How We Got The Bible

Lesson 10 - Thinking Your Way Through the Bible – November 30, 2022

We have for the most part, concluded the material for this class. However I want to go back and discuss a little further, a couple of the elements in this process, and also to answer some very good questions that some of you have asked. And we are going to do that next week. But tonight I want give you another step that you can take in understanding the Bible. Actually, I want to show you 3 pretty easy ways you can learn to think your way through the Bible, and hopefully it will give you a better understanding of the chronology of the Bible as well.

First of all, the easiest way that I know to think your way through the Bible is simply to memorize the books of the bible in the order that you find them listed in the front of most any English translation of the Bible. I memorized the books of the Bible when I was a pre-teen in Vacation Bible School. I didn’t get saved until I was 20 and when I began to read and study the Bible as a Christian, I realized I had an advantage, in that I was able to quickly find a book or passage of the Bible by reciting in my head, those titles I had tucked away there years before. It was and is a tremendous help in studying the scripture.

I’ve included below, a simple chart with the names of all the books, that you can print and carry with you and memorize them. I want to challenge you to do that.

Second, and really as a help in memorizing the books of the Bible is learning the divisions of the English Bible. As we have learned, scribes and scholars throughout the centuries worked to make the Bible more easily readable and convenient to study. One of the things they did was to arrange the books in both the Old and New Testaments in a certain order.

The 39 books of the Old Testament are arranged in groups of 5s and 12s. The first five are the Law. Then next 12 are Historical Books. Next are the 5 Poetical Books, followed by Five Major Prophets, and finally the 12 Minor Prophets. (The difference between Major and Minor prophets, simply being the length of the books.)

The 27 books of the New Testament begin with the 5 historical books, of the four gospels and the book of Acts, followed by 21 epistles (letters) written by apostles and those closely associated with them, and lastly the single prophetic book, The Revelation.

In both the Old and New Testaments there are other divisions that can be seen in a second chart below. Learning and memorizing these divisions will also help you in thinking your way through the Bible.

The third and for me the most effective way of thinking through the Bible is through the use of the historical periods of the Bible. The benefit of this method is that while the English Bible with its divisions provide a measure of help in understanding the overall plan of the Bible, it can also be confusing if you don’t realize that the books are largely NOT listed in chronological order. Some are, but many are not, and that served as, source of perplexity for me until I learned to think through the Bible using this method.

They Historical Periods are listed in chronological order. Each one includes, “From” and “To” events to identify the beginning and end of each period. They are also marked by dates, as well as the sections of scripture where they are found.

HISTORICAL PERIODS OF THE BIBLE

THE OLD TESTAMENT

The dates listed for the first 6 periods are approximate.

I The Beginnings Period ‑ *From creation to Abraham* B.C. 4000 ‑1900. Genesis chapters 1‑11.

II The Patriarchal Period ‑ *From Abraham to Israel's descent into Egypt.* B.C. 1900 ‑ 1700. Genesis chapters 12‑50.

III The Egyptian Period ‑ *From Israel's descent into Egypt until the exodus out of Egypt*. B.C. 1700‑1500. Exodus chapters 1‑14.

IV The Wilderness Period ‑ *From the exodus out of Egypt to the entrance into Canaan.* B.C. 1500‑1460. Exodus chapters 15‑40, and the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

V The Conquest Period ‑ *From the entrance into Canaan to the death of Joshua.*  B.C. 1460‑1430. The Book of Joshua.

VI The Judges Period ‑ *From the death of Joshua to the setting up of the kingdom.*  B.C. 1430‑1053. The Books of Judges and Ruth.

VII The United Kingdom Period ‑ *From the setting up of the kingdom to the division of the kingdom.*  B.C. 1053 ‑ 933. (120 years, 3 kings) [Saul, David, and Solomon] I & II Samuel, I Kings chapters 1‑11, I Chronicles and II Chronicles chapters 1‑9.

VIII The Divided Kingdom Period ‑ *From the division of the kingdom to the captivity of the Northern kingdom*. B.C. 933 ‑722. I Kings 12:1 ‑ II Kings 17:41; II Chronicles chapters 10 ‑28; and the books of Jonah, Amos, Joel, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah.

IX The Single Kingdom Period ‑ *From the captivity of the northern kingdom to the captivity of the southern kingdom.* B.C. 722 ‑ 605. II Kings 18:1 ‑ 25:30; II Chronicles 29:1 ‑ 36:23; and the books of Nahum, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk.

X The 70 Year Captivity Period ‑ *From the first deportation of the southern kingdom until the return from captivity*, B.C. 605 ‑536. The books of Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Obadiah.

XI The Partial Restoration Period ‑ *From the return from captivity to the close of the Old Testament Canon.*  B.C. 536‑400. The books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

I. The Intertestament Period - *From Malachi to the Events Leading To The Birth of Christ* - 400 B.C. - 5 B.C. (There is no inspired record of this period.)

II. The Life of Christ - *From the birth to the resurrection and ascension of Christ.* 5 B.C. - A.D. 30 Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

III. The Church in Jerusalem - *From the founding of the Church at Pentecost to the scattering of the Church because of persecution by the Jewish leaders.* A.D. 30 - 35 Acts Chapters 1-7

IV. The Church in Judea and Samaria - *From the scattering of the Jerusalem Church to the beginning of Paul's first missionary journey.* A.D. 35-45 Acts Chapters 8-12

V. The Church in All The World - *From the beginning of Paul's first missionary journey to the close of the book of Acts* A.D. 45-63 Acts Chapters 13-28; The books of James, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Corinthians, Galations, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, I Timothy, I Peter, and Titus

VI. The Church in Perilous Times - *From the Close of the book of Acts to the Death of John (the last apostle) and the close of the New Testament canon.*  A.D. 63-100 The books of II Timothy, II Peter, Jude, Hebrews, I,II,III John, and Revelation.