

The Bible

Some quotes about the Bible:

The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable.

Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you.

It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christian's charter. Here too, Heaven is opened and the gates of Hell disclosed.

Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently and prayerfully.

It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure.

It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, rewards the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents. –Forward to Gideon Bibles

It is not the Word of God because the Church says so; but that the Word of God might be spoken, therefore the Church comes into being. The Church does not make the Word, but it is made by the Word. Life of the World magazine

Luther says:

No one letter in Scripture is purposeless, but the Scripture is God's writing and God's Word.

It is beyond doubt that the entire Scripture points to Christ alone.

The Bible is the cradle wherein Christ is laid.

Some facts about the Bible:

-The Bible is actually a collection of 66 Books.

-The Bible is the best selling book in history.

-There are 929 chapters in the Old Testament and 260 chapters in the New Testament for a total of 1,189 chapters.

-Psalm 117 is the middle chapter of the Bible. It is also the shortest chapter of the Bible.

-There are 23,145 verses in the Old Testament and 7,957 in the New Testament for a total of 31,102 verses.

-Shortest verses: OT 1 Chronicles 1:25 "Eber, Peleg, Reu"; NT (Greek) 1 Thessalonians 5:16 "Rejoice always", (English) St. John 11:35 "Jesus wept".

Additional information about Biblical Reliability:

1. God inspired many human authors of the Bible (about 36). That various authors, in a wide range of time, from diverse backgrounds all proclaim the same essential message is important. Many other sacred texts of other religions are attributed to one singular human author (such as in Islam and Mormonism).
2. The number of manuscripts and manuscript fragments far exceeds other religious and secular sources from the ancient world (more on this below).
3. In 1947 the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered containing scrolls that pre-dated the earliest known manuscripts by about 1,000 years. These showed an incredible level of matching these texts, devastating the theories that the Scriptures had changed much over the years.
4. “Thus says the Lord” or its equivalent is used more than 2,000 times in the Bible clearly proclaiming that the very Word of God is being spoken.
5. Many prophecies (often very specific) are spoken in the earlier-written Biblical books and then fulfilled in the later-written books. Fulfilled prophecy is a proof of the Bible’s accuracy.
6. The Bible contains numerous scientific aspects that were unknown at the time of the Bible’s writing, but have later been confirmed as human’s understanding of science increased.
7. Many of the authors of the books of the Bible were persecuted and/or martyred (killed) for standing by the words that God inspired them to speak and write. It is unreasonable to think that all of these people would have endured such hardship and often gruesome deaths for things that they did not believe were true.

Transmission and Translation of the Bible

We also note that Scripture pays much attention to historical incidentals. For instance, see the genealogy listings in Genesis 10 and St. Matthew 1. St. Matthew considered it very important to trace the historical ancestry of Jesus back to Abraham.

✦ **St. Matthew 1:1** *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.*

The Scripture is the record of God’s dealings with His people. It was necessary that God choose a people and set them apart. This was the nation of Israel, the Jews. In the New Testament, Jesus showed the Jews that they were no longer the true children of Abraham and His Kingdom would be open to all believers regardless of ethnic background (St. John 8:33-39).

One way to help you study the Bible is to gain background information and other notes from a Bible Handbook. Concordia publishes the *Complete Bible Handbook for Students*. *Halley's Bible Handbook* has been a top seller for years and has some good information even though it not Lutheran.

For Discussion:

Why is the Scripture concerned with history? Why does it contain more than the Ten Commandments, the golden rule, or even the story of Christ's death upon the cross? See Exodus 3:6.

The Old Testament as History

The Old Testament records God's dealings with man from the beginning of time (Genesis) to the end of the Old Testament prophetic era (Malachi, about 440 BC).

The Origin of Holy Scripture

The Bible is not a book which suddenly fell from heaven. The Bible we use today is the result of a long process of **collection**, **transmission**, and **translation**. The process covers a period from Moses (about 1400 BC) to the Apostle John (Revelation, about 100 AD).

The Biblical **autographs** (original manuscripts) were written in the language of the people. Most of the Old Testament was written in **Hebrew**. A few sections were written in **Aramaic**. Both are Semitic languages. The New Testament was written in **Greek**, the universal language of the day.

There were originally no chapter, word, or verse divisions. Hebrew was written from right to left, while Greek was written from left to right. The inspired writers of Scripture neither thought nor wrote according to verse concepts. The Scripture was written in columns (usually two fingers apart) with two, three, or four columns to a page. The system of chapters and paragraph divisions was introduced in 1238 AD. This was replaced by the verse system introduced by Robert Stephens in 1551 AD.

The books of Scripture were written on **clay tablets**, **leather**, **papyrus**, and **vellum**. The text was painstakingly transmitted by scholars and scribes. The Scripture originally appeared in the form of **scrolls** or **rolls**. The **codex form** (book form) first began to appear in the last half of the second century after Christ. The books of Scripture passed from one congregation to another. The originals were copied and re-copied until there were many thousands of manuscripts. In fact there are over 24,000 manuscripts and fragments of the Bible, some dated within 35 years of Christ's death. This compares to other ancient texts such as Julius Cesar with 10 manuscripts dated 1,000 years later or the Illiad with 600 but 1,300 years later. In short, even in a purely secular sense the Bible is the most reliable record from the ancient world.

The text of Scripture has been faithfully handed down from generation to generation. Its faithful transmission has itself been an act of God.

✦ **II Peter 1:16** *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*

The concept of canonicity is important to our understanding of the Scripture we use today. The term “canon” means “measuring rod”. It identifies the Biblical books which have the authority and distinction of divine inspiration. It distinguishes such books from others which were written for a religious purpose.

The Hebrew test for canonicity was twofold.

1. Do the contents indicate divine inspiration?
2. Is it written by a prophet or an accredited representative of God?

Those who wrote under divine inspiration were well-known to have God’s blessing. The people knew a prophet when they saw one. After the completion of such a work, it was placed into the temple or tabernacle along with the other sacred writings. These sacred writings (which “defiled the hands”) were eventually collected into an authorized list. Tradition tells us that the Men of the Great Assembly (including Ezra and Nehemiah about 400 BC) authorized the final list of Old Testament Books. Official sanction was also given at the Council of Jamnia in 90 AD.

The “Apocryphal Books” of the Old Testament were written after the close of the Old Testament canon between 200 BC and 100 AD. They fill in the gap between the testaments when prophecy and inspiration had ceased. The Apocryphal Books were not written in Hebrew and were not accepted as inspired Scripture by the Jews. Because they were included in the Septuagint Old Testament (the Greek Old Testament used by the early church), they eventually found their way into the Christian Scripture – over the protests of some early church fathers. The Reformers re-opened the controversy and established only the Hebrew canon as authoritative. The Roman Catholic church incorrectly accepts the Apocrypha as part of Scripture to this day.

The New Testament Canon was also the result of a long, gradual, and God directed process. The New Testament test of canonicity was fourfold.

1. **Apostolicity:** is the book written by an Apostle or one who has apostolic authority?
2. **Contents:** are the contents of such a spiritual level that it is entitled to rank on canon? Is it consistent with the rest of Scripture?
3. **Universality:** is the book universally received by the Church?

4. **Inspiration:** does the book give evidence of inspiration?

The New Testament canon was not formulated simply by a pronouncement of the early church. It was the result of a gradual process throughout the Church. Each book was separately evaluated. Each book impressed itself upon the Church. Finally, when there was general agreement about which books should be accepted, the canon was closed at the Council of Hippo (393 AD) and the Council of Carthage (397 AD).