

THE CATHOLIC BIBLE

WHAT IS THE CANON OF THE CATHOLIC BIBLE?

The canon or official list of books of the Catholic Bible is comprised of 72 books (73 if Lamentations is separate from Jeremiah). The Old Testament has 45 (or 46) books and the New Testament has 27.

The Old Testament was written *before* the time of Christ and is basically the Jewish Bible.

The first five books which we call the ***Pentateuch*** is central to the Jewish faith and is known to the Jews as the ***Torah*** in Hebrew, or the Law.

The Old Testament is the Bible that Jesus knew and quoted in his teachings.

The New Testament books were written *after* the time of Christ.

The Gospels (or “good news”), which tell us very little about most of his life, are “glimpses” into the life of Christ - in particular the last three years of his life known as “The Ministry Years.” The Gospels, along with the Acts of the Apostles, reveal to us the message, mission and works of Jesus.

THE PENTATEUCH

Genesis.....Gn
Exodus.....Ex
Leviticus.....Lv
Numbers.....Nm
Deuteronomy.....Dt

Joshua.....Jos
Judges.....Jgs
Ruth.....Ru

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

1 Samuel.....1 Sm
2 Samuel.....2 Sm
1 Kings.....1 Kgs
2 Kings.....2 Kgs
1 Chronicles.....1 Chr
2 Chronicles.....2 Chr

THE GOSPELS

Matthew.....Mt
Mark.....Mk
Luke.....Lk
John.....Jn

Acts of the Apostles.....Acts

THE NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

Romans.....Rom
1 Corinthians.....1 Cor
2 Corinthians.....2 Cor

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Ezra.....Ezr
Nehemiah.....Neh
Tobit.....Tb
Judith.....Jdt
Esther.....Est
1 Maccabees.....1 Mc
2 Maccabees.....2 Mc

THE WISDOM BOOKS

Job.....Jb
Psalms.....Ps
Proverbs.....Prv
Ecclesiastes.....Eccl
Songs.....Sg
Wisdom.....Wis
Sirach.....Sir

THE PROPHETIC BOOKS

Isaiah.....Is
Jeremiah.....Jer
Lamentations.....Lam
Baruch.....Bar
Ezekiel.....Ez
Daniel.....Dn
Hosea.....Hos
Joel.....Jl
Amos.....Am
Obadiah.....Ob
Jonah.....Jon
Micah.....Mi
Nahum.....Na
Habakkuk.....Hb
Zephaniah.....Zep
Haggai.....Hg
Zechariah.....Zec
Malachi.....Mal

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Galatians.....Gal
Ephesians.....Eph
Philippians.....Phil
Colossians.....Col
1 Thessalonians.....1 Thes
2 Thessalonians.....2 Thes
1 Timothy.....1 Tm
2 Timothy.....2 Tm
Titus.....Ti
Philemon.....Phlm
Hebrews.....Heb

THE CATHOLIC LETTERS

James.....Jas
1 Peter.....1 Pt
2 Peter.....2 Pt
1 John.....1 Jn
2 John.....2 Jn
3 John.....3 Jn
Jude.....Jude
Revelation.....Rev

HOW ARE THE CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT BIBLES DIFFERENT?

The differences between the Catholic and Protestant bibles are found in the Old Testament. The following seven books (highlighted above) are called the ***deuterocanonical*** books and are not included in the canon of the Protestant bible:

Tobit	Wisdom
Judith	Sirach
1 & 2 Maccabees	Baruch

(also parts of Esther and Daniel which are not ***deuterocanonical***)

The New Testament is identical in the Catholic and Protestant bibles.

WHY ARE THE CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT BIBLES DIFFERENT?

The Old Testament (previously the Jewish Bible) is different for Catholics and Protestants due to the elimination of some books that took place in the several centuries before the time of Christ.

In the first centuries before Christ the Jews were divided into two groups – the Palestinian Jews who spoke Hebrew and the large number of Jews scattered throughout the Roman Empire who spoke Greek (a consequence of the conquest of Alexander the Great of Greece).

At this time, the Palestinian Jews re-examined and eliminated some of the books of the existing collection – saying they were not in harmony with the Law of Moses and of doubtful inspiration. The arbitrary criteria used to determine which books to include in the Jewish canon were: 1) they had to be in harmony with the **Pentateuch (Torah or Law)**; 2) they had to be written before the time of Ezra; 3) they had to be written in Hebrew; and 4) they had to have been written in Palestine.

As a consequence, the Palestinian Jews eliminated the books of Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, 1 and 2 Maccabees, and parts of Esther and Daniel from their canon.

The Catholic Bible – Old Testament = “Alexandrine” Jewish Canon

Catholics recognize the Jewish canon which includes the **deuterocanonical** books. From the earliest times, the Christian Church recognized the Jewish canon of the Greek-Roman tradition, or Alexandrine canon, as being the true Bible. Jesus himself quoted from this Bible and not until the Reformation was this canon seriously challenged.

The Protestant Bible – Old Testament = “Palestinian” Jewish Canon

Protestants recognize the Jewish canon which does not include the **deuterocanonical** books. This change from the Christian tradition of the Old Testament canon took place at the time of the Reformation in the 1500's.

HOW DID THE CATHOLIC CHURCH DEFINE THE CANON?

The Catholic Tradition of inspired books has remained unchanged since the earliest times of Christianity.

The Catholic Church holds fast to its tradition in written form as it is found in the “Bible” which contains the principle truths of faith taught to the Apostles by Christ. It firmly believes as stated by the Vatican Council that “The Church holds those books as sacred and canonical...because having been written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their Author.”

In the early centuries of the Church, there was some confusion and doubt as to which books were inspired and biblical, and which were not. The first time the Church determined which books were inspired was at the Council of Hippo in A.D. 393. The Council of Trent, in 1546, formally canonized all the traditional books which now make up the Catholic Bible.

A WORD ABOUT THE APOCRYPHA

In order to avoid any miscommunication in Catholic-Protestant dialogue, we must understand that the term “**Apocrypha**” is used differently by Protestants and Catholics.

Protestants: When Protestants use the term **Apocrypha** they are referring to the seven **deuterocanonical** books of the Bible that are included in the Catholic Bible but which are not in the Protestant bibles.

Catholics: When Catholics use the term **Apocrypha** they are NOT referring to the **deuterocanonical** books. They are referring to the collection of books which are not included in the Catholic Bible canon and which were rejected by the Council of Hippo as being non-biblical. Some of the stories in these books have slightly heretical tendencies.