

# The Bible & the Lectionary



- The Bible is the inspired Word of God written in human words by human hands
- Bible is a "Library" -- a collection of 73 Books (46 Old Testament, 27 New Testament)
- The main message of the Bible: GOD SAVES (both Old and New Testament)



## Where did the Old Testament come from?

Oral Tradition → Written down over a 1000 year period → Edited, re-edited, remembered, rewritten

Our Old Testament includes all the 39 books that are in the Jewish Bible (TANAK) originally written in Hebrew, and a few extra books written by Greek speaking Jews as well. It tells the story of God's relationship with humans, particularly how God worked through the people of Israel, the people of the Covenant, to bring about salvation. The writers used many different types of writing (literary genres): folktales, myths, poetry/song, historical records, family legends, parables, etc. to express basic Truths.

## Where did the New Testament come from?

Written over a 50 year period (circa 50 - 100 A.D.) by 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians.

Developed in 3 stages:

- (1) 4 B.C. – 30 A.D. People experienced Jesus through His ministry, death, and resurrection.
- (2) 30 A.D. – 70 A.D. Jesus' followers told and re-told the story ("Apostolic Witness").  
*Some of Paul's letters to early Christian communities were written during this time.*
- (3) 70 A.D. – 100 A.D. The Gospels, Acts, Revelation, and some of the Letters were written.

***The New Testament was originally written in Greek*** (possibly a few writings in Aramaic). Like the Old Testament, the New Testament also uses a variety of writing styles— historical records, parables, songs, letters, prophetic and apocalyptic writings, and proclamation ( *Gospel* means *GOOD NEWS*).



The New Testament has 27 books: 4 Gospels, Acts, 21 Letters (Epistles), Book of Revelation.

## How to Find Passages in the Bible

The earliest copies of the Bible had *no punctuation* and *no chapter divisions*. Thankfully, punctuation marks were inserted (around 600 A.D.), and in 1226, Stephen Langdon divided the books of the Bible into chapters for easier reference. Around 300 years later, chapters were divided into verses.

**Exodus 3:1-10** means chapter 3, verses 1-10, the call of Moses by God

**2 Cor. 13** means the 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter of Paul to the Corinthians, **verse 13**, a familiar blessing.

## How has the Bible been used in worship in the past, and how do we use it today?

In Jesus' time, the TANAK was read out loud and studied in synagogues. First would be a passage from the Torah, then discussion of it. Then a song/chant from the Book of Psalms, and occasionally a reading from one of the prophets. See Luke 4: 14- 21, which tells of Jesus standing up to read from the scroll of Isaiah at the lectern in the synagogue. He then gave a homily, opening up the meaning to those there, and immediately got in trouble!

Early Christian Church: Jesus' first disciples were Jewish, and they modeled early Christian worship services on the synagogue services. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> -3rd centuries, the typical Christian worship gathering on Sunday included a passage from the TANAK (Old Testament), followed by a psalm, and then one of the letters, for ex. from St. Paul. Finally, there would be a reading from one of the Gospels—a PROCLAMATION of faith in Jesus Christ-- which is why they would stand up-- Sound familiar? Gospels were proclaimed in Greek, then in Latin when it became the more common language.

1550's-1600's Attempts at unity, standardization (and reactions to Protestant Reformation): a Roman Missal, including Sunday readings for the year, became the text for Mass.



1960's-1970's The Second Vatican Council updated our Masses by looking back at the past-- restoring many of the earlier traditions, including using a common language at Mass, and re-emphasizing the importance of *both* the Old and New Testaments, and how the New Testament builds on the Old Testament.

**New Lectionary**, with a three year cycle for Sundays (3x as many Scripture readings), a lot more Old Testament.

Cycle A: we mostly hear the Gospel of Matthew

Cycle B: we mostly hear the Gospel of Mark

Cycle C: we mostly hear the Gospel of Luke

(every year, we hear different parts of the Gospel of John, especially on holy days).



In the Sunday Mass readings, there is usually a common message or theme in the First Reading, the Psalm, and the Gospel.

20<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> Century: There has been a renewed interest in Catholic Biblical Studies, understanding the historical contexts, literary styles, symbolism.

May your children come to know and love God through the Old Testament and through the New Testament Gospel stories, and may the Holy Spirit continue to work through you to spread God's Word!

*“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Cor. 13)*