

## Bible Basics

The word "Bible" from the Koine Greek τὰ βιβλία, τὰ biblíā or "the books." (The Greek word is the same as the Latin "biblia")

The Bible is sometimes referred to as "Scripture," from the Latin term "scriptura," meaning "writing."

The Bible contains 66 books. The Old Testament has 39 books. The New Testament contains 27 books.

The Bible was written by approximately 40 different men (approximately because of debates about the authorship of some books) over a period of 1500 years (essentially the time of Moses, the author of the Pentateuch, to 92-96 AD, the time of the Revelation).

Yet, they're in agreement with each other, leading to the concept of inspiration and the evidence of one unifying author behind it all. Even though the Bible addresses many very controversial topics, the writers are in unity, even across millennia.

The Bible is divided in two large sections, based on pre-Christ Jewish history and post-Christ church history. So the division between the Old and New Covenants is a literary division.

The words Testament and Covenant are very similar. The Hebrew term for covenant is *berit*, meaning "to bond or fetter." It is translated into the Greek as *syntheke*, "binding together" or *diatheke*, "will, testament."

The Bible was originally written in three languages: Most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew except for parts of Daniel and Nehemiah that were written in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Koine Greek, a form of common Greek.

None of the original manuscripts of the Bible currently exist. However, we have in excess of 5600 early manuscripts, some dating back to the early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century.

## Old Testament Canon

To add or subtract from God's word would be to prevent God's people from obeying him fully. (Grudem) It is a way of keeping people from being able to obey all the instruction that God has intended for His people.

The Bible testifies to the historical development of the canon. The earliest writing of the Word of God was when God wrote the Ten Commandments with His own finger. Written in Hebrew, the specific language spoken by the people to whom God was communicating. So, God's words are for the purpose of revealing Himself to particular people.

So, the first words the Hebrews had were the tablets of stone. Moses then wrote (Ex. 24:4, 34:27, Numbers 33:2), by command of the Lord. See also: Deut. 31:22, 24-26.

So, the earliest writing about God was preserved along with the other religious furniture.

Then Joshua wrote: Josh. 24:26. Consequently, Joshua is the next book in the OT.

Then others, usually prophets, wrote additional words from God.

1 Samuel 10:25, 1Chron 29:29, 2Chron 20:34, 26:22, 32:32, Jeremiah 30:2

The Bible is both history and insight into what God is doing through these various events. The books are added by prophets who not only wrote about what happened, but they provided additional information concerning the background and spiritual implications of what occurred.

The Old Testament was preserved because it was given to a particular people group who protected and preserved it with appropriate reverence.

Old Testament canon ended around 435 BC with the completion of Malachi (currently the last book in the OT).

The Jews continued keeping history, but they had no words from prophets. So, the history is recorded (collectively referred to as the apocrypha -- "hidden", "esoteric", "spurious", "of questionable authenticity", from the Greek ἀπόκρυφα, meaning "those hidden away"), but not counted as Scripture because they did not have imprimatur of prophets who heard from God.

1Maccabees 4:45-46 (@164 BC)

45 And a good counsel came into their minds, to pull it down: lest it should be a reproach to them, because the Gentiles had defiled it; so they threw it down. And they laid up the stones in the mountain of the temple in a convenient place, till there should come a prophet, and give answer concerning them."

1Mac. 9:27 (160 BC)

So there was great distress in Israel, the worst since the time when prophets ceased to appear among them.

14:41 - Therefore, the Jews and their priests are happy to have Simon and his descendants as their leaders and High Priests, until a true prophet appears.

Josephus (Jewish historian) 39-100 AD

Against Apion 1:38-42

For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, [as the Greeks have,] but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time; and how firmly we

have given credit to these books of our own nation is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add any thing to them, to take any thing from them, or to make any change in them; but it is become natural (or, an instinct) to all Jews immediately, and from their very birth, to esteem these books to contain Divine doctrines (or “decrees of God”), and to persist in them, and, if occasion be willingly to die for them.

*Flavius Josephus Against Apion*, translated by William Whiston (University of Cambridge, 1736).

So, we see that around 95-100 AD Josephus states that the contents of the Old Testament were written between the time of Moses and the days of Artaxerxes I (king of Persia from 465 to 424 BC), which places it in the time of Esther (in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah).

{{According to Josephus, the Jews recognized 22 books as the Scriptures of the Jewish Bible:

- The Law: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy: 5 books
- The Prophets: Joshua, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah-Lamentations, Ezekiel, The book of the twelve (Hosea to Malachi): 7 books
- The Writings: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth-Judges, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles: 10 books

In Protestant Bibles, many of the books are divided—Samuel becomes 1 and 2 Samuel, Chronicles becomes 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah are separate books, as are Ruth and Judges.}}

And, of course, Jesus and NT teachers continually quote from the OT over 296 times, but they never cite any books of the Apocrypha as having any authority.

The books that make up the OT Apocrypha are: 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Prayer of Azariah, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasseh, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees

So, the NT authors, Jesus, and early church fathers, as well as

Hebrew sources reject the Apocrypha. However, in 404 AD the Bible was translated into Latin (given the dominance of the Roman Empire). Jerome was given direction by the pope to create the Latin Vulgate. Jerome was forced to include the Apocrypha, but he would not include it as canon. In 1546, at the Council of Trent, the Catholic Church declared the Apocrypha to be Scripture, in response to the Protestant Reformation that Luther began October 31, 1517).

Protestants argue that something is Scripture based on the evidence that it's directly from God. Catholics say that the Church decides.

If God is sovereign, then He directed history in order to include the books that are now in the OT.

So the method for preserving the OT was to have those books guarded by a particular, relatively small group of people who considered them God's word to them specifically, written in a language specific to them. However, the NT was written in the most common language in the then-present world and was preserved through the sheer number of copies created and distributed.

There are 39 books in the OT and 27 books in the NT.

The New Testament is traditionally divided into: Gospels, History, Epistles (Letters), and Prophecy.

Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

History: Acts

Epistles: Romans, Titus, 1Corinthians, 2Corinthians, Galatians, Hebrews, Ephesians, James, Philippians, 1Peter, 2Peter, Colossians, 1John, 2John, 3John, 1Thessalonians, 2Thessalonians, Jude, 1Timothy, 2Timothy

Prophecy: Revelation

So, how did these particular books become "canon" or the list of books that were accepted in the Bible?

can·on /'kanən/ Noun

A general law, rule, principle, or criterion by which something is judged.

Christian Bibles range from the sixty-six books of the Protestant canon to the eighty-one books of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church canon.

The Hebrew Bible, or Tanakh, contains twenty-four books divided into three parts; the five books of the Torah ("teaching" or "law"), the Nevi'im ("prophets"), and the Ketuvim ("writings").

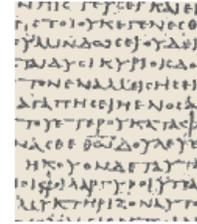
The first part of Christian Bibles is the Old Testament, which contains, at minimum, the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible divided into thirty-nine books and ordered differently than the Hebrew Bible. The Catholic Church and Eastern Christian churches also hold certain deuterocanonical books and passages to be part of the Old Testament canon.

The New Testament is the same for all Christian churches, containing twenty-seven books; the four Canonical gospels, Acts of the Apostles, twenty-one Epistles or letters and the Book of Revelation.

# Manuscript evidence for superior New Testament reliability

by [Matt Slick](#)

The New [Testament](#) is constantly under attack and its reliability and accuracy are often contested by critics. But, if the critics want to disregard the New Testament, then they must also disregard other ancient writings by Plato, Aristotle, and Homer. This is because the New Testament documents are better-preserved and more numerous than any other ancient writings. Because they are so numerous, they can be [cross checked](#) for accuracy... and they are very consistent.



There are presently 5,686 Greek manuscripts in existence today for the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> If we were to compare the number of New Testament manuscripts to other ancient writings, we find that the New Testament manuscripts far outweigh the others in quantity.<sup>2</sup>

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Approximate Time Span between original & copy	Number of Copies	Accuracy of Copies
Lucretius	died 55 or 53 B.C.		1100 yrs	2	----
Pliny	61-113 A.D.	850 A.D.	750 yrs	7	----
Plato	427-347 B.C.	900 A.D.	1200 yrs	7	----
Demosthenes	4th Cent. B.C.	1100 A.D.	800 yrs	8	----
Herodotus	480-425 B.C.	900 A.D.	1300 yrs	8	----
Suetonius	75-160 A.D.	950 A.D.	800 yrs	8	----
Thucydides	460-400 B.C.	900 A.D.	1300 yrs	8	----
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	1100 A.D.	1300 yrs	9	----
Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	900 A.D.	1200	10	----
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	900 A.D.	1000	10	----
Livy	59 BC-AD 17	----	???	20	----
Tacitus	circa 100 A.D.	1100 A.D.	1000 yrs	20	----
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	1100 A.D.	1400	49	----
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	1000 A.D.	1400 yrs	193	----
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs	643	95%
New Testament	1st Cent. A.D. (50-100 A.D.)	2nd Cent. A.D. (c. 130 A.D. f.)	less than 100 years	5600	99.5%

As you can see, there are thousands more New Testament Greek manuscripts than any other ancient writing. The internal consistency of the New Testament documents is about 99.5% textually pure. That is an amazing accuracy. In addition there are over 19,000 copies in the Syriac, Latin, Coptic, and Aramaic languages. The total supporting New Testament manuscript base is over 24,000. Almost all biblical scholars agree that the New Testament documents were all written before the close of the First Century. If Jesus was crucified in 30 A.D., then that means that the entire New Testament was completed within 70 years. This is important because it means there were plenty of people around when the New Testament documents were penned who could have contested the writings. In other words, those who wrote the documents knew that if they were

inaccurate, plenty of people would have pointed it out. But, we have absolutely no ancient documents contemporary with the First Century that contest the New Testament texts.

Furthermore, another important aspect of this discussion is the fact that we have a fragment of the gospel of John that dates back to around 29 years from the original writing (John Rylands Papyri 125 A.D.). This is extremely close to the original writing date. This is simply unheard of in any other ancient writing and it demonstrates that the Gospel of John is a First Century document.

Below is a chart with some of the oldest extant New Testament manuscripts compared to when they were originally penned. Compare these time spans with the next closest which is Homer's Iliad where the closest copy from the original is 500 years later. Undoubtedly, that period of time allows for more textual corruption in its transmission. How much less so for the New Testament documents?

Important Manuscript Papyri	Contents	Date Original Written	MSS Approx. Date Time Span	Location
<b>p<sup>52</sup></b> (John Rylands Fragment) <sup>3</sup>	<a href="#">John 18:31-33,37-38</a>	circa 96 A.D.	circa 125 A.D. 29 yrs	John Rylands Library, Manchester, England
<b>p<sup>46</sup></b> (Chester Beatty Papyrus)	<a href="#">Rom. 5:17-6:3,5-14; 8:15-25, 27-35; 10:1-11,22,24-33,35; 16:1-23, 25-27;</a> Heb.; 1 & 2 Cor., Eph., Gal., Phil., Col.; <a href="#">1 Thess. 1:1,9-10; 2:1-3; 5:5-9, 23-28</a>	50's-70's	circa 200 A.D. Approx. 150 yrs	Chester Beatty Museum, Dublin & Ann Arbor, Michigan, University of Michigan library
<b>p<sup>66</sup></b> (Bodmer Papyrus)	<a href="#">John 1:1-6:11,35-14</a> :26; fragment of 14:29-21:9	70's	circa 200 A.D. Approx. 130 yrs	Cologne, Geneva
<b>p<sup>67</sup></b>	<a href="#">Matt. 3:9,15; 5:20-22, 25-28</a>		circa 200 A.D. Approx. 130 yrs	Barcelona, Fundacion San Lucas Evangelista, P. Barc.1