

The Overall Structure and Meaning of the Bible

The Bible can be a big, confusing book that doesn't seem to say much to our everyday lives.

But when we understand some of the structure of God's Word, we find that God is speaking into every situation.

Check out this summary of the structure of the Bible, along with a quick description of each of the individual books.

THE OVERALL STORY OF THE BIBLE

The story of the Bible can be summarized in four movements, *the creation of the world, humans defying God by sinning, God redeeming His entire world through Jesus Christ, and the completion of His work in a new and glorious re-creation.*

We can see this flow through the following texts:

1. God created the world perfectly - Genesis 1
2. God required man to be perfect - Genesis 2
3. Man ruined this creation and did not live perfectly - Genesis 3
4. God established a special people - Genesis 15 and 17
5. God gave His clear instructions on how His people were to live perfectly - Exodus 20
6. God's people did not obey - Amos 2:6-16
7. God decided to bring perfection in a new way - Jeremiah 31:31-37 and Ezekiel 36:22-32
8. God promises to send His Son to carry out this covenant - Isaiah 53
9. The Son of God, Jesus, comes - John 1
10. Jesus comes to establish the kingdom of God - Matthew 12:22-37
11. Jesus dies - Mark 14-15
12. Jesus comes back to life - Luke 24
13. Jesus ascends to heaven and takes His throne as King of all things - Acts 1:1-11
14. The Holy Spirit comes to carry out the covenant - Acts 2
15. The people who have the Holy Spirit are being made perfect again, able to obey God's commands, just like God created it in the beginning. - Ephesians 2:1-10
16. Jesus is coming again to transform everything in this world into His perfection - Revelation 22

WHAT ARE THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE ABOUT?

THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Law – God's commands for how to live

1. Genesis – Man's sin, and the initial steps taken for his redemption by a divine covenant made with a chosen race
2. Exodus – The deliverance of God's people out of captivity
3. Leviticus – How can sinful man approach a holy God?
4. Numbers – Unbelief bars entrance to abundant life
5. Deuteronomy – The divine requirements of obedience

The Former Prophets – Stories of what life looks like while obeying or disobeying God

6. Joshua – How to succeed in the battle against evil
7. Judges – What happens when we quit the battle against evil
8. Ruth – How loving one's neighbor brings fulfilling salvation
9. 1 Samuel – The establishment of the king of God's people
10. 2 Samuel – The effects of obedience and disobedience of the anointed king.
11. 1 Kings – The prophets of the Lord call the king and the Israelites back to obedience
12. 2 Kings – The effects of the disobedience and obedience of the kings of Israel and Judah.
13. 1 Chronicles – The sovereignty of God over the reign of David
14. 2 Chronicles – The inability of David's descendants to recognize the sovereignty of God
15. Ezra – The power of the Word of God in human life
16. Nehemiah – The rebuilding of God's kingdom through prayer and obedience
17. Esther – The effect of obedience in the face of great risk

Wisdom – A description of what life looks like with and without God

18. Job – A Godly example of complaint against the King
19. Psalms – Expressions of praise and sorrow to the sovereign God
20. Proverbs – A map of the life of wisdom
21. Ecclesiastes – A stark description of life on earth without acknowledgement of God
22. Song of Solomon – Human love expressed in a Godly manner

Prophets – Calling the people back to obedience, and looking forward to the Obedient One, Jesus

23. Isaiah – Condemnation and deliverance of the people of God in the nation of Israel
24. Jeremiah – Condemnation and deliverance of the people of God in the nation of Judah
25. Lamentations – Expressing sorrow and repentance for the sin of God's people
26. Ezekiel – God turns His back on His people, but not without the promise of returning and restoring.
27. Daniel – How to live in a world that rejects the one true God
28. Hosea – A human portrayal of the adultery of God's people
29. Joel – A call for the nation to repent before they are destroyed in the Day of the Lord
30. Amos – All of the nations are judged because of their sin, but there is still hope to found in the salvation that God offers.
31. Obadiah – One nation is to be destroyed because of how it treated God's people
32. Jonah – The futility of resisting God, and the expanse of God's mercy
33. Micah – The concern God shows towards the oppressed
34. Nahum – The promise of deliverance for God's people, and the promise of destruction for those who persecute God's people.
35. Habakkuk – The mysteries of providence
36. Zephaniah – There is no hiding from God's judgment, except in the safety of His salvation.
37. Haggai – God's judgment on Judah because they neglected the worship of God
38. Zechariah – A vision of God's judgment and cleansing
39. Malachi – In spite of social sins and corruption in worship, God promises to send a messenger of the covenant

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Gospels – The life and work of the Savior, who obeys the law

40. Matthew – Emphasizes the royalty of Jesus, and His fulfillment of the law of Moses
41. Mark – Christ is the suffering servant
42. Luke – A connected and orderly narrative of the life of Christ, so that we can know that the gospel is certain
43. John – Emphasizes Jesus as the Light of the world, as well as the full divinity and full humanity of Jesus
44. Acts – The work of the Holy Spirit as an effect of Christ's death and resurrection

The Epistles – The description of the effect Jesus' work has on people's lives. They also tell us how we can follow the law as we follow Christ.

45. Romans – The plan of salvation, and the effects of being saved.
46. 1 Corinthians – God calls for unity and purity in His church
47. 2 Corinthians – The motives for being God's worker
48. Galatians – The futility of works and the effectiveness of grace for salvation
49. Ephesians – The diverse church is to be unified in purpose
50. Philippians – The church is encouraged to be pure in the middle of suffering
51. Colossians – The church is taught to avoid heresy and stay true to the pure gospel
52. 1 Thessalonians – The church is encouraged to live in the hope of the future coming of Christ
53. 2 Thessalonians – The teaching about the second coming of Christ is clarified
54. 1 Timothy – How to conduct oneself as a servant of Jesus Christ in His church
55. 2 Timothy – More teaching and encouragement for serving Jesus in His church
56. Titus – The importance of good works to support the sharing of the gospel
57. Philemon - Forgiveness shows the effect of salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit.
58. Hebrews – The fulfillment of the Old Testament is found in Jesus
59. James – Salvation is found through grace by faith, but is confirmed through righteous acts

60. 1 Peter – Strength for a suffering church
61. 2 Peter – A warning against false teachers, and a call to rely only on the Word of God
62. 1 John – Encouragement for Christians to not fall into sin in the face of false teaching, and to give them the assurance of eternal life
63. 2 John – Warnings against heresy and false teachings
64. 3 John – Encourages Christian hospitality
65. Jude – Warnings against immorality and untrue teachings about Jesus and the gospel

66. Revelation – A poetic history picturing the struggle between God's people and the world, with Christ as victor