

HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE

PREPARED BY

**LARRY CURRY
CRESTWOOD, IL
2009**

“How the Bible has come down to us is a story of adventure and devotion. It is a story of toil and faith by those who, sometimes at great cost, passed down from generation to generation the message of salvation. The Bible did not just happen, nor has it been preserved through the years by mere chance. The Bible is a marvel all its own. Living in a day when books are written and printed by the thousands, we are apt to overlook the fascinating drama that lies behind our Bible...How and when did the books of the Bible have their origin? In what sense are these books different from other books? How have these books been preserved and transmitted to us? These are some of the questions that arise in the mind of every thoughtful student of the Bible; and the answers to these questions compose a story which spans thousands of years, that takes us to various regions of the world and into the hearts of countless unnamed people whose first love was the Word of God.”

--Neil Lightfoot, *How We Got The Bible*, Page 11

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**“NOW WE HAVE RECEIVED NOT THE SPIRIT OF THE
WORLD, BUT THE SPIRIT WHO IS FROM GOD, THAT WE
MIGHT KNOW THE THINGS FREELY GIVEN TO US BY GOD”**

(1 CORINTHIANS 2:12)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Main source:

I am indebted to Alan Jones for the order and organization of these lessons, and much of the content.

Other sources:

Harris, R. Laird, *Inspiration And Canonicity Of The Bible*

Lightfoot, Neil, *How We Got The Bible*

Warfield, B.B., *The Inspiration And Authority Of The Bible*

THE PRODUCTION OF THE ORIGINALS

INTRODUCTION

I. THE OBJECTIVES OF OUR STUDY

- A. We want to know the origin of the 66 books that we call the Bible.
- B. We need to know whether we actually have the word of God.
- C. Finally, we want to see our study as a way of strengthening our faith.

II. THE PURPOSES OF THIS LESSON

- A. We will discover the materials and languages used in the production of the Bible.
- B. We will give the background for the study of old Testament and New Testament manuscripts and translations.

BODY

I. THE WRITTEN WORD

- A. God has communicated in various ways. (Hebrews 1:1, 2)
 - 1. He spoke to men during the days of the Patriarchs such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, etc.
 - 2. He eventually gave the Law through Moses who lived about 1500 B.C.
 - 3. Moses the first of about 40 men to have a part in God's revelation. (Joshua 8:31, 32)
 - 4. He reveals Himself to man through the written word.
- B. The Bible is the mind of God revealed in human languages.
 - 1. All Scripture originated in God's mind. (2 Peter 1:20, 21)
 - 2. Scripture came as a result of the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:8-13)
 - 3. All Scripture is inspired, a word meaning "God breathed." (2 Timothy 3:16, 17)
- C. The written word was/is as authoritative as God's oral messages.
 - 1. Jesus verified the authority of the Old Testament.
 - a. He appealed to it in time of temptation. (Matthew 4:4)
 - b. He declared that it was authoritative right down to the "jot or tittle." (Matthew 5:18)
 - c. He said that Scripture cannot be broken. (John 10:34, 35)
 - 2. The New Testament is also presented as authoritative.
 - a. We are told to hold fast to it and to obey its instructions. (2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:14)
 - b. Severe penalties are reserved for anyone who adds to or takes away from it. (Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18, 19)

II. HISTORY OF WRITING

- A. The Bible is among some of the most ancient writings.
 - 1. Earliest known examples of writing date back to the Egyptians in 4000-5000 B.C.
 - 2. In Babylonia, inscriptions of King Sargon I, who lived about 2350 B.C., were found.
 - 3. Letters written by governors of cities in Palestine from 1500 B.C. have been found.
- B. One might ask, what is the significance of these discoveries?
 - 1. Critics of the Bible formerly held that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, since writing was unknown in his day.
 - 2. Again, archeology has served an important function.

III. WRITING MATERIALS

- A. Stone was the earliest writing material in use in almost every region.
 - 1. Its durability might have been a factor as well as its availability.
 - 2. The Ten Commandments were written on stone. (Exodus 31:8; 34:1, 28)
- B. Clay was predominant in Assyria and Babylonia.
 - 1. It was certainly readily available.
 - 2. Ezekiel was to use one in prophesying the downfall of Israel and Judah. (Ezekiel 4:1)
- C. Tablets of wood were frequently used.
 - 1. Isaiah used it in a prophecy against Judah. (Isaiah 30:8)
 - 2. Habakkuk was to record his vision on a wooden tablet. (Habakkuk 2:2)
- D. Leather was a writing material used by some.
 - 1. Animal skins played an important role in the history of writing the Bible, though it is not specifically mentioned.
 - 2. The scroll mentioned in Jeremiah 36:23 may have been leather since a knife would undoubtedly not have been used on a delicate surface.
- E. Papyrus was widely used by the ancients as writing material.
 - 1. Papyrus came from a papyrus plant found in abundance along the Nile River, and its use as a writing material dates back to 3500 B.C.
 - 2. Papyrus rolls were the “books” of the ancient world until the first or second century A.D.
 - 3. The average roll was 30 ft. long and 9-10 in. wide.
 - 4. The papyrus roll gave way to the papyrus codex, what we know as a book.
- F. Vellum or parchments were of a much later origin, but also widely used. (2Timothy 4:13)
 - 1. It was developed by King Eumenes II (197-158 B.C.) a ruler in Palestine.
 - 2. Originally, vellum was the skins of calves and antelopes, while parchment was the skins of sheep and goats.
 - 3. Vellum was distinguished from leather in that it was not tanned.
 - 4. It was used for more than 1,000 years in copying the New Testament as it was much more durable than papyrus.

IV. LANGUAGES OF THE BIBLE

- A. Hebrew was the predominant language of the Old Testament.
 - 1. Almost all of the 39 books were written in Hebrew.
 - 2. It is a strange language to us since it is written backwards (right to left), has no vowels, its sounds are different than ours, and its vocabulary is totally unrelated to ours.
- B. Aramaic was used somewhat in the Old and New Testaments.
 - 1. It began to be used by the Jews after their return from captivity. (Nehemiah 8:8)
 - 2. It is found in the following places in the Old Testament.
 - a. A place-name in Genesis. (31:47)
 - b. One verse in Jeremiah. (10:11)
 - c. About six chapters of Daniel. (2:4b-7:28)
 - d. Several chapters of Ezra. (4:8-6:18; 7:12-26)
 - 3. The New Testament preserves some instances of it.
 - a. “Talitha cumi”- little girl, get up (Mark 5:41)
 - b. “Ephphatha”- be opened (Mark 7:34)

- c. "Eli, eli, lami sabathani"- My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?
(Matthew 27:46)
 - d. "Abba"- Father (Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6)
 - e. "Maranatha"- Our Lord, come! (1 Corinthians 16:22)
 - f. It was, in all probability, the normal language **spoken** by Christ and His followers.
- C. Greek was the predominant language used in writing the New Testament.
1. They were written in "koine" Greek, the common Greek language of the day.
 2. Recent discoveries of various writings of the day such as wills, receipts, private letters, has shown that it was the common language of the "man on the street."
 3. This pays tribute to the wisdom of God who has willed that all men be able to understand His Word.

CONCLUSION

- I. THE MIND OF GOD WAS REVEALED TO MAN
- II. IT WAS RECORDED ON MATERIALS COMMON TO THEM IN THEIR LANGUAGE
- III. WE WILL TRACE THE STEPS INVOLVED IN BRINGING THE BIBLE TO US

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. In what ways has God communicated to man throughout time? _____

2. What does it mean to say the Scriptures are “inspired?” _____

3. Give some examples to show how Jesus viewed the authority of the Old Testament.

4. What will happen to one who adds to or takes away from the word of God? _____

5. Some of the earliest examples of writing date back to the _____
in 4,000-5,000 B.C.
6. Explain how archeology has been valuable to our knowledge of how we got the Bible.

7. Name some of the various writing materials used down through time. _____

8. The writing material used to copy the New Testament for many years was _____
_____.
9. Name the three languages used in the production of the books of the Bible.
_____, _____, _____
10. Which language was the predominant one used in writing the New Testament?

CANONICITY AND TRANSMISSION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTION

I. SEVERAL STEPS WERE REQUIRED FOR US TO RECEIVE GOD'S WORD

- A. We refer to this process as the transmission of the text.
 - 1. God revealed His will through the Holy Spirit to men who wrote it down.
 - 2. Only those actually produced at God's direction made up the "canon" of Scriptures.
- B. The process was overseen by God.
 - 1. Copies of these accepted books were made and circulated.
 - 2. Translations were made from the original languages into various other languages.

II. TWO MAJOR STEPS IN THIS PROCESS ARE OF CONCERN TO US

- A. Which books belong in the "canon" of Scripture?
 - 1. Not all the books written were inspired.
 - 2. How can we determine which ones belong?
- B. Do those which belong possess "integrity?"
 - 1. Do our English translations accurately and adequately reproduce the original writings?
 - 2. What evidence is used to determine the accuracy of the versions we have?

BODY

I. CANONICITY

- A. Let's begin by defining "canonicity."
 - 1. The basic meaning is "reed."
 - 2. Our English word "cane" is derived from the same root word.
 - 3. Since a reed was sometimes used as a measuring rod, the Greek word "kanon" was used to describe a standard or rule by which a judgment could be made.
 - 4. Canonicity refers to the testing of books for their acceptance as books from God.
- B. We must have a proper concept of canonicity.
 - 1. God determined that certain books were to be received as authoritative by guiding men through the Holy Spirit in what they wrote. (Matthew 22:43; Mark 12:36; John 16:13)
 - 2. The authority by which the church acts is based on the authority of the Scriptures.
 - 3. The Catholic idea would have the church certifying the authority of Scripture, and, thereby, make the binding power of Scripture subject to the church leaders.
- C. Some factors in deciding canonicity of the Old Testament include the following:
 - 1. Authoritative- did it bear the mark of having come from God, with the writer claiming to speak for God? (Exodus 34:27, 28)
 - 2. Prophetic- did it contain messages from God for the present time as well as predictions of what was to come? (Jeremiah 26:8-15; Isaiah 44:28)
 - 3. Authenticity - was it regarded as genuine by passing the test of true prophecy, and by being consistent with previously revealed truth? (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:14-22)
 - 4. Acceptance - did the people of God accept the writings as being from God? (Joshua 1:13; Daniel 9:2)

- D. The arrangement of the Hebrew bible was three-fold:
1. The Law: Genesis - Deuteronomy
 2. The Prophets:
 - a. Former prophets- Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings
 - b. Latter prophets- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Twelve
 3. The Writings: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles
 4. This arrangement contains the same books as the English Bible's arrangement of 39 books.
- E. Consider Jesus' attitude toward the Old Testament.
1. He recognized two major divisions: the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 5:17)
 2. Furthermore, he spoke of a three-fold division- the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. (Luke 24:44)
 3. The New Testament writers quoted from all of the Old Testament books except Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.
- F. Further valuable information about the canon of the Old Testament comes from Josephus, a Jewish historian who wrote toward the end of the first century A.D.
1. In his epistle, *Against Apion*, he lists the books of the Old Testament which are the equivalent of our 39.
 2. He clearly indicated that these were the only ones accepted as of Divine origin.
- G. What about other writings that were not accepted into the canon of the Old Testament?
1. The Pseudopigrapha, written between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D., were rejected by all.
 2. Twelve of fifteen books called the Apocrypha are accepted by the Catholics and are a part of the Old Testament in their versions.
 - a. None of them are quoted by Jesus or the apostles.
 - b. Some of them contradict the Old Testament books.
 - c. After debate for many years, they were declared to be a part of God's word by the Council of Trent in 1546 A.D.
 - d. As R. Laird Harris suggested in his book, they had doctrines which they needed some basis for in scripture. (See *Inspiration and Canonicity of The Bible*, page 193)
 3. Some of these books, although not inspired, do contain valuable historical information from the years between the Old and New Testaments.

II. TRANSMISSION

- A. Our concern in this section is whether or not the Word of God which we have is complete.
1. Recall that inspired men wrote down what they were led by the Spirit to write. (2 Peter 1:21)
 2. Since none of the originals are still in existence, we must rely on copies of the originals.
 3. How accurate are they?
- B. Four major manuscripts provide the basis for the Old Testament.
1. Cairo Codex (895 A.D.)- contains the former and latter prophets.
 2. Leningrad Codex (916 A.D.)- prophets
 3. British Museum Codex (900-1100 A.D.)- the Pentateuch
 4. Leningrad Codex (1108 A.D.)- the entire Old Testament

- C. Why are there so few manuscripts available?
1. Their age and destructibility are certainly factors.
 - a. Many were written on animal skins.
 - b. The Jews “lived out of suitcases” making preservation difficult.
 - c. Jerusalem, where many were stored, was conquered 47 times from 1800 B.C. to 1948 A.D.
 2. They developed sacred laws which demanded the ceremonial burial of defective and/or worn out manuscripts.
 3. Some scribes, such as the Massorettes, disposed of many copies as they “standardized” the text to prevent a non-sacred use of the material.
- D. What helped to determine the accuracy of the copies?
1. Jewish scribes between 300 B.C. and 500 A.D. were required to follow elaborate procedures in producing a copy of the Pentateuch to be used in worship. (See *How We Got The Bible*, page 75)
 2. The Massorettes, a group of scribes which came into being around 500 A.D., worked for four or five centuries even devising elaborate ways to eliminate as many errors as possible. (See *How We Got The Bible*, page 71)
- E. Other materials verifying their accuracy include the following.
1. The Samaritan Pentateuch- a form of the Hebrew text, differing only slightly from it, but containing only the books they considered to be authoritative (John 4:20-22)
 2. The Septuagint- a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek around 250 B.C. that was used by Jesus and the apostles
 3. The Talmud- collections of Jewish writings which quote from the Hebrew Old Testament
 4. The Dead Sea Scrolls- a collection of some 350 scrolls found in caves in the vicinity of the Dead Sea
 - a. Scrolls were found of every book except Esther.
 - b. The most significant find was a complete scroll of Isaiah dating back to 150 B.C.
 - c. Only insignificant variations due to spelling, etc. can be found.

CONCLUSION

- I. WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE IN WHAT WE CALL THE OLD TESTAMENT
- II. NEXT, WE WILL STUDY THE CANONICITY AND TRANSMISSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What do we mean by the “canon” of Scriptures? _____

2. Explain the difference between the Catholic idea of canonicity and the correct view.

3. List some of the determining factors in deciding the canon of the Old Testament.

4. What test did God give to determine true prophecy? _____

5. The Hebrew Old Testament consisted of three parts called the _____
the _____, and the _____.
6. Did the Hebrew Old Testament contain the same books as we have even though they
arranged them differently? _____
7. Jesus spoke of two major divisions of the Old Testament called the _____
and the _____.
8. What do we mean by the term “Apocrypha?” _____

9. How many major manuscripts do we have of the Old Testament, and why aren’t there more?

10. What is the “Septuagint?” _____

CANONICITY AND TRANSMISSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTION

I. BRIEFLY REVIEW OUR PREVIOUS LESSON

- A. Recall that we need to be able to know whether or not the Bible as we have it is reliable.
 - 1. Can we rely on the Bible to be accurate?
 - 2. Remember the Gospel is God's power unto salvation.
- B. We have seen what was involved in the canonicity and transmission of the Old Testament.
 - 1. We have ancient manuscripts of the Old Testament books.
 - 2. Secular writers such as Josephus supply important evidence as well.

II. OUR CONCERNS ARE THE SAME AS IN THE PREVIOUS LESSON

- A. Which books belong, in the "canon" of the New Testament?
 - 1. Again, there were other books written during that time period.
 - 2. How can we determine which ones belong?
- B. Do those which belong possess "integrity?"
 - 1. Do our English translations accurately and adequately reproduce the original writings?
 - 2. What evidence is used to determine accuracy?

BODY

I. CANONICITY

- A. Here are a few brief remarks concerning "canonicity."
 - 1. The Greek word "kanon" was used to describe a standard or rule by which something was judged.
 - 2. The canonicity of the New Testament refers to the testing of books to determine their right to be included in a list of books from God.
 - 3. Recall also that the church acts by the authority of the Scriptures, and does not decide what is authoritative and what is not.
 - 4. For a more complete discussion of this point, refer to the previous lesson in this series.
- B. The same determining factors can be used in determining the canonicity of the New Testament as was used with regard to the Old Testament.
 - 1. Authoritative- did it claim to be the word of God, and did the writer claim to speak for God? (1 Corinthians 2:13; 14:37)
 - 2. Prophetic - did it contain messages from God for the present time as well as predictions concerning the future? (Romans 16:26; Revelation 1:1)
 - 3. Authenticity - was it regarded as genuine, and was it consistent with previously revealed Truth? (Jude 18)
 - 4. Acceptance - did the people of God accept it as being from God. (2 Peter 3:15, 16)
- C. The early development of the New Testament is seen in the books themselves.
 - 1. They were to be read by all the brethren. (1 Thessalonians 5:27; Revelation 1:3)
 - 2. They were to be circulated among Christians in other places. (Colossians 4:16; Revelation 1:11)
 - 3. Peter's reference to Paul's letters shows they were collected together. (2 Peter 3:15, 16)

4. There is a good possibility that Paul quoted from Luke 10:7 in 1 Timothy 5:18, and that Jude 18 is a quotation of 2 Peter 3:2.
- D. Further evidence of their rightful place can be seen in the writings of various men beginning in the late first century.
1. Clement, a bishop of Rome, wrote a letter in 95 A.D. to the church in Corinth making reference to five of Paul's letters (Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, and Titus) as well as the Gospel of John, Hebrews, and James.
 2. Ignatius, a bishop of Antioch, martyred during the reign of Trajan (before 117 A.D.), showed influence of the Gospel of John in his writing as well as familiarity with the writings of Paul.
 3. Polycarp, a bishop of Smyrna, who was martyred in 155 or 156 A.D. and had personally heard John the apostle, mentions Philippians and quotes from Matthew, Acts, Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, 1 & 2 Peter, and 1 John.
 4. Basilides, a Gnostic writing in the days of Hadrian (117-139), quoted from Romans (8:22), 1 Corinthians (2:13), and referred to Matthew, Luke, John, 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, and, possibly, 1 Timothy, and 1 Peter.
 5. Justin Martyr, put to death in 148 A.D., clearly referred to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, Hebrews, and Revelation as well as providing a description of a church service. (See *Inspiration And Canonicity of The Bible*, page 213)
- E. Early canons and translations also provide valuable help.
1. Early canons of the Scripture include the following:
 - a. Marcion, a heretic, formed a canon around 140 A.D. or before that included Luke, Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians (called Laodiceans), Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon.
 - b. Muratori formed a canon around 170 A.D. that included all of the New Testament except Hebrews, James, and 1 & 2 Peter.
 2. Early translations of the Scripture include:
 - a. The Old Syriac, an early 2nd century translation, included all but 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, Jude, and Revelation.
 - b. The Old Latin, another 2nd century translation, included all but Hebrews, James, and 2 Peter.
- F. It appears that only 7 of the 27 books were ever subject to debate.
1. The debate over their belonging to the New Testament centered around authorship and/or content. (See *Inspiration and Canonicity of The Bible*, pages 257f)
 2. We can be sure we have the Truth which God wanted us to have.

II. TRANSMISSION

- A. Our concern in this section is whether or not we have the Word as God gave it.
1. The writers of the New Testament were guided by the Holy Spirit as were their counterparts with regard to the Old Testament. (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13)
 2. However, can we rely on the copies we have of the originals?

- B. There are two major manuscript types.
1. The cursives (written in letters joined closely together as in our handwriting) formed the basis for the Byzantine text of the fourth century.
 - a. Erasmus, a Catholic monk, used a representative of this family of manuscripts in printing his Greek Testament which was so widely received it became known as the *textus receptus*.
 - b. The King James version was based on this type of text.
 2. The uncials (large letters with no spaces between them and no punctuation) formed the basis for other texts of the New Testament.
 - a. The uncials were of earlier origin, and are, therefore, of more value.
 - b. We will next consider some of the more important ones.
- C. Some important uncials include:
1. The Vatican Manuscript (4th century), located in the Vatican Library in Rome and prevented from being copied until 1889-90, is of great value since it contains almost all of the Old Testament and does contain all of the New Testament.
 2. The Sinaitic manuscript (4th century), now located in the British museum, again contains part of the Old Testament and all of the New.
 3. The Alexandrian Manuscript (5th century), also in the British museum, contains most of both the Testaments.
 4. The Manuscript of Ephraem (5th century), now in the National Library of Paris, is actually a “palimpsest.”
 - a. The term “palimpsest” means “rubbed again” and refers to the fact that the shortage of writing materials often meant that they would erase what was there and write over it.
 - b. In this case, the top layer is the works of Ephraem and the bottom layer is a 5th century work containing some of the Old Testament, and all of the New except for 2 Thessalonians and 2 John.
 5. The codex Bezae (5th century), now at the University of Cambridge, was an early manuscript in Greek and Latin that contained the Gospels, Acts, and a few verses from the general epistles.
- D. Determining the accuracy of what we have is known as textual criticism.
1. Mistakes made in copying are of two types:
 - a. Unintentional errors are caused by the scribe mistaking one word for another, reading the manuscript wrong due to similarity of words, omitting a line, etc.
 - b. Intentional errors are made, not because the scribe was dishonest, but because he wanted to correct what he thought was an earlier error.
 2. Some basic rules used in evaluating a manuscript or another source are the following:
 - a. The quality of the manuscripts are more important the number of manuscripts that contain a certain verse or verses.
 - b. The more difficult reading is to be preferred.
 - c. The different reading of parallel passages is preferred.

3. Though the errors total about 200,000 from 5,000 different manuscripts, there is no cause for alarm.
 - a. One error is counted every time it occurs in any manuscript.
 - b. Most of the variations are trivial, not effecting the translation.
 - c. Other variations only involve whether the verses belong at a certain place since the same Truth is taught elsewhere.
- E. We now will deal with the most widely followed texts of New Testament.
 1. We spoke earlier of the Textus Receptus on which the King James Version was based.
 2. The other major text followed in translation of the last century is the Westcott-Hort Text (1881), named after two scholars who served on the revision committee of the English Revised Version (1881) from which came the American Standard Version (1901).
 3. Three of the manuscripts spoken of earlier, namely, the Vatican, the Sinaitic, and the Alexandrian were all discovered since the translation of the KJV.
 4. Just as the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls were important to the text of the Old Testament, recent discoveries have helped to confirm the Westcott-Hort Text of the New Testament.
 - a. The Sinaitic Syriac Manuscript, discovered in 1892 in the monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai where Tischendorf made his discovery of the Sinaitic Manuscript, was a palimpsest copy of the Gospels.
 - b. The Washington Manuscript, acquired in 1906 and now in Washington D.C., contains a copy of the four Gospels including the final verses of Mark 16:9-20.
 - c. Koridethi Gospels, a 9th century document that became known in 1913, gives valuable information of one type of text.
 - d. Chester Beatty Papyri, dated in the 3rd century or earlier, contains three manuscripts of New Testament books as well as portions of the Old Testament.
 - e. The John Rylands Fragment, A.D., dating back to 117-138 A.D., is the oldest known manuscript of the New Testament and gives good evidence concerning the Gospel of John being in circulation in Egypt where the fragment was found.
 - f. The Papyrus Bodmer II, dating back to about 200 A.D., contains most of the Gospel of John.

CONCLUSION

- I. WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
- II. NEXT, WE WILL TAKE A MORE DETAILED LOOK AT TRANSLATIONS

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. State briefly what is meant by the “canon of the New Testament.” _____

2. What evidence is there in the N.T. to show that the various epistles were collected together at times, and were supposed to be circulated? _____

3. According to _____, the things he wrote were to be accepted as the Lord’s commandment.
4. Discuss the value of the so-called “church fathers” to our copies of the N.T. _____

5. Of the “church fathers” we studied, which one knew the apostle John? _____
6. How could a heretic be a source of help in putting together an accurate text of the New Testament? _____

7. Name the two kinds of manuscripts. _____
8. Who hindered scholars for many years in their efforts to study ancient manuscripts?

9. Name the two kinds of possible scribal errors. _____

10. What are the two most widely used texts used today in translating the New Testament?

FROM THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGES TO ENGLISH

INTRODUCTION

I. BRIEFLY REVIEW THE PREVIOUS LESSONS

- A. We have studied the means of writing the original copies.
- B. We can know that what we have is what God intended for us to know.

II. OUR OBJECTIVES IN THIS LESSON ARE THREEFOLD

- A. First, we will study the various English translations of the Bible.
- B. Secondly, we want to discover what we should look for in a translation.
- C. Thirdly, we want to notice some precautions to consider with regard to all translations.

BODY

I. PIONEERS IN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

- A. While some partial translations into English were made as early as 700 A.D., no translations of the whole Bible were made until the 14th century.
 - 1. This is a story of God's providence at work.
 - 2. The enemies of Truth could not keep it from being translated into English.
- B. John Wycliffe (1330-1384)
 - 1. Called the "morning star of the Reformation," he made the first complete translation from Latin to English.
 - 2. As a result of his differences with the Catholic church during his life, his body was exhumed, burned and the ashes scattered in 1428.
 - 3. He once said, "No man was so rude a scholar but that he might learn the words of the Gospel according to his simplicity."
- C. William Tyndale (1492-1536)
 - 1. Using the New Testament done by Erasmus in 1516, Tyndale translated it into English.
 - 2. Though he had to flee England, he eventually did the Old Testament.
 - 3. His translation efforts identified him with Luther, who had made a German translation, and he was betrayed strangled, and burned at the stake crying, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes."
 - 4. Tyndale's version of the N.T. provided the basis for all successive revisions between his day and ours including the KJV.
- D. Miles Coverdale (1488-1569)
 - 1. He was an assistant of Tyndale's.
 - 2. While his work was largely a revision of Tyndale's in light of German versions, it was the first to circulate without official hindrance.
- E. Thomas Matthew (1500-1555)
 - 1. Writing under the pen name of John Rogers, this former assistant of Tyndale combined the Tyndale and Coverdale O.T.'s with the 1535 revision of Tyndale's N.T.
 - 2. The significance of this work is that it had the sanction of the king.

II. EARLY ENGLISH BIBLES OF IMPORTANCE

A. The Great Bible (1539)

1. Under the direction of Coverdale, this one had the approval of both Cranmer, the archbishop of Canterbury, and Cromwell, the chancellor under Henry VIII.
2. The preface read, "This is the Bible appointed to the use of the churches."

B. The Geneva Bible (1557, 1560)

1. The N.T. only was printed in 1557 with the O.T. and a revised N.T. printed in 1560.
2. This bible introduced the use of italics where needed to make it more readable.
3. It went through at least 140 revisions by 1644, yet still remained popular through the introduction of the KJV.

C. The Bishop's Bible (1568)

1. This revision of the Great Bible undertaken by translators, most of whom were "bishops," was an attempt to make a bible for public reading as opposed to the Geneva Bible which had become a "home" bible.
2. It became the official basis for the KJV of 1611.

III. THE KING JAMES VERSION (1611)

A. Although it met with some opposition from those who thought the previous versions were good enough, the work, proposed in 1604 and started in 1607, was first printed in 1611.

1. The preface contained information in which the translators sought to justify their efforts.
2. Does that sound familiar?

B. Its strengths were as follows:

1. Greek and Hebrew scholarship had made tremendous progress since the time of Tyndale.
2. Literary scholarship was at its peak.
3. A good translation was needed.
4. The revision was impartial and not the work of one man.

C. Its weaknesses are as follows:

1. A better textual base is available now since many important manuscripts have been found since 1611.
2. There are translation errors due to the relatively new field, at that time, of Greek and Hebrew study.
3. It contains many archaic words which, in many cases, have changed meanings completely i.e., "suffer" for "allow," "allow" for "approve," "let" for "hinder," "prevent" for "precede," "conversation" for "conduct."

IV. THE ENGLISH AND AMERICAN REVISIONS (1881, 1901)

A. The English companies, composed of 27 members each on the Old and New Testaments, began their work in June 1870.

1. The New Testament was released on May 17, 1881, and the Old Testament on May 19, 1885.
2. The whole work is known as the Revised English Version.

- B. The Americans, who had worked with the British on it, agreed to wait 14 years to release their version which became known as the American Standard Version of 1901.
 - 1. The strengths of this translation are many.
 - a. It is based on a superior text to that of the KJV.
 - b. They rendered their text more accurately due to an advanced knowledge of the original languages.
 - c. Their desire was for a meticulously exact translation.
 - 2. However, there are some weaknesses.
 - a. Not all archaic phrases were eliminated, and some were even created to give the text a “biblical flavor,” i.e., “aforetime,” “would fain,” “howbeit,” “us-ward,” “you-ward,” etc.
 - b. What it gained in accuracy and consistency, it lost in ease of reading.

V. MORE RECENT TRANSLATIONS

A. The Revised Standard Version (1952)

- 1. The New Testament was released in 1946, and the complete bible on September 30, 1952.
- 2. This revision of the American Standard made some improvements, but also had its shortcoming.
- 3. The most controversial rendering in the whole work has been the words "young maiden" instead of “virgin” in Isaiah 7:14.

B. The New American Standard Version (1971)

- 1. The main value of this version is its readability in more modern English.
- 2. A great more interest was shown in translating verbs in their proper tense.

C. The New International Version (1978)

- 1. This translation like the NASB is in more readable language.
- 2. The Calvinistic background of many of its translators shows up in places like the book of Romans with the phrase “sinful nature” instead of flesh.

D. The New King James (1979, 1982)

- 1. The New Testament was released in 1979 with the complete bible released in 1982.
- 2. Unlike the English Revised Version, the American Standard Version, and others, the New Testament is based on the Textus Receptus as is the KJV of 1611.

VI. WHAT ARE SOME CRITERIA TO USE IN CHOOSING A TRANSLATION?

A. Here are some general guidelines to follow.

- 1. Make sure it is translated from the original languages of the Bible.
- 2. Be certain the translators consulted the best available manuscripts.
- 3. The translators should have a high regard for the inspiration of the Scriptures.
- 4. It should be done by a committee with varied religious backgrounds rather than one man or religious group.
- 5. The translation should be “word for word” and not “thought for thought” or “sense for sense.”
- 6. Use one that is readable and easily understood, but not vulgar or crude.
- 7. Words supplied by the translators should be put in italics.

B. Here are some things to remember.

1. Not every translation is correct.
2. Translators are not inspired.
3. There is value in comparing translations.

CONCLUSION

I. OUR FAITH IN GOD SHOULD BE EVEN GREATER

II. WE SHOULD ALSO APPRECIATE HIM FOR THIS MARVELOUS BOOK

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Some partial translations were made as early as 700 A.D., but none of the whole Bible were made until _____.
2. Who made a translation from Latin to English, and what happened to his body? _____

3. Which early English bible had the approval of both the archbishop of Canterbury and the chancellor under Henry VIII? _____
4. List some of the strengths and weaknesses of the KJV. _____

5. Which two versions were “twins” having only small differences? _____

6. Which version has a controversial rendering in Isaiah 7:14? _____
7. The Calvinistic background of the translators shows up in which recent translation?

8. Which of the more recent versions use the same text for translating the New Testament as the translators of the KJV used? _____
9. List some general guidelines to follow in selecting a translation. _____

10. How can this study help us to have a stronger faith? _____

