

Begin memorizing 2 Timothy 3:16:

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”

Bible Study #9

The Bible: Part 1

The Bible is God’s Word. If we don’t study God’s Word, how can we know who He really is or how He wants us to live our lives? How would we understand His love or how to extend that love to others? Learning God’s Word and then putting it into practice is the foundation of our faith and the core of our relationship with God.

PRAY before you start! Answer the questions briefly and in your own words.

Bible Basics

The Bible contains 66 books: 39 Old Testament – Genesis through Malachi, and 27 New Testament – Matthew through Revelation. Each book is broken down into chapters and the chapters are broken down into verses. Example: John 3:16 John is the Book. The number 3 indicates the chapter within the Book of John. The second set of numbers is the verse, indicating the specific verse within chapter 3. When Scripture is quoted, it is always stated as BOOK, CHAPTER, and VERSE.

The word “testament” means a covenant or agreement. Therefore, the Old Testament was God’s old covenant with mankind, while the New Testament is God’s new agreement with humanity.

The Old Testament

The Old Testament documents were written mostly in the Hebrew language (with small parts in Aramaic). Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament (known collectively as the Pentateuch) in approximately 1500 B.C. Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament, was written around 450 B.C.

The first book of the Old Testament is Genesis. Appropriately, its name means “beginning,” since it records the beginning of the Universe and everything in it. Adam and Eve were the first people God created (on day six of His creative activity), and they lived in the beautiful Garden of Eden, where they were free to do anything they desired—anything, that is, except eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (read Genesis 1:16-17). One day, Satan, who appeared in the form of a serpent, tricked Eve into eating the fruit. Eve took the fruit to Adam and, although he was not tricked (1 Timothy 2:14), he, too, ate the fruit. This is how sin first entered the world. In fact, about 1600 years after Adam and Eve were ejected from the Garden of Eden, people had become such terrible sinners that the Bible says: “Now the Lord observed the extent of the people’s wickedness, and he saw that all their thoughts were consistently and totally evil” (Genesis 6:5). Because of man’s wickedness, God sent a flood that covered the entire Earth. Only Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives were spared, along with seven of every kind of clean animal and two of every kind of unclean animal. After the flood, humans began to repopulate the Earth. Most of these people sinned by worshiping many different gods (a concept known as “polytheism”) instead of the one true God. Eventually, God chose a man by the name of Abraham to become the father of a new nation of people who worshiped only Him as the true and living God. Abraham believed God, and did as he was instructed. Some time later, God blessed him and his wife Sarah with a son named Isaac. Isaac then had a son named Jacob, and Jacob (whose name later was changed to Israel) had twelve sons who became the heads of what came to be known as the twelve tribes of Israel. In time, Jacob and his sons migrated to the land of Egypt where they became slaves. Even so, God blessed them and allowed them to multiply greatly during their sojourn in the land of the pharaohs. After the Israelites had spent hundreds of years of bondage in Egypt, God sent Moses and his brother Aaron to set the Israelites free. When they left the land of Egypt, God gave them a special law that separated them from all other nations around them. The Pentateuch (the first 5 books of the OT) explains how Abraham became the father of the Jewish nation, how the Jews became the chosen people of God, and how God gave the Old Law to Moses to present to the Jews. The Ten Commandments represented the major rules that the Jews were supposed to follow under the Old Law.

The rest of the Old Testament records the history of the Jews, including the fact that they begged God for a king so that they could be like the nations around them. Once they had kings, they were led in the wrong direction spiritually, and eventually returned to worshiping many different gods (1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings, and 1&2 Chronicles). God sent numerous prophets to the Jews to urge them to come back to their Creator, but they were a stubborn, rebellious people who refused to listen (Isaiah-Malachi). Since the Jews misused and ignored the Old Law, and since many of the prophets’ efforts had been in vain, God promised that He would send a new prophet. Moses said: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear” (Deuteronomy 18:15). This new Prophet would arrive with a new law: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (Jeremiah 31:31). The Jews of Old Testament times waited anxiously for a Messiah Who was prophesied to bring salvation

and institute that new covenant. But He was not supposed to be a strong military leader or powerful political activist. In fact, the prophet Isaiah said that He would be “despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). Instead, He was to be a Savior who would be put to death for the sins of His people in order to satisfy God’s demand for justice (53:5). The prophet Isaiah wrote of this Messiah: “I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6). Thus, under the new law to be established through the Messiah (His Son, Jesus), God would allow people from any nation—not just the Jews—to be His chosen people.

The New Testament

The New Testament includes the life of Jesus Christ, God’s plan of salvation through grace rather than living under the Law, the beginning of the church, teachings about how to live a Christian life, the end times, and the second coming of Christ.

These 27 books of the New Testament are divided into 4 major sections.

The Gospels. The word gospel means “good news.” The first four books of the New Testament are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They are known as the Gospels because they tell the story of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Since the story of Jesus is good news for sinful humanity, it is known as the gospel.

History. This section of the New Testament has only one book—Acts. Acts was written by Luke, and tells about the “acts” of the apostles, the beginning of the church, and its early history. After Jesus returned to heaven, His followers went all over the world preaching the Good News of His life, death, and resurrection. Because of their preaching, God’s Word spread throughout the whole world and the church that Jesus had promised to build (Matthew 16:18) spread like wildfire.

The Epistles. “Epistle” is another word for a letter. When the apostles preached the Gospel around the world, many churches were started in various cities. The apostles and other writers needed a way to explain to these churches how to worship and how to live. So they wrote them letters. For instance, the book of Romans is a letter written to the church at Rome. Sometimes these epistles were written to an individual (like 1 and 2 Timothy, which are letters written by the apostle Paul to his helper, Timothy). These epistles were written to people who already were Christians, yet who needed some encouragement, answers to questions, spiritual instruction, and yes, even discipline. The apostle Paul wrote many of the epistles in the New Testament. In fact, of the 27 books in the New Testament, He wrote 13 epistles (just under half of the entire New Testament).

Prophecy. This section has only one book—Revelation. The reason it is called a prophetic book is because it told the people in the first century things that were going to happen to them in the future. Most of the things discussed in Revelation already have occurred. Unfortunately, many people today misuse this book to make inaccurate and

untrue predictions regarding the end of time. When reading Revelation, it is important to remember two things: (1) it uses a lot of symbolic language (much of which comes from the Old Testament books of Daniel and Ezekiel because the Jews would understand it while their enemies would not); and (2) nothing in it contradicts the rest of the Bible.

The New Testament was completed about 550 years after Malachi (the last book of the Old Testament). However, the New Testament picks up right where the Old Testament left off. All of the prophets had been telling about the coming a Messiah who would save the world from its sin and establish a spiritual kingdom. The entire Jewish nation was waiting for this Messiah. The four Gospels tell the story of Jesus, and prove by His miracles and teachings that He indeed was the prophesied Savior.

The rest of the New Testament outlines the new covenant that Jesus established. No longer would people offer animal sacrifices such as bulls and goats (as they did in the Old Testament) in order to receive forgiveness of their sins. Under Jesus' new covenant, His own death on the cross would be the only sacrifice that could forgive sins. It is very important to understand that the new covenant (New Testament) took the place of the old covenant (Old Testament). That is why the writer of the book of Hebrews said: "In that He says, 'a new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away" (8:13). The Old Testament is a wonderful set of books that can teach people today many amazing things about God. In fact, the Old Testament prepared the world for Jesus, the coming Messiah. But after Jesus lived, died, and was resurrected, God created a new system and established a new covenant with mankind. The details of that new covenant are found in the New Testament—the only place mankind can go to find salvation.

Authors/Unity

The Bible is the inspired Word of God. The authors number more than 40 different people spanning a period of over 1,500 years (over 40 generations). The authors were from various walks of life with diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Moses was a leader trained in the universities of Egypt.

Peter was a fisherman.

Solomon was a king.

Joshua was a military general.

Nehemiah was a cupbearer.

Daniel was a politician.

Amos was a herdsman.

Matthew was a tax collector.

Luke was a doctor.

Paul was a Jewish leader (rabbi).

The Bible was written many places, such as in a prison, on an island, in the wilderness, and in a palace. The Bible was written in different languages including Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. The writers wrote from three different continents (Asia, Africa, and Europe).

Finally, its subject matter includes hundreds of controversial topics. Yet, the Biblical authors spoke in complete harmony from Genesis to Revelation. If we were to pick ten different authors today, all from the same walk of life, from one generation, one place, one time, one mood, one continent, one language, and just one controversial subject, how many of them do you think would agree with each other in what they write? Yet look at the Bible and consider that they all agree despite the many, many differences.

Write **True** or **False** in the blanks after the following statements.

1. None of the books of the Bible shows any unity.
2. The Bible was written by 4 men.
3. The Bible was written over a period of about 1,500 years.
4. Adam was the very first man.
5. Pain and sin entered the world because God put them there from the beginning.

Fill in the blank

6. What does the word “testament” mean?
7. What are the first and last books of the Old Testament?
8. Most of the Old Testament tells the history of what nation?
9. How many books are in the New Testament?
10. Which of the following words means “letter”? (a) Scribe (b) Hebrew (c) Epistle (d) Scroll
11. There are _____ books in the Old Testament.
12. The entire _____ nation was waiting for the _____.
13. What does the word “gospel” mean?
14. Where was the nation of Israel held in slavery before Moses freed them?

15. List two factors which contribute to the unity of the Bible being so unique.

16. Write out your memory verse.