

# A Study of Bible History

## Lesson One

### Introduction

The Bible was written by many different people over a long period of time, and yet it all has the same message. This is possible because the Bible is God's Word. God used people to write down His Word. The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Bible so that their words would be the truth.

Our study of the Bible will begin with an overview of the organization of the Bible. The Bible is divided into two sections.



A. Old Testament

B. New Testament.

Both parts of the Bible center around the same wonderful promise of God. That promise is of the providing of a Savior, Jesus, to redeem sinful mankind.

The Old Testament looks forward to the coming of Jesus. The Savior's arrival is anticipated. Prophecies of His coming abound. Even in Genesis, directly after the fall of Adam and Eve, the Savior is promised. He will be the solution to the terrible predicament that arose when Adam and Eve sinned.

The New Testament centers on the Savior's arrival and His work here on earth. The New Testament tells of the new church and its mission of spreading the Gospel – the Good News that the Savior has arrived and delivered mankind from its sin.

To sum up, the Old Testament anticipates the coming of the Savior; the New Testament announces His arrival.

## THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament is organized into several sections.

**FIRST SECTION** Books of Laws

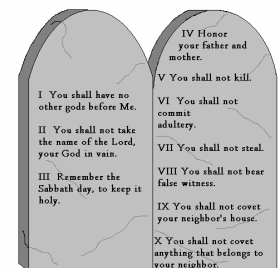
These books are: 1. Genesis

2. Exodus

3. Leviticus

4. Numbers

5. Deuteronomy



## 2 Introduction

These books contain information on the creation of the universe, the fall, the flood, and all events up until the end of the forty years of wandering in the desert. In other words, it contains history until the nation of Israel was established in the promised land.

### SECOND SECTION Books of History

There are the twelve books in this section.

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| 1. <u>Joshua</u>        | 7. <u>Second Kings</u>      |
| 2. <u>Judges</u>        | 8. <u>First Chronicles</u>  |
| 3. <u>Ruth</u>          | 9. <u>Second Chronicles</u> |
| 4. <u>First Samuel</u>  | 10. <u>Ezra</u>             |
| 5. <u>Second Samuel</u> | 11. <u>Nehemiah</u>         |
| 6. <u>First Kings</u>   | 12. <u>Esther</u>           |

These books contain information on the formulation of the new nation and the history of that nation. They include the period of rule by judges, the establishment of the monarchy, the separation of the nation into two nations, the decline of both nations, and accounts of rebellion against God by both nations. The story culminates in the total defeat of both nations and the subsequent captivity of the Israelites.

### THIRD SECTION Books of Poetry



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| 1. <u>Job</u>      | 4. <u>Ecclesiastes</u>    |
| 2. <u>Psalms</u>   | 5. <u>Song of Solomon</u> |
| 3. <u>Proverbs</u> |                           |

In addition to the beautiful imagery and expressions of the greatness of God, these books also contain principles that, when followed, lead to a God-pleasing lifestyle. The poetry also often includes references to the coming of Jesus as the leader of God's people.

## FOURTH SECTION

The final section of the Old Testament is divided into two parts. They are

The Books of the major prophets

The Books of the minor prophets

The first part (major prophets) contains five books.

1. Isaiah
2. Jeremiah
3. Lamentations
4. Ezekiel
5. Daniel

The second part (minor prophets) contains twelve books.

1. Hosea
2. Joel
3. Amos
4. Obadiah
5. Jonah
6. Micah
7. Naham
8. Hhabakkuk
9. Zephaniah
10. Haggai
11. Zechariah
12. Malachi

The books of the major and minor prophets contain special messages that God sent to His people. The prophets were the messengers. The messages often came at times when the Israelites were engaged in activities that were not God-pleasing. In these cases the messages were warnings of what would happen if the people did not repent and turn to God with their whole hearts. The warnings were not heeded and the people of Israel were carried off into captivity. The prophecies that occurred while the people were captives concerned the return to their land and the coming of the special King God would send to them.

## NEW TESTAMENT

The books of the New Testament can also be divided into several sections.

### FIRST SECTION

The first of these sections contains the Gospels. There are four books in this section.

1. Matthew
2. Mark
3. Luke
4. John

These books tell the story of Jesus' life. They also give testimony to Jesus as God's Son who died for our sins and rose again and will return to take us to be with Him. These accounts reveal how Jesus fulfilled the words of the Old Testament prophets.

### SECOND SECTION

The next section is History. This section is made up of only one book.

1. Acts

This book begins where the Gospels end – with the ascension of Jesus into heaven and His promise to return. It then tells of the formation and activities of the early Christian church. The stories of the ministries of Peter and Paul dominate the action in this book. The setting of the book moves throughout the Roman Empire as the young church expands and grows by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### THIRD SECTION

The next section of the New Testament contains Paul's letters.

There are two classifications of these books.

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| <p>A. <u>Churches</u></p> <p>1. <u>Romans</u></p> <p>2. <u>First Corinthians</u></p> <p>3. <u>Second Corinthians</u></p> <p>4. <u>Galatians</u></p> <p>5. <u>Ephesians</u></p> <p>6. <u>Philippians</u></p> <p>7. <u>Colossians</u></p> <p>8. <u>First Thessalonians</u></p> <p>9. <u>Second Thessalonians</u></p> | <p>B. <u>Individuals</u></p> <p>1. <u>First Timothy</u></p> <p>2. <u>Second Timothy</u></p> <p>3. <u>Titus</u></p> <p>4. <u>Philemon</u></p> |
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All of these letters were written by Paul. Paul was not always a Christian. In fact, at one time he tried to have Christians hurt and killed. But God had a special purpose for Paul and called him in a spectacular way. Paul's letters contain practical information that would help the new churches as they struggled with special problems. They also contain information for the spiritual growth of the congregations or individuals to whom they were written.

#### FOURTH SECTION

The New Testament also contains letters written by people other than Paul. These letters comprise the next section.

It is entitled General Letters and contains eight books.

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| <p>1. <u>Hebrews</u></p> <p>2. <u>James</u></p> <p>3. <u>First Peter</u></p> <p>4. <u>Second Peter</u></p> | <p>5. <u>First John</u></p> <p>6. <u>Second John</u></p> <p>7. <u>Third John</u></p> <p>8. <u>Jude</u></p> |
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The authors of these books were leaders in the early Christian church. They, along with Paul, wrote to congregations and individuals to encourage them in their faith and to give them instruction in practical and spiritual matters.

## **FIFTH SECTION**

The last section of the New Testament is Prophecy. This section contains one book.

1. Revelation

This book contains the vision given to one of the disciples of Jesus years after Jesus had ascended into heaven. It tells of the future and Jesus' glorious return.

It is easy to see that the Bible is not simply one book but rather a collection of many books, all written by men who were inspired by God. The Bible is God's Word. His Holy Spirit spoke to the hearts of the writers and gave them the words to write.

Before we begin to look at the individual books of the Bible and the stories they contain, we should take a moment to look at where the action takes place. Actually the center of action for both testaments is roughly the same geographic area. Each testament contains adventures that occur outside of this area, but the central action is quite regional.

# Old Testament Areas



## ***New Testament Areas***

