

THE BIBLE TIMELINE

The Story of Salvation



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Ascension Press
Post Office Box 1990
West Chester, PA 19380
Orders: 1-800-376-0520
www.AscensionPress.com
www.GreatAdventureOnline.com

Cover design: Devin Schadt

Printed in the United States of America

About *The Bible Timeline*: The Story of Salvation

The Great Adventure is a Catholic Bible learning system that makes the complex simple by teaching the story—the narrative—of the Bible. Jeff Cavins developed *The Great Adventure* in 1984 when he realized that most people, despite their strong faith, did not grasp the “big picture” of the Bible. Though they knew selected stories, they were not able to connect them into a full narrative. His answer was to identify the books of the Bible that tell the story from beginning to end. By reading just these fourteen “narrative” books, a chronological story emerges. From this idea grew the immensely popular *Bible Timeline* program, which teaches the story in a way that is easy to remember and helps people to continue reading Scripture on their own.

A clear understanding of the underlying Scriptural narrative is essential to all Bible reading and study, and for this reason *The Bible Timeline* is the first foundational study in *The Great Adventure* Bible Study Series. This series employs a combination of individual reading and study, group discussion, and lecture commentary. These components guide participants as they read through the fourteen narrative books of the Bible and discover the meaning of each in light of the whole. *The Bible Timeline* is an immensely rich study, diving deep into each time period of salvation history.

The Bible Timeline is basic enough to suit those who haven’t studied the Bible before while at the same time offering ways to go deeper that will challenge the Bible study veteran. Salvation history is covered from its beginning in Genesis through the coming of Christ and the establishment of the Catholic Church.

Central to the program is *The Bible Timeline* Chart. This chart arranges the key people and events of salvation history in chronological order and shows how the books of the Bible fit together to tell the story. People who go through the course learn the “big picture” of salvation history and will:

- Read for themselves the fourteen narrative books of the Bible—the ones that tell the story—in chronological order.

- Learn God’s marvelous plan of salvation history and see how their faith story fits into “His-story.”
- Study key Old Testament passages in light of their fulfillment in Christ.
- Learn how Catholic Tradition views the biblical narrative and how to use the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as a study reference.
- Gain a greater appreciation for the Scripture readings they hear in Mass.
- Encourage one another as they learn together how God’s Word applies to their lives.
- Lay a strong foundation for further Bible reading and study.

General principles for reading the Bible are also taught, and participants are encouraged to continue on the life-long “great adventure” of learning to know God through Scripture.

Materials

1. Video/audio lecture series: Twenty-four, fifty-minute talks by renowned Bible teacher and theologian Jeff Cavins available in DVD and CD formats. These talks form the core teaching of the study.
2. Study Materials (available in the Bible Study Kit):
 - Study Set Questions: Twenty-four Bible study lessons help you learn the “big picture” of salvation history from creation to the establishment of the Catholic Church.
 - Study Set Responses: Recommended answers to the Study Set Questions.

- Full-color *Bible Timeline* Chart: The master plan of Bible history in one handy 33"-wide fold-out chart.
- *The Bible Timeline* Workbook: Includes fill-in *Timeline* charts, assigned Scripture readings, and pages for taking notes during the taped lectures plus a dozen important maps and graphs, a Bible reading plan, and more.
- Bible Memory Bookmark: Holds your place in the Bible and locates the seventy-three books of the Bible in twelve periods of Bible history, giving the reasons for each period color.
- Memory Bead Wristband: Handy mnemonic device for memorizing the periods of Bible history.
- Three-ring binder: Helps you keep your *Bible Timeline* materials organized.

3. Additional Bible Study Resources:

- *Then and Now Bible Maps* book: With colorful plastic-overlay maps, shows where key events took place in Old and New Testaments and how the geography of the Holy Land has changed over the millennia; customized for use with The Great Adventure Bible Study System.
- *Great Adventure Bible Indexing Tabs*: Helps you locate all seventy-three books of the Bible quickly and easily; color-coded to match the periods of *The Great Adventure Bible Study System*.
- Full-Color Wall Charts:
 - *Jesus Family Tree*—traces Jesus' royal and legal lineage all the way back to Adam and Eve through King David. Double-sized: 39" x 26"
 - *Books of the Bible*—lists all seventy-three books, divided by literary type. Size: 19" x 26"

- 100 Prophecies—shows all the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah are fulfilled in Jesus. Size: 19” x 26”

Each participant should have his or her own Bible and a copy of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

- Recommended Bibles are the New American Bible (NAB) or the Revised Standard Version – Catholic Edition (RSV-CE). The RSV-CE is the version used in the course materials. If a Protestant Bible is used, it should be one that includes the deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament (which Protestant Bibles call the Apocrypha)

An on-line, searchable version of the *Catechism* is available on a number of websites, including www.usccb.org/catechism/text and www.scborromeo.org/ccs.htm

Twelve Effective Ways to Increase Attendance

Although many Catholics feel intimidated by the thought of studying the Bible, most truly want to understand Scripture. They just need a bit of encouragement to get started. Here are some practical and effective ways to see the attendance at your *Bible Timeline* study grow beyond your expectations.

1. Place an announcement in your parish bulletin several weeks prior to the start of the study. (*Note*: Samples are available for you to customize).
2. Post 11” x 17” full-color promotional posters around your parish (*Note*: We can send these with your order).
3. Ask your pastor to announce your *Bible Timeline* Study from the pulpit.
4. Show the Overview DVD after all Masses to generate enthusiasm (announce this two weeks prior), and allow people to register at that time.

5. Invite neighboring parishes. Ask them to place an announcement in their bulletins and post flyers around their parishes.
6. Use your parish website to announce the study.
7. Place an ad in your diocesan newspaper.
8. Run free community calendar announcements on Catholic, Christian, or secular radio stations.
9. Commission a group of five to ten “inviters” to personally invite people they know and encourage attendance. A personal invitation is extremely effective.
10. When you begin your study, ask participants to bring at least one friend with them.
11. Allow late registrations, even after the study has begun.
12. Encourage students to continue attending, even if they cannot complete the assigned readings. They will still benefit greatly and may resume the reading later.

Course Outline

Session	Title	Scripture References
1	Introduction	
2	Early World Part 1	Genesis 1-3
3	Early World Part 2	Genesis 4-11
4	Patriarchs Part 1	Genesis 12-26
5	Patriarchs Part 2	Genesis 27-50
6	Egypt & Exodus Part 1	Exodus 1 - 18
7	Egypt & Exodus Part 2	Exodus 19 – 40
8	Desert Wanderings	Numbers
9	Conquest & Judges Part 1	Joshua
10	Conquest & Judges Part 2	Judges
11	Royal Kingdom Part 1	1 Samuel 8 - 31
12	Royal Kingdom Part 2	2 Samuel 1 – 1 Kings 1
13	Divided Kingdom Part 1 Israel	1 Kings 12 – 2 Kings 16
14	Divided Kingdom Part 2 Judah	1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 23
15	Exile	2 Kings 17-25
16	Return	Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
17	Maccabean Revolt	1 Maccabees
18	Messianic Fulfillment Part 1	Luke
19	Messianic Fulfillment Part 2	Luke
20	Messianic Fulfillment Part 3	Luke
21	The Church Part 1	Acts
22	The Church Part 2	Acts
23	The Church Part 3	Acts
24	Conclusion	

Organizing a Group Bible Study

1. Form your group

Make sure there is at least one group facilitator for every eight to twelve people. Facilitators need not be knowledgeable on the topic, as guidelines are provided for answering the questions. With large groups, though, there should be a leader (such as a priest or catechist) to guide the group as a whole and to answer questions that are not covered in the materials.

2. Order the following materials:

- One copy of the 24-part audio/video lecture series (DVD format is most effective for group study).
- A Bible Study Kit for each participant (or, if participants have already attended the Bible Timeline Seminar and have the Seminar Pack materials, only the Study Set is needed).
- One copy of this Leader's Guide (included free with group orders also and available as a downloadable PDF file at www.GreatAdventureOnline.com).

Note: Some groups choose to distribute the Study Set Responses to all participants following the group discussion for each session. They are produced in a loose-leaf format for this reason.

3. Plan your schedule

Plan for a two-hour weekly time slot. A 24-week study can be done comfortably between mid-September and mid-March, allowing a week off at Thanksgiving and longer break during the Advent/Christmas seasons; or three eight-week sessions can be planned; or a 17-week Old Testament followed by the seven-week New Testament.

4. Prepare to lead the study

Leaders and facilitators should be familiar with the program before it starts. Have everyone listen to the first two audio or video sessions: Introduction

and Early World Part 1. If there are several facilitators in the group, it would be helpful to go through a lesson together ahead of time to become familiar with the format of the homework questions and determine how the class will be run. (Guidelines for facilitating a discussion begin on page 8 of this Leader's Guide. Guidelines for discussing the questions themselves can be found in Session 1 Responses: Introduction.) When time and interest allows, leaders and facilitators might gather monthly or each week prior to the class to prepare and to pray.

Suggested Session Plans

Session 1 (Introduction)

Note: This is the only meeting in which the video session is shown first. All other weeks, the reading and questions are done and discussed before viewing the video.

- 20 minutes: Hospitality, registration, distribute materials
- 10 minutes: Welcome and opening prayer
- 50 minutes: Watch or listen to the first taped session, "Introduction." There are pages in The Bible Timeline Workbook for taking notes on the introductory talk (point this out to participants before starting the tape).
- 30 minutes: Break into discussion groups to review guidelines for doing the homework as covered in "Session 1 Questions: Introduction" from the Study Set.
- 10 minutes: Reconvene large group. Take final questions, then close with a prayer.

Sessions 2–23

- 10 minutes: Gather, welcome, and opening prayer and song, if desired. General reminder of the lesson topic.
- 40-50 minutes: Break into groups to discuss the lessons done the previous week at home (guidelines for answering the questions are in the Study Set Responses)
- 5 minutes: Return to main group
- 50 minutes: Watch video corresponding to lesson just completed (for week #2: Session 2: Early World Part 1). The Bible Timeline Workbook contains pages for note-taking and blank chart pages to fill in during this time.

5 minutes: Wrap-up and give assignment for following week, then close with a prayer.

Session 24 (Conclusion)

The agenda for this class is similar to the preceding ones, but the audio/videotape is only thirty minutes long and leaves twenty minutes for a group wrap-up. This may be a good time to share spiritual benefits gained from the course. If desired, the time may be used to review the sequence of events on the chart, or to trace Christ's bloodline while walking through a brief outline of the story, and to encourage continued personal Bible reading. (To follow Christ's bloodline, a red pencil can be used to connect the asterisks on the period pages in the workbook.)

Facilitating Group Discussion

Suggested responses to the *Bible Timeline* 24-Week Course study questions are provided to facilitate group discussion and to reinforce the lesson.

Understanding the Questions and Responses

Some of the questions have actual, expected answers. Others may have a number of potential answers and are designed to draw you in and make you interact with what you are reading. Often a great richness of response comes out in the group discussion, where each person brings a different perspective to the reading. Everyone benefits from this. The "answers" you will find in the Study Set Responses are not exhaustive but are offered as a guide. Reading them as you go may limit your thinking about a particular passage and can stifle group discussion. For this reason, we strongly recommend that individuals doing the study look at the Responses only after completing a set of questions, and that groups distribute the Responses only after the discussion if at all. Group leaders should review them only after they have completed the answers on their own and before facilitating discussion.

The Goal of Group Discussion

The primary goal of group discussion in this study is to reinforce the main teaching points of each session: to help everyone fix in their minds an

overview of the biblical period in question. Another goal is to share with and glean from others the things learned during the preparation time.

The Role of the Facilitator

It is not necessary for group facilitators to be trained catechists. It would be helpful, though not necessary, for them to have some experience or training in group facilitation. If they have previously attended a Bible Timeline Seminar, so much the better. The role of the facilitator is not to teach, and it is not even so much to get people to answer questions correctly as it is to draw out of them what they have learned from their reading, make sure they have a broad idea of what the particular period is about, and encourage them in their journeys through the Bible.

Keeping Time

The amount of time available for group discussion will vary from group to group. We recommend a forty- to fifty-minute time period, but to a large extent the time needed will depend on how many people are in each discussion group. It is useful for facilitators to determine ahead of time how much time to spend on each section of the study. Suggestions for limiting the discussion time can be found in “Session 1 Responses: Introduction.”

Some groups may find it helpful to assign one person to assist the facilitator by alerting the group when time is half over or five or ten minutes before closing.

Keeping Focused

Often questions will lead people into related areas that however interesting, are off the subject and steal time from the intended topic. One way to handle that is to keep a log of these questions. When one comes up, simply write it down and delay discussion until the lesson is completed.

The Role of the Video/Audio Lesson

In each fifty-minute lesson, Jeff Cavins walks the viewer or listener through the main events of the period, explaining difficult areas, draw-

ing out major themes, telling how they fit in with the big picture, showing how events in the Old Testament come to fulfillment in Christ, and applying the reading to our lives today. This video/audio portion of *The Bible Timeline 24-Part Study* is intended to follow and supplement individual preparation, not precede it. Because it does not directly address the questions asked in the Study Set, it is not a substitute for the Study Set Responses or for group discussion of the questions.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *Can the DVDs be watched on their own, without using the other materials?*

Yes, the DVDs can stand alone, although they will make more sense if you have access to the full-color *Bible Timeline* Chart. Because the talks were filmed during an actual class in which people were using *The Bible Timeline* study materials, these are mentioned from time to time. Jeff Cavins also refers to the questions included in the Study Set. If you want to make full use of the program, you will use these, too. But without them, the DVDs will still give you a complete picture of the timeline of Bible history.

2. *Can the Study Set be done as a stand-alone Bible study, without the DVDs?*

Yes again. The Study Set was developed as a Bible study program to help people read through and get a basic understanding of the fourteen books of the Bible that tell the story of salvation history. The video lectures significantly enhance and supplement that study, whether it is done individually or in a group setting. Ideally, they are both used together. Materials in the Bible Study Kit (the *Bible Timeline* Chart, Seminar Workbook, Bookmark, and Memory Bead Wristband) are all referenced in the Study Set and used to complete it.

3. *Does the video answer all the questions in the homework?*

Not directly, although they cover similar ground. The homework is aimed at helping people learn the periods of Bible history, get a basic working knowledge of the biblical narrative, get familiar with how the “supplemental” books fit in with the “narrative” books of the Bible, begin using the *Catechism*, etc. The video lectures tell the story, put it into historic and biblical perspective and then focus on applying what is learned to our lives.

4. *What if we still have questions after doing the reading and questions and watching the video, and no one in the group knows the answers?*

Hang onto those questions—you have begun a journey that you will be on for the rest of your life! It can be difficult to let go of the need to know, but try not to think that all your questions must be answered now. One of the things we hope this course will do is encourage people to ask questions and to seek for truth. Write your questions down. Pray about them. Try to track down the answer in the Bible, or your *Catechism*, or with some other outside reading. Some questions can be answered with a little research. Others may bother you for days or weeks or even years. Pray over those, and keep reading, discussing, and expanding your knowledge of God’s Word.

5. *Is this study appropriate for high school use? Middle school?*

In its present form, *The Bible Timeline* Study is meant for adults (however, there are high school students who have been successfully using it). With a knowledgeable instructor, it can be used at the high school level. To serve the needs of teens, a teen version of *The Bible Timeline*, *T3: The Teen Timeline* has also been developed. Presented by Mark Hart, *T3* teaches the Bible to teens by showing them the “big picture” of salvation history. Based on the same twelve biblical periods and fourteen narrative books used in *The Bible Timeline* study, *T3* is now being used in schools and parishes nationwide.

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