

A PRAYER BEFORE READING THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

Illumine my heart, O Master who loves humankind, with the pure light of Your divine knowledge. Open the eyes of my mind to the understanding of the Gospel. Instill in me also a sense of awe for Your blessed commandments so that, laying aside all earthly desires, I may lead a spiritual way of life, both considering and doing all things that are well-pleasing to You. For You are the enlightenment of my soul and body, O Christ God, and unto You I offer glory, together with Your Father, who is without beginning, and Your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.



The Bible is the most remarkable book ever written. Some forty individuals, spanning about 1500 years and representing a variety of cultures, historical periods, and occupations, are credited with its contents. They wrote in three languages—Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. Yet the Bible is a well-organized unity with one great theme and central figure, Jesus Christ. All of this would be impossible if it weren't for the fact that the Bible ultimately had one divine Author—God—who inspired its human authors (2 Tim 3:16).

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
PLEASE CONTACT:**

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE



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THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament is an account of God's early agreement or testament with His People prior to the coming of Jesus Christ.

The first five books of the Old Testament are called the *Pentateuch*, or the "five writings." They deal with salvation history from creation through the entrance of the Chosen People into the Promised Land. The next twelve books are historical, having been written about 1100-600 B.C. They describe God's ongoing dealings with His Chosen People. The remainder of the Old Testament is composed of poetical books, as well as the writings of the major and minor prophets.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament—God's present agreement with His People—reveals Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the One who comes to save humankind from sin and death. In it we find the accounts of Jesus' life and sayings, instructions in Christian living, and God's plan for the future. The first five books of the New Testament are historical.

- ✧ **The Gospel of Saint Matthew** records the life of Jesus written especially for the Jews. It reveals Jesus Christ as their long-awaited Savior and King.
- ✧ **The Gospel of Saint Mark** describes Jesus Christ as the obedient Servant of God.

- ✧ **The Gospel of Saint Luke** emphasizes Jesus Christ as human and divine. Saint Luke's Gospel is considered to be filled with many unique insights into the person of Jesus.
- ✧ **The Gospel of Saint John** reveals Jesus as the Son of God, the eternal and divine Word of the Father.
- ✧ **The Acts of the Apostles** relates the history of the early Church following the Ascension of Jesus Christ.

The remaining books of the New Testament, consisting of letters or epistles written by the apostles to the early Christian communities, deal with virtually every aspect of Christian faith and life.

The last book of the New Testament, the **Book of Revelation**, is a book of prophecy. It speaks in highly symbolic language of the life of Jesus Christ's eternal Kingdom and the blessings which await those who remain faithful to God.

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND REFLECTION

During the days ahead, learn more about the meaning and purpose of Scripture by looking up the answers to the following questions in the designated passages:

- ✧ **How did God give us His written word?**
2 Peter 1:20, 21
- ✧ **Of what can we be sure concerning the Scriptures?**
Proverbs 30:5
Psalm 111:7, 8/110:7, 8
1 Peter 1:24-25
- ✧ **What can the scriptures give us?**
Psalm 119:42/118:42
Psalm 119:105/118:105
Psalm 119:165/118:165
Jeremiah 15:16
John 15:3
- ✧ **Who is the central figure of all Scripture?**
Luke 24:25-27
John 5:39
- ✧ **What has God given us?**
2 Peter 1:3, 4