

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, February 18, 2015 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

ALL ABOUT THE BIBLE How We Got the Bible – Transmission Part 2 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:19-21

*“¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God^[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)*

“¹⁹ We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” – 2 Peter 1:19-21 (NIV)

FOR REVIEW

Let’s review just a little bit where we have been in our study “All About the Bible.” This study is primarily concerned with how we got the Bible, is it reliable and how to get the most out of it. We began our study by look at what the Bible says about the itself. You know... the claims that the Bible makes about itself. Our two key text for what the Bible claims about itself and the key texts for our study are:

2 Key Bible Texts for What the Bible Claims for Itself:

1. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** – Claims that the Bible is inspired by God and is profitable for us.
2. **2 Peter 1:19-21** – Claims that the Bible came from God and goes a step further in tell us how men got it from God. Namely that man got it straight from God as *“they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*

***Observation:** Based on these two verses we must affirm that at some point our faith in the claims of the Bible must be relied upon for the ultimate acceptance and believe in the Bible as the Word of God. The Bible claim it and therefore we must choose to either believe it by faith and place the full force of our being on that claim or reject it. From this point the study of how we got the Bible and how it has been preserved by God for us becomes based solely on our understanding of what the Bible says about itself and the external evidences that point to and reinforce those claims. A major point to understand in a study like this is that it may not answer all your questions, may leave you feeling a bit vulnerable about the reliability of the Bible, and may leave you with more questions. That is why faith must be our beginning place*

in accepting God's Word as itself. With that said there is more external evidence that points to the Bible's claims about itself, its reliability and trustworthiness and authenticity, and the fact that it is the Word of God as it claims... there is more evidence of these things than there is for any other piece of literature or sacred writing every produced by man.

Now we began our study, a couple of weeks ago by looking at a diagram/chart of how the Bible came from God to us. Here is a simplified version of it.

GOD: Revelation → Inspiration → ANCIENT MAN: Transmission → Canonicity → MODERN MAN: Textual Criticism → Translation → ME: Interpretation → Illumination → Application

We looked, thus far in our study, at the subject of “revelation” and “inspiration.” The next step in the process of how God’s Word, the Bible, came to us is the subject of “transmission” or the transmission of Scripture, the Bible to man. We began our study on “transmission” last week. That is, how was it accurately written down or copied so that what we have today is reliable. How did it get from God’s mouth to paper, so-to-speak. Let’s review how we defined the word “transmission.”

A Definition of Biblical Transmission:

“Transmission is the ancient process of accurately copying Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek scriptures for successive generations.”

Again, the term “transmission” describes the ancient process of copying Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek manuscripts to preserve them for future generation and to distribute them for greater use. Since there were no copy machines, the texts had to be copied by hand. In this way they were “transmitted.”

We said, that begs the question, is the Bible which I own and read today the real Bible? Or has it been distorted? How can I believe the Bible if I do not even know if it is accurate? Nowadays, there are scores of English versions of the Bible. Many people wonder how accurate these Bibles are. That essentially is the problem of “transmission.” In this study our aim to sum up any question of the accuracy and reliability of the “transmission” of the Bible as we now have it. This will also lead briefly in to the subject of “canonicity” that will be studied a little deeper in our next study.

Here is the basic question we will ask in this study, “Is the original Bible still in existence today?” And we will seek to answer that question based on what we know of the “transmission” of Scripture.

THE QUESTION: "Is the original Bible still in existence?"

THE ANSWER: The answer to this question is “no” and “yes.”

In the strictest sense, no, the original documents that comprise the 66 books of the Bible—sometimes called the “autographs”—are not in the possession of any organization. However, in a

very real way, yes, humankind does have the actual words and books that make up the Word of God. How can this be? It is tied up in an understanding of the “transmission of the Bible.” To gain an understanding of how the original Bible was written and how it compares to what is read today, it’s necessary to look at the process that resulted in its original compilation and what has happened since that time.

Background of the Original Bible

According to skeptics, there has never been a true “original” Bible. For example, Dan Brown’s fictional book *The Da Vinci Code* has his storyline ‘expert’ say the following about the Bible:

“The Bible did not arrive by fax from heaven. . . . The Bible is the product of man, my dear. Not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds. Man created it as a historical record of tumultuous times, and it has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book.” –The DaVinci Code

Brown’s charge does indeed belong in a work of fiction because the assertion is simply not true.

It is correct that the Bible was written over a long period of time.

Reminder of Some Facts About the Writing of the Bible:

- 1. The Bible was written by 40 authors**
- 2. The Bible was written over a period of some 1,500 years**
- 3. The Bible is made up of 66 books**
- 4. The Bible contains 39 books in the Old Testament**
- 5. The Bible contains 27 books in the New Testament**
- 6. The Old Testament is oftentimes divided into three sections:**
 - (1) The Pentateuch, which is sometimes referred to as “The Law” and includes the first five books of the Bible (sometimes called the Torah by the Jewish people)**
 - (2) The Prophets, which includes all the major and minor prophetic writings**
 - (3) The Writings, which includes Psalms, Proverbs, and a number of other books.**
- 7. The New Testament is also divided into three segments:**
 - (1) The Gospels**
 - (2) Church History, which basically includes just the book of Acts**
 - (3) The Apostolic Writings, which includes everything else**

Compilation of the Original Old Testament

How was the original Bible as described above compiled? Its assemblage can be traced through Scripture in a fairly accurate manner.

What Scripture Tells Us About the Transmission Process:

- 1. Moses -** Moses wrote the Pentateuch (Exodus 17:14; 24:4, 7; 34:27; Numbers 33:2; Joshua 1:8; Matthew 19:8; John 5:46-47; Romans 10:5)
- 2. The Ark of the Covenant -** After which, it was placed in the Ark of the Covenant and preserved (Deuteronomy 31:24). Over time, other inspired texts were added to the first five books of the Bible.

3. **The Temple Treasury** - During the time of David and Solomon, the books compiled until that time were taken and placed in the temple treasury (1 Kings 8:6) and cared for by the priests who served in the temple (2 Kings 22:8).
4. **King Hezekiah** - More books were also added during the reign of King Hezekiah—David’s hymns, Solomon’s proverbs, and prophetic books such as Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah (Proverbs 25:1).
5. **The Prophets** - In general, as the prophets of God spoke and their words were written down, they were included in what today is the Old Testament until the Old Testament as we now know it was complete.

The Continuing Transmission Process Throughout History:

1. **Babylonian Captivity** - During the Israeli exile in the sixth century, the books were scattered, but not lost. Around 539 B.C. and after the return of Israel from the Babylonian captivity, Ezra the priest later re-collected all of them back together and added other works to the compilation.
2. **The Second Temple** - They were then stored in the Ark that was constructed for the second temple and were meticulously copied (the Masoretes) to protect the inspired writings.
3. **The Hebrew Bible** - This collection of Old Testament books, written in the Hebrew language, is what Judaism calls the “Hebrew Bible.”
4. **The Septuagint or LXX** - In the third century B.C., the Old Testament books were translated into Greek by a team of 70 Jewish scholars, with the finished work being called the LXX (which stands for “70”), or the Septuagint (a Latin word derived from phrase “the translation of the seventy interpreters”). The Septuagint was certainly used and quoted by the Apostles, including Paul, in their writings. The oldest manuscripts of the LXX include some 1st and 2nd century B.C. fragments.
5. **The Dead Sea Scrolls** - In 1947, the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in the area of Qumran in Israel. Modern dating techniques state the age of the scrolls to be (depending on the scroll) anywhere from the 5th century B.C. to the 1st century A.D. Historians believe the Jewish scribes maintained the site to preserve God’s Word and most certainly to protect the writings from the destruction of Jerusalem that occurred in A.D. 70. The Dead Sea Scrolls represent nearly every book of the Old Testament and comparisons with modern copies that exist today show them to be virtually identical, with the main deviations being the spellings of some individuals’ names and various numbers quoted in Scripture. The Dead Sea Scrolls are a testimony to the accuracy and preservation of the Old Testament and provide confidence that the Old Testament existing today is the same Old Testament as that which was used by Jesus. In fact, Luke records a statement made by Jesus regarding the assemblage of the Old Testament: *“For this reason also the wisdom of God said, ‘I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute, so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation’” (Luke 11:49-51, emphasis added).* Jesus confirmed the 39 books of the Old Testament in these verses. Abel’s death is found in Genesis and Zechariah’s in [2 Chronicles 24:20-21](#), which, from an ordering (chronological) perspective, is the last book in the Hebrew Bible. Wow!

Compilation of the Original New Testament

Dan Burstein, in his book *Secrets of the Code* (a book similar to Dan Brown's book), says this about the New Testament:

"Eventually, four Gospels and twenty-three other texts were canonized into a Bible. This did not occur, however, until the sixth century." – Secrets of the Code

Is this assertion true? Actually, it is 100% false. The truth is the composition of the New Testament was officially settled by A. D. 397. Let me give you the basic process of how this came to be.

The Basic Process of How the New Testament Came About:

1. **Marcion** - However, the majority of the New Testament was accepted as authoritative much earlier. The first collection of New Testament books was proposed by a man named Marcion in A.D. 140. Marcion was a docetist (docetism is a system of belief that says all spirit is good and all material matter is bad), and so Marcion excluded any book that spoke of Jesus being both divine and human, and he also edited Paul's letters to match his own philosophy.
2. **Muratorian Canon** - The next proposed collection of New Testament books on record was the Muratorian Canon, dated A.D. 170. It included all four gospels, Acts, 13 of Paul's letters, 1, 2, 3 John, Jude, and Revelation.
3. **Athanasius and the Council of Carthage** - The final New Testament Canon was first identified by the church father Athanasius in A. D. 367 and ratified by the Council of Carthage in A. D. 397.

Let's go back even further for when the New Testament was first accepted as the Word of God. History shows that the actual New Testament read today in modern Bibles was recognized much earlier and that it is an exact reflection of what the "autographs" contained.

3 Proofs of An Earlier Acceptance of New Testament Writing as the Word of God:

1. **The Bible (itself)** - First, Scripture itself shows that the writings of the New Testament were considered inspired and on a par with the Old Testament. For example, Paul writes, "For the Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,' and '*The laborer is worthy of his wages*'" ([1 Timothy 5:18](#), emphasis added). The latter quotation is from [Luke 10:7](#), which shows Paul considered Luke's Gospel on par with Scripture as a whole. Another example includes a statement made by Peter: "Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do *the other Scriptures*, to their own destruction" ([2 Peter 3:15-16](#), emphasis added). It is clear from Peter's quote that he regarded Paul's letter equal to the Old Testament canon.
2. **The Early Church Fathers** - Second, quotations exist from the early church fathers that allow the near reconstruction of the entire New Testament as it is found today. For example, Clement (c. A.D. 95) quotes from 11 New Testament books, Ignatius (c. A.D. 107) quotes from nearly every New Testament book, and Polycarp (a disciple of John, c. A.D. 110) quotes from 17 New Testament books. Working with early church fathers' quotes, the entire

New Testament can be pieced together with the exception of some 20-27 verses, most of them from 3 John. Such evidence provides witness to the fact that the New Testament was recognized far before the Council of Carthage in A. D. 397 and that the New Testament reflects today what was written 2,000 years ago. In other words long before the Council of Cathage recognition the church was using the New Testament as the sacred and inspired Word of God on par with the Old Testament.

3. **Manuscript Evidence (massive)** - Third, there is no literary rival in the ancient world to the number of manuscript copies and the early dating of the New Testament. There are 5,300 Greek, 10,000 Latin, and 9,000 miscellaneous copies of the New Testament that exist today and more continue to be unearthed via archaeology. The combination of early dating and the enormous number of New Testament copies causes historical experts such as Sir Frederic Kenyon (former director/principal librarian of the British Museum) to say, *"The interval, then, between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."*

THE CONCLUSION: Original Bible

In summary, it can be said that while the original autographs of the Old and New Testaments are not in the possession of anyone today, because of all the copies that exist and the work that has been done by biblical historians via the science of textual criticism (which seeks to restore the Bible to its original autographs), there is no loss of confidence among competent scholars that today's modern Bible reflects the Old and New Testament writers' work. As an analogy, if the original and preserved unit of measure known as a "yard" was lost in a fire in its holding place in Washington, D.C., there is little doubt that that measurement could be replaced with full assurance through all the exact copies of it that exist elsewhere. The same is true of God's Word.

Read more: <http://www.gotquestions.org/original-Bible.html#ixzz3S8LODfPc>