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Overview of the Bible



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In this comprehensive overview of the Bible, Steve Gregg discusses the organization and content of the Old and New Testaments. He highlights key events and individuals, such as Abraham, David, and Jesus, and explains their significance in God's plan of salvation. Gregg also emphasizes the central message of the Gospel: the good news of the Kingdom of God, with Jesus as the Messiah and ruler who has been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Ultimately, he stresses the importance of submitting to King Jesus and spreading His kingdom throughout the world through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

There is, I think, nothing more useful to a human being than to be familiar with the whole Bible. I've had the privilege and the pleasure of being a Bible teacher for 43 years, and much of that time, I was running a school where I had to teach through the whole Bible every year for 16 years. So I became acquainted with the Bible as a part of my life.

Many of you who have real jobs probably don't have time to spend the time that I did doing that. It is actually easier than you think to become moderately acquainted, anyway, with everything in the Bible. But the main challenge is the Bible is big, and it's hard to keep the pieces in their proper order in your mind.

I grew up in a church, and I knew Bible stories growing up. I knew most of the well-known Bible stories when I was a kid, but I couldn't have told you exactly how they all fit together chronologically or anything like that. Until, actually, my family moved to Orange County in 1970.

We started going to Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, and our pastor there taught through the Bible. And I got the big picture, and that was so helpful in seeing and making sense of the little details. And I've always felt it's good for someone to have a chance to just go through the whole thing in a sitting once in a while.

So let me just give you some background. The word Bible is from the Greek word, biblos. Biblos means little book.

Now, you don't probably think of the Bible as a little book. In fact, I just mentioned that it's a pretty big book when it comes to trying to master everything in it. But it's really a little book when you think about how much duty it performs and the number of pages it has.

I mean, this is the only book that we have that is directly revealed from God to man to serve all the needs of billions and billions of people for thousands and thousands of years, many, many generations. Everything we need to know, as it says in 2 Peter 1, all things necessary for life and godliness, for all people, it's in there. And when you think of that, you might think the Bible should be more like the Encyclopedia Britannica.

The Bible itself, however, is made up of 66 books. It's not really a book so much as it's an anthology of books. You've got 66 books in the Bible, and they're written by probably about 40 different authors.

We don't know exactly who wrote a few of them, and that's why we say about 40. The book of Hebrews, for example, it's not known who wrote the book of Hebrews. It could be Paul, though most don't think so.

Many churches in the early days of the church thought Paul wrote Hebrews, and many thought he didn't. If he wrote Hebrews, then obviously they belong to that one author. If they don't, then that's another author that we don't know who it was.

And there are a few other books like that we don't know for sure who wrote them. Yet there were about, we know this much, about 40 authors can be identified of the 66 books. The Bible's books divide into two main sections, as you all know.

And those sections are the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament has 39 books. The New Testament has 27 books.

And the dividing line there is Jesus Christ himself. The Old Testament covers about 4,000 years of history. The New Testament covers about 30 years of history.

So you can see, although the New Testament is shorter than the Old Testament, it's not proportionally shorter. For the number of years covered in the New Testament, 30 years approximately, 30 to 35, are covered in the New Testament. But in the Old Testament, which is maybe about 4 times as long, there's like 4,000 years covered.

More than 10 times as much time. By the way, this answers one of the questions that people often ask. And that is, why is the God of the Old Testament so full of judgment and wrath? And yet in the New Testament, he doesn't seem to be that way.

He seems to be, he had a change of mood or something because he seems all merciful and nice in the New Testament. This is what people say when they don't know the Bible very well. Because the God of the Old Testament is not any different than the God of the

New Testament.

The truth is, God in the Old Testament and the New Testament is very merciful and patient. Sometimes for hundreds of years with people who don't deserve a moment's mercy. Like the Canaanites.

God gave them 400 years to repent before he wiped them out. People before the flood, God predicted when Methuselah was born, that when Methuselah would die, the flood would come. So he kept Methuselah alive 969 years, the longest man we know of that ever lived.

Because God was committed to judging the world when he died, so he kept him alive longer than he kept anyone else alive. God predicted the flood almost a thousand years before the flood. So you do see some judgment acts, Sodom and Gomorrah, the flood, people being struck by God in acts of judgment and so forth.

The Canaanites being wiped out. People see these and they don't realize there's hundreds and hundreds of years between these events. That God is patient and long-suffering.

And we do see the same kind of judgment acts in the New Testament. God struck Ananias and Sapphira dead on the spot. An angel of the Lord struck Herod and worms ate him and he died.

The book of Revelation is full of the judgment of God, in whom the main participant is the Lamb, who is Jesus. We don't have a different kind of God in the Old Testament and the New. What we do have is a lot more history in the Old Testament, 4,000 years of it.

Far more occasions for God to judge, but also much longer periods of Him enduring sinners without judging. God is a God who judges, but He's also a God of mercy and He's more inclined to show mercy than to judge. And the Old Testament is very much a testimony of that too.

Although some people, in a quick read-through, what catches their mind is every few chapters you read about some judgment. You don't realize several centuries have passed. In between those chapters.

But it's a 4,000 year history in the Old Testament. We're going to master it today. And then there's about a 30 or 35 year history in the New Testament recorded.

When I say 30 to 35 years, I'm talking about from the time Jesus was baptized till the close of the book of Acts. Just so you'll have another way of understanding this. The Old Testament, it's 39 books divided into three different sections.

When you look at something as big as the Bible, it's good to break it into smaller pieces

for easy management. The first section of the Old Testament is usually called the law. That's what the Jews call it.

They call it Torah. Torah is a Hebrew word that means, originally meant direction, but it came to mean law. And the best translation of the word Torah is law.

These are the first five books of Moses. The first five books in our Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are the law. They contain more than simply law, however.

They contain a great deal of history. In fact, the majority of Old Testament history is contained in the book of Genesis alone. As we will see, Genesis chapters 1 through 11 covers half of the Old Testament period.

The rest of the Old Testament covers the other half. So, Genesis has a lot of historic stuff in it, but it's still part of the five books that are called by the Jews, called the law. They're written by Moses.

Christians have another word for these five books. It's called the Pentateuch. Pentateuch means five books.

It's a Greek word. The first part, then, of the Old Testament is the Torah, and it's the first five books, or what we call the Pentateuch. And then we have what the Jews call the prophets.

When you hear the word prophets, you might think of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the minor prophets. And, well, you should. They are prophets.

But the Jews call those the latter prophets, or the later prophets. They also have a group of books they call the former prophets. And we don't call those prophets at all.

We have another name for those, and I'll tell you about that in a moment. But the Jews speak of Joshua, Judges, the books of Samuel, and the books of Kings as the former prophets. Then they have the later prophets, which are the books that we would call prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets.

Then they have what they call the writings. The chief book of this category are the Psalms, the biggest book in the Bible. Psalms is just the largest book, a collection of books that the Jews have after the law and the prophets in their scripture.

And those would include what we call the wisdom books, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Job. But also they would have Ruth, Esther, and Chronicles in there. The writings are sort of a catch-all for all the books that belong in the scripture but aren't law or prophets.

But the Jews speak of these three categories. In fact, Jesus spoke of these three when he

was talking to his disciples in Luke 24. In verse 44, after his resurrection, he said, It had to be fulfilled all that was written in the law and the prophets and the Psalms concerning me.

Now when he said the Psalms, he may have had this whole category of the writings in mind. In any case, this is how the Jews break up their Bible, and that's what we call our Old Testament. Now I'll give you our more Christian groupings, because if you have a Hebrew Bible, the books do not appear in the same order as they do in our Old Testament because of these different groupings.

But the first part of our Bible we could call historical books. And in understanding the chronology of the books of the Bible, you have to understand there's a group of them that are historical that run their course chronologically. But then the prophets and the Psalms and so forth are intermingled in that history.

But you have all the history reported first, and that's from Genesis to Esther. These are the history of the Jews prior to the coming of Christ. Now there was more history than is recorded there.

There's another 400 years after Esther. Actually more like close to 500 years after Esther of Old Testament time before Jesus came. We call that the intertestamental period because it took place after the close of the Old Testament and before the opening of the New Testament.

The New Testament opens with the coming of John the Baptist. Esther fell within the middle of Ezra. Part of Ezra is before and part of it is after Esther.

But Esther is the last book in the arrangement of historical books. Some of the material in Ezra and Nehemiah comes after her time. But all those books are historical in nature, so we call those historical books.

And then in our arrangement we have what we call the poetic books. And the first of those is Job. Now Job is historically accurate also, but it's called a poetic book because it's written in poetry.

And the last of those is Song of Solomon. So Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon. Five books are in this segment called poetry books.

The last portion of the Old Testament are the prophecy books or prophetic books. These are Isaiah through Malachi. So this is how our Old Testament is arranged.

The arrangement I showed you that I erased is how the Jewish Bible arranges the same books in a different arrangement. We have this arrangement. All the history books are at the beginning.

Seventeen history books. Likewise there are seventeen prophecy books. And there are five of these.

All together makes thirty-nine books. The poetry books and the prophecy books are written within the time frame of this historical period. I mentioned that the historical books of the Old Testament are seventeen in number.

And so are the prophecy books, seventeen in number. The similarities go beyond that. Among the history books, the most important ones are the Pentateuch.

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. That's the most important books of the historical segment. That's the foundation documents of Israel.

It's like our Declaration of Independence and our Constitution and things like that. So the first five history books are the most important. Then there are twelve that are of somewhat lesser importance.

Now I'm not saying that any book of the Bible is not important. I'm just saying some of the history is more important than other history. Some periods of history have more stupendous things happen than at other times.

After the first five books is important history. But it's not as important in terms of the founding of the nation of Israel. So you've got five major history books and twelve minor ones.

Now when it comes to the prophets, we have five major prophets. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Now that sounds like four instead of five.

But we also have lamentations put in there. Now the Jews put lamentations in the writings in their last category. But lamentations was written by Jeremiah who is one of the major prophets.

So in our Bible we have Jeremiah and lamentations next to each other. And that makes five books by major prophets. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and lamentations is right after Jeremiah.

So we have five major prophecy books and there are twelve minor prophets. So in the history section we have five major and twelve minor historical books. In the prophets section we have five major and twelve minor prophets.

In addition to the founding of Israel in the Exodus, there is one other event in the Old Testament that is of similar importance. Israel actually was born twice. Most nations don't get a chance to have a second birth once they've been destroyed.

But Israel was totally wiped out by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The capital city was burned to the ground. The temple was burned to the ground. The Jews were all

scattered.

They weren't allowed to be in Israel anymore. They were taken out to all the regions that Babylon had conquered. The nation of Israel just didn't exist anymore.

It was gone. It's like if we got obliterated, if we got overrun by the Chinese or something and America became part of China for 70 years. And then out of that America came back up again.

With our same constitution, our same founding documents, we had good old America back again after 70 years. Now Russia went under communism for 70 years and they're back but they're not all the way back. I mean they still have a lot of, they weren't really reborn.

But Israel was. Israel went into captivity for 70 years and there wasn't any Israel except for the ethnicity. There was the ethnic Israel.

But there was no national Israel. There was no nation by that name for 70 years. And then they came back.

Now that time away from Israel is called the exile, the Babylonian exile. And very important. It's important for the same reason that the Exodus is.

Israel was 400 years enslaved in Egypt and God delivered them from Egypt and the nation was born in the days of Moses. But then hundreds of years later Israel was enslaved in Babylon. And then through Zerubbabel and some other men that God raised up, the nation was reborn again from nothing.

From being dry bones scattered in the desert. They had flesh come upon them. They came to life and the nation was reborn.

That's how Ezekiel describes it. This dry bones thing in Ezekiel 37. Now the reason I mention that here while we're talking about how these books relate up is that there are books of the Bible that are written before the Babylonian captivity.

We call those pre-exilic books. And there are books that are written after the Babylonian exile. They're called post-exilic books.

I mentioned there are 12 minor historical books. Nine of them are pre-exilic. And three of them are post-exilic.

Everything from Joshua up through Chronicles is pre-exilic. Chronicles ends with Israel going into Babylon. But then you've got Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther.

Three books post-exilic of the historical books. So you've got five major historical books. Twelve minor historical books.

Of the twelve minor ones, nine are pre-exilic and three are post-exilic. When it comes to the prophets, we have twelve minor prophets also. Interestingly, nine of those are pre-exilic.

And three of them are post-exilic. Which would be Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. All the other prophets are pre-exilic.

Now this is, I don't know if this is significant, but it makes things look very symmetrical. It makes you wonder if the people who put the Bible together in its present arrangement in the Old Testament had this in mind. We have five major historical books.

We have five poetry books. We have five major prophets. But to the first and third category, we add twelve additional books.

In each case, nine of them pre-exilic, three of them post-exilic. That's the Old Testament. Now we're actually going to go through the history.

Don't think I'm going to leave you with just that. I just want you to know how the Bible is laid out. And then the New Testament, of course, has its historical section first also.

There are five books of history in the New Testament. And that's, of course, Matthew through Acts. The first four of those books are what we call the Gospels.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. And the first three of those are called the Synoptic Gospels. The reason that Matthew, Mark and Luke are called Synoptic Gospels is because they cover so much of the same information.

Anyone who's read through the New Testament, if you read Matthew and then you read Mark and then you read Luke, you're going to say, it seems like I've been here before because I'm reading the same stories over again. Sometimes the details differ a little bit. Sometimes one book leaves out a story, another one includes.

But in general, the story is very similar in Matthew, Mark and Luke. And they're called Synoptic. Syn means together.

And optic, like our optic nerve, means to see. Synoptic means to see together. That the three Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, are called Synoptic Gospels is because you can see them kind of together as one picture.

John is different. John covers very few of the things that these Synoptic Gospels cover. He wrote it later.

John was the last Gospel written, and in all likelihood, he was familiar with the others and didn't want to duplicate what they wrote. As an old man, it's likely and it's believed that the elders of the Church of Ephesus, where John lived his last years, knew that he had memories of his time with Christ which the other writers had left out of their books. Not

wishing for these memories to disappear with John's death, he was prevailed upon to write his Gospel.

And he wrote, therefore, a supplementing Gospel. It's interesting, there's almost nothing in John's Gospel that's also in the other Gospels, with a couple of exceptions. The feeding of the 5,000 is in all four Gospels.

It's the only miracle of Jesus, besides his resurrection. That's in all four Gospels. The feeding of the 5,000 in John 6 is found in the Synoptics too.

None of the other miracles overlap. There's very few miracles in John's Gospel. There's a lot of them in the Synoptics, but there's only seven in John's Gospel.

In the other Gospels, Jesus uses a lot of parables. John doesn't have any parables. At least none that scholars would recognize as parables.

Maybe the vine and the branches could be called a parable, but it's different than a parable. A parable is more like a story. I am the vine, you are the branches, more like a metaphor.

But the point here is John's Gospel contains the things that the others left out, or at least many things that they left out. Of course, John, along with the other Gospels, focuses primarily on the last week of Jesus' life. In John's Gospel, almost half the Gospel of John is the final week.

In the other Gospels, it's somewhat shorter parts, but usually about a quarter or a third of the Gospels, all of them, at the end have a focus on the final week. Because Jesus' life, although every day of his life was important, what he did in the final week was seen as exceptionally important, especially, of course, his death and his resurrection. The Gospels, therefore, cover about 33 years.

We don't know exactly how long, for a couple of reasons. One, we don't know exactly how old Jesus was when he began his ministry, but it says in Luke chapter 3 and verse 23 that he was about 30. Now, he could have been exactly 30, but when a historian says he was about 30, the historian says, I don't know how old he was, but he was about 30.

A lot of times in third world countries, in ancient times, they just didn't keep that much track of their birthdays and things like that. Apparently, Jesus' actual date or even year of birth is unknown. Luke is the only person who gives us any indication of Jesus' age.

It says about 30 when he started. It could have been 32, 33, 28. We just don't know.

But we might as well say 30 since we don't have any other number than that to work from. So his ministry began when he was about 30. Then how long was his ministry? We usually say 3 1/2 years.

Some say 2 1/2 years. The reason we don't know for sure is because none of the gospels actually tell us how many years his ministry was. But we calculate it by the number of Passover's that are recorded in the gospels.

The Jews had a Passover once a year. Jesus' ministry didn't begin at a Passover, but there are at least 3 Passovers mentioned in his ministry. He died on a Passover.

The feeding of the 5,000 was on a Passover. And there was a Passover in John 2 when Jesus first went and cleansed the temple the first time in the Gospel of John. We know of 3 Passovers for sure.

But since Jesus died on one of them, the distance between the first and the third one would be 2 years. Now there's some ministry of Jesus prior to that. We can just call that a half year if we want to, or it could have been a few months.

But there's at least 2 years and some change that we know of that was in Jesus' ministry. Now there's also another feast, or let's just say an unnamed feast, in John 5 where it says that there was a feast of the Jews and Jesus went to Jerusalem. Many scholars believe that was also a Passover.

If it was, then there were 4 Passovers in Jesus' ministry making a total of 3 years and a little. We usually say his ministry was 3 1/2 years because that's the outer limit that we know of. But it could have been 2 1/2 years.

In any case, we'd say Jesus died at around 33. We don't know exactly when he started his ministry. We don't know if his ministry was 2 1/2 or 3 1/2 years.

But we don't need to. The main thing to know is approximately 33 years are involved. And Jesus' ministry probably began in the year 26 A.D. which means he probably died right around 30 A.D. Now as with all things Christian, there are disagreements among different scholars on that.

Some think he died around 33. Doesn't really matter too much, but the point is the 4 Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, cover the lifetime of Jesus. Acts is the final historical book in the New Testament.

That was written by Luke, who also wrote the Book of Luke. Now by the way, if you take Luke and Acts together, that's a quarter of the New Testament. So the man who wrote the most pages in the New Testament was Luke, not Paul.

Completely a quarter. Because the Gospels themselves take up half the pages in the New Testament. Acts covers, of course, the time from Jesus' resurrection.

Actually it begins with the ascension of Christ into heaven. And the Apostles' ministries, some of them. The book is called the Acts of the Apostles, but really only a few of the

Apostles' actions are recorded in the Book of Acts.

In the first half of the Book of Acts, it's mainly Peter and John. Especially Peter. In the latter half of the Book of Acts, it's mostly Paul.

Although James is in there too. But what the other Apostles did is not recorded in detail. But the Book of Acts carries the story from the resurrection of Jesus and the ascension of Jesus through the day of Pentecost, when the Church was really born, when the Holy Spirit came down and filled the saints.

And then the evangelistic mission of the Church spreading out from Jerusalem into Judea and Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the world. The latter portion, to the uttermost parts of the world, is largely documented in the ministry of Paul. Paul, in his ministry, gets saved as he's leaving Jerusalem to go persecute Christians in Damascus, the city in Syria to the north.

He gets saved, he gets persecuted by the Jews because he got saved, and so he travels a lot. He doesn't travel just because he's persecuted, but sometimes that's what tells him when it's time to go somewhere else. He travels all over Asia Minor, which is modern Turkey.

He travels in Greece and establishes churches there. Eventually he goes to Rome, and we don't know after that because the Book of Acts ends with Paul in prison in Rome. And by the time the book ends, Paul's been there for two years, waiting to stand trial before Nero, and he has not gotten his trial yet.

So he got to Rome around 60 AD, and he was there at least two years, according to the final verses of the Book of Acts, he was spent at least two years under house arrest in Rome when the Book of Acts closes. So the Book of Acts ends around 62 AD. If Jesus died in 30 AD, then that's another 32 years added to that.

If he died in 33 AD, it's only about 30 years added to that. In any case, it's only 62 years AD that the close of the historical New Testament is. That's in those five books.

Then you have what's called epistles. An epistle is just a letter, really. A letter from one person to another person, or we could say in some cases to a group of people.

There are 21 of those in the New Testament, of which two-thirds may have been written by Paul. Thirteen of them have Paul's name on them, and we accept all of those as what we call the Pauline epistles. So there are 13 letters that have Paul's name as the sender.

Most of these are to churches, not individuals, though some of them are to individuals. He wrote to some of his co-workers, Timothy and Titus, two books to Timothy, one to Titus, and there's a book to his friend Philemon. So of the 13 named Pauline epistles, four of them are to individuals, nine of them are to churches.

Now there's another book that might be Paul's, but that's much disputed. That's the book of Hebrews. If the book of Hebrews was written by Paul, then he wrote fully two-thirds of the epistles in the New Testament.

Luke wrote about a quarter of the New Testament. Paul wrote the largest number of books, though many of them are short. If Hebrews was Paul's, then he wrote 14 books.

The other seven epistles were written by other people. James wrote one book that we know about, Peter wrote two, and John wrote three, and Jude wrote one. And all together that makes seven.

These are called general epistles. General because they're usually not written to an individual church, they're kind of just to the church at large, most of them, and they're written by a variety of authors, obviously. So let's just say for the sake of making the numbers neat, 14 epistles by Paul, seven epistles by the other guys combined.

Then you have the book of Revelation, and that's in a class by itself. It's written by John, who also wrote one of the Gospels and three of the epistles. But John was on an island, he saw visions, and he wrote them down.

And these visions were in the form of apocalypse. Now the word apocalypse is actually the name of the book in the Greek Bible. Apocalypse is the name of the book of Revelation in Greek.

The Catholic Bible just calls it the apocalypse, which is just the transliteration of the Greek word apocalypsis. We call it the Revelation because that's the meaning of the Greek word. It means the unveiling.

And these visions were written down, and this book, by the way, was very controversial in the early church. It wasn't really accepted into the New Testament by all the churches until about 397 A.D. But that was also true of Hebrews, 2 Peter, Jude. I think those ones primarily.

Hebrews, 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation were the books that were considered disputed for a long time. They finally were all accepted into the canon or the official list of scripture of the New Testament in 397 at the Council of Carthage. So almost 400 years after the birth of Christ.

It took that long for them to accept this book. But it deserves to be in there. The books that were withheld for a long time, that shouldn't make us have any doubts about them.

It just means that the people who were making the decision wanted to make sure they weren't hasty in deciding. They didn't hold these books at arm's length because they didn't like anything in them. They just weren't sure who the authors were in some cases.

Usually if the authorship was questioned, its inclusion was questioned. But eventually sufficient data and evidence seemed to arise to convince the church leaders that these books really were written by apostles and therefore they're included. So that's how it breaks down.

Now let's talk about the timeline of biblical history. If we take all of history from the creation of the world till today, let's make a timeline to represent that whole time. Okay, so we're going to have Adam and Eve here.

And this is us today. Okay. Many of you can tell me how long that is.

6,000 years, right? And what's interesting is that divides into three essentially equal parts. Today is 2,000 something A.D. Now by the way, what does A.D. mean? Anno Domini. What does that mean? Year of our Lord or year of our King.

Why is the number 2014 A.D. used to speak of the date we live in? Because there has to be some reference point from which you begin to number dates. In ancient times before Jesus came, you'll find in the Bible that a society would number the years from the beginning of the reign of a king. So you'll find in the third year of Jeconiah or the fifth year of Hezekiah the king or the second year of Ahaz or someone like that.

You start from the reign of a king and that becomes the reference point for measuring years. Same thing in Babylon. We read of the first and second year of Nebuchadnezzar and so forth in Babylon.

Now actually today's year, 2014, would actually be the 2600th year of Nebuchadnezzar if we were using Nebuchadnezzar as a reference point. This would be the year 2600. But why don't we use Nebuchadnezzar? Because he's not our king.

The reason we use Jesus is because he is our king. And because Jesus was sent to earth to be the king, his coming to earth is considered to be the beginning of the marking of significant years. Now what's interesting is even non-Christian countries are somewhat compelled to acknowledge this.

Of course, China has their own way of numbering years and I'm sure that every country that's not Christian has its own way. But because the nations that have raised Christianity have become economically dominant, all over the world this is 2014. Even in atheist countries, this is 2014.

The 2014th year of the reign of our king Jesus. That's what that number means. I remember Richard Wurmbrandt who was in Romania under communism was having a conversation with a Russian soldier on a train once and the Russian soldier said, we don't believe in Jesus.

Richard Wurmbrandt said, oh sure you do. Even Pravda, the official communist

magazine, believes in Jesus. And the soldier said, no, there's no way that's possible.

So he pulled it out and had the number of the date on it. He said, what's that number measuring from? Even the atheists inadvertently acknowledge the significance of Jesus' birth. Now, people who are trying to get away from that in our culture don't use BC and AD anymore.

Do you know what they use? BCE, before the common era. And that's instead BC. It's not before Christ, it's before the common era.

They also use CE for what today's date would be 2014 CE. That's the common era. But what makes the difference between what is the common era and what's before the common era? Still the same thing, still Jesus.

Doesn't matter what names you give it, what letters you use, you still are acknowledging Jesus is the thing that changed history significantly enough to change all the numbers. And that happened, well if we want to measure backward, of course, let's just make that zero. Jesus comes at zero AD.

That means the Old Testament, which is 4,000 years from Adam to Christ, is twice as long as the time that has existed since Christ till now. Now the New Testament covers about this much here. So you can see that the history of the Bible from Adam to the end of the book of Acts goes to about that point.

To about, what did we say, about 62 AD? This point is almost exactly the middle between Christ and Adam. What of significance was there 2,000 BC? Abraham, that's right. After the creation, the call of Abraham is one of the very most important things.

To the Jew, it's the most important thing. Because Abraham is the man that God came to and said, I'm going to make your seed the most important in the whole world. He said, you and your seed, I'm going to give this land, I'm going to bless all the nations, I'm going to make you a father of many nations.

And this happened in Genesis 12, 1 through 3. Which means there's only 11 chapters covering this section from Adam to Abraham. Genesis 1 through 11 covers all that period of time, equal in length to the time from Abraham to Christ. In just 11 chapters.

Those 11 chapters deal with four major events. The creation, in the first two chapters. The fall, in the third chapter.

The flood. Now I'm skipping over Cain and Abel because although those are interesting stories, they're not as earth-shaking. The creation, the fall, the flood.

Chapters 6 through 9. Especially 6 through 8. And then in chapter 11, there's the Tower of Babel. That's when all the nations' languages were confused and they spread out. So

you've got four major history-changing events in this period.

One is the beginning, the creation. Then the fall, that changed everything. Then the flood, that changed everything again.

And then the Tower of Babel, that changed everything again. It's like God kept hitting the reset button. Change it again, start from scratch again.

Change everything. Now, we don't have a lot of chapters describing that period of time, but no one could say those are unimportant events. Those are among the most important events for humanity that could be in any history.

But it's covered very quickly. And the reason it's covered quickly and the rest is covered in more detail is because everything after Genesis 12, all the way to this point, the day we're living in, 2014 and beyond, that 4,000 years from Abraham to our own time, everything that happened after that is commentary on Genesis 12, 1-3. In Genesis 12, 1-3, God made a covenant with Abraham, a promise.

He fulfilled that covenant in stages, and he's still fulfilling it today. Because according to Paul in Galatians 3.16, when God made promises to Abraham and his seed, he did not say seeds plural, he said seeds singular. I'm quoting Paul here.

He did not say, and to your seeds, but to your seed, which is Christ. Galatians 3.16. The seed of Abraham, to whom the promises were made, is Christ, according to the apostle Paul, if we trust him. I do, he's an apostle of Christ.

Therefore, Christ, the seed of Abraham, came at this point, 2,000 years after the promise, and the promise is that all the nations of the earth are going to be blessed through that seed. That's what's been going on since then for the last 2,000 years. How? By the message of Christ's salvation, the message of his kingdom being carried to all the world.

See, the book of Acts begins with Christ, just before he ascended back to heaven, he said, you'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the world. And that's what's been going on for the past 2,000 years. And as new nations and new individuals learn of Christ and find salvation in Christ, that's more people being blessed by Abraham's seed, Christ.

And all the nations are going to be blessed. That's why Jesus sent his disciples out to disciple all nations. Because that's the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise that he intends.

So we've got 2,000 years after Adam and 2,000 years before Christ, this promise made which informs and controls the rest of history. Okay, we've talked about this period from Adam to Abraham. I want to make another timeline that doesn't include Adam to

Abraham just because we need to give more details.

It won't include us either. We'll just take the time between Abraham and Christ. So here's our new timeline.

Now, this period of 2,000 years is divided exactly in half by another person of significance. Anyone know who? David. Right around 1,000 B.C., we have David.

Now, he's important similar to Abraham in a way because just as God made a promise about the Messiah to Abraham, he amplified on that promise to David. In 2 Samuel 7, Nathan the prophet was speaking to David and said, for God, he says, when you are dead, when you're sleeping with your fathers, the Lord will raise up your son after you who will come out of your loins. He'll sit on your throne, and God will establish his kingdom forever.

He will be to me a son, and I will be to him a father. And he will build the temple of the Lord or the house unto the Lord. Now, there's a sense in which Solomon seems to fulfill all these conditions, but the New Testament in Hebrews 1.5 tells us that this prophecy was uttered to Jesus because that statement, he shall be my son, and I shall be his father, which is part of the promise God made to David about his son who would reign forever, that's quoted in Hebrews 1.5 as being spoken to Jesus or about Jesus.

So, David's son, from this point on, the Messiah was going to come through David's line. That's the same thing as coming through Abraham's line, only more precise. Because David, of course, descended from Abraham, but so did millions of other people.

Of those millions of people who descended from Abraham, one of them was selected and said, okay, now it's you and your kid that's going to be the Messiah. So, it's interesting how symmetrical this is. I mean, the Bible actually doesn't call attention to that.

The Bible doesn't have the dates of things written into the stories, except, you know, the third year of Uzziah the king or something like that. It doesn't actually give us a timeline. It gives us the story, and it gives us sufficient chronological dates and so forth that we can add them up, and this is what we come up with.

It's almost like a hidden background part of the history that it's so symmetrical. If the Bible made a big deal about it, we'd think it was artificial. But the Bible doesn't even mention this symmetry.

Now, let's talk about from Abraham to David. The book of Genesis, as I said, from chapter 12 on, picks up the story of Abraham, and the remainder of the book of Genesis covers four generations, from Abraham to Joseph. Just as the first 11 chapters of Genesis covered four major events, the remainder of Genesis, the last 38 chapters, covers four major people.

Abraham, his son Isaac, his son Jacob, and his son Joseph. Now, Abraham had a number of sons. He had eight children that we know of by name.

The two most important were Ishmael and Isaac. And Ishmael was his firstborn, but he was passed over, and Isaac was made the heir of the promises. Now, to say that God made somebody the heir of the promises, this is not talking about them dying and going to heaven.

Ishmael might be in heaven, even though he wasn't chosen. When the Bible talks about choosing someone of the sons of Abraham, it's not talking about choosing them for eternal life. Eternal life wasn't even discussed in the Old Testament.

It was the coming of the Messiah that was promised. It was who is the seed of Abraham, through whom all the nations are going to be blessed. Well, it's going to come not through Ishmael, but through Isaac.

It didn't come through any of the other six children of Abraham. We have no idea whether they're in heaven or hell. That's not the issue in the Old Testament.

The issue is of Abraham's eight children, which one is the one through whom God's going to bring the Messiah? And Isaac was chosen. Now, Isaac himself had two sons, Jacob and Esau. And of those two, Jacob was chosen to be the one to carry the promises forward.

Jacob had 12 sons and a daughter. And those 12 sons, once they got married and had families, became 12 clans of Jacob. Eventually, they became big enough clans to call them tribes.

And so, we talk about the 12 tribes. Now, the man Jacob, who was the father of these 12 sons, his name was changed in the Bible to Israel. Israel, in the Bible, is a man's name.

He's the same man who was called Jacob when he was born, but his name was changed by God to Israel. Now, everyone who comes from Israel, from Jacob, is considered to be in Israel. He had 12 sons.

Israel was a man's name whose significance extended to all of his offspring. And his 12 sons became the 12 tribes of Israel. Now, this happened during a time they spent in captivity in Egypt, a time that is given in Scripture as 430 years.

Moses was born at the end of that 430 years and was called by God to rescue the people from the captivity in Egypt. Moses' life divides into three equal sections of 40 years and 40 years and 40 years. And 40 is going to be a very important number because in the period of the judges, the judges are all going to reign for 40 years or 80 in a few cases.

And then, when Saul is made king, he reigns 40 years. Then David's the next king, he reigns 40 years. Solomon's the next king, he reigns 40 years.

Everybody reigns for 40 years. It actually begins to look artificial. Now, it's either the fact that God sovereignly orchestrated that these people die in the 40th year of their reign because that's how they ended their reign in every case, by dying.

And if you lived to the end of that, you might begin, when you're about 38 years old, to get nervous, you know, if you're David or Solomon. But that number is given for the length of the reign of almost all the judges. And Moses' life divides into three of those 40s.

There are some scholars who feel like the 40 years isn't intended to be taken literally, but just a shorthand for a generation. I'm not taking a position on that. We're going to go ahead and use 40 as the actual number because it calculates out the way we do it here.

So Moses spent his first 40 years growing up in Egypt. His next 40 years he was out in the wilderness, at the end of which time he saw the burning bush and he was sent by God to go back to Egypt and rescue his people after a confrontation with Pharaoh, which involved 10 disastrous plagues that ruined the economy of Egypt and eventually even the families of Egypt. And so Pharaoh reluctantly, when Moses was 80 years old, let the people go under Moses' leadership.

They crossed the Red Sea. They went out of the land of Egypt. Pharaoh had changed his mind, sent his armies after them, but they got wiped out in the sea.

And God brought the children of Israel to a place called Mount Sinai, which is in Arabia, according to Paul in Galatians 4. He said Sinai is in Arabia. The traditional site of Sinai is actually in what's called the Sinai Peninsula. You know, I said, well, of course it'd be in the Sinai Peninsula.

What else? Well, the Sinai Peninsula is named after the traditional location of Mount Sinai. If that traditional place is not really Mount Sinai, then Sinai Peninsula is named wrongly. But actually there's good evidence that Sinai is actually across the Gulf of Aqaba in Arabia.

But we're not going to get into those controversies right now. The point is they got to Mount Sinai and God gathered the children of Israel, whom he led out of Egypt there, and gave them a covenant. Now, he made a covenant with Abraham earlier, but now he makes a covenant with these people who are now rescued from their slavery in Egypt.

And that covenant is in Exodus 19, verses 5 and 6. He says, if you will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then you will be a peculiar treasure unto me in all the earth, because all the nations are mine, God said. But he says, and you'll be a kingdom of priests and a peculiar people to me. So God gave Israel a conditional covenant.

If you will obey my voice, if you will keep my covenant, you will be my special people. Well, the rest of the history after that part of Exodus is discouraging. No sooner was the

ink dry on the stone tablets, but that they were already worshipping other gods.

They built a gold calf, they worshipped it. This made God very angry. He almost wiped them out.

He was going to make another nation out of Moses. He wiped all the others out, but Moses prayed for them and that changed. And so God kept them in his family.

And he led them for 40 years through the wilderness. Now, it would only take 11 days to get across the wilderness, so 40 years is obviously moving pretty slow. But they actually got across the wilderness in a shorter time than that.

They parked at Sinai for a year. So they were there a whole year before they moved. But when they did move, they got to Kadesh Barnea, where they were actually able to cross over into the Promised Land.

But they sent some spies in ahead of them to report back how things were. And they came back with a good report in general. It's great, prosperous land.

It's flowing with milk and honey. But there's giants in the land. We can't kill them.

We can't defeat them. Now, God had promised that he would help them defeat them, but they didn't believe it. And so their lack of faith made God upset with them.

He said, OK, listen, you don't want to go in there? I won't let you go in there. You're going to wander around for 38 more years here in the desert, and I'll let your kids go into the Promised Land since you don't want to go. And so for a total of 40 years, they wandered in the wilderness, 38 after that point.

And Moses died. His successor to leave the country was Joshua. And Joshua is in the book of Joshua.

So Moses dies at the end of Deuteronomy. I should point out to you that of the five books at the beginning of the Bible, everything in Genesis happens before Moses is around. Although he wrote those five books, he wasn't alive during the time of Genesis.

But he's born at the beginning of Exodus, and he dies at the end of Deuteronomy. So Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are all the lifetime of Moses. But he dies in Deuteronomy at the end, and then Joshua, in the book of Joshua, takes over.

It takes about 25 years subduing the land. They conquer the Canaanites and subdue the land. And then Joshua dies.

After Joshua dies, there's no successor. Moses was commanded by God to lay hands on Joshua to appoint him as his successor, but no such appointment was made to succeed Joshua. And so the book of Judges follows.

The book of Judges is approximately 323 years, the book of Judges. In that book, there's 12 judges. There's 12 judges named.

There might have been other judges that aren't named, but there's 12 given in the book of Judges. And this period of 323 years, Israel didn't have a central government. They had the tabernacle as a central place of worship, but they didn't have a king.

There was no standing army in those 323 years. There was no capital, no political capital, no government machinery, no taxation, except for the tithes paid to the priests. And this is stated four times in the book of Judges.

In those days, there was no king in Israel. And everyone did what was right in his own eyes. The way God set things up after Joshua died is they didn't have a king, and everyone was just supposed to do what's right in their own eyes.

They're supposed to follow the law according to their own conscience. God gave them the law. He gave them liberty.

They didn't have a political system telling them what to do. They just had God's laws to live by, and as long as they did that, things went well. Everyone could just live under his vine and fig tree and be peaceful and have a good time.

But what happened is, in the book of Judges, we see this cycle about seven times, I think it is, that the Israelites start worshiping other gods. And then God brings invaders in who keep them under captivity and keep them under their thumb. And then the people cry out to God, and God raises up a man to deliver them, or a woman.

Because Deborah is one of the judges. But all the other judges that are named are men. But God would raise up somebody to deliver them.

And that deliverer was really a military leader. They'd call the tribes of Israel together to go out and drive out the invaders. They would succeed with the help of God.

And then that person who led their armies would remain in a position called a judge. Now, the judge was not a king or a queen. The judge was just like a magistrate.

God was the king of Israel. They were his kingdom. The judges served under God, but not as kings.

People would come to them, like you would go to a court of law today to go before a judge, to solve litigious matters, you know, if there's some litigation. The judge would go to the law of Moses and arbitrate from the law. But they didn't rule.

And when the judge died, they didn't leave a successor. That's a big difference between a judge and a king. Kings always have successors.

A king starts a dynasty. And his son and grandson, great-grandson, and so forth, are kings after him. During this period of time, Israel was what usually is called a tribal league.

Twelve tribes that had a loose connection with each other through the tabernacle worship. Apart from that, they just minded their own business, didn't bother each other very much. When they were called together by a judge to resist the enemy and drive them out, then they were kind of united under the leadership of that judge for a while.

But the judge didn't set up a dynasty. They just served in the emergency. And when they died, things went back to the way they were.

People were just doing what was right in their own eyes, until what was right in their own eyes wasn't good. And then they'd do bad, and God would send more invaders, and the cycle would go again. A lot of people say it wasn't good, because it says everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Now, almost every preacher that quotes that verse, you know, there was no king in Israel, and everyone did what was right in their own eyes, they think that's a bad thing. But the reason there was no king in Israel is because God didn't want there to be one. There was nothing else to do but for everyone to do what was right in their own eyes.

But he intended them to be informed by the law as to what is right. He wanted them to each family follow the law as free people, without tyrants telling them what to do. Later they had kings, most of them tyrants.

And you know what, it's actually better for everyone to do what's right in their own eyes than for everyone to have to do what's right in the eyes of a tyrant who's wicked. They were supposed to have God as their king. In fact, Gideon was one of those judges, and God raised him up to drive out the Midianites after one of those periods of oppression.

And at the end of that, in Judges chapter 8, the people wanted to make Gideon their king. They said, rule over us, you and your son and your sons' sons, rule over us. He said, I will not rule over you and my son will not rule over you, the Lord will rule over you.

It was understood during the time of the judges they weren't supposed to have a king. God was their king, they're his kingdom, he's their king. That was the arrangement.

But at the end of the period of the judges, Samuel, who was the last of the judges, was getting old, and his sons were corrupt. And he was a priest also, and so his sons were serving as priests. And they were corrupting, they were taking bribes, and they were doing bad things in the tabernacle.

And the leaders of the tribes of Israel came to Samuel, who was the judge at that time, and said, we don't like your sons, and you're getting old, and we're a little tired of this

cycle of one judge after another, why don't you just give us a king, like all the nations have. This is in 1 Samuel chapter 8. 1 Samuel begins at the end of the period of the judges. Ruth, by the way, is a little story stuck in there between judges and Samuel.

Ruth was a story that took place during the time of the judges. And by the way, a lot of people talk about how bad things were in the period of the judges. But actually, Ruth is a story about people who lived during the time of the judges.

Boaz was a God-fearing man. Bethlehem, the city she lived in, was a pretty pious city. Ruth herself was a pious girl.

Everyone blessed each other in the name of Yahweh. There was no idolatry going on there. So sometimes, in some places and sometimes in the period of judges, it was good.

Other times, it was bad. Because everyone did what was right in their own eyes, and not everyone has the same ideas about what's right. In any case, at the end of that time, Samuel, the last judge, was approached by the people.

They said, we want you to give us a king like all the nations have. So now we're at the beginning of 1 Samuel chapter 8. Samuel didn't like it because it wasn't really what God had set up. But he prayed and God said, Samuel, go ahead and give them what they want.

Don't worry about it. They've not rejected you. They've rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

So it's clear that God wasn't pleased. He certainly wasn't flattered by their wish to have an earthen king. He said, they've rejected me from being their king, but give them what they want.

Now the monarchy is in the books of Samuel and Kings. In our Bible, we have 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles. In the Hebrew Bible, there was only originally one book of Samuel, which included both what we call 1 and 2 Samuel.

Likewise, one book of Kings that included all the material in 1 and 2 Samuel. And same thing with Chronicles. And also Ezra and Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible.

The Hebrew language doesn't have any vowels in it. It does, but the Hebrew scriptures didn't have any vowels in them. And so they didn't take up much space.

You can put all the material in 1 and 2 Kings or 1 and 2 Samuel into one scroll. When the Old Testament scriptures were translated into Greek, the Greek words are longer, they have the vowels in them, and it just took up more space. So they broke up these big books into two books.

So Samuel became 1 and 2 Samuel. Kings became 1 and 2 Kings and so forth. That's the

Greek Bible, and that's how it came down to us in our Bible as well.

Now the book of Samuel there, 1 and 2, is the story of the monarchy being established. The prophet Samuel was not only the last of the judges, he's also considered to be one of the first of the prophets. And God used him to establish the monarchy.

And so he picked Saul. Actually, Samuel didn't pick him, God picked him. And Saul was the kind of guy that people would pick.

In fact, the name Saul in Hebrew means asked for. And he's just the kind of king people ask for. He's like a television president.

He's taller than everybody. He stood head and shoulders taller than everyone else in the country. He's the tallest man in the country.

And he was handsome. And he was all that. You know, he would have won the election in a TV candidacy.

And so Saul was picked. And he was okay at first, but not for long. He eventually got rebellious, got too cocky, and God told Saul, I'm going to have to pick someone else to replace you.

I'm going to pick a man after my own heart to replace you. Saul reigned 40 years total, but in the middle of that, that's where David comes in. And David is a shepherd.

He's a young boy. In those days, Israel was under the boot of the Philistines, and they couldn't defeat them. But the Philistines sent a giant who was about 10 feet tall.

This man was the champion of the Philistines, and he said, listen, let's not have all this bloodshed. Let's just have two people fight it out. The Philistine champion, Goliath, will fight the Israelite champion, whoever he may be.

Send him out here, and then if the Philistine kills the Israelite, then the Philistines win this war. The Israelites have to serve the Philistines. If the Israelite wins, then the Israelites win the war, and the Philistines have to serve them.

It's interesting that this strategy came from the pagan side because it's actually a pretty good strategy. Why kill all the soldiers? Why not just have it out between two guys and say that settles it? In fact, we could even just have them play chess. Whoever wins, the whole country wins.

War is over. It actually sounds like a really smart way to end problems. The only trouble is the Philistine champion was bigger than everybody in the world, and Israel, the biggest guy they had was Saul.

He didn't want to go out there and face him. What happens is the shepherd David

happened to hear about this when he was bringing food to his brothers who were in the army. He heard the challenge issued by the Philistines and said, well, who's going to go out and fight him? If no one else will do it, I'll do it.

He went, and the greatest testimony to Saul's faith is that he let David go out there and fight Goliath, knowing that if David was killed, the whole nation of Israel was going into captivity. It's a pretty amazing thing that David could persuade the king to trust him like that. But the king said, David, you can't kill a giant.

You're just a shepherd boy. This giant's been a warrior all his life. David said, well, king, let me tell you something.

I've been a shepherd for a while. One day a lion came out to get the sheep, and I killed it. Another time a bear came out and wanted to kill the sheep, and I killed it.

He said, the Lord who delivered me out of the mouth of the lion, out of the paw of the bear, he'll deliver me from the hand of this uncircumcised Philistine. Just watch. And somehow David's confidence convinced even Saul.

He said, okay. And so David went out there and killed the Philistine. And David became prominent, but Saul was still the king.

David had already secretly been anointed in the house of his father by Samuel the prophet to be the new king, but no one knew about it except the family. But Saul kind of got suspicious about this. And Saul began to realize that David was getting more popular than he was.

So he started persecuting David, and David had to flee for a long time. But eventually Saul was killed in battle in the 40th year of his reign. And first the tribe of Judah, which was David's own tribe, asked him to be their king.

And he reigned over them for seven and a half years. And then the rest of the tribes asked him to be their king too, and he reigned over them for 30 years. And so David was the king after Saul, the second king.

Now David is the one that God made the promise to about your son is going to be on the throne forever. And Jesus descended from David. And so David was a pretty good ruler.

He had his sins, but Israel nonetheless prospered during his time. He never turned from God like some of the later kings did. Now you might say, well didn't he commit adultery and do some bad things? He did.

He did. He did. All the kings, in fact all the people in the Bible, did bad things.

But a king was considered to be good or bad insofar as he did or did not worship other gods. There were going to be a total of 40 kings after David. And almost all of them

worshipped other gods, not Yahweh.

David didn't. So all the few kings that were good were always said to say they followed the Lord like David did. It doesn't mean that David was perfect or that they were perfect, but they weren't apostates.

Most of their kings later were. But David was a pretty good king. The nation at the time of his death was at the highest point of its prosperity at any time in history.

He left his kingdom to his son Solomon. And Solomon was okay at first, but he went bad, sort of like Saul did. I won't go into the detail, though I'd love to right now.

Solomon also reigned for 40 years, but the end of his reign was not good. He left the nation in terrible debt because of his building projects. He built a temple at great expense, but he built himself a palace at an even greater expense, and used slave labor, Israelites, and was very oppressive.

And when he died, part of the nation was on the brink of rebellion against him. When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam came to power, and right at the very beginning of Rehoboam's reign, the leaders of the tribes of Israel came to Rehoboam and said, Listen, we'll make a deal with you. Your father Solomon taxed us to oblivion.

If you lower the taxes, we'll serve you. But if you don't, we won't serve you. And Rehoboam, being a young man, I think in his early 20s as I recall, maybe just 20, he went to his advisors.

First he went to the older advisors who were his father's age. And they said, Yeah, do what the people say, and they'll serve you. Lower the taxes, lift the burden, and you'll have your kingdom secure.

But he said, Let me check with the younger guys my age. And he talked to the counselors his age. You know, these young guys didn't have any experience, just theories.

They said, No, you need to show them who's boss. You need to go tell those people, My father whipped you with whips. I'm going to whip you with scorpions.

My little finger will be thicker than my father's loins. These are Hebrewisms that don't mean much to us. But it meant he's going to be heavier than his father.

He essentially called their bluff, and they rebelled. Ten of the tribes rebelled and did not follow David's dynasty anymore. They were the northern tribes, and they formed a nation under a man named Jeroboam, and they called their nation Israel, because ten of the twelve tribes were part of that nation.

The other two tribes in the south, Judah and Benjamin, remained loyal to David's

dynasty, so they served Rehoboam. Well, so we have two nations now. The southern kingdom was called Judah.

The northern kingdom was called Israel. The history of the northern kingdom was from 975 B.C. That's when the rebellion under Rehoboam took place, 975 B.C., until they were destroyed in 722 B.C. So the history of the northern kingdom was 253 years. During that time, they had 19 kings.

Not one dynasty lasted more than four generations. Their kings were violently killed. They were wicked.

Not one of their kings served God. They served idols, and they persecuted the prophets and so forth. And these 19 kings brought such ruin on the country that in 722 B.C., the Assyrians came at God's behest, because God was judging Israel for this, and they were destroyed and carried off into captivity.

They never returned. Those ten tribes just disappeared. Partly they disappeared because they were carried off and they intermarried with other races, and they just kind of got assimilated.

So those ten tribes are gone. Now you might say, but doesn't the New Testament talk about twelve tribes? Yes, because when Rehoboam's rebellion took place, I mean, Jeroboam's rebellion against Rehoboam, there were some of the individuals of the ten tribes that wanted to stay loyal to David and wanted to still worship at the temple that Solomon built. So there were individuals from all the ten tribes that came down to live in Judah and became part of the nation of Judah.

So the nation of Judah was almost entirely made up of the tribe of Judah, one of the twelve tribes. But the Benjamites were there, a very small tribe, and some people of all the other tribes too. So the northern kingdom, when it came to nothing in 722 B.C., we lost all of them, except the ones who had migrated back down to Judah earlier and had their descendants there.

So there still are people from all twelve tribes, but all of them after 722 were living in the southern kingdom called Judah. Now the southern kingdom of Judah lasted a little longer. It started in 975 with the rebellion, and it ended when the Babylonians came and destroyed Judah in 586 B.C. That's 390 years.

So it lasted like 150 years longer than the northern kingdom. The Assyrians that wiped out the northern kingdom also came down and tried to do the same thing in Judah. But Judah happened to have a good king at that time, which wasn't true most of the time, but they had King Hezekiah, who was a godly king.

And while the walls of Jerusalem were besieged by the Assyrians, Hezekiah prayed and asked God for deliverance, and God sent an angel who killed 185,000 Assyrians outside

the gates of Jerusalem. And that ended that siege pretty good. And so the Assyrians never conquered Judah.

They conquered everyone else around, but they didn't conquer Judah. And Judah lasted another 150 years approximately until the Babylonians were now the new threat, and it was the Babylonians that took out Judah. Now Judah had 20 kings after Solomon.

So the northern kingdom had 19, and Judah had 20. Now since Judah lasted 150 years longer, you can see that the kings of Judah were longer reigns, because there were a few of them that were good guys. Mostly not.

Of the 20 kings, there might have been 5 that we could have called good. The rest, pretty much just like the ones in the north. And the nation became an offense to God, and He warned them through prophets.

Now both of these kingdoms, before they fell, before the northern kingdom fell to the Assyrians, and before Judah, the southern kingdom, fell to the Babylonians, God sent them prophets. And those are those prophets that I call the pre-exilic prophets. Isaiah, Jeremiah, they were sent to Judah, as well as most of what we call the minor prophets.

They were sent to Judah. A few prophets were sent to the northern kingdom. Elijah and Elisha were in the northern kingdom, although they didn't write any books.

Their stories are told in 1 and 2 Kings, but they didn't write any books themselves. But Hosea and Amos were among the prophets that were sent to the northern kingdom before it fell. And these prophets were sent there to warn them that God was going to judge them if they didn't repent.

And they didn't repent, so God judged them, and that's basically that. And so they went into captivity in Babylon for 70 years. In Babylon there were two prophets, two Jewish prophets in the exile.

They were Daniel and Ezekiel. Daniel went there in 605, which was the first time Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, carried off some of the Jews into captivity. Ezekiel went in 597 B.C., when a second time Nebuchadnezzar came.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, conquered Jerusalem three times, but he didn't destroy it until the third time. He tried to keep it alive. He tried to put governors and people who would cooperate with him in charge.

And in 605, the first of these times, he carried away Daniel and a number of others into Babylon. In 597, he carried away Ezekiel and most of the others. But it wasn't until 586 B.C. that a final rebellion in Jerusalem against Nebuchadnezzar brought his armies in.

He totally destroyed the city, burned down the city, burned down the temple. Nothing

was left. He carried everyone except the poorest peasants in the land.

He allowed the poorest people to stay in the land, but the nation was gone. All the political machinery, all the nobility, all the royalty, everyone, most of the population were carried off into Babylon for 70 years. And that's the exile.

And that puts Israel kind of in the same place they were before the exodus in Egypt. They have a promised land, promised, but they're not in it. And they don't have a king, they don't have a nation.

And they're under the rule of pagans. The prophets had said that God would send them into Babylon if they didn't repent, but he'd also bring them back, and he did. Jeremiah in particular, in chapter 25, had said they'd be 70 years in Babylon before he brought them back.

What happened is the Babylonians were conquered by the Persians under a man named Cyrus in 539 B.C. And Cyrus was a generous monarch, and he let all the people that had been displaced by the Babylonians go home to wherever they came from. That included the Jews. And he gave them an official document that authorized any Jew who wanted to leave Babylon and go back and rebuild Jerusalem, rebuild the nation there.

They were still going to be vassal states under Persia, but they could have their own country again and have their temple again and all that. So a small remnant did go back, about 50,000, with a man named Zerubbabel. Later, Ezra and Nehemiah took a few more people back, and this is the post-exilic return.

This is in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Now the book of Esther happened at that same time, but she stayed in Persia because she happened to be the queen of Persia. She was a Jewish girl who got picked to be the king's wife.

And her presence in Persia, when some of the other exiles had gone back to Jerusalem to build things up again, she saved her people from a slaughter in Persia that was plotted against them there. That's another story we won't get into. But that actually brings us to the end of the historical part of the Old Testament.

And there were three prophets that spoke to the Jews who came back from the exile when they were building the temple. Well, two of them, Zechariah and Haggai, were the two prophets who encouraged them to rebuild the temple. And Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament, was a prophet who came sometime later, around 400, maybe 440 B.C. That's the last book of the Old Testament.

So we've covered the whole Old Testament. The last of the books is still 400 years short of the time of Christ. After Malachi and before Matthew were the intertestamental period.

Now I'll just tell you real quickly what happened. The Bible doesn't record it, but history

does. When Malachi and the Old Testament books closed, Israel is still under Persian rule.

Most of the Jews are still in Babylon and Persia where they were when Babylon fell. Some, a minority, have gone back to Jerusalem. They've reestablished the nation.

But they're all under Persian rule because Persia ruled over the whole region. But Persia fell in the 4th century B.C. A man named Alexander the Great, a Macedonian, a Greek, beginning around 334 B.C. when his father, Philip the Macedon, died. He came to power at age 20 in Greece.

In 12 years, the entire Persian Empire and all the realm that had been in it. So the Babylonian Empire had passed to the Persians and the Persians had passed now to the Greeks under Alexander. Alexander didn't live long though.

At age 32 he died. After Alexander died, Israel was part of the region that was conquered and was now under Greek rule. No longer Babylonian, no longer Persian, now Greek from about 332 B.C. onward.

Now when Alexander died quite young, his kingdom was divided up among 4 of his generals. They're referred to in Greek as the Diadochi. But the 4 generals divided up his territory.

Egypt was ruled by someone named Ptolemy and Syria was ruled by someone named Seleucus. Now Syria is north of Israel, Egypt is south of Israel. And these 2 kings liked to make war with each other and they couldn't fly.

So they had to go through Israel. And whenever they sent armies through Israel, it didn't go well for Israel. These were usually angry pagan soldiers in large numbers coming into a peaceful village, raping women and children, stealing whatever they could.

And Israel was under hard times there. Eventually they were under the rule of one of the Seleucid dynasty of the north, the Syrian. A guy named Antiochus IV.

He came to be known as Antiochus Epiphanes. And he's very famous in Jewish history because it's his activities that led to the foundation of the holiday Hanukkah. And you know the Jews celebrate Hanukkah around the time Christians celebrate Christmas usually.

And Hanukkah commemorates this story about Antiochus Epiphanes who was a tyrant who actually outlawed Judaism in Israel on pain of death. If a Jew would circumcise their child, they'd be put to death. If they owned a copy of the Torah, they'd be put to death.

If they kept Sabbath or Passover, they'd be put to death. And yet they were commanded by their law to do many of these things. And therefore there arose a heroic group of non-

compromising Jews called the Hasidim who eventually gave rise to the party called the Pharisees.

There were also a lot of Jews who collaborated with the Greeks and did compromise without objection. Their numbers eventually gave rise to a group called the Sadducees. But when Antiochus was really mad at the Jews, he came and he brought a pig and he sacrificed it in the Jewish temple on an altar to Zeus.

And this was an outrage. The Jews considered the temple defiled. They couldn't use it anymore because it had been defiled.

And about that time, another interesting thing happened. There's a little town up north of Jerusalem called Modian. And a Syrian official under Antiochus came down and set up a pagan altar in that village.

And he commanded the town priest, an old man who had five sons, Mattathias, to sacrifice to Zeus on this altar. Mattathias said he wouldn't do it. Another townsman stood forward and said, I'll do it.

And Mattathias, the priest, killed his fellow Jew and killed the Syrian official. And he and his five sons fled to the mountains. And along with them went a bunch of freedom fighters, Jews who lived out in the wilderness and formed guerrilla bands that raided the Syrians for a period of three years until they drove them out.

Mattathias was the leader and his five sons and series were leaders. All of them died in battle, except for Simon, I think the youngest one. The rebellion there against Antiochus was called the Maccabean Revolt because one of the sons of Mattathias, Judas Maccabeus, was nicknamed Maccabeus and the whole revolt was named after him.

Maccabeus is a word that means the hammer. In any case, he did and his brothers did deliver Israel. And they rededicated the temple and the rededication ceremony was the first Hanukkah.

And the Jews celebrate Hanukkah every year to remember the Maccabean victory and the deliverance of Israel from the Syrians. Actually, Israel for the first time in like 600 years at that point had independence. They had been under the Babylonians, they had been under the Persians, they had been under the Greeks, they had been under the Syrians, and now they weren't under anybody.

They drove the Syrians out and now they were independent again. And they were independent for about 100 years. And they set up some of their own rulers called the Hasmonean dynasty.

In 70 BC, the Romans, Pompeii, conquered the region and Israel became a vassal state under Rome. So they had been under Babylon, then Persia, then Greece, now Rome. And

this is of course where they found themselves when Jesus was born.

So the whole story of the New Testament occurs within the framework of the Roman dominion of that region. The Romans set up their own king over the Jews named Herod. He was appointed as king of the Jews in 40 BC.

But the Jews didn't want him because he was an Edomite and they fought him. And he had to actually make war against his own citizens to take his throne. It took three years to defeat them.

So he came to sit in power in Jerusalem in 37 BC until his death in 4 BC. This man was alive when Jesus was born, but he died in Jesus' infancy. When Jesus' parents took him into Egypt in Matthew chapter 2, it was to avoid Herod, this same Herod, killing all the babies in Bethlehem.

But it was when Herod died that his parents came back from Egypt and relocated to Galilee. And so we have the gospel stories. I'm not going to go into those in detail.

Suffice it to say that most of Jesus' life is passed over without much information. We have birth narratives in two gospels, Matthew chapters 1 and 2 and Luke chapters 1 and 2. Mark and John don't give any birth narratives. And apart from those four chapters, the gospels record things beginning at age 30 with Jesus, or about age 30.

And so the gospels are occupied primarily with this ministry of Jesus, which we'll, for the sake of having a figure, we're going to call it 3 1/2 years. Now, this 3 1/2 years divides into unequal but similar three parts. We can call them a year each, but we're being flexible.

A year, give or take. The first year, give or take, could be called the year of obscurity. Jesus didn't do much publicly in the first year of His ministry.

He turned water into wine. He got baptized, then He went into the wilderness and got tempted, then He came back and He turned water into wine at a wedding. He cleansed the temple.

He had conversations with Nicodemus and the woman at the well, and He healed a nobleman's servant. This is in the first five chapters of John. Not recorded in the synoptic gospels.

The first year is almost totally obscure. Only those few chapters in John record those few things in that first year. But the second year, we could call the year of popularity.

In that year, Jesus spent most of His time in Galilee, in the north part of the country, and He had huge crowds following Him. The synoptic gospels spend most of their time talking about that year of popularity. He fed the 5,000, which all the gospels record.

But John tells us that after He fed the 5,000, His ministry kind of collapsed because the next day, the people came back wanting Him to feed them again. And He said, listen, you need to eat my flesh and drink my blood, and don't labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life. And they were offended by that, and they left Him.

And apparently, only the 12 remained with Him. He had thousands of people following Him the day before. Now He has 12.

And one of them is a devil, as He points out. He said, have I not chosen you 12, one of you is a devil? Well, that was the end of the year of popularity. But there was one more year.

In fact, exactly a year, because that collapse happened at Passover, and so did His death the following year. That would be the year of opposition. He had to kind of hide out most of the time.

He had to leave the country some of the time, cross the Jordan, where the Pharisees and the chief priests didn't have jurisdiction. And so His first year of ministry, approximately, is obscure. The second year, popular.

The year of popular. And the third year, the year of opposition. And that ended with what we call the Passion Week.

The word passion is Latin for suffering. And the Passion Week begins with His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. And then, of course, He's risen from the dead by the next Sunday.

He's crucified on one of those days. Some say Wednesday, some say Thursday, some say Friday. I say Friday, but if you say Wednesday or Thursday, more power to you.

It's not worth arguing about. He died, and He rose again. Now, after He rose again, He commissioned the disciples to go into all the world.

And then He ascended into heaven and took the throne at the right hand of God. And the disciples forever afterwards went preaching that He was the King now. And their message was called The Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Gospel is an old English word that means good news. The Greek word euangelion referred to a good announcement, like a town crier might give if there's some announcement of something wonderful. When Jesus was born, actually, the angels said, shepherds, we bring good tidings, that's in the gospel, good tidings of great joy that should be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ, the Lord. And so

Jesus is the Messiah. He's the Lord.

The word Lord means ruler. He's the King. He's at the right hand of God.

He's the Son of David. He's the one who sits on David's throne in David's dynasty. Where Solomon and the other sons of David had succeeded David, Jesus is now the permanent inhabitant of that position.

Forever. The gospel preaching in the book of Acts and ever since has simply been this. There's another King, one Jesus.

That's the way the gospel is summarized in Acts 17. I think it's verse 7. There's another King, one Jesus. That's the message.

And the whole world needs to be told that. Because the whole world lies in the lap of the wicked when the Bible says. And Jesus said, Go out and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.

He said, All authority, that means rulership, in heaven and earth is given to me. Jesus is the Lord. And so from the time of Christ on until now, it's all the same except getting bigger.

See, Jesus said His kingdom was like a little mustard seed that would grow into a great tree. He said His kingdom was like a little bit of leaven put into a dough that would make the whole lump to rise. That's what's been going on for the past 2,000 years.

Jesus planted a little mustard seed. It's been growing. A little stone that's been growing to a great mountain to fill the whole earth.

It's now everywhere. And it's growing faster than any other movement in the world today. We don't need to just evangelize the world.

Jesus said, Go and teach them to observe everything I've commanded you. So the commission of the church is not just to tell them the gospel and get them a ticket to heaven, but to train them to be followers of Jesus, to teach them to observe everything I've commanded because He's the King. That's what you're supposed to do with the King.

Submit to Him. Obey Him. Jesus said, Why do you call me Lord, Lord? And you don't do the things I say.

Christianity is a movement of people submitted to a King. It is a kingdom, in other words. We are all subjects of King Jesus, those of us who are Christians.

And that is what Christianity is. It's a kingdom that's growing like a little stone into a great mountain to fill the earth. It's been growing like crazy.

On the day of Pentecost, there were 120 in this kingdom. Worldwide, 120. They're all in one room.

The next day, there's 3,000. A few days later, there's 5,000 men, not counting women and children. Eventually, we lose track.

Today, there's a quarter of the world population, a population of 7 billion people. A quarter of them claim to be Christian. Of course, they're not all real Christians, but when they go to church, they say Jesus is Lord.

Jesus is declared as Lord and King by a quarter of the world's population today. It used to be 120 in one room. And so, this is the history of the world.

God appointed Abraham to be the founder of a movement whose seed would bless all the nations in the world. Then, a thousand years later, David comes along, and God says he's going to be the son of David. And then, a thousand years later, Jesus the son of David comes, and he becomes king.

He's enthroned at the right hand of God the Father, the Bible says. Jesus said in Revelation 3.20, He says, To him that overcomes, I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, even as I have overcome and am seated with My Father on His throne. Jesus is already on the throne.

And He's been ruling for 2,000 years. That's why this is the year 2014 Anno Domini. This is 2014, the year of this King Jesus.

He's been reigning that long. And He's going to reign forever. What history is about is not about just handing out tickets to heaven.

It's about bringing people under the lordship of the King that God has appointed to sit at His right hand and who He's commanded every knee to bow and every tongue to confess to. And that's what the Bible's about. The whole Bible's about Jesus.