

## **BBS#1 • The Structure Of The Bible**

3. At the beginning of the Bible, we have man's first recorded words addressed to his God, "I heard Thy voice ... I was afraid ... and I hid myself" (**Genesis 3:10**). Sin had separated him from the Lord. At the end of the Bible, we have man's last recorded words addressed to the Lord, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (**Revelation 22:20**). This is man, restored by grace, longing for the presence of Him from whom he once fled and hid!

The essence/central **core** of this Book? ... **grace!**

True Bible theology does revolve around what theologians have styled as "the doctrines of grace," (otherwise known as "The Five Points Of Calvinism").

Over the centuries, much has been said and written about these Five Points. They are often presented using the traditional vocabulary of 'TULIP':

1. Total depravity;
2. Unconditional election,
3. Limited atonement,
4. Irresistible grace, and
5. Perseverance of the saints.

Personally, I prefer the acronym of "GOSPEL":

**G**race is ...

1. **O**bligatory,
2. **S**overeign,
3. **P**rovision-making,
4. **E**fficacious, and
5. **L**asting!

**Grace, grace: God's grace:**  
**Grace that can pardon and cleanse within.**  
**Grace, grace: God's grace;**  
**Grace that is greater than all our sin!**

# **BASIC BIBLE STUDY**

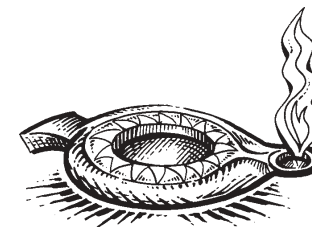
## **An Introductory Guide To Understanding The Scriptures**

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### **PART ONE**

### **The Structure Of The Bible**

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"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet,  
and a light unto my path"  
PSALM 119:105

Many people see the Bible as nothing more than a series of fragmented stories - incidents that are thrown together with little or no relation one to the other.

A noted Bible scholar once testified: **"Many years ago, I decided I was going to master the Bible. I was going to begin with Genesis, read to Revelation, and I wasn't going to put it down until I understood it. I soon became hopelessly entangled in a jungle of fantastic stories, unpronounceable names, broken plots, unanswered questions, and endless genealogies. I stubbed my toe on Leviticus, sprained my ankle on Job, hit my head on Ecclesiastes, and fell headlong into the mud on Habakkuk. I was defeated. I threw my Bible down. One thing seemed clear: the Bible was a series of unrelated stories put together in random order!"**

But that same scholar discovered a key to understanding the Bible. Things became clearer: Bible study became immensely profitable and enjoyable.

That key ... was learning about:

## **THE STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE.**

If you want to understand the Bible, you must first learn how the Bible is put together.

The total number of books in the entire Bible is 66 ... written by 37 authors over a period of more than 1500 years.

### **THE TWO DIVISIONS**

The Bible has two major divisions: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

- **The Old Testament begins with creation, and tells the story of the Jewish people up to the time of Christ.** It is made up of 39 individual books (the Book of Genesis, the Book of Exodus, etc.) written by 28 different authors, and spans a period of over 2000 years.
- **The New Testament is the record of the birth of Jesus, His life and ministry, and the ministry of His disciples, which was carried on after Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection and ascension into heaven.**

The New Testament is comprised of 27 books written by 9 different authors, and covers a time period of less than 100 years.

Without this, it would be extremely difficult to identify verses.

### **Bible divided into verses**

- 1250: Cardinal Hugo was the first to divide the Bible into chapters. His divisions have been adopted in every subsequent translation. (While they are convenient for reference, they have not always proved to be the best possible arrangement; e.g. **Genesis 1-2:3**).
- 1551: Sir Robert Stephens was the first person to divide any part of the Bible into verses.

### **Memorising the books**

It is well worth the time to memorise the books (and the easiest way to memorise them is according to their categories). Memorise the first 17 Historical Books. Then, when you have these memorised, learn the 5 Poetical books, ... etc.. This system is much easier than attempting to memorise an unbroken list of 66 books.

### **THE PLAN OF THE BIBLE**

The Bible is an organic unity. A careful study of it reveals a well-considered plan throughout: it is so complete, that no single part can be dispensed with - and there is neither need nor room for any additional part/parts. The whole is full of the Spirit of Life.

### **THE ESSENCE OF THE BIBLE**

**The Bible is a message from God to man, with the purpose of bringing man to God.** "The two Testaments are the two lips by which God hath spoken to us" (Thomas Watson).

1. The Bible begins with God - and ends with man: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (**Genesis 1:1**). Those few words constitute the key to the Bible - and to all created things. The Bible ends with man - the last of all God's creations: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (**Revelation 22:21**).

2. Although the division into verses was not of Divine origin, it is interesting to note that the verse which stands exactly in the middle of our Bible (**Psalms 118:8**), contains the essence of all Bible teaching - it brings man to God, by telling him to reject all confidence in the things of earth: "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man."

The primary content in all the Epistles is “instruction” on Christian doctrine/belief and conduct/lifestyle.

In the New Testament:

- The first 5 books are Historical Books,
- The next 13 books are Pauline Epistles, and
- The next 9 books are General Epistles.

**The Three Kinds of Books in the New Testament**

<u>Historical</u>	<u>Pauline Epistles</u>	<u>General Epistles</u>
Matthew	TO CHURCHES:	Hebrews
Mark	Romans	James
Luke	1 Corinthians	1 Peter
John	2 Corinthians	2 Peter
Acts	Galatians	1 John
	Ephesians	2 John
	Philippians	3 John
	Colossians	Jude
	1 Thessalonians	Revelation
	2 Thessalonians	
	TO INDIVIDUALS:	
	1 Timothy	
	2 Timothy	
	Titus	
	Philemon	

- The first 5 books of the New Testament outline the story of Jesus and the Church He established. These five books form the historical framework for understanding the entire New Testament.
- The Apostle Paul’s instruction to churches and individuals appears in the next 13 books (14 when we include the book of Hebrews).
- Instructions to churches and individuals by men like the Apostles Peter and John are given in the final 9 books of the New Testament.

**BIBLE REFERENCES**

To find something in the Bible, a standard reference system is used - book, chapter & verse.

**Genesis 1:1** = **Genesis** (book) **1:** (chapter) **1** (verse)

**Languages**

- The Old Testament was written mostly in Hebrew (called "the Jews' language" in **2 Kings 18:26-28** and "the language of Canaan" in **Isaiah 19:18**), with a few short passages in Aramaic.
- The New Testament was written in Greek – the international language at the time of Christ.

**Old Testament Books**

Genesis	2 Chronicles	Daniel
Exodus	Ezra	Hosea
Leviticus	Nehemiah	Joel
Numbers	Esther	Amos
Deuteronomy	Job	Obadiah
Joshua	Psalms	Jonah
Judges	Proverbs	Micah
Ruth	Ecclesiastes	Nahum
1 Samuel	Song of Solomon	Habakkuk
2 Samuel	Isaiah	Zephaniah
1 Kings	Jeremiah	Haggai
2 Kings	Lamentations	Zechariah
1 Chronicles	Ezekiel	Malachi

**New Testament Books**

Matthew	Ephesians	Hebrews
Mark	Philippians	James
Luke	Colossians	1 Peter
John	1 Thessalonians	2 Peter
Acts	2 Thessalonians	1 John
Romans	1 Timothy	2 John
1 Corinthians	2 Timothy	3 John
2 Corinthians	Titus	Jude
Galatians	Philemon	Revelation

**THE OLD TESTAMENT**

Many people make the mistake of assuming that the whole Old Testament was one long, unbroken story, and that the history would flow evenly and consistently out of one book into the next until they were all finished.

Of the 39 books in the Old Testament, there are **three different kinds of books:**

1. Historical Books
2. Poetical Books
3. Prophetical Books.

... the first 17 books are historical,  
 ... the next 5 books are poetical, and  
 ... the next 17 books are prophetical.

If you know what type of book you are reading, then you will know what kind of information to expect, and can easily follow the logical flow of the Old Testament.

**The Three Kinds of Books in the Old Testament**

<u>Historical</u>	<u>Poetical</u>	<u>Prophetical</u>
Genesis	Job	Isaiah
Exodus	Psalms	Jeremiah
Leviticus	Proverbs	Lamentations
Numbers	Ecclesiastes	Ezekiel
Deuteronomy	Song of Solomon	Daniel
Joshua		Hosea
Judges		Joel
Ruth		Amos
1 Samuel		Obadiah
2 Samuel		Jonah
1 Kings		Micah
2 Kings		Nahum
1 Chronicles		Habakkuk
2 Chronicles		Zephaniah
Ezra		Haggai
Nehemiah		Zechariah
Esther		Malachi

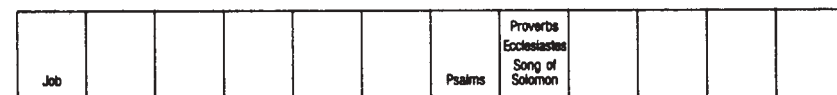
This is somewhat oversimplified, (for there is some poetry in the Historical Books, and some history in the Prophetical books, etc). The point is, however, that each of the books fits into **a primary category**. If you keep this structure in mind, the Old Testament will begin to take shape in your mind.

The basic story line is contained in the first seventeen books - the Historical books. Of the 17 Historical books, 11 are primary historical books, and 6 are secondary historical books (cf. 'Timeline', p5). The history of Israel is advanced in the 11 primary books, and repeated

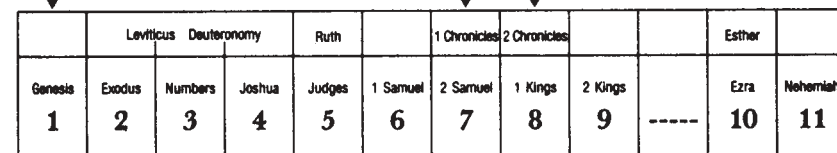
or amplified in the 6 secondary books. (The Poetical and Prophetical Books were written during the same time period as the first 17 books).

**TIME LINE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

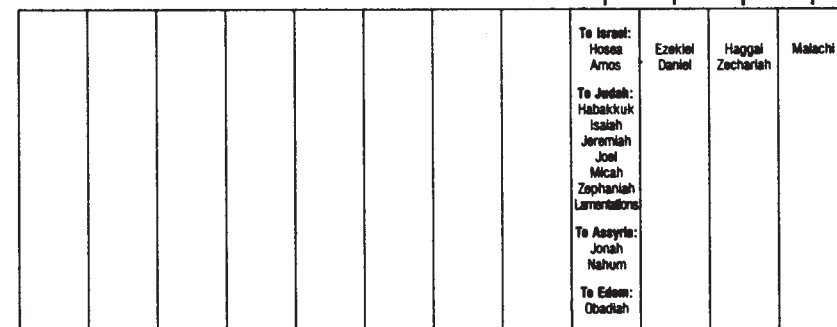
*Poetical Books*



*Historical Books*



*Prophetical Books*



**THE NEW TESTAMENT**

Of the 27 books of the New Testament, there are also three different kinds of books:

**1. Historical Books**

The four gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.

**2. Pauline Epistles**

The Epistles were "letters" written to various individuals and church congregations. The Pauline Epistles were letters written by the Apostle Paul.

**3. General Epistles**

Letters written to individuals and congregations by a number of different people, therefore the name "General Epistles."