

Introduction

There are, of course, a number of ways one may approach the study of the Bible: *Synthetic*—an overview of the Bible as a whole to provide a grasp of the overall message, *Analytical*—the process of viewing the Bible verse by verse to get an in depth understanding, *Topical or Doctrinal*—a study of the Bible according to its many topics and doctrines, and *Typical*—a study of the many pictures or types found in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, that portray the truth of the New Testament. The *synthetic* or *overview* approach is extremely helpful for the beginning student or for those who have never undertaken such a study. Through the *synthetic* approach, we are not only able to grasp the big picture or see the whole forest, but such an overview will help in understanding the details later on in one's study of the Bible. The goal is to give the reader key terms, verses, themes or purposes of each of the books along with a brief description of the content.¹

Comparing the Old and New Testaments

The Bible may be divided into eight basic sections: four for the Old Testament and four for the New, but it should be noted that in each of these, Christ is the hope and underlying theme of all the books of the Bible. On several occasions, Christ claimed that He is the theme of all of Scripture:

1. In Matthew 5:17 He said, "I have come not to abolish them (the Scriptures) but to fulfill them."
2. When walking with the disciples on the Emmaus road, Luke tells us that, "... beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."
3. Later that evening, the Lord spoke to ten of the disciples and regarding that, Luke tells us in Luke 24:44-47, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."
4. In John 5:39 and 40, when in dialogue with the Jews, Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; 40 and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life."

In addition, in Revelation 19:10 we are told that "the testimony of Jesus (about Jesus) is the spirit of prophecy." In other words, the very nature and purpose of prophecy, and all of Scripture for that matter, is to reveal Jesus Christ. Obviously, due to the fall and need of man, Christ is the theme of both the Old and New Testaments for it is only through Him that we can have both eternal life and life abundantly (John 10:10).

¹ Some of the ideas and the plan used in this Survey for each of the books of the Bible (author and title, date, purpose and theme, key verse(s), etc.) are similar to and drawn from other survey materials such as, *Briefing the Bible*, J. Vernon McGee, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1949; *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament*, Norman L. Geisler, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1977, "Old Testament Survey," Alban Douglas, class notes, Prairieview Bible College, and *Talk Thru the Bible*, Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1983.

| Old Testament (four-fold division) | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
| Law—the <i>Foundation</i> for Christ History— <i>Preparation</i> for Christ Poetry— <i>Aspiration</i> for Christ Prophecy— <i>Expectation</i> of Christ | Preparation & Foundation | The Old Testament in its four-fold division lays the foundation for the coming of the Messiah Savior anticipating Him as Prophet, Priest, and King and as the suffering Savior who must die for man's sin. |
| New Testament (four-fold division) | | |
| Gospels | Manifestation | Tells the story of the coming of the long-anticipated Savior and His person and work. |
| Acts | Propagation | Through the work of the Holy Spirit, Acts proclaims the message of the Savior who has come. |
| Epistles | Explanation & Application | Develops the full significance of the person and work of Christ and how this should impact the mission of the Church (and each Cristian) as Christ's ambassador in the world. |
| Revelation | Consummation | Anticipates the end time events and the return of the Lord, His end time reign, and the eternal state. |

The Law: The First Five Books

The first five books of the Bible are sometimes called the Pentateuch which means "five books." They are also known as the "books of the law" because they contain the laws and instruction given by the Lord through Moses to the people of Israel. These books were written by Moses, except for the last portion of Deuteronomy (because it tells about the death of Moses). These five books lay the foundation for the coming of Christ in that here God chooses and brings into being the nation of Israel. As God's chosen people, Israel became the custodians of the Old Testament, the recipients of the covenants of promise, and the line from which the Messiah descended (Rom. 3:2; 9:1-5).

GENESIS (The Book of Beginnings)

Author: Moses

Date: 1450-1410 B.C.

Name of the Book: The name *Genesis* is taken from the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

Theme and Purpose:

Even a casual reading of the Book of Genesis reveals the prominence of the theme of blessing and judgment. For obedience and faith, there is blessing as in the Garden of Eden, but for disobedience, there is cursing. The entire book turns on this theme and its antithetical opposite, judgment. But perhaps the main theme is the choice of a nation through Abraham and the Abrahamic covenant. Through Abraham God promised to bless the nations (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-21).

Key Words: "Generations" or "account."

A key word or phrase is "these are the *generations* of" or "this is the *account* of." It is used some eleven times to introduce the reader to the next section which gives the narrative about what happened in connection with the key events and persons of the book from the creation of the heavens and the earth to all the patriarchs of Israel.

Key Idea:

Beginnings: Genesis not only means 'beginning', but it is the book of beginnings. The book of Genesis gives us our historical point of reference, from which all subsequent revelation proceeds. In the book of Genesis, all the major themes of the Bible have their origin. It is a book of many beginnings: in it we see the beginning of the universe, of man and woman, of human sin and the fall of the race, the beginning of God's promises of salvation, and the beginning of the nation Israel as the chosen people of God because of God's special purpose for them as the line through which the Messiah appears. In Genesis, we learn about Adam and Eve, about Satan the tempter, about Noah, the flood, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph and his brothers. But here we also have the beginning of marriage, family, work, sin, murder, capital punishment, sacrifice, nations, languages, civilization, Sabbath. The Bible is, through and through, a historical revelation. It is the account of God's activity in history.

Key Chapters: Since the call of Abraham and the promises of blessing to the nations through his seed is the prominent message of Genesis, the key chapters are those relating to the Abrahamic covenant and its reiteration, 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-9

Key People: Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, Jacob, Rachel, Joseph

Christ as Seen in Genesis:

Prophetically: Immediately after the fall, the promise of salvation is given in the seed of the woman (3:15), but then the Messianic links are made clear throughout Genesis: the line of Seth (4:25), the offspring of Shem (9:26), the family of Abraham (12:3), the seed of Isaac (26:3), the sons of Jacob (46:3), and the tribe of Judah (49:10).

Typologically: There are several key types that portray the Savior in Genesis.

(1) **Adam** is a type of Christ (Rom. 5:14). As Adam is the head of the old creation, so Christ is the head of the new spiritual creation.

(2) **Abel's** offering of a blood sacrifice points to Christ who would die for us. Abel's murder by Cain may also illustrate Christ's death.

(3) **Melchizedek** is also a type of Christ (see Heb. 7:3).

(4) The near offering of **Isaac**, and God's provision of a ram, is a type of the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ

(5) **Joseph**, who was loved dearly by his father, betrayed by his brothers, and yet became the means of their deliverance typifies Christ.

Outline:

The book easily falls into two major sections: Four Events and Four People

I. Four Events (Gen. 1-11).

- A. The creation of the world and man (1-2)
- B. The corruption of man, the fall (3-5)
- C. The destruction of man, the flood (6-9)
- D. The dispersion of man, the nations (10-11)

II. Four People: the election of a nation and the preparation for the redeemer (Gen. 12-50)

- A. Abraham (the father of faith and of the nation Israel) (12-23)
- B. Isaac (the beloved son of promise) (24-26)
- C. Jacob (scheming and chastening) (27-36)
- D. Joseph (suffering and glory) (37-50)

EXODUS (The Book of Redemption)

Author: Moses

Date: 1450-1410 B.C.

Name of the Book: "Exodus" is a Latin word derived from the Greek *exodos*, the name given to the book by those who translated it into the Greek Septuagint (LXX). The word means "exit," "departure."

Theme and Purpose:

Two themes prevail in Exodus: (1) Redemption as pictured in the Passover, and (2) deliverance from the bondage of Egypt as seen in the Exodus out of Egypt and crossing the Red Sea.

Key Word: "Redeem," used nine times (6:6; 13:13; 15:13; 21:8; 34:20).

After nearly four hundreds years of growth in Egypt, Exodus continues the history of God's chosen people, the nation of Israel, and describes their deliverance out of Egypt and their development as a nation, actually, a theocracy under God. It describes the birth, history, and call of Moses by God to lead the people out of their Egyptian bondage and into the Promised Land, the land of Canaan. Through the Passover lamb, the sparing of the firstborn, along with the miracles of the ten plagues, and the crossing of the Red Sea, God showed His people that He was not only more powerful than any Egyptian Pharaoh, but was the sovereign LORD, *Yahweh*, the God of redemption and revelation.

Once the people had crossed the Red Sea and arrived in the wilderness or desert, God declared that they were a treasured possession to Him and gave them His righteous law; they were to be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation as a testimony to the nations (Ex. 19:4-7). This holy law, including the Ten Commandments, demonstrated God's holiness, taught them how to love God and one another, but in the process, it also demonstrated how all fall short of the holiness of God and need a way of access to God that provides forgiveness. This was provided for in the tabernacle, the sacrifices, and the Levitical priesthood.

Key Chapters: Chapters 12-14 record the redemption of Israel from slavery in fulfillment of God's promises; delivered from slavery by blood (the Passover lamb) and by power (the parting of the Red Sea).

Key Verses: Exodus 6:6; 19:5-6

Key People: Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Pharaoh.

Christ as Seen in Exodus:

While Exodus contains no direct prophecy of Christ, there are a number of beautiful types of the Savior.

(1) In many ways, **Moses** is a type of Christ. Deuteronomy 18:15 shows that Moses, as a prophet, anticipates Christ. Both were endangered in infancy, renounced their power to serve others, and functioned as mediators, lawgivers, and deliverers.

(2) The **Passover** is a very specific type of Christ as the sinless Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36; 1 Cor 5:7).

(3) The **Seven Feasts**, each of which portray some aspect of the Savior.

(4) The **Exodus**, which Paul connects with baptism, pictures our identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (1 Cor. 10:1-2; Rom. 6:2-3).

(5) The **Manna and Water** are both portrayed as pictures of Christ (John 6:31-35, 48-63; 1 Cor. 10:3-4).

(6) The **Tabernacle** portrays the Savior in its material, colors, furniture, arrangement, and the offerings sacrificed there (Heb. 9:1-10:18).

(7) The **High Priest** quite clearly foreshadows the person and ministry of Christ (Heb. 4:14-16; 9:11-12, 24-28).

Outline:

Exodus easily divides into two sections: Redemption and Revelation

I. Redemption From Egypt (1-18)

A. In Bondage (Subjection) (1-12)

B. Out of Bondage (Redemption by blood and power) (12-14)

C. Journeying to Sinai (Education) (15-18)

II. Revelation From God (19-40)

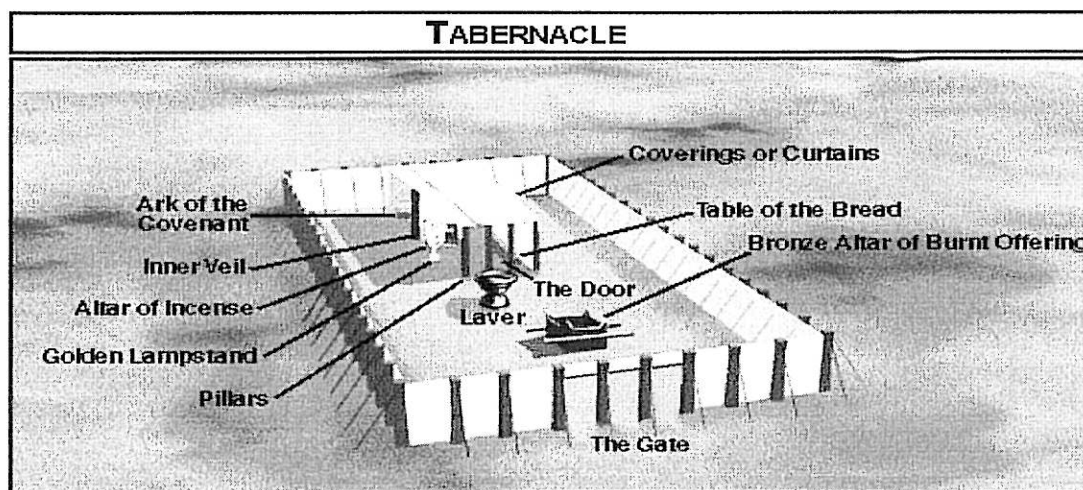
A. The Giving of the Law (19-24)

B. The Institution of the Tabernacle (25-31)

C. The Breaking of the Law (32-34)

D. The Construction of the Tabernacle (35-40)

Figure 1²



² Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible, Expanded Edition*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1995, electronic edition.

LEVITICUS (The Book of Holiness)

Author: Moses

Date: 1450-1410 B.C.

Name of the Book: Leviticus receives its name from the Septuagint and means "relating to the Levites." The Levites were the priests who were chosen of God to minister to the nation. The book of Leviticus contains many of the laws given by God to direct them in their work as priests for the worship of God.

Theme and Purpose:

Leviticus 11:45 says, "Be holy, because I am holy." The directives given in the book of Leviticus showed Israel was to walk before God as a holy people. Leviticus was designed to teach Israel (1) how to worship and walk with God and (2) how the nation was to fulfill its calling as a nation of priests. The great theme of Leviticus is **holiness**. A holy God can only be approached on the basis of sacrifice through the mediation of a priest.

Key Word: "Holiness."

Key Verses: Lev 17:11; 20:7-8

Key Chapter: Chapter 16 deals with the Day of Atonement, which became the most important day in the Hebrew calendar because it was the only day the high priest was allowed to enter into the Holy of Holies in order to make atonement for the people. "... for it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you; you shall be clean from all your sins before the LORD" (16:30).

Key People: Moses and Aaron.

Christ as Seen in Leviticus:

Similar to Exodus, a number of types of Christ are evident in Leviticus.

(1) The **Five Offerings** all typify the person and work of Christ in His sinless life, submission to the Father that we might have fellowship with God.

(2) The **High Priest** as mentioned above is a very prominent type of Christ in Leviticus.

(3) The **Seven Feasts**, again, as mentioned, also form a type of the Savior.

Outline:

Leviticus falls into two clear divisions: Sacrifice and Sanctification

I. Sacrifice (1-17)

A. The Laws of Sacrifice for Approach to God (1-7)

B. The Laws of the Priests (8-10)

C. The Laws Regarding Purity (11-15)

D. The Laws of National Atonement (16-17)

II. Sanctification (18-27)

A. The Laws of Sanctification for God's People (18-20)

B. The Laws of Sanctification for God's Priests (21-22)

C. The Laws of Sanctification in Worship (23-24)

D. The Laws of Sanctification in the Land of Canaan (25-26)

E. The Laws of Sanctification and Vows (27)

NUMBERS (Wilderness Wanderings)

Author: Moses

Date: 1450-1410 B.C.

Name of the Book: Numbers gets its name from the two accounts in chapters 1 and 26 of the numbering or counting of the people of Israel first at Mount Sinai and second on the plains of Moab.

Theme and Purpose:

Though Numbers gets its name from the numbering of the people, it is primarily concerned with nearly forty years of wandering in the desert. A journey which should have only lasted eleven days became a 38-year agony of defeat simply because of the disbelief and disobedience of the people. Numbers shows the consequence of failing to combine faith with the promises of God (see Heb 3:16-4:2). Further, Numbers teaches us that while life does have its wilderness experiences, God's people do not have to stay in those conditions. Joshua will illustrate this later.

Another important theme shown throughout the book of Numbers is found in God's continual care for his people. Over and over again, regardless of their rebellion and unbelief, He miraculously supplied their needs. He provided them with water, manna, and quail. He continued to love and forgive the people even when they complained, grumbled, and rebelled against Him.

Key Word: "Wanderings."

Key Verses: Numbers 14:22-23; 20:12

Key Chapters:

Chapters 13-14 stand as the key chapters because these chapters record a critical turning point for the nation. Here, at Kadesh-Barnea (32:8), after receiving the evil report from 10 of the 12 spies whom Moses sent to spy out the land, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb Israel focused on the giants in the land, failed to believe God, and refused to enter to possess and conquer the land, a Land that flowed with milk and honey.

Key People: Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Joshua, Caleb, Balak

Christ as Seen in Numbers:

(1) Perhaps no place is there a clearer portrait of Christ and His crucifixion than in the **serpent lifted up** on the standard (cf. Num. 21:4-9 with John 3:14).

- (2) The **rock that quenched the thirst** of the people is a type of Christ (1 Cor. 10:4).
 (3) The daily **manna** pictures Christ as the bread come down from heaven (John 6:31-33).
 (4) The **pillar of cloud** and **fire** portray the guidance of Christ and the cities of refuge certainly portray Christ as our refuge from judgment.

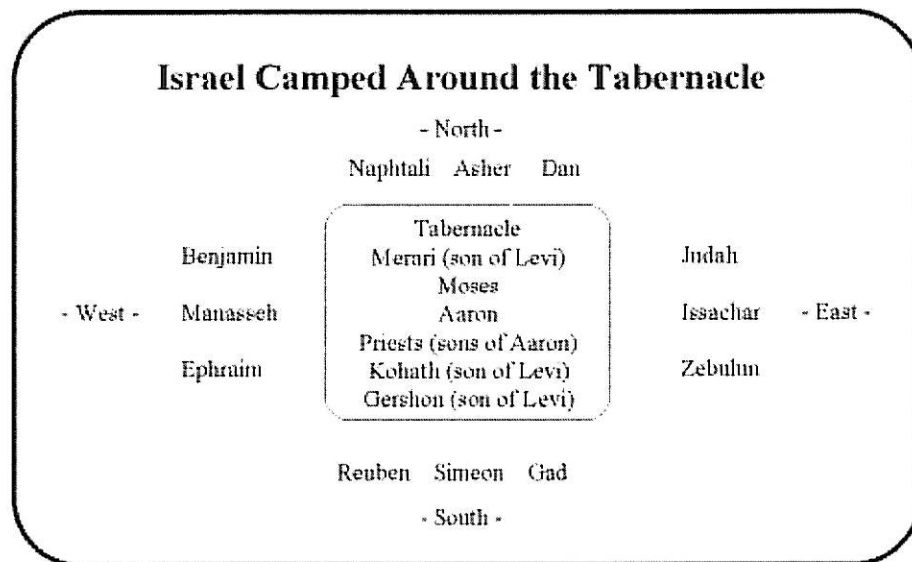
Outline:

Numbers divides into three sections: Preparation at Sinai, Failure of the Old Generation, Preparation of the New Generation.

- I. Preparation at Sinai (Old Generation) (1-10)
 - A. The Position and Numbering of the People (1-4)
 - B. The Precepts of God and Sanctification of the People (5:1-9:14)
 - C. The Pilgrimage Toward the Promised Land (9:15-10:36)
- II. Failure of the Old Generation (11-25)
 - A. Discontent Along the Way (11-12)
 - B. Disbelief at Kadesh-Barnea (13-14)
 - C. Discipline from the Lord (15-25)
- III. Preparation of the New Generation (26-36)
 - A. Reorganization of Israel (26-27)
 - B. Regulation of Offerings and Vows (28-30)
 - C. Regionalization of the Land (31-36)

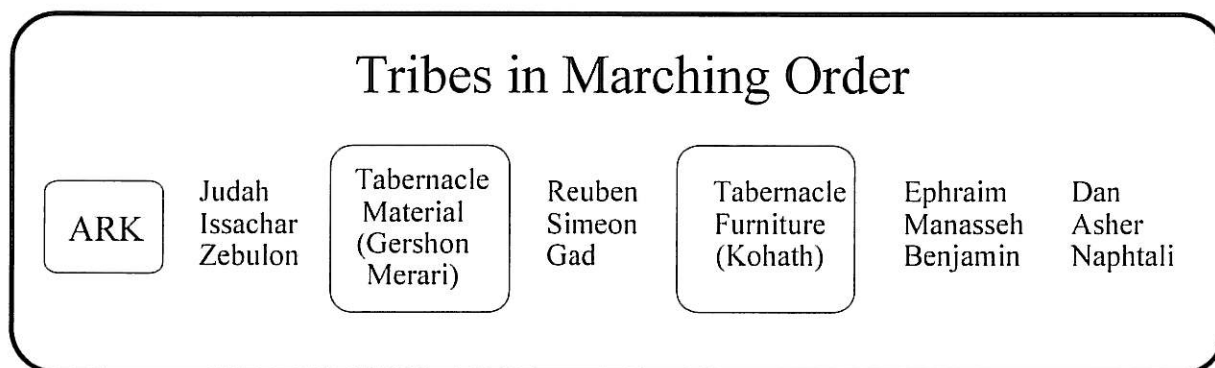
The figures below illustrate the position of the tribes in camp and on the march:

Figure 2³



³ Ryrie Study Bible.

Figure 3



DEUTERONOMY (Reiteration and Reviewing)

Author: Moses

Date: 1410 B.C.

Name of the Book: The English title, which comes from the Septuagint, means "second law-giving" and comes from the mistranslation of 17:18, which actually says "a copy of this law." Deuteronomy is a not a second law, but rather a review, expansion, and reiteration of the original law given at Sinai.

Theme and Purpose:

Watch yourself lest you forget. After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites were on the eve of entering the Promised Land. Before they did, it was necessary (lest they forget what God had done and who they were) that they be reminded about all that God had done for them and about God's holy law which was so vital to their ability to remain in the land and function as God's holy nation and as a kingdom of priests to the nations (Deut 4:1-8). As a part of this theme or purpose, the book also emphasizes the vital necessity of teaching children to love and obey God. Deuteronomy ends with the renewal of God's covenant with Israel (chapter 29), Joshua's appointment as the new leader (chapter 31), and Moses' death (chapter 34).

Key Word: "Covenant" (occurring some 27 times)

Key Verses: Deuteronomy 4:9, 23, 31; 10:12-14; 30:19-20

Key Chapters:

Chapter 27 is key because in it there is a formal ratification of Israel's covenant as Moses and the levitical priests call upon all Israel to take heed and listen, for in verses 9-10 it is declared, "This day you have become a people for the LORD your God. You shall therefore obey the LORD your God, and do His commandments and His statutes which I command you today."

Chapters 28-30 are also key because of the promises regarding Israel's near and distant future as it pertains to blessing for obedience or cursing for disobedience.

Key People: Moses and Joshua.

Christ as Seen in Deuteronomy:

The statement about Moses in 18:15 is one of the clearest portraits of Christ. It reads, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him." Further, Moses, as a type of Christ, is the only figure other than Christ to fill all three of the offices of prophet (34:10-12), priest (Ex. 32:31-35), and king (although Moses was not king, he functioned as ruler of Israel; 33:4-5).⁴

Outline:

Deuteronomy divides into three sections:

- I. Preamble (1:1-5)
- II. Review of Israel's Wanderings—Historical (1:6-4:43)
- III. Rehearsal of Israel's Law—Legal (4:44-26:19)
- IV. Ratification of Israel's Covenant—Motivational (27:1-30:20)
- V. Conclusion (31:1-34:12)

Summary: Key Words and Themes to Remember

| | | |
|-------------|------------|------------------------------|
| Genesis | Beginnings | Election of the nation |
| Exodus | Redemption | Redemption of the nation |
| Leviticus | Holiness | Sanctification of the nation |
| Numbers | Wandering | Direction of the nation |
| Deuteronomy | Review | Instruction of the Nation |

⁴ Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Old Testament*, Vol. I, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 39.