

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE



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Introduction

Why Study the Bible?

- God's revelation
- The Vertical/Horizontal Dimension
- The 30,000 Ft. View and the Microscopic View

A Simple Formula

- Content + Context + Compatibility/Contrast = Clarity (3c's = C)

How We Got the Bible

1. Did you know that.....?

- Written over a span of around 1500 years
- Written by over 40 authors and editors from many different backgrounds including kings, peasants, philosophers, priests, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars to name but a few.
- Written in many different places and on three different continents (Asia, Africa and Europe).
- Written in three different languages.
 1. Hebrew - majority of Old Testament.
 2. Aramaic – parts of Ezra, Daniel primarily.
 3. Greek – New Testament
- Comes from the Greek meaning “library”. A library of 66 different books (39 in the OT and 27 in the NT), in a variety of different literary styles and genres.
- Has been read by more people than any other book. Well over 100 million new copies of the Bible (whole and parts of the Bible) are produced every year.
- Has been published (in whole or part) in more than 2000 different languages (even Klingon).
- Has been copied (in whole or part) more than any other book in history.
- For the Old Testament, the Masoretic Text is the authoritative text of Rabbinic Judaism. A scribal school known as the Masoretes dedicated themselves to copying, editing, distributing, and cataloguing textual data between the 7th and 10th centuries.

- The New Testament has more manuscript evidence than any 10 pieces of classical literature combined. This is illustrated in the chart below:

Text/Author	Existing Copies	Years between original and earliest copies
New Testament	24,000	40-70
Homer/Iliad	643	500
Sophocles	193	1400
Aristotle	49	1400
Tacitus	20	1000
Caesar	10	1000
Aristophanes	10	1200
Euripides	9	1300
Herodotus	8	1300
Pliny	7	750
Plato	7	1200

2. One technical word you need to know is the word *canon*. It comes from the Greek word *kanōn* meaning rule or standard.
3. The Old Testament Canon

The Old Testament is divided into 3 general categories

- The Law
 - The Prophets
 - The Writings
- The Canon of Scripture was at first, gradual and not created by ecclesiastical authority. The beginning was made by Moses (see Ex 17:14, Ex 20:1-17).
 - In David's time the office of recorder was established, and detailed records were kept by all the kings of Israel.
 - The final collection of writings and the Canon of the Old Testament was completed during the time of Ezra, Nehemiah (Ezra 7:6, 8:1-8, 2 Mac. 2:13).
 - The Old Testament Canon of Scripture was completed by the time of the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, accepted books into Greek (294 - 289 B.C.).
 - After the destruction of Jerusalem 70 A.D., the Sanhedrin moved to Tiberius and later to Jamma, a small town 13 miles south of Joppa where, in 90 A.D. the Canon

of the Old Testament was again decided upon the apocryphal books (most of which were written the last 3 centuries B.C.) being rejected from the Jewish Canon of Scripture. This list of Old Testament books called the Palestinian Canon has been universally accepted by the Protestant Church (Only the order is different)

- Many New Testament scriptures prove that the present Canon of Scripture of the Old Testament was accepted in the days of Christ and the apostles (Matthew 21:42, 22:29, 23:33, Luke 11:51, 24:27-32, 44, John 5:39, 10:35, 2 Timothy 3:15-17).
- Not once is there a reference to a controversy over the Old Testament Canon. It was a settled subject at that time and should have never been brought up again by any Church in this age.

4. The New Testament Canon

- A collection of 27 books which were gradually accepted by the church.
- Basic three stages of development
 - Apostles to 170 AD – Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin Martyr
 - 170-220 AD – Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian
 - 3rd – 4th centuries – Origen, Jerome, Augustine, Athanasius
- The Council of Carthage in 397 secured the 27 books of the New Testament that we have today. Jerome and Augustine are key figures.
- The Latin Vulgate is published (390-405, Jerome's Latin Bible).
- Though certain books took longer to be recognized by the church universal, the Gospels, Acts, the Pauline Epistles, 1 Peter and 1 John were recognized from the beginning.

5. Interpretation and Meaning

1. Authorial Intent
2. Reader Response
3. Application – what we do with the meaning