

An Outline of the Bible

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Remember: It is the content of the book which has real importance, and not these descriptions, or any others you may find.

I. The Old Testament. In three-hundred-year-old English, the word “testament” was a synonym for the word “covenant”. Although people have forgotten this, the old names are kept because they are remembered! A “covenant”, f.y.i., is a binding of two or more persons’ lives, in many ways like a marriage. So in the Bible we have two sections, the Old Testament in which (among many other things) the Old Covenant between God and the Hebrews is described, and the New Testament, in which is described the New Covenant between God and all of the people who are taken to Him by His only Son, Jesus the Christ (the word “Christ” means “God-gifted person”), who was born into the Hebrews, and who is called both their king and ours. Many significant words (“love”, “goodness”, “marriage”, “creation”, “murder”, “thief”, “sodomy”, “sin”, etc.) are defined in the Old Testament according to how God Himself uses them, thus with highest possible authority. This is the best use I personally have found for the words of the Old Testament today: I love these God-given definitions of words, all of which are really quite vital to avoid the confusion being dumped everywhere by people who lie about words when trying to make themselves and their favorite sins look good.

A. The Five Books of Moses, also called the Law of Moses, or Pentateuch. Today, the people who call themselves Jews call this their “Torah”; their double-scroll of which you may have seen pictures contains these five books only. They do keep around some, not all, of the other books of our Old Testament; but in my experience they believe almost none of it to be true. Instead, they believe and do other and/or contradictory things which their rabbis tell them to do. Jesus talked about this behavior of theirs, which is also duplicated in many churches (see Mark chapter 7 verses 6 through 8). None of the people who are under the New Covenant are commanded to follow the laws in these books. But God spoke many truths among the laws, to help people understand why they were put into places, and the truths are very important for all time.

Genesis

Creation; foundational history including the Flood of Noah, when God killed a very large number of very evil people by drowning, and saved only one family for the future; and the earliest available history of the Hebrews, including Abraham and the early life of Moses.

Exodus

More history, including how God took the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt, and how their trek began towards the land then called Canaan and now called Palestine or Israel, depending on who you're talking to. Quite a few specific laws from God to the Hebrews are here, among them being the famous Ten Commandments (chapter 20).

Leviticus

Laws, laws, and lots of laws from God for the Hebrews. Some history here as well, plus the usual characteristic statements of God for all time.

Numbers

More laws from God for the Hebrews, and more history of the Hebrews, particularly statistic-oriented history, plus a few very noteworthy vocabulary items.

Deuteronomy

This book's name is, roughly, Anglicized ancient Greek for "reiteration", and that's what it is: a reiteration, a summary with additional explanation, of the previous four books.

B. Judges. A "judge" in Old Testament context was a person who God used to speak, to command, to lead the other people with whom He chose to interact, and to judge disputations of all civil sorts within the people. The word is a synonym for "prophet" in most of the Old Testament, a "prophet" being a person whose tongue and body God takes and uses for His purposes, without possibility of fault or failure while His required work is going on. Moses is cited by some as "the greatest of the judges".

Joshua

History of the arrival of the Hebrews into Canaan, including the story of how "Joshua fought the battle of Jericho", when God killed lots of people both Personally and using the swords and other means in the hands of the Hebrews.

Judges

Early history of the Hebrews in Canaan. Lots of trials and tribulations of the Hebrews and their neighbors.

Ruth

A historical note of one family, especially one very special woman named Ruth. This history becomes rather important in later centuries, all the way to the genealogy of Joseph, legal though not biological father of Jesus, the Christ, the Lord of all.

C. Kings. A human "king" in the Bible is a man who is a ruler of a nation large or small, who is an absolute dictator responsible only to God and His requirements. Any other concept of "rule of law" is entirely absent from God's Personal commands; in fact, it is written several times that God Personally overrode His written commands in direct communication to His kings. These books are history of all of the kings of the Hebrews, who at this point in history are also called collectively "Israel and Judah". Of great importance is the fact that God commanded Solomon, one of the kings, to build the first Temple in Jerusalem. This Temple was much later destroyed by God when He became angry at the Hebrews, when they abandoned the good counsel of David and Solomon, and became so profoundly corrupt and evil as to serve the devil-gods of their neighbors. God caused evil people to take the

Hebrews from the land of Canaan (“the first diaspora” or “dispersion” as some say it; see all of Ezekiel chapter 16 for one of very many statements by God of same, and see James 1:1 for later witness), and keep them in slavery and other captivity, as punishment. It is very worthwhile to remember for later on that Jesus Christ was the legal son of Joseph, who was a lineal descendant of David.

1 Samuel

2 Samuel

1 Kings

2 Kings

1 Chronicles

2 Chronicles

D. The second temple prophets. This category admits of various definitions, and is sometimes lumped with others. Nehemiah was a prophet who God called to rebuild the Temple and to cleanse the city of Jerusalem of filth and of sin. Because of general disobedience, the work was not very successful. Ezra lived near and at the same times, and he reports many related events from a different perspective. Some people, especially Jews, say that there were only two temples; but there certainly were at least three, the third being the one extant during the first century C.E., built and rebuilt by Jews during the three centuries B.C. and before. The number is somewhat vague simply because at least two of the destructions were not total.

Ezra

Nehemiah

E. The book of Esther describes several unusual events which occurred entirely within captivity, especially the heroic and self-sacrificial behavior of a young woman named Esther.

Esther

F. The book of Job is very helpful in defining crucial words ('children of God', 'Satan') used in other books. It is useful to note that its position in the Bible is not at all according to the time-flow of history. This book is history of a very good man named Job who lived, it is often thought, somewhat before the time of Abraham. Job was the subject of a disputation between God and an evil angel called Satan, whose name means “adversary” or “enemy”. Job was taught a number of enormous lessons in the process and especially in the aftermath, and in this book we have the privilege of seeing it all happen from a very heavenly perspective.

Job

G. Writings of the kings. Really only two kings' writings are represented, the two kings usually considered the greatest human kings of Israel: David, and Solomon. The position of these books is, like Job, also not according to time-flow of history. One of the more interesting aspects of these books is how many statements by David make little sense in land-oriented Old Testament life, but tremendous sense in heaven-oriented New Testament life. It is very often thought that King David related to God in many ways more similar to New Covenant life than that which was usual in Old Covenant life.

Psalms

The word “psalm” means “song intended for accompaniment by the musical instrument called a 'psaltery’”, and that's most of what is in this book. The songs do contain much prophecy. Almost all of them were written by David, who is sometimes called a prophet-king. There are several psalms written by other people. A psaltery is (there are people who still make and play them) a kind of harp whose strings are strung on a sounding-box. Until recent times, all psalteries were plucked, not bowed or hammered.

Proverbs

The book of Proverbs was written by Solomon. It contains a large number of short statements which are very wise. “Spare the rod and spoil the child” is a short extraction of more than one of the Proverbs. However, some of the Proverbs are explicitly contradicted by commands of the Lord Jesus Christ, by which He defines the New Covenant.

Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes was also written by Solomon. It is not a book of proverbs, however; it is a book of observations as to quite a few truths of this world, some of them rather disturbing if the reader is not heaven-oriented (see the book of John, chapter 2, verses 15 through 17). Many people are eager to imply that this book is either wrong or irrelevant, because of their own troubled orientations.

The Song of Solomon, also called The Song of Songs

The Song of Solomon contains a single long song, or poem thought to have been put to music. The music is long lost to humanity. The words are a very specific description of the very good social, emotional, and physical relationship between King Solomon and one of his very many wives. Many of the descriptions, especially the physical ones, are given in metaphor, and some of the metaphors contain elements difficult to ascertain today, thousands of years later. But enough specificity is there to make the book most useful when talking about certain good aspects of this life. One hint: the place-names are, for the most part, not geographical.

H. “Major” prophets. The distinction of “major” versus “minor” is meaningless habit of some of humanity; I use it here only because it is very recognizable to some. These books contain true and verifiable history written before it occurred, the history of the destruction of the then-divided nations of the Hebrews: unlike previous times, at this point Judah and Israel are two separate nations. There is also some related history of other peoples, and interpretation of many historical events as spoken by God Himself, all delivered through prophets. This history is often the opposite of pretty, and the anger of God is great and terrible, and the consequences are horrible; but near every statement of consequences, He gives much reason for hope for the future. It is interesting how many unusual descriptions of a particular man are given in this section, descriptions all of which were present in Jesus Christ. It is thus that Jesus Christ is given as a profound hope for the future, a Savior from all of the

evil of the world. And yet, all of these books were written many centuries before Jesus Christ was born. For examples, see Isaiah 9:6, Jeremiah 33:14-15, and Ezekiel 37:23-28. It is important to many of these passages to remember that the single man named David, King of Israel, author of most of the Psalms, was long dead before these words were written.

Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel

Daniel is special. There is unusual history here, including a miracle or two also described specifically in ancient clay tablets available today, from the Assyrians and the Babylonians who had the Hebrews captive at the time this book was written. There is also prophecy in this book which points with unusual clarity towards the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. For one example, see Daniel chapter 9, verse 26.

I. “Minor” prophets. Ditto the distinction and the time-line, just like “Major”. There are a lot of statements by God in these books which define terms very useful in New Covenant context.

Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah
Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk
Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi

II. The New Testament. This is the description of the New Covenant, the binding of lives between God and the people believing in and obedient to His Son, the Lord Jesus, the Christ, the Savior. The Old Covenant was defined for men and women according to the children, the bloodline, of Abraham; the New Covenant is defined for men and women according to those considered to be children of God. God does not consider all humanity to be His children (see Matthew chapter 23 verses 14 and 15, and John chapter 17 verse 12): although He created us all, most of us are slaves to sin (see John chapter 8 verse 34), and before He considers any of us to be His children, He releases us from this slavery by the blood of Christ who was crucified (Matthew chapter 26 verse 28), in a way most similar to the way that God used the life in the blood of sacrificial animals to cleanse sin under the Old Covenant (see Leviticus, chapter 17, verse 11), but permanent, and forever, and once for all. This is why it is essential to be born again, to be born of God, to become truly a child of only God, to submit to having God cut us off from our first life, of sin, and take us into a new life of righteousness, of goodness, and of truth.

In order to be born again, one must recognize and willingly accept the need, and honestly ask God to begin to the process. This is what it means to “repent of our sin”: to willingly accept and recognize that there is evil within us, that this evil God must remove from us if we are to become righteous, or “right”, or “true”, or acceptable unto God. One of the things which we are commanded to do in our willingness to repent and be made different, is to submit to being baptized. When we are baptized, God washes our sins away (see Acts chapter 22 verse 16). We still have sin within us – impurity and evil still exists within our person (see 1 John chapter 1 verse 8) – but the true and correct sense of guilt we have for past sins, the weight on our consciences of past evil things we have

done, is removed from us. Some people, immediately after baptism, are very strongly aware of this, and their joy and the release from their suffering is awesome to behold. Others, like myself, had little ability immediately after we were baptized to know that we had no more right reason to feel guilty for the sins of our first life: over time God very gradually and very gently educates us, and as He slowly and steadily cleans us or “sanctifies” us as it is usually worded in the Bible, we come to know the joy and the rest which all in Christ do share.

There are many different experiences within Christ...but there is always increasing freedom from sin and guilt, always an increasing sense of good and true purpose to our life, and always a change of our lives towards goodness and love. This change is always driven by God Himself, accepted but not powered by our selves, the wretches to whom God has given amazing grace. If God has not yet taken you thusly, please contact me or someone else who has been. We like to help, because this is how God uses all of us who serve His purposes in this world: to bring people with us to eternal life.

A. The Four Gospels. These contain testimony by four men who saw Jesus in the flesh, heard Him speak, interacted with Him, and were taught by Him most personally for several years, both before and after He died and was resurrected. These four books contain most of the words that we have which were spoken by the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The New Covenant is described in toto in these books, as is the life in this world of the Lord. As for the will of God concerning just how we are to live our daily lives, I know no better nor more important nor more complete set of commands from God to us than Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7. But any or all of these books may well be the very best place to start reading in the Bible, if you have interest.

Matthew

Mark

Luke

John

B. Acts is the testimony of Luke, the writer of the Gospel book that bears his name, of the events occurring immediately and for several years after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. It is helpful that this book was written by Luke, because he was a highly-trained physician, with a physician's tendency towards careful recording.

Acts

C. The Epistles of Paul. Paul did not meet Jesus in the flesh. However, the ability God gave him to break down the commands of the Lord Jesus to further our understanding was unusually great, and we have several of his letters delivered to us as books within the Bible. The names of the books are the names of the churches or specific persons to whom the letters were written. It is vital to know that, according to Paul himself, some of his recommendation was not from God (see 1 Corinthians chapter 7 verses 10 through 12, where we have one command from the Lord, and one command explicitly not from the Lord, both given by Paul). When people do not keep this in mind, when people presume that all recommendation through Paul, and Peter, and Moses, et al., are to be obeyed by all, all sorts of troublesome behavior results. When in doubt as to what to do in daily life, it is best

to rely on the record and example as to that which the Lord Himself commanded and did (for example, Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7), while bearing strongly in mind that according to Him and God His Father it is only the Lord Jesus whose body had to be sacrificed for all of us.

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

D. The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews. This book is sometimes placed in its own category, because its content is aimed generally and directly at Hebrews, and not non-Hebrews, who were born again, with consequently different focus and details included. Its content is, in large part, a comparison of the Old and New Covenants, and a discussion of the implications of the history of each.

Hebrews

E. Other epistles. James, Peter, John, and Jude all were taught by Jesus in the flesh, and were all taught by Him both before and after He was resurrected. The book of James was written expressly to all Hebrews, both those reborn into Christ and those contemplating the words of same (see James chapter 1 verse 1). Some histories have it that in the first several decades after Jesus was resurrected, there was much mixing between Hebrews who had and had not been born again; to many, the book of James appears to support this point of view.

James	1 Peter	2 Peter	1 John
2 John	3 John	Jude	

F. Revelation. This is a book written by John, containing statements and admonitions by God to many different specific churches, and also prophecy of the distant and not-so-distant future.

Revelation