

How we got the Bible

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Lesson 1: Looking at what we have in our hand

Reproduction of the text (working backward)

Today - Leather/paper bibles – computerized typeset – everything turns out the same, every time.

- Can pick up 100 copies of same version and it will read the same in every one.
- Difference between reliability and accuracy
 - Shoot arrows at target – all hit the same spot, just not bullseye – reliability
 - Shoot arrows at target – all hit the bullseys – that’s accuracy
- Computer technology – allowed reliable/consistent products
 - That doesn’t guarantee accuracy – more on what makes the Bible accurate later.

What did we have before printing from digital computer files?

- Printing press

What did we have before the printing press?

- Hand copies

Printing press allowed someone to make exact duplications of each typeset they set.

- Put all the letters in their rows and crank them out
- Errors come in the typesetting
- Errors get reproduced for every page that runs through with that error in the typesetting

There is no “official KJV” – 1611. It had errors. Thousands of corrections over dozens of revised versions over several hundred years.

- That is just part of the real process of trying to faithfully reproduce scripture for the people

How many Bible do you have when they are hand copied? – Few

Who probably ends up with them? – Church leaders

How many once you can crank them out on a printing press? – Way more

Who ends up with them once the number increases by 5000%? – more every day people

- Limited access to the written word = less literacy
- Increase that access increases literacy

Prior to the printing press, the scriptures were in the hands of the elites. What is more, they were mostly in Latin...which only the religious types were able to read. Services done in Latin...this put the power of the scriptures in the hands of the church and the everyday people had to trust they were being told right.

Elitism eventually leads to corruption. There is no check/balance. Take advantage of the people.

- Once scripture is in their hands, in their language...they can turn their, read it for themselves, and know they are being lied to.

The printing press took the church out of the hands of the elite and put it back in the hands of common people.

Hand copies

Before the printing press – hand copies

Old Testament:

- Stone (10 commandments)
- clay tablets (no bible reference)
- wood (Hab 2:2 & Isa 30:8 – probably wood)
- Leather – Jeremiah 36.23
 - Word is Vellum (from Peggammum...like in Revelation)
 - Pergamene is where we get the word parchment

New Testament:

- Papyri – the writing material of the day – interwoven, thinly sliced papyrus plants
 - Glue these sheets together – make a scroll (temple scroll in DSS was 27 feet long)
 - Volume – something rolled up
 - Luke – 30 feet long
 - Acts – 30 feet long (vol 1 & 2 – each its own scroll)
 - The lines in the papyrus would serve as guidelines as they wrote (make writing straight and to mark off margins)

Later – books

- Fold papyrus sheets in half and bind them together
- Later figured out how to do this with vellum/leather

Copies of copies (Dan Wallace video used as reference here)

We don't have any of the original/autographs of scripture...we have copies of them and copies of copies

Is that a problem?

- Wallace answer is this – the guy who made the 4th generation copy would have most likely still been able to check it against the original if he wanted to...in other words, of the copies we do have...they were around at a time when the originals were still checkable.

How do we, then, know that what we have in our hand is what they actually wrote?

Dan Brown of the DaVinci code – “The bible has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book”

Daniel Wallace’s 3 questions:

How many variations are there?

- 140,000 words in the GNT
- 400,000 textual variants in the GNT
 - “the reason we have a lot of textual variants is that we have a lot of manuscripts” – Wallace
- If you had only 1 copy from the 10th century AD you would have no “variations” ...that you knew of.
- The more evidence we find the more variations we will find – good problem to have!

5752 Greek manuscripts (handwritten)

- 59 are complete new testaments
- 3000 are copies of gospels
- Revelation has the least

10,000 Latin manuscripts

Other languages – 5,000-10,000 manuscripts

- That’s why we have so many “errors”/variants

Let’s say it all got destroyed – what would we have?

Church fathers – over 1 million quotes of the NT from church fathers. This could re-create the entire NT.

Compare to other ancient writers (some of the most important during 1st century) – from Wallace

- The three people on which we base our entire knowledge of early Roman history are Livy, Tacitus and Suetonius

Historian	Oldest Mss	Number mss surviving
Livy 59BC – 17 AD	4 th century AD	27
Tacitus 56-120 AD	9 th century AD	3
Suetonius 69-140 AD	9 th century AD	200
Thucydides 460-400 BC	1 st century AD (400 yrs later)	20 (fragments)
Herodotus 484-425 BC	1 st century AD (400 yrs later)	75 (fragments)

New Testament documents – what do we have?

- Earliest within decades of autographs
- Within 100 years of NT we have 12 manuscripts
- 43% of the NT found in these 12 manuscripts

- By 4th century (300s) – 120 mss total
- Oldest fragment – p52 (papyrus #52) Gospel of John from around 90-100 AD. This is within decades of the original.

This is what we have today

What they had in 1611 (KJV) – 6 manuscripts, oldest of which was from 10th century.

Which is better...to have fewer variations because we have less and newer texts or to have more variations because we are finding more material...that should be getting us closer to the original?

What are those variations?

Bottom line – we have the original amongst all the data we have. There is never a time we don't have the evidence and just have to make something up.

99% of variants make no difference to the text

- 70% Differences in spelling – most common issue. We know the word, just difference in spelling
- Nonsense reading
 - WE became little children among you or we became gentle among you (1 letter difference)
 - 1 mss reads “we became horses among you” – also a letter or 2 difference. Nonsense! Obvious what is going on here – does = another variant but is obvious
- Wallace example – “Jesus loves Paul” can be written 100s of different ways in GNT (word order doesn't matter to them...multiple words for love) – meaning is the same. Only 1 way to write that in English. = more variants but no issue – we know what it means

Key point – the % of variants that actually make you wonder if it might be correct is less than 1% - meaning might be influenced in less than 1% of those 400,000 variants.

What doctrines depend on these variations?

Nope

Writing style

- No punctuation, no spacing...just consecutive letters

How We Got the Bible

Sources:

- How we got the bible – Lightfoot

Old testament originals

We don't have the originals (autographs) in hand but we do have an idea about what they were probably like and definitely what was written in them.

Material for OT writings: – leather/animal skins

- Jewish tradition was the Torah had to be on this
- Paul asks for “parchments” in 2 Tim 4:13 – leather OT

Writing of the HOT:

No vowels or really much spacing to speak of

New Testament originals

We don't have the originals in hand but we do have mss within one or two generations of the originals and copied during the lifetime of those alive during the events recorded in the NT.

Material for NT writings:

- Papyrus – this was the most widely used writing material in the 1st century

Process of making papyrus paper:

- Take the plant, slice it into thin strips
- Put them side by side
- Overlay another layer going the other way
- Press them together – natural adhesive
- The cross fibers gave nice guide lines for writing and a pretty smooth surface.
- Join them together to make a roll – up to 30 feet long (think Gospel of Luke
- These papyrus rolls were how things were done until the real book format in the 2nd/3rd century AD.

Writing of the GNT

All caps or all lowercase

Making Sense of The Bible In Your Hand

Holy Bible:

- *What does Holy mean?*- set apart
- *How is the Bible “set apart”?*
 - There is no other book like it in the history of the world

Special place of scripture:

- *How many years did it take to get the entire Bible?*
 - Moses – 1300/1250BC
 - Jesus – 30 AD
 - Gospel of John/Revelation – 70-85 AD
- Roughly max of 1400 years
- How many authors of scripture?
 - Well, 1 – God
 - Human authors – around 50
 - *What kind of people were these?*
 - Moses – ex-Pharaoh’s household turned shepherd turned leader of the exodus
 - David – boy shepherd turned king
 - Solomon – son of the king
 - Matthew – tax collector
 - Luke – physician
 - John – fisherman
 - Paul – ex-Pharisee and persecutor of Christians turned into a church planter
- *What languages was it written in?*
 - OT – Hebrew & Aramaic
 - NT – Greek

So get this – the Bible was written over 1400 years in 3 languages by people from a wide variety of backgrounds

- *How amazing is it that the Bible even makes sense, much less doesn’t contradict itself?*

Open your bibles (go to table of contents in your app)

After the uninspired “presented to” page you have the uninspired Table of contents.

Two testaments – testament is the Latin word for “Covenant”

- Why do things have to be so confusing?

What is a covenant?

- An agreement between God and mankind

OT covenants (which one?)

- Covenant with Noah – Gen 6:18 & 9:11, 16
- Covenant with Abraham – Gen 17:4-7
- Covenant with Moses – Exodus 19:4-6 (almost sounds like a continuation of the Abraham covenant...in that covenant, God prophesied they would be slaves in Egypt and get delivered)
- Covenant with David – 2 Sam 7:12-17 (descendent on the throne)
- Pointing toward a new covenant – Jeremiah 31:31-34

NT Covenants (actually saying NT covenants is redundant – when you say New Testament you are saying “New Covenant”)

- Through Christ’s death and resurrection – Luke 22:14ff

Old Testament

Breakdown (contents next week)

39 books divided into several categories (**See handout**)

OT starts with the creation of the world (Gen 1-2)and ends waiting for the Messiah (**Mal 4:5**)

New Testament Structure

Breakdown (contents next week)

27 books divided into several categories

- Gospels
- Historical (Acts)
- Paul’s letters (longest to shortest)
- General letters
- Apocalyptic – Revelation

Why these 27 books?

Of all the writings we have had available to use for the last 2000 years, these were the ones that were believed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and authoritative for us as Christians.

How did they determine that/make that selection?

3 criteria:

- **Divine qualities** – the book is consistent, written in the correct spirit/tone, does not nullify other scriptures (harmony), etc
- **Reception by the church** – that the early church viewed these books as Scripture
- **Apostolic Origin** – that it is determined that they were written by the Apostles and/or witnesses to Jesus Christ (Luke interviewed witnesses and was a companion of Paul).

Based on these criteria there were books that didn’t “make the cut”, most notable were:

- Gospel of Thomas

- Shepherd of Hermas
- 1 Clement

Inspiration of Scripture:

Inspiration = God breathed. It comes from God and is put out into the world to accomplish God's purposes.

In the OT the breath of God/Spirit of God

God is behind what we find in scripture:

- 2 Tim 3:16
- Mtt 19:4-5
- John 7:16 – Jesus spoke words from God.
- Jeremiah 1:9
- Acts 4:25
- 1 Cor 7:12 – I, not the Lord

Scripture is powerful and authoritative for our lives:

- Heb 4:12 – powerful and active

Scripture is true and eternal

- Psalm 119:160 – God's word is true and eternal (inerrancy)

Who is the author? God or man?

- The writing of the Bible did not take place through mindless and mechanical dictation from God to an author. God partnered with these men for these things to be recorded!
- Man's contribution:
 - Look at writers and you see they have their own style – They were not automatons sitting writing in God's vocab. Yet their thoughts and what they wrote were influenced and inspired by God.
 - They had their own personality and vocabulary (Mark vs. John).
 - Luke researched the things he wrote down – so he played a part in what was there but God certainly influenced him and helped him record what God wanted to be recorded.
- God's contribution:
 - There are times in scripture God tells people to write down something exactly and in a particular way – that does happen (Exo 34:27 & Hab 2:2). See also Exo 31:18
 - The prophets were told things specifically by God to say and these are recorded for us – The Lord says this and the Lord says that (Jer 1:7, Ezek 2:7, Amos 3:7).
 - The Holy Spirit played a role – in the NT writers (1 Cor 2:9-13, John 14:26, 15:26, 16:13)

Verses and headings:

"The verses were added to the New Testament by Robert Estienne (also known as Stephanus), a French printer, linguist, and classical scholar. He wanted to create a concordance to the Greek New Testament and needed to mark off small stretches of text so words could be easily located... His son Henri finished the concordance project in 1594 after his father's death and

tells us, writing in Latin, that his father put in the numbers in 1551 while traveling...from Paris to Lyon and back. “ - <https://understandingbooksbible.wordpress.com/tag/stephanus/>

Headings in the Psalms – added by later traditions

Titles to the books of the Bible – added later (usually by tradition)

Footnotes, study notes, center column verses – added by editors to assist your study 😊

Why is this important?

Because you need to understand what you have in your hand, what it means and how to read it.

Bible from then to now

Story of how you got the English Bible that is in your hands

As the Gospel spread through the world so did the need to translate it:

- Earliest translations were probably done by missionaries
- Greek was translated into:
 - Syriac – 4th/5th century
 - Coptic (Egypt) – 5th century
 - Latin – 3rd century (these are pretty messed up in how they have been preserved)
 - 4th century – Latin Vulgate became the standard
 - 382 – Pope Damasus asked Jerome (the expert in Greek of the day) to come up with a better Latin version
 - Jerome took the best Latin version he had and compared it against some Greek manuscripts and came up with the Latin Vulgate
 - The Vulgate was THE version used by the Catholic church until the 1600s

Gutenberg Bible was the first major work done by the printing press – it was the Vulgate in the 1450s

- 48 copies are still in existence
- Single page sold for \$75000
- Some have sold for nearly \$5 million and worth even more today.

Printing press did its first Greek New Testament in 1514 – took forever to create the fonts (over 200 variants of the letters)

Erasmus – commissioned around that same time to put together a Greek New Testament.

- Had a few Greek manuscripts (12th century – 300 years old) and the Latin Vulgate to work with
- Goal – to get the best readings on each verse based on the manuscripts he had and comparing it to the Latin to end up with a superior Greek text
- Had a few issues
 - Did it quickly – typos
 - Where the Greek texts he had were poor, in a couple of places he created the Greek from the Latin
 - Revelation - Most notable was last 6 verses of Revelation (which says don't change these words) – his Greek copy of Revelation was missing the last page (last 6 verses).
 - Acts 9:6 – 1611 KJV reads, “⁵ And he said, Who art thou Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: It is hard for thee to kicke against the prickles.
⁶ **And he trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou haue mee to doe?** And the Lord said vnto him, Arise, and goe into the citie, and it shall be told thee what thou must doe.”

- When he did that he came up with a new/non-original reading because he created what he thought it might be from the Latin. There is no Greek manuscript of Acts 9:6 in existence that has that sentence because he had it in the Latin and added it back into the Greek.

The effect of Erasmus' work

Erasmus did a good job with what he had (6 12th century Greek texts and the Vulgate). But there were better Greek texts out there. The problem was – Erasmus was cheap and therefore accessible and printed more heavily than many others. That means there are more floating around giving him a greater influence than some of the better texts.

Textus receptus

- Text based on Erasmus that took most popular readings on each verse and compiled it into one text – good approach, until you get older (better) texts
- As errors creep in and then those errors get copied – you have more texts with the error than without it.
 - Example:
 - 40 examples of a verse from 1200 that all agree
 - You later find 20 examples of that same verse from 250-600 that all differ on the same word.
 - Which is more accurate?
 - Over time...Greek texts have gotten more accurate, not less.
 - These variations help us get closer to the original, not further.
 - This is like an investigation
 - Again, these variations are minor
- Was the first published Greek NT in America
- This became THE accepted version of the Greek New Testament (remember we are only at a few dozen Greek manuscripts from as early as the 1200's being used to create this. Again...now we have manuscripts back into the 100's.
- People who questioned it were heavily criticized

The more people tried to get GNT's together the more variants they had – this disturbed Johann Bengel (around 1720) and he decided to find out what was going on here – he collected as many Greek texts from his day as he could and investigated. They thought at that time there were 30,000 variants – his conclusion was that in all the variations (due to typos, printing errors, switching of letters/words, added verses) that no doctrine was in question (see Metzger, 112).

English translations

First full English translation of the Bible – Wycliffite Bible (1382). It was a translation from the Latin Vulgate to English (didn't come from the Greek).

- 4 years before this Wycliffe attacked the Pope saying the authority for the church came strictly from scripture. He believed God's word was addressed to everyone and that ordinary people should be able to read the scriptures (from Metzger, 56-57)
- He was put on trial for heresy in 1382 – same year as his translation came out.
- 1415 – Wycliffe Bible was official condemned and burned (it was handwritten – no printing press yet)
- The Pope had Wycliff's body, who had died of a stroke, removed from his grave, burned and his ashes thrown into a river.
- Today we still have parts of 180 copies
- This was the only Bible available in English until the 1500s.

Tyndale

- First printed Hebrew Bible was in 1488
- Erasmus GNT – 1516
- William Tyndale decided there was need for an actual translation of the Bible from original languages into English
 - Remember – this is from the 1st century to 1500s' – no English Bible from Greek/Hebrew – we are spoiled!
- He was heavily persecuted and constantly having to move to escape.
- Printed 3000 of these but only 4 survive today
- Worked on the OT but never finished
- Arrested for his translation, convicted and executed (strangled and burned). Last words, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes" (Metzger, 60)
- Tyndale Bible heavily influential after his death

Tyndale to KJV

Other English translations took place prior to the KJV

- Coverdale Bible – took Tyndale's and completed it
- Matthew's Bible – similar to Coverdale
- "Great Bible" – great due to its size...it was the first self "authorized" version as it said in the preface, "this is the bible apoynted to the use of the churches" – the BYBLE, that's the book for me!
- Geneva Bible
- Bishops Bible – all of these were in the 1500s

1611 KJV - landmark translation

Came about due to religious disunity in England...some of which came about due to some of the earlier, poor, English translations like the Geneva Bible (which took political jabs at people).

1604 – King James

- King James got together a committee of 47 scholars from the church of England and some rules. These guys were the best in their day.
- Rule 1 – follow the bishop's bible as best you can "as little altered as the truth of the original will permit"

- Rule 2 – use other English translations were they better reflect the truth of the original (Coverdale, Matthews, etc)
- Rule 3 – Don't use the word "congregation"...just "church" (as in Church of England)
- Bible divided up – 6 panels of translators. When section completed by the panel it is sent to the other panels for feedback.

The KJV was the best English translation produced by that time.

Beyond the KJV

There weren't any really notable translations between the KJV and 1901 (English Standard Version)

1952 – Revised standard version

1978 – NIV

NKJV - 1982

Next week – we will talk about translations:

- Which ones are available
- Which ones are best
- How to pick a good one
- How to use them with each other
- Online resources