

The Bible

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Bible Quick Reference

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The Bible is the authoritative and inspired Word of God, the primary source of God's truth. Composed of 66 books and divided into the Old and New Testaments, the Bible reveals the grand narrative of redemptive history: the creation of the world, the fall of humanity, God's covenantal dealings with His people, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the hope of final restoration.

The English word Bible is derived from the Greek word biblion ([βιβλίον](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigβιβλίον

Means book, scroll or document.

Noun, neuter.

Declensions of βιβλίον Case Singular Plural Nominative βιβλίον βιβλία Genitive βιβλίου βιβλίων Dative βιβλίῳ), meaning "book." However the Bible is not merely a book; it is a library of sacred writings, penned by over 40 human authors over a span of more than 1,500 years, yet unified by Holy Spirit as the divine author and one consistent message of God's plan to redeem sinners through Jesus Christ.

Books of the Bible

The Bible is composed of 66 books. These recognized inspired texts are known as the canon of Scripture. The Bible is divided into the Old Testament (39 books) and the New Testament (27 books). While Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions include additional writings (commonly referred to as the Apocrypha or Deuterocanonical books), the Protestant canon consists only of those texts that were recognized by the Jewish community of the Old Testament era and the early Christian church.

Old Testament

See also: [Old Testament](#)

The Old Testament lays the foundation for understanding God's character, His covenant with Israel, and the unfolding promise of a coming Messiah. Its books can be categorized as follows:

- **The Pentateuch (or Torah) - Genesis to Deuteronomy.** These five books recount the creation of the world, the fall of man, the flood, the calling of Abraham, the Exodus, and the giving of the Law at Sinai.
- **Historical Books - Joshua to Esther.** These tell the story of Israel's entrance into the Promised Land, their period of judges and kings, the division of the kingdom into the northern kingdom of Israel and southern kingdom of Judah, the destruction of the northern kingdom and exile and return of southern kingdom, and return.
- **Poetical and Wisdom Literature - Job to Song of Solomon.** This section includes psalms, prayers, proverbs, and philosophical reflections on suffering, justice, and the fear of the Lord.
- **Prophets - Isaiah to Malachi.** These books contain the messages of God's prophets who called Israel to repentance, warned of judgment, and foretold of the coming Messiah and the future hope of restoration.

Throughout the Old Testament, God's redemptive plan is progressively revealed, culminating in the prophetic anticipation of Christ (e.g., [Isaiah 53](#), [Micah 5:2](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigMicah 5:2

Hebrew יְשׁוּעָה בֶּן־דָּוִד וְיִשְׁרָאֵל עַד עַתָּה יִלְדָּה וְיִתֵּן אֶחָד מֵהֶם לְךָ יְהוָה עַד עַתָּה יִלְדָּה וְיִתֵּן אֶחָד מֵהֶם לְךָ עַד עַתָּה יִלְדָּה וְיִתֵּן אֶחָד מֵהֶם לְךָ ESV But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. NIV
καὶ σὺ οἶκος τοῦ εἶτοῦ εἰναι ἐν χιλιάσιν ἐκ σοῦ μοι ἐξελεύσεται τοῦ εἶναι εἰς ἄρχοντα ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ αἰῆς οδοῖα τοῦ ἀπαρχῆς ἐξ ἡμερῶν αἰῶνος...).

New Testament

See also: [New Testament](#)

The New Testament is about the person and work of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His church. Its books include:

- **The Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.** These are theological biographies that recount the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus, each offering a unique perspective.
- **Acts of the Apostles.** This is a historical narrative written by Luke that chronicles the birth and spread of the early Christian church, particularly the ministries of Peter and Paul.
- **Epistles - Romans to Jude.** These letters, written by apostles such as Paul, Peter, James, and John, provide instruction, encouragement, correction, and theological exposition to early Christian communities.
- **Revelation.** This is a prophetic and apocalyptic book written by the apostle John, portraying the ultimate victory of Christ over evil and the final establishment of God's kingdom.

The New Testament fulfills the promises of the Old, as Jesus declares, "Everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" ([Luke 24:4](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigLuke 24:44

Greek Εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτούς· οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι μου οὓς ἐλάλησα πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἔτι ὢν σὺν ὑμῖν, ὅτι δεῖ πληρωθῆναι πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ νόμῳ Μωϋσέως καὶ προφήταις καὶ ψαλμοῖς περὶ ἐμοῦ. ESV Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled....).

The New Testament tells the story of Jesus and the early church. The New Testament contains different categories as well including the Gospels which describe the birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, and the book of Acts which tells the story of the formation of the early church. The New Testament also contains a number of letters or epistles to various early Christian communities. It finishes with the Book of Revelation which is apocalyptic prophecy that paints a picture of the final victory of Christ, calling on his followers to persevere despite persecution.

Extra-Biblical and Apocryphal Texts

See also: [Extra-Canonical Texts](#)

While Protestants affirm the 66 books of the canonical Scriptures as the inspired word of God, there are certain other ancient texts considered interesting but not inspired, commonly called the Apocrypha or Pseudepigrapha. They were produced primarily during the intertestamental period and although some of these texts may be of historical or literary interest, they are not viewed as authoritative for doctrine or practice. The Reformers rejected these books as Scripture on the grounds that they were not part of the Hebrew Bible and were not affirmed by Christ or His apostles.

Formation of the Bible

See also: [Biblical Canon](#)

The canon of Scripture (the books included in the Bible) did not arise arbitrarily but was recognized by the believing community under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament canon was largely settled by the time of Jesus, who affirmed the authority of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings ([Luke 24:44](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigLuke 24:44

Greek Εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτούς· οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι μου οὓς ἐλάλησα πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἔτι ὢν σὺν ὑμῖν, ὅτι δεῖ πληρωθῆναι πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ νόμῳ Μωϋσέως καὶ προφήταις καὶ ψαλμοῖς περὶ ἐμοῦ. ESV Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled....).

The New Testament canon emerged gradually as apostolic writings were circulated among early churches and recognized as divinely inspired. By the end of the 4th century, church councils such as those at Hippo (393 AD) and Carthage (397 AD) affirmed the 27 books of the New Testament as canonical books that were already widely accepted and recognized by the early church. Importantly, the church did not arbitrarily create the canon, but rather, recognized the writings that bore the marks of divine inspiration, apostolic origin, and doctrinal consistency.

Translating the Bible

See also: [Bible Translation](#)

The Bible was originally written in Hebrew ([Old Testament](#)), Aramaic (a few sections, notably in [Daniel](#) and [Ezra](#)), and Koine Greek ([New Testament](#)). Early translations included the [Septuagint](#) (a Greek translation of the Old Testament) and the Latin [Vulgate](#) by Jerome.

With the Reformation in the 15th century AD, came a renewed emphasis on making the scriptures available to all people in their native languages. Reformers like Martin Luther and William Tyndale translated the Bible into vernacular (or ordinary and common) languages, often at great personal cost. Their work reflected the Protestant conviction that every believer should have direct access to God's word.

Today, organizations such as Wycliffe Bible Translators and the Bible Society continue to translate Scripture into thousands of languages, fulfilling the call to bring God's Word "to every tribe and language and people and nation" ([Revelation 5:9](#)[plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigRevelation 5:9](#)

Greek καὶ ᾄδουσιν ᾠδὴν καινὴν λέγοντες, ἄξιός εἰ λαβεῖν τὸ βιβλίον καὶ ἀνοῖξαι τὰς σφραγίδας αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἐσφάγης καὶ ἠγόρασας τῷ θεῷ ἐν τῷ αἵματί σου ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς καὶ γλώσσης καὶ λαοῦ καὶ ἔθνους, ESV And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,...).

Interpreting the Bible

See also: [Biblical Interpretation](#)

[Hermeneutics](#) involves seeking to understand the intended meaning of scripture and apply it rightly. Closely related to hermeneutics is [exegesis](#), which focuses on interpreting the original meaning of a passage in its historical, grammatical, and literary context.

Christians affirm the clarity, sufficiency, inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of scripture. These doctrines shape how the Bible is to be read and understood.

- Inspiration means that scripture is "God-breathed" ([2 Timothy 3:16](#)[plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_big2 Timothy 3:16](#)

Greek πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν, πρὸς ἐλεγμὸν, πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν, πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ, ESV All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, NIV All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,...), written by human authors but ultimately authored by God

- Inerrancy holds that the Bible, in its original manuscripts, is without error in all that it affirms.

A person's presuppositions greatly influence their interpretation. A non-Christian reader may approach the Bible as ancient myth or literature. In contrast, the Christian approaches the Bible as divine revelation, to be read with reverence, prayer, and dependence on the [Holy Spirit](#) for understanding ([1 Corinthians 2:14](#)[plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_big1 Corinthians 2:14](#)

Greek ψυχικὸς δὲ ἄνθρωπος οὐ δέχεται τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ, μωρία γὰρ αὐτῷ ἐστίν, καὶ οὐ δύναται γινῶναι, ὅτι πνευματικῶς ἀνακρίνεται· ESV The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. NIV The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because...).

Protestant Christians traditionally uphold [Sola Scriptura](#), the view that scripture alone is the supreme authority in all matters of faith and life. This contrasts with Catholic and Orthodox traditions, which place scripture and sacred tradition on equal footing.

Concluding Thoughts

The Bible is not merely a historical artifact or moral guidebook. It is the living word of God ([Hebrews 4:12](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigHebrews 4:12

Greek ζῶν γὰρ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐνεργῆς καὶ τομώτερος ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν μάχαιραν δίστομον καὶ διϊκνούμενος ἄχρι μερισμοῦ ψυχῆς καὶ πνεύματος, ἁρμῶν τε καὶ μυελῶν, καὶ κριτικὸς ἐνθυμήσεων καὶ ἐννοιῶν καρδίας· ESV For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart....), the means by which God reveals himself and his will. It is the final rule of faith and practice, sufficient to make the believer “complete, equipped for every good work” ([2 Timothy 3:17](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_big2 Timothy 3:17

Greek ἵνα ἄρτιος ᾦ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος, πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἐξηρτισμένος. ESV that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. NIV so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. NLT God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.). As such, it is to be studied, treasured, obeyed, and proclaimed. Through its pages, we come to know Jesus Christ, the word made flesh, and find eternal life in His name ([John 20:31](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigJohn 20:31

Greek ταῦτα δὲ γέγραπται ἵνα πιστεύητε ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ἵνα πιστεύοντες ζωὴν ἔχητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ. ESV but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. NIV But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name....).

Quotes

I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book. - *Abraham Lincoln*

The Bible is worth all other books which have ever been printed. - *Patrick Henry*

Defend the Bible? I would just as soon defend a roaring lion. - *Charles H. Spurgeon*

The existence of the Bible, as a book for the people, is the greatest benefit which the human race has ever experienced. Every attempt to belittle it is a crime against humanity. - *Immanuel Kant*

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