How We Got The Bible

Preservation/Manuscripts

The question we want to answer today is: Do we have today, and will the future generations have tomorrow, the same revelation that was recorded in the autographs? Does God *preserve* that revelation for us? In other words, when you and I hold a translation of the Bible do we really have God's Word in our hands?

The answer is the doctrine of *Preservation.*

Four views of Preservation of the Bible.

God's "Words" have not been preserved. To those who believe the Bible is less than revelation from God the Bible is not His preserved 'Word'. It is just myth or legend or the words of man.

God's Words are only preserved in a certain English translation. This is a view held by a minority of people that the Word of God is only preserved in the King James Version of the Bible even to the exclusion of the Greek and Hebrew. A more common view is that the King James Bible is the only preserved Word of God for English speaking people.

God's Words are preserved in one particular Hebrew and one particular Greek text. Those that hold this position believe the Word of God is only perfectly preserved in one particular Masoretic Hebrew text and the Textus Receptus Greek text.

God's Words are preserved in the totality of the manuscripts. This position believes that the Word of God is preserved in all of the existing Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. Preservation through manuscripts. Why didn't God preserve the autographs? How would we authenticate it? It would probably become an object of worship. Would you believe it any more? Hebrews 3:16-4:2. Without faith you're not going to believe no matter what God does.

Manuscript types:

- Alexandrian: Considered to be the oldest Greek extant manuscripts, from the area of Alexandria, Egypt, in uncial form.
- Western: Very few uncial manuscripts exists that seem to be more of a paraphrase.
- Caesarean: Believed to have originated or preserved in Caesarea. Mixed text forms. Debated whether it should be its own text type.
- Byzantine or Majority: It is not the oldest but the most numerous of the text families. Dating mainly from the 9th century forward.

Most often you will find these NT manuscript types divided into just two text groups:

Alexandrian Text: also called the Ecclectic, Neutral, Critical, Westcott/Hort, Nestle or UBS (United Bible Society) text. The name is used because historians believe that Alexandria, Egypt was the geographic center where this particular text type dominated. These manuscripts are generally considered to be the oldest existing manuscripts. These manuscripts are the basis for the Westcott/Hort Greek NT published in 1881, and for nearly all modern English translations.

Byzantine Text: also called Majority, Syrian, or Traditional text. These manuscripts are associated with Antioch of Syria or Byzantium. They are usually dated much later than the Alexandrian texts. From this text family came the basis for the New Testament for the King James translation.

Text forms:

- Papyri - "ancient paper" manuscripts. About 70 in existence dated second to fourth century.
- Majascule or Uncial – A style of Greek handwriting characterized by large, unconnected capital letters. About 260 in existence dated from the 4th to the 9th century.
- Miniscule – A style of Greek handwriting characterized by small connected letters, something like cursive script. Common around the 10th century forward. Accounts for the majority of manuscripts- over 2,750.
- *Lectionaries* – manuscripts of weekly or special Scripture reading lessons believed to be used as early as the first century.
  Church Fathers – commentaries and other writings that include thousands of Scripture quotations.
- Masoretic text – Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew with a few short places written in Aramaic.
Old Testament Copies There are over 3,000 Hebrew manuscripts of the OT that range from small fragments to large sections. You will not find a lot of controversy concerning the Hebrew text because it is extremely accurate. Textual scholars agree that differences found among the Hebrew manuscripts are very rare and that there is no other ancient work which has been preserved as accurately as the Old Testament.

The basis of our Old Testament today is the **Masoretic Text.** The name comes from the scribes and scholars who produced and preserved the OT manuscripts from around A.D. 500 – 1000. These Masoretes are the scribes about whom we hear so much of the detail that went into copying and transcribing these documents. For example, they would count the number of times each letter of the alphabet occurs in each book. They took note of the middle letter of the Pentateuch and the middle letter of the whole Hebrew Bible. The Masoretes were also responsible for the greatest work of punctuation of the OT text. They added vowels, accents and marginal notes.

To state it simply, the Masoretic text is based on two significant manuscripts. The **Leningrad Codex** (so named because it is located in the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg), and **The Aleppo Codex.**

The Leningrad Codex is the oldest complete copy of the Tanakh. It was written in Cairo and dated to 1008 AD.

The Aleppo Codex is considered by many scholars as the most accurate manuscript, written in Tiberias in approximately 930 AD but is missing several pages from a theft during a civil war.

From these manuscripts, textual critics create a Hebrew text to be used for translating the Old Testament into English. Most translations of the OT since 1937 have been translated from a text based on the Leningrad Manuscript. Earlier translations were based on the 1524-25 Bomberg edition including the King James translation. According to scholars the Leningrad manuscript and Bomberg edition by Jacob ben Chayyim are both forms of the Masoretic text and the differences between them are minute. The Masoretic text has been accurately copied and preserved and has had no serious rival since the first century. Almost all of your modern English translations are based on an updated Old Testament text called the Biblia Hebraic Stuttgartensia.

What the Holy Spirit gave to the original writers has been painstakingly and carefully copied through the centuries. We can be certain that we have the OT Scriptures in their original form notwithstanding the progression into our modern versions with vowels, accent marks, and paragraph, chapter and verse divisions.

The New Testament was written in Koine Greek.

New Testament Copies The accuracy of the New Testament text is also amazing- and quite a bit more detailed than the OT. There are over 5,000 manuscripts containing all or part of the Greek NT.

New Testament Greek Texts:

Textus Receptus: The text of the second edition of a Greek NT published in 1624 by two brothers, Bonaventure and Abraham Elzevir, and advertised by them as "the text which is now received by all." This was a revision of the text first produced by Erasmus in 1516. A few manuscripts from the Byzantine Text family were used to construct the Textus Receptus or Received Text. This text was used for the King James translation and almost every English translation until 1881. It is also the basis for the New King James Version (NKJV) and Modern English Version (MEV)

1, Acts, epistles, four gospels, 12th c.

2, Four Gospels, 12th,

2815, Acts, epistles, 12th,

2816, Acts, epistles, 15th,

2817, Pauline Epistles, 10–11th,

817, Four Gospels with Theophylact's commentary, 15th,

2814, Apocalypse with Andrew's commentary, 12th,

2105, Pauline Epistles with Theophylact's commentary, 12th,

Westcott & Hort Text. Brooke Foss Westcott (1825–1901) and Fenton John Anthony Hort (1828–1892) worked together for 28 years to develop a Greek text of the New Testament. They made use primarily of Codex Vaticanus (325-350 A.D.) and Codex Sinaiticus (330-360 A.D). The Westcott/Hort text became the basis for the Revised Version of 1881.

Nestle/Aland Text. In 1898 Eberhard Nestle published a Greek NT text using the WH text as well as others. Eberhard's son Erwin Nestle took over after his father's death and published the 13th edition in 1927.

In 1952 Kurt Aland became the associate editor of the 21st edition at Erwin Nestle's request. Aland reviewed and expanded the text, adding many more manuscripts. This eventually led to the 25th edition of 1963. Manuscript discoveries of the 20th century had also made a revision of the text necessary and, with Nestle's permission, Aland set out to revise the text. Aland submitted his work to the editorial committee of the United Bible Societies *Greek New Testament* and it became the basic text of their third edition (UBS3) in 1975. The current edition is the NA28/UBS5 which is used as the basis for most modern English translations.

What About the Differences?

Mark 16:9-20

At last count, 1,653 Greek manuscripts include Mark 16:9–20. (Some of them are damaged, but show that they had the whole passage when they were pristine). Three Greek manuscripts end the text of Mark at 16:8. Eight Greek manuscripts have the so-called Shorter Ending (given above in italics from the ESV footnote). And all eight proceed to include 16:9 (a few of these eight manuscripts are fragments which, due to damage, do not have all twelve verses).

https://textandcanon.org/a-case-for-the-longer-ending-of-mark/