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## Question 27 - Where were the Old and New Testament canonical books kept?

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## 101 MOST ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

### 27. Where were the Old and New Testament canonical books kept?

#### A. Old Testament

1. Before the Babylonian captivity – Prior to this period (606 B.C.) the Old Testament books were apparently laid beside the Ark of the Covenant in the temple. This is indicated in the following passages:

*“And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do. And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. . . And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient” (Exod. 24:3-4, 7).*

*“And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee” (Deut. 31:24-26).*

*“And Hilkiyah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of them that do the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD. And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king” (2 Kings 22:8-10).*

*“So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the LORD” (Josh. 24:25-26).*

*“Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house”* (1 Sam. 10:25).

2. During the Babylonian captivity – The books were probably carried to Babylon and later collected by Daniel. In 9:2 of his book, the prophet Daniel writes: *“In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem”* (Dan. 9:2). Here Daniel specifically states he was reading Jeremiah and “the books,” a reference no doubt to the other Old Testament books written up to that time.
3. After the Babylonian captivity – These books may have been taken back to Jerusalem by Ezra the prophet and kept in the newly completed temple. (See Ezra 3:10-11; 6:15-18; Neh. 8:1-8.)

**B. New Testament** – *“And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea”* (Col. 4:16). *“I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren”* (1 Thess. 5:27).

It seems certain the New Testament books were *not* kept in the temple area as the Old Testament books were. This was the case for at least two reasons:

1. Some of the New Testament books were written after the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70.
2. No New Testament book would have been accepted by the Jewish rabbis as an inspired addition to the Old Testament canon – However, from the above verses it appears various churches may have cared for and circulated among the Christian community the New Testament books.