

LESSON 2 The Book God Has Given Us

Have you ever wondered how God gave us the Bible? Was it perhaps put together by angels and left waiting for someone to find it? Or did someone spend his lifetime studying and searching that he might finally give us his philosophies?

God chose to use neither of these avenues to give us His Word. Instead, He used ordinary men from many walks of life and over a span of hundreds of years to give us the Book we call the Bible. The agreement and harmony with which these men wrote stand as a testimony to God, who never changes.

The way the Bible was written is a miracle. Its preservation is another miracle. One of the prophets told how the king took the book of prophecies, threw it into the fire, and burned it. But the Lord told the prophet to take another scroll and write everything again (Jeremiah 36:27–28). God’s Word could not be destroyed.

In this lesson, we will study facts about the Bible—who was used in the writing of it, how one part of the Bible relates to another, and how it all relates to us. As we get better acquainted with the Book, we will appreciate and study it more.

The Plan

- A. Its Origin
- B. Its General Structure
- C. The Relationship of the Testaments
- D. Its Different Translations

The Goals

1. Describe the origin and structure of the Bible.
2. Explain how the New Testament is related to the Old.
3. List at least three differences between the Old Testament and New Testament.
4. Give an example of how the New Testament fulfills the Old Testament.
5. Give one reason we need the Bible in more than one language.
6. State one reason there are different versions of the Bible.
7. State some facts concerning the Apocrypha.

A. ITS ORIGIN

Definition and Divisions

Goal 1. Describe the origin and structure of the Bible.

The Holy Bible is like a small library of sixty-six books that God has given us. We call it the Bible, the Scriptures, or the Word of God.

The word *Bible* means “books.” *Holy* means “something we respect because it belongs to God.” Each of the sixty-six books of the Bible is holy.

Application

- 1 How many books are in the Bible?
 - a) 29
 - b) 39
 - c) 66
 - 2 God's book, the *Holy Bible*,
 - a) is the book of the saints.
 - b) contains two ancient books.
 - c) is from God, and we respect it because it is His.
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Authors and Inspiration

Goal 2. Explain how the New Testament is related to the Old.

Approximately forty men were divinely inspired to write the Bible. Some of these men wrote more than one book. A few books were not signed by their authors, so we do not know who wrote them.

The term *divinely inspired* means the Holy Spirit gave the authors the thoughts and words God wanted them to write. The Bible tells us in 2 Timothy 3:16 that all Scripture is inspired by God. These writers could not have consulted each other about their work because they did not all live at the same time. The first books were written about fifteen hundred years before Christ, and the last were written about one hundred years after Christ. Because these books of the Bible were inspired by God, we call them holy.

Among the authors were kings and fishermen, politicians, military and religious leaders, peasants, merchants, and poets. Even though they came from different places, with various interests and backgrounds, they all wrote about the same theme because God inspired them. This theme is the relationship between God and humanity. Such order throughout all of the books, without contradictions, was possible because the Bible

has only one principal author—God—who spoke through different men.

The following verse is important to memorize:

Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:21)

Application

- 3** Choose the answer that best completes the following sentence. When we say the Bible is the *inspired Word of God*, we mean the Holy Spirit impressed the writers to
- a)** consult with one another about what to write.
 - b)** write the thoughts and words of God.
 - c)** try to decipher the thoughts and ways of God.

Choose the best answer for each of the following questions.

- 4** How long was it from the time the first book of the Bible was written until the last one was written?
- a)** About 50 years
 - b)** About 500 years
 - c)** About 1,600 years
- 5** Whom did God inspire to write the Bible?
- a)** Forty men who met and worked together
 - b)** Forty priests and prophets
 - c)** Approximately 40 men of different occupations and from different periods of history
- 6** These men wrote on the same theme and did not contradict each other because
- a)** God was the real author, and they were under the control of the Holy Spirit as they wrote.
 - b)** each one left instructions for the following writers.
 - c)** they got extremely lucky.
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B. ITS GENERAL STRUCTURE

Goal 3. List at least three differences between the Old Testament and New Testament.

When two people or two nations want to make a special agreement, they can write a *treaty* or a *pact*. Once the treaty is signed, it must not be broken.

The word *testament* means treaty, pact, or covenant. The Bible is divided into two Testaments—the Old and the New. These are the pacts God has made with humankind.

At the front of your Bible is a list of the books of the Old and New Testaments. This list also gives the page numbers where each book begins. The Old Testament is listed first.

The Old Testament was given to the Jews, who were also called Hebrews or Israelites. God chose them to receive His truths, write them, and teach them to others. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew because it was the language of the Jews.

The Old Testament covers the history and terms of God's relationship with humanity, from Creation to the coming of the Savior who would establish a new covenant.

The New Testament gives the history and the conditions of the new covenant, or pact, that God has made with all who accept His Son Jesus Christ as their Savior. The New Testament tells the story of the life of Jesus Christ, and also what He taught.

When the New Testament was written, Greek was a commonly known language. Since this new pact was for all people—not for the Jews alone—the New Testament was written in Greek, thus making it possible for most people to read it.

Application

7 Who were chosen to receive the revelation of God and the covenant we know as the Old Testament?

- a) The Hebrews (Israelites)
- b) The Christians
- c) The Greeks

8 The provisions and conditions of the covenant God has made with those who accept Jesus Christ as their Savior are in the

- a) Old Testament.
- b) New Testament.
- c) Minor Prophets

9 (Circle the letter before each correct completion of the following sentence.) The Old Testament is different from the New Testament in that the Old Testament

- a) was written in Hebrew, not in Greek.
- b) contains more books.
- c) was written especially for the Jews.
- d) has authors different from those who wrote the New Testament.
- e) is about a different period in history.



C. THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE TESTAMENTS

Goal 4. Give an example of how the New Testament fulfills the Old Testament.

The Old Testament is very important because it reveals God's plan for humanity. But the Old Testament was a temporary pact until Jesus Christ would come to establish the permanent pact. We are now living under the new pact—the New Testament. Therefore, we suggest that you read the New Testament before reading the Old Testament.

The New Testament is based upon the Old Testament. It not only explains the relationship between the two pacts, but it relates the fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies.

For example, the Old Testament book of Micah (chapter 5, verse 2) indicates that the Savior would be born in the Jewish town of Bethlehem. Matthew 2:1, in the New Testament, tells us Jesus the Savior was born in Bethlehem.

Psalm 22:18 in the Old Testament prophesies that men would gamble for and divide the Savior’s garments among themselves. When Jesus was dying on the cross, the soldiers took His clothes. Matthew 27:35 says, “When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots.”

There are hundreds of other examples. Special books have been compiled which give all of the Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in the New Testament.

It is wonderful that a book as ancient as the Old Testament was preserved for so many years. We should be grateful to God’s chosen people who received God’s Word, preserved it, and shared it with other nations.

Application

- 10** Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement.
 - a)** Since the Old Testament was given to the Jews, it is not necessary for us to read it.
 - b)** The New Testament is God’s covenant with His people today, but the Old Testament has important lessons for us too.
 - c)** Both the Old and New Testaments are God’s revelation of His plans for humankind.

11 To whom do we owe special thanks for the Bible?

12 Match the Old Testament prophecies with the New Testament references that tell of their fulfillment. Write the number of the New Testament reference on the dotted line in front of each prophecy.

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|---|-------------------|
| ... a) 2 Samuel 7:13—descendant of David, eternal King | 1) Revelation 5:5 |
| ... b) Genesis 49:10—from royal tribe of Judah | 2) Matthew 21:4–5 |
| ... c) Psalm 110:4—priest like Melchizedek | 3) Luke 1:17 |
| ... d) Isaiah 7:14—conceived of a virgin | 4) Matthew 26:15 |
| ... e) Isaiah 40:3—John, His forerunner, crying, “Prepare ye the way.” | 5) Luke 23:50–53 |
| ... f) Isaiah 7:14—His name, Immanuel | 6) Matthew 1:1 |
| ... g) Zechariah 9:9—enters Jerusalem on a donkey | 7) Matthew 1:23 |
| ... h) Zechariah 11:12—sold for 30 pieces of silver | 8) Hebrews 5:6 |
| ... i) Isaiah 53:9—burial in tomb of rich man | 9) Luke 1:31 |

D. ITS DIFFERENT TRANSLATIONS

Different Languages

Goal 5. Give one reason we need the Bible in more than one language.

God wants every person to accept Jesus Christ as his or her Savior (see 2 Peter 3:9). Since this is God’s desire, we know He wants everyone to understand His Word. This is why the Old

Testament was written in Hebrew for the Jews, and the New Testament was written in Greek for the larger world population of that time.

Today, since most of us do not understand Hebrew or Greek, we would have a difficult time understanding the Scriptures if they were not translated into our language. This is why we study the Bible, teach it, translate it, and publish it.

There are Bible societies that are always working on new translations. As of 2005, there are approximately seven thousand distinct languages spoken in the world. Complete Bibles exist in 422 of them. The New Testament has been translated into almost eleven hundred languages. Over sixteen hundred other translation projects are in process.

When a new translation is completed, there is much rejoicing because another group of people will be able to read the Scriptures in their own language. There are still thousands of languages into which the Bible has not yet been translated. Let us pray that those who do this work will have strength to continue their great task.

Application

13 (Circle the letter in front of each correct completion to the following sentence.) The world needs many different translations of the Bible because

- a) God wants everyone to understand His Word.
 - b) most people do not read Greek or Hebrew today.
 - c) it is easier to understand something written in one's own language.
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Different Versions

Goal 6. State one reason there are different versions of the Bible.

Sometimes there is more than one translation of the Bible in a particular language because languages change. When a

translation becomes outdated and a bit difficult to understand, it needs revision. Older words are replaced by newer words—words used in everyday speech.

Making a new version is not an attempt to change the meaning or the teachings of the Bible. All versions—old and new—are the same Bible. The translators have tried to give us the exact meaning that was in the original Greek or Hebrew copies.

The most popular of the English versions for many years was the King James Version. The English, however, is several centuries old and sometimes difficult to understand. Today, many enjoy reading the New International Version. This textbook, *Your Bible*, quotes from the New International Version. Let us compare Philippians 3:1 in both versions of the Bible.

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. (KJV)

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. (NIV)

Some readers find the contemporary language easier to understand, while others still prefer the richness of the old versions.

Application

14 We have many different versions of the Bible in English because translators want to

- a)** make it agree with their own doctrines.
- b)** put it into words that are easier for people to understand.
- c)** make it difficult for translations into other languages.

15 When we talk about a *version* of the Bible, we mean its

- a)** quality of binding.
- b)** translation.
- c)** difficult words.

16 We will probably see more versions of the Bible in our language because

- a) Bible publishers want to make money.
 - b) languages and word meanings may change.
 - c) everyone always wants something new.
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The Apocrypha

Goal 7. State some facts concerning the Apocrypha.

Catholic versions of the Bible include the Apocrypha, a number of books of doubtful origin. Though these books contain some historical information, especially about the four hundred year period between the Old and New Testaments, not all their historical data are accurate. Because they lack evidence of divine inspiration, they were not accepted as part of the Jewish sacred writings which make up the Old Testament.

The collection of books was named *Apocrypha*, from a Greek word meaning “hidden things.” They were considered as being beyond the ability of the average person to understand and appreciate—whereas Scripture is given for us all to profit by and enjoy. God wants everyone to be saved and “come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4).

Application

17 The word *apocrypha* means

- a) “hidden things.”
- b) “doubtful.”
- c) “semi-historical.”

18 Most versions of the Bible do not include the Apocrypha because these writings

- a) are too long.
 - b) lack evidence of divine inspiration.
 - c) are difficult to translate.
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Check Your Answers

- 1 c)** 66.
- 10** Statements b) and c) are true.
- 2 c)** is from God, and we respect it because it is His.
- 11** To God's chosen people.
- 3 b)** write the thoughts and words of God.
- 12 a)** 6) Matthew 1:1
b) 1) Revelation 5:5
c) 8) Hebrews 5:6
d) 9) Luke 1:31
e) 3) Luke 1:17
f) 7) Matthew 1:23.
g) 2) Matthew 21:4
h) 4) Matthew 26:15
i) 5) Luke 23:50–51
- 4 c)** About 1,600 years
- 13** All three reasons are correct.
- 5 c)** Approximately 40 men of different occupations and from different periods of history
- 14 b)** put it into words that are easier for people to understand.
- 6 a)** God was the real author, and they were under the control of the Holy Spirit as they wrote.
- 15 b)** translation.
- 7 a)** The Hebrews (Israelites)
- 16 b)** languages and word meanings may change.
- 8 b)** New Testament.
- 17 a)** "hidden things."
- 9** All of the answers are correct.
- 18 b)** lack evidence of divine inspiration.