

# The Story of the Bible

The following story is copied from [The Everyday Guide To The Bible - A friendly & informative guide to the Old and New Testaments](#). I found it to be a brief but good summary of the Bible.

The Bible is made up of sixty-six different books, but it's really all one story, a master plan.

The Bible opens with the story of the creation of the world. God created the world and everything in it, including two people, Adam and Eve, and a great garden called Eden. He gave one guideline: Don't eat of this one, certain tree. The importance of that guideline was not the tree, nor what kind of fruit grew on it (which, by the way, probably wasn't an apple). The importance of that guideline was their choice to either walk with God or to walk their own way. From the beginning, God asked people to show their love and devotion through their obedience. Adam and Eve chose to walk their own way. That changed everything.

Adam and Eve had children (remember the Cain and Abel fiasco?), who had children, who had children, and so on. Each generation ignored God more than the generation before. Of Adam and Eve's descendants, one of the most notable was Noah. By the time of Noah, God regretted even making people. (Genesis 6:6) Noah was the one guy of the population who had any concern whatsoever for his relationship with God. God gave humanity another opportunity through Noah. A worldwide flood destroyed everything on earth except the animals and people who moved into Noah's big boat. After the waters receded, the world started over, this time with Mr. and Mrs. Noah, their three sons, and the three son's wives. (The original *My Three Sons*, pre-Fred MacMurray.)

Noah's children had children, who had children, who had children, and so on, but things didn't get a whole lot better. God gave humanity yet another opportunity, but this time by making a promise kind of agreement with a man named Abraham. God promised He would give Abraham many descendants and that one of those descendants would be the Messiah, the one who would make right this thing that Adam and Eve had messed up. Abraham's part of the promise was that neither he nor his descendants would take their relationship with God lightly and that they would all be circumcised as a sign of their commitment. It was from this agreement that the people we call the Jews or Hebrews descended. The Hebrews are Abraham's descendants.

Abraham had a son (Isaac), who had twin sons (Jacob and Esau). One of those twins (whose name "Jacob" was later changed to "Israel") had twelve sons. Those twelve sons were the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel. They all moved their families to Egypt during a famine, and it was there in Egypt that they began to grow out of an "extended family" and into a "great nation".

Most of the Old Testament is made up of the history of the descendants of these twelve sons. Eventually they became a nation of slaves in Egypt. Through a seeming fluke, a Hebrew baby named Moses escaped slavery and was raised in the king's (Pharaoh's) palace. Moses grew up and led a God-sponsored rebellion, helping his people escape from Egypt. The plan was for Moses to lead his people back to the land that Abraham had settled, way back when. That land was called Israel (after one of Isaac's twin sons), or you might have heard it called "The Promised Land."

Forty years later, through miracles, mishaps, and misunderstandings, the Hebrews finally reached that land. You may have guessed already that the land had been resettled by other people. Even today there are conflicts in that area about land ownership. Under the leadership of an man named Joshua, the Hebrews set out to reclaim the land. God warned them, actually, to make *everyone else* leave that land. The Hebrews did reclaim much of the land, but they didn't make absolutely everyone leave. That's important to remember.

The reason the Jewish people were supposed to run *everyone else* out of the land is because *everyone else* worshiped idols of some kind. During their travels God had given the Jewish people the Ten Commandments, which began with "You'll have no other gods before me." You know how human nature is. If they let idol worship stay in their land, eventually they would be influenced by it.

And that's e-XACT-ly what happened. The Hebrews kept getting their worship mingled in with the idol worship around them. When they did this, they became weaker and weaker as a nation. As they became weaker (politically and spiritually), they became prey for the surrounding nations. The kingdom divided into two kingdoms. The southern kingdom was Judah and its capital was Jerusalem.

All during this part of Hebrew history, the prophets cried out to their people to turn back to God and let Him protect them from their enemies. But eventually, both the northern and the southern kingdoms of Israel were defeated and taken away from their land into exile. The prophets continued to call out to them even while they were in captivity, asking them to become wholehearted about their relationship with God again. And finally as they started returning and rebuilding, the prophets were there reminding them to keep from making the same mistakes again.

The first half (roughly) of the Old Testament is all about God's following through on that promise agreement that He made with Abraham: first in Abraham's backyard, then in Egypt, then in the desert, then in their new land. The rest of the Old Testament really revolves around Israel's struggle to worship God and only God. The historical books describe Israel's struggle with idolatry, then with keeping their land, then with returning to their homes after being taken away as prisoners to other lands. The books of wisdom are the truths that carried them through all those times. The books of prophecy record sermons and visions regarding Israel's unfaithfulness and the bad things that would happen to them because of it. These books also prophesy of the coming Messiah, who would deliver them from their physical and spiritual slavery.

All the way through the story so far there was the promise of one coming who would fix what had been broken when people chose their own way rather than God's way. That's what Jesus' life was all about. The Old Testament asked a question: How can we be right with God since we've chosen our own way? The New Testament answered it: through the grace of God given through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The first four books of the New Testament record the events of Jesus' life and ministry. The fifth book records the organization of the early church. The next twenty-one are letters explaining faith and encouraging people and churches. The last book is the prophecy of the end of the world as we know it.

The New Testament opens with the life of Jesus. He was God, having put humanity on so that He could give Himself up for our wrongdoings. He enraged the religious leaders of His day because (1) He claimed to be God and (2) He confronted their hypocrisy and (3) He threatened their authority and power within the community. He said to them in so many words, "God is not about your do's and don'ts. God is about how you live your lives, and connect with Him, and love other people." If they gave up their do's and don'ts, then they didn't have a way to control.

At the age of thirty-three, Jesus was sentenced to death through a true conspiracy instigated by religious leaders. Jesus died as He was hanging on crossbeams of wood. This kind of death was called a crucifixion. It was a painful and agonizing execution typical of that period of history. It was amazing enough that an innocent man was willing to suffer such a death. More amazing than that, while He surely did die on the cross, He came back to life a few days later. He spent some more time with the people He was closest to and then He was gone again, no longer living in a physical body. Before He left the last time, He promised to return again one day to set the record straight once and for all. He also commissioned His followers to spread the message of His sacrifice and to love each other along the way.

Those followers became the first missionaries or church-planters. They went to all the surrounding regions spreading the new and exciting message that Jesus had paid the price for our failure to stay in a right relationship with God. They preached grace and faith. They started churches in major cities. Some of them wrote letters back to the churches they had started to help them understand their role in society until Jesus' return.

That's the story of the Bible. It's the story of God's creating us and wooing us into a relationship with Him.