



The Bible

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The Bible consists of two distinct “testaments,” the Old and the New, the former consisting of 39 separate “books,” and the latter consisting of 27. (There are also twelve “Apocryphal” or disputed books which are sometimes included in the Old Testament canon; these twelve volumes are accepted as authentic by Catholic theologians but not by Jewish or Protestant theologians.)

The Old Testament may be segmented into three divisions: the Law (Torah), which includes the writings of Moses; the Prophets, which contains both history and prophecy; and the Writings, which contain the wisdom and literature of ancient Israel, including the Psalms, the Book of Job, and the Proverbs of Solomon.

The Old Testament is essentially the story of God’s mighty acts in history and his holy character, particularly: the creation of the world (Genesis); his covenant with a special people, the children of Israel (Exodus) who are called to be his witnesses; his passion for justice and righteousness in the earth (the Prophets); and his desire for love and mercy in the nation of Israel and in the world at large (the Proverbs and the Psalms).

The New Testament, revered by Christians--who read it as a fulfillment of and companion volume to the Old Testament--consists of 27 separate books, including four “gospels” (narratives about the life of Jesus Christ), one historical treatise (the Acts of the Apostles), letters written by early Christian leaders to their converts in various locations in Europe and Asia.

The New Testament is essentially the story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, whom Christians regard as the unique Son of God and the fulfillment of Jewish prophecies about a coming Messiah. The New Testament also tells the story of the early Christian church and its battle for survival in a hostile environment.

The Bible has represented a reservoir of hope, courage, and inspiration for many centuries of readers, religious and nonreligious, and continues to be a source of light to many seeking a sense of purpose, meaning, and value in their lives.

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