



## The Bible → God's Story<sup>1</sup>

### The Bible

The word "bible" was derived from the Greek word *biblia*, which means "books." The Christian Bible is comprised of 66 books,<sup>2</sup> written over a period of roughly 1500 years by approximately 40 different human authors. However, the Bible is also *one* book, containing two main sections: the Old Testament (old covenant) and the New Testament (new covenant).<sup>3</sup>

#### ***The Old Testament***

The Old Testament contains 39 books, written over a period beginning at least 1400 years before the time of Jesus Christ. See "When Old Testament Events Happened."

#### ***The New Testament***

The New Testament contains 27 books, written within the first century after the time of Jesus Christ. See "When New Testament Events Happened."

#### ***The Scope of the Bible***

The Bible spans the entire history of the earth. The first book (Genesis) begins, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The last book (Revelation) talks about the end of this earth, and the making of a new heaven and a new earth (*Revelation 21:1*).

#### ***The Unity of the Bible***

Though written over a period of roughly 1500 years by about 40 different human authors, the Bible is remarkably unified. The Bible is unified because of its one Divine Author. God used the human authors to record what He wanted to say (*2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21*). Thus the Bible is "God's written revelation" or "God's Word." Not only is the Bible unified because of its one Divine Author, but because it conveys one main story – the true story concerning God and his relationship to mankind. This is 'God's story.'

### God's Story – The Big Picture

"God's story" is the subject of "Biblical theology."<sup>4</sup> Michael Lawrence says, "Biblical theology puts the narrative of Scripture together as a single, coherent story that begins just before the beginning of time and ends just after the end of history. It looks at the big picture and asks how all the parts fit together to form the whole."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'God's story' is a *true* story concerning God and his relationship to mankind. God's story is addressed to us!

<sup>2</sup> The Roman Catholic Bible contains other books from the Old Testament period, but these books (the Apocrypha) are omitted from the Hebrew and Protestant Christian Bibles since they do not meet the standard of the other books.

<sup>3</sup> 'covenant' – an agreement between two parties that establishes a relationship and in which obligations or mutual responsibilities may be enacted. Some Bible covenants provide only divine promises while others entail obligations. God enacted a 'new covenant' with the coming of Jesus – providing a new way of relating to God.

<sup>4</sup> 'Biblical theology' is defined in different ways, but this course follows the definition provided by Michael Lawrence.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Michael Lawrence, 8-7-10. *Gospel Coalition*. Retrieved 9-2-13 from <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justintaylor/2010/08/07/interview-with-michael-lawrence-on-biblical-theology-and-the-church/>.

## God's Story – The Story of Redemption

The Bible's "grand narrative" includes "four major plot movements – creation, fall, redemption, and restoration."<sup>6</sup> The movement from creation to fall to redemption occurs in the first three chapters of the Bible (*Genesis 1-3*). "Restoration" is the final goal of redemption – in other words, consummation (*Revelation 21-22*). Thus the Bible's main narrative is the story of redemption.

"Redemption" in the Bible generally refers to God's gracious deliverance or salvation of his people from forms of bondage such as alien dominion, slavery, sin, evil, or death.<sup>7</sup> As a result of "the fall" (*Genesis 3*), "redemption" became necessary for all mankind (and creation in general). This redemption could be accomplished only through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

While Christ did not enter humanity until New Testament times, God's plan of redemption surfaces in Genesis (particularly in God's promise to Abraham) and progressively unfolds from Genesis through Revelation. There is "an organic nature to this progressive revelation of God and his redemptive plan... It unfolds and develops from seed-form to full-grown tree."<sup>8</sup>

Christ is central to the story of redemption in both the Old and New Testaments. As we study the Old Testament in the light of Christ, we discover a record full of divine promises, covenants, pictures, patterns (types), and prophecies that point to the King of Kings – the Lord Jesus Christ.

This study series is called "God's Promise for the Nations" because God's story of redemption applies to "all peoples [and] all nations on earth" (*Genesis 12:3; 18:18*). The end of the story includes people "from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb [Jesus Christ]" (*Revelation 7:9*).

Let us begin tracing God's story!



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<sup>6</sup> Bruce Ashford, ed, *Theology and Practice of Mission* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011), 6.

<sup>7</sup> This definition of redemption is central to 'the story of redemption,' but there are other aspects of the story, including reconciliation (restoration of relationship) and renewal, and there is a progressive nature to salvation.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 27.