



Bible History

Old Testament and New Testament Books

I. INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS

A. God Is a God of Order

B. God Is a God of Division

1. God Himself divides (Genesis 1:4, 7; Matthew 10:34).
2. He expects us to rightly divide His Word (2 Timothy 2:15).
3. Therefore, it should not surprise us that God has provided natural divisions in the Bible.
 - a. These divisions, interestingly enough, are sevenfold. Each level of division is a subdivision of the unit above it.
 - b. The sevenfold division has the mark of God upon it. The number seven in scripture identifies the perfect work of God.
 - (1) The creation of this world began with seven days (six days of creation and one day of rest).
 - (2) There are seven colors of the rainbow and seven notes in the major scale.
 - (3) Joshua marched around Jericho seven times on the seventh day.
 - (4) God introduced a seven-sealed book in the book of Revelation (Revelation 5:1).

II. THE DIVISIONS

A. Testaments

1. The Bible is clearly divided into two testaments.
2. A *testament* is related to the idea of a *last will and testament*. It refers to something received after something or someone dies (Hebrews 9:16-17).
3. The Old Testament (2 Corinthians 3:14) was in force during the time prior to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.
4. The New Testament (2 Corinthians 3:6) went into force after the death of Christ (Hebrews 9:16-17; see Matthew 26:26-28).
 - a. Through His shed blood, Jesus became “the mediator of the new testament” (Hebrews 9:15).
 - b. The part of the Bible known as the New Testament records the coming of Christ to the earth as a man, His sacrifice for us on the cross and the early record of His followers.
 - c. The Bible accurately divides the Old and New Testaments between Malachi and Matthew. After all, the New Testament was in composition during the life of Christ.



B. Writings

1. This refers to the major sections of the Bible that are distinct as to type of writing.
2. This division is the most difficult to define both as to title and to exact number of them in the Bible (usually given as from 6 to 10 for the entire Bible).
3. However, even though some disagree as to where to make the divisions, the concept is of God.
4. Jesus Himself accepted the standard Jewish division of the Hebrew Bible in His time (Luke 24:44).
 - a. The law of Moses
 - b. The prophets
 - c. The psalms
 - d. These were the writings of the Old Testament as defined at that time. Today, some Bible teachers may separate the minor prophets from the major prophets and some may not.
5. One example of this type of division of scripture
 - a. Pentateuch
 - (1) Statistics
 - a) Genesis through Deuteronomy
 - b) Five books
 - (2) Details
 - a) Primarily covers the 2,500 years from the creation of man to the death of Moses.
 - b) After detailing God's creative work, focus almost immediately shifts to God's dealings with the first couple in the garden of Eden.
 - c) The time period ends with God focused upon one nation wandering through the wilderness.
 - b. History (Old Testament)
 - (1) Statistics
 - a) Joshua through Esther
 - b) Twelve books
 - (2) Details
 - a) Covers nearly a 1,000-year period reflecting an emphasis on Israel's historical record.
 - b) This record begins with the initial conquest of Canaan and ends with the Jews scattered (some into captivity, while others remained in the land).
 - c) This section chronicles the rise of the judges and the establishment of the kings, along with the captivities and the multiple returns of the Jewish people into their promised land.
 - c. Poetry
 - (1) Statistics
 - a) Job through Song of Solomon



- b) Five books
- (2) Details
 - a) Grouped more for the type and nature of the content rather than any chronological order.
 - b) This section is noted for its literary beauty (from the tale of Job’s loss turned to triumph, to the songs of the Old Testament saints, to the great thinker Solomon who wrote about the vanity of all things under the sun).
- d. Prophecy (Old Testament)
 - (1) Statistics
 - a) Isaiah through Malachi
 - b) Seventeen books
 - c) Sometimes divided into
 - i) Major Prophets
 - (a) Isaiah through Daniel
 - (b) Five books
 - ii) Minor Prophets
 - (a) Hosea through Malachi
 - (b) Twelve books
 - iii) This division is solely based upon the size and scope of the books.
 - (a) When one takes a step back and considers this division, it really makes no sense to divide the prophets in this way.
 - (b) Later we will discuss more scriptural dividing lines for the books.
 - (2) Details
 - a) These books center around the captivities and restoration of God’s chosen people, the Jews.
 - b) Much of its content has been fulfilled in part and will find a complete fulfillment when God restores Israel.
 - c) Sometime following the Rapture, God will turn His attention back to the nation of Israel.

Basic Book Divisions 1—O.T.			
Thirty-nine Old Testament Books			
Genesis– Deuteronomy 	Joshua–Esther 	Job–Song of Solomon 	Isaiah– Malachi 
A. Pentateuch (5 books)	B. History (12 books)	C. Poetry (5 books)	D. Prophecy (17 books)


Chart 2.10 – OT Book Divisions 1



- e. History (New Testament)
 - (1) The Gospels
 - a) Statistics
 - i) Matthew through John
 - ii) Four books
 - b) Details
 - i) Covers approximately thirty-three years of events, commencing with the conception of John the Baptist and ending with the final ascension of Christ.
 - ii) Although the specific themes vary in each gospel book, they serve the general purpose of presenting the person and overall work of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - iii) Among other details, this section chronicles: Christ's baptism, ministry, calling and equipping of twelve disciples (later called apostles), His betrayal, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.
 - (2) The Acts of the Apostles
 - a) Statistics—one book, Acts
 - b) Details
 - i) Commenced with the time period immediately preceding Christ's ascension which aligned with the final event recorded in the previous section. The book of Acts concluded with Paul's imprisonment in Rome.
 - ii) This book chronicles the actions of the apostles similar to how the Old Testament books of First and Second Kings and First and Second Chronicles covered "*the acts of*" the kings. It spans approximately forty years, majoring on the historical record.
 - iii) The nature of this book necessitates its standing alone especially because of its transitional nature (i.e., Peter to Paul, Jew to Gentile, signs to no signs, etc.).
 - iv) Much of the applicable doctrine and practical instructions taught during this period are more extensively covered in the epistles following Acts.
- f. The Epistles
 - (1) Statistics
 - a) Romans through Jude
 - b) Twenty-one books
 - (2) Details
 - a) Contains most of the teachings received by the early Church.
 - b) These teachings directly applied to churches and individuals living during the first century, but the instructions were intended to apply for the duration of the Church Age.
 - c) These twenty-one epistles are where the Church finds its **primary** doctrine, practice, and purpose. This does not mean that variations in these epistles do not exist based upon the audience receiving the epistle.



- g. Prophecy (New Testament)
- (1) Statistics—one book, Revelation
 - (2) Details
 - a) Begins with letters to seven first century literal churches and culminates at the commencement of eternity future.
 - b) Although seldom considered by most Bible teachers, Revelation is very much a historical book. It begins with a historical record of messages delivered to seven churches and then describes the history of John’s reception of the Revelation. Finally, it describes future history as it chronicles end-time events.
 - c) The focus of Revelation is more on the past, present, and future unfolding of events.

Basic Book Divisions 1—N.T.			
Twenty-seven New Testament Books			
Matthew–John 	Acts 	Romans–Jude 	Revelation 
E. The Gospels (4 books)	F. The Acts of the Apostles (1 book)	G. The Epistles (21 books)	H. Prophecy (1 book)
Chart 2.20 – NT Book Divisions 1		© www.KJB1611.com	

C. Books

1. This is the separation between the individual books as originally written.
2. The word *Bible* means *a collection of writings of library of books*.
3. The apostle John referred to his work as a book in Revelation 22:10.
4. The Bible has a total of sixty-six books. Each of these books is a whole within itself and yet each book relates to the other books of the Bible.
 - a. Thirty-nine in the Old Testament
 - b. Twenty-seven in the New Testament

D. Chapters

1. Chapters separate the Bible into blocks of text suitable for public reading, study, or teaching.
2. The Bible was first divided into chapters around 1250 by Cardinal Hugo for the purpose of reference in a Latin concordance. For this reason, many have questioned the validity of the chapter divisions.
3. Yet, the concept of chapter divisions is based on Biblical practice.
 - a. The Psalms are individual songs and were always separate.
 - b. In a sermon, Paul quoted from the “second psalm” (Acts 13:33).



- c. Lamentations was divided into five separate poems. Four of the five were twenty-two verses each (the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet). Of all the chapters in the Bible, the most common length is twenty-two verses.
4. The Bible has a total of 1,189 chapters.
 - a. 929 in the Old Testament
 - b. 260 in the New Testament

E. Verses

1. Verses separate the Bible text into lengths suitable for reference, quotation, and memorization.
2. New Testament quotations from the Old Testament set the pattern for the length of a verse (see Matthew 1:22-23 and Isaiah 7:14).
3. The New Testament was first divided into verses in 1551 by Sir Robert Stephens in his Greek New Testament. In 1560, the Geneva Bible, an English translation of the Bible made by the English exiles in Geneva, divided the entire Bible into the verses that we still use today.
4. An old source said that the number of verses in the Bible totaled 31,173; however, this number is wrong. Also wrong is the common teaching that the middle verse in the Bible is Psalm 118:8.
5. The Bible actually has 31,102 verses and the middle verses (two are required because of the even number of total verses) are Psalm 103:1-2.

F. Words

1. Words distinguish between individual mental concepts.
2. Language is made up of words and God speaks to man in words (Proverbs 30:5).
3. Men are warned against taking any words from the book of Revelation (Revelation 22:19).
4. It is the *words* that are pure and preserved in Psalm 12:6-7.
5. By my count, there are 789,671 words in the King James Bible.
 - a. This means that the average verse is approximately 25 words long.
 - b. There are above 12,500 different words in the English Bible.

G. Letters

1. They separate between the distinct sounds which make up the words.
2. They are important because a change in the them can create a new word and meaning.
3. Paul distinguishes between the meaning of *seed* and *seeds* in Galatians 3:16.
4. By most counts, there is an average of between four and five letters in each word in the King James Bible.
5. For this reason and others, the King James Bible has been said to have a reading level of seventh grade or below.