

TLCBiblical.com Video Series

121 A Timeline Of Biblical History

1. Introduction

Now that we've surveyed the Bible, divided it into its main divisions, grouped and summarized the books we can begin to look deeper into the narrative and see how the individual writings complement one another. In this video we'll examine **A Timeline Of Biblical History**.

2. Building the timeline

The Bible is sometimes criticized as being an incomplete record of the ancient world. Over the years archaeological sites have been identified based on Biblical descriptions but gaps remain in the overall record. This leads to questions about the narrative and content of the Bible. Was the Bible an attempt to provide a comprehensive description of the development of nations in the ancient world or is there another explanation that is overlooked. As we examine the scriptures we'll find that the Bible is a record of God's dealings with mankind and traces a spiritual path leading to the focal point of the narrative. In the next several videos we'll explore the historical accounts in the Bible and the ways in which God dealt with mankind. This will then allow us to identify the central theme of the scriptures, see how the various volumes complement one another and provide a way to understand the details. In order to do that we must have a grasp of the overall flow of the text.

If we draw a line to represent time we can do three things. First we can mark significant events over time. Secondly we can align these events with each of the books. Finally this will allow us to examine and understand changes made by God as the story unfolds. As we do this we can then understand finer aspects of the context of passages and why some things are stated in the way they are recorded.

We can start by setting endpoints or boundaries as presented in the Biblical narrative. Our line begins with creation and ends with the final chapter of Revelation. Beyond these endpoints lies eternity which is the realm of God. Time was created by the Lord and is governed by Him. Questions arise concerning the way the accounts are recorded leading some to reject the Bible because they lack all the answers they would like to have. I answer folks who have concerns about this with one of my favorite passages. In Deuteronomy 29.29 Moses told the children of Israel that the "secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." Everything we need to know in order to serve God have been revealed and although we don't have all the answers to some of our questions that does not invalidate the message of God's word. As we construct our timeline we will develop a sense of how the scriptures work together and demonstrate the power and wisdom of God. This will also provide evidence for the existence of God and the nature of divine inspiration that has preserved this message through the ages. As the writer of Hebrews tells us, faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. Both of these elements are found in the written record we know as the Bible.

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Time begins with the account of creation. Over a period of six days God brings the universe into existence. On the last day of creation God creates man in his image as a living being with a soul, that part of us that is in His likeness. Mankind stands as the pinnacle of the Lord's work. A habitat is created in the Garden of Eden and the newly formed man and woman are placed there. The couple is given everything they need to sustain themselves, work in keeping and dressing the garden and the means to enjoy one another by being fruitful and multiplying. One prohibition is given to the pair in that they are not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil with the pronouncement of a negative consequence, death, for violating this command. Although many in the modern world regard this to be a mythical account, the Bible presents it as fact. In later videos we will return to this but for now we will focus on the narrative of the events themselves.

Not long after these events sin enters into the world as Eve, the first woman is tempted or tricked by Satan into eating the fruit of this tree. Adam follows suit resulting in God introducing physical death into the family of mankind and driving them from the garden. As time goes on mankind in general drifts away from God filling the world with violence causing God to decide to destroy man. Noah however finds grace in the eyes of the Lord and he received instructions for building an ark that will save the patriarch and his family from destruction. The flood wipes the world clean of sin after which Noah and his family once more become fruitful and multiply. The tendency of man to reject God however continues resulting in the Lord confusing their language causing them to separate, abandon their defiance of the Lord and fill the Earth.

Over time God calls on a man of faith, Abram, instructing him to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees and go to a place the Lord would show him. Abram, whose name is changed by God to Abraham along with his wife Sarai, whose name is also changed to Sarah, departs taking their household with them. God leads them to Canaan and the Lord delivers to Abraham three promises that are significant in regard to the rest of the Biblical narrative. This man's offspring would become a great nation, would be like the sand of the sea, they would be given the land the Lord brought Abraham to and eventually all nations would be blessed through him. Abraham and Sarah were childless at the time these promises were given but the birth of their son Isaac would mark the beginning of God's fulfillment. Abraham's grandson Jacob inherited these promises. Jacob's twelve sons became the patriarchs of the nation God had promised. Jacob's name was also changed by God to Israel and through him the promises made to Abraham would eventually be realized. God had also told Abraham that his children would be oppressed in a foreign country but would return to Canaan in the fourth generation

One of Jacob's sons, Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers and was carried to Egypt. There by the providence of God, the nation of Egypt was preserved through Joseph during seven years of famine at which time his family also moved to Egypt. After the death of Pharaoh, fear of the children of Israel caused the Egyptians to enslave them. As the years passed they cried to God for deliverance.

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God remembered his promise to Abraham and raised up a deliverer. Moses, who had been hidden by his mother was found by the daughter of Pharaoh and raised in his house. His mother was hired as a nurse for him and as he grew he was aware of the plight of his brethren. Fleeing Egypt and living in Midian, God spoke to Moses instructing him to return and lead the people out of their bondage. Moses, in spite of initial objections and excuses did as the Lord instructed him and returned to Egypt with God's message. After a series of plagues, the last of which was the death of the firstborn of Egypt, Moses led the people to freedom. Assembled at mount Sinai God delivered His laws, regulations, ordinances and statutes that would govern the people under the Lord's leadership. When the children of Israel reached Canaan spies were sent to view the land. The majority of these men lacked faith in God and declared that they could not take the land. For their unbelief the children of Israel were to wander in the wilderness for forty years until all of that generation twenty years old and above died. As this period comes to a close Joshua is selected to succeed Moses and would lead the people into Canaan. Moses was denied entry into the land for disobeying God.

Joshua was faithful to the Lord and commanded the people to serve God as well. Under his direction that land was divided among the tribes, the land was subdued and the children of Israel settled into the inheritance that God had promised Abraham over 400 years earlier. Joshua's final warnings to the people included a reminder that God had blessed them but would withdraw those blessings if they failed to follow the Law and remember the Lord. Joshua told them to decide whether they would serve God or idols in his final statements to them.

In spite of the faithfulness and strong leadership of Joshua the people failed to drive all of the inhabitants out of the land of Canaan. God withdrew his blessings from them for their failure in allowing some of the inhabitants to remain. This created a number of conflicts for the Israelites including oppression by foreign powers. During those times as the people remembered God and cried to him for help the Lord selected leaders called judges to deliver them. The history of Israel shows that they had periods of faithfulness followed by times in which they sinned. The end of this period was characterized by everyone doing what they thought was right and not following the Lord.

Eli and Samuel were the last two judges of Israel and were also priests. Eli was condemned by God because his sons acted wickedly and Eli did not attempt to restrain them. . After his death Samuel leads the people but his sons also became evil causing the people to reject his leadership. The people demanded a king so that they could be like the nations around them. Samuel was disturbed by this request but God informed him that the people had rejected the Lord not Samuel. God then directed Samuel to anoint Saul of the tribe of Benjamin as the first king of Israel.

Saul was very humble when he began his reign but soon allowed his pride to lead him to disobey God. Saul's failure to destroy the Amalekites caused God to reject Saul as king. Samuel was instructed to anoint David, the youngest son of Jesse, of the tribe of Judah as the next king. David's reign marks a high point in the history of the nation of Israel. He was faithful and although he sinned

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against the Lord, David humbled himself and was repentant. His son Solomon succeeded him as the next king. Solomon was also humble when he began his reign and asked God for wisdom to lead the people. God granted this request and blessed Solomon with great riches as well. In spite of these blessings Solomon violated God's law by marrying foreign women who served idols. In his later years Solomon also served these idols for which reason God informed him that ten of the tribes would be taken away from the house of David. When Rehoboam, Solomon's son became king he rejected good advice given by older men who counseled him to be a friend to the people. Rehoboam's rejection of this good advice and declaration to be oppressive in his rule caused a rebellion in which ten tribes broke away from the house of David. The period of the United kingdom had come to an end.

God had instructed the prophet Ahijah to anoint Jereboam of the tribe of Ephraim as the king of the ten northern tribes. Jereboam had been a leader under Solomon but when Solomon heard the news of Jereboam's appointment he attempted to kill him. Jereboam fled to Egypt and returned at the time Rehoboam was being made king. The ten northern tribes accepted Jereboam as their king and broke away from the house of David. The nation was now divided into two kingdoms. The Northern kingdom was known as Israel while the Southern kingdom, made up of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were known as Judah.

God told Jereboam that He would be with him if he kept the law but he was afraid that if the people went to Jerusalem for the required holy days they would rebel against him. Fearful of his loss of power Jereboam created a religion that involved idolatry and replaced the priests of the Lord with people of his own selection. From that point on the Northern kingdom continued to stray farther from the Lord until God allowed them to be destroyed by the Assyrians. The Southern kingdom also began to forget God but there were kings who restored the worship of God. The trend toward idolatry and disregard for God continued until God allowed them to be carried away from their land by the Babylonians which occurred under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.

Jeremiah foretold that the Babylonian exile would last for a period of seventy years. In his writings are a number of significant statements including the dissolution of the kingship and a change in the law that would be made. The Babylonians were finally conquered by the Medes and Persians who years later allowed groups to return.

God had revealed through the prophets that a remnant would return and through this remnant an eternal kingdom surpassing the physical nation would be established. The return to Judah of these groups marked the beginning of the fulfillment of these promises. Under the leadership of faithful men the temple was restored, the walls of Jerusalem rebuilt and the land repopulated. The nation however was changed and would never again have the power or freedom they once possessed. As the Roman empire spread into the region Palestine, including Judah, or Judea came under their control.

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After the writing of the last prophets a period of about 400 years passed with no new revelation from God. During the days of the early Roman emperors two births marked the beginning of God's ultimate fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham generations earlier. The prophets had proclaimed the coming of the Messiah and a sign in the form of a messenger would precede him. John the baptizer fulfilled this as he preached repentance and called on the people to return to God. His cousin, Jesus, began to preach as well and it was apparent to those who believed that he was the Messiah. For about three and a half years Christ preached, performed miracles and declared that the kingdom of God was at hand. Fearing his power and hating Jesus for exposing their hypocrisy the Jewish leadership conspired with one of Christ's disciples to have him killed. Accusing him of blasphemy and sedition against Rome the Jews convinced the Roman governor to put Christ to death. Three days after his execution Christ arose from the dead appearing to his disciples instructing them to wait in Jerusalem until they received power from God. Christ was with them for a period of forty days at the end of which he ascended into Heaven returning to the Father from which He had come. The disciples, eleven of which remained, returned to Jerusalem as directed. There they appointed a replacement for Judas who had committed suicide and waited.

Ten days after Christ had ascended to his Father, the disciples were gathered together. This was the fiftieth day after the Passover and was a holy day in which faithful Jews from all over the world had gathered in Jerusalem. As they were gathered together they heard a sound of a rushing mighty wind and tongues of fire appeared over them. They began speaking in other languages causing the crowd to think they had been drinking. Peter then stood up declaring that they were not intoxicated. He explained that what they were witnessing was the fulfillment of a prophecy made by Joel. From that point on he declared that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah and was now at the right hand of God. Convicted of their error in the death of Jesus they asked Peter what they should do. Peter told them to repent and be baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of their sins. The New Testament era had begun with power as God had promised. The church or kingdom spoken of by the prophets and that Christ stated he would build had arrived.

The early days of the church were peaceful as the believers were regarded favorably by the people around them. In short time however persecution arose and they were forced to disperse carrying the message with them. The Gospel went to Samaria, part of the Northern kingdom that was not respected by the Jews and to the Gentiles in the conversion of a Roman centurion by the apostle Peter. One of the main persecutors, Saul of Tarsus, was a zealously devout Jew. On the way to Damascus to arrest believers Christ appeared to him and gave him instructions to go into the city and wait to be told what to do. Saul, later known as Paul began preaching the Gospel. Through his preaching the message was carried into the Gentile world and continued to spread.

The preaching of the Gospel was a threat to Jews who sought to destroy Paul and others. Their efforts led to persecutions and eventually the Romans began to persecute Christians as well. Faced with paganism, emperor worship and the traditions of the Jews the Gospel continued to spread. The

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power of God is evident in these events as His will was done in spite of hatred and the threat of death.

As the first century comes to a close only one apostle remains alive. Exiled on the island of Patmos by the Roman emperor Domitian the Bible comes to a close as John records a final message from Christ to seven churches located in Asia Minor. John’s writing is conveyed in signs, or symbols with warnings, commendations and directions to each of these congregations. The book closes with a warning that no part of the prophecy is to be altered by adding anything to it, or taking anything away from it. The final message is that Christians will reap the reward of eternal life if they remain faithful to the Lord even through death.

This is a brief summary but it will allow us to understand the flow of the Biblical narrative. In an earlier video I mentioned that the Old Testament in a historical sense does not end with the book of Malachi. We can now understand that the point at which the Law of God changes does not happen with the birth of Christ as we read in the book of Matthew. In the next several videos we’ll take a look at the Laws of God in more detail but for now we’ll concentrate on the division of the Old Testament, or the Law of Moses and the beginning of the Gospel.

The period of the Old Testament, including the Law of Moses extends beyond the time of the prophets. Christ lived and died under the time governed by the Law and stated that he had come to fulfill it. If we draw a line we can see that the Old Testament, and the Law of Moses specifically are in effect until the day of Pentecost. On that day the Gospel is preached and the church is established. From the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter two we can draw a line representing the New Testament period governed by the commands of Christ. This point will become clearer in the next several videos as we review the laws through which God communicated His will. After that we’ll take a more detailed look at the central theme of the scriptures and how this thread weaves through the text.

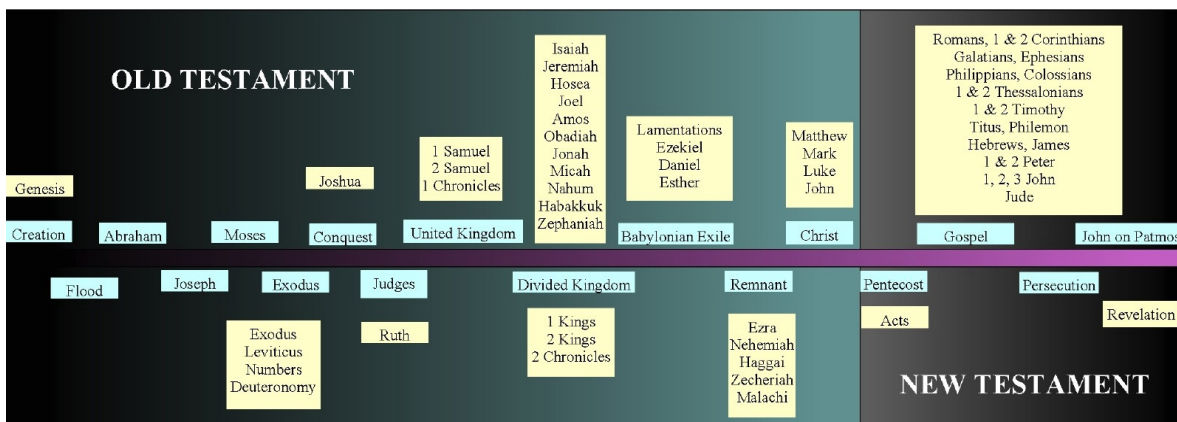


Figure 1 Timeline of biblical history

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3. Next

Join me in the next video as we discuss **The Ages of God**.