

Kobus Genis

**THE BIBLE
GPS**

Making Sense Of The Bible

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In memory of my father, Koos, who instilled the love for the Bible in me. He suddenly died on December 31, 1999, but his legacy is still alive. And to my mother, Malie, who is a living example of someone who experiences the Bible as her God Positioning System

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A Word from the Author

The Global Positioning System (GPS) is probably one of the best inventions of our time. It helps you to find your way and not get lost!

A GPS uses satellites, receivers and software to allow users to determine their exact geographical position. You can type in an address and the GPS will navigate you to the correct address. If you make a mistake there is no need to stress because a voice will just tell you “recalculate” and you are back on your way to your destination. The GPS has saved me lots of time and probably my marriage. ☺

Our journey through life often leads us to unknown paths. We know that life can have rather sharp edges and that pain and sorrow are part of our existence. It is therefore not always easy to find our way in life. We can feel a little bit lost and lonely.

The good news is that God has given us a GPS to find our way through life – God’s Word, our God Positioning System. According to Psalm 119:105, God’s Word is a lamp to our feet and a light for our path.

Erwin McManus started his book “*An Unstoppable Force*” with a striking quote:

“The vast ocean of the unknown can only be navigated through the compass of an ancient text.”

The Bible, as ancient text, has passed the test of time. No other book has influenced humanity more than the Bible.

The Bible outstrips any other as the world’s all-time bestseller. It remains so popular today, thousands of years after it was first

written, that it is excluded from bestseller lists the world over so that it doesn’t skew the charts. And yet, an increasing number of people are not reading the Bible.

The Bible helps us to stay on course. In reality, many people still believe in the gospel but do not know how to apply the message of the Bible on their life journey. So many people have told me that they started reading the Bible with great enthusiasm but that their enthusiasm did not last long because they found it difficult to understand. Some told me that they felt completely lost in the Bible. This is actually the last place you want to be lost—it is, after all, God’s Word!

The BIBLE GPS will be your guide to help you to navigate through the Bible and to meet God on your journey.

Getting the Most from the BIBLE GPS

The BIBLE GPS can be used in a number of contexts like personal study, one-on-one, triads (groups of three), quads (groups of four) or bigger groups of ten.

The BIBLE GPS is specifically designed to implement small multiplying discipleship units. The reading happens at home and the discussion part happens once a week during the gathering.

A Discipleship unit is where a leader invites two or three people to meet once a week.

A Ten-Week Journey

You will embark on a 70-day journey through the Bible with its different genres. The book contains daily devotions, study material and material for group discussions.

Weekly Gatherings

The daily reading happens at home and the discussion part happens once a week during the gathering. The discussion is about the previous week's reading.

The Daily Readings

Each day contains a prayer, a devotional reading, study material of about two pages and some questions. It will take you about 20-30 minutes daily.

(All the Devotionals in this guide, except the one on page 161, are from my book, *From a Garden to a City*. The Devotional on page 161 is from my book, *@Godstweet*)

Video Material

Video material for each week is available at <https://biblegps.teachable.com>

Small Multiplying Discipleship Units

After the 10 weeks the ideal is that everyone starts a new unit by inviting two or three people. Repeating this process again and again is a great way to reach many people.

Round 1: (You and three other people) **4**

Round 2: 4 groups of 4 people = **16**

Round 3: 16 groups of 4 people = **64**

Round 4: 64 groups of 4 people = **256**

Round 5: 256 groups of 4 people = **1024**

Round 8: 16 384 groups of 4 people = **65 536**

Acknowledgments

This work is the result of a lifetime of learning from my family, friends, colleagues, counselors and teachers who invested their time, energy, wisdom and interest in my life. For this, I am forever grateful!

Here are just a few who made this work possible:

To my wife, Anne-Marie, and my three children, Cara-Mari, Elsjé and James, for all the sacrifices they have endured to see this book to completion. I am as relieved as you are!

To my first congregation, the Dutch Reformed Church Port Natal, located in beautiful Durban, South Africa. I will always be grateful for the opportunity you gave me to grow spiritually and to take risks (together) for the kingdom of God.

To my current congregation, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Calgary for allowing me to take risks and to grow together.

To Judi Pearce for her advice and proofreading.

To Dr. Stanley Ott, founder and president of Vital Churches Institute, for challenging me to convert all my Bible study material to a discipleship format.

To my mentor, Prof. Danie Veldsman, for his patience, integrity and wisdom over so many years.

To my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for His love, compassion and WORD.

WEEK 1: THE BIBLE

Its Uniqueness, Overview & Literature



Introduction to Week 1

In this week we are going to focus on:

- A. How the Bible came into being
- B. The Overview of the Bible
- C. The Different Types of Literature of the Bible

Complete the readings of each day

Pray the Prayer Covenant daily

Lord, grant ___ and me the grace today to commit our lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ without reservation, and grant ___ and me further the grace to know your strength and your guidance this day. Amen¹

Text of the Week: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

(You are welcome to memorize it.)

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

Video material of this week is available at

<https://biblegps.teachable.com>

1. E. Stanley Ott: The Vital Churches Institute, Word-Share-Prayer, 2013

Day 1

DEVOTION

You Could Not Have Wished for a Better Start!

The word “beginning” is a wonderful word because it contains elements of expectation, optimism and excitement. Think of a new day dawning, the first cry of a newborn baby, the opening chords of a music concert—or the beginning of a journey along the biblical paths. It is striking to note that the very first sentence in the Bible contains this word. It is here where our journey begins: the very first sentence in the Bible.

Genesis 1 (Prose- History)

The Beginning

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. (NIV)

The first sentence in the Bible is an announcement that proclaims God is the creator of all. Everything begins with God! God has no equal. He is the creator of all. However, we must remember that the universe did not always have its present order. It was without life. The earth was still uninhabitable, desolate and empty. The mass

of water that would give rise to everything was wrapped in darkness. Uninhabitable and dark depths represent forces that frighten human beings and leave them feeling a sense of helplessness. Likewise, you might be starting this journey with the same feeling of helplessness—perhaps because of a child who has lost the way, a state of depression you are experiencing or even your deteriorating health. Helplessness about life can make you wonder if anyone is ever in control. You want to ask “where is God?” or even “is God truly God?”

Take comfort from the second part of Genesis 1:2: “The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” Imagine a bird hovering graciously, but secretly, over the chaos (mass of water), ready to intervene. This symbolizes God’s mysterious presence, which goes hand in hand with His creative power. It is this mysterious power that could equip a stutterer like Moses to lead his people, turn a defenseless widow like Naomi into a joyous grandmother, stop Saul in his tracks, or enable Jesus to rise from the dead. On this journey, you will discover how God’s Spirit is still alive. You should learn to see this. In short, this journey begins with God. You could not have wished for a better start!¹

“Start by doing what’s necessary; then do what’s possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”

St. Francis of Assisi

STUDY MATERIAL

A. The Bible: Its Uniqueness

Have you ever wondered how the Bible came into being?

It is important to have some understanding how the Bible came to us. You will realize that the Bible, like creation, is an amazing miracle.

What makes it such an amazing miracle? Although it was written on three continents (Africa, Asia and Europe), in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek), over a period of about 1500 years, by more than 40 authors (from all walks of life), the Bible as a whole forms a wonderful unit. We find perfect harmony in the message they convey. **This unit makes the Bible unique among all books.**

The Bible did not just simply drop from the sky, but it came into being through a **fascinating, but complicated process.**

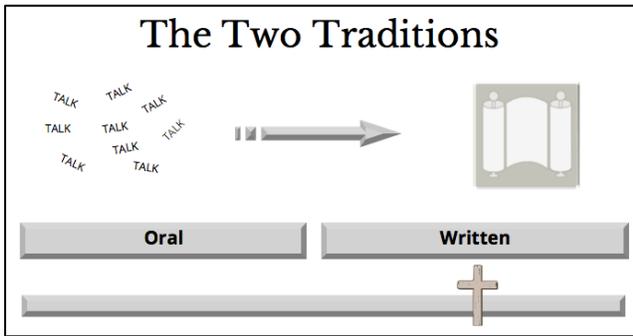
To best understand the process we need to be aware of:

1. The Two Traditions
2. The Languages
3. The Councils

1. The Two Traditions

The Bible evolved over a time span of approximately 1500 years. The time span can be divided into an **oral tradition** and a **written tradition.**

1. Kobus Genis, *From a Garden to a City*, 2015



The oral tradition lasted for **centuries** as families passed along the stories of their ancestors to each new generation before they were written down in a final form. The oral tradition is likely dated to the time of Abraham, around 1800 BC.

The oral tradition has **steadily evolved** into written tradition as societies in the Near East began to develop the art of writing. Probably the **first** written parts of Scripture were short pieces of poetry, dating to the time of the exodus around 1300 BC.

2. The Languages

Most of the original manuscripts of the Old Testament were written in **Hebrew**, although a few chapters of Ezra and Daniel were recorded in **Aramaic** (dialect of Hebrew), the language spoken by Jesus.

The New Testament was written in the first century AD in **Greek** because it was the most spoken language around the Mediterranean at the time.

The first English translation of the Bible was by **John Wycliffe**. He translated the Bible into English from the Latin translation of the Bible (Vulgate) because he did not know Hebrew or Greek. The **King James Version** (1611AD) is the translation from the original Hebrew and Greek into English.

The **Advent of Printing** in 1455 greatly aided the transmission of the biblical texts. The Bible has been translated into more than **2,000** languages. Did you know that the first book ever printed was the Bible?

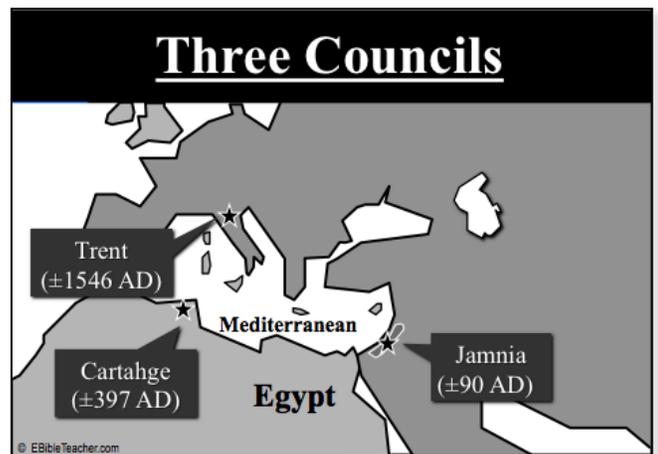
3. The Councils

Who decided which books would be part of the Bible?

Three **church councils** (synods) played a very important role to determine which books needed to be in the Bible.

They were:

- a) **Jamnia (± 90 AD)**
- b) **Carthage (± 397 AD)**
- c) **Trent (± 1546 AD)**



The leading Jewish **rabbis** gathered at Jamnia to give final clarity on what books should belong to their Holy Scriptures, the Old Testament. The Jewish Scriptures contain the same books as the Old Testament of the Protestant Bible.

The 27 books of the New Testament were formally approved as part of the Bible at the Council of Carthage (located in Tunisia).

Many years later, the Council of Trent (northern Italy) met as a result of the tension between Roman Catholics and the emerging Protestant believers. At this Council, the Roman Catholic Church accepted 12 extra books officially as part of their Bible. They are placed between the Old and New Testament. These books were written between about 400 BC, and the time of Jesus.

These books apparently were not used in the Christian gatherings and are therefore not regarded by Protestants as inspired. The Jews also did not include them in their Hebrew Bible. Roman Catholics argue that those books were an integral part of the early church and should be included in the list of inspired Old Testament books.

General Remarks

Where does the name "Bible" come from?

The word Bible comes from the Greek *biblia*, meaning "books".

Do we have the original manuscripts of the Bible?

Although we don't have the original manuscripts of the Bible, we do have copies that still exist today e.g. the Leningrad Codex, or *Leningradensis*, the oldest complete Hebrew Bible still preserved, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the **Codex Vaticanus** which is an almost complete New Testament and has been at the Vatican Library since 1475.

What do you tell someone that says that the Bible cannot be trusted because you only have copies? I think you could answer that with a counter question:

Of what do you make copies? **You make copies of the things that are important to you.** The process of making copies of the original manuscripts were very expensive and were done with great precision.

Did you know that with the possible exception of a few pages of Sir Thomas More, a play that Shakespeare may have helped write, no manuscripts of Shakespeare's survive? Yet, I have heard of no person who doubted the work of Shakespeare.

Why is the Bible divided into two parts: The Old Testament and The New Testament?

Since there is a 400-year gap between the last book of the Old Testament and the first book of the New Testament, the Bible is divided up into those two parts.

Why are the two parts called a 'Testament'?

The word testament is a derivation of the Latin word *testamentum*, which was used to translate the Hebrew for covenant. The word has come to be used in describing the two main divisions of the Bible. It should be understood, then, that the Bible is generally to be looked at as a **covenant**. A covenant is an agreement between two parties and in the Bible it is between God and humanity.

The Bible speaks of different agreements that God made with humanity. The entire flow of biblical history is based upon the covenants that God has made with humankind. In the Bible we find covenants made with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David.

God has kept His part of the bargain in all of these covenants in the Old Testament. However, humanity miserably failed to keep their part. That is why a **new covenant** (agreement) was necessary.

"The new covenant is the relationship we have with God, made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus could do that because he was both God and human. He was not only able to represent both parties, he was able to be both parties. As God, he did what only God could do: forgive us. As a human, he did what humanity was supposed to do: respond perfectly. Just as his death counts for all humanity, so does his perfect response."¹

1. Joseph Tkach, *The New Covenant in a Nutshell*, <https://www.gci.org/law/nutshell>

2. Mark Lundquist, *Why aren't books being added to the Bible in modern day?*, <https://www.quora.com/profile/Mark-Lundquist-2>

The Old Testament (covenant) lays the foundation for the coming of the Messiah (New Testament) who would sacrifice Himself for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2).

Why aren't books being added to the Bible in modern day?

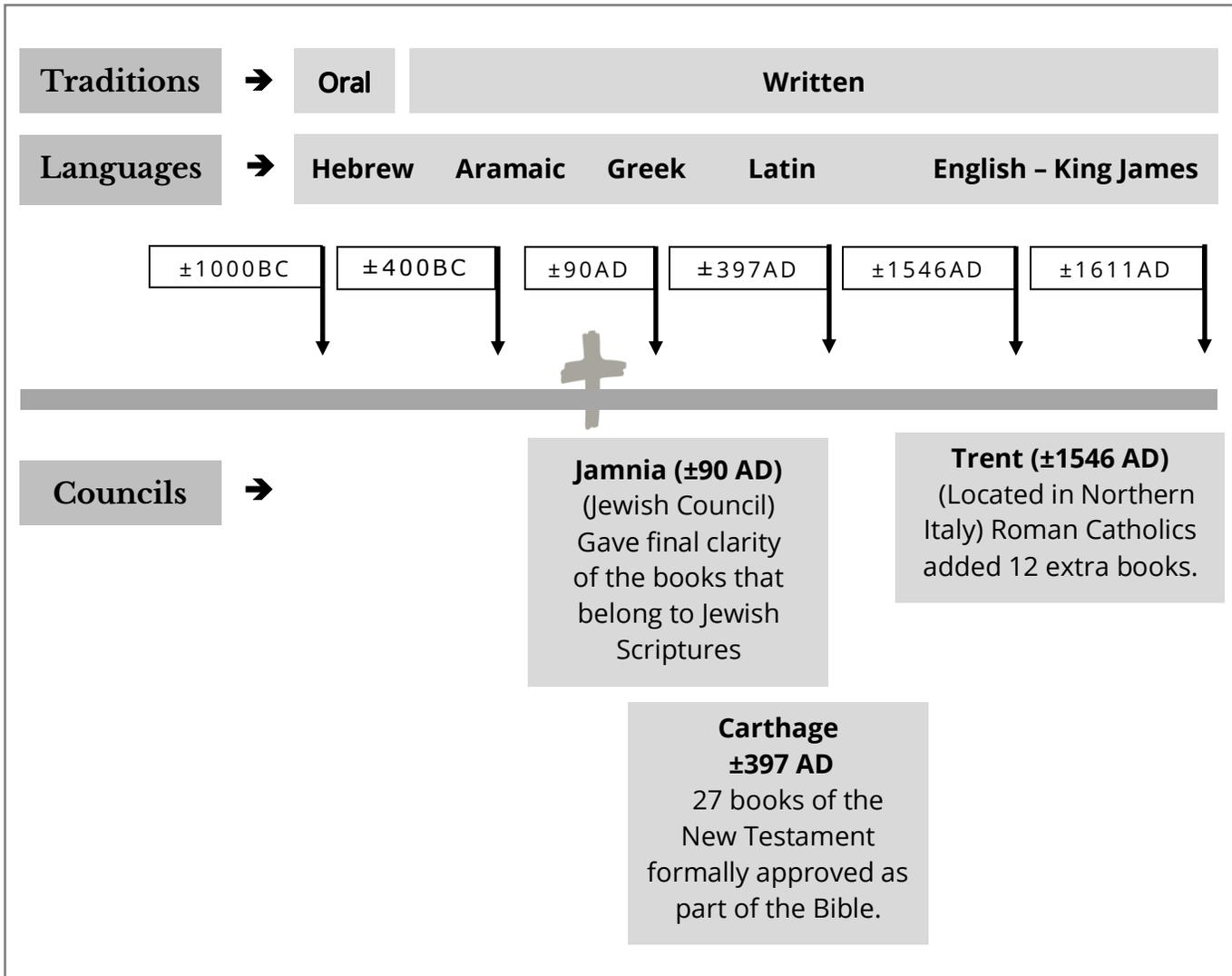
The widely held belief is that the Bible as the inspired word of God is a finished work. If the Scripture we already have is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true, why would we need more? Why would we seek more? The Scripture already revealed by God can make us complete for everything God has called us to be and do in life.

"The implications are that (a) an individual believer in the 21st century does not require any more special revelation from God than did an individual believer in the 1st century, and likewise (b) the Church in the 21st century does not require any more special revelation than it did in the 1st century. The Old Testament is the "set-up" for Christ. Christ came, and the New Testament is there to explain Christ. Apparently (1) God has he has done all the explaining of Christ that needs to be done in his own words, and (2) there's no big "new thing" since Christ that needs to be explained. The next "big new thing" will be Christ again :-)."²

We see that the Bible did not merely drop from the sky, but came into being by a fascinating, yet **complicated process**.

No other book has such a history. No other book has influenced humanity more than the Bible. For believers, it is indeed God's Word that gives life!

How did the Bible come into being?



1. Did the lesson succeed in leaving you in awe of God's Word? Explain!

.....
.....

2. What touched you the most in this lesson?

.....
.....

3. Is there anything in the lesson that was not clear to you? If so, what was unclear?

.....
.....

4. Which two traditions are attributed the origin of the Bible?

-
-

5. Name the three Councils which played an important role in the formation of the Bible?

-
-
-

Day 2

DEVOTION

Does Genesis 1 Have a Message for Us?

God's Actions		God's Actions	
Day 1	Light and Time a) And God said (3) b) "Let there be light," (3) c) and there was light (3) d) God saw...was good (4) e) evening...morning day (5) <small>(NIV)</small>	Day 4	Sun, Moon and Stars a) And God said (14) b) Let there be lights (14) c) and it was so (15) d) and God saw...good (18) e) evening...morning (19) <small>(NIV)</small>
Day 2	Sky (Water above) Sea (Water under)	Day 5	Birds (sky) Fish (sea)
Day 3	Land and Plants	Day 6	Animals and Man

The story of creation has given rise to much debate, but the question stands: Does Genesis 1 have a message for us? Let's take a look. The schematic representation shows that the story of the creation contains prose as well as poetic elements. It is a story containing repetition (a-e), which is characteristic of poetry. The schematic representation further shows that the first three days parallels the last three days

During the first three days, God thus tames the forces that struck fear into people in antiquity: darkness and barrenness. During the last three days, God completes the cosmos in the same sequence as the first three days: the heavenly bodies (sun, moon and stars) to drive away the darkness; the birds to fill the air and the fishes to fill the seas; animals and human beings to live from

its abundance. On the seventh day, God rests. This starts the cycle of work and rest.

The story of creation, which develops so wonderfully parallel, tells us *that* God created in an orderly fashion. The Bible does not tell us exactly how this came about—this is the concern of the natural sciences, which try to discover the secrets of creation. With the story of creation, God sets the table for relationships between God and human beings, between human beings themselves, and between human beings and creation. Shall we join God at the table?

"Treasure your relationships, not your possessions."

Anthony J. D'Angelo

STUDY MATERIAL

B. Overview of the Bible

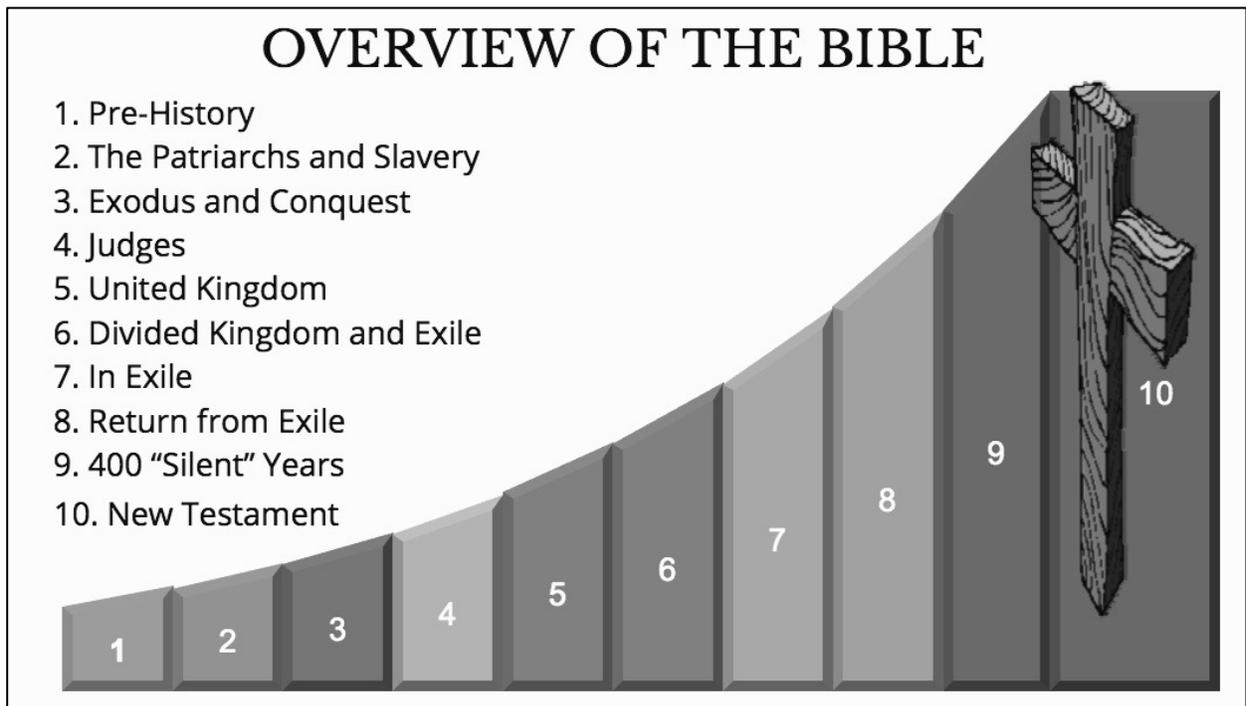
Why do many Christians struggle to read the entire Bible?

Virtually every Christian at some point has the intention to read the entire Bible. If we believe the Bible is the Word of God, it's natural not to want to miss a word of it. The reality is that many Christians did not make it through the Bible. The majority has read Genesis and Exodus. It tells important events and read like a novel. But when we get to Leviticus, everything changes. It's difficult reading about the ceremonies, the sacrifices, and the cleansing rituals because they are foreign to us today. We lack a road map, an overview of the Bible to help us through these difficult portions of the Bible.

The schematic presentation of the overview of the Bible indicates the first nine blocks (Old Testament) with a growing line. This is to show that the Old Testament is building up to a **climax** until Jesus appears in the New Testament.

The New Testament (block ten) is not a rising line, because in Jesus, God became human, the personification (fulfillment) of the shadow. "These are a **shadow** of the things that were to come; the **reality**, however, is found in Christ" (Col 2:17 *NIV*).

One can conclude that the Old Testament (covenant) is like a **shadow** pointing to the **person** of Jesus in the New Testament.



1. Pre-history

(Genesis 1-11)

The events in Genesis 1–11 bear no date and are therefore known as pre-history. Four important events: are being described in these chapters: Creation, the Fall of humanity, the Flood and the Tower of Babel.

The first 11 chapters of Genesis describe how human beings miss the mark. The rest of the Bible tells us how God accompanies human beings on their journey through life, in order to create a community of believers—a family of faith!

The entire Bible is the story of God building a family.

It's called History, His-story, because God is building a family for Himself that is going to last not just here on earth, but forever and ever and ever in eternity. It is an eternal family. You were made to last forever and to be part of this family.

2. Patriarchs and Slavery

(±2000 – ± 1250 BC)

(Genesis 12–50)

God was grieved that He had created human beings and His heart was deeply troubled when he saw the wickedness of humanity. (Gen 6:6). As a result, God wanted to wipe humanity and animals from the face of the earth. Fortunately, God had changed his plans because God's love always supersedes God's wrath.

God had decided to rescue humanity by making a covenant with Abraham and turn

them into a nation that will have a very special relationship with Him. A **covenant** is an agreement to make a shaky relationship more steadfast and permanent. Abraham was the first father of the community. He and his descendants (such as Isaac and Jacob) are known as the patriarchs. "Patriarchs" is a Hebrew term that means "first father" or "ruling father." Joseph is another main figure. He was the favorite son of his father, Jacob.

God forms the new community of believers in such a way that it does not happen naturally but through God's direct intervention.

God does this in two ways.

First, He chooses an old sterile woman (Abraham's wife, Sarah) as the mother of the community of believers.

Second, He calls someone from the heathens to be the father of the new community.

By doing this, God wants us to realize that the community of believers is not the result of human thought and effort. It is the work of a God who wants to be reunited with us.

Genesis ends when Joseph and his family settle in Egypt. The Israelites lived for 430 years in Egypt. During these 430 years, the Israelites multiplied in great numbers, even though the pharaoh forced them to do slave labor in the hope of keeping their numbers in check.

In these chapters in Genesis, we see the wondrous ways God goes about establishing a new community of faith.

3. Exodus and Conquest

(±1250 – 1220 BC)

(Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua)

Genesis ends with Joseph and his family in Egypt. Exodus picks up the story 430 years later with a Pharaoh who did not know Joseph and how he had saved the Egyptians from starvation.

This Pharaoh fears the “Hebrews”, the name given to the descendants of Abraham via Jacob and puts them to work as slaves.

Now you may wonder: How is God going to fulfill the covenant (agreement) He had made with Abraham? How can they be a blessing to the nations and living in a Promised Land if they live as slaves in a foreign country?

God calls Moses to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt into the Promised Land.

God always has a plan! Moses is an unlikely hero. He is raised in Pharaoh’s palace, “the enemy camp”, he murders an Egyptian and flees for maybe 40 years. When he is old God calls him to lead the children of Israel but Moses pleads for God to send someone else because Moses had a speech impediment. In the end Aaron - Moses’ brother - is given the job of spokesman.

Highlights from this time:

Moses leads his people from Egypt

- the 10 plagues

The Passover (Jewish Easter)

- celebrating the exodus from Egypt

The people wander in the desert

The sad episode of the golden calf

- God’s presence with the people
 - Fire and cloud columns
 - Tabernacle
- God sends provisions of manna and quails.

Offerings

Offerings are an acknowledgement that worshipers are unworthy to approach God on their own. Leviticus describes this in detail because the Levites were concerned with offerings.

Invasion of Canaan, the Promised Land

- Mission of the 12 spies
- Poisonous snakes afflict the people when they rebel
- The bronze snake on a pole cures the people
- Moses bids farewell (Deuteronomy)
- Joshua leads the people across the Jordan
- The fall of Jericho
- The land is divided up
- The people still disobey (Deut 7:2-4; Joshua 17:13)

God remains faithful by starting to fulfill His promises made to Abraham.

Day 3

DEVOTION

The Crisis Confronting Us Every Day

The well-known story told in Genesis 3 illustrates a crisis we experience each day.

Genesis 3: 1-24 Human Disobedience

Tension: The serpent tempts Adam and Eve (verses 1-5)

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'

Release of tension: Adam and Eve sin (verses 6-21)

⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Result: Adam and Eve leave Eden (verses 22-24)

²³ So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. (NIV)

We all want to experience freedom. The reality is that your freedom stops where someone else's freedom starts. That is why houses have doorbells and countries have boundaries. People need to ask permission to enter your free space.

Freedom entails boundaries that need to be respected.

Adam and Eve were not allowed to eat from the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden. The tree is a symbol of God's presence and therefore indicates that the garden belongs to Him. The tree therefore sets a boundary between God and human beings. We need to respect those boundaries. By choosing to respect the boundaries we are expressing our love and respect to God. Unfortunately Adam and Eve did not respect those boundaries by eating from the forbidden fruit. They realize that and hide from God. Fortunately God does not turn His back on them but calls to them: "Where are you?" (verse 9)

No matter what you have done, God will still be looking for you to show you how much He loves you.

"A lack of boundaries invites a lack of respect."

Author Unknown

STUDY MATERIAL

4. Judges

(±1200 – ± 1020 BC)

(Judges and Ruth)

The previous period began with Moses and the exodus from Egypt and ended with Joshua and the Israelites entry into Canaan, the Promised Land.

This period ended with the death of Joshua (the political leader) and Aaron's son (the religious leader). After the death of these leaders, the people had to venture into the future on their own with God. This brings us to the time of the Judges.

The period between the Conquest and Monarchy

The period of the judges covers the events between the entry into the Promised Land and the establishment of the monarchy in Israel.

Tribes not closely united

During this phase, the tribes were not as closely united as they would later become. The tribes also moved to different areas, and God's people were still at the mercy of the hostile nations who lived in and around Canaan (for example, the Syrians, Philistines, Moabites, Edomites, Ammonites and the Amalekites).

The continuous raids and battles were a struggle for possession of the land. Other groupings also wanted to expand their territories.

Judges sent by God to rule

The judges (leaders sent by God) acted timely to restore order in these hostile times. Only one or two Israelite tribes were normally involved in these clashes.

Well-known Judges and Ruth

The most well-known judges were Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephtah and, of course, Samson. The story of Ruth also takes place during the time of Judges.

This was a dark period in the history of Israel.

Whereas the people still worshiped God in the time of Joshua, their faith in Him started to dwindle during this phase. The people began to lead an immoral life and wander off after other gods, and the judges were unable to follow in Joshua's footsteps and turn Israel back to the Lord. The book of Judges shows a clear pattern whereby the people would sin, show remorse, and then again be pardoned by God. However, the time of Judges ends on a note of despair, when even the system of the judges stopped working in Israel and people were left to their own devices to determine what was right or wrong.

Yet despite all this, God sent His Spirit to them to lead His people.

5. The United Kingdom

(± 1020 – 925 BC)

1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings 1–11,
1 Chronicles—2 Chronicles 9, Job, Psalms,
Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon)

The dark time of the Judges paved the way for this period

The previous period in Israel's history ended on a note of despair, because there were no judges left in Israel and the people were left to act according to what was right and wrong in their own sight. Idolatry and lawlessness prevailed. Therefore, the guidance of a king became a matter of urgency. Judges paved the way for the period of the kings.

Samuel warns the people

Samuel anointed the first two kings, namely Saul and David. Initially, Samuel warned the people that they did not need an earthly king because God was their king (1 Sam. 8:5,20). God regarded their request as a rejection of Him as their king (1 Sam. 8:7). However, Israel ignored the warnings about the consequences of having an earthly king (1 Sam. 8:10-19).

The three kings of this period

The three kings of this period were Saul, David and Solomon.

1. Saul

Saul became king in ±1020 BC. He had a lot of potential, but he did not have God at heart e.g. he consulted a medium (1 Sam. 28) and did not interact well with other people.

2. David

David became king in ±1000 BC. The name "David" conjures up images of a shepherd, a poet, a brave soldier, a king and the precursor of Jesus. He is one of the great characters in the Old Testament. But David also had a dark side, which the Bible does not hide. David united Israel and led them during the most blessed time in its history.

Through everything, God always kept His promise to Abraham that He would multiply the children of Israel (1 Kings 4:20-21).

3. Solomon

Solomon became king in 965 BC and led his people to great heights. The completion of the Temple is a testimony to his reign.

Below the surface, however, things started going wrong. Unfortunately Solomon's trust in his military power, his many wives and their idols, and his wealth drove a wedge between himself and God.

However, God continued to systematically execute His plan of salvation and His promise to Abraham.

God promised that David's kingdom would last forever (2 Sam. 7:14-16).

Day 4

DEVOTION

Can God Change His Plans?

We easily change our plans to suit ourselves. But can God also change His plans?

Genesis 6: 1-8 (Prose: Narrative) Human Wickedness

Tension: God is grieved

⁵ The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

⁶ The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.

Release of tension: God makes a decision (verse 7)

⁷ So the LORD said, 'I will wipe mankind, whom I have created from the face of the earth – men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds in the air – for I am grieved that I have made them.'

Result: God's grace triumphs (verse 8)

⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. (NIV)

Shortly after God created everything good, the Bible tells us of humankind's failure - Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and Cain killed his brother, Abel.

Humankind's sins cause God tremendous pain because God loves them. The word "grieved" in this passage literally means that

His heart was filled with pain. The same Hebrew word for "grief" is used in Genesis 3:16 to describe the pain women have to endure during childbirth and in Genesis 3:17 to describe men's toil to earn a living. By deliberately using the same word, the Bible says something remarkable: Our pain has spilled over to God. God is therefore not detached from what happens to us.

Because God is disappointed, God plans to wipe out humankind and even the animals from the face of the earth. But then something impressive happens, as the word "but" in verse 8 indicates: God changes his mind. God's love for humans is always stronger than His wrath. He is not a harsh, cold and clinical despot but a God who cares and understands. That is why He is prepared to give humankind another chance. Isn't that comforting to know – especially when we mess up?

"The will of God will never take you to where the grace of God will not protect you."

Author unknown

STUDY MATERIAL

6. The Divided Kingdom and Exile

(925 – 586 BC)

(1 Kings 12 – 2 Kings 25, 2 Chronicles 10 – 36, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah 1-39, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Habakkuk, Obadiah, Isaiah 40-66)

Solomon, a major culprit

Unfortunately, the once-united kingdom of Israel split into two. How did this happen? It all started with Solomon. On the surface, his kingdom appeared to be very prosperous. Unlike David, he did not engage in battle to enlarge his territory but used trade and marriages to wives from other nations to increase his power. His accumulated wealth contributed to his fame. Even the Queen of Sheba paid him a visit and was overwhelmed by his wealth and wisdom. For tax purposes, Solomon divided his land into different administrative regions, each with its own governor. Sad to say, his wisdom did not prevent him from making basic mistakes.

The people became embittered because of all the hard labor Solomon enforced and the heavy taxes he imposed on them to generate money for his building projects. He even began worshiping the foreign gods that his wives worshiped. The Bible states that because of this,

“The Lord was very angry with Solomon, for his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice” (1 Kings 11:9, *NLT*).

After Solomon’s death, a delegation from the people went to visit his son Rehoboam to ask him whether he was prepared to relieve their burden. After discussing it with his advisors, he answered, “My father laid heavy burdens on you, but I’m going to make them even heavier! My father beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions!” (1 Kings 12:14, *NLT*).

The southern tribes, whom Solomon had treated better, remained loyal to Rehoboam. However, Rehoboam’s threats became too much for the northern tribes, and they broke away in 925 BC to form an independent kingdom under the reign of Jeroboam, an official in Solomon’s court.

The Northern Kingdom retained the name **Israel**, while the Southern Kingdom became known as **Judah**. Israel had more territory and wealth, but it was situated on an important trade route and was therefore exposed to attacks from other nations.

In short, Solomon’s disobedience caused the division of the kingdom. The Northern Kingdom (Israel) consisted of 10 tribes and had 19 kings before they were taken into exile by Assyria. All 19 kings committed evil. The Southern Kingdom (Judah) consisted of 2 tribes and had 20 kings before they were taken into exile by Babylon. Eight of the 20 kings were good, while 12 were bad.

The End of the Northern Kingdom (722 BC)

The Assyrians lived in the region between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers (modern-day Iraq) during most of the Old Testament period. The Assyrian kingdom came into being

in 900 BC and soon blossomed into a mighty empire. The Assyrians were cruel and relentless in war. In 722 BC they invaded Israel, which had slowly been declining politically and socially, and conquered the capital city of Samaria.

The reason why God allowed this to happen is set out in detail in 2 Kings 17: they continued to sin against God and ignored the warnings of the prophets. After the Assyrians conquered them, the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom were taken into exile, never to return.

After the Israelites were exiled, the Assyrians sent foreigners from different parts of the kingdom to inhabit the land (2 Kings 17:24); a practice that was meant to prevent uprisings in the conquered territories. The foreigners married the few Israelites who were not displaced, and this mixed race of Israelites and foreigners became known as the Samaritans. The Israelites were whisked off not because God was powerless but because they were stubborn.

The End of the Southern Kingdom (586 BC)

The Assyrian kingdom collapsed suddenly and unexpectedly in 622 BC when Media and Babylon (modern-day southern Iraq) conquered Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. Babylon then became the new world power.

More than a century after the fall of Israel, Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, acted foolishly and rose up against Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, struck back forcefully against Jerusalem in 598 BC.

Jehoiakim's 18-year-old son, Jehoiachin, succeeded his father. He, too, was unable to offer resistance to Nebuchadnezzar and eventually had to surrender. After he and his supporters were taken to Babylon, the Babylonians appointed Zedekiah to reign in Judah.

Zedekiah, Judah's last king, was under the impression that Jerusalem could never be destroyed and dared to revolt against the king of Babylon. Then, the unthinkable happened: Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, was invaded and destroyed by Babylon in 586 BC. Nobody ever expected such a tragedy to happen. Jerusalem was the city God Himself had chosen. The Temple was in the city.

But even this special status could not save Jerusalem.

The beautiful city, with its Temple, was completely destroyed. The people's persistent sins, despite all the warnings by the prophets, had caused the Lord to allow Jerusalem and the Temple to be destroyed (2 Kings 24:8–25:1). God's people were then taken to Babylon as exiles. In the next stop, we will see what happened during their time in exile.

The question now is: How is God going to fulfill his plan of salvation with the people in exile?

7. In Exile

(597–538 BC)

(Ezekiel and Daniel)

Babylon was the world power during the time God's people were in exile.

God did not turn his back on His people. After all, he made a covenant with them to be their God. He continued to educate and encourage them through prophets.

Ezekiel and Daniel were prophets in Babylon and Jeremiah was a prophet in Jerusalem and Egypt.

Way of worship changes:

The exile changed the people's way of worshiping. The temple and sacrifices could no longer be the focal point of their worship because they were now far away from Jerusalem. Instead, prayer, confession and teaching became the focus of their worship.

The gatherings in their homes preceded the assemblies in the synagogues. The Temple priests who were also taken into exile acted as interpreters of the Law.

In the foreign country the Lord did not turn his back on His people.

8. Return from Exile

(538 — 420 BC)

Haggai, Zechariah, Joel, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah and Malachi

Persian Empire encourages return

In 549 BC, Cyrus the Great founded the Persian Empire, and he eventually conquered Babylon.

Persia was now the new world power. Cyrus allowed those who were exiled to Babylon to return to their homelands, as he believed that it was in his best interest to have loyal followers all over the world. Cyrus also showed a great deal of tolerance toward the religions of those he conquered.

The two centuries the Persians reigned were of great importance to God's people, as the Persians encouraged their repatriation and also subsidized it.

The return took place over a **long period**.

The first group of exiles returned with Sheshbazzar ±536 BC to rebuild the temple. A little later Zerubabel, the grandson of king Jehoiachin, escorted another group back to the homeland. The next main group returned in ±458 BC with Ezra, the scribe. Then in 444 BC, Nehemiah returned with another group.

It was during this time that the exiles who returned home were called "Jews" for the first time. This word derives from the Hebrew word Yehudi, which is related to Judah, the tribe in which Jesus was born. God remains faithful to his promise.

Day 5

DEVOTION

Ambition Can Be Dangerous!

“Live your dream!” “If you can dream it, you can achieve it!” “Reach for the stars!” Ambitious people are inspired by utterances such as these. Ambition is a good thing, but it can be dangerous. The well-known story of the Tower of Babel illustrates the danger of ambition.

Genesis 11: 1-9 (Prose: Narrative) The Tower of Babylon

Tension: Building the Tower of Babel

⁴ Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.’

Release of tension: God causes confusion (verses 5-7)

⁵ But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. ⁶ The Lord said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.”

Result: The people are scattered (verses 8-9)

⁸ So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth ... (NIV)

In the past, people believed that the gods lived on the mountain tops. Because Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq) did not have high mountains, people built ziggurats to perform this function. Ziggurats, which were common in Mesopotamia were built in the form of stairways that decreased in size from the bottom to the top of the structure. The base of a ziggurat could be about 300 square feet and have a height of about 300 feet. The room at the top was used for religious practices. It served as the meeting place between heaven and earth—between the gods and human beings.

The story of the Tower of Babel was most probably told with reference to the ziggurats. The purpose of the Tower of Babel was for the people to “make a name” for themselves by creating a tower “that reaches to the heavens” (v. 4). They were very ambitious. There is nothing wrong with ambition. Unfortunately they use their ambition to compete with God and to exclude God.

Ambition should always take God into account, for this will prevent us from becoming arrogant and trampling on others. Arrogant people always think they are better than other people. Humble people are easily liked, very approachable and easy to get along with. Be humble and thank God for your accomplishments!

“...the image of the Lord had been replaced by a mirror.”

Jorge Luis Borges

STUDY MATERIAL

9. 400 "Silent" Years

(420- ±6BC)

Where does the Old Testament end?

The Old Testament ends with the return of the Lord's people from exile in Babylonia. At that time, Persia was the great world power and ruled over the returned exiles. The Israelites did not have their own king, but they knew who the successor should be: Zerubbabel, the grandson of king Jehoiachin. The Persians appointed him as governor in Jerusalem (Ezra 2: 2 and Haggai 1:1). During his reign, the rebuilding of the Temple was completed in AD 515. The rebuilt Temple was smaller and less ostentatious than the Temple that Solomon had built. The priests, from the line of Aaron, continued to use the system of offerings.

Where does the New Testament start?

When we open the New Testament, everything is completely different. Rome is now the world power, and once again a king is on the throne. This king is not from the house of David but is a descendent of Esau. His name is Herod the Great. The priests are also not descendants of Aaron.

The reason for this completely different picture is because **400 years** had passed from the time the last book of the Old Testament was written to the start of the New Testament. These years are called the **"silent" years** because they are not reflected in the Bible.

For 400 years God is 'silent.' There are no prophets, no miracles and no angel visitations.

But the silence is broken with the birth of Jesus Christ.

What happened during those 400 years? Fortunately, there are sources that tell us what happened during those years. The 400 years can be compared to a stage scene in which the curtain is drawn and the director (the Lord) gets an opportunity to quickly rearrange the décor of history.

When the curtain rises 400 years later, we find ourselves in the time of the New Testament. The following "décor shifts" occur:

1. Political shifts
2. Cultural shifts
3. Geographical shifts
4. Religious shifts
5. Language shifts

1. Political Shifts

The three great powers during these 400 silent years were first the Persians, then the Greeks, and finally the Romans.

Initially, **Persia** was the major world power, but the empire had to contend with the emerging power of the Greeks. Alexander the Great, at the young age of 20, conquered the Persians and established **Greek rule** throughout the land in 333 BC. The center of world power thus shifted from the east to the west.

Alexander was one of the greatest generals of all time. He subjected the whole inhabited world, including Palestine, to his rule during his short life span. He was a student of the renowned Greek philosopher Aristotle. This

exposure enabled Alexander to spread Greek culture to all corners of the world he conquered.

Alexander died before his thirty-third birthday. After his death, his empire was divided among his **four generals**. They shared Alexander's dream and continued to spread Greek culture, Greek thinking and the Greek language everywhere. This process has been called "Hellenization" ("Hellas" is the Greek name for "Greece") since the time of Alexander to describe this implementation of Greek culture. The Jews in Palestine did not escape **Hellenism**.

Rome was rising up as the new world power. By 338 BC, the Romans already controlled the western section of the Italian peninsula, and within a few years they ruled over the whole area. After Rome conquered Carthage during the second century BC, the Roman Empire started to spread quickly in all directions.

In 63 BC, Rome began its rule over Palestine. The Romans appointed the rulers in Palestine themselves. One of the most unpopular choices among the Jews was probably the appointment of Herod (37-4 BC) as king of all Judea in 40 BC. The Jews saw this as a bitter pill, because Herod was a descendent of Esau (an Edomite) and his mother was of Arabic descent. Rome managed to maintain world peace between 27 BC and AD 180. This period is known as the **Pax Romana** (Latin for "the Roman peace").

2. Cultural Shifts

Politically, the empire of Alexander the Great did not last long due to his early death, but it

was successful in the cultural sphere. His generals worked very hard to establish Greek thought and the Greek language in the regions they controlled. The next world rulers, the Romans, **fully embraced Greek culture**.

The Greek dialect used at the time was known as koine (general) Greek and flourished in the Roman Empire. Greek architecture dominated, and gymnasiums, theatres and stadiums in the Greek style were soon erected everywhere. Alexandria in Egypt, named after Alexander the Great, was an excellent example of Hellenism. The city had museums and a big library. The mathematician Euclid and the physicist Archimedes lived and studied here. Many Jews also lived in Egypt. The city of Alexandria is also where the Old Testament was translated into Greek during 275 to 100 BC—a translation that became known as the "Septuagint." The New Testament was written in Greek during the first century AD. The Greek culture also had an impact on the Jews in Palestine.

3. Geographical Shifts

Many of the Jews never returned to their country of birth after the period of exile. Many of them settled in Egypt. In fact, during the time of the New Testament, there were probably more Jews in Alexandria than in Jerusalem. The Roman Empire's extended transport system, the Pax Romana and the fact that koine Greek was widely spoken, made it very easy for the Jews to travel. Consequently, Jewish settlements with synagogues developed across the known world of that time. The Jews who spread from Palestine came to be known as the Jews of the Diaspora (dispersion). They spoke Greek and

prayed in synagogues.

During Roman domination, Palestine (formerly known as Canaan) was divided into three areas; namely, Galilee, Samaria and Judea. Previously, Palestine was divided into two areas: Samaria in the north and Judea in the south.

Galilee formed the northern part of Palestine and was the largest of the three areas. Although Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the south, He spent most of His life in Galilee.

Samaria was somewhat smaller than Galilee and was situated in the middle of Palestine. The Jews despised the Samaritans and used their name as a swear word, because they did not regard the Samaritans as “true” Jews. The Samaritans came into existence when Assyria invaded Samaria in 722 BC and took the prominent Israelites (Northern Empire) into exile. In order to establish stability in the region, foreigners were deported to Samaria. The Samaritans were the offspring of the foreigners and the Israelites who stayed behind. Today, it is known as the so-called West Bank area, where much of the conflict in the Middle East occurs. It is currently ruled by Israel and Palestine.

Judea formed the southern part of Palestine, and Jerusalem was its most important city. Before the Babylonian exile, the region was known as the kingdom of Judah, but after the Israelites returned from exile, it became known as Judea. During Roman rule, Judea was ruled by governors, of whom Pontius Pilate was the most well known.

4. Religious Shifts

Alexander the Great’s attempts to Hellenize the world led to resistance. New religious parties were formed among the Jews during the 400 silent years in reaction to the pressure to adopt Greek language and culture. These parties all acknowledged the authority of the Torah (Law of Moses) and the importance of the Temple. These different groups, however, had different ideas about the practical application of the religion in their daily lives.

The **Pharisees** were known for their rigid adherence to religious prescriptions and traditions of the forefathers. They saw themselves as the official interpreters and defenders of the Law. They believed in the resurrection and in angels. They tried not to mix with sinners. They asked Jesus trick questions about issues such as keeping the Sabbath, eating with sinners and fasting. There were about 6,000 Pharisees during the time of Jesus.

The **Sadducees**, a smaller group than the Pharisees, were politically more active. They tolerated Roman rule, as it brought about stability. Theologically, they were conservative. For instance, they only accepted the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch) as Scripture. They did not believe in the resurrection or in angels (they asked Jesus about this). They persecuted the Early Church and questioned the apostles.

Strictly speaking, **the scribes** were not a party but a group of laymen who studied the Law of Moses. They originate as far back as the period of exile when the Torah was the center of Jewish religion because the Temple lay in

ruins. Since the time of Ezra (Neh. 8:9), who by that time was already known as a priest and scribe, they were seen as experts of the Law. By the time of the New Testament, they were considered to be the upholders of the Torah and taught it to groups of pupils. They were versed in the Law and served as judges in the Jewish Sanhedrin. They acted on behalf of the Romans to maintain law and order. They considered Jesus, who many saw as a political liberator, to be a threat to the Roman law and order.

The **Zealots** were followers of the Pharisees' faith but were firmly set against domination by the Romans. They tried to get rid of Roman rule.

5. Language Shifts

The language of the inhabitants of Palestine changed from Hebrew to Aramaic (a language related to Hebrew) after the period of exile in Babylonia. Hebrew was mainly the language of the Old Testament. During the time of Jesus, the priests and rabbis only used Hebrew for religious matters. Latin was spoken in Rome, but koine **Greek** was spoken in the rest of the Roman Empire. The New Testament was also written in Greek. The Jewish Bible was translated into Greek (the Septuagint) because many Jews were fluent in both Greek and Aramaic. Jesus and His disciples spoke Aramaic.

God prepared the world scene in such a way for the gospel to spread quickly.

Day 6

DEVOTION

What Do We Do When Life Is a Dead End?

We often encounter situations in our lives when we feel trapped. These are times when it seems as if life has reached a dead end and there is no way forward. This episode might help us see the light!

Genesis 22: 1-19 (Prose: Narrative) God Commands Abraham to Offer Isaac

Tension: Abraham must offer up his son (verses 1-11)

² Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."

Release of tension: The Lord provides a lamb (verses 12-15)

¹³ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide.

Result: The Lord promises blessing (verses 16-19)

¹⁶ "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies,

¹⁸ and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." (NIV)

The episode in which Abraham was to sacrifice Isaac must have made Abraham doubt God's logic. How could God ask him to do such a thing? Had not God promised him land and numerous descendants? And now he was to sacrifice his only son. Yet despite his inability to understand, Abraham obeys God. In the end, Abraham sacrifices a ram, not Isaac. Was it a coincidence that the ram was there? No, Abraham sees this as a sign that God provides. He calls the place "the Lord will provide." What seemed like a dead end to Abraham was actually a new beginning.

We often explain things that happen to us as coincidence. Yet this may be God's way of providing in our lives. We do not have to understand everything, but we should realize that God wants to provide everything for us.

Right now, things may be happening in your life that just do not make sense. You may be asking questions such as, "Why is this happening to me?" or "How will I ever escape this?" Wrestling with God in situations in which there seems to be no way out will give you the opportunity to be like Abraham and say, "The Lord will provide."

"The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."

Winston Churchill

STUDY MATERIAL

10. The New Testament

When God raised the curtain after the 400 silent years, the world was prepared for the rapid spread of the gospel. There was now a world language (koine Greek), it was easy to travel because of the peace brought about by the Roman Empire, and Jewish settlements and synagogues were present everywhere. The silent years ended with the birth of Christ in 6 BC. There is now more certainty about the year Christ was born.

The Roman monk Dionysius Exiguus, who created our calendar, made a calculation error, which meant that there were six years too many. Three years on either side of the year 0 were taken away and therefore the year of Christ's birth is set on ± 6 BC. Herod the Great—the Herod at the time of Christ's birth and the one responsible for the murdering of children in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1) - ruled between 37 and 4 BC.

The 27 books that make up the New Testament were nearly all written before the end of AD 100.

The 27 books can be grouped the following way:

- **The four Gospels, which describe the life of Jesus from different perspectives**

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

- **The first years of the Christian Church**

The Acts of the Apostles

- **The letters of Paul**

Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon

- **The general letters**

Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1–3 John and Jude)

- **John's visions**

Revelation

1. Why is it important to have an overview of the Bible?

.....
.....

2. Did the material succeed in giving you an overview of God's Word?

.....
.....

3. What has spoken the most to you in this week's reading?

.....
.....

4. Was there anything surprising in this week's material? If so, how were you surprised?

.....
.....

5. In the overview of the Bible we see that the Bible consists of ten periods.

Name them.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)
- 8)
- 9)
- 10)

Day 7

DEVOTION

People Who Are Arrogant Should Not Expect Support from Others!

Dreams play a crucial role in the story of Joseph. They also bring about movement in the story. Joseph's first dream reveals a characteristic of him that causes him to fall into disfavor with his family.

Genesis 37: 1-11 (Prose: Narrative) Joseph and His Brothers

Tension: Joseph gossips (verses 1-3)

¹ Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan.

² This is the account of Jacob's family line. Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him.

Release of tension: Joseph's brothers take a dislike to him (verses 4-10)

⁵ Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more.

Result: Tension in the family (verse 11)

¹¹ His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind. (NIV)

Joseph's two dreams have a detrimental effect on his relationship with his brothers. The meaning of the dreams is very clear: Joseph will become a ruler and his father and brothers will be subservient to him. Joseph's arrogance makes his brothers blood boil. This is aggravated by the fact that he is their father's favorite child.

The way Joseph reports the dreams shows that he believes they will occur and that he is looking forward to their fulfillment. In those days, dreams were seen as revelations, and Joseph's dreams posed a threat to his brothers. This is why, in the next episode, they throw him into a cistern and sell him as a slave. This arrogant pet son learns the hard way that arrogance brings you into disrepute.

We have to listen earnestly to what is said in Proverbs 14:3: "A fool's talk brings a rod to his back, but the lips of the wise protect them" (NIV). The first dream leads to Joseph being thrown into a dry well and taken as a slave to Egypt.

**"There's a thin line between Confidence
and Arrogance... Its called Humility.
Confidence smiles. Arrogance smirks."**

Author Unknown

STUDY MATERIAL

C. The Different Types of Literature of the Bible

Why is it important to have an understanding of the literature of the Bible?

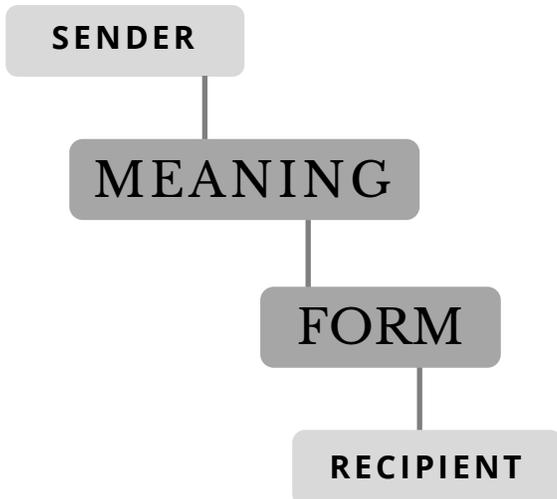
- to realize that the different types of literature are each being read in a different way.

The Bible was written by approximately 40 authors over a period of more than 1500 years.

The author's (sender's) goal was to communicate the **meaning** in their hearts with others (recipients) by writing them down.

They used different **forms** (genres) to write down their message.

The different forms of writing are known as literature. The word literature literally means "things made of letters".



Literature can be classified into two main **TECHNIQUES**; namely Prose and Poetry.

Prose is the most typical form of language. The English word 'prose' is derived from the Latin *prōsa*, which literally translates as 'straight-forward.' Because of this, prose is observed in many areas of writing, most especially in newspapers, magazines, and even encyclopedias.

Poetry (from the Latin *poeta*, a poet) is typically reserved for expressing something special in an artistic way.

The Bible is a treasure of types of literature. God's message of love is written in different types of literature.

The **MEANING** is written in many **FORMS** such as Narratives, the Law, Prophecy, Wisdom and Epistles.

PROSE	POETRY
Narrative/History The Law Prophecy Gospel Epistle (Letter) Apocalyptic Writing	Wisdom Psalms Prophecy

It is important to identify the different kinds of literature because each one is being read in a different way. You can, for example, not operate different modes of transport (boats, cars, aeroplains, busses) in the same fashion.

Wisdom is written in poetry style. A poem is like a song in which a lot of emotion with rhythm, rhyme and parallelism is being conveyed. Narratives are totally different. They have a plot, set with characters at a specific time and place.

Hebrew poetry typically was not based on rhyme, but on a concept known as **parallelism**. It means that there is a connection between two successive lines. Instead of rhyming words, as our poetry does, the Hebrews rhymed **ideas**.

There are basically **three** primary types of parallelism: synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic. These are sometimes called similar thoughts, contrasting thoughts, and additional thoughts, respectively.

The Reason for Parallelisms

- It creates balance and beauty.
- It highlights the theme.
- It involves your emotions.
- It stimulates your imagination

Synonymous Parallelism	Antithetic Parallelism	Synthetic Parallelism
The second line repeats the thought of the first line in different words (Most popular in prophets).	The second line contrasts with the first, expressing the opposite thought. These are most common in Proverbs and Psalms.	The second line (or following lines) expands on the thought of the first line and adds something fresh.
EXAMPLE Isaiah 53:5	EXAMPLE Proverbs 10:1	EXAMPLE Isaiah 60:5
<p><u>"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities."</u> (NIV)</p>	<p><u>"A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son brings grief to his mother."</u> (NIV)</p>	<p>"Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; <u>the wealth on the seas will be brought to you.</u>" (NIV)</p>

Match the corresponding letter with the respective parallelism

Synonymous parallelism match

.....

Antithetic parallelism match

.....

Synthetic parallelism match

.....

A

"Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau. And the kingdom will be the Lord's."
(Obadiah 21 NIV)

B

"I will turn your religious festivals into mourning and all your singing into weeping."
(Amos 8:10 NIV)

C

"The poor plead for mercy, but the rich answer harshly."
(Proverbs 18:23 NIV)

(Answers are on page 39)

Read the following two passages

Exodus 14:1-9

1 Then the Lord said to Moses,
 2 “Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. They are to encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal Zephon.
 3 Pharaoh will think, ‘The Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert.’
 4 And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord.” So the Israelites did this.
 5 When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, “What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!”⁶ So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him.
 7 He took six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them.
 8 The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites, who were marching out boldly.
 9 The Egyptians—all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots, horsemen and troops—pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi Hahiroth, opposite Baal Zephon. (NIV)

Exodus 15:1-6

1 Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord:
 “I will sing to the Lord,
 for he is highly exalted.
 Both horse and driver
 he has hurled into the sea.
 2 “The Lord is my strength and my defense;
 he has become my salvation.
 He is my God, and I will praise him,
 my father’s God, and I will exalt him.
 3 The Lord is a warrior;
 the Lord is his name.
 4 Pharaoh’s chariots and his army
 he has hurled into the sea.
 The best of Pharaoh’s officers
 are drowned in the Red Sea.
 5 The deep waters have covered them;
 they sank to the depths like a stone.
 6 Your right hand, Lord,
 was majestic in power.
 Your right hand, Lord,
 shattered the enemy. (NIV)

What have you noticed?

- Both passages deal with the same event when the Lord delivered the Israelites from the Egyptians.
- The first passage is in **prose**, and the second one is in **poetry**.
- The same message can be written in both prose and poetry.

Summary of Biblical Genres



Narratives / History (Prose)

Genesis and the first half of **Exodus**, **Numbers**, **Joshua**, **Judges**, **Ruth**, 1 and 2 **Samuel**, 1 and 2 **Kings**, 1 and 2 **Chronicles**, **Ezra**, **Nehemiah**, **Esther**, **Jonah**, and possibly **Acts**

This is the most basic genre. Narratives simply tell the story of what happened. Exodus is an expansive narrative about the delivery of the Israelites from slavery. Ruth focuses on the story of one family. Acts tells the spectacular events of the first generation of Christians, as they were led and inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Narrative tells us what happened, according to the purposes of the author. Sometimes there are spiritual lessons from events, and sometimes we are just gaining the context of the history of God's people.



Law (Prose)

(The last half of **Exodus**; also **Leviticus**, **Deuteronomy**)

These include laws that prohibited things but also encouraged actions / deeds. The most famous laws in the Bible are the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5).

Examples of other laws are found in Deuteronomy 6:1-21, Deuteronomy 35:16-34 and James 4:11,12.



Wisdom (Poetry)

Wisdom literature focuses on questions about the meaning of life (Job, Ecclesiastes) and practical life and sanity (Proverbs and some Psalms). They are collections of wise sayings meant to shape the moral and ethical lives of their readers.



Psalms

The Book of Psalms is for the most part a book of prayer and praise. The service in the Temple incorporated its verses and we have been reciting them ever since.



Prophecy (Prose and Poetry)

The prophetic genre deals with the words of the prophets. While narratives describe events, prophecies proclaim the message of God. A prophet is God's messenger.

A prophecy's primarily focus is to call on people to repent. The prophetic books are divided into two parts: Minor Prophets (Hosea to Malachi) and Major Prophets (Isaiah to Daniel). The term "minor" refers to the length of each book (ranging from a single chapter to fourteen) in comparison with the length of the Great Prophets like Isaiah and Ezekiel.



Gospel (Prose)

"Gospel" means "good news" and refers to the first four books of the New Testament. The four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) describe the life of Jesus and all He has done for us.



Apocalyptic Writing (Prose)

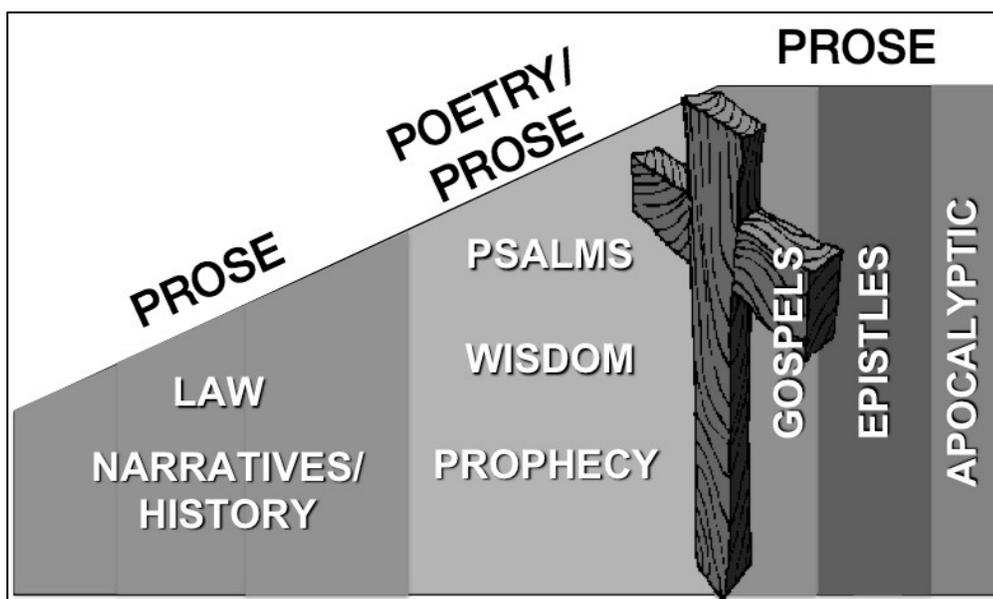
"Apocalypse" is a Greek word meaning "revelation", "a revealing or unfolding of things that previously were not known". A characteristic of apocalyptic literature is the use of images, symbols and symbolic numbers. John's visions in Revelation and Daniel 7-12 are examples of apocalyptic writing.



Epistle / Letters (Prose)

The letters refer to the twenty-one letters of the New Testament. These can be divided into two main sections: Paul's letters, totaling fourteen (if he was the author of Hebrews), and the General Epistles, three by John, two by Peter, and one each by James and Jude. The letters make up about 38% of the New Testament.

A Schematic Presentation of the Biblical Genres



Schematic Presentation of the Bible books and their Genres

	Narratives/ History	Law	Wisdom	Psalms	Prophecy	Gospel	Epistle	Apocalyptic
P R O S E	Genesis	▪						
	Exodus	▪	▪					
	Leviticus	▪	▪					
	Numbers	▪	▪					
	Deuteronomy	▪	▪					
	Joshua	▪						
	Judges	▪						
	Ruth	▪						
	I Samuel	▪						
	II Samuel	▪						
	I Kings	▪						
	II Kings	▪						
	I Chronicles	▪						
	II Chronicles	▪						
	Ezra	▪						
P O E T R Y	Nehemiah	▪						
	Esther	▪						
	Job			▪				
	Psalms			▪	▪			
	Proverbs			▪				
	Ecclesiastes			▪				
	Song of Solomon			▪	▪			
P R O S E & P O E T R Y	Isaiah				▪			
	Jeremiah				▪			
	Lamentations				▪			
	Ezekiel				▪			
	Daniel	▪			▪			▪
	Hosea				▪			
	Joel				▪			
	Amos				▪			
	Obadiah				▪			
	Jonah	▪			▪			
	Micah				▪			
	Nahum				▪			
	Habakkuk				▪			
	Zephaniah				▪			
	Haggai				▪			
Zechariah				▪				
Malachi				▪				

Schematic Presentation of the Bible books and their Genres

P
R
O
S
E

	Narratives/ History	Law	Wisdom	Psalms	Prophecy	Gospel	Epistle	Apocalyptic
Matthew						▪		
Mark						▪		
Luke						▪		
John						▪		
Acts	▪							
Romans							▪	
1 Corinthians							▪	
2 Corinthians							▪	
Galatians							▪	
Ephesians							▪	
Philippians							▪	
Colossians							▪	
1 Thessalonians							▪	
2 Thessalonians							▪	
1 Timothy							▪	
2 Timothy							▪	
Titus							▪	
Philemon							▪	
Hebrews							▪	
James							▪	
1 Peter							▪	
2 Peter							▪	
1 John							▪	
2 John							▪	
3 John							▪	
Jude							▪	
Revelation								▪

Match the corresponding letter to the type of literature

Narrative match

.....

Prophecy match

.....

Law match

.....

Gospel match

.....

Wisdom match

.....

Epistle match

.....

Poetry match

.....

Apocalyptic match

.....

(Answers are on page 39)

A

¹ And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. ² He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.

(Rev 20 *NIV*)

B

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

(John 3 *NIV*)

C

³ "You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴ "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

(Ex 20 *NIV*)

D

⁶ Now Joseph was well-built and handsome,

⁷ and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!" ⁸ But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care.

(Gen 39 *NIV*)

E

⁶ The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.

(Is 11 *NIV*)

F

²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. ²³ His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise.

(Gal 4 *NIV*)

G

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil.

(Prov 3 *NIV*)

H

¹ The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,

³ he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake

(Psalm 23 *NIV*)

1. Why is it important to identify the different kinds of literature of the Bible?

.....
.....

2. Name the two techniques in which literature can be divided.

1)
2)

GATHERING 1

WORD / STUDY (40-60 min)

Text of the Week: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. NIV

- How did the text of the week speak to you this week?

.....

.....

- Share your results on pages 7, 26, 30 and 36

PRAYER (5-10 min)

- Jot down a blessing in your life and a prayer request that you and others may have. Share blessings and prayer requests and pray for one another.¹

.....

.....

.....

.....

SHARE (20-30 min)

- What devotional reading touched you the most this past week and why?

.....

.....

Answers to questions on page 30.

Synonymous parallelism match **B**

Antithetic parallelism match **C**

Synthetic parallelism match **A**

Answers to questions on page 36.

Narrative match **D**

Law match **C**

Wisdom match **G**

Poetry match **H**

Prophecy match **E**

Gospel match **B**

Epistles match **F**

Apocalyptic match **A**

