

Introduction to the Chronological Scripture Reading Plan

The chronological Scripture Reading Plan provides a varied diet of daily readings from the books of the Bible in approximate chronological order. The books of the Bible appear in three columns: (1) Old Testament narrative and prophetic books, (2) Old Testament psalms and wisdom, and (3) the New Testament. Readers can choose whether to read through the entire Bible in one, two, or three years by choosing the column(s) they intend to read in any given year.

For the most part, the Old Testament narrative and prophecy readings present the biblical books in the order of the story they tell (not the same as the order in which they were written). This chronological order is particularly helpful in understanding where the prophets and various narrative works fit in the history of Israel. A significant exception to this chronological presentation is the placement of 1-2 Chronicles (which cover the same period as the books of Samuel and Kings) near to when they were written near the end of the OT period, in order to lessen the experience of repetition.

A similar approach is taken to the third column that contains the books of the NT. These readings begin with the Gospel of Luke and Acts to provide a narrative framework for the whole. The other three Gospels are interspersed among the remaining New Testament books to allow readers to return to reflect on the life of Christ throughout the year. Then come the letters of Paul arranged in approximate chronological order, Hebrews, the epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude, concluding with the book of Revelation.

The second column, the remaining books of the OT, begins with the Psalms and then presents the wisdom books in canonical order, since the meaning of this literature depends less on its relation to Israel's history.

It is important to say that the chronological relationship of the biblical books to one another is far from clear and scholars hold a variety of opinions. The order presented here is just one of many possibilities. Even though it is uncertain, it nevertheless can give readers a general idea of the progression of biblical events and understanding. I'm attaching a brief timeline of the biblical period to aid readers in keeping track of where they are in the grand narrative of biblical history.

I'm indebted to Dr. Mary Healy for dividing the books of the Bible into three columns of 365 readings in this format and to Ms. Brigid Kowalczyk for helping me to arrange them in chronological order.

May the Lord bless you as you read his word in Sacred Scripture!

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An Overview of Biblical History

1850 BC	Abraham in Canaan (Gen 12)		
1700	Jacob and 12 Patriarchs in Egypt		
1250	Moses, The Exodus, Ten Commandments at Sinai, Wilderness Wanderings (Exodus-Deuteronomy)		
1220-1200	Joshua invades Palestine (Joshua)		
1200-1030	Period of the Judges (Judges) [Iron Age]		
1030-1010	Saul, first king of Israel, anointed by Samuel (1 Samuel, 1 Chronicles)		
1010-970	David, anointed by Samuel; promise through Nathan (1 Sam-2 Sam)		
970-931	Solomon succeeds David		
931	Rehoboam succeeds father Solomon. Schism . Jeroboam governs 10 northern tribes (Israel). Rehoboam, David's grandson rules only Judah.		
	Israel (Northern Kingdom)	Judah (Southern Kingdom)	Outside Israel
931-910	Jeroboam I, idolatrous worship at Dan and Bethel	Rehoboam rules until 913	
910-841	Series of wicked kings, Omri and Ahab (wife: Jezebel), embrace idolatry. Opposed by prophet Elijah.	Kings not quite as bad as Israel's. Resist idolatry.	Attacks from Damascus. Assyria also strong.
750-721	Amos (750-749) and Hosea (750-712?) prophesy judgment to Israel (and Judah)		
722	End of Northern Kingdom (Samaria). Falls to Assyria . Deportation.		
740-687	Isaiah prophesies in Southern Kingdom, Judah.		
716-695?	Hezekiah is king of Judah (716-687). Survives Assyrian attack twice.		
627-586	Jeremiah prophesies in Judah. Predicts 70 years of exile (605).		
602, 598	Judah defeated, first deportations to Babylon.		
586	Destruction of the Temple, Babylonian exile. Ezekiel written.		
539	Decree of Cyrus, Persian emperor, that the Jews may return and rebuild.		
538	Exiles return and rebuild. Prophets Haggai and Zechariah encourage the rebuilding (520). " Second " Temple rededicated (515).		
445	Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem for the first time to build the city walls		
398 (or 428 or 458)	Ezra journeys to Palestine and institutes reforms		
332	Alexander the Great defeats Persia (Arbela 331), acquires Palestine.		
165	Climax of Hellenization: Antiochus Epiphanes defiles the Temple; outlaws Jewish practice. Maccabees recapture Jerusalem, rededicate Temple, begin the "Hasmonean dynasty" ruling Israel.		
63	Pompey captures Jerusalem. Palestine comes under Rome.		
37	Herod, an Idumaean ends "Hasmonean" rule; named "king of the Jews" by Rome; placates Jews by rebuilding Temple (20 BC-26 AD)		

7-6 BC	Birth of Jesus
4 BC	Death of Herod "the Great" (reigned 37-4 BC)
27 AD	Preaching ministry of John the Baptist begins; John beheaded in 29 AD.
27-28	Ministry of Jesus begins in Galilee
30	Death and resurrection of Jesus
34?	Conversion/call of Saul of Tarsus (Paul) in Damascus
49	Emperor Claudius compels Jews to leave Rome (lasts 5 years)
51	Paul writes 1 Thessalonians (the first of his letters)
57	Paul writes 1 Corinthians
58	Paul writes Romans
64	St. Peter and other Christians martyred in Rome under Nero (Paul, 67?)
66	Jewish rebellion against Rome in Palestine begins
67	St. Paul martyred in Rome under Nero
70	Destruction of Jerusalem and Temple by Roman army (Titus)
95	Persecution of Christians by Emperor, Domitian; Revelation written