

Introduction to the Bible

Introduction to the Bible – Study Notes

1. What Is the Bible?

- **Definition:** A collection of sacred writings regarded as the inspired word of God by Christians (and, in part, by Jews).
 - **Composition:** 66 books (Protestant canon) divided into two main sections:
 - **Old Testament** – 39 books (Hebrew Scriptures)
 - **New Testament** – 27 books (Christian Scriptures)
 - **Languages:** Primarily Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.
-

2. Structure & Organization

Section	Number of Books	Main Genres	Time Span
Pentateuch (Torah)	5	Law, Narrative	c. 1500?1400?BCE
Historical Books	12 (OT)	Israel’s history	c. 1400?400?BCE
Wisdom & Poetry	5 (OT)	Psalms, Proverbs, etc.	c. 1000?400?BCE
Major Prophets	5 (OT)	Prophetic messages	c. 800?400?BCE
Minor Prophets	12 (OT)	Prophetic messages	c. 800?400?BCE
Gospels	4 (NT)	Life of Jesus	c. 60?90?CE
Acts	1	Early church history	c. 63?70?CE
Epistles	21	Letters to churches/individuals	c. 50?100?CE
Apocalypse	1	Prophetic vision	c. 95?CE

Note: Catholic and Orthodox Bibles include additional “Deuterocanonical” books.

3. Key Themes

Theme	Old Testament Illustration	New Testament Fulfillment
Creation	Genesis 1?2	John 1:1?3; Colossians 1:16
Covenant	Abrahamic & Mosaic covenants	New Covenant in Christ (Jeremiah?31:31; Luke?22:20)

Introduction to the Bible

Theme	Old Testament Illustration	New Testament Fulfillment
Redemption	Exodus, sacrificial system	Jesus' death & resurrection (Romans?3:24)
Kingdom of God	Davidic monarchy	Jesus' proclamation (Matthew?4:17)
Justice & Mercy	Prophetic calls for righteousness	Ethical teachings of the apostles (James?2:13)

4. How the Bible Was Formed

1. Authorship

- Written by >40 authors (prophets, priests, apostles, historians).
- Diverse backgrounds: shepherds, kings, fishermen, scholars.

2. Oral Tradition

- Many narratives and laws were transmitted orally before being written down.

3. Manuscript Transmission

- **Hebrew Bible:** Masoretic Text (c. 10th?c. CE) is the standard Hebrew manuscript.
- **New Testament:** Over 5,800 Greek manuscripts, plus early translations (Latin, Syriac, Coptic).

4. Canon Formation

- **Old Testament:** Closed by the end of the 1st?c.?CE among Jewish communities.
- **New Testament:** Recognized by early church councils (e.g., Hippo?393, Carthage?397) and affirmed at the Council of Trent (Cath