Scripture

The Story of Who We Are
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Who wrote the Bible? (An Introduction to Scripture)

The Bible is not a book – the Greek word “Byblos” means “library”

A Library is a collection of many books:
- written by different authors, on different topics, written in different styles at many different times.
You would not read a book of poetry in the same way you would read a book of history
Therefore in order to understand the Bible, you need to know about each book:
The historical and cultural setting in which it was written in (when and where)
The “style” of literature it was written in and what the author intended (how and why)
The author’s intent, who they were writing for, the assumptions the author made about them.
This method of understanding Scripture is called the “Historical – Critical” method
it is the primary one that the Catholic Church uses.

Inspiration
Above all else, the Bible is the inspired Word of God; in one sense God is the author of the Bible.
Inspired by God does not mean dictated by God;
God used human authors to write the Bible – with all their human flaws and shortcomings
God gave them the inspiration to write, but the authors themselves put that inspiration into words.
Some wrote better than others – compare Isaiah and Jeremiah or Luke and Mark

Inspired by God means that the entire Bible is inspired
Not just the parts you like (or agree with), not just the New Testament – it's all or nothing
Inspired by God means the Bible teaches truly and without error the message that God wanted taught
The Bible is a book of religion – not science.
It is an injustice to God’s Word to force it to mean something that God never intended.
Like using it to predict the Stock Market or presidential elections.
The truth of Scripture remains constant – our understanding of that truth changes with time
Like the authors, we are effected by the times and culture in which we live
We grow in wisdom and understanding as we reflect on the Scriptures
We need to constantly re-understand Scripture as our society changes

Inspired by God means that Scripture is fundamental to our understanding of God
God reveals himself in Scripture; ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of God
Scripture is the “touchstone” of Church doctrine;
There is much Church teaching that has no counterpart in Scripture (like human cloning)
However, no doctrine or teaching of the Church can ever run counter to Scripture.
Scripture is “normative;” it is “normal,” the standard we measure things against

Literary Form
Like a library, there are many kinds of writing in the Bible.
These forms change with time (they go in and out of style)
Some are familiar to readers today – forms like history or biography.
Some are very different than anything today – forms like prophecy or apocalypse
Some of the literary forms in the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures) are:
- Creation stories: accounts of the origin of the world and its peoples. Ex: Genesis
- Legal Codes: collections of civil and religious law. Ex: Leviticus
- Genealogies: family trees show the “connectedness” of people and famous ancestors. Ex: Numbers
- Annals: official histories of kings and kingdoms. Usually highly selective (not history in the modern sense)
- Often written under royal sponsorship. Ex 1 and 2 Kings.
- Prophetic Books: collections of the words of God spoken through human intermediaries (prophets),
  And accounts of the symbolic actions of the prophets to the people to faithfulness. Ex: Jeremiah
- Psalms: Songs and poetic lyrics used in worship services. Ex: The Psalms
- Prayers: private (not used in worship services) heartfelt words addressed to God. Ex: Lamentations
Proverbs: “wise old sayings” collected to encourage readers to live well. Example: Proverbs

Wisdom Literature: inspirational stories to encourage people to live wisely. Ex: Job

Apocalypse: a symbolic narrative that interprets current events through the eyes of God.

Written to give hope to oppressed people. Ex: Daniel

Some of the literary forms in the New Testament (Christian Scriptures) are:

Gospels: proclamations of the good news” of Jesus; accounts of his life, death and resurrection.

Not biographies of Jesus in the modern sense, written with a theological agenda. Ex: Matthew

Acts: a narrative of the events of a group of people like the early church). Ex: Acts

Letters: open letters written to a Christian group (church) or individual (Titus)

Usually deal with a particular issue confronting the people. Ex: 1 Corinthians

Testament: a dying person’s last wishes or instructions for their successors. Ex: 2 Peter

Homily: a reflection that cites and interprets the Old Testament in reference to Jesus. Ex: Hebrews

Wisdom Collection: a collection of general instructions on how to live a Christian life. Ex: James

Apocalypse: a symbolic narrative that interprets current events through the eyes of God. Ex: Revelation

How did the Bible come to be written?

1) To write a Bible, first you need a campfire.

Religion is about the experience of God – experience is shared by speaking about it

“Oral tradition” is the shared religious heritage of a group – “campfire stories”

Note that these stories have parts that are based on fact and parts that are “legend”

Did George Washington really chop down the cherry tree? What does this story teach?

“Memory tricks” in the scriptures show that most of them were memorized and passed on verbally

2) Once you have the stories, you write them down so you won’t forget them

When the stories become important enough to the group, they are written down.

This is assuming you know how to write and you have something to write on!

The initial written stage becomes a point of departure for further development

Copying – the manuscripts are copied – they wear out, others want copies, etc.

As they are copied, errors in the text begin to creep in – may become significant over time

Editing – the manuscripts are studied and people write in their comments

Parts of the text may be dropped, moved around or mixed with other text

The original meaning may change – depending on the spin of the editor

3) At some point, the process stops and the text becomes “canonical”

Some basic edition of the text is accepted as authoritative and “frozen” in time

Little further intentional development of the text – but it may be unintentional or accidental

All copies of a text could be destroyed during a time of persecution (book burning)

A splinter group may break off from the main group with their own version of the accepted text

Where did my Bible come from?

We have no original manuscripts of any book of the Bible

We speak in terms of “text traditions” and “witnesses” to the (supposed) “original” text.

For the Old Testament, the Dead Sea Scrolls (from about 200 years before Jesus) are the oldest

For the New Testament the, the Codex Sinaiticus (from about 300 years after Jesus) is the oldest

These are the oldest complete versions. We have bits and scraps going back further – but nothing original.

Point: We are dealing with copies of copies – there is always the issue of errors in the text.

If you are reading your Bible in English you are reading a translation

Hebrew (for the Old Testament) and Greek (for the New) are the original languages.

Every translation is a compromise – how about a translation of a translation?

Formal Translations – aim for word-for-word accuracy, sometimes the meaning suffers.

Equivalence Translations – aim for “same sense” even if using different words.

Paraphrases – give you my interpretation of what I think the original words mean.

For example, the ancient Israelites system of time was very different from our own.
There were twelve hours from sunrise to sundown, and night was divided into three "watches." The same time called "the eleventh hour" in a formal translation; would be translated "five o'clock in the afternoon" in an equivalence translation and might simply say "in the late afternoon" in a paraphrase.

Old Testament – steps in development
We have no example of the Bible as used during the Kingdom of Israel
After the Babylonian Exile, each synagogue would have made its own copy of the Bible
Copies would be in Hebrew or sometimes in Aramaic, the common language of the people
About 300 BC a “standard edition” of the Old Testament was made in Alexandria Egypt.
This is the Septuagint and it was written in Greek, translated from the original Hebrew
This became a widely accepted version and was the Bible Jesus would have been familiar with.
About 75 AD, the Jewish authorities rejected this Greek translation and returned to the Hebrew
The Christians retained the Greek version (probably because the Jews rejected it).
St. Jerome (about 400 AD) used the Hebrew and Greek versions for his Vulgate (written in Latin)
Jerome included all the Greek Old Testament books in his official list of books of the Bible.
This became the “standard” (the “cannon”) for Catholic Bible.
In the 1500s AD, Erasmus made a Latin translation from the Hebrew
Martin Luther used this as the Basis for his German translation

New Testament – steps in development
We have no original copies of the Gospels or Letters (originally written in Greek)
The earliest examples we have are some scraps of text from about the year 200 AD
St. Jerome (about 400 AD) translated the Greek for his Vulgate (written in Latin)
Again, in the 1500s AD, Erasmus made a Latin translation from the Greek
Martin Luther used this as the Basis for his German translation

The Bible in English
The Catholic Church in England used the Latin Vulgate Bible until the 1500s AD
There were some partial translations of the Vulgate into English, only a few scraps have survived
John Wycliff made the first complete translation of the Vulgate into English (1380 AD)
Neither accurate nor widely accepted – had heretical leanings

Protestant translations – Church of England
William Tyndale made a translation based on the work of Erasmus and Luther (1530 AD)
A Protestant, Tyndale had a strong anti-Catholic bias – which is obvious in the translation
Coverdale’s Bible – translated from Luther’s German and the Latin of Erasmus (1535 AD)
Commissioned by King Henry VIII – England was now a Protestant country.
The King James (KJV), commissioned by King James I in 1611 (the “Authorized Translation”)
Became the standard Bible for the Church of England (and America) until 1880

The Revised King James 1880 – re-translation with original texts
Became the American Standard in 1901 and the New American Standard in 1968

Revised Standard (RSV) – an American revision of the Revised King James in 1950
Became the New Revised Standard (NRSV) in the 1970s
The Reader’s Digest Bible (from the NRSV) cut 50% of the Old and 25% of the new!

Protestant translations – Other
Almost every Protestant group has its own favorite translation
Most mainstream groups use either the King James or some variation on it.
Other translations include:
International Bible Society’s New International (NIV)
The Gideon’s Gideon Bible
The Good News Bible – a paraphrase and not a translation
And on and on and on and on and on.
Catholic translations
The Douay-Rheims (from the Vulgate 1582) revised by Bishop Challoner 1750
  The first (and only official) English translation until the 1950s
  In the 1950s the Church finally allowed Catholics to study the Bible – yes really!
  The Jerusalem Bible (1940s) by the Dominicans was translated into English from the French
  The New Jerusalem (1970s) is an original translation into English by the Dominicans
The American Bible from the 1950s was the first official English Bible adopted for use in the USA
  This has been revised into the New American Bible – the one we use at Mass
Other Catholic translations of Scripture used in worship
In worship services we use books that contain Bible passages that are not strictly Bibles;
  Lectionaries are the books we read from at Mass (and in the USA are based on the New American)
  There is a Lectionary for Masses with Children that is an official Church paraphrase of the Bible.
Psalters are books of the Psalms used in worship – they use the Grail translation based on the NRSV
  The Vulgate in English (or Latin) can still be used.

Interpretation
Ultimately we must arrive at what the Bible means – how are we interpret it?
Layers of interpretation:
  Literal layer – the passage is taken to mean exactly what it says as I read it (no interpretation).
    This approach ignores the historical aspect of the Bible:
      It assumes words and idioms mean the same than as now (CB radio slang?)
      It does not allow for literary form (poems mean the same way as history)
      It does not allow for cultural differences (Jesus ate with tax collectors!)
      It does not account for parallel passages that do not agree (were we created on the first or last day)
  Historical layer – the passage is taken to mean only what it meant at the time it was written.
    This approach ignores our on-going development in understanding scripture
    It over emphasizes the “original words” of the author, rejects parts of text as not authentic
    It reduces everything to historical fact – If I can’t prove it, I won’t believe it
    Seen in the groups who are “debunking” the “Jesus Myth” – religion gets lost in the shuffle
  Symbolic layer – the passage is taken as symbolic only, carrying hidden meaning (that only I know)
    This approach “reads in” meaning to Scripture – a very bad idea
    Starts with a pre-conceived idea that you are trying to prove through Scripture
    Often used (wrongly) in interpreting the prophetic and apocalyptic books
    This was the favored approach of the early church (often led to heresy – like the Gnostics)
  Ecclesiastical (Church) layer – the text is seen in light of what it has come to mean to the Church
    Some passages (and books) have taken on a life of their own in the church
      “Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them…” becomes the basis for confession
      “Do this in memory of me…” becomes the basis for the Mass.
So how are we to interpret what we read?
  1) Let your heart be open to what the Word of God is telling you.
     The Holy Spirit moves through Scripture, be still and listen!
  2) Dig deep enough to get some insight
     Understand the historical, cultural and textual issues surrounding the passage
     Wrestle with the angel!
  3) Don’t dig deeper than you have to
     Sometimes things really do mean what they say – if it makes sense, go with it!
     Avoid looking for deep secret meanings – and distorting the passage to fit them
  4) Ask the experts
     When in doubt, rely on a good (Catholic) commentary (like Fr. Raymond Brown’s)
  5) Scripture interprets Scripture
You may find one passage referencing another – use this as an aid to understanding.
Jesus explains what the parable of the Sower means – you gonna find a different meaning?

6) Let your heart be open to what the Word of God is telling you.
This is the first and last principle of interpreting Scripture.
The Catholic Approach to the Bible

General approaches

“Literal” - Each word, story or situation actually happened, exactly as written

For example:
- The Universe was created in six, 24 hour days
- Noah built an actual boat that contained two of every creature

There are problems with this:
- When was mankind created? On the first or last day? (two separate stories of creation in Genesis)
- How many animals did Noah take on the Ark two of each or seven clean/two unclean?

It is hard to harmonize the conflicting accounts – gives rise to complex, convoluted explanations

e.g.: The days were longer when the world was created – each day is an epoch

As Catholics we do not use this approach, nor do most mainline Protestants

Interpretative (non-literal)

Some approaches look at the text as only symbolic,
the events are fictitious, recorded only as “moral exhortations” or a “religious novel.”

For example, Jesus was not really divine, just a good teacher who sets an example for us.

Other approaches try to map current events on Biblical passages, or foretell the future from them
Using Scripture as a kind of “Divine Ouija board.”
Looking for the end of the world or making a profit in the stock market

Catholics do not use this approach either

Modern Catholic scriptural studies

The Catholic approach is called the “Historical-Critical method”

It consists of two linked disciplines.

First, Text Criticism

This is the study of the text itself:
- Comparing extant versions, papyrus fragments, archaeology, attempting to date the fragments
- Then translating the text, studying ancient languages, other writings of the time – the older the better
- Eventually arriving at the best possible source text for the Bible.

Second, trying to understand what the ancient writers were trying to say

We need to understand:
- the “mind set” of the authors – prejudices and preconceptions
- the culture they lived in – male dominated, slave owning, ruled by kings
- the historical events surrounding their writing – war and famine, migration, politics
- their motivation for writing – to provide for future generations? Out of joy or fear?
- the religious life at that time – were the texts used in worship? Read at liturgies?

All this will yield an understanding of the text within its historical and cultural context

This was not always the approach of the Catholic Church

Prior to the 1950's, Catholics were not encouraged to read Scripture

The church (through the priest) was the sole interpreter of Scripture
- His job was to read it and tell his people what it meant. Limited number of passages used at mass.
- This was mostly a reaction to the Protestant Reformation
- The Reformers encouraged people to read Scripture on their own and make up their own interpretation
- The Church feared that that would result in heresy, never a good idea!

Modern Catholic Biblical studies

Begin with the document Divino Afflante Spiritu (September 30, 1943) by Pope Pius XII
He founded the Pontifical Bible Institute to promote modern Biblical studies

Commissioned new translations of the Bible. The New American translation we use today was one

The document addressed issues of inspiration, revelation, interpretation, literary form, authority, and use.

Inspiration

The Bible is a divinely inspired book;
- written by human authors (with all their faults and limitations)
- who lived and worked in a specific culture at a specific time in history
- under the inspiration (influence) of the Holy Spirit.

Ultimately God is the author of Scripture but he used human beings to write it.

Inspiration is not dictation, the authors wrote in the style of the times, in their own words

Inspiration guarantees that the message written about is from God – it is true and reliable

Scripture is part of revelation

God reveals himself to us that we may know and love him.
Jesus is the greatest (and final) revelation. He is both the Revelation of the Father, and God himself revealed.

Scripture is the story of God's revelation throughout history—sacred history, not history in the modern sense—not a TV documentary!

God reveals to us those things that we need for our salvation. It is a book of religion, not science.

**Interpretation (Hermeneutics)**

How are we to understand what the writers meant to communicate? What does it mean? There are two terms we use to characterize interpretation:

- **Isigesis** – the “reading in” to Scripture
  - Coming with a pre-conceived idea that we seek to validate by scripture passages (“proof texts”)
  - It is non-prayerful, closed to the Holy Spirit, seeking only personal ends

- **Exegesis** – an attempt to “draw out” what the meaning is
  - It is prayerful, open to learning and obedient to the Holy Spirit
  - Clearly this is the proper, Catholic approach!

There are “levels” of understanding:

- The superficial, literal, level—and sometimes this enough; the text means what it says
- Deeper levels may (usually!) exist
  - A good example Jesus’ parable of the Sower and the Seed—he even explains it.
  - There is an “acquired” level of meaning—what the text has come to mean in history
  - In the Exodus account of the Passover, we view the “Blood of the Lamb” as Jesus’ sacrifice.

Ultimately we receive from Scripture a deeper understanding and love of God

**Literary form** – the format or style the author used in writing

The form of a work of literature helps us to understand it

- We read poetry differently than history, comics differently than a newspaper
- We know, from the form, if the author is being strictly factual or “enlarging” his narrative

**Scripture is authoritative (or:Normative”)**

- The words of Scripture are the Words of God—we need to take them seriously.
- They are “normative” in that no teaching of the Church can contradict Scripture
- It is the “touchstone” of belief

**Scripture is used throughout the life of the Church**

- We read Scripture at every Mass—both the Old and New Testaments
- Clergy (and others) pray the Psalms daily—dunning through them all every four weeks
- Church documents always reference Scriptures

**A practical application – the Book of Genesis (chapter 1 - 10)**

**The text itself**

- First book in the Jewish Bible—part of the Torah, the Law (the Pentateuch, the “five books”)

**Sources for the text**

- Written first in Hebrew, translated into Greek, Masoretic, Aramaic and other languages of the time
- Four major textual sources:
  - The Masoretic text (a copy of the Hebrew), the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Septuagint, and fragments of Genesis found at Qumran (the “Dead Sea Scrolls”). The Masoretic text is the best source.
  - The point is that many copies—of varying accuracy—are in existence.
- Other ancient Middle Eastern creation stories
  - For example the ancient Sumerian “Enuma Elish” parallels the story of the flood (Noah)
  - The Egyptian and Persians also have creation stories in their sacred tradition.
  - The point is to compare and contrast them with the account in Genesis, shed light on the story..

**Authorship of the text**

- Traditionally attributed to Moses, along with Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy
- In the Early 20th century the “Four Source” theory
  - Four sources: Yahwist, Deuteronomic, Elohist and Priestly (multiple authors over time)
  - Based on the name used for God, Yahweh or Elohim
  - Attempts to explain contradictory passages—e.g. were humans created on the first or last day?
  - What was the role of editors (redactors) in the transmission of the text through time?
  - Why (how) did they edit the stories? Blended stories together, changed sequence of events, etc.

**Our understanding of the text**

- It is a “pre-history” of mankind and the cosmos, written by many authors over time
- Addresses the major issue of Evil in the world—if there is a good God, why does evil occur?
- Explains the origin of the the peoples of Earth—in particular the Jewish people.
It teaches that God is the origin of all things – the first and final cause of the cosmos
  God creates effortlessly, by his word (command) out of nothing (creation “ex nihilo”)
  Evil came into the world from humans (by their poor choice) and not God
  God blesses creation and finds it “very good” - matter is not evil, God does not make junk.
We treat Genesis as “sacred myth” (as opposed to a “fairy tale”)
  We learn truths about God and our relationship to him – myth (story) is the medium of expression
  Just because the form is myth does not mean it should be dismissed as irrelevant
  What does the myth of George Washington chopping down the apple tree teach us?
    That he was an honest person, not that he was a tree-hater.
    Did it really happen? It doesn't matter – religious truth is distinct from narrative validity
    “All stories are true, some actually happened.”
What is the inspired message that Genesis has to give us?
  It teaches that:
    God is in control! We are his creation, he loves us and cares for us. We are beautifully created.
    Although sin abounds, God's grace will prevail. God acts within (but is outside of) history.
    He has made a covenant (promise) to us that He is our God and we are his people. He has our back!
  It does not teach that:
    The cosmos was created in six, 24 hour days. Or that God destroyed all life by a global flood
    This is “reading into” scripture, projecting our preconceived ideas on to the text (isigesis)
    In so doing we close our hearts and minds to what the Holy Spirit wants us to learn

In conclusion, read Scripture!
  But read it prayerfully, in the Spirit, open to what it has to teach us.
  Read “critically” - understand the who, what, why and where of its composition.
  Use all current critical and theological insights – study what Catholic scholarship has to say. Keep reading! If a passage puzzles you, skip over it – the meaning may become clear in later verses.
Who Wrote the Bible - Focus Questions

Scripture is (or should be!) foundational to our faith – St. Augustine says “Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of God.” What role has scripture played in your life? Did you read (or have it read to you) as a child? Did you select scripture for your wedding service? Do you have any favorite scripture stories?

Some religious traditions use a “literal” approach to scripture – everything actually happened exactly as recounted. Have you ever encountered this? How did you respond to it?

Reading the Bible can sometimes be an overwhelming task. What has kept you from reading scripture? If you have tried to read the Bible, how far did you get? Why did you stop? Does scripture play a part in your spirituality?

The Church regards scripture as “normative” - no Catholic value or teaching can run contrary to it. What values do you have that are Bible based? Do you see the values of modern society reflected in scripture? Which do you think agree with it, which run counter to it?
In the Beginning – Old Testament

The Pentateuch
Means in Greek “The First Five Books of the Bible”
Sometimes referred to as the “Five Books of Moses” implying Moses wrote them
Moses is the Central figure (after Abraham and the Patriarchs), but is not the author.
For the Jewish people, it is the most highly regarded part of Scripture
As central to them as the Gospels are to Christians.

Genesis - A “prelude”, probably blends some of the earliest writings and some of the latest
Creation Stories / prehistory (Adam and Eve, Noah, Tower of Babel) (Ch 1 – 11)
Creation accounts are good examples of multiple oral traditions getting written down
Use of the terms “Yahweh (or God)” and “Elohim (Lord God)” for God
Ancestor Stories / origins (Abraham and the Patriarchs, origin of the 12 Tribes) (Ch 12 – 50)
Literary form of “Ancestor lists” (Heb toledot)

Exodus - The starting point for the Hebrew experience – slaves in Egypt
The Stories of Moses:
Birth / Exile / The Burning Bush / Return
Pharaoh / plagues / passage to freedom (through the waters of the Red Sea)
Institution of the Passover (Ch 12)

Desert stories
Columns of smoke and fire / manna / the Meeting Tent
Grumbling and whining / the Waters of Massah and Meribah / rejection of Moses

Sinai and the tablets of the Law (Ch 19)

Leviticus – “Book of the Levites (Priests)”
Lists of religious law and liturgical practice – source of the “Jewish Law”
Commented on, developed for hundreds of years by the Rabbis

Numbers – Book of the Census
Census of the Hebrew people and the division of the Promised Land
Very important to ancient Hebrews – Who am I? Who am I connected to?
Gives a connection between the Jews and the Land of Israel – was (and still is) a key issue
Balaam’s star (Nm 24:17) seen as a foreshadowing of Christ – the star of the Magi

Deuteronomy – The “Second Law”
Represents itself as the final speech of Moses to the Israelite people
A recap of the Law and a (strong) encouragement to follow it.
Probably written near the end of the kingdom of Judah
Very different in style from the rest of the Pentateuch
May be associated with King Josiah (640-610 BC) and his reforms to Jewish worship.
A reflection on the beginnings of the Jewish people (in a time of trouble)
A call to return to the ways of faith of their great leader Moses
The “S’hma” is the great Jewish prayer (like the “Our Father”)
"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone!” (Ex 6:4)

The message
One way to understand the Pentateuch is to concentrate on the Exodus experience:
First, a journey from Slavery to Liberation / Egypt to the Promised Land
Exodus through Deuteronomy (and beyond to Joshua)
God selected a rag-tag group of slaves and chose them to be his own special people
A people completely dependent on God / not saved by their own hands.
God enters into a “covenant” relationship with them – you are my people, I am your God

-(12)-
Second, a reflection on the fundamental presence of God in the world

God created the universe (Genesis) and established a basic relationship with it (Abraham)
A relationship ratified with Noah (the Rainbow) Gn 8:21
and again at Sinai (tablets of the Law) Ex 19:5

Sin and evil is present in the world but not a part of God’s original creation
But God is stronger than sin – God’s promise to Eve (Gn 1:15)

1) God chose Moses to lead his people from slavery to freedom (God chooses unlikely leaders!)

God showed his power through Moses in the plagues sent upon Egypt
The final plague (the death of the firstborn) was the trigger that instituted the Passover
The Passover meal was (and still is) the great celebration of freedom from slavery (Ex 12)
A lamb without blemish was killed and eaten in a special way (as if prepared for a journey)
Its blood is spread on the doorpost so the Lord’s angel will “pass over” this house
It is this experience of God’s salvation that is the foundation of the Jewish people's religious beliefs.
The Exodus event will be a recurring theme through all the rest of the Old Testament
For Christians, the theme of God saving his people is fulfilled in the New Testament by Jesus

2) Once salvation is experienced and freedom obtained, the relationship with God is forged

The Law is given at Sinai (the Ten Commandments)
This forms the “ground rules” of the Jew's (and our!) relationship with God
It spells out what each party (God and the Israelites) must do – rights and obligations.
God will take care of the Israelites, like a shepherd cares for the flock
The Israelites will live in a total relationship with God following the Law
It shows the commitment the Israelites have to God
Which is why Idolatry (worshiping false gods) is so offensive to the Israelites

The details of worship are determined
The clergy (Levites) and their duties (who does the worship)
The sacrifices – various types; sin offering / holocaust (how is the worship done)
The meeting tent and implements (where is the worship done)

Some interesting things to think about are:
The relationship (the Law) is established first; worship grows out of relationship
God travels with the Israelites; he is not stuck in one place (like in the Temple)
The danger is that religion will become ritual only – just going through the motions
And this is exactly what happens when the Temple is built in Jerusalem

3) The relationship continues through hard times – in the desert

Even though they complain and rebel, God never abandons the Israelites
Although entry to the Promised Land is delayed and denied to Moses.
Our disobedience / breaking the relationship with God has its consequences
Food (Manna) is provided, so is water (from the “rock”) and health care (saraph serpents, Nm 21:9)
The desert is a place of learning / a place of purification
No phone / no TV / no Internet – freedom to focus only on God
The Israelites are forever changed by a daily / close / personal relationship with God

4) Victory comes in the end – the Promised Land is reached

Faith / trust / perseverance pays off in the end – God brings them to a land of plenty (milk and honey)
Live the relationship and God will take care of you – the Covenant.

5) If you look back on the experience of the Exodus (from long after) you will:

come to an understanding that God was there since the beginning – so you:
understand the story as extending to the beginning of the world (Genesis)
re-tell the story as a sermon by a famous person – Moses (Deuteronomy)
Special Issues

The creation of the World

There are at least three versions in Genesis:
1:1 – 2:3 (the “7 days”), 2:3-25 (the “garden”), and 5:1-2 (the “summary”)
In some ways, the story of Noah can be seen as a (re-) creation story
When did God make human beings?
- On the last day (after plants and animals) – the “7 day” account.
- On the first day (before plants and animals) – the “Garden account” account.
- Not mentioned – the “summary” account
So which is right? All three.
These stories contradict one another; they are sacred (religious) myth – not to be taken literally.
The religious message is that God created human beings – when is not important.
Don’t miss the point of the story; don’t try to explain religion by science.

The Ten Commandments

Exist in two places Exodus 20: 1 – 26 and Deuteronomy 5: 1 – 33
In Commandment 10, Deuteronomy places “wife” before house
Numbered differently by various denominations:

Catholic / Lutheran version (Exodus 20: 1 – 26)
1. You shall not have other gods besides me.
2. You shall not carve idols for yourselves
3. You shall not take the name of the LORD, your God, in vain.
4. Keep holy the sabbath day.
5. Honor your father and your mother,
6. You shall not kill.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male or female slave, nor his ox or ass, nor anything else that belongs to him."

Greek (orthodox) / Christian Reformed / Church of England version (Deuteronomy 5: 1 – 33)
You shall not have other gods besides me. You shall not carve idols for yourselves
You shall not take the name of the LORD, your God, in vain.
Keep holy the sabbath day.
Honor your father and your mother,
You shall not kill.
You shall not commit adultery.
You shall not steal.
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
You shall not covet your neighbor's house.
You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male or female slave, nor his ox or ass, nor anything else that belongs to him."

As Christians, we respect the Ten Commandments – but recognize that Jesus fulfills them.
The Ten Commandments are “negative” – “you shall not”
Jesus gives us “positive” commands – “you shall” love God, your neighbor and your self.
Paul tells us the “Old Law” can only condemn, it cannot correct;
it tells you when you are wrong but doesn’t help you to be right – Jesus does.
The Passover (Exodus 12)
Kept for almost 3000 years by the Jewish people – Jesus celebrated the Passover.
The Last supper was a Passover meal – Jesus is the spotless lamb offered for all.
The Jewish focus is on remembering the great deeds of God, the salvation of his people.
For Christians, the Eucharist is our “Passover meal” (e.g. Luke 22:1-20)
We celebrate God’s deeds of salvation by remembering what Jesus did for us.
By Jesus’ blood we are saved from destruction, – he is both priest and victim (Heb 5:1-10).
The meal also binds us together as a people – it is both source and symbol of unity.

Sacrifice
Animal sacrifice was the primary way the ancient Israelites worshiped God. Why?
Life was sacred – because it was from God.
Blood was the “life principle” (remove the blood from an animal and it dies)
So, blood (life) belongs only to God – which is why Jews don't eat blood.
Life was valuable – animals were precious
To give one up meant hardship – voluntary hardship (e.g. fasting) is good
And, worship had to be done by a priest – someone selected / worthy to offer the sacrifice
When I sin (break my relationship with God) I need to fix the relationship by one of:
“Propitiation” – calming down an angry God / avoiding God’s “wrath”
Made sense then, common among non-Israelite (pagan) religions
Makes less sense now – violates our notion of an all-loving God
“Satisfaction” – I deserve to be punished, but let the sacrificial victim take my place
Problem - The animal usually didn’t have a say in the matter
I may just be “dodging the bullet” – if my life hasn’t changed, I will sin again
“Atonement” – literally “At-one-ment,” to become re-united with God
My spirit becomes one with God’s spirit
United with God, I am freed from sin, the relationship is mended.
As Christians, we recognize Jesus as the priest who offers himself as victim.
United with him through our baptism (dying and rising) we are united with God

Land
For the ancient Israelites, the covenant with God was rooted in the land
The covenant was to endure as long as possession of the land endured
Each of the 12 tribes (except the Levites) had an allotment of land
“Eretz Israel” – the name for the traditional boundaries of Israel
From the sea and the Jordan, south to the Dead sea, north to the Lebanese mountains,
If you lost your land (sold your birthright) you were no longer part of Israel
This explains why land is so important in the Middle East today
It is a visible sign of God’s promise to me (an Israeli)
It ensures my “membership” in the group of God’s chosen people.
How to Buy a Bible

Congratulations!
You are going to purchase your first Bible. Here are some things to think about before you purchase.

If you are reading the Bible in English, you are reading a translation:
Hebrew (for the Old Testament) and Greek (for the New) are the original languages.
Every translation is a compromise – and how about a translation of a translation?
Translations – aim for word-for-word accuracy, sometimes the meaning suffers
Paraphrases – give you my interpretation of what I think the original words mean
Themed Bibles – have themed sidebars (like Women's devotional, the AA recovery Bible)

The Bible in English
The Catholic Church in England used the Latin Vulgate Bible until the 1500s AD
There were some partial translations of the Vulgate into English, only a few scraps have survived
John Wycliff made the first complete translation of the Vulgate into English (1380 AD)
Neither accurate nor widely accepted – Wycliff had his own agenda in translating

Protestant translations – Church of England
William Tyndale made a translation based on the work of Erasmus and Luther (1530 AD)
A Protestant, Tyndale had a strong anti-Catholic bias – which is obvious in the translation
Coverdale’s Bible – translated from Luther’s German and the Latin of Erasmus (1535 AD)
Commissioned by King Henry VIII – England was now a Protestant country.
The King James (KJV), commissioned by King James I in 1611 (the “Authorized Translation”)
Became the standard Bible for the Church of England (and America) until 1880
This translation is still available and used by many Protestants. Mostly ignored by Bible scholars
The Revised King James 1880 – re-translation with original texts
Became the American Standard in 1901 and the New American Standard in 1968

Revised Standard (RSV) – an American revision of the Revised King James in 1950
Became the New Revised Standard (NRSV) in the 1970s
This translation is the most widely used by scripture scholars – accurate and reliable.
The Reader’s Digest Bible (from the NRSV) cut 50% of the Old and 25% of the new!

Protestant translations – Other
Almost every Protestant group has its own favorite translation
Most mainstream groups use either the King James or some variation on it.
Other translations include:
International Bible Society’s New International (NIV)
The Gideon’s Gideon Bible
The Good News Bible – a paraphrase and not a translation
And on and on and on and on.

Catholic translations
The Douay-Rheims (from the Vulgate 1582) revised by Bishop Challoner in 1750
The first (and only official) English translation until the 1950s
In the 1950s the Church finally allowed Catholics to study the Bible – yes really!
The Jerusalem Bible (1940s) by the Dominicans was translated into English from the French
The New Jerusalem (1970s) is an original translation into English by the Dominicans
The American Bible from the 1950s was the first official English Bible adopted for use in the USA
This has been revised into the New American Bible – the one we use at Mass, the one you should buy.

Catholic Bibles will have several features Protestant Bibles usually don't:
Look on the first page of the Bible – where the copyright information is. It should have:
An “imprimatur” - the name of the issuing bishop and diocese
A “nihil obstat” - the name of the “censor librorum” the person who checked the text for doctrinal errors.

Introductory material – information about each of the books, about scripture in general, history, etc.

Church documents – the church Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum), promulgation letters, etc.

Footnotes and cross references

Maps, Indexes, key words

All this information is provided to help you understand the text and the times when it was written.

Other books

Study Bibles will have detailed notes on each book and articles by top scholars on scriptural topics.

Very good material, may be more depth than you are interested in. Usually quite expensive.

Commentary – a line-by-line explanation on what the text means.

Be careful! Make sure you get a Catholic commentary.

The New Jerome Biblical Commentary is the gold standard, the Collegeville Commentary is very good.

Concordance – A list of words and where they are used in the Bible. Of limited usefulness.

It only works with a specific translation, use the U.S. Bishop's website and their scripture search instead.

Places to Purchase

You probably do not want to go to a “Christian bookstore” - they will not usually have Catholic versions.

Catholic supply house – Mateja on Ford Road in Garden City, will have catholic bibles and other fun stuff.

www.autom.com – on-line catholic supply house. Many good bibles and prayer books


And you don't even *really* need to purchase one!

The U.S. Bishops provide the New American on their website for free!

http://usccb.org/bible/index.cfm

Has notes, links, introductions and readings for the day.

The text is searchable – and can be expanded to include the Catechism.

Get a Bible that won't fall apart with use – a hard bound version is worth the expense.

Consider a large text version – it is easier to read. You can accessorize with divider tabs and zipper covers.

Ultimately the *best* Bible is the one you will read! So get out there and start reading!
Getting Started Reading the Bible

Would you choose a book to read in the Canton Public Library because it was the first one on the first shelf closest to the door? No? So why would you start reading the books in the library of the Bible on page one of book one? Now that we have an overview of the Bible, here are some suggestions to get started reading.

Old Testament or New?

As Christians we are probably most interested in Jesus. Who was he? What was his life like? What did he teach? The four Gospels in the New Testament contain the answers to these and many more questions. On the other hand, the Old Testament sets the stage for the New. We will understand Jesus much better if we understand the religious environment he was brought up in. The Old Testament may take more work to read, but it gives rich rewards.

To start with the New Testament:

Start with a Gospel; Mark is a good choice; it is the shortest and most direct. Next, either the Book of Acts or another Gospel (Luke). If you chose Luke, use the cross references in the footnotes to find the same passages in Mark. You may want to save the letters of Paul for reading later. The book of Revelation should be saved until you have read the Old Testament, especially the book of Daniel.

To Start with the Old Testament:

You definitely will need a "path" to follow! A good one is the "1, 2, 3" approach: One central theme (Covenant), Two central events (Exodus and Exile), three central people (Abraham, Moses and David).

Start with Abraham:

**Genesis** chapter 12 to 22.

Pay particular attention to the covenants (central theme!) God makes with Abraham and Abraham's obedience to God's will, even to the point of sacrificing his only son. For now we will skip over the stories of Abraham's descendants.

Next, Moses and the Exodus:

**Exodus** (central theme!)

Chapter 1 Birth and youth of Moses
Chapter 3 The call of Moses; the burning bush.
Chapters 4 to 11 The plagues of Egypt
Chapter 12 
    verses 1 to 14 The institution of the Passover
Chapter 14 We cross the Red Sea and start the Exodus
Chapter 16 Wandering in the desert
Chapter 19 The covenant on Mt. Sinai; the Law
Chapter 20, The Ten Commandments
    (skip chapters 21 - 31)
Chapter 32 The story of the Golden Calf., tablets broken
Chapter 34 
    verse 1 to 9 Tablets renewed
Chapter 35 to 40 Building the Meeting Tent

**Numbers**

Chapter 10 verse 11 The departure from Mt. Sinai.
Chapter 13 Arrival at the promised land only to lose it through rebellion and remain wandering in the desert for 40 years.

You may feel like you are wandering for 40 years in reading the next few chapters. If you find the going slow at times, don't be afraid to skim; slowing down when something catches your eye. Don't miss the story of Baalam in chapter 22.
to 24 (we use chapter 24 verse 2 to 17 in Advent to describe the coming of Christ). Stop at chapter 26. **Deuteronomy** is a retelling of the story of the Exodus from Mt. Sinai to the border of the Promised Land. Chapter 5 summarizes the teachings of Moses. The 10 commandments are restated in chapter 5 and chapter 6 verse 4 to 6 has the great commandment (Jesus quotes this).

The Story of David:

**1 Samuel**
- Chapter 16: Samuel anoints David King of Israel
- Chapter 17: David and Goliath
- Chapter 18 to 31: Saul's persecution of David and Saul's death

**2 Samuel**
- Chapter 1: David mourns Saul
- Chapter 2: David the king
- Chapter 7: Nathan's prophecy (the promise of an everlasting Kingdom)
- Chapter 11: David and Bathsheba
- Chapter 12: Nathan's parable (about David's treachery with Uriah)
- Chapter 15: David and Absalom (David's son)
- Chapter 18: death of Absalom

**1 Kings 2**: the death of David

The story of David repeats in ** Chronicles**

**1 Chronicles** 10; Death of Saul
- Chapter 11; David the King
- Chapter 17 Nathan's prophecy
- Chapter 22 David instructs Soloman to build the Temple

**Favorite Stories**
- Noah Genesis 6:5 – Genesis 9:17
- Tower of Babel Genesis 11:1 - 9
- The book of Tobit
- The book of Ruth

**Exile – the end of the Jewish kingdoms.**

The Prophets serve as the “conscience” of Israel Calling the Kings and people to fidelity to their God – with varying degrees of success. The kings of Israel ranged from the saintly Hezekiah to the scoundrel Manasseh.

**2 Kings**
- Chapter 17 The fall of Samaria, the Northern Kingdom, to the Assyrians
- Chapter 25 The fall of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, to the Babylonians

If you want a happy ending, you can read about the return of the exiles!

**Ezra**
- Chapters 1 through 6 The return of the exiles

There is much more to reading Scripture – the **Psalms** and **Wisdom Literature**, the letters of **John** and the book of **Acts**. You can also get commentaries to help explain difficult passages and attend classes at local (Catholic!) colleges. Reading with other people and discussing it adds a whole new dimension. The study of Scripture is a life-long adventure, it will change who you are and bring you closer to God. So start reading!
1. Moses’ life goes from power and wealth lost through violence, to exile, to return and freedom. All because of a burning bush – an experience of God. Have you experienced these things in your life? Violence? Loss and exile? What has been the “burning bush” in your life? How has God shown himself to you?

2. God says that we are to have no other gods before him. What does this mean? Has there ever been anything in your life you placed in front of your relationship with God? What was it? What happened to you when you did this?

3. How to you restore a broken relationship? What has to happen first – sorrow / asking forgiveness / receiving forgiveness? How do you make amends for a broken relationship?

4. The Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years; it was a time of learning and purification for them. How are you experiencing the desert of your life now? How is God leading you to a different place? Can you hear him any better now than before? What things prevented you from hearing God before you came here? How will you listen for him?
Overview of Ancient Jewish History

The Settlement of Canaan (the Promised Land) – wars of conquest
The formation of the United Kingdom of Israel (Saul / David / Solomon) – the Golden Age
The split of the United Kingdom to Israel in the North and Judah in the South – civil war
The fall of Israel (the Northern Kingdom) to the Assyrians (721 BC)
The fall of Judah (the Southern Kingdom) to the Babylonians (586 BC)
The exile in Babylon
The restoration (return from exile)

The Histories

Not history in the modern sense
They are not impartial and analytical
Not a documentary but a religious reflection – they definitely have a “point of view”
Include or leave out events based on their religious significance
Pass judgment on individuals based on their religious actions
They record what the person “should have said” rather than what they actually said
Author puts his words in the mouth of famous people

Samuel’s response to the Israelites request for a king (1 Sm 12:1 – 25)
David’s prayer after hearing the Lord’s promise of kingship (2 Sm 7:22 – 29)
Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the Temple (1 Kg 8:14 – 61)

There are two general histories of this period in the Bible:

The Deuteronomonistic History
From “Deuteronomy” – which is sort of an introduction to these books
Consists of:
Deuteronomy – restating of the Law
Joshua – conquest of Canaan and division of the land
Judges – stories of the time “Before there was a King in Israel”
1 and 2 Samuel – beginning of the kingship, Saul and David
1 and 2 Kings – Solomon, civil war, destruction of both kingdoms and exile.

The Chronicler’s History
Consists of:
1 Chronicles – David
2 Chronicles – Solomon, civil war, destruction of both kingdoms and exile.
Ezra – the rebuilding of Jerusalem from Ezra’s point of view
Some feel that Ezra is the Chronicler
Nehemiah – the rebuilding of Jerusalem from Nehemiah’s point of view

Some historical novels (not considered part of either history)
Ruth – written after the return from exile, takes place during the time of the Judges
That is why it was placed with the book of Judges
Tobit – takes place during the Assyrian captivity (of the Northern Kingdom)
Judith – takes place during the wars with Assyria
Esther – loosely takes place during the Babylonian exile / Persian kingdom

They were put together from several sources:
Stories of the events of the various kings (remember the campfire?)
Other written records of the kings – some are referred to by name in the Bible
These records are referred to in the Bible but have been lost (e.g. 1 Kg 22:39)
Religious writings – commentaries on the Bible and the Law (e.g. the *Mishna*)

This is where the theological perspective of the histories comes from

They were probably put into their final form late in the history of the Kingdoms

- The fall of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) may have prompted the first
- The fall of the Southern Kingdom (Judah) may have prompted the second

They are often written in a “formula” style (e.g. 1 Kg 15:25 - 31)

1. “In the (number) year of the reign of (name) king of Israel
2. “began his (number) year reign over Israel”
3. “He did evil in the sight of the Lord, imitating the conduct of (name) and the sin he caused Israel to commit”
4. (the sins of the king are often detailed)
5. “The rest of the acts of (name) are written in the book of the chronicles of Israel”
6. “(Name) rested with his ancestors and was buried in (place) and his son (name) succeeded him”

**The Theological Insight of the Histories**

Both histories are a reflection on the destruction of the Kingdom and the Temple

David was promised that his line (the kingship) would last forever (2 Sm 7:8 – 17)

- The kingship is destroyed by the Babylonians – how can it continue as Nathan promised?
  - As Christians we see the fulfillment of the prophecy in Jesus – born of David’s house.

The Temple in Jerusalem is destroyed, the priests are killed

- How can you worship the Lord without a temple or a priesthood?
  - Who will perform the (daily / yearly) sacrifice for the sins of the people?
  - As Christians we look to Jesus as the Great High Priest, doing sacrifice for his people.

**The Babylonian Exile**

Greatest tragedy that could happen to the Jewish people – they lost their land.

The Land was the sign of the covenant between God and the Jewish people

- If the land is gone, what has happened to the covenant? Does God still care?
  - Probably is the reason the tribal division of land is so prominent in the histories
  - A period of reflection and growth in a new direction
  - With no more Temple, worship takes place in small communities – synagogues
  - Rabbis (teachers) become more important than priests
  - Reflected in the liturgical development of the Synagogue service

The final answer

Israel had strayed away from the Law given on Mt. Sinai

- As long as Israel followed the Law, all went well
  - When it disobeyed the Law, they were punished
  - The Lord sent warnings (the prophets) and showed mercy
  - But Israel didn’t listen, refused to turn from sin and they got the fruits of their sin – destruction

**Major themes**

**The Covenant**

The Lord established a covenant with the Israelites, its symbol is the Law

- That is why the Law and obedience to it are so dominant in the Histories.

Idolatry was the worst (most offensive to the Lord) sin of the Israelite peoples

Worshiping other gods rather than the Lord is a direct violation of the covenant

- The histories always denounce the “Baals” and “high places” (native Canaanite religion)

**The Land**

- Promise of the covenant, it could be (and was!) lost through unfaithfulness to the covenant
  - The histories contain many lists of ancestors and lands given to them
  - Shows the readers how they are connected to the land and great events of the past
The Temple
Center of true worship – only in Jerusalem
Samaritans worshipped on Mt. Gerezim – not Jerusalem, so they had rejected the covenant

The Kingship
The histories have a mixed opinion of the Kings of Israel and Judah
The Kingship represents a rejection of God – Yahweh is the real king of the Jewish people
Divinely instituted (anointed) by God (through Samuel)
Kings have a special responsibility to care for Yahweh’s people
Politically, Judah (in the South) is chosen by the Lord
Israel (in the North) is rejected by the Lord – because of the civil war?
David is the greatest king (George Washington?), Solomon the most powerful
They are the “Golden Age” of the Jewish people
Only two kings (Hezekiah and Josiah) are considered completely good
Both Kings of Judah, neither could prevent the punishment of the Lord

Punishment for Sin
The Hebrews were the Lord’s chosen people, “dearer than all the other nations.”
When they strayed from the ways of the Lord, they were punished
The Lord is merciful, but he is also just.
He will forgive, but sin must be punished
He punishes the people with the Babylonian exile, but restores them to their land

Conclusion
The histories conclude with the Temple restored and Jerusalem being re-built
We know that the Jewish Kingdom never regained what it had during the days of David and Solomon
It will not be its own nation until 1947.
Alexander the Great brought everything to an end
Greek religion and culture dominated the Middle East (and the known world!)
The Books of the Maccabees tell the story of revolt against the Greeks and coming of the Romans

Favorite Stories
Joshua and the conquest of Jericho (Jos 6:20) – “And the walls came tumbling down”
Samson and Delilah (Jdg 13 – 16)
David and Goliath (1 Sm 17:1 – 51)
Solomon’s Dream (1 Kg 3:4 – 14) – “Give your servant an understanding heart”
Elijah and the Fiery Chariot – (2 Kg 2:9-12)

Favorite Psalms
Many of the Psalms express the message of the Historical books:
Ps 74 – Prayer at the destruction of the Temple
Ps 126 – Song of return from exile
Ps 137 – “By the rivers of Babylon we sat and cried”
### Timeline of Jewish history

#### All dates BC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1428 - 1312</td>
<td>Slavery in Egypt</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 1440 (?)</td>
<td>The Exodus from Egypt (Moses)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 1250 – c. 1025</td>
<td>Biblical Judges lead the people</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 1025 – c. 1010</td>
<td>King Saul</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 1010 – c. 970</td>
<td>King David</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 970 – c. 931</td>
<td>King Solomon</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 960</td>
<td>Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 931</td>
<td>Split between the Kingdom of Judah and the Kingdom of Israel (Samaria)</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 931 – c. 913</td>
<td>King Rehoboam of Judah</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 900</td>
<td>According to the documentary hypothesis, J Source of the Torah is written</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 840</td>
<td>Mesha inscription describes Moabite victory over a son of King Omri of Israel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 800</td>
<td>According to the documentary hypothesis, E Source of the Torah is written.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 740 – c. 700</td>
<td>Prophecy of Isaiah</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 740 – c. 722</td>
<td>Kingdom of Israel (Northern kingdom) falls to Neo-Assyrian Empire</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 715 – c. 687</td>
<td>King Hezekiah of Judah (Southern Kingdom)</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 690</td>
<td>According to the documentary hypothesis, P Source of the Torah is written</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 649 – c. 609</td>
<td>King Josiah of Judah institutes major reforms.</td>
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<td>c. 626 – c. 587</td>
<td>Prophecy of Jeremiah</td>
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<tr>
<td>620</td>
<td>According to the documentary hypothesis, D Source of the Torah is written.</td>
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<tr>
<td>597</td>
<td>First deportation to Babylon</td>
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<tr>
<td>586</td>
<td>Jerusalem falls to Nebuchadnezzar and Solomon's Temple destroyed</td>
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<tr>
<td>587 – 538</td>
<td>The Babylonian Captivity</td>
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<tr>
<td>539</td>
<td>Jews allowed to return to Jerusalem, by permission of Cyrus</td>
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<tr>
<td>520</td>
<td>Prophecy of Zechariah</td>
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<tr>
<td>516</td>
<td>Second Temple of Jerusalem consecrated</td>
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<tr>
<td>475</td>
<td>Often associated with Xerxes I of Persia:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>460</td>
<td>Seeing anarchy breaking out in Judea:</td>
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<tr>
<td>450</td>
<td>Documentary hypothesis suggests that the five books of the Pentateuch were created by combining the four originally independent sources</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>332</td>
<td>Alexander the Great conquers Phoenicia and Gaza:</td>
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<tr>
<td>200 BC – 100 BC</td>
<td>probably entering by Judea without entering the Jewish dominated hill country on his way into Egypt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>167 – 161</td>
<td>Hasmoneans revolt against the Hellenistic Empire of Seleucids, led by Judah Maccabee, resulting in victory and installation of the Hanukkah holiday.</td>
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<tr>
<td>157 – 129</td>
<td>Hasmonean dynasty establishes its royal dominance in Judea during renewed war with Seleucid Empire.</td>
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<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Pompey the Great lay siege to and entered the Temple, Judea became a client kingdom of Rome.</td>
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<tr>
<td>40 – 4 BC</td>
<td>Herod the Great, appointed King of the Jews by the Roman Senate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 AD</td>
<td>Province of Roman Judaea created by merging Judea proper, Samaria and Idumea.</td>
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</table>
Hillel the Elder, considered the greatest Torah sage, dies, leading to the dominance of Shammai till 30, see also Hillel and Shammai.

Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus, killed by the Romans.

Schism within Judaism during the Second Temple era.

A sect within Hellenised Jewish society starts Jewish Christianity

The Great Jewish Revolt against Roman occupation

Destruction of the Second Temple and the fall of Jerusalem.

Period of the Tannaim, rabbis who organized and elucidated the Jewish oral law. The decisions of the Tannaim are contained in the Mishnah, Beraita, Tosefta, and various Midrash compilations.

Final events of the Great Jewish Revolt, the fall of Masada.

Council of Jamnia, Christians excluded from the synagogue

Christianity starts off as a Jewish sect and then develops its own texts and ideology and branches off from Judaism to become a distinct religion.
Israel in Old Testament Times - Map

THE KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

SCALE OF MILES

This map can be viewed at:
www.bible.ca

Steven Rudd (2007)

The Great Sea

Joppa

Sidon

Tyre

Dan

PHOENICIA

KINGDOM OF DAMASCUS

AMMON

Gaza

Jerusalem

Tokeia

Moresheth

PHILISTIA

Beersheba

Judah

Tharu (Arish)

Egypt

Red Sea

Elat

Negeb

Ain el Quderiat

Mount Karkom

Mount Seir

Kadesh Barnea

Ezion Geber

Kings Highway

Wilderness of Zin

Wilderness of Paran

Edom

Midian

Egypt

Wilderness of Egypt Ezek 20:36

Israel in Old Testament Times - Map
Judah and Israel – Old Testament Reflection Questions

The story of Samson speaks of a great leader who cannot control his passions and is destroyed by them. Can you think of any examples of modern-day leaders who have been in a similar position? Has this ever happened to you? Why do people do what they know is bad for them?

When the Jewish people followed the Lord, everything went well. When they disobeyed, things went badly. Have you experienced this in your life? How did you return to the Lord? What happened when you did?

The Babylonian exile was a critical experience for the Jews. They lost everything and were made slaves. Then, by a miracle, they were rescued from slavery and restored to the land. Can you think of a similar experience in your life where you suffered loss and then experienced restoration? How did it make you feel?

For most of Old Testament history, the Temple in Jerusalem was the only place a Jew could worship. After its destruction the people had to find new ways to worship. How would you feel if all the Catholic churches were closed? How would it effect your faith? What would replace the churches?
The promise of a Messiah – Old Testament

So what is a Messiah and why do we need one?
The world is not as God intended – if there is a good God, why is there evil in the world?

The Old Testament opens with a pre-history of the human race, told in beautiful and poetic terms
Evil is the result of human choice (disobedience), not something God did or wanted.

Adam and Eve, the snake and the apple.

Evil continues to be a presence in the world because of the basic estrangement of the people from God.
The fundamental event of the Old Testament (Jewish History) is the Exodus and the giving of the Law
A savior is needed (Moses) to:
1) free the people from slavery – establish a covenant between the people and God.
2) define a relationship between them and their God – recorded as a set of laws (Ten Commandments)

This is a Messiah – one who is chosen to rescue the people from slavery and lead them to freedom.

God gives the Law as a guide for his people, to govern their lives and keep them faithful.

With both a savior and a guidebook it should be easy to maintain our relationship with God.

Israelite history shows that when the people follow the law and maintain the relationship
All will be well – there is peace and prosperity in the Kingdom

But if the people turn away and forsake the covenant
War and disaster - even a return to slavery – will occur

History of God's Chosen People – the Old Testament
The history of God's people trying to be faithful to God's calling, to live out their relationship with Him.

The Exodus – God chooses a people as his own that through them, they might manifest His glory and fidelity

Slaves in Egypt, rescued by Moses and led through the wilderness to a land of milk and honey

The giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, establishment of the covenant

"you will be my people and I will be your God."

The Establishment of the Jewish kingdom – “we want a king like all the other nations"

King David and the unification of Israel (1010 – 970 BC)
King Solomon and the Golden Age of Israel – establishment of the Temple (970 – 931 BC)

Civil war
The breakup of the Kingdom into North and South (Samaria and Judea)
Prophets – the conscience of Israel, calling the people back to faithful

End of the Kingdom
The North falls to the Assyrians – (722 BC)
The South falls (597 BC) and endures the Babylonian Exile – slaves once again!

The Restoration of the Kingdom
Cyrus, God's chosen (anointed) and the re-building of the Temple (515 BC)

Restoration of the Jews was an unprecedented event in history – seen as a miracle of God's power

Conquest by the Greeks
Alexander the Great – end of the Jewish kingship (332 BC)
There will be no independent Israel until 1948 AD!
The Greeks tried to impose their culture and worship on the Jews – with mixed success.

Conquest by the Romans
"Judea Captiva” - the stage set for the coming of the Messiah (32 BC)
More brutal than the Greeks.
Israel After the Exile

The devastating effect of the Babylonian Exile on the Jewish spirit is hard to overemphasize.

We are right back where we started – as slaves of an oppressor.

Guilt – we abandoned the covenant and God has abandoned us.

Destruction of the Temple – no place to worship, no way to reconcile with God.

Miracle of the restoration

Cyrus the Persian - beyond all hope the Land was restored to them (by a pagan!)

The nation (political and religious) began to be rebuilt.

Alexander the great

There was animosity between the Jews and Samaritans (remnants of the Northern kingdom of Israel).

The Samaritans welcomed the Greeks (Alexander) and built their temple on Mt. Gerezim.

Remember – Jerusalem was the only place you could legitimately offer sacrifice.

This explains the meeting of Jesus and the Samaritan woman, why she is so surprised he spoke to her.

The followers of Alexander

Alexander died and left his empire (including Palestine) to his generals.

All Palestine was part of the Ptolemaic (Egyptian) Dynasty – they ignored the Jewish people.

Civil war came and the Selucid dynasty took Palestine from the Ptolemaic dynasty.

They wanted to impose Greek ways on the Israelite people.

They tried to blend Jewish religion with Greek – putting a statue of their god Zeus in the Temple.

Judas Maccabeus

The books of Maccabees recount the occupation of the Greeks and the Revolt of the Jews.

Eventually the Romans came in and settled the whole thing – making Israel a conquered nation.

The Cultural Climate

The Jewish people were not united – there were many groups and factions among them.

These groups often were in conflict with each other – which helped the Romans.

Some of the groups are mentioned in the New Testament (e.g. Pharisees and Sadducees).

We know of others through historical records of the time (e.g. Essenes).

Pharisees

Their name means “Separated Ones.”

Practiced a strict avoidance of:

- Gentiles (non-Jews), less observant Jews and Sinners (tax collectors, thieves, etc.)
- Unclean persons or things (see the parable of the Good Samaritan)

They were a “lay group” (not associated with the Priests or Temple).

They accepted as authoritative both the written and “oral” Torah (interpretations and commentary).

They accepted:

- the resurrection of the dead, free will (under divine providence), angels, the coming messiah.
- They regarded the teaching of the do’s and don’ts in the Law to guarantee holiness.
- The only way to be a holy nation and devoted to God was by this minute attention to detail.
- They looked down on anyone who was not as observant (of the Law) as they were.
- They were usually opposed to the Sadducees.
- They were influential on other Jews because of their learning and strict observance of the Law.
- The Pharisees developed into the Rabbis of today.

They are often negatively portrayed in the Gospels.

St. Paul was probably a Pharisee and Scripture speaks well of at least one – Gamaliel.

Acts 5:34 “But a Pharisee in the Sanhedrin named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, respected by all the people, stood up....”
Sadducees
These were the priests and aristocrats of the ancient Jewish people
Their name derives from the (last) priest Zadok
They were influenced by Greek culture, and before the Romans they supported the Greek rulers.
Although priests, they were secular in outlook – not all that much interested in questions of religion
They tended to be conservative and were mostly interested in guarding their priestly benefits
They were opposed to the Pharisees and their interpretation of the Torah
They accepted only what was literally written in scripture – no development or commentary
They denied divine providence insisting on each person being absolutely responsible for their own acts
They denied the afterlife and the punishment / reward of individuals after death
As a group they disappeared with the destruction of Jerusalem (about 75 AD).

Scribes
They were the lawyers – experts in religious law and highly respected
They devoted themselves to a study of the scriptures and were responsible for teaching
Also had secular function – reading and writing for those who could not
Probably closer in religious outlook to the Pharisees than the Sadducees

Essenes
Name means “pious ones” (or possibly “healers”)
Returned late to Israel from the Babylonian exile, settled on the West shore of the Dead Sea
Most likely they are the Qumran community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls
Not mentioned in the New Testament – they kept themselves separate form the rest of the Jews

The Messiah
The word is Hebrew, meaning the “Anointed One.” In Greek it is “Christos” and English “Christ”
It is a title not proper name – Christians consider Jesus to be “the Christ”
Christ is not Jesus’ last name – he actually would have been called Yeshua (or Jesus) bar-Joseph (Son of Joseph).
In the Old Testament the term “Anointed One” is used for kings in the Davidic Dynasty:
Ps 18:51 – “You have given great victories to your king, and shown kindness to your anointed, to David and his posterity forever.” (see also Ps 2:2; Ps 89:39, 52; Ps 132:10, 17)
Because of its association with the kingship, the term began to have political implications
In the Prophetic books of the Bible, it is linked to an ideal Davidic ruler that God would send to occupy the throne
Jer 33:15 – “In those days, in that time, I will raise up for David a just shoot; he shall do what is right and just in the land.”
Ezek 37:23-24 – “No longer shall they defile themselves with their idols, their abominations, and all their transgressions. I will deliver them from all their sins of apostasy, and cleanse them so that they may be my people and I may be their God. My servant David shall be prince over them, and there shall be one shepherd for them all; they shall live by my statutes and carefully observe my decrees. When the Davidic dynasty dies out during the Exile, the title could be used by a high priest:
Lev 4:3 “...if it is the anointed priest who thus sins and thereby makes the people also become guilty..”
Even a non-Israelite could be an anointed agent of God:
Isa 45:1 – “Thus says the LORD to his anointed, Cyrus, whose right hand I grasp...”
Just before the time of Jesus there was mention of a coming anointed one who would renew Jerusalem
Dan 9:25 – “From the utterance of the word that Jerusalem was to be rebuilt Until one who is anointed and a leader, there shall be seven weeks.”
This is from the famous Apocalypses in Daniel (the first example of an Apocalypse in Scripture) written in reaction to the Greek occupation of Palestine.
During this time the Qumran community (they wrote the “Dead Sea Scrolls”) spoke of two Messiahs:
A Messiah of Israel: an anointed king who would renew the Davidic kingship.
A Messiah of Aaron: an anointed king who would renew the Aaronic priesthood.

The Point: there was not a general agreement on who the Messiah was supposed to be.

Some looked for a political figure to drive out the Romans and restore the Davidic Kingdom
Some felt religious reform was needed first and only later could the Davidic Kingdom be restored
All shared the hope that God would intervene in the present age by:

Heavenly aid – sending an anointed (political) savior
Angelic (divine) aid – sending an angel and / or heavenly host.

Additional Figures

God also might send a prophetic figure (like Moses)

Dt. 18:18-19 – “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kinsmen, and will put my words into his mouth; he shall tell them all that I command him.”

This person would give a true interpretation to the Torah (ending the arguments about interpretation) and usher in an age where all people would follow the Law

An angelic host might be sent to battle evil in a final cosmic conflict

Thus the final age would be brought in and the Romans (and other demons) would be driven out.

This is the environment in which Jesus began his ministry.
Promise of a Messiah Reflection Questions

What does the idea of a savior mean to you? What do you need to be saved from? How do you go about doing it? What kind of help do you need? How much is your responsibility and how much belongs to someone else?

During the time just before the birth of Jesus, there were many conflicting religious groups among the Jews – all of them claiming to have the truth. Does this sound like our society today? What do you think it means when there are many conflicting ideas of religion? Is only one group right or could each have some insight into truth?

All religions need to grapple with the question: “If God is good, why is there evil in the world?” What is the answer? How should we deal with evil?

We see every morning on the news evil deeds done in the name of religion. As someone interested in religion, what is your reaction? What would tell people who speak out against religion? Is the problem religion or the interpretation of religion?
Tell Me a Story About Jesus – The Gospels

What is a Gospel?

Remember that if you want to write the Bible, you first need to build a campfire.

The Gospels are the written down stories about Jesus that those who knew him remembered and shared.

Scholars think the first Gospel (Mark) was written at least 30 years after Jesus’ death and resurrection. For at least 30 years the memory of Jesus kept alive by people sitting “around the campfire” telling stories.

The stories may have been written down because the people who knew Jesus were beginning to die. They didn’t want the memory of Jesus to die with them – so they produced the Gospels.

Each Gospel represents the picture of Jesus that a particular group of believers had:

Mark’s Gospel:

- Is associated with Peter – traditionally its author is John Mark, companion of Barnabas and St. Paul
- It was written before 70AD for a community unfamiliar with Jewish customs and ritual; such as Peter’s community in Rome.
- It looks for a time of coming persecution and encourages believers to stand firm in their faith.
  - It’s message is “Pick up your cross and follow me”
- Followers of Jesus should expect to suffer for their faith, but will win the Kingdom if they hold on
- Makes use of the “Messianic Secret” idea – Jesus tells people he has healed not to tell anyone
  - Only after the Resurrection can the complete story of Jesus be known
- The disciples are shown as totally clueless as to what Jesus is about

Matthew’s Gospel:

- May have been for a group of recent Jewish converts to Christianity in Syria.
- Seems to be aware of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (in 70AD)
- Concerned with Old Testament prophecy fulfilled in Jesus, the Law, Jewish purity customs.
- Sharply critical of the Jewish leaders of Jesus’ time, may reflect early Jewish – Christian tensions.
- The most “teaching” in the Gospels – contains the Sermon on the Mount, the key teachings of Jesus

Luke’s Gospel:

- Traditionally the Luke was thought to be a Syrian (gentile) Christian writing around 80 – 90AD.
- Mentioned in Colossians 4:14 “Luke the beloved physician…” (also Philemon 24 and 2 Tim 4:11)
- Lacks a knowledge of Jewish custom and the country around Galilee and Jerusalem.
- Written by a non-Jew for a non-Jewish community
- The “Social Justice” Gospel – consistent preference for the oppressed, rejection of the powerful
  - Shown the most concern for the situation of women – they are portrayed in a positive light
  - Has the most healing miracles – Luke was traditionally a physician
- The Book of Acts is part two of Luke's story, they are often treated together.
- Together, Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the “Synoptic” (“with the same view”) gospels
  - They are very similar; much of the text is repeated word-for-word (90% of Mark is in Matthew)
- Scholars have suggested a (now lost) “source Gospel” that they were based on (“Q” or “quelle”)

John’s Gospel:

- Very different from the “synoptic” gospels, has a unique point of view – emphasis on Jesus’ divinity
  - Scholars feel it was the last written (100AD) and is associated with a community in Ephesus
  - Has the harshest tone toward the Jewish people, reflecting (like Matthew) tension in his community.
- The most “mystical” Gospel – gives insights into the nature of Jesus and his relationship to God.

A common thread

In order to be a Gospel, the Gospel must relate the death and resurrection of Jesus.

This is why the book of Acts is not a Gospel; written by Luke, it deals with the church after the resurrection of Jesus.

Gospels need to focus on Jesus – and who he was to the community that created that particular Gospel.

Parables, miracles and collections of sayings of Jesus are found in all the Gospels.

Parables

A parable is a “story with a point” – it was a favorite teaching tool of the Rabbis (called midrash).

Luke has the most parables, John the least – there are often differences in the same parable between the Gospels.

It is a story that seems to lead to an obvious conclusion and then suddenly turns to an unexpected end:

Luke 15:11 – 32, “The forgiving father.” (or the “Prodigal Son.”)

It is interesting that Jesus’ primary way of teaching is by story:
Stories are language independent – you still get the point even if they are translated to a different language. You don’t need to be able to read and write to listen to a story – (remember the campfire?)

The best stories will always have meaning – the “Forgiving father” works as well today as 2000 years ago.

Miracles

The Gospels have many miracles of Jesus – they tend to fall into categories:

Healing miracles – Jesus brings miraculous healing to someone’s illness / affliction
  Matthew 12:9-14, Curing the man with a withered hand (on the Sabbath)

“Nature” miracles – Jesus intervenes in the natural world
  Mark 5:35-41, Jesus calms the storm at sea

“Other” miracles – Other miraculous happenings
  Luke 9:19-17, Jesus feeds the five thousand.

Jesus’ miracles are primarily about his authority of one sent from God – they are signs of his power.

Note that nothing Jesus does is outside the ordinary scope of things:
  He does things that God does all the time: makes people recover from illness, stops storms, gives food, etc.
  He never does things God doesn’t do – hatch an elephant out of a chicken’s egg or grow a third arm

The point is that Jesus’ miracles are an extension of God’s actions within the world:
  In one sense, we experience miracles every day – life and breath, love and charity; all from God.
  Since God is always at work in the world, we shouldn’t be surprised at them, we should expect them

The Gospel writers also retold the miracle stories to make their religious point. For example:
In the miracle of Jesus walking on the water (Matthew 14:22-23, Mark 6:45-52):
  Matthew recounts Peter walking on water, Mark does not (Luke doesn’t even have the miracle!).
  Mark has the disciples astounded but not understanding (“their hearts were hardened.”)
  Matthew has the disciples do Jesus homage and say, “Truly, you are the Son of God.”
  Matthew is concerned with showing Jesus’ authority and divinity (contrasted with Peter’s failure)
  Mark is concerned with the disciples not understanding who Jesus was until after the resurrection

The point is that they “adjusted” the story to fit their particular needs;
Which doesn’t make the miracle less true because it exists in different forms

Collections of sayings (teachings)
  Range in scope from the “Sermon on the Mount” (4 chapters) to small sayings (Luke 16:16)
  Probably sayings of Jesus from several occasions, blended together to reinforce the Gospel’s point.
  The stories we find in the Gospels are like “pearls on a string:”
  Each one stands alone, but can be strung together to make something more beautiful that any one
  Four Gospels are like four beautiful necklaces – made up of the same stones but each unique

What a Gospel is not

“Gospel” translates the Greek work “Euangelion” which means “good news (announcement).”
  It was the same word used to announce victory in war – good news of a great battle won.

The Gospels are the announcement (proclamation) of the victory Jesus won over sin and death.
  A Gospel is not a biography of Jesus in the modern sense.
  They are concerned with the religious significance of his life – not with minute details
  We have no information about Jesus from about age 12 to age 30 – it was not religiously important
  They do not include everything that happened to Jesus
  Matthew and Luke speak of the birth of Jesus – Mark does not and John gives us a theology lesson.
  They do not always agree with each other
  Matthew speaks of the Sermon on the Mount, Luke places it on a plain.
  Matthew, Mark and Luke have Jesus say “this is my body / this is my blood” at the last super;
  John has Jesus wash their feet instead

Not every miracle or parable is in each Gospel and they are not always in the same order

A Gospel is not a history book
  The Gospels are based on historical events – the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus
  but they do not give us a complete picture of the times – their focus is Jesus
  we should not form opinions about the Jewish people based on John’s opinion of them

In the late 1800’s, there was a movement to find out who the historical Jesus was
  The idea was that Jesus was a great teacher and religious leader, but not divine:
    Christianity had “hi-jacked” his message and turned it into something he never intended
As Christians, we reject this position and insist that Jesus was both God and human.

The Gospels show that the disciples regarded Jesus as divine at the time they were written.

We have seen this idea re-surface recently in the “Jesus Movement.”

Learning about the historical aspect of Jesus is fine – just don’t forget the religious aspect!

A portrait of Jesus

Several things jump out when we read Jesus’ story:

He came from a poor / remote town (Nazareth) – his mother was a single mom, he was her sole support

He always sided with the outcast and marginal people (the anawim) whose only hope was in God

There was something very compelling about him:

He could make Peter leave his fishing business by just saying “Follow me”

He could outwit and silence the scribes and Pharisees when he argued with them

One important question is what Jesus thought of himself – how did he understand who he was?

The information from the Gospels is mixed because the Gospels are a meditation on who Jesus was.

At times Jesus seems to have divine qualities and insights

Sometimes he seems able to know what his disciples (or the crowds) are thinking

At other times he seems not to know; “Who touched me?” (Luke 8:40, The woman with a hemorrhage)

In the later Gospels (Luke and John) Jesus’ divine status is almost taken for granted.

In John’s Gospel, Jesus identifies himself with the “I AM” of Moses’ burning bush (John 18:5)

Scholars today base their understanding of Jesus’ self perception on Luke 2:52:

“And Jesus advanced (in) wisdom and age and favor before God and man. ”

This is taken to mean that Jesus had to “grow into” the knowledge of his relationship with God.

As a child, Jesus acted like a child – he was not born with the mind of an adult

As he grew up, he experienced a special relationship with God as loving Father – the “Abba Experience”

During his public ministry, he was aware of the power of God working through him in miracles.

Most likely he would not have understood himself as the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity

At his death, he knew that God would not abandon him, that God would “make it OK” somehow.

He probably did not have a specific knowledge of the Resurrection – only a complete trust in God.

If he did absolutely know he would be resurrected, then his choice to die was not totally free.

He chose to share all things with us – even the fear and uncertainty of death – to bring an end to fear.

It was not until Easter morning that he knew the complete story.

What the Church says about Jesus

The church (all Christians) insists on divine intervention in the birth of Jesus (the “Virgin Birth.”)

We believe that Mary was the mother of Jesus and Joseph (Mary’s husband) was his adoptive father.

Mary conceived Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit – not the normal human means.

This means that Jesus was truly the son of Mary and the son of God – and Mary is the Mother of God.

Without belief in the divinity of Jesus, you cannot correctly be called a “Christian”

Catholic tradition also insists on Mary’s unique status among all human beings:

She is the only woman (except Eve) who did not suffer from Original Sin (more about Original Sin later)

This is the doctrine of the “Immaculate Conception” – that Mary was conceived without Original Sin

Please do not confuse this with the “Virgin Birth” which is about Jesus’ divinity.

Mary did not have other children after Jesus.

The “brothers and sisters” of Jesus mentioned in scripture could be:

Children from a prior marriage of Joseph

Extended family – what we would call cousins

The church also insists on the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus:

That he truly (and freely) died – just as dead as we are going to be

That on the third day he resurrected (not revived), being given a new kind of life from God.

And our hope is that we too will share in his resurrection.

Please do not try to “explain away” the resurrection by saying things like:

Jesus was just in a coma, or someone stole his body, or somebody impersonated him after his death.

These are not available positions for Christians to take – it is all or nothing.

As Paul says, “If Jesus did not rise from the dead, we are still in our sins and our hope is in vain.”

That some time after his resurrection Jesus was “taken up” (ascended) into heaven.
Returning to the Father from whom he was sent, going ahead to “make a place” for us to follow.
That Jesus will return to earth at the end of time to bring about the end of world and the beginning of a new one.
This will be the “second coming” of Jesus for Christians, the first coming of the Messiah for the Jews.
After this, we will both be on the same page theologically!
*Please* do not try to figure out when this will happen!
Jesus himself tells us that only the Father knows – don't worry about it; it will come when it is supposed to come.
Catholics do not make a big deal of the End Times – trying to map the Book of Revelation to current events.
remember that Revelation was written as a message of hope for Christians suffering persecution under Nero.
as such, its message to us is “God wins” stay strong and God will take care of you.

As Christians we are disciples of Jesus
He is the root of our faith;
he promises that we will be his brothers and sisters, adopted children and co-heirs of his Father.
He is the source of grace, the foundation of the sacraments and the one we meet each time we go to Mass.
Major events in the Life of Jesus
Based on Mark’s sequence
* = out of sequence with Mark

Birth and Youth
Announcement of the birth of Jesus
Luke 1:26 “(30) Then the angel said to her, "(31) Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.

The birth of Jesus
Luke 2:1 “(6) While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, (7) and she gave birth to her firstborn son.”

The visit of the shepherds
Luke 2:1 “…the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place…”

The presentation in the Temple
Luke 2:22 “…they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord…”

The boy Jesus in the Temple
Luke 2:41 “(46) After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers…”

* * * * * Jesus boyhood is called the “hidden” years * * * * *

Ministry in Galilee
Baptism
Mark 1:9 “Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John.”
Luke 3:21 “After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized…(22) the holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove…”

The temptation of Jesus
Mark 1:9 “…and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan.”
Luke 4:1 “Jesus … was led by the Spirit into the desert (2) for forty days, to be tempted by the devil.”

Call of the Disciples
Mark 1:16 “(17) Jesus said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."
* Luke 5:1 “(11) they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.”
* Luke 5:27 “he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi … He said to him, "Follow me."”

The mission of the Twelve
Mark 3:16 “He appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles)…(16) Simon, whom he named Peter; James, son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James, whom he named Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus; Thaddeus, Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him”
* Luke 6:12 “from them he chose Twelve, 5 whom he also named apostles: Simon (Peter), Andrew (his brother), James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (Zealot), Judas (son of James), Judas Iscariot”

The rejection at Nazareth
Mark 6:1 “(3) Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary …? And they took offense at him.
Luke 4:16 “(28) They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill … to hurl him down headlong.”

Jesus feeds the multitude
Mark 6:34 “(41) … taking the five loaves and the two fish … he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to (his) disciples to set before the people.”
Mark 8:1 “(6) … taking the seven loaves he gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to his disciples to distribute, and they distributed them to the crowd.”

Luke 9:10 “(16) Then taking 7 the five loaves and the two fish, … he said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd.”

Peter’s confession about Jesus
Mark 8:27 “(20) … Peter said to him in reply, "You are the Messiah."

First prediction of the Passion
Mark 8:31 “He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer greatly, … be killed, and rise after three days.”
Luke 9:22 "The Son of Man must suffer greatly … be killed and on the third day be raised."

The Transfiguration
Mark 9:2 “Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, …”
Luke 9:29 “he took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance”

Second prediction of the Passion
Mark 9:30 "(31) The Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death he will rise."
Luke 9:43 "The Son of Man must suffer greatly … be killed and on the third day be raised."

Third prediction of the Passion
Mark 10:32 “(33) … we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over … and they will condemn him to death…”
* Luke 18:31 "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem and everything written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled."

Jesus in Jerusalem
Jesus enters Jerusalem
Mark 11:1 “(9) "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"
* Luke 19:28 "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord."
John 12:13 “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord ... the king of Israel.”

The Lord’s Prayer
Mark 11:25 “When you … pray, forgive anyone against whom you have a grievance, so that your heavenly Father may in turn forgive you your transgressions."
Luke 11:1 “He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.""

The Greatest Commandment
Mark 11:28 “(30) You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. …(31) You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
* Luke 10:25 “(27) "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.""

The end of the World
Mark 13:3 “(8) Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes… and there will be famines.
Luke 21:7 “(10) Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. (11) There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues

2 Scripture – the story of who we are.doc -(38)- 9/11/2018
The Last Days Of Jesus

The anointing at Bethany
Mark 14:3 “a woman came with an alabaster jar of perfumed oil, … and poured it on his head.”
John 12:1 “Mary took a liter of costly perfumed oil ... anointed the feet of Jesus and dried them with her hair”

The Last Supper
Mark 14:22 “… he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is my body."

The Garden of Gethsemane
Mark 14:32 "Abba, Father, …. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will."

The Trial (part 1) - Jesus before the Sanhedrin
Mark 14:53 “(61) "Are you the Messiah, the son of the Blessed One?"

Peter’s denial of Jesus
Mark 14:66 “(71) "I do not know this man about whom you are talking."

The Trial (part 2) - Jesus before Pilate
Mark 15:1 “(2) Pilate questioned him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

The sentence of death
Mark 15:1 “(12) what (do you want) me to do with (the man you call) the king of the Jews?" (13) They shouted again, "Crucify him."

Mockery by the soldiers
Mark 15:16 “(17) They clothed him in purple and, weaving a crown of thorns, placed it on him."

The Passion
Mark 15:20 “when they had mocked him, they… led him out to crucify him."

The crucifixion
Mark 15:33 “At noon darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.”

The burial of Jesus
Mark 15:42 “… he took him down, wrapped him in the linen cloth and laid him in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock.

The Resurrection of Jesus

The Resurrection
Mark 16:1 “(6) You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised; he is not here.

Post-Resurrection appearances
The appearance to Mary Magdalene
Mark 16:9 “… early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene…”
Mark 16:12 “… he appeared in another form to two of them walking along on their way to the country."

The commissioning of the Twelve
Mark 16:14 “(15) "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature."

The ascension of Jesus
Mark 16:19 “… the Lord Jesus … was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God."
A brief look at Jesus and salvation

Introduction
Christianity is a religion of salvation; we call Jesus our Savior, we speak of being 'saved'
Salvation involves concepts of:
  - Sin and grace – the mystery of evil in the world
  - Church and sacraments – the means of grace given through the community of believers
  - Creation and eschatology – the beginnings and end of all things
  - Christ and his mission – who Christ is and what did he come among us to accomplish
Salvation implies movement from one state to another; from:
  - Bondage to liberation – The Exodus to the Passover
  - Sin to forgiveness – alienation from God to presence of God
  - Death to eternal life – no life at all to abundant everlasting life
  - Law to freedom – the condemnation of the Old Law to the Freedom of the New
  - Darkness to light – “I once was blind but now I see”

To understand salvation, we need to understand about Jesus.

God and Man – “Cur deus homo?” (How is God human?)
  - Jesus is absolutely unique in history; He is One person (Jesus of Nazareth) with two natures; both fully human and fully divine
  - Jesus = 100% human + 100% divine (bad math, great theology)

Messiah
  - He is the expected Messiah of the Old Testament; the Christos (anointed one)
  - He comes to announce the Kingdom of God;
  - Jesus' ministry shows the real redeeming presence of God breaking into history.

Images of the Messiah:
  - Political or religious savior – king and priest; drive out the Romans and renew the priesthhood / temple practice.
  - Suffering servant – from Isaiah (Is 53); one comes who will suffer to redeem his people
  - Son of Man – from Daniel (Dn 7:13); one who comes in glory to renew the Kingdom

The Paschal (Easter) Mystery
  - Jesus' passion, death, resurrection and ascension; accomplished human redemption
  - His death on the cross shows his solidarity of God with humans
  - the depth of God's love for humanity, for his creation
  - If we are united with Jesus in our humanity (e.g. through Baptism);
    - we will follow him in his suffering, death and resurrection
    - By his death, Jesus liberates us from sin;
    - By his resurrection he opens the way to new life;
    - By his ascension he stands at the side of the Father as our eternal high priest
  - The Church celebrates this in the Eucharist (proclamation of the Mystery of faith): “Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life; Lord Jesus come again in glory.”

Pentecost
  - Jesus sends the Spirit upon us and the Church;
  - empowers us and guides us until the Kingdom is realized in its fullness

A closer look at the mechanics of salvation

Theological models – “Fides quaerens intelectum” (Faith seeking understanding)
  - Theology can only talk about God by analogy; and remember that no analogy is perfect.
  - Theology develops in a specific time and place; influenced by its context.

Relational models are:
Subjective: salvation is a change in *humans*,
Divinization – Jesus became human that we might share in his divinity. This is a more positive idea of God and humans

Legalistic models are:
Objective: salvation is a change in *God*;
Propitiation – Jesus ‘pays the price of redemption’ for us to an angry God. This is a more negative idea of God and humans.

Remember; It is not a case of either/or but both/and.
Salvation is something that already has occurred;
but we need to 'buy into' it to make it effective for ourselves.

Theologies of Salvation

Hebrew notions – The Exodus event.
Important because Jesus was a Jew; he would have been raised in this tradition. This is also the context the early church would have used it to understand Jesus' passion, death, resurrection and ascension.
The Exodus - central event in Jewish history. Yahweh redeems his people; buys them back from slavery.
Passover; the blood of the paschal lamb that rescues those doomed to die (the first born) from death.

Early Church - Paschal Lamb
St. Paul: Jesus' death is seen in a context of Judaism; he is the paschal lamb
Sin is a cosmic power; all creation groans under its weight (Romans 8:18-25)
The human situation is one of enslavement to sin and death
The obedience of Jesus is contrasted with the disobedience of Adam (Romans 5:12-19)
The undeserved death of an innocent victim has the power to bring about expiation (atonement).
Redemption:
1. Blots out the punishment of sin
2. Frees and liberates humans from the Law / sin / death (Romans 3:21-26)
3. Is now and future; all creation will be redeemed at the end of time. (1 Corinthians 15:20-28)

The Fathers (and Mothers) of the church - Divinization
Is a growth in understanding of who Jesus was, how he brought about redemption; creeds and councils
Sin and Death are effects of the human sinful state
By the incarnation; Jesus takes on our humanity;
he elevates / divinizes human nature (what is not assumed is not redeemed)
St. Augustine - Cosmic battle
We are in the midst of a battle between God and Satan; the fall (Adam’s original sin) puts humans under the power of the devil; the paschal mystery frees us from that power
The image of 'bait and hook'; Jesus is the bait, Satan took the bait but was unable to hold Jesus.
Developed in response to mistaken ideas in the early church (dualism)

Medieval - Legalisms
St. Anselm:
We are guilty of not giving to God what is due to him (God is like a feudal King); we must offer satisfaction for sins committed.
We can't do this alone because humans already owe all they have to God
Only Christ can do this because he was born without sin
Jesus’ death is a meritorious act of his human nature
Abelard
Christ reveals the love of God in his teaching and example; leads us to respond to him in love
God's love for us is manifested in Christ; he assumes our nature, is faithful unto death
Protestant Reformation - substitution rather than satisfaction

Luther

Jesus represents humanity; he endures the suffering of God's wrath against sin.
We deserve punishment for sin; Jesus undergoes it for us (vicarious suffering)
'Happy exchange' - Jesus bears our sins, we share in his righteousness

Calvin

Criminal law (Calvin was a lawyer); humans stand guilty before God, the divine judge
They fail to render what is due God; they are guilty and subject to punishment
Christ bears the punishment due humans

Modern - emphasis on the self

The 'turn to the subject'; emphasis on self and psychological models
If we are psychologically unhealthy, we cannot act with free will;
Sin requires an act of free will (an acta humanis – fully human act)
Jesus acted out of free will, in a fully human way, to heal our broken humanity.
Sin prevents a proper relationship with self / neighbor / God; Jesus reestablishes that relationship.
Jesus is the ‘bridge’ between humans and God – enables grace to flow (through sacraments)

Final Thoughts

Various theological approaches to salvation reflect the times that surrounded them.
Legalistic approaches; stress punishment, the 'badness' of human nature
Relational approaches; stress grace and forgiveness, the potential for good in human nature

The way we conceive of sin will effect the way we conceive of salvation; a legalistic view of sin leads to a
legalistic view of salvation
Sin is about relationship; when our relationship with God is broken, that is sin
Catholic tradition teaches that human nature is fallen but not hopeless
Jesus took on our sinful nature in order to restore what been lost; to restore our relationship with God

Some additional resources

Terms

Expiation An act of making amends for a crime; taking away sin
Redemption 'Buying back' (usually from slavery); originally a commercial term
Atonement Literally 'at-one-ment'. Bringing together divided parties
Reconciliation Bringing together estranged parties; parties who were originally united
Justification Becoming acceptable to God; being holy in his sight
Salvation Healing a hurt; making whole or well
Propitiation To appease or regain the good will of someone; turning away God's wrath

References

Books of interest
You can (and should) pick up a copy of the Catechism at any bookstore
Catechism of the Catholic Church (Ligouri Publications)
Articles on redemption are paragraphs 457 to 660. Good overview with lots of scriptural references

These books should be available in the Canton Public Library:
New Jerome Biblical Commentary (Prentice Hall)
Article 82; Pauline Theology, paragraphs 48 - 80. Thorough discussion of Paul's view of salvation. May be slow going, but worth the effort. Many scriptural references.
The New Dictionary of Theology (Michael Glazier)
Article on Redemption. Good historical presentation.

Some Scriptural references
Jewish expectations of the Messiah
Daniel 7:13, image of 'The Son of Man'; adopted by Jesus in Matthew 26:63-64
Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah foretells the birth of Hezekiah to Ahaz, adopted by the Church to describe the birth of Jesus.
See. Matthew 1:23

The Incarnation
Philippians 2:6 - 11

The Passover event and paschal sacrifice.
Exodus 12:1 - 14. Jesus identified himself with the paschal lamb at the Last Supper (which was a celebration of the Jewish Passover). See Matthew 26:26-38

Vicarious suffering
2 Macabees chapter 7; the story of seven brothers martyred with their mother develops the Jewish view (prevalent in the early church) of how suffering can be salvific.

Salvation Outside the Church
Catechism of the Catholic Church
CCC 1257
The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation. He also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them. Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament.
The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are "reborn of water and the Spirit." God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments.

CCC 1129
The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation. "Sacramental grace" is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament. The Spirit heals and transforms those who receive him by conforming them to the Son of God. The fruit of the sacramental life is that the Spirit of adoption makes the faithful partakers in the divine nature by uniting them in a living union with the only Son, the Savior.

CCC 161
Believing in Jesus Christ and in the One who sent him for our salvation is necessary for obtaining that salvation. "Since without faith it is impossible to please [God] and to attain to the fellowship of his sons, therefore without faith no one has ever attained justification, nor will anyone obtain eternal life ‘but he who endures to the end.’"

CCC 846
How are we to understand this affirmation ("Outside the Church there is no salvation"), often repeated by the Church Fathers? Re-formulated positively, it means that all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his Body:

Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council teaches that the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and Baptism, and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through Baptism as through a door. Hence they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium 14)

CCC 847
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9/11/2018
This affirmation is not aimed at those who, through no fault of their own, do not know Christ and his Church:

Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience—those too may achieve eternal salvation. (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium 16)

JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter Redemptoris missio
10. The universality of salvation means that it is granted not only to those who explicitly believe in Christ and have entered the Church. Since salvation is offered to all, it must be made concretely available to all. But it is clear that today, as in the past, many people do not have an opportunity to come to know or accept the gospel revelation or to enter the Church. The social and cultural conditions in which they live do not permit this, and frequently they have been brought up in other religious traditions. For such people salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation. This grace comes from Christ; it is the result of his Sacrifice and is communicated by the Holy Spirit. It enables each person to attain salvation through his or her free cooperation.

For this reason the Council, after affirming the centrality of the Paschal Mystery, went on to declare that "this applies not only to Christians but to all people of good will in whose hearts grace is secretly at work. Since Christ died for everyone, and since the ultimate calling of each of us comes from God and is therefore a universal one, we are obliged to hold that the Holy Spirit offers everyone the possibility of sharing in this Paschal Mystery in a manner known to God."19

Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes
22. The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come,(20) namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear. It is not surprising, then, that in Him all the aforementioned truths find their root and attain their crown.

He Who is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15),(21) is Himself the perfect man. To the sons of Adam He restores the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward. Since human nature as He assumed it was not annulled,(22) by that very fact it has been raised up to a divine dignity in our respect too. For by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man. He worked with human hands, He thought with a human mind, acted by human choice(23) and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, He has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin.(24)

As an innocent lamb He merited for us life by the free shedding of His own blood. In Him God reconciled us(25) to Himself and among ourselves; from bondage to the devil and sin He delivered us, so that each one of us can say with the Apostle: The Son of God "loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20). By suffering for us He not only provided us with an example for our imitation,(26) He blazed a trail, and if we follow it, life and death are made holy and take on a new meaning.

The Christian man, conformed to the likeness of that Son Who is the firstborn of many brothers,(27) received "the first-fruits of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:23) by which he becomes capable of discharging the new law of love.(28) Through this Spirit, who is "the pledge of our inheritance" (Eph. 1:14), the whole man is renewed from within, even to the achievement of "the redemption of the body" (Rom. 8:23): "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the death dwells in you, then he who raised Jesus Christ from the dead will also bring to life your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who dwells in you" (Rom. 8:11).(29) Pressing upon the Christian to be sure, are the need and the duty to battle against evil through manifold tribulations and even to suffer death. But, linked with the paschal mystery and patterned on the dying Christ, he will hasten forward to resurrection in the strength which comes from hope.(30)

All this holds true not only for Christians, but for all men of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way.(31) For, since Christ died for all men,(32) and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to
believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with
this paschal mystery.

Such is the mystery of man, and it is a great one, as seen by believers in the light of Christian revelation. Through Christ
and in Christ, the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful. Apart from His Gospel, they overwhelm us. Christ has
risen, destroying death by His death; He has lavished life upon us(33) so that, as sons in the Son, we can cry out in the
Spirit; Abba, Father(34)
All of Jesus’ miracles are things God does all the time. What does this say about raising Lazarus from the dead? Could it be that death is not in the “normal” order of things intended by God? Read Genesis chap 3 – where does death come from?

Jesus had to grow in age and wisdom to understand his relationship with God. How have you grown in wisdom in your relationship with God? How is that relationship today as compared to a year ago? Ten years ago? How about when you were a child?

Jesus teaches by parables. Can you write a parable? A story that people around you could relate to that would shed light on some part of Jesus teaching? What events or people would you use in it? What part of Jesus’ message would you try to bring out?

4. Jesus was not accepted in his hometown of Nazareth. Why do you think this was? Was it because the people there know him only as the carpenter's son? How do our difficult is it to change our preconceived notions about someone?
Letters to young Churches – The New Testament Epistles

The Pauline Letters
(Most probably written by Paul):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Written:</th>
<th>From:</th>
<th>Deals with:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Thessalonians</td>
<td>51AD</td>
<td>Corinth</td>
<td>Thanksgiving, warnings about the Second Coming (Parousia).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Thessalonians</td>
<td>51AD</td>
<td>Corinth</td>
<td>More warnings about the Second Coming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galatians</td>
<td>54 – 55 AD</td>
<td>Ephesus</td>
<td>“O you stupid Galatians!” Paul speaks against false teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Corinthians</td>
<td>56 AD</td>
<td>Ephesus</td>
<td>Problems in the community, spiritual gifts, the resurrection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Corinthians</td>
<td>57AD</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>More problems, Paul’s defense of his ministry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romans</td>
<td>56 – 58 AD</td>
<td>Corinth</td>
<td>God’s righteousness saves all who believe in Jesus, his Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ephesians</td>
<td>61 – 63AD</td>
<td>Rome (prison)</td>
<td>The Church; Christ as its head, brings salvation to all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippians</td>
<td>59 – 63 AD</td>
<td>Rome (prison)</td>
<td>Instructions to the community, the great hymn of praise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colossians</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>(?) in prison</td>
<td>More warnings against false teachers, Christian Life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philemon</td>
<td>61 – 63AD</td>
<td>Rome (prison)</td>
<td>Treatment of the runaway slave, Onesimus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Written by someone close to Paul – Paul died in 63AD):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Timothy</td>
<td>100AD</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Warnings and instructions to church leaders (pastors).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Timothy</td>
<td>100AD</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Personal instructions to Timothy, “my dear child.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titus</td>
<td>100AD</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Warnings and instructions to Titus, “bishop” of Crete.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Probably not written by Paul)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Written:</th>
<th>From:</th>
<th>Deals with:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hebrews</td>
<td>70 – 96AD</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Christ, the great high priest.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Catholic (Universal) letters
(Most probably not written by James)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Written:</th>
<th>From:</th>
<th>Deals with:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>90-100AD</td>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>Faith and works.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Peter</td>
<td>60 – 67AD</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Remain faithful in the face of persecution.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Most probably not written by Peter – Peter died by 67 AD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Written:</th>
<th>From:</th>
<th>Deals with:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Peter</td>
<td>100-125AD</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Stay faithful, reject false teaching, delay of the Parousia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Written by someone close to John the Apostle)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Written:</th>
<th>From:</th>
<th>Deals with:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 John</td>
<td>110 AD</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>God as Light, love one another.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Written by “The Presbyter” – probably not the author of 1 John)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Written:</th>
<th>From:</th>
<th>Deals with:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 John</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>To a “Chosen Lady,” avoid false teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 John</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>To Gaius, avoid false teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jude</td>
<td>100 AD</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Stay faithful, reject false teaching.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The spread of Christianity

After the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (70AD) the center of Christianity moved to Antioch (Syria)

The Christians began to be distinguished from the Jews as a separate religious group.

By about 75 AD, Christianity was spread throughout the Roman Empire.

Because of its importance, Rome became the most important center for Christianity

The community (church) founded by Peter, the first among the Apostles, became first among Churches.

The head (bishop) of the Church in Rome became “first among equals” of all bishops.

Seen in the role of the early bishops of Rome who were asked to give opinions on disputes among churches.

The first 300 years of the church were the years of persecution.

They were worst in the beginning and the end of this period – but it all depended who the emperor was.

The first persecutions began in the middle 60’s AD under the Emperor Nero (54 – 68 AD).
They were probably worst at the end under the emperor Diocletian (245 – 313 AD)
Christians would be required to make a sacrifice to the Roman Gods; if they refused, they were killed.

Point: To become a Christian in these early days was truly to risk your life
Christians met in secret, were careful about new members (they might be a Roman spy)
It took a long time to join the community – ensuring commitment on the part of new members
This is the model of initiation that the church has revived in the R.C.I.A. – that you are going through!

The Structure of the early Church
Characterized by “household” churches.
This was because the church was small (in size) and often had to meet secret – no grand buildings
The head of a household (a landowner) converts to Christianity along with his family, servants and slaves.
He (or she!) becomes the “presider” at the Lord’s supper (forerunner of the Eucharist).

Jesus told the Apostles to “spread the Good News” – he didn’t tell them how.
Almost all of the structures and institutions in the Church are of human origin – not divine commands.
There were no “parishes” or “dioeceses” in the sense we have them today.
The original Apostles were chosen by Jesus – in turn, they chose others to carry on their mission.
These successors (in an unbroken line!) are our bishops today – this is the “Apostolic Succession.”
In scripture they are called “episcopoi” or “overseers” and they watched over a church in an area (city)
These “overseers” had assistants – “diakonoi” or “servants” (deacons!) – to help them in their work.
They helped with the material needs of the people – feeding the hungry, visiting prisoners and so on.
There is some record of “elders” or “presbyteroi” (priests) who assisted the “overseers” in liturgical tasks
Since worship happened in the home church, they did not function as a modern priest (saying Mass)
Rather, they would have done liturgical things the bishop didn’t have time to do – like baptisms
They are a rather late addition to the clergy – not needed until the church became larger
The earliest worship services of the church were based around the “agape” or the “love meal.”
This was the beginning of the Eucharist, a meal celebrated by believers that recalled the deeds of Jesus.
There would be scripture readings, prayers for the needs of the community gathered.
The head of the household would preside and offer his (or her) comments on the scriptures
This would be where the letters of Paul, Peter and so on were read.
Then the presider would give the “thanksgiving” (eucharist) for the meal, blessing the bread and wine.
Then all would share in a (real!) feast (agape) – the poor would take home the leftovers
It is trouble with this meal that prompted Paul to write 1 Corinthians.

Issues in the early Church
Most of the letters were written to address specific issues within a particular church:

Practical issues:
How are we to live our lives as Christians?
Eating meat sacrificed to idols appears in Paul's letters as a real problem
Pagan temples were the Krogers of their time – they supplied meat to the city. Can Christians eat it?

What kind of occupations were allowed for Christians?
Paul encourages people to work (“those who do not work should not eat.”) Idleness was a vice.
Christians could not join the army, be prostitutes, make pagan idols or be a pagan priest (duh!)

What is the status of slaves in the Christian community?
Slavery was common in ancient times – they were property with no legal status.
Paul (in Philemon) insisted that they were church members with rights equal to everyone else.

What was the status of women in the Christian community?
In those times, women were not much better off than slaves
Paul (and Peter) insisted for their rights in the community – some women were community leaders

How should Christians relate to Roman (civil) law?
Christians were often blamed for starting riots in the Jewish synagogues
Paul caused a riot among the makers of pagan idols – who had him arrested (one of many arrests). Paul encouraged his churches to live at peace with everyone – obeying all civil laws that they could. Christians were not allowed to worship pagan idols – including the worship of the Roman Emperor. The Romans made this a law, Christians refused and were marked as traitors – arrested and killed.

Theological issues:
What is Paul’s own status as an Apostle?
Paul never met Jesus while Jesus was still alive – he met only the resurrected Jesus. Paul seems to have an “inferiority complex” about this;
he vigorously defends his status as an Apostle (Gal 1:1, 1 Cor 9:1)
This may infer that people were questioning what he had to say – after all, he wasn’t one of the 12.

How should the “agape” meal be celebrated?
This religious meal had become an occasion for the rich to feast while the poor watched.
Paul speaks out against this (and the division of rich and poor) in 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 11:17)

What is the role of prophets when the community assembles?
People were praying in tongues – causing confusion in the service and unrest in the community (1 Cor 14)
Paul speaks out for the unity of the community – “one bread, one body, one cup of all.”
Things that disrupt the unity of the community are to be avoided.

How should Christians relate to the Jewish law?
Opinion was split: Paul felt the Jewish law did not apply, some felt it did. Paul won out. (Rom 7)
Circumcision was not required of male Christians, food restrictions did not apply.

How to assure “orthodoxy” (correctness) of belief in the community?
All the letters speak of people who come in preaching a “different Gospel” that Paul (Gal 1:6-9)
Paul (and Peter and John) want the churches to remain true to Jesus

Why has the Parousia (the second coming of Jesus) been delayed?
Early on, Paul was expecting Jesus to return to earth very soon – like tomorrow. (1 Thes 5:1-4)
This explains his comments on marriage, “Stay as you are – single or married – the Lord is coming soon.”
As time went on and the Lord did not return, Paul had to explain it, “He delays to allow us to repent.”

How does Jesus bring us salvation?
This is the hardest issue Paul (and the others) dealt with and it caused the most problems in the churches.
The key question is: “how is Jesus both human and divine?” – and it took 400 years to work out the answer.
Rom 5:11-19 Sin comes through one man (Adam), salvation comes through one man (Jesus)

What must we do to attain the salvation Jesus brings?
For Paul, salvation is from faith that is witnessed to by baptism.
Salvation is not from works of the (Jewish) Law – this is the Faith v/s Works dispute (still going on!)
Gal 5:1-7 Salvation is not through the Law

The Theology of Paul
There is no doubt that the teachings of Paul (as seen in his letters) are the most influential that ever were.
He was responsible for changing Christianity from a Jewish sect to a universal religion.
We are Christians in this room today because of Paul.
The letters of Paul inspired Martin Luther to formulate his theology of salvation.
A theology opposed to the established church understanding at the time (although no longer so).
Which led to the Protestant Reformation.
A (very!) brief explanation of Paul’s thought would center around three concepts:

Jesus
For Paul, Jesus is the Lord, fully divine, the Son of the Most High (God).
Not everyone at this time agreed with this – there was much misunderstanding of Jesus’ divinity.
This was the problem with some of the “other Gospels” Paul refers to – they denied Christ’s divinity.
Since Jesus is the divine Son of God, he has “legal rights” in regard to his Father like any human son.
First-born sons inherit their father’s belongings – they are his heirs. This holds true for Jesus; all that the Father has is given to Him but since the Father does not die, Jesus returns all to the Father so that “God may be all in all.”

Jesus is also a **human being** (“born in the likeness of men.”)

Jesus “emptied himself” of his divinity and took on our humanity – becoming one of us.

This doctrine will be developed more fully over the next 400 years.

It was easy for people in those days to think of Jesus as a human being, harder to see him as God.

Today it is easy to see Jesus as God, too often we lose sight that he was also human!

God raised Jesus up (the resurrection) on the third day and Jesus ascended (returned) into heaven.

One common thought at the time was that God “rewarded” Jesus with resurrection for a good life.

Paul insists this was not true – Jesus was God to begin with

**Sacrament**

Paul sees that we participate in Jesus’ death and resurrection through our faith and our Baptism.

For Paul, faith in Jesus is absolutely necessary – but perhaps not as we think of it today.

Paul does not mean that we should merely believe in the events surrounding Jesus’ life.

Faith is not just belief without proof!

Paul means that we must be absolutely dependent on Jesus, have a rock-solid relationship with Him.

Faith is trust without reservation.

Baptism is the outward sign of this internal disposition (the classic definition of a sacrament)

When we are baptized, we die (go under the water) and rise (up out of the water) to a new life.

We do what Jesus did before us – die and rise again

We die to our old life of sin and rise to our new life of grace

Since we imitate what Jesus did, we are united with him (through our being baptized).

**Faith** first – trust that Jesus can save us, then the **work** (baptism) expressing our union with Jesus.

So it takes faith and works – it is not one or the other but both: faith is the root, works are the fruit.

This union with Jesus is so close that we become his brother or sister.

Since we are “family,” we become an adopted child of his Father and co-heir of Jesus.

Therefore, everything the Father has given Jesus will become ours – resurrection and eternal life.

And this is a cause for great rejoicing; “O death, where is thy sting?” as Paul says

**Community**

Since I am a brother to the Lord and you are a brother (or sister) to the Lord,

that means that we are brother and sister to each other; all the baptized form one big family in Christ.

It is this family that forms the Church – the body of all baptized believers.

And body is exactly what Paul means:

All the baptized form the **Mystical Body** of Christ – Jesus is the “head” and we are the “arms” and “legs.”

All working together for the good of one another,

guided by the mind and Spirit of the Lord – the Holy Spirit that we receive at our baptism.

Paul is not much interested in the Spirit beyond the Gifts the Spirit gives;

gifts given for the good of the body –

which is why he speaks out against the “showy” gifts (speaking in tongues)

He does not see much benefit to the community in them – especially if they aren’t understood!

It is in this context that Paul makes his declaration that love (caritas / charity) is the greatest gift of all:

This is the “glue” that holds the body (the community) together

Paul’s theology is the start of the “teaching authority” (magisterium) of the church.

It will be added to through time and will continue to develop, even to today.
Letters to Young Churches – Reflection Questions

1) If Christianity was outlawed today, would there be enough evidence to convict you as a Christian? How do you practice your faith? How visible to others is your Christian commitment?

2) What things bother you when the community comes together to worship? Why do they annoy you? Is it OK to worship in our own style? Is there ever a time when we should “go along” with the group?

3) Do you remember your baptism? If yes, how did you feel? Was the symbolism of dying and rising clear to you? If no, do you feel “shortchanged”? How do you think your baptism effects you today?

4) Paul often speaks out against “false teachers.” Who do you think the “false teachers” are today? Other religions? Television advertising? Movies? Do you listen to them? Who protects you from them?