Covenant Theology

The Bible is Salvation History

The Bible is NOT an encyclopedia on God. The Bible IS Salvation History. The Bible is NOT the history of everything God has ever done (or will do) nor does it pretend to answer every question we might have about who God is and what He is doing. The Bible is NOT all we might want to know about God. The Bible IS what we need to know for our salvation – that we can trust Him! The Bible IS Salvation History.

That being said, the history of salvation is still a long one. It starts with the Fall and continues past this present day. So how do we get a handle on that much history? First, we need to recognize that all history includes interpretation of the events, not just the events themselves. So how do we know we have the correct interpretation? That is the importance of the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. God has authored the Bible (through the agency of man) and so what we have is authoritative history. The story of 9/11 read very differently in the New York Times ("… a cowardly attack on innocent people …") than it did in the Iranian press ("… martyrs for Allah succeed in striking a blow against America, the great Satan …"). Who is to say which is correct? That is the dilemma of history, but not for the Bible. If God is the author, then the events recorded as well as the meaning of those events can be trusted!

This is not a course in apologetics nor is it one where we will defend the reliability of the Bible. We are going to assume the reliability of the Bible; after all, Jesus did! Instead, we are going to look at just what the Bible tells us about Salvation History.

So, how do we look at Salvation History as a whole? The Bible is not arranged in chronological order. We will look briefly at how the Bible is arranged, but the best way to understand the flow of Salvation History is to understand the arc of the story expressed through the concept of covenants.

Covenant vs Contract -
Contract - Your performance is based on the performance of the other person in the contract. If they do not perform their end, you are not bound to perform yours.
Covenant - Your performance is based on your character, your ability to keep your promise, regardless of the other person's performance.

God's covenants always reveal His sovereign and gracious nature.
The seven major Biblical covenants are:

Covenant	By Choice	By Grace
1. Adamic - promise to send a savior	Gen: 3:15	Gen 3:15
2. Noahic - promise not to destroy the earth	Gen. 8:21,22	Gen. 6:18
3. Abrahamic - promise of many descendants/ through his descendants bless the world	Gen. 12:2,3	Gen. 15:1-6
4. Mosaic - promise of land and nationhood	Ex. 20:1-17	Ex. 20:2; Deut. 7:6-11
a. Negative promises of the covenant	Deut. 28:15	
5. Davidic - promise of king and kingdom everlasting	I Chron. 17:3-14	I Chron. 17:3-14
6. Christological - Salvation by grace/ Holy Spirit	Jn. 3:16	Eph. 2:8,9
7. Second Coming of Christ	Matt. 24:27	Acts 1:6-10

Only the first and sixth covenants are specifically about salvation, and both are for all people. God's love was never limited to the Jews, it was just promised to come through them, and did in the person of Jesus, the Messiah.

Salvation History Outline

A. Beginnings—Genesis 1-11
   1. Creation, Fall, Flood, Tower of Babel
B. The Patriarchs—Genesis 12-50
   1. Abraham
   2. Isaac
   3. Jacob
   4. Joseph
C. Israel becomes a nation
   1. Moses
   2. The Exodus
   3. The Law
   4. The Wanderings
D. Israel enters the Land
   1. Joshua
   2. Judges
   3. Samuel
E. The United Kingdom
   1. Saul
   2. David
   3. Solomon
F. The Divided Kingdom
   1. Israel—10 tribes, the Northern Kingdom
   2. Judah—2 tribes, the Southern Kingdom
G. The Exile and return
   1. Ezra
   2. Nehemiah
H. The Intertestamental Period
   1. 400 years without a Prophet
   2. The Maccabees
   3. The Pharisees and Sadducees
I. The first coming of the Messiah
   1. John the Baptist
   2. Jesus the Christ
   3. His ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension
J. The Birth of the Church
   1. Pentecost
   2. The Acts of the Apostles
   3. Unto Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth
   4. Saul/Paul
   5. The Letters
K. The Promise of His Second Coming (the Parousia)
   1. Revelation
   2. Judgment and Eternity—the City of God

The End of the Beginning and the Beginning of Something Brand New!

The Structure of the Bible

The Old Testament: think 5—12—5—5—12 = 39

A. Five books of the Pentateuch (The Books of Moses: The Torah)
   1. Genesis
   2. Exodus
   3. Leviticus
   4. Numbers
   5. Deuteronomy

B. Twelve books of history
   1. Joshua
   2. Judges
   3. Ruth
   4. I Samuel
   5. II Samuel
   6. I Kings
   7. II Kings
   8. I Chronicles
   9. II Chronicles
   10. Ezra
   11. Nehemiah
   12. Esther

C. Five books of poetry
   1. Job
   2. Psalms
   3. Proverbs
   4. Ecclesiastes
   5. Song of Solomon

D. Five Major prophets
   1. Isaiah
   2. Jeremiah
   3. Lamentations
   4. Ezekiel
   5. Daniel

E. Twelve Minor prophets
   1. Hosea
   2. Joel
   3. Amos
   4. Obadiah
   5. Jonah
   6. Micah
   7. Nahum
   8. Habakkuk
   9. Zephaniah
   10. Haggai
   11. Zechariah
   12. Malachi

New Testament: think 4—1—13—8—1 = 27

A. Four Gospels
   1. Matthew
   2. Mark
   3. Luke
   4. John

B. One book of history
   1. Acts
C. Thirteen Pauline Epistles
   1. Romans
   2. I Corinthians
   3. II Corinthians
   4. Galatians
   5. Ephesians
   6. Philippians
   7. Colossians
   8. I Thessalonians
   9. II Thessalonians
   10. I Timothy
   11. II Timothy
   12. Titus
   13. Philemon
D. Eight 'other' Epistles
   1. Hebrews
   2. James
   3. I Peter
   4. II Peter
   5. I John
   6. II John
   7. III John
   8. Jude
E. One Revelation
   1. Revelation