

How We Got the Bible

Ten Key Points

1. The Bible is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).
2. The Bible is made up of 66 different books that were written over 1600 years (from approximately 1500 BC to AD 100) by more than 40 kings, prophets, leaders, and followers of Jesus. The Old Testament has 39 books (written approximately 1500-400 BC). The New Testament has 27 books (written approximately AD 45-100). The Hebrew Bible has the same text as the English Bible's Old Testament, but divides and arranges it differently.
3. The Old Testament was written mainly in Hebrew, with some Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Greek.
4. The books of the Bible were collected and arranged and recognized as inspired sacred authority by councils of rabbis and councils of church leaders based on careful guidelines.
5. Before the printing press was invented, the Bible was copied by hand. The Bible was copied very accurately, in many cases by

special scribes who developed intricate methods of counting words and letters to insure that no errors had been made.

6. The Bible was the first book ever printed on the printing press with moveable type (Gutenberg Press, 1455, Latin Bible).
7. There is much evidence that the Bible we have today is remarkably true to the original writings. Of the thousands of copies made by hand before AD 1500, more than 5,300 Greek manuscripts from the New Testament alone still exist today. The text of the Bible is better persevered than the writings of Caesar, Plato, or Aristotle.
8. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls confirmed the astonishing reliability of some of the copies of the Old Testament made over the years. Although some spelling variations exist, no variation affects basic Bible doctrines.
9. As the Bible was carried to other countries, it was translated into the common language of the people by scholars who wanted others to know God's Word. Today there are still 2,000 groups with no Bible in their own language.

10. By AD 200, the Bible was translated into seven languages; by AD 500, 13 languages; by AD 900, 17 languages; by AD 1400, 28 languages; by 1800, 57 languages; by 1900, 537 languages; by 1980, 1,100 languages.

Old Testament written- approx. 1500-400 BC

- Stone
- Clay
- Leather

New Testament written- approx. AD 45-100

The oldest New Testament fragment (from John 18) that we have today was copied in Greek on a papyrus codex around AD 110-130.

Bible copied on Papyrus

Scrolls of leather, and later of papyrus, were used to make copies of the Scriptures. A papyrus codex is a bound volume made from sheets folded and sewn together, sometimes with a cover. There were used more than scrolls after AD 1-100.

Bible copied on fine animal skins

Fine quality animal skins from calves or antelope (vellum) and sheep or goats (parchments) were used for over 1,000 years to make copies of the Bible approximately AD 300-1400. Two of the oldest vellum copies (AD 325-350) that exist today are the Vatican Codex and the Sinaitic Codex.

Bible printed by printing press after 1455

Wycliffe Bibles were inscribed by hand on vellum in the 1300's-1400's. Some copies took ten months to two years to produce and cost a year's minimum wage. The Bible was the first book to be printed with Gutenberg's printing press in 1455.

The Bible, God's Word to the world

The Bible is now printed on paper in many versions and languages. It is also on tape recordings, compact discs and computers.

2000 BC

Old testament events are written down in Hebrews (portions in Aramaic) over centuries. In Exodus, the Lord tells Moses to write in a book. Other Old Testament writers, inspired by God, include leaders, kings, and

prophets. Together, these writings on leather scrolls and other materials are called the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament.

500 BC

Ezra, a priest and scribe, collects and arranges some of the books of the Hebrew Bible- the Old Testament- about 450BC, according to Jewish tradition.

The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament). It is translated in 250-100 BC by Jewish scholars in Alexandria, Egypt. (The word *Septuagint* means seventy, referring to the tradition that 70 or 72 men translated it. It is often abbreviated LXX, the Roman numeral for seventy.)

200 BC

The books are arranged by subject: historical, poetic, and prophetic. It includes the Apocrypha (meaning “hidden”) referring to seven books that were included in the Hebrew Bible until AD 90 when they were removed by Jewish elders.

Papyrus, a plant, is cut into strips and pressed into sheets of writing material and can be made into a scroll or a codex. The New Testament books were probably first written on papyrus scrolls. Later Christians begin to copy them on sheets of papyrus which are bound and placed between two pieces of wood for covers. This form of early book is known as a codex.

AD 1

Time of Jesus: 4 BC- approx. AD 33. Jesus quotes the Old Testament (Scriptures) often. He says that He did not come to destroy the Scriptures, but to fulfill them. He says to his disciples, "These are the words which I spoke unto you,...that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. *Luke 24:44-45*

AD 100

Followers of Jesus, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, James, Peter, and Jude write the Gospels, history, letter to other Christians, and the

Revelation between AD 45 and 100. The writers quote from all but eight of the Old Testament books. These writings in Greek are copied and circulated so that by AD 150 there is wide enough use of them to speak of the “New Testament” (“New Covenant”). The new covenant God made with people was promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and referred to by Jesus (Luke 22:20) and Paul (1 Corinthians 11:25) and in the letter to the Hebrews.

AD 200

Old Testament Apocrypha- Evidence derived from first century AD writers Philo and Josephus indicates that the Hebrew canon did not include the Apocrypha.

Earliest translations are AD 200-300 Latin, Coptic (Egypt), and Syriac (Syria).

Church fathers accept the writings of the Gospels and Paul’s letters as canonical (from a Greek word referring to the *rule* of faith and truth). Origen lists 21 approved New Testament books. Eusebius lists 22 accepted books.

AD 300

The New Testament books are collected and circulated throughout the Mediterranean about the time of Constantine, the Roman emperor who legalizes Christianity in AD 313. By AD 400 the standard of 27 New Testament books is accepted in the East and West as confirmed by Athanasius, Jerome, Augustine and three church councils. The 27 books of the New Testament were formally confirmed as canonical by Synod of Carthage in AD 397, thus recognizing three centuries of use by followers of Christ.

Jerome starts translating the Scriptures into Latin in AD 410 and finishes 25 years later. This translation, called the Latin Vulgate, remains the basic Bible for many centuries.

AD 500

Roman Empire declines. Germanic migrations (AD 378-600) cause new languages to emerge.

The Masoretes are special Jewish scribes entrusted with the sacred task of making copies of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) approximately

AD 500-900. They develop a meticulous system of counting the number of words in each book of the Bible to make sure they have copied it accurately. Any scroll found to have an error is buried according to Jewish law.

AD 600

Christianity reaches Britain before AD 300, but Anglo-Saxon pagans drive Christianity Britons into Wales (AD 450-600). In AD 596, Augustine of Canterbury begins evangelization again.

Caedmon, an illiterate monk, retells portions of Scriptures in Anglo-Saxon (Old English) poetry and song (AD 676).

Aldhelm of Sherborne, AD 709, is said to have translated the Psalms.

Bede, a monk and scholar, makes an Old English (Anglo-Saxon) translation of portions of Scripture. On his deathbed in 735, he finishes translating the Book of John.

Alfred the Great, King of Wessex, 871-901, translates portions of Exodus, Psalms, and Acts.

Aldred, Bishop of Durham, inserts a translation in the Northumbrian dialect between the lines of the Lindisfarne Gospels (950).

Aelfri, 955-1020, translates portions of the Old Testament.

AD 1300

Normans conquer England (1066) and make French the official language.

No English translation work produced until the 1300's.

Middle English emerges, popularized by works such as the *Canterbury Tales* and Richard Rolle's *Psalter* (1340).

First English Bible is translated from Latin in 1382 and is called the Wycliffe Bible in honor of priest and Oxford scholar John Wycliffe. During his lifetime, Wycliffe had wanted common people to have the Bible. He also criticized a number of church practices and policies. His followers derisively called Lollards (meaning "mumblers") included his criticisms in the preface to the Wycliffe Bible. This Bible is banned and burned. Forty years after Wycliffe's death, his bones are exhumed and burned for heresy.

In 1408, in England, it becomes illegal to translate or read the Bible in common English without permission of a Bishop.

World's first printing press with moveable metal type is invented in 1455 in Germany by Johann Gutenberg. This invention is perhaps the single most important event to influence the spread of the Bible.

The Gutenberg Bible is the first book ever printed. This Latin Vulgate version is often illuminated by artists who hand paint letters and ornaments on each page.

AD 1500

Erasmus, a priest and Greek scholar, publishes a new Greek edition and a more accurate Latin translation of the New Testament in 1516. His goal is that everyone be able to read the Bible, from the farmer in the field to the weaver at the loom. Erasmus' Greek text forms the basis of the "*textus receptus*" and is used later by Martin Luther, William Tyndale, and the King James translators.

Martin Luther translates the New Testament into German in 1522.

William Tyndale, the priest and Oxford scholar, translates the New Testament from Greek (1525), but cannot get approval to publish it in England. He moves to Germany and prints Bibles, smuggling them into England in sacks of corn and flour. In 1535 he publishes part of the Old Testament translated from Hebrew. In 1536, Tyndale is strangled and burned at the stake. His final words are “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.”

Tyndale is called the “Father of the English Bible” because his translation forms the basis of the King James Version. Much of the style and vocabulary we know as “biblical English” is retraceable to his work.

The Coverdale Bible is translated by Miles Coverdale (1535) and dedicated to Anne Boleyn, one of King Henry VIII’s wives. This is the first complete Bible to be printed in English.

The Matthew’s Bible, translated under John Rogers under the pen name “Thomas Matthew,” is the first Bible published with the king’s permission (1537). Printed just one year after Tyndale’s death, its New Testament relies heavily on Tyndale’s version, and even has tribute to him on the last

page of the Old Testament. Tyndale's initials are printed in 2½ inch block letters. Late Thomas Cromwell, advisor to King Henry VIII, entrusts Coverdale to revise Matthew's Bible to make the Great Bible.

1539 Great Bible is placed in every church by order of Thomas Cranmer, archbishop under King Henry VIII. It is read aloud except during services and sermons. This Bible is chained to the church pillars to discourage theft.

AD 1555

England's Queen Mary bans Protestant translations of the English Bible. John Rogers and Thomas Cranmer are burned at the stake. Later some 300 men, women, and children are also burned.

The Geneva Bible- Exiles from England flee to Geneva, Switzerland, and in 1560 print the Geneva Bible, a complete revision of the Great Bible with the Old Testament translated from Hebrew. The Geneva Bible contains theological notes from Protestant scholars.

John Calvin, Bezas, Knox, and Whittingham. It is the first Bible to use Roman type instead of blackletter. This is the Bible of Shakespeare and

the one carried to America by the Pilgrims in 1620. The 1640 edition is the first English Bible to omit the Apocrypha.

Bishops Bible- A new translation begins under Queen Elizabeth in 1568. It is translated by several bishops of the Church of England in answer to the Geneva Bible.

Rheims-Douai Bible was translated into English from the Latin Vulgate by Catholic scholar Gregory Martin, while in exile in France (1582-1609). It becomes the standard translation for the Catholic church.

AD 1600

King James Version or Authorized Version- King James I of England commissions 54 scholars to undertake a new Bible translation. Over the next six years, six teams of scholars using the Bishops Bible and Tyndale's Bible, as well as available Greek and Hebrew manuscripts, complete the new version in 1611. The King James Version (also called the "Authorized Version," even though King James never gave the finished version his royal approval) is revised several times.

The edition used today was revised in 1769. It is the most popular Bible for more than 300 years.

AD 1800

Older manuscripts discovered! Between 1629 and 1947, several of the earliest known copies of the Bible are found.

Codex Alexandrius, a copy of the New Testament from AD 400, perhaps the best copy of the book of Revelation, is made available to western scholars in 1629.

Codex Sinaiticus (earliest complete copy of the New Testament, copied in AD 350) is found in St. Catherine's Monastery near Mount Sinai.

The Revised Version (AD 1885)- In 1870, scholars in England decide to revise the King James Version to reflect the findings from the manuscripts discovered the two previous Centuries. Their goal is to use better Hebrew and Greek texts and to retranslate words based on new linguistic information about ancient Hebrew.

Codex Vaticanus (earliest and probably best copy known of the New Testament from AD 325) is released to scholars in 1889 by Vatican Library.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, found in a cave in 1947 by a shepherd, contain the oldest known copies of portions of the Old Testament. These copies were made between 100 BC and AD 100.

AD 1900

A Scoll of Isaiah that is part of the Dead Sea Scrolls is the oldest complete manuscript of any book of the Bible (copied around 100 BC). The copies of Isaiah discovered in the Qumran caves prove to be remarkably close to the standard Hebrew Bible, varying slightly in the spelling of some names. They give overwhelming confirmation of the reliablilty of the Masoretic copies.

During the 1900's more than a hundred New Testament manuscripts are found in Egypt.

A Ugaritic Grammar is published in the 1960's. Ugaritic is an ancient language similar to Hebrew and helps scholars understand Hebrew vocabulary and poetry.

Modern Translation

The knowledge from newly discovered manuscripts has led to hundreds of new translations:

1885- The English Revised Version

A British revision of the King James Version

1901- American Standard Version (ASV)

Revision of the King James Version in American English

1926- Moffatt Bible

A very popular modern-language version

1931- Smith-Goodspeed, an American Translation

Modern American English

1952- The Revised Standard Version (RSV)

A revision of the ASV New Testament revised 1971

1958- J.B. Phillips' New Testament in Modern English

A paraphrase originally made for youth

1965- The Amplified Bible

Uses word-for-word ASV with added words to communicate insights on original texts

1966- Jerusalem Bible

Translation by Catholic scholars in Jerusalem

The New Jerusalem Bible, 1985

1970- New English Bible

“Timeless” modern English

Revised 1989

1970- New American Bible (NAB)

Official version of the Catholic Church

Revised New Testament in 1986

1971- New American Standard Bible

Literal word-for-word translation

Updated in 1995

1971- The Living Bible

Popular paraphrase

1976- The Good New Bible (Today's English Version) (TEV)

Vernacular English translation

1978- New International Version (NIV)

Dignified, readable

1982- New King James Version (NKJV)

Modernization of the KJV using the same manuscripts

1987- New Century Version (NCV)

Puts biblical concepts into natural terms

1989- Jewish New Testament

English translation using traditional Jewish expressions

1989- New Revised Standard Version

“Gender neutral” revision of the R.S.V.

1991- Contemporary English Version

“Natural, uncomplicated” English

1995- God’s Word

Contemporary English

1996- New Living Translation (NLT)

A revision of *The Living Bible* to make it a translation

1996- New International Reader’s Version (NIrV)

A simplified version of the NIV with a 3rd or 4th grade reading level

2001- English Standard Version (ESV)

Literal update of the RSV

2001- Today’s New International Version (TNIV) (New Testament)

Modernization of the NIV

2002- The Message (MSG)

A paraphrase from the original languages

2004- Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought

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What the Bible Says About Itself

“My word...that goes forth from My mouth...shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”—Isiah 55:11(NKJV)

“The Lord’s word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him.”—Psalm 18:30 (NIV)

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the sould; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlighting the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgemetns of the Lord are true and righteous altogether; more to be desired are thy than gold, year, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and I keeping them there is great reward.” –Psalm 19:7-11(NKJV)

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, tat the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” –2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” –Hebrews 4:12 (KJNV)

“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption n the world caused by evil desires.”—2 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV)

“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.”—Isaiah 40:8 (NKJV)

Exit Outcomes

1. Write a one page paper on the tests used by the Church to bring the Canon of the Bible Together.
2. Write a two page paper on why we should believe that the Bible is the Word of God.
3. Write a one page paper on the importance of the printing press.
4. Write a two page paper on the History of the English Bible from A.D. 300 to 1700.
5. Write a one page paper on John Wycliffe, Erasmus, William Tyndale and King James I, on the English Bible we have today.