

Crawl Through the Bible Terms and Concepts

Canon: Literally, a ruler or yardstick—figuratively, it describes how far and how straight one can go within a faith system. Used to describe the accepted books of the Old and New Testaments.

Covenant: Interchangeable with “testament”. A two-party agreement.

Tanakh: The Hebrew name for the Scriptures (our Old Testament). It is an acronym of Torah (Law), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings).

Pentateuch: The Greek term (and the one used within the Christian faith) for the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament.

Solomon's Temple: The First Temple, built for high Jewish worship and to store the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the Ten Commandments. It was destroyed in 586BC by the Babylonians.

Exile: Two main historical events: The Northern Kingdom (Israel) was conquered and taken into exile by the Assyrians in 725BC—they were not allowed to return. The Southern Kingdom (Judah) was taken into exile in 586BC, though they were permitted to return about 50 years later when they began to rebuild the Temple and Jerusalem. Exile is also a central theme in the Old Testament.

Documentary Hypothesis: An interpretation of the different forms of writing in the Old Testament, primarily the Pentateuch, which argues that the books were edited together from Northern and Southern Kingdom sources, as well as other priestly or legal sources. Often referred to as JEDP, with each letter referring to a unique source.

Gilgamesh Epic: An ancient (some parts date to 2100BC) work of literature with alternate descriptions of some historical events, including the Great Flood in Genesis. Some parallels with writings in Ecclesiastes.

Hellenization: The spread of Greek language and culture in the 4th century BC, imposed by Alexander the Great on the Western world.

Septuagint: The Jewish scriptures, written in Greek after the imposition of Greek language and culture on the Western world. Dates to the mid-3rd century BC. It is often footnoted as LXX, which is the number 70 in Latin, because of the legend that 70 scholars individually produced the exact same translation.

Herod and the Second Temple: The Second Temple was a small structure built after the return of exiles in the years after 525BC. Herod I (or, Herod the Great) refurbished the Temple and doubled the size of the Temple Mount, the raised plateau overlooking Jerusalem which held the Temple. This is the Temple and grounds as it would have existed in the time of Christ. It was destroyed by the Romans in 70AD.

Council of Carthage (397): Established the canon of the Bible as we have it today. That list was already in use for centuries, but it was made church law at this Council.

Masoretic Text: The text of the Old Testament produced by Jewish scholars between the 7th and 10th centuries AD. It added vowel markings, which did not exist in ancient Hebrew, and set the pronunciations for words in biblical Hebrew. Christian Bibles use the Masoretic Text for our Old Testament translations.