

STUDIES IN THE BIBLE

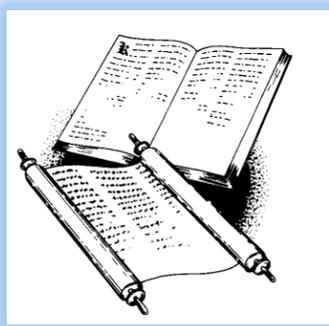
Lesson 1

How We Got Our Bible

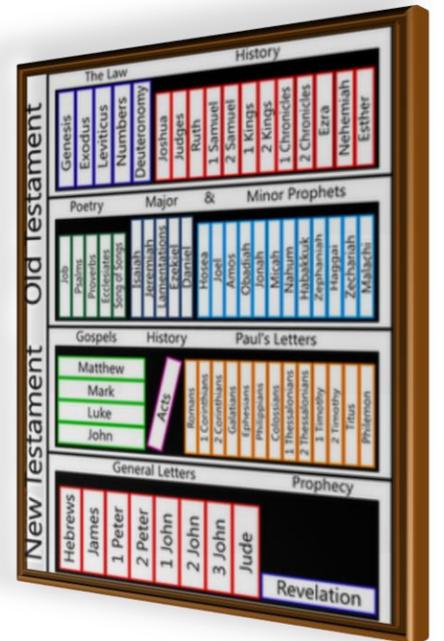
You are about to begin a study of the world's most wonderful book. It has often been called "the book" and rightly so for it is in a class by itself. "Bible" means "book." Actually, it is a compilation of 66 books written by about 40 different authors scattered across many countries during a period of 1600 years. The story of how this remarkable book came into being with each part fitting perfectly into the others and with no real contradictions is most interesting. We must conclude it could have come only from God.

How the Bible Was Written

The Bible is divided into two great divisions known as the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is over three times as long as the New Testament and its writing was about 400 years before the birth of Christ. Originally the biblical books were handwritten on animal skins (parchment) or on paper made from the papyrus plant. Printing was not yet invented, so every copy of an original had to be made by hand. Therefore, copies were rare and extremely valuable.

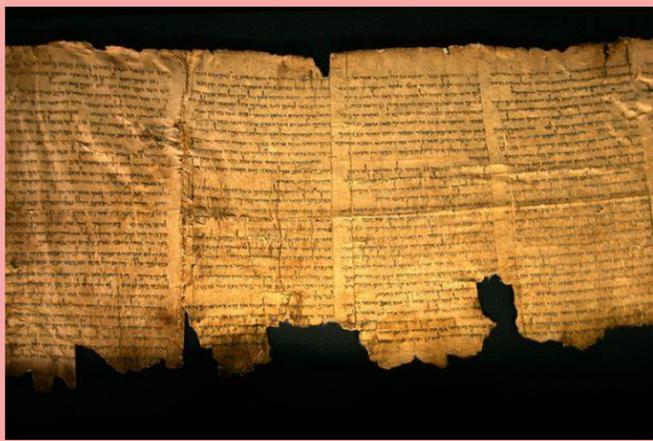


The 39 Old Testament books were written in Hebrew, except for small portions in the Aramaic language. The first 5 were written by Moses about 1500 years B.C. (before Christ). During the next thousand years the remaining books were penned, and it appears that Ezra, the scribe (A person who wrote documents for others or copied written material), brought them all together into a single book (Nehemiah 8:5) about 400 B.C. In the third century before Christ, the first great translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek was made at Alexandria, Egypt. It was called *Septuagint* (meaning seventy) because it was supposedly translated by seventy scholars (a person who studies an academic subject and knows a lot about it). Christ often quoted this version or a Hebrew text similar to it.



The 27 New Testament books were written in Greek by eight men. Several of them apostles of Christ, in the first century A.D. (Since Christ). The New Testament covers events occurring in that century, including the life of Christ and the establishment of his church. As is true of the Old Testament, all original copies have been lost or destroyed, and yet we have writings substantially as they were penned. Many copies have been preserved and are available for scholars to use in translating into other languages. The three most important

are the Vatican Manuscript at the Vatican in Rome, written in the fourth century; the Alexandrian Manuscript in the British Museum in London, written in the fifth century; and the Sinaitic Manuscript, also in the British Museum, written in the fourth century. In addition there are hundreds of other copies of lesser importance which are of value to translators in making sure that we have the original New Testament writings.



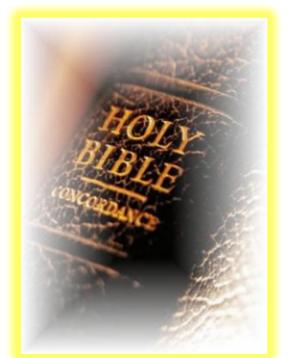
The *Dead Sea Scrolls*, the first of which were discovered in 1947 in a cave near the Dead Sea and which date from the first or second century before Christ, have helped in recent translations of the Old Testament. They have also substantiated the accuracy of the manuscripts from which earlier translations were made so that we may be even more confident that we have the real message of the Old Testament writers.

There are two additional sources of information about the original New Testament books. One is the translations made soon after the New Testament was written. The most important, written in Latin, is called the *Vulgate* and was completed by Jerome in 405 A.D. We also have numerous Bible quotations from the writings of the early church fathers. By comparing the

Greek manuscripts, the early translations, and the quotations of the church fathers, Bible scholars have been able to determine with great accuracy what the New Testament authors wrote. In fact, so sure are we that we have the Bible almost as it was given that we can positively say that no major Bible doctrine is in any way affected by minor errors of copying through the centuries.

The Bible in English

The first major English translation of the New Testament was completed by John Wyclif in 1382 after 22 years of hard work. In 1456 printing was invented by Johanne Gutenberg, making it possible to publish Bibles much faster and virtually eliminating typographical errors so common in hand copies. In fact, the first book printed by Gutenberg was a Latin Bible. The first printed English Bible was the New Testament as translated by *William Tyndale* in 1525. He was strongly opposed in this by the Catholic Church and he found it necessary to have his Bibles printed on the continent and smuggled into England. Most were publicly burned in London. He was betrayed, and burned at the stake for giving the Bible to the people. His final words were, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes."



The first complete English Bible was the work of *Miles Coverdale*. Other versions soon followed and by 1604 the king of England's eyes were opened. He

authorised the translation of a new version, the work of 54 scholars. It was completed in 1611 and is known as the King James (after the monarch who authorised it) or the Authorized Version. Although it was translated over 350 years ago, it is still probably more widely used than any other English version of God's word.

However, the discovery of additional Bible manuscripts not available to the King James translators and inevitable change of the English language in time called for other versions that would be more readable and accurate. In 1885 a revision of the King James known as the *English Revised Version* was completed by 84 British and American scholars. The American edition of this version, the *American Standard Version* was published in 1901, and is possibly the most accurate version which we have. In 1952 the complete Revised Standard Version appeared using modern English. It is a revision of the American Standard and has gained wide acceptance in the few years since its publication. It is more readable than its predecessors and is destined to replace the King James as the version most widely read.



Several other versions are worthy of note.

They include translations by individuals such

as *Edgar J. Goodspeed* (left) and *James Moffat* (right) and more

recently, the *New English Bible* and the *New American Standard New Testament* a revision of



the American Standard. The Roman Catholic Church has produced its own translations. The *Rheims-Douai Bible* appeared in 1582. It has been succeeded by the *Confraternity Version*, part of which first was published in 1941. Catholic versions include the same books found in other versions (sometimes under a different name) plus fourteen more in the Old Testament only which are called the Apocrypha. This word means "hidden" and is applied to these books because their origin is doubtful. They are found only in the Greek, not the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament, and have therefore been rejected by the Jews and most non-Catholics as not rightly belonging in the Old Testament. However, their exclusion from the Old Testament does not materially affect any Bible doctrine.

The Bible Is God's Word

The bible claims to be inspired. Peter said,

"For no prophetic message ever came just from the human will, but people were under the control of the Holy Spirit as they spoke the message that came from God." (2 Peter 1:21).

The Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost) so guided the writers of the Bible that they could not make mistakes.

"So then, we do not speak in words taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit, as we explain spiritual truths to those who have the Spirit." (1 Cor. 2:13).

Because of this, there are no real contradictions in the Bible. Those things which appear to be contradictions disappear under close investigation.

That the Bible is true may be shown by several of its characteristics. It is *scientifically accurate*, even though it is not a book of science. It is *historically accurate*. Every attempt to prove it historically wrong has failed. It is *prophetically correct* as is seen in many prophecies which have been fulfilled beyond question. It is *impartial*, presenting both good and bad of all men, not trying to gloss over the sins of any man who might be “a man after God’s own heart.” It presents the world’s *highest standard of morality*. Finally, *it has never been destroyed in spite of dozens of attempts to exterminate it.*



STUDIES IN THE BIBLE

The Quiz

Lesson 1

How We Got Our Bible

“Seek and You Shall Find”

Circle the letter representing the correct answer:

1. The number of books in the Bible: (a) 27 (b) 39 (c) 66.
2. About how many men wrote the Bible: (a) 8 (b) 40 (c) 70.
3. Bible means: (a) book (b) version (c) manuscript.
4. The Old Testament was written in: (a) Greek (b) English (c) Hebrew.
5. The New Testament was written in: (a) Hebrew (b) Greek (c) Latin.
6. The first great Old Testament translation was: (a) Septuagint (b) Vulgate (c) King James.
7. The Sinaitic Manuscript is at: (a) British Museum (b) Alexandria (c) Vatican.
8. First major English translation: (a) King James (b) Gutenberg (c) Wyclif's.
9. The King James Version appeared in: (a) 1952 (b) 1611 (c) 1382.
10. Apocrypha means: (a) book (b) hidden (c) parchment.

Complete the scripture quotations:

1. Neh. 8:5 – “As _____ stood there on the platform high above the _____, they all kept their eyes fixed on him. As soon as he _____ the book, they all stood up.”

2. 2 Peter 1:21 – “People were under the control of the _____ Spirit as they spoke the message that came from _____.”

3. 1 Cor. 2:13 – “So then, we do not speak in _____ taught by human _____, but in words taught by the Spirit”

4. 2 Tim. 3:16 – All _____ is _____ by God and is useful for teaching the truth, _____, _____, and giving instruction for right living,”

Fill In the Blanks

1. The three most important New Testament manuscripts are _____, _____, and _____.

2. Three of the many English translations which have been made are _____, _____, and _____.

3. The Rheims–Douai Catholic Version was issued in the year _____.

4. The _____ Scrolls were discovered in 1947.

5. Some books of the Bible were originally written on paper made from the plant.

6. The inventor of printing was _____.

7. Wyclif completed his translation in the year _____.

8. Copies of Tyndale's translation were burned in the city of _____.

9. The Bible is _____ accurate, _____ accurate, and correct.

10. The world's highest standard of morality is presented in the _____.

You have now completed the quiz; continue onto the next page to view the answers.

THE ANSWERS

“Seek and You Shall Find”

(1) C (2) B (3) A (4) C (5) B (6) A (7) A (8) C (9) C (10) B

“Complete the scripture quotations”

(1) Neh. 8:5 – As [Ezra](#) stood there on the platform high above the [people](#), they all kept their eyes fixed on him. As soon as he [opened](#) the book, they all stood up.

(2) 2 Peter 1:21 – “People were under the control of the [Holy](#) Spirit as they spoke the message that came from [God](#).”

(3) 1 Cor. 2:13 – “So then, we do not speak in [words](#) taught by human [wisdom](#), but in words taught by the Spirit.”

(4) 2 Tim. 3:16 – “All [Scripture](#) is [inspired](#) by God and is useful for teaching the truth, [rebuking error](#), [correcting faults](#), and giving instruction for right living”

“Fill In the Blanks”

1. The three most important New Testament manuscripts are

[Vatican Manuscript](#), [Alexandrian Manuscript](#), and [Sinaitic Manuscript](#).

2. Three of the many English translations which have been made are
, _____, and _____.

If you choose three of any of the following, then you have answered correctly:

[John Wyclif Translation](#); [William Tyndale Translation](#);

[Miles Coverdale Translation of the whole Bible](#);

[1611 King James Version](#); [English Revised Version](#);
[American Standard Version 1901](#); [1952 Revised Standard Version](#).

3. The Rheims–Douai Catholic Version was issued in the year [1582](#).
4. The [Dead Sea](#) Scrolls were discovered in 1947.
5. Some books of the Bible were originally written on paper made from the [papyrus](#) plant.
6. The inventor of printing was [Johanne Gutenberg](#).
7. Wyclif completed his translation in the year [1382](#).
8. Copies of Tyndale’s translation were burned in the city of [London](#).
9. The Bible is [scientifically](#) accurate, [historically](#) accurate, and [prophetically](#) correct.
10. The world’s highest standard of morality is presented in the [Bible](#).

Congratulations, you have now completed the lesson. If you have any questions about this lesson, please send us an email with your name and email address and we’ll get back to you.