



Lesson 3 Part 1
The Word of God

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with
God, and the Word was God.

- John 1:1 -

LESSON THREE: THE BIBLE – GOD’S WORD

I. WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS CLASS

- The Bible is God’s inspired Word.
- The Bible is the Christian’s source for faith and practice.
- The Holy Spirit gives a believer illumination or revelation of what the Scripture means.
- The Bible is reliable – We have more and older manuscripts of the Bible than any other copy of ancient literature.
- You will learn about the Bible’s structure in the Old and New Testaments and the types of literature genres in the Bible and the basic divisions of the books of the Bible.

II. FOUR IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT THE BIBLE, GOD’S WORD

1. As Christians, we base what we _____ and _____ on the Bible.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. 2 Timothy 3:16

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. John 8:32

2. We look to the Holy Spirit for _____ of the meaning of the scriptures.

God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. 1 Corinthians 2:10-16 (verse 10)

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

John 16:13

3. The Word and the Spirit always agree. God does not change and _____ does not change.

For I am the Lord, I do not change. Malachi 3:6

...the word of our God stands forever. Isaiah 40:8

4. The _____ is not going to disagree with God and His Word.

...He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak John 16:13

III. FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE AND MANUSCRIPTS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

The Old Testament

According to noted scholar, Dr. Daniel Wallace, the Jewish scribes were so reverent towards the scriptures; they used extreme care and paid attention to great detail in making copies of the Torah and other Old Testament scriptures. Not wanting to make even the slightest error, they counted the number of letters, words, and lines. One mistake would mean the entire manuscript would be destroyed and they would start over from the beginning, thus preserving the quality of the manuscripts – something exceeding all others. In 1947, the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in caves on the mountain sides near ancient Qumran, very near the Dead Sea. These scrolls, written in Hebrew, antedate the earliest Masoretic Old Testament manuscripts by about 1,000 years. But even

with the spread of 1,000 years between the texts, very few variants are found between them, mostly in spelling and style.

The New Testament

New Testament manuscripts are more in number and better preserved than other ancient writings. There are more than 5,800 Greek New Testament manuscripts in existence today.

If we were to compare the number of New Testament manuscripts to other ancient writings, we find that the New Testament manuscripts far outweigh the others in quantity.

There are more than 10,000 Latin manuscripts and another 5,000 manuscripts in other languages (Syriac, Coptic, etc.) In addition to this, there are thousands of citations of New Testament passages by the early Church fathers. Over **1,000,000** quotations by the Church fathers have been catalogued – *enough to reconstruct the entire New Testament from these quotes alone!*

In contrast, the typical number of existing manuscript copies for any of the works of the Greek and Latin authors, such as Plato, Aristotle, Caesar, or Tacitus, ranges only from one to 20.

43% of extant (existing) New Testament manuscripts copies are dated within the first 100 years of the originals.

Conversely, the average gap of other ancient authors between the composition and the earliest copy of the writings is 1,000 years! The earliest copy in existence of the Iliad is dated about 500 years after it was written.

The earliest portion of the New Testament in existence is dated some to be around **29 years after it was written!** It contains John 18:31-33, 37-38. (P-52 – the John Ryland fragment at the John Ryland’s University Library, Manchester, UK.)

By comparison, we have just a few copies of these ancient historians:

<i>Histories</i>	<i>Oldest Manuscripts</i>	<i>Number of Man. Surviving</i>
Livy 59 B.C. – A.D. 17	4 th Century A.D.	Less than 20
Tacitus A.D. 56-120	9 th -11 Centuries A.D.	3
Thucydides 460-400 B.C.	10 th Century A.D.	8
Herodotus 484-425 B.C.	10 th Century A.D.	very few

IV. SOME THINGS THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT ITSELF

The Word of God:

- is like _____ in your _____ (Ezekiel 3:3)
- can _____ in you _____ (Colossians 3:16)
- is a _____ for your _____ (illuminates your path) (Psalms 119:105)
- _____ your mind (Romans 12:1, 2)
- is a _____ that burns in your heart (Jeremiah 20:9)
- is perfect and trustworthy (Psalms 19:7)
- penetrates your thoughts and _____ (Hebrews 4:12)

V. THE PHRASE “THE WORD OF GOD” IS ALSO USED TO REFER TO A PERSON: JESUS CHRIST

*I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no-one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and **his name is the Word of God**. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron scepter.” He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS**. Revelation 19:11-16*

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
John 1:1*

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

VI. THE BIBLE’S STRUCTURE

The word “Bible” means “book.” The Bible is a book that contains a collection of books. As we noted earlier, the Bible contains 66 “books” of different lengths and containing a wide range of literary genres. Some of the genres include poetry, prophetic oracles, letters, laments, and apocalyptic.

Some Bibles also contain an additional group of books called the Apocrypha (meaning “hidden”). None of the Apocryphal books are quoted by any of the authors of the New Testament. Most Protestant Bibles do not contain the Apocryphal books. The Apocryphal books are not recognized as being part of the Hebrew canon of scriptures.

Jesus generally described the Old Testament as being the accepted Hebrew canon in Luke 11:51 – “from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation.” (NKJV)

This statement paints the timeline of the Old Testament as being “bookended” from Genesis (where the story of Abel occurs) to 2 Chronicles (where the story of the death of Zechariah occurs – the end of the Hebrew Old Testament order of books.)

In other words, it is inclusive of all the books of the Hebrew canon (Genesis to Malachi) but does not include any of the Apocryphal books.

A. Old Testament:

The Old Testament takes up about two-thirds of the Bible – in 39 books. The other third is the New Testament in 27 books.

The Old Testament can be divided up into some basic sections:

- **Law:** The First five books, the Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy – called the “Torah” (from Hebrew for ‘teaching’) or the “Pentateuch (Greek for ‘five books’).”
- **History: The Historical books** include Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.
- **Poetical and Wisdom: The poetic and wisdom writings** include Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.
- **Prophetic:**
 - **Major Prophets** - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel.
 - **Minor Prophets** - Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

The words “Genesis,” “Exodus,” etc. are derived from the Greek names for the books in the Greek version (the Septuagint) of the Old Testament, which was translated from Hebrew between 200 and 300 B.C. The Hebrew names for the first five books are derived from the first words of each book. For example: Bereshit – Genesis, Schmot – Exodus, Vayikra – Leviticus

The Old Testament is also said to have three divisions: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

B. New Testament Sections:

- **Gospels** – Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
- **Historical** - Acts
- **Pauline Epistles** - (Pastoral Letters)
 - **to churches:** Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians
 - **to individuals:** 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon
- **General Epistles** - Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude
- **Prophetic** – Revelation

NOTE: The Bible’s Chapter Numbers and Verse Numbers... are NOT inspired and are not part of the original text. They were first instituted about 1,000 years after the canon was established. The Hebrew Old Testament already had some basic divisions. Stephan Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1207-1228 A.D. divided the Bible into chapters. Robert Estienne (also known as Robert Stephanus) in the mid-16th century devised the basic verse numbering system – a version of which we use in today’s Bibles. He was the first person to print a Bible with verse numbers in each chapter. Chapter and verse numbers are useful for finding specific places in the Bible, but sometimes can be a hindrance if we fail to keep reading through a verse or chapter division to gain the complete context of what is being said.

(The following from: Paul E. Little, *Know What You Believe* – (Downer’s Grove, Ill.; IntersVarsity Press, 2008), p. 19.)

The Bible		
	Old Testament	New Testament
Number of Books (Protestant Canon)	39	27
Major Groups	Law, Historical Books, Poetry, Wisdom, Prophets	Gospels, Acts, Epistles, Revelation
Years to Write	1100 years	100 years

VII. ABOUT THE WORD “CANON”

The word “canon” comes from the Greek word that means “a measuring rule” or “straight bar,” and possibly from a Hebrew word “qaneh,” which means “a rod.” In time, the word canon began to take on the meaning of an accepted list of scriptures.

The Hebrew Old Testament canon was settled prior to the coming of Christ. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in Israel in 1947 gave us copies of the Old Testament scriptures that were dated about 1,000 years earlier than copies that existed at that time. They revealed that the Old Testament copies were essentially unchanged throughout the whole period of time from 100-200 B.C.

To be part of the accepted canon, the books had to be historically accurate and authoritative – that is, that God was speaking through the individual, or the individual was speaking for God, and in agreement with the other books.

The canon of the Old and New Testaments was recognized as being the only books to be read in the churches at the church council of Laodicea in 363 A.D.

Basically there were three primary criteria that had to be met in order for books to be recognized as authoritative:

1. Had to be written by an apostle, or someone directly connected or in contact with the apostles.
2. Had to conform to the “rule of faith” – basic orthodox Christian beliefs as practiced and accepted among the majority of the churches.
3. Had to be widely accepted and read continuously in the majority of the churches.

(See Carson, D.A., *Collected Writings on Scripture*, Crossway, 2010)

VIII. HOW THE NEW TESTAMENT CAME TO US

Luke begins his gospel by telling us that, “*Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us,*” (Luke 1:1). Obviously, there were many accounts of the life of Jesus written down, but over time four of the “gospels” that were copied and circulated and began to be recognized as authoritative by the apostles, and by the churches at large. In addition to the gospels, the book of Acts, the 13 letters of Paul, 1 Peter, and 1 John were accepted as being inspired scripture early on. Christians desired to copy the latest letter from the Apostles and so copies abounded. Later adopted usage of cursive Greek script (as opposed to Uncial – all capital letters) made copying manuscripts much quicker.

The use of individual parchment scrolls gave way to the use of the “codex” – essentially not unlike a modern book, it was glued or bound on one edge, and thus enabled a collection of writings to be held together in one place. Christians adopted the use of the codex and more and more copies began to be in circulation among the churches.

Early (Patristic) evidence for the existence of widely accepted scriptures is found in the letter of 1 Clement – dated around 90 A.D. The letter quotes from both the Old and New Testaments without any introductory formula. The letter refers to the four gospels as we know them today, Acts, 1 Corinthians, Philippians, Titus, Hebrews, 1 Peter, and possibly James. In another letter, 2 Clement, which is dated around the end of the first century, occurs an early usage (perhaps the earliest) of the term *scripture* in citing a *New Testament* passage – namely, Mark 2:17.

As far as lists of the accepted books of the New Testament, one of the earliest was that of Marcion around 140 A.D., who was a heretic, but nonetheless, his “list” of books is important from a historical perspective.

The Muratorian fragment dated near the end of the second century A.D. contains a list of New Testament books. Although the first part of the fragment is mutilated, it evidently speaks of the four gospels – Matthew and Mark are missing, but they are inferred because the fragment says Luke is the “third” gospel, and then it speaks of John. It also mentions Acts, Paul’s nine letters to churches and four individual letters (Philemon, Titus, 1 Timothy, and 2 Timothy), Jude, two Epistles of John, and the Apocalypse of John and Peter.

Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, writing about 115 A.D. speaks of “the gospel” – in other words a singular story, although he knew of other “gospels” from other writers, and this seems to indicate the acceptance of one story of the gospel, but told by various authors. He may have been referring to the four gospels in his use of the term.

Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, in his writing “Against Heresies” (dated c. 175-185 A.D.), in Book 3.11.8, describes the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as the “four-formed gospel” and likens them to the four-faced cherubim upon which the Word sits enthroned and says that “it is not possible that the gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are.” In Book 3.2.8, Irenaeus writes, “For as there are four quarters of the world in which we live, and four universal winds, and as the Church is dispersed over all the earth, and the gospel is the pillar and base of the Church and the breath of life, so it is natural that it should have four pillars, breathing immortality from every quarter and kindling the life of men anew. Whence it is manifest that the Word, the architect of all things, who sits upon the cherubim and holds all things together, having been manifested to men, has given us the gospel in fourfold form, but held together by one Spirit.”

The Paschal (Passover/Easter Season) letter of Athanasius in 367 A.D. contains the exact list of New Testament books we have today.

Answers:

Pg. 1 – believe, practice, revelation, His Word, Holy Spirit

Pg. 2 – honey, mouth, dwell, richly, lamp, feet, renews, fire, attitudes