

FOUNDATION
STUDIES

THE BIBLE
AND ITS
AUTHORSHIP

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Bracketed comments following some scriptures assist the reader in understanding the intended meaning of these verses

We acknowledge the additional works of the various Scholars and Bible Commentaries used in conjunction with the College material. This is not to say that we agree with all their theology, but we certainly value their contribution to the Body of Christ.

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THE BIBLE AND ITS AUTHORSHIP

The Bible is the divinely inspired and authoritative written Word of God. Indeed God chose and anointed specific men over centuries of time to write down His principles and laws for the benefit of mankind, and these writings together make up a book called the Bible.

The word “Bible” is derived from a Greek word meaning “the books.” The Bible is actually a library of 66 books, of which 39 make up the Old Testament and 27 the New Testament.

The Old Testament contains the holy books of God’s ancient chosen people - the Israelites. The first book was written around 1400B.C., and the last was written about 400B.C., that is, 400 years before Christ was born.

The books of the Old Testament are not arranged chronologically, but according to the subjects they cover. The way in which the Old Testament books are arranged, and can be classified, is as follows:

1. LAW BOOKS (The Pentateuch)

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

2. HISTORY BOOKS

Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings, II Kings, I Chronicles, II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.

3. POETRY and WISDOM BOOKS

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon.

4. MAJOR PROPHETS

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel.

5. MINOR PROPHETS

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

When the Old Testament was translated into Greek (3rd Century B.C.), the apocryphal books were added. The Apocrypha is a collection of books, between eleven to sixteen in number, written during the 400 year period between the Old and New Testaments. This was called “The Silent Period” because no divinely inspired prophets operated in the interval between Malachi and John the Baptist. The books written during the Intertestamental period, while having literary and historical merit, have been rejected by the Protestant Church as part of the canon of scripture. However the Catholic Church in 1546 A.D. declared eleven of the books to be canon. This is why you will find these eleven books, termed “the Apocrypha,” in modern Catholic versions of the Bible.

Note: The word “apocrypha” means “hidden” or “secret.” The term “canon of scripture” refers to that which is regarded as having been written under divine inspiration.

The 27 books of the New Testament are also arranged by subject or author, not according to the order in which they were written. They are classified as follows:

1. THE GOSPELS (Good News of Jesus Christ)

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.

2. HISTORY

Acts of the Apostles.

3. PAULINE EPISTLES (Letters)

Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus, Philemon.

4. GENERAL EPISTLES (Letters)

Hebrews, James, I Peter, II Peter, I John, II John, III John, Jude.

5. PROPHECY

Revelation

Sometimes the Bible is referred to as “the Holy Scriptures.” The word “holy” means “set apart for a special purpose” and the word

“scripture” simply means “writings”: Thus the Holy Scriptures are “holy writings.”

The Bible primarily contains:

- (a) an account of the origins of man, and an outline of man’s future
- (b) the early history of God’s chosen people
- (c) God’s principles and commandments by which we are to live
- (d) God’s will and plan for mankind.

The Bible is God’s Word, divinely inspired and full of truth, and God backs up His Word with His power. The Word of God provides us with boundaries, exhorts us to live according to Godly principles and contains the way to life. We should treasure God’s Word and read it daily, drawing from its pages the direction and correction we need. For:

2 TIMOTHY 3:16 All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God (the Greek says, “all Scripture is God-breathed,” which means it is the Word of God, and, thereby, infallible!), ***and is profitable for Doctrine*** (all we believe, teach, and do must be based squarely on the Scriptures), ***for reproof*** (proclaims the use of the Word of God in setting direction), ***for correction*** (refers to restoration to an upright state), ***for instruction in Righteousness*** (presents the Bible as the only guide for such instruction): (E.S.B.)

HEBREWS 4:12 For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions (motives) of the heart. (R.S.V.)

***PSALM 119:105 Your Word is a lamp unto my feet, and
a light unto my path.***

The writers of the Bible were inspired by the Spirit of God to write the words they wrote. This is why Christians refer to the Bible as “the Word of God.” In fact, as we have stated, the Greek word “theopneustos” found in 2 Timothy 3:16 literally means “God-breathed,” or “given by inspiration of God.” Thus the holy scriptures were breathed out by God and breathed into the hearts and minds of the writers of the Bible by the Holy Spirit. These men then wrote words from God Who is the ultimate source of what they wrote.

***“. . . Thus the holy scriptures were
breathed out by God and breathed into
the hearts and minds of the writers of the
Bible by the Holy Spirit. . . ”***

The Holy Spirit gave His Word to the individual writers of the Bible via the temperament, culture and experience of each one. Therefore the Bible, quite often, has a human stamp on it as well as a Divine stamp, and each book displays the character of the writer as well as the character of God.

Such is the incredible power of God, that He has been able to use the human personality, disposition and experience to produce His infallible Word.

***2 PETER 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time
by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they
were moved by the Holy Spirit.***

“If one closely studies the Scriptures one sees that as far as instruction is concerned, the Holy Spirit does not go beyond the intelligence of the writer. While tremendous predictions were given by the Prophets concerning things they did not know or understand, this was not the case as it regards instruction. Regarding instruction, the Holy Spirit definitely inspired the writers, but did so only up to the limit of their understanding.”¹

(underlines added)

***“ . . . Such is the incredible power of God,
that He has been able to use the human
personality, disposition and experience to
produce His infallible Word. . . ”***

There are many writers of the Bible, but one Author, that being God Almighty - and it is written proof of His love for mankind. The Bible has been divided into two sections: the Old Testament or Covenant and the New Testament or Covenant. It has been said: the Old Covenant was the New Covenant concealed and the New Covenant is the Old Covenant revealed. So BOTH the Old Covenant and the New Covenant constitute the written Word of God.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE BIBLE

Knowing that God is in the ever eternal present, and we (mankind) are locked into a time zone, our approach and thinking when studying God's Word (as we have previously noted) should be in the knowledge of the following:

The present and final outcome of mankind was known by God even before the Book of Genesis was written. With this foreknowledge, God's Spirit chose, directed and anointed people to write down His Word. So from God's perspective, and according to His foreknowledge, the Bible (God's Plan of Redemption for mankind) has been constructed from the back (Book of Revelation) to the front (Book of Genesis). This explains why the Old Testament shows us many physical type-patterns of truths which apply to us today - because God placed them there to highlight the spiritual truths of Calvary. **We could also say that everything recorded in the Bible points to Calvary.** Indeed the Old Testament sacrifices, ceremonies and festivals are a shadow or a type-pattern of the reality of Christ's sacrifice and His finished work. The precious Blood of Jesus flowed backwards from the Cross to cleanse the sins of the Old Testament Saints as well as flowing forwards from the Cross to cleanse the sins of the New Testament Saints. Everything points to the Cross, God's pivotal point for mankind's redemption.

“...So from God’s perspective, and according to His foreknowledge, the Bible (God’s Plan of Redemption for mankind) has been constructed from the back (Book of Revelation) to the front (Book of Genesis). . .”

Remember too that the books of the Old Testament contain the principles of God which are for us to live by today, just as the books of the New Testament do. These principles and commandments are contained within the historical, prophetic, literary and apostolic writings of the entire Bible.

In New Testament times, Jesus revealed to the Pharisees that God was far more concerned with justice, compassion and humility than with outward ritual e.g. man-made religious ordinances and traditions, etc. The same was true in Old Testament times and is still true today - for there is a continuity expressed throughout the whole Bible regarding God’s commandments, principles and requirements. Therefore we should take time to study the Old Testament as well as the New, and not regard it, as some do, as either outdated or pertaining only to Israel. Indeed to go one step further, it is not possible to truly understand the New Testament unless we understand the Old.

God has endorsed and will continue to endorse and confirm His Word of Truth with His power, when people receive and act on His truths in faith. Indeed God our Creator has given this “Manual of Life” to mankind to live by, so we can have victory in every area of our lives.

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE

Translation work is motivated by a desire to know, experience and proclaim the truth. When one comes to the knowledge of the truth, one is then set free. The history of how we came to have our English Bible is a history of the quest of true Believers for religious

freedom - for the ordinary man to read for himself the Word of God, and to shake off the shackles of institutionalized religion and dogma.

If you are reading the Bible in the English language, you are reading a translation, for the Bible was not written in English. There are now many good translations from which you can choose, in order to read and study the Bible effectively. Before giving a general outline and some recommendations in this regard, we will look briefly at the history of the translations up until the King James Version appeared in 1611.

In its original form, nearly all the Old Testament was written in Hebrew. Only half of Daniel and two passages in Ezra were written in Chaldee (or Aramaic), a sister language to Hebrew. The New Testament was written in Greek.

During the third century B.C., the Old Testament was translated into Greek by Jews living in Alexandria, Egypt. Greek had become the widespread language of the day, and this translation was needed because many Jews had become dispersed from Palestine, and no longer spoke Hebrew. This version was known as the Septuagint (L.X.X.) and would have been the one which Jesus and the Apostles used. It became the Bible of the Christian community, and its adoption facilitated the spread of Christianity because it was written in Greek, the “lingua franca” (commonly used language) of the day.

It wasn't until the beginning of the fifth century A.D that the Old and New Testaments were translated into Latin by Jerome, this version of the Bible being known as the “Vulgate,” a term which referred to the “vulgar” or “commonplace” Latin of that day. By this time, of course, western civilization was, in general, no longer familiar with Greek. The Vulgate became the standard version of the scriptures which was used, by and large, by much of the western world until the King James Version was published in 1611.

There had been some English translations of the Bible produced prior to this. John Wycliffe was responsible for producing the first English Bible in 1380. He had become a severe critic of the corrupt church and its papacy, and wanted to make the truths of the Bible available to the common people. He was branded a heretic, and some of his followers were executed. William Tyndale, about 150 years later, became the true father of the English Bible. His translation was of a fine literary quality, and was a printed Bible

rather than a hand-copied manuscript. He was subjected to much harassment and was burned at the stake for his efforts in 1536.

The Reformation in the sixteenth century had sparked the desire, in Europe, to translate the Bible into national languages so people could understand it. Prior to this, the Word of God had been locked up in the Latin language, being inaccessible to the common man, a situation which had been perpetuated by the Roman Catholic Church. With the Reformation, other English versions began to proliferate, and the King James Version arose, to some extent, from the perceived need and desire for uniformity. By this time, the Protestant church had gained ascendancy in England, and King James I was to play a leading role in organizing the translation process.

The King James Version was translated by 54 scholars, and has been widely accepted in Christian circles ever since. It should be noted that Bible translation is a highly complex undertaking, and is best done by a large group of people. This avoids the pitfalls, generally, of particular viewpoints and biases creeping into the text. This point should be born in mind when considering different translations.

Translators will generally have one of these basic approaches to their tasks. They will translate word for word which is termed “literal translation,” keeping as close as possible to the precise words and phrases of the original language. The K.J.V. and the New American Standard are examples of literal translations. Alternatively, they will try to translate the ideas contained in the text, paying much less attention to the exact meaning of particular words, often making the text relevant to the culture of today, e.g. instead of using “denarii” or “cubits,” the translators will use “dollars” and “feet.” This form of translation is called a “paraphrase” rather than a literal translation, and this kind of approach can expose the translator to the charge of being unfaithful to the original text. Examples of paraphrase versions are the Living Bible and the J. B. Phillips New Testament in Modern English. This type of Bible may be helpful in regard to general reading but should not be considered an appropriate principle tool for serious study. Sometimes called a “free translation,” this type of version will try to eliminate historical distance as much as possible (the differences between the culture of today and that of the Bible) e.g. the Cotton Patch version. There is a third approach to translating which is called the “dynamic

equivalent.” This approach attempts to translate the meaning of the original language into an exact equivalent, in a contemporary form, of the language into which the translation is made. While retaining historical and factual details, this kind of translation updates grammar, language and style. The Good News Bible is an example of this form of translation. The New International Version is a combination of the literal and the dynamic equivalent approaches.

We will now outline some of the translations which are available to Christians today, making brief comments on each.

KING JAMES VERSION

This version has stood the test of time, having been an extremely popular version in Christian circles since its publication in 1611. It is, in fact, still the most widely used English translation in the world. Several revisions have modernized its spelling so that we can read it easily today. Nevertheless, one of its major drawbacks is that the meanings of many of the English words have changed since the 1600’s. For example “Spirit” is translated as “Ghost.” Thus the Holy Spirit is called “*the Holy Ghost*”: Luke 3:22. The word “conversation” is used rather than “behaviour” or “conduct” (Eph.4:22; Gal.1:13), or in another context, “citizenship”: Phil.3:20. “To let” in 2 Thes.2:7 now actually means “to hinder.” There are also errors of interpretation, some of which are corrected in the margin of the Thompson Chain Reference publication of the K.J.V. These are matters to be considered by students studying the K.J.V.

Some of the grammatical constructions, as well as the archaic words, make this version harder to understand than more recent versions. However, even given these difficulties, there seems to lie within its pages an integrity that is time-honoured, and a tacit approval which comes from God Himself. It is also eloquent and easy to memorize. While avoiding the tendency of some to worship or deify this version, for it has obvious flaws, we would argue that there is something special about this Bible, and for the serious Bible student, it is certainly well worth investing the time needed to accustom yourself to its idiosyncrasies.

It remains, in the opinion of the writers, one of the best overall translations available.

THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION

This version became the first after the King James (or Authorized) Version to receive any significant acceptance in Christian circles. The New Testament was published in 1946 and the Old in 1952.

This version is a reputable translation which is useful for private study. It is more a revision of the English Revised Version (1885) and the American Standard Version (1901), both being revisions of the K.J.V., than a translation of older manuscripts. It has modernized the archaic language of the K.J.V., and arranged verses in paragraph form, except for the poetic passages.

THE NEW REVISED STANDARD

This version was brought out in 1989, having been the work of a number of Catholic, Protestant, Greek Orthodox and Jewish scholars. One of the changes it has introduced is that of “political correctness,” thus adopting, for instance, pronouns that are neutral in gender. For example, the word “man” is translated “people” and the pronoun “Him” in referring to “God,” is always “God.”

THE NEW AMERICAN STANDARD

The New Testament in this version appeared in 1963 and the entire Bible in 1970. It was the first version in which a number of evangelicals were included in the translation process. It is a revision of the 1901 American Standard Version, and an attempt, like the R.S.V., to modernize the language of the K.J.V. The New American Standard Bible gives an accurate and literary translation of Hebrew and Greek texts, but in so doing, has sacrificed some of its readability in accordance with current English usage. Nevertheless it remains an excellent study Bible because of its exactness, and one which will definitely benefit the serious student.

THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE

Brought out in 1970 and translated by 50 British scholars, this work is generally not accepted by evangelicals because of the tendency of the translators to paraphrase at times rather than translate

word for word. It also contains the Apocrypha, a collection of books appearing in the interim between the Old and New Testaments, rejected by the Protestant Church as being part of the canon of scripture (written under divine inspiration).

THE NEW TESTAMENT IN MODERN ENGLISH

J.B. Phillips completed this version in 1957. It was produced because he found himself ministering to adolescents who had no church background and couldn't make sense of the K.J.V. He had a passion to make Biblical truth comprehensible to the recently saved and the uninitiated. This work is not a true translation but a paraphrase, and contains some questionable language choices e.g. *"But Peter said to him 'To hell with you and your money' (Acts 8:20), 'O you dear idiots of Galatia'": Gal.3:1.* The command to greet one another with a holy kiss becomes *"a handshake all round"* (2 Thes.5:26), and *"to give over to Satan"* becomes *"to expel from the church,"* both examples demonstrating the difficulty with paraphrases. Nevertheless, for people who want to read the New Testament and gain an overall understanding in modern English, this work is one of the best of the paraphrase Bibles.

THE NEW WORLD TRANSLATION

This is a publication of the Jehovah's Witness Society, which substantiates the particular heresies of this cult. For instance, Jesus is called "a god" (John 1:1) and hell as the destination of the unrighteous is de-emphasized: Matt.25:46.

TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION / GOOD NEWS FOR MODERN MAN

Good News for Modern Man is a New Testament version which came out in 1966. Today's English Version is basically the work of the same man, Dr. R. Bratcher, having been published in 1979. Both versions are primarily paraphrases which tamper with foundational doctrines. For example, in Luke 1:27, the word "virgin," as referring to Mary, is omitted. The importance of the blood of Christ is also weakened as it is translated by other words e.g. Matt.27:4, 24, 25; 1 Peter 1:19; Heb 10:19. For instance,

Ephesians 1:7 is changed from: *“In Whom we have redemption through His blood”* to *“For by the death of Christ we are set free.”* And the reading in I Peter 1:19, *“But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot or blemish”* becomes *“By the costly sacrifice of Christ, Who was like a lamb without spot or defect.”* This tendency to weaken foundational truths represents a significant problem in regard to these two versions.

THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE

This Bible is not a translation but an amplification of the text. The purpose of this is to reveal different shades of meaning which are possible for the words and phrases used, being an attempt to broaden the reader’s understanding of the Biblical narrative. Having been completed in 1962, this Bible has become very popular in recent times. It is quite wordy, and this usually represents problems for public reading. This version, however, is an excellent one for private study, provided it is used in conjunction with other good translations to test accuracy and define word meanings more precisely.

THE JERUSALEM BIBLE

This version was first published in France but was translated into English and released in 1966. It is a Catholic Bible which equates the Church with Roman Catholicism. Footnotes espouse Catholic doctrine. For example, there is a note that states that the *“brothers”* of Jesus were really cousins (Acts 1:14), which backs up the doctrine of Mary’s perpetual state of virginity. This is not a version for evangelical Christians. It has the distinction of being the first Catholic Bible to be translated into English from the original languages rather than the Latin Vulgate. It contains eleven apocryphal books, declared by the Catholic Church in 1546 to be canonical. These are located through the Bible, as found in the Septuagint and the Vulgate, and include two books added to Daniel, verses added to Esther, and 1 and II Maccabees.

THE LIVING BIBLE

Published in its completed state in 1971, this work is that of one man, Kenneth Taylor. It was inspired when he found his own children unable to comprehend the K.J.V. during family devotions.

It is a popular Bible, but very definitely a paraphrase which reflects a number of theological biases. It contains vulgarities (e.g. 1 Sam 20:30 "*You son of a bitch*") and both inaccurate and loose translations (e.g. the gifts of the Spirit, or "charismata" in 1 Cor.12:14 are called "*special abilities*," and circumcision is called "*keeping the Jewish rules*": Rom.4:9). While very readable, the Living Bible is far too simplified. At the expense of a great deal of rich and provocative Biblical truth, the writer has produced a Bible which can be read as one reads the morning paper. This is definitely not a version for the serious Bible student.

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

The completed form of this Bible was first published in 1978, and it has become one of the most popular to be read by Christians today. It was the work of approximately 110 scholars living all over the world, and is a true translation, not just a revision of previous translations. It is both accurate and clearly written, and could well become the all-purpose translation to be used in general by the evangelical church. This is one good version to be recommended to new Christians, and those who want to be able to read the Bible in clear modern English.

THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION

This Bible came out as the New Testament in 1979 and the Old Testament in 1980. It was the work of around 120 scholars, and represents a reworking of the K.J.V. in order to simplify the language used. For example, the personal pronouns "thee," "thy" and "thine" have been changed to "you" and "your," and other obsolete and antiquated words have also been addressed. For instance, "*It behooved Christ to suffer*" has become "*It was necessary for Christ to suffer*": Luke 24:46. This also is a good accurate version to be used by students of the Bible.

STUDYING THE SCRIPTURES

Our Bibles today are essentially translations from the original languages, from manuscripts and scrolls, which were copies of copies of copies etc. Therefore what exist today are thousands of copies of Old and New Testament texts, produced by hand and copied over a period of around fourteen hundred years. From this perspective, even the K.J.V. is a relatively modern one!

The number of New Testament manuscripts still in existence today is large in comparison with the number of Old Testament manuscripts. However the quality of the Old Testament manuscripts is high, something confirmed by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. Prior to this, the earliest Old Testament manuscript in existence was dated at around 895AD. The Dead Sea Scrolls include Old Testament manuscripts which date back to 250 BC. These, incidentally, have proven the reliability of later copies.

By following proper hermeneutical principles (the science of interpreting scripture), we should be able to resolve most seeming contradictions and ambiguities which crop up in our study of God's Word. Some of the principles involved here include: interpreting scripture within its immediate context, interpreting specific passages according to the framework of the whole Bible (for the Holy Spirit will never contradict Himself), recognizing that scriptures can never mean what they could never have meant to the original writers (this excludes prophecy), determining the original intent of the Biblical text rather than beginning with the here and now, etc. Because of the complexities involved in translating ancient texts into modern day languages with completely different grammatical structures and historical and cultural contexts, there is no one perfect translation. The meaning of some old Hebrew words is uncertain (e.g. in Job 40:15, the word "*behemoth*" is translated by different versions as hippopotamus, crocodile, or simply left as "*behemoth*"). It is difficult to translate some Greek words precisely into English, and scribes also made copying errors, so that different source manuscripts can greatly vary. Culturally based idioms (e.g. when Amos warns Israel that God will give them "*cleanness of teeth*," he is speaking about famine not toothbrushes: Amos 4:6) are often difficult to understand, and imperatives (e.g. the necessity for women to wear head coverings) can be irrelevant to us today. This is why it

is important, when studying the Bible, to have several good translations, and to compare version with version when seeming inconsistencies or problems appear. It is also useful to have a good Hebrew and Greek dictionary - the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible is one such dictionary.

A good Bible dictionary, covering general information, will also benefit the student in obtaining information regarding the historical context, that is the occasion for which the book was written and the purpose of each book. This will help place the book within its setting.

The other important thing to consider when studying scripture is the literary context, that is, "What is the point?" "What is the writer trying to say, why are they saying it here and what are they saying next?" Everything connects, and has meaning. The goal is to find out what the author was intending, as he wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

WHAT BOOKS ARE IN THE BIBLE?

THE MEANING OF CANON

The question of which books belong in the Bible is called the question of the canon. The word canon means rule or measuring rod, and in relation to the Bible it refers to the collection of books which passed a test of authenticity and authority; it also means that those books are our rule of life. How was the collection made?

THE TESTS FOR CANONICITY

First of all it is important to remember that certain books were canonical even before any tests were put to them. That's like saying some students are intelligent before any tests are given to them. The tests only prove what is already intrinsically there. In the same way, neither the church nor councils made any book canonical or authentic; either the book was authentic or it was not when it was written. The church or its councils recognized and verified certain books as the Word of God, and in time those so recognized were collected together in what we now call the Bible.

What tests did the church apply?

1. *There was the test of the authority of the writer. In relation to the Old Testament, this meant the authority of the lawgiver or the prophet or the leader in Israel. In relation to the New Testament, a book had to be written or backed by an apostle in order to be recognized. In other words, it had to have an apostolic signature or apostolic authorization. Peter, for instance, was the backer of Mark, and Paul of Luke.*

2. *The books themselves should give some internal evidences of their unique character, as inspired and authoritative. The content should commend itself to the reader as being different from an ordinary book in communicating the revelation of God.*

3. *The verdict of the churches as to the canonical nature of the books was important. There was in reality surprising unanimity among the early churches as to which books belonged in the inspired number. Although it is true that a few books were temporarily doubted by a minority, no book whose authenticity was doubted by any large number of churches was later accepted.*

THE FORMATION OF THE CANON

The canon of Scripture was, of course, being formed as each book was written, and it was complete when the last book was finished. When we speak of the “formation” of the canon we actually mean the recognition of the canonical books by the church. This took time. Some assert that all the books of the Old Testament canon were collected and recognized by Ezra in the fifth century B.C. References by Josephus (A.D. 95) and in 2 Esdras 14 (A.D. 100) indicate the extent of the Old Testament canon as the thirty-nine books we know. The discussions by the teaching-house at Jamnia (A.D. 70–100) seemed to assume this existing canon. Our Lord delimited the extent of the canonical books of the Old Testament when He accused the scribes of being guilty of slaying all the prophets God had sent Israel from Abel to Zacharias (Lk 11:51). The account of Abel’s death is, of course, in Genesis; that of Zacharias is in 2 Chronicles 24:20–21, which is the last book in the order of the books in the Hebrew Bible (not Malachi as in our English Bibles). Therefore, it is as if the Lord had said, “Your guilt is recorded all through the Bible—from Genesis to Malachi.” And He did not include any of the apocryphal books which were in existence at that time and which contained the accounts of other martyrs.

The first church council to list all twenty-seven books of the New Testament was the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397. Individual books of the New Testament were acknowledged as Scripture before this time (2 Pe 3:16; 1 Ti 5:17) and most were accepted in the era just after the apostles (Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John and Jude were debated for some time). The selection of the canon was a process that went on until each book proved its own worth by passing the tests for canonicity.

The twelve books of the Apocrypha were never accepted by the Jews or by our Lord on a par with the books of the Old Testament. They were revered but were not considered Scripture. The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament done in the third century B.C.) included the Apocrypha with the Old Testament canonical books. Jerome (c. A.D. 340–420) in translating the Vulgate distinguished the canonical books from the ecclesiastical books (the Apocrypha), which had the effect of according them a secondary status. The Council of Trent (1548) recognized them as canonical, though the Reformers rejected this decree. In our English Bibles the Apocrypha was set apart in the Coverdale, Geneva, and King James versions. The first English Bible to exclude it entirely as a matter of policy was an Amsterdam edition of the Geneva Bible published in 1640, and the first English Bible printed in America (the Aitken Bible, 1782) omitted it.

IS OUR PRESENT TEXT RELIABLE?

The original copies of the Old Testament were written on leather or papyrus from the time of Moses (c. 1450 B.C.) to the time of Malachi (400 B.C.). Until the sensational discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 we did not possess copies of the Old Testament earlier than A.D. 895. The reason for this is simply that the Jews had an almost superstitious veneration for the text which impelled them to bury copies that had become too old for use. Indeed, the Masoretes (traditionalists) who between A.D. 600 and 950 added accents and vowel points and in general standardized the Hebrew text, devised complicated safeguards for the making of copies. They checked each copy carefully by counting the middle letter of pages, books, and sections. Someone has said that everything countable was counted. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, they gave us a Hebrew text from the second to first century B.C. of all but one of

the books (Esther) of the Old Testament. This was of the greatest importance, for it provided a much earlier check on the accuracy of the Masoretic text, which has now proved to be extremely accurate.

Other early checks on the Hebrew text include the Septuagint translation (middle of third century B.C.), the Aramaic Targums (paraphrases and quotes of the Old Testament), quotations in early Christian writers, and the Latin translation of Jerome (A.D. 400) which was made directly from the Hebrew text of his day. All of these give us the data for being assured of having an accurate text of the Old Testament.

More than 5,000 manuscripts of the New Testament exist today, which makes the New Testament the best-attested document in all ancient writings. The contrast is quite startling.

Perhaps we can appreciate how wealthy the New Testament is in manuscript attestation if we compare the textual material for other ancient historical works. For Caesar's Gallic War (composed between 58 and 50 B.C.) there are several extant MSS, but only nine or ten are good, and the oldest is some 900 years later than Caesar's day. Of the 142 books of the Roman history of Livy (59 B.C.–A.D. 17), only 35 survive; these are known to us from not more than twenty MSS of any consequence, only one of which, and that containing fragments of Books III–VI, is as old as the fourth century. Of the fourteen books of the Histories of Tacitus (c. A.D. 100) only four and a half survive; of the sixteen books of his Annals, ten survive in full and two in part. The text of these extant portions of his two great historical works depends entirely on two MSS, one of the ninth century and one of the eleventh.... The History of Thucydides (c. 460–400 B.C.) is known to us from eight MSS, the earliest belonging to c. A.D. 900, and a few papyrus scraps, belonging to about the beginning of the Christian era. The same is true of the History of Herodotus (c. 480–425 B.C.). Yet no classical scholar would listen to an argument that the authenticity of Herodotus or Thucydides is in doubt because the earliest MSS of their works which are of any use are over 1,300 years later than the originals.²

Not only are there so many copies of the New Testament in existence, but many of them are early. The approximately seventy-five papyri fragments date from A.D. 135 to the eighth century and cover parts of twenty-five of the twenty-seven books and about 40 percent of the text. The many hundreds of parchment copies include the great Codex Sinaiticus (4th century), the Codex Vaticanus (also 4th century), and the Codex Alexandrinus (5th century). In addition, there are 2,000 lectionaries (church service books containing many Scripture portions), more than 86,000 quotations of the New Testament in the church Fathers, old Latin, Syriac, and Egyptian translations dating from the third century, and Jerome's Latin translation. All of this data plus all of the scholarly work that has been done with it assure us that we possess today an accurate and reliable text of the New Testament. ²

In conclusion we would recommend that students use one main Bible for reading and memorization, but that for study, two or more Bibles should be used in conjunction with it. One could use the K.J.V., the N.K.J.V. or the N.I.V. as a primary Bible. For study, the New American Standard and the Amplified will also prove very helpful in addition to the K.J.V. and the N.I.V.. A parallel Bible which contains four versions (K.J.V., Amplified, N.A.S. and N.I.V) is available from Zondervan. Called the Comparative Study Bible, this is particularly useful for study purposes for the serious Bible student.

Always remember, however, as you study the Bible, that we should not be seeking knowledge for the sake of knowledge, but to have the truths of God's Word revealed to us and written on our hearts. Only in this way can we renew our minds, whereby God can then give us the faith needed to carry out His will in our lives. With renewed minds and faith in our hearts we will be fit vessels for our Master's use, equipped for every good work, and effective against all the enemy's schemes. And this should always be our highest goal when we study God's Word. Amen and amen.

REVIEW OF TEACHING BOOKLET

Fill in the blanks.

1. The Bible is the inspired Word of God, written by men over centuries of time who were specifically and by God to do so.
2. The Bible contains books, of which make up the Old Testament and make up the New Testament.
3. The Old Testament books are not arranged chronologically but according to the they cover.
4. The law books are as follows:,, and
5. The books from Joshua through to Esther are called books.
6. There are books of major prophets and books of minor prophets.
7. The Apocrypha is a collection of books written in the 400 year period between the and Testaments, and is not regarded by the Protestant Church as inspired, i.e. as being part of the of scripture.
8. The New Testament books are also arranged by or, not according to the time in which they were written.
9. The five classifications of New Testament books are as follows:
1) the gospels, 2)

- 3) letters, 4) letters
5)

10. The 66 books of the Bible, written over a period of years, show a remarkable of thought and purpose, and point to a divine

11. The Word of God provides us with, and exhorts us to live according to godly

12. There are many of the Bible but one Author, and both the Old and the New constitute the written Word of God.

13. There are many physical - in the Old Testament which point to spiritual truths in the new. The reason this is possible is because of God's

14. The pivotal point for mankind's redemption is the, and we could say that everything recorded in the Bible points to

15. The Testament contains the principles of God which are for us to live by, just as the Testament does. Therefore we should regard the Testament as relevant and necessary to our study today.

16. The Old Testament was originally written in, and the New Testament was originally written in

17. In the Third Century BC, the Old Testament was translated into by Jews living in Alexandria. This was called the, and would have been the version read and studied by

18. The spread of was enhanced by the fact that everyone in Jesus' day spoke

19. In the Fifth Century AD, Jerome translated the Old and New Testaments into, the common language of the day. This version was known as the, and remained in widespread use until the Version was published in

20. The first English Bible was translated by in

21. The true father of the English Bible was, later at the stake for his efforts in

22. The in the 16th Century had begun the move to translate the into people's national languages, so they could read and it.

23. The Version was translated by 54 scholars, remains the most widely used translation in the world, and is recommended to the serious Bible

24. Translators usually approach their work from one of two directions - the translation involves translating each of the text whereas the is a translation of

25. The translations are usually helpful to read, but are not suitable for serious

26. Two examples of literal translations are the Version and the Standard.

27. Two examples of paraphrase translations are the & the J B
.....

28. A third approach to translation work is the
..... .
29. Both the Version and the Standard attempt to modernize the language of the K.J.V. and are both excellent study Bibles.
30. The New World translation is a publication of the
31. Paraphrase Bibles can weaken foundational, and often contain bias because they usually represent the translation work of one rather than a large group of people.
32. The Bible is not a translation but an amplification of the text, and helps broaden the reader's of the Biblical narrative.
33. The Bible is a modern Catholic Bible which includes apocryphal books and makes some changes in the text due to doctrine. It equates the Church with
34. The Bible is easy to but also inaccurate and oversimplified in areas.
35. The Version is accurate and clearly written, a true not a paraphrase, and can be recommended to both new and Bible students.
36. The New is an accurate translation which has the language of the King James.

37. The discovery of the in 1947 gave scholars Old Testament manuscripts dating back to 250 BC.

38. All our Bibles today are really translations of manuscripts and scrolls which were hand produced copies of copies of copies written down over a period of around 1400

39. We should have several, when studying the Bible, to check seeming inconsistencies or problems which appear in the text.

40. We should follow proper principles while studying scripture so that we can interpret what we study, properly.

41. Remember when studying the Bible that the Holy Spirit will never Himself, in other words, everything will together if properly interpreted.

42. We should not seek for the sake of knowledge, but to have God's revealed to our hearts so we can gain the faith to walk in His will for our lives. This should be our highest when we study God's Word.

For further information or teaching material to help you grow in the Christian faith, please visit:

CROSSROADS INTERNATIONAL
FULL GOSPEL MINISTRIES
crossroadsministries.org.au

NOTES

- 1 S.B.C., Vol.21, Hebrews pg. v1,
- 2 Ryrie, C. C. 1995, c1972. A survey of Bible doctrine. Moody Press: Chicago.

*"We have a vision
to see people living
in abundant life
by the power of God
through Jesus Christ"*



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