

Bible: Purpose of Each Book

THE LAW (5 books)

1. Genesis – “Beginning”

Beginning of the world, recreation, the flood, Israel as a family.

2. EXODUS – “Going Out”

Shows the bondage of Israel in Egypt, their coming out of Egypt and God making an agreement with them. The redeeming of Israel.

3. LEVITICUS – “The Priesthood Tribe of Levi”

Gives instructions concerning the laws, worship, and priesthood of Israel. Leviticus means specifically “pertaining of Levi.”

4. NUMBERS – “Numbering or Census”

Gives history of Israel as a nation—her forty years in the wilderness, her journey to the Promised Land, the census of her people and the inheritance of each tribe.

5. DEUTERONOMY – “Second Law” or “Repetition of the Law”

Laws had been given Israel throughout the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. Deuteronomy rehearses and expounds these laws with applications just prior to Israel entering the Promised Land.

THE PROPHETS (6 BOOKS)

FORMER PROPHETS (Joshua through Kings) The former prophets deal with Israel having the law of God without God’s Spirit. Their faith is only in what they could see (actually on faith). It deals with Israel’s failure in the land.

1. JOSHUA – “Jehovah, the Savior – Jesus”

JUDGES – “Rulers”

History of Israel’s settlement into the Promised Land under Joshua and the priests and their failure under the priests. These books cover Israel’s conquest of Canaan and their first 300 years in the land—a time of losing and regaining their position in the land because of disobedience, mainly Sabbath breaking.

2. SAMUEL – “Asked of God”

KINGS – “Kings”

Books are called books of the Kingdoms. Shows the history of Israel ruled by Judges and Kings (mostly Kings), being first a divided kingdom, then united, and then divided again. David, future King of Israel and Elijah the prophet, play very important roles in these books. These books are an excellent introduction to the book of Isaiah!

FORMER PROPHETS (A summary of both sections)

JOSHUA – Israel brought into the land, under the Priests, with God keeping his Covenant

JUDGES – Israel is in the land, they break God’s covenant and the priesthood fails.

SAMUEL – Israel is still in the land, God shows mercy by appointing prophets and a King whose throne will be established forever.

KINGS – Israel is ejected from the land, man breaks God covenant with God and with David.

LATTER PROPHETS (Isaiah through Malachi)

God predicts that even though priests and kings have failed, through Him the Messiah would be sent and God’s purposes and blessings for Israel and all the world would be secure.

3. ISAIAH – “The Salvation of Jehovah”

Isaiah is called the Messianic prophet. He understood by looking at the history of Israel (Samuel and Kings) under man’s rule that the result was failure. So Isaiah looked to Israel, especially Judah, as the nation through whom the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would come to rule all nations successfully.

4. JEREMIAH – “Whom Jehovah Raises Up”

Jeremiah lived during the final devastating of the nation of Judah. He was the last prophet to proclaim that if Judah would repent, God would save them from Babylon. God rejected the human king over Judah because of disobedience and prophesied of David’s “Righteous Branch” being raised up.

5. EZEKIEL – “God Strengthens”

Ezekiel was a captive in Babylon 11 years before Jerusalem was destroyed. Israel had been captured 120 years before. Ezekiel prophesied against Israel nevertheless (a future prophecy) and predicted the re-establishment of Israel as a nation when ALL would know God is God.

6. MINOR PROPHETS

Each prophet concerns himself with Israel, Judah or a nation dealing with them. The prophets give the problem, the cause and the prophecy that God will restore the Kingdom with his government on earth ruling all nations.

LATTER PROPHETS (A summary of each section)

ISAIAH – Show the restoration of the throne of David.

JEREMIAH – Restoration of the twelve tribes by a new covenant.

EZEKIEL – Restoration of the land and re-establishing the twelve tribes.

THE TWELVE – Restoration of the throne of David through Jesus Christ.

THE WRITINGS (HYMNS OR ROYAL BOOKS) (11 books)

1. PSALMS – “Praises”

Called in Hebrew, the book of praises. The character of David, the author, is vividly portrayed – a man after God’s own heart. Psalms are compared by many to the Pentateuch – structured into five sections with each relating to one of the first five books of the Bible. Psalms contain God’s counsels concerning (1) man and his obedience (2) Israel as a nation (3) the sanctuary in relation to God and man (4) Israel and the nations of the earth and (5) God and His Word.

2. PROVERBS – “To Rule” (Hebrew – Mishlai)

As the title of this book indicates, Proverbs are words which are to rule and govern our life. This book could be called a book of practical ethics. Solomon proved by personal experience that the Commandments of God are the best for mankind.

3. JOB – “Afflicted”

God names books according to what its main theme contains. Affliction is what Job experienced throughout the book. We are to learn why affliction comes on us (because of our faults not God’s) that God is righteous and from HIM comes all our righteousness and that suffering for righteousness sake is a glory to God.

THE MEGILOTH

The Megiloth are the following five books found in the Writings. A specific book was read on one of the Holy Days or Jewish National Festivals since these books contained the lesson the festival pictured. The Lesson of the five books would be: God chose Israel to be his wife and inherit all spiritual blessings with him. (Song of Songs). Through Jesus Christ all people will become spiritual Jews and be partakers of His matrimony (Ruth). Although God will punish his people for their spiritual adultery (Lamentations), He will establish his Kingdom on this earth (Ecclesiastes) and deliver all those who forsake Satan and his ways (Esther).

4. SONG OF SOLOMON – “Son for or by Solomon”

This book was read at Passover – the event God chose to take Israel as His wife. It shows God’s approach to human, physical love.

5. RUTH –

Ruth was a Gentile woman, the grandmother of King David, who shared the inheritance of Israel because she married a descendant of Abraham, Boaz. Pentecost depicts God’s Spirit and the time of the firstfruits of God. Gentiles have access to God’s spirit and the first resurrection through Abraham’s seed—Jesus Christ.

6. LAMENTATIONS – “Alas” (Exclamation of Pain)

Read on ninth of Ab (August) the date the temple and Jerusalem was destroyed by Babylon. Possibly the prophecy after righteous Josiah’s death (II Chron. 34:24-28). Written to show the utter destruction of Jerusalem because of a sinning people and a corrupt ministry. One author has entitled this book “a funeral dirge over the desolation of Jerusalem.”

7. ECCLESIASTES – “Assembler of Convener” (Greek – “Church”)

Ecclesiastes shows the emptiness of this life’s pursuits if our only goals are physical. Life can only have meaning if our main goal is God’s Kingdom. Therefore, the conclusion is to fear God and keep his

commandments. Read during the Feast of Tabernacles which depicts God's Kingdom.

8. ESTHER

Read at Feast of Purim which commemorates the deliverance from the Jews' enemies. Last book of the five Megiloth. After God restores His Kingdom and government on this earth, all who are spiritual Jews will receive deliverance from Jesus Christ, the King. Satan will have been put away and there will be peace. Esther was responsible for saving the entire Jewish nation from which came the future Saviour of the world.

9. DANIEL – “God’s Judgment”

Daniel is not listed among the prophets because he dealt only with Gentile nations, not Israel. Daniel was absolutely unswerving in his own religious convictions, yet totally loyal to his idolatrous king, so much so he was trusted with the affairs of the empire—a tremendous example to us. Daniel prophesies of Gentile kingdoms to time of Christ's return.

10. EZRA-NEHEMIAH

These books depict the restoration of Jerusalem. Ezra returned from captivity to reinstitute God's way and make Jerusalem God's center. The temple and wall of Jerusalem are rebuilt. Ezra emphasizes things relating temple, Nehemiah, as governor, emphasizes the civil matters of Jerusalem.

11. CHRONICLES – “Genealogies”

Written from the point of view of the Levitical Priesthood. Its purpose is to show the importance of Jerusalem – that it was the headquarters of the political and spiritual entity of God. Emphasis is on Judah—in particular David and the temple. Solomon and the four righteous kings of Judah: Asa, Jehosaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah. The genealogies cover the period from Adam to the Jews' return from captivity – a summary of all previous sacred history. The last chapter of II Chronicles leads directly to Matthew 1.

THE GOSPELS AND ACTS (5 books)

There are four accounts of the life of Christ because Christ's sacrifice and message are of primary importance to the understanding of the Bible's purpose. Four authors wrote a comprehensive description of Christ, in person, preaching the Good News of God's coming Kingdom and sacrificing Himself so we can enter into the Kingdom.

1. MATTHEW

The book was written to Jewish Christians. Its purpose was to show Christ is the King of the Jews. In the genealogy, the line of King David only is shown, back to father Abraham, father of the tribe of Judah. Second chapter – Magi asked “Where is the King of the Jews?” Obedience to the Law is emphasized and Christ as King. Kingdom of Heaven is used rather than of God because Jews didn't like using God's name unnecessarily. Set against background of Pharisees (5 & 23). Cities of Israel not visited until the Son of Man comes. Inscription on the cross – “King of the Jews.”

2. MARK

This book was written to the Gentiles to show that Christ is the Son of God. Christ as a servant is

emphasized (10:45). Mark had to explain what certain phrases meant that the Gentiles would not have naturally understood (e.g. 5:41, 7:2, 10:46, 15:42). The baptism and transfiguration of Christ shows Him as the Son of God. Compared to Matthew when Christ went into the temple to cleanse it, Matthew is the house of prayer, Mark is the house of prayer for ALL NATIONS.

3. LUKE

Luke wrote to Theophilus (and to all Greeks) a man of rank “excellent” and well-off. Written in a higher Greek than the regular colloquialism. Books of Luke and Acts are an important link; Luke shows Christ the Saviour for the whole world and Acts shows the Church goes to the whole world. The genealogy is back to God and Adam. Verses 2:14, 2:31, and 24:47 includes all people everywhere. Luke has more parables and statements dealing with the rich because of the audience to which he was writing (e.g. chapter 12). Luke leaves out the name “Gentiles, Lost sheep of the house of Israel” etc.

4. JOHN

Heresy had already set in and there were splits in the Church by this time (I John 2:19). Diotrophes did not accept John. Gnosticism was prevalent – logos meant reasoning. John was writing to Asia Minor – see Revelation 2 and 3 – where there were many Jews and gnostics. He showed that Logos was Jesus Christ. The general feeling was Christ was not necessary to reveal God. John 1:1 shows immediately that Christ was necessary. The Roman pro-consul lived in Pergamos wherein lay the seat of power (Rev. 2:12). John knew they would understand his description of Christ as the Source of Justice – the Two Edged Sword.

5. ACTS

This book continues with the Work of Jesus Christ, that of preaching the Good News of God’s coming Kingdom, not in person but through His spirit (Acts 2) working in His Church. Jesus Christ preached directly to Israel but since His sacrifice destroyed the barrier between the Gentiles, Acts largely deals with the gospel to Gentiles.

THE GENERAL EPISTLES (7 books)

1. JAMES

The book was written to establish the beginning of a foundation on which the rest of the New Testament could be understood – especially those books “hard to be understood,” the writings of Paul. The tone closely resembles that of the Sermon on the Mount. It is a book on Christian living, obeying the intent of the Law of God. More similarity between James teaching and Christ’s than any other N.T. author.

2. I PETER – “Small Rock”

A general epistle that gives instruction to specific categories of people e.g. – servants, husbands, wives, elders. Suffering as a Christian is the main theme of I Peter. Suffering is necessary to grow as a Christian, to become perfect, to cease from sinning and to glorify God.

3. II PETER

The general epistles deal with very fundamental Christian doctrines in order that Christians will be stable and not waver. Five books among the general epistles demonstrate why being grounded in the faith is so important – heresies would endeavor to unseat Christians from the Church. II Peter shows in

Chapter 1 how it is possible never to fall and then continues with predictions of false teachers, their

practices and their end.

4. I JOHN

John was responsible for canonizing the New Testament (along with Peter). By 90 A.D. much error had crept into the Church. John's purpose was to describe the anti-Christ and what true love really is—the keeping of the commandments.

5. II JOHN

Whether this letter was written to a real personality or describes an analogy does not matter. The purpose was definitely to exhort church members to continue obeying what they first learned and to beware of deceivers.

6. III JOHN

Heresy had become so strong in some areas, that true followers were not allowed in the doors of churches where ministers had deceived the majority of their congregations.

7. JUDE

Jude describes in detail those who are heretics comparing them to evil examples in the Old Testament and their end. He exhorts the brethren to earnestly contend for the faith initially delivered to the saints.

THE EPISTLES OF PAUL (14 books) (2 sections : Church and Pastoral)

Church Epistles

1. ROMANS

The Theme of this book is justification – how we are made right – not by the law of Moses but by Christ. However, the subject is not law or grace but rather by which are we justified. Paul answers basic questions engendered by a traditional Jewish background on such subjects as circumcision and Abraham, Christ's sacrifice, the reason for the law, God's Spirit, God's calling, Christian living, the civil law, fasting and meats offered to idols – all in relation to justification by Jesus Christ (God's mystery revealed).

2. I CORINTHIANS

Paul deals with many church problems. At least twice, he defends his apostolic authority. The main problems dealt with: division because of following men, incest and the churches leavened attitude, settling differences in the church, marriage, food offered to idols, church disorders at gatherings, spiritual gifts (tongues) and the resurrection.

3. II CORINTHIANS

Paul has many objectives in this epistle. He comments on the first epistle concerning the man put out of church, defends his apostleship and suffering in the ministry. Because of church trials, Paul again assures the membership of the hope of the resurrection.

4. GALATIANS

Paul establishes his authority in the ministry and proceeds to explain how we are justified by grace and not the law. All law has its purpose but only through Christ are we saved. (This book does not, however, do away with the law.)

5. EPHESIANS

The Church of God, with Gentiles and Israelites alike, is one church through Jesus Christ, having access to the promises of eternal life. The church will remain one through government and obedience to God's ways standing against Satan the devil.

6. PHILIPPIAN

Paul encouraged the Philippians telling them his suffering in prison helped to further the gospel, that humility was the example Christ left us. We should beware of those who boast of their physical talents and abilities and press toward our spiritual goal being content with what we have in this life.

7. COLOSSIANS

This letter emphasizes the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ. Ascetics in Colossae urged the keeping of traditions (Gentile) not keeping the words and ways of Christ which symbolized Christ's Kingdom being established.

8. I THESSALONIANS

The coming of Jesus Christ is the main theme of I Thessalonians. Suffering and tribulation were experienced by these members. The return of Christ was the reason to bear up under these problems and continue to obey.

9. II THESSALONIANS

Their willingness to endure persecution was the manifestation of their worthiness to be in God's Kingdom. The actual coming of Christ will be preceded by a falling away and the man of sin revealed. He admonishes the brethren to wait patiently and stay away from brothers who are not obeying.

10. HEBREWS

A letter to Jews to help them understand Christ's position as High Priest - - how the temple and priesthood of the Old Testament were only types of Jesus Christ and the new covenant people.

Pastoral Epistles

11. I TIMOTHY

A letter to Timothy on how to minister to a church. He starts by showing the reason for God's commandments, our attitude toward men's governments, instruction for men, women, ordination of elders and deacons, doctrines of devils, and other basic admonitions to members, widows, elders, slaves and the rich.

12. II TIMOTHY

Paul's last letter to Timothy encouraging him to remain strong and again avoid picky questions. He tells of the attitude in the last days, warns of future heresies and pronounces his final words, perhaps just before he died.

13. TITUS

Much the same as I Timothy. Instruction on appointment of leaders, examples of different age groups in church, attitude toward government, avoiding foolish questions and the handling of heretics.

14. PHILEMON

Paul wrote this book to intercede with Philemon to forgive Onesimus, the runaway slave. Letter is a perfect example of courtesy, tact, delicacy and generosity (Halley's Bible Handbook).

REVELATION (1 book)

This book was written to show what the attitudes of the churches were at that time as prophecy for attitudes in today's churches and to show religious and political conditions at the end time.