

# THE BIBLE

FROM BEGINNING TO END

SESSION ONE

CREATION AND COVENANT

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# 1. THE BIBLE

## i. What is the Bible?

- one book and lots of books
- one book and two books

## ii. What order do the Bible books come in?

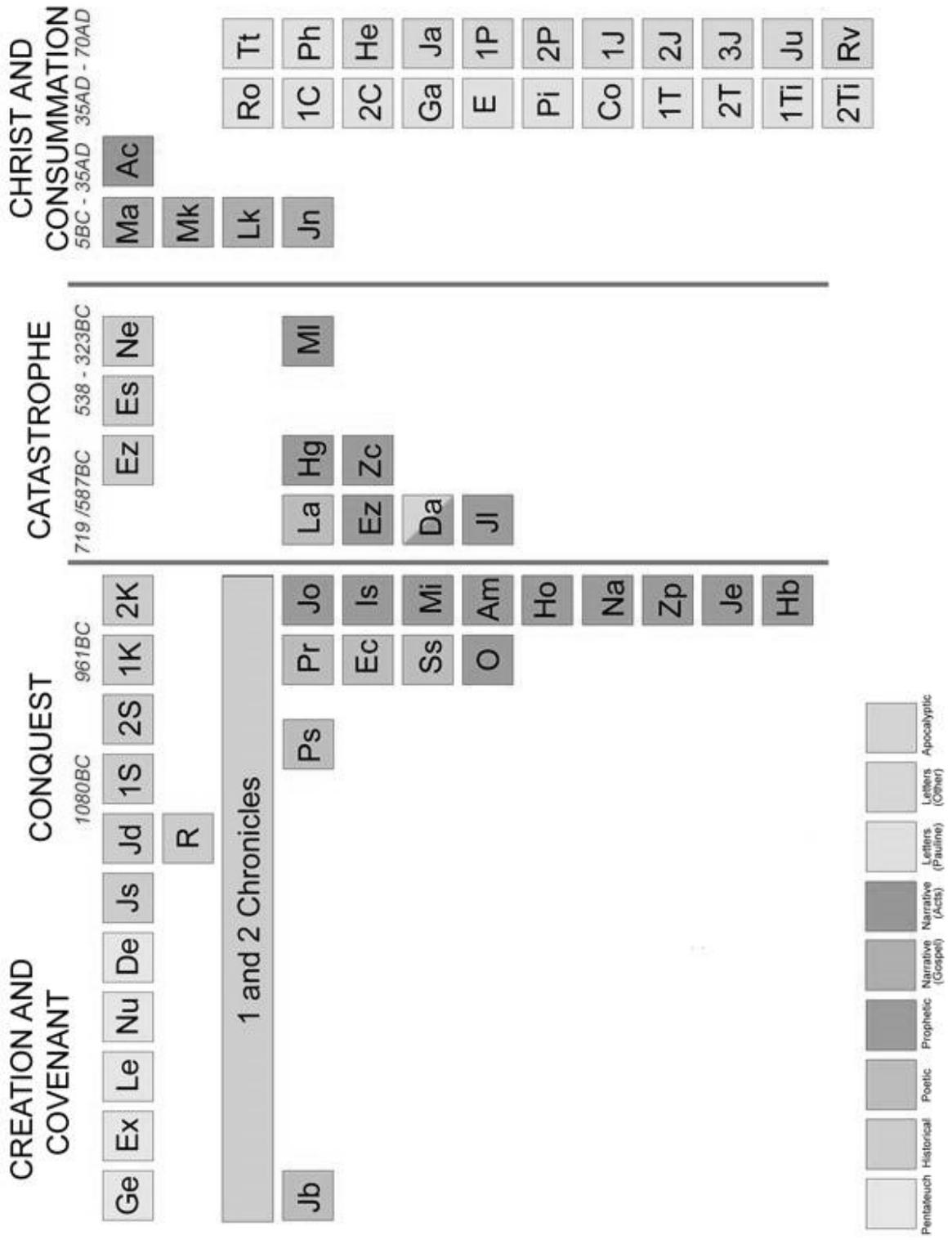
- in the Christian Bible, the books are ordered mainly according to their genre
- this means that they are not in chronological order
- in the Jewish Bible, the books which we have in the Old Testament are in a different order. This is how Jesus knew them, in the groups called the law, the writings, and the prophets:

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Luke 24:44

- The Psalms was the first book in the 'Writings' and was a shorthand way of talking about all those books. The Prophets included all the prophetic books, but also 'the former prophets' which includes the narrative books from Joshua to 2 Kings.



# Chronological order of Bible books



### **iii. How can we understand the Bible?**

- by reading
- by the Holy Spirit
- by the Bible

### **iv. What should we expect when we read the Bible?**

- to find salvation  
2 Timothy 3:16
- to find it useful for life  
Proverbs 1:1
- to delight in the words of our Lord  
Psalm 19:7-10

## **2. PENTATEUCH**

The first five books of the Bible are called the Pentateuch. They are also called the Torah, the Law, and the books of Moses. Traditionally they were thought to have been written by Moses.

The history in these books covers the period from the pre-historic age to about 1400 BC.

The book of Job is also set during this period, but we will look at it later with the other wisdom books.

### **3. CREATION**

#### **Genesis 1-2**

- The Bible is a book about God.
- The world is God's world.
- People have place of honour: in God's image
- They also have a responsibility: to fill and subdue the earth

### **4. COVENANT WITH ADAM**

#### **Genesis 2-3**

- Covenant = relationship.
- God establishes limits for Adam and Eve
- Blessings for obedience: life in God's presence
- Curses for disobedience: death and exile
- The people break the covenant
- God promises a saviour

## 5. COVENANT WITH NOAH

### Genesis 4-11

- Adam's descendants multiply, spread, and fall deeper into sin.
- The consequence of their disobedience is death: the flood.
- God saves humanity from the flood:
  - by one person and his family
  - through water
  - with a covenant promise
- Noah's descendants multiply, spread and fall deeper into sin.
- The consequence of their disobedience is scattering: Babel

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you--the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you--every living creature on earth. I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth." **Genesis 9:7-13**

## 6. COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

### Genesis 12-50

- God makes specific promises to Abraham and his descendants:

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." **Genesis 12:1-3**

- The family line is preserved through the next three generations in the book of Genesis: Isaac, Jacob (who is given the name of Israel), Joseph and his brothers.
- The consequence of their disobedience is exile to Egypt.

Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and ill-treated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterwards they will come out with great possessions." **Genesis 15:13-14**

## 7. COVENANT WITH MOSES

### Exodus - Deuteronomy

- God fulfils the specific promise to Abraham, so that the Israelites are slaves in Egypt for 400 years. But the Egyptians suffer through the plagues and their army is destroyed in the Red Sea. The Israelites leave, bringing with them plunder of gold and silver.
- God saves his people out of slavery:
  - by the work of one person
  - with the blood of a lamb
  - through water.
- God makes another covenant with his people at Mount Sinai.
  - He establishes limits for the Israelites
  - Blessings for obedience: life in God's presence
  - Curses for disobedience: death and exile
  - The people break the covenant
  - Sacrifices and substitutes are acceptable but the people still need a saviour.

## 8. SUMMARIES OF EACH BOOK

**Genesis.** God creates the world and puts people in it, making a covenant with them. They are continually disobedient, but God is faithful making new covenants with Noah and then with Abraham and his descendants. Abraham's line continues through Isaac, not Ishmael, and through Jacob, not Esau. It even continues despite the famine, because the family can escape to Egypt under the protection of their brother Joseph.

**Exodus.** God saves the Israelites out of Israel, through Moses, and makes a covenant with them. They are continually disobedient, grumbling and idolatrous, but God is faithful. He gives them instructions for worship in the temple.

**Leviticus.** God demonstrates his holiness to the Israelites through the laws which he gives them through Moses. He makes his people holy, calls them to be holy, and provides atonement through blood sacrifices when they are not holy.

**Numbers.** God leads the Israelites through the wilderness, but when they are disobedient and faithless, they suffer the consequences. They send spies into the land of Canaan, but rather than believing God's promise, they are afraid. Therefore, God promises that this generation will not enter the land.

**Deuteronomy.** Moses preaches to the Israelites, calling them to live as saved people. In this series of sermons, they are told to worship the one true God and not be drawn aside to worship idols when they enter the land. Every aspect of their community must be shaped by God's character of grace, justice, purity, compassion and generosity. If they are obedient, God promises wonderful blessings, but if they disobey, the consequences will be exile and even death.

## 9. READING BIBLE HISTORY

- How is God saving his people?
- How is God fulfilling his promises?
- What is God like?
- Is there a pattern or a model that is like Christ?
- Don't make the people into heroes; God is the hero.

## 10. BIBLE READING RESOURCES

### **Bible overview books**

God's Big Picture, Vaughan Roberts

Bible Overview, Steve Levy

According to Plan, Graeme Goldsworthy

### **Other media**

The Bible TV miniseries is now on DVD

Audio Bibles

### **Ways to read the Bible**

The Jesus Storybook Bible – not just for kids!

Bible reading plans: these divide up the Bible so that you can read all of it over the course of about a year.

Here is one suggested Bible reading plan, that shouldn't take more than about 15 minutes every day.

Get three bookmarks and put them at Genesis 1, Psalms 1 and Matthew 1. Every day, try to read three chapters for the first bookmark and one chapter for the other two. So the first few days would be:

Day 1: Genesis 1-3, Psalm 1, Matthew 1

Day 2: Genesis 4-6, Psalm 2, Matthew 2

Day 3: Genesis 7-9, Psalm 3, Matthew 3

etc.

You will always be reading three OT chapters plus a psalm and one NT chapter.

When you get to the end of the Psalms, simply move that bookmark back to Psalm 1. When you finish Revelation, move that bookmark back to Matthew 1. As you read through the Old Testament on the first bookmark, miss out the book of Psalms. When you get to the end of Malachi, congratulations! You have now read the whole Bible.

If you do the readings every day, in a year's time you will have read the Psalms twice, the rest of the Old Testament once, and be about halfway through the New Testament for the second time.

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