

THE BIBLE

The **Bible** is the Word of God and is composed of both the Old and New Testaments.

The **Old Testament** relates God's Creation of the world and his Word to Israel. He reveals his undying love for his creation mankind, in spite of man's sin and disobedience, through the promise of a Redeemer. There are over 100 Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, among them Genesis 3:15, Deuteronomy 18:15-18, 2 Samuel 7:14-16, 1 Chronicles 17:12-14, Psalm 22, Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Daniel 7:13-14, Micah 5:2, and Zechariah 9:9.

The Old Testament is **Hebrew Scripture** or *Tanakh*, and is composed of the **Law**, the Pentateuch or *Torah*, the **Prophets** or *Neviim*, and the **Writings**, the Hagiographa or *Kethuvim*. The *threefold* division - and original order - of Hebrew Scripture was evident at the time of Jesus, who referred to "The Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms (Luke 24:44)." The Old Testament was composed in **Hebrew**, except for the following written in Aramaic - Genesis 31:47, Jeremiah 10:11, Ezra 4:8-6:18 and 7:12-26, and nearly half of the Book of Daniel (2:4-7:28).

The writings of the Old Testament were preserved in three languages - Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, and have been passed on to us mainly through 4 manuscripts: the Greek Septuagint from Alexandria; the Masoretic Hebrew text; the newly discovered Dead Sea Scrolls of the Essenes; and the Targums, translations of Scripture into Aramaic. The differing traditions have led to the disparity found in the Old Testament canons among Christian religions. See the **Canon** of the Old Testament for a more complete discussion.

The oldest surviving translation of Hebrew Scripture was the **Greek Septuagint**, which was undertaken in the third century BC in Egypt by Jewish scholars who had migrated there during the Diaspora. The Greek codices arranged the books in a *fourfold* division, a different way than Hebrew Scripture, by placing the Law of Moses first, then the Historical Books, then the Psalms and Wisdom Literature, and then the Prophets. The three major Christian religions follow the Greek pattern, and will serve as the outline for this discussion.

The **Law** contains the five Books of Moses or the Pentateuch. **Genesis** describes the creation of the world, our first parents Adam and Eve, Noah and the Flood, and God's Covenants with Noah, Abraham, the Patriarch of Israel, and his son Isaac. The historical pattern of covenant, fall, judgement, and redemption that begins in Genesis remains consistent throughout the Old Testament. **Exodus** records the history of Moses, the Ten Commandments and the Ark of the Covenant, the first Passover and

the Exodus from Egypt. **Leviticus** relates the laws pertaining to religious observances and conduct, such as to love your neighbor (19:18), and to refrain from tattoos (19:28) or consult fortune tellers (19:31). **Numbers** is so named because of the census taken of the Israelites, and their wandering in the Sinai Desert for forty years because of their disobedience to the Lord God. **Deuteronomy** repeats the Ten Commandments and religious laws, and delineates how the Israelites should live in the Promised Land, and prophesizes the consequences of their behavior.

The **Historical Books** include Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, as well as Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, the Books of the Restoration. **Joshua** records the entry of the Israelites into the Promised Land and the conquest of Canaan. **Judges** describes the time when the Lord raised up Judges, such as Samson, to save his people, a time when there was no king in Israel. **Ruth** traces the ancestry of the Davidic dynasty. The Books of Samuel and Kings were made into two books each. In **First Samuel**, the prophet Samuel anointed Saul, who failed as the first monarch because of his disobedience; the young shepherd David was faithful to the Lord and defeated Goliath. In **Second Samuel**, David united all twelve tribes and became King of all Israel; he brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, which became the capital of the United Kingdom of Israel. **First Kings** begins with David's son King Solomon who built the first Temple of the Lord, which housed the Ark of the Covenant. Disobedience to the Mosaic Law led to the Divided Kingdom of Israel and Judah. **Second Kings** records the preponderance of Kings who broke covenant with the Lord, and the subsequent capture of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians in 722 (or 721) BC, and the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple with the **Babylonian Captivity** in 587 (or 586) BC. **Chronicles** records the time from the reign of Saul to the return from the Babylonian Exile. The Historical Books also include the history of the Restoration, the return of the Jewish people from the Babylonian captivity, through the eyes of two leaders: **Ezra** restored the Mosaic Law, while **Nehemiah** restored the gates and walls of Jerusalem. The Second Temple in Jerusalem was rebuilt during this time and completed in 516 BC. The (complete) Book of **Esther** records how God through Esther spared the Jewish people during the period of the Restoration.

The **Wisdom Literature** consists of **Job**, **Psalms**, **Proverbs**, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs.

The **Prophets** include the Major Prophets - **Isaiah**, the Book of Jeremiah and Lamentations, Ezekiel, and **Daniel**; and the Prophets of the **Book of the Twelve**, which include Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, **Jonah**, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

The Hebrew canon for Judaism developed through the ages, and was refined by the Pharisees at Jamnia, particularly the Writings. They recognized **10** books less than the Greek Septuagint. The **Masoretic Text** developed from the eighth through tenth century reflected this Hebrew canon.

St. Jerome translated both Old and New Testaments into Latin; he completed the translation of the New Testament into Latin in 384, and the Old Testament in 405. St. Jerome translated from both Greek and Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament and noted the difference between the larger canon of the Greek Septuagint and the shorter Hebrew canon, and called those books comprising the difference the "hidden or secret books," or the **Apocrypha**. To support the traditional use of the Greek Septuagint as the source of the Christian Old Testament, St. Augustine and the Synod of Carthage in 397 AD preserved seven books of the Apocrypha in the OT Canon, known as the *deuterocanonical* books: the Books of **Tobias** (Tobit), **Sirach**, *Baruch*, *Wisdom*, *First and Second Maccabees*, and *Judith*, as well as the Greek portions of Esther, and **Daniel** which includes the Prayer of the Three Young Men, the story of Susannah, and Bel and the Dragon. St. Jerome included these as well for a total of **46** Books in his Latin Old Testament. The **Latin Vulgate Bible** served as the standard Bible for Western civilization for over 1000 years.