

MAKING SENSE OF THE BIBLE

INSTRUCTIONS FOR YOUR STUDY OF “MAKING SENSE OF THE BIBLE”

Sometimes people are just overwhelmed by the Bible because it's so big! The purpose of this study is to give you a quick overview of the contents of the Bible and let you know how each book fits into God's overall plan for lost mankind. The Bible is an amazing book which has no mistakes in it; it is a timeless book and we believe you will enjoy your study of “**Making Sense of the Bible.**”

Here are your instructions:

1. We recommend that you get a **one inch loose leaf notebook** in case you want to make notes and write down questions you may have.
2. Use **your own Bible** as you study. We use the King James version of the Bible in Home Bible School lessons, but you may use the version you have.
3. When you finish studying the lessons, go to the **test questions** at the end of the study and answer them. You may do this one lesson at a time or all at once.
4. After you finish your test questions, return them to us for grading.. **Please do not send the lesson material back.** It is yours to keep for additional study.
5. Further studies are available, as you wish to continue.

Special thanks are given to **Mr. Wayne Jackson** of Stockton, California, for providing the basic material from which this edited version has been taken. Mr. Jackson is one of the foremost Bible scholars in our nation.

God bless you as you study.

HOME BIBLE SCHOOL
Internet Bible Education Program
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INTRODUCTION

The Bible is a **one-of-a-kind book** because our **one-of-a-kind God** has provided this precious book for the good of all mankind. A human being can take it or leave it, but if a person leaves it, he's lost the **most important piece of information in the world**. He's lost the key and the path to heaven. If a person takes it, he also takes the responsibility of understanding the Bible.

The purpose of this short Bible study course is to not only give you an overview of the Book of books but to let you acquire a grasp on some basic concepts which will help you understand the *plan* of the Bible. You will learn how to **make sense out of the Bible!**

This will help you in your journey to put the most powerful information in the world inside your mind. You will discover how the pieces fall into place and you get a grip on what the Bible teaches, so you can go on to further, and deeper, studies in the Bible.

THE TWO DIVISIONS OF THE BIBLE

When you take an overall look at your Bible, the first thing you notice is that it has two divisions. These divisions are the **Old Testament** and the **New Testament**. You will also notice that the Bible has **sixty-six books** in it. **Thirty-nine** are in the Old Testament and **twenty-seven** are in the New Testament.

The Old Testament was written as the covenant (an agreement/ a law) for the **Hebrew people**. Its meaning for us is found in Romans 15:4, "*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*" The Old Testament lasted as law for the Hebrew people from the giving of the ten commandments on Mount Sinai to the cross of Christ.

The New Testament was written as the covenant (agreement/law) for **all** men. It begins at the cross of Christ and will last until Jesus comes again.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT ITSELF

The Bible is not an ordinary book and it says so throughout its pages.

1. **The Old Testament teaches that it is from God.** More than 3800 times in the Old Testament the writers said that their messages came from heaven. Some scriptures which show this fact are:

Exodus 4:12, "*Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.*"

2 Samuel 23:2, "*The spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.*"

Jeremiah 1:9, "*Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.*"

2. **The New Testament teaches that the Bible came from God.**

In John 5:39, Jesus spoke of the Old Testament by calling it "**the scriptures**" (the holy writings of God) and in Matthew 5:17,18, he said the Old Testament was "**the law**."

2 Peter 3:2 says, *“That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.”*

2 Timothy 3:16,17 teaches, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”*

All the claims made by the Bible are true and there is no contradiction in the Bible because “thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

THE DIVISIONS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament was written by about **thirty-two men** who were Hebrews. They received God’s message from heaven and their style of writing was Hebrew. They divided the Old Testament into three sections as Jesus taught in Luke 24:44, *“These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”*

So, the Hebrews divided the Old Testament into the **law**, the **prophets** and the **psalms**.

In our times, we divided the Old Testament into these six sections.

1. **The Law of Moses**
2. **History**
3. **Poetry**
4. **Major prophets**
5. **Minor prophets**

THE BOOKS OF THE LAW

The first five books of the Bible are **Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy** and are called “the books of the law.” Sometimes they’re called the **“Pentateuch”** which means “the five books.”

Genesis is the book of beginnings, teaching us:

1. **How the world began**
2. **The creation of the human family**
3. **Man’s fall into sin**
4. **The beginning of God’s plan to save man.**

Genesis focuses on the family of **Abraham** who was the father of **Isaac**, who was the father of **Jacob**, who was the father of **Joseph**. This is the family through whom Christ would come.

Exodus tells of the coming out of Egyptian captivity (bondage) and of the giving of the law of Moses to the Hebrews.

The law of Moses:

1. **Told the Hebrews how to live good moral lives**
2. **Told the Hebrews how to worship and please God**

Leviticus emphasizes the system of sacrifice and the priesthood. Leviticus points toward Christ, our sacrifice, and his priesthood.

Numbers is the record of the Hebrews' wandering in the wilderness of Sin because of their unbelief. It gets its name from God's order to count the number of men who were fit for war.

Deuteronomy is a re-reading of the law of Moses for the second generation of Hebrews. The older generation that came out of Egypt died in the wilderness and this second generation needed to be reminded of the things of the law of Moses.

THE BOOKS OF HEBREW HISTORY

The next twelve books in the Old Testament are the books of Hebrew **history**.

Joshua is the record of how God helped the Hebrews conquer the land of Canaan.

Judges tells of the rule of fifteen judges who governed the Hebrews for about 350 years.

Ruth tells the delightful story of a Gentile girl who was an ancestor of Christ.

1 and 2 Samuel teach us about Samuel, the fifteenth (the last) judge and the rule of the first two kings of Israel: Saul and David.

1 and 2 Kings teach about the reign of King Solomon, David's son, the division of the United Kingdom into two countries. Israel was the ten northern tribes and Judah was the two southern tribes, plus the tribe of Levi.

1 and 2 Chronicles were written for the Hebrews who returned after their exile into Babylon. It teaches of David, Solomon, the division of the kingdom and the fate of the Hebrew nation. The ten northern tribes, Israel, went into Assyrian Captivity and never returned home. The two southern tribes, Judah/Benjamin, went into Babylonian Captivity and many returned seventy years later. The two countries went into captivity because they rebelled against God and tried to do their own thing.

Ezra and Nehemiah take up the story of those Hebrews who returned in three waves from Babylonian Captivity to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, the city walls and the temple.

Esther tells of a beautiful Hebrew girl who became queen of Persia and who saved the Hebrews from being totally destroyed by their enemies.

THE BOOKS OF POETRY

Poetry helps man to show our deepest emotions. These inspired books of poetry not only show how emotional our devotion to God can be, but they tell us a lot about God himself.

Job is the example of a godly man who suffered terrible things, but who remained faithful to God.

Psalms is a collection of 150 songs, 37 of which were written by King David. They sing of great truths about God, his plan of redemption for humanity and how to sweeten our relationship with God.

Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings, most of which were written by King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived except for Jesus Christ. The proverbs speak of God's divine wisdom in our human lives which have been touched by sin.

Ecclesiastes, also written by Solomon, teaches that people spend their lives in seeking money, drinking wine, seeking out women and seeking wisdom – but the very top of human experience is to fear God and keep his commandments.

The **Song of Solomon** celebrates the joy of married love and illustrates the value of marriage in cementing male/female relationships.

THE BOOKS OF PROPHECY

In the Old Testament, God spoke through selected men to give God's message to people living and to give God's message to generations not yet born. **All Old Testament prophecies have come to pass!**

THE MAJOR PROPHETS

The first five books of prophecy are called the Major Prophets because the books are generally longer than other prophetic books.

Isaiah foretells judgments to come on Israel due to their transgression of the law of God. It also previewed the spiritual deliverance by the work of the Messiah (the Hebrew word for Christ).

Jeremiah tells of the tender love that God still had for his rebellious people and that the people would be taken into Babylonian Captivity because they didn't listen to God.

Lamentations is a sequel to Jeremiah and tells of the tears (lamentations) that Jeremiah shed over the fall of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel was written while the Hebrews were captives in Babylon. It teaches against false prophets who said Israel would not be in captivity for seventy years, as Jeremiah had predicted. It is filled with hope when the Messiah would come.

Daniel was written during the days of the Babylonian Captivity and during the rule of the Medo-Persian empire. The book tells the people God is still in control of world affairs and that the kingdom of God, the church, would come in the days of the Roman Empire.

THE MINOR PROPHETS

The last twelve books of the Old Testament are called the "minor prophets" because their books are generally shorter in length than the longer major prophets. Some of them speak to the ten northern tribes of Israel and some speak to Judah, while some are general in nature.

Hosea speaks of the deep love God has for his people and begs northern Israel to return to him. Hosea's unfaithful wife, Gomer, is used as the background for this story.

Joel speaks of the coming "day of the Lord", using a horrible locust plague to picture a happier time when the spirit of God would be poured out in the Messianic age.

Amos strongly rebukes northern Israel because they were morally and religiously corrupt. Punishment is coming upon many nations, including Israel and Judah.

Obadiah speaks of the destruction of Edom, the descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother, who had been cruel to their cousins, the Jews.

Jonah tells of his journey to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, where he warns of God's destruction and he witnesses Nineveh's complete repentance. The book tells of God's love for the Gentiles.

Micah lived the same time as Isaiah and some of Micah's prophecies about Christ are identical to Isaiah's. Micah also prophesied against injustice in Judah.

Nahum should be read after Jonah. The Assyrians had repented at the preaching of Jonah and had been temporarily spared. Nahum, 150 years later, announces that Assyria will be destroyed.

Habakkuk asks God the question, "How can a just God use an evil nation like Babylon to punish his people?" The answer is in God's providence. He will use Babylon as a divine rod of punishment, but Babylon will also eventually be destroyed.

Zephaniah prophesied just before King Josiah's great reformation in Judah. The prophet warned that punishment would still come upon Judah and upon their heathen neighbors. Only in the coming Christ would true deliverance be known.

Haggai preached after the Jews returned from Babylon and encouraged the people to rebuild the temple.

Zechariah prophesied the same time as Haggai, except he encouraged the Jews to rebuild their lives by obeying the will of God.

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament and speaks to the corruption the Jews had in their worship services. He ends the Old Testament by prophesying about the coming of John the Baptist.

THE VALUE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The message of the Old Testament is to trace the development of God's plan to save man through the Hebrew nation and how they were affected by other nations. Old Testament history is very selective – it doesn't tell all the history of the world, but only of the Hebrews.

The Old Testament is also very valuable because of the **prophecies** about the coming of Christ (Galatians 3:24), its great **moral teachings** that are timeless (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:6,11) and its teachings about the **horrible nature of sin** (Romans 7:7,13).

The Old Testament (covenant) was binding upon the Hebrews as law and was taken away by the death of Christ on the cross (Galatians 3:25; Ephesians 2:11; Colossians 2:14).

FOUR SILENT CENTURIES

When Malachi's book ended the Old Testament, there was no more revelation from heaven for four hundred years. We call this the "Silent Centuries." Many things developed during this time: the coming of the **Jewish sects** (Pharisees, Saducees, etc.), the **synagogue** (places of Jewish worship), the rise of the **Greek language**, the rise of the **Roman Empire**, etc. God used this time to make providential preparation for the coming of his Son, the Savior, into the world.

NEW TESTAMENT DIVISIONS

There are 27 books in the New Testament and they are easily divided into four sections, each of which has its own purpose. The **Gospels**, the book of Church **history**, **letters** to churches and individuals and **prophecy**.

THE GOSPELS (the biography of Jesus). None of these books is a complete biography, but each has its own purpose.

NOTE: There were three cultures in the Jewish nation in the first century – the **Jews**, the **Greeks** and the **Romans**. Three of the gospels speak to each one of these cultures. **Matthew** speaks to the Jews and proves that Jesus was the promised Messiah. **Mark** speaks to the Romans and stressed that Jesus served his heavenly father, which Romans could identify with. **Luke** speaks to the Greeks and shows the human nature of Christ because the Greek emphasized "man." **John** is unique and appeals to all people, emphasizing the miracles of Christ and that Christ was the son of God.

THE BOOK OF CHURCH HISTORY: Acts is a short history of the church for about the first 30 years of its existence. It begins with the ascension of Jesus and ends with Paul's first imprisonment in Rome. The church began on the day of Pentecost, 50 days after the Passover (Acts 2).

Acts is roughly divided into two sections: 1) the work of Peter and John among the Jews in Jerusalem (chapters 1-12) and 2) the work of Paul among the Gentiles (chapters 13-28). Paul made three missionary journeys before he went to Rome in his first imprisonment.

LETTERS TO CHURCHES AND INDIVIDUALS. Another word for "letter" is "epistle" and this next section of the New Testament contains letters to various churches of the Lord's people and to individual Christians. Paul is known to have written 13 of these books (Romans-Philemon); John wrote three short letters; Peter wrote 2 epistles while James and Jude wrote one each. The book of Hebrews is unsigned (2 Thessalonians 3:17).

Romans was written to the church in the capital city of Rome, Italy. Its subject is "the faith" system, another thing meaning the gospel, Christ's message of good news and our salvation by him and it.

1 and 2 Corinthians were sent to a church (Corinth in southern Greece) which had many problems. The first deals with doctrinal and moral problems and the second is a defense of Paul's apostleship against some people who doubted that he was a true apostle.

Galatians went to a group of churches in Asia Minor, which were probably established by Paul on his second missionary journey. The book teaches against going back into Judaism and to warn of binding Judaism on Gentile Christians.

Ephesians was sent to the church in Ephesus, which Paul established in Acts 19. Its theme is God's plan for eternal redemption by means of the "in Christ" relationship.

Philippians was sent to Paul's favorite church. It is a letter of great joy for that church and urges them toward unity on the basis of serving one another.

Colossians deals with a false teaching in this church (Colossae) which denied the deity of Christ.

Philemon was written to a man who had a runaway slave named Onesimus, whom Paul had converted. Philemon is encouraged to accept Onesimus as a brother in Christ and not as a slave.

The two Thessalonian epistles were written to the church in Thessalonica, a city in Macedonia, Greece. **1 Thessalonians** deals with Paul's apostleship, encouragements for Christian living and teachings about the second return (coming) of Jesus. **2 Thessalonians** was written to correct their understandings about the first letter, teaching that Jesus' second coming would not come before an apostasy from primitive Christianity would develop.

1 Timothy, Titus and 2 Timothy (in that order) were written to two young coworkers of Paul to help churches grow in the truth of God. **1 Timothy** deals with the qualifications of elders and deacons, as well as the responsibilities of a preachers. In the first century, preachers were not called "pastors," elders were. **Titus** was also a "son in the faith" and he was instructed to appoint elders in every church and was also given the qualifications for elders. **2 Timothy** was written from Paul's prison cell in Rome where he was awaiting execution. The book offers encouragement to Paul's "son in the faith" and was Paul's final letter .

Hebrews was written by an unknown inspired writer who encouraged Jewish Christians to be just Christians only and not go back into their old Jewish faith. It teaches the superiority of Christ, his gospel, his priesthood and his purpose.

James was written by Jesus's half-brother and is a practical little book, revealing the value of the Lord's truth for the everyday trials of Christian living.

The two epistles of **Peter** were written to Christians who had been scattered throughout the world and the two books are designed to protect the child of God against persecution and to strongly warn against false teachers.

The three letters written by John are intended to:

- a) teach against a false philosophy which denied the deity of Christ (**1 John**)
- b) commend faithful Christians, like the elect lady (**2 John**)
- c) warn against church dictators and commend men like Gaius (**3 John**)

Revelation closes the 27 books of the New Testament by "revealing" visions seen by the apostle John on the island of Patmos. Its theme is "victory", meaning that all who overcome the trials of this life will be rewarded by Christ in heaven. It could be easily understood by the people who read it in the first century.

THE VALUE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The gospel records (Christ's biography) show the identity and mission of Jesus, which produce faith in the honest heart. Acts shows how people became Christians in the first century, the same things we also do today. The epistles protect against false teaching and help God's children to grow up in the truth. Revelation promises a glorious eternity, in spite of persecutions in this life.

AMAZING UNITY AND COORDINATION

One of the truly amazing features of the Bible is that these 66 books, written over a span of some 1,600 years (from at least 1500 BC to 100 AD) all fit together in a beautifully coordinated pattern. Every book has its place and makes a unique contribution to the entire message of the Bible.

Each book of the Bible, either directly or indirectly, has Christ at its center.

The Bible is a mighty chorus of 66 masterpieces, providing evidence of God, our great creator, and his wonderful love for the redemption of humanity.



THIS CONCLUDES YOUR STUDY OF "MAKING SENSE OF THE BIBLE"

**Please answer the test questions
on the next few pages
and return them to be graded.
Send to:**

HOME BIBLE SCHOOL
Internet Bible Education Program
4314 Dasher Rd.
Valdosta, GA, 31601

Please do not send back the whole study –
it is yours to keep for further study

TEST QUESTIONS
Making Sense of the Bible

YOUR NAME: _____

YOUR ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

WHERE DO YOU GO TO CHURCH? _____

Part one: Introduction, two Bible divisions, divisions of the Old Testament

TRUE FALSE (Check the correct answer)

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| 1. Is it okay if a person just leaves the Bible alone and not understand it? | T _____ F _____ |
| 2. The Bible teaches that it is from God | T _____ F _____ |
| 3. The Bible was written by about 32 men who were Hebrews | T _____ F _____ |
| 4. The Bible is divided into two divisions | T _____ F _____ |
| 5. The Old Testament was written as the covenant for the Hebrew people | T _____ F _____ |

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. 2 timothy 3:16,17, "All _____ is given by _____ of God and profitable _____, for reproof, for correction, for _____ in righteousness..."
2. Luke 24:44: "These are the _____ which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that _____ things must be fulfilled, which were written in the _____ of Moses, and in the _____ and in the _____ concerning me."
3. All the claims made by the Bible are true and there is no _____ in the Bible because "thy _____ is _____" (John 17:17)
4. Romans 15:4: "For whatsoever things were written _____ were written for our _____."
5. Both the _____ Testament and the _____ Testament are from _____.

Part two: Books of the law, history, poetry and the prophets

MULTIPLE CHOICE (Circle the correct answer)

1. The book of Genesis teaches: A Evolution B The beginning of all things C The story of the nation of Babylon.
2. The books which teach about the reigns of King Saul, King David and King Solomon are: A 1 & 2 Samuel B 1 & 2 Kings C 1 & 2 Chronicles D All of these
3. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel are called Major Prophets because: A Their books are more important than other prophecies B Their books are shorter than other prophecies C Their books are longer than other prophecies
4. The Old Testament is very valuable because: A It tells of the prophecies about Christ B It has great moral teachings C It tells of the terrible nature of sin D All of these
5. The book that is a sequel to Jeremiah and weeps over the fall of Jerusalem was: A Haggai B Daniel C Lamentations

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. The book of _____ tells of a godly man who suffered terrible things, but who remained faithful to God.
2. The book of _____ tells about the conquest of Canaan
3. The Old Testament is divided into five sections: The _____ of Moses, books of _____, books of _____, Major _____, Minor _____.
4. The book of _____ was written during the Hebrews' captivity and during the rule of the _____ - Persian empire.
5. The book of _____ speaks about the coming _____ of the Lord.

TRUE FALSE (Check the correct answer)

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. Deuteronomy is a re-reading of the Law of Moses to the Hebrews | T _____ F _____ |
| 2. Most of the Psalms were written by Moses | T _____ F _____ |
| 3. The ten northern tribes of Israel went into Assyrian Captivity | T _____ F _____ |
| 4. The last book of the Old Testament is Habakkuk | T _____ F _____ |
| 5. Between Malachi and Matthew was fourteen years | T _____ F _____ |

Part three: New Testament divisions, the gospels, Acts, Epistles I

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. The gospel of Matthew was written for the _____; the gospel of Mark was written for _____ and the gospel of Luke was written for _____
2. _____ was written to the church in the capital city of _____, Italy and tells of the gospel message, our _____ in Jesus Christ.
3. Another word for "letter" is _____.
4. The book of _____ teaches Christians not to go back into Judaism
5. The two half-brothers of Jesus who wrote two New Testament books are _____ and _____.

TRUE FALSE (Check the correct answer)

- | | | |
|--|---------|---------|
| 1. The book of Ephesians is the New book of church history | T _____ | F _____ |
| 2. The book of Revelation could be understood by people in the first century | T _____ | F _____ |
| 3. Paul wrote all of the epistles | T _____ | F _____ |
| 4. Philippians was written to Paul's favorite church | T _____ | F _____ |
| 5. The church at Corinth in northern Greece had no church problems | T _____ | F _____ |

Part four: Epistles II, Revelation, Conclusion

FILL IN THE BLANKS

- 1 Timothy deals with the qualifications of _____ as well as the responsibilities of the _____.
- Paul's "son in the faith" were both _____ and _____.
- The three short epistles of _____ taught against human philosophies and a man named Diotrophes.
- The gospel records show the _____ and _____ of Jesus Christ; _____ shows how people became Christians in the first century; the _____ teach against false teaching and help Christians mature and _____ is the book of victory.

TRUE FALSE (Check the correct answer)

- | | | |
|--|---------|---------|
| 1. The book of Hebrews was written by the apostle Paul | T _____ | F _____ |
| 2. The two preaches Paul wrote to were Alpha and Omega | T _____ | F _____ |
| 3. Jude speaks strongly against false teachers | T _____ | F _____ |
| 4. The book of Revelation <u>cannot</u> be understood by anybody | T _____ | F _____ |
| 5. Onesimus had a runaway slave named Philemon | T _____ | F _____ |