Books of History

The next 12 books continue the history of the Israelites for about 700 years. They moved into the Promised Land (Canaan) and established a kingdom.

Joshua: The capture and settlement of the Promised Land.

Judges: The nation of Israel is led by a series of judges or military leaders.

Ruth: A beautiful story of God's love and provision involving the ancestors of the royal family of Judah.

1 Samuel: Israel during the judgeship of Samuel and the reign of Saul.

2 Samuel: The story of the reign of David.

1 & 2 Kings: The history of the nation from David's death and Solomon's accession, the building of the temple, the dividing of the kingdom, the kings that followed, and the destruction of Israel. (The Northern Kingdom/Israel fell to the Assyrians in 722 B.C.; the Southern Kingdom/Judah fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C.)

1 & 2 Chronicles: The most complete genealogical record in the Bible; a religious history of Israel—covering the same period as 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings.

Ezra: The story of the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity and the rebuilding of the temple.

Nehemiah: The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem after the Jewish exiles returned from Babylon.

Esther: The story of a Jewess who becomes queen of Persia and saves the Jewish people from destruction.

The Books of Poetry

Almost one-third of the Old Testament was originally written in poetry. These poems concentrate on God, life, pain, and love.

Job: The story of the trials and patience of a holy man as he faces tragedy.

Psalms: A collection of sacred poems intended for use in worship; these prayers and hymns cover the full range of human emotions.

Proverbs: Wise sayings offering advice for practical living. The style of wise living described leads to a fulfilled life.

Ecclesiastes: A poem reflecting the futility of earthly things. A life without God leads to meaninglessness and despair.

Song of Solomon: A beautiful poem celebrating romantic and physical love.

The Books of the Prophets

During the years when kings ruled Israel, God spoke to His people through prophets. Although prediction was an essential part of their preaching, their primary function was to call people to obedience and dependence upon God.

Isaiah: Analyzed the failures of the nations around him and pointed to a future Messiah who would bring peace.

Jeremiah: Prophecies announcing the captivity of Judah, its sufferings, and the final overthrow of its enemies.

Lamentations: Jeremiah's sorrow expressed upon the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple.

Ezekiel: Messages of warning and comfort to the Jews in their captivity. He used dramatic stories and enacted parables to make his points.

Daniel: A narrative of some of the occurrences of his captivity and a series of prophecies concerning world powers and Christ.

Hosea: A story of one-sided love and faithfulness that represents Israel and God, illustrated through the life of Hosea and his unfaithful wife, Gomer.

Joel: Prediction of judgment and woes upon Judah and of the favor with which God will receive the penitent people.

Amos: Prediction that Israel and other neighboring nations will be punished by conquerors from the north, and of the fulfillment of the Messiah's kingdom.

Obadiah: Prediction of the desolation of Edom, a nation bordering Judah.

Jonah: Jonah reluctantly goes to Nineveh and finds Israel's enemies responsive to God's message.

Micah: Micah exposed corruption in every level of society, but closed with a promise of forgiveness and restoration.

Nahum: Prediction of the downfall of Assyria.

Habakkuk: In a frank conversation with God, he discusses problems of suffering and injustice. He predicts the doom of the Chaldeans.

Zephaniah: A prediction of the overthrow of Judah for its idolatry and wickedness resulting in a remnant left to bless the entire world.

Haggai: Prophecies concerning the rebuilding of the temple. He reminds people to put God first.

Zechariah: Prophecies relating to the rebuilding of the temple and to the coming Messiah.

Malachi: Malachi faced a nation who had grown indifferent. He sought to stir them from apathy. He prophesied of the calling of the Gentiles and the coming of the Messiah.

