



The Rest of the Story

SPOILER ALERT! Here's how the Bible ends: God wins, and His people live happily ever after. The first four books of the New Testament – the Gospels – describe the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. The twenty-three books that follow tell us about the early Christians... what they did, what they believed, and how they struggled to carry out the Great Commission given to them before Jesus ascended: *go make disciples of all nations*.

After reading this section, you should be able to explain:

- Variety of writings included in the New Testament
- How the canon of Scripture developed
- Key persons in the early growth of the Church

SAINT LYDIA THE PURPLER

Acts of the Apostles describes a woman named Lydia who sold purple cloth, a luxury in that time. She met Paul and Timothy in the Greek city of Philippi on their second missionary journey, and is considered one of the first converts to Christianity in Europe. After she and other members of her family were baptized, Lydia opened her home and her wallet in support of the leaders of the early Church. She demonstrated generous hospitality and stewardship, and is a great role model for merchants, tailors and especially businesswomen. Her feast day is August 3.



REFLECT: *If you run your own business someday, how will you practice stewardship—using your God-given time, talents and treasure to benefit others?*

RECALL...

- the four Gospels describe Jesus' life and teachings
- before ascending, Jesus gave the Great Commission
- the Holy Spirit empowered the Church to share the Good News with others

BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

There are 27 books in the New Testament. You have already read and studied the four **Gospels**, which tell us about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. **Acts of the Apostles** was written by Luke as a sequel to his Gospel. It describes the growth of the early Church under the leadership of the apostles Peter and Paul. Next are thirteen **Pauline Epistles**, sent by Paul to various communities and individuals he met as he traveled around the Mediterranean world sharing the Good News. The letter to the **Hebrews**, perhaps also by Paul, shows how Jesus is the great high priest—foreshadowed in the Old Testament—who offers himself as a sacrifice to atone for our sins. There are seven **Catholic Epistles**, addressed to the universal (or “catholic”) Church and written by four leaders of the early Church: Peter, James, John, and Jude. Finally, the New Testament concludes with **Revelation**, a book written by the apostle John to encourage Christians suffering persecution for their faith. This final book shows God triumphing over evil at the end of time, and provides a fitting end to the story of Salvation History told throughout the entire Bible.

VOCABULARY

Canon: the list of 73 books the Church declared to be inspired by God, and thus included as part of the Old and New Testaments – the Christian bible

Apocalypse: form of writing in the Bible that uses symbols and images of destruction to portray God's triumph over evil; literally “to unveil,” or “reveal”

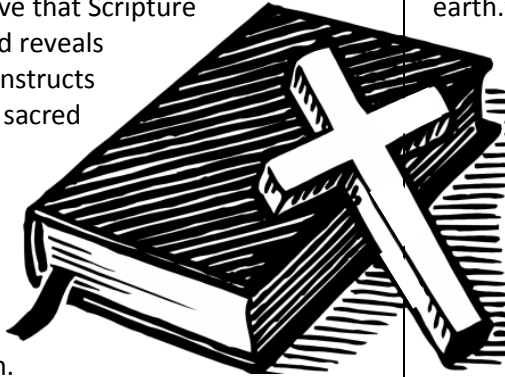
Epistle: one of the New Testament letters, written to the whole Church or specific individuals/communities

Evangelization: sharing the Good News with others

THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

Some people just imagine that the Bible fell out of the sky fully formed, written by the very finger of God Himself. Instead, think of the Bible as a sort of collaborative effort between God and various human authors. We also believe that Scripture is not the only way God reveals himself to us. He also instructs and guides us through sacred

Tradition: apostolic teachings of the Church not found in Scripture. The two sources of God's revelation to us are Scripture and Tradition.



WHY THESE BOOKS?

After Jesus ascended to heaven, the Church first spread the Good News by means of **Oral Tradition**. In short, they *told* people about Jesus. Eventually, inspired by the Holy Spirit, some Christians began to write down what had been handed on to them about Jesus. (The word "Tradition" means "handing over.") Some of these writings were widely distributed and read to Christians at gatherings such as the Sunday Eucharist.

But Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were not the only Christians to write books about the life and teachings of Jesus. Paul likely wrote more than 13 letters; and we know that other Church leaders (like Clement of Rome) wrote beautiful letters about the Christian faith that are not numbered among the 27 books of the New Testament. So, what made these books so special?

Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church gradually established a **canon**—or list—of Scripture. Books that affirmed sacred Tradition and that were known to be written by reliable sources were included in the canon; others were not. The books in the canon are guaranteed to contain religious truth inspired by God. The canon of Scripture – both Old and New Testaments – was debated by various gatherings of Catholic bishops, and finalized at councils in north Africa at the end of the Fourth Century.

NEW TESTAMENT V.I.P.'s (Very Inspired People)

You'll meet lots of important and interesting people as you continue your journey through the New Testament. They took seriously their mission to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to "the ends of the earth." Here is a quick preview of some of the most important ones.

PETER: *Named by Jesus as the head of his new Church, Peter is shown fearlessly proclaiming the Gospel in Acts of the Apostles. He helps the Church understand that the many Jewish customs were no longer binding on Christians, and that baptism was to be offered to Gentiles as well as Jews. He wrote two Catholic Epistles.*

PAUL: *Initially a staunch Jew and persecutor of Christians, Paul (also called by the Hebrew name Saul) experiences a dramatic conversion when he has a vision of the risen Jesus. As a Roman citizen familiar with Greek culture, Paul is uniquely qualified to travel around the Mediterranean world spreading the Gospel. He is considered "apostle to the Gentiles."*

LUKE: *A physician who accompanies Paul on several of his missionary journeys, Luke wrote the third Gospel and its sequel, Acts of the Apostles.*

BARNABAS: *A Jewish convert who introduces Paul to the apostles after his conversion, Barnabas accompanies Paul on his first missionary journey.*

MARK: *Also called John Mark, this cousin of Barnabas accompanies Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey but deserts them for unknown reasons. He is believed to have worked as a secretary for Peter, who may have helped him write his gospel.*

TIMOTHY: *A young disciple considered by Paul as his best friend and closest assistant, Timothy was the recipient of two Pauline epistles.*

JOHN: *The "Beloved Disciple" and author of the fourth Gospel, John also wrote three Catholic Epistles and the book of Revelation. This youngest apostle's life ends in exile on the island of Patmos during a time of severe persecution of Christians at the end of the first century. He is the only apostle who was not martyred.*