

A condensed version of the Bible?

When I was in school (kindergarten through college) I absolutely hated reading. I think it was partially because I was such a slow reader and it would take me much longer than others to read just about anything. In fact, when I was in grade school, my mom would often read my assignments to me. That's how much I hated reading. I would also get distracted, especially in high school and college, and start day dreaming while reading. I would then re-focus and realize that I really didn't know what was going on regarding whatever passage I was currently viewing. I then had to look back to the previous paragraph to see where I started straying, only to eventually discover I had gone off the reservation about five pages earlier, just tuning-out and subconsciously turning pages occasionally. Fortunately, I now love reading, but only when it's something technical and somehow related to defending the Christian worldview.



Given my history, having a condensed version of a book would have been very helpful. However, in this article, I am not referring to condensing in the normal sense, when things are more summarized, but rather where significant portions are left out altogether.

In my now 33 years of experience in speaking on topics related to apologetics, I have had the honor of being in a variety of Christian churches, the vast majority being very sound in their doctrine and theology. However, I have also experienced many situations where there was no interest in addressing apologetics topics at all. It is never my intention to force my way into any speaking engagement, so I simply move on to the next opportunity. This has brought my attention to an interesting phenomenon—the condensing of the Word of God.

What do I mean by “the condensing of the Word of God”? I mean the purposeful or somewhat unintentional removal of two major portions of the Bible. You may have heard of these segments. We call them “the beginning” and “the end.”

What exactly do I mean when I say these have been removed? I certainly don't mean they have been physically extricated from the pages of the Bible, or even that Bibles have actually been produced with these sections missing. I am simply stating that many churches are not comfortable in discussing these portions in any real depth. They would certainly claim they believe God is the Creator and that Jesus is coming back, but they spend little, if any, time teaching about these areas.

Why might that be? Well, this is generally how it goes.

In the minds of many in church leadership, the Genesis creation account is “up for interpretation,” and they believe there are a number of viably acceptable options. They also feel that we can't really know which view is correct and more importantly, it doesn't really matter. Therefore, there's no point in focusing on it or trying to figure it out, which would only lead to division within the body of the congregation. They are comfortable in just believing God is ultimately the Creator, but how and when

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he created is not important and understanding what the text in Genesis 1 & 2 really means doesn't matter. This belief also dissuades leadership from studying the first few chapters of the Bible, so their personal knowledge of potential problems with any particular view is generally lacking. Furthermore, having someone address the Genesis creation account from the pulpit is sure to cause someone in the congregation to seriously question the pastor as to why that view was presented. In this case, the pastor is risking being exposed for not being able to adequately defend his beliefs. I personally do not believe that every pastor should be able to thoroughly defend his beliefs about creation scientifically, although there are a few basic things they should be familiar with. However, I do believe they should be able to say something like, "Right or wrong, let me show you from Scripture why I hold to the view that I do." It is obviously much easier to simply say, "There are different views on Genesis, and there are good people on all sides." Unfortunately, I don't believe most seminaries are strongly encouraging or requiring any real depth of knowledge in this area. Our ministry, in part, serves to graciously assist church leadership in seeing the foundational importance of Genesis and helping them learn and defend a view that is both biblically and scientifically sound.

Another area of Scripture that often gets downplayed or ignored altogether is eschatology (i.e., the study of end-time events). The same attitude often exists as with the creation account, mainly that there are various views out there, with good people on all sides, and it ultimately doesn't really matter which view is correct. At the risk of offending some people, I would agree that no matter which view of eschatology may be correct, it doesn't change what God is generally calling us to do—to evangelize and make disciples. It also doesn't really affect the Gospel message either (unlike how various views on Genesis treat the origin of death and its relationship to the Gospel). However, the main problem I see is that we go too far with our response to feeling eschatology is too complex, and we could never figure it all out. We subsequently tend to not look at it at all. The return of Christ, independent of your view of the rapture, is a very significant event and it should consequently be a significant part of our overall worldview.

So, in short, we have a "condensed" version of the Bible. No well-defined beginning and no well-defined end. Let's take all of God's Word seriously with the leading of the Holy Spirit. "Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it." (Deuteronomy 12:32)

If you have any further questions about this or any other issue, please don't hesitate to [contact us!](#)