

A Summary of the Bible

Generally, the Bible is divided into two sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament. However, thematically, the Bible is divided into three sections. The first section covers the first eleven chapters Genesis and focuses on the **promise** of a Savior the human race. The second section covers chapter twelve of Genesis to the end of the Old Testament and focuses on the **preservation** of that promise. The third section covers the entire New Testament and focuses of the **presentation** of the Savior to the human race.

A Summary of the Bible		
The Old Testament		The New Testament
Genesis 1-11	Genesis 12 to Malachi	Matthew to Revelation
<p>The promise of a Savior to the entire human race.</p> <p><i>“I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.” Genesis 3:15</i></p> <p>After learning of Adam’s and Eve’s disobedience, God graciously promises a Savior. Since this is before the creation of the Hebrew peoples, the promise is for all humanity.</p> <p>The promise of a Savior is embryonic at this point. Not all the details are fully formed. It’s by looking back we learn the “He” that God spoke of is Jesus.</p> <p>Satan caused Jesus to suffer (bruised his heel) through the crucifixion. Jesus brought a death blow to Satan (crush his head) through his resurrection.</p>	<p>The preservation of the promised Savior through the Hebrews.</p> <p><i>“All the families on earth will be blessed through you.” Genesis 12:3</i></p> <p>Having promised humanity a Savior, God then chooses Abram and creates the Hebrews from him.</p> <p>God tells Abram the promised Savior would come through him, the Hebrews, and would be for “<i>all peoples</i>” (NIV).</p> <p>The rest of the Old Testament is the story of how God preserves the promise (of a Savior) through the Hebrew people.</p>	<p>The presentation of the promised Savior to the entire human race.</p> <p><i>“These are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.” John 20:31 Read John 4:25,26</i></p> <p>Jesus is the promised Savior of the Old Testament. Luke 2:25-38, Acts 13:23, 32, 33</p>
<p>Jesus was promised to everyone (Genesis 3:15), preserved through the Hebrews (Genesis 12-Malachi) and presented to everyone (John 20:31).</p>		

A Summary of the Old Testament

Type of Writing

The Old Testament is arranged by four types of writing

Law	History	Poetry	Prophecy
<p>Creedal in nature. Describing guidelines for godly living among cultures that do not honor God.</p> <p>*****</p> <p>Genesis. The account of creation, the fall of man, the promise of a Savior for all humanity and preservation of the Savior through the Hebrews.</p> <p>Exodus. The deliverance of the Hebrews from enslavement in Egypt.</p> <p>Leviticus. The establishment of a sacrificial system as a means of fellowship with a holy, righteous God.</p> <p>Numbers. The account of the Hebrews wandering for 40 years due to sin.</p> <p>Deuteronomy. The second giving of the Law to prepare the Hebrews to enter their promised land.</p>	<p>Narrative in nature. Describing the early existence of the Hebrew people.</p> <p>*****</p> <p>Joshua. Entering and conquering the promised land.</p> <p>Judges. Sin in the promised land.</p> <p>Ruth. Providential love and loyalty.</p> <p>1, 2 Samuel, 1, 2 Chronicles, 1, 2 Kings. Historical narratives of Israel under different leaders.</p> <p>Ezra and Nehemiah. The restoration of Israel after exiles.</p> <p>Esther. The story of personal courage and divine providence.</p>	<p>Emotional in nature. Describing man's relationship with God and others.</p> <p>*****</p> <p>Job. The story of human suffering and God's sovereignty.</p> <p>Psalms. Stories of God's unchanging character (immutability) against man's ever-changing emotions and circumstances.</p> <p>Proverbs. Wise sayings about man's relationship to man.</p> <p>Ecclesiastes. Wisdom about what is most important in life.</p> <p>Song of Songs. Passionate words about love.</p> <p><i>"Job teaches you how to suffer, Psalms teaches you how to pray, Proverbs teaches you how to live, Ecclesiastes teaches you how to enjoy, Song of Songs teaches you how to love." J. Oswald Sanders</i></p>	<p>Predictive in nature. Declaring God's just and gracious character in an immediate and future sense.</p> <p>*****</p> <p>Prophecy can have both near and far application. Some was historically fulfilled, some is still future in fulfillment. Some are both.</p> <p>Prophecy speaks about God's punishment (and eventual restoration) of Israel. It also predicts much about the Messiah. See Isaiah 53.</p> <p>There are two types of prophecy books; The longer ones, called Major Prophets, and the shorter ones, called Minor Prophets.</p> <p>Major Prophets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isaiah • Jeremiah • Lamentations • Ezekiel • Daniel <p>Minor Prophets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosea • Joel • Amos • Obadiah • Jonah • Micah • Nahum • Habakkuk • Zephaniah • Haggai • Zechariah • Malachi

A Summary of the New Testament

Type of Writing

The New Testament is arranged by four types of writing

Gospels	History	Epistles	Prophecy
<p>The presentation of the Savior the first time.</p> <p>*****</p> <p>Matthew. Jesus as the King of men. (Matthew 27:11)</p> <p>Mark. Jesus as the Servant of God. (Mark 10:45)</p> <p>Luke. Jesus as the perfect man. (Luke 1:32)</p> <p>John. Jesus as the Son of God. (John 20:31)</p>	<p>The expansion of Christianity.</p> <p>*****</p> <p>Acts. A historical account of the first 25 years of Christianity (and the Church).</p> <p>Also a biographical narrative of the first four Christian missionaries: Stephen, Phillip, Peter and Paul.</p>	<p>The explanation of Christianity.</p> <p>*****</p> <p>Epistles are letters written to various churches and individuals.</p> <p>They explain the deeper truths of the Christian faith to new believers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Romans • 1,2 Corinthians • Galatians • Ephesians • Philippians • Colossians • 1,2 Thessalonians • 1,2 Timothy • Titus • Philemon • Hebrews • James • 1,2 Peter • 1,2,3 John • Jude 	<p>The presentation of the Savior for the second time!</p> <p>*****</p> <p>Jesus comes the second time as the ruling King. (Revelation 19:11-21)</p> <p><i>Revelation</i> is New Testament prophecy. Most of it (Chapters 4-22) describes what is yet to come.</p> <p><i>“Write down what you have seen—both the things that are now happening and the things that will happen. (1:19 NLT)</i></p>

I. **THE RELIABILITY OF THE BIBLE** Can we trust the Bible?

The Bible is evidential. Its reliability is based upon the following evidence.

1. Archeological evidence.

The Bible mentions hundreds of cities, structures and other archeological facts. Never in the thousands of years that people have been digging, has anything been found that contradicts any biblical account. *It may be stated categorically that no archeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference.*¹

2. Historical evidence.

Not one of the hundreds of historical events mentioned in the Bible is refuted by any of the historians of the New Testament era. Even secular historians of the time of Christ do not refute Biblical history. For instance, Josephus, a Jewish historian of the time of Jesus, wrote a lengthy historical treatise that corroborates many New Testaments events.²

3. Textual evidence.

One of the most powerful tests for determining the reliability of any modern text is to compare it with an ancient copy of the same text. The higher the degree of agreement between ancient and modern texts, the greater the reliability.

There was relatively little question about the authenticity of the Old Testament text until the middle of the twenty century. The accuracy of our modern Old Testament text was confirmed by a remarkable discovery in 1947 by a shepherd boy trying to scare his goats out of a small cave. When he threw a pebble into the darkness he heard the sound of the pebble hitting something brittle. When he went into the cave to investigate, he found several clay jars that contained one of the most important archeological discoveries of all time, the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Dead Sea Scrolls comprise over 200 individual scrolls, including the entire book of Isaiah and portions from all the other Old Testament books except Esther. The scrolls date to about 70 AD. Before this time the most recent Old Testament texts dated to around 1100 AD. The Dead Sea Scrolls bridged a gap of over a thousand years. Comparison of the texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls with our modern texts did not reveal any errors in doctrine. The amazingly high degree of agreement between our modern texts and the text of the Dead Sea Scrolls proved that the transmission of the text for that missing millennia was accurate. Therefore our modern Old Testament text is, indeed, reliable.

¹ Don Stewart, *You Be the Judge*, Here's Life Press, p. 48.

² <http://www.josephus.org>

The New Testament text was originally written during the first century. Our most modern manuscripts date to around 120 AD. The interval between the original manuscripts and the first generation copies of the New Testament texts (which we possess) is so small as to be considered inconsequential by experts in the field of textual criticism. *Sir Frederic Kenyon, who was the director at the British Museum, and second to none in authority and issuing statements about manuscripts concludes, "The interval...between the dates of original composition and the earliest extent evidence becomes so small as to be, in fact, negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."*³ The gap between the original writings of the New Testament and the texts we possess is so small as to be considered extraneous.

Additionally, there are over 5,300 early Greek manuscripts of the New Testament in existence today. The agreement of these texts with each other (in addition, the small gap between them and the original texts) also supports the conclusion that our modern New Testament text is indeed accurate and, therefore, reliable and trustworthy. *"There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament."*⁴

4. Internal evidence.

The Bible was written over a period of 1400 years in three languages (Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic) by 40 authors on 3 continents, yet does not contain any errors in doctrine. This is amazing when one considers that many of the authors were not contemporaries of each other, had no overriding means or incentive to agree with each other, and did not even speak the same language. In spite of these factors, the Bible completely agrees with itself. *"The Bible is a marvelous unified whole. There are no contradictions or inconsistencies within its pages....It quickly becomes apparent that no human being(s) could have orchestrated the harmony of the teachings of the Scripture. The divine authorship of the Bible is the only answer."*⁵

It is also remarkable when one considers the nature of the writings. No where would one expect to find a document that is so self-condemning, so painfully honest, and so unique in story line. Any human attempt to gather this number of writers under these conditions would result in a text that contradicts itself to the extent it would be laughable and not worth reading, certainly not believable.

³ Josh McDowell, *More Than a Carpenter*, Living Books Publisher, p. 48.

⁴ F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, May 2003.

⁵ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, Moody Press, Chicago, Ill. Page 155

However, the Bible is in complete agreement with itself, giving testimony to its divine authorship. *“No where does Scripture in one place declare erroneous what it gives in another place, and this holds true for even the smallest details.”*⁶

Ask three people to each write the name, birthplace and occupation of an imaginary person on a piece of paper without consulting each other. Then share the answers. They will all disagree. Despite the three contemporaries being in the same room, at the same time, using the same language. The Bible has complete unity of all it speaks about, yet was written by 40 people, over 1,4000 years, on three continents in three languages.

5. Prophetic evidence.

Much of the Bible is predictive in nature. One of the strongest reasons for accepting the reliability and inspiration of the Bible is the fulfillment of predictive prophecy. Not one prediction in the Scriptures has ever proven to be false. God’s ability to *make known the end from the beginning* (Isaiah 46:10) is one of the strongest pieces of evidence supporting the reliability of the Bible. *Only I can tell you what is going to happen even before it happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish. (Isaiah 46:10 NLT)*

There are over 300 predictions about Messiah in the Old Testament. Jesus Christ has fulfilled over 100 to date. The rest will be fulfilled in the coming ages. These predictions were all made between 1,400 years and 400 years before his birth. Many of them center on issues that he had no control over. Events such as the place, lineage and nature of his birth (Genesis 22:18, Micah 5:2, Isaiah 7:14), the nature, means and details of his death (Isaiah 53) and the fact of his resurrection (Psalm 16:10).

Jesus fulfilled over 100 Old Testament Messianic prophecies, however the chance that he could fulfill even 48 is one in 10^{157} . By comparison, the estimated number of electrons in the entire known universe is about 10^{79} .⁷ Mathematically speaking, anything that extends beyond 10^{50} is considered to be impossible.

II. THE CANON OF THE BIBLE How was the Bible put together?

The authenticity of the Old Testament text was recognized in phases. The Pentateuch (The Law or first five books of the Bible) was recognized as authoritative (canonized) as Ezra read it in 444 BC. (Nehemiah 8-10) Much of the prophets writings were accepted between 200 and 300 BC. Acceptance came as much of what they predicted took place. The final recognition of the Old Testament text was affirmed at a

⁶ Rene Pache, *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture*, Moody Press, 1980. p. 122.

⁷ McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Thomas Nelson Pub., 1993, p. 167.

synod of Jewish Rabbis in Jamnia in 90 AD. The authority of the Old Testament is furthered by the fact that the New Testament authoritatively quotes or alludes to it over 250 times.

The authority of all 27 New Testament books was finally affirmed in 397 AD at the Council of Carthage. *“The Bible is self-authenticating, and the church councils have only recognized the authority already inherent in the book themselves...it is important to remember that the books of the Bible were authentic (canon) before any test of man was put to them. In the same manner as an intelligent person is intelligent before any test of intelligence is put to him/her. The test merely confirms what is already there. The early Church used several meetings (called Counsels) of learned men to verify, affirm and recognize that certain books were indeed worthy of inclusion in the Bible. They did not create the authenticity of the Bible but merely confirmed what was already present.”*⁸ The three tests placed upon the New Testament writings to determine their authenticity were...

- 1. Authorship.** (Eyewitness evidence) All the writings had to be either written or backed by an apostle of Jesus Christ. Peter backed the writings of Luke, Mark and Paul.
- 2. Agreement.** (Internal evidence) The content of the writings had to agree with the revealed will of God. The Old Testament was a good source of comparison for this.
- 3. Acceptance.** (External evidence) All the writings had to receive unanimous acceptance by the early Churches. *“The early Church was in surprising agreement among itself as to which writings were authentic and which were not.”*⁹

Summary

The Bible is amazingly evidential. An enormous amount of corroboration awaits the discovery of those so inclined. The Christian faith is not a blind leap into nothingness. It is not a “check your brain at the coat rack” religion. Instead, it incorporates reason and requires logic. It’s a belief system that stands the test of any objection or challenge. It welcomes tough inquiries and invites hard questions. The amount of verifiable facts, testimonies, signs and support for the Bible is overwhelming. In the words of Josh McDowell, the evidence “demands a verdict.”

The Bible is the most amazing body of literature in all of human history. It stands alone as a one of a kind treatise. It is completely unique. Its self-agreement, prophetic fulfillment and transforming power puts it in a category all its own. It answers the deepest questions, addresses the most pressing needs, and solves the most important problems of life. It humbles the prideful, softens the hardened, comforts the sorrowful,

⁸ Charles Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1978, p. 1961.

⁹ Ryrie. p. 2018.

guides the lost, and saves those destined to perish. It provides peace in the midst of turmoil, furnishes joy throughout this life, and furnishes confident expectation (hope) for the life to come. It is Scripture, the Word of God.

*We also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, **the Word of God**, which is at work in you who believe. (1 Th 2:13 NIV)*

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