

Big, black book

Once upon a time, the Bible was a big black book with golden-edged pages that required a course in bodybuilding before you could lift it off the shelf.

In recent times, though, the Bible's been repackaged and has sunsets and puppy dogs and other marketing-friendly pictures on the cover, and no longer weighs a ton. But even though it now looks like any other bestseller, the Bible still stands out as being a book unlike any other.

For a start, it was produced by two of the world's big faiths: Judaism and Christianity. You can see this in the way the Bible is structured into two 'halves': the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old half contains the scriptures (holy writings), of Judaism, while Christians regard both Old and New as their scriptures.

On top of that, a third world faith – Islam – also regards the Bible as a holy book, although Muslims believe that the Bible has been corrupted and is inferior to the Qu'ran.

Books, chapters and verses

When you buy a Bible, you're not buying just one book, you're buying 66 books rolled into one. Take a look at the contents page of the Bible, and you'll find all 66 books listed, some with names that give a clue to what they're about, such as Kings, Song of Solomon and Revelation, but most with the names of the people said to have written them, such as Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.



The word 'testament' means 'agreement'. The Bible's first half centres on the agreement God made with Moses and Israel at Mt Sinai, while the second half centres on the agreement God made available to all people through the death of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament contains 39 books, while the New Testament is smaller, with 27 books.

