

The Bible: God's Truth

Unit 1, Lesson 2a

Memory Work:

This week, continue memorizing the books of the Bible.
If you already know the books, memorize Psalm 119:105.

The Bible is the record of God's revealed truth given through written historical accounts, poetry, prophecy, letters, and proverbs. Sixty-six books cover time from God's creation of all that exists through the age of Jesus' ministry on earth to the time of the early church. In addition, there are prophecies that are still future to our day, most notably the return of Jesus and the establishment of God's eternal kingdom on earth. These books have been compiled into a single volume, known as the Bible.

"Bible" is a transliteration of the Greek *biblos* meaning "book."

Bible Divisions:

- Testaments
- Books
- Chapters
- Verses

The Bible as a whole is a record of:

- 1) The original arrangement God made with man to represent Him in authority over creation (Genesis 2),
- 2) Man's failure to carry out God's expectations (Genesis 3)
- 3) God's intervention to restore mankind,
- 4) And the restoration of God's original intention (Revelation 21-22).

God's relationship with man is characterized by covenants or promises (testaments) by God to mankind.

The Bible is organized in two major divisions:

- I. Old Testament
- II. New Testament

Testament:

- a covenant between God and man

Covenant:

- a binding agreement between two or more parties
- a contract
- a promise

The Old Testament, found first in the Bible, describes the sequence of events from creation and man's failure to the covenant God made with the nation of Israel and how Israel lived under that covenant. The historical events recorded in the Old Testament occurred from Creation to about 400 BC.

The New Testament, referring to the new covenant in Christ Jesus, describes the life and ministry of Jesus and the actions of the early church, along with letters written by early church leaders for the instruction of the believer. The new agreement God made with mankind, Jew and Gentile, is worked out and explained in the New Testament. The New Testament books were written from shortly after Jesus' ascension to heaven to about AD 90.

Gentile:

- anyone who is not Jewish (a descendant of Abraham)

Both testaments describe events leading to the fulfillment of God's plan for mankind, the future establishment of God's eternal Kingdom.

The Old Testament

The Old Testament is made up of 39 books and is typically broken down into these categories:

LAW:	Genesis through Deuteronomy
HISTORY:	Joshua through Esther
POETRY:	Job through Song of Songs
MAJOR PROPHETS:	Isaiah through Daniel
MINOR PROPHETS:	Hosea through Malachi

Here is a brief description of these divisions and the books in them:

LAW:

The five books of the Law are also known as the Pentateuch. The Hebrew name for these five books is Torah. Although in brief definitions Torah is described as the Law, the Torah actually entails more than lists of rules. It describes a way of life.

1. According to Deuteronomy 31:9, who wrote the law?
2. Who were the caretakers of the law?
3. Why was the law to be read to all the people every seven years (Deuteronomy 31:10-13)?

GENESIS (Gen, Ge, Gn): the book of beginnings and firsts, from creation to the first sin to the origins of God's chosen people, Israel

EXODUS (Ex, Exod, Exo): the exodus of God's people, the Israelites, from slavery in Egypt

LEVITICUS (Lev, Le, Lv): the establishment and details of the priesthood of the tribe of Levi

NUMBERS (Num, Nu, Nm, Nb): the wanderings of the Israelites in the desert for 40 years

DEUTERONOMY (Deut, Dt): Moses speaks to the Israelites prior to his death, instructing and reminding them of their covenant with the Lord

The Jewish Scriptures are the same as the Old Testament (without the apocrypha accepted by the Roman Catholic Church). The Jewish Bible may be called the Hebrew Bible. It is written primarily in the Hebrew language.

The Jewish Bible is also known as the Tanakh or the Masoretic Text.

The Jewish Scriptures are traditionally divided into three categories. The Hebrew names for these divisions form the acronym Tanakh:

- Torah (Teaching)
- Nevi'im (Prophets)
- Ketuvim (Writings)

Pentateuch is Greek for "five scrolls."

Law = Pentateuch = Torah = Teaching/ Instruction

Alien:

- foreigners living with Israel

The parentheses after each book title on the left gives some common abbreviations used for writing Scripture references. Bible book abbreviations are often written without periods. The abbreviation used in these Bible studies is listed first.

"Deuteronomy" is from the Latin and Greek, meaning "second law." It is a restatement of the law/instruction Israel had already received through Moses from God.

HISTORY:

The books of history record the events surrounding God's actions through and for the people of Israel from their entry into and possession of Canaan until they are exiled from, and then returned to, the land.

JOSHUA (Josh, Jos, Jsh): describes the conquering of the land of Canaan under Joshua's leadership

JUDGES (Judg, Jdg, Jg, Jdgs): the time when Israel is led by various "judges" through periods of oppression and deliverance

RUTH (Rth, Ru): a woman of Moab, Ruth, moves to Israel with her mother-in-law and ultimately becomes a part of Jesus' family line

1 and 2 SAMUEL (1 Sam, 1 Sa, 1st Sam, First Sam, 2 Sam, 2 Sa, 2nd Sam, Second Sam): Samuel is the last judge to lead the people of Israel, and is followed by King Saul and King David

1 and 2 KINGS (1 Kgs, 1st Kings, First Kings, 2 Kgs, 2nd Kings, Second Kings): Israel divides into a northern kingdom, Israel, and a southern kingdom, Judah; the history of the kings of each nation, until conquered by foreign powers as a result of disobedience toward God

1 and 2 CHRONICLES (1 Chron, 1 Ch, 2 Chron, 2 Ch): a record of the kings of Judah from King David until the exile to Babylon

EZRA (Ez): Jews return to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon and rebuild the Temple

NEHEMIAH (Neh, Ne): the wall is rebuilt around the city of Jerusalem and the people return to faithful living

ESTHER (Esth, Es): A Jewish woman is chosen as wife of a Persian king and is able to save the Jews through her courage

POETRY:

In these books, various poetic forms are used to present truths about God and life.

JOB (Job, Jb): an exploration of the suffering of the righteous and God's oversight and sovereignty

PSALMS (Psa, Ps, Pss): songs and poetry for praise and worship

PROVERBS (Prov, Pr): wise sayings and observations about life

ECCLESIASTES (Eccl, Eccles): an examination of the purpose of life

SONG OF SONGS, also Song of Solomon (SS, SOS): a celebration of marital love

PROPHECY:

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Canaan is a Biblical name for the land known as Palestine, where the ancient and present-day nation of Israel is located.

The "judges" were individuals God raised up to be leaders who saved Israel from the enemies of their day. See Judges 2:16.

Moab was an ancient nation located on the southeastern edge of the Dead Sea.

Prophecy (noun) refers to the message of a prophet

Prophecy (verb) means to speak by divine inspiration

MAJOR PROPHETS:

The major prophets are known as “major” due to the quantity of material attributed to their ministries and does not indicate their messages were more important than that of the minor prophets. This category contains the messages of four prophets along with the poetry considered to have been written by one of those prophets.

ISAIAH (Isa, Is): a prophet to the southern kingdom of Judah during the days of the Assyrian threat when the northern kingdom of Israel was exiled

Isaiah is sometimes called the “gospel” of the Old Testament

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DANIEL (Dan, Da, Dn): descriptions of faithful living by some of the Israelites exiled to Babylon as well as prophecies of events yet in our future

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The messages given by God to twelve men are recorded in the books of the minor prophets. They are considered one “book” in the Hebrew Bible since all their writings fit on a single scroll in ancient times.

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A question often asked is "why bother studying the Old Testament?" Not only does 2 Timothy 3:16 specifically state that "all Scripture" is inspired and profitable, but, for the New Testament church, the *only* Scriptures they had *were* the Jewish Bible, the Old Testament.

Read **1 Corinthians 10:6-11** and consider the following questions:

4. First Corinthians 10 begins with a discussion about the nation of Israel being brought out of slavery in Egypt under Moses' leadership. What does verse 6 give as the reason for recording these Old Testament events?

5. According to these verses, what caused God to be displeased with those earlier people?

6. What reason does verse 11 give for why these things were written down?

7. How can knowing about the experiences of the Israelites long ago affect your choices and life today?

8. How can you be careful not to fall into sin, as verse 12 instructs? What will you begin doing today to set your heart on things of God to prevent a fall?

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PROPHECY: Read Deuteronomy 18:17-22

Where do the words a true prophet speaks come from?

How can a prophet's message be verified as coming from God?

LORD (all capital letters) in the Old Testament is the typical translation of God's name YHWH, which was given to Moses in Exodus 3:14.

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That the people might hear, learn, and fear God and observe/obey what was recorded there.

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12. First Corinthians 10 begins with a discussion about the nation of Israel being brought out of slavery in Egypt under Moses' leadership. What does verse 6 give as the reason for recording these Old Testament events?

These are examples so we do not do as they did and want/engage in what is evil.

13. According to these verses, what caused God to be displeased with those earlier people?

They set their hearts on evil, indulged themselves, committed idolatry and sexual immorality, grumbled against and tested God.

14. What reason does verse 11 give for why these things were written down?

They are to be an example to instruct us in what is unacceptable to God.

15. How can knowing about the experiences of the Israelites long ago affect your choices and life today?

Answers will vary.

16. How can you be careful not to fall into sin, as verse 12 instructs? What will you begin doing today to set your heart on things of God to prevent a fall?

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PROPHECY: Read Deuteronomy 18:17-22

Where do the words a true prophet speaks come from?

A true prophet speaks words that God has put into his mouth. He does not speak his own words and ideas.

How can a prophet's message be verified as coming from God?

A true prophet will speak in the name of YHWH. What the prophet speaks will happen just as God says it will.

The history of Moses and the Israelites is recorded in Exodus through Deuteronomy.

First Corinthians 10 is referring to events found in Number 16:41-50; 21:4-9; 25:1-9.

LORD (all capital letters) in the Old Testament is the typical translation of God's name YHWH, which was given to Moses in Exodus 3:14.

The Bible: God's Truth

Teacher's Guide

The Bible is a compilation of sacred and inspired writings of about 40 authors over a period of approximately 1500 years. It is divided into 66 "books" - 39 books in the Old Testament, 27 in the New Testament. The Old Testament material was written in ancient Hebrew with a few passages of Aramaic. The New Testament was originally in Koine Greek, the lingua franca of the first century AD.

Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury (d. 1228), is credited with creating chapter divisions for the Bible text. The Hebrew Scriptures already had verse divisions, but in the 1300's a rabbi named Solomon ben Ishmael added Langton's chapter divisions. The New Testament verse numbering was provided by Robert Estienne or Etienne when he printed a Greek NT with verse numbers in 1551.

It is important not to let the chapter and verse numbering interfere with understanding context of a passage. These numbers are artificial, do not have any special meaning, and are simply to be used as an aid to locate and communicate particular passages of Scripture. Keep in mind that an author's thoughts may begin before the start of a chapter or continue through a chapter/verse break.

Many translations also provide headings for chapters or other sections. These headings are not part of the original text and, as such, are not inspired Scripture. There is more about the history of the Bible in the next lesson (Unit 1, Lesson 3).

The Old Testament is the same material as the Hebrew or Jewish Bible. Jewish scholars called Masoretes (6th-10th centuries AD) standardized the Scripture text by adding vowel pointing (Hebrew is a language of consonants), accents, and other diacritical marks and marginal notes to ensure the accuracy and pronunciation of the text for future generations. Their final product is known as the Masoretic Text (MT).

English translations use the MT as the foundational text of the Old Testament, with reference to other ancient copies of the Scriptures such as the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) and the Septuagint ((abbreviated LXX, c. 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. The LXX came about to accommodate the Jews dispersed outside of Palestine who were speaking Greek, which had become the common language of the region through the years after Alexander the Great conquered the Middle East.) The introduction to one's Bible will give information regarding the manuscripts used in that version's translation process.

The Hebrew Bible is also known as the Tanakh, an acronym from the three major divisions of the Hebrew Bible:

- Torah
- Nevi'im
- Ketuvim

Jesus refers to these divisions in Luke 24:44. Books that make up each of these divisions are:

Torah (Law, Instruction):

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

Nevi'im (Prophets):

Former Prophets (Samuel and Kings are not divided into two books):

Joshua
Judges
Samuel
Kings

Latter Prophets

Isaiah

Jeremiah

Ezekiel

The Twelve (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi; a single scroll)

Ketuvim (Writings)

Psalms

Job

Proverbs

Ruth

Song of Songs

Ecclesiastes

Lamentations

Esther

Daniel

Ezra-Nehemiah (a single scroll)

Chronicles

Chronicles is a fitting ending to the Hebrew Bible with its rehearsal of Israel's history through genealogy beginning with Adam, emphasis on the kingship of David's line, and the permission by King Cyrus for the Jews to return to the land of Israel from their exile in Babylon. This leaves the Bible reader with bated breath, looking forward to the next act in God's plan for bringing forth the seed that will crush the serpent's head as promised in Genesis 3:15, and the king established on David's throne forever (2 Samuel 7:13, 16).

The books of the Old Testament can be thought of in 5 categories or divisions:

- ☞ Law or Pentateuch: Genesis through Deuteronomy (Pentateuch is from the Greek meaning "five scrolls," referring to the five books of Moses.)
- ☞ History: Joshua through Esther
- ☞ Poetry or Wisdom: Job through Song of Songs
- ☞ Major Prophets: Isaiah through Daniel
- ☞ Minor Prophets: Hosea through Malachi

Originally the Scriptures were written on scrolls which does not lend to a set order for the various texts since scrolls can be shifted around. The order for the books of the Bible became more established with the printing press and Scriptures in book form rather than scrolls.

As a reference, the following list of the Old Testament books in order of estimated beginning date of writing (earliest to latest) is provided.ⁱ Some of these books took many years to produce and would have been composed simultaneously with other writing(s).

- ☞ Job (earliest although date unknown)
- ☞ Genesis (1445-1405 BC)
- ☞ Exodus (1445-1405 BC)
- ☞ Leviticus (1445-1405 BC)
- ☞ Numbers (1445-1405 BC)
- ☞ Deuteronomy (1445-1405 BC)
- ☞ Psalms (1410-450 BC)
- ☞ Joshua (1405-1385 BC)
- ☞ Judges (1043 BC)
- ☞ Ruth (1030-1010 BC)
- ☞ Song of Songs (971-965 BC)
- ☞ Proverbs (971-686 BC)
- ☞ Ecclesiastes (940-931 BC)
- ☞ 1 Samuel (931-722 BC)
- ☞ 2 Samuel (931-722 BC)
- ☞ Obadiah (850-840 BC)
- ☞ Joel (835-796 BC)

- ☞ Jonah (775 C)
- ☞ Amos (750 BC)
- ☞ Hosea (750-710 BC)
- ☞ Micah (735-710 BC)
- ☞ Isaiah (700-681 BC)
- ☞ Nahum (650 BC)
- ☞ Zephaniah (635-625 BC)
- ☞ Habakkuk (615-605 BC)
- ☞ Ezekiel (590-570 BC)
- ☞ Lamentations (586 BC)
- ☞ Jeremiah (586-570 BC)
- ☞ 1 Kings (561-538 BC)
- ☞ 2 Kings (561-538 BC)
- ☞ Daniel (536-530 BC)
- ☞ Haggai (520 BC)
- ☞ Zechariah (480-470 BC)
- ☞ Ezra (457-444 BC)
- ☞ 1 Chronicles (450-430 BC)
- ☞ 2 Chronicles (450-430 BC)
- ☞ Esther (450-331 BC)
- ☞ Malachi (433-424 BC)
- ☞ Nehemiah (424-400 BC)

The priestly line in Israel was descended from Jacob's son Levi, thus the "sons of Levi" or the priests were entrusted with the law written by Moses at God's instruction (Deuteronomy 31:9). "Elders of Israel" refers to those considered leaders from each tribe of Israel.

ⁱ Petersen, Jonathan. "When Was Each Book of the Bible Written?" *BibleGateway Blog*. 1 Feb 2016, www.biblegateway.com/blog/2016/02/when-was-each-book-of-the-bible-written/, Accessed 8 Mar 2024.