Bible Timeline Summary



Creation + Fall

The book of Genesis opens with the line “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This first sentence immediately tells us what the book is about and more importantly, *who* it’s about. These opening chapters help set the stage of God’s grand story - beginning with creation, humanity, disobedience and the relentless progress of evil in the world - all against the backdrop of God and His patient, enduring love for His people. The rest of the story is about God’s plan of redemption for His people in the broken world we find ourselves in.

Key people, dates or events
Creation - Adam and Eve
The Fall of man
Noah and the Flood
The Tower of Babel



Chosen People

Chaos, brokenness and evil became prevalent in the world, yet in the midst of the brokenness, God intervened with an amazing, gracious plan of redemption. God chose the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - “The Patriarchs” - through which His story would become known. The stories of their trust in God's promises and His covenants with them to be their God are abundant. A key moment is in chapter 12 where God calls Abraham to leave his home and “go to the land I will show you.” God promised Abraham would become a “great nation” and bless “all peoples on earth” through Him. God’s plan of redemption came with a promise of land that would be given to this chosen family, that would become a great nation in order to be a blessing to the other nations.

Key people, dates or events
Abraham
Isaac

Jacob
Joseph



Exodus

The overarching theme of the Exodus story (found in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) is the fulfillment of God's promise to the patriarchs. God's chosen people became enslaved in Egypt for 400 years before God finally used Moses to help lead God's people out of Egypt, the land of slavery. After miraculously escaping Egypt, God's people were disobedient and disciplined by wandering in the desert for 40 years. During those 40 years, God's people learned to rely on God and God alone to lead, guide, protect and provide for their daily needs. Ultimately, God needed His people to live in the land of dependance before they could enter the land of abundance. In order for that to happen, God needed to "get Egypt out of them" to refine them, their character, their lifestyle, their devotion. During their time in the desert, God also graciously made a covenant with His people when He gave them the law at Mount Sinai (Ex. 19-34). This law is part of God's revelation of himself and it clarifies His relationship with His people so that His people can be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Key people, dates or events
Moses leads God's people out of Egypt
Wilderness wandering
Covenant at Sinai



Conquest

After the death of Moses, God appointed Joshua to be the new leader of God's people. This is the story of how a second generation of former slaves invaded the land of Canaan, the land that was promised to Abraham and his descendants hundreds of years earlier, in order to give them their place of "rest." The book of Joshua focuses on the nation of Israel's entrance into the land (ch. 1-5), the conquest of the land (ch. 6-12) and the distribution of the land (ch. 13-21). In the last couple of chapters, God's people are concerned about their relationship with Him, so they "renew their vows" of covenant. A key concept is that these conquests are not of Joshua or of might or military strategy,

but they are God's holy war "so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God" (Josh 4:24).

Key People, dates or events
Joshua
Conquest of Canaan



Judges

The time period of the Judges refers to the title given to the 12 different leaders (judges) of Israel between Joshua and Samuel. The leadership responsibilities of these 12 judges was both civil and military. There is a continual pattern in this book which is introduced in Judges 2:11-23 and shapes the story:

1. The Israelites do what is evil in the sight of God;
2. God allows the nation to be conquered and oppressed by a neighboring nation;
3. The people cry out to God for help; and
4. God sends a judge to deliver them

The cycle then repeats after the judge dies.

Key People, dates or events
Deborah
Gideon
Samson
Ruth



Kings and Prophets

The Israelites decided they would rather be ruled by an earthly king instead of by God Himself. Kings Saul, David and Solomon led the Israelites to become a regional political power, and under Solomon, built a temple for worshiping God in Jerusalem. This time period is known as the United Kingdom. After the death of King Solomon, the kingdom of Israel split when the northern tribes rebelled and became their own kingdom (Israel), while the tribe of Judah remained in what became the southern kingdom. This time period is known as the Divided Kingdom. All 19 kings of Israel were evil and led

people away from God. The entire kingdom of Israel was eventually punished and wiped out by the Assyrian Empire. Of the 20 Kings of Judah, about half of them were good. The others stumbled, fell and caused God's people to worship other false gods. God sent prophets to remind His people who they were called to be, to encourage and warn them to turn back and follow God. Eventually, the voices of these prophets fell on deaf ears and God punished the Kingdom of Judah by sending them into exile in Babylon.

Key People, dates or events
Kings: Saul, David, Solomon (United Kingdom)
Israel (North) Kings: Jeroboam, Baasha, Ahab, Jehu, Jeroboam II)
Israel (North) Prophets: Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea
Judah (South) Kings: Rehoboam, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Josiah
Judah (South) Prophets: Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, Micah, Isaiah, Habakkuk
931 BCE - United Kingdom divides
722 BCE - Northern Kingdom of Israel wiped out by Assyria
586 BCE - Southern Kingdom of Judah exiled to Babylon



Exile

In 586 BCE, the Babylonians wiped out the Southern Kingdom of Judah and destroyed the city of Jerusalem, including the beloved temple where they worshiped God. Upon conquering Judah, God's people were exiled to Babylon and Judah ceased to be an independent kingdom. The deportees found themselves without a homeland, without a place of worship, and without a leader. The entire situation seemed to be one of infinite despair. The books of Jeremiah, Daniel and Ezekiel speak into the realities that took place during their seemingly hopeless time in exile.

Key People, dates or events
Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel
586 BCE - Southern Kingdom of Judah exiled to Babylon



Return

In 538 BCE, the Persian Empire defeated the Babylonians and Cyrus, King of Persia, graciously allowed God's people to return back to their homeland. God's chosen people were restored from Babylonian exile and returned to the covenant land as a people under God's rule. This restoration of Israel from exile was God's doing. He moved the hearts of the Persian emperors and raised up Ezra and Nehemiah to lead the people in the rebuilding of the walls and city of Jerusalem, the temple and its worship services in Jerusalem, as well as the rebuilding of their lives back in the land promised to Abraham and his descendants. Repentance and a covenant renewal ceremony with the reading of the Book of the Law in Jerusalem is a center point.

Key People, dates or events
Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

Intertestamental Period

There was a span of about 400 years from the prophet Malachi to the birth of Jesus. These are sometimes known as the "silent years," but they were not silent. Some major world-changing historical figures and events occurred during these so-called "silent years." Alexander the Great rose to power. He conquered much of the ancient world and introduced a Hellenistic, humanistic, ungodly worldview, as well as the Greek language, which became the language of the world. After Alexander's death, his kingdom was divided amongst a few of his generals, two of which rose to the top. The Seleucids' and the Ptolemy's fought over the Promised land for many years. One of the Seleucid Kings, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, brought horrible persecution to the Jewish people and desecrated the sacred temple in Jerusalem. Eventually, Judas Maccabeus and the Hasmoneans revolted against Antiochus' persecutions in order to restore the priests and the desecrated temple. The period of the Maccabean Revolt was one of war, violence, and infighting. Around 63 BCE, a Roman General by the name of Pompey conquered Israel, putting all of Judea under control of the Roman Caesars. This eventually led to Herod the Great being made king of Judea by the Roman emperor. Herod the Great was ruling the land when another King, Jesus, was born in Bethlehem, in Judea.

Key People, dates or events
Alexander the Great (336-323 BCE)
Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BCE)
Maccabean Revolt (160-167 BCE)
Roman General Pompey conquered Israel (63 BCE)
Herod the Great King of Judea (37-4 BCE)



Gospels

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John record the most important story in the history of the world - the story of Jesus. His birth, His calling of the 12 disciples, His teachings, His ministry, His death and resurrection as well as the commissioning of His disciples after His ascension. Each gospel writer has different points of emphasis in their gospel. Matthew, a tax collector and disciple of Jesus, emphasized the teachings of Jesus, how Jesus fulfilled the Law and the Prophets, and was the King of the Jews. Mark was written by John Mark (Acts 15:37-39), and emphasized the rapid-fire actions of Jesus. Luke, a physician, gives us a thorough account of the episodes in Jesus' life arranged in chronological order. Luke emphasized that Jesus came to save the lost, including every kind of marginalized person. John's account of Jesus' teachings and miracles emphasize the divine nature of Jesus, as well as how God is more fully known through the incarnation of Jesus.

Key People, dates or events

Jesus

Jesus' 12 disciples: Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Nathanael (Bartholomew), Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Thaddaeus (Jude), and Judas Iscariot.

6/4 BCE - Jesus' birth

26 CE - Jesus begins His ministry

30 CE - Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension



Church

After Jesus' death and resurrection, He gathered His disciples together and commissioned them to go and be His "witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). So they went. John, Peter, James, Paul and others. Luke, the author of Acts (and Luke) shows how the good news of Jesus spread rapidly from Jerusalem through the entire Roman Empire and from its Jewish roots to include the Gentile world as well. God used them to establish countless little Christian communities that started popping up all over the place. Unbelievable persecution broke out against the Christian community, yet it couldn't stop the story from spreading. These apostles and house church community leaders wrote various letters to different church communities

(in Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, Rome, Corinth, etc.) to rebuke, correct and inspire them to keep going. Keep pursuing Jesus. Keep telling others about the greatest story in the history of the world. Eventually, one generation kept passing on the story of Jesus to the next generation, to the next generation, to the next generation….to *our* generation. Now we too can pass it onto the next.

Key People, dates or events
30 CE - Pentecost (Acts 2)
35 CE - Paul converted to Christianity
46-48 - Paul's First Missionary Journey
50-52 - Paul's Second Missionary Journey
53-57 - Paul's Third Missionary Journey
59-61 - Paul imprisoned in Rome
64-68 - Paul died
70 - Jerusalem destroyed
95 - Revelation written



New Creation

God promised that one day all the broken, chaotic things in the world will be made right. There will be no more sadness, sickness, or death. One day, the kingdom of heaven will *fully* come to earth and everything will be made new again. This is by far the most incredible story in the history of the world! This is not only a story about God and His patient, relentless, redeeming love for His people. This is our story too. We all have a part to play. God invites us to join Him and together, we get to partner with Him to bring hope and healing to the broken things in the world. Following the life and example of Jesus, we too get to love God with all our hearts and love our neighbors as ourselves. This is what we were made for! *So may we live out the prayer of Jesus, longing for His Kingdom to come and His will to be done here on earth as it is in heaven.* This is how we become part of the new creation, where broken things are made right…until the final day when God returns and makes everything new again.

"Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away…I am making everything new!"
(Revelation 21:3–5 NIV)