

Bible Study # 5  
September 22, 1987  
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Proof of the Bible Series (Part 5)—The Inspired Order of the Books of the Bible  
(Chart at end)

Our focus has been on **how we can come to know and have the confidence that we have the complete Bible, and that it is really the Word of God.** We have gone through and seen how we have come to have the Old and New Testaments. We have seen God's completion of the Bible.

We mentioned that there were seven periods of how the Bible came together. When you add the twenty-two books to the twenty-seven books, you come up with forty-nine. There is no room for an Apocrypha. The Bible has an internal unity. **There are seven divisions of the entire Bible.** There are **three divisions of the Old Testament Scriptures:** 1) the Law, 2) the Prophets and 3) the Writings. There are **four divisions of the New Testament Scriptures:** 1) the Gospels and Acts, 2) the General Epistles, 3) the Epistles of Paul and 4) Revelation. It is not the order you have in your King James Bible and there is a reason for that.

What we term the "Old Testament," the Jewish Publication Society Edition terms it, simply, the "Holy Scriptures." In their translation, they record in the inspired order. There was a translation made (that took place over a period of years) called the "Septuagint Translation"—in reference to the seventy scholars. It was not translated for the authoritative Scriptures. They were on the edges of the Jewish community. It was the common translation in the Greek language and was the only one for a number of years. (Jews in Palestine looked down on it.) The Law, the Prophets and the Writings did not make sense to them.

They based the order of the Septuagint on what was commonly used by the Catholic Church. When the translation was made, they used the order that was already there by the Catholic Church. It loses something. The Greek manuscripts are preserved in a particular order. Only one translation preserves the proper Greek order—the Ivan Panan translation. When the King James was translated, they utilized the order which was already being used, and that was the order of books that the Catholic Church utilized. They went to the right sources of the translation, but they lost sight that God is a God

of order who builds order in a system and has a reason for doing it that way. *Let's look and see how the inspired order differs with the order in which we are familiar.*

**The Old Testament has three sections** (Luke 24:44):

1) **The Law:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. That part has not been tampered with.

2) **The Prophets:** There are two sections of Prophets: the **Former Prophets:** Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. They are books we would consider as historical. These books tell the story of the entrance of Israel until they go into captivity; they are told in a logical order. Then, the **Latter Prophets:**—divided into the **Major Prophets:** Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel; and the **Minor Prophets** (simply based on the size of the books): Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. History and prophecy are simply the same thing. You look back on history and forward on prophecy. It is the story of what happens when you obey the Law and what happens when you don't—the blessings and the curses. God's law is the fundamental revelation. Everything builds on that. That is the starting point. The **Former Prophets**, written earlier, tell the story of what Israel did—what happened when they obeyed and what happened when they disobeyed. The **Latter Prophets** drew lessons out into the future and showed the ultimate end of things.

3) **The Writings (or Psalms)** division consists of things that amplify and many things of poetry. They sandwiched it in with the Prophets because they didn't understand it. We are going to come back and see there is a direct logical reason why these Writings are in the order that they are. As we come into the New Testament, we see again the logic. When you read them in the order we have them today, you don't really understand what Ruth is all about. The point is often lost. We come to I, II Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, and it seems like Chronicles is rehashing what you just read. Ezra and Nehemiah are sandwiched in there along with Esther. You come to Job, and it seems to be sticking out, unrelated anywhere. You have Song of Solomon, then Lamentations (after Jeremiah). We add in the book of Daniel, and then, finally, books dealing with the Minor Prophets. That is not the way God had it. The **Former Poetic (Meter Books):** Psalms, Proverbs and Job are all written in a poetic fashion. Psalms was written primarily

as songs to sing. They were written to be memorized.

Psalm 148:1, “Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise Him in the heights!” A poetic expression repeated. There is a certain repetition of thought.

You find the same thing in Proverbs 2:2, “So that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding.”

And Proverbs 1:20, “Wisdom calls aloud outside; she raises her voice in the open square.” They were written to be meditated on. There was a rhythm to them. It’s far easier to commit poetry to memory than to prose. You are able to call it back to mind. You think on them; you meditate on them. There are a lot of things you have to think about to get them out. Job was written in poetry.

**The Megillot (Festival Books):** Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther were Festival Scrolls read through the year to illustrate points. Realize, when you understand when these books were to be read, you get some understanding. They don’t get lost in the shuffle.

Then, we have the books written after the captivity. **Latter Restoration Books:** Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles—written as a conclusion to the Old Testament. Daniel answers to the book of Revelation in the New Testament—written as a parallel to that. Ezra and Nehemiah pick up the story after the return from captivity and how the Old Testament came to be. They tell you the story of what happened when they came back and make it plain about the Samaritans and Israel. After several hundred years, we know where to look. Simon the Magician claimed that they were the source of truth, and it resulted in a religion that claimed to be of Christ. Chronicles tells the story from the standpoint of Jerusalem. It tells you nothing about Northern Israel or King Saul. I Chronicles tells you about King David, that the temple was built there and that this was where God was working. It is obvious when you go through and read the Old Testament that there needs to be something to come after.

In the inspired order, II Chronicles 36:23 is the end of the Old Testament—the end of the Scriptures. It is a totally different feeling than what you get at the end of Revelation, where it would end. The next thing you would be reading in the inspired order is the book of Matthew. Matthew 1 goes right on through, coming down fourteen generations—all the generations from Abraham to David to Christ. Matthew backs up

the story and kind of summarizes it from the standpoint that II Chronicles had just gotten through telling it. We find, as we go into Matthew, it ties in with II Chronicles.

**The New Testament has four sections:**

1) **The Gospels and Acts:** Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts correspond to the books of the Law.

Luke 1:1-3, “Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which are most surely believed among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent *Theophilus*.” Go on to Acts.

Acts 1:1-2, “The former account I made, O *Theophilus*, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen.” Acts is the story of the Living Jesus Christ after He had ascended to heaven and sent the Comforter. He continued to work through His servants. John is inserted between Luke and Acts.

2) The next section is the **General Epistles:** James, I, II Peter, I, II, III John and Jude.

3) Then follow the **Epistles of Paul.** They follow through Paul’s letters to seven Churches: Romans, I, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and I, II Thessalonians. Then comes Hebrews (General Epistle) followed by Timothy, Titus and Philemon (Pastoral Epistles).

4) **Revelation.**

Let’s go back and understand a little more why this order has some relevance.

**There are seven divisions of the Bible:**

**I. The Law:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Logically, Genesis is the place to begin. Why is Genesis a part of the Law? God didn’t open up with the Ten Commandments. That is not where the Bible starts. It starts in the most logical place—“In the beginning.” It starts out by introducing to us who and what God is. We are introduced to God. God created and fashioned the earth. He is the Creator of the earth and of man upon it. He is the Author of that. He introduces Himself as the Creator and the Life-giver. Then He introduces Himself as the Lawgiver. We find God promises land to Abraham. We understand that the God, who promised land to Abraham, created it, and He owns it. It is His to give. We are introduced to

Him in that context. We are introduced to Abraham.

Notice the focus. God starts out with the universe and then the family of man. In a matter of twelve chapters, He goes all the way from the universe to one man, Abraham and then the family of Abraham, zeroing in on the family God was to work with in the future.

We then go to the story in Exodus. God didn't do it the way it would seem logical to people. They never really anticipated that God would allow their descendants to sink down as slaves. God wanted them to get the point that He was the One who gave the blessings. Man seems to think, 'Look what I have done; look what I can do.' As God brings them out of slavery, He then begins to speak. He reveals that Law and goes through the statutes and judgments and the experiences Israel went through wandering in the wilderness for forty years. There is logic and order.

**II. The Prophets:** As we go through the Former Prophets, it is continued in story form. It is an amplification of the promises that God made (the blessings and the curses) and what happened when they obey and what happened when they disobeyed.

**III. The Writings:** Then we come back with the Writings—written in poetic and philosophical fashion, focusing in on many ways you can derive lessons. The Megillot (Festival Books): Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther. The Jews traditionally read the Song of Solomon during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

The Song of Solomon is a love story in poetic form, the story of a young lady and her intended. It is the story of an attempt by the king to take her into his harem, and the story of two people who saved themselves for each other. It is a beautiful love story that we will be going through during a Bible study. I don't know of any sin more difficult to really see the need of putting away than sin dealing with the area of sex. This book read during this time was to focus in on the positive blessings and benefits that two young people were to have if they put away sin and saved themselves for one another. It is a beautiful and a graphic story. God is not prudish. The Song of Solomon is very graphic. It contains many things of instructions, in terms of sexual matters. It is important for young people to understand.

The book of Ruth was read on the Day of Pentecost. Again, it is a love story; it is more of a symbolic story. It ultimately focuses in on the marriage of Christ and the Church. It looked

back to the marriage of Christ and Old Testament Israel. The marriage of the Lamb has not yet taken place. Ruth embraced the ways of God and then her marriage to Boaz. It was a story that parallels the story of Pentecost.

Lamentations was read during their national holiday—the Feast of Ab (not one commanded in Scripture)—an anniversary of the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar. Titus did it on the same day in 70 A.D. So the Jews had a greater reason to fast. It was kind of a 4<sup>th</sup> of July in reverse. It's a prophecy of the Great Tribulation of which the destruction of Jerusalem was a type.

Ecclesiastes was read during the Feast of Tabernacles. That may strike some as unusual. But when you understand the message of Ecclesiastes, it was the story of a man who lived the Feast of Tabernacles three hundred sixty-five days during the year. His name was Solomon. He had everything. He lived it up. It was a time of prosperity, a time of abundance.

Micah referred to the World Tomorrow.

Micah 4:4, "But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree...." This term was used during the reign of Solomon (I Kings 4:25). This was to be characteristic of the World Tomorrow. Solomon, however, had to learn some lessons, and those lessons are set out in the book of Ecclesiastes. If physical things are all that you have, then there is an empty spot. The book of Ecclesiastes was read during that occasion. You see, there is a story contained in these Festival Scrolls.

Latter restoration books: Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles. The book of Daniel is prophecy from a completely different standpoint. It was written by one outside the land of Palestine, written primarily dealing with Gentile areas. It was written after the captivity. Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles complete the story from that standpoint.

Then when you come to the New Testament, it is interesting that the Church is described as being built on the foundation of the prophets and the apostles (Ephesians 2:20). The Old Testament was written by prophets; the New Testament, by apostles and Jesus Christ being the Chief Cornerstone.

**IV. The four Gospels and Acts:** *Why are there four gospel accounts?* They tell the story from four different standpoints. They follow a similar outline, but they tell the story in a different way.

Matthew was written to a Jewish audience. It focuses in on things from a Jewish standpoint. Those who were reading it were coming from a

background of strict, orthodox Judaism. It covers Christ's confrontation with the Pharisees and the Olivet Prophecy. It gives things not given in any other account. It was written to people very familiar with the Law. The confrontations were written in detail.

Mark (written by Mark)—the one who accompanied Peter. The thrust was to the area Peter ministered to. It is a book that focused in on the things that Christ did. It is a fast-moving story. It uses the word "straightway" (KJV), "immediately" (NKJV). It focuses in more on what Christ did rather than what He said. It doesn't give the details that Matthew gives.

Luke was written primarily to the Gentile area. Luke was a companion to Paul. There are two genealogies of Christ—Matthew and Luke. Matthew establishes that Jesus is the Messiah—the heir of David and Abraham. Those were the ones that were important as far as the Jews were concerned. God made the promises to Abraham and reiterated it to David. Matthew emphasizes that Jesus was the King. Luke traces it back to Adam, showing a common bond to all humanity. This was the Gospel that was circulated where Paul preached. It was written from a little different standpoint.

So, here were three Gospel accounts that circulated in three different areas: Matthew's in the area of Judea and Jerusalem, Luke's and Paul's in the Gentile area and Mark's in the area where Peter and Mark worked.

John simply omits some of the things that Matthew, Mark and Luke talk about. John wrote at a much later time. He doesn't give the Sermon on the Mount. You will find that it gives what Christ said and did on seven occasions: three Passovers, Pentecost, Feast of Trumpets, Feast of Tabernacles and The Last Great Day. John focuses in on these Festival occasions. John simply added in material that was important for the Church to know. It was a time when the validity of the Holy Days and the Sabbath was being questioned.

Acts picks up the story from Luke, carries it through, and ends abruptly in Paul's imprisonment. It tells how Christ established His Church and worked through it. That set the stage. That is a logical place to begin the New Testament.

**V. The General Epistles:** James, Peter, John and Jude. Remember last Bible study, the warning from Peter about Paul's writings—"things difficult to be understood"—some things people tend to misapply and misuse. You read Jesus' example of the days He observed and

kept. Then the book of Acts and the good news of the Kingdom they preached. We have two sections that were to set the stage.

James explains faith; Peter, hope; and John, love. Faith without works is dead (James 2:20). He emphasizes faith. The faith it takes to be healed in James 5. The kind of faith Abraham had (2:23). The kind of faith it takes. When you get through reading the book of James, you realize that it is necessary to do something (2:20).

Peter focuses on hope.

John goes through and explains about love.

I John 5:3, "This is the love of God that we keep His commandments."

II John 6, "This is love, that we walk according to His commandments." He goes on explaining about the things we are to love. We are not to love the world (I John 2:15). It focuses in on what real love really is.

Then Jude warns you that you must earnestly contend for the faith once delivered. After having that as a background, you are prepared to read what Paul wrote. The Catholics didn't like the book of James; it was too Jewish. They like the book of Romans. They put all the general epistles to the back, hoping you wouldn't make it all the way there.

**VI. The Epistles of Paul:** The order of Paul's Epistles is interesting. He wrote to seven Churches: Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians and a General Epistle: Hebrews. He wrote four Pastoral Epistles: I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus and Philemon.

Some modern critics want to say that Paul didn't write Hebrews. When you include Hebrews, you have fourteen that he wrote. There are seven General Epistles: James, I Peter, II Peter, I John, II John, III John, and Jude. There are fourteen letters from Paul. That is logical. God does things in a logical way. There is order. Many of the scholars can't understand why the epistles are in the order they are, but there is logic.

The order of Paul's epistles is based on the outline of God's plan based on the Holy Days. The book of Romans explains the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread.

Romans 5:8, "...Christ died for us." Isn't that the message of the Passover? It continues right on into Romans 6—the Days of Unleavened Bread and the necessity of coming out of sin.

Romans 5:8, "...while we were sinners Christ died for us." But we can't live in sin; we have to come out of it.

Then you go on to the book of Corinthians—the instruction about Passover (I Corinthians 11) and the little leaven that leavens the whole lump (I Corinthians 5:6). The Holy Days picture God’s plan of salvation.

Then you go on to Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. Those four focus in on the meaning of Pentecost and the giving and working of God’s Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23—the fruits of the Spirit. Ephesians is an entire sermon on Pentecost. Ephesians in the New Testament and Ruth in the Old Testament explain being called out of the world and the marriage covenant. Let’s notice one little thing here.

Ephesians 2:11-12, “Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”

That’s what Ruth was—a Moabite. She turned her back from the world. What did she tell Naomi?

Ruth 1:16, “...‘Your people will be my people and your God my God.’ It has to do with us being called out of the world. ‘Husbands, love your wives; wives obey your husband.’ He goes through this in Ephesians 5, and people think he is talking about the husbands and wives. Then he comes down and says it is a mystery about Christ and the Church (v. 32).

Philippians focuses in on God’s Spirit and how to overcome. Colossians continues on with the very same things—things that zeroes in, in a special way, with the meaning of Pentecost. What does I Thessalonians talk about? What comes next? Trumpets!

Chapter 4:16, Christ will descend from heaven.

I Thessalonians 5:1-2, “...the times and seasons ...the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night.”

II Thessalonians 2:1-2, “Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.” Paul goes through and explains things—setting the stage of the Feast of Trumpets.

Then, Hebrews focuses in on the things that deal with Atonement and Tabernacles. We always go back to Hebrews on Atonement because it explains the symbolism of Leviticus 16.

In Hebrews 8 and 9, Paul explains, “but now Christ has entered into the Holy Place” (9:12). Hebrews 11, focuses in on the time when they will receive the promises (vv. 13-16)—the Feast of Tabernacles—a time yet to come. There is a thread that runs through, focusing in on the return of Christ and on into the World Tomorrow.

You have a logical flow through Paul’s epistles, then his letters of instructions to the ministry: Timothy, an Evangelist, Titus (of less responsibility) and Philemon, an elder in the Church. There is logic as you go through it.

**VII. Revelation:** The logical place to end is Revelation—on out into eternity. Genesis opened up in the beginning; Revelation ends on the brink of eternity—forever stretching out beyond. They both boggle your mind. You can’t understand “forever” in the past and in the future. Genesis starts with the Tree of Life in the midst of Paradise. Revelation ends with the Tree of Life and God building His family. We find the twelve sons of Jacob have now become twelve tribes designated by twelve gates. All mankind ultimately becomes the spiritual seed of Abraham. Jacob had twelve sons because God had an organizational structure that is ultimately going to relate to all those twelve tribes. Everyone who comes in has to go through one of those twelve tribes.

The Bible: things written over a period of a millennium and a half—one thousand five hundred years. Yet there is logic. There are seven divisions in the Bible: three in the Old Testament and four in the New Testament. This Book that God gave to mankind starts at the beginning and ends on the brink of eternity.

Next Bible study we will focus in on different aspects of the Bible. Many aspects will be of value to us in coming to understand more deeply this Book—every word by which we are to live. That is what we are going to focus in on—this Book that is to be the basis of how we live our lives.

TRUE ORDER AND DIVISIONS OF THE BIBLE

