

# **INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE**

## **Student Manual**

Title: Introduction to The Bible

In the preparation of this open educational resource (OER) have been consulted and derived help from the work in English: *The Bible: An Introduction* by Donald E. Demaray (1996). "A book acclaimed in the high circles of the theological world. It is not just a textbook, but a manual that can serve anyone who wants to know the details of the Holy Bible."

# **INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE**

Course Code BI-101

# INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

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## Syllabus

### Course: Introduction to the Bible

Course code: BI-101

Required for all candidates to Associate Degree in Pastoral Theology

Pre-required courses: None

### Purpose of the course

The purpose of Introduction to the Bible is to make data about the Bible available to the student. A reference booklet that provides information easily, quickly and succinctly to the facts. Simplicity and usefulness have been kept in mind from beginning to end, and the facts are arranged in the form of an outline, with marginal indication of the themes. Believers, church workers, Sunday school teachers, youth counselors, leaders, and pastors will find it a useful tool.

### Objectives

Academic

1. Explore the magnificence of the Bible, as a book
2. Study the journey of the Bible from papyrus to codice (book)
3. Learn what the biblical canon is and how it was established

Learning:

1. Acquire knowledge of the Bible's inspiration and interpretation
2. Learn about old and modern translations of the Bible
3. Learn the background of the Old and New Testaments, their divisions, language and time in which they were written.

Practical

1. Participate in four (4) in-person lessons and four (4) distance lessons
2. Complete the exam for each lesson
3. Complete readings and auxiliary assignments, according to the teacher's instructions.
4. Complete a 500-word essay on the course's impact on your life.

### Score

Attendance 10 pts.

Participation 10 pts.

Assignments 64 pts. (8 per lesson)

Essay 16 pts.

### Grade scale

A = 90-100 pts.

B = 79-89 pts.

C = 69-78 pts.

All assignments must be submitted on time. If the student is unable to submit an assignment on time, they must contact the teacher immediately for approval.

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### **Late Submission Policy**

Late assignments: 5% deduction.

Assignments delayed by more than one week: deduction of 10%

Subjects not submitted during the term of the course will not be accepted, except in special circumstances (ei. death in the family, health issues, etc.) to be considered, by case and approval of the teacher.

### **Code of Honor**

The Great Commission Theological Institute operates based on a Code of Honor shared by the Church The Great Commission, the board of directors, the administration, the faculty, and students. This code, a reflection of our doctrinal values, defines the principles by which we are governed. Two essential concepts stand out: God is the source of our lives, redemption, and courage as His creatures; and our task is to reflect His glory in behavior and works.

Although we understand that some may differ with some elements of the Honor Code, we expect our students and faculty to commit to respecting and abiding by the Honor Code of the Great Commission Theological Institute. The Code of Honor is available via [aimsinstitute.org/codigo-de-honor](https://aimsinstitute.org/codigo-de-honor).

**Lesson 1**  
**What a Book!**  
**The Bible is the Book**

The Bible is more than just a book. It's the book. Werner Keller, a German historian (and he is not a religious historian) says that in human history there is no book that has had comparable "revolutionary influence" or that "has so decisively influenced the development of the Western world".

No book, Keller declares, has had such a worldwide effect as the "Book of Books: The Bible."<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt that the Bible stands out as the greatest of books in the history of literature and humanity. Yes, the Bible is more than just a book. The Bible is God's message. It is God trying to communicate with man. In other words, it is God's "Word" to humanity.

Moreover, the Bible is the book par excellence, because there is no other work in the world that has been so widely read for so long and so continuously. In ancient times and in the Middle Ages it was incessantly copied. When the printing press appeared in the fifteenth century, it was the first book to be printed.

From then until today it has been the envy of publishers for its great power for sale; in effect, it leaves behind the sales of almost every other publication by a staggering margin. More than 25,000,000 Bibles or portions of it are sold annually in all parts of our world.

Why study the Bible?

Believers in faith in Christ believe in the Bible, Old and New Testaments, as the written Word of God given to men, and as such has the omnipresence and omnipotence of God, in this sense we can consider the Bible as a means or a very powerful instrument capable of doing anything.

On the other hand, it is the task of every Christian to carry out the task of Jesus Christ to bring his gospel of salvation to every creature, thus becoming Christ's workers to complete the task of salvation throughout the world. In order to fulfill this task, it is necessary to have the necessary tools, such as a worker to fulfill his work. you need adequate tools for your work, but it is also necessary that you know them and that you know how to use them, because otherwise not only can they not be useful for your work, but the consequences of misuse will result in incomplete, poorly done, corrupt or inadequate work, in addition to the tool can cause damage to your person or other workers.

In the same way it happens with the Word of God, that the misuse resulting from ignorance and irresponsibility brings serious consequences for those who preach it and for those who listen to it, so we see that there are many bad workers who use the Word of God for their own benefit, or to the detriment of the one who listens to it, condemning and condemning themselves instead of fulfilling the work of salvation.

How to study the Bible?

We can know the Bible through its academic study, however, understanding it implies knowing the purpose that God had to make his word known to man and it will only be possible through the same procedure by which 'the Inspiration of God' was written. To understand this, consider that a literary work can be read by anyone who knows how to read, but understanding it takes knowing the author's purpose in writing it or mastering the subject matter. A medical treatise can be read by anyone who can read, but understanding it is taken by a doctor or explained to us by the author of that treatise.

Therefore, to understand the Bible and make it useful, take that God put in the reader that same

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inspiration that He put in the authors who wrote the Bible or that we know God and the reason why He gave His Word to men.

To know the Bible, it is necessary to study exegetically (Exegesis: explanation, interpretation of a text) of the Bible, but it is also necessary to know and approach God to ask Him for the inspiration necessary to understand His Word, since it is impossible for us ourselves to have by our own carnal nature the minimum indispensable to know the thoughts of God (Psalms 92:5).

### The Existence of God

The idea of God cannot be denied, still, less can the existence of the word: "God" be denied. There will be people who do not believe in God and deny His existence, but by pronouncing the word God, an idea (conception) of that word is necessarily formed in our minds.

Trying to describe this idea with the single word "God" is somewhat difficult because of everything that the idea of God contains, even if you want to deny the existence of God, since you cannot deny or prove what you have never seen, since God; "No one ever saw him" (John 1:18).

Man as a mortal (or finite: who has an end) being cannot approach God since in himself he will always have limitations to understand God who is immortal (infinite: who has no end). So, if God exists it is He who has to approach and reveal Himself to man, even when he is not able to know God for himself (how can we know anything if we do not know of His existence?), for that very reason the ways or manners in which God reveals Himself to man must be simple and understandable so that any kind of man- educated or ignorant - can understand them.

There are three obvious ways that are simple and understandable by which man can know God:

#### 1. Nature: the world around us

The world around us and its complexity gives us evidence that there had to be a creator, who established order and laws that govern the relations between the entities and systems that make up the universe: (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20). This argument has been called, "Cause and Effect," since the question invariably arises: If the world exists, who did it? that is, every effect has a cause, however with this same argument arises a rhetorical question (Rhetorical question: it is a question that, either has no congruent answer, is answered, or the answer contradicts the question) that questions Who made God? But, whatever our questions, we will always come to the same conclusion to the supreme good: God, the beginning, the ultimate, the only one; you can't go any further.

Trying to question this argument has asked rhetorical questions. It has been said that the universe was made (or was made) by chance, there is talk of "evolution" or spontaneous creation and other scientific theories, etc. Arguments that after some time it is recognized that they must be taken by faith! because they cannot be bought, since there are many scientific gaps that have not been answered.

This argument shows us a purpose—something that other theories outside of God's revelation cannot prove—the Glory of God. The world around us with all its fascination and dazzling grandeur is a reminder that God is its doer. That this doer exists and is real.

#### 2. The human mind: reason or intellect

The human mind shows us several very interesting questions that make us ask ourselves what do we do? Why are we in the world? etc., and in trying to answer these questions we come to understand the existence of God. Let's look at three arguments that answer the main questions:

A. Theological Argument (realization, result, consequence, or fulfillment).



This argument begs the question why or why am I in the world? Always at some point in our lives this question arises whose answer is not to understand: "The purpose of being in the world." A person who denies the existence of God will not find a definite purpose for his life in any sense. This always creates inadaptability not only social, but even identity that invariably leads him to find no meaning of his own existence but only lives a mere accident that the same gives that it exists or does not exist.

If God does not exist, what do I do here? Whoever does not believe in God will not, in the long run, enter a purpose in his life. Instead, the man who believes in the existence of God (Theist: who believes in God), will see a purpose in being in this world, that

purpose is to live! and he will always act (and his actions will be governed) according to this principle: God created man to live, now in the world and then in his Kingdom.

### B. Anthropological argument

Why do I behave this way? Men, no matter how much they talk about natural selection, evolution, humanism, atheism, etc., within themselves, in the intrinsic nature of man (intrinsic: his real value), have capacities that animals do not possess. For example: consciousness, intelligence, faith, etc., which come into open conflict with the ideas and theories that equate man to all creation. Man has in his reasoning that animals do not have-, well delineated the concepts of good and evil, just, and unjust, etc. In other words, man has a well-defined moral sense of what is desirable as opposed to what is not.

It is very interesting that the humanist and naturalist - who does not accept any absolute norm, when giving advice - will always exhort people to do "The good". If he does not believe that man is a being ruled by his Creator, why does he do it? if the humanist cannot explain to himself satisfactorily that it is good and evil, why does he give such advice? The believer in God can and should satisfactorily explain behavior that is guided by the concepts of good and evil.

### C. Ontological argument

Why do I have the idea of God in mind? Man has in his mind the idea of God, whether theistic or not, a being the beginning of everything and that is all perfection, logically this must exist, otherwise it would not be perfect. God as we understand the word is the most perfect being who can be thought of, so he must exist.

This word comes from the Greek to be, existence. Against this argument it has been said that ignorance, fear, and cruelty "created God," and if man is freed from these ideas, the "existence of God" will end. But this cannot be achieved without taking away man's rational will, free will. Man as a representative of humanity has always tried to banish the idea of God. (See for example Psalms 14 and 53), secularizing and re-educating oneself far from God, but, it has failed, let us take as an example the communist countries, the French revolution, etc. We wanted to give the idea that education means, not believing in God. That the word "judgment" means to be superior to anyone who believes in God, and that not to have "prejudices" is not to fear a punishment from God; but openly, at least implicitly. Despite all this, man has utterly failed to deny the existence of God in the human mind, for man still has God in mind and this idea will not end.

It has been said that these three arguments put to us by the human mind are incomplete and in no way fully "prove" the existence of God. Within this controversy that has lasted hundreds of years, however, the questions proposed by the human mind have not been discarded.

It has also been said that nature and the human mind are incomplete since they do not have a reliable and complete measure (parameter) with which to compare God. God has yet revealed Himself

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in another form; a form that leaves no room for doubt that God exists, this written form is reliable historical proof. (Galatians. 4:9).

### 3. The Word: Sacred Scripture or the Bible

It is possible that through nature and the human mind it is very difficult or perhaps, it is not possible to know God (personal God), and that is why the simplest and most direct way in which God has revealed Himself to man is through something written.

There are at least four reasons that show us the need for written revelation:

(1) Without written revelation, there can be no knowledge of God understandable to all.

(2) Without a written revelation, it is impossible to set a true standard of morality and not just intuitive.

(3) Without a written revelation, the future state is just guesswork.

(4) Without written revelation, there is no pointing of a way of salvation for sinners. This written form should reveal to us God's will, and all that God wants to teach us. That is why any enemy of God, whether Satan or any man who denies the existence of God will always seek to destroy this revelation of God, either by persecuting whoever reads or possesses it, destroying it or making fun of it, claiming that the Bible contains thousands of scientific errors, all so that this revelation is not considered.

It is important to clarify that the Bible does not "try" to prove that God exists, for it is a fact, because it begins with these words: "In the beginning I believe God"..., and does not try to prove or prove the existence of God in human terms because it would simply and simply be impossible to describe the nature of God and even less to prove it with the limitations of human language, In addition, we have already said that there is nothing to compare it to.

The Bible describes God as a reality, the reader may or may not believe it, but may not deny what is written. Let us bear in mind that the Bible is not a scientific or academic treatise, the Bible is a Theological Treatise, so this book will show us and reveal God. If we enter the Bible with pre-established and humanistic ideas, we will come out of its reading. But if we enter the Bible looking for God because God has revealed Himself in it, we will find Him.

### Notes

The Bible is only about 611,000 words long, which means that Moses wrote a little more than 20% of the Bible. That's incredible. In word count, Moses is above all other writers. And if the five books of the Pentateuch are a quintuple book, that means Moses wrote the longest book in the Bible.

It is often necessary to do research to show why certain men are believed to have written each book. It is interesting to study about the various ways in which academics make a connection with a certain author. Of course, many of the books are very clear about who the author is because they tell us about it in the book itself.

Others, such as Hebrews, do not give a clear indication of who the author might have been. Most people believe it was Paul because of the number of other books in the same genre he wrote. However, Hebrews was written to the Jews, and Paul focused his ministry on reaching the Gentiles. The writing style is also not like Paul's. However, if Paul were to write a book with a purely Jewish audience in mind, it would probably come out written as the book of Hebrews is.

There are people who debate the authorship of various books for the purpose of overthrowing the authority of the Bible. God used real people to write His Word; and sometimes we don't know who

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God used. Regardless of who is believed to have written the book of Hebrews, or any other book, the important thing is to trust the content of God's Word. He develops a relationship with man through His Holy Scriptures.

In the English Bible, the Old Testament is organized into groups according to the type of book. They are then organized chronologically within their grouping. That means that some books toward the end of the Old Testament (in the prophets' section) fit chronologically earlier in the Old Testament with the history books.

### Pentateuch

The books of the law or the books of Moses, as they were written by him. They are the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

### History books

They are so named because they contain historical archives. They are: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

### Poetic or Sapient Books

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

### Major Prophets

They are so called because their books are longer, not more important. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel

### Minor Prophets

They are so called because their books are shorter, not less important.

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

### The New Testament

The New Testament is also divided into groups. It was written in the first century BC

#### The Gospels

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

#### History

Facts of the apostles

#### Pauline Epistles

Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon

#### General Epistles

Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude

#### Prophecy

Apocalypse

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Lesson 1 - Quiz

What a Book

**[Click following link to take the quiz: https://forms.office.com/r/LiCBQEGe89](https://forms.office.com/r/LiCBQEGe89)**  
**If the link doesn't work copy and paste it into your browser**

1. Why study the Bible?

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2. How do you study the Bible?

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3. Give three pieces of evidence of God's existence

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4. Which are the divisions of the Old Testament?

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5. Which are the divisions of the New Testament?

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## Lesson 2 Manuscripts

In the study of the Biblical Introduction there is always talk of “The Manuscripts”, but it is rarely explained what they are or why they are named like this. Manuscripts have been given the name Manuscripts to the transcriptions of copies of the oldest texts that form the books of the biblical Canon, Old and New Testaments obviously made by hand on papyrus or parchments usually made by hand.

This denomination arose from the need to name in some way all the materials related to the origin of the Bible (it is also called bibliology).

In the study of the Biblical Introduction there is always talk of “The Manuscripts”, but it is rarely explained what they are or why they are named like this. Manuscripts have been given the name Manuscripts to the transcriptions of copies of the oldest texts that form the books of the biblical Canon, Old and New Testaments obviously made by hand on papyrus or parchments usually made by hand.

We currently have none of the original writings (autographs), what we have now are about 200 copies of the Old Testament in various languages, not just Hebrew, reliable ranging from 400 B.C. (for the most recent discoveries) to 900 A.D., which is the “Masoretic” text.

Of the New Testament we have about 4,700 manuscripts in Greek and including some versions in other ancient languages add up to about 5,200 copies ranging from the first four centuries of our time to the eleventh century. As we can see it is such a large and diverse amount that it is necessary to purify the Manuscripts, to put them in order, to find the best, those that reflect the divine inspiration of the originals, because from them arise the current copies of the Bible.

We see the need to separate the false from what is not, hence the desire to have a science that helps us to this purification. This is the hermeneutics (Art of interpreting texts and especially that of interpreting sacred texts) that deals with the materials of writing, the instruments of writing, the form of ancient books, types of writing, their reliability and veracity of these manuscripts.

In the II-IV centuries; during the expansion of the church throughout the world, many believers felt compelled to write traditions about the life and teaching of Jesus. For this reason, there were not only “four gospels”, but there were others who claimed to have been written by the apostles. So we have gospels written by pseudo-Pauls, Peters, Johns, etc. The longing to tell in writing the wonders of life and salvation through Christ became more urgent. Many even felt the need to imagine what was missing from the narratives of Jesus’ life and deeds in the four gospels.

Some signed the narratives with their own name, others to be accepted sought the “sponsorship” of an apostle or respected character, even if he had died many years and even centuries before. Therefore, the need arises to separate the books that were really inspired from those that were not, appearing the term “apocryphal”, which means: “hidden”, referring to the writings of authors to whom facts are attributed that cannot be historically proven and who are also not considered to have been divinely inspired.

That’s how we came to have gospels, Acts, epistles, and apocryphal Revelation. In the end this happens not only in the writings of the New Testament, but also in the Old Testament. There are books that narrate the Ascension of Moses, The Prophecies of Enoch, The Song of the Three Young Men in the Fiery Furnace, The Prayer of Manasseh as He Repented of His Sins. Many of these writings have disappeared and we know them only from the quotations or references of other authors.

### The Manuscript Era

Until the recent discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumram 1952), and that of Ketef Himnon on

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June 25, 1979. The oldest existing Hebrew manuscript (Old Testament) was from around 900 A.D., (The Old Testament was completed in 400 B.C.).

The discoveries of the Qumran and Ketef Himnon, give clarity to the Old Testament, since the manuscripts of the Qumran date from the years 120 to 100 years BC, and the last one that is a small scroll, is around 400 BC, comparing them with the existing manuscripts, we are amazed by their similarity since there is a difference between them of 1,300 years. This shows us the reverence with which the sacred writings were treated by the Jews.

The reason why until now there were no ancient copies of the Hebrew writings were (only the most important):

- 1.- The manuscripts were copied literally. "Exactly" the same as above. Since they had very strict rules for the transcription of manuscripts; so severe that manuscripts that did not meet the requirements were burned or buried, if they had few variants, they were given to schools to be used as textbooks.
- 2.- The Jews do not keep the old copies because the new ones were reliable.
- 3.- Due to the persecutions to which the Jews have been subjected, they preferred to save the copy of their best-preserved manuscripts, that is, the new ones.

For these three reasons, we can have full confidence in the Old Testament, as a comparison of the Masoretic Text with the Qumran scrolls, which are up to 1,300 years apart, gives us almost word-for-word reliability even though there was no printing press, much fewer modern forms of transcription.

The original manuscripts of the Old Testament were undoubtedly made of skins sewn from end to end. This is attested to in passages such as Psalm 40:8 and Jeremiah 36:14, 23. The manuscripts that have come to us are generally of parchment; if they come from the East, they are made of leather. The absence of manuscripts. Ancient Hebrews are due as already noted, to large extent, to the Jewish custom mentioned in the Talmud; all the deteriorated sacred manuscripts were buried and those with transcription errors."

### New Testament Manuscripts

The twenty-seven books of the New Testament, except for the Gospel of Matthew, were originally written in "Koine" Greek, or popular Greek, which was deeply implanted in Palestine for more than three centuries from the conquest of Alexander the Great.

The original manuscripts of the New Testament disappeared, as did all copies of the first three centuries, except for some fragments. The papyrus, used in correspondence (2 Jn. 1:12) deteriorated rapidly, and in the time of Diocletian (A.D. 303) the persecutors of Christians went after copies of the Holy Scriptures to destroy them.

Despite the absence of the printing press, the transcribers multiplied the copies. The copyists devoted themselves especially to the four gospels; the transcriptions of Paul's epistles were somewhat less numerous. As for the Apocalypse, it was little copied.

Manuscript copies of the New Testament are of two types: uncial and cursive. The so-called uncial (gr. "capital") script showed no signs of aspiration or accents; nor were the words separated, except incidentally, marking the beginning of a new paragraph. Only a small gap was left between lines. Cursive writing is written in a common way, in small characters, and with word separation. The change of writing occurred around the ninth century.

## Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. Here and there are small portions of Aramaic, the language of Syria. Aramaic gradually became the popular language of the Jews beginning with the exile, and in New Testament days it was probably the language spoken by Jesus and his disciples.

Daniel 2:4b-7:28, Ezra 4:8-6:18 and 7:12-26, and Jeremiah 10:11 were written in Aramaic. See also 2 Kings 18:26. In the Gospels we hear Jesus speaking in Aramaic: "talita cumi" (Mark 5:41); "efata" (Mark 7:34); "Eloi, Eloi, sabactani lama?" (Mark 15:34; compare Matthew 27:46). In addition, Jesus used the word "Aba" meaning "Father" in the Garden of Gethsemane, and St. Paul used the same Aramaic word in Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6. In 1 Corinthians 16:22 we have the well-known expression "Maranata" ("Our Lord, Come!"). In Acts 1:19 we have "Aceldama" ("Field of Blood").

Aramaic, though related to Hebrew, is not derived from it. Both are Semitic languages, such as Arabic, Assyrian, Babylonian, Canaanite. They are very different languages from European languages such as Spanish, French, and German. For example, in our Western languages we write from left to right, while Hebrew is written from right to left.

In Hebrew, vowels were pronounced, but not written and this lasted until the seventh century A.D. when they were added by the Masoretes. Vowels are indicated by dots and small markings above and below of the consonants. The oldest biblical manuscripts in Greek and Hebrew have no punctuation, no separation between words, and are in uncial characters (all capital letters).

## Koiné

New Testament Greek is the common or vulgar dialect of that time, known as Koine. But, especially in the gospels, he is a Koine influenced by Aramaic. The Koine translates Aramaic sayings, and this shines through the Greek here and there. Jesus spoke in Aramaic, and His words were written in the Greek language.

Gospel scholars often translate Greek back into Aramaic, and then back into Greek, as an attempt to achieve the fullness of flavor of the original spoken language. But the Aramaic influence—and the Hebrew influence as well, since the Old Testament is the antecedent of the New—should not be exaggerated. In the last analysis, the Greek of the New Testament is authentic Koine, with the unmistakable characteristics of that ancient language.

Why was the New Testament written in that common language? Because in Jesus' time it was the international language. A man named Alexander of Macedon played an important role in making this so. Alexander (fourth century B.C.) conquered much of the ancient, civilized world and spread his language everywhere he went.

So, from India to Rome, and on all the shores of the Mediterranean, he came to speak - it was common Greek. It was natural that the New Testament should be written in this popular international language and not in local Aramaic. The fact that this has happened highlights the fact that the Gospel is for the whole world and not for a select isolated people.

## Manuscripts on Papyrus and Parchment

Before the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century, the Bible was only known in manuscript form. That means that the New Testament, not to mention Antiquity, was copied by hand for fourteen hundred years and even in the sixteenth century continued to be copied like this. Those handwritten copies were called "manuscripts" (Manus in Latin means "by hand" and scriptum means



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“written”).

The materials on which the ancient manuscripts were written were generally of two kinds: papyrus (2 John 12, in the original) and parchment (2 Timothy 4:13). E1 papyrus is a species of reed, a reed (see “Plants”) that occurs on the banks of the Nile River.

The plant reaches a thickness like that of a man’s wrist. The fibrous medium was cut into very thin vertical layers. The cut strips were glued together to form larger leaves. Another strip of similar size was placed crossed over the first one and the leaves thus formed were crushed to form a thinner material. Finally, they were polished with pumice stone.

The finished leaves varied in size between 8 and 20 centimeters by 15 and 45 centimeters, and the color was light brown or grayish. On the front of the sheet (the side for writing) the lines go horizontally. This is the “obverse”. On the “reverse” the lines go vertically.

It used to be written on him with a reed (“calamus”) cut into the shape of a pen to write (3 John 13), and the ink (Jeremiah 36:18; 2 John 12) was made of soot, rubber, and water. Only specially trained people wrote, and some, like St. Paul, who had a secretary (amanuense), dictated the documents and at the end signed them to authenticate them.

Papyrus was very expensive; depending on its size and quality, each leaf cost the equivalent of 5 to 17 cents of gold. For centuries this material was used, predecessor of paper (our word “paper” is derived from “papyrus”).

Parchment (a word derived from “Pergamon”, a city in Asia Minor that at the end of the second century perfected parchment and exported it) was more durable than papyrus.

It was made of specially prepared leathers. Sheep and goat hides were dried, and polished with pumice. Sometimes young animals were used because their skin produced finer material; vellum, extra-fine parchment, was sometimes obtained from unborn animals extracted from the mother’s womb. Parchment was used from antiquity until the Middle Ages when it was gradually replaced by paper.

### The Scroll

The use of papyrus and parchment by the Israelites and Christians made it possible to compile extensive documents. The ancients wrote on whitewashed stones, metal, wood, clay, and other materials in which, due to their small size, there was little room for sculpture. Sewing or gluing with rubber several sheets formed long strips to the ends of which were glued rollers of bone or some other strong and durable substance.

The length of the scrolls varied, but it was rarely more than nine meters, roughly the size needed for Luke’s Gospel or Matthew’s. As the scrolls were heavy and uncomfortable, it was necessary to use helpers to hold, roll and unroll them while the rabbis read in the synagogues. It was written vertically on the scrolls, in columns five or seven centimeters wide.

Comparatively few ancient scrolls have been preserved; the specimen of Isaiah contained in the Dead Sea Scrolls is a rare and magnificent example of the ancient form of the scrolls. Even today, in synagogues, the Torah (i.e. the Law or the Pentateuch) is written by hand on parchment and in the ancient form of a scroll. These scrolls are used in public worship as in ancient times.

### The Book (codex)

The book, technically known as a “codex,” was devised and employed only after having used scrolls for centuries. Indeed, it is believed that the idea of forming books was born around the first century A.D. Its predecessor was the diptych, consisting of wooden tablets that were joined by a strap and



opened and closed like a book.

Both scrolls and books were used from the first to the fourth centuries; after this the codex was universally employed. The first books were made of papyrus or parchment. Several sheets were put together, folded in the center, and then glued down the back to form a "booklet." Several booklets were put together to form a "book". Each page contained several columns as in the Codex Sinaiticus. The codex shape provided many advantages, such as comfort and economy. Even if it was large, it was easier to hold a book than an uncomfortable scroll. In terms of economy, both sides of the leaves could be used, which was not possible in the scrolls.

Papyrus and vellum were scarce and expensive, but over time paper reduced the cost of producing books. Unfortunately, it did not appear in the Western world until the middle of the eighteenth century.

### All Greek and Hebrew originals disappeared

Today there is not a single original manuscript of the Greek or Hebrew Bible. The reason is not known for sure, but perhaps the order issued in 303 by the emperor Diocletian to destroy all Christian literature explains the fact. Another possible reason is that papyrus, material in which most of the New Testament was probably written, is not well preserved unless it is kept in a very dry place.

From a certain point of view the loss of the originals was convenient, since humanity tends to the worship of objects related to the sacred. God must be worshipped, not the Bible, let alone the paper and ink with which it is made. While the originals were lost, scientific research assures us that the Bible we read is, for all practical purposes, the same one that was produced under divine inspiration. But it is important to remember that all biblical manuscripts are copies.

### Copying Errors

The scrolls and books were produced either by a person copying from another manuscript, or by a group copying what was dictated to him. It is easy to understand that the amanuense could, by fatigue or carelessness, make mistakes. But the collective copying method also produced errors; several reasons made it possible, but the main error came from what scholars call "mis-heard."

There are also "view errors". It is enough to check the errata faith of the books to see that not all errors are of a mechanical type, but that some are produced by subconscious confusion of words.

### Despite everything, amazing accuracy

In the manuscripts that have come into our hands there are indeed "errors of hearing", "errors of sight", and other kinds of mistakes. But the amazing thing is that the Bible has been preserved so well. Although copied thousands of times by hand, the enormous number of manuscripts show that we possess what we might call a consistent and authentic biblical text.

There is a classic statement regarding the exactness of the New Testament, formulated by two great scholars of the past generation, Westcott and Hort: "Words which in our opinion are still doubtful hardly constitute one thousandth of the New Testament" (F. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, editors, New Testament in Original Greek 1882 vol. II, Introduction, p. 2).

One of the factors that contributed to the accuracy of the Old Testament was the Jewish belief in the sacredness of Scripture. Regarding these Josephus said: «... no one has dared to add, remove, or alter even one syllable..." (see Deuteronomy 4.2 and Jeremiah 26.2).

The fact is that the Jewish Scriptures were copied with scrupulous care. Scribes were the guard-

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

ians of sacred writings in biblical times, historically succeeded by the Masoretes (a word that follows “transmitters”). The Masoretes flourished between A.D. 500 and 1000, and their efforts to preserve the biblical text were laborious and almost unbelievable.

They used resources like these: they counted each letter of a book and determined the one that occupied the central place; they counted each word and determined the central one; they wrote down the number of times a word or phrase appeared in the Bible; books containing errors were discarded. In this way, it is easy to understand why the Scriptures have come to us almost perfectly.

Incidentally, the Masoretes, based in Babylon and Tiberias, on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, left us notes, the “Masoras”, along with the text of the Antiquity Testament.

One of the most famous Masoretes of Tiberias was Aaron ben Asher. The Masoretes preserved the Old Testament so perfectly that their work has come to us as a standard text, and is called the “Masoretic text”, also known by the abbreviation TM.

### Deliberate Changes

It should be noted that on some occasions there were copyists who deliberately introduced changes to the text. Sometimes they thought they clarified a doctrinal point in this way. At other times they believed they resolved a contradiction. But they had better leave the text as it was. Some copyists placed their changes in the margin, but others incorporated them into the text. Today textual criticism must draw the false from the true.

### Essentially insignificant variations

Although there are variations in the biblical texts, more in the New than in the Old Testament, most are of minimal importance, and no great doctrinal truth is called into question by textual errors. The many manuscripts provide a collective testimony to endow us with a usable and essentially accurate text.

There is probably no passage in the New Testament whose correct wording has not been preserved. The well-known scholar Frederick Kenyon says that “no fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith is based on controversial wording.” He adds this comment: “The emphasis on us in stating that, in essence, the text of the Bible is true will never be too much” (Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts, Revised by W. Adams, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1958, p. 55).

### Some ancient manuscripts of the Bible

#### Raw material of the textual critic

Ancient manuscripts (texts) and translations (versions) constitute the raw material with which the textual critic works. It also uses portions of the Bible cited by the Church fathers that give indications of the sources they used, but these quotations are usually not as important as the texts and versions themselves. What they are trying to do is to restore the original text. Generally, the older the manuscript, the more important it is, but some later manuscripts contain very old and authentic texts, in which case they are as important as the oldest copies.

Biblical manuscripts are not the same, and textual criticism must determine the correct text. The expert has manuscripts of the Old Testament dating from the third century B.C. to the twelfth century A.D., as well as ancient translations in Aramaic, Greek, Syriac, Latin and other languages. As for the New Testament, it has documents dating from the early second century A.D. to the sixteenth century, plus ancient translations into several languages, especially Latin, Syriac, and Coptic.

## Dead Sea Scrolls

Below, we note some of the major manuscripts dating from the second century B.C. to the fifth century A.D. Until 1947 our oldest manuscript of the Hebrew Old Testament, except for relatively unimportant fragments, dated from the late ninth century A.D. Our oldest manuscript of the New Testament was much older (by almost eight centuries) than our oldest Old Testament manuscripts.

But now we have copies of pre-Christian Hebrew texts. The first Dead Sea scrolls were discovered in 1947 in a cave near Qumram, northwest of the Dead Sea. The first discovery included a complete scroll of Isaiah in Hebrew, one of the oldest ever discovered, dated to the second century B.C.; like many of the other Dead Sea Scrolls, it agrees admirably with the recognized text of the Old Testament, the Masoretic text. It was the first of the Qumram materials ever published and is still the best known. After the first discoveries, other caves were systematically explored and materials from every book of the Old Testament except Esther's were discovered. Biblical commentaries and other kinds of literary works also appeared.

The great value of the scrolls is that their Hebrew texts are a vigorous testimony as to the confidence that the Old Testament we have known for centuries deserves. The Dead Sea Scrolls are the most dramatic Old Testament discovery so far this century. H. Roberts discovered a 6 x 9-centimeter papyrus fragment in a collection at the John Rylands Library, Manchester, England. It contains thirty words in Greek from John chapter 18 (18:31-33, 37-38). It is the oldest surviving manuscript portion of the New Testament and dates from the first half of the second century. It comes from a codex, not a scroll. We know this because it is written on both sides of the papyrus, a rare phenomenon in the scrolls. Scholars know the fragment by the symbol p.52.

## Bodmer Papyri (circa 200 A.D.)

In 1956, 1958 and 1962 the Bodmer II papyrus was published. This includes the first thirteen chapters of John in Greek, in near-perfect condition, and fragments of the remaining chapters. It is dated around 200 A.D. And it is in the Bodmer Library, near Geneva. In 1961 another Bodmer document was published: Luke 3:18 to John 15:8. Its origin may date back to the last quarter of the second century. Other Bodmer fragments include Judas and 2 Peter in Greek (about 200 A.D.), and portions of the Bible, from both the Old and New Testaments, in Greek and Coptic.

## Chester Beatty Papyri (s. III)

Acquired in 1930 by Chester Beatty, it was Sir Frederick Kenyon who announced them to the world in the London Times of 17 November 1931. They include portions of the Old and the New Testament, and their approximate date is from the third century A.D. (some have assigned dates more generally, dates ranging from the second to the fourth century).

There are eleven papyrus codices, seven from the Old Testament, three from the New and one part from 1 Enoch. The oldest copies of the Pauline epistles, with some gaps (especially the pastoral ones: 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) are in the group; also portions of the four gospels and Acts dating from shortly after 200 A.D.

A portion of the Apocalypse completes the papyri currently in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, except for thirty leaves of the Pauline Epistles that are in the library of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

### Codex Sinaiticus (s. IV)

In 1844 Constantine von Tischendorf discovered forty-three sheets of parchment from the now famous Codex Sinaiticus, in the monastery of St. Catherine, on Mount Sinai. Hence the name of the manuscript. Apparently, the monks were completely unaware of their value, because the forty-three leaves had been put in a basket of old papers where Tischendorf discovered and rescued them.

When he returned in 1859, he managed, although with great difficulty, to persuade the monks to give him what had remained of the document (apparently, they were already aware of its value). Altogether, this fourth-century copy included the entire New Testament and most of the Old Testament. Two extrabiblical documents (the Epistle of Barnabas and part of The Shepherd Hermes) were included, making a total of 346 1/2 sheets, 147 1/2 of which constitute the New Testament.

The Codex Sinaiticus, except for the first forty-three leaves, which are in Leipzig, is currently in the British Museum in London. Before being bought from Russia at Christmas 1933 at the price of £100,000, it had been in the Imperial Library of St. Petersburg (Leningrad) for seventy-four years. The British public, including churches and Sunday schools, contributed half of the purchase value, and the government put the other half.

### Vatican Codex (s. IV)

Another well-known document is the Vatican Codex, a copy of the fourth century. Discovered in the Vatican Library and brought to Paris for a time by Napoleon, it is currently in the Vatican Library in Rome, and contains the Greek Old Testament (it is the oldest and best of the Septuagint manuscripts) and the New Testament until Hebrews 9:14 (all materials after this portion have been lost). This and sinaitic are sister codices, probably of Egyptian origin. They are the best Greek text available.

### Codex Beza (s. IV or V)

Codex Beza is a copy of the fourth or fifth century and contains incomplete texts from the four gospels and Acts, plus a few verses from 1 John. The pages on the left have a Greek text and those on the right have the Latin text. It is named after the reformer Beza, who presented it to Cambridge University in 1581. He had acquired it from the monastery of St. Irenaeus in Lyon in 1562. It contains 406 leaves, but certainly originally contained at least a hundred more.

### Codex Washingtonian I (s. IV or V)

The Washingtonian Codex I is an important manuscript dating from the fourth or fifth century. Charles L. Freer bought it from a salesman in Cairo, Egypt, in 1906. The document, which contains the Greek gospels in the order of Matthew, John, Luke, Mark (as well as Codex Beza), is in the Freer Museum of Art, which is related to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

### Codex Alexandrinus (S. V)

The Codex Alexandrine is a fifth-century manuscript of the Old and New Testament in Greek, as well as two extrabiblical books: the Epistles of Clement. It is believed to have been the work of Thekla the Martyr. The book was presented to King Charles I in 1627 by Cyril Lucar, Greek Patriarch of Alexandria; hence its name. It is housed in the British Museum, London, and was one of the first gifts with which the museum was founded.

Codex of St. Ephrem (fifth-century palimpsest).

An incomplete codex of the Old and New Testaments in Greek, from the fifth century, that of St. Ephrem, is known as a palimpsest. The term "palimpsest" is derived from two Greek words: *palin*, meaning "again," and *psistos*, meaning "erased" or "scraped"; so that a palimpsest manuscript is one whose earlier writing has been scraped so that the parchment could be used "again." In 1950, in the monastery of St. Catherine of Mount Sinai, an extraordinary palimpsest was discovered, which had been used five times and is therefore known as "quintuple palimpsest".

In the case of the palimpsest of St. Ephrem, the biblical text had been erased, but with relative success chemicals were used to restore the first scripture. (Ultraviolet photography currently makes the use of chemicals in palimpsests unnecessary.) A treatise of St. Ephrem was written on top of biblical scripture. Hence the name of the codex. It includes 64 pages of the Old Testament and 145 of the New, from an original of 238.

A Multitude of Witnesses

Papyrus, uncial, minuscule, lectionary

Old Testament manuscripts are usually divided into papyrus, uncial, and tiny; New Testament documents in papyri, uncial, minuscule, and lectionary. The last three classes are largely found on parchment and relatively few on papyrus. The uncials are manuscripts copied in uppercase letters, while the lowercase ones are in cursive letters, like our hand-inclined writing.

Of the Manuscripts of the New Testament, there are 247 uncials and 2623 lowercase. As the uncials are older, relatively few have been preserved. There are 68 papyri and 968 lectionaries, scriptural lessons adapted for public worship. Lectionaries vary from the text of the normal New Testament but are sufficiently attached to it to constitute important textual witnesses.

Together, the papyri, uncials, minuscules, and lectionaries of the New Testament number more than 5,000 documents, and their number increases each year with the new de-coverings. We have more manuscripts of the New Testament than of the Old Testament, but those of the Old Testament count in their favor the fact that the Jews copied their Scriptures more carefully than the Christians (see section "Accuracy").

The manuscripts of the New Testament are annotated in a central register in Germany. Caspar René Gregory was the "registrar" for a long time; today, Professor Kurt Aland, of Munster, is the scholar in charge of cataloguing the manuscripts. The New Testament papyri are catalogued under the letter P, and the number of each manuscript is next to that letter, P1, P2, etc. up to P78.

Uncials are usually listed under an O; so we have from O1 to O247. However, in older systems, uncials were classified alphabetically; thus, the Codex Sinaiticus is still sometimes known by the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, Aleph; the Codex Alexandrinus, by A; the Vatican Codex by B. (In the current system the Sinaitic is O1, the Alexandrian O2 and the Vatican O3).

The lowercase ones are simply encoded by the numbers 1-2623; lectionaries are indicated by an "l". It symbolizes the gospels, "t" the facts, the epistles of Paul, "r" the Apocalypse. The numbers from 1 to 1968 are added to indicate the lectionary. Old Testament manuscripts are catalogued according to their own system: the uncials usually receive a letter, and the lowercase ones a name. The names Holmes, Parsons, and Rahlfs are related to the history of Old Testament manuscript cataloguing.

Multitude of Manuscript

Testimonies It is truly admirable that there are so many manuscripts of the Bible. No other ancient

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

literature can boast of so many testimonies. Indeed, the works of the Greek and Roman literatures exist in very few manuscripts, and these are mostly after the ninth century A.D.; only the manuscripts of the Latin poet Virgil (copies, of course) are of older date and correspond to 300 or 400 years after the death of the author.

But biblical scholars have a wealth of materials to work with, and the materials are much closer to the time of their writing. This fact is further proof of the broad influence of God's Word and its providential preservation.

**Lesson 2 Quiz**  
**Manuscripts**

**[Click following link to take the quiz: https://forms.office.com/r/BFBENTVwTB](https://forms.office.com/r/BFBENTVwTB)**  
**If the link doesn't work copy and paste it into your browser**

1. Define manuscripts

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2. What are the three reasons why we don't have old Hebrew writing?

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3. In which languages was the Old Testament written?

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4. In which language was the New Testament written?

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5. What is Papyrus?

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

6. List three examples of Bible Papyri

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7. What is a parchment?

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8. What are scrolls?

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9. What's a Codex?

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11. List three examples of Bible Codex

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**Lesson 3****First Acts of the Bible**

What is the meaning of "Bible"?

The word "Bible" comes from the Greek "bible" (books). The singular is "biblion"; "biblos" is a form of "bible", and simply means any kind of written document. Originally Byblos meant a document written on papyrus, a kind of paper made from an Egyptian plant.

The ancient Phoenician port of Gebal (near modern Jebeil, about 40 kilometers north of Beirut) was renamed by the Greeks by the Greeks by byblos (Biblus) because it was a city famous for making papyrus for writing. In addition, the inhabitants of Byblos are among the first to initiate the evolution of writing and invented one of the first alphabets.

It was therefore natural for the Greeks to call the place "Byblos" and centuries later, when the codex (a book with pages folded in the form of an accordion) was invented, the term persisted and came to mean "book". Our word "Bible" simply means a "book."

Scripture

"Scripture," "Scriptures," or "Holy Scripture" are terms that New Testament writers use to refer to the Old Testament or any part thereof. By "Scriptures," they meant "Divine Scriptures." Paul speaks of "Tabernacles Scriptures" in 2 Timothy 3:15 and in verse 16 he uses the term "Scripture."

The expression "the Scriptures" is used in Matthew 21:42; Luke 24:32; John 5:39; Acts 18:24. The singular expression "Scripture" usually refers to a particular passage of the Old Testament rather than to the Old Testament as a whole (Mark 12:10; Luke 4:21; James 2:8).

In 2 Peter 3:16 the epistles of Paul and probably the gospels are called "Scriptures"; so we have weighty precedents for employing both the Old and New Testaments in our Christian Scriptures. But not all Christians have the same content in their Scriptures.

Variety

The Bible is the product of a remarkable variety. The social, economic, political, and religious aspects of life are present in it. They vary their geography and their people. The rich and the poor, the free and the serf, the urban man, and the peasant, the cultured and the ignorant, parade through the pages of the Testaments. Deserts and cities, mountains and valleys, rivers and seas are also parts of the biblical scenario.

Just as there is a variety of environments in the Bible, there is also a variety of literary expressions in it. Most wrote in prose, but some in poetry, and others in prose and verse. Within this double division of prose and verse are literary forms such as history, laws, parables, riddles, biography, sermons, proverbs, and love stories. The story of redemption is told in enough ways to appeal to the various temperaments, background, and personalities of each generation in all parts of the world.

Samuel Chadwick once said, "The Bible is a miracle of variety. In it we find every kind of literature, every form of humanity, every variety of temperaments, every human need, every gift of wisdom and grace." "It is suitable," he said, "for every circumstance and every need of man."

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

### A central message

However, this variety of environments and literary forms, there is a strong unity of purpose in the Bible. Theatre, history, and law are used to clarify the central message. No doubt this is the reason why the word Bible came to mean not only many books, but one book (in Greek "Bible" is plural, but it became the Latin "Bible" which is singular).

What is this central message? It is contained, in one word: salvation. God provided this salvation, and in the very act of providing it He expressed its meaning. He sent himself in a Son, Jesus, who taught and lived salvation from sin. On the cross, God provided the means of salvation, and Jesus' life and death provoke in man a response for or against God.

God continues to show us salvation in his "Church," a word used both in the New Testament (Matthew 16:8 "I will build my church") and in the Greek Old Testament. God expressed salvation in His Written Word (Bible), dramatized it in His Living Word (Jesus Christ), and demonstrates it today in His Perennial Word (He is holy Spirit in His Church).

### Revelation

The Bible is the revealed (unveiled, uncovered) Word of God regarding the salvation of man. The central message of the Bible is the sum and essence of that revelation. This message or revelation was staged by God while expressing it in words. He staged it in the great events of biblical history: the Exodus, the giving of the law to Moses, the deliverance from Assyrian captivity in the eighth century B.C., the return from the Babylonian exile, and especially in his Son Jesus Christ who lived, died, rose again, and ascended to the Father to be our Mediator.

Alongside these saving acts were prophetic words. Moses was God's spokesman to the Israelites at the time of the exodus, the chronicler of the Ten Commandments and the details of the Law; the prophets—especially Isaiah—spoke in God's name with words of admonition and encouragement during the Assyrian threat; other prophets declared the Word of God during the return of the exiles. In the New Testament we have the story of Jesus Christ, through whom God Himself spoke. The Bible combines and intertwines God's powerful acts (see Psalm 145) with God's prophetic Word.

It is in this entanglement of dramatic events that revelation is expressed. History and prophecy were one thing in the sense of being both vehicles for communicating God's message. Perhaps therefore in the Hebrew Bible the historical books form a single set with the books of the prophets.

### Revelation and Response

God revealed His purpose and will to provoke in man a response. The Bible, especially the Old Testament, records not only God's actions but also man's reactions. It is possible to trace the ups and downs in the reactions of the Hebrews. They were obedient, but very often disobeyed (the book of Judges is especially graphic about it). Just as God's revelation was expressed in both acts and words, man's reactions were double-pressured. Both the words and deeds of the Israelites are recorded in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament we are presented with surprising clarity theology and its results in practice.

### Revelation and inspiration

The word "inspiration" means "breath out." Since God inspired the Bible this is a divine product. Men were the vehicles that God used to give His message written form. How this was done is a mystery; that was realized, is a fact. Inspiration and revelation go hand in hand. Our inspired Bible is indeed the written revelation, just as the words of Jesus were the spoken revelation. God's words and

deeds expressed in real-life dramas were the revelation to the Israelites; the chronicle of such drama is the revelation for us centuries later.

The living redemptive story is revelation, as is the written narrative of that story. Inspiration and revelation complement each other; they are interwoven. Both were and are necessary for the maintenance and growth of the Church. Revelation and inspiration came when men were empowered to see and write the powerful acts and prophetic words of God. So seeing and noting were miraculous gifts of God's Spirit in ardent, enlightened men and minds.

### Revealed Word and Its Authority

The expression "Thus saith the Lord" appears about 359 times in the Word of the Bible. God has spoken in His revealed Word, and man must respond to Him negatively or positively. To confront the Bible is to be forced to decide for or in authority against it; that's how demanding she is! It is in this way because in history human experience has shown that the Bible has the definitive verdict (has authority) concerning (1) faith (doctrine) and (2) practice (moral or ethical conduct).

The Bible is a book with a dual purpose: to bring people to faith in God—that is, to God Himself—and to teach them how to proceed. The Bible shows us how to establish right relationships with God, with our neighbor, and with ourselves. To recognize this fact is to recognize the authority of the revealed Word; Responding to the Word of authority is the key to the existence of harmonious individuals and a harmonious society.

According to the beliefs of the Catholic Church, authority is constituted by two elements: the Bible and history or tradition. Protestants honestly must recognize that their diverse traditions do play a role in the overall religious attitude; however, tradition does not play as important a role as in Catholicism. The Protestant Reformers tended to proceed on the principle that the Bible, and it alone, is the true and only authority in matters of doctrine and practice.

Thus, the Westminster Confession—typical statement of Protestant creed - as most—declares that the sixty-six biblical books are "all... given by divine inspiration, to be the rule of faith and life." We must state this other fact: that the Bible is the best support of authority for itself, and everyone must read it for themselves. The most exalted biblical scholar cannot make this discovery for another person, but the same Spirit who inspired the Bible, within the receptive person, will bear witness to his authority.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

**Lesson 3 Quiz**  
**First Acts of the Bible**

**[Click following link to take the quiz: https://forms.office.com/r/GTki7ifpbi](https://forms.office.com/r/GTki7ifpbi)**  
**If the link doesn't work copy and paste it into your browser**

1. What is the meaning of 'Bible'?

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2. Why should we study the Bible?

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3. How should we study the Bible?

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4. List three pieces of evidence of God's existence

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5. What's the Bible's central message?

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6. What is the meaning of 'Inspiration'?

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7. What is the meaning of 'Revelation'?

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8. What is the basis of the 'Revealed Word of God'?

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

### **Lesson 4** **Interpretation of the Revealed Word of God**

It is important for the study of doctrine, how the Word of God is exposed, that is, its interpretation, in the intelligence, that interpreting means explaining or clarifying the meaning of what is written. Today, Christianity faces a wide variety of interpretations, saying that they are "different" schools of interpretation, sometimes going so far as to say that they are different Revelations! of the same interpretation!

Most of the time selected texts are used at our own convenience, which leads us to very particular interpretations not without errors. For all these interpretations words have been invented, or a theological and spiritual term has been given to words that in their normal sense do not mean what these interests really want to make-believe. Words such as Calvinism, Arminianism, Lapsarism, Amileanism, Postmillennial, liberation, etc. are used. Words that most of the time we do not know their definition and do not tell us anything about these doctrines.

But correctly speaking, the different interpretations only serve to prove us wrong (Jeremiah 17:5) even when they are sincere. It has been rightly said that anything good or bad can be proven or defended through the Scriptures. That is why we must be very careful about the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, thinking about the curse (anathema) that weighs on whoever misuses the Scriptures (Galatians 1:8-9).

Christians, trying to faithfully interpret the word of God, have reached out of the science of interpretation, known as "Hermeneutics", from the Greek "hermenevein", is the "art of interpreting texts, especially sacred texts", and precedes exegesis (from the Greek verb "exomai", «I narrate or explain" whose definition is: explanation, interpretation.

Hermeneutics aims to understand, as far as possible, the process by which the author composed his text and to make it understandable to the modern reader.

The apostle Peter himself, speaking of the Scriptures, says that "there are some difficult to understand, which the unlearned and fickle twist, as well as the other Scriptures (those of the Old), to the perdition of themselves" (2 Peter 3:16).

Before making an interpretation, you must go through the process of inquiry. One must examine the Bible before explaining it, therefore the first question must be "What does it say?" and the second "What does it mean?", many of the most common errors of interpretation have arisen from negligence in trying to find out what the Bible says in its simplest sense. Since it has been written so that it can be understood by every human being in a language so simple and simple that even children can understand it, it should present no problem, yet the pride of man above all who believes himself to be a scientist overlooks this basic principle (1 Corinthians 1:20).

Hermeneutics is important in the role it has in Bible study, but let us keep in mind that it is a human science and its results may be imperfect due to man's own limitations. This discipline is subject to certain rules that will help us to better understand the requirements for an adequate explanation.

Accept the literal meaning of words

Words should be taken in their usual and ordinary sense as soon as possible; this simple rule is of the utmost importance, for forgetting it falls into the danger of giving Scripture an arbitrary and capricious sense. Here the Hebraisms and peculiarities of the Oriental style, the customs, and way of proceeding of the Jews will have to be considered.

Examine the context of a passage

It is necessary to read the text by looking at the context because the Bible is its own interpreter, the

Bible is explained by the Bible itself; thus, a dark passage is understood by lighter and brighter ones. It is necessary to take the words in the sense indicated by the context, namely the verses that precede and follow the text being studied.

Here we encounter, at times, abrupt interruptions of the story, with divisions that obscure the text, because as is known, the division into chapters and verses dates only from a few centuries ago and was made to facilitate study but was not known to the biblical authors.

Remember the End or Purpose of scripture

As we search the Bible, let us keep in mind that God's purpose is to reveal Himself to man. Therefore, we may find things in the Bible that seem difficult to understand, obscure, or that do not correspond to the earthly reality in which man lives. Keep in mind that the writers of the Bible wrote of God, and only occasionally of other subjects. Thus, of worldly things, the biblical writers were not allowed to go beyond the intelligence of their contemporaries. But we still find references to the science of the time and to scientific discoveries made later.

Words must be taken in the sense indicated by the whole sentence because a word can have different meanings depending on the context and the subject matter of the author. Here we must consider the message that the author tries to communicate and place the word in the discourse. It is important to say that each book has its theme, and every passage related to the book must be taken from that point of view so as not to fall into errors.

The object or purpose of the book or passage in which the obscure words or expressions occur must be taken into consideration. Thus, for example, some epistles of Paul were written when errors, which with great damage sought to implant the Judaizers or "false teachers". If we read these passages in the light of the apostle's ministry, his personal history, his struggles, etc., we will understand them better.

Compare one passage to another

It is necessary to consult the parallel passages, as the Greek text in 1 Corinthians 2:13 says: "Explaining spiritual things by spiritual things." Thus, in addition to clarifying the passage, exact biblical knowledge of Christian doctrines and practices is learned. Here it should be remembered that there are parallels between words, parallels of ideas, and parallels of general teachings. When consulting this kind of parallel, one must first clarify the meaning of the dark word in the same book or author in which it is found, then in the other books of the same time, and finally any book of Scripture.

Accept the Bible as a revelation of Jesus Christ

The correct interpretation depends on the inductive study of everything the Bible says on a certain matter, the conclusion reached must be the complete testimony of the Word of God. No passage of the Bible in relation to the subject should be considered separately from other Biblical passages of the same subject.

Don't expect to understand everything

Seek at every step the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Since the Bible was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the inspiring intervention of the Holy Spirit is therefore also necessary to correctly interpret the Word of God and to be edifying both for those who expose it and for those who receive it.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

### Language

The purpose of biblical interpretation is to make clear the meaning and message of God's revelation. How do we interpret the Bible? We must begin by recognizing what G. Campbell Morgan called the "contextual principle." The Bible must be considered within its own context of language, time, place, and situation.

Each part of it must be analyzed in the light of the other parts. We have already said that the Bible was written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Expert linguists constantly try to give their translations of the Holy Scriptures the true flavor and meaning of the original text. The idiomatic constructions and idioms are constantly deciphered for us in our language with increasing clarity, as more and better translations are published.

But also, the layman must make the task his own. He must consider the difference between prose and verse, prophecy and revelation, parable, and fact. The Bible is ancient and Eastern; that is, it comes from the Middle East or Near East, and not from Europe or America. Easterners think figuratively more than Westerners; they use poetry and figurative language. We cannot force our literal and rectilinear language patterns into this ancient and oriental book, in which they have no application.

### Time

Time, history, or what we might call historical background must be understood to correctly interpret the Bible. Among the ancient peoples, the Hebrews were the ones who had the keenest sense of history; and they were because God revealed Himself in His deeds and words throughout history.

Not only the history of his saving acts should be known, but also the environment in which those saving acts occurred. The events of the Bible centered on the geographical area stretching from Egypt northward through Palestine, Babylon, and Assyria, to Asi Minor, and finally Europe. Since the events of the Bible occurred over a period of several thousand years, the historical movements of this great period must be carefully observed.

If these movements and changes are not recognized, the interpreter finds himself in the clumsy position of evaluating the molds of the behavior of the early Canaanite by the high moral standards of Jesus. Reasoning, in the same way, is essential that in our day we take from the Bible the teachings, or a word, that has application for us, in our modern circumstances.

### The place

If the time factor has to do with the historical background, the place factor has to do with the geographical background. It is a recognized fact that the climatic and geographical position influence the culture of a people. In Egypt, where it is very hot and rarely rains, people are slow and need a lot of sleep. Generally, in cool climates, on the contrary, people have faster movements and are more progressive in terms of removing dirt and disease. Some of the laws of the Pentateuch have a definite relationship with the warm climatic conditions of the Near and Middle East. For example, the ban on eating pork was good, because such meat decomposed rapidly without refrigeration. Considering this fact, it would be unfair to interpret the acts of the ancient Hebrews as ignorance simply because we can today preserve and eat this meat.

### The situation

What were the true living conditions of the ancient Hebrews, or of the more recent Jews in New



Testament times? To understand these ancient peoples in their daily lives and put ourselves in their place it is essential that we carefully observe their customs and way of life. Our tendency to form images is a fact; therefore, we form a more accurate picture of the Bible if we visit, so to speak, the biblical peoples. Fortunately, this is possible through the abundance of available data on biblical dress, relationships, and customs. In addition, Bible dictionaries and similar reference books provide graphic illustrations using charts and the written word. Scholars today get much of their data from the work of archaeologists who are excavating the remains of civilizations from biblical times.

### Seeing the Bible as a whole

G. Campbell Morgan, in enunciating the contextual principle of biblical interpretation, insisted that it was necessary to consider every book of the Bible, and even every chapter and passage, in the light of the entire Bible. Sometimes it is expressed this way: The best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself. Here's an exaggerated example: The Bible says, "There is no God" (Psalm 14:1). So it says to the letter. But to proclaim that the Bible teaches atheism would be most irresponsible and dishonest. We must read the statement, "There is no God," in its full context, and then we read, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'" But in the interpretation of this text, we must go beyond the immediate context. Consider the rest of the Bible. The Bible begins with God (Genesis 1:1) and ends with God (Revelation 22:21), and between one extreme and the other, almost every line throbs with the teaching that there is a living God.

### Biblical Interpretation and the Holy Spirit

The great Illuminator is the Holy Spirit. It is he—as We are told by Scripture (John 14:26), history, and experience—who interprets the Bible for us. We must use the contextual principle in all the aspects detailed above, because the Holy Spirit uses these natural "means" to make us know the Bible, and even makes it known to us in an even deeper dimension. It is likely that the knowledge of geography, history, or archaeology does not make us understand, much less experience the New Birth, for example. It takes the convincing and enlightening power of God's Spirit to lay bare the reality of our sin and unworthiness, and to show us the startling truth that there is a God eager to draw the sinner to himself. The great spiritual truths of Scripture are revealed by the Holy Spirit Himself.

### Methods of Interpretation

For the interpreter to see each portion of Scripture in relation to the whole, there must be a guiding principle. This rule has varied from time to time, from group to group, and from person to person. Below, we outline some guiding principles and interpretation methods.

#### 1. Allegorical

The allegorical principle was employed in ancient times, and today some use it in one way or another. Alexandria, in Egypt, was the center of this school of interpretation used by men such as Philo, Clement, and Origen. Allegory consists of describing one thing by representing it with another. It was believed that this spiritualization of the biblical content caused one to penetrate the very mind of the Holy Spirit; and that, moreover, this covered the supposed ethical difficulties of the Old Testament (for example, the divine order to kill the Midianites). The truth is that the allegory did neither one thing nor another.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

In the Middle Ages, as some do today, certain doctrines were “drawn” from simple narratives, or introduced into them. The allegory is spurious precisely because it fails to reveal the truth that gives faith of itself, but through its subtle and “pious” mask, it makes one suspicious of the one who uses it, if not of Scripture itself.

### 2. Legalistic

This method really had followers long before the current day. Paul struggled with the legalists (Acts 15 and the Epistle to the Galatians) who insisted on keeping certain aspects of Judaic law despite the new Gentile climate and changed attitude.

In the Middle Ages a school of “moralists” emerged who from certain biblical passages sought to deduce the moral systems they liked. The same attitude persists today in certain circles, which give the main purpose of biblical interpretation to “discover another argument” to support a certain point of view on conduct, almost completely disregarding the doctrinal or theological aspect of Scripture. The opposite can also occur, in which case the Scriptures are interpreted to satisfy one’s own doctrinal thesis, almost completely disregarding practice and ethics.

Often this legalistic attitude of interpretation goes hand in hand with certain handling of the scriptural letter, through which a “text-demonstration” is used to test a thesis on a certain subject. This trick is often used by pseudo-Christian sects.

### 3. Reformed

The Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century reconciled two forms of approach to biblical interpretation: the right or “evident” sense of Scripture, and historical-grammatical exegesis. They argued that anything resembling the allegorical interpretation was an attempt to conceal the intentional meaning of Scripture, and in that case it was spurious. The Reformers thundered against this and against any other methods that prevented the Scriptures from “speaking for themselves.”

As for grammar, the argument is that simple grammatical analysis helps to understand the plain meaning of simple sentences and even some not so simple. “Historical” refers to what Scripture meant in its historical context. The reformers also used the abundance of commentary that the past has bequeathed to us. They wondered, “What have the great intellects of the past expressed about the Bible?” The reformers were especially interested in what was said by the Fathers of the Church (Augustine, Jerome, etc.).

“Exegesis” means to extract from Scripture what it really contains; the opposite term is “eiségesis”, to make the text say what one would like it to say.

The Reformers did not always succeed in avoiding “eiségesis,” for each gives the Bible the nuance of his own way of seeing and the environment that surrounds him; but you can assure yourself with certainty that they did more than most people up to those days to let the Bible speak for itself.

### 4. Typological

This school of interpretation is also old and current at the same time. Typologists, for example, see a “type” or symbol of Christ in Joseph, in the Old Testament, in the attempt to sacrifice Isaac, in Moses and Joshua as liberators. They are somewhat right; but Joseph, Isaac, Moses, and others are to be taken as illustrations and suggestions, and in no way taken at face value as “types” of Christ. The person of Christ is not the only thing that typologists deal with, but the example above illustrates their method.

## Christ Himself, Guiding Principle

Some schools of interpretation are more worthy of praise than others. The allegorical school has a real thread; the Reformers were so successful in what they started, that most of today's scholars, at least the Protestants, go ahead with their method and expand it.

The good thing about the legalistic school is its attachment to the truth; the typologists are right that there are indeed in the Old Testament prefiguration of Christ and his work. But at the end of the day what we must do is face the ultimate Word, the Christ, through whom God spoke and continues to speak. This same Son of God, this Jesus of Nazareth, this Christ, the Messiah, must be the center of our interpretation of Scripture.

We must observe how Christ Himself handled the Scriptures. For Him, the Old Testament predicted His advent. As far as doctrine is concerned, we must not throw ourselves forward with the impetus of the flesh to formulate our own theology; we must ask what Jesus believed and let Him be the Great Arbiter regarding our thesis.

The life and example of Jesus constitute the perfect picture for human conduct. Although in the minds of men there are contradictory pictures concerning Christ, we have the Spirit of God to lead us to more true and profound meanings and to help us separate the real from the false in each individual case. If this method of interpretation could be explained by a diagram, we would put Christ at the center of the circle.

The rays of the wheel converge on Him, and the circumference of the wheel would be the Holy Spirit who gives balance to the whole.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

**Lesson 4 - Quiz**

**Interpretation of the Revealed Word of God**

**[Click following link to take the quiz: https://forms.office.com/r/FefqegvZjh](https://forms.office.com/r/FefqegvZjh)**  
**If the link doesn't work copy and paste it into your browser**

1. What is hermeneutics?

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2. Define the following rules of hermeneutics:

A. Accept the literal meaning of words \_\_\_\_\_

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B. Examine a passage's context \_\_\_\_\_

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C. Consider the objective or purpose of the Scriptures \_\_\_\_\_

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D. Compare passages \_\_\_\_\_

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E. Accept the Bible as the revelation of Jesus \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What is the purpose of biblical interpretation?

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4. Define 'contextual principle'.

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5. In which languages was the Bible written?

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6. Define 'historical background'.

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7. Define 'geographical background'.

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8. What is the importance of knowing the customs and way of life of ancient times when studying the Bible?

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9. What does it mean to 'see the Bible as a whole'?

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10. Who is the best interpreter of the Bible?

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11. Who is the illuminator of the Bible?

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12. What are the schools of Bible interpretation?

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

### Lesson 5 The Canon

The word "canon" comes from the Greek "kanon", which means "level" or "rule" used by the builder or by the scribe.

Figuratively, the canon may refer to the norm or rule of conduct or faith, to a list or catalog of what may or may not be done or believed. Figuratively it also came to mean a list of books of the Bible. In the fourth century, Athanasius was the first to use the term in this sense.

#### The Apocrypha

The apocrypha are the fourteen or fifteen books, or additions to certain books, which are not found in the Hebrew canon, but in the Alexandrian canon (the Septuagint). Most of them are accepted by the Catholic Church as part of the Bible. It should be stressed that they are not found in the Hebrew Old Testament but were added to the Greek translation known as the Septuagint (LXX).

The Alexandrian canon was always more or less variable in terms of the books it included, while the Hebrew canon is more fixed and stable. The Septuagint gives us the only source we have for the Alexandrian canon. The general order of the books of the Septuagint, which comes to us through Jerome's Latin Bible (Vulgate), has been accepted by Protestants. (Many of the titles of the biblical books we know also come from the LXX and the Vulgate.)

Hebrew text and selection have been used, but neither the text nor the selection of Books per se of the Septuagint have been retained. This is not to say that the distant canon was worthless, but that it was less stable than the Hebrew. In view of this, Luther relegated the Apocrypha to a separate section in his Bible; he said they were "good and useful to read," but not as a basis for doctrine.

Calvin completely excluded the apocrypha. The Church of England follows Luther's example; in the sixth of the Thirty-Nine Articles, it is urged to read the apocrypha "as to example of life and instruction of manners, but without applying them to found any doctrine."

The Bible Society of the British Isles cannot include the Apocrypha in its editions of the Bible; this is prevented by the statutes of the entity. But the Apocrypha are included in some Protestant versions in English. The publishers of those versions have often printed the Apocrypha in separate volumes from the sixty-six books, thus following the general view of Luther and Anglicanism. It is interesting to note that among the Dead Sea Scrolls evidence has been found that some of the apocryphal books existed in Hebrew (e.g., portions of the Ecclesiastical).

The Reformation upheld the principle that the Bible, and it alone is the medium of information, doctrine, and ethics. The Reformers, as indicated, rejected the apocrypha as part of the Bible.

Why? Because they contain false doctrines such as the justification of suicide, prayer for the dead, almsgiving as a means of atoning for sin, that the end justifies the means, superstitions, and magic. Moreover, not even one of the New Testament writers cites any portion of the apocrypha, a fact that constitutes a vigorous argument in favor of the Protestant thesis.

When the Roman church convened the Council of Trent (1546) to combat the Reformation, one of its important acts was to formally recognize the apocrypha. They had never been granted official recognition; on the contrary since the days of Jerome in the fourth-century doubts had been expressed about them. Jerome turned to the Hebrew, Greek, and Ancient Latin texts to produce one more translation a day; and he, like Luther, relegated the Apocrypha to a separate place.

In addition, the haste with which he translated the dubious books indicates the little significance he gave them. Unfortunately, Jerome had little ecclesiastical authority. Although he was a great biblical and linguistic scholar, theologians, like Augustine in Africa, had more ecclesiastical power, and in Au-

gustine's part of the world, the content of the Greek Bible gained general support. So, the Alexandrian codex came out triumphant and prevailed until the Reformation.

The Roman church continues to support the Apocrypha as part of God's Word, although there are Catholic scholars who currently tend to describe the apocryphal books as "deuterocanonical" (secondary).

### The pseudo-epigraphs and the so-called apocrypha of the New Testament

Pseudo-epigraphs (false scriptures) are ancient books dating from the last centuries BC and the earliest of our era.

To gain prestige, and not because they were really their authors, they were given the name of great Jewish characters (Enoch, Moses, Isaiah). Hence they are called false (pseudo). Neither Protestants nor Roman Catholics have ever considered them part of the Bible. Most of these books were written before the time of Christ and are apocalyptic in nature. They present a happy picture of the future of the Jews. Pre-Christian pseudo-epigraphs include the following:

- Book of Enoch (mentioned in Judas)
- Secrets of Enoch (quoted in Judas)
- Ascension of Isaiah
- Apocalypse of Zephaniah
- Revelation of Ezra
- Testament of Adam
- Apocalypse of Baruch
- Assumption of Moses (Patriarchs)
- Testament of the Twelve

Of the post-Christ books, several circulated in religious media. They pretended to have historical value, saying to give data not about Scripture itself, but about the disciples, Mary the mother of our Lord, the childhood of Jesus, his resurrection, etc. Most of the stories are legendary and imaginary, but there are traces of information here and there that are considered authentic. Here are some of the Apocrypha of the New Testament:

- Gospel of James
- Gospel of Paul
- Gospel of Peter
- Acts of John
- Gospel according to the Hebrews
- Story of Joseph
- Gospel of the Birth of Mary
- Gospel of Nicodemus (or Acts of Pilate)
- Acts of Peter
- Acts of Andrew
- Acts of Thomas
- Apocalypse of Peter
- Apocalypse of Paul
- Epistles of the Apostles

It is interesting to note that the New Testament apocryphal books or pseudepigraphs can be clas-

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

sified in the same categories as our authentic New Testament: Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Revelation. Fascinating traces of "information" are found in these books. Example:

1. Jesus was born in a cave (Gospel of James). (This is probably true. The traditional site of his birth is a cave above which the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, one of the oldest churches in the world, is built.)
2. Paul was a tiny man, slightly bald, bow-legged, with a set eyebrow and a somewhat aquiline nose (Acts of Paul). This, too, is well supported by tradition.
3. The man with the withered hand in Matthew 12:13 was a mason.
4. Jesus' brothers were sons of Joseph, by another wife.
5. The soldier who wounded the crucified man was named Longinus.
6. The woman with the issue of blood was called Veronica

### Fixation of the canon

Holy books such as those we have discussed circulated for a period along with the books of the Bible; but over time, the best was selected under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Although there was no official resolution on the Hebrew canon until the Council of Jamnia, there around the year 90 A.D., in practice it had already been fixed before Christ. Christians took the Old Testament as part of the Bible.

The New Testament canon was fixed in its main part as at the end of the second century AD. But even after this there was uncertainty for a long time about the last five or six books of the New Testament. The first list of our twenty-seven books, as we know it today, was formulated by Athanasius in 367 AD. in his Easter epistle.

Not all Christian canons are the same. The Roman Catholic canon (as well as the Greek Catholic) has already been cited. The Ethiopian church includes the books of Enoch (cited in Jude) and Jubilees.

Some Christians in the Syriac church exclude 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. At the end of the first century of the Christian era, a Jewish school, perhaps of rabbis, confirmed the Hebrew Canon in the city of Jamnia, in Palestine. They closed the Canon with the prophets Ezra (458 BC), Nehemiah (445 BC), and Malachi (433 BC). This Canon comprised 22 to 24 books.

They did not reject the deuterocanonical books definitively, but they did not include them among the canonical ones. This is how the two canons of the Old Testament arose.

### History of the New Testament Canon

The Canon of the New Testament is the set of 27 books that Christians consider inspired by God, including The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), The Acts of the Apostles, the Letters of the Apostles, and Revelation.

The formation of the New Testament canon is highly complex and not easy to trace. Two main periods are distinguished: 1. The origin of the formation of the canon (s. I-II) and 2. The constitution of the definitive canon (s. III-V).



### The origin of the formation of the canon

All the books of the New Testament were written in the second half of the 20th century.

The communities welcomed them with respect and veneration. But since they were written to communities or individuals, the first collections took time to emerge. Some letters of Saint Paul and some Catholic letters were addressed to several local churches: They were sent to one community to be transcribed to another. Saint Paul himself orders the Colossians to read the letter sent to the Laodiceans (perhaps that of the Ephesians). And to those of Ephesus who read that of the Colossians. The letter of James and 1 Peter appear to be circular writings. The communities would keep a copy.

At first, some books are grouped according to regions and cultures. However, there are writings that, due to their importance, would be more widespread, such as Romans and Ephesians. In Greece and Asia Minor, the letters of Saint Paul would be joined by those of Saint John and the Gospel of Saint Luke. In Rome, the letter to the Romans would be joined by the Gospel of Mark. In Syria and Palestine: Mateo, Santiago, and Judas. In southern Gaul the canon began to be almost complete.

### The formation of the canon throughout the second century

None of the writers of this period composed a catalog of biblical books. But from their works these three data are extracted: 1. They quote or allude to almost all the books that will constitute the biblical canon (except 3 John) 2. They do not question the authority of any of the inspired books and 3. They recognize in those books a supreme authority. The word 'New Testament' in the sense of New Alliance or new covenant already appears in the Bible (Matthew 26:28 and Hebrews 8:6-13). Some ancient writers, speaking of Old Testament books, imply that there are New Testament books. It is Tertullian who first uses the term 'New Testament' to apply it to these biblical books, around the year 200. The first catalogs of inspired books began to appear.

### Criteria and criterion of canonicity

In addition to these factors external to the church, the canon formation process is due to the clarification of the criteria. We can see three groups:

A. External criteria: apostolicity, antiquity of the writing, apostolic approval, doctrinal orthodoxy, harmony with other already accepted books of Scripture, edifying character, and universality.

B. Internal criteria: Those offered by the same sacred book and recognized by the pneumatic experience of the Church. Chief among these criteria was 'apostolicity'. The criterion of 'apostolicity', which was the main one, gave writing the seal of canonical and inspired. For this, the writing had to have a tradition that goes back to the apostles and to have been recognized as of divine origin by the apostolic church. Catholicity had to be joined by traditional acceptance and conformity to the Church's rule of faith. What was already praxis in the Church was rationalized.

### Division into chapters (1250 A.D.)

It was not until 1250 A.D. The Bible was divided into chapters. At that time Cardinal Hugo incorporated chapter divisions into the Latin Bible. He did it for convenience, although his divisions were not always successful; however, essentially the same chapter divisions have persisted to the present.

### Division into verses (1551)

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

The ancient Hebrews had already tried the division by verses, but the division that we have today was made three hundred years after the division by chapters carried out by Cardinal Hugo. In 1551, Robert Stephens (Robert Etienne) introduced a Greek New Testament with the inclusion of verse divisions. The Old Testament was left undivided. The first complete Bible in English with division into verses was the Geneva Bible (1560).

The division into chapters and verses in English and Spanish is not always exact, as can be seen for example in Acts 7, which at the end interrupts the story to begin chapter 8. This has been partially corrected in the 1960 Revision of the Reina-Valera version, by subdividing the content with subheadings indicating the topics, so that in chapter 8 there is a subheading at the beginning of verse 4 to indicate a new topic.

**Lesson 5 - Quiz**

**The Canon**

**[Click following link to take the quiz: https://forms.office.com/r/7za0q1i5s6](https://forms.office.com/r/7za0q1i5s6)**  
**If the link doesn't work copy and paste it into your browser**

1. Define 'Canon'

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2. List some New Testament apocrypha

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3. What are the Pseudepigraphs?

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4. List some pseudoepigraphs

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5. Define 'Fixation of the canon'

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6. How many chapters and how many verses does the Bible have?

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## Lesson 6

### Antique Translations (versions)

#### The Septuagint (250 BC)

The technical term given to translations is 'version'. There are ancient, medieval, and modern versions. The Septuagint, a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, is the oldest of the ancient Greek versions. The Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) was translated around 250 B.C. The rest, including the Apocrypha, may not have been completed until the end of the first century BC. Some parts are written in good Koine Greek, others in Greek, influenced by Semitism. Some portions are faithfully translated (the Pentateuch), and others abound in paraphrases and additions (Proverbs). This translation was born out of necessity since there were many Greek-speaking Jews in the ancient world. Indeed, the international language of the Mediterranean region for several centuries was Greek.

The name "Septuagint" is abbreviated by the symbol LXX because, according to tradition, there were about seventy translators of it. It is interesting that New Testament writers have often quoted this version instead of the Hebrew Scriptures. (Luke and the author of Hebrews used the LXX more than the other New Testament writers; Matthew used it the least.) At least some of it was translated in or around the Egyptian city of Alexandria. The titles we give today to the books of the Old Testament come partly from the Septuagint (partly from the Vulgate, which is the Latin translation of the Septuagint). Early Christians used the LXX and even adapted it, eventually placing it alongside the Greek New Testament to make up the complete Greek Bible. It underwent revisions in Greek, various Greek versions were produced, and was translated into Coptic, Ethiopic, Gothic, Armenian, Arabic, Georgian, Slavonic, and Old Latin.

#### Samaritan Pentateuch (pre-Christian)

The Hebrew Old Testament is the Bible of the Jews, and the Hebrew Pentateuch is the Bible of the Samaritans. The Samaritans—so called because they lived in Samaria, which took its name from the city of Samaria—were part Jews. They were not allowed to collaborate in the construction of the temple in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, and they isolated themselves from their Jewish relatives, founding their own religious center on Mount Gerizim, near Shechem (modern Nablus). They made the Pentateuch their Bible, changing it and adapting it to their history and way of thinking (for example, in Deuteronomy 27.4 "Ebal" has been replaced by "Gerizim"). The Abisha scroll of Nablus, a copy of the Samaritan Pentateuch, is made up of two scrolls, neither of which is dated before the Middle Ages. Another extant copy dates to the thirteenth century: a scroll believed to have been discovered by the high priest Phineas in 1355. Europe did not possess a copy of the Samaritan Pentateuch until 1616. The Samaritan Pentateuch is simply a Hebrew edition in slightly modified letters. It preserves to some extent an ancient textual tradition, but there are so many changes due to neglect of copying and other reasons that the text is not always useful for textual criticism. At Qumram, a text from the Exodus was discovered that has affinity with the Samaritan Pentateuch. The Samaritans exist today in small groups, and they persist in using the Pentateuch as their Bible.

#### Targums (Aramaic versions)

The targums are paraphrases or interpretive translations of most of the Old Testament (there are no targums of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah) in Aramaic. Aramaic gradually replaced Hebrew as the common

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

language after the Babylonian captivity. In time the Scriptures had to be transcribed into the popular language. In the synagogues, therefore, oral translations were made. The translator was called "Meturgeman" and the translation he made was called "targum". The time came when these oral paraphrases were recorded in writing; some were more literal than others. A targum of Job is found in the recently discovered Dead Sea Scrolls.

Outside of that Dead Sea discovery, the oldest copies of Targums come from the fifth century AD, although there is evidence that they existed in pre-Christian times. One of the famous targums is called Onkelos. In 1957 the Vatican Library announced that it had discovered in its archives a copy of the targum known as "Jerusalem II", dating from the fifth century.

### Latin versions (s. II and after Jerome)

In the second century A.D., when Latin replaced Greek as the international language, Latin translations began to appear. With the passing of a century or two, and as the use of Latin spread, the Latin versions grew in number but became so varied and difficult that Damasus, Bishop of Rome, commissioned a great scholar of the fourth century and fifth, the production of a stable Latin text. It was translated from Hebrew, ancient Latin, and Greek. royal Jerome.

### Syriac versions

Syriac is a Semitic language related to Aramaic and was used in Edessa and western Mesopotamia until supplanted by Arabic in the thirteenth century AD. Included in the Syriac versions are those noted below.

Tatian, a convert in Rome and a disciple of Justin Martyr, prepared a harmony of the four gospels, weaving the materials together to form a continuous story. He did his work around A.D. 180. and he was the first to perform a harmony of this kind. Whether he originally composed it in Syriac or Greek is unknown. But of the Syriac versions, it was the Diatessaron that circulated most widely until the fourth century, though it reflected his own heretical ideas. In ancient times it was translated into Arabic and probably Latin and influenced medieval Gospel harmonies in Europe and the East.

#### 1. Ancient Syriac (2nd century)

In 1892 the so-called Syriac-Sinaitic version was discovered by Mrs. Lewis and Gibson of Cambridge, twin sisters, at St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai. It is a palimpsest (see "St. Ephrem Codex") and contains most of the four Gospels. The manuscript is still on Mount Sinai, but it has been photographed, and an English translation by Mrs. Lewis was published in 1894. There is also what is known as Curetonian Syriac, named after William Cureton of the British Museum, published in 1858. It contains the Gospels and is a copy of the Old Syriac, produced in the fifth century. The original was brought from Egypt to the British Museum in London in 1842.

#### 2. Syriac Peshitta (4th century)

The Peshitta ("plain") New Testament, a revision of the Old Syriac version, probably done by Rab-bula, became the "authorized version" of the Syriac church. The total number of manuscripts preserving parts of the Peshitta is 243; nearly half of these are in the British Museum in London. Two of those documents come from the fifth century (the oldest is dated 464 A.D.) and dozens of others come from the sixth century. The Peshitta of the Old Testament, at least of the Pentateuch, is probably of Jewish

or Judeo-Christian origin. In the New Testament of this version, 2 Peter 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation are missing.

### 3. Philoxenian version (early 6th century)

The Philoxenian version is another of the Syriac versions. It is sometimes called Heracleia because some believe it was republished by Thomas of Heracleia. The textual variants of the book of Acts that the Heracean marginal notes record are useful in determining the correct text of that book. Some fifty manuscripts of the Heracean revision are known to exist, most of them in England. The original Philoxenian version now exists only in fragmentary form, containing portions of the New Testament and the Psalms. Some have suggested that originally the Philoxenian and the Heracleian were two entirely separate translations.

### 4. Syriac Palestine (circa 4th century to 6th century)

The Syriac version of the Old and New Testaments is known only in fragments and is in its own dialect (Aramaic-Palestinian in Syriac characters). It dates from the fourth to the sixth century, and was used by the Melkite church (Palestinian Syriac church). There are fragments of this version from the Septuagint in Rome, London, Leningrad, and on Mount Sinai.

### Coptic versions (s. III and IV)

Coptic was the language of the early Egyptian Christians. It had been derived from the language of the pharaohs. It was not written in hieroglyphics but in characters like the Greek ones. In the third and fourth centuries, the "Coptic" Christians produced the Bible in their own language and dialects. Of the various dialects, two are of great importance. One is the Sahidic of the Christians of the upper Nile (to the south), and the other is the Bohairic, of the lower Nile (to the north). The latter was a literary rather than a spoken language. The Old Testament appears in both dialects and is based primarily on the Septuagint. Today there is the New Testament in Bohairic. And in Sahidic, it is almost complete. These translations of the New Testament are not earlier than the third century A.D., and the Bohairic may be from the fourth century. The Bodmer Papyri (see previous pages) include some Coptic material.

### Gospel of Thomas (circa 4th century)

A strange version, if it can be called a version, is the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas, in Coptic. An accident revealed this and other documents. It happened around 1945 or 1946, near ancient Chenoboschion, on the banks of the Nile, about 50 kilometers from Luxor, Egypt. While digging the earth, some Egyptians (not archaeologists) accidentally found a Christian tomb. Thirteen papyrus codices were found in a clay pot, containing some fifty individual documents, including an Apocryphon of John and a Gospel of Philip. Twelve of the books are in the Coptic Museum in Cairo. Number thirteen, known as the Jung Codex, and containing the Gnostic Gospel of Truth, is in the Jung Institute, Zurich. (Gnosticism was a primitive cult that emerged as a threat to early Christianity. It believed in salvation through "gnosis" (special knowledge). These thirteen papyri, sometimes called the Nag Hammadi papyri (Nag Hammadi, not far from Quenoboschion, the modern town where the discoverers sold the papyri for the equivalent of eight dollars and fifty cents), are probably fourth-century copies of second-century Greek works, most of them Gnostic in character.

The Gospel According to Thomas, published by Harper in English and Coptic in 1959, contains it

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

has 114 supposed sayings of Jesus. The name of the disciple Thomas was put on the work to give it authority, a common resource in ancient times. The Coptic language of the Gospel of Thomas is Sahidic, dating from about the fourth century, but based on a Greek document perhaps from the mid-second century. It contains beatitudes and parables and mentions well-known characters such as Saint Peter, John the Baptist, and James the brother of our Lord. Some scholars have suggested that a few of the new sayings may be authentic, but little credence is currently given to that view. Most of the sayings are known to us in the Gospels, in papyri discovered at the end of the last century in Oxyrhynchus, or in quotations made by early Christian writers.

The basic assumptions of the Gospel of Thomas are Gnostic, not Christian, and there is no proof that it is an eyewitness. None of the sayings fully coincides with the language of our Lord in the Gospel, although some are similar or parallel. Here are two of these sayings:

"Blessed are the lonely and chosen because you will find the kingdom; for from him you came and to him, you will return." And "It is impossible for a man to mount two horses and draw two bows, and it is impossible for a servant to serve two masters, for otherwise he will honor one and offend the other."

"Agrafos" is a term used by scholars to refer to the "sayings" of Jesus that do not appear in the Gospels. The 114 sayings of the Gospel of Thomas are the largest collection of agraphs; others are found in the writings of early Christian authors. The word "agrafo" literally means "not written", which refers to the fact that the sayings do not appear in the gospels; they are written somewhere else, of course. There is an agraph in the New Testament: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20.35); it is an agraph, because it is not found written in the gospels.

### Other old versions

Gothic (4th century) - Ulfilas ("Wolverine"), a 4th-century character, produced the Gothic version, invented an alphabet, and reduced the Germanic dialect of Gothic to a written language. The celebrated Silver Codex—written on purple vellum in silver ink—is at Uppsala University, dates from the fifth or sixth century, and contains portions of all four gospels. The Gothic is a faithful translation, although the six extant manuscripts are incomplete.

Armenia (4th century) - The Armenia, made for the Armenian Christians in the fourth century has been called "Queen of versions" for its beauty and accuracy. Mesrop, a soldier turned missionary, and Sahak did the translation. Like Ulfilas, Mesrop invented an alphabet. (How many alphabets have been invented, how many languages have been reduced to writing in the process of translating the Bible!) The Armenian version was revised several times after the fifth century.

Georgian (circa 5th century) - The Georgian version was the Bible of the ancient peoples of Georgia, located in the mountainous region between the Black and Caspian seas. They first heard the Gospel in the fourth century, but its translation was probably not done until the fifth century.

Ethiopian (around the 4th or 5th century) - Little is known about the origin of Christianity in Ethiopia (v. Acts 8.26-39). Exactly when they got the Bible is also unknown, but it may have been in the fourth or fifth century. The oldest copy of this version is from the thirteenth century. Most come from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Nubia (date unknown) - Nubia was located between Egypt and Ethiopia. From the sixth to the fourteenth century these peoples embraced Christianity after Islam became their religion. Only tenth- and eleventh-century fragments survive of the Nubian version; It is not known when the original version was made.

Sogdiana (date unknown) - The Sogdiana (Central Asian) version is very incomplete and little is known about it.

Ancient Arabic (date unknown) - Translations into ancient Arabic were made in the eighth century



## INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

by Juan, Bishop of Seville, in the tenth century by Isaac Velázquez, of Córdoba, and in the thirteenth, in Egypt. It is not known if there were translations prior to the eighth century.

Old Slavonic (circa 9th century) - In the 9th century, according to tradition, the Greek brothers Cyril and Methodius, missionaries to the Slavs, began a translation of the Gospels. There are about twelve manuscripts of the Old Slavonic version of the gospels, dating from the tenth and fourteenth centuries.

Order in which the books of the bible were written

The books of the Bible were not written in the order that we have them in our Bibles. In today's Bibles, most of the books are topically first, then chronologically second.

The Writings of the New Testament

The writings of the New Testament differ from the Old, because here the thematic order is accentuated, rather than the chronological one, in terms of the degree of doubt, here the historical books are combined with the doctrinal ones.

NOTES: (+) These epistles were written at the same time being sent by Tiquico. They are called "Captivity" or "Prisoners" because Pablo is imprisoned. The two dates, due to the possibility that Pablo has been released. (\*) The book of Hebrews does not mention its author, several authors have been thought of, but they are only conjectures without any historical value. The names, in order of importance, are Pablo, Bernabé, Lucas, Apolo, Santiago, etc. (°) These seem to be personal letters appended (or introductory) to the book of Revelations.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

**Lesson 6**

**Antique Translations**

**[Click following link to take the quiz: https://forms.office.com/r/qtNjBQ0ePK](https://forms.office.com/r/qtNjBQ0ePK)**  
**If the link doesn't work copy and paste it into your browser**

1. Define Septuagint \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Define Samaritan Pentateuch \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Define Targums \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. List three Latina versions of the Bible \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. List three Syriac versions of the Bible \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Define the following antique versions of the Bible  
A. Gothic \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

B. Armenian \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. Georgian

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D. Ethiopian

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

### **Lesson 7** **Modern Translations**

Spanish translations to the present The Bible before the press

Long before the invention of the printing press, Spain had the Holy Scriptures, first in Latin, and later in Spanish. However, the prohibition of possessing the books of the Old and New Testaments in the common language has been produced and reiterated since 1229. The territorial scope of the various prohibitions is variable, according to the different jurisdictions established by the feudal division. By ecclesiastical provision, applicable mainly to the Catalan region, those who possessed the Holy Scriptures in the common language were given a period of eight days in which they had to deliver them to the bishop of their diocese "to be burned." For those who even allowed "heretics" to live on their land, the penalty was confiscation of property. The repeated prohibitions make it understood that since the thirteenth century the Bible in the vulgar language was known in Catalonia. By then the Waldensians and Albigensians had already won supporters in Spain.

13th century Alphonsine Bibles

The oldest copy of the Bible in Spanish is kept in the El Escorial Museum. It is the so-called Prealphonsine Bible, one of the works of Alfonso X (1221-1284). The respective codex has deteriorated and currently only consists of the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The work of the Wise King himself is the Alfonsina Bible, part of the Grande e General Estoria; it is a summary of the entire Bible. Alfonso X, in collaboration with Moorish and Jewish scholars, wrote works in which the Castilian language refined its style and reached unusual splendor. In this way, it influenced the evolution of our language in those days and has suffered a fate parallel to that evolution in successive versions.

Jewish convert translations

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw a great boom in biblical productions. R. Salomón, a Jew who converted to Catholicism, produced a parallel translation: a column from the Vulgate next to another from the Spanish translation, made directly from the Hebrew.

Bible of the House of Alba, 1430

Bible of the House of Alba is a luxurious vellum codex, beautifully illustrated and calligraphed. It consists only of the Old Testament, ordered according to the Jewish canon. It is the work of Rabbi Mosé Arrangel, who invested nine years of work in it. He finished it in 1430.

Martin of Lucena

A translation that has been lost is that of Martín de Lucena, el Macabeo. It is done Commissioned by Íñigo López de Mendoza, the famous Marquis of Las Serranillas.

The court of the Inquisition, created in 1483 to persecute Albigensians, had fallen into disuse. The Catholic Monarchs obtained from Pope Sixtus IV the resurrection of the same with the Holy Office (1482). The mob, incited against the Jews, had already been exterminating many of them and destroying property. Some Catholic apologists say that in Spain there was freedom of worship in those days. That the persecution was against Jews who pretended to have converted to Catholicism; that

unconverted Jews were allowed to persevere in their religion.

### Expulsion of the Jews, 1498

In 1498 the Catholic Monarchs decreed the expulsion of the Jews. These took Spain in their hearts, and still lovingly preserve their language. In exile, they continued to produce Spanish translations of the Old Testament, published mainly in Amsterdam (Holland) and Geneva (Switzerland).

### Three centuries of unbiblical repression

New measures are beginning to be produced to restrict the reading of the Holy Scriptures. «Rule V of the Index of the Inquisition, however, if it did not cut the thread of the Romance translations, in fact, it greatly limited them», says the Commentary on the Sacred Scripture of «Verbum Dei» (Barcelona, Editorial Herder, 1960). He adds that in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and much of the eighteenth centuries, very few biblical translations were made in Spain, «and not all of them were published». Between 1514 and 1547 the Complutensian polyglot Bible was produced, and in 1569-1573 the Regia Bible, also a polyglot.

### Spanish Jewish translations

Outside of Spain, there was more freedom regarding the Bible. Exiled Jewish translators include Isaac Abarbanel, Isaac Haraman ben Moseh, Jom Tob Athías (known as Duarte Pinel), and Jerónimo de Vargas.

Sponsored by Duke Hercules II of Ferrara, these last two produced in 1553 the Bible (Old Testament) bearing the name of Ferrara. "Suspicious that by this dispersion they would forget the doctrine that in the synagogues of Spain they had been taught by the Spanish manuscript codices that were in them, these Jews, residents of Ferrara, resolved to make by these same codices an impression that keeps the same Spanish voices that they were accustomed to hearing in said synagogues, and that were not in use outside of them». (Joseph Rodríguez de Castro; Biblioteca Española, Volume I, Madrid: 1871, p. 408. Cited by B. Foster Stockwell, Prefacios a las Biblias Castellanas del siglo XVI, Librería «La Aurora», Buenos Aires: 1939.)

In their preface addressed «To the reader», Pinel and Usque state that they have used the work of «very wise and experienced lawyers in the same language, both Hebrew and Latin» and of «all the ancient and modern translations and of the Hebrew older than they could be found by hand" (B. Foster Stockwell, op.cit.).

«The Ferrara version is, without a doubt, the result of a collective elaboration of several generations» (Clemente Ricci, La Biblia de Ferrara, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas de la Faculty de Filosofía y Letras, Buenos Aires, 1926 p.30; cit. by B. Foster Stockwell, op.cit.).

### Biblical knowledge among the people

#### Ferrara Bible

The Bible, since it had become acclimatized in Spain and, finally, the living Word, was adapted following the evolution of the Castilian language and reflecting its best glories. But don't be fooled by the sheer number of translations. The days of printing had not arrived. Possessing a copy of the scriptures was the privilege of the rich and learned. Furthermore, even if Bibles had abounded, illiteracy

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

reigned everywhere.

Among the people, there was a relative knowledge of the Holy Scriptures: the one that they were good to supply from the pulpit, and the one that manifested itself in the liturgy. That veneer of knowledge was transmitted by oral tradition.

Sayings are "little gospels", according to a popular saying that not only refers to the general wisdom they contain but also to the biblical doctrine that many contain. Some do nothing more than rhyme the biblical text; others give it by the letter. As an example, we have the following:

"Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45).

"You must not kick against the pricks" (Acts 9.5).

"Do not throw pearls before swine" (Matthew 7.6).

"By their fruits, you will know them" (Matthew 7:16, 20).

"Look at the speck in another's eye" (Matthew 7.3).

### Protestant Bibles in Spanish

The Reformation found the Spanish terrain well fertilized, as we have seen, by the great diffusion of the Holy Scriptures due in large part to the Jewish people. Many of these had related to Spanish families. The accusation of Judaizing was leveled many times by the Inquisition against important Spanish figures, even within the clergy.

Let's see some of the main translations that, under the influence of the Reformation, are produced in the Spanish language.

### Protestant translations of the 16th century

In the sixteenth century, Juan de Valdés translated the Psalms and the Epistles to the Romans and the Corinthians. The works of this elegant writer have recently been republished in Argentina and Mexico. In 1964, the Autonomous University of Mexico published the «Dialogue on Christian Doctrine and the Psalter, translated from Hebrew into Spanish romance». Here is how Psalm 23 begins:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I will never be in need. In meadows of yerua he will make me rest; Make calm waters guide me."

### New Testament of Enzinas, 1543

Under the influence of Melancton, and naturally abroad, Francisco de Enzinas translated the New Testament in 1543. He dedicates his translation to Emperor Charles V with the quote from Joshua 1.8, good advice for every ruler. He states that "there have been many and very various opinions" regarding whether it is appropriate to transfer the Holy Scriptures to vulgar language. Enzinas agrees with those who want "in his natural language to hear Jesus Christ and his apostles speak."

Among the various reasons he supports, the second is that only the Spanish people are prevented from having the Bible in their own language. In defense of the cultural prestige of Spain he undertakes his work.

## New Testament of Juan Pérez de Pineda, 1556

Between 1556 and 1557 Juan Pérez de Pineda published his beautiful translation of the New Testament and the Psalms in Geneva. He also wrote a moving "Consoling Epistle" dedicated to the evangelical Christians of Seville who underwent torment, and twenty-one of whom died at the stake for their faith. Among these was Julianillo Hernández, who had steadfastly and audaciously dedicated himself to smuggling Juan Pérez's New Testament into Spain. Juan Pérez de Pineda dedicated his entire life to spreading the Word of God, and contributing to the company even after his death, he dedicated all his assets by the will to the printing of a complete one in Spanish.

## Casiodoro de Reina Bible, 1569

Casiodoro de Reina worked ten or twelve years on its translation, whose frontispiece proclaims in the words of Isaiah: "THE WORD OF OUR GOD REMAINS FOREVER." Probably the publication was possible through de Reina, the inheritance of Juan de Pineda. There is evidence that others also gave his contribution. It was finished printing in 1569 and circulated clandestinely in Spain, through the abnegation of believers who thereby exposed their lives.

Menéndez y Pelayo praised this translation as follows: «As made in the best time of the Castilian language, in many ways the version of Casiodoro, the modern version of Torres and the unfortunate one of Father Scío» (History of the Spanish heterodox) A picture containing background pattern description automatically generated one we have been discussing is the so-called Bear Bible, so named because it has a bear engraved on its frontispiece. Cassiodorus makes very special mention of the use he made of the Ferrara Bible... This version, which was solely of the Old Testament, had been made within the tradition of the Jews of Spain, which implied a very special reverence for each word and letter of the Hebrew text» (Guillermo L. Wonderly, *Casiodoro de Reina: Ancient translator with new ideas, in the Bible in Latin America, Mexico, no 90, 2 Tim, 1969*).

Cassiodorus acknowledges his debt to the Ferrara Bible but criticizes the excessive attachment of this to the correct or natural meaning of words, attachment to the letter that is carried out "many times with manifest violence of meaning." He considers that the Bible is a revelation, a message from God, it is logical that it be dressed in language understandable to the common man, and Ferrara's, with his literalist desire, did not achieve that.

Cassiodorus is fully aware of the dynamic and revolutionary force of the Scriptures, since he says in his «Admonition to the reader»: «It is an intolerable thing for Satan, father of lies and author of darkness (Christian reader), that the truth of God and the light is manifested in the world; for in this one-way deceit is undone, his darkness vanishes, and all the vanity on which his kingdom is founded is revealed, whence then his ruin is certain; and the miserable men that he has bound in death with prisons of ignorance, taught with the divine light, come out of their prison to eternal life, and to the freedom of children of God» (B. Foster Stockwell, *Prefaces to the Castillian Bibles of the sixteenth century*).

## The Bear Bible

It is about the word of God to the people. Cipriano de Valera carried out the same task with respect to his generation in 1602, considering the semantic changes that time inevitably imposes on languages.

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### Current Versions

The progress of the sciences of man has contributed to the new flourishing of biblical studies during the present century. The various branches of anthropology have made it possible to penetrate more and more into the thought of the ancient peoples of the Middle East, to better understand their customs and better understand their writings.

The evangelical effort is more to put the Bible within the reach of the people than to preserve an incomprehensible literary work, or to produce versions of such an elevated style that they deprive the masses of spiritual food. This does not prevent, however, the production of Bibles for select groups.

With the purpose of disseminating the Word, the Bible Societies have produced different versions based on the Reina Valera, for use by congregations and for common reading. The last one was in 1960, carried out by a review committee made up of Dr. Alfonso Lloreda and Messrs. Honorio Espinoza, Henry Parra Sánchez, Alfonso Rodríguez Hidalgo, Eugenio A. Nida, and John Twentyman. Some sixty consultants distributed throughout the Spanish-speaking world collaborated with them.

Under the direction of Guillermo L. Wonderly, who had the suggestions of learned collaborators, connoisseurs of the New Testament in the Greek language, and of the speech of the people in the various directions of America and Spain, the popular version was produced, called *God speaks today*. Their language is affordable for the great peasant masses, for children, and for those who are just coming out of illiteracy. However, not to the good taste of the most cultured people.

Currently, the Bible Societies have produced the 1995 version of the Reina Valera. We must also mention previous versions made by the Societies Biblical. We have the Modern Version, the work of H. A. Pratt, one of the first attempts in Spanish to apply textual criticism; The Hispano-American Version, a bilingual edition (Spanish-English) of the New Testament, also modernizes the language somewhat.

The Scofield Bible is an annotated edition published by Spanish Publications Inc. of Miami, USA.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have produced their own version in support of their particular tenets, under the title of the *New World Translation of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures*.

A new Jewish translation of the Old Testament, the work of León Dujovne, Manasés Konstantinowski and Moisés Konstantii has been published by Ediciones S. Sigal (Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1961). The authors declare that their version "translates with scrupulous fidelity the Hebrew original. In some parts the text is completely new in relation to previous versions». It has a phonetic key, "so that the reader knows the biblical names in their exact pronunciation."

As an example of what in his controversial eagerness, typical of that time, Cassiodoro called "rabbinical malice", let us see in this version the text is almost completely new in relation to versions by Ferrara: «For a child is born to us, a son is given to us: and the dominion will be on his shoulder, and the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Eternal Father will call him: "Prince of Peace"» (compare with other versions).

Among the modern Catholic versions in Spanish are those of Bóver-Cantera and Nácar-Colunga (1944), published in Spain, and that of Bishop T. Straubinger, published in the Argentine Republic in 1941. They have been reissued in whole or in part several times. All three were made with excellent critical sense, taking advantage of the latest discoveries in biblical research.

The Jerusalem Bible has been published in Spanish (Desclée de Brower: Brussels, Belgium, 1967). This work was originally published in French, under the auspices of the Biblical School of Jerusalem.

### Paladins of the Bible in the Hispanic world

It is not enough to multiply the number of Bibles. The Word of God is a living and effective sword, a power that transforms men, leads them to the knowledge of God, and produces in them the desire



to transmit the divine message.

As a knight errant of the Holy Scriptures, we find in the first half of the nineteenth century George Borrow introducing the New Testament in Spain. From 1837 to 1838 he had the New Testament printed in the Spanish peninsula in the Reina-Valera version and dedicated himself to distributing it personally.

A picture containing background pattern Description automatically generated Borrow quickly captured popular sympathy, as he felt genuine esteem for the authentic people that is reflected in his writings. "In Spain," he said, "the only vulgar thing is the nobility." He rode enormous distances on horseback, with a load of Bibles on his mule.

He suffered persecution and imprisonment, but he doggedly took advantage of the ups and downs of freedom in the brief liberal period of those days. In *The Bible in Spain*, an exciting autobiographical work, he recounts his adventures and masterfully presents the Spanish landscape and people. He quickly apprehended popular sympathy, for he had genuine esteem for the authentic people which is reflected in his writings. "In Spain," he said, "the only vulgar thing is the nobility." He rode enormous distances on horseback, with a load of Bibles on his mule. He suffered persecution and imprisonment, but he doggedly took advantage of the ups and downs of freedom in the brief liberal period of those days. In an exciting autobiographical work, he recounts his adventures and masterfully presents the Spanish landscape and people.

An Italian living in Uruguay became in 1882 an indefatigable "Traveler of God", traveling on a mule back through the most intricate parts of the Andean region, and then almost the entire American continent. His continuing concern was to disseminate the Holy Scriptures, which he did as an agent of the

British and Foreign Bible Society.

Those were days of intransigence on the part of the dominant religion, and the civil authorities used to be at the service of the ecclesiastical ones. The spiritual awakening that the first trip by Penzotti produced in Peru caused the Bible Society to organize a Pacific Bible Agency, with Penzotti as executive secretary.

"The Roman Catholic Church was shocked by the new movement and began a tremendous persecution against Penzotti and his "colporteur" congregation. There were armed attacks, ex-communications, curses and, finally, jail for many of them» (Luis D. Salem, Francisco G. Penzotti, *Apostle of freedom and truth; Mexico: Bible Societies in America Latin*). Penzotti himself suffered long months in prison in Callao.

These figures give an idea of his titanic work: «During his life, he personally distributed 125,000 copies of the Bible and under his direction, more than two million circulated» (L. D. Salem, *op. cit.*).

The work of Penzotti and Borrow was both spiritual and cultural in character. The Bible helps to educate the people. «The reading of the Bible laid the foundations of popular education that has changed the face of the nations that possess it» said Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, the hero of America. The reader of the Bible disciplines his thought and comes out of the semi-illiteracy of those who in the newspapers read only the sports or social pages, and outside the newspapers they do not know anything other than the illustrated pamphlets.

The large number of translations of the Bible show us the long pilgrimage of man in his effort to make available the eternal truth revealed centuries ago. The different versions have tried to make her speak in the ordinary language of those who must read and think living in this current world, so distant from that of the Eastern shepherds.

Our individual preference and choice regarding translation(s) will be reflected in our homes and in what we teach the youth. The translation process will naturally continue. There are at least two reasons

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for this: (1) The meaning of words changes, and new words are added to the lexicon; (2) The discoveries of papyri and archaeological remains are providing us with new data to better understand the Holy Scriptures.

**Lesson 7 - Quiz**  
**Modern Translations**

**[Click following link to take the quiz: https://forms.office.com/r/55ky21Dmp3](https://forms.office.com/r/55ky21Dmp3)**  
**If the link doesn't work copy and paste it into your browser**

1. What was the Bible like before the printing press? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What are the Alfonsine Bibles of the XIII Century? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What are the translations of unconverted Jews? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the 1430 Casa de Alba Bible? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Who was Martin de Lucena? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What were the Three Centuries of Unbiblical Repression? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Cite some examples of Protestant Bibles in Spanish \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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8. What is the Enzinas New Testament of 1543? \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

9. What is the New Testament of Juan Pérez de Pineda of 1556? \_\_\_\_\_  
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10. Who are the Paladins of the Bible in the Hispanic world? \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

## Old and New Testaments

### Lesson 8

#### Old and New Testaments

In common language “testament” is the last will of a person, in which he disposes of his assets at the time of his death. But that is not the sense it has in the Bible, in which it means “covenant” or agreement. It would be more appropriate to speak of Old Covenant and New Covenant, but tradition (since Tertullian) has long established the use of the word “Testament.”

The idea of a “covenant” goes back to Moses at Sinai (Exodus 24:3-8), and even before Moses, to Abraham (there are even older indications of the Covenant, Genesis 6:18, for example) when God made a promise to his chosen people. By making that promise or covenant, God placed himself in a special relationship with his people: in a saving or redemptive relationship.

The Old Testament tells the story of how that special relationship has worked out in history. But the Jews foresaw and hoped for a New Covenant, and in it they placed their hope; Jeremiah (31.31-34) predicted that New Covenant (see the words of Jesus in Matthew 26.28). That the New Covenant came about is demonstrated by Jesus himself when he says: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” (1 Corinthians 11:25). Not surprisingly, Paul mentions the Old Covenant (2 Corinthians 3:14) and the New (2 Corinthians 3:6). And the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes the distinction between the Covenants one of his great themes (Hebrews 8:13, etc.).

#### Old Testament: Divisions

There are three divisions in the Hebrew Old Testament: Law, Prophets, and Scriptures. This triple division is reflected in New Testament passages such as Matthew 5:17, Luke 16.29 and Luke 24.44. Traditionally the Hebrew Bible contained only twenty-four books.

These twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible correspond to the thirty-nine of our Old Testament. The number is altered mainly by dividing the minor prophets into twelve separate books and by dividing (into two each) Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. Ezra-Nehemiah is also separated into two books. In the Greek Bible (Septuagint), the Old Testament has a different division, determined by the similarity of themes.

#### Old Testament

##### The Pentateuch - Laws: from Genesis to Deuteronomy

The term Pentateuch (pente means five; thus Pentateuch means “five scrolls”) refers to the first five books of the Old Testament. They are also called “Torah” or “Law” because since ancient times the Jews have respected this five-volume work as their Law. Israel’s great legislator for more than forty years.

These books focus on the main threads of the revelation to the Hebrews: In Genesis we have the revelation to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph (the patriarchs or “fathers”) with the creativity of God and the sin of man as a background. In Exodus we find a double revelation: the freedom of the captives in Egypt and the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. Leviticus clearly states the teaching and the need to live holy.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

In Numbers, God guides his people on their way to the Promised Land. In Deuteronomy, Moses recapitulates God's message in law and history up to that time, and the Ten Commandments are repeated (chapter 5). In all this God manifested himself through real historical acts; therefore, it is no wonder that, more than any other ancient people, the Jews took history seriously. We repeat that in the historical event God manifested himself to his people.

Until modern times all Christians and Jews believed that Moses was the author of most or all of the Pentateuch. Exodus 24.4; Deuteronomy 31.9, 24-26, for example, indicate him as the author of portions of the Pentateuch. Some later passages (e.g. Joshua 1.7,8; 1 Kings 2.3; 2 Chronicles 34.14) recognize Moses as the author of the Law. In addition, the New Testament takes such paternity for granted (e.g. Luke 24.27,44; John 1.45; Acts 28.23).

Nowhere does the Bible say that Moses wrote the entire Pentateuch. For example, he did not write the account of his death at the end of Deuteronomy. But today some hold the thesis that several people, and perhaps many, participated in the production and writing of the first five books of the Old Testament. This thesis has been combated, especially in conservative circles. But what is clear is that there were written sources on which the Pentateuch was based (e.g. "The Book of Jehovah's Battles," Numbers 21:14).

Moses, an enlightened man capable of appreciating the value of written records, may well have collected genealogical and other records, to join them to what was revealed by God (e.g. Creation) weaving them in the form of a continuous narrative. In short, that is the current thesis regarding Moses as an author.

The order reflected in the Greek Bible (previous table) is the one generally followed by the Latin Bible and our Evangelical Bibles. By the way, this order is more chronological than that of the Hebrew Bible (for example, Ruth comes after Judges).

### The New Testament

The length of the New Testament is only a third of that of the Old, but Jesus Christ, the central figure in it, places the highest value on it. Jesus did not write any book; he did not leave a literary legacy; the data about him were supplied by his apostles and his disciples. But Jesus is the key character. Next in importance are Peter (mentioned more times than anyone except Jesus) and Paul. Paul and Luke contributed the most to the writing of the New Testament, but a dozen men helped write the whole.

For some 1600 years most Christians have credited this New Testament of ours with its 27 books divided as follows: Gospels - Acts - Epistles - Revelation.

There are four gospels, a book of Acts (History of the Early Church), twenty-one letters or epistles of Paul, other apostles and apostolic men, and an Apocalypse (like Daniel in its literary form). This fourfold order is logical and chronological at the same time.

First, the gospel message is presented (the foundations are laid), then the spread of the Gospel is recounted in Acts; the explanation of the Gospel is expanded later in the Epistles and an expression of the will of God regarding the future of the evangelical believers puts an end to the New Testament: the Apocalypse. This arrangement is also chronological not in terms of the order in which it was written but in terms of subject matter.

Thus, Jesus, the founder of faith, is revealed in the Gospels; the progress of faith for about thirty years after Jesus died and rose again is presented in the Acts; the theology of faith is outlined in the Epistles; the final consummation of faith is prophesied in the Apocalypse. Apocalypse means "revelation."

It seems that the Gospels originally circulated separately, and it was not until the beginning of the second century that they were brought together in one volume. Once released, Acts and Luke, hith-

erto parts of a single work, were separated. As for Paul's works, each was preserved by the individuals and groups to whom it had been sent, but by the end of the tenth century his writings (the "Pauline epistles") were probably put together in a single "package." » and they circulated like this. Paul had exposed the evangelical message both in its theological and practical aspects, by inspiration of the Spirit of God. At first, probably only ten of Paul's epistles circulated as a group. Later three others were added, the pastoral calls (1, 2 Timothy, and Titus).

Two large groups of documents circulated at that time, the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles, and the Acts as a link between the two. Hebrews and the General (Catholic) Epistles as well as the Apocalypse were added over time to complete the New Testament writings.

This outline does not correspond to the order in which the books were written; if so, the epistles would appear first (James or Galatians), and Mark would be the first gospel. Second Peter would be the last book instead of Revelation. They were ordered according to a different principle, not according to the date of writing. The Gospels come first because they introduce us to the Founder of our religion; He is the beginning of the story.

Matthew is the first gospel because he is the most Jewish and shows how the Old Testament was fulfilled in Jesus; so that Matthew constitutes a bridge between the Old and the New Testament. Acts comes after the Gospels because it continues the story up to thirty years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Epistles of Paul are generally arranged according to length, longest first, shortest last.

The Apocalypse concludes the New Covenant because it strikes the note of hope and confidence summation on the Final Day. Hebrews and the Catholic (Universal) Epistles expand and strengthen the doctrine of the New Testament and were also added for practical applications of the doctrine.

It is significant that from very early in Christian history the twenty-seven books of the New Testament appear attached to the Hebrew Scriptures. This provided richer and more ample resources for the worship and for the defense of the Christian Gospel. Furthermore, the Old Testament was recognized as preparation for the New (Hebrews 1.1-2). That is why the Bible of the apostles, as well as that of their circle of Gospel preachers and other collaborators, was the Old Testament, which they called "the Scriptures".

The Old Testament contained the way of salvation, the coming of the Messiah (note Paul's words in Romans 3:21 and 2 Timothy 3:15). And what is more important, Christ himself used the Old Testament; and by virtue of his authoritative example, the apostolic circle also employed it. Listen to what Richard Hooker says in his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*: The general end of the Old and the New (Testaments) is one, and the difference between them boils down to this: The Old Testament gave wisdom by teaching salvation through Christ. that was to come; the New, teaching that Christ the Savior came. So, the New is the fulfillment of the Old. The Old is what God did in the past; the New, is what He dramatizes in a Son.

The New in the Old is already implied; The Old in the New is well explained. The New in the Old is rare truth; The Old in the New is already clarified.

### Language of the Old Testament

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, since it was the language in which the Hebrew people, the nation called Israel, expressed themselves literarily. It must be known, however, that Daniel 2.4b -7.21 and Ezra 4.8-6: 18; 7.12-26, and Jeremiah 10.11 are written in Aramaic, a language related to Hebrew and part of the Semitic language family (Arabic, Assyrian, Babylonian, Canaanite). The New Testament was written in Greek, although part of it was first spoken in Aramaic, the everyday language of Jesus and his disciples.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

### Eras The Hebrew Scriptures Cover

They were produced over a period spanning more than a thousand years, but the New Testament was written during the first century A.D., during the second half of the century. The history of the Old Testament goes back to the dawn of humanity and divine history. Archeology has demonstrated the validity of Old Testament history to a degree that was not expected just a generation or two ago, and the ancient civilization of the Hebrews and that of the Near East can be studied together since they both developed around the same time. As for the New Testament, the first epistles of Paul, perhaps adding Jude to them, were written in a span of ten or twelve years (48 A.D. to 60 A.D.); the four gospels and most of the other books of the New Testament were completed between 60 and 100 A.D.

### The Two Testaments

The Old Testament and the New Testament are two parts of the Bible. Simple-mind means that the Old Testament records God's promises and relationship to his people before Christ. The New Testament records the life of Christ and the things that came after Christ.

The Old Testament and the New Testament complement each other. Their interrelation is so complete that the first explains the second and vice versa, only in the light of the Old Testament do we realize what the Old Testament meant; Christ correctly said to his hearers: "Search the Scriptures and you will see that Moses speaks of me" (John 5:39-45).

In many ways, the Old Testament serves as the foundation for the New Testament. While the Old Testament comprises about three-fourths of the Bible, its content points to the Messiah revealed in the New Testament. Instead of an entirely new message, the New Testament reveals how Jesus fulfilled the predictions about the Messiah and provides many of his teachings and miracles, along with the writings of his early followers.

### What are the differences between the Old and New Testaments?

Although the Bible is a collection of books with a single message, there are numerous differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

#### Time

The books of the Old Testament were written from the time of Moses to around 400 BC This roughly 1,000-year period covers a wide range of events from the creation of the universe to the return of the Jewish people to Jerusalem under Ezra and Nehemiah. The New Testament was written between approximately AD 50 and AD 150.

#### Close up

The Old Testament narrates the power and works of God, looking to the coming Messiah. The New Testament reveals Jesus as the Messiah, recalling his life and teachings as the foundation of the church and the spread of the Gospel.



### Prophecy

Most of the Old Testament prophecies await the future and were not fulfilled at the time of the completion of the Old Testament. The New Testament highlights the fulfillment of many of the Old Testament prophecies, including more than 300 in the life of Jesus Christ.

### Worship

Much of the Old Testament focused on the tabernacle or temple as the central place of worship. Many details were included in the development of offers, festivals and related practices. In the New Testament, Jesus offered himself as the center of worship, claiming to be the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one could come to the Father except through him (John 14:6).

### Covenant

The Old Testament emphasized the Mosaic covenant with its focus on the Law of the Lord. The New Testament began a new covenant in which Jesus came as a fulfillment of the Law. The Jewish (or Gentile) people would no longer need to fulfill the Law to find atonement; Jesus offered forgiveness and eternal life to all who believed in Him.

### Size

The Old Testament includes thirty-nine of the sixty-six books of the Bible and represents approximately three-fourths of the entire Bible. The New Testament includes twenty-seven books, including four Gospels, a history book (Acts), twenty-one letters, and a book of prophecy (Revelation).

INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

**Lesson 8 Quiz**  
**Old and New Testaments**

**[Click following link to take the quiz: https://forms.office.com/r/nv1GiVTZiX](https://forms.office.com/r/nv1GiVTZiX)**  
**If the link doesn't work copy and paste it into your browser**

1. What is a testament?

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2. Which are the divisions of the Old Testament?

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3. Which are the divisions of the Greek Bible?

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4. In what language was the Old Testament written?

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5. What eras does the Old Testament cover?

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6. What eras does the New Testament cover?

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7. What are the differences between the Old and New Testaments?

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**References**

Demaray, D. E. (1996). *Introduction to the Bible*. Unit.