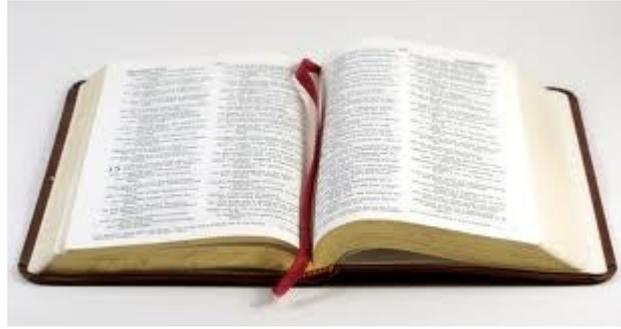


An Introduction to Reading the Bible



"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach what is true and make us realise what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right". 2Tim 3:16

How to Use Your Bible

The Bible is the most important collection of books in the Christian Catholic faith. There are 66 different books in the Bible. 39 of these books were written before Jesus was born – the Old Testament. 27 books were written after Jesus lived – these are known as the New Testament. All of these books are coded in such a way that we can search for a story in the Bible and find the exact same story in any Bible we look in. This is done using abbreviated names, chapters and verses.

So how do we begin? All books in the Bible are shortened by using two, three and sometimes four letters. They always begin with the first letter of the book, for example, **Matthew = Mt.**; **Jeremiah = Jer**; **Romans = Rom**.

The shortened word is then followed by a number. This number is the **Chapter** from where the story comes from, for example, **Jn. 14**. This means the story comes from the Gospel of John, Chapter 14.

This first number is then followed by two additional numbers. These numbers refer to the **verses**, the first number marks the point where we begin reading the passage, and the second number marks the end of the passage we are reading. For example **Mt. 4:12-24**, which means the story comes from Matthew's Gospel, the fourth chapter, beginning at the twelfth verse and ending at the twenty fourth verse.

In some cases the abbreviated name of the book may be preceded by a number, for example, **1Pet** or **2Cor**. This indicates the author wrote a number of books/letters and we are invited in this instance to read the first letter from St. Peter or the second letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

Interesting Facts About The Bible

1. How many books are in the Bible?

The Bible contains 66 books, divided among the Old and New Testaments. There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament.

2. What does "testament" mean?

Testament means "covenant" or "contract."

3. Who wrote the Bible?

The Bible was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by over 40 different authors from all walks of life: shepherds, farmers, tent-makers, physicians, fishermen, priests, philosophers and kings. Despite these differences in occupation and the span of years it took to write it, the Bible is an extremely cohesive and unified book.

4. Which single author contributed the most books to the Old Testament?

Moses. He wrote the first five books of the Bible, referred to as the Pentateuch; the foundation of the Bible.

5. Which single author contributed the most books to the New Testament?

The Apostle Paul, who wrote 14 books (over half) of the New Testament.

6. When was the Bible written?

It was written over a period of some 1,500 years, from around 1450 B.C. (the time of Moses) to about 100 A.D. (following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ).

7. What is the oldest book in the Old Testament?

Many scholars agree that Job is the oldest book in the Bible, written by an unknown Israelite about 1500 B.C., and the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) was written between 1446 and 1406 B.C.

8. What is the youngest book in the Old Testament?

The book of Malachi, written about 400 B.C.

9. What is the oldest book of the New Testament?

Probably the book of James, written as early as A.D. 45.

10. What is the youngest book in the New Testament?

The Book of Revelation is the youngest book of the New Testament, written about 95 A.D.

11. What languages was the Bible written in?

The Bible was written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

12. When was the Bible canonized?

The entire New Testament as we know it today, was canonized before the year 375 A.D. The Old Testament had previously been canonized long before the advent of Christ. Thus, to have the Bible "canonized" meant that it had been measured by the standard or test of divine inspiration and authority. It became the collection of books or writings accepted by the apostles and leadership of the early Christian church as a basis for Christian belief. It is the standard by which all Christians throughout the ages live and worship.

13. When was the first translation of the Bible made into English?

1382 A.D., by John Wycliffe. The Bible was first printed in 1454 A.D. by Johannes Gutenberg who invented the "type mold" for the printing press. It was the first book ever printed.



14. What is the oldest almost-complete manuscript of the Bible now in existence?

The Codex Vaticanus, which dates from the first half of the fourth Century. It is located in the library of the Vatican in Rome. There are older fragments of the Bible that are still preserved however-- the oldest being a tiny scrap of the Gospel of John was found in Egypt, dating back to the beginning of the second century. (It is currently in the Rayland's Library in Manchester, England).

15. What is the longest book in the Bible?

The book of Psalms.

16. What is the shortest book in the Bible?

2 John.

17. What is the longest chapter in the Bible?

Psalms 119

18. What is the shortest chapter in the Bible?

Psalms 117

19. What is the longest verse in the Bible?

Esther 8:9

20. What is the shortest verse in the Bible?

John 11:35

21. Which book in the Bible does not mention the word "God?"

The book of Esther.

22. Who was the oldest man that ever lived?

Methuselah who lived to be 969 years old (Genesis 5:27).

23. Who were the two men in the Bible who never died but were caught up to heaven?

Enoch, who walked with God and was no more (Genesis 5:22-24). Elijah, who was caught up by a whirlwind into heaven (II Kings 2:11).

24. How many languages has the Bible been translated into?

The Holy Bible has been translated into 2,018 languages, with countless more partial translations, and audio translations (for unwritten languages). (This is an enormous amount of translations. In comparison, Shakespeare, considered by many to be the master writer of the English language, has only been translated into 50 languages.)



PRAYER BEFORE READING THE BIBLE

*Merciful God, anoint me with your Holy Spirit.
And as I read your word, let me hear your voice
speaking to me from within.
Give me wisdom to understand your message to
me.
Let your word be the joy of my heart and the
lamp to my feet.
Give me strength to build my life on your word.
Let it be done unto me according to your word.
May I rejoice in the blessedness of hearing your
word and keeping it.
Speak Lord, your servant is listening...
Thank you Jesus... Praise you Lord.*



The Books of the Bible

THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament contains 39 books which speak about God and His relationship with people and with nations.

The Law

- Genesis
 - Exodus
 - Leviticus
 - Numbers
 - Deuteronomy
- Five books written by Moses describe how God created the world, showed Himself to people, and choose a nation to be His special envoys to the rest of the world.

History

- Joshua
 - Judges
 - Ruth
 - Samuel
 - Kings
 - Chronicles
 - Ezra
 - Nehemiah
 - Esther
- God at work among His people from their entry into the Promised Land, through the period of the judges and kings, in the time of exile in Babylon and their return to their own land.

Meditations

- Job
 - Psalms
 - Proverbs
 - Ecclesiastes
 - Song of Songs
- An account of one man's experience of God through difficult circumstances, poetry and songs for use in worship, wise sayings, and a love poem.

Major and Minor Prophets

- Isaiah
 - Jeremiah
 - Lamentations
 - Ezekiel
 - Daniel
 - Hosea
 - Joel
 - Amos
 - Obadiah
 - Jonah
 - Micah
 - Nahum
 - Habakkuk
 - Zephaniah
 - Haggai
 - Zechariah
 - Malachi
- Prophets brought God's message to individuals and to the nation. Encouragement to worship and holy living, warning of judgement, and foretelling the future are all part of the prophets' remit. Major and minor refer more to the length of their books rather than the importance of their message.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament contains 27 books which speak about Jesus Christ and His followers i.e. the Christian church.

Gospels

- Matthew
 - Mark
 - Luke
 - John
- Four accounts of the life of Jesus Christ covering His birth, His ministry, His death and His resurrection.

Acts of the Apostles

- Acts
- This book relates how Jesus' followers spread the good news about Jesus in Jerusalem, the Holy Land, and through much of the Roman Empire.

Paul's Letters

- Romans
 - Corinthians
 - Galatians
 - Ephesians
 - Phillipians
 - Colossians
 - Thessalonians
- The apostle Paul established a considerable number of churches (groups of Christians not buildings) throughout the Mediterranean region. Paul wrote letters to these churches covering both doctrine and practical Christian living.

- Timothy
 - Titus
 - Philemon
- Paul also wrote letters to other Christian workers.

Other Letters

- Hebrews
 - James
 - Peter
 - John
 - Jude
- Letters written by other Christian leaders.

Revelation

- Revelation
- Visions of heaven and the future written to encourage Christians passing through times of severe persecution for their faith.