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TO
**UNDERSTANDING
THE BIBLE**

UNLOCK THE SCRIPTURES IN
JUST 15 MINUTES A DAY

MAX ANDERS



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

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INTRODUCTION

Let's make a bargain.

If you'll give me fifteen minutes a day for thirty days, I'll give you an understanding of the Bible, the most widely distributed publication in history (approximately five billion copies). In one month, you'll learn the story of the entire Bible . . .

all the major men and women,
all the major events, and
all the major points of geography.

You will be able to put these people and facts together in their proper chronological order and trace the geographical movement as you think your way through the entire Bible!

Yet the Bible is more than history. It is a treasure-house of important teachings that have been the foundation of Western civilization from the Roman Empire until today, including important and profound ideas that have been embraced by Christians for the last two thousand years. You will learn about the Ten Great Subjects of the Bible:

| | |
|-------------|---------------|
| Bible | Man |
| God | Sin |
| Jesus | Salvation |
| Holy Spirit | Church |
| Angels | Future Things |

The information is presented at face value as it is found in Scripture. No previous knowledge is assumed. A beginner will not be overwhelmed, and the established student will find much help clarifying, organizing, and expanding what he or she may already know.

You will also learn about some of the more puzzling things about the Bible:

Why there are four Gospels

How to understand the parables of Jesus

The importance of miracles

The relationship between the Passover Feast and the Lord's
Supper

The importance of the resurrection of Jesus

. . . and much more

The Bible is an enormous book covering much information and many subjects. It is not possible to learn everything about it in thirty days. But you can gain a beginning knowledge, an overview, that you can use to build a more complete understanding in the years ahead. In just fifteen minutes a day for thirty days, you can gain a foundational grasp of the most important book ever written.

SECTION I

THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT



CHAPTER I

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

Charles Steinmetz was an electrical engineer of towering intellect. After he retired, he was asked by a major appliance manufacturer to locate a malfunction in their electrical equipment. None of the manufacturer's experts had been able to locate the problem. Steinmetz spent some time walking around and testing the various parts of the machine complex. Finally, he took out of his pocket a piece of chalk and marked an X on a particular part of one machine. The manufacturer's people disassembled the machine, discovering to their amazement that the defect lay precisely where Steinmetz's chalk mark was located.

Some days later, the manufacturer received a bill from Steinmetz for ten thousand dollars. They protested the amount and asked him to itemize it. He sent back an itemized bill:

| | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Making one chalk mark | \$1 |
| Knowing where to place it | \$9,999 |

If you know where the chalk marks go, the most overwhelming tasks are easily solved. If you don't, even simple tasks can be impossible.

Learning about the Bible can be much the same. If you don't know much about it, it can be like trying to cross the Sahara Desert blindfolded. Yet if you learn where a few of the major "chalk marks" go, the Bible will unfold itself to you, allowing you to begin to master it.

My own experience bears this out. Many years ago, I decided I was going to master the Bible. I was going to begin with Genesis and read through Revelation, and I wasn't going to put it down until I understood it. I soon became hopelessly entangled in a jungle of fantastic stories, unpronounceable names, broken plots, unanswered questions, and endless genealogies. I stubbed my toe on Leviticus, sprained my ankle on Job, hit my head on Ecclesiastes, and fell headlong into the mud on Habakkuk.

I was defeated. I threw my Bible down, concluding that the Bible was a series of unrelated stories put together in random order!

Then one day I discovered a key. With this key, the fog that enshrouded my understanding of the Bible began to lift. Not that things came into sharp focus, but at least I began to see shapes on the horizon.

The key: *Learning the structure of the Bible*. If you want to learn architecture, you must first learn how buildings are put together. If you want to learn sailing, you must first learn how ships are put together. And if you want to learn to understand the Bible, you must first learn how the Bible is put together.

THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

The Bible has two major divisions: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament begins with creation and tells the story of the Jewish people up to the time of Christ. It is made up of *thirty-nine* individual “books” (the book of Genesis, the book of Exodus, etc.) written by twenty-eight different authors and spans a period of over two thousand years.

The New Testament is the record of the birth of Jesus, His life and ministry, and the ministry of His disciples, which was carried on after Jesus was crucified. The New Testament is composed of *twenty-seven* books written by nine different authors and covers a time period of less than one hundred years. The total number of books in the entire Bible is *sixty-six*.

SELF-TEST

*What you can learn tomorrow is built
on what you learn today!*

As you work through these chapters, you will be asked to fill in many blanks. This is not by accident or whim. *Repetition is the key to mental ownership.*

Each time you review this information, electrical impulses travel through the brain, creating neurological pathways for memory. As you complete these exercises, you will construct superhighways of memory in your brain and begin to “own” this information on a level that would be impossible any other way.

In addition, what you can learn today is built on what you learned yesterday, and **what you can learn tomorrow is built on what you learn today**. So, by being faithful to complete the review exercises and self-tests, you are not only gaining mastery of important information today, but you are also creating a powerful foundation of knowledge that will enable multiplied learning tomorrow.

So, with a ready mind and expectant heart, carry on!

How many?

_____ books in the Old Testament

_____ books in the New Testament

_____ books in the whole Bible

OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS

| | | |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Genesis | 2 Chronicles | Daniel |
| Exodus | Ezra | Hosea |
| Leviticus | Nehemiah | Joel |
| Numbers | Esther | Amos |
| Deuteronomy | Job | Obadiah |
| Joshua | Psalms | Jonah |
| Judges | Proverbs | Micah |
| Ruth | Ecclesiastes | Nahum |
| 1 Samuel | Song of Solomon | Habakkuk |
| 2 Samuel | Isaiah | Zephaniah |
| 1 Kings | Jeremiah | Haggai |
| 2 Kings | Lamentations | Zechariah |
| 1 Chronicles | Ezekiel | Malachi |

NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS

| | | |
|---------------|-----------------|------------|
| Matthew | Ephesians | Hebrews |
| Mark | Philippians | James |
| Luke | Colossians | 1 Peter |
| John | 1 Thessalonians | 2 Peter |
| Acts | 2 Thessalonians | 1 John |
| Romans | 1 Timothy | 2 John |
| 1 Corinthians | 2 Timothy | 3 John |
| 2 Corinthians | Titus | Jude |
| Galatians | Philemon | Revelation |

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Here is the key to understanding the Old Testament. Of the thirty-nine books in the Old Testament, *there are three different kinds of books*: Historical Books, Poetical Books, and Prophetical Books.

What kind of information would you expect to find in the Historical Books? **history!**

What kind of information would you expect to find in the Poetical Books? **poetry!**

What kind of information would you expect to find in the Prophetical Books? **prophecy!**

If you know what kind of book you are reading, then you will know what kind of information to expect, and you can more easily follow the logical flow of the Old Testament!

In the Old Testament:

- . . . the first seventeen books are historical,
- . . . the next five books are poetical, and
- . . . the next seventeen books are prophetical!

THE THREE KINDS OF BOOKS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

| Historical | Poetical | Prophetical |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Genesis | Job | Isaiah |
| Exodus | Psalms | Jeremiah |
| Leviticus | Proverbs | Lamentations |
| Numbers | Ecclesiastes | Ezekiel |

| Historical | Poetical | Prophetical |
|--------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Deuteronomy | Song of Solomon | Daniel |
| Joshua | | Hosea |
| Judges | | Joel |
| Ruth | | Amos |
| 1 Samuel | | Obadiah |
| 2 Samuel | | Jonah |
| 1 Kings | | Micah |
| 2 Kings | | Nahum |
| 1 Chronicles | | Habakkuk |
| 2 Chronicles | | Zephaniah |
| Ezra | | Haggai |
| Nehemiah | | Zechariah |
| Esther | | Malachi |

If you want to read the story of the Hebrew nation in the Old Testament, you must read the first seventeen books. These books compose a historical timeline for the nation of Israel.

If you want to read the poetry of Israel, you must read the next five books of the Old Testament.

If you want to read about the prophecy of Israel, you must read the final seventeen books.

This is somewhat oversimplified, because there is some poetry in the Historical Books, and some history in the Prophetical Books, and so on. The point is, however, that each of the books fits into a primary category. If you keep this structure in mind, the Old Testament will begin to take shape for you.

My mistake was in assuming that the whole Old Testament was one long, unbroken story and that the history would flow evenly and consistently out of one book into the next until they were all finished. Now I know the storyline is contained in the first seventeen books.

Of the seventeen Historical Books, eleven are *primary* Historical

Books and six are *secondary* Historical Books. The history of Israel is advanced in the eleven primary books and repeated or amplified in the six secondary books. The Poetical and Prophetical Books were written during the time period that is constructed in the first seventeen books.

Let's take a look at the historical timeline of the Old Testament in chart form:

TIMELINE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Poetical Books

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|--|--|--|--|--|--------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Job | | | | | | | Psalms | Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon | | | | |
|-----|--|--|--|--|--|--|--------|--|--|--|--|--|

Historical Books

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|-----|------------|----------------|
| | Leviticus | Deuteronomy | | Ruth | | 1 Chronicles | 2 Chronicles | | | Esther | |
| Genesis 1 | Exodus 2 | Numbers 3 | Joshua 4 | Judges 5 | 1 Samuel 6 | 2 Samuel 7 | 1 Kings 8 | 2 Kings 9 | ... | Ezra 10 | Nehemiah 11 |

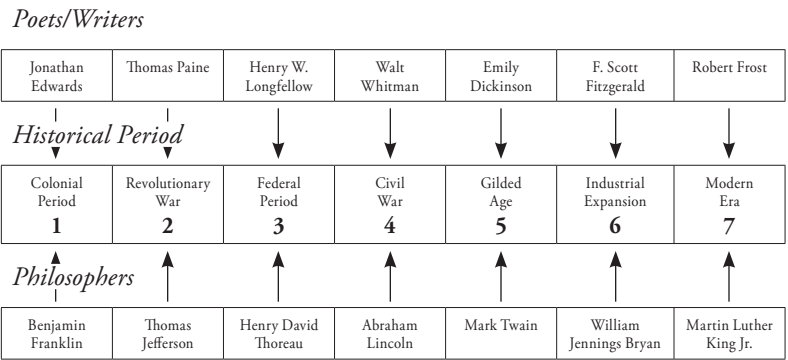
Prophetical Books

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|-------------------|---------------------|---------|
| | | | | | | | | To Israel: Hosea Amos | Ezekiel Daniel | Haggai Zechariah | Malachi |
| | | | | | | | | To Judah: Habakkuk Isaiah Jeremiah Joel Micah Zephaniah Lamentations | | | |
| | | | | | | | | To Assyria: Jonah Nahum | | | |
| | | | | | | | | To Edom: Obadiah | | | |

As you can see, Job was written during the time period of the book of Genesis, and Psalms during the time of 2 Samuel, while Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon were written during the time of 1 Kings, and so on.

To use an analogy, we constructed a similar chart for U.S. history. Imagine that you read an American history book for the main storyline. The history book would give you the major periods in U.S. history. Some of these periods might be associated with a major poet or writer and a major philosopher. The poets would correspond to the poets of Israel, and the philosophers would correspond to the biblical prophets.

TIMELINE OF U.S. HISTORY



THE NEW TESTAMENT

Of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, *there are also three different kinds of books*: Historical Books, Pauline Epistles, and General Epistles. The Historical Books are the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. The Epistles are letters written to various individuals and church congregations. The Pauline Epistles are letters written by the apostle Paul. The General Epistles are letters written to individuals and congregations by a number of different people, hence the rather generic name General Epistles. The primary content in all the Epistles is instruction on Christian doctrine and lifestyle.

What kind of information would you expect to find in the Historical Books? **history!**

What kind of information would you expect to find in the Pauline Books? **instruction!**

What kind of information would you expect to find in the General Epistles? **instruction!**

In the New Testament:

- . . . the first five books are Historical Books,
- . . . the next thirteen books are Pauline Epistles, and
- . . . the next nine books are General Epistles!

THE THREE KINDS OF BOOKS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

| Historical | Pauline Epistles | General Epistles |
|------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Matthew | <i>To Churches:</i> | Hebrews |
| Mark | Romans | James |
| Luke | 1 Corinthians | 1 Peter |
| John | 2 Corinthians | 2 Peter |
| Acts | Galatians | 1 John |
| | Ephesians | 2 John |
| | Philippians | 3 John |
| | Colossians | Jude |
| | 1 Thessalonians | Revelation |
| | 2 Thessalonians | |
| | <i>To Individuals:</i> | |
| | 1 Timothy | |
| | 2 Timothy | |
| | Titus | |
| | Philemon | |

If you want to read the story of Jesus and the church He established, you must read the first five books of the New Testament. These five books form the historical framework for understanding the entire New Testament!

If you want to read the apostle Paul's instruction to churches and individuals, you must read the next thirteen books.

If you want to read the instruction to churches and individuals by men like the apostles Peter and John, you must read the final nine books of the New Testament.

REFERENCES

To find something in the Bible, you use a standard reference system. This consists of the name of the book of the Bible, the chapter number followed by a colon, and the verse number (each chapter is divided into numbered verses). For example:

| | | | |
|---------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Genesis 1:1 = | Genesis | 1: | 1 |
| | (book) | (chapter) | (verse) |

When you see a reference such as Joshua 1:21, you will either need to memorize the books of the Bible to know where Joshua is, or you can look it up in the table of contents. It is well worth the time to memorize the books, and it is easiest to memorize them according to their categories.

For example, you now know that there are three types of books in both the Old Testament (Historical, Poetical, and Prophetical) and the New Testament (Historical, Pauline Epistles, and General Epistles), and how many books are in each section. Memorize the first seventeen Historical Books. Then, when you have these memorized, learn the five Poetical Books, and so on. This system is much easier than attempting to memorize an unbroken list of sixty-six books.

There is no substitute for reading the whole book for yourself, of course, but it is possible to offer a quick overview. To read “The Story of the Bible,” turn to the appendix.

SUMMARY

1. There are 39 books in the Old Testament. There are 27 books in the New Testament. There are 66 books in the whole Bible.

2. The Old Testament is the story of God and the Hebrew people, their poets, and prophets.

There are 3 kinds of books in the Old Testament:

17 Historical Books

5 Poetical Books

17 Prophetical Books

3. The New Testament is the story of Jesus of Nazareth, the church He founded, and its growth under the leadership of His apostles after His death and resurrection.

There are 3 kinds of books in the New Testament:

5 Historical Books

13 Pauline Epistles

9 General Epistles

SELF-TEST

What you can learn tomorrow is built on what you learn today!

The Bible:

How many?

_____ books in the Old Testament

_____ books in the New Testament

_____ books in the whole Bible

The Old Testament:

The Old Testament is the story of G_____ and the H_____ people, their poets, and prophets.

There are 3 kinds of books in the Old Testament:

H_____ Books,

P_____ Books, and

P_____ Books.

There are _____ Historical Books.

There are _____ Poetical Books.

There are _____ Prophetical Books.

The New Testament:

The New Testament is the story of J_____ of Nazareth, the c_____ He founded, and its growth under the leadership of His a_____s after His death and resurrection.

There are 3 kinds of books in the New Testament:

H_____ Books,

P_____ Epistles

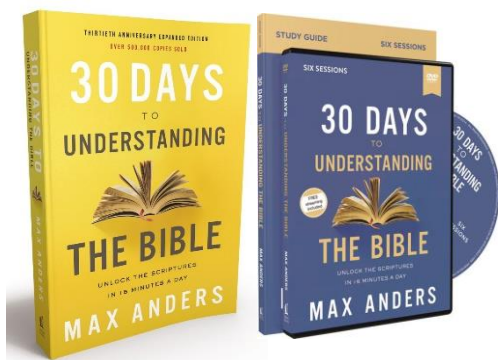
G_____ Epistles

There are _____ Historical Books.

There are _____ Pauline Epistles.

There are _____ General Epistles.

Congratulations! You are off to a fine start. As we move from the general to the specific, you can build your knowledge of the Bible like rows of bricks on a house. In twenty-nine more days, your house will be finished.



30 DAYS TO UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

MAX ANDERS

Start Your Journey to Master the Bible.

The problem most of us have with the Bible is that we started out studying the details without ever getting the big picture. It's no wonder we're confused!

In this study, Max Anders helps you master bite-sized portions of information about the Bible. Over the course of 30 days, you'll gain a complete understanding of the story of the Bible and the core teachings or doctrines that Christians have held onto throughout the centuries.

Anders' simple-to-use, straightforward guide has been recommended by Bible teachers and pastors for thirty years, and now he can join your Bible study and launch you on a journey of mastering the Bible so well that the Bible masters you.

LEARN MORE