

## Let's Make a Bible Timeline

By  
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The Bible is such an important yet interesting book, isn't it? It tells us about the Lord God. But it is also a history book full of exciting, true stories. Stories about things that really happened and about people who really lived. The story of how the world all began and the history of the Jews through whom God gave us the Bible. But sometimes we have trouble remembering just where the different history/stories come in, don't we? Who was first -- Enoch or Elijah? David or Daniel? Where would we find the story of Zacchaeus? Where did the Flood come in?

Well, I think the best way to solve this problem is with a timeline. From looking carefully at the Bible we know that it's been about 6000 years since the Lord God first created the world. So let's draw a line and then divide this line into 6 big parts, each part standing for 1000 years. Then, we'll divide each of these 1000 year parts in half into 500 years. And then we'll divide each of those 500 year parts into 100 years. Then we'll put "Creation" at the beginning of our timeline and "now" at the end of our timeline. Then I'm going to put a little dotted line to show that the world is still going to go on until the Lord Jesus comes back. Of course, we don't know how long it will be until Jesus comes back to earth, so we'll just put in a question mark for the date.

Okay. Now, when we look at our calendar, how do we say what year it is? Why, we say, "This is the year 2,016" (or whatever year it is), don't we? But -- 2,016 what? What do we mean when we say that number? Well, it's been about 2,000 and 16 years since the time that Jesus was on earth.

You see, our calendar is divided into 2 big parts by taking approximately the time that Jesus Christ came to earth and using this as the dividing point. So let's mark that here on our timeline. And let's put a cross here so that it's easier to see we're talking about when Jesus was on earth.

Now, the time before Jesus came to earth is called "Before Christ" or just "B.C.". And the time after Jesus came to earth is called "Anno Domini" or "A.D.". Now, "Anno Domini" are Latin words for "Year of our Lord" (talking about when Jesus was born). But I find those Latin words hard to remember, so I just say that "A.D." stands for "After Death". (I don't think we need to worry about the around 33 years between the birth of Jesus and His death. They don't really make a lot of difference in 2000 years, do they?!).

So now we have our timeline divided into 2 big parts, about 4000 years before the time of Jesus Christ, and about 2000 years after the time of Jesus Christ. So now we can mark dates on our time line. 1000, 2000, 3000, and 4000 years before Christ (B.C.), and 1000 and 2000 years after Christ (A.D.). (Yes, I know we're living a little more than 2000 years after Christ, but let's not worry about that!) You can see that we're counting backwards before Christ and we're counting forwards after Christ.

Now, just for fun, let's fill in a couple of big things that have happened since Jesus was on earth (that is, in the A.D. part). That way we can get an idea of how long it has been since then,

something to compare those many years to. Well, the Crusades were a little over 1000 years A.D. (that is, about 1000 years after the time of Jesus). Okay. Now, in what year did Christopher Columbus discover the New World? That's right, in 1492, that is, 1,492 years A.D. Let's put in one more date. When did the American Revolution begin? Yes, in 1775, that is, 1,775 years A.D. Hmmmm! We don't take up much time in the history of the world, do we?! But you see how it works, don't you?

But now let's look at the history given in the Bible itself. About how many years did we say there were between Creation and Christ? Yes, about 4,000 years. So the B.C. period is twice as long as the A.D. period up to this point, isn't it? Now, let's see. This B.C. (Before Christ) period can be divided in half (that is, at 2,000 B.C.) by Abraham. Yes, I know he lived a long time, but that's about when he was born. Now, I've found that pictures always help me remember things more easily, so I'm going to put in little stars above his name, because God said that Abraham would have more descendants than there are stars in the sky.

Now, for every about 500 years between Abraham and Christ there is a big name in the Bible. About 500 years after Abraham was born came Moses. I've put Moses walking through the Red Sea when God parted the waters. About 500 years after Moses was David. Yes, that's David the shepherd boy who killed Goliath and became the second king (and the greatest king) of Israel. Let's give him a crown. Then about 500 years after King David was Daniel. Remember Daniel and the lions' den? So let's help us remember Daniel by putting a lion's head here.

All right, now. We have a pretty good outline of our timeline, haven't we? We have the history of the whole world (about 6,000 years) using a calendar based on when Jesus Christ was on earth. 4,000 years Before Christ (B.C.) and 2,000 years after Christ, Anno Domini (or After Death) (A.D.).

All right, we divided the Before Christ period in half with Abraham, and then about every 500 years after that we put in a big name: Moses, David, and Daniel. So now let's see how the Bible itself fits in here.

The Old Testament covers about 3,600 years -- all of the Before Christ (B.C.) period except for the last about 400 years before Jesus came to earth. The New Testament, on the other hand, only covers about 90 years!

But why so few years for the New Testament? Only about 90 years, as opposed to almost 4,000 years in the Old Testament?! Why, because the Old Testament was leading up to that great happening of the New Testament -- the ministry of Jesus here on earth when He would provide a means of salvation to fallen mankind.

But let's get back to our timeline and see some more where things in the Bible fit into it.

The book of Genesis is what I call the book of beginnings. It tells of the beginning of the whole world and how everything got here, and it tells of the beginning of the Jewish nation. So the book of Genesis is very important, isn't it? But how many years of our timeline before Christ (B.C.) do you think this one book covers? 2,400 years!! Wow!

But what are some of the things that happened in the book of Genesis, after Creation? Well, there was Noah and the ark and the big Flood, wasn't there? But how long after Creation did that happen? About 1,650 years after Creation (that is, about 2,350 B.C.). Let's put a boat there to remind us of the ark. (We'll have a little dove there, too.) Look how many years that is after Creation!

But what does the Bible tell about that happened during those many years between Creation and the Flood? And who lived during those many years? Of course, there would be about Adam and Eve, and the Garden of Eden, wouldn't there? And when they ate the fruit that God told them not to eat and had to leave the Garden of Eden. And it tells about Cain and Abel, and a little about what life was like then, how they had music and worked with metals and so on. And there was also Enoch, the godly man who didn't die but was taken to heaven without dying. All of these things happened before Noah and the Flood.

Now, the book of Genesis has 50 chapters. And how many of those 50 chapters do you think there are in Genesis that cover those 1,650 years before it starts talking about Noah and the Flood? Only 5 chapters! And 3 of those 5 chapters tell about Creation and why we don't live in the Garden of Eden ourselves! But why so few chapters for such a long period of time, for over 1,600 years? Why, because everything before the Flood was going to be wiped out, wasn't it? So except for Creation itself and why we don't live in the Garden of Eden, the people then weren't so important except for the list of the ancestors of Noah. Only Noah and his family would survive the Flood, wouldn't they? The Bible then gives us 3½ chapters to tell us about Noah, his building the ark, the Flood itself, and when the Flood was over and they came out of the ark. Then in the rest of the book of Genesis, God went on to tell of the formation of the nation of Israel. This was important.

But why was the nation of Israel (what we call the Jews) going to be so important? Because not only was God going to reveal Himself to mankind through the Jews, but Jesus Christ, the Saviour, was to come through this line of the Jews. But let's go on with the timeline.

Now there isn't much time between the Flood and Abraham, is there? Only about 400 years (and only 2½ chapters of Genesis). But the Bible does tell us one story about something very important that happened sometime after the Flood but before Abraham. Do you know what story that is? Yes, it's the story of the Tower of Babel. Remember, lots of people had been born after the Flood, and they were going to build a tower so they could all stay together. So finally the Lord God confused their languages, and they started going all over the world.

Well, all the rest of the book of Genesis from the birth of Abraham only covers about 400 years. Now, who were the important people during that 400 years? Yes, there was Abraham himself, then there was Abraham's son Isaac, there was Isaac's son Jacob, and then Jacob's 12 sons. But which of Jacob's 12 sons do we hear the most about? That's right, Joseph. And 39 chapters of the 50 chapters of Genesis are given mainly to the lives of those 4 men: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph! And then the book of Genesis ends with Joseph and his brothers and their families all down in Egypt and then Joseph dies. All of that is in the book of Genesis. Whew! That's a lot for just one book, isn't it?! Over half of the Old Testament period! But we might call Genesis the foundation of the Bible, mightn't we? And a foundation is very important.

Well, after that comes a short gap in the history of the Old Testament of about 80 years between the death of Joseph at the very end of Genesis and the birth of Moses as the book of Exodus begins. Jacob's family had lots of babies born, and the Egyptians made them slaves. You remember that, don't you? The book of Exodus begins what is called the time of the Judges. You see, after God had Moses lead the children of Israel (the Jews) out of Egypt, the Lord God was their King. But God had different men that are called Judges, who would guide them, be leaders under King God. The first judge was Moses and then there was Joshua, and after Joshua there were several others (Ehud and Samson and Gideon and others). The time of the Judges was about 400 years.

After that the Jews wanted a man to be their king instead of the Lord. Saul was their first king, and David was their second king, and there were many kings after that. So the next period of time is called the time of the Kings. And the Jews had men for kings for about 400 years.

Later during the time of the Kings the Jews began worshipping idols and doing other very wicked things, so finally the Lord had them be captured by enemies, and they were taken away from their land; they were exiled. We call this the time of Exile. Daniel was one of the men who was taken into exile. Then, after 70 years in Babylon, the Jews were allowed to go back, to return, to their own country and rebuild it.

And that is the end of the Old Testament. Then, as I said earlier, there are about 400 years where no Bible was written. But then the New Testament begins.

But let's go back and look at the Old Testament a little more before we begin talking about the New Testament. We have the Old Testament divided into Genesis, the time of the Judges, the time of the Kings, and the time of the Exile and the Return from exile. So, now let's put the various books of the Old Testament into the proper time periods.

Of course, Genesis is under "Genesis"! However, it is also thought that the book of Job may have been written during the time of Genesis.

Then the time of the Judges is covered by 7 books of the Bible: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, and Ruth. (By the way, I find it interesting that even though the time of the Judges was about 400 years, nearly all of the one book of Exodus takes place in only 1 year, the first year after the Jews leave Egypt!)

Samuel was the last judge, but Samuel also anointed both Saul and David as Kings, so, starting with I Samuel, the stories (the history) during the time of the Kings is covered by 6 books of the Bible: I & II Samuel, I & II Kings, and I & II Chronicles. Also during that time the books of Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon were written. And also many of the prophets wrote during the time of the Kings, warning the Jews to follow the Lord.

Then during the time of the Exile and Return there are 3 books of history: Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Also during that time the Lord sent prophets to the Jews to warn them and to encourage them.

So those are the books of the Old Testament.

Now let's turn to the New Testament and see what books of the Bible would be in that. Why, everything from Matthew through Revelation, of course! All the rest of the Bible! (There isn't room to list all of them on our timeline.)

The first five books of the New Testament are books of stories and history. The first 4 of these (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John -- what we call the 4 Gospels), is where we hear about when Jesus, the Son of God, became also a man and was here on earth (about 33 years), though mostly they just tell of the last about 3 years of that time. The fifth book in the New Testament (Acts) tells about what happened after Jesus went back to heaven. Then all the rest of the New Testament is letters that were written to different churches that were there then. Even the last book of the whole Bible, Revelation, has letters to some churches, but it is mostly full of prophecies about what is going to happen some day when the Lord Jesus comes back to earth as King of everything and everyone.

So now that we have all of this down, let's see if we can place a few more things on our timeline here. We won't take a lot of time doing this. But I think you'll find it fun and easy. You see, if we want to know when a certain person in the Bible lived or a certain thing happened in the Bible, all we'd have to do is to remember a detail or so about that person or about that event. So let's start.

Let's begin with Ruth. When did Ruth live? Well, let's see. Ruth was the great-grandmother of King David, so she'd have to have lived before the time of the Kings, wouldn't she? So Ruth lived during the time of the Judges sometime before 1000 B.C., didn't she? Now, that was easy, wasn't it?! Let's try a few more.

When did Lot live? Well, Lot was Abraham's nephew and was with Abraham part of the time. So Lot lived during Genesis between "Abraham" and "Moses" didn't he? Probably around 2000 B.C.

How about King Saul? When did he live? Well, he was the first king of the Jews, so he lived during the time of the kings and just before David, didn't he? Just before 1000 B.C.

Now, where would we find, say, Methuselah? Well, Methuselah lived the longest of anyone we know, and he was the son of Enoch and he was the grandfather of Noah, so we would find Methuselah before the Flood in the first chapters of Genesis. Sometime before about 2,400 B.C.

Or how about Zacchaeus? Where would we find out about him? Oh, yes, Zacchaeus was the man who climbed up in the sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, wasn't he? So of course we'd find Zaccheus in one of the 4 Gospels in the New Testament, wouldn't we?

How about, when was the first Temple built? When would that have been? Well, we know that Solomon built the first temple. And we know that Solomon was a king of the Jews and we know that David was his father, so we know that the temple was built during the time of the Kings, sometime after 1,000 B.C.

Let's just try a few more names. I think this is fun, don't you?! How about Elijah? What do we know about Elijah? Well, King Ahab tried to kill Elijah, didn't he? So Elijah would have to have been during the time of the Kings, wouldn't he? He'd be somewhere between 1000 and 500 B.C., between "David" and "Daniel".

Well, what about Peter? Where would we find Peter? Why, he was one of Jesus' 12 apostles, wasn't he? So, of course, he would be in the New Testament.

How about Judah and Benjamin and Levi? Oh, they were Joseph's brothers, weren't they? So they'd be in Genesis after their great-grandfather Abraham, near the end of Genesis, wouldn't they? But let's just put in the one brother's name, Judah, to save space on our timeline. So Joseph's brothers would be around 1,600 B.C., wouldn't they?

Let's take just one more name, one that's maybe a little harder and see if we can figure out when he was. How about, let's see, how about Haman? Hmm. Now what do we know about Haman? Haman, Haman, Haman? Oh, yes, Haman was the wicked man who wanted to kill all the Jews in all the lands that Babylon owned, wasn't he? But remember, Queen Esther stopped him, didn't she? So Haman would be found during the time of the Exile/Return. And Haman would have lived somewhere around 450 B.C.

See how this works? I think it's fun, don't you?! And it's easy, too, once you figure out what you're doing. Why, you could even play a game with this! Yes, if you can remember just one or two details about a person or an event in the Bible, then you can know sort of when in history the person lived or when the event happened. And I think this makes the Bible so much easier to remember, don't you?

So. A very quick review. Just remember a few things: There have been about 6000 years since Creation. There have been about 2,000 years since, after, Jesus came to earth. And there were about 4,000 years before Jesus came to earth. This 4000 years can be divided in half by Abraham. Then there is a big name for every about 500 years after Abraham: Moses, David, and Daniel. If you can remember just those 4 names (Abraham, Moses, David, and Daniel), and then if you can just remember a little bit about the person or event in the Bible, you will know about when in history they were. This connects people and events in the Bible.

But why is it so important to know about things in the Bible? Because the Bible is God's book that He gave us so we'd know where everything came from, and we'd know His power and love. And, of course, how was the very biggest way God showed His love for us? Yes, God the Father had His beloved Son Jesus come to earth to die on the cross for our sins. Then the Bible tells us that 3 days later Jesus was alive again -- and He is still alive. And if we trust Him to forgive our sins, He will. And then the Lord Jesus will be our King. And then some day we will be able to go be with Him forever. And when the Lord Jesus comes back to earth, we will be with Him, too, and He will be King of everything forever and ever. How wonderful! How much the Lord God loves us!

Thank you, Lord, for giving us Your word in the Bible so we may learn about you.

# TIMELINE FROM CREATION TO PRESENT TIME

