

## How Did We Get the Holy Bible (Student Copy)

The sixty-six books were written over fifteen hundred years and collected into what we call the Bible. This is called the "*canon*," a word meaning "*collection*." To be part of the Bible, a book had to be inspired by God. From a practical standpoint, a primary basis for deciding whether a book was inspired was the author's relationship with God. For example, was he a genuine prophet speaking God's words? Was the message of the book consistent with earlier revelations from God?

No one questioned Moses' testimony, ***John 9:29 (KJV 1900) — 29 We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is,*** so the first five books of the Old Testament were accepted as Scripture first. Israel called these the Torah, and they became the basis of the Jewish faith. While this word is often called "*the Law*," its full definition is "*set of instructions*."

Through the centuries, Jewish scholars acknowledged as Scripture seventeen prophetic books, twelve books of history, and five books of poetry and wisdom. The entire Old Testament was identified by Jewish scholars as holy scriptures three hundred years before Christ was born. Jesus quoted from this Scripture, calling them the Law and the Prophets. He considered them to be the Word of God.

The four Gospels in the New Testament were all written in Greek in the first century and were circulated to early churches. Acts and some of the many letters of Paul were accepted as Scripture without great discussion. Only a few books at the end of the New Testament were still in question by the end of the second century. But there were many counterfeit writings about Jesus circulating, some falsely claiming to have been written by the apostles. These were rejected by the church as "*fictitious history*." When the synods of Hippo in AD 393 and of Carthage in AD 397 (both of which were in Africa) identified the books of the New Testament as we now know them, they were merely confirming what the church had already determined—by the witness of the Holy Spirit—were New Testament Scripture. These books were already used in teaching and worship. - *Africa Study Bible (Oasis International Ltd, 2016), 1800.*

The biblical collection emerged through a gradual, Spirit-guided process spanning centuries. The sixty-six books comprising the Bible were written across fifteen hundred years before being gathered into a unified collection<sup>1</sup>, a process shaped by specific criteria for what qualified as Scripture.

For a text to enter the canon—the word meaning “*collection*”—it had to demonstrate divine inspiration, which was assessed primarily through the author’s relationship with God<sup>1</sup>. Moses’ testimony faced no opposition, so the Torah (the first five books) achieved acceptance earliest and became foundational to Jewish faith<sup>1</sup>. Jewish scholars eventually recognized seventeen prophetic books, twelve historical works, and five wisdom texts as Scripture, completing the Old Testament canon three centuries before Christ’s birth<sup>1</sup>.

The New Testament followed a similar trajectory. The four Gospels, written in Greek during the first century and distributed among early churches, gained acceptance alongside Acts and Paul’s letters with minimal resistance<sup>1</sup>. However, counterfeit writings falsely attributed to apostles circulated during this period, prompting the church to distinguish authentic texts from fraudulent ones. The synods of Hippo (AD 393) and Carthage (AD 397) formally identified the New Testament books we recognize today, though they were essentially ratifying decisions the church had already made through the Holy Spirit’s witness<sup>1</sup>.

Rather than being manufactured through formal decree, these texts were received by God’s people as Scripture over centuries of inspired composition<sup>2</sup>. The process wasn’t arbitrary—it reflected both theological conviction about divine authorship and practical experience of these texts’ spiritual authority in teaching and worship. This organic development explains why the Bible has circulated in multiple forms across history, resulting in Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox versions<sup>3</sup>.

1 Africa Study Bible (Oasis International Ltd, 2016), 1800.

2 Got Questions Ministries, *Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered* (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2014–2021).

3 Andrew E. Arterbury, W. H. Bellinger Jr., and Derek S. Dodson, *Engaging the Christian Scriptures: An Introduction to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 3.

## **The Bible Says It Is God's Word**

Most important is what the Bible claims for itself.

**It is God's Word.** More than 3,800 times the Old Testament writers say they are transmitting the words of God: *Jeremiah 1:9 (KJV 1900) — 9 Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.*

**It was written by eyewitnesses.** *"We were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his majestic splendour with our own eyes" (2 Peter 1:16).*

**It helps readers live godly lives.** *2 Timothy 3:16 (KJV 1900) — 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:* It will never disappear. *Matthew 24:35 (KJV 1900) — 35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*

**It is powerful.** *Hebrews 4:12 (KJV 1900) — 12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

The best evidence showing the power of the Bible is that reading it has changed the lives of millions of people around the world and throughout history. When he read in *Romans 1:17 (KJV 1900) — 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith;* Martin Luther exclaimed, *"I felt as if I were entirely born again and had entered paradise itself through the gates that had been flung open!"*

- Africa Study Bible (Oasis International Ltd, 2016), 1801.

**Questions We Will Answer During This Study: (there will some redundancy in answering these questions)**

- 1. What was the process of deciding on the New Testament canon?**
- 2. What was the process of deciding on the Old Testament canon?**
- 3. Where did the Bible come from? How did we get the Bible?**
- 4. Where did the Old Testament come from?**
- 5. Where did the New Testament come from?**
- 6. Where did my Bible come from?**