

**AGAPE HOUSE OF WORSHIP  
WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY**

**Study Series: Keys to Understanding the Bible (Acts 8:30-31)  
Lesson 1 – Understanding the Layout of the Bible**

**Wednesday, September 6, 2023  
Facilitator: Pastor Jide Lawore**

**“Understandest Thou What Thou Readest?”**

There is a powerful lesson in Acts 8:26-40. *Philip*, after his exploit in Samaria, was directed to a eunuch of Ethiopia on a road from Jerusalem to Gaza. He was reading the book of Isaiah but did not understand what he was reading. Philip asked him “*Do you understand what you are reading?*” 31 *And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.*” Without proper guidance, we are all like the eunuch. We all need proper guidance to be a worker not ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

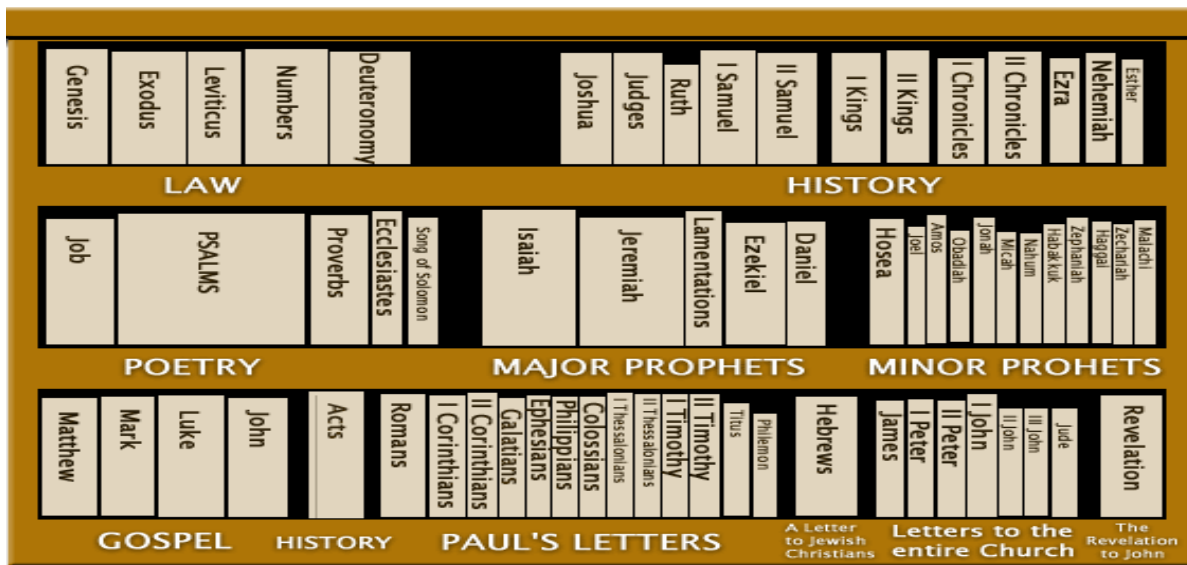
**2 Timothy 2:15** “*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. NKJV*”

**What is the Bible?**

The word Bible comes from a Greek word, *biblia* which is plural and means "little books" or "booklets." The Bible is sixty-six books, not one book as it appears at first glance. It is a series of books bound together between two covers. The word Bible tells us that this book is really a library of smaller books.

**Understanding the Layout of the Bible**

To become a good bible student, it is important to understand the layout of the Bible. The 66 books of the Bible are arranged in a logical order and divided into sections for sake of our convenience.



**The Old and New Testaments**

The Bible has two sections, which we call the Old Testament and the New Testament. These are two testaments—that is, two testimonies about God—in the Bible, but there are other ways to view these segments of time. This is the first and easiest way to categorize Scripture.

- The Old Testament explains the history of the creation of the world, the calling of Abraham, the formation of Israel, and God’s dealing with the nation of Israel. The subtle underlining theme is the promise of the coming Messiah. John 5:39
- The New Testament focuses on the birth, life and teachings of Jesus and the Christian church.

The Old and New Testaments can further be divided into different categories as follows.

**The Old Testament** [or Old Covenant] has 39 books which can further be divided into four different sections:

1. Books of Law called the Pentateuch or Torah
2. The Historical Books
3. The Poetic Books
4. The Prophetic Books which can be subdivided into Major and Minor Prophets

**The New Testament** [or New Covenant] has 27 books which is also divided into 4 categories:

1. The Gospels - The first three of these are usually referred to as the "synoptic gospels,"
2. The Historical Books – The book of Acts
3. The Letters - Can be further divided into Paul's Letter and Other Letters.
4. The Book of Vision or Revelation to John.

### **The Ten Ages in the Bible**

Another way to categorize the Bible is what theologians call "Ages" or simply "period of time". As we read through the Bible, the way God relates to his people and how they understand him changes over time. If we look at each of these ages in the Bible apart from the others, we see God a bit differently in each one. Different people have come up with different categorizations based on ages. In this study, we will consider these ten ages in the Bible to categorize scripture.

1. **Eden:** We start in the Garden of Eden. God is in perfect community with Adam and Eve. They hang out. They spent time with each other. Though this phase doesn't last long, we can anticipate its return when our present reality wraps up and the new heaven and new earth emerge.
2. **Sin and Separation:** When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, their sin drove a wedge between the relationship with God and them. They were forced to leave their idyllic existence, the garden of Eden. After that God becomes distant, vaguely present and estranged from his creation.
3. **The Reboot with Noah:** Things went along with God sitting far away for several centuries until the time of Noah. With evil rampant, God did a reboot of humanity with Noah and his family. In doing so God takes a step forward to reconnect with his creation.
4. **The Call of Abraham:** We see the next transition occurred with Abraham. God called him to go to a new place and into a new relationship. Abraham's descendants will eventually emerge as God's chosen people (Israel). This is the actual beginning of the Old Covenant.
5. **The Law of Moses:** Next Moses comes along to lead the enslaved Israelites out of Egypt and to return to the land God promised Abraham. This marks a significant transition because God gives them the Law: instructions about how to worship him and live right, rules of what to do and not to do. For the first time since Adam and Eve left the garden, the people now have specific directives for how God expects them to act and connect with him.
6. **Judges Lead—Sort Of:** Moses brings the people to the promised land and Joshua takes them into it. For a time, God is their king, at least in theory. A series of judges try to re-orient the people's attention to God, but their efforts don't last.
7. **Kings and Prophets:** Starting with Saul, the people have their first king, effectively pushing God aside as their ruler. The age of kings got to its peak with King David. Then it diminishes over the centuries that follow until Israel and later Judah are conquered and deported. The work of most of the prophets coincides with the age of the kings.
8. **Intertestamental period - Repatriation and Preparation:** The 400-year period between the Old Testament and New Testament is called the Intertestamental Period about which we know a great deal from extra-biblical sources. After a time, some people return to the land God promised Abraham. They rebuild what they can, both physically and spiritually, but both fall short of what they once were. This prepares for the arrival of Jesus.
9. **Jesus Changes Everything:** We see the most significant shift occur with the arrival of Jesus. He fulfills what the Old Testament points to and anticipates. He doesn't do away with the Law. Instead, he transforms it from rules into relationships.
10. **The Early Church:** Led by Holy Spirit power and guidance, the church of Jesus was born. The rest of the New Testament addresses this. We can use this to form our understanding of following and worshiping God, through Jesus as prompted by the Holy Spirit.