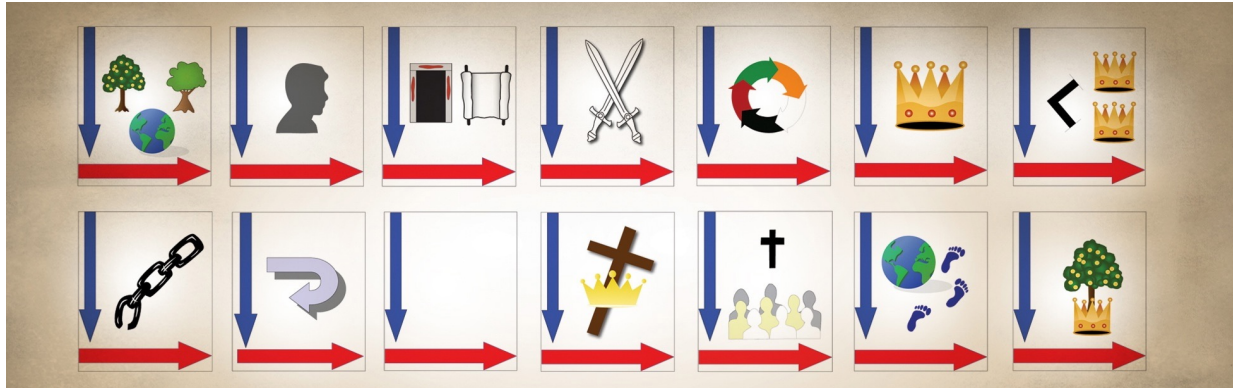


The 14 Era Structure of the Bible

Assembling the story line of the Bible resembles the assembly of a puzzle. Without the picture on the box cover, you won't know what you're building, and you'll quickly lose interest. Further, without the straight edges and corners you will not have a framework for all the other pieces in the box.



The 14 Era graphic of the Bible provides a simple structure that builds the storyline of the Bible. Each era captures a passage of time and contains a **vertical arrow** which symbolizes God's speaking and a **horizontal arrow** which symbolizes God's action to fulfill what He has spoken. The simple graphics within each era capture the "big picture" action within that era. Connecting each era's vertical and horizontal arrows reveal the narrative of the Bible.

Let's build the 14 Era framework.

Creation Era Genesis chapters 1:1-11:26 comprise the Creation Era and this era encompasses five stories: Creation, the Fall, Cain and Abel, Noah and the flood, and the Tower of Babel. This first era explains human origins as the special creation of God, human purpose as image-bearers, and human sin through the Fall, as well as the promise of the Seed who will come.

Patriarch Era Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob teach the newly liberated Hebrews God's strategy for walking with Him by faith. The Patriarch Era begins in Genesis 11:27 and concludes in Genesis 50:26. The book of Job also occurs during the patriarchal era.

Exodus Era God liberates the Hebrews from slavery just as He had promised Abraham in Genesis 15. He gives the Hebrews purpose and forms their identity by giving them instructions to follow, warnings to heed, and a sacrificial system to honor. These boundaries provide for their physical and spiritual well-being. Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy narrate the Exodus Era.

Conquest Era God never gives arbitrary boundaries or instructions. The Book of Law fully prepares the Hebrews to flourish in the land of Canaan. He will bless them if they believe His Word and obey Him by honoring the boundaries that He has established. The Book of Joshua comprises the Conquest Era.

Judges Era Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—the Book of the Law—provide the Hebrews with a roadmap for success or for failure. Failure to know the Book of the

Law and live in light of God's good character and His gracious promises characterize this people who are determined to do what's right in their own eyes. Sadly, the Hebrews choose the path of disobedience and failure which results in their being diminished repeatedly by the very enemies they failed to remove from the land. The Judges Era is captured by the book of Judges and the book of Ruth.

Kingdom Era The book of Deuteronomy was written to direct the Hebrews on how to live in Canaan. This navigational instruction book spoke specifically about the day when Israel would demand a king like the surrounding nations (Deut. 17:14-20). That day arrived. God raised up three kings who ruled in the united nation of Israel—Saul, David, and Solomon. The story of the Kingdom era covers several books in the Bible including 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, a portion of 1 Chronicles and the Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes.

Divided Kingdom After King Solomon dies the Hebrew kingdom divides. Solomon's son Rehoboam rules over the two southern tribes of Benjamin and Judah. Solomon's former administrator, Jeroboam, becomes king of the ten northern tribes of Israel. Jeroboam disregards the Book of the Law and establishes a "new" religion. A large portion of the Old Testament, 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, Nahum, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah, compile the Divided Kingdom Era.

Captivity Era Moses records the blessings and the curses (Deut. 28) that explain much of Israel's history. God desires to bless His people, but He will not bless disobedience; terrible consequences accompany disobedience. After the Conquest Era the Hebrews did not serve the Lord God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything (Deut. 28:47); therefore, they served their enemies in the Judges Era. Now, in the Captivity Era the Hebrews fully serve their enemies. A small portion of the book of Jeremiah and the books of Lamentations, Daniel, and Ezekiel cover the Captivity Era.

Return Era The Jews taken captive from the Southern Kingdom spend 70 years as Babylonian captives. God fulfills a promise made through Isaiah and raises up a pagan king who decrees their return to Israel. The books of Nehemiah, Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi capture the Return Era.

Silent Era Without Bible literacy, people form and act out erroneous views about God, themselves, and history. During the Silent Era, the four hundred years between Israel's return to their land and the birth of Christ, God preserves Bible literacy by stirring up the Jews to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. He also works in the geo-political world in the successive kingdoms of Persia, Greece, and Rome to prepare the world for the coming of the promised Redeemer.

Gospel Era God's Seed promised after Adam and Eve's sin, sent through the line of Abraham, Judah, and David, arrives as announced by the Angel and in fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah, Micah, and others. When Jesus arrives, He fulfills His Father's will in a ministry of justice and mercy, but He is despised and rejected by His own and finally killed. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John narrate the Gospel Era.

Church Era Just as the Lord Jesus promised, He rises from the dead and ascends to heaven. He gives gifts to His people (Ephesian 4:8); He sends the promised Holy Spirit to bring about the birth of His church (Matt. 16:18), an assembly of "called out ones" who enter that church by

repentance toward God and faith in Christ. They identify with Him by baptism, and He adds them to His church. He gifts His church with leaders (Eph. 4:11) to teach them doctrine, prayer, fellowship, and mission (Acts 2:42). Their life together and the Spirit's work in them draws individuals to Christ and creates conflict with those who reject Christ.

Missions Era When God created humanity He gave them purpose—to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the whole earth with more image bearers. Sin altered His image-bearers, but it didn't change their ability to multiply. They produced more broken and sinful image-bearers who need to be redeemed. When God inaugurated the church, He gave them purpose—a job to do. The majority of the book of Acts and the epistles describe the Missions Era.

The End and New Beginning The Book of the Revelation contains a blessing for those who read and heed its warnings. The human story will end. For those whose hope is anchored in the substitutionary life and death of Jesus it will end in a new heaven and new earth. For those who reject the Son will spend eternity under the wrath of God. The Book of the Revelation describes the last era in the story arc, The End/New Beginning.