

# HOW TO READ **THE BIBLE**

A course in Biblical literacy

## Session 1: The Surprise of Scripture

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Session 1:  
The Surprise of Scripture



WALT

We are  
learning to  
read the  
Bible



I know many other books very well and I flatter myself that I understand them – even books by people like Augustine and Calvin. But I do not understand the Bible. I study theology as one would watch a solar eclipse in a shadow. In church, the devout old custom persists of merely repeating verses, one or another luminous fragment, a hymn before and a hymn afterward. **By grace of my abiding ignorance, it is always new to me. I am never not instructed.**

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# Session 1: The Surprise of Scripture

<b>Session 2:</b>	<b>14<sup>th</sup> October</b>	<b>How to read... Genesis</b>	<b>Desi Alexander</b>
<b>Session 3:</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> November</b>	<b>How to read... Exodus</b>	<b>James McKeown</b>
<b>Session 4:</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> December</b>	<b>How to read... Leviticus</b>	<b>David Livingstone</b>
<b>Session 5:</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup> January</b>	<b>How to read... Numbers</b>	<b>Graham McGeown</b>
<b>Session 6:</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> February</b>	<b>How to read... Deuteronomy</b>	<b>Kim Walsh</b>
<b>Session 7:</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> March</b>	<b>How to read... Joshua</b>	<b>Stephen Williams</b>
<b>Session 8:</b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup> April</b>	<b>How to read... Judges / Ruth</b>	<b>Roz Sterling</b>
<b>Session 9:</b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup> May</b>	<b>How to read... 1&amp;2 Samuel</b>	<b>Cindy Brown</b>
<b>Session 10:</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>How to read... 1&amp;2 Kings</b>	<b>Stephen McIlwaine</b>

The story *of* the Bible

The story *in* the Bible



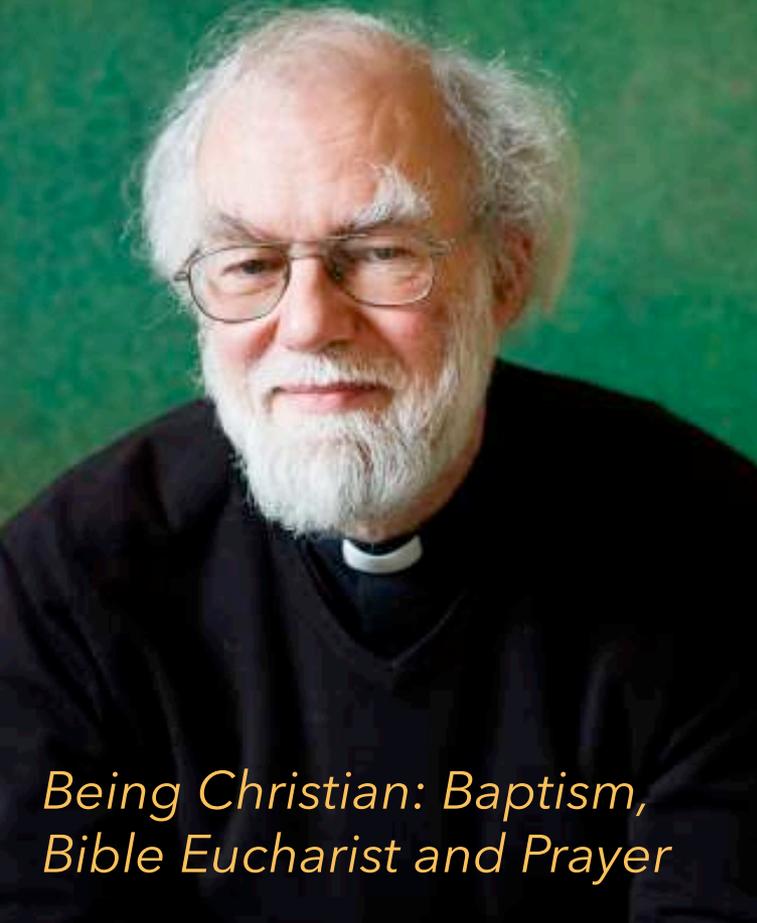
# Ta biblia "the books"



# HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

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Rowan Williams



*Being Christian: Baptism,  
Bible Eucharist and Prayer*

## The story *of* the Bible

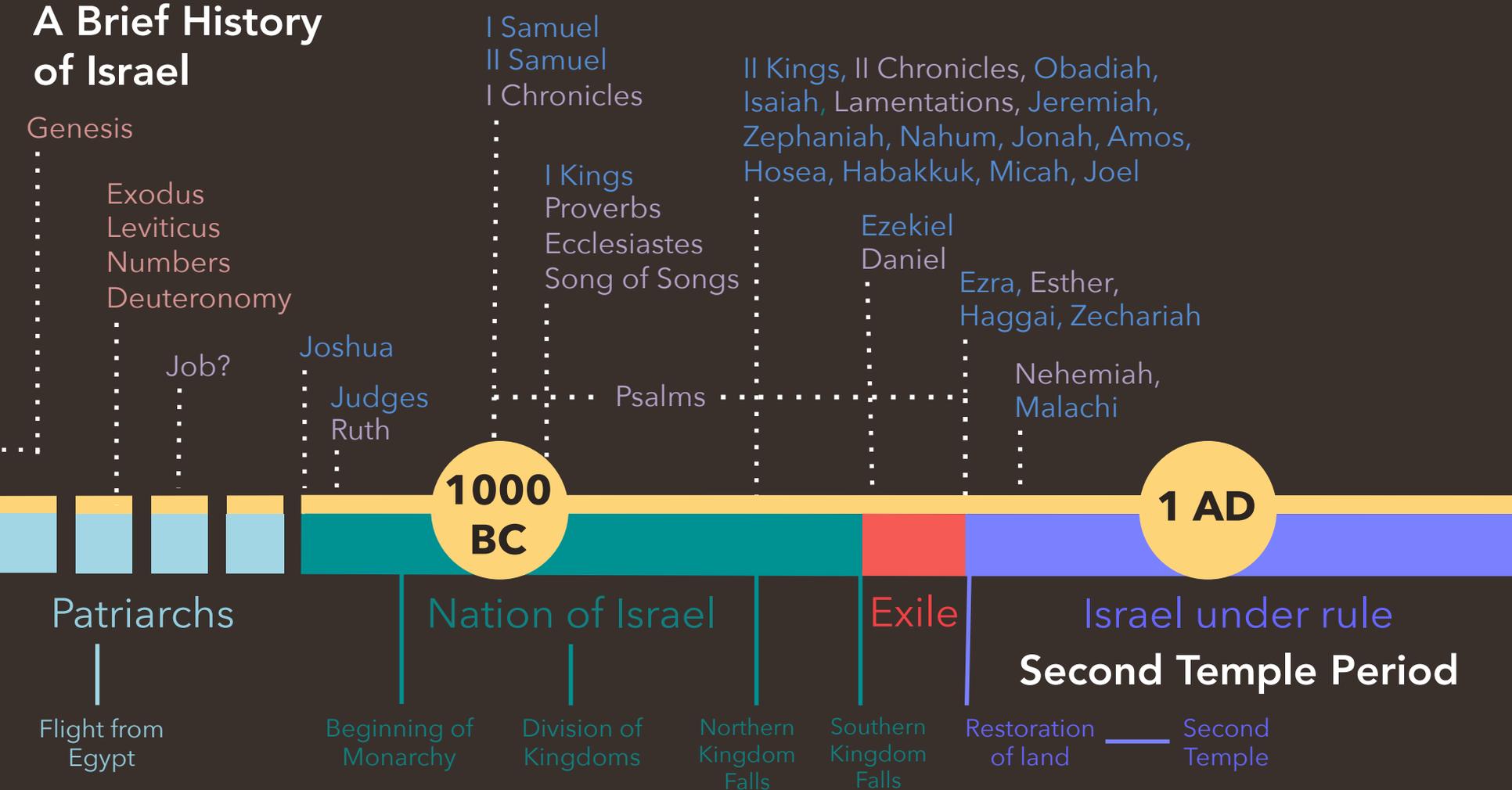
The diversity of the Bible is as great as if you had within the same two covers, for example, Shakespeare's sonnets, the law reports of 1910, the introduction to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, the letters of St Anselm and a fragment of *The Canterbury Tales*.

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## The story *of* the Bible

### A Brief History of Israel



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## The story *of* the Bible

### TaNakh

#### Torah

*"law"/"instruction"*

Genesis  
Exodus  
Leviticus  
Numbers  
Deuteronomy

#### Nevi'im

*"the period of prophecy"*

##### Former Prophets:

Joshua, Judges,  
Samuel and Kings

##### Latter Prophets:

Isaiah, Jeremiah and  
Ezekiel

##### Minor Prophets:

Hosea, Joel, Amos,  
Obadiah, Jonah,  
Micah, Nahum,  
Habakkuk, Zephaniah,  
Haggai, Zechariah and  
Malachi

#### Ketuvim

*"writings":*

##### Poetic Books:

Psalms, Proverbs and  
Job

##### The Megillot:

Song of Songs, Ruth,  
Lamentations,  
Ecclesiastes and Esther

##### "Other books":

Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah  
and Chronicles

And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Is this not written in the **Book of Jashar**? The sun stopped in mid-heaven, and did not hurry to set for about a whole day.

*Joshua 10.13*

Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred and how he reigned, are written in the **Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel**.

*I Kings 14.19*

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## TaNakh

### Torah

*"law"/"instruction"*

Genesis

Exodus

Leviticus

Numbers

Deuteronomy

**Additional writings from  
Second Temple period:**

Tobit; Judith; Additions to  
Esther; 1 Maccabees; 2  
Maccabees; Wisdom of  
Solomon; Sirach; Baruch;  
Additions to Daniel.

### Nevi'im

*"the period of prophecy"*

**Former Prophets:**

Joshua, Judges,  
Samuel and Kings

**Latter Prophets:**

Isaiah, Jeremiah and  
Ezekiel

**Minor Prophets:**

Hosea, Joel, Amos,  
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Micah, Nahum,  
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### Ketuvim

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**The Megillot:**

Song of Songs, Ruth,  
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**"Other books":**

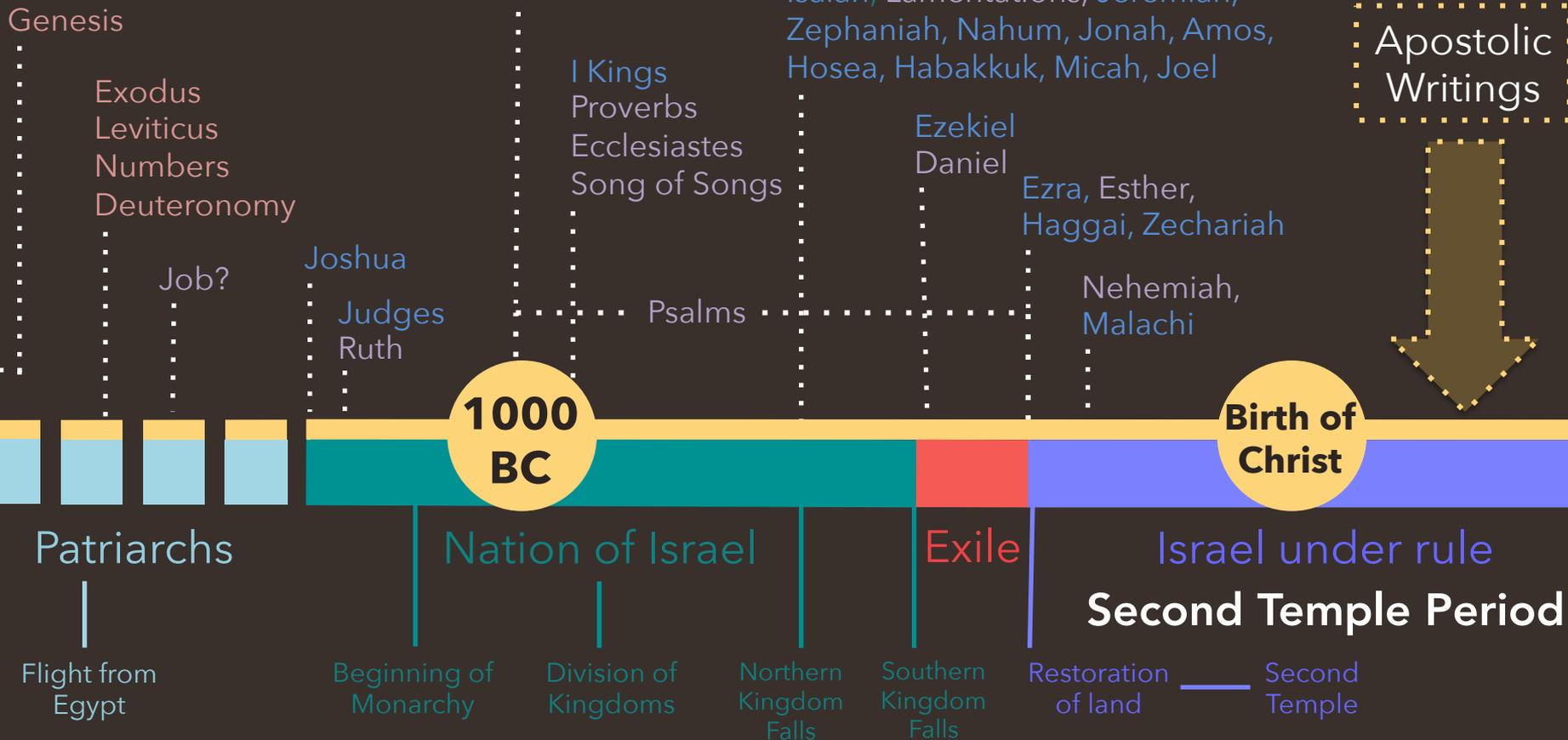
Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah  
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## The story *of* the Bible

# New Testament

## Gospels & Acts

Matthew                  Acts  
Mark  
Luke  
John

## Apocalypse

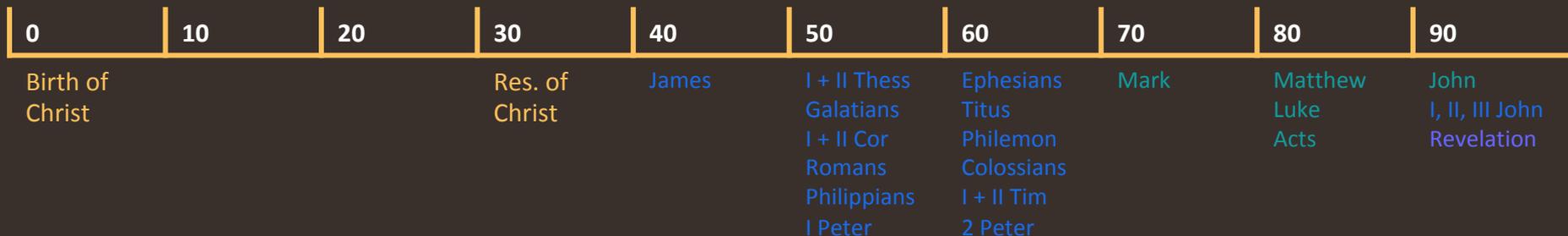
Revelation

## Epistles

**Paul to churches:** Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians.

**Paul to individuals:** I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus, Philemon.

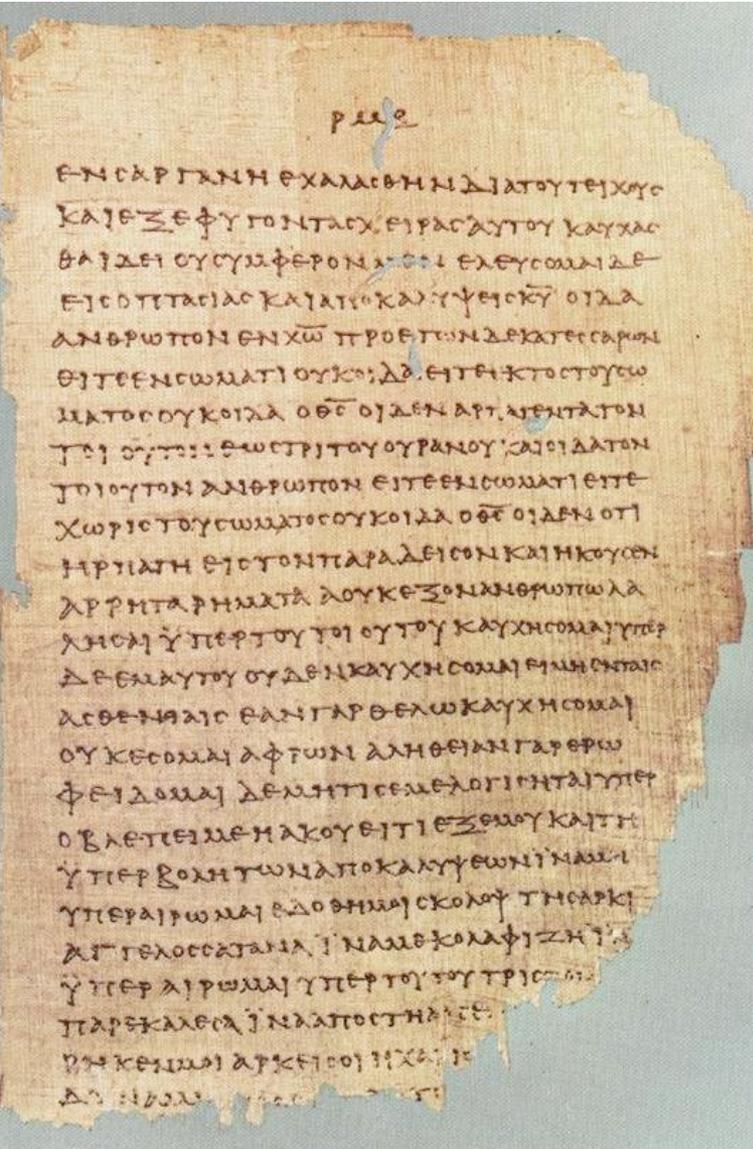
**General epistles:** Hebrews, James, I Peter, II Peter, I John, II John, III John, Jude.



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## The story *of* the Bible



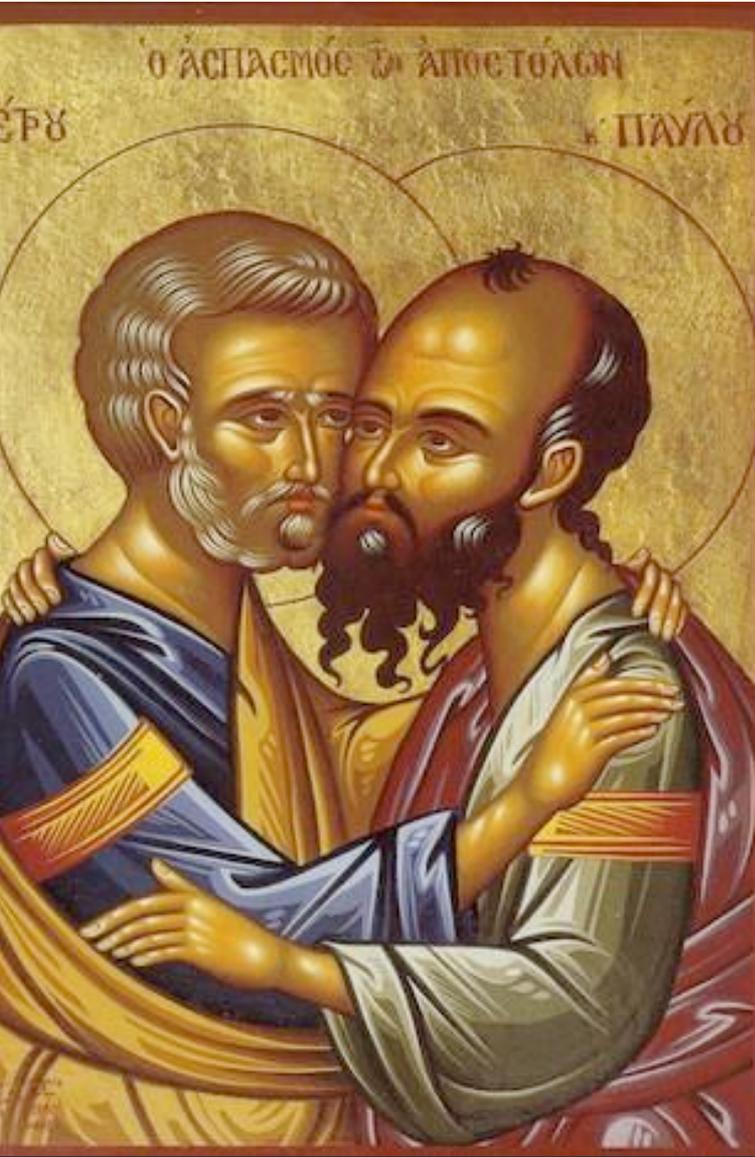
Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, **so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.**

*The Gospel of Luke 1.1-4 (NRSV)*

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## The story *of* the Bible



So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16 speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, *as they do the other scriptures.*

*2 Peter 3.16 (NIV)*

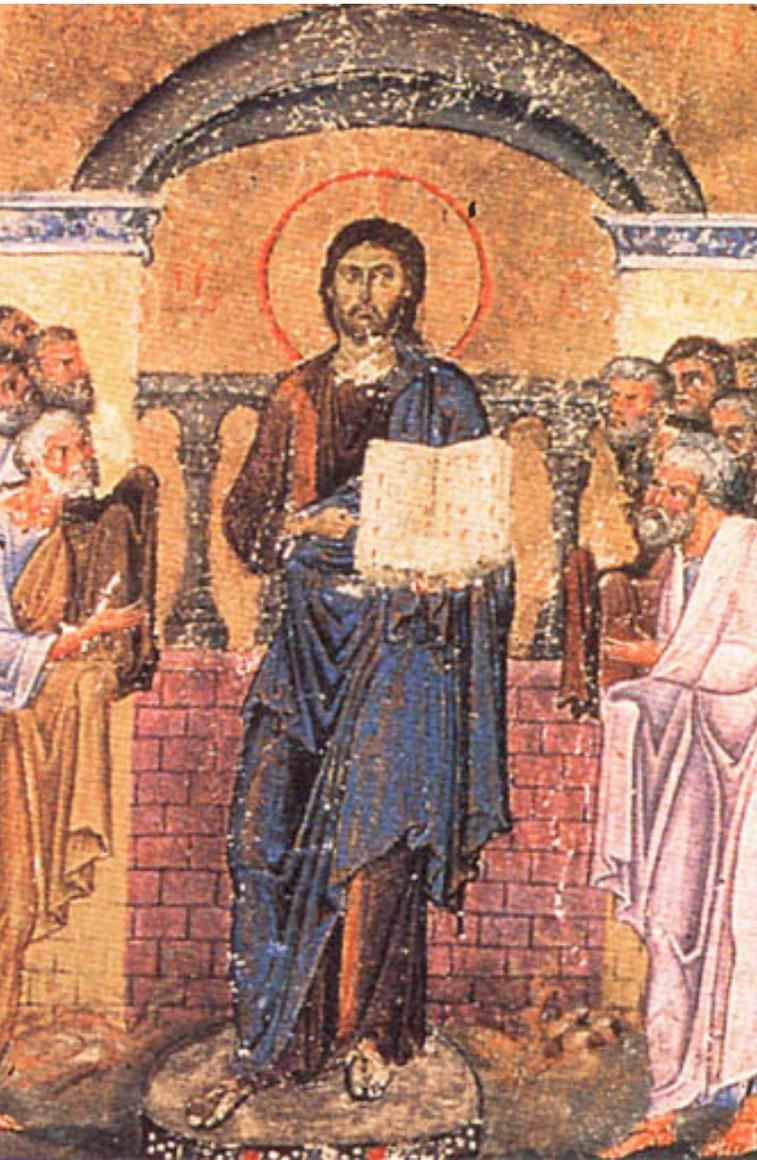
## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION:

**Why not one book?** Discuss the value of God revealing Himself through texts spread out over 1000 years and written by different authors.

# The story *in* the Bible

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## The story *in* the Bible

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the  
poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty  
to the captives

and recovering of sight for the  
blind,

to set at liberty those who are  
oppressed,

to proclaim the year of the  
Lord’s favour.”

*Luke 4.18-19 (ESV)*

“The full meaning of what has gone before is laid bare in Jesus. The agenda for what follows is set in Jesus. And, without trying to undermine or ignore the integrity of Jewish Scripture in itself [...], the Christian is bound to say that he or she can only read those Jewish Scriptures as moving towards the point at which a new depth of meaning is laid bare in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.”

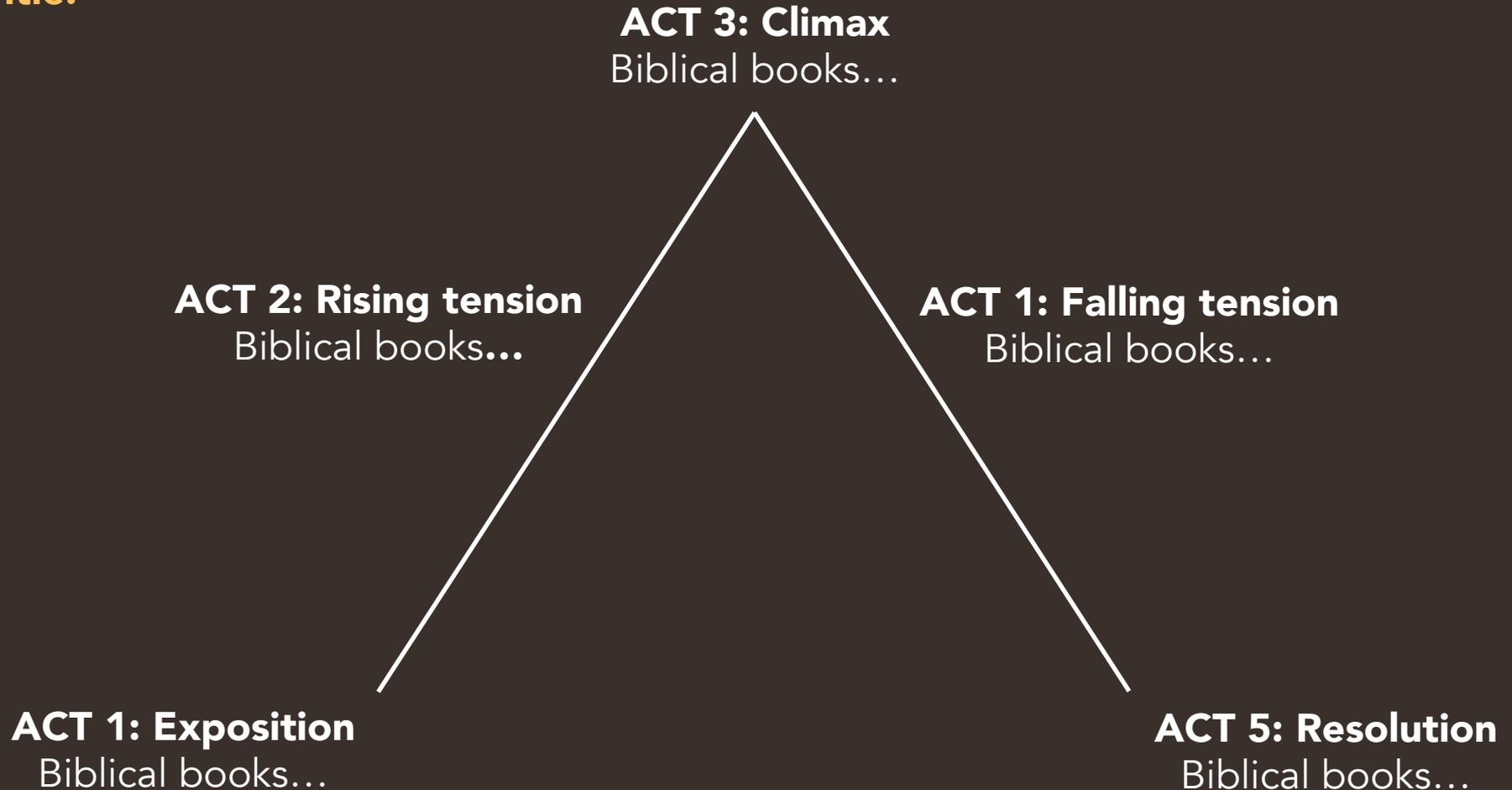
Rowan Williams  
*Being Christian: Baptism, Bible Eucharist and Prayer*

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**Title:**



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# The story *in* the Bible

**Title:** The Divine Comedy

**ACT 3:** God with Us:  
The Life, Death and  
Resurrection of Jesus

**ACT 2:** God's  
Faithfulness and Our  
Forgetfulness:  
Covenant and  
Disobedience

**ACT 4:** "To the ends  
of the earth": The  
Spreading of the  
Good News

**ACT 1:** "It was very good":  
Creation and the Fall

**ACT 5:** It will be more than  
very good: Christ's Return  
and the New Creation

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## The story *in* the Bible

### **ACT 1: "It was very good": Creation and the Fall**

Genesis 1 - 11

### **ACT 2: God's Faithfulness and Our Forgetfulness: Covenant and Disobedience**

Genesis 12 - 50, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalm, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

### **ACT 3: God with Us: The Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus**

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

### **ACT 4: "To the ends of the earth": The Spreading of the Good News**

Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude

### **ACT 5: It will be more than very good: Christ's Return and the New Creation**

Revelation

Old Testament

New Testament

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## The story *in* the Bible

Ever since God created the world, his invisible qualities, both his eternal power and his divine nature, have been clearly seen; they are perceived in the things that God has made. So those people have no excuse at all!

*Romans 1.20 (Good News)*

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The story *in* the Bible

# The Big Story

From Stardust to the New Creation

Story told by *Reverend Leonard J. Vander Zee*

The logo for Biologos, featuring a stylized red bird icon above the word "BIOLOGOS" in a red, serif font.

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The story *in* the Bible

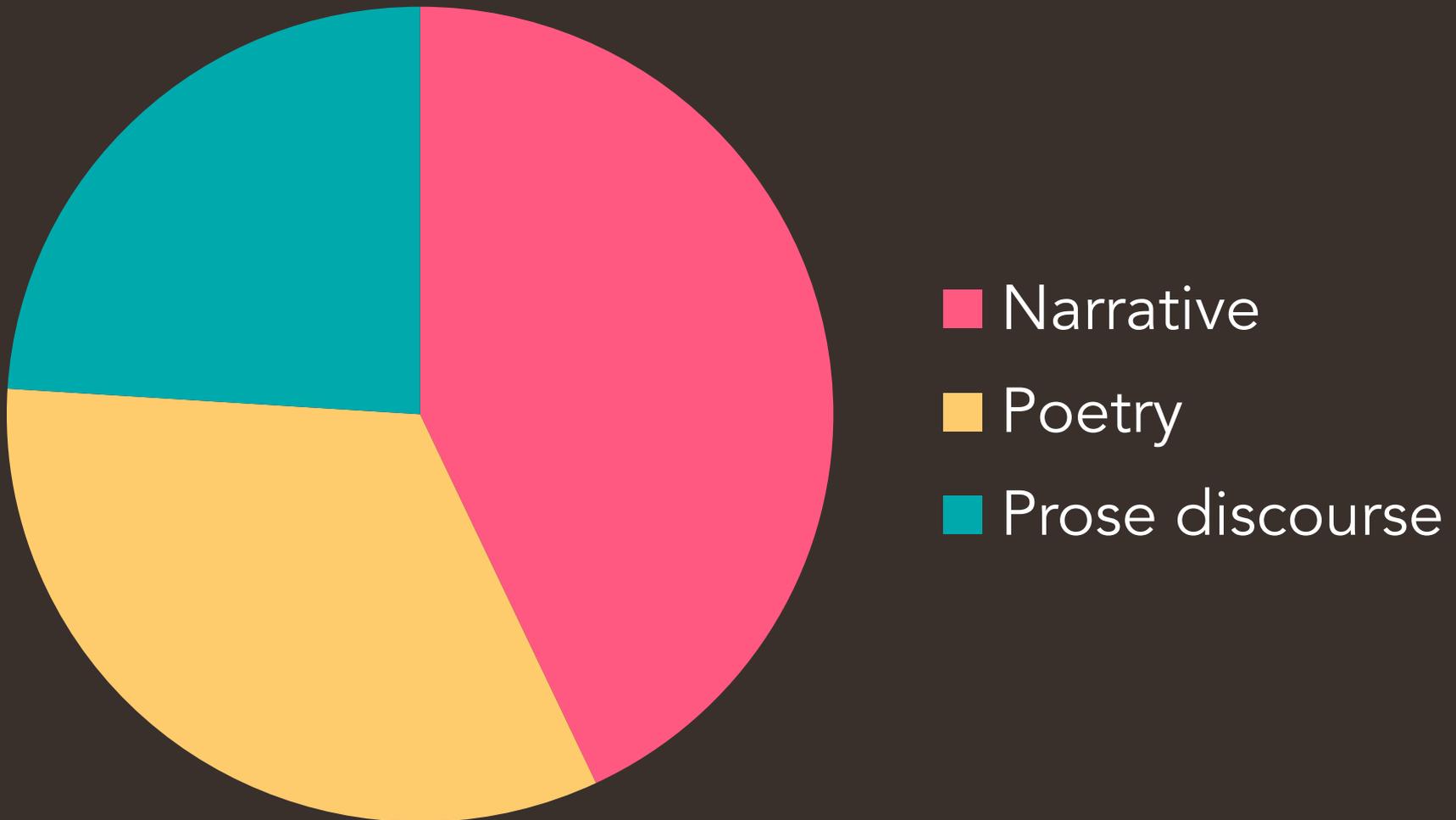
"I read it as I had read the other volumes which had fallen into my hands, as a **true history**."

"...all Good to me is lost; / Evil be thou my Good."



"The Creature"  
Mary Shelley's  
*Frankenstein*

## Literary Styles in the Bible



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## The story *in* the Bible



Calvin did not for a moment think that every word, clause and sentence of the Bible was objectively factual, that the streets of heaven are (literally) paved with gold and that God literally has a backside. He had a Renaissance humanist's appreciation of metaphor and analogy and of the different genres of biblical writing.

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION:

Why is there so much diversity of genre in the Bible? Discuss the ways in which this diversity contributes to our understanding of the big story of the Bible.

You will be successful if you:

1. read the Bible in light of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of **Jesus Christ** the living and eternal Word of God;
2. read individual parts of the Bible in light of the **greater whole**;
3. read the Bible in light of its **historical contexts**, recognising the diversity of books and the limitations, cultural understandings and world views of the various biblical writers;
4. read the Bible in its **literary contexts**, with an appreciation of grammar, genre and form;
5. read the Bible in conversation with the **Book of Nature**;
6. read the Bible as a **community** with the help of the **Holy Spirit**.