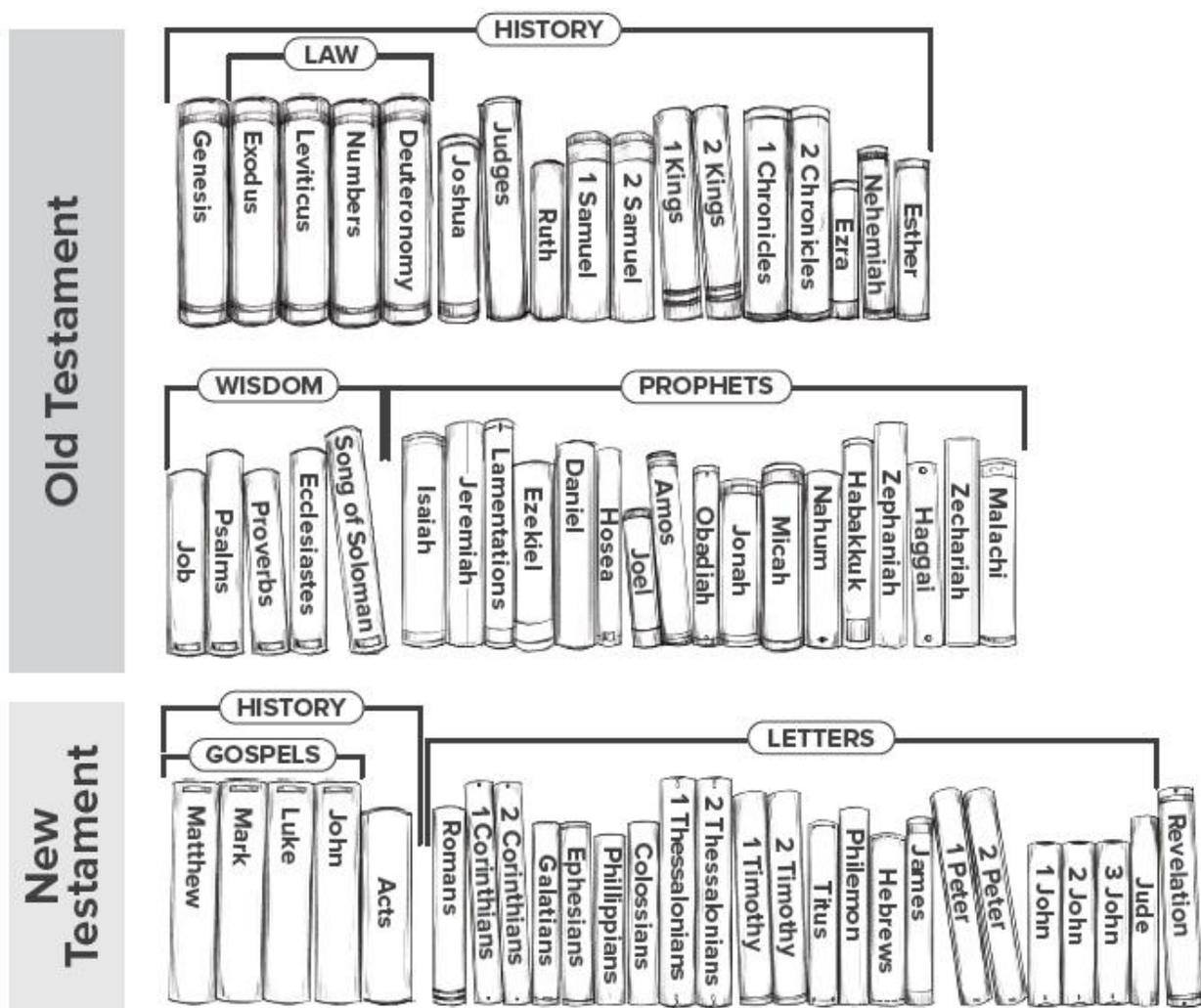


Introduction to the Bible
Summer 2017
Week 1

Class goals, syllabus & requirements

The big picture



The Bible is 66 books, written by 40 different human authors over 1500 years, employing several different types of literature – yet it has one ultimate Author (God) who tells one Story centering around one key Figure (Jesus).

Think of the Bible as an epic novel with three main parts (see blank Overview Chart):

- Introduction:
- Main body:
- Epilogue:

Introduction: Creation & Fall (Gen. 1-11)

Creation (Gen. 1,2) – God creates the universe, focusing on the earth, the plants and animals that inhabit it, and especially the first humans (Adam & Eve).

- “*Who* created?”
- “*Why* did God create the universe? *Why* did He create humans?”

Fall (Gen. 3-11) – Satan slanders God as repressing Adam and Eve, and urges them to become their own gods by disobeying God. But what Satan promised would be a step upward to enlightenment and freedom became a tragic fall into alienation and bondage. Humanity now has two key problems (among others):

- PROBLEM #1:
- PROBLEM #2:
- Gen. 4-11 narrates the rebellious downward spiral of early humanity, and the (redemptive) judgments that God enacts to prevent humanity’s total corruption. It ends with humanity fragmented into “nations” separated by different languages.
- But there is also a word of hope. Gen. 3:15 anticipates God’s redemptive plan.

Genesis 3:15 (NASB95) – “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.”

The rest of the Bible details this “seed,” and teaches that He comes twice – the first time to be injured by Satan (but solving PROBLEM #1), and the second time to crush Satan (and solving PROBLEM #2). He is the Redeemer.

Main body: Redemption (Gen. 12 – Jude)

Most of the Bible tells the story of how God solved these two problems through the “seed.” The Old Testament focuses on the nation of Israel and tells how God prepared His Coming. The New Testament focuses on His First Coming, the new people He works through (the Church), and how He fulfills His mission through His Second Coming. All of this material is the fulfillment of a covenant God makes to Abraham in Gen. 12:1-3 (the *Abrahamic Covenant*).

Genesis 12:1–3 (NASB95) – ¹ Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the *land* which I will show you; ² and I will make you a great *nation*, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; ³ And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be *blessed*.”

Note three key promises:

- God will make a great _____ from Abraham’s descendants (12:2).
- God will give Abraham (or his descendants) a _____ (12:1).
- God will extend a _____ to all people-groups through Abraham’s “seed”/descendants (12:3).

The rest of the Old Testament narrates the initial fulfillment of God’s covenant with Abraham. God enacts three other covenants as He does this:

- First God forms the nation of _____. Later they divided into two nations: Israel (north) and Judah (south).
- Then God gives Israel His _____ – the *Mosaic Covenant*.
- Then God brings Israel into their _____. He eventually exiles them for their ongoing disobedience to His Law, but later restores Judah to their land as the Old Testament closes.
- During this same period, God raises up _____ to speak to His people. Among other things, they provide increasing information about the coming “seed” and the blessing He will bring to all people-groups. They provide two different pictures of this Person:
 - He will be a _____ (“Messiah”) who descends from king David’s line (the *Davidic Covenant*). He will solve PROBLEM #2.

He will also be a _____ whose death pays for humanity's sin and re-establishes a relationship with God for those who receive Him. He will also solve PROBLEM #1.

Through Him, God will inaugurate a *New Covenant* which will replace the *Mosaic Covenant*.

The prophets neither understand nor explain how these two pictures fit together.

1 Peter 1:10 (NASB) ¹⁰ As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, ¹¹ seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you . . . things into which angels long to look.

- There are 400 years of prophetic silence between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament.

The New Testament records the arrival of the promised “seed” – Jesus. It goes on to describe how His two Comings fulfill Gen. 3:15 and the *Abrahamic Covenant*.

- It narrates Jesus' First Coming – His birth, His brief public ministry, and His rejection, death and resurrection.

Jesus descends physically from Abraham and David (Matt. 1:1).

He claims to be the King who will one day rule, but also insists that He is the Servant who has come this time to die for humanity's sins.

His death fulfills part of Gen. 3:15 (“you shall bruise Him on the heel”), and resolves PROBLEM #1.

After His resurrection, He begins working through His followers to spread the message of His atoning death (the “gospel”) to all people-groups.

- It narrates God's temporary switch from Israel (an ethnic group) to the Church (multi-ethnic believers in Jesus) as His redemptive agent, and how the Church began to spread the gospel.
- It records the letters of Jesus' apostles, which expound and apply the gospel.
- We are still in this stage of God's plan. It will continue until people from every people-group believe in the gospel. Progress so far:

Epilogue: Consummation (Revelation)

The last book of the New Testament predicts the future culmination of the battle between the “seed” and Satan, ending in Satan’s defeat (Gen. 3:15 – “He shall bruise you on the head”).

- The gospel reaches people from every people-group.
- Jesus returns as King and permanently ends Satan’s reign.
- God creates a new heavens and earth, in which all of His people enjoy intimacy with God and reign with Him forever – thus solving PROBLEM #2.

Reasons why the Bible is God’s unique revelation

All of the major world religions have sacred books, yet they differ widely in how they describe God, humanity’s root problem, and the solution to that problem. Why should we believe that the Bible is giving us the right answers to these questions? Your reading assignment over the next four weeks will give you many answers to this question. Here is a summation:

- The Bible claims to be inspired (“God-breathed”). By contrast, most other “scriptures” do not make this claim.
- The unity of the Bible’s plot (see above) argues for a single ultimate Author. By contrast, most other “scriptures” are collections of sayings without any historical narrative within a unified plot.
- The unexpected way this plot unfolds (Messiah crucified) and its unique way of salvation (a free gift received by faith alone) suggest a *unique* Author.
- The phenomenon of fulfilled prophecy is compelling evidence for an all-knowing and sovereign Author. By contrast, other “scriptures” do not have this feature.
- The historical accuracy of the Bible’s account argues for a reliable Author. By contrast, most other “scriptures” either do not interface with history at all, or have demonstrable historical errors.

So what?

God has a good plan for human history, and His plan centers around His Messiah.

Ephesians 1:9–10 (NLT) ⁹ God has now revealed to us His mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill His own good pleasure. ¹⁰ And this is the plan: At the right time He will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth.

- Atheistic world-views have no plan for human history.
- Pantheistic religions-views have no personal plan for human history.
- Monotheistic religions have no assurance of salvation for sinful humans.

God's plan gives true purpose to your life.

- If you receive Jesus as the Messiah, He will forgive you and make you a permanent member of His family.

John 1:12 (NASB95) But as many as *received* Jesus, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who *believe* in His name.

- If you give your life to Jesus after receiving Him, He will work through you to fulfill your unique portion in His plan.

Romans 6:13 (ESV) ¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but *present yourselves to God* as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.