

Bible Basics

Paul's letter to the Romans says: "For whatever was written previously was written for our instruction, that by endurance and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope." (Rom 15:4) By reading and studying the Sacred Texts of Scriptures we gain a new spiritual life from a personal encounter with Christ found there. Begin your exploration by learning the basic facts about the most important book ever written.

Important terminology

Bible: comes from the Greek *biblia* (βιβλος) which means books or scrolls.

Testament: the word is a synonym for covenant.

Canon: from the Greek *kanon* (κανον) meaning "measuring rod," and later came to mean a rule by which something was judged. It came to be used as a term to mean the official list of individual books that make up the Scriptures.

Deuterocanonical: in Greek (δευτερος), this term means "second canon." These books are those texts not found in the Hebrew canon, but were added to the Greek translation, the Septuagint, and then copied into Latin by the Church. These books are Sirach, Wisdom, Baruch, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Tobit, Judith and additions to Ester and Daniel. These books were not added to the protestant canon.

Gospel: from the Greek word *euangelion* (ευαγγελιον) meaning "good news," and is unique to describe the good news of Jesus Christ.

Old Testament: The word "testament" means "covenant." There are 46 books that make up what we call the "Old Testament." These scriptures, known to the Hebrew people by the time of Jesus, are divided into different categories of texts according to the type of writing. These books are the story of the covenant God had with his people and the foundation for the "New Covenant" that was ushered in with Jesus Christ. Some refer to this as the "Hebrew Scriptures." The first reading at mass is from this part of the bible.

New Testament: The "new covenant" God made with his people through the Incarnation. These 27 books continue to tell the story of God's plan for our salvation through the retelling of the ministry of Jesus, the ministry of His Followers, and the life of the early Church. In the mass the Gospel and Sunday's second reading are from this part of the bible.

Old Testament

Catholics divide the Old Testament into four sections:

- a. The Pentateuch
- b. The Historical Books
- c. The Prophets
- d. The Writings

Pentateuch (the Law):

The five foundational books that comprise the Jewish Torah give basis for the telling of the origins of God's people and their unique relationship with God, through the Covenant at Mount Sinai.

Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy
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Historical Books:

These books recount the period of Israelite history from about 1250 to 100 B.C.

Joshua	Judges	1 & 2 Samuel
1 & 2 Kings	Ruth	1 & 2 Chronicles
Ezra	Esther	Nehemiah
1 & 2 Maccabees	Judith	Tobit

Wisdom books:

These books give us a reflection of the experience of the Jewish people with God and the world.

These writings comprise beautiful poetry, songs as well as instruction on living a virtuous life.

Job	Song of Songs
Psalms	Wisdom
Proverbs	Sirach
Ecclesiastes	

Prophets:

The prophets reminded the people of the covenant they made with God. Despite human misbehavior and subsequent misfortune, God was always faithful to the Covenant and ready for them to return to Him.

Isaiah	Hosea	Nahum
Jeremiah	Joel	Habakkuk
Lamentations	Amos	Zephaniah
Baruch	Obadiah	Haggai
Ezekiel	Jonah	Zechariah
Daniel	Micah	Malachi

The New Testament

The New Testament contains 27 books which can be divided as follows:

The Gospels

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
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The Acts of the Apostles

The Epistles (Letters)

The Epistles can be divided into the following groups:

The Letters of St. Paul

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

The Catholic Letters

James	1 & 2 Peter
1, 2, and 3 John	Jude

Hebrews

Revelation