



# Notes

## Introduction to this series

### “The Beautiful Book”

Era	Characters	Chapters
In the beginning	God create world	<a href="#">Gen 1</a> 
Before 4000 BC	Adam Eve	<a href="#">Gen 1~3</a> 

# Summary

## **Introduction Part 1 of 3..... 3**

Who and what this series is designed for; to capture the Bible's beauty as one holistic book; to know God's will for our lives.

## **Introduction Part 2 of 3..... 7**

The uniqueness of the Bible: suitable for all; written mainly as stories; all important but varyingly so; in different styles; and ultimately a spiritual book.

## **Introduction Part 2 of 3..... 11**

Genesis contains truths about creation and man's fall, which forms the foundation for important truths found in other parts of the bible.

# Transcript

## The Beautiful Book – Introduction Part 1 of 3

Today, we begin our series called, “The Beautiful Book”. What is the goal of this series? It’s very simple: that we will see the Bible, as the beautiful Book - the beautiful Masterpiece, that God has given to us - God's greatest Masterpiece, placed in our hands.

Who is this course designed for?

Firstly, it's designed for Christians, however mature you are, however long in the faith, who have never read through the Bible, even once.

Secondly, it's for Christians who have read through the Bible, maybe through a reading plan, maybe through an ad-hoc way of reading through the Bible; but somehow, after reading through the entire Bible, never really saw how all the 66 books are perfectly, beautifully, connected.

Thirdly, it is for the Christians who just struggle to read the Bible. They don't mind going to a sermon, they don't mind reading a verse with a long devotional; but just to open the Bible and read it, there seems to be a barrier. They find it confusing, difficult, and so they never really go into the Bible.

So, this is designed for such people.

Let me just first say, I emphasize this, that this is not a reading plan. A reading plan is something that, sort of, disciplines you to go through the Bible; a few chapters a day of Old Testament, a few chapters in New Testament, so that you will eventually go through the whole Bible. It, sort of, gives you discipline. Now, this series is not so much as trying to give you discipline, but to help you to be delighted in the Bible. That 'wow, you want to read it'; not so much that you've been disciplined to read it.

It's also not an overview. Some people ask me, "Is this like an Old Testament survey; a New Testament survey?" No. This is not meant to give you knowledge of how things fit in, how the Kings fit in. No, no. It's not to fill your head with knowledge, but rather, this program is designed to fill your heart with love for the Bible.

It's definitely not a commentary. Some said, "Wow, wonderful! At last, we can go deep into the Bible with your series." I said, "No, no, no. Please, if you want to go deep, there are many commentaries on particular books, particular passages of Scripture. I would recommend that you go for those commentaries.

So, now, what are the objectives at the end of this series?

The number one objective is, you will say, "Wow, the Bible is so amazingly connected. I never knew why each book was so wonderfully placed in the right position. Not that, "Wow, this book is very good. And then, I like this book." No, no, no. The whole

Book, the whole one Book, not 66 books, is so wonderful. Many of us, as Christians, we have a favourite chapter, some have a favourite verse, and so, we sort of build our Christianity around those verses we love. Some love verses on how God will bless them, so the whole prosperity gospel theology comes out of that. Some will have another doctrine about baptism, everything is Baptist; a whole denomination comes around a few verses on the importance of baptism. Some will have verses about spiritual gifts, they would have built a whole church around spiritual gifts. That's why Christianity has over 40,000 denominations. Each one, probably not wrong, but each one, focusing on one aspect, the verses or the chapter, or the passage they like; and they build a whole life around it, a whole church around it.

Now, at the end of this series, I hope none of us will be in this business of taking a text out of context, to make a pretext. I hope, at the end of this series, we will see every verse in the context, not of that chapter or that passage, but of the context of the Bible. The Bible is one Book, not a disjointed Book. So, that's number one.

Number two objective is at the end of this series, we will say not only, "Wonderful Book", but also we'll say, "Wonderful God. Amazing God."; not just a provider God, not just a judging God, but a wonderful God. You see Him in all His beauty, because you've read through the Bible and you know this God. So, in other words, at the end of this series, you will begin to enter, every time you open the Bible, you're not focusing on yourself. Not saying, "What verse can I find in this Bible that will bless me, that will help me? I'm looking for, like, a lucky dip. Pick up one verse that will help me." No, no. At the end of this course, you will read the Bible with a focus on God: "What can I find about God?" rather than: "What can I find from God, for me?" A lot of Christians read the Bible with

the wrong focus: “What can I get from God?” rather than: “How can I know this wonderful God?”

Third objective is, that you will be a Christian who will always be in the will of God because you know God well, and when you know God well, you know what God likes, and when you know what God likes, you will do the will of God.

So, I hope that you, at the end of this, will be a Christian living in the will of God - not because a certain verse told you to do it; not every time, “Should I do something? Let me see what verse can I find to support my decision.”- but rather, “I know this is the will of God, because I know God.” Such as, I knew my father very well and I knew, I never had to ask him: “Dad, will you like me to read this book? Will you like me to have this kind of friends? Will you like me to go to this kind of movies?” I never needed to ask it; I knew what he liked, because I knew him. So, I could live in obedience to him, simply because, I knew him well.

## The Beautiful Book - Introduction Part 2 of 3

Now, let's ask ourselves: "What makes the beautiful Book so beautiful, so unique?"

Firstly, it's the only Book that God has left for all of us, Christians.

In other words, it's a perfect Book, whether you are a baby Christian or a super scholar Christian.

It's a perfect Book, whether you're a young boy or an old man Christian.

It's a perfect Book, whether you are highly educated or totally uneducated.

This is the only Book God has left for us, so it suits all spectra of Christians. Now, this is so unique, because we are used to text books. When we have a text book, it is written for a certain level. So, when we have a text book, we are expected to understand just about everything in that book because it was written for our level of understanding, so if you didn't, there's something wrong with you. But when you read the Bible and you don't understand a passage, don't be troubled; it could be for a more matured Christian. One day, you will understand it when you reach that level of maturity. So, a lot of Christians get stuck; they get a certain passage of Scripture and get very troubled, "I don't understand this!" Maybe it's not for you yet, or maybe, "I read this passage, I see so little. Then I heard my preacher preach on it and he sees so much." It's okay; one fine day, as you dig into the Word of God yourself, you will see as much, if not more, than him. So, don't get

stuck when you can't understand. Don't get frustrated, when you don't know as much as somebody else from that same passage of Scripture. That's number one. So, don't look at the Bible like, "Whoa, I must know everything and every passage I read."

Number two, the Bible is 70% stories. That's the beauty of the Bible. In a story, if you're just a child, you could just learn the story itself. For example, the Genesis story, how God made the world - that's all you will know. If you are a bit more matured, you will see the principles inside that story. If you are very deep, in that same story, you will see a lot of fine things that nobody else sees. So, in other words, God uses stories generally to teach, because it's for different levels and because it can be literally a bottomless pit of truth, as you dig in and find more and more treasure in this story. So, the Bible is roughly 70% stories - very different from many other religious books, which are about statements, about how good God is and how wonderful God is; or some fables, you don't really believe those stories - but these are real stories, about a real group of people, who live in a real land with towns that are still there.

The third unique thing about the Bible is that: not everything in the Bible is equally important. Everything is important but not of equal importance. For example, most of the Old Testament is written for the Israelites. There's a lot of truth in it. As you read it, you can pull out a lot of truths but they're not specifically for you. And some of those, in the Old Testament, are not only for the Israelites but for the priests, how they are to sacrifice a lamb, all the details of sacrificing a lamb. Now, you're not a priest, so you don't need to know the details; you want to know the principles. So, when you read that kind of story, you don't need to read as if that was direct instruction. If you're a priest, you better take notes of everything because you have got to do it. So, some parts of the Bible, you can



just read to get the principles, the truths. Other parts, maybe apply to you, like how you take the Lord's supper - that one you better read carefully, because every month, you take it and you don't want to make a mistake on this. So, don't look at every passage of the Bible as of equal importance to you and equal focus you have to give. So, if you were to study the Bible, equally focusing everywhere, you're going to get stuck in books that were written for the priests, for example: "What's all this? The Tabernacle, how many cubits? What's this for?" Or, "judgement on some group of people, the Amalekites", just know that God judges.

Number four, the Bible's written in different styles: some of it is poetry, a lot of it is story. Psalm is poetry. Often, poetry is better listened to. Stories are often better listened to, rather than reading scholarly - trying to analyze every part of this poem, you lose it. So, a lot of the Bible, actually, can be enjoyed, by listening. In fact, Jews, when they went to synagogue, for 1,500 years, all they did was hear the reading of the Scripture. That's all they did; they never had a chance to read it. It was a scroll - after it was read, it was put in back into the closet in the synagogue; similarly, for Christians, in the first 1,500 years of Christianity, almost nobody ever touched a Bible. Bibles were hand copied, very rare to get your hands on any. It was only about after 1,500 years, the printing press came up with Bibles, that people could actually hold and actually read personally. So, you must understand, that, listening to the Bible is not wrong. God designed the Bible to be heard - "faith comes by hearing." And yet, for many of us, we feel so guilty, we don't actually open the Bible, stare at the words and analyze every word. Remember, about 100 years ago, most Christians couldn't even read. Most Christians never even owned a Bible. So, a lot of the Bible can be listened to, profitably and enjoyably - stories, poetry.

Lastly, we must understand, the Bible is basically, a spiritual book, not an academic book. So, it's very important that you open the Bible, expecting God to work the Word in you. Don't go in the Bible like a scholar; go into the Bible like a child of God, saying, "God, speak to me. Papa, speak to me." Too much of today's Bible study, Bible reading, has become a scholarly matter. And I hope that you will realize, it's a spiritual exercise.

## The Beautiful Book - Introduction Part 3 of 3

Now, let us look at the structure of this beautiful Book.

Basically, the Book only has two sections. The first section, tells us how this beautiful world has gone wrong. I think, all of us agree, that when we see the world, we can see great beauty in it, and yet, we can see, things are not what they should be. The mountains, gorgeous mountains, are deforested. The beautiful land is depleted. The beautiful rivers are polluted. Something has gone wrong.

So, the first part of this Bible, just the first 1% of it, Genesis chapter 1 to chapter 11, that's all, tells us, how this beautiful world went wrong. Then, the rest of the Bible, the other 99%, tells us, how God would right the wrong - not by fixing the messed-up world and making a new creation, no - but how God would fix man and make a new creature. So, the rest of the Bible, 99%, is the Redemption drama - how God rescues man from himself, not from a messed-up world. We can't blame the world; the world is messed up because of us. So, we see here, just a two-part drama, and God, in this redemption rescue of us, reveals Himself - His power, His patience, His wisdom, His mercy, His judgement. God reveals Himself, along the way, in this drama.

Now, of course, the two key books usually, in every well-written book, is the first chapter and the last chapter; and so, it is with the Bible. You must know Genesis, otherwise you don't know what the rest of the book is about. And then you want to know, "What's the goal of this book? What's the ending?" So, the two key books, as Christians, we must be very good in, are Genesis and Revelation.

And yet, the truth is, these are two books that many Christians do not know well. You say, "But most of us know Genesis well." Today, many Christians believe that Genesis is really a myth. A lot of Genesis is not real to them. They've been indoctrinated by the theory or the hypothesis of evolution and they say, "It cannot be. God cannot have created this world in six days." So, they write off Genesis as a myth. And then, Revelation, they say, "It's a mystery; you cannot understand it." Who is behind this situation? Satan. Satan hates these two books. Because, in these two books, he is exposed. In Genesis, he is shown to have been the one to have brought problems into this beautiful creation. Satan likes to work behind the scenes. Even in Genesis, he didn't expose himself to Eve, he came as a serpent. And even today, most people do not believe there is someone called Satan. Most people think, it's just a "figurative" person, kind of sometimes like a cartoon. "Really? You believe in the devil? You believe in Satan?" The devil doesn't want to be known. A deceiver always wants to do things without you knowing, and he is the Great Deceiver. In Revelation, he is shown to be totally conquered, captured; he doesn't like that either.

And so, these two books here - Genesis, myth; Revelation-mystery. Most Christians don't know these two books well. And therefore, their whole Christianity has no foundation and no goal. So, remember, you have to build a strong foundation with Genesis. All the important truths, in the Bible, and in fact, many of the important truths of our life are found in Genesis. They are in seed form, embryonic truths, that are later going to be expended in different parts of the Bible and explained more and more.

So, we need to know Genesis, particularly, Genesis chapter 1 - that's foundation. If you cannot believe Genesis chapter 1 is true, how can you believe the rest of the Bible. If the first page of the

Bible, you begin to doubt, “Is this real?”, how can you believe the rest? God lays the foundation beautifully. Genesis chapter 1 is one of the easiest stories in the entire Bible. Imagine, telling the Creation of the world in such a way that a child could learn that story. Really, a child could learn it: six-day- creation, nothing complicated. In fact, Bible translators tell us, the easiest book in the entire Bible to translate to another culture, another language, is Genesis chapter 1. Because everything in Genesis chapter 1, any native, any tribe can understand. Everyone knows the moon, the sun, the fish, the birds, the plants, nothing is difficult to translate. The rest of the Bible can be very difficult. How do you translate a grapevine to a person who has never seen a grape? How do you translate sheep to someone who's never seen a sheep? All these things, you don't know how to even translate it. But in Genesis chapter 1, translators say, “Easy. First book is very easy to translate. Any language, can be translated, in a way that can be understood, by any tribe.

So, God has made it so simple to lay that foundation.