

scripture basics



bible mythbusting

- myth #1: catholics don't really need the bible
- myth #2: the bible is a book
- myth #3: the old testament isn't relevant
- myth #4: the gospels all tell the same story



myth #1: catholics don't really need the bible

- catholics have had less *direct* contact with the bible since the reformation (1500s)
- what was it like for 1500 years before that?

myth #1: catholics don't really need the bible

➔ *On the day called Sunday, all gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought.*

St Justin Martyr, mid-2nd century

myth #1: catholics don't really need the bible

- *You know how carefully you receive the Body of the Lord and reverently make sure that no particle drops to the ground, lest any of the consecrated gifts be lost But if you exercise such concern in taking care of his body how can you think it a lesser crime to neglect the Word of God than his Body?*

Origen, end of 2nd century

myth #1: catholics don't really need the bible

➤ *Ignorance of the scriptures is ignorance of Christ.*

St Jerome, 4th century

➤ *No sooner do I glance at the Gospel, but immediately I breathe in the fragrance of the life of Jesus and I know where to run.*

St Thérèse of Lisieux, 19th century

myth #1: catholics don't really need the bible

- so what happened in the 16th century?
- Martin Luther: appeal to scripture against church teaching
- Protestant view:
 - *sola scriptura* (“scripture alone”)
 - individual interpretation
- Catholic church:
 - damage control
 - formation of priests/people

myth #1: catholics don't really need the bible

- Benedict XVI (*Verbum Domini* 2010):
 - since the end of the 19th century there has been a “crescendo ... of increased awareness of the importance of the word of God and the study of the bible in the life of the church.”
 - every household should have its Bible, to be kept in a worthy place and used for reading and prayer

myth #2: the bible is a book

- looks like a book – acts like a book!
- *in fact*: the bible is more like a library
 - different types of literature (e.g. poetry, stories, history, laws, sayings, biography, letters, visions)
 - written by different people in various times and places
- what do the books in this library have in common?
 - God is “principal” author

myth #2: the bible is a book

- inspiration:
 - *not*: mechanical dictation (fundamentalism)
 - *but*: uses the human author's freedom, creativity and intention
 - *so*: first step in working out what God means is to ask what the human author meant
- modern readers need to be aware of:
 - different types of literature
 - different authors (where, when and why did they write?)

myth #3: the old testament isn't relevant

- fullest revelation of God is in Jesus Christ
- *but*: Jesus reveals the God of Israel to be his Father
- early christians continued to treat the old testament as scripture
- Augustine: *the New is in the Old concealed; and in the New, the Old revealed.*

myth #3: the old testament isn't relevant

- difficulties for modern readers:
 - huge cultural gap
 - images of God

- *but*: can challenge our own limited perspective

myth #3: the old testament isn't relevant

- *Zephaniah 3:17-18 The Lord your God is there with you, the Warrior-saviour. He will rejoice over you with happy song, he will renew you by his love, he will dance with shouts of joy for you on a day of festival.*
- *Hosea 11:3-4 I myself taught Ephraim to walk, I myself took them by the arm, but they did not know that I was the one caring for them, I was leading them with human ties, with leading-strings of love, that, with them, I was like someone lifting an infant to his cheek.*

myth #3: the old testament isn't relevant

- *Isaiah 40:10-11 See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.*

myth #4: the 4 gospels tell the same story

- gospels not just biographies of Jesus
- gospels look back through the lens of the resurrection
- John 20:30-31 *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.*

myth #4: the 4 gospels tell the same story

➤ Matthew:

- Infancy: annunciation to Joseph; Herod; Magi; flight into Egypt
- Sermon on the Mount + four other long teaching sermons

➤ Mark:

- Begins with John the Baptist
- “Passion story with a long introduction”

➤ Luke:

- Infancy: annunciation to Mary; shepherds; angels
- parables (Good Samaritan, Prodigal Son, Lazarus & Dives)
- The “good thief”

➤ John:

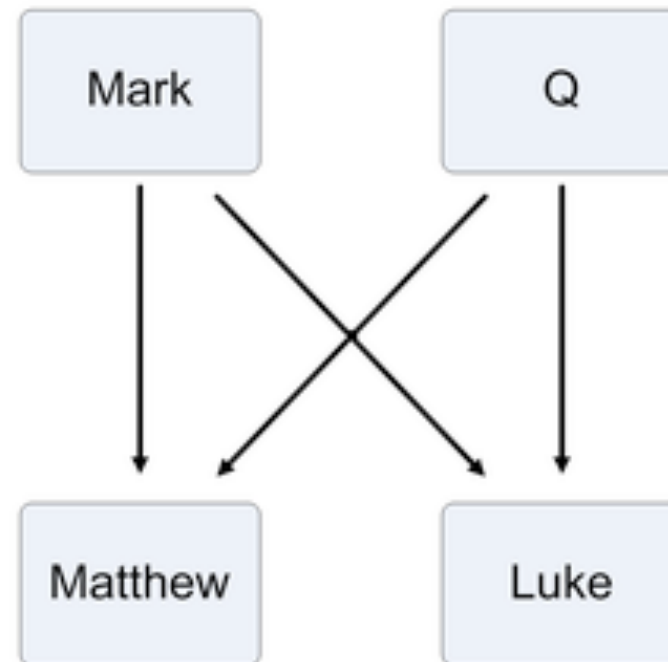
- 3 year ministry (3 passover visits to Jerusalem)
- Last Supper: foot washing, but no institution of eucharist

myth #4: the 4 gospels tell the same story

➔ Why are Matthew, Mark and Luke similar?

Matthew and Luke drew independently on Mark and on a collection of sayings of Jesus (named 'Q' from German *quelle* "sayings").

Two Source Hypothesis



Mark 4:35-41

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side."

And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him.

A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped.

But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"

And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Matthew 8:23-27

And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him.

A great quake arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep.

And they went and woke him up, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!"

And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

They were amazed, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"

Luke 8:22-25

One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they put out,

and while they were sailing he fell asleep. A windstorm swept down on the lake, and the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger.

They went to him and woke him up, shouting, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he woke up and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; they ceased, and there was a calm.

He said to them, "Where is your faith?" They were afraid and amazed, and said to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?"

myth #4: the 4 gospels tell the same story

- some points for reflection when reading
 - does an action/saying of Jesus occur in more than one gospel? are there differences in the accounts?
 - what significance might it have had for the evangelist and the people he wrote for?
 - can it have a similar significance for me?

which bible to use?

➤ it's all Greek (or Hebrew) to me!

➤ *If I had been a priest I should have made a thorough study of Hebrew and Greek so as to understand the thought of God as he has deigned to express it in human language.*
(St Thérèse of Lisieux)

➤ “catholic” vs. “non-catholic” bibles

translations

- “literal” vs. “dynamic”
- dynamic or paraphrasing translations:
 - Good News Bible, New International Version, Living Bible
 - easy to read – use modern sounding language
 - but: may exclude other interpretations
- literal translations:
 - New Jerusalem Bible, New American Bible, New Revised Standard Version
 - give more “direct” access to the word of God

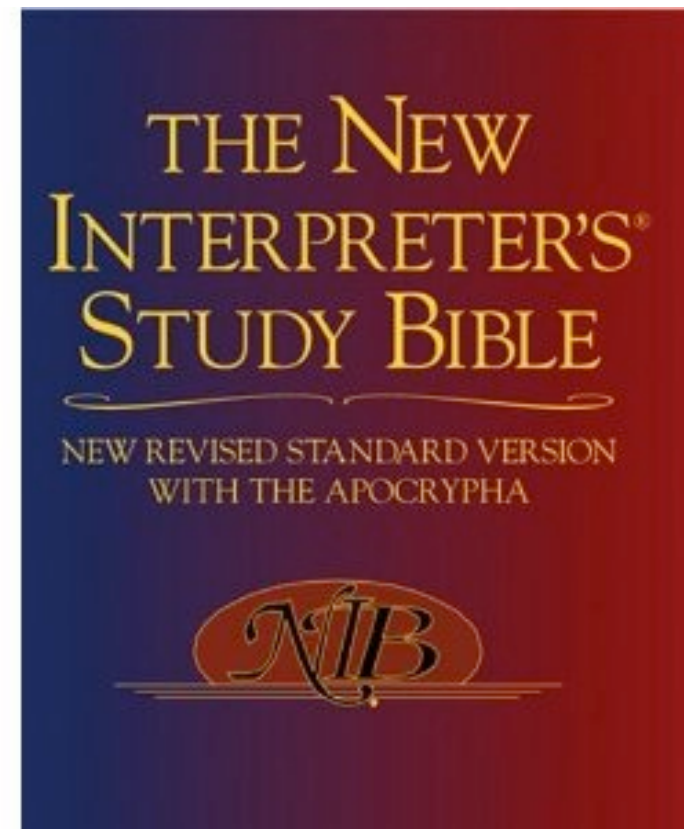
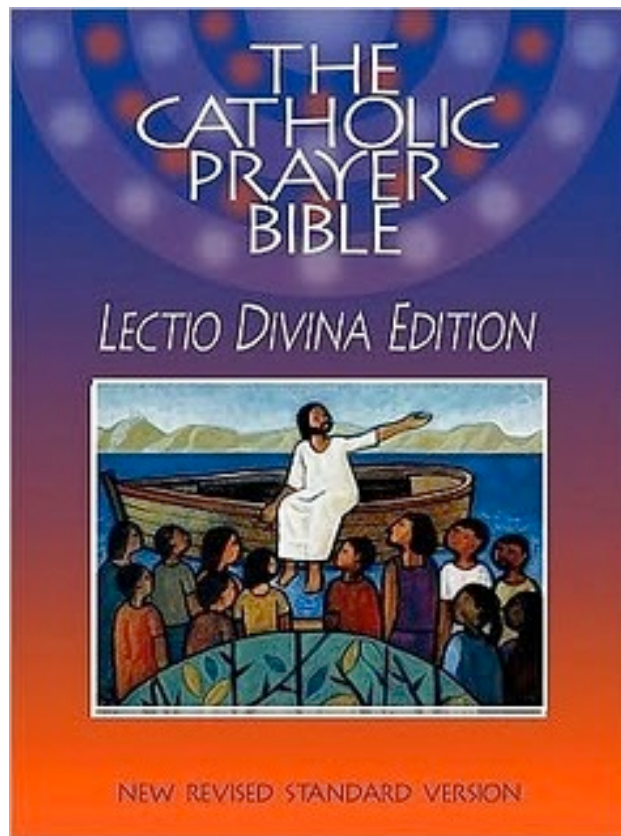
“catholic” vs “non-catholic” bibles

- all christians agree on new testament
- catholics/orthodox have longer old testament
- look for bible labeled “catholic” or with “deutero-canonical”/“apocryphal” books

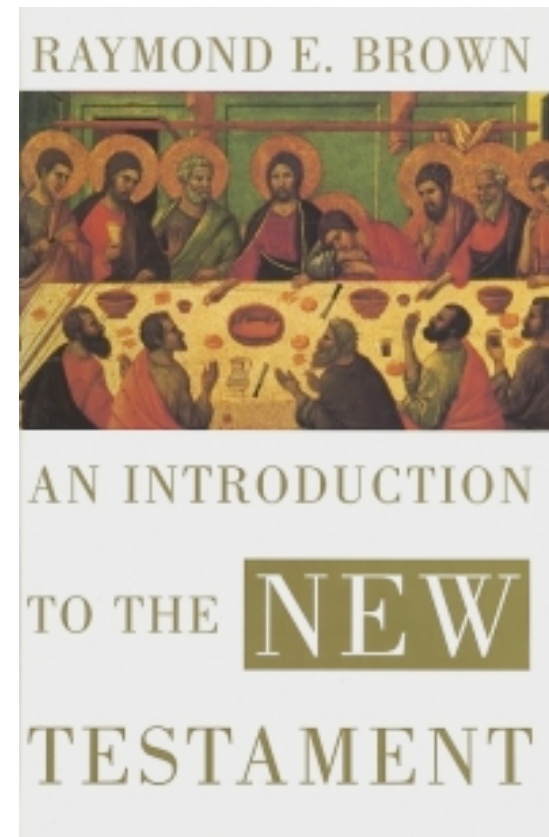
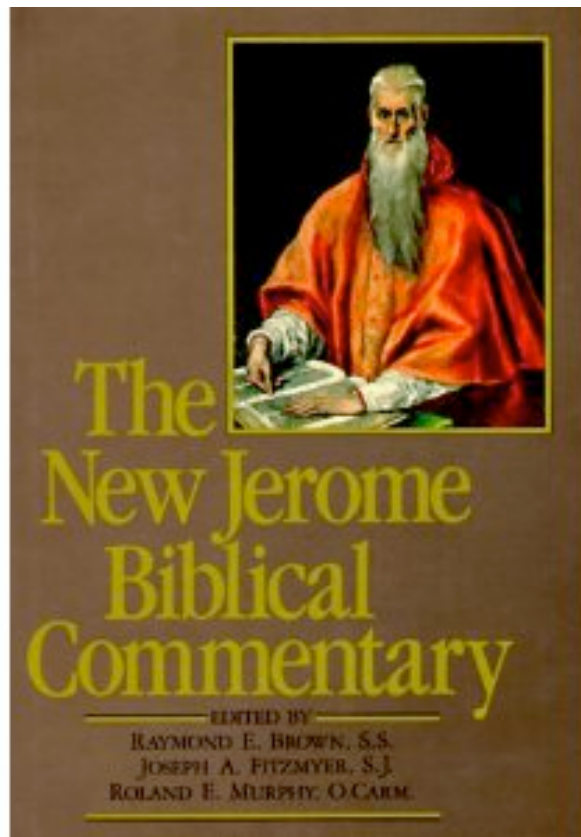
study/prayer bibles

- bibles with introductions, notes, maps or suggestions for prayer help us to:
 - understand what we're reading
 - make our reading a source for our prayer and action

study/prayer bibles



introductions & commentaries



what to do next

- *remember*: the bible is a library – so you can start anywhere!
- *so*: to begin with, choose a book you feel attracted to
- *but*: try to stick with that book if you can
- *perhaps try*: “lectio divina” – read, think, pray, act

final thoughts

➤ *When you read the bible, God speaks to you; when you pray, you speak to God.*

St Ambrose