

In the previous lesson we looked at the Bible as history. When it refers to ancient history, is it reliable; is it accurate? The answer is yes. When we use the 3 tests given to all ancient writings to test their accuracy, the Old and New Testament manuscripts far surpass all other secular documents.

Now in this lesson, we will look at the spiritual side of the Bible - at Bible basics.

Let's begin with the **NAMES** of the Bible.

The name *Bible* comes from the Greek word *biblion*, which means *books*.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century, when the Greek language was spoken, Christians called their Old and New Testament books, *Biblion Hagion - Holy Books*.

When they began to speak Latin, they called them *Sancta Scriptura - Sacred Writings*. It is from this name that we have our word "*Scripture*".

The words *sacred* and *holy* lead us to the **AUTHORS** of the Bible.

In Peter's 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the Jews, he tells them they should pay attention to what the Old Testament prophets had said.

In 2 Peter 1:20, he explains why.

Since translations vary, let me translate it from the Greek. *Be assured that no prophecy of Scripture originates from the prophet's own explanation or solution. For when the men spoke from God, it was not from their will but from the Holy Spirit as they were moved or prompted by Him.*

Peter says the concepts and thoughts came from God. He is the original author. Then guided by the Holy Spirit, human authors wrote down these thoughts. Each author was given the freedom to write in his own style. But as he debated whether to phrase the thought this way or that, the Holy Spirit guided him in his choice. The final result conveyed God's message accurately.

Paul makes the same declaration in 2 Timothy 3:16. *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in rightness, so that the person of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* According to Paul, God breathed the message into the mind of the human authors.

Both Peter and Paul say the Holy Spirit is the original author. This logically leads to the next concept.

Because the Holy Spirit is the author, only the Holy Spirit can explain it. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:14

*The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned.*

Only the author of a book can truly explain and reveal the deepest meaning of that book. Only the Holy Spirit can reveal the depths of His book. This is why we ask Him to be our teacher and give us understanding.

Peter and Paul also say God used human authors to write it down.

There were more than 40 of them, with many different backgrounds. There were kings and fishermen, prophets, priest and poets. There was a shepherd, a tax collector; a rabbi-theologian named Paul, the medical missionary Luke, and an army general, Joshua.

This claim of divine and human authorship is not unique to the Bible.

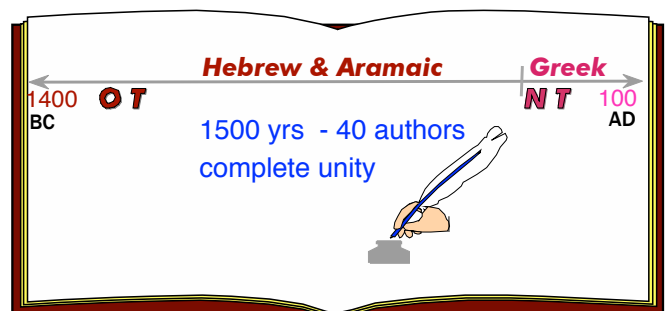
All religions claim to have sacred writings that come from a divine or sacred source. This is where faith comes in.

Hindus claim the Veda is sacred because they, by faith, believe it came from the Hindu deities they worship.

We claim the Bible is sacred because by faith, we believe it came from the God we worship.

Since many religions and books make the claim of divine authorship, does the Bible have anything to support its claim? The answer is yes.

The books of the Bible were written over a period of 1500 years. The first books of the Old Testament that can be historically dated were written by Moses, c. 1400 BC. The last books of the New Testament were written by John in almost 100 AD. So there is a time span of about 1500 years.



Over this time period, there were 40 different authors writing down God's message. When all their books were finally put together, they were in complete agreement. This could only be possible if there was someone to oversee the project during those 1500 yrs. Only the Holy Spirit, as the divine, eternal author, could oversee the entire period to co-ordinate that unity. One evidence of divine authorship is the unity of the Bible.

Now the **LANGUAGES** of the Bible.

Because the books were written over a period of 1500 years, 3 languages were used.

The Old Testament was written in **Hebrew**, the language of the Jews from 1400 to 400 BC.

A few chapters in the books of Daniel and Ezra were written in **Aramaic**. This was the language of Aram or Syria that gradually became the language of the Middle East. The Jews began to speak Aramaic when they were exiled in Babylon.

The New Testament was written in **Greek** during the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. It was the simplified or common Greek, known as *koine* Greek.

Once again let me point out how absolutely amazing this is. Here are more than 60 books, written by 40 different authors over a period of 1500 years, in 3 different languages. Eventually these books were combined into one volume and there was complete unity with one single theme. The only explanation is God as the divine author.

The names, authors and languages of the Bible. Now it's **DIVISIONS**.

First of all, it is divided into 2 parts: the **Old and New Testaments**.

The word *testament*, in this context, means *God's declaration*.

**God is declaring how He has revealed Himself to the world.**

This revelation includes what He is like, what He wants to do and what He expects in return.

The **OLD** or **FIRST DECLARATION**

God revealed Himself to the world **thru the Jewish people and nation**.

It took place before Jesus' life here on earth - the time of history called BC. (Before Christ)

The **NEW** or **SECOND DECLARATION**

God the Father revealed Himself **thru His Son, Jesus**.

After Jesus returned to heaven, He revealed Himself **thru the body of Christ, the Church**.

In the future, God will once again reveal Himself **thru the Jewish people**.

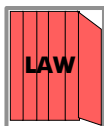
This New or Second declaration started after Jesus came to this earth, the time of history called AD.

**Two declarations** covering BC and AD. We call them the Old and New Testaments.

The Bible is also divided by **topics**, as you would find in a library.

When you go into a library, you see all the books of history in one section; all the books about sports or biography are in another. The Bible is divided in the same way.

All the books with the same topic are found together. Depending on the version you use, you have either 66 or 73 books in your Bible. In the New Testament everyone has 27. In the Old Testament you have either 39 or 46. In a few minutes I will explain this difference, but for now, let's find out what the topics are.

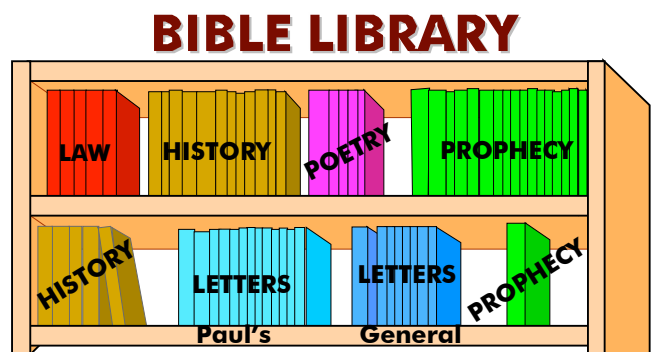


The first topic in the Old Testament is **LAW**.

There are 5 books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Sometimes they are called the books of Moses or the books of the law. The Jewish name for these books is *Torah*, meaning *instruction or law*. The Greek name is *Pentateuch*, which means *5 scrolls*.



The next topic is **HISTORY**: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 2 books by Samuel, 2 books about Kings, 2 books of Chronicles and 1 book each of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther. Some of your Bibles will have additional books of Tobit, Judith and 2 books of Maccabees.

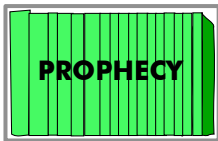




Then there is the topic of **POETRY** or **WISDOM**: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs. The book Song of Songs used to be called Song of Solomon or Canticles. The additional books of Wisdom and Sirach are in some Bibles.

The last topic is **PROPHECY**. There are the major and minor prophets. Unfortunately, these words give a wrong impression.

In our English of today, a minor accident means it is far less serious than a major accident. So the terms, major and minor prophets, give the impression that some are far less important than others. But that is not the meaning. The words are referring to the length of the books. When they were originally written, each book of the Major Prophets filled up one scroll. However with the minor or shorter books, all 12 of them fit on one scroll.



The major or longer books of the prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel. Some Bibles include the book of Baruch.

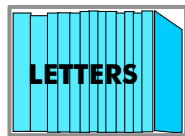
The minor or shorter books of the prophets are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

These last 12 books are the hardest to remember, the hardest to find and perhaps the hardest to understand. But by the time we finish this Old Testament study, I trust you will be able to enjoy them just as much as you do the other books.



The New Testament has 27 books. They also are divided by topic.

The first topic is **HISTORY**. There are 4 Gospels giving the story of Jesus' life: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The book of Acts tells how the Church began, first in the Middle East and then thruout Europe. So we have 5 books dealing with history.



The next topic is **LETTERS**.

The first group is written by Paul: Romans, 2 books to the Corinthians, 1 each to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, 2 books to the Thessalonians, 2 books to Timothy and 1 each to Titus and Philemon. Paul has 13 letters.

The second group is called General letters. They are not written to a church or individual, but rather to Jewish people living in various places.

Hebrews is written to Jews living in Israel. The author is unknown. We know Paul did not write it based on the verse in Hebrews 2:3.

The rest of the books are written to Jews living outside the land of Israel.

There is 1 book by James, 2 by Peter, 3 by the apostle John and 1 by Jude.



The final topic is **PROPHECY**, the same as the Old Testament. It is the book of Revelation.

So in the Old Testament, we have the topics of law, history, poetry and prophecy. In the New Testament we have the topics of history, Paul's letters, General letters and prophecy.

These are the topics and divisions of the Bible.

Now let's look at the **VIEWS** about the Bible

Some people take an **historical** view. It is also known as the literal or conservative view. This view believes the stories in the Bible took place as history. The books said to be written by a particular author were written by him.

There is also the **allegorical** view, sometimes called higher criticism, or the liberal, modern view. This says the stories in the Bible did not necessarily happen as history. They might be myth or legends that teach spiritual lessons. These are called allegories. This view also says that many of the books were not written by the author associated with the book. They claim unknown authors wrote them at a much later time and then connected them to names of famous people in the past.

I personally believe the Bible stories to be true, historical events, written by the people who claimed the authorship. I also believe the Bible has allegories and picture language that should not be taken literally. So as we go thru these books, I will be teaching from the conservative, historical view, but also mentioning the picture language and allegories. When we get to stories that come under particular criticism, I will try to give explanations either from archaeology, science, history or logic. Christianity and the Bible require faith; but they are also reasonable.

The last of the basic facts is how we learn and understand the Bible

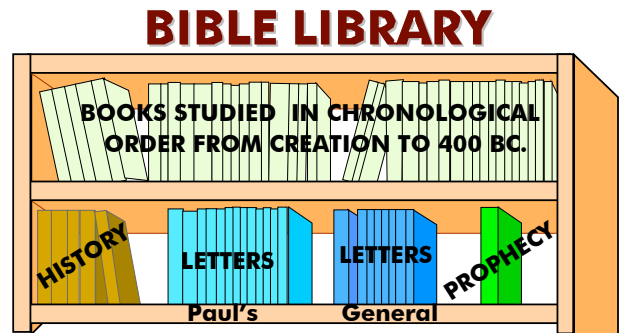
In our culture of North America, we learn the most when dates and geography are included.

We need to know **when** it happened and **where** it happened. We also need to know what happened 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. We need **chronology**. But the Bible is not in chronological order. This is why it is so difficult to connect the events.

So in these lessons we are going to study the Bible in chronological order, not in the order of the Bible. It is as though we will be taking these books off the library shelves and putting them back according to time rather than topic. We will also study the books and events using dates and maps, finding out **when** they happened and **where** they happened.

#### **BASICS ABOUT THE BIBLE**

**Names**  
**Authors**  
**Languages**  
**Divisions**  
**Views**  
**How we learn**



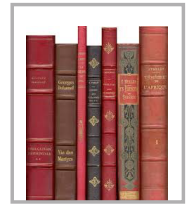
Earlier, I mentioned **ADDITIONAL BOOKS in the Bible**. Some Bibles have 66 books while others have 73.

**What** are they? **Where** did they come from? **Why** are they in some Bibles today but not in others? The rest of the lesson will answer these questions.

First of all, **WHAT** are these extra books?

The correct name for them are the *deutero-canonical* books. This is a Greek word meaning “2<sup>nd</sup> group of books”. Others call them *Apocrypha*. That is a Greek word meaning *doubtful, uncertain, unknown*.

These extra books were Jewish literature written between the time of Malachi and Matthew - from 400 to 100 BC. There are 7 complete books plus additional chapters or verses in 2 other books. Some of these extra books of Jewish literature are fact, while others are fiction.



The 1<sup>st</sup> of these 7 Jewish books is **TOBIT**. It is a Jewish novel and one of the most popular. Tobit, a young Jewish man, is led by an angel to Persia to marry a virgin widow. According to the story, she has lost 7 different husbands on her wedding night, due to an evil spirit. Tobit does not want to be number 8. The angel, who is guiding him, tells him how to overcome the evil spirit. He gets to Persia, follows the advice of the angel, marries the virgin widow and they live happily ever after. This is the story of Tobit.

Another Jewish novel is **JUDITH**. It is about love of country and people. Judith is a beautiful Jewish widow who lives in Israel when Nebuchadnezzar, the enemy, is trying to conquer the Jews. According to this story, she goes to the general of Nebuchadnezzar's army, offers to betray her people and is given a nearby tent. The enemy is delighted and decides to have a banquet to celebrate the expected victory. Judith is also invited and attends. At the banquet, the army gets drunk. After the banquet when everyone leaves, Judith is alone with the general. Because he is so drunk, she is able to go where he is reclining, take his sword, cut off his head and thereby saves her city and people. **Tobit** and **Judith** are Jewish novels.

The 2 books of **MACCABEES** are history. They tell about Jewish survival in Israel during the Greek empire from 175 to 135 BC. During this time the Greeks were determined to Hellenize everyone. That is, they wanted to make them act like Greeks, think like Greeks, speak the Greek language and worship the Greek gods. Anyone who refused to be Hellenized was to be killed.

The Jews, however, were determined to remain a separate and distinct people. In 167 BC, an agent of the Greek king went to a small Jewish town in Israel and demanded the Jews either worship the Greek gods or die.

God used the Jewish priest Mattathias and his 5 sons to preserve the Jews and lead them in miraculous victories over their enemies. They are sometimes called the Maccabees. Because this family led the Jews to independence from 142-63 BC, it was called the Maccabean period.

These books are real history. Secular history gives us the Greek point of view. 1 and 2 Maccabees give the Jewish perspective. Secular historians consider 1<sup>st</sup> Maccabees as one of the finest and most important documents from that period. In fact, historians consider 1<sup>st</sup> Maccabees to be more accurate than some of the Greek accounts because the writer was an eyewitness to the events. The Greek historians were writing from Greece, hundreds of miles away.

In the Gospels, Jesus refers to an event from the book of 1<sup>st</sup> Maccabees to warn the apostles. Because the apostles knew the book of 1<sup>st</sup> Maccabees – it was part of their history - they understood what Jesus meant.

He told them,

*What happened in Jewish history, will also happen to you Jews in the future. When it happens, leave the city immediately. When you see that abomination of desolation/destructive presence in the temple - leave. Matt. 24:15, Mark 13:14*

**1-2 MACCABEES** are valuable because they describe Jewish history between the time of the Old and New Testament.

The book of **WISDOM** is Jewish poetry in the style of Proverbs. It describes the value of wisdom.

**SIRACH** is also Jewish poetry in the style of Proverbs. It gives rules on how to live the everyday life.

Finally there is **BARUCH**. It tells about the prayers and repentance of the Jews when they were in exile.

So we have 7 Jewish books, sometimes called the *Apocrypha*:

**Tobit, Judith, 2 books of Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach and Baruch.**

There are also extra chapters.

In the book of **ESTHER** there are extra chapters that describe the prayers and praise of Esther and Mordecai.

In the book of **DANIEL** there are extra verses giving the prayers and praise of the 3 men in the fiery furnace. There are also 2 extra chapters at the end of the book telling how Daniel used the wisdom God gave him.

Now we know **WHAT** these Jewish books are, but **WHERE** did they come from? The answer is found in history and how the Bible came to us.

Scholars believe that c. 400 BC a Jewish priest by the name of Ezra gathered all the scrolls of the Jewish sacred writings, arranged them by topic and put them to one side. It is the same Ezra that we read about in the book of Ezra. He put aside the equivalent of our 39 books. By separating them, he was saying, *we Jews believe these books to be totally different from all our other Jewish literature. We believe God has given us these books.* So at the time of Ezra, the Hebrew **sacred** writings had the equivalent of our 39 books.



Ezra lived during the Persian Empire. Eventually the Persians were conquered by Alexander the Great. He created the Greek empire. At his death, he divided the world empire among his 4 generals. For over 100 years, the Jews in Israel were under the Greeks ruling from Egypt. Their kings had the title of Ptolemy.

Their 2<sup>nd</sup> king decided to build a great library in Alexandria, Egypt. He wanted to collect the best literature in the known world and translate it into Greek, so all the world could read it.

Because Jewish people worked for the king, he knew they had sacred writings. But it was in Hebrew. So in 280 BC, Ptolemy Philadelphus appointed 70 Jews living in Egypt, to translate their sacred writings from Hebrew into Greek. These 70 Jews were linguists, gifted with the ability to speak several languages.

But they were also Hellenized Jews. Because they had been born and raised under the Greeks ruling in Egypt, they accepted Greek culture and thought. These Jews did not believe any of their books were God-given. For them, all Jewish literature was the same. So as they translated, they started with the 39 books that Ezra had put aside as sacred, but then added favorite stories from Jewish literature.

In summary, in 400 BC we have Ezra putting aside 39 books that he believed were sacred and God-given. Starting in 280 BC, Jews in Egypt translated these books from Hebrew into Greek.





This translation, plus copies for other places, continued for the next 100 years. The original translators were replaced as needed. It became known as the translation of the 70. It was said in Greek and the Greek word for 70 was *Septuagint*. This was the very first translation of the Jewish Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek. When speaking, it is called the *Séptuagint*. However on the written page, it always appears as LXX - the Roman numerals for 70. The **SEPTUAGINT** contained the original 39 books plus additional Jewish stories.

Over the next 2-300 years, hundreds of Greek copies were made. The Jews who made these copies continued to add more and more of their favorite Jewish stories. During this time the Greek empire fell and the Roman Empire developed. The spoken language changed from Greek to Latin.

By then the Church had also developed. So the Jews are still guardians of the Old Testament, while the Church is guardian of both the Old and New Testament sacred writings.

In 150 AD, church translators took the latest Greek version with the added books and translated it from Greek to Latin. It became known as the **OLD LATIN VERSION**. For the Old Testament, the original 39 books were put in one section and the extra Jewish books in another.

As the years pass, people make their own translation from Greek to Latin. Because people phrased things in their own way, the text was getting changed. The Church realized God's words must be protected - there must be one accurate, standard translation. They looked for a man who was expert, not only in Greek and Latin, but also in Hebrew.

They wanted him to make a Latin translation of the Old Testament directly from the original Hebrew. Jerome was the scholar they were looking for. He spent 15 years translating the Old Testament. It was called the **LATIN VULGATE**. This was c. 400 AD. Because Jerome translated the Old Testament directly from the Hebrew, he translated just 39 books - the exact ones Ezra had put aside as uniquely God-given.

The tragedy is that after 15 years of work, nobody liked Jerome's translation. It did not have those extra books they were used to. Finally at the insistence of friends, Jerome added the books of Tobit, Judith and the additions to Esther and Daniel. It was Jerome who gave them the name *Apocrypha* - books of uncertain origin. He spent several more years translating the New Testament from the original Greek to Latin.

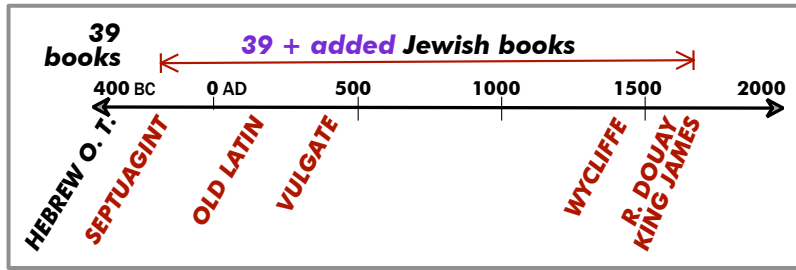
During Jerome's lifetime, his translation was never liked. After his death, it still was not accepted. All those extra books were missing. Because the Church did not want to lose such a wonderful translation, they finally added all the additional books from the Old Latin version and put them between Malachi and Matthew. With this, everyone now thought Jerome's translation was wonderful.

The Latin Vulgate was then used exclusively from the 600's until almost 1400 AD. This is the only time in history that one translation was used for 800 years - twice as long as any translation has been in use today.

By 1388, people wanted a Bible in English. A man by the name of John **WYCLIFFE** translated the Bible from the Latin Vulgate into English. So besides the 39 original books, the extra books were included and placed between Malachi and Matthew, just as they had been in the Vulgate.

In 1582, Roman Catholics were exiled from England and moved to northern France. They wanted a Bible in English. This was the beginning of the **REIMS DOUAY VERSION**. (With a revision done in 1750.) It was translated from the Vulgate, so in the Old Testament there were the original 39 books plus the additional books.

By 1611 the king of England saw the need for an English Bible that was translated directly from the original languages - Hebrew in the Old Testament; Greek in the New Testament. He was responsible for appointing the committee and paying for the translation, so it was named after him - the **KING JAMES BIBLE**. Since the Old Testament was translated from the Hebrew, there were just 39 books. But can you guess? Because Bibles for the last 1000 years had always contained those additional books, they were added as a group and put between the Old and New Testament.



In summary, in **400 BC** Ezra set aside the equivalent of our 39 books that he believed were sacred and God-given.

In **280 BC**, during their translation from Hebrew to Greek, the Jews added additional books to the original 39 books.

From **200 BC** to **1827 AD** - for 2000 years - all Bibles in all languages, including the King James, had these extra Jewish books. They were always placed between Malachi and Matthew. There were 10 stories that were especially popular.

From **100 to 1500 AD**, both Jews and the Church said there was a difference between these 2 groups of books. For example:

Josephus, a Jewish historian of the 1<sup>st</sup> century said, *39 books are God-breathed - the others are edifying.*

Church leaders said, *39 books of the Old Testament are inspired - others are of value, but should be considered with caution, since they are controversial.*

This is why the extra books became known as **deutero-canonical**. They were always considered a **2<sup>nd</sup> group of books**.

They were never part of the original 39 that Ezra set aside.

Then came the **1500's**. As most of you know, Martin Luther and his followers protested against certain practices within the church. They become known as the Protéstants. Later the accent was changed and they were called Prôtestants.

Until the time of Luther, there was just one church, east and west, so the statements made by church leaders had been adequate. But the split between the Protéstants and Catholics caused these extra books to become a major issue.

In **1546** at the Council of Trent, the Roman Catholic church took the official position that 7 of the most popular 10 extra books were equal to the original 39. They were to be considered as God-given.

The Protéstants meanwhile, stayed with the former position of the church. They said only the original 39 books were God-given. The others were useful and instructive. These decisions were made in the 1500's. However it was not until 1827 that the extra Jewish books were removed from Protestant Bibles and stayed in Catholic Bibles.

Today, Catholics and Episcopalians accept 46 books in the Old Testament as God given.

(The 3 not accepted are the Apocrypha - Prayer of Manassas; 1-2 Esdras)

Other Protestants generally accept only 39 books in the Old Testament as God-given.

(They call the extra 7 books, the *Apocrypha*. (The extra 3 are Pseudepígrapha)

This course is based on the Hebrew Bible - the **Jewish** Old Testament, so we will only study the original 39 books.

From history we have seen that in spite of Jewish translators adding other books, in spite of language changes, in spite of people making their own translations, God, the author of the Bible has also been the Protector of the Bible.

He has gone to great lengths to protect His message because:

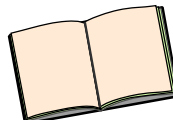
Only the Bible can tell us what our God is really like, how we can be right with Him and how we can enjoy Him.

Only the Bible tells us what is right and wrong from God's point of view.

Only the Bible can thoroughly equip and train us so our good works are effective and bring honor to God.

Only the Bible will show us right motives, right attitudes and the right ways for our ministry.

This is why the Bible needs to be a vital part of our life.



## BIBLE DEFINITIONS

**Bible** from the Greek *biblion*, meaning *books*. Jews and Christians called their books *biblion hagian*, meaning *holy books*.

**Scripture** from the Latin *Sancta Scriptura*, meaning *Sacred Writings*

**Testament** God's declarations in how He has revealed Himself to the world. This revelation includes:  
What He is like; What He wants to do; What He expects in return

**Old / First Declaration or Testament** God has revealed Himself to the world thru the Jewish people and nation.  
It all took place before Jesus' life here on earth  
the time of history called BC. - Before Christ.

**New / Second Declaration or Testament** - It started after Jesus came to this earth, the time of history called AD.  
God the Father revealed Himself thru His Son, Jesus. After Jesus returned to heaven...

God the Father continued to reveal Himself to the world thru those who put their faith in Jesus.  
He is using the Body of Christ, the Church.

In the future, God will once again reveal Himself thru the Jewish people.

**Deutero-canonical books** A Greek word meaning 2<sup>nd</sup> group of books.

**Apocrypha** A Greek word meaning *doubtful, uncertain, unknown*