# Five KEY Reasons why it's important to read through the Bible in historical, chronological order

Reading through the Bible in historical, chronological order, where you read the events as they took place and where you read the material associated with a historical period close to the same times as reading the historical narrative is much more than an interesting alternative way to read the Bible.

It can be a totally life-changing experience. It will help you grow in your trust in and appreciation for the Bible and will enable you to grow as a disciple of Jesus in a way few other things will. Following are Five Key Reasons why it is important to read through the Bible in historical, chronological order:

**1. God works in linear, historical order**

One of the distinguishing marks of the Christian faith is that it views human history as a linear process with a starting point and ending point. In contrast, many Eastern religious systems view human history as an endlessly repeating cycle.

It follows therefore that God's work, His revelation of Himself, and His actions are revealed in historical order. Salvation history builds upon the promise of the Savior immediately after humanity's fall. It moves through the preparation for the Messiah in the Old Testament to His life, death, resurrection, and founding of the church in the New Testament to the promised culmination in the new heavens and new earth.

Revelation is progressive and many of the great themes of the Bible are seen dimly in the Old Testament, further clarified in the Prophets, brought to fruition in the Gospels, and applied to life explicitly by later writers such as the Apostle Paul.

Much of this is missed when Bible reading consists of jumping from passage to passage. Reading that way, you see bits and pieces of God, but not the full display of his grandeur.

**2. God works in and through human history**

Not only are God's actions in a linear process, but they are intimately involved in the tangible events of world history. When you read the Bible, and take the time to match it up with world history, you'll see how prophecy predicted becomes prophecy fulfilled.

The Christian faith is the only faith in all the world's religions that is both historical and evidential. The events took place in real history and we have evidence of it.

Unlike many other religions our Bible has maps because the events recorded took place in real places you can visit today. Archeologists have discovered the city of Ur where Abraham lived before he was called out of it to found the Jewish nation. If you search the web today, you can see U.S. troops on some of the temple steps of the city that have been unearthed. When you read about the fear Israel had of Nineveh, you can see the ruins of the place of Sennacherib there the reliefs show in detail the impaling and torture of the people he conquered. The cities Paul wrote his letters to in Asia Minor in the New Testament can be visited today and you can walk on remnants of some of the same Roman roads he traveled to share the good news about Jesus.

When you match the stories in the Bible with the archeological artifacts and historical cities and events they move out the realm of biblical fairy tales and become what they are—real history.

**3. Individual Bible stories make more sense**

We've all heard the story of Jonah, but his bad attitude that caused him to run away from God's calling to go and preach to Nineveh makes much more sense when you put it into the historical perspective of his time and life. When you read Jonah in conjunction with the historical passage where he is mentioned, you find that:

2 Kings 14: 23In the fifteenth year of Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel became king in Samaria, and he reigned forty-one years.24He did evil in the eyes of the Lord and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit. 25He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Dead Sea, in accordance with the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hepher.

26The Lord had seen how bitterly everyone in Israel, whether slave or free, was suffering; there was no one to help them. 27And since the Lord had not said he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam son of Jehoash.

We see from this passage how Jonah had been a prophet who preached deliverance to Israel. He was popular, his message was positive. But now God wants him to go and preach judgment.

Not only will you understand the personal stories and messages of the prophets more clearly as you put them in historical context, but as we go through these books, we'll look at the world history that was going on at the same time. You'll see how Assyria (Nineveh was the capital), was the rising world power. They were a cruel and brutal people and the last thing Jonah wanted was for them to repent. As the previous section mentioned, they were a people known for their excessive cruelty and the last thing Jonah wanted was for them to be saved.

One more insight we learn from understanding Jonah in his historical context is in part an answer to the question, "What about the people who have never heard the Christian gospel?" The book of Jonah would answer, "How do you know who has heard and who has not?" The Assyrians were not part of the "chosen people" and yet God reached out to them in mercy and a great repentance and revival took place. It did not last, but one might assume that when Israel was taken into captivity later, there were believers in Jehovah there to greet them in this most unlikely of circumstances.

There are many treasures like this in the Bible that you will only see if you read it in historical, chronological order.

**4. Reading the whole Bible in this way respects the book and the author**

What other book from a comic to a best-seller to a textbook, would you pick up, open a page here or there, glance at a passage at random. and then have the nerve to say you "read the book?" If you didn't read the whole thing, in the order it was written, you haven't read the book.

Do not lie to yourself or others and say you've read the Bible when you heard a few stories at church and read a verse here and there that promised to make you feel good.

What other book would you pull a quote or two out of context and then have the nerve to pass judgment on the usefulness of the entire book?

How can you comment on the truthfulness or trustworthiness of the author when you don't read his words in the order he wrote them? Or how can you critique the flow of his thesis or argument if you haven't read it from beginning to end?

We would never disrespect a secular author the way we disrespect God, the author of our Bible.

One more thing (and I realize this may upset some) DO NOT think you have read the Bible if you read a chopped version of it such as *The Story*. *The Story* IS NOT the Bible. It is a selection of stories from the Bible—but it is not the Bible when huge sections of the law, prophets, and basically all the hard parts are taken out. Sadly, many people who read it think it is a version, a modern translation of the Bible (just look at the reader's comments on Amazon for verification of this), but it is not and many people are deceived by thinking they have read the Bible, when what they have read is far from it.

**5. We don't read for fun; we read to be obedient**

Leviticus is not a fun book to read. Neither is Jeremiah or a host of other passages that are brutal, confusing, and demanding. But God put them in there so we would understand not only his love, mercy, and the fun, adventurous, stories of his dealings with humanity, but the reality of how we disobeyed and the consequences of our disobedience.

The Bible wasn't written to entertain us or make us feel good (though it can certainly do that at times when it provides eternal hope and comfort), but to show us how to properly relate to our Creator and Lord. To encourage people to read the only the happy parts, the bits and pieces that are easy reading and then later when they have formed one opinion of a God who exists to tell good stories with happy endings and then later to introduce the difficult, demanding parts, the parts that show the depths of our sin that required Jesus die a horrific death on the cross is spiritual bait and switch. The Law comes early in God's dealings with his people and it's tough to get through, but unless we understand early on that we are a fallen people, we won't need to see our need for a Savior.

When critics point to the horrible parts of the Bible that describe human sin and the consequences of it, we need to be familiar with that also. We need to read (though we may never fully understand) the context of God's judgment in situations such as when he sent the Flood to destroy the human race except for Noah and his family and his commands to wipe out the idolatry of people of Canaan. We need to read through the history and prophets in the Old Testament and see the result of continual wars and domestic turmoil because the people didn't obey God's commands. In the midst of that judgment, we need to read about God's unfailing love and mercy no matter how far his people strayed.

When we get to the New Testament, we need to understand that though salvation in Jesus is a free gift, we are responsible for how we act after we receive it. If we haven't read the Old Testament, many of the allusions, references, and commands in the New Testament won't make sense. When John the Baptist says of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29)" we will have a much richer understanding of the significance of that phrase when we've read of the millennia of temple sacrifices that came before it. When Peter says of believers that we are "a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9)" when we've read the demands of the Old Testament priests, we have a greater understanding of our call and responsibilities as believers in Jesus when Peter uses them as a standard of behavior.

To respect the author of the Bible and the book he's given us, we must read the whole thing. Reading it in historical, chronological order is one of the best ways to understand it.

I hope you'll join us in this adventure—a sometimes difficult and demanding, yet ultimately fulfilling one than you can imagine.