



## What are the basic themes of the Bible?

1. The Scriptures *center on Jesus Christ*. Jesus says: **“You study the Scriptures because you think that by them you have everlasting life; these are the Scriptures that testify about me” (John 5:39).**
2. The *two main teachings* of the Bible are the LAW and GOSPEL. Think of the acronym S.O.S. The LAW of God *Shows Our Sins*. The GOSPEL *Shows Our Savior*. The Law tells us what we should do and should not do. The Gospel tells us what *Jesus* has done to save us. Both the Old and New Testament preach Law AND Gospel.
3. Many Old Testament people and events *foreshadow Jesus and his Act of Redemption*.
4. The Bible speaks in terms of *opposites*: judgment and salvation, unbelief and faith, light and dark, love and hate.

LAW Shows Our Sins



GOSPEL Shows Our Savior



# How Do I Study the Bible?

## Introduction

Many people recognize that it's important to study the Bible, but at the same time they can feel intimidated to begin. There are many reasons. Where to begin? How much to read? How does it fit together? Will I be overwhelmed and only become more confused? Where do I turn to find help?

If these concerns are your concerns, this outline will give you some basic help. First, it will explain what the Bible is, how and when it came into being, why it is important, and how it all fits together around some basic themes. Then it will give some “nuts and bolts” suggestions to help you with your actual study.

## What is the Bible?

The Bible is God's Word. The Holy Spirit inspired it. The word “inspired” means “to breathe into.” In the New Testament, we find this verse from 2 Timothy 3:16: **“All Scripture is God-breathed.”**

*Over the years, different views have arisen about inspiration in regard to the Bible's accuracy. Below you will find three of these views.*

1. God inspired every word of the Bible. Therefore the Bible is truth, word for word, untainted by any human error or opinion.<sup>1</sup>
2. God inspired the ideas and concepts but not the actual words of the Bible.<sup>2</sup>
3. God inspired not the words or ideas but individual people.<sup>3</sup>

*The Bible teaches the first view.*

2 Samuel 22:31 says, **“The word of the Lord is flawless.”**

Jesus says in John 17:17, **“Father, sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”**

## Discussion

Why is it important to believe that each word of the Bible is inspired truth, free from any human error or opinion?

**Exercise Match the statement with the corresponding view.**

- a. “The Bible *is* the Word of God.”  View 2
- b. “The Bible *contains* the Word of God.”  View 3
- c. “The Bible is human thought *about* God.”  View 1

<sup>1</sup> Becker, Siegbert. *The Scriptures*. Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, WI, 1971, page 17.

<sup>2</sup> Gooch, John O. *The Bible*. Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1991, pages 15,16.

<sup>3</sup> Gooch, pages 15,16.

## Exercises on the Bible themes

1. The Scriptures *center on Jesus Christ*. Compare Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:18-23.
2. The *two main teachings* of the Bible are the Law and the Gospel. Identify the following passages as law or gospel:
 

A. John 3:16	Law ___ Gospel ___
B. Exodus 20:1-17	Law ___ Gospel ___
C. Matthew 5:27-29	Law ___ Gospel ___
D. Isaiah 53:5	Law ___ Gospel ___
E. Matthew 3:7,8	Law ___ Gospel ___
F. Psalm 23	Law ___ Gospel ___
G. Romans 12:9-12	Law ___ Gospel ___
H. I Corinthians 1:30,31	Law ___ Gospel ___
I. I John 4:10	Law ___ Gospel ___
3. Many Old Testament people and events *foreshadow Jesus and his Act of Redemption*.
  - A. Explain how Moses is a “Jesus figure” from the following passages. Exodus 3:4-10; Deuteronomy 18:17-19
  - B. Explain how the Passover foreshadows Jesus' act of redemption. Exodus 12:1-13
4. The Bible speaks in terms of *opposites*. See Mark 16:15; John 3:16-21; I John 2:9-11

## Nuts and Bolts

1. Try to read your Bible frequently.
2. Don't be overly concerned if you don't immediately understand the meaning of every book, chapter or verse.
3. Mark your Bible!
  - i. To highlight verses important to you
  - ii. To define terms
  - iii. To note points of interest
  - iv. To write down questions that arise
4. Bring your questions to your pastor
5. Supplement your Bible reading with Bible commentaries. There are many good Lutheran Bible commentaries from which to choose.



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## How and when did the Bible come into being?

God the Holy Spirit inspired the words of the Bible and had them recorded through human authors. In the New Testament, we read from 2 Peter 1:20, 21: **“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”**

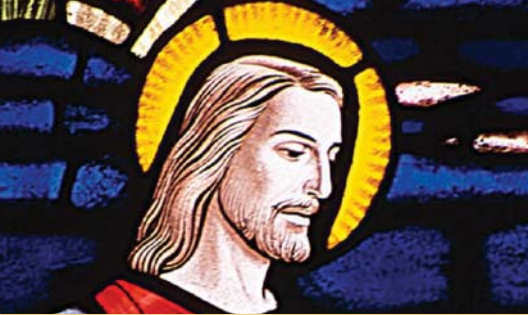
God inspired His Word into writing first through Moses. From 1449-1409 B.C. Moses wrote by inspiration the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The Book of Revelation is the last of the inspired Scriptures, by the hand of the Apostle John, in 95 A.D.

*Listed below are the dates and authors of all the books of Scripture.*

### Old Testament

Book	Inspired writer	Approximate date written
Genesis	Moses	1446-1406 B.C.
Exodus	Moses	1446-1406 B.C.
Leviticus	Moses	1446-1406 B.C.
Numbers	Moses	1446-1406 B.C.
Deuteronomy	Moses	1406 B.C.
Joshua	probably a younger contemporary of Joshua	1300s B.C.
Judges	uncertain	before 1000 B.C. (before David took Jerusalem)
Ruth	uncertain	1000 B.C.
1 Samuel	uncertain	after 930 B.C.
2 Samuel	uncertain	after 930 B.C.
1 Kings	uncertain	586-538 B.C.
2 Kings	uncertain	586-538 B.C.
1 Chronicles	probably Ezra	450 B.C.
2 Chronicles	probably Ezra	450 B.C.
Ezra	Ezra	440 B.C.
Nehemiah	Nehemiah	430 B.C.
Esther	uncertain	470-465 B.C.
Job	uncertain	uncertain (before 2000 B.C. or perhaps much later)

Keller, Brian. *Bible—God's Inspired, Inerrant Word*. Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, WI, 2003, pages 115-118.



## Why is the Bible important to study?

2 Timothy 3:16 gives us a good answer. “All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

It is useful for *teaching*. See John 8:31, 32

It is useful for *rebuking*. See 2 Timothy 2:25

It is useful for *correcting*. See Acts 18:24-26

It is useful for *training in righteousness*. See Colossians 3:16,17

So that the man of God may be *thoroughly equipped* for every good work. See Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 1:3-6; Romans 15:4-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

Jesus also says in John 6:63, “The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.”

### Summary

*The Word of God is the power of the Spirit to bring sinners to repentance and faith and enables them to freely live for God in joy.*

See also: Isaiah 55:11; Romans 1:16, Romans 10:17

### Discussion

*Let's discuss some misuses of the Bible<sup>4</sup>*

The Bible is misused when people:

1. Do not believe what it says.
2. Do not regard it as the final authority on spiritual matters.
3. Purposely seek to evade its main purpose.
4. Insert their ideas into the Bible's words.
5. Do not use it as much as they could.

<sup>4</sup> Keller, pages 87-91.



## How does the Bible fit together?

Most people know that the Bible has an Old Testament and a New Testament. What is less well known is the purpose of each.

*Some common misconceptions about the Old and New Testaments.*

1. The Old Testament teaches exclusively about God's law. The New Testament teaches exclusively about the Gospel (good news).
2. The Old Testament teaches only about God the judge. The New Testament teaches only about God the Savior.
3. The Old Testament no longer applies, or is less important, than the New Testament.

### The Purpose of the Old Testament

God revealed to the Old Testament prophets *that a Savior was coming.*<sup>5</sup>

The master author begins the Bible by recounting his creation of heaven and earth. Then he describes Adam and Eve's perfect life in the Garden of Eden. The third chapter of Genesis brings the reader to the dreadful history of the fall into sin. Adam and Eve succumbed to the temptation of the devil, the serpent, and this brought sin and death upon the whole human race. Yet immediately after this tragic history we encounter some of the most wonderful words ever uttered, “So the Lord God said to the serpent,...I will put enmity between you and the woman; and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:15). There, early in the Bible's first book, the pattern is set for the entire Scripture. It is the history of people's sin and God's grace. Although Adam and Eve sinned, God did not destroy them. Instead He promised that one of the woman's descendants (“her offspring”) would break the devil's power (“crush your head”). The story of mankind's sinfulness runs through the Old Testament like a black thread. But alongside it runs the golden thread of the promised Savior.<sup>6</sup>

### Summary

*The purpose of the Old Testament was to tell sinful people that the Savior was coming into the world to save them from sin and death.*

<sup>5</sup> Keller, page 19.

<sup>6</sup> Lange, Lyle. *Our Great Heritage, Volume I*, Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, WI, 1991, page 235.

<sup>7</sup> Keller, pages 76-77.

<sup>8</sup> Lange, page 237.

## The Purpose of the New Testament

In the New Testament, we look backward to the Savior who has already come. Jesus Christ is the only Savior and the only way to heaven. “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 4:16). The New Testament revealed how Jesus saved us. He lived the perfect life that God demands for heaven. Jesus did that as our substitute (the world's substitute). He died on the cross to pay the just penalty for all sin. He rose from death to assure us that he has won forgiveness for all. The forgiveness is good news (Gospel) for all the world. Our Lord said, “Go into all the world and preach the Good News to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15,16).<sup>7</sup>



### Summary

*The New Testament proclaims that Jesus is the Savior foretold by the Old Testament.*

### Old Testament Prophecy-New Testament Fulfillment-in Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ came to fulfill every promise made by God in the Old Testament.

The New Testament demonstrated that Christ truly did fulfill all the prophecies. Even in small details it linked him with the Old Testament Promises. Consider one verse from Matthew's account of Jesus' suffering (Matthew 27:35): “When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots that the word spoken by the prophet might be fulfilled: ‘They divided my garments among themselves and cast lots for my clothing.’” (see Psalm 22:18).<sup>8</sup>

**Martin Luther said:** “It is beyond a doubt that the entire Scripture points to Christ alone.”

### Discussion

Explain how the Old and New Testament relate to the following passage: “**For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘yes’ in Christ**” (II Corinthians 1:20).

### Old Testament continued

Book	Inspired writer	Approximate date written
Psalms	various, mainly David	most 1000 B.C. (Psalm 90 in 1400s B.C.)
Proverbs	mainly Solomon	before 930 B.C.
Ecclesiastes	Solomon	before 930 B.C.
Song of Songs	Solomon	before 930 B.C.
Isaiah	Isaiah	700 B.C.
Jeremiah	Jeremiah	626-586 B.C. (last chapter is later)
Lamentations	Jeremiah	shortly after 586 B.C.
Ezekiel	Ezekiel	593-571 B.C.
Daniel	Daniel	530 B.C.
Hosea	Hosea	750-715 B.C.
Joel	Joel	uncertain
Amos	Amos	760-750 B.C.
Obadiah	Obadiah	uncertain
Jonah	Jonah	780 B.C.
Micah	Micah	700 B.C.
Nahum	Nahum	630 B.C.
Habakkuk	Habakkuk	609-605 B.C.
Zephaniah	Zephaniah	632-622 B.C.
Haggai	Haggai	520 B.C.
Zechariah	Zechariah	520-518 B.C.
Malachi	Malachi	433 B.C.

Keller, pages 115-118.

### New Testament

Book	Inspired writer	Approximate date written
Matthew	Matthew	A.D. 50
Mark	Mark	A.D. 63
Luke	Luke	A.D. 60
John	John	A.D. 90
Acts	Luke	A.D. 62
Romans	Paul	A.D. 56/57 (winter)
1 Corinthians	Paul	A.D. 56 (spring; 16:8)
2 Corinthians	Paul	A.D. 56 (probably fall)
Galatians	Paul	A.D. 49 (or 51/52)
Ephesians	Paul	A.D. 60/61
Philippians	Paul	A.D. 62
Colossians	Paul	A.D. 60/61
1 Thessalonians	Paul	A.D. 51
2 Thessalonians	Paul	A.D. 51
1 Timothy	Paul	A.D. 63
2 Timothy	Paul	A.D. 67
Titus	Paul	A.D. 66 (summer/fall; 3:12)
Philemon	Paul	A.D. 60/61
Hebrews	(Luther guessed Apollos)	A.D. 65-69
James	James	A.D. 45-49
1 Peter	Peter	A.D. 62
2 Peter	Peter	A.D. 64
1 John	John	A.D. 90
2 John	John	A.D. 90
3 John	John	A.D. 90
Jude	Jude	A.D. 75-80
Revelation	John	A.D. 95

Keller, pages 115-118.