

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BIBLE

“All Scripture is inspired by God...” 2 Timothy 3:16a (NASB)
“For the word of God is living and active...” Hebrews 4:12a (NASB)

The Holy Spirit inspired men to write the Bible, which contains sixty-six books written over hundreds of years. Also called Scripture and the written word of God, the Bible has proven its accuracy and dependability, over, and over. Because of the design, inspiration, and organization of the Bible it can be, both understood and defended intelligently. Discovering how the Bible is organized gives us an important tool to unlock the truths, design, and inspiration, contained within its pages.

The Bible contains eight sections. The first section in the Old Testament extends from creation through the exodus of the nation of Israel from Egypt, followed by the history section, the poetry section, and the prophecy section. The New Testament sections include the gospels (the good news about the Christ), history section, letters section (written to various churches, groups and individuals), and the prophecy section (primarily about the return of Christ).

Each of the Bible’s different sections provides unique views into the lives, words, and subjects found in the Bible. For example, the Old Testament’s poetry section contains the Psalms of David but the history section is where we find details about his life. Similar views exist in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul discusses his imprisonment in his letter to the Philippians, an imprisonment pictured in the history section, the Book of Acts. The different sections provide different windows of perspective through which we read, understand, and gain greater content and added depth.

Understanding how the Bible’s different sections fit together can help us prioritize and organize our own beliefs. For example, we need foundational truths that apply to all believers. In the New Testament, the gospels and the letters section are where we find the majority of those truths. We also need examples from which we can take personal lessons and personal applications. The history sections are where we find most of these examples.

Outwardly, the Bible is two-dimensional, ink on paper, but the Holy Spirit, who inspired the Bible’s words and design can help us discover unique and inspiring connections. It is as if below the surface of each page,

with each word, each verse, each lesson, there are connections to thousands of other pages, words, verses, and lessons. As we read, we are compiling spiritual information to make those connections possible just like adding books to a library. The Holy Spirit is able to pull that information from our “spiritual library” when we have need of that specific thing. This allows us to make new and surprising “spiritual connections” but we must first put that information in our minds.

We can discover the deepest thoughts of God and those things He has given to us and He wants us to know (see 1 Corinthians 2). Such things are possible because the Holy Spirit inspired the writing of the Bible and He knows our hearts and our needs. The Bible is “living and active...able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (see Hebrews 4:12). The Holy Spirit can use those words written hundreds of years ago to meet our needs today. The more we read the more we are equipped to discover those spiritual connections, connections that demonstrate the design, organization, accuracy, and dependability of the Bible.

However, those same attributes of biblical design often expose conflicts between our beliefs and what the Bible teaches. Trusting in the Bible’s design we must become self-correcting and root out those conflicts that most often come from our own opinions, religious traditions, or denominational thinking.

Where do we start? The Bible is not a novel (to be read straight through from beginning to end) but a roadmap for life’s journey. The Bible tells us where we begin our spiritual journey and where we are going. The beginning of that journey starts in Genesis with the history of creation and man’s sin. In the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), we find the solution to that sin problem and discover the teachings, life, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, of Jesus our Savior. We also need examples to give us clarity and detailed direction. The book of Acts, an historical book, provides great lessons from the lives of men and women in the early church. Books, like Romans, contain foundational truths and instruction needed to understand both Old and New Testament.

For example, the first eight chapters in Romans is almost a blueprint for Christian growth. The Book of

Romans begins with a description of God as creator (Romans 1). Next, sin is discussed and the law of God that condemns our sin (Romans 1-3), then we are taught about faith to believe in Christ as payment for our sin (Romans 4-5) and how we can overcome sin in our daily lives (Romans 6-8).

We are on a “spiritual road trip” and the Bible is our roadmap so we need to read large portions of the Bible so we acquire an overview and gain perspective. We also need in-depth study and detailed knowledge in order to enrich our faith. On a long road trip we may see the plains rise to meet the mountains and mountain snows becoming rivers leading to the oceans but in order to obtain detailed knowledge we must slow down, take a walk or meet some of the local people. Considering details adds significant depth to our travels. To be a well-rounded student of God’s word we also need both perspective and depth.

As we read and study the Bible, our spiritual foundation grows. The Holy Spirit within us, as believers, feeds on that study giving us a hunger to know more. Commit to reading the Bible at least five minutes every day. Watch how quickly that time grows as a hunger for God’s written word increases. Having knowledge of how the Bible is organized allows us to gain additional benefit from what we read. Such knowledge also feeds that hunger for the Bible. As we read more, and more, our knowledge of how the Bible is organized better equips us to know where to read so we can find out where we are and see where we are going.

OLD TESTAMENT

1. Creation-Israel-the Law (Genesis to Deuteronomy)

The first five books of the Bible tell us of creation, of God’s chosen people, Israel, and of the law.

2. History (Joshua to Esther)

This section of Israel’s history is full of many examples of faith, of human failure, of God’s power, and His glory. In this section, we find many instructive lessons we can apply to our lives.

3. Poetry (Job to Song of Solomon)

Within this section we find the lessons of Job’s suffering and God’s faithfulness, the Psalms (songs) of David, the wisdom of Solomon, and an intimate portrait of love from the Song of Solomon that runs

parallel to the intimacy between the believer and Christ.

3. Prophecy (Isaiah to Malachi)

The Old Testament prophets spoke about their immediate times (often seen in the history section) and the distant future. The prophets also told us about the Christ, who is our God and Savior, who was to suffer as a servant, die, rise from the dead and then to return again to reign on this earth.

NEW TESTAMENT

1. The Gospels (Matthew to John)

The gospels are central to the Bible telling us about Christ’s birth, life on earth, teachings, suffering, death, resurrection, His ascension into heaven, the promise of His return, and the promise of the Holy Spirit for believers.

2. History (Acts)

The book of Acts is an historical account of the early church mostly about the life and travels of the Apostle Paul. Beginning with the gift of the Holy Spirit to believers, the pages of Acts depict the transition from the gospels to the birth of the church and how early Christians changed the world.

3. The Letters (Romans to Jude)

The Letters (or Epistles) give us the greatest content for understanding the faith that is common to all believers and how that faith differs from lessons taken from examples or purely personal issues.

4. Prophecy (Revelation)

Revelation contains letters written to the seven churches in Asia but it deals primarily with the return of Christ to the earth. Often misunderstood and considered purely symbolic by some Revelation must be considered with other prophecies of Christ’s return, such as are found in Daniel, Matthew 24, Mark 13, and 2 Thessalonians. Prophecies in both Testaments can be obvious but also deeply mysterious with some facts not understood until they unfold. For example, we now see for the first time in history the political will and technologies that could fulfill every requirement for the “mark of the beast” described in Revelation 13. Revelation is worthy of our consideration for the Lord will return and we must know how to prepare as faithful servants waiting for their Master.

Please support the Constitutional Alliance, a not-for-profit organization. Your gift may be tax deductible. Send contributions to: Constitutional Alliance PO Box 2512 Mountain View, AR 72560 Donate online at: www.constitutionalalliance.org

The Organization of the Bible 082415 js 2p.doc