

*Journey of Faith, Q4 and Q5*

THE BIBLE AND  
HOW CATHOLICS  
INTERPRET THE BIBLE

Meg & Brian Vail

2015

# Why the Bible?

- The Road to Emmaus
- **Luke 24:27**
  - “Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.”

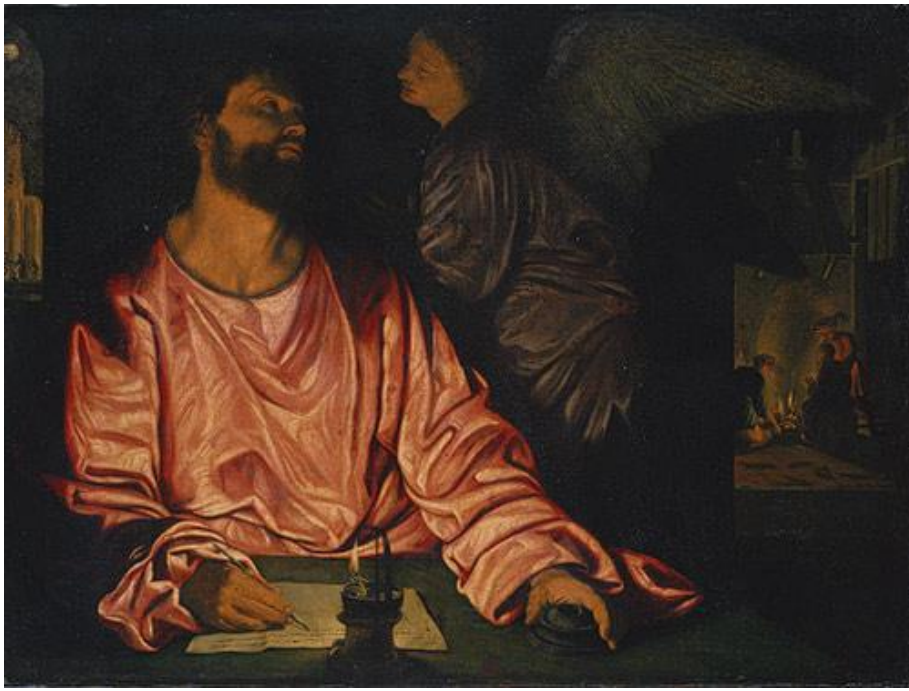
# The Bible

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- Not one book but a library (collection & selection)
- Not one continuous story beginning at the beginning and ending at the end.

# On the other hand...

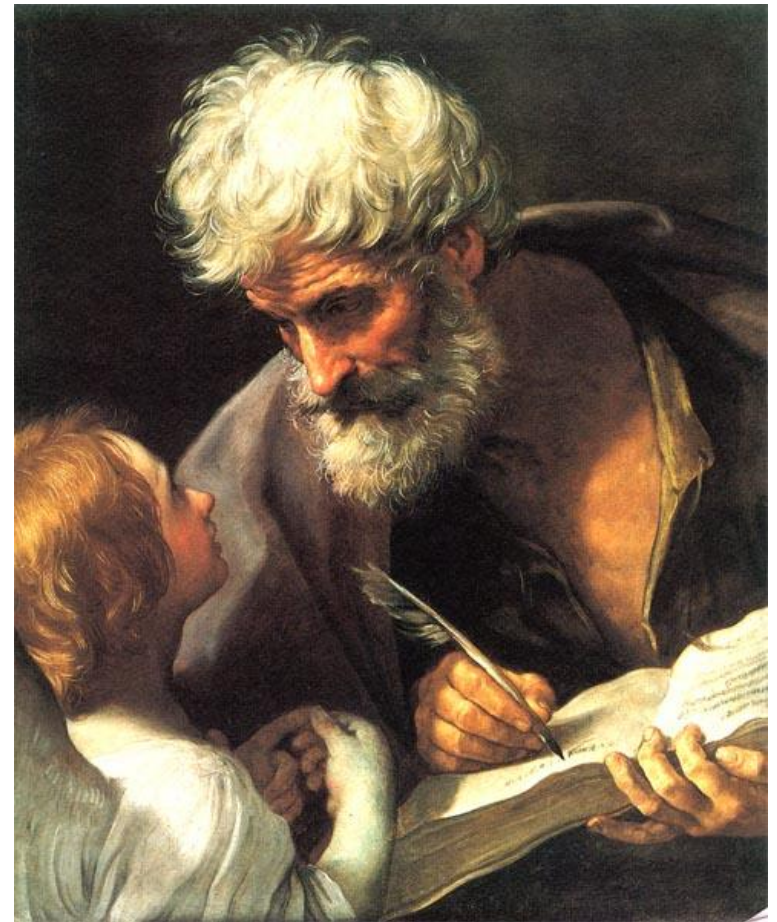
- Not one book... BUT... the Bible has unity, and each book needs to be read in the context of the whole.
- Not one continuous story... BUT... many books of the Bible follow a rough historical line



Savoldo



Caravaggio



Guido Reni

St. Matthew  
and the Angel

# The Bible

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- Not dictated “word for word” by God
- Human authors were inspired by God to write about how He affected their lives
- Bible is a record of our relationship with God

# The Living Word of God

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- Not only the divinely inspired human record of the people of God, the Bible is also the Living Word of God.
- When proclaimed in the community (Church), God speaks directly to us about our lives

# The Living Word of God

- We receive the Holy Word proclaimed at Mass
- We encounter God in the Word just as we encounter the person of Jesus in the Eucharist
- Jesus is the Word made Flesh (John 1:14)



# Revelation

- The Bible is the major way that God has chosen to reveal Himself to us.
- Not the *only* way – also traditions of Apostles and Early Christians passed on to us through the Church.
- So we always read/listen to the Bible in the light of Tradition and the Church's teaching.

# How Catholics Read the Bible

- The Road to Emmaus
- **Luke 24:27**
  - ▣ “Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.”
- We read Scripture in the light of the Jesus’ incarnation, birth, life, death and resurrection. Jesus is the lens.

# How Catholics Read the Bible

- We read Scripture in 2 ways:
- 1. The Literal Sense: what do the words say? What did the human author intend his audience to understand? What was he trying to say? What is the context?
- 2. The Spiritual Sense: what is the deeper meaning? How does the reading relate to Christ? What moral lesson is there – does it teach us how we should behave? What does it teach us about the future and life after death?

# How Catholics Read the Bible

- We pray - the Bible is God's Word – communication is 2-way street
- We look to the Church and trust her experience.
- **Note:** The Literal Sense is **NOT** the same as a literalist interpretation (fundamentalism). The Bible does not intend to teach natural science or history. It tells us about our relationship with God.

# Is everything in the Bible true?

- “The Book of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching firmly, faithfully, and without error that truth that God wanted put into the sacred writing for the sake of our salvation.” *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*
- The Bible is always True, when properly understood
- Truth is not the same as accuracy (historical accuracy, scientific accuracy, etc.)

# Example: Two stories of Creation

- God creates the earth and everything in it in 6 days
- God creates by speaking.
- All creation is good
- Humans (man and woman), made in God's own image on day 6 are very good
- Day 7, God rests.
- God creates the world and man in one day
- God forms man (Adam) from clay and breathes life into him
- God puts Adam in garden and realizes it is not good for man to be alone
- God looks for suitable partner for Adam
- God makes woman (Eve) from man's rib

# Literal Sense

- To understand the Literal Sense we can turn to information from Biblical historians, archeologists, anthropologists, linguists, and other scholars.
  
- Compare with similar stories in the Bible
  - Fragments of creation stories in books of Psalms and Job
  - God conquers a sea monster called Leviathan or Rahab.
  - Idea of a cosmic battle which God wins

# Fun Facts! (to help understand the Literal Sense)

- a “cosmic battle” occurs in creation stories of *other* ancient people in the same region
- in a Babylonian creation story a god defeats a goddess who represents the sea, and then cuts her carcass in half and makes sky and earth from the pieces
- the goddess’ name sounds a lot like the Hebrew word for abyss or deep sea
- in a Canaanite creation story, a god named Baal defeats the sea god Yam (Hebrew *yam* means sea) with similar results
- the people of Israel were forced to live in Babylon (*Exile*)
- Hebrew uses the same word for “breath” and “spirit”



# Remember how Catholics read the Bible:

- Literal Sense: what do the words say? What did the human author intend his audience to understand? What was he trying to say? What is the context?
- Spiritual Sense: what is the deeper meaning? How does the reading relate to Christ? What moral lesson is there – does it teach us how we should behave? What does it teach us about the future and life after death?

# Spiritual Sense: Truth the stories teach us (sample)

## First Creation Story

- God created all from nothing using only His Word
- God controls the abyss
- There is no god more powerful than God
- Humans are created in God's image
- Humans are very good – different from animals
- The Sabbath (7<sup>th</sup> day) is Holy – God's day of rest.
- God made us. Our spirit is from God.
- Man and woman were designed and created FOR each other, and marriage is from God.

# Which one is “true”? Both!

- Both stories teach us truths about God and human beings.
- Neither story teaches how the world developed as a physical planet in the solar system. That's not why they were written.
- Written by people of faith to be read with faith. Book of spiritual truth, not scientific fact.

# THE HOLY BIBLE

containing the  
Old and New Testaments

*New Revised Standard Version: Catholic Edition*

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NAMES AND ORDER OF  
THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

THE OLD TESTAMENT

PENTATEUCH

Genesis	1
Exodus	48
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Numbers	116
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Judith	457
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Baruch	939
Ezekiel	946
Daniel	996
Hosea	1017
Joel	1028
Amos	1032
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## THE NEW TESTAMENT

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# ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used for the books of the Bible:

## *Old Testament*

Gen	Genesis	Tob	Tobit	Bar	Baruch
Ex	Exodus	Jdt	Judith	Ezek	Ezekiel
Lev	Leviticus	Esth	Esther	Dan	Daniel
Num	Numbers	1 Macc	1 Maccabees	Hos	Hosea
Deut	Deuteronomy	2 Macc	2 Maccabees	Joel	Joel
Josh	Joshua	Job	Job	Am	Amos
Judg	Judges	Ps	Psalms	Ob	Obadiah
Ruth	Ruth	Prov	Proverbs	Jon	Jonah
1 Sam	1 Samuel	Eccl	Ecclesiastes	Mic	Micah
2 Sam	2 Samuel	Song	Song of Solomon	Nah	Nahum
1 Kings	1 Kings	Wis	Wisdom of Solomon	Hab	Habakkuk
2 Kings	2 Kings	Sir	Sirach	Zeph	Zephaniah
1 Chr	1 Chronicles		(Ecclesiasticus)	Hag	Haggai
2 Chr	2 Chronicles	Isa	Isaiah	Zech	Zechariah
Ezra	Ezra	Jer	Jeremiah	Mal	Malachi
Neh	Nehemiah	Lam	Lamentations		

## *New Testament*

Mt	Matthew	Gal	Galatians	Philem	Philemon
Mk	Mark	Eph	Ephesians	Heb	Hebrews
Lk	Luke	Phil	Philippians	Jas	James
<u>Jn</u>	John	Col	Colossians	1 Pet	1 Peter
Acts	Acts of the	1 Thess	1 Thessalonians	2 Pet	2 Peter
	Apostles	2 Thess	2 Thessalonians	1 Jn	1 John
Rom	Romans	1 Tim	1 Timothy	2 Jn	2 John
1 Cor	1 Corinthians	2 Tim	2 Timothy	3 Jn	3 John
2 Cor	2 Corinthians	Titus	Titus	Jude	Jude
				Rev	Revelation



## OLD TESTAMENT (HEBREW SCRIPTURES)

### LAW

Genesis  
Exodus  
Leviticus  
Numbers  
Deuteronomy

### WISDOM

Job  
Psalms  
Proverbs  
Ecclesiastes  
Song of Songs  
Wisdom  
Sirach

### HISTORY

Joshua  
Judges  
Ruth  
1 Samuel  
2 Samuel  
1 Kings  
2 Kings  
1 Chronicles  
2 Chronicles  
Ezra  
Nehemiah  
Tobit  
Judith  
Esther  
1 Maccabees  
2 Maccabees

### PROPHECY

Isaiah  
Jeremiah  
Lamentations  
Baruch  
Ezekiel  
Daniel  
Hosea  
Joel  
Amos  
Obadiah  
Jonah  
Micah  
Nahum  
Habakkuk  
Zephaniah  
Haggai  
Zechariah  
Malachai

## NEW TESTAMENT (CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES)

### GOSPELS

Matthew  
Mark  
Luke  
John

### HISTORY

Acts of the Apostles

### LETTERS

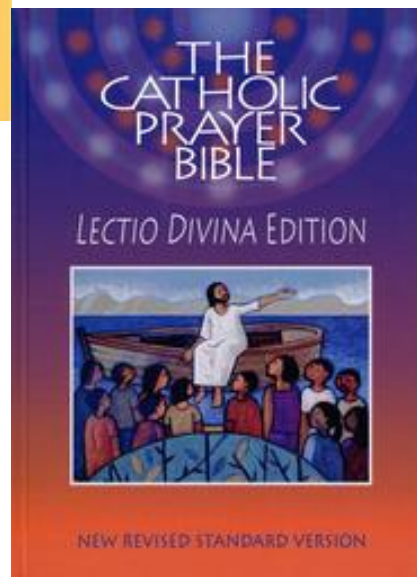
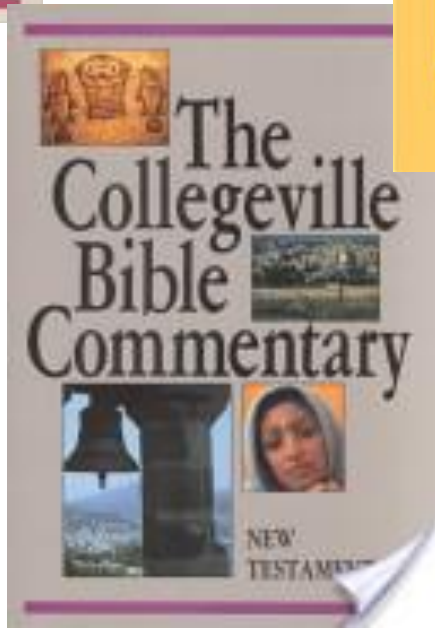
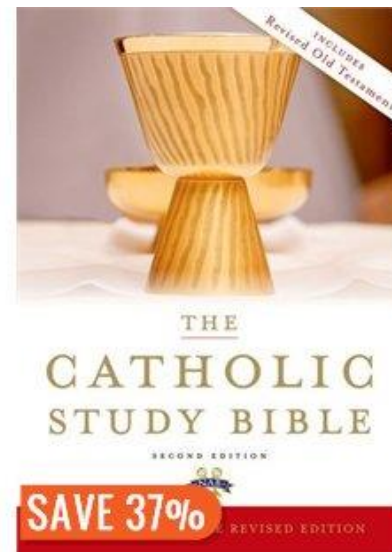
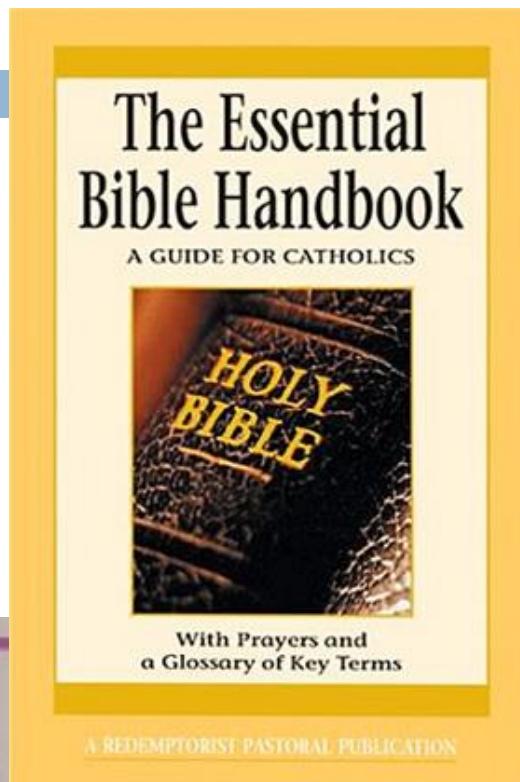
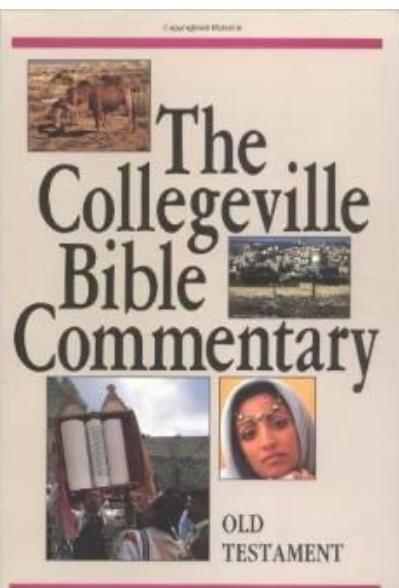
Romans  
1 Corinthians  
2 Corinthians  
Galatians  
Ephesians  
Philippians  
Colossians  
1 Thessalonians  
2 Thessalonians  
1 Timothy  
2 Timothy

Titus  
Philemon  
Hebrews  
James  
1 Peter  
2 Peter  
1 John  
2 John  
3 John  
Jude

### APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

Revelation

# Bible Commentaries



# Chapter & Verse

- The Gospel of Luke, chapter 1, verses 46 to 48
  - Luke 1:46-48 or Lk 1.46-48
- The first book of Samuel, chapter 2, verse 1
  - 1 Sam 2:1 or 1 Sam 2.1