

Welcome to not simply a Bible Study—but to an opportunity to encounter the God who made you and loves you! <sup>1</sup> With time you will gain a birds-eye perspective of the entire Bible by closely examining 14 books that capture the essence of the 12 periods of Salvation History with all the major people, places, and events. The climax of it all is found with the arrival and sacrificial offering of Jesus; He is the “interpretive key” of every verse and chapter from Genesis to Revelation. As St Jerome said: “Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.” And “the one who reads the Bible with an open mind can hardly avoid seeing that Jesus is the completion and fullness of what was already foretold in the Old Testament. For the one who, so to speak, has discovered him, it can be like a game to try to find Him everywhere in persons and events in the Old Covenant.”<sup>2</sup> Bible Study is indeed an adventure into the very mind and heart of God as He interacts with His beloved people.

But this story is far from over! It continues to play out in your life, home, community, and nation with drama, hope in the face of evil, and a relentless love on the part of God that is transformative. Find your place in the story of His glory!

As an overview, according to Bishop Barron,<sup>3</sup> there are five chapters in the Salvation Story:

- (1) Creation
- (2) Fall
- (3) Creation of Israel as God’s people
- (4) Coming of the Messiah
- (5) Era of the Church

Jeff Cavins’ overview in *The Bible Timeline* series adds a few more subcategories, (with the 14 narrative Bible books we shall read in parentheses):

- (1) Creation (Genesis)
- (2) Fall (Genesis)
- (3) Creation of Israel as God’s People to be witness to the world
  - \*Patriarchs (Genesis)
  - \*Egypt & Exodus (Exodus)
  - \*Desert Wanderings (Numbers)
  - \*Conquest & Judges (Joshua and Judges; 1 Samuel)
  - \*Royal Kingdom (1 & 2 Samuel; 1 Kings)
  - \*Divided Kingdom (1 & 2 Kings)
  - \*Prophets:
    - Exile (2 Kings)
    - Return (Ezra & Nehemiah)
  - \*Maccabean Revolt (1 Maccabees)
- (4) Coming of the Messiah

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<sup>1</sup> St Augustine: “God loves each of us as though there were only one of us.”

<sup>2</sup> Stinissen, Fr Wilfrid from his book *The Word is Very Near You*. Quote by *Daily Catholic Wisdom*. Accessed on-line, at [yourfriends@catholicwisdom.org](mailto:yourfriends@catholicwisdom.org) on August 15, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Homily from Bishop Robert Barron’s daily Mass, April 30, 2020

- \*Messianic Fulfillment (Luke)
- (5) The Era of the Church (Acts)
  - \*Pentecost
  - \*Evangelization/ St Paul
  - \*Persecution/ Growth of the Church
  - \*Salvation History and Your Story Today

Let's start!

**Materials needed:**

For this Study you will need a Catholic Bible (as it has a particular numbering system in Psalms, additional books compared to Protestant versions, and extra passages in Esther and Daniel. We will explain why later). Also, obtain a copy of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, as it is frequently referenced. It beautifully summarizes many of the profound truths of our Faith.

**This introduction will cover several topics before we launch into the actual reading of Scripture:**

1. What are the unifying themes of the 73 books of Scripture?
2. What is our part in the Salvation Story?

In the next introductory lesson, we shall look at how to read or interpret the Bible “from the heart of the Church” by:

1. A quick look at the *Catechism* 50-141.

In particular, what are:

- \*The various “senses” of Scripture
- \*Jesus as the fulfillment of Scripture

Note: The *Catechism*, originally compiled by St John Paul II, is organized in paragraphs that are numbered. From henceforth, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* will be referenced as *CCC*, followed by the numbered paragraph for quick reference.

**The Unifying Themes of the Bible**

There is a cohesive purpose to the Bible. *God reveals Himself to us so that we will respond to Him (CCC 52) in love and accept His invitation to become part of His family*, drawn into intimate relationship into the very life and love of God. “The Holy Spirit reveals many things to us. One of the most beautiful is the Spirit revealing God as our loving Father, our ‘Abba-Daddy.’ Jesus related to his Father as Abba, and never before had God been spoken of in such personal and intimate terms. God as Abba is a uniquely beautiful Christian revelation. The

Spirit of Jesus desires to free us from fear and master-slave relationship to a Father-Daughter or Father-Son relationship.”<sup>4</sup>

\*How do the following two passages summarize all of Scripture:

-Sirach 17 (the entire chapter): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

-John 3:16-17 (called the Gospel in miniature): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\*Look at all of Scripture through the lens of a heart-broken-by-love Father God. How is God trying to convince you of His love and that you belong to Him? What do you see of this theme in:

-Hosea 11:1-4: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

-Luke 15:11-32: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### \*The Kerygma

Although God loves us, we have rejected that love, as painted from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation. “It is very helpful if we understand what the basic tenets of our faith are. St John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis have all encouraged the Church to return to a basic *kerygmatic* message. The *kerygma* is a Greek word for “to preach.” There are basically four points, and it’s helpful for all Catholics to know these:

1. God loves us.
2. We have each sinned and walked away from God’s love.
3. Jesus came to earth and suffered, died, and rose from the dead to save us.
4. We each need to accept this and live our life for Christ in relationship with the Body of Christ, the Church.”<sup>5</sup>

Are you willing to let the Holy Spirit change how you see yourself, how you see God, and how you relate to Him? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

We will discover that the Holy Spirit is the author of all Scripture, and the resulting Word is dynamic<sup>6</sup> and transformative!

### \*The Covenants

A primary Biblical theme is “*God wants to make us part of His family.*” This theme is found in the concept of covenants made by God with individuals throughout the Old and New

<sup>4</sup> Pivonka, Fr Dave, TOR. Quote from the *Wild Goose* series, accessed online from *Daily Catholic Wisdom*, September 9, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Pivonka, Fr Dave. *Breath of God: Living a Life Led by the Holy Spirit*. © 2015 by Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN, pp 134.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 4:12-13

Testaments. A covenant is a permanent exchange of persons that creates a family. The history of salvation can be divided into the following covenants,<sup>7</sup> with Jesus being the fulfillment of all of them.

Covenant Mediator (with Covenant Sign in parentheses):

Adam (marriage)  
Noah (household)  
Abraham (tribe)  
Moses (nation)  
David (kingdom)  
Jesus (Church)

The respective Covenant signs are the Sabbath, rainbow, circumcision, Passover, Temple & throne, and the Eucharist. We shall examine each in the weeks to come.

For now, see this as God's means of inviting each of us "back home," after having strayed into disobedience.

### **Your Invitation. RSVP.**

God invites you to join this Story of Salvation TODAY.

"A theo-drama is written and directed by God. On the great stage that is the created universe and according to the prototype that is Christ, we are invited to 'act,' to find and play our role in God's theater. The problem is that the vast majority of us think that we are the directors, writers, and above all, stars of our own 'ego-dramas,' with other people functioning as either our supporting players or the villains in contrast to whom we shine all the brighter. Of course, our dramas are always uninteresting, even if we are playing the lead role. The key is to find the role that God has designed for us, even if it looks like a bit part. Sometimes, in a lengthy novel, a character who has seemed minor emerges as the fulcrum around which the entire narrative turns.... When we de-center the ego and live in an exciting and unpredictable relationship to God, we realize very clearly that our lives are not about us. And that's a liberating discovery."<sup>8</sup>

"The Old Testament, like the New, is about Jesus. It is the beginning of the story of salvation, the same story Jesus completes, the same story we are in now."<sup>9</sup> Jesus does not simply want to save you *from* sin; He saves you *for* the purpose of walking in "newness of life,"<sup>10</sup> an "abundant life"<sup>11</sup> in Him, by the working of the Holy Spirit. Franciscan priest Fr Dave

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<sup>7</sup> Deutsch, Monsignor Daniel. CD "*The History of Salvation: God's Plan for His People*," produced by Lighthouse Catholic Media.

<sup>8</sup> Barron, Bishop Robert. From *Word on Fire: Daily Gospel Reflections: Matthew 24:42-51*/ accessed on-line on August 27, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Kreeft Peter. From *You Can Understand the Bible*. Accessed on-line from *Daily Catholic Wisdom*, November 18, 2020 from [yourfriends@catholicwisdom.org](mailto:yourfriends@catholicwisdom.org).

<sup>10</sup> Romans 6:4,11

<sup>11</sup> John 10:10

Pivonka describes “living in the Spirit (as) the ultimate adventure....Your life will not be your own, and you won’t care. Such is living a life in the Spirit.”

Life in Christ.

A life transformed bit by bit into something glorious!<sup>12</sup>

Interested?!

\*How have you moved beyond just belief in Christ to life in Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

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\*Pray: “Come, Holy Spirit—teach me, transform me!” before you work on each week’s lesson.

“Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, what God has prepared for those who love him!”<sup>13</sup>

“To be open to the Holy Spirit means to invite God to be more present in your life.”<sup>14</sup>

Come, Holy Spirit!

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<sup>12</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:18

<sup>13</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:9

<sup>14</sup> Pivonka, Fr Dave. *Breath of God: Living a Life Led by the Holy Spirit*. © 2015 by Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN, p 27.