

BOOKS 40 TO 66 · 27 BOOKS · WRITTEN IN GREEK

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The promise kept

BOOKS	27 books: 4 Gospels, 1 book of history, 21 letters and 1 book of prophecy.
WRITTEN	About AD 45 to 95, by apostles of Jesus and their close companions.
LANGUAGE	Koine Greek, the everyday Greek spoken all over the Roman Empire.
ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS	More than 5,800 Greek manuscripts, plus thousands of early copies in Latin, Syriac and Coptic. No other ancient book comes close.
EARLIEST MANUSCRIPT	Papyrus 52, a scrap of John 18, usually dated about AD 125 to 175.
THE LIST OF 27	The churches used these books from the start. In AD 367 Athanasius, a bishop in Egypt, listed the same 27 books we have today.

What Does Testament Mean

Testament is an old word for covenant, a binding promise. The Old Testament is the story of God's covenant with Israel. The New Testament is the new covenant Jeremiah promised in Jeremiah 31:31, sealed by the blood of Jesus. On the night before He died, Jesus lifted the cup and said, This cup is the new covenant in My blood.

Why Four Gospels

Each Gospel writer had a different audience. Matthew wrote for Jewish readers and shows Jesus as the promised King. Mark wrote fast and short, likely for Romans, and shows Jesus as the Servant who acts. Luke, a doctor, wrote a careful history for a Greek reader and shows Jesus as the Savior of everyone. John wrote last and shows Jesus as God in the flesh. Four witnesses, one Jesus. In court, four matching witnesses who each add their own details are more believable than four who repeat the same script.

The Three Oldest Bibles

The next three pages show the three oldest Bibles that still hold most of the New Testament, oldest first: Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Alexandrinus. Older pieces of single books survive on papyrus, like Papyrus 52, but these three held the whole Bible in one book, and they are the copies scholars check first.

400 Quiet Years

Between Malachi and Matthew, about 400 years pass with no new prophet. A lot happens. The Persians hand the world to Alexander the Great, and Greek becomes the language of everything. The Jews translate their Scriptures into Greek. The Maccabees win a war for the temple, which is where Hanukkah comes from. Then Rome takes over in 63 BC. By the time Jesus is born, the roads are Roman, the language is Greek, and the people are waiting for the Messiah. The stage is set.

How It Is Organized

THE GOSPELS	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. Four accounts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, built on eyewitness testimony.
HISTORY	Acts. How the church spread from Jerusalem to Rome.

PAUL'S LETTERS

Romans to Philemon. 13 letters from Paul to churches and friends.

GENERAL LETTERS

Hebrews to Jude. 8 letters from other leaders, including Peter, James and John.

PROPHECY

Revelation. How the story ends: Jesus wins.

Why We Say Yahweh

God told Moses His personal name in Exodus 3:15. In Hebrew it is spelled YHWH, and it shows up about 6,800 times in the Old Testament. Out of respect, Jewish readers stopped saying it out loud and said Lord instead, so most English Bibles print LORD in capital letters. The Owner's Manual puts His name back. Where you see Yahweh, the Hebrew says YHWH. Where you see Lord, the Hebrew usually says Adonai, which means master. Where you see God, the Hebrew usually says Elohim, the mighty Creator.

Jesus Is Yeshua

Jesus is the English form of the Hebrew name Yeshua. It is the same name as Joshua, the man who led Israel into the promised land. The name means Yahweh saves. That is why the angel says in Matthew 1:21, You are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.

Lord in the New Testament

The New Testament was written in Greek. God is Theos and Lord is Kyrios. When Jesus quotes the Old Testament, the Hebrew behind Lord is often YHWH, but the Greek says Lord, so this Bible keeps Lord in the New Testament. When you see Lord in a quote from the Old Testament, you can look up the verse and find Yahweh there.

How This Bible Marks the New Testament

QUOTES. When a New Testament writer quotes the Old Testament, the quoted words are printed in italics. The Old Testament verse is in italics too, so you can see both ends. When a writer only points back to an Old Testament verse without quoting it, you get a note but no italics.

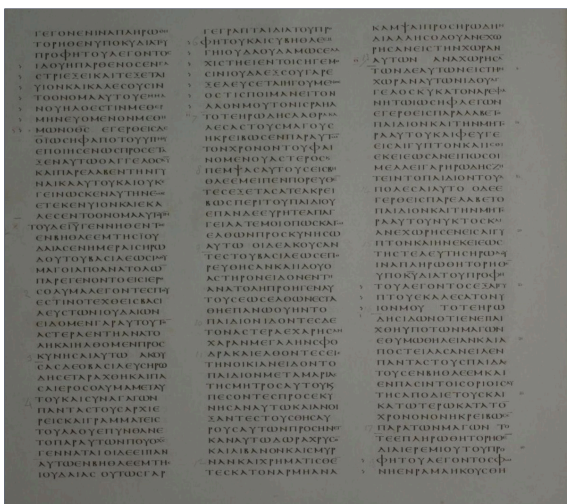
FULFILLED. When a verse fulfills a prophecy, the note at the bottom of the column says FULFILLS and points back to the prophecy.

JESUS SPEAKING. The words of Jesus are printed in red, and so are the words of God the Father. Only the words they actually said are red.

THE FAMILY LINE. Names in the bloodline of Jesus are underlined in red in the family trees in Matthew 1 and Luke 3.

THE THREE OLDEST BIBLES · 1 OF 3 · FIELD NOTES · CONFIDENCE: HIGH

CODEX VATICANUS



Codex Vaticanus, Matthew 1:22 to 2:18, three columns on a page. Public domain.

WHAT IT IS

A handwritten Bible in Greek, and probably the oldest Bible in the world that still has most of its pages. Codex means a book with pages instead of a scroll. The words are written in three columns on each page, and in two columns in the poetry books like Psalms and Job.

HOW OLD IT IS

It was copied about AD 300 to 350, and many scholars narrow that to about 300 to 325. That makes it a little older than Codex Sinaiticus, or about the same age. Its text of Luke and John matches Papyrus 75, a copy usually dated about AD 175 to 225, almost word for word. So those Gospels were copied with great care.

WHERE IT IS TODAY

In the Vatican Library in Rome, where it is called Vat. gr. 1209. That is where the name Vaticanus comes from. 759 leaves survive out of about 830. Every page is free to view at digi.vatlib.it.

HOW IT GOT THERE

Nobody knows where it was made. It was probably in the library's first catalogue in 1475, and it is certainly listed in 1481. Napoleon's armies carried it off to Paris after a treaty in 1797, and it came home to Rome in 1815.

WHAT IS IN IT

The Old Testament in Greek, plus Baruch, the Letter of Jeremiah, Judith, Tobit, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach and 1 Esdras. It has no 1 to 4 Maccabees and no Prayer of Manasseh. In the New Testament it has the four Gospels, then Acts, then the letters of James to Jude, then Paul's letters, with Hebrews right after 2 Thessalonians.

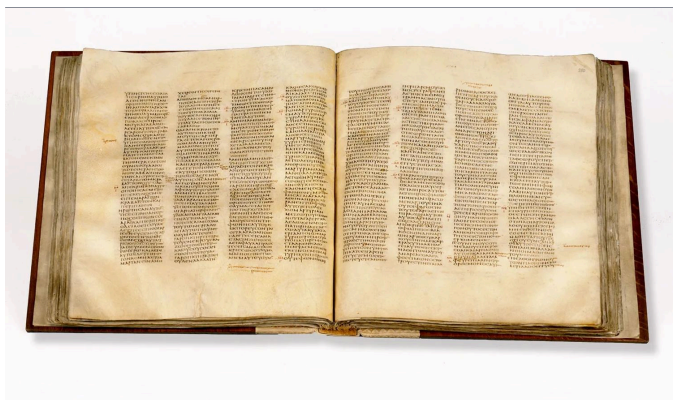
WHAT IS NOT IN IT

The first pages are gone, so Genesis starts at 46:28. A few verses of 2 Samuel 2 and Psalm 106:27 to 138:6 are lost too. At the other end it stops in the middle of a word in Hebrews 9:14. The rest of Hebrews, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon and Revelation are lost. In the 1400s someone added the end of Hebrews and Revelation in a much newer hand, but that part is a separate, later copy.

VERSES THAT ARE NOT THERE

Mark ends at 16:8. Then the scribe left the next column empty before Luke begins. Some think he knew of a longer ending and left room for it. John 7:53 to 8:11, the woman caught in adultery, is not there, and neither is Acts 8:37. This Bible prints those in [brackets].

CODEX SINAITICUS



Codex Sinaiticus, open to two of its pages. Every surviving page can be viewed free at codexsinaiticus.org/en.

WHAT IT IS

A handwritten Bible in Greek, copied about AD 330 to 360, a little after Codex Vaticanus or about the same time. It is the oldest complete copy of the New Testament in the world, because Vaticanus has lost its last pages. It also held the Old Testament in Greek, and about half of that part survives. The words are written in four neat columns on each page.

MADE FROM ANIMALS

Its pages are parchment, made from animal skins. It took about 200 animals or more, mostly calves with some sheep. That made it a hugely expensive book.

WHO HAD IT MADE

Nobody knows for sure. In AD 331 Constantine, the first Christian emperor, ordered fifty Bibles for the churches of his new capital. Some scholars think this could be one of them, and others disagree.

FOUND BY ANOTHER CONSTANTINE

The man who found it was a German scholar named Constantin von Tischendorf, who shared his name with that emperor. In 1844 he visited Saint Catherine's Monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai in Egypt and left with 43 leaves. He said they were in a basket waiting to be burned, but the monks dispute that story. In 1859 he was shown the rest of the book and took it to the Tsar of Russia. The monks say it was only a loan.

WHERE IT IS TODAY

In 1933 the Soviet government sold most of it to the British Museum for 100,000 British pounds. In 1975 the monks found more pages in a storage room under a chapel. Today it is split among four places: the British Library in London, Leipzig University in Germany, the National Library of Russia and Saint Catherine's Monastery. In 2009 all four put every surviving page online for free at codexsinaiticus.org/en.

HOW IS IT DIFFERENT

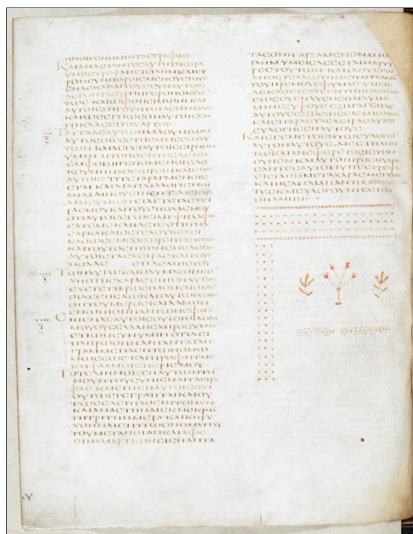
It has all 27 New Testament books we have today, plus two extra books at the end, the Letter of Barnabas and part of the Shepherd of Hermas. Early Christians read those two, but the church later left them out. The order is different too. Paul's letters come right after the Gospels, Hebrews sits after 2 Thessalonians, and Acts comes after Paul's letters. Later scribes made about 23,000 corrections to it over the centuries.

VERSES THAT ARE NOT THERE

Mark ends at 16:8, and the woman caught in adultery, John 7:53 to 8:11, is missing. About 16 single verses found in the King James Version are missing too, like Acts 8:37. This and other early copies suggest scribes added those verses later. This Bible prints them in [brackets] so you can see them and decide. None of them changes a core teaching of the faith.

THE THREE OLDEST BIBLES · 3 OF 3 · FIELD NOTES · CONFIDENCE: HIGH

CODEX ALEXANDRINUS



Codex Alexandrinus, the last page of Luke, two columns on a page, with a decorated ending and the title The Gospel According to Luke. British Library. Public domain.

WHAT IT IS

A handwritten Bible in Greek, the youngest of the three great old Bibles. It is written in two columns on each page.

HOW OLD IT IS

It was copied in the early 400s, about AD 400 to 440. That is roughly 75 years after Codex Sinaiticus.

WHERE IT IS TODAY

In the British Library in London, bound in four volumes called Royal MS 1 D V to VIII. 773 leaves survive. Its name comes from Alexandria in Egypt, where it was kept before it left for Europe. Its New Testament volume was photographed and put online in full in 2012.

HOW IT CAME TO ENGLAND

Cyril Lucaris, who had led the church of Alexandria, probably brought it to Constantinople around 1621, after he became the Patriarch there. In 1624 he offered it to King James I, but James died in 1625. It reached his son, King Charles I, in 1627. The King James Version came out in 1611, so its translators never saw it.

WHAT IS IN IT

The Old Testament in Greek, with 1 to 4 Maccabees, Psalm 151 and the Odes, a set

of songs from the Bible gathered after the Psalms. Its table of contents also lists the Psalms of Solomon, but those pages are lost. The New Testament runs in this order: Gospels, Acts, James to Jude, Paul's letters with Hebrews after 2 Thessalonians, and Revelation. At the end it adds 1 Clement, a letter from the church in Rome written about AD 96, and part of 2 Clement. Early Christians read those two, but the church did not keep them in the Bible.

WHAT IS NOT IN IT

Some pages are lost: Matthew 1:1 to 25:6, John 6:50 to 8:52 and 2 Corinthians 4:13 to 12:6. Scholars counted the lines that fit on the lost pages of John and found there was not enough room for the story of the woman caught in adultery, John 7:53 to 8:11.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT

Unlike the two older Bibles, it has the long ending of Mark, 16:9 to 20. It does not have the extra words in 1 John 5:7 that the King James Version has. In the Gospels its wording is mostly the kind found in the many later Greek copies, while in the letters and Revelation it is closer to the oldest copies.