Introduction to
HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to give you the assurance and confidence that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God.

"The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds the true Word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation, throughout the centuries." (Frederick Kenyon, quoted in *Inerrency*, Norman L. Geisler, et. al., The Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, MI, 1980)

The Word 'Bible'

The word "Bible" comes from the Latin word *biblia* and the Greek word *biblos,* which mean *book*. The first known reference to the words *ta biblia* (the books) in referring to the collection of books recognized by the Christians as canonical (the rule) was said to be in an early Christian writing (c. A.D. 150) arguably written by Clement of Rome. The Epistle states, "the books and the Apostles declare that the church…has existed from the beginning." The words *Scripture* and *writings* are synonyms for the word 'Bible'.

The Material of the Writings

The word *biblos* may have come from the port of Byblos in what is today Lebanon where Egyptians exported papyrus (from which we get our word paper) to Greece. Papyrus was the material on which books and scrolls were written. From the beginning of time any document, the Bible included, was handwritten. A handwritten document is called a manuscript. (*Script* – something written, *Manus* – Latin for 'hand'.) Until the invention of the printing press all written communication was by hand. When applied to the Bible, the word *manuscript* refers only to those portions of the Scripture copied in the original languages.

Papyrus was a tall reed plant that grew along the Nile River in Egypt. This is the same material Moses' mother used to make a basket to hide him in the river. (Ex. 2:3). Although some of the details to making papyrus have been lost to history we do know some of the process. The papyrus was made by cutting the inner parts of the stalks into long strips and soaking them in water long enough for them to decompose. The strips are laid side by side and other strips placed on top at a right angle. The two layers are pressed and dried so that the strips adhere to each other. The papyrus was then polished or pressed smooth with a hard round object such as a stone. The papyrus could be used either in sheets or connected in long strips and rolled up to form a *scroll.* In the Bible the words scroll and books are used interchangeably. (2Ti. 4:13)

A second material which became popular in the second century B.C. was parchment. Parchment was made by stretching and scraping the skins of animals such as goat and sheep.

Parchment was obviously more durable than papyrus. Vellum, similar to parchment, was usually made from calf skin. Vellum was a finer quality of leather than parchment.

As papyrus gave way to parchment, the scroll was eventually replaced by the *codex*. A codex had words written on both sides of the sheets which were then folded and bound together. Modern books are codices (plural) but the term is used only in reference to handwritten manuscripts produced before the invention of the printing press.

The Language of the Bible

The Bible was originally written in three languages. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic. Aramaic was the language of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian empires.. The Aramaic portions of the Old Testament are the following: Ezra 4:8 through Ezra 6:18; 7:11-26; Daniel 2:4 through Daniel 7:28; Genesis 31:47 (two words); Jeremiah 10:1. Jesus and His disciples spoke Aramaic and there are a few Aramaic words and phrases they used in the New Testament. The words, *Abba*, (Mk 14:36) *Maranatha* (1Co 16:22) and *Cephas* (John 1:42) and the phrase *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani* are Aramaic.

The New Testament was written in Greek. While there were several dialects of Greek, the Bible was written in *Koine* Greek. This was the language of the common people in everyday life. A handwritten copy of Scripture in a language other than these three is referred to as a *version.* Original writings penned by the original authors are referred to as the *autographs* (plural) or *autographa* (singular).

The Two Testaments

The Bible is made up of 66 books divided into two sections. Thirty-nine books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven books in the New Testament. The word *testament* means a covenant or agreement. The Old Testament tells the story of God's relationship and workings with His chosen people, the Jews. The New Testament tells the story of Jesus' ministry on earth, the beginning of the church and the works of the Apostles.

The Writers of Scripture

It was written by some 40 authors over a span of about 1500 years. The Bible authors came from every walk of life including kings, military leaders, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, tax collectors, poets, musicians, statesmen, scholars and shepherds. The Bible books were written on three continents: Asia, Africa and Europe.

Topics of This Study

This lesson series will concentrate on the following topics regarding the Bible:

I. Revelation
II. Inspiration
III. Canonization
IV. Preservation
V. The Manuscripts
VI. Translation
VII. History of English Translations
VIII. History of the King James Bible
IX. Modern English Translations

Synopsis

<u>REVELATION</u>: God making Himself known. This definition asserts four facts.

1. God exists.
2. God can be known.
3. God Himself is the Revealer.
4. God is the subject being revealed.

Theologians divide the number of ways God can reveal Himself into two categories: General Revelation and Special (Particular) Revelation. Through general revelation God reveals Himself to all men, everywhere, at all times.

Creation: Romans 1:19,20

Conscience: Rom. 2:14-15

Providence: Acts 14:17.

Through special revelation God reveals Himself to certain people at certain times.

Miracles:

Verbally: Audibly, Dreams, Written Word.

God's Son: Heb. 11:1-2

Q: How can we know there is a God and who He is?
In what ways has He revealed Himself?

INSPIRATION: Inspiration is the action of God the Holy Spirit whereby He enabled divinely selected men, in keeping with God's purpose and their personalities, vocabularies, and backgrounds, to make a pure and accurate record of God's revelation that is inerrant in the autographs and as such is as reliable, as authoritative, and as much the Word of God as though God had penned it with His own finger.

God bore along "holy men of old" enabling them to convey His message to human beings. These writings were *breathed out* by God and were inerrant. 2Timothy 3:16, 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 Peter 1:20-21.

The fact that the words of our Bible came from God the Holy Spirit leads us to the conclusion that the Bible is inerrant. Inerrancy means that when all facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything that they affirm, whether that has to do with doctrine or morality or with the social, physical, or life sciences.

Q: Does inspiration apply to copies and translations?
Were the writings or the writers inspired?

CANONIZATION: The word *canon* means the rule or standard. Canonization refers to the process whereby believers discovered and recognized which books the Holy Spirit determined to bring together. We believe the Holy Spirit preserved the Word of God and determined which writings should comprise our Bible.

There are other ancient books which are not a part of our Bible. Some examples would be the Apocrypha (*hidden books* - Fourteen books and 172 chapters that were published in our original 1611 KJ Bible.), the Pseudepigrapha (*false inscription* – 18 books) as well as other books mentioned in the Bible. (Jasher, Joshua 10:13; the book of the wars of the LORD, Numbers 21:14; books of Samuel, Gad and Seer, 1Ch. 29:29).

How did the sixty-six books in our Bible come to be recognized as canonical? What about these other books? Some of these books that are mentioned in our Bible we don't even have anymore. We will answer these questions.

a. Old Testament Canon
b. New Testament Canon

Q: What about books written by Bible authors that we don't have in our Bible?
What about books that were in the original King James 1611 but not in our Bibles today?
Did a fourth century Catholic council decide what books would be in our Bible?

PRESERVATION: Matthew 5:18. Those original, inerrant, inspired words were copied. Those originals and copies were carefully copied through the ages. There are over 3,000 preserved copies of various portions of the Hebrew Old Testament and over 5,000 preserved copies of portions of the New Testament in Greek. God's Word has not passed away but is preserved for us in a form consistent with the original languages.

Q: How do we know we have what God gave to the original writers?
Where are the originals?
Are our Bibles today accurate representations of the originals?

THE MANUSCRIPTS: By ancient manuscripts we mean those Scripture portions handwritten in the languages of the original autographs (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) before the advent of printing. These manuscripts range from small fragments to nearly complete Bibles. Though the original autographs and copies were copied with great care there were nevertheless variants among copies. God, in His providence, has enabled His people to compare copies and their variations in order to arrive at an accurate representation of the original.

Q: What about the differences in manuscripts?
What difference do the differences make?
Which manuscripts are God's words?

TRANSLATION: The act or process of translating, especially from one language into another. (The American Heritage dictionary of the English language. -4th edition, 2000, Houghton Hills Mifflin Co.)

Q: Why is translation necessary?

HISTORY OF ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS:

Q: How many English translations were done before the King James Version?
What is the significance of those translations to our Bible today?

HISTORY OF THE KING JAMES BIBLE:

Q: Why was a new translation done and whose idea was it?
Is the KJB inspired?
Is the KJB without error?
Is the KJB we use today the 1611 edition?

MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS:

Bestsellers, February 2025 ECPA.

1. English Standard
2. New International Version
3. King James Version
4. New Living Translation
5. New King James Version
6. Christian Standard Bible
7. Reina Valera
8. New American Standard Bible
9. New Revised Standard Version
10. New International Reader's Version

Q: What about comparing these translations with the King James?
Why are there differences?
What is the translation difference between 'formal equivalency', 'dynamic equivalency', and paraphrasing?