

The Book of Books

The Bible is God's Holy, inspired Word. It is the most powerful and most quoted book in the world. Some of the greatest men in modern history have had a deep respect for the Bible:

Abraham Lincoln: *"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."*

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

Daniel Webster: *"If there is anything in my thought or style to commend, the credit is due to my parents for instilling in me early love for the scriptures."*

Hundreds of millions of people have read its sacred pages, making it the best-selling book of all time.

The composition of the Bible is indeed amazing. A library of sixty-six books, it was written by more than forty different human authors under the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These writers wrote independently, knowing almost nothing of the other's part. None had anything in common, and their literary qualifications were diverse. Moses, for example, was a man of learning, trained in the best universities of Egypt. Peter, on the other hand, was a fisherman without claim to formal education. Yet, each wrote the wisdom of God with powerful force.

It took the Old and New Testament writers fifteen centuries to complete the Bible, which was written in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) and on three continents. Indeed, this collection of books is really one, not sixty-six, for it is coherent in content and progressive in truth.

The Bible is composed of 1189 chapters (929 in the Old Testament and 260 in the New) and utilizes 773,746 words to convey its life-changing message. This literary masterpiece contains history, laws, poetry, prophecy, biography, dramatic stories, letters, and revelations.

In the words of Sir Isaac Newton:

"There are more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history."

Christian church leaders of the fifth century A.D. decided upon the list of books to be included in the Bible. This collection of accepted writings came to be known by scholars as the "canon," and were considered inspired and authoritative.

The Bible and It's Construction

The Bible is composed of two main sections: the Old Testament, containing 39 books, and the New Testament, containing 27 books.

Read Genesis 1 and Revelation 22. From these two chapters, summarize the scope of the contents of the Bible.

Divisions of the Old Testament

The Old Testament can be divided into five parts:

Pentateuch. The first five historical books, written by Moses, are also called the books of the Law. Genesis | Exodus | Leviticus | Numbers | Deuteronomy

Historical Books. The next twelve books tell of the establishment of the kingdom of Israel, of Israel's repeated turning from God to sin, and finally of the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles -- God's punishment.

Joshua | Judges | Ruth | 1 Samuel | 2 Samuel | 1 Kings | 2 Kings | 1 Chronicles | 2 Chronicles | Ezra | Nehemiah | Esther

Poetry. Of the next five books, Psalms -- the Hebrew hymn book -- is probably the best known. Job | Psalms | Proverbs | Ecclesiastes | Song of Solomon

Major Prophets. Written shortly before Israel was taken into captivity and during the exile, these books prophesied the coming Messiah and other world events. They also contain warnings of impending disaster if Israel did not turn from her wicked ways.

Isaiah | Jeremiah | Lamentations | Ezekiel | Daniel

Minor Prophets. These last twelve books of the Old Testament are called minor prophets only because they are shorter, not because they are less important. They are mainly concerned with Israel and the coming Messiah. Read one of the books from the choices below, and summarize it's main points.

Hosea | Joel | Amos | Obadiah | Jonah | Micah | Nahum | Habakkuk | Zephaniah | Haggai | Zechariah | Malachi

Divisions of the New Testament

The New Testament can be divided into five parts:

Gospels. The first four books of the New Testament tell of Christ's life and ministry - Matthew | Mark | Luke | John

Acts. This history of the early church, which also describes the ministries of Peter and Paul, consists of only one book. What is its significance for us today?

Pauline Epistles and Hebrews. Thirteen of the epistles (letters) were written by Paul, and were named for the church, group of churches, or individual to whom they were sent. Although the author

of Hebrews is not identified, many believe Paul also authored it. Romans | 1 Corinthians | 2 Corinthians | Galatians | Ephesians | Philippians | Colossians | 1 Thessalonians | 2 Thessalonians | 1 Timothy | 2 Timothy | Titus | Philemon | Hebrews

General Epistles. There are seven general epistles, and they are named not for the recipients, but for the authors. James | 1 Peter | 2 Peter | 1 John | 2 John | 3 John | Jude

Revelation. The last book of the New Testament is one of prophecy. It describes the end times and the triumph of Christ in His second coming. Describe the central message of the book (Revelation 22:12-17). What are its promises to those who overcome? (Revelation 2,3)

Life Application

To know the Bible well and to be able to find scripture references quickly, you should memorize the names of the books in the order in which they appear.

Adapted from *The 10 Basic Steps Toward Christian Maturity*, by Bill Bright, co-founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. © Cru. All rights reserved.