

**BIBLE SURVEY I**  
**An Introduction**  
**to the Bible**

by

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Global Missions  
United Pentecostal Church International  
Weldon Springs, Missouri

Printed in U.S.A.

## FOREWORD

For several years Overseas Ministries has made available to overseas Bible schools a textbook entitled "Bible Survey" written by Darline Kantola. Her outline of the various books of the Bible with comments offered on various units within the chapters of the Bible has been highly praised.

Recently, we have felt the need to expand the Bible Survey study series. Therefore, we are bringing to you three courses of study: *Introduction to the Bible*, *Old Testament Survey*, and *New Testament Survey*. My special thanks goes, once again, to Darline Kantola for her assistance in this, and we have added a new dimension with the capable and qualified contributions by Dorsey Burk and editing and typing by his wife, Beverly.

The commentaries in the Bible Survey series are intended for Bible school teachers, leaders of Bible study groups, Bible school students, and other serious students of the Word of God. I feel that this series will give solid help in understanding selected books of the Old and New Testaments. It is certainly not intended to be an exhaustive commentary. For each book there is helpful introduction discussing various subjects such as the authorship, date, purposes and giving of explanations and views set forth throughout the years. Each unit in the book is carefully examined and unfolded under the headings and subheadings of a unifying outline. Challenges are faced courageously and the meaning of each is explained with the hope that lessons for our day can be extracted and applied. The courses are not meant to deal with a lot of details, but with the main facts of each book and the content thereof.

The Bible contains 3,566,480 letters, 810,697 words, 31,175 verses, 1,189 chapters, and 66 books. It is, therefore, a "Divine library," and demands not only spiritual illumination but also the practical application of reverent and diligent study methods in order to master its diversified subjects, as well as its unified message. I appreciate the authors of this series giving attention to the importance of the many aspects of the truths of God's Word. I thank the authors for not trying to entertain us, but rather give us a map with which to aid our study of the Word of God. It is my sincere thanks to the authors and it is my earnest prayer that their efforts will be prayerfully received. We certainly need men and women who live the Bible. May the Lord use these exceedingly useful volumes to help us all learn love and live the Word of God.

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# I. INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE SURVEY

## A. Bible Survey Provides a Panoramic View Of The Bible

The typical Christian is often perplexed when he first begins to read the Bible. He usually begins somewhere in the New Testament and continues reading there more frequently because the content of the Old Testament often seems confusing. He does not see the Bible as a unified whole; he sees it in "bits and pieces" with no meaningful relationship between the parts. This is not the picture which God intends for man to have. He wants man to see His whole plan for mankind as displayed and revealed in all of Scripture.

Every portion of the Bible lends itself well to a detailed study. But before a study of the parts can attain their full significance, the student must be able to view the whole purpose and content of Scripture. A Bible survey approach provides that overall knowledge of the Bible which is necessary for a correct understanding and interpretation of the individual portions of Scripture.

A panoramic, view of the Bible shows God's redemptive purpose for the human race. Without understanding this purpose, a man could easily regard some portions of the Bible as endless, detailed descriptions with little or no value. With this knowledge the Bible pages can come alive with meaning to any man.

## B. Bible Survey Reveals the Treasures of The Greatest Book in Existence

As previously mentioned, the revelation of *God's Plan of Redemption* for man is the main theme running through the pages of the Bible. A quick survey of this Book of Books gives the diligent student a clear concept of this plan. He sees the God of Creation operating through the course of history to reveal Himself in flesh to become the God of Redemption. The stories of the Old Testament are not just fascinating tales to be told, but they are revelations by God of His dealing with man which point toward the climatic events of the New Testament. From Genesis to Revelation God reveals Himself, with meaningful picture added to meaningful picture, until the complete panorama of divine redemption stands unveiled. One who surveys the Bible with open eyes find his vision reaching into the distance to see and to know a great acquaintance with the treasures of the Book of God.

## C. Bible Survey Gives a Foundation for All Study

William Tyndale believed that "a ploughboy with the Bible would know more of God than the most learned ecclesiastic who ignored it." We could add to this that a

Spirit-filled believer who knows his Bible will be more effective in sharing God with his fellow men than a theological scholar who merely knows intellectual ideas *about* the Bible rather than knowing the direct and simple message of the Bible.

While a quick survey of the Bible will not give sufficient time for a complete reading of the Bible, a student must waste no time in setting up a consistent schedule which will take him completely through the Bible in direct contact with all the words of Scripture. This important factor cannot be overly emphasized. Some of the greatest preachers of Pentecost had little to study but the Scriptures, no doubt this is what made them so great in their knowledge of God. They depended on the Word and the impressions of the Holy Ghost to give them knowledge and understanding. I trust that our day of intellectual pursuit will never cause us to depend on commentaries and various books and authors to the exclusion of the **Word** itself. May every Pentecostal student determine in his heart with the Psalmist: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). May he never depart from a careful attention to the *words of his Bible* to become enslaved with a consuming fascination for books filled with mere ideas or interpretations of men.

The Christian should always keep the study of his Bible as the foundation of all his studies. He should begin with his Bible and use it as an evaluation guide for any ideas or philosophies he encounters.

## II. THE IMPORTANCE OF BIBLE STUDY

### A. The Bible Is God's Word

Many things bear witness to the authority of the Scriptures as the Word of God. Thus, the man who comes to know and understand the contents of the Bible will reap great blessings as he adjusts his life according to its precepts. The man who ignores and despises the words of this Book will do himself untold harm.

The Bible declares that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (II Timothy 3:16) and that "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:21). Through personal experience, many great men of the past and present have given testimony to the accuracy of Scripture in being what it claims to be. How could finite man dare to ignore the importance of this message from God?

C. W. Slemming, in his work, *The Bible Digest*, makes these declarations:

*Many scientists have verified the Word of God through investigations. Many archaeologists have proved the Word of God through discovery. Many saints have enjoyed the Word of God through reading and obedience. Many infidels have attacked the Word of God without disproving it.*

God has miraculously preserved His Word for the benefit of mankind. One unique testimony of this is cited by Sidney Collett in *All About the Bible*:

*Voltaire, the noted French infidel who died in 1778, said that in one hundred years from his time Christianity would be swept from existence and passed into history. But what has happened? Voltaire has passed into history, while the circulation of the Bible continues to increase in almost all parts of the world."*

Other accounts state that Voltaire declared that within one hundred years only a few odd Bibles would be found in museums. At an auction sale Voltaire's entire works (ninety-one volumes) were sold for the equivalent of \$1.41, and the British government bought just a portion of the Bible (the Codex Sinaiticus) for the equivalent of \$700,000, the highest price ever paid for a book. Just fifty years after Voltaire's death the Geneva Bible Society used his press and house to produce Bibles by the stacks.

### B. The Bible Must Be Studied to Be Known

No substitute can be found for a careful and constant study of the Bible, for it is by the words of Scripture that we know God. God gave His Word to bring moral and spiritual guidance to man. The man who acknowledges this will give careful attention

to learning and heeding its contents.

II Timothy 3:15-17 shows the importance of a knowledge of the Word of God. Timothy is recognized as one who had a knowledge of the “holy scriptures” from his childhood. Then he is instructed concerning the purpose of “scripture.” The instruction is for all men, not just Timothy:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works(11 Timothy 3:16-17).

It is a dangerous thing to study what men think about the Bible without giving foremost attention to what the Bible says for itself. The very words of the Bible will convict man of sin and lead him into paths’ of righteousness. The writer of Hebrews asserted that “the Word of God is quick and powerful.”

*A reading of the Bible is a requisite for studying the Bible. The study of scores of books about the Bible will never compensate for a firsthand reading of the direct words of Scripture. Christians need to be challenged to read the Word of the Lord. In a recent meeting I asked for a show of hands of those who had read through the Old and New Testaments. In this group of approximately 150 Spirit-filled believers, only three had read through the Old Testament, and only around twenty had read the New Testament. Does this not testify to a lack of knowledge in the Scriptures’? This should challenge the Bible teacher and student to create in others a thirst for a consistent reading and study of God’s Word.*

Some men take portions of the Bible and use them to support their “pet” ideas. But God would have men to know the whole message of His Word. F. F. Bruce, in *The Books and the Parchments*, states, “Any part of the human body can only be properly explained in reference to the whole body. And any part of the Bible can only be properly explained in reference to the whole Bible.”

### **C. A Suggested Plan for Bible Reading**

Bible reading is the foundation for Bible study. I trust this has been well stressed in the previous section. Since many students fail to get started in a systematic reading of the Bible, the following simple suggestions are made. First, obtain or make a chart which lists all the books of the Bible with numbers to indicate each chapter of each book. These chapters can then be marked one by one as the chapter is read.

Example:

Esther 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I have learned that even college students respond much better to a regular program of Bible reading when they can chart their progress.

Second, plan a time especially for Bible reading. Our lives need to be adjusted so that time is given to reading of the Word. It is not possible for the pulpit or classroom teaching to give us all the exposure to the Bible that we need.

Be encouraged by this knowledge: Campbell Morgan once stated, "The Bible can be read from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22 at pulpit rate in seventy-eight hours." As he was challenged by a lawyer on his statement, Morgan challenged the jurist to try it. The lawyer did. He read the Bible through in less than eighty hours. In simple terms, this means that the average reader could read through the Bible in one year in less than fifteen minutes per day.

### III. THE ORIGIN OF THE NAMES FOR THE BIBLE

#### A. History Of the Word Bible

The unity or oneness of the content of the Bible is reflected in its singular name. Originally the title was not singular, for in the early days of Christianity the Greek-speaking Christians referred to all the Old and New Testament books as *La Biblia* meaning "the books." The Latins borrowed the title *Biblia* but translated it in the singular. This word then came through Old French into English as Bible.

The Greek use of the title, *La Biblia*, originated from the name of the papyrus or byblos reed used in antiquity for making scrolls or books. The Greeks quite naturally came to title a book *bibios* or a small book *biblion*. Later the Greeks called their sacred Scriptures, *La Biblia*, "the books."

#### B. Other Names Used for The Bible

##### 1. Scriptures

The term *Scriptures* is derived from the Latin and means "the writings." The use of *Scripture* to refer to the Bible developed from its use in Bible passages. The word has come into common use as another name for the Bible.

In its precise meaning, the singular word *Scripture* refers to passages in the Old Testament which are quoted or referred to in the New Testament. In the plural *Scriptures* refers to books or a collection of books of the Old Testament. As the writings of the New Testament came into being, they too became known as Scripture or Scriptures.

The word Scripture is found thirty-two times in the King James Version. The plural form is found twenty-one times. Daniel 10:21 is the only Old Testament passage which employs the direct term Scripture. Examples of use in the Bible can be noted:

- \* In Exodus 32:16 the commandments written on tablets of stone are called "the writing of God."
- \* Daniel 10:21 refers to "the scripture of truth."
- \* Mark 12:10 refers to a particular "scripture" of the Old Testament (Psalm 118:22).
- \* Romans 9:17 refers to the account of the children of Israel in Egypt as "scripture."
- \* The words delivered to Abraham are regarded as "scripture" (Galatians 3:8).
- \* II Timothy 3:16 identifies "all scripture" as being "given by inspiration of God."

## 2. The Word of God

“The Word of God” is a phrase that has come into common use to identify the Bible. It is certainly a proper title, for it marks the Bible as being distinct from the writings of man. This phrase is used repeatedly in the Bible in reference to the words which God has given unto man. A few examples are given:

- \* “The word of God came to Nathan” (I Chronicles 17:3).
- \* The Psalms speak of the “word of the Lord.”
- \* “Every word of God is pure” (Proverbs 30:5).
- \* “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (Luke 4:4).
- \* “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Hebrews 4:12).

In a correct sense, we can refer to the total content of the Bible as “the Word of God,” for these words in their entirety make up the body of truth which God has divinely imparted to man. They are of a certainty God’s words to man!

## IV. THE FORMAT OF THE BIBLE

### A. General Information About the Bible

#### 1. Authorship and time of writing

The Bible is comprised of sixty-six books written over a period of about 1,600 years by about forty different writers. Moses authored the first books of the Bible around 1500 B.C. by the inspiration of God, and the Apostle John added God's final revelation about 97 A.D. God used men of every station of life to pen his words to mankind: herdsmen, kings, priests, prophets, farm laborers, fishermen, physicians, tax collectors, lawyers, and teachers. These "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (11 Peter 1:21).

#### 2. Unity of the Bible

While the Bible is a collection of sixty-six books, it is by no means just a small library of varied subjects. It is not a curious collector's item. Its sixty-six books form a unified whole with a main theme running through each book and tying one to the other. These books are the "divine library" which fit together in perfect harmony. The content of each book adds something to the total revelation which God designed to give mankind. Though authored by many different men in different stages of history, no book contradicts another book. The writings of one book are more clearly understood by comparing them with the writings of another book. Even though Moses wrote at Sinai, separated from John the Revelator on the Isle of Patmos by 1600 years, we often compare Genesis with Revelation and find continuity of thought. The Old Testament prophecies are marvelously and accurately fulfilled in the New Testament. Agnostics who have tried to refute this unity have found themselves bowing in recognition as they have studied openly and carefully the evidences of this unity.

#### 3. Languages of the Bible

The original language of the Old Testament was Hebrew. Threesmall sections were, however, written in Aramaic. These Aramaic portions were Jeremiah 10:11; Daniel 2:4-7:28; and Ezra 4:8-6:18.

The original language of the New Testament was Greek. This was the common language of the Roman world. Even though the Jews continued to speak Aramaic in the days of Christ, God directed men to write the New Testament in the language that would be more freely read and widely understood. While Aramaic was the common language in Palestine in the time of Christ, the writers of the New Testament would have been familiar with the universal language, Greek.

## **B. The Old and New Testaments**

### 1. Main divisions of the Bible

The Bible is divided into two main sections, the Old and New Testaments. Thirty-nine books comprise the Old Testament and twenty-seven books make up the New Testament.

### 2. Meaning of testament

The word testament as used for these Bible divisions refers to the idea of “covenant” or “agreement.” The word testament comes from the Latin word testamentum which means “a witness.” The Greek usage supplies the idea of a witness which constitutes an agreement. The contents of the Bible do certainly convey the terms of God’s covenant with man.

What we now call the Old Testament was referred to in the early Christian era as the “Scriptures,” or “the Law and the Prophets.” When the New Testament was written and recognized, the title “Old Covenant” was applied to the early writings which we now label the Old Testament. The name “New Covenant” was used to identify the writings of the apostles and their companion which we now call the New Testament. The designation of the Old and New Testaments as such has passed into the English from the Latin usage.

## **C. The Order of The Books and The Divisions**

The present arrangement of the books of the Bible is in part chronological, largely historical, in time sequence) and in part logical (arranged by type of material).

The Hebrew Scriptures were arranged in three parts as follows:

- \* The Law of Moses
- \* The Prophets
- \* The Psalms or other writings

Jesus made reference to these divisions in Luke 24:44 and thus gave his approval to the entire of the Old Testament Scriptures: “That all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.” This Hebrew arrangement still appears in most Hebrew manuscripts, but the English and other version follow the order and divisions of the Septuagint version (Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures completed during the third century B.C.). The Hebrew Old Testament contains twenty-four books while those which follow the Septuagint version contain thirty-nine books.

The common divisions into which the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament are grouped are as follows:

\* The Pentateuch (the Five Books of Moses)

1. Genesis
2. Exodus
3. Leviticus
4. Numbers
5. Deuteronomy

\* The Historical Books

6. Joshua
7. Judges
8. Ruth
9. I Samuel
10. II Samuel
11. I Kings
12. II Kings
13. I Chronicles
14. II Chronicles
15. Ezra
16. Nehemiah
17. Esther

\* The Wisdom or Poetical Books

18. Job
19. Psalms
20. Proverbs
21. Ecclesiastes
22. Song of Solomon

\* The Prophetical Books

- a. The Major Prophets (5 books)
  23. Isaiah
  24. Jeremiah
  25. Lamentations
  26. Ezekiel
  27. Daniel

b. The Minor Prophets (12 books)

28. Hosea
29. Joel
30. Amos
31. Obadiah
32. Jonah
33. Micah
34. Nahum
35. Habakkuk
36. Zephaniah
37. Haggai
38. Zechariah
39. Malachi

As one can see, the Old Testament consists of five main sections. The first two divisions (the Pentateuch and the historical books) cover the entire period of Old Testament events. Most of the books in the last three divisions were written in, or relate to, the last part of the period covered by the historical books. For example, many of the Psalms relate to the period of the kings. Likewise, the prophets wrote chiefly during the reign of kings and in the restoration period. The designation of the major and minor prophets has nothing to do with the importance or quality of the messages. It merely designates the longer books from the shorter ones.

The twenty-seven books of the **New Testament** are commonly grouped as follows:

- \* The Gospel's
  1. Matthew
  2. Mark
  3. Luke
  4. John
- \* History
  5. The Book of Acts
- \* The Epistles

a. The Epistles of Paul (13 books)

6. Romans
7. I Corinthians
8. II Corinthians
9. Galatians
10. Ephesians
11. Philippians
12. Colossians
13. I Thessalonians
14. II Thessalonians
15. I Timothy
16. II Timothy
17. Titus
18. Philemon

b. The General Epistles (8 books)

19. Hebrews, (sometimes included with Pauline epistles)
20. James
21. I Peter
22. II Peter
23. I John
24. II John
25. III John
26. Jude

\* Prophecy

27. The Book of Revelation

The New Testament consists of five sections if the two sections of the Epistles are recognized separately. The Gospels and the Book of Acts are historical in content, as were the first two divisions of the Old Testament. The Epistles are often compared with the wisdom of Poetical Books for their instructional and inspirational content. The last division of the New Testament is prophetic, as was the close of the Old Testament.

The original manuscripts contained no chapter or verse divisions. These were added at later times to assist in locating references.

The first divisions of Scriptures were of the Pentateuch which began as early as 586 B.C. These divisions and others which followed were designed to aid in the oral reading of the Scriptures. The Greeks made divisions around 250 A.D. The actual chapter

divisions date back to about 350 A.D. During the thirteenth century these sections were changed into the modern chapter divisions by Stephen Langton, a professor at the University of Paris (Geisler & Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*).

Varied forms of verse indicators appeared in different versions, but the first standard verse divisions came around 900 A.D.

Varied reports can be found about the first appearance of chapter and verse divisions. Josh McDowell in his well-documented work, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc., 1972), claims that “the Latin Vulgate was the first Bible to incorporate both verse and chapter divisions in both Old and New Testaments.”

The Bible is divided into 1189 chapters: 929 in the Old Testaments and 260 in the New Testament. The Bible is divided into 31,163 verses. Psalm 119 is the longest chapter. Psalm 117 is the shortest chapter and also the middle chapter of the Bible.

The student should keep in mind that the chapter and verse divisions are mechanical devices to aid in locating Bible passages. The divisions do not always come where there is a natural division of thought. Sometimes the full meaning of a passage can be lost if the reader discontinues his reading at the end of a chapter or verse.

## V. THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

### A. The Significance of Inspiration

The Bible came from God; it is not a human production. This truth is foundational for claiming the Bible as the authority for doctrine and conduct. The manner in which the Bible finds its source in God is known as inspiration. The Bible states, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God. . ." (II Timothy 3:16).

Belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures is the initial declaration of faith of the United Pentecostal Church International:

*We believe the Bible to be inspired of God, the infallible Word of God. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Timothy 3:16). (Articles of Faith, United Pentecostal Church International.)*

The Bible is the only God-given authority which man possesses; therefore, all doctrine, faith, hope, and all instruction for the church must be based upon and harmonize with the Bible. It is to be read and studied by all men everywhere and can only be clearly understood by those who are anointed by the Holy Spirit (I John 2:27). "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:20, 21).

### B. The Meaning of Inspiration

Inspiration is the method by which God's revelation has been communicated to man and recorded in the Bible. "To inspire" literally means "to breathe into." When Paul said that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God," he taught that the words of Scripture were "God-breathed." God's breath or divine influence was in all the words making them His very expression or thoughts. II Timothy 3:16, as has been noted, clearly expresses that inspiration is the method God used to impart His truth.

II Peter 1:21 teaches how God operated by inspiration through man to impart truth which man could not have otherwise known. Men of God were inspired to write, but not of their own thinking. "For prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." This was an influence of the Holy Spirit upon the lives of the writers which caused them to record the exact thoughts of God which He desired man to know. We cannot fully explain just how God enabled each writer to record His message, but we need not question that the Almighty One supernaturally directed the mind and activity of each one.

William Evans in his work, *Great Doctrines of the Bible*, summarizes the Doctrine of Inspiration effectively:

*“Holy men of God, qualified by the infusion of the breath of God, wrote in obedience to the divine command, and were kept from all error, whether they revealed truths previously unknown or recorded truths already familiar.”*

### **C. The Extent of Inspiration**

Inspiration is all inclusive. The entire content of the Bible is inspired by God. The Bible has only one author. God is that author. All forty writers wrote as they were directed by God. If the Bible declares that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God,” then we must accept that there is no Scripture or portion of the Bible that is not authored by God.

I Timothy 3:16 teaches complete or full inspiration. The idea of *partial inspiration* is contrary to the teaching of Scripture. Some men try to say that the Bible contains the Word of God. They leave room for the idea that some of the Bible is not “God inspired.” The Bible does not merely contain the Word of God; it is the Word of God. This vast difference must be recognized. Those who teach the lesser view of partial inspiration can disregard some Scriptures at their own discretion. They can easily alter the true meaning and teachings of Scripture.

Verbal-Plenary Inspiration is the term used to identify the view that ALL of Scripture is divinely inspired. Verbal inspiration means that each word and thought of Scripture was divinely ordered. The original copy penned by each writer had no error. That writing expressed precisely in word and thought what God intended. While we acknowledge that mistakes could have been made by later scribes and translators, the original writing was perfectly done under the direct influence of Almighty God. (May we add that the transmission of the text has been miraculously guided by God so that we still have a clear “voice” from God of His will for mankind. Errors have proved to be minor and have not altered the doctrines God gave to man through the Scriptures.)

Plenary inspiration means that “all scripture” was fully inspired by God. No portion of the Bible was merely the expression or thoughts of the writer. Every verse of the Bible, though written by man, was given by God as a part of that revelation of truth.

### **D. The Proof of Inspiration**

#### **1. Internal proof—the testimony of Scripture**

The Old Testament writers affirmed that their writings were the words of God:

- \* "And God spake all these words" (Exodus 20:1).
- \* "And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words" (Exodus :34:27).
- \* The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (II Samuel 23:2).
- \* "Then came the word of the LORD unto me, saying" (Ezekiel 20:2).
- \* "Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying" (Jeremiah 1:4).
- \* "The burden [oracle] of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi" (Malachi 1:1).

The New Testament writers declared that the Scriptures came from God:

- \* "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:21).
- \* "God who ... spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" (Hebrews 1:1).
- \* "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (II Timothy 3:16).

Jesus spoke of the Scriptures in a manner which ascribed divine authority to them. In Matthew 5:17, 18, Jesus spoke of the Law and Prophets, attributing to them an authority above that of man. In Luke 24:44, Jesus referred to the three sections of the Hebrew Old Testament: The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms (or the writings). He ascribed a prophetic element to them which can only be supernatural. Luke 24:27 also shows Christ proving the prophetic aspect of the Old Testament as he explained its fulfillment in His own coming.

## 2. External proof – testimonies from outside the Bible

Many *archaeological discoveries* in this twentieth century prove the accuracy of the Scriptures which, in turn, testify of their divine origin. Aside from direct "inspiration from God," Moses could not have recorded events with such accuracy. Professor Rowley points out that scholars today "have a much greater respect for the patriarchal stories than was formerly common ... because the evidence warrants it."

Nelson Glueck, the renowned Jewish archaeologist, declares that "it may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference" (*Rivers in the Desert: History of Negev*, 1969).

Henry M. Morris Points out, "it must be extremely significant that, in view of the great mass of corroborative evidence regarding the biblical history of these periods there exists today not one unquestionable find of archaeology that proves the Bible to be in error at any point" (*The Bible and Modern Science*, 1956).

Many of the details of the New Testament record which at one time were questioned have been verified. For example, the court mentioned 'where Jesus was tried by Pilate

(John 19:13) has been labeled as a “myth.” William F. Albright, in the *Archaeology of Palestine*, describes the findings of recent times which identify this court and prove its historicity.

The testimony of science verifies the divine origin of Scripture. Precise, declarations were made by the writers of Scripture about things which they would not have known nor been able to report. While the Bible makes no claim to be a scientific reference, it cannot be found to be in error in any of its declarations which relate to scientific fields. If the ideas were merely human, more advanced scientific knowledge would surely have pinpointed errors in their reporting. But the fact remains that true science has never been found in conflict with the Bible. An interesting observation is that Isaiah spoke about the “circle of the earth,” and yet men long after his time thought the earth to be flat. (See Isaiah 40:22.) Of course, science has proved the accuracy of Isaiah’s statement.

Human experience testifies to inspiration. Every man who has accepted the words of the Bible as the guide to salvation and obeyed accordingly has found a satisfying experience in Christ.

The Bible offers many practical answers to human needs. Men have found the words of Scripture an answer to their needs. Its principles work and prove far more effective than human philosophies.

The man who has accepted Christ as his personal Savior has an inward testimony of the divine inspiration of Scripture. The purpose of scripture – To reveal the Christ and salvation – has found its fulfillment in him.

*The testimony of prophecy* – The Bible abounds with prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah and various events of human history. The fulfillment of these prophecies is one of the great proofs of the “inspiration” of the Scriptures. A few of these fulfilled prophecies will be cited for examples. Selected items are from Josh McDowell’s book, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, in which he presents an excellent defense of the Christian faith.

McDowell states that “one of the most unusual prophecies in the Bible is that concerning the ancient city of Tyre” (Ezekiel 26:3-21). He lists the following predictions from these verses:

- \* Nebuchadnezzar will destroy the mainland city of Tyre (26:8).
- \* Many nations against Tyre (26:3)
- \* Make her a bare rock; flat like the top of a rock (26:4)
- \* Fishermen will spread nets over the site (26:5)
- \* Throw debris into the water (26:12)
- \* Never be rebuilt (26:14)

- \* Never be found again (26:21)

Following this listing he gives a detailed description from history of how all of these came to pass. He summarizes his account with a quotation from Peter Stoner (Science Speaks):

*“If Ezekiel had looked at Tyre in his day and had made these seven predictions in human wisdom, these estimates mean that there would have been only one chance in 75,000,000 of their all coming true. They all came true in the minutest detail.”*

McDowell discusses eleven other prophecies concerning towns, cities, nations, etc., and gives the evidence for their exact fulfillment. The reading of these accounts should cause even the unbeliever to acknowledge that the predictions of Scripture were far beyond any human capability. Sheer logic alone should cause one to acknowledge that God alone could have been the author of these prophecies. The God who “inspired” the writing of the predictions saw to it that they were fulfilled to the very details.

The Old Testament which was written over a 1,500 year period contains over 300 references to the Messiah which were fulfilled in Jesus. These fulfilled prophecies show plainly the “inspiration” of the Bible. The Old Testament record was completed over 400 years before the coming of Christ, and yet its predictions came to pass exactly as stated by the writers. A few of these prophecies are cited for examples:

- \* Isaiah 7:14 predicts the virgin birth. Matthew 1:18, 24, 25 shows its fulfillment.
- \* Genesis 49:10 identifies the tribe of Judah as the one from which the Messiah will come. Luke 3:23, 33 verify that Jesus was of the tribe of Judah. See also Matthew 1:2 and Hebrews 7:14.
- \* Isaiah 11:1 and 11:10 prophesy that He will come from the family of Jesse. Luke 3:23, 32 and Matthew 1:6 show that Jesus came from this family line.
- \* Micah 5:2 names Bethlehem as the place of the Messiah’s birth. Matthew 2:1 shows the fulfillment.
- \* Deuteronomy 18:18 calls him a prophet. Matthew 21:11 identifies Jesus as a prophet. See also Luke 7:16; John 4:19; 6:14; 7:40.
- \* Psalm 110:4 names him as a “priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” Hebrews 3:1 and Hebrews 5:5, 6 ascribe this office, to Jesus.
- \* His ministry of miracles is foretold in Isaiah 35:5, 6a. Its fulfillment is seen in Matthew 9:35 and many other passages.

- \* Psalm 78:2 prophesy that he would speak in parables. Matthew 13:34 verifies that in taught in parables.
- \* Zechariah 9:9 tells that he will enter Jerusalem on a donkey. Luke 19:35-37 records the fulfillment of this prediction. See also Matthew 21:6-11.
- \* The piercing of his hands and feet is foreseen in Psalm 22:16. Luke 23:33 and John 20:25 tell of Jesus' piercing.

## VI. THE PREPARATION OF THE BIBLE

### A. The Birth of The Bible

No record exists of any inspired writings prior to the time of Moses. Had there been such records it seems likely that some of the inspired writers would have made reference to them. Beginning with Moses (about 1500 B.C.), a continuing record of God's revelation to mankind was written and preserved.

The fact that Moses began his record with Creation is strong evidence that God ordained Moses' work as the first phase of His divine revelation to be preserved in writing. Before this time God seemed pleased to reveal himself orally to men such as Adam, Noah, and Abraham.

Joshua and other men followed Moses as the inspired writers of Scripture. Nearly forty men continued the work began by Moses. God chose men from all walks of life to set His Truth in writing over a period of 1,600 years. Thus, the Bible was born in the mind of God and communicated to man "line upon line" until God's full revelation was given.

### B. The Original Manuscripts

None of the original manuscripts of the Hebrew Old Testament have been found. Neither is there any knowledge of the existence of any New Testament Greek manuscripts.

The absence of original manuscripts is no cause for doubting the record of the Bible. Many thousands of copies of the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts do exist. A comparison of these manuscripts has revealed an amazing accuracy in the transmission of the text of both the Old and New Testaments.

### C. The Existing Manuscripts

The available evidence found in the thousands of manuscript copies of the Old and New Testaments confirms the accuracy of our present-day Scriptures. Capable scholars who have done comparative studies of these manuscripts have found a purity in the content unequalled in any other literature.

The existing manuscripts can be generally classified into four groups:

- \* Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament:

*None of these dated earlier than the eighth century A.D. until recent decades. With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, significant manuscript portions appeared that dated one thousand years older than the previously known manuscripts. Now evidence is available that antedates New Testament times.*

\* Greek manuscripts of the New Testament:

*Some of these date back to the fourth century, with substantial fragments dating back to the third and second centuries. These copies are not far removed in time from the original manuscripts of the first century A.D.*

\* Greek manuscripts of the Old Testament:

*These are copies from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. The Septuagint was completed in the third century B.C. The existing manuscript copies date back to the fourth century B.C. Septuagint manuscripts are quite numerous in the world's libraries.*

\* Early translations of the Scriptures:

*Manuscript copies of early translations, or portions of them, are in existence. These are in Syriac, Latin, and a few other languages. Their dates vary considerably.*

The great multitude of manuscripts now available makes it easier to do comparative studies and thus reconstruct the original wording of the text. Such studies have verified the accuracy of our Bible even though it has been transmitted through many manuscript copies and various translations.

A testimony of accuracy

The New Testament text shows far less textual corruption than any other ancient works. Studies reveal textual corruption or errors amounting to only one-half of one per cent. By comparison, the "Iliad" shows a five percent corruption from a study of its existing manuscripts. The national epic of India shows a ten percent corruption. God has certainly guarded the transmission of the Bible text so that every generation continues to have the clear "notes" of God's message to mankind.

#### **D. The Preparation of The Manuscripts and Manuscript Copies**

##### 1. The writing materials

Many of the original manuscripts would likely have been written on *papyrus*, made from the papyrus plant, which was a perishable material. Thus, the preservation of the

original copies would be most unlikely. Papyrus continued in popular use until about the third century A.D.

*Parchment* was prepared from the skin of animals such as sheep and goats. Parchment use dates to as early as 2500 B.C. It was possibly used for some original manuscripts.

Prepared from calf skin, *vellum* was often dyed purple. Some existing manuscripts are on purple vellum.

Earlier manuscripts were in roll form, averaging twenty to thirty-five feet long. Some have been known to be 144 feet long. The Septuagint translators reportedly divided some of the original Hebrew books in order to avoid such lengthy rolls.

Codex or book form was later used to make reading easier. Records indicate that Christianity was the prime reason for the development of the codex-book form.

Various types of reeds, pens and ink were used to write on these materials.

## 2. The writing

The Hebrew and Greek manuscripts were first written without any breaks between words. The Old Testament was written in consonants only, the vowel sounds being supplied by the reader. This abbreviated form saved space, but it could result in misunderstanding of the text. Of course, the custom of reading aloud, even to oneself, syllable by syllable, made the vowel sounds somewhat evident. Even today, some readers of Hebrew say they can read it more easily without the vowel signs. Vowel signs began to appear as early as the ninth century B.C. A standard system of vowel-signs was finally established about A.D. 900. The Hebrew text was arranged in columns and was read from right to left.

The manner in which the Jewish scribes so painstakingly did their work explains how the manuscripts could remain so pure. Detailed regulations guarded the work of the copyists. The Talmud, a Jewish commentary and collection of notes on the Scriptures, gives this information:

*An authentic copy must be the exemplar, from which the transcriber ought not in the least to deviate. No word or letter, not even a dot, must be written from memory, the scribe not having looked at the codex before him ... The fifth book of Moses must terminate exactly with a line, but the rest need not do so. Besides this, the copyist must sit in full Jewish dress, wash his whole body, not begin to write the name of God with a pen newly dipped in ink, and should a king address him while writing that name, he must take no notice of him.*

*(Quoted by Sir Frederic Kenyon in Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts, p. 39)*

The Jewish scribes of the period from A.D. 500 to 1000 (The Masoretic period) used additional devices to insure precise accuracy of the text. The words and even the letters of each scroll were counted to guard against both omissions and additions.

The remarkable accuracy of the Jewish scribes is shown when one Hebrew manuscript is compared with another. They are all almost identical. The main differences concern the vowel letters and other small details of spelling. The 1947 discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has provided an extraordinary proof of the accurate preservation of the Hebrew Scriptures:

*The Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah is a thousand years older than the oldest Hebrew manuscript known until this discovery. Yet the only variations are extremely minor and make no difference whatsoever in any doctrinal point. Here in the middle of the twentieth century is striking evidence of the fact-that the Old Testament as is has been preserved for us across the ages conveys the Word of the Lord exactly as it was first given through inspired prophets of old.*

*(W. T. Purkiser, Ed., Exploring the Old Testament, p. 63)*

Records indicate that Jews of the Middle Ages reverently destroyed worn copies of the Scriptures. This accounts for the absence of the oldest manuscripts. It also gives further evidence of the careful effort made to provide for accurate transmission of the Scriptures. Surely God directed the scribes work of copying the Scriptures in such a unique manner.

## **E. The Formation of The Canon**

### **1. The Meaning of Canon**

The canon identifies those books which are considered to be the binding and authoritative message from God to man. The word canon, as applied to Scripture, simply means "an officially accepted list of books." Canon comes from a Greek word which originally meant "that which measures." The Greek word is thought to have developed from the Hebrew qaneh, a reed or measuring rod.

Briefly stated, the canon of Scripture is that list of books that has been accepted as authoritative because they measure up to an unquestioned standard of inspiration. We must recognize that the formation of the canon has been a process specially directed by God. The canon is not just a man-made list of books which other men have agreed to accept.

The Scriptures are actually the product of a two-fold process: First, God directed the writing of the book through inspiration; then He guided men into recognizing the book as part of the Scriptures. In other words, our present Bible was first written by men. Then each book was recognized as possessing special authority from God and became generally accepted as part of the written Word of God. One must understand that the books of the Bible are not recognized as inspired because they are part of the canon. They were first recognized as being from God and then included in what has been called the Canon of Scripture. We can believe that God led men to a knowledge of those books which were Scripture just as much as He inspired men to write them in the first place.

## 2. Formation of the Old Testament Canon

From the time of Moses to Malachi (the Old Testament period of inspired writers), many more books were written than are part of the Scriptures. Each of the canonical sections of the Hebrew Old Testament makes reference to other writings. This observation shows that the Lord certainly did not leave man without a means for identifying His inspired, authoritative Word. The word canon did not come into use until the Christian era, but the recognition of the inspired books dates far back into Israel's history. Actually, the canon was a body of Scripture continually growing and yet complete at each stage.

The Law (Pentateuch) was clearly recognized as authoritative by the time of Hezekiah (seventh century B.C.) and probably much earlier.

The writings of the Prophets were complete by the time of Zechariah and Malachi. This section of the Hebrew canon was completed and recognized when it became apparent that the voice of the prophets was no longer heard. By the time of Christ this portion was plainly accepted as authoritative.

We have no exact insight into when the Writings were first recognized as part of the Word of God. It was definitely as early as the second century before Christ when they were included as part of the Septuagint. Jesus accounted them as a part of the Hebrew Scriptures.

In the New Testament era the writers of the New Testament accepted the three major divisions of the Hebrew canon. They quoted over 400 times from the Law, 715 times from the Prophets, and almost 450 times from the Writings. Jesus himself acknowledged all three portions (see Luke 24:44). Josephus, the Jewish historian who wrote during the first century of the Christian era, bears out this early Jewish recognition of the Old Testament canon. This early recognition of the Old Testament canon has preserved for us that Book which God gave for our moral and spiritual guidance.

The importance of this established canon of Scripture is understood when factors of that day are known. Many other religious writings sprang up with some men trying to claim for them a place in the Old Testament Scriptures. The apocryphal books, as they are now identified, are examples of such literature. A study of these books shows how they do not bear the marks of authoritative Scripture. They contain inaccuracies and teachings which are at variance with inspired Scripture. Thus, it was important that the Christians have a clear determination of which books were the authoritative Word of God.

Some books leave the impression that the Jewish Council of Jamnia in A.D. 90 established the Old Testament canon. This council did discuss the canon and debated whether certain books should be recognized as canonical, but the truth is that these books had already been generally accepted as authoritative. The outcome of their debates was actually a confirmation of what the Church had recognized long before: those books which they refused to admit had never been acknowledged as authoritative; those books which they retained in the canon were the ones which had previously been admitted.

### 3. Formation of the New Testament Canon

The New Testament canon took shape as the writings of men revealed the coming of Christ and imparted His revelation to man. As the apostles, guided by the Holy Ghost, wrote of Christ and applied His teachings, their writings were soon recognized as authoritative. Thus, they began to circulate among the churches. This formal written record did not appear until about the sixties of the first century A.D. Before this the eyewitnesses circulated the message among the churches. It is evident that God planned for their oral witness to be preserved in writing.

*The Gospel* - Near the end of the first century, the apostles had written the Gospels to preserve the record of the ministry of Christ. Not long after the writing of the fourth Gospel (John's Gospel written around 90 A.D.), the four Gospels seem to have been brought together as a collection. This collection was called *The Gospel*. Thus, each church had all four records of Christ's ministry.

About the same time, or perhaps a few years earlier, a movement came which gathered together Paul's letters from the various churches and individuals. This collection circulated among the churches as *The Apostle*.

The part of Luke's history which carried on the story after Christ's ascension was left by itself when the four Gospels were gathered together. In the course of time, it was titled the Acts of Apostles. Being the work of Luke, the author of the third Gospel, it shared the same authority. This book was of great importance in identifying Paul and establishing his apostolic authority for the epistles he wrote.

The letters of the other apostles and apostolic men, and the Apocalypse of John (Book of Revelation) also came to be recognized as bearing divine authority. They too were circulated among the churches.

Thus, shortly after the first century A.D., the New Testament had taken shape and was becoming known among the churches. The need for an established New Testament canon soon became evident. While an official canon of the New Testament had not been formally recognized, we can see how God directed the Church in recognizing the inspired books. Shortly after this, a heretic, Marcion, developed his own canon and began to circulate it. Also, many Eastern churches began to use books that were of doubtful origin.

Church leaders who were concerned about the authority of the books used in the churches began to subject writings to the test of whether or not they bore *evidence of apostolic authority or apostolic authorship*. Various discussions took place and lists of books began to appear. We need not doubt that God kept his guidance on all of these proceedings.

The contents of our present New Testament compare exactly with a list of books sent to the churches in A.D. 367 by Athanasius of Alexandria. Also, in A.D. 393 a Church Council – the Synod of Hippo – Aided the twenty-seven books of the New Testament as we know them. Thus, individuals and groups were coming to a common agreement on the books which had come into acceptance as authoritative Scripture. Again, we see the sovereignty of God in directing men to a recognition of His Word. Since this fourth century A.D., there has been no serious questioning of these twenty-seven books of the New Testament canon.

#### 4. Summary

The word canon refers to the list of books which make up our Bible. The formation of the canon was a gradual process. Books were recognized as a part of the canon on the basis of their divine inspiration.

Evidence shows that the Old Testament canon was clearly defined by the time of Christ. History shows that the New Testament books were being read in the churches not long after they were written. The Christians highly esteemed the words of Jesus and His apostles. In this way the New Testament canon quickly took shape.

Within a century or two after their first century origin, the books of the New Testament had been collected together and recognized as being divinely inspired.

It is important to recognize that no church or council made the canon of Scripture.

The Bible does not owe its existence or authority to any individual or group. The authority of Scripture comes from God.

God merely directed men to identify the books which He had inspired men to write. Thus, the canon of Scripture is that list of books which God directed men to acknowledge as His divine Word for mankind.

#### **F. The Apocryphal Books (not a part of the Bible)**

The word apocrypha comes from the Greek and means "hidden." It was used in reference to a book whose origin was doubtful or unknown. Eventually it came to mean "non-canonical." The common usage of "the apocrypha" is the title for those extra books found in the Catholic Old Testament and not in the Protestant Bible. A student should know that there are also New Testament apocryphal books which are noncanonical.

The apocryphal books were written in the period from 200 B.C. to 100 A.D. after the Old Testament canon was actually complete. While they do contain some historical and literary value, they lack the distinctive elements of inspired Scripture.

The Old Testament apocryphal books are fourteen in number. They are titled as follows:

- \* I Esdras (about 150 B.C.)
- \* II Esdras (A.D. 100)
- \* Tobit (early second century B.C.)
- \* Judith (about the middle of the second century, B.C.)
- \* Additions to Esther (about 100 B.C.)
- \* The Wisdom of Solomon (about A.D. 40)
- \* Ecclesiasticus, or Wisdom of Solomon (about A.D. 40)
- \* Ecclesiasticus, or Wisdom of Sirach (about 180 B.C.)
- \* Baruch (about A.D. 100 / contains the Letter of Jeremiah)
- \* Susanna (first century before Christ) - a thirteenth chapter added to the Book of Daniel
- \* Bel and the Dragon (first century before Christ) - a fourteenth chapter added to the Book of Daniel
- \* The Song of the Three Hebrew Children (follows Daniel 3:23 in the Septuagint)
- \* The Prayer of Manasseh (second century B.C.)
- \* I Maccabees (first century B.C.)
- \* II Maccabees (first century B.C.)

All but three of these books are considered canonical by the Roman Catholic Church. Those considered as canonical are interspersed among and attached to the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament accepted by the Protestants. The three books not considered as part of the canon by the Catholics are I and II Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh.

For convenience in gaining a brief understanding of the nature of the books, the content can be described under four divisions:

Historical (I Esdras, I and II Maccabees)  
Legendary Jobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, and the additions to the Book of Daniel)  
Prophetic (Baruch, Prayer of Manasseh, II Esdras) Ethical (Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom of Solomon)

While some of the apocryphal books do contain useful material, they must be rejected as part of the canon because they do not bear the marks of being divinely inspired. Many valid reasons can be shown to reveal their non-acceptance as Scripture. Unger's Bible Dictionary (Moody Press, 1973 printing) gives four reasons for excluding them from the canon:

- \* They abound in historical and geographical inaccuracies and anachronisms (placing of events out of their proper time in history).
- \* They teach doctrines which are false and foster practices which are at variance with inspired Scripture.
- \* They resort to literary types and display an artificiality of subject matter and styling out of keeping with inspired Scripture.
- \* They lack the distinctive elements which give genuine Scripture their divine character, such as prophetic power and poetic and religious feeling.

Lightfoot, in his book, *How We Got the Bible*, gives seven reasons for not regarding the apocryphal books as Scripture. His comments can be summarized as follows:

- \* not included in the Hebrew Old Testament.
- \* Jesus and his apostles did not accept the writings of the apocryphal books.
- \* Early Jewish and Christian writers did not recognize them as canonical.
- \* They lack internal evidence of inspiration. For example, they contain historical, chronological, and geographical errors. Some of the books contradict themselves or other canonical books.
- \* They have been shrouded with continual uncertainty.
- \* They cannot be maintained on a compromise basis. Their unacceptability for doctrine makes them invalid for church use.

- \* Since they do not prove to be divinely authorized, no action of man can pronounce them as canonical. In other words, we cannot accept the action of the Catholic church in pronouncing the Old Testament Apocrypha as authoritative Scripture. (This pronouncement was made by the Fourth Session of the Council of Trent, of the Roman Catholic Church, on April 8, 1546.)

Careful study proves that the apocryphal books are not canonical and must be rejected from our Bible. Much historical information can be found to testify to the exclusion of the Apocrypha from the Bible. Geisler and Nix (A General Introduction to the Bible. Moody Press, 1968) present such testimonies by the following:

- \* Philo, an Alexandrian Jewish philosopher
- \* Josephus, Jewish historian
- \* Jesus and the New Testament writers
- \* The Jewish scholars of Jamnia
- \* The Christian church of the first four centuries
- \* Many of the early church fathers
- \* Jerome, the great scholar and translator of the Vulgate
- \* Many Roman Catholic scholars through the Reformation period
- \* Luther and the Reformers
- \* Not until 1546 did the apocryphal books actually receive full canonical status by the Roman Catholic Church.

References to the Apocrypha usually relate to the Old Testament apocryphal books, but the Bible student should know that there are other apocryphal writings. Many of these are known as the New Testament Apocrypha. The New Testament apocryphal books were written under assumed names of the apostles and others. They are dated during the second century and later. Several types of writing are included: Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypses. The apocryphal Gospels, for example, often deal with the early years of Jesus, giving fanciful tales about His childhood. The apocryphal Acts contain similar exaggerated tales about the ministry of Jesus and the apostles.

These apocryphal books have never received sanction as part of the New Testament canon. They do not contain internal evidence of divine inspiration. However, they do portray the rise of heresy in the age following the apostles. These apocryphal writings, along with the writings of the early Church Fathers, have erroneously been called “the lost books of the Bible.” This is a misleading and inaccurate title, for none of these writings have ever been a part of the Bible.

Study of the Scriptures themselves, along with other historical evidence, shows that God has specially directed the establishment of His Word. The canon of Scripture is settled. And the apocryphal books are not part of this established Word from the Lord. Therefore, the Christian need not concern himself with a study of the apocryphal books

for spiritual enlightenment They aren't meant for the building of Christian faith. While some of them do contain historical information, they also contain ideas contrary to scriptural teaching. A Bible student should not be overly involved with a study of these books, and especially not until he has taken the time to become thoroughly knowledgeable in the Word of God.

## VII. THE TRANSMISSION OF THE BIBLE

### A. The Text of the Old Testament

The accuracy of our present Old Testament is dependent on the accuracy of the Hebrew text as it has been copied from one manuscript to another and then passed on through various translation to the language in which we read and study the Bible. The purpose of this section is to show how scholars have proved the Old Testament text to be reliable and trustworthy.

After a study of the details of textual transmission, this writer is convinced that God has provided this century with His distinct and accurate message. We have abundant evidence for believing that our present Bible text is trustworthy. Sir Frederic Kenyon, an authority in textual study, states:

The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true Word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries. (Frederic Kenyon, *The Bible and Modern Scholarship*, London: John Murray, 1948.)

A thorough study of the Old Testament text is a lengthy process. Some of the steps are briefly outlined to show the process by which scholars have determined the accuracy of the Old Testament text.

1. An examination of the extreme care with which the copyists transcribed the Old Testament manuscripts. Brief mention has previously been made concerning a few of their procedures.

2. Careful studies and comparisons of existing manuscripts. The major Hebrew manuscripts are:

- \* Cairo Codex (A.D. 895) - it contains both latter and former prophets.
- \* Codex of the Prophets of Leningrad (A.D. 916) - It contains Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the twelve minor prophets. Codex Babylonicus Petropolitanus (A.D. 1008) - The earliest complete manuscript of the Old Testament.
- \* Aleppo Codex (A.D. 900+) - This is an exceptionally valuable manuscript. It was lost for a time but was rediscovered in 1958 with some damage.
- \* British Museum Codex (A.D. 950) - It contains part of Genesis through Deuteronomy.
- \* Reuchlin Codex of the Prophets (A.D. 1105) - A text prepared by the Massorete ben Naphtali.

*(This information about manuscripts was taken from Evidence that Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell. His original intent in studying the text of Scripture was to shatter its trustworthiness. His final conclusion was: "The Bible is trustworthy and historically reliable.")*

3. A comparison of the more recently discovered Dead Sea Scrolls (found in 1947) with the previous Hebrew manuscripts from which the Old Testament text has been determined. Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the oldest Hebrew manuscripts were dated around 900 A.D. The Dead Sea Scrolls are dated as early as the first and second centuries B.C. These manuscripts which date 1000 years earlier than other manuscripts provide an abundance of material for textual study. A study of the Isaiah text alone compared with the Massoretic text (916 A.D.) shows unusual accuracy over a thousand-year period. Gleason Archer points out that the Isaiah copies of the Dead Sea Scrolls "proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95% of the text. The 5% variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling." (Gleason Archer, A Survey of the Old Testament. Chicago: Moody Press, 1964).

4. Reference to various other sources, including translations into other languages.
  - \* The Samaritan Pentateuch which is a form of Hebrew text. Overall, the Hebrew and Samaritan Pentateuch have few major differences.
  - \* The Septuagint - A Greek translation of the Old Testament completed in the third century B.C.
  - \* Aramaic Targurns - Paraphrases of the Old Testament into the spoken language of the Jews after the exile.
  - \* Syriac Peshitta - A translation which dates as early as the first century A.D.
  - \* Latin Versions
    - \* The Old Latin dates back to 150 A.D. but does have limitations because it is based on the Septuagint.
    - \* The Latin Vulgate is a valuable authority. Jerome translated it directly from the Hebrew around 400 A.D.
    - \* Other sources - Numerous other versions and discovered fragments of the Hebrew text provide an abundance of text-materials.

5. Use of the Massoretic text - In the period between 500-1000 A.D. a group of Jewish scholars known as the Massorettes accepted the job of editing and standardizing the Hebrew text. These well-disciplined scribes exercised meticulous care, using a thorough system of safeguards to avoid errors, in the preparation of the manuscripts. The major manuscripts in existence are specimens of the Massoretic text. This Massoretic text is the standard Hebrew text used today. Their careful handling of the Hebrew text has been one of God's methods of passing on an accurate record of His Word. Sir Frederic Kenyon mentions that "the Massorettes were indeed anxious that not

one jot nor tittle, not one smallest letter nor one tiny part of a letter, of the Law should pass away or be lost" (Frederic Kenyon, *Our Bible and Ancient Manuscripts*, 1941).

## **B. The Text of the New Testament**

### 1. Source of the New Testament text

The original manuscripts of the New Testament were completed within the first century A.D. From that time on the New Testament books were copied and recopied and circulated among the churches. While there are no original manuscripts in existence as far as is known, there is an abundance of manuscript material available for study. Between 4000 and 5000 Greek manuscripts are in existence. Some 8000 copies of the Latin Vulgate are available. At least 1000 copies of the early Latin versions still exist. Some 13,000 manuscript copies of New Testament portions give additional textual materials. In addition to all of these manuscript copies, the New Testament can be largely reproduced from the quotations of the early Christian writers.

### 2. Major manuscripts of the New Testament

Major manuscripts of the New Testament date back to the fourth century A.D. Significant fragments date as early as the second and third centuries:

- \* The Codex Sinaiticus (350 A.D.) contains almost all the New Testament and over half of the Old Testament. It is owned by the British Museum.
- \* Codex Vaticanus (325-50 A.D.) is a copy of nearly all the Bible. It is considered one of the most valuable manuscripts of the Greek Bible. It is in the Vatican Library at Rome.
- \* Codex Alexandrinus (400 A.D.) contains almost the entire Bible. It is located in the British Museum in London.
- \* Chester Beatty Papyri collection (200 A.D.) contains papyrus codices (book form), three of them containing major portions of the New Testament.
- \* John Ryland Manuscript (130 A.D.) is the oldest known fragment of the New Testament. This portion of the gospel of John is an important testimony to the writing of John.
- \* Many other manuscripts could be noted, but these give an indication of the materials that have been available to scholars for textual study.

### 3. The New Testament can be trusted

The great multitude of existing manuscripts makes it possible to reconstruct the original manuscript in spite of the copyists' errors that may have entered the text through the years. F. F. Bruce assures us that "there is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament" (F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, 1963).

Along with the abundance of Greek manuscripts available for establishing the reliability of the New Testament text, we also have early versions of the New Testament. The Syriac and Latin versions were made about 150 A.D. These take us back very near to the time of the original writings. There are more than 9,000 copies of these early version in existence. The Syriac Peshitta, for example, has more than 350 extant manuscripts that date from the 400's.

While critics will try to cast doubt on the trustworthiness of the Scriptures, the Christian can rest assured that his Bible has come down through the ages in reliable form. The critic, for example, may use the statement that the New Testament contains 150,000 various readings. What the critic does not admit is that these are generally insignificant. One single word misspelled in 3,000 manuscripts is counted as 3,000 variants. Many reliable textual authorities emphasize that the known textual errors do not in any way endanger fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. Scholars are convinced that they possess the true text of the New Testament.

We can be confident that the New Testament is the Word of God. Sir Frederic Kenyon tells us that "it cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible is certain. . ." (Frederic Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, p. 23).

## VIII. MAJOR VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE

### A. Availability Of God's Word - Translated in Over 1,200 Languages

The Word of God is now accessible to people around the world in their own language. Some translations or versions are better than others. The quality of the translation is dependent on the quality of the scholarship and available textual materials used to develop the translation. The miracle of translation work is that God has so wonderfully preserved His message on the written page in so many different languages. It can be said that the message of the Bible (the story of Redemption) is accurately transmitted in the multitude of different translations. By the early 1970's more than thirty English-language editions of the Bible were available or in stages of preparation, plus 100 or more New Testament versions portions.

The transmission of the Bible into our twentieth century can be shown by a brief study of how the English Bible has come to its present-day form.

### B. Versions Which Preceded the English Bible

When Christianity came into Britain no later than the fourth century, the Scriptures were not available in the English language. The popular version of the Bible was in Latin, the dominant language in the West at that time. In England the common man won the right to have the Bible in his own language, as our survey will show. From these early centuries onward we can see how God provided ways for His Word to be spread throughout the world in the language of the people, whether it be English or some other tongue.

The Septuagint, Greek translation of the Old Testament (third century B.C.), has been widely used as a basis for many translations. The present titles of the Bible books were first adopted in the Septuagint. This translation is faulty in many respects, and we have no evidence that Jesus ever referred to it.

Early Vulgate is a Latin version based on the Septuagint version of the Old Testament and the Greek New Testament. It dates back to the second century A.D.

The Latin Vulgate is the common name given to the revised Latin translation made by Jerome (an able scholar) just prior to 400 A.D. His work was based on the Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New. His version still stands as the basis for the present day Roman Catholic Douay Bible.

### C. The Early English Versions

The beginning of the English Bible was crude and incomplete. Nevertheless, the

stage was set for the more important versions which were to follow. We can note some of the interesting beginnings:

1. Caedmon's verse (seventh century) - He was an uneducated laborer who arranged accounts from the Bible in verse form in the Anglo-Saxon tongue. This is the first known attempt to present the Bible in English.
2. Aldhelm's translation (eighth century) of the Psalms.
3. The Venerable Bede's (eighth century) translation of John's Gospel of which nothing has been preserved.
4. Alfred the Great (close of ninth century) gave his people parts of the Bible in English.
5. Abbot Aelfric (tenth century) translated large parts of the Old Testament into English of which some portions have survived.

These early works were made from the Latin. After the Conquest of 1066 the language underwent a great change due to the influence of French invaders. The Old English Bibles fell into disuse and only a few fragments were preserved. The next period of Bible translation was into Middle English. This began about 1300.

#### **D. The Versions of Wycliffe And Tyndale**

Only traces of translations led up to the famous work of Wycliffe. This was a time of struggle to make the Bible available to the common people. But God intended for the people to have His Word and He continued to direct men to make it possible.

Wycliffe's version (completed in 1384) was the first English translation of the complete Bible. Wycliffe believed that the Scriptures should be accessible to Christians for common use as a guide to faith and morals. Thus, under his guidance and scholarship, the Scriptures were translated into English from the Latin Vulgate, most likely with the aid of his associates. The Roman Catholics opposed Wycliffe's work and finally forbade the reading of his English Bible under penalty of death.

A contemporary of Wycliffe, John Purvey, made an English translation which was completed in 1388. Some accounts regard this work as a revision of Wycliffe's; others report that each translator carried on his work without the knowledge of the other.

In the century after Wycliffe's work, printing was invented in Europe (accredited to John Gutenberg around 1450). A Latin Bible is generally considered to be the first printed book from this moveable type. By 1476 printing was put to use in England.

Tyndale's version (1525-1535) was the first printed version in English. Tyndale translated the New Testament directly from a Greek New Testament prepared by Erasmus, a scholar and instructor, who strongly felt that the common man should have the Scripture available for personal use. Later Tyndale translated the Pentateuch and other portions of the Old Testament directly from the Hebrew. After that he made two more editions of the New Testament.

Tyndale began his work in England but had to flee to Germany to escape Catholic opposition. His translation was printed in Germany and smuggled into England for distribution. Tyndale was regarded as a Reformer along with Luther, and many copies of his work were publicly burned.

Roman Catholics, determined to stamp out heresy, imprisoned Tyndale. Yet he attempted to carry on his noble work in prison. After many months he was strangled and burned at the stake (1536). The dying cry of this martyr was "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." Even before his death the tide was beginning to change in England. The translation of the Bible into English was authorized, and intense activity in Bible translation began. Tyndale's work had lit a flame.

## **E. Other Translations of The Sixteenth Century**

A flood of translations and revisions began to appear after 1535, just following Tyndale's death.

### **1. Coverdale's Version (1535)**

This translation was based on the Latin Bible and on Luther's and Tyndale's versions. Miles Coverdale's work was done as an assigned task rather than as a work of love. While it does show the marks of haste and carelessness, it is significant because it was the first English Bible to circulate without hindrance.

### **2. Matthew's Bible (1537)**

This version is actually<sup>42</sup> a fusion of the Tyndale and Coverdale versions. It is actually the work of John Rogers, a former associate of Tyndale. Rogers died as a martyr in the reign of Queen Mary.

### **3. Taverner's Version (1539)**

This version appeared mainly because of opposition to Matthew's Bible. In reality, it was just a revision of Matthew's Bible but was marked by careful scholarship and literary form.

#### 4. The Great Bible (1539)

Another revision of Matthew's Bible, "The Great Bible" (so named because of its size) was placed in every church in England to comply with the wish of Henry VIII that "In God's name, let it go abroad among the people!" In the truest sense, this "Great Bible" was a several-times revised edition of Tyndale's version, except for the parts which he had not completed. The later editions of "The Great Bible" contained these words on the title page: "This is the Bible appointed to the use of the churches." Tyndale's dying prayer had been answered, for the King of England's eyes had been opened.

#### 5. The Geneva Bible (1560)

Hebrew and Greek scholars who were refugees in Geneva made this revision from "The 'Great Bible.'" This version was prepared because of the excessive cost of "The Great Bible." It quickly became popular as the household edition of the Word of God. It was marked by accurate scholarship and faithfulness to the original text of Scripture, and it was divided into chapter and verses. This Bible was the Bible of Shakespeare and also of the Pilgrims who journeyed to America from England.

#### 6. The Bishop's Bible (1568)

The Geneva Bible was not popular with the church officials and yet they could not ignore its excellence which showed up the imperfections in "The Great Bible." As a result, English bishops set about to produce a revision of "The Great Bible." It was an improvement, but it still did not match the standard of the Geneva Bible. The scholars never approved it, and its cost kept it from use by the people.

#### 7. The Rheims and Douay Version (1582 and 1609)

The popularity of the Protestant translations eventually forced the making of a Roman Catholic version in English. A translation of the New Testament was published in 1582 in Rheims, and in 1609 the Old Testament was done in Douay. It was translated from the Latin Vulgate. Of the English versions, this Rheims-Douay version is the poorest. Despite its inferior quality, it did make the Bible available to English Catholics. Later editions brought improvements to this translation. This version included the Apocrypha.

### **F. The Authorized Version or The King James Version (1611)**

King James I authorized and supported the translation work which came to be known as the Authorized Version. The frequently used name in America is the King James Version. Forty-seven outstanding scholars worked for seven years (1604 to 1611)

to complete this version. One of the requirements was that the Bible was not to contain marginal notes as in previous versions.

This version was formally a revision of the Bishops' Bible. But the translators had use of all the existing English versions and every available foreign version, as well as the Hebrew and Greek. The Authorized Version can realistically be traced back to the influence of Tyndale who worked from the Hebrew and Greek texts. It is said that nine-tenths of Tyndale's work is preserved in the Authorized Version. Tyndale died for his work, but his work has lived on, and he has become known as the father of the English Bible.

The Authorized Bible is a work of excellence. It has held first place in the English-speaking world for over 350 years. This version has passed through many editions and appears considerably different now. Spellings have been modernized and many other alterations have taken place. Its great excellency did not mark it as a perfect version. With the development of the English language and continual progress in textual studies, changes have been in order through the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

## **G. English Translations Within the Last 100 Years**

### **1. Revised Version (1885)**

A revision of the Authorized Version began in 1870 under the guidance of more than fifty scholars. This revision was felt to be needed because of the changes which two centuries had made in the language and because of a fuller knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek text. Also, there was a need to correct inaccuracies and obscurities in the Authorized Version. The objective of the translators was to introduce the alterations in conformity to the language of the Authorized Version. In 1885 the Revised Version of the whole Bible was published.

This Revised Version has not won the admiration of the English-speaking world, but it is accepted as a commentary on the text. The Authorized Version has remained the classic version.

### **2. American Standard Version (1901)**

This revision resulted from the differences between the British and American points of idiom, spelling, word order and such. It differs very little from the English Revised Version. The Americans on the British committee favored more variations from the time-honored King James Version, so they continued their work which resulted in this American revision of 1901.

### 3. Revised Standard Version (1952)

The Revised Standard Version (RSV) is an authorized revision of the American Standard Version of 1901. The New Testament was completed by 1946 and the whole Bible appeared in 1952. A large group of denominations and a sizable committee of scholars were behind the revision. However, its acceptance has been limited, for its translators were nearly all from the liberal school. Although it had the benefits of the latest scholarship, it departed from a high regard for the Masoretic text of the Old Testament which was a part of the Authorized Version and those that followed it. It contains renderings that are doctrinally weak and unreliable. It has not replaced the Authorized Version among conservative Christians.

4. Many other translations appearing after 1900 could be described. But the Authorized Version or the King James Version is still firmly established as the Bible of Pentecostal believers. It seems that God gave special attention to the preparation of this version so that it could stand for many centuries as the authorized text for the English world. The story of the English Bible will be completed with brief mention of some of the more modern translations.

## H. Modern Translations in English

### 1. Guidelines for using different translations

The Bible is now available in many translations, and this is especially true in English. The Bible student should realize that no one translation is without weaknesses. All the translations have faults, but with proper use they can be especially helpful for understanding the full sense of many Bible passages. The great variety of versions has caused many to ask, "What is the best version to use?" No simple answer can be given, but a few guidelines can be helpful.

First, we would do well to keep the King James Version as our top priority. It can be said that this is the official Bible of English-speaking, oneness Pentecostal churches. While it may contain some archaic forms and certain weaknesses, it has proved its place through the centuries as a trustworthy translation. God seems pleased to have given this translation as an enduring Bible for the English world.

Along with the King James Version, we can select versions of more modern speech to help us gain the full meaning of the text. Of the many versions available, no one can be specifically recommended for all readers. Some versions were written more for private reading and others for church use. Some are profitable for devotional reading but are not appropriate for careful doctrinal study. The translators often state their purposes for the translation in the introduction to the work. A reading of this can be helpful.

Certain precautions should be observed. Some versions were made with denominational or doctrinal bias affecting the renderings. For example, The New World Translation carries the doctrinal bias of the Jehovah's Witnesses. The Jerusalem Bible is a distinctively Catholic Bible and contains the Apocryphal books scattered throughout as part of the text of Scripture. It also contains copious explanatory notes. The Revised Standard Version (RSV), which has already been described, contains the liberal viewpoint of the translators. While it has been highly recommended by many denominations for its textual excellence over the King James Version, it proves inadequate for the fundamentalist who sees the dangers of its liberal bias. The precaution, therefore, is for the Bible reader to know the basis of the translation before making use of it.

The guidelines can be summarized as follows: the reader should find out the background of the version and use it accordingly. The strengths and weaknesses and limitations of the translation should be known and kept in mind. A Bible written for easy, private reading should not be used as an authority for doctrinal study. A young Christian should consult his pastor or a capable Bible teacher about what versions would be helpful to him.

## 2. A brief look at some popular translations

Recognizing the abundance of twentieth century translations, the writer finds it impossible to give an overall picture of available works. 'Therefore, a sampling of popular versions will be given to acquaint the student with the resources available to him.

### The Living Bible (1971)

The Living Bible has become the top seller, not only of Bibles, but of nonfiction books in the United States. In 1972-73, for example, this version topped the list of Best Sellers. By 1974 more than fifteen million copies had been sold. Such popularity might cause some to accept its authority without question.

The Bible reader should know that this is not a translation in the truest sense. It is a free style paraphrasing the traditional wording into everyday English. Its readability in modern English has brought it quick popularity, but Nathaniel Taylor (the translator) himself acknowledges that it is a paraphrasing of Scripture (a restatement in his own words) and not a careful translation. His basic text for his work was the ASV of 1901. Many weaknesses of serious consequence can be pointed out in this work. The student must realize that The Living Bible is certainly not a work for serious Bible study. Any use should be strictly limited to casual reading and that with a clear understanding of its limitations. Its use should never supersede or replace the use of the King James Version or other more reliable versions.

### The Amplified Bible (1965)

This version is in reality a mini commentary. The translators have attempted to give the reader a fuller meaning of the text by adding the various shades of meaning that could relate to a single-word or phrase. The danger of such renderings is that most readers do not distinguish between the additions and the actual Bible text. Also, the interpretative additions sometimes carry the doctrinal bias of the translators. An example is the trinitarian view expressed with Genesis 1:26. This version should be used with definite caution.

### Phillips' Translation of the New Testament (1958 & 1973)

This translation resulted from J. B. Phillips' efforts to make the New Testament more readable to young people. Its popularity rests in its contemporary style and its easy wording. It sounds like twentieth century English. The New Testament was first published in 1958, and its revision in 1973. This version contains some excellent renderings of the true sense of the text, but it also contains weaknesses such as are common to translations which attempt to express the original in modern idioms. The newer edition is not as free in style but is more accurate. Again, the Bible student needs to know that this work was not intended to be used for study purposes. Its first aim was readability. Phillips used too many liberties for his work to be considered an authoritative study reference.

### The New English Bible (1961 & 1970)

This translation first appeared in 1961 as the New Testament with the complete Bible appearing in 1970. This was the first work by a group of Protestant scholars to depart completely from the Tyndale-King James tradition of revisions, even though some private translators had already departed from the King James ancestry. Thus, it claims to be a completely new rendering of the original Hebrew and Greek texts. A new principle guided this revision. It follows a sense-for-sense translation pattern rather than the traditional word-for-word sense. The translators claim that it is an honest effort to convey the true meaning of the original text. But this kind of translation does leave more room for the scholars' own ideas to creep in. The style is more akin to the modern speech versions than to the stricter word-for-word translations. Overall, it seems to represent a good rendering of the thought of the Scriptures. It adds up-to-date feeling to the text, but a more literal translation is advisable for the distinct meaning of the original wording.

### The New International Version (1973)

This is a completely new translation made from the original languages of the Bible.

It was produced by a committee rather than by an individual. The committee aimed to make it suitable for both private reading and public use. It claims to be written for international use for all English-speaking people; therefore, Americanisms and Anglicisms have been avoided as much as possible. One authority on translation work stated that “few translations since the KJV of 1611 have been as carefully done as this one.” Its style is literary rather than colloquial. Some scholars feel that it lacks the color and uniqueness of Phillips’ version or the New English Bible. On the other hand, it is considered a dependable and straightforward rendering. It will likely be more acceptable for use by conservative Christians than many of the newer translations. Due to lack of thorough acquaintance with this version, the writer is reluctant to express unreserved approval of this version as an authorized study source. As with any new version, caution must be exercised.

### 3. Significant trends in Bible translations

A trend in Bible translations that all students need to carefully watch is a weakening of the cardinal doctrines of faith. Liberal theologians have certainly had their influence on Bible translations. Use of the Authorized Version (King James Version) as an evaluation guide for English-speaking people proves to be a safe precaution for preserving the true doctrine of God’s Word. We have ample reason to believe that the Truth has been divinely preserved in this version.

Another noticeable trend is the advancement toward a common Bible for Protestants and Catholics. This trend is especially advanced in France. Authorities state that a completely new Common Bible for both groups will be mutually developed. Fundamental Christians recognize this as a trend toward unified religion. Oneness Pentecostals will certainly not find this version acceptable to a true biblical Christian position.

The difference between the words paraphrased and translated have become somewhat concealed. This can create a problem for the common reader, for he may begin to lose the strict sense of doctrinal Truth as he becomes accustomed to the easier reading style of the paraphrased versions and lays aside the more reliable literal translations. Bible teachers need to guard against trends which can weaken the doctrinal teachings of the Scriptures.

While new translations can be helpful and enlightening, careful attention must be given to maintaining a strong allegiance to the original intent of Scripture. We must reject versions for general use that weaken God’s message or any part of it.

### 4. Various language versions

The above information about the English Bible gives a picture of how God has made

His Word available to men of all generations. The English Bible is only representative of the thousands of languages, and every year additional language versions are being translated and printed.

This study omits a survey of Bible translations in other languages only because the information is not accessible at this time to the writer. Teachers in each country should assemble material which would give the students a knowledge of how his Bible came to him. He should be shown how God has marvelously directed the transmission of His Word to the people of this generation.

It would likely be advisable to omit the study of the English Bible and replace it with a survey of the Bible in use by the students. In that case, it is hoped that this collection of material on the English Bible will serve as a helpful guide in assembling material on Bible versions in other languages. Where a Bible translation has been based on the English version, this information will serve as a foundation for further study.

## IX. HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

*Introduction:* This section is adapted from notes prepared by Ralph V. Reynolds and found in his study course, Bible Introduction. It is a part of the International Alpha Bible Course.

### A. How To Prepare for Bible Study

A Bible student should own a good Bible. By a good Bible, we mean a well-bound Bible that has clear type that can be read without eye strain. The Authorized Version (Kings James Version) is recommended. A Bible without interpretative notes is often advisable for the beginning student so that he will not think of the notes as a part of the text. He should learn first of all to let the Bible speak for itself.

A Bible student should own a Bible in modern language. Many modern versions are available as has already been noted. If the student can afford it, he should obtain several of these modern versions. By comparing one with the other he can often glean a deeper understanding of the Scriptures. Of course, he should remember the cautions which have previously been mentioned about the use of modern translations.

A Bible student should own a good concordance. A variety of concordances are available. The concordance should list all the key words of the Bible with a complete listing of all the related Scriptures. A helpful, economical reference is Cruden's Complete Concordance. Of course, other excellent, more exhaustive works are also good to have when they can be afforded.

A Bible student should obtain a durable notebook. Bible study should be a lifelong pursuit; therefore, a loose-leaf notebook of excellent quality is advisable.

### B. The Spiritual Preparation Necessary for Bible Study

A personal acquaintance with the Author of the Bible is necessary for a proper understanding of the Word. The unsaved man is brought to God by exposure to God's Word, but the unregenerate man cannot fully understand spiritual truths. "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (I Corinthians 2:11).

A Bible student should be fully persuaded of the inspiration of God's Word. The Bible is not just another book. It is God's Word. We must approach the Bible on bended knee. The Bible student should never put a question mark where God puts a period.

A Bible student must have a love for the Bible. To be a successful student of the Bible,

a Christian should cultivate a real passion to know the Bible. This desire comes through prayer and the disciplining of oneself to study and to read the Bible.

A Bible student should pray for discernment. The knowledge of the Bible will depend upon the revelation of God and the mind of the student being illuminated by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is essential that the student sincerely pray for guidance and understanding.

A Bible student should be willing to obey. If he would know the Word, he must do the will of God. It is impossible to fully understand God's Word without a willingness to obey the Word.

A Bible student must study regularly and consistently. To make progress in Bible study, a student must be systematic and not haphazard. Regular hours should be set aside for the study of God's Word.

### **C. The Benefits of Bible Study**

There are several benefits of Bible study. The first is personal faith. A study of God's Word increases faith. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

The second is a sanctified, holy life. The Word of God provides a cleansing power. D. L. Moody said, "The Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this Book." How true this is!

The third is preparation for service. Success in personal work is dependent upon an ability to use God's Word. God honors His Word, not the person.

The Word of God leads a soul to Christ, not just an argument. "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17).

The fourth is power in the ministry. Use of God's Word gives power to one's ministry. The Word is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. (See II Timothy 3:16.)

The fifth is knowledge. God's Word is the greatest source of knowledge. A man who knows the Bible is a man of understanding and great knowledge.

The Bible itself list several benefits:

Bible study will keep one from sinning against God (Psalm 119:11). Bible study protects against false doctrine (Acts 20:29-32).

Bible study assures joy (Jeremiah 15:16). Bible study gives peace (Psalm 85:8).

Bible study gives power to abide in Christ (I John 2:24). Bible study is a source of answered prayer (John 15:7). Bible study gives wisdom (Psalm 119:98,100,130).

Bible study makes one complete (II Timothy 3:16, 17).

#### **D. Some Rules for Bible Study**

A born-again experience is vital. Bible study is a discerning search for spiritual truth. Men cannot receive this spiritual truth by their own innate wisdom. Spiritual truth comes only through faith and spiritual discernment and revelation.

Preparation is necessary. Heart-searching should precede Bible searching. Do not rush into God's presence and out again without taking time to free your mind of distractions and to search your soul. Only after this preparation can the mind be clear for God to speak from His Word. Try to be alone and uninterrupted as you search the Word of God.

Proper interpretation is important. In Bible interpretation, a student should follow this principle: "When the plain sense makes good sense, we should seek no other sense." A passage should be taken literally unless the context shows that it is to be understood otherwise.

Contextual consideration must be given. A text without a context is a pretext. False interpretations result from taking Bible passages out of their context. Each word must be evaluated in its usage in the sentence. A sentence must be considered in the light of the paragraph. A paragraph must be studied in its relation to the chapter, and the chapter in its relation to the entire book.

We may go one step further and consider the Bible itself in its relation to all knowledge, whether spiritual or secular. The Bible is the center or the heart of all knowledge.

The triple approach may apply to some passages. A text of Scripture may have a threefold interpretation:

Its primary meaning.

Its spiritual meaning as applied to personal living. Its symbolic or prophetic meaning.

An example of this may be given in reference to the messages addressed to the seven churches in the second and third chapters of the Book of Revelation. There is a primary

interpretation in the description of the churches existing in that day and the exhortation given to them. There is a spiritual application as we apply these messages to our own heart. There is a prophetic interpretation as we trace Church history by means of these churches, each one describing and representing a definite period in church history.

## E. How To Study A Book Of The Bible

Read the book through to locate the main theme and key verses of the book. Try to express in your own words in one or two sentences the main message contained in the book. Write the key verses out in your study notebook.

Learn what you can about the writer. Discover in the book itself what you can about the writer's personal biography and his personality. Locate information about the writer in reference books.

Answer these questions about the book:

Where was the book written? If possible, this should be determined by reading the book itself.

When was, the book written? Locate the time of the writing within the life span of the author.

To whom was the book written? Write down the chapter and verse if the information is given in the book.

For what purpose was the book written? Identify the situations or problems in the lives of those to whom the book was written which made the book necessary.

Identify unusual or unique aspects of the book. List by chapter and verse words or terms that are used repeatedly. Note phrases or clauses that are unique to this book. Make a list of subjects that stand out in the book.

Define all words and phrases that appear difficult. Be certain that you understand the meaning of every expression.

Observe What the book teaches about Jesus Christ. The theme of the Bible is **redemption** through Jesus Christ, and in some way all of Scripture points to Jesus. Make an outline of what the book shows concerning the Redeemer.

Study the major divisions of the structure of the book. List these divisions clearly. Reference books can be consulted for assistance in identifying these divisions.

## **F. How To Study A Chapter Of The Bible**

The Bible contains 1,189 chapters. Many of these have been favorites for years and lend themselves to an interesting and profitable study. While some chapter divisions have been unfortunate, most of them make suitable units for study. Psalm 23 and I Corinthians 13 are good examples.

Look for the theme of the chapter. Read the chapter through in one reading and write a phrase or sentence that would sum up the main thought of the chapter. Identify a verse that would express the theme of the chapter. Write this verse in your notebook.

Note the people who are mentioned in the chapter. Make a list of their names and give the information from the chapter about each of them.

Answer the following questions:

What are the commands which we should obey? What are the promises which we should claim? What are the lessons which we should remember?

List the words, phrases, or thoughts that have a special appeal to you. Jot down ideas that you may use for future detailed study. List the words and phrases that are frequently repeated in the chapter. Consider the significance of the ideas emphasized by these words. List all the difficult words and phrases and check the meaning of each in a concordance, Bible dictionary, or commentary.

Observe what the chapter teaches about Jesus Christ. Outline this information.

## **G. How To Study A Bible Doctrine**

The chief aim of all Bible study is to understand the teachings or doctrines of the Bible and be able to apply them to our own lives. For a beginning student it might be wise to begin by studying the doctrine as given in one book and then expand the study from there.

Collect all references to the doctrine. Trace all these Scriptures by the use of a concordance or topical Bible. It is recommended that all the Scriptures to be studied be written out in the study notes.

Compare all the references which relate to the doctrine. What do they have in common? Where do they differ, such as giving additional information?

Relate the references to their immediate context and the total pattern of biblical

truth. Study each reference in the light of its context.

Define the doctrine. Apply the doctrine to personal experience. Consider how it would be applied to your life and others. Write a paragraph to explain and summarize the doctrine in your own words.

## H. How To Study A Bible Biography

The study of Bible personalities is fascinating. Great spiritual lessons may be learned from the experience of Bible characters. The Bible mentions 2,930 different individuals.

Look for the meaning of the person's name. The name often gives helpful information about the character. In studying a Bible character, be careful not to confuse names. Some names are used repeatedly but for different people. Thirty are named Zachariah; twenty are named Nathan; fifteen, Jonathan; eight, Judas; seven, Mary; five, James; and five with the name John.

Study the ancestral background. The genealogical listings of Scripture are helpful for this study. Take note of the religious and secular crises which occurred in his life. Summarize his training background and his personal development if it is mentioned in Scripture. Make a list of his character traits. It is often helpful to write a character sketch in your own words. Name his friends, associates, and enemies. Indicate the influence that each had on his life. Summarize the influence of his life.

What important contributions did he make? What failures did he encounter? What attitudes did he manifest? How did he live? for God? self? Satan?

Indicate the lessons of life from this individual which are of special value to you.

### 1. How To Study A Bible Miracle

Miracles are divine contraventions of the normal course of things. They not only display God's supernatural power in some way, but they also bring out some important truth. The Bible records many miracles as can be noted:

- Sixty-two miracles recorded in the Old Testament Thirty-eight primary miracles of Christ
- Forty secondary miracles of Christ Fifteen miracles by the apostles

Make an outline of the occasion of the miracle. Note the term designating the miracle. Does it imply wonder, power, or purpose? Identify the command or prayer which brought forth the miracle. Study the manner and circumstances of this command

or prayer. Discover the truth contained in the miracle. What does the miracle reveal about the nature of God? What does the miracle reveal about the work of God? How would this miracle relate to the Church today?

#### **J. How To Study A Bible Parable**

A parable is a short, simply story through which a spiritual lesson is taught. A Bible parable may or may not be a true story. Jesus used many parables to help the people understand spiritual truths. A parable is not meant to establish a doctrine, but rather to illustrate the truth of a doctrine already established. Parables enhance spiritual understanding if they are properly used and interpreted.

In studying a, parable, note the occasion which provoked the telling of the parable. Note the details, customs, and practices which are por- trayed in the parable. Study the manner of living related to the parable. Learn to whom the parable was told.

Study the parable carefully to learn these things: What one main lesson does it teach?

What other Bible passages teach the truth?

How can you apply this truth to your own experience this very week? Use the context of the parable to help in the interpretation of the parable.

Be careful not to read interpretations into the parable which are not clearly expressed by the setting of the parable.

Using present day situations, write a parable to convey the truth illustrated by the parable.

#### **K. Summary** (Not Included in The Alpha Bible Course)

Many additional phases of Bible study could be outlined. The important principle is to maintain a high regard for the exact message of the Scripture and develop a personal system of study that will allow the Bible to speak for itself. A student should be very careful not to approach the Scriptures with preconceived ideas, but with an open mind to see and hear Truth. He should not search the Scriptures merely to find passages to support his personal ideas. He should search his Bible to hear from God.

Another reminder to the student is that he be a diligent reader of the Scripture. He will never really know the Scriptures until he has read them over and over. A real Bible student will discipline himself to place the Bible itself in a place of priority. He will never allow books about the Bible to take precedence over His Bible.

A word of encouragement to those who have not had opportunity for much formal education is this: It is better to have a knowledge of the Bible without a secular education than to have a secular education without a knowledge of the Bible. To know the Bible is WISDOM.

## **X. ALLEDGED CONTRADICTIONS AND ERRORS IN THE BIBLE**

### **A. Two Accounts of The Sermon On The Mount**

Scriptural Reference: Matthew 5:1; Luke 6:17

Differences in the rendering are pointed out as errors. Actually, they are renderings of two different sermons. One was preached in the mountain and one upon the plain (see Bible texts). The sermon recorded by Matthew was preached before he was called to be a disciple, but the one found in Luke records a sermon preached when Matthew was present (Matthew 9:9; Luke 6:15).

### **B. Matthew 28:19 And Acts 2:38**

These Scriptures are not contradictory. Jesus did not tell his disciples to baptize, using the words, "Father, Son and Holy Ghost." He told them to baptize in the NAME (singular) of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The name is JESUS.

### **C. Paul's Supposed Mistake**

Scripture Reference: Numbers 25:9 "And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand."

I Corinthians 10:8 "And fell in one day three and twenty thousand."

There is no contradiction here. In the book of Numbers the total is given, but Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Spirit, stated that 23,000 died in one day. The other thousand died on a different day.

### **D. Matthew's Supposed Mistake**

Scriptural Reference: Matthew 27:9 "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver"

We read this prophecy of Jesus in Zechariah, but do not find it in Jeremiah. Matthew, writing under inspiration, wrote that Jeremiah spoke these words. Jude 14 contains a similar prophecy of Enoch's (of which a similar one is also recorded in Zechariah 14:5). Both prophecies could be recorded in Zechariah but still have been spoken by Jeremiah and Enoch.

## **E. David Numbering the People**

Scriptural Reference: II Samuel 24:9 “And there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.”

I Chronicles 21:5 “And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew sword.”

All Israel were 1,100,000. Eight hundred thousand valiant men drew the sword. Three hundred thousand men could not be called valiant.

## **F. Genealogies Of Our Lord**

Matthew 1. This is traced back on Joseph’s side to Abraham, to show Christ as the legal heir to the throne of Israel.

Luke 3. This is traced back on Mary’s side to Adam, emphasizing Christ’s true humanity and to show Him as the promised seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15).

## **G. Inscription On the Cross**

It is claimed that this is a contradiction because it is different in each of the Gospels. However, when we put these together the difference disappears. Undoubtedly, the total inscription was written and only part of it recorded in the various gospels.

Matthew:	This is Jesus	the King of the Jews.
Mark:		the King of the Jews.
Luke:	This is	the King of the Jews.
John:	Jesus of Nazareth	the King of the Jews.

TOTAL: This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.

## **H. Jonah And the Whale**

Whales have been seen as much as seventy feet long. There are many instances recorded of their huge size, and large objects swallowed, such as an entire shark fifteen feet in length. A dying sperm whale ejects the contents of its stomach, and masses have been seen as large as eight by six-by-six feet. These whales often swim about with the lower jaw hanging down in its normal position, and its gullet gaping like a large cavern. Jonah could have slipped easily into such a whale.

## RECOMMENDED READING

Collett, Sidney, *All About the Bible*, Old Tappan, New Jersey: Flemming H. Revel Company, 1972.

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Mears, Henrietta C., *What the Bible Is All About*, Glendale, California: Regal Books (Gospel Light Publications), 1970.

Pearlman, Myer, *Through the Bible Book by Book*, Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1979.

Phillips, John, *Exploring the Scriptures*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1970. Slemming, C. W., *Bible Digest*, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1975.