

The Online Catechism

Stage Two:

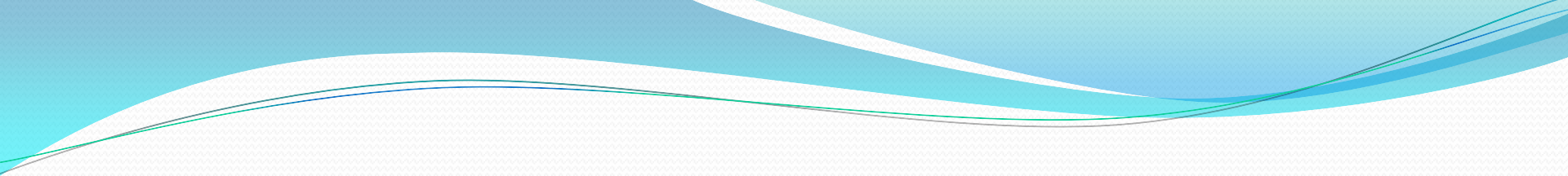
The Biblical Story

in Six Acts




Introduction to the Bible (5 slides)

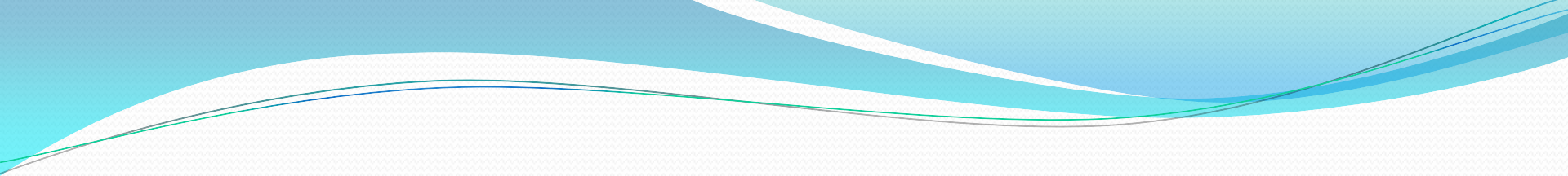
- The Bible, in its Protestant version, comprises 66 ‘books’, and is divided into two parts—the Old Testament and the New Testament. These various books were written by many authors over a period of more than 1000 years.
- The Old Testament (or Hebrew Scriptures) in its Protestant version has 39 books. Protestants accept into their Old Testament only the books included in the Jewish scriptures (*Tenach*), whereas Roman Catholic and Orthodox Bibles include additional ancient Jewish writings, collectively called the Apocrypha. The Old Testament books were originally written in Hebrew, though in the first century BC a group of rabbis translated them into Greek, as most Jews at that time no longer understood Hebrew but understood Greek because it was the *lingua franca* of the Mediterranean world in that era.



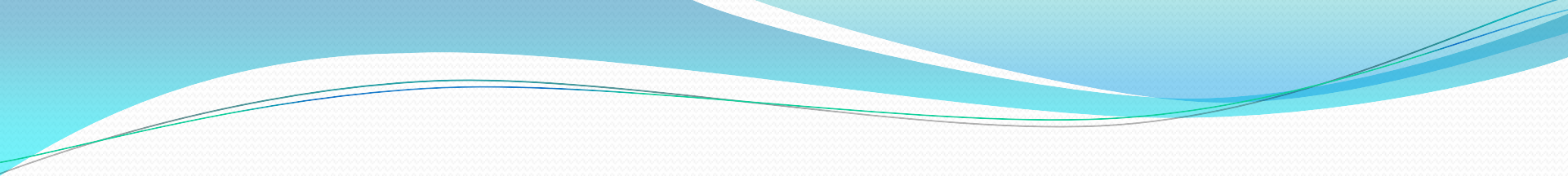
The New Testament contains 27 books, including four Gospels, the Book of Acts, numerous Epistles (letters written either to individuals or to church communities) and the Book of Revelation. During the first couple centuries after Jesus' resurrection, many writings about the life and teaching of Jesus were made and circulated among the churches of the Mediterranean world. These writings could be very divergent in their teachings, and it became clear that there needed to be some discernment as to which writings should be considered most historically and spiritually trustworthy and authoritative for purposes of preaching and teaching the faith. So over a period of a couple centuries church leaders identified which of these many writings seemed most apostolic (written by the apostles or by those close to them), and therefore most genuine to Jesus' life and teaching. These were the texts eventually accepted into the New Testament.



Periodically one hears in the media today about some book or Gospel that was kept out of the New Testament by conspiratorial church leaders back in this early period. Nothing sells like a good conspiracy theory! Nonetheless, the many writings that were not accepted into the New Testament were rejected not out of a sense of ‘conspiracy’ but simply because they were felt not to be genuinely or adequately apostolic. Particularly rejected from the New Testament were books written in the Gnostic tradition, which held to claims of secret knowledge and a denial of the goodness of creation. Early church leaders believed that knowledge of Jesus and the Gospel is to be public, and that God’s creation is not evil but good—a judgment with which all churches today agree. All churches today also agree on the same 27 books of the New Testament.



There are many different genres or types of writing in the Bible—poetry, history, prophecy, apocalyptic, lament, wisdom, gospel, and letters, among others. Some people suggest that all of the Bible is to be read literally, while others suggest that all of the Bible is to be read figuratively (not literally). With the Bible's diversity of genres, however, such black-and-white approaches simply lead us into misunderstanding. A more biblical perspective is that some parts of scripture are to be read literally and some parts figuratively—and part of Christian maturity is learning to discern which texts are to be read in which way. As well, it is an ancient principle that we interpret the Old Testament through the lens or teachings of the New Testament.



It is easy to get so absorbed in particular parts of scripture that we lose sight of the whole, for the Bible as a whole is best understood as an overarching story of God's work from creation to God's work of final redemption and new creation. Here in Stage 2 of the catechism we will read 50 important passages of scripture, plus ten psalms, to give us a sense of the Bible as a story or drama in six acts. (You will need to use your own Bible for these readings. If you need help getting a Bible, please ask your Pastor.)

50 Important Readings

Act 1: Creation

1. The Creation: Genesis 1:1-2:3

Act 2: The Fall and Human Sinfulness

1. The Fall of Adam and Eve: Genesis 3
2. Noah, the flood, and the ark: Genesis 6-9:17
3. Trying to be like God (The tower of Babel): Genesis 11:1-9

Act 3: Israel (The people of God)

1. God's call to, and covenant with, Abraham: Genesis 12:1-9, 15:1-21
2. Jacob and Esau: Genesis 27
3. Moses and the Hebrews: Exodus 1-2
4. The Passover and the Exodus: Exodus 12
5. God's covenant with the Hebrews (including the Ten Commandments):
Exodus 20
6. Fear the Lord, protect the vulnerable: Deuteronomy 10:12-22
7. The Hebrews enter the promised land: Joshua 1
8. The story of Ruth: Ruth 1-4
9. David becomes king, and early victories: 2 Samuel 5
10. David, Bathsheba, Nathan and the birth of Solomon: 2 Samuel 11-12
11. Israel sent into exile: 2 Kings 17:1-23
12. Queen Esther saves her people: Esther 2-8
13. Isaiah's commissioning: Isaiah 6
14. Messiah's birth prophesied: Isaiah 9:1-7, Isaiah 53
15. Israel has abandoned God's ways, Daniel seeks forgiveness: Daniel 9:1-19
16. God's call to fairness and justice: Amos 5:4-24

Act 4: Jesus—God with us

1. In the beginning was the Word: John 1:1-18
2. The birth of Jesus: Luke 1-2:20
3. The temptation of Jesus: Luke 4:1-13
4. Jesus calls the disciples: Luke 5:1-11, 27-31
5. The sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5-7
6. Jesus announces his ministry: Luke 4:14-30
7. Jesus' teaching on prayer: Luke 11:1-13
8. Three parables reflecting God's heart: Luke 15
9. New birth: John 3:1-21
10. Two miracles and Jesus the bread of life: John 6:1-34
11. The Lord's supper: Luke 22:26-56
12. The betrayal and death of Jesus: Luke 22-23
13. The resurrection, appearances, and ascension of Jesus:
Luke 24

● **Act 5: The Church (The new people of God)**

1. The Great Commission: Matthew 28:16-20
2. The coming of the Holy Spirit: Acts 2:1-21
3. The two disciples on the way to Emmaus: Luke 24:13-35
4. Repent and be baptized: Acts 2:22-47
5. Paul's conversion: Acts 9:1-31
6. Paul's missionary activity in Greece: Acts 17
7. Paul's testimony before Agrippa: Acts 25:23-26:32
8. No one is righteous, only through faith: Romans 3:9-26
9. Life through the Spirit: Romans 8
10. Spiritual gifts: 1 Corinthians 12
11. What love is: 1 Corinthians 13
12. Freedom and the fruit of the Holy Spirit: Galatians 5:13-26
13. Imitating Christ: Philippians 2:1-11
14. Faith in action: James 2:14-26

Act 6: The Age to Come (New Creation)

1. The resurrection of the dead: 1 Corinthians 15
2. The return of Christ: 2 Peter 3:3-14
3. The new heaven and new earth: Revelation 21-22

10 Psalms

1. Delight in the law of the Lord: Psalm 1
2. A prayer of lament: Psalm 22
3. The Lord is my shepherd: Psalm 23
4. Deliver me from my enemies: Psalm 59
5. Trust in God: Psalm 62
6. In time of distress: Psalm 77
7. A prayer of thanksgiving: Psalm 100
8. Praise God for creation: Psalm 104
9. Praise God for my existence: Psalm 139
10. Let everything that has breath...: Psalm 150