

A Summary of the Bible

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The Bible is full of history, poetry, and principles for living, and all are tied to a single main theme. This theme begins with the very first words of the Old Testament (OT) and is consistent through both testaments, right to the end of the book of Revelation. This is a summary of that theme.

1. The very first words of the Bible (Genesis 1:1) are "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This can be called in a word, "Creation." According to the Bible, there actually was a beginning of time and space, so one can actually know the historic origin of things.

This most basic verse in the Bible states more, however, for it makes plain that at the time of the "beginning", God existed. He is in fact "eternal." So at the outset the Bible takes into account the fact of what has been called a "supernatural reality." Everything there is, in other words, cannot be judged on a materialistic or physical basis. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit existed before the beginning, and it was this Trinity Who decided to create. Which is also another way of saying that we live in a personal universe.

The Bible therefore begins by assuming God's reality and thus explaining the origin of the material world. But it also answers a question troubling many persons: "Who am I?" Rather than just a "speck of protoplasm floating on a sea of meaninglessness," as one person described him, man according to the Bible is a creature made by God, and as such bears His image. Man really is somebody! He has value and worth! And furthermore, as God's creation, he has been given a purpose. God designed him with something particular in view, and man despairs until he fulfills it.

So God began by creating the first man, Adam, and the first woman, his wife Eve, and He put them in a beautiful place called the Garden of Eden. Here the first couple enjoyed their wo

women, and children--had worth, yet he spoke plainly to them of sin and the judgment of God on sin. He bluntly told people, "Repent!" He commanded them to turn from self-centeredness and independence back to God. But while what He said was true, lawbreakers usually do not like to hear the truth. So the people with their leaders drummed up false charges and pressured the Roman governor, Pilate, to sentence Him to death. There at a place called "Calvary", outside Jerusalem, Jesus was nailed to a cross, where He died. People--in the heat of their sin--had actually killed the Son of God. But their plot fell into the plan of God, for in fact, they had been the means by which God's sacrifice for sin had been offered. The Lamb of God had died. But three days later, Jesus miraculously came back to life, His work on earth completed.

This is the heart of the Bible's message. In a few words, it can be said this way (I Corinthians 15:3,4): "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures." This focal point of history, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, points out the answer to man's question, "What do I need?" Of all the things that man wants and needs, he basically needs to be brought back into a right relationship with his Creator, God. It is really of first importance, because through the perfect life and death of Jesus, God actually does restore man to His fellowship. And according to the Bible, that is the ONLY way God does it. But in order to appropriate the work of Christ, man is commanded by God to put his faith and confidence in Jesus. In other words, God offers mercy and forgiveness to all who look to Jesus' death on the cross as the complete sacrifice for their sins and then follow Christ as their King. And according to the Bible, such persons receive eternal life.

A short time after Jesus rose from the dead, and after having shown Himself to His friends, He returned to heaven. And the Bible states that He is there today, alive and ruling. When He went back to heaven, however, two angels told His disciples, "This same Jesus, Who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven."(Acts 1:11) So, Jesus will, in time and space, come to earth again.

4. Unlike His first coming, Jesus' second coming will be with power and splendor. The Bible states that everyone will see Him, and everyone will appear before Him in judgment. Simply put, He will confront every person and pronounce his or her destiny. In John chapter 5, verses 28 and 29, Jesus said it this way: "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life (or heaven), and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of 'damnation'(or hell)."

So, when a person asks the question, "What is going to happen to me?"—a very important question to everyone--the answer in the Bible is clear. Each is going to meet Jesus Christ; and Christ, as God's appointed Ruler, will pronounce judgment. Those persons who have put their trust in Christ's sacrificial death on the cross and submitted to His rule over them will enjoy everlasting life in the presence of God. As it states in II Peter 3:13, "But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." On the other hand, those who have neglected or refused Christ's sacrifice for sin and persisted in their own independence and rebellion from God...well, they must suffer the consequences. It's simply an eternal future of hell and God's anger.

You can see why the person who understands and believes the Bible knows what is ahead. It's no mystery really. The next great event in history will be the coming of Jesus Christ and the final judgment. We today do not know how long it will be from now until then, though we do know how long it has been since Jesus died and rose. The Bible just does not give that information. But just like it explains the origin of all things, so the Bible predicts the end of world history. Every event is another step toward that moment when Christ will come, the judgment will be pronounced, and the new heavens and new earth established. And there you have a summary of the Bible.