

GETTING TO KNOW THE BIBLE

The Bible is also called Holy Bible, Scriptures, and Holy Scripture

DESCRIPTION

The Bible shows us God's love, and brings about faith. The Bible describes itself in these words: "the Holy Scriptures ... are able to give you the wisdom that leads to **salvation through faith** in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is **inspired by God** and is **useful** for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living." (Quoted from the Bible book called Second Timothy, chapter 2, verses 15 and 16.; the translation is the Good News translation, © 1962 by the American Bible Society.)

GETTING ACCESS

Besides book form, the Bible is available as an app (search for Bible or You Touch), and on websites (Two popular sites are www.biblegateway.com and www.youtouch.com. On biblegateway you can search by topic and by book name.

NUMBERING SYSTEM

The 66 books of the Bible are each divided into chapters, and the chapters are divided into verses. For example, John 3:16 means "The book of John, chapter 3, verse 16." It reads "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (English Standard Version)

GETTING STARTED

If you have not read the Bible before, start by reading Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. They each tell about the life of Jesus. The basics of Christianity are seen in the book of Romans. Prayers and praises are in the book of Psalms. [Click](#) to see suggestions for verses to read about daily problems.

TRANSLATIONS

The Bible is in hundreds of languages, and there are dozens of translations into English. All are based on one original Bible: the Old Testament was first written in the Hebrew language, and the New Testament was first written in the Greek language. [Click](#) for samples of translations. The concepts on this web page will apply no matter which translation you are using.

ARRANGEMENT

The first portion of the Bible is called the Old Testament. These 39 books were written before Jesus Christ was born, that is, more than 2000 years ago. These 36 books are also used in Judaism, where they are known as "The Jewish Bible." The other portion of the Bible is called the New Testament. These books were written after Christ, during the first century. [Click](#) here for more details.

CONTENT

The Old Testament begins with creation, establishing that we are responsible to God because He made us, and that all humans are equal in value. The early chapters go on to explain that humans are flawed due to turning away from God's will (this is the meaning of the word "sin"), but that God is forgiving and promises that someone will mend the relationship with God (that someone turned out to be Jesus

Christ.) The early chapters also introduce Satan, the reality of judgment, and God's institution of marriage.

The first book of the Bible then introduces Abraham, who lived about 2000 years before Christ. He is the forefather of the Jewish people, so the rest of the Old Testament traces their history, up to about 400 BC. (The Jewish people are also called the people of Israel, the Israelites, and the chosen people). God told them details about the one who will come to mend the relationship. This person is called the Messiah in the Hebrew language; in Greek, that word is translated as Christ.

This history includes:

Abraham's children, grandchildren, and his great-grandson Joseph who was sold as a slave into Egypt.

Abraham's descendants, the Jewish people, live in Egypt for 400 years, where they are made into slaves
Moses leading them out of Egypt,

The next leader, Joshua, bringing them into the promised land (Canaan, which they renamed Israel, and which today includes Israel and Palestine);

Several hundred years with temporary military leaders called Judges

Their first three kings: Saul, David, (around 1000 BC) and his son Solomon.

The split into two separate kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judah in the south

The destruction of Israel by the Assyrian empire in 722 BC

The destruction of Judah by the Babylonian empire in 585 BC

The deportation of most Jews from Israel to Babylon

The destruction of the Babylonian empire by the Persians, who permit the Jews to return around 532 BC.

From the 800's to the 400's BC,, prophets were writing warnings and forecasts.

No Bible books are written after 400 BC. During these years the Jews are ruled by the Greeks (starting with Alexander the Great in 322 BC), then have a short period of self-rule from around 150 BC to 66 BC, when they were taken into the Roman Empire. The Roman empire was in charge when Jesus was born.

Some Jewish books written during the these 400 years are included in the Roman Catholic Bible, and are called the Apocrypha (which means hidden) because they were mixed in with the Bible books.

The New Testament records the life of Jesus, and shows how Jesus fulfilled the details that had been prophesied about him, showing that he was the promised Messiah, or Christ, who would suffer and die for the sins of the people. Jesus was nailed to a cross, but his suffering paid the penalty that we all deserve for turning away from God's will. Jesus died and was put into a tomb, but on the third day He rose from the dead, proving that his teachings were right: that he is God who became a man in order to die for us, and that all who trust in Him have forgiveness and eternal life. Forty days after rising from the dead, Jesus' body left the earth, but He is still present with us though we cannot see him.

The New Testament continues with the adventures of the early Christians and letters which clarify details about the faith. [Click](#) here to see the contents of each book of the Bible.

VERSES TO LOOK UP FOR DAILY PROBLEMS:

Controlling your temper: Ephesians 5:16-26. Controlling your tongue: James 3:1-12. Peer Pressure,

Ephesians 5:1-20. Illness: Psalm 23. Suffering: Hebrews 12:1-11. Seeking forgiveness: 1 John 1:8-9. Seeking salvation: Ephesians 2:1-11, and Romans 3:21-31. (Ideas from Holy Bible, Common English Version © 1995 by American Bible Society, notes on page 1352.)

SAMPLES OF TRANSLATIONS

Here is the same verse, 1 John 2:1-2, in various translations. The first few are from translations noted for translating each word of the Greek as much as possible. The other translations show degrees of freedom in word choice for expressing the gist of the meaning. Not included here are versions that are so free that they are called “paraphrases.” Examples are “The Living Bible” and “The Message.”

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the ^[b]propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world. (NASB = New American Standard Bible, ©1960 ... 1995 by The Lockman Foundation)

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. (King James translation, 1611. It is also called the “authorized version,” because in 1611 the King of England, James I, authorized it for use in the Church of England.)

My little children, I write you these things so that you may not violate God's law and sin. But if anyone should sin, we have an Advocate (One Who will intercede for us) with the Father--[it is] Jesus Christ [the all] righteous [upright, just, Who conforms to the Father's will in every purpose, thought, and action]. And He that same Jesus Himself] is the propitiation (the atoning sacrifice) for our sins, and not for ours alone but also for [the sins of] the whole world. (AMP = Amplified Bible, ©1954...1987 by the Lockman Foundation). This Bible uses the King James as its basis, but puts explanations of some terms in parentheses.)

My dear children, I'm writing this to you so that you will not sin. Yet, if anyone does sin, we have Jesus Christ, who has God's full approval. He speaks on our behalf when we come into the presence of the Father. He is the payment for our sins, and not only for our sins, but also for the sins of the whole world. (GW = God's Word translation, ©1995 by God's Word to the Nations. Used by permission of Baker Publishing Group.)

I am writing this to you, my children, so that you will not sin; but if anyone does sin, we have someone who pleads with the Father on our behalf—Jesus Christ, the righteous one. And Christ himself is the means by which our sins are forgiven, and not our sins only, but also the sins of everyone. (GNT = Good News Translation, ©1962 by American Bible Society.)

MORE DETAILS ON THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE BIBLE

Picture the Bible as two book cases. Each book's case has the same three categories (History, Writings, and Prophecy) pictured here as three shelves:

OLD TESTAMENT:

Category	Description	How many books
History	The Jews from Abraham up to 400 BC.	17
Writings	Sayings and poetry.	5
Prophecy	Writings of the Jewish prophets.	17

NEW TESTAMENT:

Category	Description	How many books
History	The life of Jesus and the adventures of the early Christians.	5
Writings	Letters sent to Christians in various cities	21
Prophecy	One book, Revelation, talking about the final victory of God.	1

THE CONTENT OF EACH BOOK OF THE BIBLE

OLD TESTAMENT: THE HISTORY BOOKS

(the dates are from Ryrie Study Bible © 1976 by Moody Bible Institute)

Book name	Date of events	Description
Genesis	Up to 1800 BC	Creation and characteristics of mankind. Abraham and the next three generations of Jews, ending with their move to Egypt.
Exodus	Around the 1300's BC	Moses leads the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and across the Red Sea into a wilderness called Sinai.
Leviticus	“	Rules for priests (Levites)
Numbers	“	Additional adventures in the wilderness of Sinai
Deuteronomy	“ These first five books are called the Books of Moses, also the Pentateuch, also the Torah.	After 40 years of wandering, Moses gives the laws to the people again (Deutero is the Greek word for “second,” nomos means “law.”)
Joshua	Around the 1300's	Joshua takes over from Moses as leader, and guides the people into the promised land (Canaan, now called Israel)
Judges	1200's and 1100's	“Judges” are temporary military leaders who defend the people from attacks
Ruth	“	She lived during the times of the judges and voluntarily married into the people of Israel.
First Samuel	Just before 1000 BC	Samuel was a prophet, and the book is about his selecting the first two kings of Israel, Saul and David.

Second Samuel	Just after 1000 BC	David becomes king
First Kings	950 to 850 BC	From David's son Solomon to King Ahab
Second Kings	850 to 586 BC	Kings of Israel and Judah (northern and southern parts) up to the time when the Babylonian Empire ends Jewish self-rule..
First Chronicles	Around 1000 BC	Retells the stories of David
Second Chronicles	900's to 532 BC	Retells the stories of the kings and the defeat of Babylon by the Persians, who allow the Jews to return to their own land.
Ezra	400's BC	Ezra assists with the rebuilding of Jerusalem
Nehemiah	400'S	Nehemiah assists with the rebuilding of Jerusalem
Esther	400's	Esther is chosen as queen of Persia and is able to save the Jewish people from a plot.

OLD TESTAMENT: THE WRITINGS

Book name	Date	Description
Job	Undated	Job suffers but does not lose his faith in God
Psalms	1000 BC and after	150 prayers and songs, many by King David.
Proverbs	900's	Sayings collected by King Solomon
Ecclesiastes	“	Solomon's reflections on his life
Song of Solomon, also called Song of Songs	“	A love song that has been used to describe spiritual love.

OLD TESTAMENT: THE PROPHETS

Name	Possible dates	Features
Isaiah	740 to 680 BC	Isaiah prophecies the virgin birth and the sufferings of Christ.
Jeremiah	627 to 585 BC	Jeremiah forecasts the New Covenant
Lamentations	586 BC	Jeremiah write his feelings about the destruction of Jerusalem
Ezekiel	592-570 BC	Ezekiel has visions while living in Babylonia
Daniel	537 BC	Daniel is thrown into the lion's den by the king of Babylonia
Hosea	710 BC	Compares the people of Israel deserting God to “adultery.”
Joel	835 BC	A locust plague provides the occasion for repentance
Amos	755 BC	Tells the rich to care for the poor and oppressed
Obadiah	840 or 586	Warnings to a nearby country, Edom

Jonah	760 BC	He ran from God but was swallowed by the fish
Micah	700 BC	He specifies Bethlehem as the place where the Messiah will be born
Nahum	663 to 612 BC	Warnings to the people of Ninevah, the capital city of the Assyrian empire
Habbakuk	607 BC	About suffering and justice.
Zephaniah	625 BC	Judgment day as terrible for some but a deliverance for God's people
Haggai	520 BC	Encouraged people in rebuilding the temple
Zechariah	520-518 BC	Also encouraged those building the temple, looking to a glorious future.
Malachi	450-400 BC	Stirred people up from their complacency.

THE NEW TESTAMENT --- HISTORY BOOKS

These record events during the first century AD, when Israel was under the control of the Roman Empire.

Title	Date of events	Description
Matthew	Birth of Christ to the 30's AD	Matthew, one of the disciples, records his experiences with Jesus.
Mark	The 30's AD	Mark records Peter's remembrances of Jesus
Luke	Birth of Christ to the 30's AD	Luke records his researches into the life of Jesus
John	The 30's AD	John, one of the disciples, records his experiences with Jesus.
Acts	From the 30's to the 50's AD	Luke writes about the adventures of Peter and Paul

The life of Jesus includes:

His teachings and miracles in the land of Israel

His arrest, trial, and death on the cross

His rising from the dead, and 40 days later, ascending from the earth.

Jesus Christ's death for our sins and rising from the dead is called the "gospel.

The book of Acts includes:

The disciples receive power from the Holy Spirit and advocate others to trust in Jesus

Peter does miracles, escapes from prison, discovers that non-Jews can also believe in Jesus.

Stephen is the first Christian to die for his faith.

Philip explains the gospel to an ambassador from Ethiopia

Paul had persecuted Christians, but then became a believer.

Acts describes three trips made by Paul throughout Turkey and Greece.

Paul is arrested and taken to Rome for trial.

In the years after the book of Acts, Peter and Paul are killed in Rome by Nero around 58 AD.

THE NEW TESTAMENT – THE WRITINGS

These are letters written to churches and individuals

Name of book	Written to	Written by	Possible date	Description
Romans	Believers in Rome	Paul	58 AD	A survey of basic Christian teaching
Two letters to the Corinthians	Believers in Corinth (Greece)	“	56 AD, 57 AD	Deals with problems that the church there was having
Galatians	Believers in Galatia (Turkey)	“	49 or 55	Emphasizes salvation by faith alone
Ephesians	Believers in Ephesus (Turkey)	“	61	Includes “by grace are you saved through faith
Philippians	Believers in Philippi (Greece)	“	61	Includes finding God’s peace as you ask Him for what you need
Colossians	Believers in Colosse (Turkey)	“	61	Includes “God has made you his friends by the physical death of His Son.”
Two letters to the Thessalonians	Believers in Thessalonica (Greece)	“	51	Being ready for the end of the world.
Two letters to Timothy	To Paul’s co-worker Timothy	“	63, 66	Principles for leading churches
Titus	To Paul’s co-worker Titus	“	65	Includes that God saved us by his mercy not by our works
Philemon	To Paul’s friend Philemon	“	61	Paul asks his friend to regard a runaway slave as a brother in Christ
Hebrews	Jewish Christians	Not stated	64 to 68	Insights about Jesus from the Old Testament
James	Jewish Christians	Jesus’ brother James	45 to 50	Practical Christian Living
Two letters by Peter	Christians in general	Jesus’ disciple Peter	63, 66	Jesus as our example of faith during suffering
Three letters by John	“	Jesus’ disciple John	90	Emphasizes love: “We love because he first loved us.”
Jude	“	Jesus’ brother Jude	70 to 80	Warnings against false teachers

THE NEW TESTAMENT --- PROPHECY.

Only one book, Revelation. John records visions he had around 90 AD.