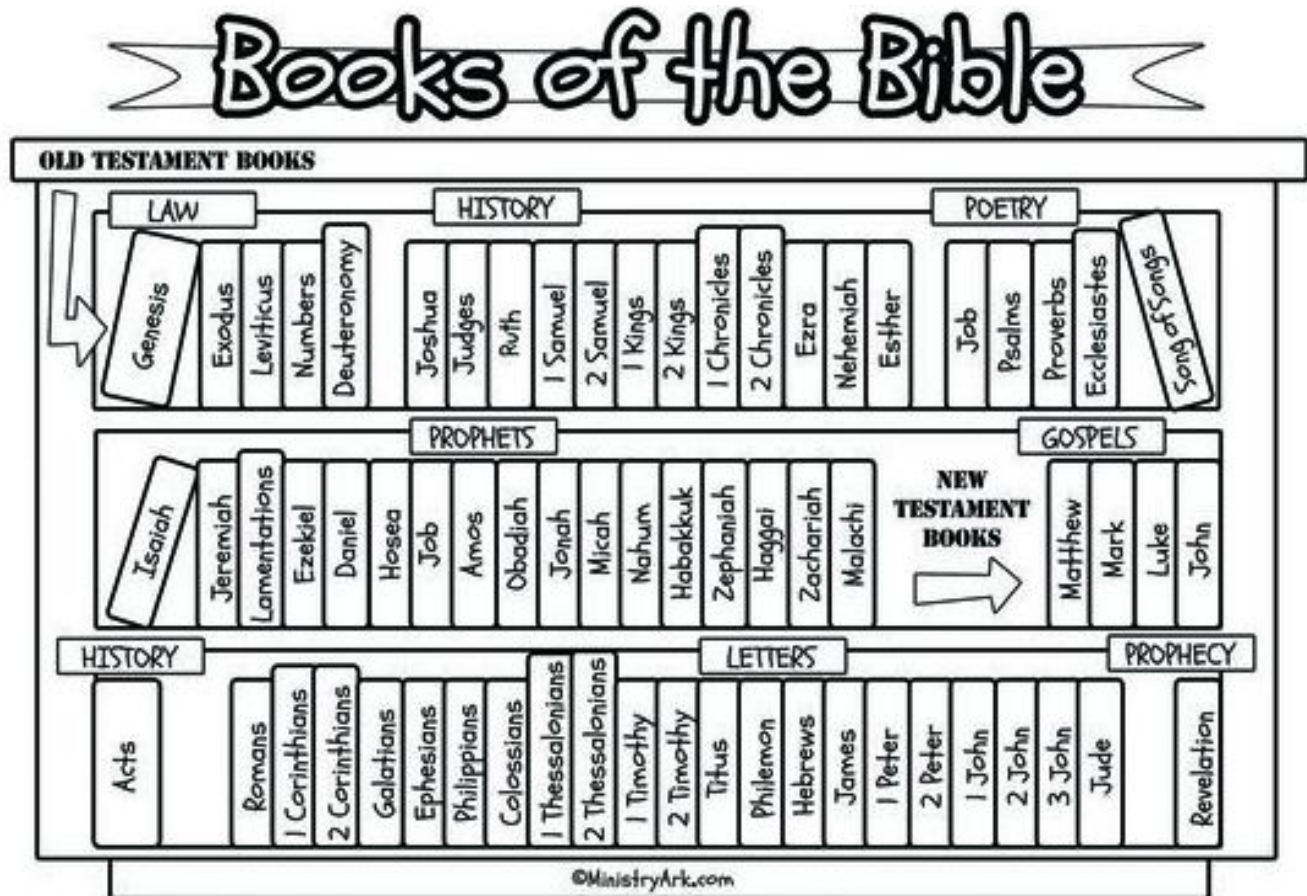


The grass withers, the flower fades,
but the word of our God will stand forever, Isaiah 40:8



The Bible

Bible comes from the Greek βιβλος - biblos, and means [Stong's G964 properly, the inner bark of the papyrus plant, i.e. (by implication) a sheet or scroll of writing:--book. The Bible is literally a book of books.

- It is made up of 66 books: (39 in the OT and 27 in the NT)
- It took about 1600 years to write
- It was written in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek)
- It was written by about 40 authors (prophets, priest, cupbearer, a king, judges, fishermen)
- It was written on three continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe
- Yet there is a consistency throughout

The LORD intended that His word be written down

“For their instruction”

- Exo 24:12 NIV The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone **with the law and commandments I have written for their instruction.**"

He spoke His words and men wrote them

- Jer 30:1-2 NIV This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: **Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you.**
- Exo 24:3-4 NIV When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, **"Everything the LORD has said we will do."** 4 **Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said.** He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel.

People made copies of the word of God & lived their lives according to it

- Deu 17:18-20 NIV When he takes the throne of his kingdom, **he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law**, taken from that of the Levitical priests. 19 It is to be with him, and he is **to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD** his God and **follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees** 20 and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.
- Jos 1:8 NIV Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, **so that you may be careful to do everything written in it.** Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Given to the Levites for safekeeping (~ 816 ys until king Josiah) - (another 710 until 70AD)

- Deu 31:24-26 NIV After **Moses finished writing in a book the words of this law from beginning to end**, 25 he gave this command to the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD: 26 "Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God. There it will remain as a witness against you.
- 2Ki 22:8 NIV Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, **"I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the LORD."** He gave it to Shaphan, who read it.

Preserved By God

- Jer 36:27-32 NIV **After the king burned the scroll** containing the words that Baruch had written at Jeremiah's dictation, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: 28 **"Take another scroll and write on it all the words that were on the first scroll**, which Jehoiakim king of Judah burned up.

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- Exo 34:1 NIV The LORD said to Moses, "Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke.

Definitions

Manuscript

Comes from Latin *manu* (hand) and *scriptum* (written). Until Gutenberg first printed the Latin Bible in 1456, all Bibles were hand copied onto papyrus, parchment, and paper.

Papyrus

The earliest relatively complete description of how papyrus was prepared comes from Pliny's Natural History (xiii.11f.): "Papyrus [the writing material] is made from the papyrus plant by dividing it with a needle into thin [strips], being careful to make them as wide as possible. The best quality material comes from the center of the [stalk]," with lesser grades coming from nearer to the edges. The strips are placed upon a table, and "moistened with water from the Nile... [which], when muddy, acts as a glue." The strips are then "laid upon the table lengthwise" and trimmed to length, after which "a cross layer is placed over them." These cross-braced sheets are then "pressed together, and dried in the sun."

Parchment

Parchment is made from the skin of young animals. This skin was washed, soaked in lime, stretched on a frame, and scraped again so as to remove all flesh. It was then wetted, coated in chalk, rubbed with pumice, and finally allowed to dry while still in its frame. Certainly it was the best writing material known to the ancients. Smoother than leather or papyrus, it easily took writing on both sides, and the smoothness made all letterforms easy -- no worries about fighting the grain of the papyrus, e.g. And it was durable. Plus it was quite light in colour, making for good contrast between ink and background.¹

Codex

Ancient manuscript in book form -- Christians found that this form had a number of advantages over the roll: (1) it permitted all four Gospels or all of the Epistles of Paul to be bound in one book, a format that was impossible so long as the roll was used; (2) it facilitated the consultation of proof texts; (3) it was better adapted to receiving writing on both sides of the page, thus keeping the cost of production down. (Metzger and Ehrman, p. 13)

Autographa

An autograph (from the Greek: αὐτός, *autós*, "self" and γράφω, *gráphō*, "write") is a document transcribed entirely in the handwriting of its author, as opposed to a typeset document or one written by a copyist; The original **manuscript** (the original parchment the author physically wrote on) is called the "autographa."

¹ <http://www.skypoint.com/members/waltzmn/WritingMaterials.html>

The Cost of One Parchment Bible

It took nearly 2 years to complete a manuscript copy of the Bible

How many animals were needed?

- A manuscript containing a group of New Testament writings in the average format (about 200-250 folios of about 25 x 19 cm) **required the hides of at least fifty to sixty sheep or goats.** (Aland and Aland, p. 77)

How expensive was the preparation and copying?

- Emperor Diocletian (ruled AD 284-305) set the wages for scribes copying secular manuscripts: At the rate of 25 denarii for 100 lines in writing . . . the cost of producing one complete Bible, such as Codex Sinaiticus, would have come to about 30,000 denarii. (Metzger and Ehrman, p. 26)

The Roman Denarius was the amount of a day's wages for a skilled worker.

@ \$100 per day that would be \$3 million dollars in today's money

For the four Gospels, these are the wages in round numbers of the Roman denarius:

2,600 for Matthew **(this is equal to about 10 years wages or @ \$260K)**

1,600 for Mark

2,800 for Luke

2,300 for John ²

Now you can understand the impact of the printing press on the spread of the gospel and the word of God.

Significance of Manuscripts

Currently we do not possess any original manuscripts “**autographa**”, however we do possess a great number of manuscript copies. The purpose of this lesson is to understand the significance of those manuscripts, and to recognize that even though we do not have the original manuscripts we can believe with certainty that the Bible we hold in our hand is the word of God.

The Volume of Manuscripts

- There are 24,000 partial and complete manuscript copies of the New Testament
- All other ancient literature pales in comparison
- This overwhelming quantity of NT documents is appreciated even more when we realize that the Diocletian persecution of AD 303 sought to eradicate Christianity, including all of its churches and historical writings

² http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2007/02/new_testament_manuscripts_the_1.html

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Proximity to the Original Manuscripts

- * Recently a fragment from the Gospel of Mark was [supposedly] discovered in Egypt dated to 80 AD. This would put the fragment into the first century and potentially as close as 10 from years of the writing of the original document.
- **Includes fragments, partial copies of the NT, complete copies of the NT

A sample of how the New Testament compares to other ancient writings

Book	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	No. of copies
New Testament	A.D. 40-100	A.D. 125 **	25 yrs	24,000 **
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C	500 yrs	643
Sophocles	496-406 B.C	A.D. 1000	1,400 yrs	193
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1,400 yrs	49
Caesar (Gallic Wars)	58-50 B.C.	A.D. 900	1000 yrs	10

Scribes

Process of copying the Old Testament by Jewish Scribes

In 586 B.C., Jerusalem was captured by the Babylonians. The Temple was looted and then destroyed by fire. The Jews were exiled. About 70 years later, the Jewish captives returned to Jerusalem from Babylon. According to the Bible, Ezra recovered a copy of the Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) and read it aloud to the whole nation. From then on, the Jewish scribes solidified the following process for creating copies of the Torah and eventually other books in the Old Testament. They could only use clean animal skins, both to write on, and even to bind manuscripts.

1. Each column of writing could have no less than forty-eight, and no more than sixty lines.
2. The ink must be black, and of a special recipe.
3. They must verbalize each word aloud while they were writing.
4. They must wipe the pen and wash their entire bodies before writing the word "Jehovah," every time they wrote it.
5. There must be a review within thirty days, and if as many as three pages required corrections, the entire manuscript had to be redone.
6. The letters, words, and paragraphs had to be counted, and the document became invalid if two letters touched each other. The middle paragraph, word and letter must correspond to those of the original document.
7. The documents could be stored only in sacred places (synagogues, etc).
8. As no document containing God's Word could be destroyed, they were stored, or buried, in a genizah – a Hebrew term meaning "hiding place." These were usually kept in a synagogue or sometimes in a Jewish cemetery.

How Accurate Were the Scribes?

Example of the Dead Sea Scrolls

- Discovered by shepherds in 1947 in caves northwest of the Dead Sea
- There are about 800 scrolls; 200 of which are of biblical material
- These scrolls contain at least **fragments of every book in the OT except the book of Esther**
- More than ten scrolls were beautifully preserved intact including **two copies of Isaiah**³
- These copies of Isaiah were written 1,000 years earlier than the previously oldest known copies

Of the 166 words in Isaiah 53, there are only 17 letters in question. Ten of these letters are simply a matter of spelling, which does not affect the sense. Four more letters are minor stylistic changes, such as conjunctions. (*and, but, if for example*) The remaining three letters comprise the word 'light' which is added in verse 11, and does not affect the meaning greatly. Thus, in one chapter of 166 words, there is only one word (three letters) in question after a thousand years of transmission - and this word does not significantly change the meaning of the passage.

Other sources

Versions or Translations:

Besides the 24,000 manuscripts we have more than 15,000 existing copies of the various versions written in the Latin and Syriac (Christian Aramaic), some of which were written as early as 150 A.D., such as the Syriac Peshitta (150-250 A.D.)

Because Christianity was a missionary faith from its very inception (Matthew 28:19-20), the scriptures were immediately translated into the known languages of that period. For that reason other written translations appeared soon after, such as Coptic translations (early 3rd and 4th centuries), Armenian (400 A.D.), Gothic (4th century), Georgian (5th century), Ethiopic (6th century), and Nubian (6th century). The fact that we have so many translations of the New Testament points to its authenticity, as **it would have been almost impossible**, had the disciples or later followers wanted to corrupt or forge its contents, for them to have amassed all of the translations from the outlying areas and changed each one so that there would have been the uniformity which we find witnessed in these translations today.

Lectionaries:

The practice of reading passages from the New Testament books at worship services began from the 6th century, so that today we have 2,135 lectionaries which have been catalogued from this period. **If there had been a forgery, they too would have all had to have been changed.**

Early Church Father's Letters:

But possibly the greatest attestation for the authority of our New Testament are the masses of quotations taken from its pages by the early church fathers. Dean Burgon in his research found in all 86,489 quotes from the early church fathers 12. In fact, there are 32,000 quotations from the New Testament found in writings from before the council of Nicea in 325 A.D. 13. J. Harold Greenlee points out that the quotations of the scripture in the works of the early church writers are so extensive that

³ <http://www.provethetemple.net/T2-Integ/Bibliog-B08.htm>

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the New Testament could virtually be reconstructed from them without the use of New Testament manuscripts.

Textual Criticism

How can we understand what the original documents say when they don't exist? The process of attempting to ascertain the original wording of a text is called Textual Criticism...Here is a simple example of how it would work.

If I have ONLY 2 copies - I would never know what the original stated

Either of these could be correct. It's a 50-50 chance.

- **Manuscript #1:** In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.
- **Manuscript #2:** In the beginning, God created the earth and the heavens.

However, if I have more manuscripts, it will be quite easy to figure out what was most likely the original passage, even though none of the following are exactly correct. I have marked which parts of each **variant** are differing from the others. By removing each of these variants, I will be able to get at the original phrase:

- Manuscript #1: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.
- Manuscript #2: In the beginning, God created the earth and the heavens.
- Manuscript #3: At the beginning, God made the heaven_ and the earth.
- Manuscript #4: In the beginning, Jesus created the heavens and the earth.
- Manuscript #5: In the beginning, God created the sky and the earth.

Can you determine what the original said?

Answer: _____

—

Variants ⁴

*A textual variant is simply any difference from a standard text (e.g., a printed text, a particular manuscript, etc.) that involves spelling, word order, omission, addition, substitution, or a total rewrite of the text.*⁵

- There are "variants" - where one copy varies from another.
- 99% hold no significance whatsoever
- They involve a missing letter in a word; or reversing the order of two words (such as "Christ Jesus" instead of "Jesus Christ")
- One of the more significant - the last part of the gospel of Mark is missing from some manuscripts
- None of these affect any major doctrine
 - They don't call into question the deity of Christ, the 2nd coming, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, or salvation by grace through faith not of works
- **Either way it is a far cry from these variants to say the bible is full of errors**

⁴ [List of NT variants](#) and [Textual Criticism in a nutshell](#)

⁵ <http://danielbwallace.com/2013/09/09/the-number-of-textual-variants-an-evangelical-miscalculation/>

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- We can be confident that what we hold in our hands is the word of God