



CONNECT
SERIES

CONNECT TO THE BIBLE

CLASS IV

OPEN THE BIBLE

KEY POINTS

1

The Bible is not 66 individual books; but one complete story of God's love and redemption.

2

Within the Bible there are several types of writings, and it is important to understand the differences. Each book was written for a specific purpose; and understanding the purpose helps us to fully embrace the author's teaching.

3

Far too often the Bible is taught (and therefore understood) in snippets with a common theme. It is easy to miss the continuity of the story and how it applies to our lives. Understanding the structure and connectivity of the parts of the Bible can help reduce intimidation.

Note: As mentioned in the video, not every book of the Bible is covered in these lessons.

WHY WE READ...

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

– 2 Timothy 2:15

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

– 2 Timothy 3:16-17

WHY WE NEED THE BIBLE

Word of God that teaches us the basis of our beliefs

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More than just reading through

Understanding
Educating
Avoiding intimidation
Correcting

WHERE ARE YOU IN THE BIBLE?

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth...The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints.

Amen

– Genesis 1:1

– Revelation. 22:21

YOU ARE HERE

BIBLE BASICS

- There are 66 books in the Bible; 39 in the Old Testament & 27 in the New Testament. “Testament” means covenant or contract.
- The Catholic Bible includes the Apocrypha.
- Written under inspiration of the Holy Spirit by over 40 different authors.
- Written over a period of some 1,500 years, from around 1450 B.C. (the time of Moses) to about 100 A.D. (following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ).
- Written in 3 languages: Hebrew (OT), Aramaic (very little OT) and Greek (NT).
- Greek translation of the OT in 3rd-2nd century BC (Septuagint)
- The Bible is the best selling book of all time.

HOW DID THE NEW TESTAMENT COME TOGETHER?

- No “formal” meeting or gathering
- Certain documents were being read alongside “Old Testament” – think of reference to “Scripture” in Timothy 3:16-17
- Organization began in response to heretics - Marcion
- Early 4th Century still did not include “disputed books” (James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, Revelation?)
- Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, listed the 27 in 367AD
- What about the other books?
 - Questions of authorship
 - Questions of authority
 - Questions of doctrinal accuracy (Gospel of Thomas)
 - Some that were close include: The Didache, Gospel of Peter, Shepherd of Hermas, Epistle of Barnabas, etc.

NOTES



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THE REFORMATION

- John Wycliffe was a predecessor to the Protestant Reformation and produced the first Bible translated into English in 1384. (*133 years before Martin Luther*)
- Gutenberg invents movable type in 1439.
- Martin Luther writes the Ninety-Five Theses in 1517. He also argued “a simple layman armed with Scripture is greater than the mightiest pope without it”
- One of the five pillars of the Protestant Reformation was “Sola Scriptura” or “by Scripture alone.”
- 1539 the “Great Bible” was ordered to be put in every church in England.
- 1604 King James ordered a new translation that was finished in 1611. It contained all 66 books and the Apocrypha.

TRANSLATIONS

- The number of printed English translations and paraphrases of the Bible, whether complete or not, is about 900.
- It has been translated into over 500 different languages.
- Translation vs. paraphrase:
 - A **translation/formal equivalence** attempts to communicate as “word-for-word” or as “thought-for-thought” as possible.
 - A **paraphrase** is a retelling of something in your own words. A paraphrase takes the meaning of a verse or passage of Scripture and attempts to express the meaning in “plain language.”



THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN STUDYING THE BIBLE

It was written for a different culture

The authors wrote for different purposes/audiences

The authors wrote in different styles

Not intended to be comprehensive - John 21:25 "Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."

Not written as a compilation

You have biases - study the Bible to learn your beliefs, not confirm your beliefs

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What do you find most intimidating about the Bible?



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What do you most want to learn from this class?



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How do you think incorporating Bible reading will help you in your Christian walk?



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WITHIN THE
COVERS OF
THE BIBLE
ARE THE
ANSWERS
FOR ALL THE
PROBLEMS
MEN FACE.

RONALD REAGAN

WHAT IS THE PENTATEUCH/ TORAH?

- The first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy)
- What are some other names?
 - Law
 - Torah (Hebrew word for “law, instruction, or teaching”)
- Who wrote it?
 - Moses?
 - Collection of authors (J -Yahwist, E - Elohist, P - Priestly, D- Deuteronomist)
 - A word about oral traditions
- How is this treated by the Jewish faith?
- How do Christians treat it?

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THE WORLD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT



THE TORAH

GENESIS

- “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth...”
- How should we read the creation story...
 - Literally
 - Allegorically
- What is a covenant?
- Walkthrough (Primeval hist. 1-11:27, Ancestral hist. 11:28-50:26)
 - Creation - 1-5
 - Noah - 6-11, 9:8-17 (covenant) other flood stories
 - Tower of Babel - 11:1-9
 - Abraham (multiple covenants, Ishmael, 17 (Covenant), Sacrifice of Isaac
 - Isaac - Father of Jacob and Esau, 27 the blessing of Jacob
 - Jacob/Israel (29-31 Rachel/Leah (12 tribes), Returning home, 32:22 - wrestling with God,
 - Joseph - 37:5 dream, 39 Joseph’s faithfulness, 40-41 Joseph saves Egypt, 42-50 saves his family (45:4-8)

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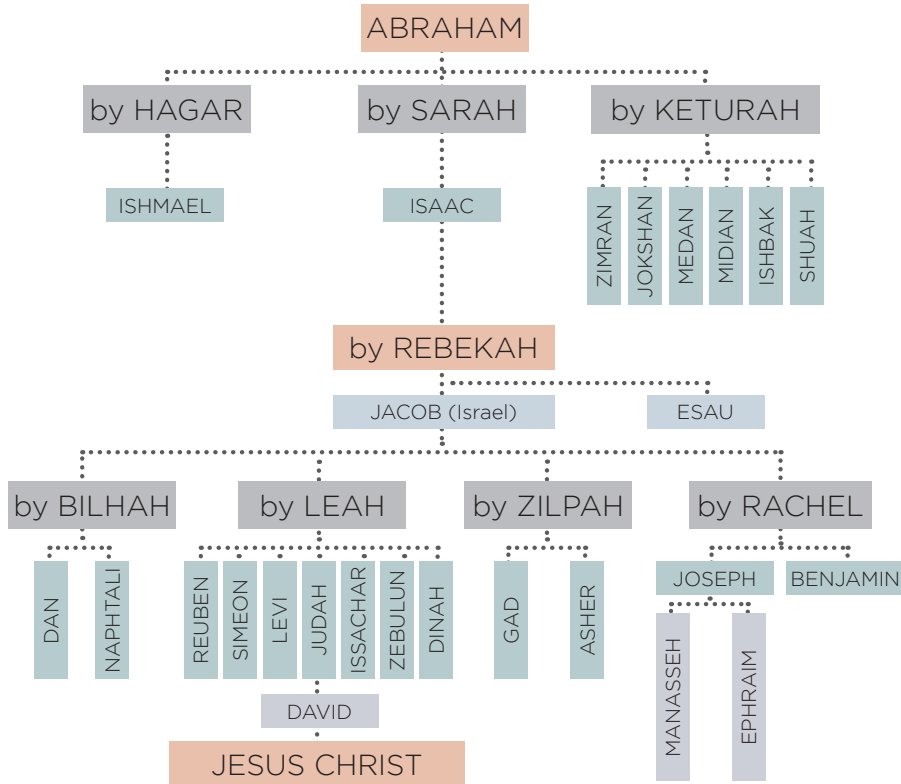
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LINEAGE FROM ABRAHAM TO JESUS



EXODUS

- 1-2 Enslavement and Moses' story
- 3-4 God's directions to Moses (and Aaron)
- 6:6-8 (covenant)
- 7-10 Plagues
- 11-15 Passover and Exodus
- 16 ("how much farther?"), bread from Heaven
- 18:17-24 Establishment of Judges
- 19 Mt. Sinai
- 20 Decalogue, Ten Commandments
- 21-24:6 Instructions to Moses
- 24:7-18 Covenant and tablets of stone
- 25-27 Instructions on the Tabernacle
- 28-29 Aaron and his sons as priests
- 32 The Golden Calf or "Can't I leave you alone for one second"
- 33 Go to the promised land
- 35-40 The creation of the Tabernacle.

LEVITICUS

- Primarily the religious ritual and law
- Five sections (1-7 sacrifice, 8-10 dedication of the Tabernacle, 11-16 ritual purity, 17-26 holiness collection, 27 extra)
- 613 Laws
- Many are still prevalent in Jewish practices.

NOTES



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Handwriting practice lines for notes.

NUMBERS

- From Mt. Sinai to the edge of the promised
- 3-4 Designation of the Levites
- 6 Vow of the Nazirites
- 13-14 Spying on the land and the return - Get lost!
- War, rebellion, rules, repeat
- Preparing for the promised land

DEUTERONOMY

- Four parts
 1. First discourse of Moses (1-4:43) historical recap
 2. Second discourse of Moses (4:44-28:68) review of the law and covenant
 3. Third discourse of Moses (29:1-30:20) ratification of the covenant
 4. Death of Moses (31:1-34:12)

UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURE

- Culture is the biggest inhibitor to us understanding the Old Testament.
- *Epic of Eden* by Sandra Richter



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Despite the cultural differences, how do you see our own lives, actions, and faith in the lives of the Israelites?



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How does God's covenants with Abraham relate to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and our role as disciples?



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How does the Mosaic covenant at Mt. Sinai relate to the new covenant through Jesus (See Jeremiah 31:31-34, Matthew 26:27-28)



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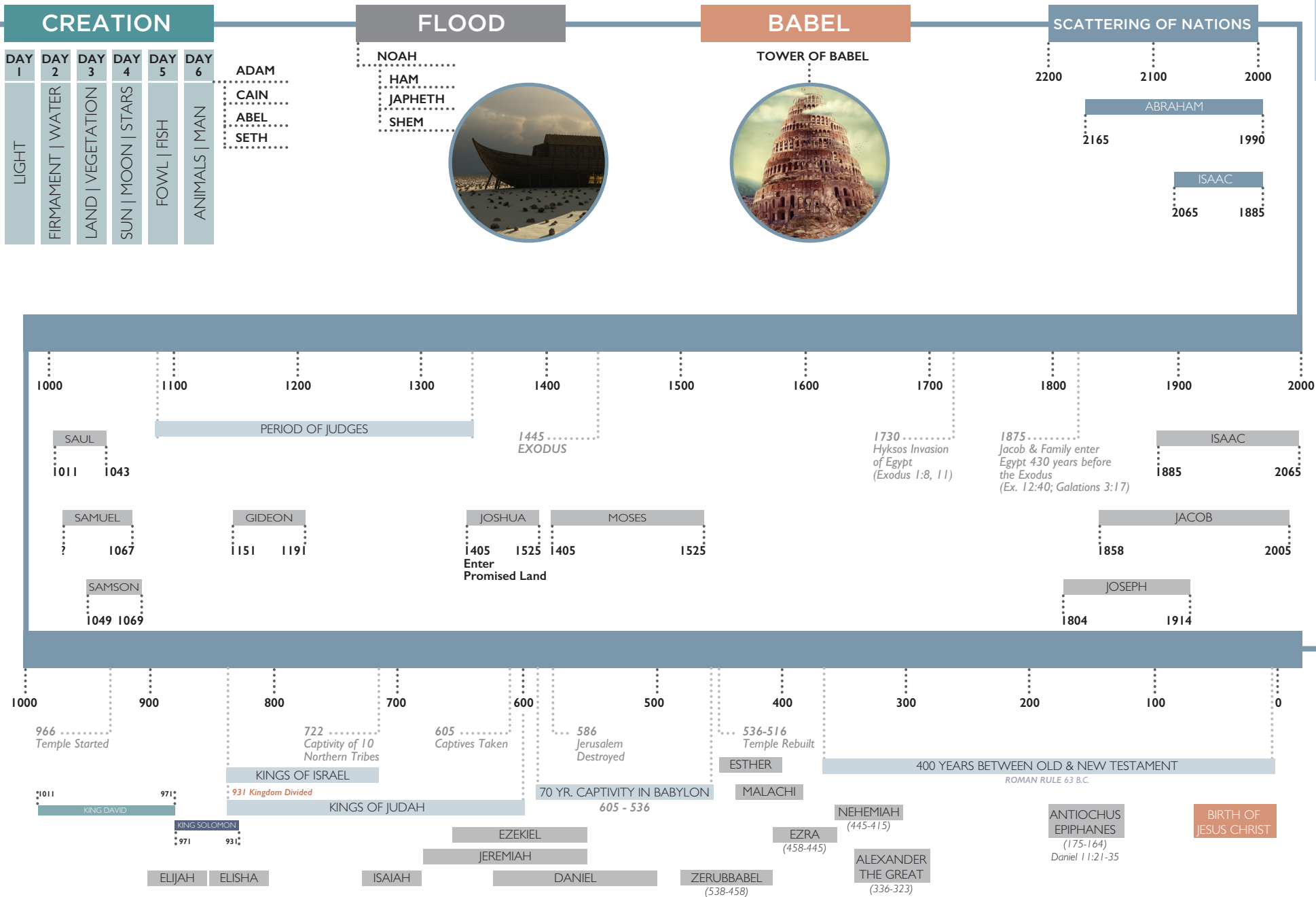
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Recommendation: The book *Epic of Eden* by Sandra Richter is very accessible to understand many important aspects of the OT; including culture, covenant, and content. Anyone interested might want to read this book along with, or before, reading the OT

“THE BIBLE WILL KEEP YOU FROM SIN, OR SIN WILL KEEP YOU FROM THE BIBLE.”

DWIGHT L. MOODY

OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY, POETRY, AND PROPHECY





1 & 2 SAMUEL

- Transition from the last Judge (Samuel) to Saul (beginning of monarchy) to David.
- Why does Israel want a king?
 - Israel wanted to be like other nations/have someone lead in battle
 - Samuel warned them this was a bad idea
- Saul - Only king a short time before he failed to keep faith with God, Samuel informs him his kingship is limited. God sought a man after his own heart.
- After Saul, David becomes king.

1 & 2 KINGS

- Solomon becomes king
- Solomon is a good king (at first) and builds the Temple
- Solomon did not stay faithful (worshipped the gods of his wives), and it was prophesied that the kingdom would be divided.
- Jeroboam rebelled against Solomon.
- God gave Jeroboam 10 tribes, Rehoboam (Solomon's son) had the other two.
- The Nation of Israel was divided. The northern nation (Israel) was led by Jeroboam and the southern nation (Judah) by Rehoboam.
- The majority of the kings (for both nations) were terrible.
- During this time we see two of the most famous prophets - Elijah and Elisha. Both were prophets to the nation of Israel.
- 2 Kings 17:3-6 - Assyria defeats Israel (end of the northern nation of Israel) (722-21)
- 2 Kings 25 - Babylon defeats Judah, destroys the Temple, and takes her people into exile (586)
- So begins the Babylonian Exile.

NOTES



POETRY & WISDOM BOOKS

- This section contains the widest variety of writings (date, purpose, style)
- Wisdom literature (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes) focuses generally on universal human concerns. Limited/no focus on the covenant or the Nation of Israel.
- Love poetry (Song of Songs)
- Temple liturgy (majority of Psalms)

JOB

- The theme is the injustice of suffering
 - The problem of suffering is one of significant focus in theology. Theodicy is the term for the explanation of suffering in light of God's goodness. In spite of its focus on suffering, Job doesn't give many answers (but does quash some erroneous beliefs)
- The three friends speak of the belief of "retribution theology." God blesses the righteous and curses the wicked. Therefore, Job must be a sinner.
- Job does not claim perfection, but questions the justice of God. He wants an interview with God. The general question is who is right, or who is wise.
- Job gets the interview with God. God doesn't justify himself, but clarifies God alone is wise.
- Job repents and is blessed by God.
- Notably, though he questioned God, he never cursed him.
- Retribution theology, the argument that if you suffer, it must be retribution for sin. (John 9:2)

PSALMS

- It is difficult to place historically, as it is a collection, and some are not historically specific.
- If we rely on the titles, they range from Moses (Ps. 90) to the post-exilic period (Ps. 126) – but don't rely solely on the titles.
- Collection probably developed over time (see note after Ps. 72)
- Individual Psalms may have also developed over time (see Ps. 69)
- Do not get bogged down in historical application, but appreciate the beauty and message of each Psalm.
- Not the teaching of God (like that given through the Prophets) but the prayers of his people.
- Genre of Psalms
 - Hymns of joy (often in time of harmonious relation with God - Ps. 100)
 - Hymns of lament (often times of distance with God - Psalm 70)
 - Hymns of Thanksgiving (reunification - Psalm 18)
 - Psalms of Confidence (trust in God - Psalm 23)
 - Psalms of Remembrance (God's acts in the past - Psalm 78)
 - Wisdom Psalms (Ps. 1)
- Provides a rich, if not ordered theology
- If you want a deeper dive, get a good resource to walk you through
- For now, read each one individually, taking the time to stop and reflect.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How do you see the various types of Psalms reflected in your prayer life?



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What are some modern examples of idols in our culture?



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How do the words of the Prophets still apply to our daily life?



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How do we see Christ fulfill the predictions of the Prophets?



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I'VE READ
THE LAST PAGE OF
THE BIBLE.
IT'S ALL GOING TO
TURN OUT ALL RIGHT.

BILLY GRAHAM

TAKE AWAY

The failings of the Israelites are not unique, not are we immune from similar failings within our own context and culture.

The Old Testament is the **story of the Israelites leading to the incarnation** of Christ.

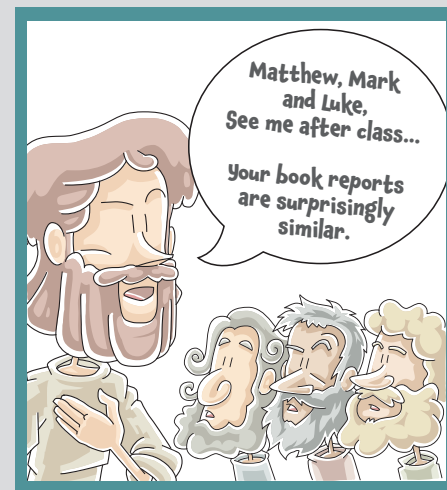
There are **valuable lessons in the wisdom literature** that are generally applicable to our lives.

The Psalms represent an **opportunity to connect with the past** through common prayer

God promised them a Messiah that would redeem them; and we have it with Jesus.

THE GOSPELS

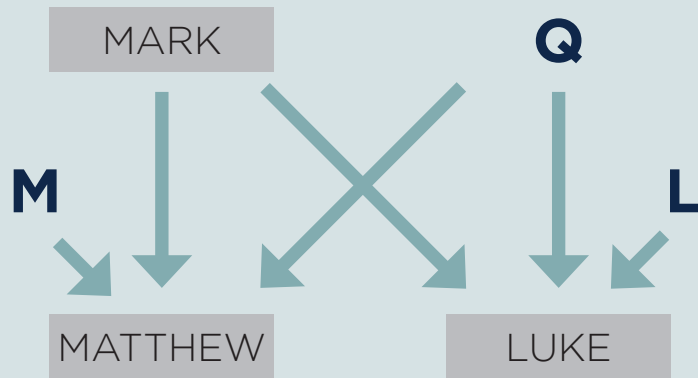
- What does “Gospel” mean? It means “good news”
- Greek is “evangelion”(verb is “evangelizo”)
 - “I am telling the good news.” This is where we get “evangelize”
 - We are telling someone the good news of God and his son, Jesus Christ
 - This was common for big announcements (military victories, Augustus’s birth)
- Gospels are narratives – but what does that mean?
 - Sometimes people will call them histories, biographies, or historiographies
 - Just know it was written for a purpose – to tell a story of “why or how” as opposed to “what” (which is what we think of history)
 - Everything the writer included is for a reason
 - It is important to let every writer tell his own story (don’t assume facts from the other gospels) – but recognize they are a part of a larger whole.
 - How to better understand them – resources (study bible), learn the culture, review cross-references (ex. Mark 5:25 – Lev. 15:25, Mark 4:39 – Psalm 89:9)



Synoptic Gospels

(se näptik gäspelz), *n.* The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which describe events from a similar point of view.

- Why are they ordered Matthew, Mark, Luke, John? This is the order they were originally thought to have been written.
- Now, most scholars believe Mark was written first, followed by Matthew, Luke, and John.
- But, why so similar?



THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

- Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the “Synoptic Gospels” – means “common view or viewed together”
- Most scholars believe Mark was written first and was used by Matthew and Luke. This is called Markan Priority. There are striking commonalities in the original Greek. There are only 30 verses unique to Mark – Don’t stress about the differences!
- Many scholars (not all) believe there was a different source Matthew and Luke used for the materials that are different than Mark. Q is from “Quelle” which is German for “source.”
- There may have been other materials (oral or written) that Matthew and Luke used (four source model)



THE GOSPELS

MARK

- Also known as John Mark. Was an associate and chronicler of Peter – this is supported from early church documents (Acts 12:10 – Peter escapes and goes to Mark’s mom’s house, may have been the stalker in 14:51)
- Believed to be written between 55-70 CE (AD) – the letters of Paul would have been circulating
- Audience – often thought to be for gentiles (explains Jewish culture 7:24) but it would make sense that it was meant for Roman Christians and Jews at the same time.
- Cultural issues are important and would have been understood by Jews (applicable to all gospels). Examples – difficulty with teaching about unclean foods (7:17-19, see Acts 10), feelings towards tax/toll collectors (they were religious outcasts), Honor/shame (not our culture, 3:21, Challenge-riposte 12:14-17)
- Why is Mark important – It was first, It set the style for the gospel narrative (a format where we come to know Jesus)
- Jesus is the Messiah promised in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Boldest intro of the Synoptic Gospels.
- The Gospels are about Jesus, but they are about God first. Mark is telling of God’s intervention in history. 1:14 “Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of God.
- Mark portrays Jesus as both a powerful teacher and a suffering servant (he must be both 10:45)
- It is a Passion-narrative. Pharisees are plotting to destroy in Chapter 3.
- Sacrifice, suffering, and death would have resonated with the readers (Rome burns in 64 and starts persecution of Christians (taking up their cross 8:34) would have been more than metaphorical)

MARK

- Two parts
 - Powerful teacher - 1:1 - 8:26. Many miracles and most of the teaching
 - Suffering Messiah - not what the disciples expected
- Early manuscripts do not include Mark 16:9-20

MATTHEW

- Matthew was a toll collector and is one of the Disciples. He is assumed to be the same as Levi (Mk 2:13-17),
- Probably written after 70 CE (closer to 80 CE)
- Not the first chronologically, but a good transition from the OT.
 - Draws more on Hebrew Scriptures than other Gospels (shows a great respect for Judaism, but not the leaders)
 - Emphasizes the fulfilling of OT prophecy
 - Gospel most relied on by the early church
- Inclusion of the birth narrative and resurrection presents a more complete story.
- Matthew has the highest percentage of writing devoted to the teachings of Jesus
- It is the Gospel most focused on the church.
 - Only gospel to use the word ἐκκλησία (ecclesia) which means “church”
 - Focuses on church discipline, liturgical practices, and mission.
- Specific Teachings
 - Birth Narrative
 - a. Contains the genealogy back to Abraham
 - b. Contains the story of Jesus escaping to Egypt
 - Sermon on the Mount

- Fundamental teachings of Jesus
- How to witness, what is sin, forgiveness, who is your neighbor, how to pray, how to give, dangers of money, ...
- 11:28-30 - “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”
- The Parables of net gathering fish, pearl of great price, treasure in the field, laborers in the vineyard, the unforgiving servant.
- The Primacy of Peter
- The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats
- The Great Commission
- Many others

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LUKE & ACTS

- Likely a physician (mentioned in Colossians & Timothy)
- Sometimes a companion of Paul (uses “we” language in Acts 16:10-17, 20:5-15, etc.)
- Never actually named as the author – but no real debate
- Most prolific writer of NT
- Wrote Luke and Acts (probably divided for length – scroll)
- Historically considered a Gentile Christian (no evidence)
- Often gets overlooked – despite the fact that many of the stories you know (Greatest Hits”) are only in Luke. (Good Samaritan, Prodigal son, Rich man and Lazarus, Road to Emmaus)
- Why is Luke the only one who tells them? They fit in with his narrative.



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LUKE

- How is it divided
 - 1:1-4:13 (Intro, Birth Narrative, and Prep for Ministry)
 - 4:14-9:50 – (Ministry in Galilee)
 - 9:51-19:48 (The Journey to Jerusalem)
 - 20:1-24:53 (Jerusalem, Crucifixion, Resurrection)
- Birth Narrative – so important
 - Christmas!!!!
 - Peanuts Christmas (Linus drops his blanket at 2:8-14)
 - Shows a parallelism between John and Jesus
 - Many ties back to Scripture (shows a continuous line from Israel to Jesus to Acts)
 - Luke lays out his themes in the Songs – Mary’s Song (Magnificat), Zechariah’s Song (Benedictus), Simeon’s Song (no name).
 - God is savior – God is the ultimate source of salvation. Jesus is the instrument of this salvation. Σωτηρια (salvation) is used 10 times in Luke-Acts, but none in Mark/Matthew.
 - Mary talks of God as Savior
 - Zachariah does too – John is subordinate to Jesus’s role
 - Lifting up the lowly/bringing down the powerful
 - a. Mary’s song lays this out – this is what he will do as savior. 1:51-53 – we will see this throughout this narrative (not just financial – the lost, the outcasts, vocation, family, those on the fringe, look at Elizabeth) 19:10 sums this up – “For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost”
 - A light to the Gentiles –Simeon’s Song 2:29-32
 - Think of these as you read Luke!



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How do you see different characteristics of Jesus in the different Gospels?



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Why is it important to read all three?



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How do the three Gospels reach different audiences?



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How could you incorporate the Gospels into your daily worship?



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TAKE AWAY

UNDERSTANDING THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS IS IMPERATIVE TO OUR CHRISTIAN WALK.

JESUS IS NOT A CHARACTER FROM A BOOK; BUT IS THE MESSIAH, FULLY HUMAN AND FULLY DIVINE, COME TO EARTH TO REDEEM US FROM OUR SINS. WHILE CERTAIN VERSES AND STORIES REFLECT HIS CHARACTER, YOU MUST READ ABOUT HIS LIFE AND HIS TEACHINGS TO FULLY UNDERSTAND WHO HE IS AND WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR US. KNOWING THE GOSPELS IS INTEGRAL TO OUR LIFE AS CHRISTIANS.



The Bible says that all things work together for the good of those who love the Lord and are called according to his purpose. I believe that. Because I've seen it all work.

– Tyler Perry

JOHN & ACTS

KEY THEMES

1

How John's gospel differs from the Synoptic Gospels, and why he wrote it.

2

The development and geographic expansion of the early Church. His disciples to heal others

3

The discipleship of Gentiles, and the internal problems/conflict it caused.

JOHN was the Gospel writer that was closest to Christ. He (along with Peter and James) were in the inner circle. With his Gospel, he focuses on the divine nature of Christ. It is a much more spiritual Gospel, and in conjunction with the Synoptic Gospels it presents the fully-realized nature of Christ.

ACTS presents the continuation of Christ's message as it rapidly expands both geographically and ethnically. This is the history of the early Church. We see the joys and pains. Paul's ministry to the Gentiles serves a source of immense growth; but also conflict within the Church. Acts continues to be an example of the importance of discipleship and how conflict can be resolved within the church.

GOSPEL

JOHN

- Probably the “beloved disciple”, definitely part of the inner circle
- Most scholars think the Gospel was written around 90 CE
- Only disciple that was not martyred.
- Contains some similarities with the Synoptic Gospels, so most scholars believe he was familiar with them. Some argue that because the Synoptics already existed, John wanted to tell the more spiritual story of Jesus
- John makes many references to “the Jews.” This has been used through the years to support anti-Semitism. Upon closer examination it appears the references are to the leaders, not a broad statement about all Jews (which they were)
- Purpose – So that the reader will believe in Jesus and have eternal life “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” 20:30-31 Not written for those that were witnesses, but for those that came after.
- Purpose – To show that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of Man, the Son of God, King of Israel; but he is more. He is the logos (Word), he was with God from the beginning, and he was God.
 - “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” – John 1:1-5
 - “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the



- earth... And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.” – Genesis 1:1-3
- “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” – John 1:14
- Jesus was both man and God. He can’t be understood through a simple biography.
- 1:1-18 – Prologue
- 1:19-12:50 – Signs he is the revelation of the Father, scene of many bitter disputes
- 13:1-20:31 – The glory of Jesus is revealed to those who accept him.
- 21:1-25 – Post-resurrection appearance.
- Interesting aspects to John (brief sample)
 - John uses the term “Father” for God in relation to Jesus 120 times (emphasizing divinity)
 - The Passion does not reflect agony
 - Jesus never casts out demons
 - Many of the stories show a division between those that are believing and drawing closer and those that are falling away.
 - a. “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” 1:11-12
 - b. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ...Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 3:16,18



HISTORY

ACTS

- The Church referred to as “The Acts of the Apostles” even though Peter is the only Apostle whose acts are included in any detail.
- But Luke shows the continuity of the message of Jesus through the disciples’ leadership in the early Church.
- The date of authorship varies, but is often thought to be late 1st Century
- Its placement (not with Luke) acts a transition from the Gospels to the letters, acts as the transition of the presentation of the Gospels to the Gentiles, provides a bigger picture basis of the events of the letters.
- Acts is the story of Jesus’s message serving as the basis of the Church; and the expansion of the ministry to the Gentiles.
- The first half of the book focuses on Peter in Jerusalem, and the second half on Paul’s missionary journeys.
- Acts is both a historical document (not in the way we expect a history) and a theological instruction to the Church.
- 1:1-26 – Preparations
- 2:1-6:7 – Witness of the disciples in Jerusalem
- 6:8-15:35 – Expansion of the mission beyond Jerusalem
- 15:36-20:38 – Paul’s mission
- 21:1 – 28:31 – Paul imprisoned and on trial



- Notable events:
 - 1:6-11 – Ascension and guarantee of the Spirit
 - 2:1-27 – Coming of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost, 7th Sunday after Easter), Peter’s sermon, fellowship of believers
 - 6:8-7:60 – Arrest, speech, and stoning of Stephen
 - 8:26-40 – Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch
 - 9:1-31 – Conversion of Saul
 - 0:1-11:18 – Conversion of Cornelius, 10:34 – Message to Gentiles, 10:44 Holy Spirit comes to Gentiles
 - Chapter 11 – Peter’s report to the Church
 - 12:1-19 – James killed and Peter imprisoned
 - 13:1 – Begins Paul’s missionary journeys
 - Chapter 15 – Jerusalem Council
 - Chapter 21 – 28 – Paul’s arrest and imprisonment

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What differences do you see in the content of John and the Synoptic Gospels?



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What does it mean to receive Christ and believe in his name (John 1:12)?



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What can the early disputes in the church teach us about how to handle differences today?



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TAKE AWAY

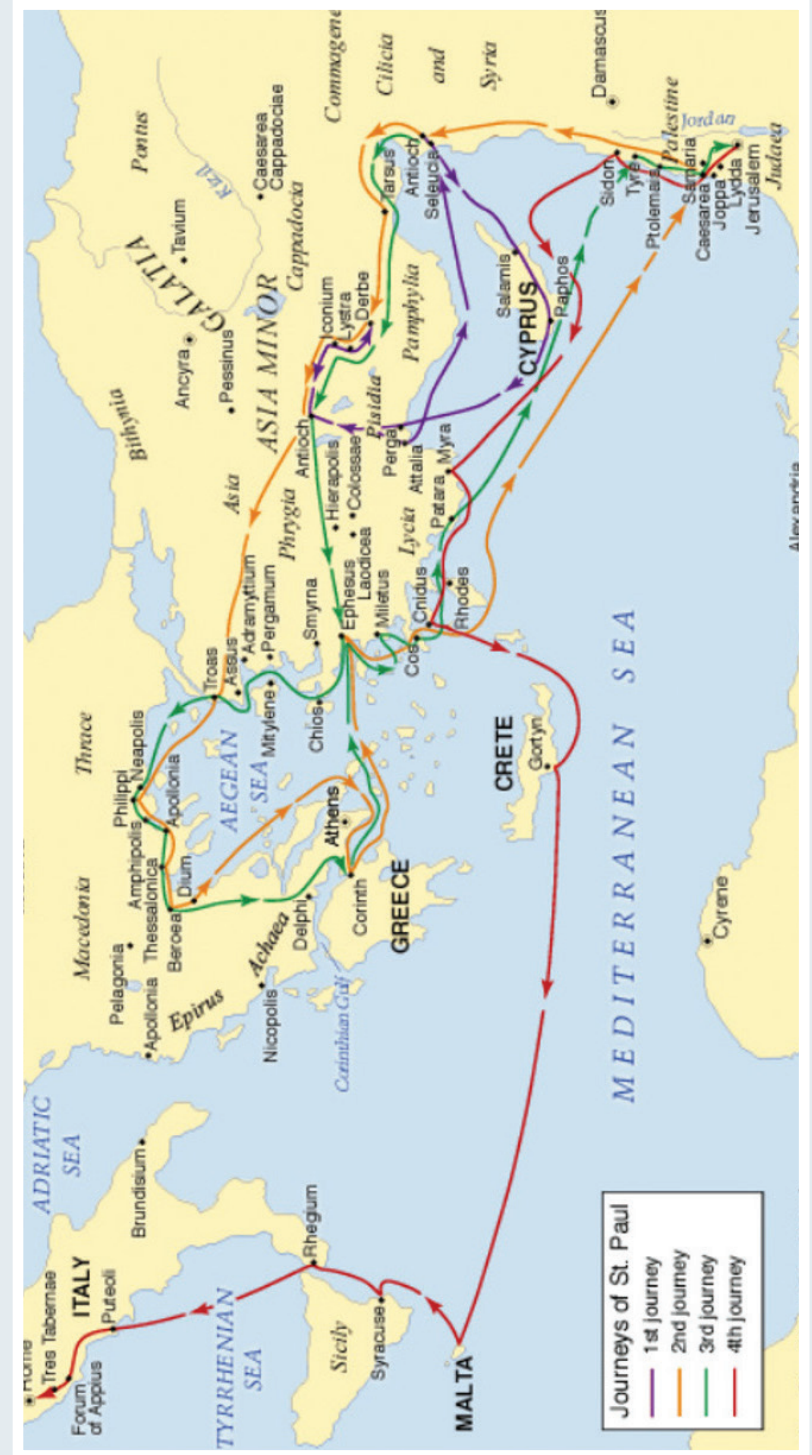
Understanding the divinity of Christ is paramount to fully realizing his nature. John’s gospel explains the “why” of Christ’s sacrifice. It is where we understand the true importance of faithfully submitting to Christ’s lordship.

Each person can make a difference with their discipleship. Whether a person is speaking to huge crowds (Peter), expanding the message of Christ to those who don’t know it (Paul to the Gentiles), or in a one-on-one encounter (Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch).



THE LETTERS

The letters present much of the theology of the Church. This is the application of the Gospel to the lives and problems of those that were following Christ. Many things that Paul writes about are analogous to what people deal with today. People may no longer argue about the requirement of circumcision, but the dichotomy between the teaching of Christ and the teaching of the world is as prevalent as ever.



THE JOURNEYS OF PAUL

THE LETTERS OR EPISTLES

- Generally the oldest documents in the New Testament. 1 Thessalonians is often dated before 50 CE.
- 13 are attributed to Paul
- 1 is unknown (Hebrews)
- 7 to Apostles (Peter, John, James, Jude).
- There are a lot of discussions about who actually wrote certain letters. Paul, for example, had several associates and some materials may not have been originally written by him. The early Church included these documents in the Canon despite questions of authorship. It is the content, not the author that counts.
- There are letters that are referenced that we don't have.
- The letters are the theology established by the early church.
- Style of Hellenistic letters
 - Opening (identification of sender, receiver, greeting, well-wishes)
 - Body (intention of letter, why letter was written, how recipient should respond)
 - Closing (wishes for recipient, greetings from third parties)



PAUL

- Converted on the road to Damascus. (Acts 9)
- Much of his missionary work is to Gentiles
- Probably the most important theologian
- Argued the importance of being free of the Jewish Law
- Argued extensively for the importance of grace not works
- Wrote on the importance and role of the Holy Spirit in our lives

- The message of Christ is universal (to all). "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" – Gal. 3:28
- Message of living together in unity, morality, repentance.
- Provided lessons of structure for the Church.
- Remember that Paul was often addressing problems in specific churches. Certain teachings are more cultural than doctrinal (1 Cor. 33-35, 1 Tim. 2:12, see other comments on women – his associates)

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