

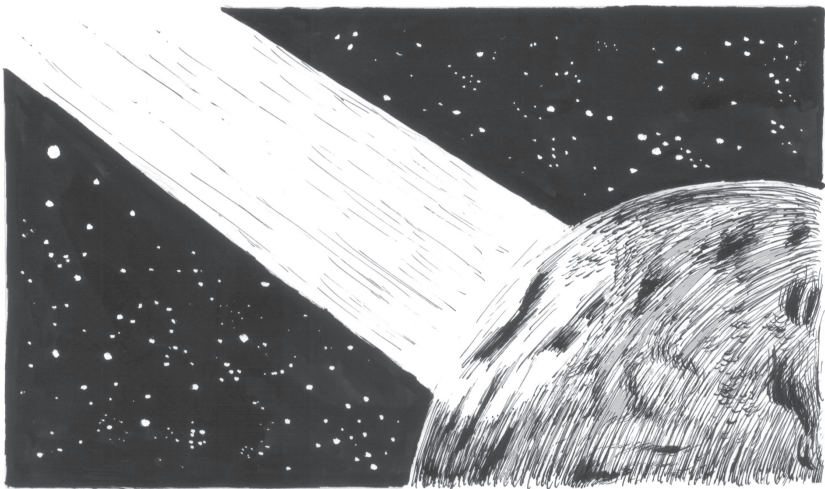
How We Got ...the Bible



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How We Got the Bible



How We Got the Bible

A. The Bible

1. A unique book.

- a. The Bible is the most amazing book of all history.
- b. Untold years of effort and care went into producing copies accurately, preserving the original text and verifying copies.
- c. Translated into many languages, the Bible continues to be the top selling book each year.

2. Many books in one.

- a. The Bible is called the Book of books.
- b. Composed of many books – a total of 66.
 - 1) 39 books in the Old Testament.
 - 2) 27 books in the New Testament.

3. Two sections called Testaments or Covenants.

- a. The message of the Bible is largely presented within the framework of these two covenants.
- b. They are referred to internally and externally as the Old and New Covenants.
- c. It is fundamental that the old was replaced by the new. Hebrews 8:7-13

4. The Bible covers three periods of divine government.

- a. Patriarchal - from the beginning of creation to the giving of the Law of Moses on Mount Sinai.
- b. Mosaical - from giving of the Law of Moses to the death of Christ on the cross.
- c. Christian - from the death of Christ until Christ returns. Referred to in scripture as the *last days*. Acts 2:17; Hebrews 1:2

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5. Theme of the Bible

The Bible story, taken as a whole, tells of God creating mankind and his habitation for the purpose of mankind being loved by God and, in turn, loving and glorifying God. Man sinned thus failing to love God. But God, being compassionate and forgiving, gave His only Son as payment in sacrifice for the sins of man so that anyone who repents and obeys God can, through Christ, be saved, reconciled with God, and can attain to the image and presence of God throughout eternity. The Bible tells of man's redemption from beginning to end:

- a. God's *purpose* for it,
- b. His *planning* of it,
- c. His *promises* regarding it to Abraham and his descendants,
- d. the *prophesying* of it by holy prophets throughout centuries,
- e. final *preparation* for its deliverance,
- f. *perfection* of it in the life and death of Jesus, and
- g. *perpetuation* of the wonderful provisions of redemption down through the ages to our time.

6. Reliability of Biblical text

- a. Many today ask if, through all the copies and the ages separating us from the original writers, the accuracy of the Bible, particularly the New Testament, was preserved. It is a good question.
- b. It is logical that the same God who wrote the Bible also preserved it.
 - 1) Can there be any doubt that the intelligence, wisdom and power which produced the Bible is able also to safeguard it from change or destruction and deliver it intact to succeeding generations.

How We Got the Bible

- 2) God not only could, but he wanted to keep His word intact for the same reasons He wanted to communicate to man in the first place.
 - 3) Allowing His message to be destroyed or tampered with in any way would defeat God's purpose for the creation of man and, therefore, the universe. Given what the Bible says about who God is, His power and His wisdom, this possibility is unthinkable.
- c. God's claims about His word necessitated that He protect it until now.
- 1) The Bible claims it will endure forever thus implying endurance in original form. By claiming His word will last forever God would have to take whatever steps needed to assure that no one destroyed it. Mark 13:31; 1 Peter 1:23, 25
 - 2) By claiming His word is perfect God obligated Himself to protect it from tampering. Proverbs 30:5; James 1:25; 1 Peter 2:2; Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Revelation 22:18, 19
 - 3) By claiming His word is all-sufficient God obligated Himself to preserve it to do the work for which He claimed nothing else was needed. 2 Timothy 3:17; Jude 3
- d. Secular records indicate that God is, in fact, preserving His word.
- 1) Despite attempts throughout history to eliminate the Bible and its influence, the Bible continues to influence the world today.
 - 2) Since original documents are not available to us today, how reliable are the copies we have?
 - a) There is a tremendous amount of evidence substantiating reliability of our Bible versions; a little of this will be presented later under the

How We Got the Bible

- separate headings of Old and New Testament reliability to show that the Bible is trustworthy.
- b) There are three basic principles used in the field of historiography for testing historical reliability of ancient writings.
 - (1) The bibliographical test.
 - (2) The internal test.
 - (3) The external test.
 - c) The bibliographical test alone shows the Bible message to have been transmitted through manuscript copies to our time with no consequential change.
- 3) Other ancient documents, compared to the Bible, have surprisingly little evidence to support the authenticity of the copies now in our possession, yet we accept them without question. Based on current evidence, no other ancient literature is nearly as trustworthy as the Bible.

B. Old Covenant.

1. Language

- a. The Old Testament was written in two languages: Hebrew and Aramaic, neither dead today.
 - 1) Israel speaks Hebrew.
 - 2) Aramaic is spoken some in Syria.
- b. Hebrew
 - 1) A family of languages called Semitic.
 - 2) Very different from the English language.
 - a) Twenty-two characters in the Hebrew alphabet. Each of twenty-two stanzas in Psalm 19 begins with a different Hebrew letter.
 - b) Characters are all different, but it is hard to tell some apart.
 - c) No vowels (they were added later for convenience).

How We Got the Bible

- d) The letters are written backwards, from right to left.
- 3) Most all of the Old Covenant is written in Hebrew.
- c. Aramaic.
 - 1) Some of the Old Testament is written in Aramaic.
 - a) One verse in Jeremiah (10:11)
 - b) Six chapters in Daniel (2:4b - 7:28)
 - c) Several chapters in Ezra.
 - 2) The letters don't appear any different than those in Hebrew.

2. Old Testament canon

- a. Definition of *canon*.
 - 1) From the Greek *kanon* meaning *a measuring rod, a level, or a ruler*.
 - 2) It was also used to mean a *list* or *index* thus referring to the list of books which are recognized as Scripture.
 - 3) The canonicity of a book is not the same as its authority.
 - a) Books of the Bible should not be considered *authoritative* because they were *included* on some *list* by a church council.
 - b) Actually, books were included in a canon because they were authoritative.
 - c) The pronouncements in Bible books were authoritative long before they were even written down. Consider Exodus 24:7 and 1 Corinthians 14:37
 - d) No council ever selected books to be included in a canon, but rather only recognized as canonical those books which had crushed out all opposition by their weight and worth in general use.
- b. The Hebrew version, according to Josephus, had twenty-two books in three groups.

How We Got the Bible

- 1) Five of Law - Genesis through Deuteronomy.
 - 2) Thirteen Prophets -
 - a) Former - Joshua, Judges (including Ruth), Samuel and Kings.
 - b) Latter - Job, Isaiah, Jeremiah (including Lamentations), Ezekiel, Esther, Daniel, Ezra/Nehemiah, Chronicles, and The Twelve.
 - 3) Four Writings - Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes.
- c. Our version has precisely the same text as the early Jewish canon, but with different book divisions. Now we separate Minor Prophets into twelve books and divide some others differently.
- 1) Five of Law - Genesis through Deuteronomy.
 - 2) Twelve of History - Joshua through Esther.
 - 3) Five of Poetry - Psalm through Song of Solomon.
 - 4) Five Major Prophets - Isaiah through Daniel.
 - 5) Twelve Minor Prophets - Hosea through Malachi.
- d. The Catholic Bible adds additional books called the apocrypha (Greek, *apokruphos*) meaning hidden or concealed. This refers to the fact that their origin was doubtful or unknown.
- 1) Total of fourteen individual books and additions to the thirty-nine Old Testament books we have.
 - I Esdras*
 - II Esdras*
 - Tobit*
 - Judith*
 - The Wisdom of Solomon*
 - Ecclesiasticus, or Sirach*
 - Baruch*
 - Susanna*, added as the 13th chapter of Daniel
 - Bel and the Dragon*, 14th chapter of Daniel
 - Additions to *Esther*
 - Song of Three Hebrew Children* after Daniel 3:23

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Prayer of Manasseh

I Maccabees

II Maccabees

- 2) Most were written in Greek, some in Hebrew:
Tobit, Judith, Sirach, Baruch (part probably in Greek), and *I Maccabees*.
- 3) All written between 200 BC and 100 AD, during the “silent period” between the book of Malachi in the Old Testament and Matthew in the New.
 - a) Oldest is *Sirach* (190-170 BC)
 - b) Parts of *II Esdras* were probably written as late as 100 AD.
- 4) Christ and the apostles never quoted them though hundreds of times they quoted and referred to most of the twenty-two books of Jewish canon.
- 5) Writers of the apocrypha frequently quoted from Old Testament scriptures, but of course, nowhere did Old Testament writers mention the apocrypha.
- 6) Early secular writers did not recognize the apocrypha as inspired.
 - a) The Jewish historian Josephus (AD 30-100) explicitly excluded them claiming there were only twenty-two inspired books in the Old Testament. He never quoted from the apocrypha.
 - b) The Alexandrian Jewish philosopher Philo (20 BC - 40 AD) frequently quoted from the Old Testament and recognized its three divisions, but never from the apocrypha as inspired.
 - c) Many early church “fathers” - Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius - spoke against the apocrypha.
 - d) Jerome (340-420), scholar and translator of the Vulgate, rejected the apocrypha as part of the canon. He disputed with Augustine on

How We Got the Bible

this point, at first refusing to translate them into Latin. Later he hurriedly translated a few. Only after his death were they brought into his Latin Vulgate.

- 7) No canon or council for the first four centuries recognized the apocrypha as inspired. They were actually rejected by Jewish scholars at their council of Jamnia (AD 90).
- 8) Many later scholars rejected their inspiration.
 - a) Many Roman Catholic scholars through the Reformation period rejected them.
 - b) Martin Luther and the reformers generally rejected them.
- 9) Finally accepted into the canon by the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent in 1546.
- e. The Jewish Septuagint version confirms our Old Testament canon.
 - 1) The Septuagint was a Greek translation of Hebrew scripture first done in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt (285-246 BC).
 - a) Jews who had settled in various parts of the world needed a copy of scripture in Greek, the common, “universal” language of the day, since many second, third, and later generation Jews could not speak Hebrew.
 - b) *Septuagint* means *seventy* (usually referred to by Roman numerals LXX, but now this designation of the translation is being replaced by the terms *The Old Testament in Greek* and *The Alexandrian Version*).
 - c) Traditions says:
 - (1) Ptolemy was responsible for development of a great library at Alexandria, Egypt, with world class cultural significance.

How We Got the Bible

- (2) Interest in Hebrew law motivated Ptolemy to arrange for translation with Eleazer, the Jewish high priest at Jerusalem.
 - (3) Six elders were chosen from each of twelve tribes of Israel (72 total) to do the translation.
 - (4) The Pentateuch (five books of law by Moses) was translated to Greek in 72 days, translators working independently and their translations being compared for accuracy at the conclusion of the work.
- d) Later, the rest of the twenty-two books of Jewish scripture were translated into Greek forming the Septuagint version in use at the time of Jesus and the apostles. (From the prologue of *Sirach* it is generally understood that Alexandrian Jews had a Greek version of the Law, the Prophets, and “the rest of the books” by the year 132 BC, or certainly by as late as 100 BC.)
 - e) Books of the apocrypha were later added to the Septuagint by the Jews (2nd century), but this addition was after Jesus’ use of the earlier version had confirmed its completeness.
- 2) Jesus and the apostles often quoted from the Septuagint.
 - 3) Jesus referred to the complete Old Testament canon by citing its three divisions in Luke 24:44.
 - 4) Jesus confirmed completeness of the Jewish canon in Matthew 23:35.
 - a) He spoke of the blood of righteous Abel (Genesis 4:8) to the blood of Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24:20-21).
 - b) The first book in the Jewish canon was Genesis and the last was 2 Chronicles.

How We Got the Bible

- c) Jesus' statement is like our saying, "From Genesis (first book of the Old Testament) to Malachi (last book of the Old Testament).
- d) Thus Jesus recognized the then current Jewish canon (first book to last) as the complete collection of old scriptures.

3. Old Testament Manuscripts

- a. Cairo Codex (AD 895) is in the British Museum. It was produced by the Massoretic Moses ben Asher family and contains the prophets.
- b. Codex of the Prophets of Leningrad (AD 916) includes Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the twelve minor prophets.
- c. Codex Babylonicus Petropolitanus (AD 1008) in Leningrad is the oldest complete Old Testament manuscript.
- d. Aleppo Codex (AD 900+), once thought lost, was rediscovered in 1958.
- e. British Museum Codex (AD 950) contains part of Genesis through Deuteronomy.
- f. Reuchlin Codex of the Prophets (AD 1150). Text was prepared by Massorete ben Naphtali.

4. Reliability of Old Testament text

- a. Finds among the Dead Sea Scrolls show the accuracy of later Massoretic texts.
 - 1) The 'Isaiah A' scroll is the complete Hebrew text of Isaiah dated about 125 BC which proves the accuracy of the Massoretic copy of Isaiah made in 916 AD, over 1,000 years later!
 - 2) The 'Isaiah B' scroll, an incomplete copy of Isaiah found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, further substantiates this accuracy.

How We Got the Bible

- b. The Septuagint, or LXX, is very close to the Massoretic Text of 916 AD thus establishing reliability of the Massoretic copy 1,300 years later.
- c. Samaritan Text (5th century BC). Variations between the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Massoretic copy of 916 AD are insignificant compared with points of agreement.
- d. The Targums. These works were paraphrases of the Old Testament, which appeared in written form about 500 AD, and prove that the Hebrew text at the time of the Targums was substantially the same as our Old Testament text today.
- e. The Mishnah (AD 200), a collection of Jewish traditions and explanations of the law, were written in Hebrew and often regarded as the Second Law. The quotations they contain are very similar to the Massoretic text of 916 AD.
- f. The Gemaris (AD 200 - AD 500) are commentaries of the Old Testament written in Aramaic which support Massoretic reliability.
- g. The Midrash (100 BC - 300 AD), doctrinal studies of the Old Testament Hebrew text, are substantially Massoretic.
- h. Other secular works. Many other writings show by their quotations and references to the Old Testament that the text in use during the years AD 40 - 254 was quite similar to the Massoretic.

C. New Covenant

1. Language

- a. The New Testament was written in two languages.
- b. Aramaic was the tongue of the common man in Palestine after 500 BC.
 - 1) Jesus and the early disciples probably normally spoke in Aramaic.

How We Got the Bible

- a) Mark 5:41
 - b) Mark 7:31
 - c) Matt 27:46
- 2) There are several indications that early Christians used the language.
 - a) *Abba* is Aramaic for Father. Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6
 - b) *Our Lord come* was probably a common expression in the early church. 1 Cor. 16:22
 - 3) Aramaic continues to be spoken some today in Syria.
- c. Greek.
- 1) Most of the New Testament was written in Hellenistic (*Koine*, or common) Greek.
 - 2) No language in history was more able to get the gospel message to all the world.
 - 3) Today Greek is spoken by millions, though Koine Greek is no longer used.

2. New Testament canon

- a. During the first period of their usage, New Testament books were not in a collection.
 - 1) During the years of writing much teaching was done orally.
 - a) Because direct, divine inspiration would not last (1 Corinthians 13:8-10) the message was written down by divine men under guidance of the Holy Spirit so that later generations would have the same teaching as those who lived with the apostles. 1 Corinthians 2:10-13; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Ephesians 3:3-5
 - b) The New Testament message began to be written about twenty years after Jesus ascended to the Father and was completed in forty-five years or less.

How We Got the Bible

- 2) Early letters were passed around. Colossians 1:16;
1 Thessalonians 5:27
- 3) The process of collecting books may have begun early. 2 Peter 3:15, 16
 - a) External evidence indicates early Christians had the number of distinct books we now have and may have divided them into three groups:
 - (1) Five books of history - Gospels and Acts.
 - (2) Twenty-one of doctrine - Romans to Jude.
 - (3) One of prophecy - Revelation.
 - b) The collecting of books was probably completed by the 2nd or 3rd century. Another method of grouping them was:
 - (1) Book 1 - Letters of Paul
 - (2) Book 2 - Four gospel accounts
 - (3) Book 3 - The general epistles
 - (4) Book 4 - The Revelation
- b. After all twenty-seven were written, early writers frequently appealed to the authority of the New Testament (Examples: Justin the Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen)
- c. Various lists of books believed to be inspired exist from the 2nd to the 4th centuries.
 - 1) There was hardly any question then regarding inspiration of twenty of the twenty-seven books.
 - 2) Some questions were raised about seven.
 - 3) But for almost two millennium to our time, the vast majority of scholars have accepted *all* of the twenty-seven.
- d. Church councils have agreed about the canon of our twenty-seven books.
 - 1) Council at Hippo Regius, North Africa, 393 AD.
 - 2) Council at Carthage, North Africa, in 397.
- e. Today we divide the same twenty-seven books into five groups:

How We Got the Bible

- 1) Four Gospels - Matthew through John.
- 2) One of History - Acts; the beginning of the church.
(A continuation of Luke, being by the same author.)
- 3) Fourteen Special Letters - Romans through Hebrews.
- 4) Seven General Letters - James through Jude.
- 5) One of Prophecy - Revelation.

NOTE: In early Greek manuscripts the general letters were found following Acts and before Paul's letters.

3. Early New Testament Manuscripts

- a. John Ryland's MS (manuscript) (130 AD) is located in the John Ryland's Library of Manchester, England, and is the oldest extant fragment of the New Testament.
- b. Bodmer Papyrus II (150-200 AD) is located in the Bodmer Library of World Literature and contains most of John.
- c. Chester Beatty Papyri (200 AD) is a collection of papyrus codices, three containing major portions of the New Testament. This collection (partly owned by the University of Michigan) is housed in the Chester Beatty Museum in Dublin. These documents bring us so close to the dates of original New Testament writings that they all but eliminate any question about the authenticity of modern copies.
- d. Codex Vaticanus (325-350 AD) in the Vatican Library contains nearly all the Bible.
- e. Codex Sinaiticus (350 AD) in the British Museum contains almost all the New Testament and over half of the Old.
- f. Codex Alexandrinus (400 AD), written in Greek, contains almost the entire Bible. It is housed in the British Museum.

How We Got the Bible

- g. Codex Ephraemi (400's AD) is in the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris. Every New Testament book is represented except 2 Thessalonians and 2 John.
- h. Codex Bezae (450 AD+) is in the Cambridge Library and contains the Gospels and Acts in both Latin and Greek.
- i. Codex Washingtonensis (about 450 AD) contains the four Gospels.
- j. Codex Claromontanus (500's AD), a bilingual manuscript, contains the letters of Paul.

4. New Testament Reliability

- a. Manuscript evidence. There is far more manuscript evidence for the New Testament than any other body of ancient literature.
- b. There are more than 5,300 known Greek manuscripts, 10,000 Latin Vulgate and at least 9,300 other early versions totalling more than 24,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament in existence today.
- c. The earliest extant manuscripts of any substance are of the 4th century - about 250 to 300 years after the original writings.
 - 1) By comparison, the chart on the next page shows similar data on other works of antiquity whose reliability is generally not questioned.
 - 2) No other ancient writing has as many supporting documents verifying authenticity as does the New Testament.
- d. Is the New Testament relevant today?
 - 1) Yes, by its claim to *all sufficiency*.
 - 2) Yes, by its claim to be *everlasting*.
 - 3) Yes, by its claim to be the *word of the only, all-wise Creator*.

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Literary Works of Antiquity Compared

(Chart from *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, p. 42)

	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	No. of Copies
Homer's <i>Iliad</i>	900 BC	400 BC	500 yrs	643
Caesar's <i>Gallic Wars</i>	58-50 BC	850 AD	900 yrs	9-10
Livy's <i>Roman History</i>	59BC-17AD	4th Century		20
(Only 35 of 142 books remain)				
Plato's <i>Tetralogies</i>	427-347 BC	900 AD	1,200 yrs	7
Sophocles	496-406 BC	1,000 AD	1,400 yrs	193
Aristotle	384-322 BC	1,100 AD	1,400 yrs	10
<i>New Testament</i>	40-96 AD	125 AD	25-85 yrs	24,000+
(All 27 books are intact)				

- 4) Yes, by its claim that God “*has in these last days spoken to us by His Son.*” Hebrews 1:1,2
- a) It is God’s word for our time; these are the *last days*.
 - b) There is no higher authority to tell this generation how to live than the Son, Jesus Christ, speaking for the Father.

D. Conclusions

1. Today’s Bible is trustworthy.

There is an overwhelming amount of evidence that modern copies of the text of God’s word are authentic.

2. The accuracy of no other ancient book is so well attested.

If, after reviewing the evidence, we cannot accept the authenticity of either the Old or New Testament, then we must reject as well the authenticity of every other ancient writing known to man.

3. What we have today is the true word of God.

As Sir Frederic Kenyon said in his book *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, “...the Christian can take the

How We Got the Bible

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.”

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