

Bible Basics – How is the Bible Structured?

Overview

Continuing our study into Bible Basics, lets take a look at the composition of the bible. There is an order to it – inspired by God – and developed by man.

What are the books in the Bible?

The Old Testament was written over a period of 1000 years in the form shown in the picture and contains writings that are:

- ❖ Histories of the heroes and events
- ❖ Codes of Law
- ❖ Orations
- ❖ Reflective writings
- ❖ Poetry



The Bible is a library of books

The Bible is not just one “book”. It is a library of books, put together in one volume. Look at the contents of your Bible! The authors of these books are mostly unknown and were not composed at one time. Many centuries elapsed between the oldest traditions and the last book of the Bible. Not even the original language of all these books was the same.

Additionally the original text ran completely together and there were no spaces nor punctuation used. The chapters and verse breakdown that we take for granted did not happen until many centuries after they were written in an effort to make the text more readable. See the sample of an old text at the top of the page that shows this concept – and take note that the writing is from the right to the left – opposite of modern writings.

A major disadvantage is that these books are not put together systematically as the books of a modern library. All kinds of literary forms: history, historical novels, parables, allegories, poems, *midrash* (Jewish interpretations of events), and more are often intermingled. Even if you read your Bible in an up-to-date American translation, such as the New American Bible, you may still need guidance.

Therefore, read the introductions to the Bible books and pay attention to the footnotes! Know that, if you want to understand what God has to tell you through Scripture, you must first understand what the writer wants to say. The Bible is God's word and man's word. One must understand man's word first in order to understand the word of God.

Since this collection of books is of such importance as source book for the humanities and religion, it became known in Western civilization as the “*Bible*” from the Greek word *biblion* (book); hence, “The Book,” which is actually a library of books!

The basic bible is divided into the Old and the New Testaments. The word testament means covenant so the bible contains the events and stories of God’s covenant with His people before and after Jesus.

The Catholic Version of the Bible

The Catholic versions contain 46 books. The protestant versions only have 39 books since they used the Hebrew canon. The Hebrew canon did not recognize such books as Tobit, Wisdom, Judith, Sirach, Baruch and 1 & 2 Maccabees because they could not find any reliable source for the book. It is interesting to note that fragments and limited sections of copies of these books were amongst those found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.