

MODULE 2

ABOUT THE BIBLE

THE BIBLE IS A UNIQUE LITERARY WORK. The Bible is the Story of God, but its origin, nature, structure, and composition make it a unique and compelling piece of literature—*supernatural* literature. The Bible is the most enduring work in history, and for good reason. In this module we will cover the basics about the Bible. What is it? How does it fit together? How was it assembled? Is it really God’s Word? Can it be trusted? How can I understand it? And much more...

What Is the Bible?	23
Uniqueness of the Bible	25
How the Bible Fits Together	27
• Structure of the Bible Chart	29
Inspiration of the Bible	30
Canonization of the Bible	32
Understanding the Bible	37
HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT	41

What Is the Bible?

1. The Bible is **MOSTLY HISTORY**.

2. The Bible is **MUCH MORE** than history.
 - a. It's really God's **STORY / AUTOBIOGRAPHY**.

 - b. This means it's a combination of the facts of history and the heart of God for all mankind. It's his plan of how he created, sustains, works in, and saves the world.

3. The Bible is a book about God's **LOVE AFFAIR** with people, his most unique creation.
 - a. John said, "God is love" (1 John 4:8). If this is his character, then everything he does is out of love for his creation.

 - b. God's love includes everyone (John 3:16).

 - c. His character doesn't change (James 1:17)

4. Because the Bible demonstrates God's love for his people, it is called **SALVATION** history.

5. The Bible is different from a simple **HISTORY** textbook; the Bible is didactic, influencing how we live.
 - a. It was written to **CHANGE** your life.

How can words on a page change a person's life?

Salvation History 101

1. Adam and Eve were created perfect (i.e. very good and without sin).
2. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and fell into sin and, consequently, away from God. They were separated from him by their sin.
3. God used the Jews to bring His chosen Messiah (Jesus Christ) into the world to save the world, not just the Jews.

/ Salvation History /

This term refers to the series of historical events that are specific acts of God to save his people.

/ Didactic /

Didactic means: intended to instruct.

Dinosaurs & Scientific Facts...

Why doesn't the Bible mention dinosaurs and other archaeological or scientific facts?

ANSWER: It's not a relevant part of His autobiography to explain prehistory and science. The purpose of the Bible isn't to explain every scientific fact, it's to reveal God's character and plan.

John 20:31

But these things [the Bible] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life.

b. If you open your **HEART**, it will!

What does it mean to "open your heart"?

Why is having an open heart so important to change?

How does a Christian keep an open heart?

6. Why else did God write the Bible?

To give people wisdom about life and to bring people **CLOSER** to him.

Why should wisdom be valuable to our lives?

What are the different ways wisdom is acquired?

Does everyone acquire wisdom the same way?

What are God's ways for passing along wisdom?

In Summary, the Three Primary Purposes of the Bible Are:

1. To reveal the character and story of God to people.
2. To show people how to have a personal relationship (friendship!) with God.
3. To help those who have that relationship with God grow closer to God and strengthen their friendship with him.

Uniqueness of the Bible

1. Common Myth: the Bible is just another “**RELIGIOUS**” book (among many others).
2. Facts about the Bible that make it incredibly unique:
 - a. It was written over an approximately **2000** year span.
 - b. It was written by more than **40** authors, from all walks of life (educated and uneducated, Jews and Gentiles, etc.) and most of the authors didn’t know each other. Yet the Bible has incredible consistency in it’s message, never contradicting itself.

Vocations of Some of the Bible’s Authors:

Moses: **POLITICIAN / SHEPHERD**

Peter: **FISHERMAN**

Amos: **HERDSMAN**

Joshua: **MILITARY GENERAL**

Luke: **DOCTORY**

Solomon: **KING**

Matthew: **TAX COLLECTOR**

Paul: **TENT MAKER / RELIGIOUS PHARISEE**

- c. It was written in different **MOODS** (from times of joy to the depths of sadness).
- d. It was written in **THREE** different languages (but primarily in Hebrew and Greek).

Some Proofs That the Bible Is Really 100% God’s Word

External Proofs

1. Christ accepted the Old Testament as God’s Word (Matthew 5:17-20; Luke 24:25-27, 44) and frequently quoted Scripture (Matthew 4:1-10).
2. The New Testament writers considered the Old Testament to be inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16).
3. The Bible has endured unscathed despite centuries of persecution and opposition towards it.
4. The Bible changes the lives of the people who read it.

Internal Proofs

1. The Bible claims to be the Word of God. Expressions such as “the Word of the LORD came...,” “the LORD said...,” etc., are found 3,808 times in the Old Testament.
2. Fulfilled prophecy is strong evidence to show that the Bible is the Word of God. For example, Micah 5:2 foretells Christ’s birth in Bethlehem which is fulfilled in Luke 2.
3. The unusual unity of the Bible is another proof. 40 different writers from various backgrounds and different times in history all wrote essentially the same message. For example:
 - a. In the Old Testament, the theme is “He (Jesus, the Messiah) is coming.”
 - b. In the New Testament, the theme is “He has come.”
 - c. In Revelation, the theme is “He is coming again.”

3. The Bible contains hundreds of **CONTROVERSIAL** issues, but there is one unfolding story: ***God's love for his people and his work to draw them closer to him through Jesus Christ.*** It can truly be said that because of the prophetic elements throughout the Old Testament, the whole Bible is about Jesus.

4. Although there's **GREAT diversity** (i.e. voices of authority, two covenants, different styles of literature, different languages, different readers and situations, different moods and tones, etc.) in the Bible, there is **GREATER unity** (i.e. consistent moral message, prophecies don't conflict with one another, theological themes are consistent, moral teachings are the same, and many others).

How did this happen?

5. The Bible was written by the **HOLY SPIRIT!**

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching... so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

***If God's love letter was written with great diversity
and even greater unity to give us wisdom for life
and to draw us closer to him...
then isn't it worth our attention?***

How the Bible Fits Together

While the Bible *is one story*,
it *is not just one book*.

It's a collection of **MANY** books (**66** total).

The Bible Has Two Major Divisions

- a. **Old Testament** → made up of **39** books.
- b. **New Testament** → made up of **27** books.

A little trick to help you remember...

$$\begin{array}{rcccl}
 3 & \rightarrow\rightarrow\rightarrow & 9 & & = 39 \\
 \text{OLD} & & \text{TESTAMENT} & & \\
 3 & \times & 9 & & = 27 \\
 \text{NEW} & & \text{TESTAMENT} & &
 \end{array}$$

The Divisions of the Old Testament

1a. **TORAH (Law) or Pentateuch.**

- Written by Moses regarding creation, the beginnings of the nation of Israel, and the Law.
- This division could actually be classified as a subdivision under “History,” as these books also contain a great deal of history.
- **Books:** *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*

1b. **HISTORY**

- About the rise, fall, captivity, and return of the nation of Israel.
- **Books:** *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*

2. **POETRY and Wisdom**

- All from different time periods, but written mainly by David and Solomon.
- **Books:** *Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*

Access to God...

Old Testament

People have access to God through the priesthood (through the priests).

New Testament

People have access to God through Jesus (who is called the “High Priest” in the book of Hebrews in the New Testament).

Testament or Covenant?

The term “testament” usually is used in terms of a person’s “last will and testament” today. It determines what happens to someone’s property after they die. New Testament people have access to God through Jesus.

The term “covenant” is “an agreement between two people or two groups that involves promises on the part of each to the other.”

When speaking of the Bible, the Old and New Testament are probably better understood as the Old and New Covenant. The agreement between God and his people is different between the Old and the New. But God does not change. What changes is how we relate to God. (Read Hebrews 8:8-9)

/ Torah /

Hebrew word meaning law, instruction, or commandment. The first 5 books of the Bible are commonly referred to as the Torah, especially by Jews, because they contain the Law of God.

/ Pentateuch /

The first 5 books of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament). It comes from the Latin, which borrowed from the Greek *pentateukhos*; from *penta* = “five” + *teukhos* = “implement, book.”

/ Gospel /

From the Greek word *evangelion*—sometimes transliterated into English as “*evangel*”—meaning “good news.”

/ Epistle /

Epistle is just an old word for letter. It comes from the Greek word *epistellein* which can be translated “to send news.”

Did You Know?

Verse and Chapter Numbers in the Bible

The verse and chapter numbers in the Bible are not inspired, or directed, by the Holy Spirit. They were added by monks in the Middle Ages, not by God.

- The chapter divisions were added in 1250 A.D.
- The verse divisions were added in 1551 A.D.

Though the chapters and verses are not always in the best places (sometimes they divide thoughts and sentences – this is why in some translations verses may be grouped together), they are useful for reference and study.

3. PROPHETS

- Divided into “major” and “minor” prophets, not due to their importance, but simply due to the length of the writings. Major = bigger/longer, Minor = smaller/shorter.
- **Books:** (*Major*) *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel*, (*Minor*) *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*

The Divisions of the New Testament

1. HISTORY (Gospels & Acts)

- About the life, teachings, and work of Jesus and the early church. The Gospels (from the Greek word for “good news”) tell about the ministry years of Jesus (his last 3 years on earth). The book of Acts gives a basic history of the early church and highlights the ministries of Peter and Paul.
- **Books:** *Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts*

2. LETTERS (or Epistles)

- Various letters written to a particular person or group of people, usually for a specific purpose. But remember that just because these books are written to specific people or groups of people, it doesn’t mean that they don’t contain principles and truth for your own personal growth.
- These letters can be divided into three categories:

1. Paul’s Letters to Churches

- These letters were written to encourage and instruct new congregations of believers.
- **Books:** *Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians*

2. Paul’s Letters to Pastors/Leaders

- These letters exhort specific church leaders to faithfulness and diligence.
- **Books:** *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*

3. General Letters

- These letters were originally written to persecuted Jewish Christians and contain practical help for maturing believers.
- **Books:** *Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude*

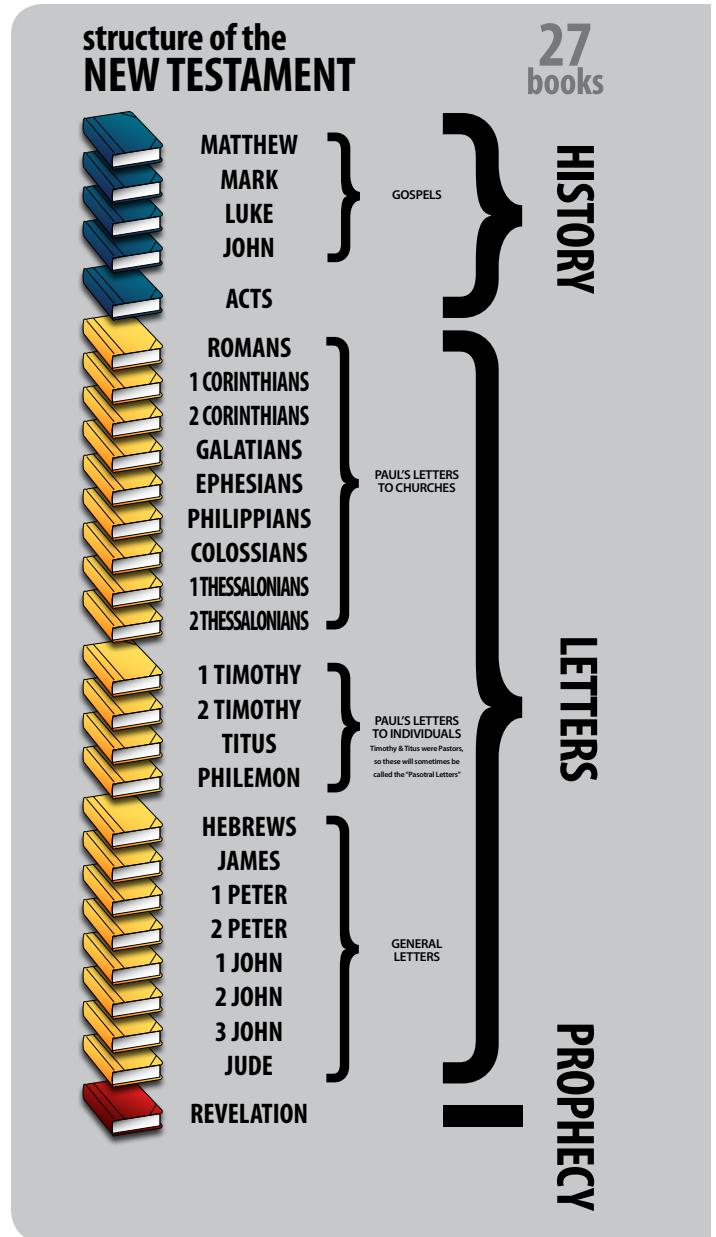
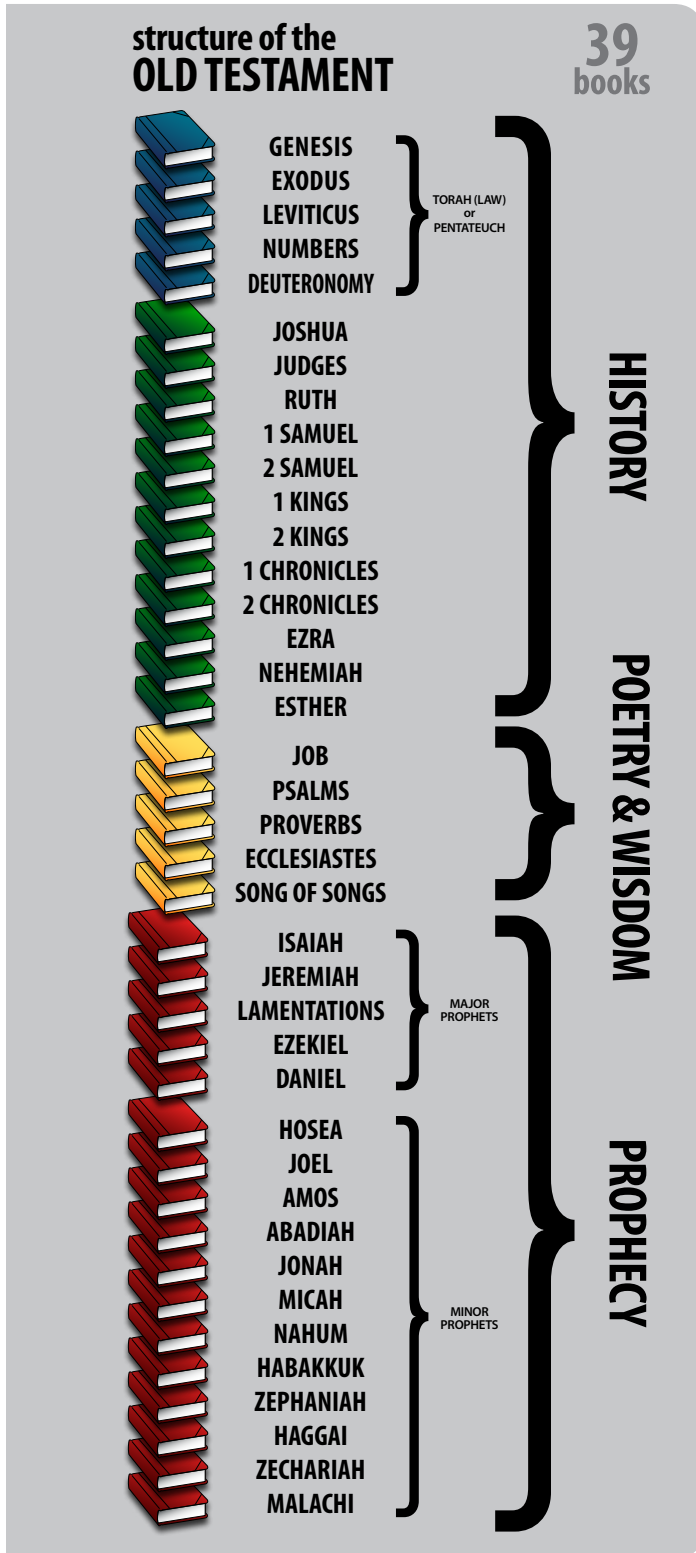
3. PROPHECY (Revelation)

- This book was written by John and primarily tells of future events in the last days (or end times).
- The book of Revelation is sometimes classified as a “General Letter”, but due to its overwhelming content of prophecy, we will be classifying it as prophecy.
- **Books:** *Revelation*

STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

Ever wondered why the books of the Bible are in the order that they are? Many people assume that they're simply arranged chronologically, but they would only be partially right. The books of the Bible are organized first by the type of literature (History, Poetry/Wisdom, Prophecy, Letters), and then each of those types of literature are *basically* in chronological order. So in the Old Testament, for instance, the books of history (including the Torah or Pentateuch*) are first, all in chronological order. Following them are the books of Poetry and Wisdom, also arranged in a basic chronological order. Then the major prophets ("major" just means they're the bigger books of prophecy), and then the minor prophets ("minor" just means the smaller books of prophecy). Below is a chart which lists the books of the Old and New Testaments in order and shows their category. Many of these books overlap in terms of when they were written, particularly the prophecy and history books of the Old Testament.

* The Pentateuch is the first five books of the Old Testament ("Penta" = five and "teuch" = book, so... "five-books"). It is also known as the "Torah" (which means "Law" in Hebrew) because all five books were written by Moses and contain the Law that God gave Moses to pass on to his people.



HOW MANY BOOKS?

The bible is a collection of 66 "books". Here's an easy way to remember how many books are in the Old Testament and how many are in the New Testament.

$$3 \rightarrow 9 = 39 \text{ books}$$

OLD TESTAMENT

How many letters are in the word "Old"? 3. So we put a "3" over "OLD" above. How many letters in "Testament"? 9. So we put a "9" over "TESTAMENT". Now slide them together, and you get "39". There are 39 books in the Old Testament.

$$3 \times 9 = 27 \text{ books}$$

NEW TESTAMENT

How many letters are in the word "New"? 3. So we put a "3" over "NEW" above. How many letters in "Testament"? 9. So we put a "9" over "TESTAMENT". Now this time, multiply them and you get "27". There are 27 books in the New Testament.

If you can't remember whether to slide them together or to multiply, just remember that the New Testament is smaller than the Old Testament!

Inspiration of the Bible

1. The Bible came to us through the **INSPIRATION** of the Holy Spirit.

*No person can ever see God on his or her own, they need to be **SHOWN**.*

No one has ever seen God. But the one and only Son is himself God and is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.

John 1:18, NLT

QUESTION:

If humans are imperfect, how could they write a perfect Bible?

2. The Bible was written by God **THROUGH** people. This miracle is called "inspiration".

3. Although God has revealed Himself in many ways, the most significant way is through **JESUS**.

Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets.

And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe.

The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven.

Hebrews 1:1-3, NLT

Who Wrote That?

A good example of the author's own life experience and personality shining through in the Bible would be the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts (both of which were written by Luke). Luke was a doctor. Because of that, he uses many technical medical terms that the other three gospels do not include.

4. Our knowledge about Jesus comes from the Bible, so what we share with others about our faith includes truth from the Bible to give it **AUTHORITY**.
5. Each biblical author expressed the Word of God out of his own experience:
 - a. personality
 - b. language and grammar
 - c. historical **CONTEXT**

6. Because the Scriptures are God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16), there are no **MISTAKES**.

Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.

2 Peter 1:20-21, NLT

So... Is Inspiration Important?

The issue of inspiration is central to the Bible actually being God's Word. Without inspiration, it's nothing more than an old collection of good teachings and holds no authority whatsoever over our lives.

- Since the Bible is inspired by God there are no errors in the original writings.
- It is the ultimate authority for the truth about God and his eternal plan, including our lives.

1. This means that when there is a conflict between...

→ **my feelings** and the Bible...

...the Bible wins.

→ my intellectual **conclusions, opinions,** and **human reason** and the Bible...

...the Bible wins.

→ my personal **experiences** and the Bible...

...the Bible wins.

There is absolutely NO CONTEST when someone or something is at odds with the Bible... *the Bible wins!*

/ Theology /

The study of the nature of God.

2. Because the Bible is the inspired word of God, all Scripture is...

- a. **AUTHORITATIVE** for all truth. This includes theology, doctrine, and morality.
- b. **UNIVERSAL**. It spans across all cultures and time.
- c. **SACRED**. It is holy (set apart) and inspired by God.
- d. **NORMATIVE**. This means that it is the "norm" or standard and it's applicable not only to ALL believers but to ALL the world.

/ Doctrine /

A belief or set of beliefs held and taught by a group of people. In our case, it is what we believe in relation to our theology (because of what we've learned by studying the nature of God in his Word, the Bible, we then believe certain things – this is our doctrine).

Canonization of the Bible

/ Bible /

A collection of inspired books.

/ Canon /

When we refer to “canon” we’re not talking about a weapon of war (spelled “cannon”) but to “a collection or list of sacred books accepted as genuine.” (Oxford American Dictionary) The term “canon” comes from the Hebrew word for reed. A reed was straight and often used to measure things. In our usage, canon refers to those writings which are recognized as Scripture. They are the writings that measured up to certain standards established to verify that they were the Word of God.

/ Revelation /

God communicating truth, revealing that which was previously unknown.

The Importance of Canon

As Christians, having the Bible is of the utmost importance. Without God’s many revelations that were written down, his acts would be forgotten, misunderstood, or passed over. Without supernatural revelation, the death of Jesus would have just been another terrible evil the Roman Empire committed. Canonization is the process of the Church recognizing God’s true revelations as Scripture.

Canonization deals with how the Bible was recognized.

Now that we know the Bible is a collection of books, how did they get collected? Who chose them? Why did they make the decision to include them in the Bible?

The Big Question Is:

What qualifies as Scripture and what doesn’t?

1. The process of canonization involves three parties:
 - a. The human **AUTHOR**.
 - b. The **CHURCH** (or the people of God).
 - c. The **HOLY SPIRIT**.
 2. The author writes the Scripture through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
 3. The Church recognizes (or “canonizes”) the Scripture through the revelation of the Holy Spirit.
 4. A book is canonized as Scripture based upon the *evidence of inspired authorship*.
- IMPORTANT:** The Church did not create the canon of the Bible, but only recognized that which was already Scripture.
- So what is the evidence of inspired authorship (i.e. that God wrote it)? And what are the criteria that must be met for a book to be “put” into the Bible?*
5. The first part to canonization is the actual writing of a book. It is simple: God worked through imperfect people to bring us his **PERFECT** message.
 6. The second part is a bit more complicated, and the process **DIFFERS** between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Old Testament Canon

1. There is not a lot of **DETAILED** information about how Old Testament books were canonized. What we do know is that a near-complete version of the Old Testament was in circulation about 200 years before the birth of Christ.
2. However, there are many sources that tell us the Old Testament is canon. While we may not know exactly how it was canonized, we do know that the process **DID HAPPEN**.
3. Old Testament canon happened in three waves or stages:
 - a. First: **Law** — 5 books
 - b. Second: **Prophets** — 8 books
 - c. Third: **Writings** — 11 books
(see side box: Organization of the Hebrew Bible)
4. The Old Testament canon starts with **MOSES**.

- a. Moses received the Law (Ten Commandments and then some) from God.

At that time I stood between the LORD and you to declare to you the word of the LORD, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.

Deuteronomy 5:5

- b. Moses **WROTE** them down.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant--the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 34:27-28

- c. The people accepted his writings as **AUTHORITATIVE**.

Go near and listen to all that the LORD our God says. Then tell us whatever the LORD our God tells you. We will listen and obey.

Deuteronomy 5:27

Organization of the Hebrew Bible

The Hebrew Bible is organized much differently from our English version. (But don't be confused, it's the same Old Testament; it's just organized differently than how we organize it in English. The O.T. is often referred to as the Hebrew Bible as it was originally written in Hebrew.)

The Hebrew Bible (**TaNaK***) has three divisions:

1. THE LAW (*Torah*)

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

2. THE PROPHETS (*Nevi'im*)

The Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings

The Latter Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, The Twelve (our minor prophets)

3. THE WRITINGS (*Ketuvim*)

Poetical Books: Psalms, Proverbs, Job

The Five Rolls ("Megilloth"):

Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Esther, Ecclesiastes

Historical Books: Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles

*The Jewish term for the Bible is "**TaNaK**" — the T, N and K are the first letters of Torah (= "Law"), Nevi'im (= "Prophets"), and Ketuvim (= "Writings").

The acronym thus reflects the contents of and general order in which the collection is arranged.

5. Jesus said the Old Testament was Scripture.

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

Luke 24:44

Abel to Zechariah

Remember, the Bible that Jesus used was organized differently. Chronicles was the last book in this Bible. When he quotes Abel to Zechariah, he is talking about the ENTIRE Old Testament. Abel is in the first book, and Zechariah was in the last book.

And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

Matthew 23:35

/ Extra-Biblical /

This term applies to any text that is not the Bible. Often these sources help to illuminate or explain portions of the Bible. For example, Josephus, a Jewish historian from the time of Jesus has recorded many cultural insights that aren't found in the Bible.

The Main Question

"The question is, what determined whether a book was canonical or not? Evidently those books that possessed special authority were included in the canon, others were not. It was not the inclusion of books in the sacred canon that made them authoritative, but rather, those that had the stamp of divine authority on them in the first place were eventually incorporated in the collection..."

"It bears repeating that no human authority and no council of rabbis ever made an OT book authoritative. These books were inspired by God and had the stamp of authority on them from the beginning. Through long usage in the Jewish community their authority was recognized, and in due time they were added to the collection of canonical books."

– pg. 69, 72: *A General Introduction to the Bible*, David Ewert, 1990

6. The New Testament calls the Old Testament...

- a. **Scripture** *John 10:35, 19:36; 2 Peter 1:2*
- b. **the Scriptures** *Matthew 22:29; Acts 18:24*
- c. **holy Scriptures** *Romans 1:2*
- d. **sacred writings** *2 Timothy 3:15*
- e. **law** *John 10:34, 12:34, 15:25; 1 Corinthians 14:21*
- f. **law and the prophets** *Matthew 5:17, 7:12, 22:40; Luke 16:16; 24:44*

7. The bottom line is this: Jesus and the rest of the New Testament authors referred to the entire Old Testament as **SCRIPTURE**.

8. Basic tests of Old Testament canonicity:

- a. Did the book have prophetic influence? (i.e. was it highly influenced if not directly written or dictated by a recognized prophet of God?)
- b. How did the book hold up under the discussion and discretion of God's people?
- c. Was the book considered to be holy in Biblical times?

New Testament Canon

There were basically five criteria the early church fathers used to determine the canonicity of New Testament texts:

1. **CONTEXT**
Is the book consistent with the Gospels, and the OT?
2. **AUTHORSHIP**
Was the author an Apostle or did he have a sustained relationship with an Apostle?
3. **DATE OF WRITING**
Though this would be embodied in “Authorship”, some have pointed out that only writings which originated in the “period of the incarnation” could be accepted as authoritative for the church. This comprises the period from the birth of Christ to the death of the last Apostle. Ephesians 2:20 tells us that the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, so once they were off the scene we have no more direct revelation, one might say. Thus, if a writing didn’t originate in this time period, it couldn’t be considered by default.
4. **CATHOLICITY**
Was it universally accepted by churches?
5. **SPIRITUAL** (or Inspiration)
Does this material reveal the truth of God?
Is the book spiritual in character?

In the early church, about 180 A.D., elders from cities where the Church was strong, met and decided which letters in their possession had Apostolic credibility. These men of God **PRAYED**, evaluated, and decided which of the books would be considered Christian Scripture.

Summary of Canon

“Jesus Himself affirmed the full authority of the Old Testament as Scripture. Then He made His own words and deeds equally authoritative, and promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would remind them of His ministry and teach them its significance. The canon of the New Testament, then, is the authoritative record and interpretation of God’s revelation of Himself through Jesus Christ.”

R. Gundry. A Survey of the New Testament, p. 58

/ Apostle /

Someone who had actually seen or been with Jesus, and was then personally commissioned by him to carry the message of the Gospel.

/ Communication /

Communication and transportation were limited when the Bible was written and recognized as canon. It’s interesting that the churches who had little or no contact with outside churches often reached similar conclusions about which texts were Scripture.

The New Testament Canon

“It has often been observed that the question of the NT canon is more problematic than that of the OT. The OT was endorsed by Jesus and the apostles, and so we can rest assured that “the law, the prophets, and the psalms,” as Jesus called our tripartite OT, is for us the Word of God. No body of literature ever had its credentials confirmed by a higher authority.

“This does not mean, however, that the NT has less authority than the OT. The apostles clearly interpreted the OT in the light of the NT. The Christ who authenticated the OT has also imparted his authority to the NT. On the eve of his crucifixion he promised to send his disciples the Holy Spirit, his Other Self, who, he said, “will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26). The NT is the written deposit of the special fulfillment of these words of Jesus.

“His Spirit not only inspired the writers of the NT books but he also witnessed to the authenticity of their message. The church was guided in affirming our twenty-seven-book NT canon by the Spirit. We may say this in retrospect, for if we look at the process by which the NT canon became fixed it strikes us as being very human. God, however, was at work in the church and watched over his word.”

– pg. 125: A General Introduction to the Bible, David Ewert, 1990

/ Septuagint /

The Septuagint gets its name (derived from Latin *septuaginta*, seventy, hence the abbreviation LXX) from a legendary account in the Letter of Aristeas of how seventy-two Jewish scholars were asked by the Egyptian pharaoh Ptolemy II Philadelphus in the 3rd century BCE to translate the Torah for inclusion in the Library of Alexandria.

The names “Septuagint” and “LXX” are of later Latin origin and are not used in Greek; the usual Greek name for the translation is “*kata tous ebdomekonta*” (according to the seventy).

The Apocrypha

“Generally speaking there are fourteen or fifteen books, written during the last two centuries before Christ and the first century of the Christian era, that make up the collection of books called the Apocrypha. The Revised Standard Version (in those that have the Apocrypha) lists the following titles: 1 & 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, The Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (or The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach), Baruch, The Letter of Jeremiah, The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, The Prayer of Manasseh, 1 & 2 Maccabees.”

“One of the difficulties in explaining the meaning of the word ‘Apocrypha’ arises from the fact that the word means different things to different people. The word apocrypha is a Greek neuter plural of the singular apokryphon, and signifies books that are ‘hidden away’.

“It was originally a term applied to those books that were held to be so mysterious and profound that in the opinion of some Jews they were to be hidden from ordinary readers. Since only the initiated could understand them, they were to be withdrawn from common use.”

“Nowadays, when something is described as apocryphal, we mean that it is fictitious. An apocryphal story is simply not true. The word is used of legendary tales that tend to gather around distinguished people. In this popular sense of the word, ‘apocryphal’ is really a derogatory term. In fact, early Christians used the term apocryphal for those books

that were withheld from general circulation, not because they were so profound but because of doubts about their authenticity.”

“We use the word ‘apocryphal’ in this chapter to refer to that collection of Jewish books that are not found in the Hebrew Bible. These books are, however, in the Greek Septuagint, and Jerome grudgingly allowed them to slip into the Latin Vulgate in the fourth century A.D., and so they have become part of the Roman Catholic Church. Protestants, however, do not accept them as canonical and call them ‘Apocrypha.’ Many Protestant Bibles have the Apocrypha in them, but they are not held to be on par with the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible.”

– pg. 74,73: *A General Introduction to the Bible*, David Ewert, 1990

The Pseudepigrapha

“Besides the books that we call the Apocrypha, Judaism produced a body of literature that has come to be known as the Pseudepigrapha. These books never made a serious bid for canonical status and we mention them only to indicate that there was a vast number of Jewish books in circulation from which the biblical books were set off.

“Since the Roman Catholic Church accepts the Apocrypha as canonical, scholars in that tradition at times speak of the Pseudepigrapha as the

Apocrypha. One could, however, just as well call some of the apocryphal books pseudepigraphic, for the word simply means that the author of a book writes under a pen name. Moreover, some of the pseudepigraphical books are anonymous, not pseudonymous. Some Protestant scholars, therefore, prefer to speak of the Pseudepigrapha as the “wider Apocrypha.” However, the term Pseudepigrapha is used quite generally today, and we use it here to designate those books, composed by Jewish writers between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200, that fall outside the Hebrew canon and the Apocrypha.”

– pg. 80: *A General Introduction to the Bible*, David Ewert, 1990

What about the stuff that *didn't* get in?

1. Not **EVERYTHING** made it into the Bible.
2. Some of the material that didn't make it into the canon can be found in the **Apocrypha** (*definition: “hidden”*).

These books were written **IN-BETWEEN** the Old Testament and the New Testament. A time of about 400 years.
3. The Apocrypha was a part of the Bible called the Septuagint (abbreviated LXX).
 - a. LXX means **70**.
 - b. The LXX was a common **TRANSLATION** used during Jesus' time.
 - c. The LXX was written in **GREEK**, which was the language everyone knew.
4. Why is the Apocryphal literature not in the Protestant Bible?
 - a. Jesus, the Apostles, and the first generation of church fathers after the Apostles never referred to any passage in the Apocrypha in their writings, nor did they ever refer to it as Scripture.
 - b. The Jews do not consider the Apocrypha to be Scripture.
5. The Apocrypha is in Roman Catholic Bibles, but is not considered to be on the same level as the “rest” of Scripture.

Understanding the Bible

1. We cannot fully understand the Bible without faith in Jesus as our **SAVIOR**.

Why? We need the Holy Spirit to **TEACH** us what would otherwise be impossible to understand.

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. "For who has known the mind of the Lord that He may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:11-16

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.

John 16:13

2. Anyone can become a Christian, so anyone can **UNDERSTAND** the Bible.

It does not take a degree from a Bible college to understand Scripture!

3. Illumination is the Holy Spirit's work of making **TRUTH** from the Bible clear when a Christian reads the Bible.

This is why people are touched differently by the same passages. The Holy Spirit always teaches us what we need to know, when we need to know it. This doesn't mean the Bible is only a matter of interpretation, and that any verse can mean anything. God is consistent in the overall meaning of Scripture, but is creative and powerful enough to make it apply to various people's circumstances, in different places in the world, at every point of history.

/ Illumination /

While inspiration refers to the Holy Spirit's work in recording the Bible, illumination refers to the Holy Spirit's work in making the meaning of Scripture clear to those who read it, teaching them what they need to know, when they need to know it.

How the Bible Describes Itself

1. Seed

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God.

1 Peter 1:23

2. Sword

- a. In Ephesians the sword is in our hand, defending against the enemy.

Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Ephesians 6:17

- b. In Hebrews the sword is in God's hands, penetrating and deeply impacting our lives.

For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

3. Food

When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty.

Jeremiah 15:16

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

Matthew 4:4

4. Milk

Like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.

1 Peter 2:2

5. Hammer

Is not my Word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?

Jeremiah 23:29

6. Fire

Therefore this is what the LORD God Almighty says: "Because the people have spoken these words, I will make my words in your mouth a fire and these people the wood it consumes."

Jeremiah 5:14

7. Lamp

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Psalms 119:105

8. Mirror

Anyone who listens to the Word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

James 1:23-25

Problems in Understanding the Bible

1. The New Testament was written almost **2000** years ago, and the Old Testament is even older. This naturally leads to some problems in our understanding of the text.

2. Differences in **CULTURE**:

- a. we've never had a king;
- b. we've (probably) never farmed or raised sheep;
- c. we've never performed an Old Testament sacrifice;
- d. we don't live in tribes;
- e. we've never lived under the oppression of the Philistines;
- f. we've never lived in a house made of mud, straw, and brick;
- g. we don't live in a Hellenistic (i.e. Ancient Greek) culture;
- h. we don't have a formal priesthood;
- i. we don't travel by camel or donkey;
- j. we don't write on papyrus or clay tablets.

3. Differences in **LANGUAGE**.

4. Differences in common **KNOWLEDGE**.

The author is writing to an audience that has a specific point of reference as to the context of what is written. For example, each letter in the New Testament was written for/to a specific purpose/issue, and we often know very little about what that was. It's like listening in on a phone conversation or reading a letter from someone you don't know to someone you've never met. Another example is when the Old Testament references another book that has been lost to history. We're left with an incomplete picture whereas the original audience would have known the book being referenced.

Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the Book of the Acts of Solomon?

1 Kings 11:41

5. We are filled with our own **ASSUMPTIONS**.

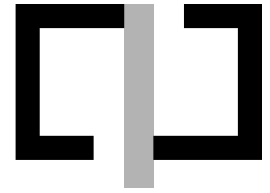
6. The key to understanding the Bible is to first understand it in its own context and then bring that truth into **TODAY**.

Later in this course we will learn methods to help you to study the Bible, overcome these obstacles, and understand what it says and why it matters to your life!

/ three strikes /

If someone told you they always strike out when they take a test, then you know that they are a terrible test taker. Would you know what they mean if you'd never heard about the game of baseball?

HOMWORK



This week your assignment is to read the first 11 chapters from the Book of Genesis.

If you want to be a superstar, read ALL of Genesis this week!

Genesis is 50 chapters long. Read or listen to 7 chapters a day.

Some Free Apps to Get:

Consider downloading the following FREE apps to your phone:

1. **YouVersion** — This bible app will give you free access to EVERY translation available and many audio Bibles.



Bible
Daily Study, Audio & Prayer
★★★★★ 5.8M

2. **Faithlife Study Bible** — This bible app comes with free study notes.



Faithlife Study Bible
Reference
★★★★★ 9.6K

3. **Read Scripture** — This is a great app for reading Scripture and learning more about the structure of the Bible.



Read Scripture
Books
★★★★★ 1.3K

