## Reading the Bible's One Story in Two Years

## Some Important Things to Know Before You Begin

I wanted to lay out a few thoughts to you before you begin this reading program that I think are important, both from the standpoint of expectations and better understanding as your read.

First, although it is truly commendable when someone decides to "read the Bible from cover to cover," it's really not the best way to approach the Scriptures, if your real desire is to understand the Bible's "point," or why God gave it to us in the first place. If the Bible is what it claims to be, namely a single narrative about the purposes of God for all time, then reading it as a narrative becomes very important. That was and is my goal in creating this project.

Second, I did this for myself, to be honest, and only decided to make it available to others as an afterthought. This is important because there are some things I am content with that others (you?) might not be. So, please consider my original goal as you use this...if you choose to do so.

Third, although the Bible is definitely a narrative, it is not strictly chronological. That's an obvious statement when we talk about the Table of Contents, but it's also true of individual books, even when they are placed in their proper chronological "spot" in the narrative.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel are excellent examples. As you go through the reading schedule, you'll see they jump around a bit. I've tried to arrange their prophecies, best I could, in the order that carries the storyline best. This was determined by names of kings (when available) that are mentioned.

The two books of Chronicles presented a difficult challenge as well. First of all, they were written after the Babylonian Exile, most likely by Ezra. So, I was faced with placing them when they were *composed* (Ezra 7-10 and Nehemiah), or during the time frame that they are reporting (2 Samuel - 2 Kings). I chose the later. I didn't see how it would help you "get" the narrative if the material in those books reappeared after the captivity and was squeezed into four chapters of Ezra. So, as you read the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles together, keep in mind that Chronicles is written after Ezra 6, and consists of a very edited history of the southern kingdom of Judah, with a special focus on the Davidic dynasty.

I was faced with a similar issue with the Book of Job. I placed it before Abraham (Gen 12) for two reasons. First, its milieu is definitely pre-Abrahamic whether or not it's actual or an authorial choice. Second, a book of its length could not easily be "spread out" anywhere in the reading program without losing the continuity of its own narrative.

Finally, I have distributed the Psalms as best I could to match the historical settings of those we know, Davidic authorship where stated, and the rest best I could with the information we have. I also spread the Proverbs out over thirty-one days because of the large number of ideas in proverbial literature. Reading more than a chapter of Proverbs in a day would be overwhelming.

The reading program is 96 readings spread out over 104 weeks (2 yrs). Each week contains 5 readings, which I think is a generous and realistic number, given life's uncertainties. There are 8 weeks "grace" in the two years, which I think is helpful navigating holidays, traveling, etc. The goal is a doable reading program with the goal of having a better grasp on the One Story of the One God. *And*, this reading program has no calendar dates which means you can begin any week of the year.

Okay, so that's my rationale and a little bit of backstage insight on this year-long project. My prayer is simply that you'll find it helpful, attainable, and perhaps something you'd like to repeat.

Shalom,

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