

An Overview of Scripture

The Old Testament (Covenant)

Genesis

The Bible has one dramatic theme throughout. It begins with the creation of man in the image of God. That is quickly followed by the fall of man, the marring of that image. The rest of the Bible is about restoring the image of God in man.

God began to prepare mankind for restoration by entering into a covenant with Abraham. The Old Testament would better be called the Old Covenant. The covenant promised that through the Jewish people the entire world would be blessed. God promised his descendants the land of Canaan. That covenant promise was renewed to his son Isaac and grandson Jacob. Jacob's name was changed to Israel and thus the promise was passed on to the children of Israel. Israel and his twelve sons ended up in Egypt. There they became a great nation.

Exodus through Deuteronomy

After 400 years in Egypt, the descendants of Israel had become a great nation, but were used as slave labor. Moses led them out of Egypt and to the Promised Land. On the journey there, God gave Moses laws and ritual worship for the people to live by.

Joshua, Judges, Ruth

Moses died before going into the Promised Land. His general, Joshua, led them to victory over the people of the land of Canaan. For the next 400 years, Israel was ruled by judges. The surrounding nations often invaded Israel. It was a constant tug of war for the land.

1 Samuel to 2 Chronicles

The last judge was named Samuel. The nation wanted a king. Samuel anointed Saul as the first king. The second king was the greatest king of Israel, King David. During his reign and that of his son, Solomon, Israel reached its peak. David had a special relationship with God. God promised that there would come one from his lineage that would reign forever. After Solomon, the nation was divided into the northern 10 tribes, called Israel, and the southern two called Judah. The northern tribes were conquered and amalgamated with foreign nations. The southern two went into captivity a hundred years later but returned to Israel after 70 years of captivity.

Job – Song of Songs

Job is a story of suffering from the period of Genesis. The other books are songs and words of wisdom, mostly composed by David and Solomon.

Isaiah – Malachi

The prophets could be subgrouped into two categories, those who spoke to the kings, and those who prophesied to the captive nation of Judah. They sometimes prophesied to other nations as well. It is in these prophesies that we

see many predictions of the king that was to rule forever. The last prophet of the old covenant was Malachi. There was a 400 year period in which God did not speak through a prophet.

Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

Esther was a Jewish queen, married to a heathen king. Her story is during the captivity. Ezra and Nehemiah were leaders of the effort to return and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.

The New Covenant

Matthew, Mark, Luke

These first three records of the life and ministry of Jesus follow the same pattern and cover much of the same material. Each has a slightly different focus. Jesus says his blood will initiate a new covenant with man.

John

John tells much of what the other gospels leave out. He wrote his gospel last, and much later. His emphasis is that Jesus is God. All of the gospels focus on the good news that Jesus died for us and conquered death. They end with Jesus ascending into heaven as He tells his followers to tell the world about His teaching.

Acts

Acts tells of the coming of the Spirit of God into people's lives. It tells how the church began and the struggles it endured. The last half of Acts is mostly focused on the missionary work of a converted rabbi named Paul. Acts is critical in sharing how the gospel went from Jews to Gentiles (non-Jews).

Romans through Philemon

Paul explains the philosophy of the early church in letters to churches. Much of our understanding of doctrines (the teaching of the Apostles) is described in these letters. Paul shows how faith in Christ begins our transformation back into the image of God. He shows that Christ is the fulfillment of all the promises to Abraham and David. He explains Christian living, the church and how it is to function, some foretelling of the future, and some specific instruction for unique situations. 1&2 Timothy and Titus are called pastoral letters as they were written to church leaders.

Hebrews

A letter explaining Jesus superiority to prophets, angels, Abraham, and Moses. It also teaches the importance and history of faith. It encourages the readers to prepare for persecution and know Judaism is not an alternative. Author unknown

1 Peter to Jude

Short letters from Peter, John and Jude to churches and individuals.

Revelation

Letters to seven churches in Asia and a revelation of events to come. This revelation was given by Jesus to John the Apostle. It contains many expressions and predictions similar to the prophets that ministered in the Old Testament.