

An Overview of the Bible (Taken from Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture*)

The Old Testament

1. *The pattern of the Kingdom.* In the Garden of Eden we see the world as God designed it to be. God's people, Adam and Eve, live in God's place, the garden, under His rule as they submit to His word. And to be under God's rule in the Bible is always to enjoy his blessing; it is the best way to live. God's original creation shows us a model of his kingdom as it was meant to be.
2. *The perished Kingdom.* Sadly, Adam and Eve think life would be better if they lived independently of God. The results are disastrous. They are no longer God's people. They turn away from Him and He responds by turning away from them. They are no longer in God's place; He banishes them from the garden. And they are no longer under God's rule, so they do not enjoy his blessing. Instead, they face His curse and are under His judgment. The situation is very gloomy. But God, in His great love, is determined to restore His kingdom.
3. *The promised Kingdom.* God calls Abraham and makes some unconditional promises to him: through Abraham's descendants He will re-establish His kingdom. They will be His people, living in His land and enjoying His blessing, and through them all the peoples on earth will be blessed. That promise is the gospel. It is partially fulfilled in the history of Israel, but is only finally fulfilled through Jesus Christ.
4. *The partial Kingdom.* The Bible records how God's promises to Abraham are partially fulfilled in the history of Israel. Through the exodus from Egypt, God makes Abraham's descendants his very own people. At Mount Sinai He gives them His law so that they might live under His rule and enjoy His blessing, as Adam and Eve had done before they sinned. The blessing is marked chiefly by God's presence with his people in the tabernacle. Under Joshua they enter the land and, by the time of Kings David and Solomon, they enjoy peace and prosperity there. That was the high point the history of Israel. They were God's people in God's place, the land of Canaan, under God's rule and therefore enjoying His blessing. But the promises to Abraham had still not been completely fulfilled. The problem was sin, the continual disobedience of the people of Israel. That was soon to lead to the dismantling of the partial kingdom as Israel fell apart.
5. *The prophesied Kingdom.* After the death of King Solomon civil war broke out and the kingdom of Israel split into two parts: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Neither was strong. After 200 years of separate existence, the northern kingdom was destroyed by the Assyrians. The southern kingdom struggled on for another century, but then it too was conquered and its inhabitants were taken into exile in Babylon. During this depressing period in their history God spoke to the people of Israel and Judah through some prophets. He explained that they were being punished for their sin but still offered hope for the future. The prophets pointed forward to a time when God would act decisively through His King, the Messiah, to fulfil all his promises. The people of Judah must have thought that that time had come when they were allowed to return from exile, but God made it clear that the great time of salvations was still in the future. That is where the Old Testament ends: waiting for God's King to appear to introduce His kingdom.

The New Testament

6. *The present Kingdom.* 400 years passed after the completion of the Old Testament before Jesus began his public ministry with the words, 'The time has come... The kingdom of God is near (Mark 1:15). The waiting was over; God's king had come to establish God's kingdom. His life, teaching and miracles all proved that He was who He said He was: God Himself in human form. He had the power to put everything right again, and He chose a very surprising way of doing it: by dying in weakness on a cross. It was by His death that Jesus dealt with the problem of sin and made it possible for human beings to come back into relationship with His Father. The resurrection proved the success of Jesus' rescue mission on the cross and announced that there is hope for our world. Those who trust in Christ can look forward to eternal life with him.
7. *The proclaimed Kingdom.* By His death and resurrection Jesus did all that was necessary to put everything right again and completely restore God's kingdom. But He did not finish the job when He was first on earth. He ascended into heaven and made it clear that there would be a delay before he returned. The delay is to enable more people to hear about the good news of Christ so they can put their trust in Him and be ready for Him when he comes. We live during this period, which the Bible calls 'the last days'. It began on the Day of Pentecost when God sent the Spirit to equip His church to tell the whole world about Christ.
8. *The perfected Kingdom.* One day Christ will return. There will be a great division. His enemies will be separated from his presence in hell, but His people will join Him in a perfect new creation. Then at last the gospel promises will be completely fulfilled. The book of Revelation describes a fully restored kingdom: God's people, Christians from all nations, in God's place, the new creation (heaven), under God's rule and therefore enjoying his blessing.