

Psalm 22 (composed before 500 BC)

¹⁶They have pierced my hands and feet—¹⁷I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me; ¹⁸They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

Wisdom 2 (composed about 100 BC)

¹²“Let us lie in wait for the righteous man . . . ¹⁶We are considered by him as something base, and he avoids our ways as unclean; he calls the last end of the righteous happy, and boasts that God is his father. ¹⁷Let us see if his words are true, and let us test what will happen at the end of his life; ¹⁸for if the righteous man is God’s son, he will help him, and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries. ¹⁹Let us test him with insult and torture, that we may find out how gentle he is, and make trial of his forbearance. ²⁰Let us condemn him to a shameful death, for, according to what he says, he will be protected.” ²¹Thus they reasoned, but they were led astray, for their wickedness blinded them, ²²and they did not know the secret purposes of God.

Isaiah 53 (composed no later than 557 BC)

³He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . . ⁹And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰Yet it was the will of the LORD to bruise him; he has put him to grief; when he makes himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand; ¹¹he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities. ¹²Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Anglicans believe the Bible

Anglicans believe the holy Scriptures, commonly called the Bible, are the books of the Old and New Testaments; other books, called the Apocrypha, are often included in the Bible. These books were written by the people of God, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to show God at work in history and to testify to Jesus Christ, *the fullness of divine revelation and the living Word of God.*

We read from God’s written Word during worship, because as St Paul wrote to the young bishop St Timothy, “the sacred writings are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All *scripture is inspired by God* and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

Anglicans understand, as St Peter wrote, “that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter of one’s own interpretation*, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:20-21). We come to understand the meaning of the Bible by the help of the Holy Spirit, who guides the Church in the true interpretation of the Scriptures.

Yet, the Bible is only part of that sacred tradition handed down from generation to generation in God’s Church. St Paul referred to the importance of oral tradition also when he wrote, “Stand fast, therefore brothers, and hold to the traditions that you were taught, *either by oral statement or by a letter of ours*” (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

Tradition guides us in understanding the Scriptures. For this reason, we also believe that “Holy Scripture contains *all things necessary to salvation*: so that what-soever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is *not to be required* of any man” (Article VI).

A newcomer’s guide to . . . Believing the Bible



By Fr. Timothy Matkin, SSC

“I was led to put faith in the Scriptures by the unpretentious nature of the language, the candid character of the writers, and the foreknowledge displayed of future events.”
—*Tatian (c., AD 160), Greek convert and a disciple of St. Justin Martyr*

“Look carefully into the Scriptures, which are true utterances of the Holy Spirit.” —*St. Clement of Rome (c., AD 96), companion of St. Paul and the 3rd successor to St. Peter as pope at Rome*

Why is the Bible unique?

The Holy Bible (in Greek, *biblios* or “books”) is a library of many books and letters. There are 80 books in the Anglican edition of the Bible (King James Version).

It was written over more than 1000 years, by over 40 authors from all walks of life. It was written in different places, at different times, in four languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Chaldean, and Greek), with different alphabets, utilizing many different genres, covering many topics.

And yet, strikingly, its message about God is consistent throughout. The theme of the Bible is the fall and redemption of humanity.

It is the most widely read, carefully preserved, copied, printed, and circulated book in the history of the world. It was one of the first major books to be translated and it has been translated into more languages than any other book (over 1,280). It has withstood persecutions, wars, criticism, cultural changes and divides.

The Bible is remarkably able to “tell it like it is.” It denounces the sins of its own people and even kings, calling them to repentance. Its writers, including the apostles and evangelists, criticize their own faults in God’s sight. It is honest about the problems and divisions in the early Church.

It’s canon (list of authoritative books) was developed by the Bible’s liturgical use, acknowledgement, and reception as true records of divine revelation. Some of the criteria were: consistent teaching, prophetic origin, and authentic character.

Is our Bible reliable?

Bibliographical Attestation: New Testament

The New Testament was the most widely copied and book of antiquity:

- 5,300 Greek manuscripts (c., AD 300)
- 10,000 Latin manuscripts (c., AD 450)
- 9,300 Other manuscripts (c., AD 125)

224,000 Fragments (earliest, AD 70)
Compare these 24,600+ copies of the New Testament with the next widest circulation of surviving ancient manuscripts:

- 643 Homer’s *Illiad* (c., AD 1200)
- 200 Demosthenes’ (c., AD 1100)
- 193 Sophocles’ (c., AD 1000)

In no other ancient literature is the interval of time between the composition and the date of the earliest available manuscripts so short as the New Testament. Note the wide agreement in content across time and space testifies to the care with which the New Testament books were copied and preserved. Note also that these texts contain first hand accounts of historical events (“What we have seen and heard, we proclaim to you also.” *1 John 1:3*)

Bibliographical Attestation: Old Testament

The Old Testament was meticulously preserved by the Jewish community. Many ancient copies are unavailable because of their veneration of the book. When scrolls wore out they were buried, just like people. Yet, some old Hebrew copies survived:

- * *Massoretic Cairo Codex at the British Museum* (c., AD 895)
- * *Codex of the Prophets of Leningrad minor/major Nevi'im* (c., AD 916)
- * *Babylonian Petropolitanus complete MS at Leningrad* (c., AD 1008)

These copies are verified by comparison to copies of ancient translations, such as the textual agreement found in the Septuagint (translated circa 300 BC).

The Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS), an ancient library discovered at Qumran in 1947, dates from the first and second century BC. They confirm the reliability of later copies. For example, a complete copy of Isaiah (c., 125 BC) was found in the DSS. It is about 95% identical to the Massoretic text copied 1000 years later. And the 5% difference consists of

spelling variations and words that do not affect the meaning.

For more, see Josh McDowell’s book, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*.

Christ and the Old Testament?

One of the most powerful and convincing testimonies to the spiritual reliability of the Bible is the Old Testament witness about Christ—a testimony given before the events even happened.

Jesus told others about how the Old Testament spoke prophetically of himself.

“Then he said to them, ‘These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that *everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.*’ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures” (*Luke 22:44-45*).

“And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness to me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen; and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe him whom he has sent. *You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life*” (*John 5:37-40*).

“*Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it and was glad.*” The Jews then said to him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, *Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.*’ So they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple” (*John 8:56-59*).

Testimonies of the crucifixion

There are literally hundreds of messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. Consider the prophecies of these passages which follow. Each one tells vivid details about the crucifixion of Jesus the Messiah hundreds of years before it even happened.