

# How Jesus read the Bible

## 1) Jesus didn't

When modern Christians talk about the Bible it will be a text that usually comes bound as a book, which will include a series of texts from prior to the birth of Christ, and a series of gospels, narratives, and epistles.

This means we read the Bible in the same mentality as people read a book. Jesus would have read individual scrolls, and only from what we call the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup>

The Hebrew Bible (Tanakh)		
The Law	The Prophets	The Writings
Torah (Pentateuch) Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	Former Prophets Joshua Judges Samuel (1 & 2) Kings (1 & 2)  Latter Prophets Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel The Twelve Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi	Poetry Psalms Proverbs Job  Five Rolls Song of Songs Ruth Lamentations Esther Ecclesiastes  History Daniel Ezra-Nehemiah Chronicles (1 & 2)

## 2) Rather badly (in one sense)

In almost every case where we see Jesus referencing Scripture he is quoting a single verse or two. Modern hermeneutics (The theory of how we read) would not accept that approach.



- <sup>2</sup>**Contextual analysis:** A verse out of context can often be taken to mean something completely different from the intention. This method focuses on the importance of looking at the context of a verse in its chapter, book and even biblical context.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-qa/qa-archives/question/how-is-the-jewish-bible-or-tanakh-different-from-the-bible/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical\\_hermeneutics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_hermeneutics)

- **Theological analysis:** It is often said that a single verse usually doesn't make a theology. This is because Scripture often touches on issues in several books.

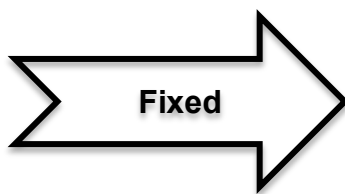
What we do see though is that Jesus would use a particular verse as an exemplar, rather than as a basis for theology.

### **Mark 12:29–31**

Jesus answered, 'The first is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.'

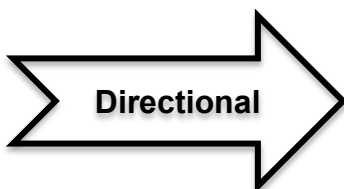
### **3) Fixed and Directional**

When we read the Bible it is not uncommon for one of two approaches to be taken, either as an historical document, separated from its devotional nature, or in the context of the religious world. In the religious context it is usually seen as expressing truths in their final form, or as describing a trajectory or direction. We see Jesus using both approaches.



#### **Mark 10.19**

You know the commandments: "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother." '



#### **Matthew 5.38-39**

'You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also;