

Bible Introduction



Bible Introduction

Table of Contents



<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
Bible Introduction Assignments Guidelines	
Coloring Page - Psalm 119:105	
Course Objectives	
Key Verses Memory Work	
"I Have a Story" article by Jim Poitras	
Daily Bible Reading Plans 1-7	
Lesson One - What is the Bible?	1
Lesson Two - What is the Bible Called?	3
Lesson Three - How is the Bible Formatted?	5
Old Testament Divisions (Hand Chart)	
New Testament Divisions (Hand Chart)	
Books of the Bible Chart	
Lesson Four - What is the Bible Like?	8
The Bible Picture (chart)	
Lesson Five - How Was the Bible Written?	9
Lesson Six - Can We Prove the Bible is Inspired?	11
Lesson Seven - How was the Bible Prepared?	14
"Scribes" article by Pastor Art Kohl	
Lesson Eight - What is the Bible Canon?	17
Lesson Nine - What About the Apocrypha?	20
Lesson Ten - How Did the Bible Get from Then to Now? (Part 1)	23
Lesson Eleven - How Did the Bible Get from Then to Now? (Part 2)	26
Lesson Twelve - How Did the Bible Get from Then to Now? (Part 3)	30
Lesson Thirteen - Does the Bible Ever Contradict Itself?	34
Lesson Fourteen - How Important are Numbers?	37
Lesson Fifteen - How Do We Know What it Means?	39
Student Helps - Research/Articles	
"How to Read Your Bible" - Christian Book Summaries	
"Bible Introduction Overview" - internet articles by various authors	
"Accelerated Bible Curriculum (Search for Truth Publications) Lesson 1 - "God's Word for My Life" - Student Workbook	

Bible Introduction Overview



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An Introduction to the Bible

Contents

- ♦ [What is the Bible?](#)
 - ♦ [What does 'Bible' mean?](#)
 - ♦ [How did we get the Bible?](#)
 - ♦ [The Bible since then. . .](#)
 - ♦ [The parts of the Bible:](#)
 - ♦ [The contents of the Bible:](#)
 - ♦ [Reading the Bible:](#)
-

What is the Bible?

Put simply, the Bible is God's word to mankind. It is a combination of His directions for how we should live, a history of the world, a story with a purpose and a revelation of God. The Bible is the ultimate authority on God and all matters of the Christian life and salvation.

What does 'Bible' mean?

The word *Bible* basically means "collection of books," and in its physical sense it is exactly that – the *Holy Bible* is the collection of *Holy Books* placed together to form one book.

How did we get the Bible?

Over a period of about one and a half millenia (a thousand years), God inspired many different people to write down His words into 66 individual books. During the centuries following Jesus' ascension into Heaven, these were collected together to form the Bible.

The Bible since then...

Since the original texts were decided upon (a somewhat final decision being made in 397 AD), the Bible has been translated from its original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek into more languages than any other book. It is also available in English in many different translations, from the King James Version of 1611 (which is known for its archaic speech) to the modern, everyday language translations such as the New International Version, the New Revised Standard Version, and the New Living Translation. *(There will be more information about different translations later in this overview.)*

The parts of the Bible:

The Bible has many imposed divisions and subdivisions within. The most obvious being the distinction between the Old Testament (OT) books (Genesis to Malachi) and the New Testament (NT) books (Matthew to Revelation). This distinction was made simply to categorize those texts written before Christ (and therefore

written when the Israelites lived under the old covenant with God) with those texts written after Christ, when all people lived under the new covenant. Here, the importance is on the word *covenant*, which is another word for *agreement*, and means the same thing as *testament*.

Within the OT there are further divisions. The first five books of the OT together form *the Law*, and the rest of the books can be divided into historical works, prophetic works or wisdom literature.

Within the NT we see that the first four books (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) are each *gospels*, that is, the story of Jesus' life. There is then Acts, which stands alone as a history of the early Church. The next section of books are the epistles (which are letters), and within the epistles are subsections divided according to author. Following these is the Revelation of John, which also stands alone as the only (mainly) prophetic text in the New Testament. (*Other NT texts have sections which are obviously prophetic, but Revelation stands out as the majority of its content is of this genre.*)

Below is a graphical view of the divisions of the Bible.

Genesis	OT: The Law	Isaiah	OT: Minor Prophets	Romans	NT: Epistles (written by Paul to specified recipients)	
Exodus		Jeremiah		1Corinthians		
Leviticus		Lamentations		2Corinthians		
Numbers		Ezekiel		Galatians		
Deuteronomy		Daniel		Ephesians		
Joshua	OT: Books of History	Hosea	OT: Major Prophets	Philippians		NT: Epistles (general)
Judges		Joel		Colossians		
Ruth		Amos		1Thessalonians		
1Samuel		Obadiah		2Thessalonians		
2Samuel		Jonah		1Timothy		
1Kings		Micah		2Timothy		
2Kings		Nahum		Titus		
1Chronicles		Habakkuk		Philemon		
2Chronicles		Zephaniah		Hebrews		
Ezra		Haggai		James	NT: Epistles (general)	
Nehemiah	Zechariah	1Peter				
Esther	Malachi	2Peter				
Job	Matthew	1John				
Psalms	Mark	2John				
Proverbs	Luke	3John				
Ecclesiastes	John	Jude				
Song of Solomon	Acts	NT: History	Revelation	NT: Apocalyptic		

The contents of the Bible:

It first must be said that the Bible as a whole is the Word of God, that is, there is no one part of the Bible which is more the word of God than other parts. Among the individual books of the Bible some are easier to read or understand, and some have more relevance to the Christian life than others, but all together form the basis for our faith.

This means that Christian theology (the study of what the Bible says) must take into account everything the Bible says on a particular subject in order to be a proper study of God's word.

Also, as God's word, there is nothing said in the Bible that should not have been said, and there is nothing missing that God wanted in there. The Bible is as God wants it. But that is not to say that there hasn't been human influence on the texts. As mentioned previously, the Bible was written over a period of approximately one and a half millennia, through many different authors, some of whom are unknown. This means the Bible has two natures: it is authoritative in that it is what God wants, and it is historical in that the human influence has tied it to specific cultures and times in history.

Reading the Bible:

Because the Bible is both authoritative and historical (see above), it is important to read it as such. It is God's word that seeks application in your life, but to understand how to apply it, you must understand its original meaning, its original context.

A simple and obvious examples of the need for context in any work is found in the fact that the words, "there is no God," are found 15 times throughout the Bible (NIV). It is not until you look at them in context that you

realize they are all part of a sentence to the effect of “there is no God but one” (e.g., Deuteronomy 32:39) or “the fool says in his heart: ‘There is no God’” (e.g., Psalm 14:1), or similar such statements.

The need for context extends further in the Bible to an appreciation of the culture and circumstances of the time. For example, in Exodus 21 we read that justice should be in the form of exact retribution: “take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise” (vv. 23-25). In Matthew chapter 5 we read Jesus as saying: “If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well” (vv. 39-40). The differences between these two apparently contradictory statements, both of which are authoritative, are reconciled through an understanding of the culture and circumstances of each statement, and the application to today’s life is similarly found.

In some circumstances it may be a good idea to have commentary handy when reading the Bible, to enable a clearer understanding of the passage you’re reading. (Commentaries *comment* on the culture and circumstance, then focus on the meaning of the passages in the Bible.) But a great deal of the time application for passages can be easily found simply by thinking and praying about them. For example, in the 14th chapter of Paul’s letter to the Romans he instructs them to obey the authorities and the law of the land. Although we live under different authorities today, it can be clearly seen that this passage is easily applied in our lives today by obeying the government and living by the laws of the country we live in.

Finally, the Bible is God’s word to us, we are supposed to live by it, and grow in godliness by obeying it. We must do all that we can to understand it and apply it as God wishes.

Various Translations of the Bible

Introduction

The Bible has been translated from its original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek into more languages than any other book in the world. This article will deal only with the English versions most used these days, seeking to help people choose a Bible for their own use.

Contents

(The below are listed in chronological order.)

KJV – King James Bible (1611)
RSV – Revised Standard Version (1952)
NEB – New English Bible (1970)
GNB – Good News Bible (Today’s English Version) (1976)
NIV – New International Version (1978)
NRSV – New Revised Standard Version (1990)
The Message (1993)
CEV – Contemporary English Version (1995)
NIRV – New International Reader’s Version (1996)
ESV – English Standard Version (2001)

Mainstream Bibles

To compare some of the translations here with others, visit BibleGateway.com and use their search feature with different translation.

KJV – King James Bible (1611)

Translated four centuries ago, this major version was the product of the professors of Hebrew and Greek at both Cambridge and Oxford at the time, and was translated under the supervision and intense interest of King James I of England. It was first published in 1611. Since then it has undergone many revisions, eventually being “thoroughly revised and updated” into the American Standard Version of 1901, which in turn produced the Revised Standard Version of 1952, eventually leading to the New Revised Standard Version of 1990. The KJV uses archaic English (*thous* and *thees* and *forasmuchs* etc), and as such can be pretty hard to read. Nevertheless, many people are very fond of it after having grown up with it when it was the only readily available version.

RSV – Revised Standard Version (1952)

A revision of the American Standard Bible of 1901 (which in turn was a revision of the King James Bible of 1611) that reduced the use of archaic English, and used more ancient manuscripts to produce a more accurate

translation than was previously possible. The English is easily readable, although a few *thees* and *thys* etc. remain.

NEB - New English Bible (1970)

The NEB was translated from scratch in an effort to get the best translation from the original to the contemporary English, without constant suggestions from previous versions. Also the translation inserted words (to aid in understanding) that were not present in the original. For example, 1 Thessalonians 4:13 literally reads: "...Those who sleep..." (referring to those who have died), whereas the NEB renders this as "...Those who sleep in death...". So meaning is not added, just clarified.

The principal reviewer of the NT section of the NEB surmised: "If one's sole concern is what the New Testament writers mean, it [the new version] is excellent. It is otherwise if one wants to find out what the documents actually say."

The **Revised English Bible (REB)** published in 1970 as a major revision of the NEB introduced almost four hundred alterations and corrections, most of which are stylistic. Obviously, being the New English Bible, there is a distinct British slant in the phraseology.

GNB - Good News Bible (Today's English Version) (1976)

This translation (with the NT section released in 1966) sought to provide the Bible in English to those who had acquired English as a second language. The result was an easy-to-read text almost child-like in its vocabulary. Also, customs and aspects of cultures not widely known today are replaced with an explaining statement (e.g., "anointed my head with oil" [Psalms 23:5] becomes "welcomed me as an honored guest"). This has also become a common children's Bible.

NIV - New International Version (1978)

Using translators from 13 different denominations of the Christian Church, originating from the United States (vast majority), Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the *New International* version sought to have an interdenominational and international character. Emphasis was also placed on each of the translators' complete trust in the inerrancy of scripture, and its full authority.

The text layout is easy to read and the use of poetic structure is frequent and effective. Where the translators thought that certain words were meant in a difference sense from the obvious, quotation marks were used around the words (for example, "gods" and "lords" in 1Corinthians 8:5).

It seems also that a limited amount of words not found in the original manuscripts were added in certain places (e.g., in Jeremiah 7:22, the word "just" has been added without any textual reason); similarly, words found in the original were omitted in the translation (e.g. in Matthew 5:2, originals read: "Jesus opened his mouth and...", whereas the NIV omits "opened his mouth and").

There are also various inconsistencies with the time format as it differs from the gospels to Acts: the gospels use the Greek format ("the third hour [Matthew 20j:3, Mark 15:25], the sixth hour etc.) but Acts uses a modern format ("three in the afternoon" [Acts 3:1] etc.).

Metzger sums up his analysis of NIV with, 'The New International Version' is more colloquial than the Revised Standard Version, less free than the New English Bible and more literary than the Good News Bible."

Regardless of its faults, the NIV has rapidly moved to a place of widespread acceptance and enjoys the position of assumed translation in many areas of the world.

NRSV - New Revised Standard Version (1990)

With the finding of better manuscripts on which to base the translation, it was decided to thoroughly revise the RSV to produce the NRSV. The new revised version was to have improved accuracy, clarity and layout, and was to remove remaining archaisms and masculine-oriented language (the latter where the text legitimately allowed). The version was released in 1990, then an Anglican version was released in 1995 with British spelling.

This translation seems similar or better than the NIV in 'readability,' however, the insistence upon gender-neutral language has led to often confusing passages and loss of meaning.

The Message (1993)

The Message was translated by Eugene Peterson. He did so out of desire to "bring alive" the words of the New Testament to readers who don't understand the original Greek, especially new Christians and others who had read the Bible so many times that it had become too familiar.

It is a non-literal translation - that is, the content of a passage in the original Greek was read and understood by Peterson, then he put that content into his own words in English and moved onto the next passage. The result is

a very well-flowing, easy-to-read and understand translation. It uses a great deal of (North) American colloquial language and slang which may be off-putting to the international reader; however, most American colloquial expressions have found their way around the world anyway.

Since *The Message* was translated only by Peterson, many other Biblical scholars were asked to read through his efforts, comparing with the original manuscripts as they went in order to be in a position to produce an authoritative collection.

While reading *The Message* with this review in mind, I became convinced that the most accurate way to describe this translation is to say that in many ways it is a modern American equivalent of J.B. Phillips' classic (British-oriented) translation of the New Testament; and therefore I would suggest this translation to any new Christians, or to any Christians to read during their devotions. However, due to the paraphrastic (very non-literal) nature of the translation I would not recommend this for Bible Study – the more literal translations are better for in-depth study as a great deal more emphasis may be placed on detail, and less will be placed on structure and flow.

CEV - Contemporary English Version (1995)

The CEV was initially intended to be a children's Bible, even easier to read than the GNB. Since more people hear the Bible read aloud than read it themselves (especially children), extra attention was paid to how the words would sound when read aloud, and theological terms were replaced by other expressions relevant to the context. From the preface: "The *Contemporary English Version* differs from all other English Bibles – past and present – in that it takes into consideration the needs of the *hearer*, as well as those of the reader, who may not be familiar with traditional biblical language."

NIRV - New International Reader's Version (1996)

In 1992 the International Bible Society voted to begin a translation aimed at third or fourth graders to be used as a stepping stone to the NIV. The NIRV is the result.

ESV - English Standard Version (2001)

The *English Standard Version* is the latest in the stream of translations stemming from Tyndale's New Testament of 1526, through the King James of 1611, the American Standard Version of 1901 and the Revised Standard Version of 1952 and 1971. The ESV is an 'essentially' literal translation, seeking as far as possible to capture the precise wording of the original text and the personal style of each Bible writer.

Translations that emphasize their literalness are often stilted and hard to read as a result of attempting to force the structure of a NT Greek sentence into contemporary English (or other languages). However, while there are obvious instances of 'interestingly structured sentences,' the ESV is nevertheless quite easy to read although it will have a higher reading level as it includes relatively complex theological terms where they were judged to represent the original Greek with greater accuracy.

Looking at the scholars involved in the translation of the ESV I noted a number of well-known and respected names, including Wayne Grudem, Phillip Jensen, Max Lucado, Leon Morris, J.I. Packer, and R. C. Sproul; and as the respective backgrounds of even this non-representative group suggests, the translation team was made up of scholars from around the world.

In conclusion, the ESV seems to be a solid translation, well-suited to Bible study and memorization, good for serious devotions (where detailed meaning is sought) and adequate for light devotions (where ease-of-reading becomes more important).

The prefaces of the CEV, NEB (revised), NIV, NRSV and RSV were used to gather information here. All external criticisms cited from B. M. Metzger, *The Bible in Translation*, Baker Academic Press, 2001.
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The Reliability of the Bible

Contents

- ♦ Introduction
 - ♦ Multiplicity of copies
 - ♦ Comparing the manuscripts...
 - ♦ The process of translation
-

Introduction

Each book of the Bible was written at least 1,900 years ago, and we do not have the original manuscripts today. The texts that today's Bible are based on are literally "copies of copies." When this fact is understood, it is an obvious and understandable question to ask, "Well, how do we know that the Bible is reliable? How do we know that what we read is an accurate representation of what was written all those millennia ago?"

Multiplicity of copies

First, there are a multiplicity of copies of the texts of the New Testament that date from within a couple of generations of their writing. Further to this, the copies come from different geographical locations and have been translated into other languages at a very early time. This helps us, as we can compare texts found in two different geographical locations and surmise that where they match up they're accurate to their original copy. So when we compare a number of manuscripts from a very early time period and different geographical locations, it is very easy to see what is accurate and what is not. We can also look at the translations into other languages and compare meanings as another source of independent information.

When compared to other ancient texts, the New Testament is quite in a world of its own with regard to reliability. We have more than 5,000 Greek New Testament Manuscripts today, dating from c. 100 AD to c. 800 AD (that's only a generation or two between original authorship and earliest existing copy) whereas the next most reliable text that comes to us from a similar time-period is Homer's Iliad, composed in 800 BC, of which we have 650 Greek manuscripts dating from c. 100-200 AD (that's about 900 years between original authorship and the earliest existing copy).

If you include translations of the New Testament, we have over 24,000 copies of the New Testament coming down to us from Antiquity, and that does not include quotes. The New Testament was widely quoted in the early centuries AD providing even more sources to compare (it is said that if we lost all Greek versions of the New Testament, we could still piece a complete copy together solely from quotations made from it by the early Church Fathers). That's a great deal of evidence to the authority of the New Testament, and makes it not only reliable, but by far *the most reliable* document to come down to us from Antiquity.

Comparing the manuscripts...

It is quite common to hear someone accuse the New Testament of containing 200,000 errors. In a way, that statement is quite true – although it is misleading (and it is more correct to say that there are approximately 200,000 *variants*).

The problem arises as copies were made of copies: obviously, when the scribes of ancient times labouriously copied from one faded text onto a clean sheet, mistakes were bound to occur. Some manuscripts have lines repeated as the scribes' mind wandered, others have the sequence of words incorrect at some point, others have words misspelled.

The figure of 200,000 comes from the addition of these errors in all the manuscripts. So if a scribe made three mistakes whilst making one copy of the New Testament, and then his copy was copied by 100 others, even assuming they did not make any further errors, that is now counted as three hundred variants when compared to other texts that do not carry the original mistake.

Then if each of those copies are themselves copied twenty times, again, without further mistake, that becomes 6,000 variants. Remembering that there are over 5,000 manuscripts, most of which are 'copies of copies,' you realize that 200,000 *variants* is quite understandable – even, to be expected.

Further to that, the types of mistakes encountered from scribal error tend not to influence the message of a text, unless whole lines are skipped inadvertently. Whether words are misspelled, repeated or written out of sequence, generally speaking, they will not represent the original intended message and therefore are reliable.

The process of translation

Many people have the misconception that the modern translations of the Bible are simply rewrites of older translations and thus after so many little alterations are probably totally inaccurate now. This is simply not the case. All mainstream Bibles were translated from the most authoritative copies of the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek available. The existing texts of the Bible in its original languages are studied fervently and compared to each other, as well as to other ancient translations, to find the most authoritative text possible (probably, but not necessarily, the oldest; and perhaps different sections from different manuscripts).

Many Bible translations today (such as the RSV, EST, etc.) were translated from the original languages whilst also comparing with other modern translations to attempt to get the most accurate rendering in conjunction with proven ease of understanding. Other versions (such as the NEB) purposefully do not compare any passages at all, but translate solely from the authoritative original texts.

It is also sometimes thought that the translations have become less and less reliable with regard to our understanding of the original languages. Again, this is fortunately not the case. As time goes on, we are able to find more and more authoritative texts (e.g. the find in Qumran in the mid-20th Century). These texts teach us more about the original languages, and shed even more light on which texts should be treated as authoritative and which should not.

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Using the Bible

This page aims to give a quick introduction to the referencing system of the Bible and how to use it.

The Reference System:

As discussed in the introduction to the Bible page, the Bible is divided into 66 books (note that invariably 'book' is used even when the 'book' in question is actually a letter). Each of these books also has further divisions within, such as chapters and verses, to help when referring to a particular passage from the Bible.

An example of such a reference is: "Romans 8:1," which refers to the first verse of the eighth chapter of the book of Romans. This is exactly the same as the abbreviated form: "Rom. 8:1."

Each book can be referenced in this way (except some books which only have one chapter and so there are less numbers and no colon in the references – e.g., "Jude 23") and the chapter and verse divisions remain the same across all different translations of the Bible.

Alternate Representations:

There have been many accepted ways of referring to passages in the Bible over the centuries, using variations on Roman and Arabic numerals, superscript, colons and fullstops. For example:

- ♦ Romans 8:1
- ♦ Rom. 8.1
- ♦ Ro. 8 1
- ♦ Romans viii, 1

The above all refer to the same passage.

Also, with those books that are named "the first," "the second," or the third," Book of X," "Corinthians" for example, Roman or Arabic numerals can be used as well. For example;

2 Corinthians 5:2
II Cor. V, 2
2 Cor. V, 2
II Cor. 5.2

The above all refer to the same passage.

A few notes:

- ♦ It is not necessary to distinguish between Old and New Testaments when referencing.
- ♦ It is not necessary to identify the author of a book when referring to it.

History of The Bible

<http://www.allaboutthejourney.org/history-of-the-bible.htm>

History of the Bible

The history of the Bible starts with a phenomenal account of history. It is not one book like I always thought – it is an ancient collection of writings, comprised of 66 separate books, written over approximately 1,600 years, by at least 40 distinct authors. The Old Testament contains 39 books written from approximately 1500 to 400 BC, and the New Testament contains 27 books written from approximately 40 to 90 AD. The Jewish Bible (*Tanakh*) is the same as the Christian Old Testament, except for its book arrangement. The original Old Testament was written mainly in Hebrew, with some Aramaic, while the original New Testament was written in common Greek.

The history of the “Bible” begins with the Jewish Scriptures. The historical record of the Jews was written down on leather scrolls and tablets over centuries, and the authors included kings, shepherds, prophets and other leaders. The first five books are called the Law, which were written and/or edited primarily by Moses in the early 1400’s BC. Thereafter, other scriptural texts were written and collected by the Jewish people during the next 1,000 years.

About 450 BC, the Law and the other Jewish Scriptures were arranged by councils of rabbis (Jewish teachers), who then recognized the complete set as the inspired and sacred authority of God (Elohim). At some time during this period, the books of the Hebrew Bible were arranged by topic, including The Law (*Torah*), the Prophets (*Nebiim*), and the Writings (*Ketubim*). The first letters of these Hebrew words – T, N, and K – form the name of the Hebrew Bible – the *Tanakh*. (Henry H. Halley, *Halley’s Bible Handbook*, 25th ed., Zondervan Publishing House, 2000, 1071).

Beginning as early as 250 BC, the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek by Jewish scholars in Alexandria, Egypt. This translation became known as the “Septuagint,” meaning 70, and referring to the tradition that 70 (probably 72) men comprised the translation team. It was during this process that the order of the books was changed to the order we have in today’s Bible: Historical (Genesis – Esther), poetic (Job – Song of Songs), and prophetic (Isaiah – Malachi). (Henry H. Halley, *Halley’s Bible Handbook*, 25th ed., Zondervan Publishing House, 2000, 1071).

Although the Jewish Scriptures were copied by hand, they were extremely accurate copy to copy. The Jews had a phenomenal system of scribes, who developed intricate and ritualistic methods for counting letters, words and paragraphs to insure that no copying errors were made. These scribes dedicated their entire lives to preserving the accuracy of the holy books. A single copy error would require the immediate destruction of the entire scroll. In fact, Jewish scribal tradition was maintained until the invention of the printing press in the mid-1400’s AD. As far as manuscript accuracy, the recent discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has confirmed the remarkable reliability of this scribal system over thousands of years. (Various, *Zondervan Handbook to the Bible*, Zondervan Publishing House, 1999, 64-65.)

After approximately 400 years of scriptural silence, Jesus arrived on the scene in about 4 BC. Throughout his teaching, Jesus often quotes the Old Testament, declaring that he did not come to destroy the Jewish Scriptures, but to fulfill them. In the Book of Luke, Jesus proclaims to his disciples, “all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” (Luke 24:44, *The Holy Bible*, New King James Version, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982.)

Starting in about 40 AD, and continuing to about 90 AD, the eye-witnesses to the life of Jesus, including Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, James, Peter and Jude, wrote the Gospels, letters, and books that became the Bible’s New Testament. These authors quote from 31 books of the Old Testament and widely circulate their material so that by about 150 AD, early Christians were referring to the entire set of writings as the “New Covenant.”

During the 200s AD, the original writings were translated from Greek into Latin, Coptic (Egypt) and Syriac (Syria), and widely disseminated as “inspired scripture” throughout the Roman Empire (and beyond). (F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* 5th rev. ed., Intersity Press, 1960, 21-28).

In 397 AD, in an effort to protect the scriptures from various heresies and offshoot religious movements, the current 27 books of the New Testament were formally and finally confirmed and “canonized” in the Synod of Carthage. (F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* 5th rev. ed., Intersity Press, 1960, 21-28).

Bible Manuscripts

<http://www.allaboutthejourney.org/history-of-the-bible.htm>

Bible Manuscripts

Dramatically, when the Bible manuscripts are compared to other ancient writings, they stand alone as the best-preserved literary works of all antiquity. Remarkably, there are thousands of existing Old Testament manuscripts and fragments copied throughout the Middle East, Mediterranean, and European regions that agree phenomenally with each other. (Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999, 71-73).

In addition, these texts substantially agree with the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, which was translated from Hebrew to Greek some time during the 3rd century BC. (Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, vol. 1, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979, 58-59.)

The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in Israel in the 1940's and 50's, also provide astounding evidence for the reliability of the ancient transmission of the Jewish Scripture (Old Testament) in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd centuries BC. (Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, vol. 1, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979, 56-5.)

The manuscript evidence for the "New Testament" is also dramatic, with nearly 25,000 ancient manuscripts discovered and archived so far, at least 5,600 of which are copies and fragments in the original Greek. (Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999, 34-36). Some manuscript texts date to the early second and third centuries, with the time between the original autographs and our earliest existing fragment being a remarkably short 40-60 years. (*John Ryland's Gospel of John fragment*, John Ryland's Library of Manchester, England. See also, *Ibid.*, 38.)

Interestingly, this manuscript evidence far surpasses the manuscript reliability of other ancient writings that we trust as authentic every day. Look at these comparisons (McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, vol. 1, 42.):

- ♦ Julius Caesar's *The Gallic Wars* (10 manuscripts remain, with the earliest one dating to 1,000 years after the original autograph)
- ♦ Pliny the Younger's *Natural History* (7 manuscripts; 750 years elapsed)
- ♦ Thucydides' *History* (8 manuscripts; 1,300 years elapsed)
- ♦ Herodotus' *History* (8 manuscripts; 1,350 years elapsed)
- ♦ Plato (7 manuscripts; 1,300 years) and
- ♦ Tacitus' *Annals* (20 manuscripts; 1,000 years)

Renowned Bible scholar F.F. Bruce declares (F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments: How We Got Our English Bible*, Fleming H. Revell Co., 1950, 178.):

There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament.

Homer's *Iliad*, the most renowned book of ancient Greece, is the second best-preserved literary work of all antiquity, with 643 copies of manuscript support discovered to date. In those copies, there are 764 disputed lines of text, as compared to 40 lines in all the New Testament manuscripts. (Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, Moody, Chicago, Revised and Expanded 1986, 366-367.)

Many people are unaware that there are no surviving manuscripts of any of William Shakespeare's 37 plays (written in the 1600's), and scholars have been forced to fill some gaps in his works. (<http://shakespeare.com/faq/>, Dana Spradley, Publisher, 2002.)

This pales in textual comparison with the over 5,600 copies and fragments of the New Testament in the original Greek that, together, assure us that nothing has been lost. In fact, all of the New Testament except eleven minor verses can be reconstructed outside the Bible from the writings of the early church leaders in the second and third centuries AD. (McDowell, *Evidence that demands a Verdict*, vol. 1, 50-51.)

In real terms, the New Testament is easily the best attested ancient writing in terms of the sheer number of documents, the time span between the events and the document, and the variety of documents available to sustain or contradict it. There is nothing in ancient manuscript evidence to match such textual availability and integrity.

(Ravi K. Zacharias, *Can Man Live Without God?* Word Publishing, 1994, 162.)

The academic discipline of "textual criticism" assures us that the Bible translations we have today are essentially the same as the ancient Bible manuscripts, with the exception of a few inconsequential discrepancies that have been introduced over time through copyist error. We must remember that the Bible was hand-copied for hundreds of years before the invention of the first printing press. Nevertheless, the text is exceedingly well preserved.

Again, I pondered this – of the approximately 20,000 lines that make up the entire New Testament, only 40 lines are in question. Those 40 lines represent one fifth of one percent of the entire text and do not in any way affect the teaching and doctrine of the New Testament.

I again compared this with Homer's *Iliad*. Of the approximately 15,600 lines that make up Homer's classic, 764 lines are in question. These 764 lines represent over 5% of the entire text, and yet nobody seems to question the general integrity of that ancient work.

To my real surprise, I discovered the Bible to be better preserved – by far – than other ancient works I've read and accepted over the years, such as Homer, Plato, and Aristotle.

As far as my "interpretation of an interpolation of an oral tradition" theory, I found that the Bible was not changed or interpreted from the ancient source texts. Simply, as the Bible was carried from country to country,

it was translated into languages that do not necessarily mirror the original languages of Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic. However, other than some grammatical and cultural differences, the "Bible manuscripts" are absolutely true to their original form and content, and remarkably well-preserved in their various translations.

One simple way to determine if a writing or statement is valid, true, or complete, is to check whether or not it, in fact, has happened. The prophecies contained in God's Word are numerous. The fact that many of these have already been recorded in history gives further proof that God's Word is accurate and true. (*Linda Poitras*)

Bible Prophecies Fulfilled

The Decree of Cyrus

In about 700 BC, Isaiah names Cyrus as the king who will allow the Israelites to return to Jerusalem and rebuild its Temple (Isaiah 44:28; 54:1). At the time of this prophecy, there was no king named Cyrus and the Temple in Jerusalem was totally built and in full operation.

In 586 BC, more than 100 years later, the Babylonian King "Nebuchadnezzar" sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. The Jews living in Jerusalem were either killed or taken captive to Babylon. (McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, vol. 2, 346.)

In about 539 BC, the Babylonian Empire was conquered by the Persians. Shortly thereafter, a Persian king named Cyrus issued a formal decree that the Jews could return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple (2 Chronicles 36:22-23). This decree is confirmed by secular archaeology in the form of a stone cylinder that details many events of Cyrus' reign, including the decree to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. (McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, vol. 2, 347.)

Remarkably, Isaiah predicted that a man named Cyrus, who would not be born for about a hundred years, would give a decree to rebuild a city and a temple, which were still standing and fully active at the time.

I had to check more of these out...! Are there more Bible prophecies fulfilled in history...?

The City of Tyre

In 586 BC (confirmed by secular sources as the 11th year of the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah), "Ezekiel" predicts the fall of mainland Tyre to the Babylonian armies of Nebuchadnezzar (Ezekiel 26). The text further describes the siege against the island fortress of Tyre (a half mile off the coast of mainland Tyre) hundreds of years later. Ezekiel's prophecy describes how the future invaders would tear down the ruins of mainland Tyre and throw them into the sea. They would "scrape her dust from her and leave her as the top of a rock" (Ezekiel 26:4). "They will lay your stones, your timber, and your soil in the midst of the water" (Ezekiel 26:12,14).

Secular history records that Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the great mainland city of Tyre about a year after Ezekiel's prophecy. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* says: "After a 13-year siege (585-573 BC) by Nebuchadnezzar II, Tyre made terms and acknowledged Babylonian suzerainty." (43/xxii452) When Nebuchadnezzar broke through the city gates, he found it nearly empty. Most of the people had moved by ship to an island about a half mile off the coast and fortified a city there. The mainland city was destroyed in 573 BC (Ezekiel's first prediction), but the city of Tyre on the island remained a powerful city for several hundred years.

Secular history records that "Alexander the Great" laid siege to the island fortress of Tyre in 332 BC. His army destroyed the remains of mainland Tyre and threw them into the Mediterranean Sea. As Alexander's army constructed a causeway to the island, they scraped even the dust from the mainland city, leaving only bare rock. Historian Phillip Myers in his history textbook, *General History for Colleges and High Schools*, writes, "Alexander the Great reduced Tyre to ruins in 332 BC. Tyre recovered in a measure from this blow, but never regained the place she had previously held in the world. The larger part of the site of the once great city is now as bare as the top of a rock - a place where the fishermen that still frequent the spot spread their nets to dry." (Phillip Myers, *General History for Colleges and High Schools*, Boston, Ginn & Co., 2003, 55.)

Wow, this was dramatic stuff - I had no idea...

The City of Samaria

The prophets Hosea (748 - 690 BC) and Micah (738 - 690 BC) each predicted the destruction of Samaria, the capital city of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Not only did these prophets predict violence and destruction, but they declared that this great city would become "as a heap in the field," with its stones poured down into the valley, and vineyards planted in place of its great walls, with even the foundations being removed (Hosea 12:11; Micah 1:6).

History tells us that Sargon took Samaria by the sword in 722 BC. Later, Alexander took the city violently in 331 BC, as did Hyrcanus in 120 BC. What is remarkable is not the violent demise of Samaria and its people, but rather, some of the historic specifics of what then happened to that once great city.

Reactions upon visiting the ancient spot have been recorded for centuries. In 169, Henry Maundrell declared "This great city is now wholly converted into gardens, and all the tokens that remain to testify that there has ever been such a place, are only on the north side..." Floyd Hamilton continues: "Today the top of the hill where Samaria stood is a cultivated field with the foundations of the columns marking the place where the palaces and mansions stood. At the foot of the hill, in the valley, lie the foundation stones of the city..." (McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, vol.1, 282.) Finally, from van de Velde:

Her foundations discovered, her streets ploughed up, and covered with corn fields and olive gardens... Samaria has been destroyed, but her rubbish has been thrown down into the valley; her foundation stones, those grayish ancient quadrangular stones of the time of Omri and Ahab, are discovered, and lie scattered about on the slope of the hill. (McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, vol. 1, 283.)

I read prophecy after prophecy...

I read them closely and let them sink in...

I took notes and collected excerpts and articles...

I was fascinated with the probabilities of these Bible prophecies being fulfilled...

The Bible is TRUE and ACCURATE...AMEN!

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"
(Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33)

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Bible Introduction



"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"
(Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33)

Lesson One

What is the Bible?

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"
(Hebrews 4:12).

What I Have Learned

The Bible is God's Word

Many things bear witness to the authority of the Scriptures as the Word of God. 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"* (2Timothy 3:16) and that *"Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"* (2Peter 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.

The Bible Must be Studied to be Known

There is no substitute 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.

2Timothy 3:15-17 shows the importance of a knowledge of the Word of God. Timothy is recognized as one who had 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" (2 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."

Reading 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 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 know the whole message of His Word. F. F. Bruce, in *The Books and the Parchments*, states that: "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."

A Suggested Plan For Bible Reading

Bible reading is the foundation for Bible study. Since many students fail to get started in a systematic reading of the Bible, here are some simple suggestions. **First**, obtain or make a chart that 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. For 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 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 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.

What Have You Learned?

1. What did Voltaire predict about the Bible?

Did his prediction come true? _____

2. What happened to Voltaire's works and writings? _____

3. What is the requirement before beginning to study the Bible? _____

4. How long might it take the average reader to read the Bible through – from Genesis to Revelation?

5. Name two (2) groups of secular professionals who have proven/verified the Word of God is true.

1) _____

2) _____

6. List two (2) things to help begin a systematic reading of the Bible. _____

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Lesson Two

What is the Bible Called?

“Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye” (Mark 7:13).

What I Have Learned

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 *Ta 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, *Ta 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 *biblos* or a small book *biblion*. Later the Greeks called their sacred Scriptures, *Ta Biblia*, “the books.”

It is not called “Biblos” because there are sixty-six books, but because of its preeminence over all books. It is not merely a book – it is the book which stands as high above all other books as the heaven is high above the earth. It is named “THE BOOK” in Psalm 40:7 and Hebrews 10:7.

The title Bible was given us by John Christianson of Constantinople (398 – 404 A.D.).

Read:

Mark 12:26 Hebrews 10:7 Acts 1:20
Acts 7:42 Luke 3:4 Luke 20:42
Psalm 40:7

Other Names Used for the Bible

Scriptures

The term *Scriptures* is 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 that 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 were known as Scripture or Scriptures.

This designation appears once in the Old Testament in Daniel 10:21. It was used more frequently in the early church than it is at present. The word Scripture occurs thirty-two times in the King James Version. The plural form occurs twenty-one times. Examples of use in the Bible are:

- 📖 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).
- 📖 2Timothy 3:16 identifies “all scripture” as being “given by inspiration of God.”

Read:




Matthew 22:29 John 5:39 Romans 1:2
2Peter 3:16 Luke 24:27 Acts 17:11
2Timothy 3:15

The Word of God

Of all the names given to the Bible, this title is perhaps the most significant, impressive, and complete. It expresses the thought that the Bible is God speaking to man. It signifies divine authority, appears frequently in the Old Testament and about forty times in the New Testament.

“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. A few examples are:

- 📖 “The word of God came to Nathan” (1Chronicles 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 that God has divinely imparted to man. They are of a certainty God’s words to man!

Read:

Mark 7:13 Romans 10:17 Hebrews 4:12

The Old and New Testament

The word “testament” means “covenant,” and by this term God was pleased to designate the relation that existed between Himself and His people. “Testament” is used thirteen times in the Authorized Version, but is translated “covenant” in the Revised Version. The Old Testament or Covenant was given at Mt. Sinai and deals with the calling and history of the Jewish nation.

The New Testament or Covenant was made in the Upper Room and is concerned with the history and application of the redemption wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Read:

Luke 22:20 2Corinthians 3:6
Hebrews 12:24 Hebrews 9:15

Oracles

“Oracles” originally meant the place where the Word of God was kept and from which it was communicated. This designation is found approximately fourteen times in the Old Testament and four times in the New Testament.

Read:

2Samuel 16:23 Hebrews 5:12 1Peter 4:11
Romans 3:2 Acts 7:38 Psalm 28:2

The Precepts

The precepts are prescribed truths. This word means “placed in trust” and has to do with the conduct and conscience of man.

The Statutes

This term means fixed obligations and comes from the root word meaning “to engrave.” These statutes are fixed and engraved by the hand of God.

The Commandments

God’s Word is given with authority and is lodged with us as a trust. Not to obey the Word of God is an act of rebellion.

The Judgments

God’s judgments were made in infinite wisdom. By them we must be judged. The Bible is a guide which is just and right.

What Have You Learned?

Give one-word answers for the following questions:

1. How many books are in the New Testament?

2. What is the meaning of the English word "Bible?" _____
3. What is the meaning of the word "Scripture?"

4. What is another word used for the word "Testament?" _____
5. In the early days of Christianity, the Greek-speaking Christians referred to all the Old and New Testament books as *Ta Biblia*, meaning what? _____
6. What other name for the Bible originally meant the place where the Word of God was kept and from which it was communicated?

7. This term (another name for the Bible) means fixed obligations and comes from the root word meaning "to engrave." _____
8. This word means "placed in trust" and has to do with the conduct and conscience of man.

Write TRUE or FALSE in the blanks provided for the following statements.

- _____ 9. The Old Testament (covenant) was given at Mt. Sinai and deals with the calling and history of the Jewish nation.
 - _____ 10. The New Testament (covenant) was made in the Upper Room and is concerned with the history and application of the redemption of Jesus.
 - _____ 11. The plural form of the word *Scripture* is found thirty-two times in the King James Version of the Bible.
 - _____ 12. "The Word of God" is a phrase that has come into common use to identify the Bible.
 - _____ 13. The phrase "Commandments of God" is used repeatedly in the Bible in reference to the words that God has given to man.
 - _____ 14. We can refer to the total content of the Bible as the Word of God.
 - _____ 15. Not to obey the Word of God is an act of rebellion, because the Bible is a guide that is just and right.
-
-

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Lesson Three

How is the Bible Formatted?

**“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”
(2Peter 1:21).**

What I Have Learned

General Information About the Bible

Authorship and time of writing

The Bible is made 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” (2Peter 1:21).

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 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.

The Languages of the Bible

The original language of the Old Testament was Hebrew. Three small sections however, were written in Aramaic: 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.

The Old and New Testaments

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.

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.

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 gave his approval to all 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 versions 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 following the Septuagint version contain *thirty-nine books*.

The Hebrews never spoke of 1 and 2 Samuel or 1 and 2 Kings until the translation of the Septuagint Bible in 285 B.C. When seventy Jews began to translate the Bible into Greek, they found it took so much space they divided some books into two. The poetical books were not divided.

The common divisions into which the thirty-nine books of the **Old Testament** 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) 1Samuel
- 10) 2Samuel
- 11) 1Kings
- 12) 2Kings
- 13) 1Chronicles
- 14) 2Chronicles
- 15) Ezra
- 16) Nehemiah
- 17) Esther

The Wisdom or Poetical Books

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

The Major Prophets

- 23) Isaiah
- 24) Jeremiah
- 25) Lamentations
- 26) Ezekiel
- 27) Daniel

The Minor Prophets

- 28) Hosea
- 29) Joel
- 30) Amos
- 31) Obadiah

- 32) Jonah
- 33) Micah
- 34) Nahum
- 35) Habakkuk
- 36) Zephaniah
- 37) Haggai
- 38) Zechariah
- 39) Malachi

The Old Testament is grouped in 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. 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:

The Gospels

- 1) Matthew
- 2) Mark
- 3) Luke
- 4) John

History

- 5) The Book of Acts

The Pauline Epistles

- 6) Romans
- 7) 1Corinthians
- 8) 2Corinthians
- 9) Galatians
- 10) Ephesians
- 11) Philippians
- 12) Colossians
- 13) 1Thessalonians
- 14) 2Thessalonians
- 15) 1Timothy
- 16) 2Timothy
- 17) Titus
- 18) Philemon

The General Epistles

- 19) Hebrews (sometimes included with Pauline Epistles)
- 20) James
- 21) 1Peter
- 22) 2Peter
- 23) 1John
- 24) 2John
- 25) 3John
- 26) Jude

Prophecy

- 27) Revelation

The New Testament has five sections if the two sections of the Epistles are separate. 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.

Into Chapters

The original manuscripts contained no chapter or verse divisions. These were added later 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*). Originally, chapter divisions were credited to Cardinal Sancto who died in 1263.

The division of the Bible into chapters was done for the purpose of a Latin concordance. Some divisions are unfortunate, but appear in all following translations.

Into Verses

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

Verse division is also man-made and was done in 1550 A.D. by Sir Robert Stevens. The Geneva Bible, printed in 1560, was the first Bible to be printed in verse form. The Revised Version of 1881 does not have the verse divisions.

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), says, "the Latin Vulgate was the first Bible to incorporate both verse and chapter divisions in both Old and New Testaments.

Conclusion

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

Students 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.

What Have You Learned?

1. How many chapters are in the Bible – both Old and New Testaments? _____

2. How many historical books are in the Old Testament? _____
3. What are the first five books of the Bible called? _____
4. What book follows the book of Obadiah?

5. What book follows the book of Joshua?

6. What is the name of the first Bible divided into verses? _____
7. Why was the Bible divided into chapters?

8. The Scriptures were first divided for what purpose? _____

9. What are the three (3) divisions of Hebrew Scriptures?
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
10. In what Scripture reference did Jesus mention these divisions? _____
11. What languages were used in the original writings of the Old and New Testaments? _____

12. According to Josh McDowell's book *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, what was the first Bible to incorporate both verse and chapter divisions in both Old and New Testaments? _____

13. What is the Septuagint version of the Bible?

Lesson Four

What is the Bible Like?

**“The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple”
(Psalm 119:130).**

What I Have Learned

The Bible is so many things. It is a picture (symbol) to help us understand ourselves, and what God wants us to understand about Himself.

1. A Discerner or Critic

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful A discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

This is the only place in the Bible where the idea of being a “critic” occurs. How presumptuous for men to dare to be critics of the Bible when it has been given to be our critic.

2. A Lamp or Light

Like the Star in the East, the Bible will lead any honest seeker to Jesus. Like the seven-branched candlestick in the Tabernacle, it shines with a perfect light upon divine things. Like the fiery pillar, it lights up the whole pathway of the child of God throughout his wilderness journey.

References:

Psalm 119:105	Psalm 119:130
2Peter 1:19	Proverbs 6:23

3. A Mirror

Like a mirror the Bible shows man as he really is, “Guilty before God.” This is the first step that leads to God.

References:

2Corinthians 3:18	James 1:23-25
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4. A Laver

As water cleanses by separating from the body those outward stains which defile it, so the Word of God has a cleansing effect by teaching the heart to shrink from every form of sin that would defile the inner life.

References:

Ephesians 5:26	John 15:3	Psalm 119:11
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5. Food

- ✓ Milk for babes – 1Corinthians 3:2; Hebrews 5:12-13
- ✓ Bread for the hungry – Deuteronomy 8:3; Isaiah 55:1-2
- ✓ Strong Meat for men – 1Corinthians 3:2; Hebrews 5:12-14
- ✓ Honey – Psalm 19:10; Psalm 119:103

6. Gold (treasure)

God has provided in His Word such lasting wealth that all the riches of this world are in comparison as nothing.

Reference:

Psalm 19:10

7. Fire

References:

Jeremiah 20:9	Jeremiah 23:29
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8. Hammer

Some men’s hearts are as hard as rock and it takes the steady beating of the Word to break them.

Reference:

Jeremiah 23:29

9. Sword

Reference:

Ephesians 6:17

10. Seed

References:

Luke 8:11 1Peter 1:23 Isaiah 5:10

- ✓ We should sow in all places (Isaiah 32:20)
- ✓ We should sow at all times (Ecclesiastes 11:6)
- ✓ Soil should be prepared by love and compassion (Psalm 126:6)

What Have You Learned?

Match the letter of the given verse (reference) to each symbol of the Bible.

a. critic/discerner	f. food	k. gold/treasure
b. lamp	g. milk	l. fire
c. light	h. bread	m. hammer
d. mirror	i. meat	n. sword
e. laver	j. honey	o. seed

- _____ 1) Psalm 119:103
- _____ 2) 2Corinthians 3:18
- _____ 3) Hebrews 5:12-13
- _____ 4) 1Corinthians 3:2
- _____ 5) Deuteronomy 8:3
- _____ 6) Luke 8:11
- _____ 7) Proverbs 6:23
- _____ 8) Hebrews 4:12
- _____ 9) Psalm 119:105
- _____ 10) Ephesians 6:17
- _____ 11) Psalm 19:10
- _____ 12) John 15:3
- _____ 13) Jeremiah 23:29
- _____ 14) Jeremiah 20:9
- _____ 15) Isaiah 5:10

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Lesson Five

How Was the Bible Written?

**“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”
(2Timothy 3:16).**

What I Have Learned

Introduction

We have the record of God writing three times:

1. The Ten Commandments written on tables of stone (Exodus 31:18)
2. Judgment on Belshazzar’s wall (Daniel 5:5)
3. The message of grace written by our Lord in the dust of the floor of the temple (John 8:6)

The first time was the giving of the Law which was broken by man. The last time was a special act of Grace that was trampled under foot by man.

A fourth example of God writing to consider is God writing on the fleshy tables of the human heart (2 Corinthians 3:3). The reason we have not included this among the three examples given above, is that this is done by the Holy Spirit and is not literal writing.

The Bible Has Only One Author

In writing the Bible, God used *forty* men over a period of some 1600 years. Although there were so many men used over such a long time, it is quite evident that the Bible has only *one* author. The Bible is the product of one Master Mind.

A reverent and careful study of the Bible will acquaint the student with its Author.

The Bible Was Written By Inspiration

According to 2 Timothy 3:16, every Scripture is inspired by God. That means there can be no Scripture which isn’t inspired by God.

“Given by inspiration of God” comes from one Greek word meaning “God breathed.”

“But above all, remember that no prophecy in Scripture will be found to have come from the prophet’s own prompting; for never did prophecy come by human will, but men sent by God spoke as they were impelled by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21, *Weymouth*).

Definition of Inspiration

“Inspired” means literally “God-breathed.” It comes from the Greek word “*theopneustos*” or “God breathed out.” It is the strong, conscious inbreathing of God into men, qualifying them to give utterance to truth. It is God speaking through men, and the Bible is therefore just as much the Word of God as though God spoke every single word of it with His own lips. The Scriptures are the result of divine inbreathing just as human speech is uttered by the breathing through a man’s mouth.

We cannot explain the manner in which the Holy Spirit enabled the writers to accomplish the task. God chose a vessel, a human personality, and used that human personality as His vocal cords.

All Scripture is God-breathed. This means that no Scripture is inspired more than any other Scripture.

Definition of Revelation

“Revelation” is that act of God by which He directly communicates truth not known before to the human mind. Revelation discovers new truth while inspiration superintends the communication of that truth. All in the Bible has not been revealed, but all is inspired.

Definition of Illumination

“Illumination” is the influence of the Spirit upon the minds of men that they might understand spiritual things. Spiritual illumination is conditioned by yielding to the Holy Spirit.

References:

Matthew 16:17

1Corinthians 2:14

Revelation is a divine revealing of the mind of God. Illumination is a divine action of the mind of men. It was are speaking of truth, then it is proper to use the word "revelation." If we are speaking of the mind and heart of man, then it is proper to use the word "illumination." The revelation of truth illuminates man's mind and heart.

The Significance of Inspiration

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. (*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 (1John 2:27).

Inspiration is the method by which God's revelation was communicated to man and recorded in the Bible.

2Peter 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. 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."

The Extent of Inspiration


Inspiration is all inclusive. The entire content of the Bible is inspired by God. 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 write had no error. The 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.

The Full Inspiration of the Bible:

- 📖 Jesus gave the Old Testament His full sanction (Matthew 5:18).
- 📖 It is the product of one Master Mind. Although it contains sixty-six books, written by forty writers over sixteen hundred years, it has One *Author*.
- 📖 The types, symbols, and ceremonies reveal it as divine, e.g. Christ in the Tabernacle.
- 📖 Bible prophecies stamp it as being divine (1Peter 1:10-11). A tremendous amount of Bible prophecy has been literally fulfilled in our own lifetime.
- 📖 Moral standards of the Bible prove it to be divine (1Peter 1:16).
- 📖 The Creator of man is the Author of the Bible. Only in this way could the Bible reveal man to himself as it does.
- 📖 It reveals the only way of salvation – so plain but yet deep.
- 📖 By its fruits we know the Bible is divine (Romans 11:33). It always brings good.
- 📖 The Bible will outlast the universe (Psalm 119:89; Matthew 5:18).

 The world recognizes it as divine. It is *The Book*. It has been translated into more languages than any other book. Whole libraries have been written to interpret it, and before it sages bow.

What Have You Learned?

Fill in the blanks with the correct word.

1. God used _____ men to write the Bible.
2. We have a record of God writing _____ times.
3. The Bible was written by _____.
4. The act of God by which He directly communicates truth to the human mind is known as _____.
5. By _____ inspiration we mean full inspiration.
6. The Bible was written over a period of _____ years.
7. The meaning of inspiration is _____.
8. The Bible has one _____.
9. _____ is the influence of the Spirit upon the minds of men that they might understand truth.
10. By "Verbal Inspiration" we mean that each _____ was inspired.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Lesson Six

Can We Prove the Bible is Inspired?

**“God, who at sundry times, and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,”
(Hebrews 1:1).**

What I Have Learned

There is much proof that God’s Word is inspired. It comes from the testimony of Scripture, and from the external proof of sources outside the Bible.

Internal proof - the Testimony of Scripture

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

Moses -

- 📖 “And God spake all these words” (Exodus 20:1).
- 📖 “Moses wrote all the words of the LORD” (Exodus 24:4).
- 📖 “And the LORD spake unto Moses saying...” (Exodus 25:1).
- 📖 “And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words” (Exodus 34:27).

David -

- 📖 “The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue” (2Samuel 23:2).

Isaiah -

- 📖 “The LORD hath spoken. . .” (Isaiah 1:2).

Jeremiah -

- 📖 “Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying” (Jeremiah 1:4).
- 📖 “I have put my words in thy mouth” (Jeremiah 1:9).

Ezekiel -

- 📖 “The word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel” (Ezekiel 1:3).
- 📖 “Then came the word of the LORD unto me, saying” (Ezekiel 20:2).

Amos -

- 📖 “The words...which he saw concerning Israel” (Amos 1:1).

Malachi -

- 📖 “The burden [oracle] of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi” (Malachi 1:1).

John -

- 📖 “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him. . .” (Revelation 1:1).

Peter -

- 📖 “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2Peter 1:21).

Paul -

- 📖 “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2Timothy 3:16).
- 📖 “God who. . .spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets” (Hebrews 1:1).

Jesus spoke of the Scriptures in a manner that ascribed divine authority and verbal inspiration 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 that 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.
- 📖 “. . . jot or tittle” (Matthew 5:18). We might say the crossing of a “t” or dotting of an “i.”

Writers did not often understand what they wrote. God gave the words but not necessarily the thoughts.

- 📖 “The prophets have enquired . . .” (1Peter 1:10-12). They were not ministering unto themselves but unto us.
- 📖 Daniel did not understand all he wrote (Daniel 12:8-9).
- 📖 Did David understand about the parting of the garments and the piercing of the hands and feet? (Psalm 22:16 and 18)

The Bible would be incorrect if it were not verbally inspired.

- ♦ Importance is placed upon simple words.
e.g. Hebrews 12:27 quoting from Haggai 2:6 "Yet once more."

- ♦ Importance is placed upon the tense of a verb.
e.g. Luke 20:37 – "I am."

- ♦ Importance is placed upon a mere letter.
e.g. Galatians 3:16-17 – "S" – seed not seeds.

External Proof – Testimonies from Outside the Bible

Many *archaeological discoveries* in the twentieth century proved the accuracy of the Scriptures that, in turn, testify of their divine origin. Aside from direct "inspiration from God," Moses could not have recorded events with such accuracy. **Professor Rowley** pointed 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, declared that "it may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference (*Rivers in the Desert: History of Neteg*, 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 that 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 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 that relate to scientific fields. If the ideas were merely human, more advanced scientific knowledge would surely have pin-pointed 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 knows Christ as His Saviour 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 (Ezekiel 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, etc., and gives the evidence for their exact fulfillments.

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 came true 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 He 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.

Conclusion

Whether you believe scientific data or the Bible itself, there is nothing but proof that this Book, **THE BOOK**, is inspired by God, and real enough to change your life for the better today.

What Have You Learned?

Given the following Scripture quotes, who was testifying of the inspiration of God's Word?

1. "And God spake all these words" _____
2. "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him. . ." _____
3. "The burden [oracle] of the word of the LORD to Israel by . . ." _____
4. "Then came the word of the LORD unto me, saying" _____
5. "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" _____
6. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" _____
7. ". . . jot or tittle" _____
8. "The words...which he saw concerning Israel" _____
9. "I have put my words in thy mouth" _____
10. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" _____

Given the following names or types of external proof that God's Word is inspired, choose the correct letter for each statement or quote.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| a. archaeological discoveries | e. Nelson Glueck |
| b. Henry M. Morris | f. William F. Albright |
| c. testimony of science | g. Josh McDowell |
| d. testimony of prophecy | h. human experience |

11. Scholars today "have a much greater respect for the patriarchal stories than was formerly common. . .because the evidence warrants it."
12. Many of these in the twentieth century proved the accuracy of the Scriptures that, in turn, testify of their divine origin.
13. Precise declarations were made by the writers of Scripture about things they would not have known nor been able to report
14. "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 this*) that proves the Bible to be in error at any point"
15. The Old Testament, which was written over a 1,500-year period, contains over 300 references to the Messiah that were fulfilled in Jesus.
16. "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference."
17. 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.
18. 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).
19. "One of the most unusual (*of these*) in the Bible is that concerning the ancient city of Tyre" (Ezekiel 26:3-21).
20. 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.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Lesson Seven

How was the Bible Prepared?

**“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”
(John 1:1).**

What I Have Learned

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” (Isaiah 28:13) until God’s full revelation was given.

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.

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 unequaled in any other literature.

The existing manuscripts are generally classified into four groups:

Hebrew manuscripts of the New 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 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-fifth of one percent. 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.

The Preparation of the manuscripts and Manuscript Copies

The writing materials

Many of the original manuscripts were likely 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. If so, these were long sheets that were then rolled on wooden rollers. These rolls of skins or parchments were known as "scrolls."

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

The earlier manuscripts (in roll form), averaged twenty to thirty-five feet in length. Some were 144 feet long. The Septuagint translators reportedly divided some of the original Hebrew books into two 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.

They were called "manuscripts," meaning "written by hand." The men who copied the Word of God on these manuscripts were called "scribes." These manuscripts were very expensive and had to be read to the congregation.

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.

For example, the name JEHOVAH was simply written *jhvh*. If we were to write the Lord's Prayer in this manner, it would appear something like this: *RFTHRWCHRTNHVNHLLWDBTHYNM...*

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 read from right to left.

The manner that 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 *yod*, 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 it 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 the 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.

What Have You Learned?

Fill in the blanks.

1. No record exists of any _____ writings _____ to the time of _____.
2. The Dead Sea Scroll of _____ is a _____ years older than the oldest _____ manuscript known until this discovery.
3. Prepared from _____, vellum was often dyed _____.
4. The _____ and Greek _____ were first written without any breaks between _____.
5. The manner that the Jewish _____ so painstakingly did their work _____ how the manuscripts could _____ so _____.
6. The _____ Testament was written in _____ only, the vowel _____ being supplied by the _____.
7. The custom of reading _____, even to oneself, syllable by _____, made the _____ sounds somewhat evident.
8. The fact that _____ began his record with _____ is strong evidence that God _____ Moses' work as the _____ phase of His divine _____ to be preserved in _____.
9. _____ this time, God seemed pleased to _____ himself _____ to men such as Adam, Noah, and _____.
10. _____ was prepared from the skin of animals such as _____ and goats. Parchment use dates to as early as _____ B.C.
11. The earlier _____ (in roll form), averaged _____ to thirty-five feet in length. Some were 144 _____ long.
12. The scrolls were called "_____" meaning "written by _____." The men who _____ the Word of God on these manuscripts were called "_____."
13. The _____ scribes of the period from A.D. 500 to _____ (The _____ period) used additional devices to insure precise _____ of the text.
14. The _____ and even the _____ of each scroll were _____ to guard against both _____ and _____.
15. The _____ was born in the _____ of God and _____ to man "line upon line" (_____ 28:13) until God's full _____ was given.

Short Answer & Listing

16. List and briefly explain the four (4) groups of existing manuscripts of the Bible.
 - 1) _____

 - 2) _____

 - 3) _____

 - 4) _____

17. Briefly explain and give one (1) example of how the Old Testament was written. _____

18. The 1947 discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has provided an extraordinary proof of the accurate preservation of the Hebrew Scriptures. Write W. T. Purkiser's quote explaining this fact.

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.

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 eye-witnesses 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 *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*.

This 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 the 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 – listed 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 the fourth century A.D., there has been no serious questioning of these twenty-seven books of the New Testament canon.

Summary

The word *canon* refers to the list of books that 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 that 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.

What Have You Learned?

1. As applied to Scripture, what is the simplest definition for the word canon? _____

2. Explain how the word *canon* came from this Greek word and this Hebrew word, and give the meaning of each. _____

3. Explain the two-fold process that produced the Scriptures? _____

4. Explain how the books of the Bible were recognized as inspired, with relation to the canon of Scripture. _____

5. When did the word *canon* come into use? _____

When does the recognition of the inspired books date to? _____

When was the Law recognized as authoritative?

Explain how the writings of the Prophets was recognized and accepted as authoritative.

When were the Writings first recognized as part of the Word of God? How do we know this?

6. During the New Testament era, what three groups or people accepted the three major divisions of the Hebrew canon? Briefly explain how we know this. _____

7. Why is it so important to have such a well- established canon of Scripture? _____

8. What was the outcome of the Jewish Council of Jamnia in A.D. 90 in relation to the Old Testament canon.

9. Briefly explain how the New Testament canon took shape. _____

10. When and how did the formal written record of the New Testament canon appear? _____

11. What was the name given to the four records of Christ's ministry? _____
When and how was it given to the churches?

12. When and how did The Acts of the Apostles become part of the New Testament canon?

13. What test was used by church leaders to prove the authority of the New Testament books?

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Lesson Nine

What About the Apocrypha?

**“Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar”
(Proverbs 30:5-6).**

What I Have Learned

Introduction

Did you ever hear someone talking about more books to the Bible, like there was something missing? They probably used a big word too: “apocryphal.” Did you ever wonder if they were smarter than you, or knew something you didn’t? Never worry, you have the whole Bible, with nothing missing.

There are some books by that name, but they are not part of our Bible. These books are not included because:

1. The Scriptures are self-contained and absolutely complete with nothing lacking.
2. There is no reference to the Apocrypha in the New Testament.
3. There are three solemn warnings against adding to the Bible:
 - ♦ **Moses** – “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:2).
 - ♦ **Solomon** – “Add thou not unto his words, let he reprove thee and thou be found a liar” (Proverbs 30:6).
 - ♦ **John** – “If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life. . .” (Revelation 22:18-19).

The Apocryphal Books

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 there are also New Testament apocryphal books which are non-canonical.

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 and 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 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** (Tobit, 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) gives four reasons for excluding them from the canon:

1. They abound in historical and geographical inaccuracies and anachronisms (placing of events out of their proper time in history).
2. They teach doctrines that are false, and they foster practices that are at variance with inspired Scripture.
3. They resort to literary types and display an artificiality of subject matter and styling out of keeping with inspired Scripture.
4. They lack the distinctive elements that 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. Here is a summary of his comments:

- They were 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 are 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 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 evidences, 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.

What Have You Learned?

1. Which Bible authors gave solemn warnings against adding to God's Word? Give Scripture references.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____

2. List four reasons given by Unger's Bible Dictionary why the apocryphal books are not accepted as Scripture.
 - 1) _____

 - 2) _____

 - 3) _____

 - 4) _____

3. Where does the word *apocrypha* come from, and what does it mean? _____

4. What is the common usage for the term "The Apocrypha?" _____

5. When were the apocryphal books written?

6. List the four divisions of the content of the apocryphal books.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____

7. List the seven reasons found in the book, *How We Got the Bible* for why we cannot regard the apocryphal books as Scripture.
 - 1) _____

 - 2) _____

 - 3) _____

 - 4) _____

5)

6)

7)

8. According to A General Introduction to the Bible, what ten people, or groups, testify that the apocrypha should not be included in the Bible because they are not canonical?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

7) _____

8) _____

9) _____

10) _____

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Lesson Ten

How Did the Bible Get from Then to Now? (Part 1)

***"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever"
(Isaiah 40:8).***

What I Have Learned

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 translations to the language in which we read and study the Bible.

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 that:

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 – About 277 B. C. seventy scholars at Alexandria, Egypt, began a translation of the Old Testament into Greek. This translation was the Septuagint, a Latin word meaning *seventy*. The Septuagint was widely circulated, and used as the basis for many future translations. It is said that it was in the Septuagint that the present familiar titles of the various books of the Bible were first adopted and their order established. This arrangement continues ever since, although it is quite different from that of the original Hebrew Scriptures. The Septuagint was a loose and free translation and was faulty in many respects. It was in existence in the time of our Lord, but neither He nor the apostles ever made use of it. It is most probably that our Lord spoke Aramaic.
- ♦ Aramaic Targums – 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 – a Latin translation of the Septuagint version of the Old Testament and the original Greek of the New Testament: The name means, “to make common or public” (vulgar). It was developed in North Africa and revised in the fourth century by Jerome. For a thousand years this was the standard Bible in the Catholic Church. The common people could not read Latin. The leader read to the people. During the dark ages God’s Word was locked up in the Latin language.
 - ✓ Jerome translated the Latin Vulgate directly from the Hebrew around 400 A.D. Jerome was one of the ablest scholars of the fourth century. He was born in 340 A.D. in Dalmatia, studied in Rome, and was baptized in the year 360. He studied the Hebrew language and lived as a hermit not far from Antioch from 373 A.D. to 379 A.D. He went to Bethlehem in 386 A.D. and as head of the monastery, he made his headquarters there till his death in 420 A.D. The older Latin versions of the Bible were crude and Pope Damasus proposed to Jerome that he make a revision. He completed the New Testament in the year 388. He then translated the Old Testament using the ancient Hebrew manuscripts. The result of Jerome’s work was the Vulgate which is still in use in the Roman Catholic Douay Bible.
- ♦ 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 Massoretes 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 Massoretes were indeed anxious that not one jot nor tittle, not one smallest letter nor one tiny part of a letter, or the Law should pass away or be lost” (Frederic Kenyon, *Our Bible and Ancient Manuscripts*, 1941).

The Text of the New Testament

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 to 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.

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 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.

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 versions 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 trust-worthiness of the Scripture, 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 certain 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).

What Have You Learned?

1. When Josh McDowell wrote *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, what was his original intent in studying the text of Scripture? _____

What was his final conclusion after studying the text of Scripture? _____

2. Given the following facts about Old and New Testament Bible texts and manuscripts, write the correct name that matches each in the blank provided.

- _____ 1) A Latin translation of the Septuagint version of the Old Testament and the original Greek of the New Testament
- _____ 2) The result of Jerome's work was the Vulgate which is still in use in this book today.
- _____ 3) This has more than 350 extant manuscripts that date from the 400's.
- _____ 4) The name means, "to make common or public" (vulgar). It was developed in North Africa and revised in the fourth century by Jerome.
- _____ 5) The earliest complete manuscript of the Old Testament.
- _____ 6) Paraphrases of the Old Testament into the spoken language of the Jews after the exile.
- _____ 7) It contains Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the twelve minor prophets.
- _____ 8) About 277 B. C. seventy scholars at Alexandria, Egypt, began a translation of the Old Testament into Greek.
- _____ 9) This 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.
- _____ 10) This book contains almost all the New Testament and over half the Old Testament. It is owned by the British Museum.
- _____ 11) This 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.
- _____ 12) It contains papyrus codices (book form), three of them containing major portions of the New Testament.
- _____ 13) It contains both latter and former prophets.
- _____ 14) Between 4000 and 5000 Greek manuscripts of this are in existence.
- _____ 15) This is an exceptionally valuable manuscript. It was lost for a time but was rediscovered in 1958 with some damage.
- _____ 16) It contains part of Genesis through Deuteronomy.
- _____ 17) The earliest complete manuscript of the Old Testament.
- _____ 18) The major manuscripts in existence are specimens of this, and it is the standard Hebrew text used today.
- _____ 19) The original manuscripts of this were completed within the first century A.D.
- _____ 20) In this, the present familiar titles of the various books of the Bible were first adopted and their order established.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Lesson Eleven

How Did the Bible Get from Then to Now? (Part 2)

**“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation”
(2Peter 1:20).**

What I Have Learned

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.

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 the year 450 A.D., the Anglo-Saxon language was introduced into England by the invaders. However, for many centuries the Word of God was only available in handwritten copies of the Latin Vulgate. Because of this, it was available only to the learned and rich. Nevertheless it had sufficient influence in the land that paganism died out.

From these early centuries onward we 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 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. Here are 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. Venerable Bede was one of the greatest literary men of those times, and he died in 735.
4. **Alfred the Great (close of ninth century)**, who was crowned king at the age of twenty-two, was a man of prayer and a lover of the Bible. He instituted great reforms and expressed a desire that every youth should be able to read the Scriptures before studying any other subject. He ordered a translation of the whole Bible to be made into Anglo-Saxon but did not live to see its completion. He gave his people parts of the Bible in English.
5. **Abbot Aelfric (tenth century)** translated large parts of the Old Testament into English. Some portions of this have survived.

These early works were made from the Latin. After the Conquest of 1066 (when England was conquered by the Normans under William the Conqueror), 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.

First English Translation

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.

John Wycliffe, the great Reformer, was born around the year 1320. He became a lecturer at Oxford and one of the ablest theologians and scholars in England at that time. He was convinced that the Bible was God’s Word and he determined to give it to the people in the English language.

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. Under his guidance and scholarship, the Scriptures were translated into English from the Latin Vulgate, most likely with the aid of his associates.

It was divided into chapters, and although it was copied in handwriting, its circulation was large. Some one hundred and fifty manuscripts survive.

This translation took about twenty-two years to accomplish and each copy took ten months to write out. Each copy would cost about \$150 in American money. Those who could not afford to buy a copy would pay a large sum to be able to read it one hour each day. Sometimes a load of hay would be given for a few pages of it.

The Roman Catholics opposed Wycliffe's work and finally forbade the reading of His English Bible under penalty of death. History records a long list of martyrs who died at the stake rather than give up this English Bible.

Wycliffe died of paralysis in 1384. Forty years after his death, the Roman Catholic authorities dug up his bones and burned them, scattering the ashes on the River Swift.

Wycliffe's Bible was printed in four volumes in 1850. He has been called the "Morning Star of the Reformation." The principle that directed his life was his claim, "The sacred Scriptures are the property of the people and one which no one should be allowed to wrest from them."

A contemporary of Wycliffe, John Purvey, made an English translation that 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.

The Invention of Printing

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

Printing was introduced into England by Caxton in 1476 about which time some of the Old Testament was printed in Hebrew. This invention greatly increased the circulation of the Scriptures.

William Tyndale

In 1525 Tyndale, one of the Protestant reformers and a contemporary of Luther, made another English translation and was the first to publish an English New Testament in print.

He had to do this partly at Cologne and partly at Worms. He worked under great difficulty, in exile, poverty, and distress. Several editions of his translation were printed. The Testaments were smuggled into England in bales of cotton, sacks of flour, etc. Catholics made every effort to prevent it and burned thousands of copies.

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. His translation was very accurate.

Later, Tyndale also translated the Pentateuch and the book of Jonah into English. In 1535, he issued a revised version of the New Testament from original Greek.

Tyndale began his work in England but had to flee to Germany to escape Catholic opposition. The 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 first strangled and then burnt at the stake by the Roman Catholic authorities. His last words were, "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.

First Printed English Bible

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

1. **Coverdale's Version (1535) - also contained the apocryphal books:** 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)** – Thomas Cromwell induced Henry VIII to grant a license for the issue of the Bible in English. This version is actually a fusion of the Tyndale and Coverdale versions. It is actually the work of John Rogers, a former associate of Tyndale. In 1553 Queen Mary came to the throne and was queen for four and a half bloody years. The printing, importation and circulation of Bible were prohibited. During her reign, Ridley, Cranmer, Latimer, and over three hundred Bible-loving men were burnt at the stake. 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 that 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.

In 1558 Queen Elizabeth came to the throne at the age of twenty-five. She inaugurated her reign by pressing to her lips and heart a copy of the Bible. This brought about a great change which caused everyone to rejoice.

5. **The Geneva Bible (1560)** – It was called the "Geneva Bible" because a number of reformers had fled to Geneva, Switzerland during the persecutions under Queen Mary. These Hebrew and Greek scholars who were refugees 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 chapters and verses. This Bible was the Bible of Shakespeare, Cromwell, John Bunyan, and the Pilgrims who journeyed to America from England.

The Geneva Bible was very important for the following reasons:

- ✓ It used the more easily read Roman type.
- ✓ It was the first whole Bible divided into verses.
- ✓ It was the first to use italics for those words the translators added for the sake of English idioms and which were not in the original text.
- ✓ It was the first to omit the apocryphal books since their introduction into the Septuagint.

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 any 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.

Conclusion

God's written Word has always been valuable. The fact that many men and women gave their lives to preserve and make His Word available to everyone makes it even more valuable. We must be careful never to take the privilege of holding, handling, studying and reading God's Word for granted. Its power and importance cannot be stressed enough.

What Have You Learned?

1. Given the following facts about Old and New Testament Bible versions, write the correct name that matches each in the blank provided.

_____ 1) This version was prepared because of the excessive cost of "The Great Bible," and it quickly became popular as the household edition of the Word of God.

_____ 2) The popularity of the Protestant translations eventually forced the making of a Roman Catholic version in English.

- _____ 3) Of any of the English versions, this is the poorest.
- _____ 4) 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."
- _____ 5) This translation was based on the Latin Bible and on Luther's and Tyndale's versions.
- _____ 6) Hebrew and Greek scholars who were refugees in Geneva made this revision from "The Great Bible."
- _____ 7) This Bible 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!"
- _____ 8) This version is a fusion of the Tyndale and Coverdale versions, and is actually the work of John Rogers, a former associate of Tyndale.
- _____ 9) In reality, it was just a revision of Matthew's Bible but was marked by careful scholarship and literary form.
- _____ 10) 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.
- _____ 11) This 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.
- _____ 12) Completed in 1384, this was the first English translation of the complete Bible
- _____ 13) It was divided into chapters, and although it was copied in handwriting, its circulation was large. Some one hundred and fifty manuscripts survive.
- _____ 14) One of the Protestant reformers and a contemporary of Luther, made another English translation and was the first to publish an English New Testament in print.
- _____ 15) His Bible was printed in four volumes in 1850. He has been called the "Morning Star of the Reformation."

2. Write the principle that directed John Wycliffe's life. _____

Write William Tyndale's dying words.

Did God answer this prayer? _____

3. List four (4) reasons why the Geneva Bible was so important.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

4. What was the major result of each of the following historical events?

1) The invention of the printing press

2) England conquered by the Normans in 1066

3) The reign of Queen Mary of Scotland

4) The reign of Queen Elizabeth

5) The dying prayer of William Tyndale

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Lesson Twelve

How Did the Bible Get from Then to Now? (Part 3)

**“For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?”
(John 5:46-47).**

What I Have Learned

King James Version or Authorized Version

In 1611, King James I authorized and supported the translation work which came to be known as the Authorized Version. This is the translation now used by most English speaking people. Forty-seven scholars authorized by King James, worked for seven years (1604 to 1611), and made an exhaustive study of earlier versions. This translation has held first place for almost four hundred years.

- 📖 Ancient Hebrew and Greek texts were studied in order to obtain the best results.
- 📖 This version as 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.
- 📖 One of the requirements was that the Bible was not to contain marginal notes as in previous versions. The forty-seven translators were divided into groups and each given certain sections of the Bible to translate.
- 📖 Their work was submitted for the approval of all the others.
- 📖 The whole Bible was given to a committee of six who worked for nine months examining the complete text.

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 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.

Changes in the Authorized Version (KJV)

The English language has changed a lot in the last 400 years. These examples from the 1611 printing will show these changes:

“Yea though I walke through the valley of the shadowe of death, I will feare no veil for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staffe, they comfort me.
Thou preparast a table before me, in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oyle, my cuppe runneth over” (Psalms 23:4-5).

As you can see, spelling alone has undergone some drastic changes. This makes the 1611 printing of the Authorized Bible different from the one you read today.

English Translations Within the Last 100 Years

Revised Version

In 1870 nearly one hundred learned men of different denominations met at Westminster and for over ten years worked at revising the Authorized Version. 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 1881 the Revised New Testament was published. The demand for this version was so great that two million copies were ordered before it was published. Every word from the beginning of Matthew to the end of Romans was telegraphed from New York to Chicago, the longest telegraphic message ever sent up to that time.

In 1885 the Revised Version of the whole Bible was issued. The Old Testament was also revised at Westminster but it took fifteen years to accomplish. In this version paragraphs were introduced.

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.

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.

This version was issued in 1905. It also took fifteen years to accomplish and divided the Bible into paragraphs.

Revised Standard Version (1952)

In 1929 the copyright of the American Standard Version was transferred to the International Council of Religious Education, a body related to 40 major Protestant denominations. This council appointed a committee of scholars from twenty seminaries and universities to revise the Standard Version.

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. 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 Massoretic 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.

Other Translations

Many other translations appearing after 1900 could be described (i.e. Moffat, Weymouth, Amplified, etc.) These help in the study of the Bible and are useful as a source of reference. But the Authorized Version of 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.

Modern Translations in English

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 are 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.

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 is 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 strength 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.

A brief look at some popular translations – There are three basic theories of translation:

1. **Literal:** *advantage* – as close as possible to the original; *disadvantage* – doesn't account for cultural differences in customs and expressions (i.e. King James Version)
2. **Free:** *advantage* – eliminates historical and cultural “barriers” by expressing Scripture in modern terms; *disadvantage* – since it is more concerned with translating “ideas” it is not always accurate in exact wording (i.e. Phillips, Living Bible, The Message)
3. **Dynamic Equivalence:** *advantage* – translates words, idioms and grammatical construction of the original language into “precise equivalents” in modern language; *disadvantage* – not as “loose” as a free paraphrase, but still not as exact in its wording as a literal translation (i.e. New International Version, New Living Translation)

WHY DOES THIS MATTER? Because our Bible doctrine must be exact. That's why you should use the King James Version as primary text to teach Bible doctrine, and use other modern translations to teach issues of practical Christian living. Sometimes, modern translations can shed more light on a passage than the KJV, but you have to be careful.

Bible Translations – PROS & CONS

- 📖 *The King James Version* is the most ACCURATE translation, but there are other valid translations. For example, look at 1 Corinthians 7:36 ...
- 📖 **KJV is accurate, but unclear** - But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.
- 📖 **NASB is inaccurate** - But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter, if she should be of full age, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry.
- 📖 **Living Bible is not specific enough** - But if anyone feels he ought to marry because he has trouble controlling his passions, it is all right; it is not a sin; let him marry.
- 📖 **New International Version is accurate and clear** - If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if she is getting along in years and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married.
- 📖 **The Message helps to clarify** - If a man has a woman friend to whom he is loyal but never intended to marry, having decided to serve God as a “single,” and then changes his mind, deciding he should marry her, he should go ahead and marry. It's no sin; it's not even a “step down” from celibacy, as some say.
- 📖 **The Amplified Version (which gives various “shades of meaning”)** can be helpful at times, with this caution: It is often better to use several translations, note where they differ, and then check out those differences in another source, than to be led to believe that a word can mean one of several things in any given sentence, with the reader left to choose whatever best strikes his or her fancy.

How do I know which translation is best?

- ✓ Do some basic word studies and see which one comes closest to the original languages.
- ✓ Do some additional reading that pertains to the specific passage you are studying.
- ✓ In almost every case the majority opinion will be right. Why do Bible versions differ? DOCTRINAL BIAS.
- ✓ Basic word studies using Strong's Exhaustive Concordance – EXERCISE
- ✓ Extended word studies using Vine's Expository Dictionary – EXAMPLE

(The above information about translations of the Bible is taken from Bro. Raymond Woodward's notes on *Research & Resources*, and used by permission.)

Conclusion

The 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.

When we realize the long hours of toil that have been invested into the translations, and that many men gave their lives so we might have the Bible, we should devoutly love our Bibles. Above all, it is God's Word, and for this reason alone we should ever cherish it and hide it away in our hearts.

What Have You Learned?

1. In the blanks provided, write the version or translation of the Bible that best fits the statement.
- _____ 1) Although it had the benefits of the latest scholarship, it departed from a high regard for the Massoretic text of the Old Testament which was a part of the Authorized Version and those that followed it.
- _____ 2) This translation carries the doctrinal bias of the Jehovah's Witnesses.
- _____ 3) This version is a distinctively Catholic Bible and contains the Apocryphal books scattered throughout as part of the text of Scripture.
- _____ 4) 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.
- _____ 5) 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.
- _____ 6) This 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 this book.
- _____ 7) One of the requirements was that the Bible was not to contain marginal notes as in previous versions. The forty-seven translators were divided into groups and each given certain sections of the Bible to translate.
- _____ 8) Forty-seven scholars authorized by King James, worked for seven years (1604 to 1611), and made an exhaustive study of earlier versions.
- _____ 9) This Bible translation has held first place for almost four hundred years.
- _____ 10) The demand for this version was so great that two million copies were ordered before it was published.
- _____ 11) In 1929 the copyright of the American Standard Version was transferred to the International Council of Religious Education, a body related to 40 major Protestant denominations. This council appointed a committee of scholars from twenty seminaries and universities to make this revision.
- _____ 12) Every word from the beginning of Matthew to the end of Romans was telegraphed from New York to Chicago, the longest telegraphic message ever sent up to that time.
- _____ 13) The Old Testament was also revised at Westminster but it took fifteen years to accomplish. In this version paragraphs were introduced.
- _____ 14) 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.
- _____ 15) It can be said that this is the official Bible of English speaking Oneness Pentecostal Churches.

2. List the three (3) basic theories of Bible translation, giving the advantages and disadvantages of each.
- 1) _____
- Advantages: _____
- Disadvantages: _____
- _____
- 2) _____
- Advantages: _____
- Disadvantages: _____
- _____
- 3) _____
- Advantages: _____
- Disadvantages: _____
- _____
3. Why do Bible versions differ? _____
4. Why does this matter? _____

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Lesson Thirteen

Does the Bible Ever Contradict Itself?

“For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it”
(Isaiah 55:10-11).

What I Have Learned

The Supposed Contradictions of the Bible

When correctly interpreted, the Bible never contradicts itself. Below are a few supposed contradictions with the proper explanations. This is another proof of the infallibility of the Bible.

If we find a Scripture that seems to contradict some other passage of Scripture, we should pray and ask the Lord for a proper understanding. As soon as we have the proper understanding, there will no longer be any confusion.

Two Accounts of the Sermon on the Mount

“And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came to him” (Matthew 5:1).

“And he came down with them, and stood in the plain” (Luke 6:17).

Are these Scriptures contradictory? Did Jesus preach the sermon in the mountain or upon the plain? Which is correct?

The answer is simple: There were two sermons – one preached in the mountain, the other preached on the plain. The first one was preached to the disciples, the other to the crowd.

We should note that Matthew was not present at the Sermon on the Mount which is recorded in his Gospel, but he was present when Jesus repeated the sermon on the plain. (Read Matthew 9:9 and Luke 6:15.)

Matthew 28:19 and Acts 2:38

“ . . . baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (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 of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Note that “name” is in the singular, not plural. What is that name?

The words Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not names but titles pointing to One Person who has one name. That name is Jesus.

Who was Jesus’ father, and what was His name? Matthew tells us that, “. . . the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 1:18).

When Joseph had doubts about marrying this already pregnant girl, “. . . the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:20-21).

Verse 23 of that same chapter of Matthew says, “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”

When Joseph woke up from his dream, he had no more doubts, and did what the angel told him to do. “And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS” (Matthew 1:25).

Jesus told the Jews who wanted to kill Him, “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive” (John 5:43). Again in John 10:25, Jesus said, “. . . I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me.”

Jesus came in His Father's name, the angel told Joseph and Mary both to name their miracle baby "JESUS" in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy, why is there any question about the "name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." The name was JESUS.

Jesus expected obedience, not just a repetition of the words He used. Peter obeyed the commission and did exactly what Jesus had said. In fact, a person has not obeyed Matthew 28:19 unless they are baptized in the name of Jesus.

Paul's Supposed Mistake

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

". . . and fell in one day three and twenty thousand" (1Corinthians 10:8).

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

Matthew's Supposed Mistake

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

In the prophecy of Zechariah we read this prophecy of Jesus being sold for thirty pieces of silver, whereas there is nothing about it in the prophecy of Jeremiah. Therefore it is claimed by some that this is a mistake made by Matthew.

Matthew, writing under inspiration, wrote that Jeremiah spoke these words. Could not this be just as correct as Jude 14 regarding the prophecy of Enoch, although a similar prophecy is in Zechariah 14:5. Jeremiah could have spoken it as well as Zechariah. Both of these prophecies could be recorded in Zechariah but still spoken by Jeremiah and Enoch respectively.

David Numbered the People

"And there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men" (2Samuel 24:9).

"And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew sword" (1Chronicles 21:5).

The explanation for the apparent contradiction here is simply this: Samuel stated that the valiant men that drew the sword were 800,000 while Chronicles stated that all Israel were 1,100,000. There were 300,000 men who could not be called valiant.

Genealogies of Our Lord

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

Luke chapter 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).

Inscription on the Cross

"This is Jesus the King of the Jews" (Matthew 27:37).

"The King of the Jews" (Mark 15:26).

"This is the King of the Jews" (Luke 23:38).

"Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews" (John 19:19)

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.

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

Undoubtedly, the total inscription was written and only part of it was recorded in the various gospels.

The Conversion of Saul

"And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man" (Acts 9:7).

“And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me” (Acts 22:9).

The explanation here is that the men with Saul saw a light and heard the sound of a voice, but to the men the sound of the voice did not express words they understood. Jesus was speaking to Saul and he was the only one who understood what was being said.

Conclusion

There are other supposed contradictions and mistakes in the Bible, but these examples are sufficient to prove that there is no mistake in God’s Word. The error is always in our understanding, never in the Word of God. The Bible is absolutely accurate and infallible. How important it is that we study the Bible and understand the message it contains. We should never attempt to change in the slightest manner anything in the Word of God.

What Have You Learned?

1. Given the following examples of supposed contradictions in the Bible, what is the explanation for each?

Genealogies of Our Lord

Inscription on the Cross

Two Accounts of the Sermon on the Mount

The Conversion of Saul

David Numbered the People

Matthew 28:19 and Acts 2:38

2. If you ever find a Scripture that seems to contradict another passage of Scripture, what should you do?

Lesson Fourteen

How Important are Numbers?

**“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled”
(Matthew 5:18).**

What I Have Learned

Introduction

Numbers have significance in God’s Word. Every detail of the Scriptures is important and this is very evident with the study of numerals.

We must be careful that we do not place too much importance on this study, however. It is impossible to build a doctrine on the significance of the various numerals in the Bible. It is sufficient to recognize that God has given a certain meaning to each numeral. Such recognition will strengthen our faith in the fact that there was One Author of the Bible, and the Scriptures are the product of One Supreme *Mind*.

Number One

The number one is a primary number. All other numbers depend upon one. It preceded and produced all other numbers.

- The number one is God’s number. Without Him nothing could exist.
- The number one stands alone, independent of all others. God is independent; we are dependent.
- God is one who has a solution for every problem.
- His Word is the one *Book*, the only *Book*.

Number Two

The number two is the number of division and separation. Number two affirms there is a difference.

- God divided the night from the day.
- There is a separation of the saved and unsaved.
- The human race is divided into two classes.
- There is the first Adam who failed, there is the second Adam who brought salvation.

There are many two’s in Scripture:

- Old Testament and New Testament Law and Grace
- Strait gate and the wide gate
- Narrow way and the broad way
- Cain and Abel
- Ishmael and Isaac

Number Three

The number three is the number of union, approval, and completeness.

- There is the three-fold testing of man: lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and the pride of life.
- There are three enemies of man: world, flesh, and the devil.
- Man is body, soul, and spirit.
- There are three that bear witness in earth: Spirit, water and blood

Number Four

The number four is the creation number. It has special reference to the earth. On the fourth day the creation of material things was completed.

- There are four directions: north, south, east and west.
- There are four seasons: spring, summer, autumn, and winter.
- There are four kinds of soil in the parable: wayside, stony, thorny, and the good.
- There are four Gospels that give the life of Jesus on earth.

Number Five

- The number five is significant of God’s grace.
- The pillars of the outer court in the Tabernacle were five cubits apart and five cubits high.
- There are five titles given to our Lord in Isaiah 9:6: Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

- Jesus took five loaves and fed the five thousand.

Number Six

The number six is man's number. This number brings to light the sad state of human incompleteness.

- Man was created on the sixth day.
- Six days were to mark the number of man's labor.
- Goliath was six cubits tall; he wore six pieces of armour; his spear's head weighed 600 shekels of iron.
- Nebuchadnezzar set up an image 60 cubits high and six cubits wide.
- Six kinds of musical instruments played to denote the time to worship the image.
- The number of Antichrist is 666 (Revelation 13:18).

Number Seven

The number seven denotes divine fullness, perfection, and completeness. It is one of the perfect numbers and comes from a Hebrew word meaning "to be full" or "to be satisfied."

- In Revelation there are seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven personages, seven vials, seven dooms, seven new things.
- There are seven better things in Hebrews.
- There are seven sayings on the cross.
- God rested on the seventh day.
- We are to forgive seventy times seven.

Number Eight

The number eight is the number of the resurrection.

- On the eighth day there is a new beginning. The first day of the week is a resurrection day.
- Eight people were saved in the flood.
- A Jewish man child was circumcised on the eighth day.
- David was the eighth son of Jesse while Solomon was the eighth son of David.
- The writers of the New Testament were eight in number: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, James, Peter and Jude.

Number Nine

The number nine is the number of judgment and finality.

- Jesus was nailed to the cross at nine o'clock in the morning; and died at the ninth hour of the day.
- There is the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit given in Galatians 5:22-23. This speaks of finality, for there is nothing more needed.
- Likewise, there are nine gifts of the Spirit as recorded in 1Corinthians 12:8-10.

Number Ten

The number ten is another perfect number. It speaks of perfection in divine order and human responsibility.

- The human body has five fingers on each hand, ten in all.
- The ten toes speak of human responsibility in divine walk.
- In the Ten Commandments we see the completeness of God's claim.
- The completeness of God's judgment is seen in the ten plagues.
- Man's responsibility in stewardship is to give God one-tenth.

Number Eleven

The number eleven is the number of disorder and imperfection.

- Eleven speaks of the disorder just before the midnight hour.
- When Judas betrayed Jesus, it left eleven disciples, which spoke of incompleteness.

Number Twelve

This number speaks of governmental perfection or rule.

- Our Lord chose twelve disciples.
- There were twelve tribes of Israel.
- The wall of New Jerusalem has twelve foundations.
- The length, breadth, and height of the city are 12,000 furlongs.

Conclusion

God is so wonderful. His Word is meant to show us who He is. His character and personality are revealed in His Word, so it should not surprise us that even something as small as the number He chose for something gives us clues. His Word is full of things to learn, and the numerals we count with are just one of those things.

Has He counted YOU as His own? His Word tells us exactly what to do to be included in His sheepfold. He is counting, and He wants to be sure all His sheep are safely home (Luke 15:3-7; Matthew 18:10-14).

What Have You Learned?

1. Given the following statements/facts, write the matching number that best fits the description given.
- _____ 1) A Jewish man child was circumcised on this day.
 - _____ 2) This many toes speak of human responsibility in divine walk.
 - _____ 3) The completeness of God’s judgment is seen in this many plagues.
 - _____ 4) Our Lord chose this many disciples and this many tribes in Israel.
 - _____ 5) 1Corinthians 12:8-10 records this many gifts of the Spirit.
 - _____ 6) There were this many writers of the New Testament.
 - _____ 7) This number speaks of the disorder just before the midnight hour.
 - _____ 8) There were this many sayings on the cross.
 - _____ 9) There is a strait gate and a wide gate
 - _____ 10) This is God’s number because He stands alone.
 - _____ 11) This many days was to mark the number of man’s labor.
 - _____ 12) This number signifies God’s grace.
 - _____ 13) This many enemies of man
 - _____ 14) This number denotes divine fullness, perfection, and completion.
 - _____ 15) There are this many directions.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Lesson Fifteen

How Do We Know What it Means?

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual”

(1Corinthians 2:12-13).

What I Have Learned

Introduction

After learning about the Bible and where it came from, let us talk about understanding God’s Word. Too many times, the reason people do not read the Bible is because they claim it doesn’t make sense. God is the best author ever. He understands humans more than anyone because He made us. He wrote His Word so we could know Him better. Why is the Bible difficult for some people to understand? What can be done to make it easier?

First, remember how valuable the Bible is. Never mind all those who died so the Scriptures would be available today. Think about eternity. In the end, we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and He will open a book – His Book – The Bible – and we will be judged by the things we did in this life (2Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:12). Understanding what is in the Bible is essential for eternity.

Second, remember the Bible is straight from God’s mouth to my ears. God speaks through His Word, and I need to listen so I will recognize His Voice (John 10:27-28).

Third, those who love His Word and obey His commands will enjoy His blessings – now and for eternity (1John 5:3; 2John 6).

If we remember these three things, we will do whatever it takes, and never stop trying to understand the Word of God.

How Do We Understand the Meaning of the Bible?

The process to understand the meaning of the Bible is “interpretation.”

In practice, interpretation has two distinct but related aspects.

1. Interpretation tries to determine, “What does this mean? What is being said?”
2. The interpreter then tries to determine, “What does this mean to me? What is God saying to me personally?”

The Scripture is intended to communicate God’s message to us, so we expect the Bible to be understandable. We may not understand all we read, but if we read carefully and intelligently, we will understand most of what we read.

2Timothy 3:16,17 tells us that ALL Scripture is profitable “for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

When we approach the Bible reverently, read it intelligently, and respond obediently, we can expect the Word of God to have a transforming impact on our lives.

Reading the Bible Intelligently

There are several elements to intelligent reading of Scripture. Some of these may seem scholarly to the untrained reader, but there are many Bible study tools available to help with any difficulty:

1. *Be aware of historical settings.* Old Testament books were written over a span of a thousand years. Knowing the history of Israel and the specific setting of each Old Testament book is important if we are to understand its message to the original readers. Similarly, an understanding of the first century helps us better interpret the Gospels and New Testament Epistles.

2. *Observe literary form.* The Bible has historical narrative, poetry, proverbs, parables, letters, sermons, prophecy, and apocalyptic visions. You cannot interpret poetry the same way as narratives or letters of instruction. To interpret the Bible accurately, know characteristics of Hebrew poetry, the use of symbolism in apocalyptic literature, various rules for interpreting prophecy, etc.

Be aware of literary devices. Hyperbole, which is exaggeration for the sake of effect, helps us understand Jesus' saying, "If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off" (Matthew 18:8). Other literary devices in Scripture include metaphor and anthropomorphism (ascribing human parts or motives to God).

3. *Interpret in context.* Bible verses and phrases always appear in the larger context of a paragraph, chapter, and book. Understand what you read within that larger frame of reference.

Interpreting in context means:

- Being aware of such things as to whom a passage is addressed;
- What issue the writer is addressing;
- Any special circumstances when the passage was written;
- Whether promises or warnings are conditional, etc.

4. *Check unfamiliar terms.* Many things in the Bible reflect a culture very different from our own.

- We may not understand the role of institutions, such as the priesthood or Passover.
- We may not understand the meaning of such terms as "grace,"
- The Old Testament's use of "save," or
- The New Testament concept of "house."

It is important to look up unfamiliar terms, or words whose use in the passage we are reading seems unusual.

5. *Seek confirmation.* From the beginning, Christians have looked to the Bible for an understanding of their faith. Their witness testifies to the fact that the plain message of Scripture can be, and is, understood.

We find confirmation of our understanding of Scripture by:

- Comparing passages with other Scripture passages,
- Seeking the opinions of mature Christians, and
- Checking our views against beliefs held in common by Christians through the centuries.

None of these principles for reading the Bible intelligently is unique. Intelligent reading of the Bible follows the same rules of interpretation used in seeking to understand any other literature, because God spoke to us in human language.

Application to Life

The Holy Spirit illuminates Scripture for believers, not only clarifying what it means, but pointing out how it applies personally. Here are some helpful principles:

1. *Maintain an appropriate attitude.* Read the Bible expectantly. The living God meets us in His Word. His purpose is not to condemn us for our failures, but to unveil life's possibilities. Whatever Scripture shows that God expects from us, his Spirit, living within, gives us the strength to achieve.

2. *Seek God's general will.* First we look for principles of faith and life-style that apply to believers everywhere. When we read a passage like Romans 12:9-21, we are moved to consider ways to honor others, be more patient in affliction, be faithful in prayer, practice hospitality, or share with others in need.

3. *Seek God's specific will.*

- Look for principles that may guide in specific situations.
- Be especially aware of any problems to solve, emotions to deal with, or decisions to make.
- As we read prayerfully, expect the Holy Spirit to give us insight and guidance.

4. *Consciously respond.*

- Respond by taking some specific overt action.
- Respond with worship.
- Respond by confessing a sin, expressing thanksgiving, becoming aware of an attitude, or exploring an emotion.

If we try to apply Scripture to our lives, we find that the Bible really does speak to us.

Letting the Holy Spirit Work

A favorite verse of Scripture for many people is:

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1Corinthians 2:9).

Notice this verse talks of "them that love him." There has always been a special connection between God and those who love Him, obey His Word, and seek to know Him better.

In the New Testament, Jesus taught in parables, and anyone could listen. But not everyone who heard what He said actually understood. This was not an accident, but why He taught in parables (Matthew 13:10-17).

Not everyone who reads the Bible will understand it. But to the faithful believer who reads God's Word consistently, the Holy Spirit illuminates his understanding of the truth. That same Spirit also gives the faithful believer a strong assurance of the divine origin of Scripture (John 16:13; Ephesians 1:17).

How Does the Holy Ghost Teach?

In our key verses, the Apostle Paul was writing the church at Corinth. While Paul is actually writing about the divine origin of his preaching, verses seven through sixteen of chapter two suggest the steps by which the Holy Spirit also inspired the writing of Scripture.

Step 1: God wanted to communicate His wisdom to man (vv. 7-9). This wisdom concerned our salvation, centering in Christ as the wisdom of God (1Corinthians 1:30; 2:2, 5).

Step 2: It is only through the Holy Spirit that God's truth and wisdom were revealed to humanity (v. 10). The Holy Spirit knows fully the thoughts of God (v. 11).

Step 3: God's revelation was given to chosen believers through the indwelling presence of the Spirit (v. 12; Romans 8:11, 15).

Step 4: The writers of Scripture wrote with words taught by the Holy Spirit (v. 13); the Holy Spirit directed the writers in the choice of the words they used (Exodus 24:4; Isaiah 51:16; Jeremiah 1:9; 36:28,32; Ezekiel 2:7; Matthew 4:4). At the same time, the Spirit's guidance in the expression of divine truth was not mechanical; rather the Spirit used each writer's vocabulary and personal style.

Step 5: The divinely inspired Scripture is understood by spiritual believers as they examine its content through the illumination of the Holy Spirit (vv. 14-16).

Thus, both the thoughts and language of the Scriptures were inspired by the Spirit of God. Not a single writer uttered a false word or phrase. The Word of God was protected from error by the Holy Spirit.

Our Use of the Bible

All our study of the Bible is of no benefit unless we *use* what we learn. The Christian Scriptures are not the only sacred writings in the world, but they are different from all others. We have faith that the Bible truly is the Word of God, and that the Bible we read is essentially identical with the original writings themselves. But this high view of Scripture is not enough.

The Bible was given to us by God for a purpose. God wants us to *use* the Bible, so we might come to know Him and to rightly order our lives. The Bible is not just another book to *read*, it is a book to *live*.

Jesus Himself expressed this idea best, when He corrected one group of questioners by saying, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God" (Matthew 22:29, NIV). To others He said, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39, NIV). We do not want to fall into error for lack of knowing the Word of God, yet we do not want to miss its central message – that Jesus Christ is the giver of eternal life.

Conclusion

After we come to know Jesus, the Scripture must play an increasingly important role in our lives. Again, we hear Jesus' words: "Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock" *Matthew 7:24, NIV). As the people of God, we must build our lives on the solid foundation of hearing, and practicing what God says in His Word.

What Have You Learned?

1. What three (3) things make reading or studying the Bible easier? Briefly explain each.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

2. List the two distinct but related aspects of Bible interpretation.

1) _____

2) _____

3. List five (5) elements to intelligent reading of Scripture.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

4. We find confirmation of our understanding of Scripture by doing what three things?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

5. List and briefly explain four (4) principles that help apply Scripture to life.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5. 1Corinthians 2:9-13 suggests five (5) steps by which the Holy Spirit inspired the writing of Scripture. Briefly explain and give Scripture to support each.

Step

1: _____

Step

2: _____

Step

3: _____

Step

4: _____

Step

5: _____

6. Explain the following statement: "The Bible is not just another book to *read*, it is a book to *live*."

This lesson is excerpted and adapted from:

1) *The Full Life Study Bible, King James Version*, Life Publishers, Int., 1992; (notes from 1Corinthians 2:12-13, p. 1770.)

2) *The Revell Bible Dictionary*, Fleming H. Revell Company, Old Tappan, NJ; 1990, (pp. 151, 519-20.)

