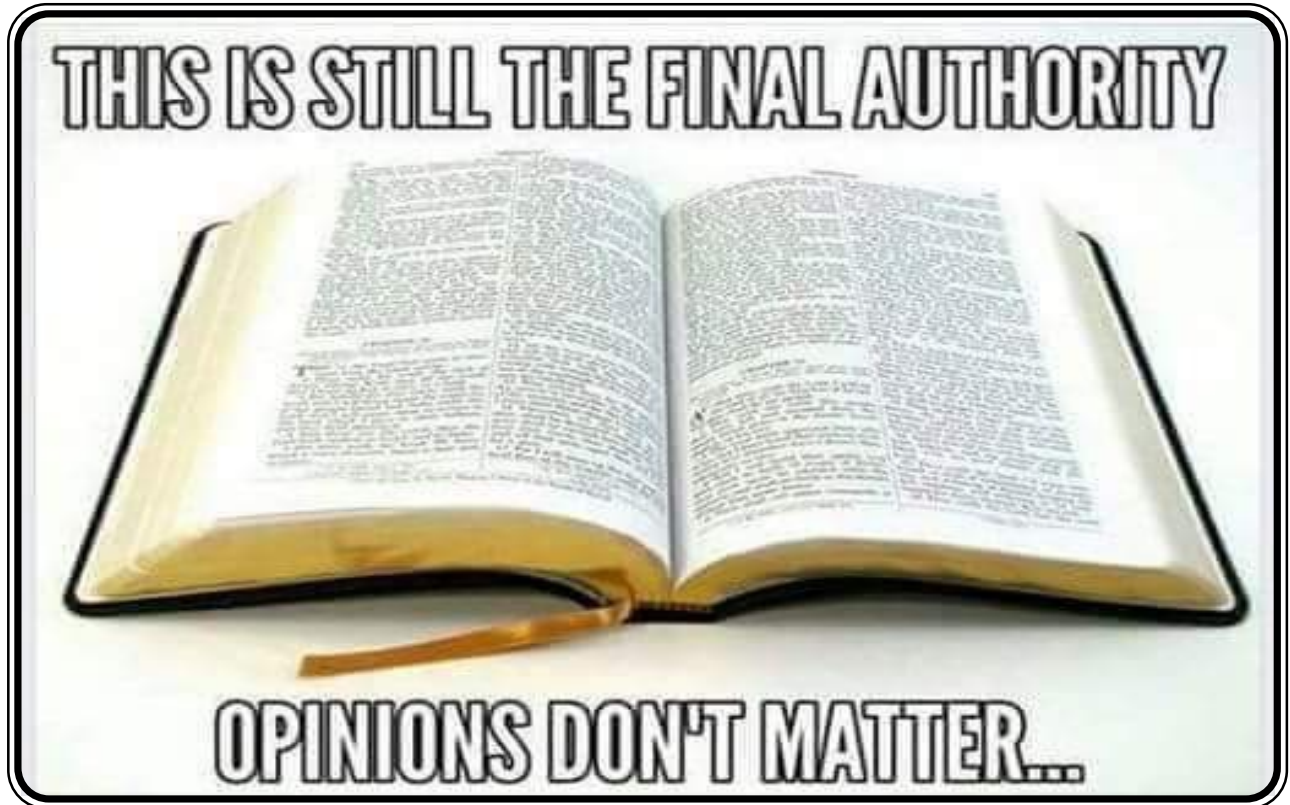


HOW WE GOT



THE BIBLE

- By Alan Jones

Presented at The Winter Park church of Christ
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Psalm 119:105

“Your word *is* a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.”

How we got the Bible

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SECTION 1

LESSON ONE: THE CHAIN OF COMMUNICATION FROM GOD TO TODAY'S MAN

FORMATION OF THE BIBLE

Inspiration

God reveals His mind, speaks His mind in human language, the Creator talks with the creature.

Beyond natural revelation, there is special revelation.

Questions Man Seeks to Know ???:

Who is our Creator?

Why did He make us?

What does He expect from us? (What are our responsibilities to Him and to one another?)

What happens if we don't meet His expectations?

What is the meaning of life? Is death the end of us?

The Bible gives answers to man's questions and claims that these answers come from God Himself.

Reception by the First Readers

Who were the first readers of the O.T.? Did they first receive the O.T. as the word of God and not men? (cp Heb 1:1). Why did He speak to them? Why would a message God spoke long ago to the ancient Israelites be of importance, and therefore, of interest to us? How does the fact that the O.T. was written to someone else affect our interpretation and application of what we read?

God spoke in these last days through His Son (Heb 1:2). Who did Jesus speak to in the N.T.? Why would a message God spoke through His Son to Christians, to individuals and congregations, in the first century A.D., be of importance, and therefore, of interest to us? How does the fact that the N.T. was written to someone else affect our interpretation and application of what we read?

Circulation

Was there a need to circulate the O.T. books? Compare this with the need to circulate the N.T. books.

Collection

Why did the O.T. books have to be collected? Why did the N.T. books have to be collected?

Canonization

"canon"- from Greek, meaning "standard" or "rule". It came to mean "rule of faith" or "authoritative Scriptures". Why is a book that is inspired also authoritative?

Why were the 39 books we call the O.T. received as inspired? Were other books written in Israel? Why were they not received as inspired?

Why were the 27 books we call the N.T. received as inspired? Did the early Christians write other books? Why were they not received as inspired?

PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE

Copying

Johann Gutenberg (1396-1468) invented the printing press in 1454. Before this, how was God's Word spread and preserved for future generations?

Do we have any original manuscripts of the Old or New Testament? What problems occur when copying? How many "variants" do we find in the text and what is their significance? How do we know that what we read today is the same as originally written? How do we know that what began as the Word of God has not become the word of men?

Creating a Standardized Text

The copies that have survived ("extant" copies) do not all read the same. How do scholars sort out the differences in search of the original reading? How do they come up with a text of the original language from which translations can be made into the various languages of the world?

Translation

How do men come to know the Word of God if they do not know Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek?

The complete Bible has been translated into over 200 languages and portions of it in over 1000 languages and dialects.

Our interest will be on the history of English translation and on what to look for in a translation.

How do we choose a Bible so that we may understand the Word of God and apply it to our lives?

Our Reading

After seeing what is involved in the formation and preservation of the Bible, how can we leave the Book closed?

"for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is through the living

and enduring word of God. For all flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of the grass. The grass withers and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word which was preached to you. Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation."
1 Pet 1:23-2:2.

LESSON TWO: THE BIBLE'S CLAIM OF INSPIRATION

"The most basic question about the nature of the Bible centers in its claim to be 'inspired' or to be the 'Word of God'. Just what is meant by and what is included in this claim is the subject of the first link, and, in that sense, the most important link in the chain of communication 'from God to us'."- A General Introduction to the Bible, p. 26.

Definition of Inspiration

The word "inspiration" is used only once in the Bible and is applied to "all Scripture" (2 Tim 3:16), though the concept is seen throughout. "Scripture" or "the Scriptures" include both Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament is often called "the Scriptures" (cp. Acts 17:2, 11; 18:28, 1 Cor 15:3,4). The New Testament is also called "Scripture" (cp. 1 Tim 5:18 where Lk 10:7 is quoted and called "Scripture" and 2 Pet 3:15-16 where the letters of Paul are referred to as part of the "Scriptures").

Literally the word "inspiration" means "God-breathed". He is the author of Scripture. The Bible calls the Scriptures "the oracles of God" for they came from His mouth (Rom 3:2; Heb 5:12; 1 Pet 4:11). Though men penned the Scriptures, the words did not originate from their minds (1 Cor 2:9-13; 2 Pet 1:20-21). The "hand of the Lord" came upon them, prompting them to communicate His word to men (2 Kgs 3:15-16; 1 Chron 28:19; Eze 1:3, 8:1 & 11:25). The Spirit of the Lord spoke by men. His word was in their tongue (and pen) (2 Sam 23:2). However, the Holy Spirit conveyed God's message in the usual language of each writer (cp. the Greek of Luke, the doctor and Paul, the well-educated man, to Peter and John, the fishermen).

Every word of Scripture came from God and so carried with it His authority (Mt 22:32, 43; Jn 10:35*; Gal 3:16, even to the tense of the verb and the singular or plural of the noun). Truly, God gave significance and authority to every "jot" (the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet" and "tittle" (the smallest stroke of a letter) of His revelation (Mt 5:17-18). The words were not to be added to or taken away from (Dt 4:1-2; Rev 22:18-19)

* Edward J. Young commented on Jn 10:35:

"The force of his argument is very clear, and it may be paraphrased as follows: "What is stated in this verse is true because this verse belongs to that body of writings known as Scripture, and the Scripture possesses an authority so absolute in character that it cannot be broken. When Christ here employs the word Scripture, he has in mind, therefore, not a particular verse in the Psalms, but rather the entire group of writings of which this one verse is a part."

Additional Evidence of the Bible's Claim of Inspiration

Additional Passages Claiming the Inspiration of the Old Testament:

"Thus saith the Lord" or related expressions such as "the Word of God came to" are found 3808 times in the Old Testament. "Saith the Lord" is found in 25 of the 39 books of the O.T. The expression is prominent in the "Prophets", as would be expected.

"That it might be fulfilled" is found 33 times in the N.T. with reference to O.T. passages. The O.T.

predicted events beyond the ability of man to foresee (cp. 2 Pet 1:10-11) and when they occurred, the N.T. writers pointed back to the O.T. passages that they and could see and all men should see were inspired of God.

"It is written" is found 68 times in the N.T. with reference to O.T. passages. Numerous other times what was "written" was appealed to other than in the exact phrase "It is written". The N.T. writers obviously held that the O.T. Scriptures were inspired of God, else they would not have appealed to them as if they possessed the authority of God.

Writings of O.T. men were attributed to God or the Holy Spirit by N.T. writers:

David Ps 110:1, cp. Mt 22:43 "David said in the Spirit"

David Ps 69:25; cp. Acts 1:16,20 "The Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David"

Psalmist Ps 95:7-11; cp. Heb 3:7-11 "Just as the Holy Spirit says"

Sons of Korah Ps 45:6; cp. Heb 1:8 "But of the Son He (God) says"

Psalmist Ps 102:25-27; cp. Heb 1:8,10-12 "But of the Son He (God) says"

Isaiah Isa 7:14; cp. Mt 1:22-23 "Spoken by the Lord through the prophet"

Hosea Hos 11:1; cp. Mt 2:15 "Spoken by the Lord through the prophet"

Moses Gen 2:24; cp Mt 19:3-6 "He who created them ... said"

Moses Mk 7:10, 13 "Moses said... invalidating the Word of God"

Eliphaz Job 5:13; cp. 1 Cor 3:19 "For it is written"

Additional Passages Claiming the Inspiration of the New Testament

Jn 14:26

Jn 15:26

Jn 16:13

Rom 16:25-26

1 Cor 14:37

Gal 1:12-13

Eph 3:3-5

1 Thess 4:15

Heb 1:1-2

2 Pet 1:3-4

Jude 3

LESSON THREE: EXTERNAL EVIDENCE SUPPORT'S THE BIBLE'S INSPIRATION

Introduction

A compelling reason for a serious examination of the Bible's claim of inspiration

The Bible very clearly claims to be from God. Paul said, "All Scripture (which would be both Old and New Testaments-AJ) is inspired by God"- 2 Tim 3:16. Since Scripture is said to come from God, naturally it is presented to its readers as possessing the authority of God. Men were urged to use it as the standard to live by.

Jesus, who lived as a Jew under the O.T., appealed to it as authority. When tempted by Satan, He three times referred to an appropriate "It is written" to explain to him why He would not do as he said (Mt 4:4,7,10). When Jesus was asked questions, He pointed the inquirers to the Law for the answer (e.g. divorce- Mt. 19:3-4 and eternal life-Lk 10:25-26).

The N.T., which claims to be applicable to both Jew and Gentile is set forth as the standard of authority. Paul instructed Christians to "Stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us." (2 Thess 2:15).

Both Testaments contain consequences for disobeying them. Hebrews 2:2-3 points out that disobedience under the O.T. brought its just punishment. The question is then posed as to what chance those who disobey the N.T. message have of escaping.

According to the N.T., God, through His Son Jesus, will one day judge the secrets of men by the gospel (Rom 2:16). At that great day, eternal sentences will be handed out, according to how men have lived, sentences of eternal life or eternal punishment (Mt 25:46).

If the Bible isn't God's Word, men have nothing to fear. It is a lie! It is a fraud and a hoax and one of the most successful ones in the history of mankind! BUT, IF IT IS GOD'S WORD, men's eternal destinies will be based on their obedience to it. Such consequences invite men to more than a casual examination of its claim to be inspired.

What is "external" evidence and what does it do for the Bible's claim of inspiration?

If the Bible is the Word of God, it must be error free in all facts that may be substantiated by sources outside or "external" to itself. These sources would include science, history, geography, and archaeology. If the Bible is not correct when compared to known facts, how can it be the perfect God-given guide for men to live by? If the Bible contains inaccuracies, then the door to its possible inspiration is slammed shut!

On the other hand, man's various fields of learning cannot prove the Bible to be inspired. Just because a book is true does not mean that it is "God-breathed", for men can author books that are true. However, if the Bible is accurate when compared to know facts from various fields of learning, then the door is left open that the Bible could be inspired of God. It is not possible to verify every person, place, event, or statement in the Bible. However, the numerous things that are verifiable are sufficient evidence to give men

confidence in the things that have not yet been confirmed.

ARCHAEOLOGY'S SUPPORT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

"Archaeology" is the study of things that are old" made from what ancient people have left behind. The spade of the archaeologist has dug up and continues to dig up evidence that confirms the truthfulness, accuracy, and therefore, trustworthiness of the Bible. Note the following examples:

Beginning in 1964, two professors from the University of Rome, Dr. Paolo Matthiae and Dr. Giovanni Petinato, worked to excavate a site known as Tell Mardikh in northern Syria. They discovered a kingdom known as Ebla, which at its height in 2300 B.C., had a population of 260,000 people. There are at least three things confirmed about the Bible by this finding:

- . Some had argued prior to this finding that Moses could not have written the first five books of the Old Testament because writing was unknown in the period of history which the Bible places Moses (1400 B.C.). However, the Ebla tablets show that even 1000 years before Moses, laws, customs, and events were recorded in the same area of the world where Moses lived.
- . Critics of the Bible had also thought that the system of law recorded in the books of Moses was too complex to have been written by the primitive people of his day. The Ebla tablets, however, contain a very elaborate legal code, similar in many respects to what is found in Deuteronomy.
- . The Ebla tablets confirm Genesis 14 as being historically accurate. Prior to the discovery of these tablets, the "five cities of the Plain" (Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar) mentioned in Genesis 14 were considered by unbelievers as only legendary. Yet the Ebla tablets refer to all five cities. One tablet even lists them in the same order as Genesis 14:2.

Until 1906, the Hittites, who are mentioned over 40 times in the Old Testament, were unknown outside of the Bible. Skeptics laughed... until 1906 when Hugo Winckler dug up the Hittite capital near Ankara, Turkey. Today, enough information has been found about the Hittites to provide us with thick books in the library, as well as the possibility of obtaining a graduate degree in Hittite civilization from the University of Pennsylvania.

John Garstang, while excavating Jericho in 1930-36, was startled to find "the walls fell outwards so completely that the attackers would be able to clamber up and over the ruins into the city". Why was he so surprised? The walls of cities, when attacked from the outside, do not fall outward, but inward. The Bible gives the explanation in Joshua 6:20. The hand of God was responsible... "The wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city every man straight ahead, and they took the city."

In 1993, archaeologists at Tel Dan in northern Israel uncovered a shattered monument with the words "King of Israel" and "House of David" on it. This was the first non-Biblical evidence of the dynasty founded by King David.

A triumphal relief on a wall in the temple of Aman at Karnak, Egypt shows treasures being taken by Shishak, an Egyptian king, from Rehoboam, king of Judah, as 1 Kings 14:25-26 records. Other Egyptian records show that Shishak died the next year and his son, Osorkon, gave 383 tons of gold and silver to the

gods in the first three years of his reign. This makes the Bible's description of Solomon's wealth believable, which many have doubted in the past.

ARCHAEOLOGY'S SUPPORT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

In 1881, Sir William Ramsey took the book of Acts as a guide and set out to follow Paul's journeys, conducting excavations along the way. He did this to prove that Luke, the author of Acts, was incorrect in his history. Ramsey took the popular view of his time that Acts was written in the late second century. He believed the book to be legendary or mythical, an imaginary account of supposed events in the lives of early Christians. He was confident that through his efforts he could show Acts and therefore, the entire New Testament, to be unreliable.

After fifteen years of investigation, in 1896, Ramsey published a large book, St. Paul, the Traveller and Roman Citizen. The skeptics were furious. Ramsey had become a believer in Christianity! What had caused Ramsey to make such a turn around in his belief? His excavations showed that Luke was accurate, even in small details, concerning what he wrote in the book of Acts. He was not someone who made up a story 150 years after Christianity began, who was unfamiliar with the time period. He must have lived in the time period that he wrote about, as Acts says.

Rulers throughout the Roman Empire were known by different names in different cities and regions. Yet Luke always assigned to them the appropriate Greek term for their locality, such as "praetor" in Philippi (16:22), "politarch" in Thessalonica (17:6), "proconsul" in Corinth (18:12), and "first man of the island" on Melita (28:7). Concerning the proconsul in Corinth, Ramsey even located a reference to Gallio, the man who was named by Luke! He found an inscription that read, "Lucius Junius Gallio, my friend and the proconsul of Achaia."

Geographical references made by Luke were also proven correct by Ramsey's archaeological finds. Iconium had been thought to be a city of the region of Lycaonia. If so, then Luke's statement that Paul fled from Iconium into Lycaonia would make no sense (Acts 14:1,6). It would be like saying the Paul fled from Detroit and went into Michigan. But, Ramsey found a monument that showed that Iconium was a city of the region of Phrygia, not Lycaonia, and his statement makes perfect sense. Luke described Philippi as "first of the district" (16:12). The word "district" (Gr. "meros") was not considered by scholars to be the correct term to describe the region that Philippi was a part of. But, Ramsey, through his digs, proved it to be correct.

A final example of Luke's accuracy as found by Ramsey is the theatre in Ephesus that Luke said that the city rushed into (19:28-32). Ramsey not only found the theatre, but also found that it was capable of holding 25,000 people.

Ramsey summed up his years of research as follows, "I may fairly claim to have entered on this investigation without prejudice in favor of the conclusion which I shall now seek to justify to the reader. On the contrary, I began with a mind unfavorable to it ... Luke is a historian of the first rank ... this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians."

LESSON FOUR: INTERNAL EVIDENCE SUPPORTS THE BIBLE'S INSPIRATION

Introduction

If the Bible is the Word of God, there must be evidence from within its pages that shows that man was not capable of writing it by himself, but that he had to have Divine aid and guidance. If there is no internal evidence pointing to the Bible's inspiration, then, despite its claim of inspiration, it is no different than the other books in the library- it is authored by men. But evidence is abundant that men could not have authored the Bible without God's help, especially in two areas, the unity of the Bible and fulfilled prophecy.

THE UNITY OF THE BIBLE

Let's suppose we gathered 40 men from different walks of life and we had each independently write a section of a book that is to have a unified theme. Do you think their material would fit together? Do you think complete agreement would exist between them? Of course not. Yet, this type of unity is exactly what we have in the Bible.

The Bible was begun by Moses in the deserts of Sinai and finished by John on the island of Patmos almost 15 centuries later. In this time, about 40 men of different times, cultures, and occupations wrote 66 different pieces of literature. Many of these men did not know one another or know of the books that had been written or were going to be written. The books were written in several styles (narrative, history, law, prophecy, poetry, and letter). Yet, amazingly, the Bible possesses unity in its teaching as well as its theme.

Unity of Teaching

The Bible contains almost innumerable teachings. Naves Topical Bible does not presume to list all Biblical topics and lists over 20,000. But, one may pick any subject of his choosing and study all the references on it and he will find that all the Bible writers are in complete harmony on that subject. Most subjects are found in a plurality of books, written on by several authors, yet there are no proven contradictions (see Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible by John W. Haley, where supposed contradictions are explained). Jesus prayed to the Father, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." (Jn 17:17). Truth is by definition unified, absolute, and contains no contradictions. A careful and honest study of the Bible will show that it meets the definition of truth and, since it was composed by so many over a long time, it could not be merely the word of men, but it must be as it claims, the Word of God.

Unity of Theme

Although composed of 66 books, the Bible is one story, the story of God's plan to save man. The problem is revealed in Genesis 3, sin. In the rest of the Bible, God's solution to the problem of sin through the Christ unfolds. This is why God's revelation is called the "mystery" (Eph 1:9-10). God's plan was for all men to be in one saved body, the church, which has a special relationship with His Son (Eph 3:10-11). Such a plan is beyond complete human comprehension (Rom 11:33-36), but the Bible reveals what we know about it. On the next page is an outline of the Bible's theme:

Outline of the theme of the Bible:

- . Promise of Christ (Gen 3:15; 12:1-3)
- . Prophecy of Christ (Acts 3:22-26; 1 Pet 1:10-12)
- . Preparation of Christ (Mk 1:1-8)
- . Perfection of Plan in Christ (Acts 10:36-43)
- . Proclamation of Christ (Acts 1:8; Rom 16:25-27)
- . Perfecting Men in Christ (Col 1:23-29)

Summary of the theme of the Bible:

God promised man that a Savior would come from the seed of woman. He later promised specifically that He would bless all nations through the seed of Abraham. God made of Abraham a great nation, Israel, and gave them Canaan to live in (Genesis-Joshua). God continued to care for them, promising that the Messiah or Christ would come to this world through them. Israel's prophets foretold the various details of this Christ (Judges-Malachi). Finally, John the Baptist came to prepare the way. Then Jesus was born, lived, and carried out his mission as predicted (Matthew-John). The good news of the Christ was then preached throughout the world (Acts). Letters were then written to Christ's disciples so that they might grow to spiritual maturity (Romans-Revelation).

Conclusion

In respect to the unity of the Bible, it is obvious that such unity is beyond human capability. One mind was behind that writing of the Bible, and that mind had to be a Divine mind. The only reasonable explanation is that "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet 1:21)

FULFILLED PROPHECY OF THE BIBLE

In the Bible, a prophet was one who was a spokesman for another (Ex 4:15-16; 7:1-2). Primarily, a prophet in the Bible was a spokesman for God. Many times God's prophets gave predictions of the future that God revealed to them.

No man knows the future. If the Bible can be shown to contain predictive prophecy, then it must be concluded that the Bible was authored by God and not by men. How can we know if those in the Bible who claimed to be prophets of God were His prophets? The Bible itself proposes a simple test. If a prophet's prediction did not come true, then he was not a prophet. If it did, he was (Dt 18:21-22). The Bible contains many predictive prophecies that we can put to the test, especially concerning the Christ. In this lesson, we will cite as evidence of the Bible's inspiration, the prophecies of God's judgment against Tyre and Babylon.

Predictions Concerning Tyre

Ezekiel's prophecy concerning Tyre was given in the eleventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity (Eze 26:1;

cp. 1:2) which would have been 586 B.C. Specific predictions the prophet Ezekiel made concerning the fall of Tyre are as follows:

- . Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, would destroy the city (26:7-11)
- . Many nations would come up against the city. The debris of the city would be scraped from her and the ruins of the city would be dumped into the waters (26:3-4,12)
- . The city would be rebuilt no more (26:14,19,21)
- . Great water would cover the city (26:19)
- . The city would become a place for the spreading of nets (26:5)

Predictions of Ezekiel fulfilled:

In 573 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Tyre, breaking down the walls, towers, and houses, and making spoil and prey of their goods (according to 26:4,12). However, the majority of the people of Tyre moved by ship to an island ½ mile off the coast and fortified a city there.

This is where the "many" nations and the scraping and dumping of the debris comes in. The people of the new city of Tyre were next opposed by Alexander the Great. Since he had no navy, Alexander had no way to conquer Tyre, a sea power. So, he demolished the remains of the old Tyre, scraping the dust from her, making her a bare rock (26:4). He then placed the stones, timbers, and dust in the water to form a causeway, 200 feet wide between the old and new cities (26:12). Completing this involved the help of many nations; Sidon, Aradus, Byblus, Rhodes, Soli, Mallos, Lycia, Macedon, and Cyprus (26:3). These nations were hired by Alexander to protect his workmen with their fleets. Alexander conquered Tyre within seven months of the completion of the causeway.

Until this day, the mainland city of Tyre has never been rebuilt. Those who travel to the site come back with reports of fishermen spreading their nets on the rocks. Writing about the present state of the site, Jidejian says, "Looking down into the water one can see a mass of granite columns and stone blocks strewn over the sea bottom. Until recently, the ruins of Tyre above the water were few."

Predictions Concerning Babylon

Isaiah made his statements about Babylon by 700 B.C. at the latest (cp. Isa 1:1 and the list of the kings he prophesied during) and Jeremiah made his no later than 586 B.C. (cp. Jer 1:3 and the list of the kings he prophesied during). Specific predictions of Isaiah and Jeremiah concerning the fall of Babylon:

- . The Medes would destroy them (Is 13:17-18; Jer 51:11,28).
- . The city would be conquered easily, while the Babylonians were drunken, without a fight (Jer 51:30-32, 38-40, 57-58). This is a remarkable prediction considering the fortifications of Babylon. The city had 14 miles of walls on three sides and the Euphrates River on the other. The outer wall of the city was 311 feet high (30 stories) and was 87 feet wide (11 car widths). In addition, there were 250 watchtowers that were 100 feet higher than the walls (cp. Jer 51:33 and God's attitude about

their fortifications!).

. The city would be completely destroyed (Isa 13:19-22; Jer 50:3,12,39; 51:61-64)

. As when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah

. Never to be inhabited

. Arab would not pitch his tent there

. Shepherds would not make their flocks lie down there

. It would be a place for wild beasts

Fulfillment of Isaiah and Jeremiah's Predictions

Babylon was destroyed by Darius the Mede on October 13, 539 B.C.. The Medes diverted the Euphrates River and entered the city in the abandoned riverbed while the Babylonians were celebrating a feast and were drunken (cp. Daniel 5:1, 30-31). The Medes were aided by deserters who drew up the plan of attack.

Alexander the Great thought to restore the great temple of Babylon, but cost prevented him. When the Seleucids gained control of the area, they decided that reconstruction of the city would be as costly as building a new city. So they built Seleucia, 40 miles north of Babylon's ruins. Everyone and everything living in the area of the ruins then left for Seleucia.

By the time of the reign of Augustus Caesar (27 B.C.-A.D. 14), Strabo said, "The great city has become a desert." In A.D. 116, the emperor Trajan described the once glorious Babylon as "mounds and legends of mounds."

Layard describes the site in modern times as "a naked and hideous waste. Owl stark from the scanty thickets and the foul jackal stalks through the furrows. Truly, the glory of kingdoms and the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency is as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah."

Saddam Hussein was trying to rebuild Babylon, in fact had the project about half completed, when the beginning of the Gulf War of 1991 stopped his efforts.

Conclusion

The more time that passes with the condition of Tyre and Babylon remaining in accordance with Bible prophecy, the stronger the argument becomes that Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, were prophets of God and that the Bible must be the Word of God.

LESSON FIVE: HISTORY OF WRITING; WRITING MATERIALS; BIBLE LANGUAGES

Introduction

We have established the basis for belief in the inspiration of the Bible. In this lesson, we will learn about how the inspired Scripture was written down for its original readers. We will begin to understand the amazing process of the formation and the preservation of the Scripture; the process that has resulted in our ability to read and understand what "God breathed" long ago.

I. History of Writing

- A. Earliest known writing: Egyptians, 4000-5000 B.C. Hieroglyphic writing appears to have begun just prior to the founding of Dynasty I in 3100 B.C.
- B. A Babylonian inscription of King Sargon I dates from about 3750 B.C.
- C. From about 3500 B.C. we have the cuneiform (small wedge-shaped letters) tablets of the Sumerians. The Sumerian account of the flood dates from about 2100 B.C.
- D. As noted in lesson two, the Ebla tablets, found in northern Syria, date from about 2300 B.C. Since 1974, 17,000 tablets have been unearthed.
- E. Certainly, men wrote long before Moses. The skeptics who laughed at the idea have been more than silenced; they have been embarrassed.

II. Writing Materials

- A. Stone: earliest writing material almost everywhere. Cp. 10 commandments; Ex 31:18; 34:1,28. A stone copy of the law of Moses was made after Israel entered the promised land, as God had commanded through Moses (Dt 27:1-8; Josh 8:30-35)
- B. Clay: This was used in Sumer as early as 3500 B.C. Huge libraries of clay tablets have been discovered in Assyria and Babylon. Writing would be done while the clay was still damp and soft. Then it would be dried in the sun or baked in a kiln to make a permanent record. See Eze 4:1 where Ezekiel made a map of Jerusalem on clay. Broken pieces of pottery, known as ostraca, were also written on in ancient times, a kind of "recycling".
- C. Wood: Wooden tablets were quite generally used in ancient times. They were very common in Greece. At Athens in the fourth century B.C., the tablets were whitewashed so they could be written on easier and were used for official notices. Sometimes wooden boards were coated with a wax writing surface. It is thought that the "tablets" mentioned in Isa 8:1, 30:8; Hab 2:2, and Lk 1:63 were wooden.
- D. Leather: Animal skins played an important role in the writing of the Bible. The Jewish Talmud, the book of Jewish tradition, required that the Scriptures be copied on animal skins, indicating that this was an ancient practice. The use of leather as a writing surface may be implied in King Jehoiakim's

use of a penknife to cut Jeremiah's manuscript (Jer 36:23).

- E. Papyrus: This writing material was made from the papyrus plant that once grew in abundance along the Nile River in Egypt. Its use dates back to 3500 B.C. Its rolls were the "books" or the ancient world until 1st or 2nd century A.D. when the scrolls began to be replaced by the "codex" or the book as we know it today. The average papyrus scroll was 30 ft. long and 8 to 9 in. wide. Writing was usually done only on one side. Often the scroll was put on a wooden roller so that it could be rolled and unrolled easier. To identify the scroll, a piece of papyrus with the name of the writing was placed on the outside of the scroll. The scroll was placed in a wooden case to protect it. It is believed that the N.T. was penned on papyrus. Two of John's letters were for sure (see 2 Jn 12; 3 Jn 13).
- F. Vellum or Parchments: King Eumenes (197-158 B.C.) improved the process of treating animal skins to make them ready for writing. Vellum was made from the skins of calves and antelopes, while parchment was the skin of sheep and goats. Paul especially wanted Timothy to bring him the parchments (2 Tim 4:13). In the making of vellum and parchments, the hide is not tanned, as with leather. Also, leather was prepared for writing on one side only (as papyrus), while vellum and parchments were prepared on both sides. Vellum and parchments were used for more than 1,000 years in copying the N.T. These skins were much more durable than papyrus, which eventually came into short supply. Beginning in the 4th century A.D., the majority of the copies of N.T. were made on vellum. The two most valuable N.T. manuscripts in existence today are found on high quality vellum.
- G. Paper: The Chinese invented paper in the 2nd century B.C., but the rest of the world did not learn about paper until much later. In the 8th century A.D., some Arabs captured some Chinese prisoners who were skilled in making paper. Gradually, this knowledge spread and by the 13th century A.D. most of Europe was using paper. While paper was not available to the writers of the Bible, a considerable amount of surviving Biblical manuscripts, especially those from the East, are paper.

III. Languages of the Bible

- A. Hebrew: Almost all of the O.T. was written in Hebrew. Hebrew is written right to left. There are no vowels. The sounds are different than English and the vocabulary is totally unrelated to English. Psalms 119 is sectioned off by the Hebrew alphabet with the first word of each section beginning with the title letter.
- B. Aramaic: This is a kindred language to Hebrew. The Jews picked it up in Babylon while in captivity. Apparently, after the captivity, the Jews needed a translation from Hebrew to Aramaic so that they could understand God's Word (Neh 8:8). Aramaic is used in Daniel 2:4b-7:28 and Ezra 4:8-6:18 and 7:12-16. Aramaic was the language of Jesus and His disciples- Mk 5:41; 7:34; 14:36 (cp. Rom 8:15, Gal 4:6); Mt 27:46; 1 Cor 16:22 "maranatha".
- C. Greek: "Koine" ("common") Greek was the language of the N.T. This was the universal language of the world when the N.T. was written. Thayer's lexicon has a long listing of "Biblical Greek" words in the appendix to his lexicon. It was thought in his time that there was a "Holy Ghost"

Greek, that many words used by N.T. writers, were not used by men outside of the Scriptures. This was because the Greek of the N.T. was being compared to the literary writings of the same period. However, the discovery of many non-literary writings, beginning in the 1890's, has proven that the language of the N.T. was the colloquial (informal) language of daily life in the 1st century A.D.

LESSON SIX: CIRCULATION AND COLLECTION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Introduction

How did the Old Testament books that God inspired get into the hands of each generation of Israelites? Since God revealed his message to Israel through His prophets in many portions and many ways (Heb 1:1), how did the Old Testament come together? Let us look to the Old Testament itself for some answers.

I. Law of Moses

- A. Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord (Ex 24:3-4).
- B. Provision for priests to read the law to all Israel every seven years (Dt 31:9-13).
- C. Responsibility placed on Israel's parents to keep the Law ever in front of their children (Dt 6:4-9).
- D. Joshua made a copy (Josh 8:32).
- E. Scribes such as Ezra made copies (Ezra 7:6, 11, 12, 21).

II. Prophets and Writings

- A. As the writer of 2 Samuel wrote of the life of David, he inserted Psalms 18, an indication that David's Psalms were being circulated and collected (2 Sam 22:1).
- B. The author of 1 Chronicles tells us that when David first assigned Asaph and his relatives the responsibility of giving thanks to the Lord, they sang a medley of praise (1 Chron 16:7-36). They sang Psalms 105 (vs. 1-15), Psalms 96, and Psalms 106 (vs 1, 47,48). It is obvious that, since the Psalms were being used in worship, they were being circulated and collected.
- C. 2 Chronicles refers to the book of Psalms (29:30); Isaiah (32:32); Lamentations (35:25), and Kings (20:34; 35:26-27).
- D. Copies of the Proverbs were made by men of Hezekiah (Prov 25:1).
- E. The elders in Jeremiah's day quote Micah (Jer 26:16-20).
- F. God used Job as an illustration of a righteous man to Israel in the time of Ezekiel (Eze 14:14,20).
- G. Daniel finds the answer to the length of the Babylonian captivity in the "books", obviously a collection of Scripture that included Jeremiah (Dan 9:1-2; Jer 25:11,12).

Conclusion

It is clear from the Old Testament itself that, as God spoke in many portions and in many ways, the writings of his spokesmen were circulated throughout the nation and were added to the Law of Moses, God's original revelation to Israel, being received as "God breathed" Scripture.

LESSON SEVEN: THE PROCESS OF OLD TESTAMENT CANONIZATION

Introduction

As the Old Testament books were being written, circulated and collected, the Israelites who lived at the time of their writing received them as inspired. Those who lived at a later time also put these books to the test to make sure that they indeed could be considered "God-breathed" and were not the mere words of men. Other books that were written while the Old Testament was being written were also put to the test, but failed to pass the test. The study of these things will answer these questions for us, "Just how did the 39 books of the Old Testament come to be received as inspired? How do we know that they should have been received? How do we know that other books were rightly rejected and not included in the Old Testament?"

I. Important Terms in Understanding How Books Came to Be Accepted as Inspired

- A. Canon- from the Greek word "kanon" meaning a rod, ruler, staff or measuring rod; Used as a figure of speech to mean a standard or norm (see Gal 6:16, "rule"). Athenasius (A.D. 296-373) was the first to use this term for the books of the Bible that were officially accepted as inspired.
- B. Homologomena- literally "one word" or agreement. Books that are referred to by this term have been accepted as inspired by virtually everyone.
- C. Antilogomena- literally "spoken against". Books that are referred to by this term have had their inspiration disputed at some time by some people.
- D. Pseudopigrapha- literally "false writings". These books were written under pen names of Biblical characters. These books were considered to be uninspired by virtually everyone.
- E. Apocrypha- literally "hidden or secret". It is not certain how this term came into use to describe books that were written. Some say the word meaning "hidden or secret" was applied to them because they were books for the spiritually enlightened to understand. Others believe the word meaning "hidden or secret" was applied to them because they are books in which it is hard to find inspiration. Most of the Old Testament Apocrypha are accepted by the Catholic Church, while all of the New Testament Apocrypha are rejected by all.

II. Five Tests of Canonicity (Tests applied by those seeking to recognize the inspiration of a book)

- A. Authoritative? Does the book speak with the authority of God, using expressions such as "Thus saith the Lord" or "It is written"?
- B. Prophetic? Was the book written by one who was recognized as a prophet?
- C. Authentic? Does the book tell the truth when compared to books already received as inspired? Is it consistent or are there contradictions?
- D. Dynamic? Does the book come with the life-changing power of God? Was it written to make a spiritual impact on its readers?

E. Reception? Has the book been received as inspired by the first readers? By later readers?

III. The Old Testament is an Arranged Collection of Books: English Bible vs. Hebrew Bible

When we understand the Hebrew arrangement of the Old Testament books, we will be able to see (as we study the next lesson) that statements made by Jesus and other men argue that the books of the Old Testament have been rightly received as inspired.

ENGLISH ARRANGEMENT (from LXX)

The Law (Pentateuch) - 5 books	Poetry - 5 books
1. Genesis	1. Job
2. Exodus	2. Psalms
3. Leviticus	3. Proverbs
4. Numbers	4. Ecclesiastes
5. Deuteronomy	5. Song of Solomon

History - 12 books	Prophets - 17 books
1. Joshua	A. Major B. Minor
2. Judges	1. Isaiah 1. Hosea
3. Ruth	2. Jeremiah 2. Joel
4. 1 Samuel	3. Lamentations 3. Amos
5. 11 Samuel	4. Ezekiel 4. Obadiah
6. 1 Kings	5. Daniel 5. Jonah
7. 11 Kings	6. Micah
8. 1 Chronicles	7. Nahum
9. 11 Chronicles	8. Habakkuk
10. Ezra	9. Zephaniah
11. Nehemiah	10. Haggai
12. Esther	11. Zechariah
	12. Malachi

THE HEBREW OLD TESTAMENT ARRANGEMENT

The LAW (Torah)	The Prophets (Nebhiim)	The Writings (Kethubhim)
1. Genesis	A. Former Prophets:	A. Poetical Books:
2. Exodus	1. Joshua	1. Psalms
3. Leviticus	2. Judges	2. Proverbs
4. Numbers	3. Samuel	3. Job
5. Deuteronomy	4. Kings	B. Five Rolls
	B. Latter Prophets:	1. Song of Songs:
	1. Isaiah	2. Ruth
	2. Jeremiah	3. Lamentations
	3. Ezekiel	4. Esther
	4. The Twelve	5. Ecclesiastes
		C. Historical Books:
		1. Daniel
		2. Ezra-Nehemiah
		3. Chronicles

LESSON EIGHT: HISTORICAL CONFIRMATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON

Introduction

Having understood from the last lesson 1) the meaning of "canon", 2) the criteria by which books have been accepted into the canon, and 3) the divisions of the Hebrew Bible, we are prepared to discuss the historical evidence that the Old Testament books that have been received as inspired truly should be accepted as such. Also, in this lesson we will examine the reason why five of the Old Testament books came into question by some for a time.

I. Historical Support for our Present Old Testament Canon

- A. Jesus (A.D. 30)- When Jesus spoke, He made both a twofold ("Moses and the prophets") and a threefold division of The Old Testament ("the Law of Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms") (Luke 24:27,44). Jesus' threefold division of the Old Testament shows that the canon He recognized is the same as the Hebrew Bible of today. Also, Jesus' statement about God avenging all the righteous blood shed on the earth when He destroyed Jerusalem reflects that the Old Testament He recognized began with Genesis and ended with 2 Chronicles, as the Hebrew Bible of today.
- B. Philo (A.D. 40)- referred to "the Law, Prophets, and hymns and others which foster perfect knowledge and piety."
- C. Josephus (A.D. 37-95)- "We have not ten thousands of books, discordant and conflicting, but only twenty-two containing the record of all time, which have been justly believed to be divine...from Artaxerxes (the successor of Xerxes) until our time everything has been recorded, but has not been deemed worthy of like credit because the exact succession of the prophets ceased. But what faith we have placed in our own writings is evident by our conduct; for though so long a time has now passed, no one has dared to add anything to them, or to take anything from them, or to alter anything in them." -- Against Apion, I. 8
- D. Council of Jamnia (A.D. 90)- This Jewish council formally recognized the Hebrew canon, the 39 books of the Old Testament, as we number them.

II. The Antilegomena of the Old Testament (Five Books Questioned by Some for a Time)

- A. Song of Solomon- This book was thought to be too sensual. The physical attraction of the human body is put in "bold" terms (4:1-8, 5:9-16, 7:1-13). On this E.J. Young rightly wrote, "God has placed this Song in the canon in order to teach us the purity and the sanctity of the estate of marriage which He Himself established."- An Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 355.
- B. Ecclesiastes- This book was said to relate too pessimistic of an outlook on life. Some called it the "Song of Skepticism". Critic of the book missed the point of the book as seen in its conclusion (12:13-14). Some also charged the book to contain the Epicurean "eat, drink, and be merry, because tomorrow we die" philosophy of life, but these critics took passages about how God intended life

to be enjoyed out of the context of the book. Such pleasures are seen to be vain (2:1- 2) and life should not be about them, but about fearing and obeying God, in preparation for judgment (12:13-14).

- C. Esther- The name of God is not in the book, so some doubts arose about its inspiration. However God's Providence can be seen in the book (4:14) and the book reveals a significant event in the accomplishment of the eternal purpose of God. The book of Esther relates how the Jews were saved from extinction, preserving the promise of God to Abraham that through his seed all nations would be blessed (Gen 12:1-3).
- D. Ezekiel- The Jewish school of Shammai thought that Ezekiel contradicted the Law of Moses. No specific example they cited has stood the test of investigation. Their interpretation of these books, rather than the books themselves, caused them to think there were contradictions and therefore to reject Ezekiel, as they had already received the Law of Moses as inspired.
- E. Proverbs- This book is said to contradict itself. The Talmud (Jewish book of tradition) says, "The book of Proverbs also they sought to hide because its words contradicted one to another" (See 26:4-5, an example of an alleged contradiction).

III. Conclusion

The fact that the books that are included in the Old Testament were challenged as to their inspiration and not received as "God-breathed" on a whim, a coin flip, or a vote strengthens our faith that the books we hold as part of the "Holy Bible" truly are "holy". Jesus' testimony surely shows us what He considered as the beginning and the end of the Old Testament canon and sets forth clearly the divisions of the Old Testament that are maintained by the Jews until this day. Sources outside the Scriptures also confirm that what we pick up our Old Testament we hold in our hand what has been properly received as the Word of God.

How we got the Bible

by Alan Jones

SECTION 2

LESSON NINE: THE OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA, PART ONE

Introduction

In this lesson, we will learn what the books of the O.T. Apocrypha are, where those that have been accepted are found in the Catholic Old Testament, and why it is argued that the accepted books should be part of the Old Testament canon of Scripture.

. What books are in the Apocrypha and where are they placed in the Catholic Old Testament?

OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA

Type of Book	Revised Standard Version	Douay	Where in O.T.
Didactic	1. The Wisdom of Solomon (c. 30 B.C).	Book of Wisdom	After Song of Solomon
	2. Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) (132 B.C.)	Ecclesiastes	After Song of Solomon
Religious	3. Tobit (c. 200 B. C.)	Tobias	Before Esther
Romance	4. Judith (c. 150 B.C.)	Judith	Before Esther
Historic	5. I Esdras (c. 150-150 B.C.)	III Esdras*	-----
	6. I Maccabees (c. 110 B.C.)	I Machabees	After Esther
	7. II Maccabees (c. 110-70 B.C.)	II Machabees	After Esther
Prophetic	8. Baruch (c. 150-50 B.C.)	Baruch chptrs 1-5	After Lamentations
	9. Letter of Jeremiah (c. 300-100 B.C.)	Baruch chapter 6	After Lamentations
	10. II Esdras (c. A.D. 100)	IV Esdras*	-----
Legendary	11. Additions to Esther	Esther 10:4-16:24	End of Esther

			Throughout Esther
			(Jerusalem Bible)
	12. Prayer of Azariah (2nd or 1st	Daniel 3:24-90	Daniel Chapter 3
	century B.C.) (Song of Three Young		(Some added to
	Men)		end
			of book)
	13. Susanna (2nd or 1st century B.C.)	Daniel 13	Daniel Chapter 3
	14. Bel and the Dragon (c. 100 B.C.)	Daniel 14	Daniel Chapter 3
	15. Prayer of Manasseh (2nd or 1st	Prayer of	-----
	century B.C.)	Manasseh*	

*Books not accepted as canonical at the Council of Trent, 1546.

II. Arguments in favor of accepting the O.T. Apocrypha with a response:

A. The N.T. quotes mostly from the Greek O.T. (Septuagint or LXX) that contains the Apocrypha.

Response: It is significant to note that copies of the O.T. in Hebrew (which have been called the Palestinian Canon) do not contain the Apocrypha. The collection of books made by the nation who first received the books from God would be more significant than a collection of books made by others. And, it has not been proven that the LXX of the first century (when the N.T. was written) included the Apocrypha because the earliest extant (surviving) manuscripts that include the Apocrypha date from the fourth century A.D. The LXX collection of books that contains the Apocrypha has been called the Alexandrian Canon for it was in Alexandria, Egypt that the LXX was translated.

B. Some Apocryphal books written in Hebrew have been found among other O.T. canonical books in the Dead Sea scrolls.

Response: The discoveries at Qumran included not only the Bibles of the Essene community, but fragments of hundreds of books that they had in their library, It cannot be assumed that because a book was in their library they considered in canonical. No commentaries on non-canonical books have been found, tending to support the contention that the Apocryphal books were not viewed as canonical.

C. The N.T. alludes to the Apocrypha (e.g. Heb 11:35; cp. 2 Maccabees chapters 7 and 12)

Response: An allusion or even a quotation made by a N.T. writer does not prove that the source the N.T. writer referred to was considered inspired by the writer or should be considered inspired by the first or later readers. Jude quotes a pseudopigraphal book (Jude 14-15; cp. Enoch 1:9), while Paul quotes pagan poets and prophets (Acts 17:28-29; Tit 1:12-13).

D. The three great Greek manuscripts that are most significant in the study of the N.T. text, (Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus and Vaticanus) that date from the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. include the Apocrypha among the O.T. books.

Response: The fact that the Apocryphal books were a part of the Greek manuscripts of the fourth century A.D. does not prove that they were a part of the canon in the first century A.D.

E. Many of the church "fathers" accepted all of the books of the Apocrypha as canonical including Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria. Some of these men quoted the Apocrypha in public worship and used it like Scripture.

Response: No early council of the church accepted them and many of the church "fathers" vehemently opposed the receiving of these books including Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Origen, and Jerome.

F. Catacomb scenes depict stories from the Apocrypha.

Response: Scenes from the catacombs do not prove anything about whether or not these early Christians received these books as inspired, but they only prove the existence of the books.

G. The Syrian church accepted the Apocrypha in the fourth century A.D.

Response: The church in Syria did not accept these books until the fourth century A.D. The second century A.D. Syrian Bible did not contain the Apocrypha.

H. Augustine and the councils he presided over at Hippo (A.D. 393, 397) accepted them.

Response: These were small local councils and their voices are the only significant ones from ancient times that recognize the Apocrypha as part of the O.T. canon. Other writings of Augustine show that he gave a "secondary canonicity" for the Apocrypha and a "primary canonicity" for the books included in the Hebrew Canon. He also accepted I Esdras, but rejected Baruch.

I. The Roman Catholic Church proclaimed them canonical at the Council of Trent in 1546.

Response: The Council of Trent was the first official proclamation on the Apocrypha made by the Roman Catholic Church and did not come until 1500 years after the books were written. The timing of the addition of books is highly suspicious. The added books support "salvation by works", "buying atonement", and "prayers for the dead", hot topics of debate between the Catholic Church and Protestant Reformers. They had been quoted against Luther in debate a few years before the Council of Trent accepted them. II Esdras was not accepted by the Council. This book emphatically denies the value of prayer for the dead. Mysteriously the section of II Esdras that teaches this (7:36-105) disappeared in extant

Latin manuscripts. It was written by an unknown Jewish author in Aramaic about A.D. 100. It was circulated in the Old Latin versions of the Bible around A.D. 200. It is found in the Latin Vulgate in A.D. 400, but it was not found in another Latin manuscript until one was found in 1874. It is thought that it was deliberately cut out of Latin manuscripts because of its teaching. After the Latin

Vulgate, it did not appear in "Western" Bibles again until a Protestant, Johann Haug, in his work of Translation from surviving Aramaic texts, (1726-42), put it in his Apocrypha. It is interesting to note that not long before 1546, Catholic scholars mad a distinction between the Apocrypha and the O.T. canon. Cardinal Ximenes did so in his Complutensian Polyglot (1514-17). Cardinal Cajetan, rival of Luther, did not comment on the Apocrypha in his Commentary on all the Authentic Historical Books of the Old Testament (1532).

J. The Greek Orthodox Church accepts them.

Response: The Greek Orthodox Church has not always accepted the Apocrypha and their position has been by no means clear. Not until the Synod of Constantinople (1638) were these books considered canonical. And, even as late as 1839, their "Larger Catechism" omitted the Apocrypha because "they do not exist in Hebrew".

K. The Apocryphal books continued in Protestant Bibles as late as the 1800's.

Response: Apocryphal books appeared in Protestant Bibles even prior to the Council of Trent, but were generally placed in a separate section, as long as they were included in the Bible, since they were not considered to be of equal authority. Luther spoke against the Apocrypha in his Bible published in 1543 by placing it in the back.

LESSON TEN: THE OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA, PART TWO

Introduction

In the last lesson, various justifications for including the Apocrypha in the Old Testament were presented. None of these compel us to receive the Apocrypha as inspired. This lesson will show that there is every reason not to include the Apocrypha in the Old Testament, as it does not pass the five tests of canonicity.

I. Claim of Inspiration?

- A. In the books of the Apocrypha, we find no claim of inspiration and no, "Thus saith the Lord."
- B. The preface to Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Sirach reads, "It is the duty of those who study the Scriptures not only to become expert themselves, but also to use their scholarship for the benefit of the outside world through both the spoken and the written word, So my grandfather Jesus (ben-Sirach- AJ), who had applied himself industriously to the study of the law, the prophets, and the writings of our ancestors, and had gained a considerable proficiency in them, was moved to compile a book of his own on the themes of discipline and wisdom, so that, with this further help, scholars might make greater progress in their studies by living as the law directs." This book is admittedly just the fruit of a man's study of Scripture! How could anyone say that it should be considered inspired- that it should be classed as Scripture, along with the Scriptures the man had studied?

II. Written by a Prophet?

- A. According to the Jews, the succession of the prophets ceased after the time of Artaxerxes, the Persian king who ruled from 465-424 B.C. Recall the quotation from Josephus cited in lesson eight, "from Atraxerxes (the successor of Xerxes) until our time everything has been recorded, but has not been deemed worthy of like credit because the exact succession of the prophets ceased. But what faith we have placed in our own writings is evident by our conduct; for though so long a time has now passed, no one has dared to add anything to them, or to take anything from them, or to alter anything in them." (Against Apion I, 8)
- B. The books of the Apocrypha were written from around 200 B.C. to A.D. 100, well after Josephus said that the Jews recognized an end to God's prophets. The Jews did not and have not recognized those who wrote the Apocrypha as prophets.

III. Truthful?

- A. Judith- "Nebuchadnezzar, who reigned over the Assyrians from his capital, Nineveh" (1:1)
- B. Tobit- He say that he was a young man when the Kingdom of Israel divided (931 B.C.) and went into captivity with his people at Nineveh in Assyria (722 B.C.) (1:3-6). He would have lived over 200 years, yet the book says that he died peacefully at the age of 112! (13:14) Also the book teaches that alms wipe out all sins (12:8-10).
- C. Baruch- Plea for God to hear the prayers of Israel's dead (3:4)

- D. 2 Maccabees- prayer on behalf the dead that they might be forgiven; buying atonement (12:39-45); intercession of the dead on behalf of the living (15:12-16);
- E. Ecclesiasticus- helping parents, almsgiving atones for sins (3:14-15, 30), man's wickedness better than a woman's goodness (42:14)

IV. Dynamic? Spiritually Life Changing?

A. Much is legendary

1. Tobit- "fish story"; heart and liver of fish chase away demon; gall of the fish cures man of blindness ch 6, 11
2. Prayer of Azariah- "fiery furnace" embellished; flames poured out above it to a height of 75 feet; The angel of the Lord "scattered the flames out of the furnace and made the heat of it as if a moist wind (another translation is "a dew-laden breeze"- AJ) were whistling through. The fire did not touch them at all and neither hurt nor distressed them" (vs. 25-27 of Prayer; Dan 3:47-50 in Catholic Bible)
2. Bel and the Dragon- Daniel exposed idolaters by putting ashes on the floor of the temple, killed a dragon with a "hairball".

B. Contains the trivial

1. Tobit- "The boy and the angel left the house together, and the dog came out with him and accompanied them... The dog went with the angel and Tobias, following at their heels." (6:1, 11:4)
2. Ecclesiasticus- "table manners" (31:12-21)

V. Received by the first readers? Later readers?

- A. First readers- the Jews who lived when the books of the Apocrypha were written did not receive them as inspired.
- B. Later readers- See lesson nine for a complete discussion. The Jews have never received the Apocrypha into their canon of Scripture. The Apocrypha have tagged along with the O.T. canon since their translation into Greek in Alexandria, Egypt and appeared in English translations of the Bible until 1827. From the time of their translation into Greek, their status has been debated, with the majority of "Christians" classifying them as distinct from the O.T. canon, though some argued for their acceptance into the canon. Official inclusion of the Apocrypha into any O.T. canon in any widespread fashion did not come until 1546 by the Catholic Church and 1638 by the Greek Orthodox Church. The Catholic Church needed to have the Apocrypha included in the Scriptures to defend themselves against the Protestants, casting serious doubt on their decision to receive them. The Greek Orthodox Church has wavered in their position, very appropriately pointing out in their 1839 "Larger Catechism" that they do not exist in the Hebrew canon. Surely the first readers are in a better position to determine the inspiration of a book than those living hundreds of years later!

Conclusion

The books of the Apocrypha do not pass the tests of canonicity. Many of the books fail all five tests. All fail at least three tests, 1) claim of inspiration, 2) authorship by a prophet, and 3) reception by the first readers. Jesus recognized "the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings" as the extent of the O.T. Scriptures. The modern Jews still recognize the same divisions of the O.T. and the same books as Jesus. We are right to do the same.

LESSON ELEVEN: EVIDENCE FOR THE OLD TESTAMENT TEXT

Introduction

We have established a strong basis of confidence in the formation of the Old Testament. The thirty-nine books we have received into our Bibles have been properly received as those inspired by God. Our concern now is for the preservation of the Old Testament. Are the words which we now read the words which God spoke to Moses and the prophets? Men wrote down what the Holy Spirit moved them to write (2 Pet 1:21). But, none of their writings have survived. We must rely on copies of the original manuscripts. How confident can we be in their accuracy? Did the O.T. Scriptures begin as the Word of God, but become merely the word of men through the corruption of the text? Or can we believe that, through faithful copying, we may still read the Word of God?

I. The Basis of our Old Testament Text

A. Until recent times, just four major manuscripts provided the basis of the Hebrew text:

1. Cairo Codex (A.D. 895)- contains the former and latter prophets.
2. Leningrad Codex of the Prophets (A.D. 916)- also contains the prophets.
3. British Museum Codex (A.D. 900-1100)- contains the Pentateuch.
4. Leningrad Codex (A.D. 1008)- contains the entire Old Testament.
5. The latest edition of the Hebrew Bible (Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica*) is based on the above manuscripts, particularly on the complete Leningrad Codex.

B. Why have such few manuscripts of the Old Testament survived?

1. Animal skins are highly perishable.
2. War- Jerusalem was conquered 47 times from 1800 B.C. to A.D. 1948.
3. Ceremonial burial of worn out manuscripts.
4. Scribes destroyed manuscripts with variants when they made standardized texts.

II. Since hundreds of years passed between the writing of the Old Testament and the earliest extant (surviving) manuscripts, and we have so few manuscripts, how can we be sure of the O.T. text?

A. Scribal Techniques of the Massorettes (A.D. 500-1000)

1. The work of the Massorettes produced the surviving Hebrew manuscripts. These scribes received their name because they acknowledged their dependence on the *Massorah*, the authoritative traditions concerning the text.
2. The Massorettes developed practices to assure the accuracy of their work. They numbered the words, letters and verses of each book. They counted the number of times each letter was used in

each book. They calculated the middle verse, middle word, and middle letter of each book. They found that the middle verse of the Pentateuch is Lev 8:7, while the middle verse of the whole O.T. (as they arranged it) was Jeremiah 6:7). The scribes checked all these things to assure that their manuscript was accurately copied.

B. Copying Rules of the Talmudic Period (300 B.C.- A.D. 500)

- 1) A synagogue roll must be written on the skin of clean animals
- 2) Prepared for its use by a Jew
- 3) These rolls must be fastened together with strings taken from clean animals
- 4) Every skin must contain a certain number of columns, equal throughout the codex
- 5) The length of each column must be between 48 and 60 lines; the breadth 30 letters
- 6) The whole copy must first be lined; if 3 words are written without a line, it is worthless
- 7) The ink should be black, prepared according to a certain recipe
- 8) An authentic copy must be used to copy from; the transcriber must not deviate from it
- 9) No word or letter, not even a *yod* must be written from memory
- 10) Between every consonant must be the space of a hair or a thread
- 11) Between every section must be the breadth of 9 consonants
- 12) Between every book must be 3 lines
- 13) The fifth book of Moses must terminate exactly with a line; the rest need not do so.
- 14) The copyist must sit in full Jewish dress,
- 15) Wash his whole body,
- 16) Not begin to write the name of God with a pen newly dipped in ink
- 17) And should a king address him while writing God's name, he must not take notice.

III. Abundant Supporting Evidence for the Accuracy of the Massoretic Text of the Old Testament

A. Samaritan Pentateuch- Hebrew text from about 400 B.C. when the Samaritans separated themselves from the Jews and built their place of worship on Mt. Gerizim (cp. Jn 4:20-22). When compared to the Massoretic text, most variants have to do with spelling and grammatical differences that do not affect the message of the text, while a few variants exist because the Samaritans changed the text to correspond to their beliefs. Over all though, there are few major variations and the Samaritan Pentateuch serves as a witness to the accuracy of the Massoretic text.

- B. The Septuagint- The translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek from 250-150 B.C. This was the text most often quoted by Jesus and the inspired writers of the N.T. and was the "Bible" of the early church. This gives us confidence in the translation. And the Greek translation gives us confidence in the Massoretic Hebrew text .
- C. Aramaic Targums- Paraphrases of the Hebrew Scripture in Aramaic which became the language of the Jews following Babylonian captivity. By the 5th century A.D., two official Targums had appeared, one of the Law and another of the Prophets. These are know for being very literal in their translation and so serve as valuable evidence of the accuracy of the Massoretic text.
- D. Syriac Peshitta- Syrian translation made as early as the 1st century A.D. Early translations compare very well with the Massoretic text, while later translations were influenced by the Septuagint.
- E. Latin Vulgate- The Old Latin translation of the O.T. dates back to A.D. 150 and was made from the Septuagint. But from A.D. 390-405, Jerome translated the Latin Vulgate directly from the Hebrew and throws much light on the Hebrew text of his day. We can therefore compare his Latin translation with the Massoretic text.
- F. Other evidence: O.T. quotations in the Talmud (the Jewish book of traditions A.D. 200-500) and ancient versions such as Coptic (Egyptian), Ethiopic, Armenian, and Arabic.

LESSON TWELVE: THE OLD TESTAMENT TEXT AND THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Introduction

Before 1947, the oldest extant (surviving) Hebrew manuscript of the Old Testament dated from A.D. 895 and the oldest complete Hebrew manuscript dated from A.D. 1008. Well over 2000 years had passed from Moses' writing until the copies made by the Massoretes that survived. We had reason to believe in the accuracy of the text of the Massoretes. They were so meticulous in their copying. So were the scribes of the Talmudic period before them. And other versions, especially the Septuagint, point toward the text of the Massoretes being true. But so much time had passed. Were their manuscripts correct? More evidence would be helpful. And more evidence was found.

In 1947, an Arab shepherd boy, Muhammad adh-Dhib, while pursuing a lost goat, 7 1/2 miles south of Jericho and a mile west of the Dead Sea, found some jars (cp. Jer 32:14) in a cave containing several leather scrolls. Little did he know that his finding would lead archaeologists to the thrilling discovery that were 1000 years older than those copied by the Massoretes! These scrolls would be able to confirm the Old Testament text in a way never dreamed possible.

I. The Find

- A. From March, 1947 until February, 1956, 11 caves were discovered and excavated near Qumran. A community of a sect of the Jews lived there, awaiting the Messiah.
- B. Thousands of fragments that once made up a 400 book library were found. Most importantly, the library contained manuscripts of every O.T. book except Esther (which was quoted in another book, the Zadokite Work). One of the most significant finds was a complete copy of Isaiah.
- C. Commentaries were found on Gen 49, Psa 37, 45, 57, 68; Isaiah, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. No commentary was found on a book besides those in the O.T. canon.

II. The Dating of the Manuscripts

- A. Carbon 14- applied to a one ounce piece of linen wrappings from one of the scrolls by Dr. W.F. Libby of the University of Chicago in 1950. The age was placed at 1917 years (+/- 10%), dating the manuscripts between 168 B.C. and A.D. 233)
- B. Paleography (study of writing forms) and Orthography (spelling) was applied to the scrolls and the majority of the scrolls dated from the period of Nash Papyrus (200 B.C. to A.D. 200); some before 100 B.C. (Self-dated manuscripts from the time of the Second Jewish Revolt, A.D. 132-135, were found to be paleographically newer than the Dead Sea scrolls). A fragment of Leviticus possibly dates from the 5th century B.C. and is identical with the Massoretic text!
- C. Archaeology- the pottery found in the caves is late Hellenistic (150 B.C.- 63 B.C.) and Early Roman (63 B.C. to A.D. 100). Coin inscriptions range from 135 B.C. to A.D. 135.
- D. By all methods of determination, without doubt, the Dead Sea scrolls are about 1000 years older

than the manuscripts of the Massoretes!

III. The Essenes

- A. Not mentioned in O.T. or N.T.; primary sources of information about them are Philo, Josephus, and Pliny.
- B. While explaining his religion to the Greeks, Josephus spoke of three "philosophies", the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Essenes.
- C. "Essene" was a term used to describe communities of Jews who probably developed as a branch of the Pharisees and existed up to and including the time of Jesus and the apostles.
- D. They separated themselves from the rest of the Jews, regarding themselves as the only true (i.e. pure) Israelites and they refused to participate in what they believed to be the corrupt religious observances of their day.
- E. Their number was about 4000 according to Philo.
- F. Some of their beliefs and characteristics:
 - 1. Simplicity of life- spent much time in study and worship.
 - 2. Industrious- manual labor demanded of all.
 - 3. Practiced a "community of goods" instead of individual ownership.
 - 4. Some renounced marriage.
 - 5. They practiced strict discipline.
 - 6. They repudiated slavery and war.
 - 7. They did not take part in Temple worship.
 - 8. They did not sacrifice animals, regarding a reverent mind as the only sacrifice.
 - 9. They practiced ceremonial cleansing. The the 5th hour, they would assemble, clothed in white veils, and they would bathe in cold water; but they emphasized that the inner man must change to be forgiven.
 - 10. They believed in immortality, but denied a bodily resurrection.
 - 11. They stressed the virtue of hospitality.
- G. The Essenes viewed the study of Scripture as VERY IMPORTANT.
 - 1. "And whatever place there be ten men there shall not cease to be a man who studies the law day and night, constantly, concerning the duties of one toward another. And let 'the many' awake

together a third of all nights of the year in order to read the Book, to study the law, and to worship together" (Manual of Discipline 6:6-8)

2. Assemblies of "the many" had to be given due reverence. If an individual went to sleep during the session, he was punished 30 days (Manual of Discipline 7:10)

3. "The man who departs from a session of the many without permission and without good reason, up to three times during one session, shall be punished ten days" (Manual of Discipline 7:10-11)

4. Purpose of study: To guide in conduct "until the coming of the prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel" (Manual of Discipline 9:11)

IV. Comparison of the Dead Sea Scrolls with the Massoretic Text

A. Similarity- "The two copies of Isaiah discovered in Qumran Cave I proved to be word for word identical with out standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95% of the text. The 5% of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling"- A Survey of O.T. Introduction, p. 25.

B. Differences- Some of the readings in the Dead Sea Scrolls that differ from the Massoretic text are the same as the Septuagint, lending support to the Greek Translation. In a similar way, readings from the Dead Sea Scrolls, when they differ from the Massoretic text, give support to the Samaritan Pentateuch.

C. General faithfulness of the Massoretic text

1. In Isaiah 53, a chapter with 166 words, 17 letters were different. Ten of the letters were a matter of spelling, four were style changes, and the remaining three composed the word "light" which is added in vs. 11 and does not greatly affect the meaning. "Light" is also supported by the Septuagint. This is typical of the amount and the significance of the variations throughout.

2. The first translation to make use of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Revised Standard Version, 1952) adopted 13 readings from them in Isaiah. Eight of these were already known from ancient versions and all were of little consequence.

Conclusion

Without reservation, we can say that our Old Testaments are reliable. The Dead Sea Scrolls allow us to examine the copying of the Scriptures over a 1000 year period. Indeed, they were copied with great care! The Dead Sea Scrolls, when combined with the evidence known prior to their discovery, provide overwhelming evidence that the Word of God has not been corrupted by men, but has been faithfully preserved for our reading.

LESSON THIRTEEN: THE CIRCULATION AND COLLECTION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Introduction

The Old Testament was written to one nation in one geographical spot in the world. Therefore, as men were moved by the Holy Spirit to write (2 Pet 1:20-21), their books were easily and quickly circulated among the Jews and added to the collection of "Scripture". However, the New Testament was written to many different individuals and congregations throughout the Roman Empire. Therefore, it would be expected that it would take time before all of these writings were circulated among all of the disciples of Christ and were collected together into the New Testament. But, as this lesson will show, even in the New Testament itself there is evidence that this important process had begun.

I. God intended that the New Testament writings be a permanent reference work for Christianity

- A. A permanent basis for faith- Jn 20:30-31; 21:24
- B. A permanent explanation of the mystery of Christ- Eph 3:3-5
- C. A permanent reminder for Christians of all pertaining to life and godliness- 2 Pet 1:3- 11, 12-15

II. There are indications of the circulation of the New Testament books

A. Circulation was a necessity because of the writer's audience

1. Some congregational letters were addressed to a larger audience than one congregation- 1 Cor 1:1-2, 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1-2
2. Some letters were "general", written to Christians everywhere- Js 1:1; 1 Pet 1:1, 2 Pet 1:1; Jd 1
3. The book of Revelation was circulated among the seven churches of Asia. The order of the churches is in the form of a circuit- Rev 1:4,11

B. Paul told the Laodiceans and the Colossians to exchange letters- Col 4:16 (The book of "Ephesians" could very well be the letter to the "Laodiceans", see International Standard Bible Encyclopedia)

III. There are indications that not only were the books of the New Testament circulating, but they were being accepted as Scripture and were being collected together.

- A. Paul quotes Luke as "Scripture" (1 Tim 5:17-18, cp. Lk 10:7) with the same authoritative weight as the Old Testament passage he quotes (Dt 25:4).
- B. Peter refers to a collection of Paul's letters and classifies them as "Scripture" (2 Pet 3:14-16)

IV. Conclusion: Even within the New Testament itself we see that the canon is forming as the first readers and the Christians to whom these books were first circulated among received them as

inspired and began to collect them together.

LESSON FOURTEEN: THE CANONIZATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Introduction

How did the 27 books of the New Testament come together as a collection of books considered by all Christians to be inspired? What basis do we have for faith that what we hold in our hands is the complete Word of Jesus (Heb 1:1-2) without addition or subtraction?

I. Review of Terms (cp. Lesson Seven)

- A. Canon- from Greek word "kanon", "a measuring rod, ruler". Figuratively used to mean a "standard or norm" (cp. Gal 6:16, "rule"). Term first used by Athanasius (A.D. 296-373).
- B. Homologomena- Books that have been accepted as inspired by virtually everyone.
- C. Antilogomena- Books that have had their inspiration disputed at some time by some people.
- D. Pseudopigrapha- Books written under pen names of Biblical characters. These were considered as uninspired by virtually everyone.
- E. Apocrypha- Books were put in this category either because they were for the spiritually enlightened or because it was hard to find inspiration in them (the origin of the term "apocrypha" is uncertain). No one accepts any of the N.T. Apocrypha as inspired.

II. Review of Five Tests of Canonicity (cp. Lesson Seven)

- A. Authoritative? Does the book speak with the authority of God?
- B. Prophetic? Was the book written by a prophet?
- C. Authentic? Is the book true when compared to itself and writings recognized as inspired?
- D. Dynamic? Is the book a life-changing message?
- E. Reception? Was the book received as inspired by the first readers? By later readers?

III. Recognition of the New Testament Canon

- A. By individuals- In the writings of the early Christians that have been preserved, all the books but 3 John are quoted before A.D. 150. All books are referred to as authentic but 2 Timothy, Philemon, James, 2 Peter, and 2 & 3 John before A.D. 215.
- B. By various canons- Marcion made a canon to fit his beliefs in A.D. 140 (listing as inspired only Luke and most of Paul's writings). The first legitimate canon was the Muratorian Canon (A.D. 170) that included all of our presently received books except Hebrews, James, and 1 and 2 Peter. All but Revelation was included in the Barococcio Canon (A.D. 206) and the canon made by Athanasius (A.D. 367) included all 27 books in our present New Testament.
- C. By translations- Old Latin (A.D. 150-200) had the same books as the Muratorian Canon. The Old

Syriac (A.D. 400, made from a text from the A.D. 200's) had all but 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation.

D. By councils- Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) recognized all but James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Jude; future councils recognized our present 27 books.

IV. The N.T. Antilogomena (Disputed Books)

- A. Hebrews- Question of authorship. In the East, it was considered to be written by Paul and was readily received. In the West, the authorship was undecided and also the Montanist sect based their false doctrine on it. But, eventually it was decided that while the Montanist doctrine did not agree with the rest of Scripture, Hebrews did.
- B. James- Some questioned the authorship of the book, but the main question was authenticity. The Question was how to reconcile James' teaching of salvation by works with Paul's teaching of salvation by faith, not by works. Martin Luther placed it at the end of his N.T., calling it a "right strawy epistle".
- C. 2 Peter- Authorship was the question. 1 Peter was readily accepted as being authored by Peter. On the surface, 2 Peter seems so different than 1 Peter. However, a closer look reveals similarities.
- D. 2 and 3 John- Authorship was the question. These short letters were of a private nature and enjoyed more limited circulation. The author refers to himself as "the elder" rather than "the apostle". Even so, these book were recognized as inspired sooner than 2 Peter.
- E. Jude- Authencitiy was questioned. Jude refers to pseudopigraphal books, the Book of Enoch (vs. 14-15) and possibly the Assumption of Moses (v. 9). But, compare other citations of uninspired sources: Acts 17:28 (Aratus); 1 Cor 15:32 (Meander); Tit 1:12 (Epimenides). A quotation from a source is not a recognition of the source's inspiration.
- F. Revelation- Authenticity questioned. The Montanist sect developed a millennial doctrine from the book. As with Hebrews, it was finally resolved that the problem was not with the book, but with the interpreters.

V. Conclusion

It is clear that the process of the canonization of the New Testament, like that of the Old, was not a "flip of a coin" or a "voting in of what I like" and a "keeping out of what I don't like". Serious and careful consideration was made of each book, with the proper criteria in mind, over a long period of time. So, with trust in the Providence of God (cp. 1 Pet 1:22-25), we can have the utmost confidence that what we hold in our hands is the complete Testament of Jesus Christ, the imperishable seed of His kingdom, containing everything we need to know for life and godliness.

LESSON FIFTEEN: EVIDENCE FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT

Introduction

We have solid evidence that the 27 books found in the New Testament were the ones authored by Jesus through the Holy Spirit. But, did they remain the words of Jesus after centuries of copying? Or was the message changed into the words of mere men due to errors in the copying process?

I. Overwhelming Manuscript Evidence for the N.T.

- A. While few Hebrew O.T. manuscripts survived, there are over 5,000 manuscripts of the Greek N.T. in the world today! Scholars study this abundant evidence to determine the Greek text from which our English Bibles are translated.
- B. Compare the number of extant (surviving) N.T. manuscripts with the number of extant manuscripts of any other ancient work. Homer's *Illiad* comes in second place with only 643. Most ancient works that are studied without question in high schools and universities are based on fewer than 10 copies.
- C. Not only is the number of extant N.T. manuscripts significant, but the time between the original writing and the date of the first surviving copy is as well. The N.T. has a shorter space between the originals and the first surviving manuscript than any other ancient writing.

II. What does the Greek Manuscript Evidence Consist of?

- A. Papyri- 85 fragments of various sections (i.e. gospels, acts, Paul's letters, general letters, Revelation) of the N.T.
- B. Uncials- 268. These manuscripts were written with all capital letters, had no spaces between the words and no punctuation. This style of writing dates from the 4th to the 9th century. These are the most important evidence of the N.T. as they are the earliest complete manuscripts.
- C. Miniscules- 2,792. These copies were made in small, cursive handwriting. They date from the 9th century until the invention of the printing press in 1454.
- D. Lectionaries- 2,193. Lectionaries are short sections of Scripture. These were used as "Scripture readings" in the church services and date from the 6th century onward.
- E. Ostraca- 25. The ancients "recycled". They wrote on broken pieces of pottery and a few pieces with the N.T. written on them have been found.

III. What Additional Evidence Supports the Text of the N.T.?

- A. "Church Fathers"- The Christians who wrote before A.D. 325, quoted the N.T. 36,000 times. In various writings, they had quoted all but 11 verses of the N.T. by A.D. 200.
- B. Translations- Early translations of the N.T. which have survived include Old Syriac, Syriac, Old Latin (from A.D. 150-200), and the Latin Vulgate (A.D. 384, 10,000 manuscripts in existence)

IV. What are the Most Important Manuscripts?

- A. Vatican (Codex B). This is the earliest and most important. The manuscript dates from the 4th century and contains practically all the O.T. and N.T. It is considered the most exact.
- B. Sinaitic. This copy is considered to be almost as important as the Vatican. It dates from the middle of the 4th century and contains part of the O.T. and the complete N.T.
- C. Alexandrian (Codex A). This manuscript contains most of both Testaments. It dates from the 5th century. Scholars say that its quality is not quite as good as the Vatican and the Sinaitic.
- D. All three of these most important witnesses to the N.T. text were found after the translation of the KJV, yet surely nothing of any major significance has changed in our later English versions because of their discovery!

V. Conclusion

If we can believe the text of any ancient work, we can believe the text of the New Testament!

Thanks be to God, whose Providence has blessed us with such abundant evidence so as to remove all doubt. We have in our hands the words of Jesus, His Son!

How we got the Bible

by Alan Jones

SECTION 3

LESSON SIXTEEN: REASONS FOR TEXTUAL VARIANTS (O.T. AND N.T.)

Introduction

God did not "inspire" those who copied His word. They were subject to human error. In this lesson we will examine the kind of errors that the most careful and conscientious of scribes might make. In the next lesson, we will discuss the number of variant readings that have come down to us because of human error and how they affect our understanding of the revelation of God.

I. Unintentional Copying Errors

A. Errors of the eye

1. Wrong division of words. In the Greek uncials, the letters all ran together. To see what problem this could cause, read the following: HEISNOWHERE. What did you read, "He is now here" or "He is nowhere"? Try again: DIDYOUEVERSEEABUNDANCEONTHETABLE. Did you read, "Did you ever see abundance on the table?" or "Did you ever see a bun dance on the table?" Depends on how you divide the words!!
2. Omission of letters or words (note the missing numbers supplied in italics in 1 Sam 13:1)
3. Omission of whole lines. A common error is called "homoeoteleuton", where two lines end exactly the same way and so one is skipped. Look at Mt 1:1:-17 a likely place this could happen. So many lines could end with "begat" or "was the father of."
4. Repetition of words. In Mt 27:17 some manuscripts read, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus?"
5. Transposition. Sometimes the order of letters or words is reversed. In 2 Chron 3:4, the transposing of two Hebrew letters makes the width of the porch 120 cubits instead of 20 cubits (as in the LXX) and would make the porch not correspond to the width of the house (vs. 3). In the N.T., "Jesus Christ" and "Christ Jesus" are many times found as alternate readings.
6. Confusions of spelling and abbreviation. This was especially a problem with Hebrew letters which were used for numbers and could be easily confused. These errors account for many numerical discrepancies in the O.T. Compare 1 Kgs 4:26 (Solomon had 40,000 stalls for horses and 12,000 horsemen) and 2 Chron 9:25 (Solomon had 4,000 stalls for horses and 12,000 horsemen). A variant reading in 1 Kgs 4:26 says 4,000 stalls in agreement with 2 Chron 9:25 where there is no variant, so 4,000 would be the more accurate figure for his horses. Besides, if he had 40,000 horses, he was really short on riders!

B. Errors of the ear. Sometimes manuscripts were copied by several scribes while one read. If words sounded similar, then the wrong one could be written down. An example: The Greek words "hamon" (our) and "humon" (your) sound similar. Manuscripts differ making it hard to determine if John wrote that "our" joy or "your" joy may be made complete (1 Jn 1:4).

C. Errors of memory. Of course, scribes were not to write from memory, but it would be hard not to. All good manuscripts of Eph 5:9 have "fruit of light", but a few, otherwise good manuscripts have "fruit of the Spirit". Perhaps some scribes had Gal 5:22 in mind instead of the text in front of them.

D. Errors of judgment. This could result from dim lighting or poor eyesight. Also, sometimes, a scribe who was not careful, may have copied someone's notes into the text. One miniscule copy of 2 Cor 8:4-5 incorporates "it is found thus in many of the copies" into the text, obviously adding a scribe's notes.

II. Intentional Changes to the Text (deliberate, but with good intentions)

A. Changes to make the text more readable. Some of the scribes smoothed out language and grammar to correspond to the usage of their day. (Compare in English the old usage, "I shall" with today's usage, "I will".) Also the scribes updated the spelling of words.

B. Changes were made to "harmonize" passages.

- . To make similar passages read exactly the same (e.g. Lk 11:2-4 was changed to read like the more popular version, Mt 6:9-13). Some changed Acts 9:5-6 to make it agree more literally with Acts 26:14-15.
- . To round out the portion of the ten commandments relating to loving one's neighbor, some scribes added "You shall not bear false witness" to Rom 13:9.

C. Changes were made to "correct" the text. Sometimes scribes corrected what they thought were errors.

- . In Rev 1:5, a scribe changed "lusanti" (loosed us from our sins) to "lousanti" (washed us from our sins) Was he trying to make more sense of the passage or, perhaps, did he make an error of the ear since the words sound the same and "washed" makes sense??
- . A scribe changed the "sixth hour" to the "third" hour to correct what he thought was an inaccuracy in Jn 19:14. The scribe was trying to correct a "discrepancy" between John and the other accounts of Jesus' trial and crucifixion, failing to realize that John uses Roman time, while the other accounts use Jewish time and there is no contradiction.
- . A scribe changed Mk 8:31 from "after three days" to "on the third day", in his mind to be more accurate as to when Jesus rose from the dead. He failed to realize that to the Jews the expression "after three days" did not mean "on the fourth day", but "on the third day". His change was actually meaningless and unnecessary.

III. Conclusion

The unintentional human errors we find in the manuscripts of the Bible are those that we would expect to be find. If we did not find them, we would have to conclude that God guided their pens! The intentional changes made to the Scriptures were done to "help" the text in some way and can easily be spotted. The conscientious efforts of these men and the quality of the end product that they produced is our solid basis for confidence in the text of the Bible, even though they were less than perfect.

LESSON SEVENTEEN: NUMBER AND SIGNIFICANCE OF TEXTUAL VARIANTS (O.T., N.T.)

Introduction

God did not guide the pen of each scribe as he copied His word. Despite conscientious effort on the part of the scribes, errors occurred. Therefore there are variations in the extant (surviving) copies of the Old and New Testaments. Just how many variants do the copies contain? How significant are the variants? Should an examination of these variants give us doubt or confidence that God's message has been preserved until our time? In this lesson we will find the answers to these important questions.

I. Variants in the Old Testament Copies

A. There are not very many variant readings of the Old Testament.

1. There are not very many extant (surviving) copies.
2. The copies we have were made by an official class of scribes who followed strict rules.
3. It is believed that the Massorettes destroyed all copies with variant readings.

B. The Samaritan Pentateuch contains about 6,000 variants from the Massoretic text, but most of these are spelling differences. About 1,900 of the variants agree with the Septuagint (LXX).

The significant variants were caused by the Samaritans inserting into the text support for their position that God chose Mt. Gerizim and Shechem as His place for worship rather than Mt. Zion and Jerusalem.

II. Variants in the New Testament Copies

A. There are many variant readings of the New Testament (at last estimate, over 200,000 from 10,000 places in the text) Why so many?

1. There are over 5,000 extant (surviving) copies. The more copies one has to compare, the more differences there will be.
2. The copying of the N.T. was not restricted to professionals following strict rules. Many private and "unofficial" copies were made.
3. In counting variants, if a word is misspelled and then copied 3,000 times then this is counted as 3,000 variants.
4. It must be noted that spelling variants account for the vast majority of the variants.

B. How significant are the variants that occur in 10,000 places in the New Testament text?

1. Brooke Westcott and Fenton Hort, in their standardized text of the New Testament, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, estimated that only about 12.5% of the variants have any weight

(involve more than spelling or style). They said only about 1.7% of the variants are more than trivialities. Therefore, we have a text that is 98.3% pure.

2. Phillip Schaff wrote in his *Companion to the Greek Testament and the English Version* that of the 150,000 variations known in his day, only 400 affected the sense and of these only 50 were of real significance, and of this total not one affected "an article of faith or a precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other and undoubted passages, or by the whole tenor of Scripture teaching."

3. The number of variants is actually a positive. The large number of variants gives us a large body of evidence by which we may review the variants. As strange as it sounds, a study of the many variants actually helps to make the text more sure. Errors in copying can be seen as errors and we can be assured of the correct reading.

Conclusion

An examination of the textual variations of the Old and New Testament texts does not cause us to have doubt, but rather to have faith that the original language text from which our English Bible is translated is trustworthy. The message of God has not been lost in the copying process, but still rings as loud and clear as it did when God inspired men to write it.

LESSON EIGHTEEN: CREATING A STANDARDIZED TEXT (O.T., N.T.)

Introduction

What do we do about all of the variant readings of the Scripture? How do we decide how the text should read? The process of comparing the variants and deciding how the original text read is called textual criticism or lower criticism. The result of this process is a standardized text, or a text which includes what scholars determine to be the best readings. This lesson will explain how scholars review the variants of the Old and New Testaments and arrive at a standardized text.

I. What evidence is used to reconstruct the text of Scripture?

A. O.T. (see lesson 11, Evidence for the Old Testament Text)

Additionally, many quotations have been preserved in the *Talmud* (A.D. 200). The Talmud is the Jewish book of tradition containing the *Mishnah*, a digest of the oral laws, and the *Gemara*, a commentary on the *Mishnah*. Also, quotations of the O.T. are found in the *Midrash*, a commentary on the O.T. a body of material collected together between 100 B.C. and A.D. 300.

B. N.T. (see lesson 15, Evidence for the New Testament Text)

II. How is a standardized text created from the manuscript evidence? Scholars consider many factors.

The following are listed in order of importance:

- A. The reading is found in an older and/or more dependable source? With the O.T., many extant translations are much older than the extant Hebrew manuscripts, but the later original language manuscripts are more important. With the N.T., it is not necessarily the manuscript that is older that has the preferred reading, but the reading that comes from the oldest and best text "type". A "type" is a family of manuscripts that originated in a certain time and place. There are four major textual families, Alexandrian, Caesarean, Western, and Byzantine, in order of importance. The more families that support a reading the more weight in its favor.
- B. More difficult reading? The scribe may have tried to smooth out differences with parallel accounts or differences he thought existed with other Scriptures (cp. Lesson 16, II, B., C.)
- C. Shorter reading? Unless there is evidence of accidental or intentional omission, the shorter reading is preferred. The tendency of scribes was to add rather than subtract from the text.
- D. Reading that best explains the variants? Scholars can see what the original reading must have been before the scribe made an obvious mistake.
- E. Reading with the widest geographical support? The wider the reading is supported, the better.
- F. Reading that conforms to the author's way of writing, his use of grammar and choice of words, his "style"? In looking at style, scholars look for the less refined grammar and expression because

scribes tended to try to "improve" the communication of the message.

G. Reading that reflects no doctrinal bias? The readings where it is obvious that a scribe was trying to enhance or prove a theological point should be rejected.

Conclusion

Scholars' tedious study of the manuscripts and rules for determining the best reading among the variants give us every confidence that we have the best possible text of Scripture to use for translation into English, a text that has been faithfully preserved so as to reflect the mind of God, not man.

LESSON NINETEEN: SOME "SIGNIFICANT" NEW TESTAMENT TEXTUAL VARIANTS

Introduction

None of the variants in the O.T. or N.T. text are "significant" in that they affect our understanding of God or His will for our lives. However, some variants are "significant" in the fact that they consist of more than a difference in spelling or one omitted word. In this lesson, we will examine the five most "significant" variants in the N.T. These affect a verse or a group of verses.

John 5:3b-4

"waiting for the moving of the waters; for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he as afflicted." (KJV)

The earliest and best manuscripts do not contain this ending to vs. 3 or vs. 4.

It is not found in the Bodmer Papyri A.D. 200 or the oldest complete N.T. manuscripts, Sinaiticus and Vaticanus (4th century);

Alexandrian (5th century) contains this text.

1 John 5:7

"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." (KJV).

The ASV and RSV omit without explanation due to the lack of any credible textual evidence.

This sentence had support from Vulgate, but not from any Greek manuscript. Erasmus was challenged as to why he did not include it in his Greek text of 1516 and 1519, he replied that if anyone would produce evidence for it one Greek manuscript, he would include it in his next edition. One 16th century miniscule from 1520 was found and in 1522, Erasmus kept his promise and put the verse in his the third edition of his Greek text. William Tyndale was the first to translate the N.T. into English from Greek and he used Erasmus' third edition. All English translations down to and including the KJV followed Erasmus' third and included the verse. So on the basis of one insignificant, late manuscript all the weight of some 5,000 Greek manuscripts was disregarded in favor of this text. What an injustice to the rules of textual criticism!! Later, one other late Greek manuscript was found containing 1 Jn 5:7. Both manuscripts containing the verse were translated from Latin.

Acts 8:37

"And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus is the Son of God."

Not found in the ASV or RSV.

Supported by a seventh century uncial, some good miniscules, and the Old Latin version, but all other manuscripts and versions stand against it.

John 7:53-8:11

This section is put in brackets by the ASV with a note that most ancient authorities omit it. It is in a footnote of RSV with a note that other ancient authorities place it there, at the end of John's gospel, or after Lk 21:38.

It is not in the oldest and best Gr. manuscripts.

Not in any Gr. manuscripts until Bezae (A.D. 550) (known for peculiar readings). It is not found in any other manuscripts again until the 8th century.

Not in Tatian (parallel gospel from A.D. 170) or early translations such as Old Syriac, Syriac Peshitta, Coptic, Gothic, and Old Latin.

No Greek writer refers to it until the 12th century.

Scribes placed it in several other locations: some after Jn 7:36, after Jn 21:24; after Jn 7:44; or after Lk 21:38. Many of the manuscripts of these indicate that this text is doubtful.

Mark 16:9-20

Verses are lacking in many of the oldest and best Greek manuscripts, including Vatican and Sinaiticus (4th century).

They are also missing from the earliest known manuscript of the Old Syriac translation.

Many of the ancient Fathers show no knowledge of it. Jerome (A.D. 340-420) said "almost all Greek copies do not have this concluding portion." Some who did include it had an asterisk or other symbol to indicate that it is a spurious addition.

In support of this ending of Mark, there is a plain statement from Irenaeus in the second century that shows the existence of Mark 16:9-20 and the belief that Mark was its author. Also this ending of Mark is found in a vast number of uncial manuscripts, most miniscules, most old Latin manuscripts, the Vulgate, and in some Syriac and Coptic manuscripts.

There is an insertion into Mk 16:9-20 found only in Codex W (fourth or fifth century). After Mk 16:14, the manuscript reads:

"And they excused themselves, saying, "This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who does not allow the truth and power of God to prevail over the unclean things of the spirits. Therefore reveal thy righteousness now"- thus they spoke of Christ. And Christ replied to them, "The term of years for Satan's power has been fulfilled, but other terrible things draw near. And for those who have sinned I was delivered over to death, that they may return to the incorruptible glory of righteousness which is in heaven."

There is another ending which occurs in several uncials, a few minuscules and several copies of ancient versions- "But they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that they had been told. And after this Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation."

CONCLUSION

The evidence is against the above passages being included in the New Testament text. But not even these "major" variants call in to question anything about our knowledge of God and His Son or affect the teaching and practice of Christianity in any way.

LESSON TWENTY: THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE

Introduction

We have studied how the inspired writings were collected, received as inspired, and copied, as well as how reliable standardized texts have been made from the copies. In all of this we have found abundant evidence to trust that the Bible is the Word of God. All that remains to be studied is the translation of the reconstructed texts of the original languages into English. A reliable translation into our language is the last link in the chain to complete our confidence that what God breathed out long ago is what we are able to read, study, obey, and be saved by today. Let's begin to look at this last link.

I. The earliest translations of the Bible into Old English (prior to A.D. 1100)

- A. First translation of any part of the Bible was by Aldhelm (640-709)- Psalms.
- B. Egbert, in 705, translated Matthew, Mark, and Luke
- C. Bede (famous for his "ecclesiastical history") finished his translation of John just prior to his death. He suffered much the last days of his life, but compelled his scribe to take dictation until the last verse was written. He then sang a chant, "Gloria" and died.
- D. King Alfred (849-901)- translated Psalms and some other sections of Scripture. He also made a Latin-English interlinear out of a Latin copy of the Gospels

II. Middle English: Partial Versions & the First Complete Translation (A.D. 1100-1400)

- A. Orm (Ormin) (1200) This monk wrote a poetical paraphrase of the Gospels and Acts. He wrote this explanation of his work, "If anyone wants to know why I have done this deed, I have done it so that all young Christian folk may depend upon the gospel only and may follow with all their might its holy teaching in thought, in word and deed."
- B. English translation of the Psalms around 1320-40 by William of Shoreham and Richard Rolle is said to have planted the seed of a struggle to put the Bible in the hands of the common people.
- C. John Wycliffe (A.D. 1330-1384), the "Morning Star of the Reformation". He was an Oxford Scholar and the people's champion over Papal oppression. He said, "No man was so rude a scholar but that he might learn the words of the Gospel according to his simplicity." Therefore, he made it his life's ambition that the simplest of English men might understand the Word of God. He translated the Bible into English from Latin manuscripts. He completed the N.T. around 1382, while the O.T. was completed by Nicholas of Herford in 1388, a few years after Wycliffe's death. The Wycliffe translation was the first complete translation of the Bible into English. John Purvey thoroughly corrected and revised the Wycliffe Bible and his 1395

edition served as the Bible of the Englishman until the 16th century. Traveling priests called the "Lollards" read and preached Wycliffe's Bible throughout the countryside. Wycliffe's work was later tied in with that of the Reformer, John Hus, who was put to death for his "heresy". Consequently, the persecutors of the Reformers, dug up Wycliffe's body in 1428 and burned it. His ashes were scattered over the River Swift.

III. The Tyndale Bible, the first English Bible translated from the Original Languages

- A. William Tyndale (1492-1536) True "father" of the English Bible. In 1509, Erasmus came to Cambridge as professor of Greek. In 1510, Tyndale came as a student, after studying at Oxford. While in college, he made it his ambition to give the English people a translation based on the original languages. In those days, a man told Tyndale, "better without God's law than without the Pope's". Tyndale replied, "I defy the Pope and all His laws; if God spare my life, ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth the plow shall know more of the Scripture than thou doest." Perhaps he derived his inspiration from his teacher, Erasmus, who once said, "I would to God the plowman would sing a text of the scripture at his plow, and the weaver at his loom with this would drive away the tediousness of time. I would that the wayfaring man with this pastime would expel the weariness of his journey."
- B. In 1524, Tyndale began his work of translation. Because of opposition in England, he had to go to Hamburg, Germany to do it. But even living abroad, at times he had to flee. His work identified him with Luther who had just finished his German translation and, of course, was leading Reformation efforts. The first printing of Tyndale's N.T. was made in 1526. Copies were smuggled into England. Officials of the Church condemned the translation. They paid for incoming copies. They burned them in public ceremonies.
- C. By 1530, Tyndale had translated the Pentateuch and by 1531 he had done Jonah. He published a revision of Genesis in 1534 and two additional editions of his N.T. in 1534-35. He was imprisoned in 1534. He continued to work on the rest of the O.T. However, he never completed it. In 1536. He was strangled and burned at the stake. His final words were, "Lord open the king of England's eyes."
- D. Truly, as one writer said of Tyndale, "he was a man of sufficient scholarship to work from Hebrew and Greek, with genius to fashion a fitting English idiom, and faith and courage to persist whatever it cost him."

IV. Other Early English Bibles

- A. Coverdale Bible (1535)- Miles Coverdale (1488-1569) was the first to translate the complete Bible from the original languages. He was a friend and associate of Tyndale. He used Latin, German, and Tyndale's translation to come up what has been described as a translation that is Tyndale's revised by the German. He was the first to separate the Apocrypha from the rest of the O.T. His translation

became the first to circulate in England without official hindrance.

- B. Matthews Bible (1537)- This was the work of another one of Tyndale's friends, John Rogers (1500-1555). His pen name was Thomas Matthew. He used a pen name so that the translation would not bear his name. He did not think that his name should be attached to the translation since it was essentially the work of others. His translation combined the work of Tyndale and Coverdale. It was the first English Bible to be circulated with the King of England's consent.
- C. Taverner's Bible (1539)- This was an independent revision of Matthew's Bible. The translation of the N.T. was improved.
- D. Great Bible (1539)- another revision of Matthew's Bible. It was edited by Coverdale. Henry VIII authorized it to be used in the churches saying, "In God's name, let it go abroad among our people." The preface read, "This Bible is appointed to the use of the churches." A copy was placed in every church in the land. Preachers complained because the people chose to read the Bible rather than to listen to their sermons.

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- E. Geneva Bible (1560)- This translation was different in that it was a careful collaboration of many scholars rather than only one or a few. It was also called the "Breeches Bible" because of its translation of Gen 3:7 where it reads that Adam and Eve "sewed figge tree leaves together, and made themselves breeches." The basic text of the translation was Tyndale, but it used the latest textual evidence available. It was the family Bible, the home Bible, while the Great Bible was the Bible of the church. It was the first Bible to print each verse as a paragraph and to put words in italics that were not represented in the original texts. It went through 140 editions prior to 1644. It retained its popularity through the first generation of the KJV. It was the Bible of Shakespeare and the Pilgrims. The commentary it contained reflected the views of John Calvin and the Reformation.
- F. Bishop's Bible (1568)- As the name suggests, most of the translators were bishops in the Anglican Church. This was a revision of the Great Bible used in the churches. Church leaders did not like the Geneva Bible because of its commentary. Yet, because of the popularity of the Geneva Bible, the people did not like the Great Bible. So, the Church leaders put out a new translation, what they called "a compromise- a dignified and 'safe' version for public reading." This was the Bible used by the churches from 1568-1611. A second edition was published in 1572 and its last printing was in 1602.
- G. Rheims-Douai Bible (1582; 1609-10)- Though the Catholic Church opposed the Bible being put into the hands of the common man in his own language and did everything they could to stop it, it happened anyway. So, eventually they were forced to "join the parade" and make their own English translation, one in which they could put their own commentary, answering the Protestants,

and one in which they could place the Apocrypha in the "canonical" position that was decreed in the Council of Trent in 1546. In the preface, the translators said that they guarded themselves "against the idea that the Scriptures should always be in our mother tongue, or that they ought, or were ordained by God, to be read indifferently by all." Their translation was from the Latin Vulgate. Still trying to keep the understanding of the Bible from the common man, they introduced excessive "Latinisms", that is they were overly literal in their translation, making it harder to be understood in English.

Conclusion

History can only help us to imagine what kind of struggle that it took to get the Bible into the hands of the common man in his own language, so that he did not have to be well versed in Hebrew, Greek, or Latin to understand it. Those who translated the Bible into English surely were in the forefront of this battle. Some men paid with their lives. We are indebted. Let us show our appreciation by reading and by studying, and especially by living the Scriptures. Putting the Scriptures into our life is the best translation of all.

LESSON TWENTY-ONE: THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE CONTINUED

Introduction

From William Tyndale to the Geneva Bible and the Bishop's Bible great strides had been made in providing the English-speaking world with an accurate understanding of the Word of God. The process of making new translations to increase accuracy and to keep up with current English usage continued with the King James Version. We must understand that it will ever be ongoing due to the discovery of new manuscript evidence and changes in the English language. In this lesson, we will track many of the English translations from the King James Version until our day.

I. The King James Version

- A. The need for a new translation was proposed to King James in 1604. He agreed that one should be made that was satisfactory to all for both public and private use. Remember that at this time, the Geneva Bible was being used at home, while the Bishop's Bible was being used in the churches. The most important decision that King James made about this translation was that there were to be no notes or comments except those that had to do with the translation of the text. In this way, doctrinal bias was kept out and the Bible was made satisfactory to all.
- B. The KJV was a revision of the 1602 edition of the Bishop's Bible. It was the work of 48 choice Hebrew and Greek scholars. They were divided into 6 companies. Each was assigned a portion of Scripture to translate according to detailed instructions. They reviewed each other's work. Delegates of each company met to smooth out the difficult spots. The work began in 1607. After 2 years and 9 months, the translation went to the printer and it was published in 1611.
- C. The title page read, "Appointed to be Read in the Churches". In a section called, "The Translators to the Reader", the translators sought to justify their work in view of the attitude of "our old Bibles are good enough". The KJV was immediately used in the churches, but took a few decades to replace the Geneva Bible for private use.
- D. The KJV has undergone numerous revisions to harmonize spelling and to get rid of antique words. The last revision was made by Dr. Blayney of Oxford in 1769. This revision differs from the original 1611 King James in over 75,000 details. Dr. Blayney's revision made over 200 years ago is what we know as the KJV today.
- E. Why did the KJV win the hearts of its first readers and retain such popularity even until today?
 - F. It was timely. A new translation was needed.
 - G. It was a national effort, headed by the King.
 - H. The revision was not the work of one man or party.
 - I. Great scholars, men of skill and piety, were chosen to do the work.

- J. Great progress had been made in the understanding of Hebrew and Greek.
- K. The translators could "stand on the shoulder's" of the English translators before them.
- L. The translators had an effective system of cooperative work.
- M. The literary atmosphere of the day, the style and artistic touch, went into the translation.

II. The English Revised Version; The American Standard Version

- A. It was decided at the Convocation of the Prince of Canterbury in 1870 that a full revision of the KJV was necessary. The work of translation began in 1871, with 65 British scholars from various denominations involved. American scholars were asked to join the work in 1872.
- B. British scholars spent six years making the first revision and then two and a half years considering the suggestions of American scholars before sending the Bible to print. On May 17, 1881 the N.T. was published. On May 22, 1881 the entire N.T. was published in the Chicago Times and the Chicago Tribune. In 1885, the O.T. was issued. The entire Bible (ERV) was published in 1898. The biggest format change from the KJV was the printing of the text in true paragraph form.
- C. The American revision committee had agreed to wait at least 14 years before issuing an American English Version. In 1901, they published the American Standard Version. The Americans revised and shortened the paragraph structure and added short page heading, in addition to changing some of the words to reflect American rather than British usage.

III. The Revised Standard Version

- A. In 1937 the International Council of Religious Education authorized the revision of the American Standard Version. Many new manuscripts, both Biblical and secular, had been found. Great advances continued to be made in Biblical scholarship. And, of course, the style of English had continued to change. The aim of the translators was to combine the accuracy of the ASV with the eloquence of the KJV. The work was done by 22 outstanding scholars, 9 working on the N.T. and 13 on the O.T. The N.T. group included well known scholars, Edgar Goodspeed and James Moffatt. Revisions to the ASV could only be made if 2/3 of them agreed.
- B. "You" and "Yours" replaced "Thou" and "Thine", except when referring to God. The translation was made clearer by a more direct word order.
- C. The N.T. was published in 1946 and the O.T. in 1952. The O.T. was the first to make use of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

IV. The New American Standard Version

- A. In 1959, another revision of the ASV was launched. The goal was to translate the Bible in more current English, while preserving the accuracy of the ASV. Of course, the most recent manuscript discoveries would be taken into account.

B. Important changes include the removal of all old English pronouns, even in respect to God; the translation of Greek verbs according to modern English usage, and the use of English idiom instead of a word for word translation whenever necessary to make the meaning clearer (the literal translation is put in the footnotes).

C. The N.T. was completed in 1963, while the O.T. was finished in 1971.

V. The New King James Version

A. The translators of the NKJV made their goal the same as the 1611 KJV translators, not "to make a new translation, but to make a good one better." They Wanted to modernize the English, while keeping the same thought flow of the 1611 Bible. Their aim was that a reader could listen to the reading of either edition while following along with the other.

B. The preface comments, "The real character of the Authorized version does not reside in its archaic pronouns or verbs, or other grammatical forms of the seventeenth century, but rather in the care taken by its scholars to impart the letter and spirit of the original text in a majestic and reverent style."

C. They kept the Textus Receptus that was used for the KJV for their Greek text (even though the best manuscripts have been discovered since the Textus Receptus), noting major critical variants from other Texts in the margin. They point out that 85% of the N.T. text is the same in the Textus Receptus, Alexandrian Text, and Majority Text.

D. The N.T. was printed in 1979 and the O.T. in 1982.

VI. Independent Versions

A. The versions discussed so far in this history version are all related to each other. They all are revisions that come from Tyndale and Coverdale (except for the Geneva Bible). See the chart on page 51. It is remarkable that 90% of our N.T. text today is still a product of the work of Tyndale, who was much more limited in his understanding of Biblical languages and in the availability of Biblical manuscripts than later scholars!) Let's briefly note two completely independent group translations. (Countless independent translations have been made by individuals, but it is beyond the scope of this course to tell their history and to evaluate them)

B. The New English Bible (1961)- This was the first modern version translated by a group of Protestants that completely departed from the respected ancestry of the Tyndale-KJV tradition. The translators also broke away from the "word for word" principle in the interest of replacing Greek constructions and idioms by those of contemporary English. They made a "sense for sense" translation rather than a "word for word".

C. The New International Version (1973, N.T., 1978, O.T.)- This was a completely new translation made by over 100 scholars directly from the best available Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. It is perhaps the most systematic translations ever made. Groups of scholars translated various portions of Scripture. Then their work went through three reviews and revisions made by

committees, the last one being a committee of 15 of the foremost scholars who oversaw the whole translation. As with the NEB, the concern was for the translation of the sense of the words rather than a "word for word" translation.

THE ENGLISH BIBLE: FROM TYNDALE TO TODAY

Tyndale (INCOMPLETE) (1524-1536) Coverdale (COMPLETE) (1535)

MATTHEWS (1537)

TAVERNER'S (1539) GREAT BIBLE (1539)

Geneva (independent) (1560) BISHOP'S BIBLE (1568)

KING JAMES VERSION (1611)

ENGLISH REVISED (1881/1885) AMERICAN STANDARD (1901)

REVISED STANDARD (1946/1952) NEW AMERICAN STANDARD (1963/1971)

Independents:

NEW ENGLISH BIBLE (1961) NEW KING JAMES VERSION (1979/1982)

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (1973/1978)

Conclusion

The history of the English Bible is the story of how English speaking men who are experts in the original languages of the Bible have spent countless hours making sure that their generation understands as accurately and as clearly as possible the Word of God in the English language. Thanks to their efforts we who are unlearned in the original languages may understand and obey our Creator and, through His Son Jesus Christ, we may enter into a relationship with Him now that lasts forever.

LESSON TWENTY-TWO: A REVIEW OF A FEW ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

Introduction

The author of these lessons has not made reviews of translations, nor does he possess the skills to do so. In this lesson, he will present information from reviews of some English translations that those with the expertise to do so have taken the time to make a careful review.

I. The King James Version

- A. The King James Version, though it has not been updated in its language since 1769, remains popular in the English-speaking world today. See lesson 20 for the reasons that it was so well received and has continued in popularity. But, the version does have some weaknesses we should note:
 - B. The textual base of the translation is not as good as the textual base available today, especially when we speak of the Greek text of the New Testament. The four most valuable witnesses to the N.T. text, the Vatican, Sinaitic, Alexandrian, and Ephraem manuscripts had not yet been found when the KJV was translated or even when it was last revised.
 - C. Since the KJV has not been revised since 1769, it contains many archaic words. These words are either unknown or misleading to today's reader. Some examples of misleading words are "allege" instead of "prove" (Acts 17:3); "communicate" instead of "share" (Gal 6:6); "suffer" instead of "allow" (1 Tim 2:12); "allow" instead of "approve" (Lk 11:48); "let" instead of "hinder" (Rom 1:13); "prevent" instead of "precede" ((1 Thess 4:15); "conversation" instead of "conduct" (Phil 1:27)
 - D. Translation was made according to the best knowledge of Hebrew and Greek at that time, but so much more is known of these languages now. Advancements in learning have brought translation errors of the KJV to light. Examples: "observed him" in Mk 6:20 should be "kept him safe"; "hell" in many places should be "hades" (such as in Mt 16:18)

II. The American Standard Version

- A. This revision of the KJV cleared up many archaic expressions. Some examples are "spoke first to him" replaced "prevented him" (Mt 17:25), "baggage" replaced "carriages" (Acts 21:15), "made a circuit" replaced "fetched a compass" (Acts 28:13), "hinder" replaced "let" (Rom 1:13), "in nothing be anxious" replaced "be careful for nothing" (Phil 4:6); and "grandchildren" replaced "nephews" (1 Tim 5:4)
- B. However, some archaic expressions were retained, such as "glory" (Mt 6:2, better translated "praise"), "dispute" (Mk 9:34; better translated "discuss"), "doctor" (Lk 5:17; better translated "teacher"), "allege" (Acts 17:3; better translated "prove") "communicate" (Gal 6:6; better translated "share"). The verb archaic verb ending "eth" was also retained.
- C. And, unfortunately many archaisms were added by the translators to give the text a more "Biblical" flavor; words such as "aforetime" (Rom 15:4), "would fain" (Lk 15:16), "howbeit" (Gal 4:8), "lest

haply" (Acts 5:39), "God-ward" (1 Thess 1:8), "us-ward" (Eph 1:19) and "you-ward" (Gal 5:10) found their way into the text.

- D. Though the ASV is considered very true to the original languages, Charles Spurgeon reflected the thought of many about it when he said that it was "strong in Greek, weak in English."

III. The Revised Standard Version

- A. Overall, this translation is said to be more clear and precise than the ASV. Some examples include "delight in riches" instead of "deceitfulness of riches" (Mt 13:22); "fraud" instead of "error" in Mt 27:64; "after the Sabbath" instead of "late on the Sabbath" (Mt 28:1); "until an opportune time" instead of "for a season" (Lk 4:13); "all of them" instead of "both of them" (Acts 19:16); "God's field" instead of "God's husbandry" (1 Cor 3:9); "peddlers of God's word" instead of "corrupting the word of God" (2 Cor 2:17); "commonwealth" instead of "citizenship" (Phil 3:20); "in idleness" instead of "disorderly" (2 Thess 3:6)
- B. The most severe criticism of the RSV is its translation, "young maiden" instead of "virgin" in Isa 7:14. In defense of the translators, a "young maiden" was naturally assumed to be a "virgin". Therefore, the translation does not take away from the prediction of the miraculous birth of the Christ as fulfilled in the birth of Jesus.

IV. The New English Bible

- A. This translation, like most of our modern translations is a "sense for sense" translation rather than a "word for word" translation. In reality, all translations, from Tyndale on down, have to be somewhat this way due to the idioms of language. Some translations are just more "sense of sense" and less "word for word" than others. The question that must be asked about any translation is, "Does it reflect the meaning of the language it was translated from?" The NEB generally is thought to be successful in its aim to accurately translate the original languages into modern speech. However, sometimes it slips over into the role of "commentator" rather than "translator".
- B. The NEB often goes away from the textual authorities with the most weight when there are variant readings to sort out.
- C. As this translation was done by those from Scotland, Wales, Ireland, it contains many Anglican or "non-American" terms. Here are a few examples from the book of Mark:
- D. "make away with him" (3:6), cp. "destroy him" (NASV)
 - E. "the young corn was scorched" (4:6), cp. "it was scorched" (NASV)
 - F. "meal-tub" (4:21), cp. "basket" (NASV)
 - G. "took to their heels" (5:14), cp. "ran away" (NASV)
 - H. "fell foul of him" (6:4), cp. "took offense at him" (NASV)
 - I. "farmsteads" (6:56), cp. "villages" (NASV)

J. "rounded on him" (10:48), cp. "were sternly telling him" (NASV)

K. "tethered" (11:2), cp. "tied" (NASV)

L. "truckle to no man" (12:14), cp. "defer to no man" (NASV)

M. "cudgels" (14:43), cp. "clubs" (NASV)

V. The New International Version

- A. There is much good to say about the preparation of this translation (see lesson 20). Its greatest strength is said to be its translation of the O.T. Perhaps it is the most readable O.T.
- B. Scholars who have reviewed this translation say that it is sometimes "too free" in its translation in its attempt to be more readable. It departs too much from the literal rendering of the words.
- C. The chief criticism of the NIV is that the Calvinistic doctrine held by many of the translators comes out in the text, especially in the translation of "flesh" as "sinful nature" in Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Colossians, and 2 Peter. Also, in 1 Cor 2:14 instead of translating the natural man" or the "unspiritual" man, the NIV reads "the man without the Spirit", implying that man cannot understand the Bible apart from the Holy Spirit's help. This is the Calvinistic teaching that man is by nature so wicked that he can do nothing good without God's help. Man must get his understanding, faith, etc. from God if he is to have it at all.

Conclusion

No translation of the Bible in any language is perfect. To those who hold the KJV to be the version "inspired and authorized by God", what about the translation of "Easter" for Passover" in Acts 12:4 or the transliteration "baptism" instead of the translation "immersion"? On the other hand no legitimate attempt to translate the Bible from the original languages is so flawed that man cannot understand the will of God in his own language. The imperfections of the translation process point out the value of referring to several translations, especially when the understanding of a word or phrase is crucial to one's obedience to God.

LESSON TWENTY-THREE: HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR BIBLE

Introduction

We must be careful in choosing our Bibles so that when we read we can rest assured that what we are reading are not the words of men, but the words of God, who revealed His mind to us in human language. Here are some questions that we need to ask when we are considering which translation to use for reading and study.

Questions to Ask When Choosing a Bible

1. Is this a translation or a paraphrase?
2. Was this translation made from the original languages in which God revealed His will?
3. What original language text was this translation based on?
4. Was the translation done by a committee or just one man?
5. What religious background did the translators come from? Was the translation made by men from different denominations or were they all from the same one?
6. Is the translation "word for word" as much as is possible or is it primarily "thought for thought"?
7. When the translators had to go away from a "word for word" translation in order to express the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek idioms in English, did they supply the literal "word for word" translation as a footnote? Did they put any words that they supplied in italics?
8. Is the translation easily understandable to you?

Conclusion

Several reliable translations are available. Have several in your home to use for reading and study. Don't rely on only one translation. Compare several reliable ones so that you may clearly and accurately understand the Word of God.

We conclude our series of lessons with the words of Neil Lightfoot that we now understand so well, "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 to generation the message of salvation. The Bible did not just happen nor has it been preserved through the years by mere chance." - How We Got the Bible, p. 11. *"The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the Word of the Lord endures forever."* (1 Pet 1:24)

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