

History of the Bible

90 AD - Hebrew Canon Established By This Date

After the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, the Jews began to associate Christianity with the Roman threat. Christians were expelled from the synagogues, and a strict separation between Jews and Christians began to develop. The rabbis met in Jamnia to solidify the canon, and under the leadership of Johanan ben Zakkai they selected twenty-four books to be included in the **Palestinian Hebrew Scriptural canon**. None of the Apocryphal books were seriously considered for inclusion. The only two books that were hotly debated were Song of Solomon and Ecclesiasties, but they were finally included. The Palestinian canon is the accepted Jewish canon to this day. The canon is also equivalent to the **Protestant Old Testament**, though Protestants divide the books further into thirty-nine: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy (the Pentateuch); Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther (the Histories); Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Songs (Wisdom Literature); Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micha, Nahum, Habbakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi (Prophets).

200 AD

Tertullian was the first to use the title "New Testament" to describe the commonly accepted Christian scriptures.

367 AD - Earliest New Testament List

The earliest surviving list of books exactly matching the modern New Testament Canon dates from 367 AD and comes from a festal letter to the churches written by Athanasius of Alexandria. Shortly after this letter, the theologians Jerome and Augustine defined the canon of 27 books.

397 AD - New Testament Canon Officially Established

In A.D. 393, the **Synod of Hippo** officially listed the 27 books of the New Testament, which had already been widely accepted in practice. This ruling was reconfirmed four years later by the **Synod of Carthage** in 397 A.D., thus putting an end to debates about the canon. Up to this point, many books had been questioned. Revelation and Hebrews, in particular, were strongly disputed by many Christians, as were James, 2 Peter, and 2 and 3 John. These books were eventually included in the

canon but other disputed books, considered inspired by some, were not: Shepherd of Hermas, 1 and 2 Clement, and the Didache. The books selected at the Council of Carthage have been accepted as the New Testament ever since, by both Protestants and Catholics. These books include: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Revelation. (This is the order in which these books are arranged in modern Bibles--they were not always placed in this order.) The disputes are now for all practical purposes at an end, though individuals may continue to question; Martin Luther, after all, questioned whether Revelation should be included.

405 AD - Vulgate

Jerome completed his Latin translation of the Bible, known as *The Vulgate*, at about this time. He worked with the Septuagint, older Latin translations, and the old Hebrew texts. In doing so, he noticed that some of the works contained in the Septuagint and older Latin translation were not in the Hebrew canon. These books he described as "the crazy wanderings" of a man who has lost his senses. He gave these books the label "Apocrypha," which means "hidden." Nevertheless, they continued to be popular among Christians.