

Two main divisions to the Bible: Old Testament and New Testament. Testament means covenant.

**Old Testament.** Consists of the first two thirds of the Bible, a total of 46 books. It is the story of Israel's struggle to be faithful to the Covenant and to understand God who had chosen them. We divide the Old Testament into the following four sections:

- **Pentateuch** – The first five books of the bible (the Jewish **Torah**). The Pentateuch includes the stories of creation and the patriarchal roots of the nation of Israel. It also includes the Law given to the Israelites by God. The five books of the Pentateuch are: **Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.**
- **Historical Books** – These books tell the story of the Israelites from their entry into the Promised Land, through the exile and return. **Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Ruth, Esther, Lamentations, Judith, Tobit, Baruch, 1 & 2 Maccabees.**
- **Wisdom Books** – These books are Israelite reflections of faith and God's relationship with humanity. **Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), Wisdom (of Solomon).**
- **Prophets** – The writings of the people whom God inspired to counsel and confront people and kings. Major Prophets: **Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel.** Minor Prophets: **Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.**

**Jewish canon**, later used by some Protestants, contains 39 books, all written in Hebrew or Aramaic.

**Catholic Canon** (from the Greek word referring to a rod or reed used for measuring.) – The books underlined above are included in the Greek Septuagint (from the tradition that 70 scholars worked completely alone yet produced exactly identical translations for the Jewish colony in Alexandria, Egypt) and the Catholic Bible. We call them the deuterocanonical books because they represent a second canon of inspired books. At the time of Christ the common book of the Scriptures was not the Hebrew Bible but the Septuagint Greek Bible. The Old Testament had been translated into Greek from the original Hebrew for the colonist Jews of Palestine and the Diaspora (those who were dispersed and exiled) who no longer knew their people's ancient language. These books were approved by the Council of Trent but had been accepted as binding in practice from the councils at Hippo, 393 A. D., at Carthage, 397 A. D and 417 A. D. The Council of Trent also established the official canon of the New Testament (see below), although it has been accepted throughout the Church by the middle of the sixth century.

**New Testament Books.** Through Jesus, God made a new covenant with humanity. Based on the earlier covenant with Israel, this new covenant invites all humanity to become part of God's Chosen People (His Church) through faith in Jesus Christ.

- **Gospel account** – four portraits and collections of stories and sayings of Jesus: **Matthew, Mark, Luke (the three synoptic gospels) and John.**
- **Acts of the Apostles** – the story of the early Christian Church after the Ascension of Jesus; not a complete history of apostolic Christianity.
- **Letters** – Written by early Christians and addressing the problems and concerns of the early Church.
  - **Thirteen Pauline Epistles** – letters attributed to Paul and named after the community or person to whom the letter is addressed. **Romans, First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, First and Second Thessalonians, First and Second Timothy, Titus and Philemon.** The author of **Hebrews** (really a long sermon rather than a letter) interprets Jesus in light of the OT. Neither the author nor the audience is explicitly mentioned.
  - **Seven Catholic Epistles:** attributed to other apostles; written to broader audiences ("*catholic*" = "general, universal"): Addressed to the entire universal church. **James, First and Second Peter, First, Second, and Third John, and Jude**
- **Revelation (Apocalypse)** - Addressed to people experiencing persecution and questioning the truth of their faith. **Revelation** offers hope that God's deliverance will come as promised. Extensive use of symbols and images that early readers would have readily understood (apocalyptic writing).