

Bible News

A Collection of Bible
Information Pages
for Old and New Testaments

Written by
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INTRODUCTION

The BIBLE NEWS

Welcome to the Bible News – news pages for every book in the Bible. This educational resource presents information for the books of the New Testament to enhance any reader's understanding of Scripture.

Each book of the Bible has a maximum of one page (front/back) of information about the writers, history, and culture of the book they're reading. The pages are written in an easy-to-read form and are in a reproducible pdf format.

Bible News was written to help people participating in a "Read the Bible in a Year" program and will enhance the reading of any Bible class. They can be used by middle or high school students, adults, or would enrich any Confirmation reading program!

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8)

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THE BIBLE

66 BOOKS THAT
TELL ONE STORY

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

The Bible is a collection of 66 books written over a long period of time (nearly 1,800 years) that tell one cohesive story. While many people wrote the Bible, it has only one author: God. He inspired the writers and wrote through them to tell His story in Hebrew, Greek, and a bit of Aramaic. It is broken into two testaments (testimonies or verifications) we call the Old and New Testaments. Being written by God, the Bible has no errors in it and is completely true.

While the Old Testament books took over 1,000 years for a wide variety of people to write and put together, the New Testament books were all written in about a 70-year span of time by first-generation followers of Jesus. The Old Testament points to the Savior, and the New Testament is about the Savior.

The Old Testament tells us about the creation of the world and the amazing life God wanted for us. Wanting to be like God, we rebelled, and He allowed it. He then put a plan in action to save us from ourselves. The New Testament is the fulfillment of that plan through His Son.

OLD TESTAMENT

The Hebrew word **TaNaK** has been used to describe the Old Testament in Jewish tradition.

TORAH (means instruction): the first five books (a.k.a. the Pentateuch) are the Jewish Books of Law: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These books tell about God's beautiful gift of creation, our rebellion against Him, His desire to love and bless us, and our continuing sinful state.

NEVI'IM (means prophets): historical books from the prophet's point of view and the prophetic books written by each prophet: Samuel, Isaiah, Obadiah, Micah, etc. These books tell the people of Israel the consequences of not following God, but also contain hope. They are full of cross-references to the historical narrative.

KETUVIM (means writings): poetry, wisdom, and narratives written by others: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ruth, Esther, etc., that talk about love, suffering, prayer, etc. They also cross-reference the historical narrative and the prophets.

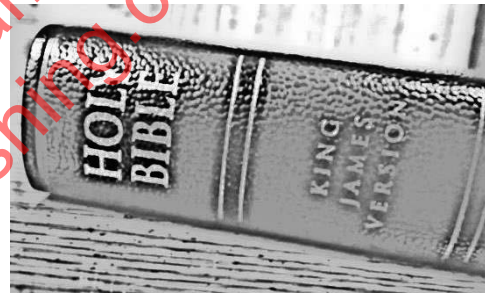
PROPHET: a person who speaks for God.

APOSTLE: a person sent to share the Gospel.

EPISTLE: a letter written to share the Gospel.

Heaven and earth will
pass away, but my words
will never pass away.

Matthew 24:35



NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament completes God's plan of salvation and reveals how first the Apostles, and then we, are to be God's witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

GOSPELS (Good News) – The four Gospels tell the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

ACTS (the Acts of the Apostles) – Tells the story of how the church grew.

EPISTLES – Letters to provide, teaching, guidance, and encouragement from the Apostles to churches. 13 were written by Paul and are in order of their length, one by an unnamed author to the Hebrews, two by James and Jude (Jesus' brothers), and five by Peter and John (disciples).

REVELATION (Apocalyptic Literature) – A letter to seven churches that shares a series of visions given to John regarding the end times.

All of these writings reference the Old Testament.

READING THE BIBLE

The Bible can be a challenge to read if we try to read it from cover to cover in the order that the books are arranged, and it doesn't take long to become confused and frustrated. Here's why. The books are not arranged in the way of a novel or a linear story, and because of the different types and purposes of each book, they can seem repetitive or disorganized. Some were written as historical narrative (a story), some are Hebrew poetry, and some are written as prose/discourse (letters, speeches, etc.) – and then there's Revelation, which is a series of visions.

Each book of the Old Testament was written on a scroll, and those scrolls were organized by category. When Jesus talks about the law and the prophets, he's talking about those groups of scrolls. Later, about 400 A.D. those scrolls were translated by Jerome into what is considered by many to be the first Bible.

While the **Torah** is written as a continuing historical story, within that story are large sections of detailed descriptions of laws, sacrifices, offerings, feasts, and festivals that the Israelites were expected to follow. These can be overwhelming to read in one sitting.

The historical narrative books continue through Samuel, though they are not a part of the Torah. Other historical books are Kings and Chronicles. These writings seem repetitive because they cover much of the same information, but from different perspectives.

Kings is a record of events from a royal historian's perspective and provides details appropriate to those records that a government would keep in the annals of the kings, but with a covenantal view or perspective.

Chronicles is a record of the history of the Israelites. It's the last book in the Jewish Bible and begins with Adam in the garden and ends with Persian King Cyrus decreeing that the remnant of exiled Jews may return to Jerusalem.

Though these are written from a different perspective, they are no less inspired by God and so are without error.

The books of the **Prophets** are written by the prophets and can be inserted within the historical books. For example, Jonah, Joel, Elijah, Elisha, and Obadiah all prophesied during the split kingdom. God spoke directly to the prophets, who wrote those prophecies as both prose (sermons) and poetry.

The **New Testament** is much easier to read except for the synoptic (similar) gospels. The writers wrote for different audiences and purposes. Matthew was writing to the Jews to show them that Jesus fulfills prophecy. Mark addressed specific questions about whether or not Jesus was the Messiah. Luke wrote with greater detail as he researched and recorded eyewitness testimonies. John wrote with great theological depth.

ANCIENT JEWISH MEDITATIVE LITERATURE

There are a number of literary styles found in the Bible, but the most interesting is ancient Jewish meditative literature because it contains unconsidered qualities.

The Bible is written in an ingenious way to keep people engaged. By leaving out a lot of the details we expect in stories today, our curiosity is piqued. The missing pieces lead us to question, and as we continue to read we make deeper connections.

It's called meditation literature because in order to truly understand it, we need to keep reading it or rereading it and thinking about it in light of what we've previously read. Lutherans describe it by saying that Scripture interprets Scripture. Many of the answers to our questions can be found in other areas of the Bible.

It is also intended that we not read it alone, but ask questions and talk about it with others. We learn and develop a fuller understanding as we read it together, talk about it, and think about it over time.

Ask God to open your heart and mind, and as you read, think about the puzzles, ask or write down questions, make connections, discover meanings, and learn more every time you read.

THE BIBLE IS NOT

- A self-help book.
- A book of divine heroes that we are to try to be like.
- A book of "good" people.
- A book of predictions of consequences to human behaviors.
- A list of blessings to be received through obedience.
- An outdated set of myths about ancient peoples.

It is not a story about the people, but about the God who created them and wasn't willing to let them go to their own destruction.

The Bible IS a book of hope for a lost people who rebelled against God and cannot make their way back to Him. **It is a book of SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH FOR JESUS' SAKE.**

GENESIS

THE BEGINNING
OF EVERYTHING

BOOKS OF MOSES: THE TORAH



Writer:

Moses



Written:

1446-1406 B.C.



Language:

Hebrew

Genesis, therefore, is made up almost entirely of illustrations of faith and unbelief, and of the fruits that faith and unbelief bear.

Martin Luther, LW 35:237

INTRODUCTION

Genesis, the beginning of everything, has three main sections.

- I. **God and the World** (Chapters 1-11)
- II. **Abraham's Family** (Chapters 12-36)
- III. **Joseph** (Chapters 37-50)

Genesis lays the foundation for all the events and the doctrines (beliefs) of the rest of the Bible. It sets up the relationship between God and nature, between God and humanity, and between humans and their neighbors. God creates community. Genesis also introduces us to covenants and sacrifice.

As you read, look for verses that provide clues that help define those relationships and doctrines.



THEMES

Beginnings – heavens and earth, and all creation, sin and redemption, blessing and curse, and society. Basically, it's the beginning of everything.

Generations or account (*toledoth* in Hebrew) – divide the book into 10 sections. These are the generations of the heavens and the earth. These are the generations of Adam. These are the generations of Noah. These words begin each of the ten sections. What follows these words is a story of someone in that group of people.

Covenants – promises God makes to His chosen people to love and be faithful to them with hope that they will love and remain faithful to Him in return.

BEGINNINGS

From nothing, God spoke into existence a dark, watery, formless mass and turned it into a beautiful life-supporting planet. He planted an incredible garden where humans could live and flourish, and then He filled it all living things including humans: Adam (ground or earth) and Eve (life). (Man being *is* and woman being *issah* in Hebrew.)

God wanted Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply and live in fellowship *with* Him. He gave them everything in the garden to support them, but He also gave them a choice. They could trust God to continue to take care of them and let Him keep the knowledge of good and evil and decide what is best for them, or they could seize that knowledge and determine good and evil for themselves. Each choice would have its own consequences.

THE PROBLEM

Humans are not good at defining good and evil for themselves. After all, what is good/evil to one may not be good/evil to another. The moment they allowed their desire to be like God determine their path was the moment they invited evil into their lives and the world. They rejected God. Genesis is the beginning of the story of what happens when humanity takes control of its own destiny.

When humans choose independence from God to define good and evil for themselves, the outcome is never what they expect or want.

COVENANTS

Genesis is a book of covenants or promises.

God created humans in His image. Out of love He **promised** to provide for them and gave them every good thing. He also wanted them to freely love Him in return, so He gave them a choice. They chose to be their own god and decide right and wrong for themselves. There were consequences, and among them were broken human relationships, and more importantly, a broken relationship with God.

But even as they were told the consequences of that choice, God made a **promise** to set things right.

Sin permeated the world. Life was hard and relationships were harder; jealousy, anger, pain, and death were now regular players. Evil and corruption filled the earth until there was only one faithful man left. God destroyed the earth and began again with a new Adam, called Noah. God made a **covenant** with Noah that He would not destroy the earth with a flood again.

Generations passed and the people learned and cities grew, and people felt like they were making real progress without God. Thinking pretty highly of themselves, they wanted to build a great tower to reach to the gods and make a great name for themselves. God scattered them.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

More time passed and God chose to make a **covenant** with Abraham. He would be the Father of God's chosen people and God would make a great name for them. By remembering God, all the people on earth would find God's blessing.

Why did God choose Abraham and his family? It wasn't because he made all the right choices and it wasn't because they were somehow more faithful than anyone else. God, however, was, and He made a special **covenant** with Abraham promising him that his descendants would number the stars. Part of this covenant required circumcision to remind them that all their descendants came from God.

Abraham had one son, Isaac, and God established his **covenant** with him as well. One son may seem like a slow start to us, but God's time is not our time and the plan was much bigger than any human could imagine.

COVENANTS cont'd

GOD'S COVENANT WITH JACOB

Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau, who did not get along, and through deception Jacob stole God's blessing from his slightly older brother. God's **covenant** was passed down to Jacob.

Jacob then had 12 sons who became the 12 tribes of Israel. His favorite son was Joseph.

Joseph's brothers were very jealous and they wanted to kill him, but God had a different purpose in mind for Joseph, so He worked it out that Joseph was sold into slavery and taken to Egypt instead. God then used Joseph to save all of Egypt and his family from a great famine.

By **covenant** God promised to make Abraham's family great, and in Genesis we see how that is taking place in spite of a sinful world. God is faithful and keeps His promises.

What is God's covenant with us today? What is His covenant with you? Do you trust Him to keep it? How does that show in your life?

THEOPHANIES

theo (god) + phainein (to show)

Where God shows Himself

As you read, look for where and how God shows Himself to the people in some human form.

GENERATIONS

The Hebrew word *toledoth* means generations, or sometimes the words descendants and account are used as in the phrase "this is the book of the generations of ____" (ESV) or "this is the account of ____" (NIV). In Hebrew the toledoth divides Genesis into ten sections.

Some toledoth are genealogies and some introduce narrative sections. They are: Heaven and Earth, Adam, Noah, Noah's Sons, Shem, Terah, Ishmael, Isaac, Esau, and Jacob.

MATTHEW

THE TAX COLLECTOR

GOSPEL



Writer:

Matthew



Written:

c. 55-65 A.D.



Language:

Greek

The [each] gospel, then, is nothing but the preaching about Christ, Son of God and of David, true God and man, who by his death and resurrection has overcome for us the sin, death, and hell of all men who believe in him.

Martin Luther, AE 35:357-61

ABOUT MATTHEW

Matthew, meaning Gift of Yahweh in Hebrew, was one of the original 12 disciples and an apostle. He called himself Matthew in his Gospel, but is called Levi in the books of Mark and Luke. Matthew was a tax collector who lived in the city of Capernaum.

Tax collectors (or publicans) made a lot of money, including Matthew, who hosted a large dinner for Jesus. Among the guests were other tax collectors, who were considered great sinners by the Pharisees. They often collected more tax than was necessary, so were hated by the people for their greed and collaboration with the Roman government. It could ruin someone's reputation among the Jews to be seen with a tax collector.

When Jesus called Matthew to follow Him, Matthew immediately left his tax booth and his money, and followed.

The Great Commission

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:19-20

MATTHEW'S AUDIENCE

While the Gospel of Matthew applies to everyone, Matthew was chosen to write for God's chosen people, the Jews. Matthew's goal was to demonstrate that Jesus is their long-awaited Messiah. There are a number of things in Matthew's gospel that indicate this. Matthew:

- **Writes Jesus' genealogy beginning with Abraham** to connect Jesus with the Father of the Jewish people. It is also traced through Joseph because that is the legal lineage according to the Jews.
- **Mentions Jewish customs without explanation** because the Jews don't need them explained. The Jews have the background knowledge of the law and the prophets and the expectation of the Messiah. Matthew doesn't need to explain prophecies, feasts, or festivals to the Jews.
- **Refers to Christ as the Son of David**, not the Son of God; and **uses the phrase Kingdom of Heaven** instead of *Kingdom of God*. The phrase Kingdom of Heaven isn't used anywhere else in the Bible. This is done out of respect, because Jews do not speak the name of God out of fear of misusing it.
- **Quotes Old Testament prophecy more than 60 times** intentionally connecting Jesus to the Old Testament. He uses phrases such as "as it is written," and "might be fulfilled," or "spoken by the prophet."
- **Shows Jesus' conflict with the religious leaders intentionally**, clearly pointing out the error of the Pharisees intent on following the law and hardening their hearts to Jesus' message.
- Matthew comments on **Israel's rejection of the Messiah**. Jesus is constantly attacked by the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders.

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Matthew wrote in a style that would be expected of a tax collector. They used memorization techniques and a type of shorthand to keep detailed records, so his gospel is organized and concise. Because it isn't entirely chronological, it isn't intended to be a timeline, so is not in the order some expect.

Matthew begins his gospel by calling Jesus Immanuel and ends it with Jesus saying He will be with us (you) until the end of the age.

Along with his own experiences with Jesus, Matthew listened as the apostles passed on their eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life and ministry in the oral tradition of the day. He memorized and collected what he heard, and organized the information around specific events in Jesus' ministry for his gospel.

Matthew's Gospel both shows the Jews that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah and is a good introduction to the core teachings of Christianity.



DISCIPLE means follower
APOSTLE means sent (in person)
EPISTLE means sent (in a letter)
ANGEL means messenger
GENTILE means non-Jew

ORGANIZATION

Similar to the five books of the Torah, also called the books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), this Gospel can be organized around five important sermons:

1. **Sermon on the Mount** (Ch. 5-7) which includes both the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer, ends with the words, "And when Jesus finished these sayings..."
2. **Commissioning of the Apostles** (Ch. 10-11:1) ends with "When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples..."
3. **Parables of the Kingdom** (Ch. 13) section ends with the words, "And when Jesus had finished these parables..."
4. **For the Church** (Ch. 18) section ends with, "Now when Jesus had finished these sayings..."
5. **End Times or Second Coming** (Ch. 23-25) section ends with, "When Jesus had finished saying these things..."

Each of these discourses or sermons is surrounded by stories of Jesus' life and ministry.

Another way to organize the book is to divide it by WORD and DEED:

1. After being tempted by the devil, Jesus begins His ministry: "From that time Jesus began to PREACH, saying..." (4:17).
2. After giving the disciples what He calls the *keys of the kingdom* (the ability to forgive or not forgive), "Jesus began to SHOW His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things..." (16:21).