

HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE #1

THE BIBLE COMES INTO BEING

SYNOPSIS: The history of writing goes back to the remote past. Writing was being practised hundreds of years before the time of Moses. People wrote long ago on such materials as stone, clay, leather, and papyrus. The books of the Bible came into being gradually and under varying conditions; yet today they are logically arranged in different divisions. At the heart of the Bible is its witness to Jesus Christ.

I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING.

- A. Earliest form dates back to 4000-3000 B.C.
 - 1. Picture writing was used at this time in Mesopotamia.
 - 2. Hieroglyphics (picture writing) were used in Egypt also at this time.
 - 3. First known alphabet (dating back to approximately 1500 B.C.) was recently discovered in the region of Mt. Sinai.
- B. Stone inscriptions have been found all over the world.
 - 1. Two old examples include Gezer Calender (10th century B.C.) and Moabite Stone (9th century B.C.)
 - 2. Ten Commandments were written on stone.
- C. Clay was used in Tigris-Euphrates Rivers area.
 - 1. This material is referred to in Ezekiel 4:1.
 - 2. An outstanding collection of clay tablets (Tel el-Amarna) has been found.
- D. Leather scrolls were used by Jews in Old Testament period.
- E. Papyrus was the most important writing material in New Testament times.
 - 1. One sheet of papyrus would be big enough for such a letter as II or III John.
 - 2. Papyrus sheets could be joined together up to a maximum length of about 40 feet (adequate for such a book as Matthew).
 - 3. Papyrus "codex" (book) developed around A.D. 100.
- F. Vellum (parchment - made from animal skins) was used for over 1,000 years in making copies of the New Testament.

II. BIBLICAL BOOKS CAME INTO BEING SEPARATELY AND UNDER VARYING CONDITIONS.

- A. Old Testament Books.
 - 1. Law - 5 books
 - 2. History - 12 books
 - 3. Poetry - 5 books
 - 4. Prophecy - 17 books
- B. New Testament Books.
 - 1. Arrangement of New Testament books.
 - a. History - 5 books
 - b. Letters - 21 books
 - c. Prophecy - 1 book.
 - 2. New Testament books were written between A.D. 50 and A.D. 95.
 - 3. Being authoritative, the New Testament books were to be read by the churches (I Thess. 5:27).

MANUSCRIPTS OF THE BIBLE

I LANGUAGES OF THE BIBLE

I. LANGUAGES OF THE BIBLE

- A. Most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew.
 - Hebrew, without vowels, is written from right to left.
- B. A small portion of the Old Testament was written in Aramaic.
 - This became the vernacular language of Palestine.
(cf. "Abba" - "Father")
- C. The New Testament was written in Greek.
 - Greek was the universal language of the first century.

II. THERE ARE SOME 5,000 COPIES, OR MANUSCRIPTS, OF THE NEW TESTAMENT NOW AVAILABLE.

- A. New Testament manuscripts are of two major types.
 - 1. The older groups are UNCIALS -- written in large letters, without intervening spaces between the words and with little punctuation.
 - 2. CURSIVE manuscripts, dating back to the ninth century, are written in small letters with a running-hand style.
- B. The most important uncials are three vellum manuscripts.
 - 1. Vatican Manuscript, located in Vatican Library, Rome, is perhaps the most important of the manuscripts.
 - 2. Sinaitic Manuscript, now in British Museum, was found by Constantine Tischendorf near Mt. Sinai in the mid-nineteenth century.
 - 3. The Alexandrian Manuscript, also in British Museum, was first of great uncials to become known. It was presented as a gift to King Charles I of England in 1627.
- C. Copying the manuscripts was originally a fatiguing task, requiring much mental concentration.
 - 1. At first copies of the manuscripts were made by individuals.
 - 2. In some cases, later, a reader would lead the group of scribes working in a scriptorium.
 - 3. Scribal variations were made, but they were usually small and unimportant.

III. WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT TEXT.

- A. Text-data for the Old Testament is not as vast as that available for the New Testament.
- B. Recent Dead Sea Scroll discoveries have verified the correctness of the Old Testament text.

CONCLUSIONS:

- 1. Books of antiquity have come down to us by means of handwritten copies.
- 2. Manuscripts of the Bible range in date from the second to the sixteenth centuries, and they come from many parts of the world.
- 3. Although variations do exist in the manuscripts, they mostly concern small matters of verbal precision.

HOW WE GOT OUR BIBLE - Lesson # 3

THE TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE

Soon after the New Testament had its birth, it began to be translated in other languages. One of the most important of the early versions was the Latin. The Latin Vulgate, translated by Jerome, was the standard Bible in Western Europe for more than a thousand years. The earliest English translations, such as that of Bede and later that of Wycliffe, were made from the Latin. William Tyndale was the first to make an English translation from the original Hebrew and Greek languages. Tyndale suffered martyrdom; but many other translations followed, culminating in 1611 with the publication of the King James Version.

I. EARLY TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE.

- A. One of the earliest translations, the Old Syriac, was designed (2nd Century) for those living in the regions of Syria and Mesopotamia.
- B. In the East, other early translations included the Egyptian, the Armenian, and the Gothic.
- C. The Bible was translated into Latin, the official language of the Roman Empire.
 - 1. The Old Latin translation was made in the 2nd century.
 - 2. The Latin Vulgate, a revision of the Old Latin Translation, was produced by Jerome, in the fourth century. (Its phrasing was in the language of the common man.)

II. THE BIBLE IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

- A. Gospel of John was translated into Anglo-Saxon in 735.
- B. The first translation of the entire Bible in English was finished in 1382, by John Wycliffe and his associates.
- C. Erasmus issued the first edition of the Greek New Testament in 1516. This made it possible for Biblical scholars to have access to the New Testament in its original language.
- D. William Tyndale completed his translation of the New Testament in English in 1525.
 - 1. His was the first New Testament ever to be printed in English.
 - 2. His was the first English translation to be based on the Greek, not on the Latin Vulgate.
- E. Tyndale began a translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into English, but his work was not completed due to his death in 1535.
- F. Miles Coverdale, basing his work in part on Tyndale's, completed the English Bible in 1535.
- G. The Great Bible, edited by Coverdale, appeared in 1535, and it was authorized to be read in the churches.
- H. The most popular of the sixteenth century translations was the Geneva Bible in 1560.
- I. The Authorized Version (King James Version) of 1611 succeeded in providing a translation suitable for all English-speaking people.
- J. Other translations have appeared in more recent times to express in more contemporary terms the message of the Bible.

SUMMARY- The Bible, in whole or in parts, has been translated into more than 1,300 different dialects and languages.

HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE

PART # 3

1. The Old Testament was originally written in _____ and the New Testament was originally written in _____.
2. The earliest translation was the Syriac version. T. F.
3. The Latin and Syriac translations date as early as the second century. T. F.
4. The Latin Vulgate was produced in 382 by _____ after years of careful study.
5. Based on the Latin text, the earliest English translation was that by Bede in 735. T. F.
6. In 1382, John Wycliffe produced the first complete Bible in English. T. F.
7. John Gutenberg was responsible for the very first printed Bible. T. F.
8. Erasmus' edition of the Greek New Testament was completed in 1516. T. F.
9. Tyndale, the "Father of the English Bible," produced the first New Testament translation based on the Greek Text. T. F.
10. Coverdale's Bible was the first complete Bible printed in English. T. F.
11. Name two other English translation produced between 1535 - 1600.
 - 1.
 - 2.
12. The best of all the English versions of the Bible was the Authorized Version of 1611. T. F.

THE BIBLE AND RECENT DISCOVERIES

Since the year 1611, a number of changes have taken place which are of interest to Bible students. The English language itself has undergone numerous changes. Hundreds of discoveries of Bible manuscripts, and of materials that effect a better understanding of the Bible, have also been made. The Biblical documents of the Dead Sea Scrolls are nothing short of sensational. For these reasons the twentieth century has witnessed a flood of new translations, most of which will prove to be helpful to the careful Bible student. Yet the story of how we got the Bible ultimately leads one to the divine throne, "for men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (2 Peter 1: 21)

I. DISCOVERIES OF BIBLICAL MANUSCRIPTS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY WERE OF GREAT VALUE.

- A. The Sinaitic and Vatican manuscripts were brought to light in the nineteenth century.
- B. A more accurate Greek text was published by B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort in 1881.
- C. The Revised Version was produced by British and American scholars (English Revised in 1881 and American Standard in 1901).

II. DEAD SEA SCROLL FINDS HAVE BEEN HELPFUL.

- A. These discoveries, beginning in 1948, have brought to light portions of almost every book of the Old Testament.
- B. The roll of Isaiah, dating back to the second century before Christ, is the most amazing of the finds.

III. TRANSLATIONS HAVE BEEN MADE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

- A. The Revised Standard Version, 1946-52, is significant for its readability.
- B. Other modern speech translations include Moffat's, Williams', Goodspeed's, Phillips' and the New English Bible.

CONCLUSION: The Bible was given by inspiration (2 Tim. 3: 15-17; 2 Peter 1: 19-21), and it has been preserved by divine providence.

"If we be ignorant, they will instruct us.
If out of the way, they will bring us home.
If out of order, they will reform us.
Take up and read - take up and read the Scriptures."

HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE

Part #4

1. The revision of the English translation in recent years was primarily undertaken to improve the accuracy and readability of its text. T. F.
2. New revisions endeavoured to delete archaic language. T. F.
3. Ancient documents recently discovered cast serious doubts upon the accuracy of the Bible text. T. F.
4. Name two ancient manuscripts discovered since 1611. 1.
2.
5. Who were the two men who worked thirty years with ancient manuscripts to compile a more accurate Greek text. 1.
2.
6. The papyri documents discovered in Egypt showed two things, what were they? 1.
2.
7. What find has supported the accuracy of the Old Testament text?
8. A copy of which prophet's writing was a major find at Qumran?
9. How are modern translations helpful to Bible students?
10. When selecting a translation what caution needs to be observed?
11. Recent discoveries confirm that we cannot consider the text of our modern Bibles to be reliable. 1.
2.