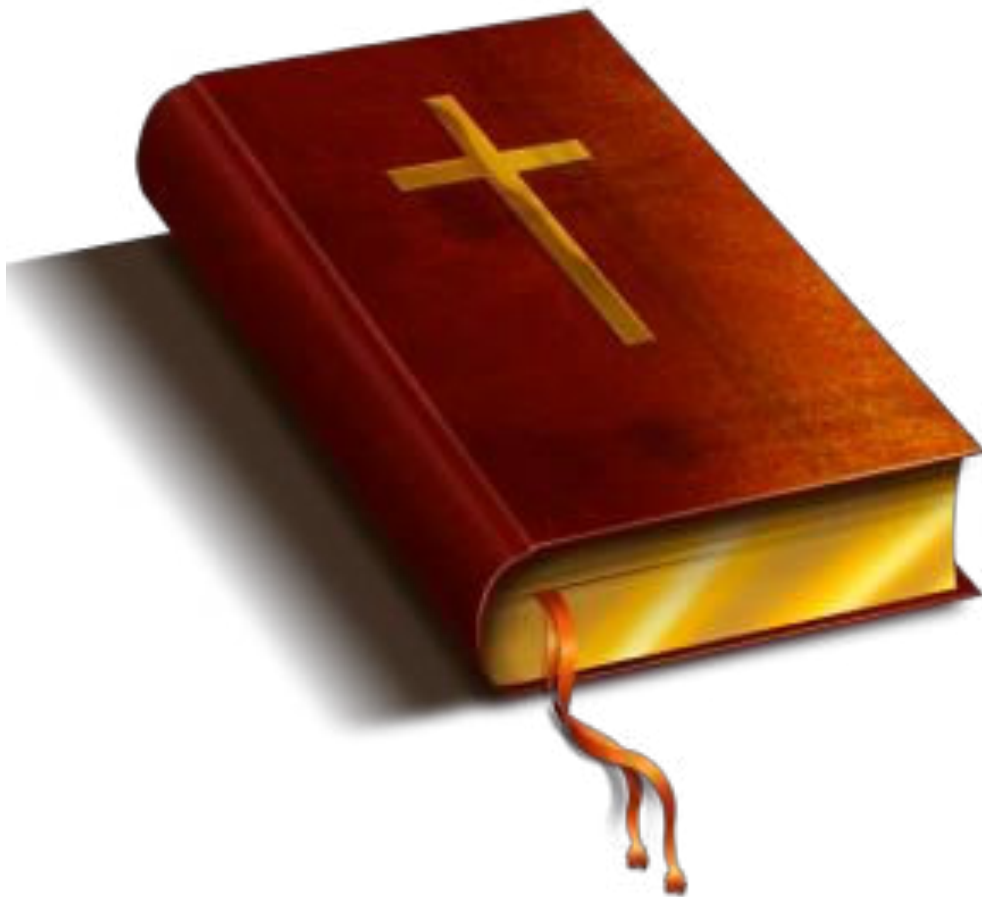


**Basic Training Bible Ministries**  
**Presents**

**“The Doctrine of Canoncity”**



**How We Got Our Bible and  
How We Know It Is Divinely Inspired**



# **The Doctrine of Canonicity**

## **How We Got Our Bible**

### **How We Know It Is Divinely Inspired**

#### **CLASS ONE**

#### **Introduction**

We are living in historic, dare I say prophetic, times! God is moving in amazing ways in our nation, and around the world. After years of darkness and deception, we are seeing a dawning of the restoration of truth and normality. All across our land people are waking up, rather than being woke. The dominion of the fake news media has been shattered. People no longer trust the “experts” who have lied to us for years. No longer do the voices of the elitist politicians and entertainers have any weight. There is an awakening across our land that is gaining force and power by the day. However, we must be aware that the enemy will not take these defeats lying down. There will be a counterattack!

Also, political victory and correction will never bring the deliverance our nation so greatly needs. It must be followed by a genuine, spiritual awakening, and this can only come from a clear and mighty proclamation of the Word of God. When we read that “*The time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God*” (1 Pet. 4:17), we generally take this in the negative sense. We recognize that God disciplines His own children before He judges those who reject Jesus Christ. But God’s Word assures us that “*if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged*” (1 Cor. 11:31).

I believe that God has displayed His mighty power and His abiding presence among us. Now the question is this: Will the Church—the Body of Christ—lay aside all our human encumbrances, and turn to Him with all our hearts, so that we may run with endurance the race He has set before us (Heb. 12:1–2), with our eyes and hearts fixed on Him who leads the way to ever greater victory and blessing?

We are at possibly the final crossroad of our history and, as great as is the potential for victory, so also is the awful possibility for failure, and fiery judgment if we fail. For these reasons I am guided by the Spirit to spend a few sessions on the Doctrine of Canonicity, with the prayer that God will light a fire in our souls, not just to exult in the political/philosophical victories He has given us. But that we might be warned that this has been done to put each one of us to the test. Today the question that needs to be answered by each and every believer is: Will I also wake up to play my part in greater devotion to His Word and His will, and will I strain every fiber of my being to strive for the high calling that I have in Christ (Phil. 3:7–14)?

May we not fail such a glorious opportunity to turn the hearts and minds of many to the truth of God’s holy and eternal Word!

## The Answer to Life

A software company in Denmark wanted to use AI technology to try to answer the age-old question: “What is the meaning of life?” They had their AI bot examine millions of pages of material: subjects ranging from science, art, religion, philosophy, and history, to the writings of Plato and Socrates. It examined articles on quantum mechanics, classic literature, volumes of encyclopedias, and the writings of the greatest human minds. After weeks, the AI bot was asked by researchers to reveal its best answer in just one sentence. The researchers could not believe what they saw on the screen: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

## The Bible

*“The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable.”* Gideon Bible

To which I would add, Its prophecies are certain! Our Bible was written over 1,500 years by over 40 different authors, which included kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, physicians, poets, statesmen, scholars, and farmers. The Bible was written by, and for, men of all stations in life. It contains over 300 prophecies of Jesus’ first coming—all accurately fulfilled—and around 500 that foretell His second coming. It is prophecy, both in its proclamation and fulfillment, that proves inspiration.

But how did our Bible come down to us? How can we be assured that it is inspired by God, and that its ancient writings are accurate?

The answers to these questions are found in the Doctrine of Canonicity. The word comes from the Greek word *kanon*, which means, “a rule, a unit of measure, an absolute standard.” It is from this word that we get the phrase, “the completed Canon of Scripture.” This means that in our Bible we have the whole and complete counsel of God given to mankind.

This word occurs only five times in our New Testament and is used only by the Apostle Paul. Perhaps the best passage to give us an idea of its meaning is looking at Paul’s words in Galatians 6:15–16.

*“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule [kanon], peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.”*

Here, the apostle declares that there is an absolute rule or standard of conduct for believers, and it is that which proclaims the new creation of God, as revealed in our Bible. Paul uses the word again in Philippians 3:15–16.

*“Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the*

*degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule [kanon],  
let us be of the same mind.”*

The verses quoted above, in light of the context of vv. 7–14, challenge us to ever be intent on the pursuit of greater spiritual insight, understanding, and obedience to the revealed will of God presented in the Bible.

There are three other uses of *kanon* by Paul found in 2 Corinthians 10:13, 15, and 16. In this text, Paul is contrasting his divine commission versus the self-appointed preachers who were his rivals in Corinth. There is a wordplay in the text that does not come through in English, for he contrasts his obedience to “*the limits of the sphere [kanon] which God appointed us*” with those who “*boast beyond measure [metron]*.” He is saying that his rule (*kanon*) of faith and life is the absolute Word of God, where his critics use a purely human measure (*metron*). In other words, he held himself to the rule of God, not the measure (*metron* = meter) of men.

Origen, the third-century church father, used the word “*canon*” to refer to the “*rule of faith*” for believers.

### **The Nature of the Word of God**

*“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”  
Matthew 24:35*

Here, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Author of all Scripture, assures us that not one word of His will ever pass away. This is critical in so many ways, but one example will be sufficient to illustrate the point. The book of Hebrews has no author’s name attached to it. Bible students have argued over this for centuries. However, in 2 Peter 3:15–16, Peter tells his readers, who were Jewish believers scattered by persecution (1 Pet. 1:1–2; 2 Pet. 3:1), that the Apostle Paul had also written to them, and he identifies this epistle as “*Scripture*” (2 Pet. 3:16b). If Paul was not the author of the book of Hebrews, then his epistle/Scripture to these Jewish believers has been lost. This would mean that we do not have all the Scriptures, and what Jesus said above could not be true!

*“All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass.  
The grass withers; and its flower falls away, but the word of the  
Lord endures forever.” 1 Peter 1:24–25*

Here again we are given the assurance that God not only has inspired His Word, but that He also will preserve it forever. He will let none of His words fall to the ground (1 Sam. 3:19).

When Peter wrote his second epistle, he knew that his death, which Jesus had predicted (John 21:18), was drawing near (2 Pet. 1:13–14). His courage in the face of his coming crucifixion (tradition tells us he was crucified upside down at his own request, as he said he was not worthy to die as his Savior did), was based on his absolute certain conviction that the Word of God was a sure foundation for eternal life.

*“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory; ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.” 2 Peter 1:16–18*

Here, Peter refers to the experience on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–8). Now many would argue that Peter, James, and John had a special advantage over us, for they saw and heard these things. But Peter goes on to make his most critical point in the next verse.

*“And so we have the prophetic word confirmed [made sure], which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Peter 1:19–21*

What Peter says here is most important for us to understand. It is not in special, spiritual experiences that we may have, however valid, that our hope rests. Rather it is in the infallible, eternal, Word of God.

*“All Scripture is given by inspiration [literally, God breathed] of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete [mature], thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16–17*

Here, Paul gives us the full scope of the benefits of learning and applying Scripture to life. God bases all of these benefits on the inspiration of Scripture. In the original Greek, the phrase “God breathed” (*Theopneustos*) speaks of its life-giving force. Just as God breathed the breath of life into Adam (Gen. 2:7), and his body came alive, even so, when we receive the Word of God by faith, it gives spiritual and eternal life to the soul and spirit. Once we become a child of God by faith in the Gospel Message, we are to continue to grow spiritually by the steady inhale (learning) and exhale (application) of His Word. If we abide in His Word (John 8:31–32), and His Word abides in us (John 15:7), we will experience the full measure of blessing Paul spoke of, which includes doctrine (systematic teaching), reproof (rebuke when we are carnal), correction (restoration to fellowship), instruction in righteousness (how to maintain obedience), and greater completeness/maturity, as we are conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18).

For all these reasons, it is critical that we know that our Bible is the full and final Word of God to us.

## **CLASS TWO**

### **The Transmission and Preservation of the Bible**

The existence of the Bible is itself a miracle, and is the greatest treasure anyone can possess. The story of how our Bible came down to us is as fascinating as the story of how our Savior came into our world. The two stories: one of the Living Word, the other of the written word, are interconnected and equally fascinating. We would not know the story of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, if we did not have the word of God in our Bible. We would not believe the record of His birth, life, death and resurrection, if we did not firmly believe that the Bible is inspired of God. To believe in the truth of the Savior we must believe in the reliability of the Scriptures.

The Bible makes claims for itself, and provides more than sufficient evidence for those claims to be believed, by any objective person. Let us consider a few of these claims, before we launch into the history of the transmission of our Bible.

### **Revelation**

*“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was **revealed** that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven— things which angels desire to look into.”* 1 Peter 1:10–12

### **Inspiration**

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

### **Preservation**

*“All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord **endures forever**.”*  
1 Peter 1:24–25

### **Prophecy**

*“Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, **declaring** the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.’”* Isaiah 46:9–10

## Living Power

*“For the word of God is **living and powerful**, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”* Hebrews 4:12

## Infallibility

*“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not **return to Me void**, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”* Isaiah 55:11

## Life-Changing Power

*“Man shall not **live** by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”* Matthew 4:4

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

## The Hidden Mysteries of the Bible

The spiritual riches of the Bible are beyond calculation. The central message of the redemption of mankind through the cross of Christ is simple, clear, and easily seen. However, there are many riches that are discovered only by careful and persistent study. Some of these treasures, in fact, could only be recognized in this last generation. This fact alone is a fulfillment of the command to Daniel, to *“Seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase ... Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end”* (Dan. 12:4, 9).

*“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering you did not require. Then I said, ‘Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of Me. I delight to do Your will, O My God, and Your law is within My heart.’”* Psalm 40:6–8 (Heb. 10:5–7)

*“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.”* John 5:39

## The Hidden Gospel

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we*



*beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:1–4, 14*

The central message of the Bible is the redemptive plan of God for mankind through the birth, life, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many wrongly assume that this message is not found until we come into the New Testament. But the message has been given to us from the very beginning. We are all familiar with the very first promise and prophecy of redemption through Christ.

*“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” Genesis 3:15*

However, there are many other messages throughout the Old Testament that are not quite so clearly seen. One of them is found in the genealogy of Adam given in the ten names of Genesis 5, when they are translated.

1. *Adam* means “man” (Gen. 1:27).
2. *Seth* means “appointed” (Gen. 4:25; 1 Chron. 1:1).
3. *Enosh* means “mortal” (Gen. 4:26; 1 Chron. 1:1).
4. *Cainan/Kenan* means “sorrow” (Gen. 5:9; 1 Chron. 1:2).
5. *Mahalaleel* means “the blessed God” (Gen. 5:12; 1 Chron. 1:2).
6. *Jared/Jered* means “descending” (Gen. 5:15; 1 Chron. 1:2).
7. *Enoch/Enosh* means “training, teaching” (Gen. 5:18; 1 Chron. 1:3).
8. *Methuselah* means “his death shall bring” (Gen. 5:21; 1 Chron. 1:3).
9. *Lamech* means “despairing” (Gen. 5:25; 1 Chron. 1:3).
10. *Noah* means “comfort/rest” (Gen. 5:29; 1 Chron. 1:4).

When the meaning of the names, in the order given, is collated, we find the message:

“Man is appointed mortal sorrow, but the blessed God shall descend, teaching that His death shall bring the despairing comfort/rest.”

Here is the Gospel Message at the very beginning of our Bible!

### **The Number Seven**

Most Bible students know that in the Scriptures, the number seven is used to express divine perfection and fulfillment. Imagine being given the task of writing a genealogy with the following restrictions:

1. The number of words must be evenly divisible by seven.
2. The number of letters must be divisible by seven.
3. The number of vowels and the number of consonants must be divisible by seven.
4. The number of words that begin with a vowel must be divisible by seven.
5. The number of words that begin with a consonant must be divisible by seven.
6. The number of words that occur more than once must be divisible by seven.

7. The number of words that occur in more than one form must be divisible by seven.
8. The number of words that occur in only one form must be divisible by seven.
9. The number of nouns must be divisible by seven.
10. Only seven words shall not be nouns.
11. The number of names shall be divisible by seven.
12. Only seven other kinds of nouns are permitted.
13. The number of male names must be divisible by seven.
14. The number of generations must be divisible by seven.

This is what we find at the beginning of the New Testament in the genealogy of Jesus in the book of Matthew. This has come to be known as the heptadic structure of the Bible (the word heptad means “seven”). (Dr. Chuck Missler, *“How We Got Our Bible,”* pp. 139–140).

This same kind of heptadic consistency is found in Mark 16:9–20, which some have suggested, based on faulty manuscripts, is not a part of inspired Scripture. It has been calculated that the occurrence of sevens in this passage happening just by chance are one in seven to the ninth power. In simple terms, we would need to make 40,353,607 attempts, at ten minutes each, to reach such consistency. This effort would take 768 years! (Missler, *Ibid*, pg. 145).

### **Isaiah 53**

Amazingly, in the greatest chapter of the Old Testament, which speaks of the sufferings and death of Jesus on the Cross, we can use this same system to discover another amazing message. I will quote from Missler’s book mentioned above.

“Isaiah 53 is a precious prophetic passage that has been called the Holy of Holies of the Old Testament ... In these twelve verses, we find encrypted the names of the people who stood at the foot of the cross: Peter, Matthew, John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, and James. In fact, we find a reference to two different Jameses ... Additionally, we find the following: Messiah, Nazarene, Galilee, Pharisee, Levites, Caiaphas, Annas, Passover, Simon, Thaddeus, Matthias, Salome, Joseph, and three Marys ... What’s even more impressive ... is the name that is missing. The name “Judas” consists of high frequency letters in Hebrew ... (but) It’s conspicuous because it does not appear.” (Missler, *Ibid*, Pg.74).

### **CLASS THREE**

We have seen so far that our Bible is filled with many wonders, the full extent of which we will never discover this side of eternity. The story of how our Bible came to be written and preserved for us is also a record of miraculous events and people. For example, what if I were to tell you that this study would lead us to links with some of the most obscure and enigmatic Old Testament figures, including men such as Melchizedek, Jabez, and John the Baptist? But before we see these links, we need to learn how our Bible came into being.

## **The Transmission and Preservation of the Bible (continued)**

*“Now it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, that this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying: ‘Take a scroll and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel, against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah even to this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the adversities which I purpose to bring upon them, that everyone may turn from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin’ ... So the king sent Jehudi to bring the scroll, and he took it from Elishama the scribe’s chamber. And Jehudi read it in the hearing of the king and in the hearing of all the princes who stood beside the king. Now the king was sitting in the winter house in the ninth month, with a fire burning on the hearth before him. And it happened, when Jehudi had read three or four columns, that the king cut it with the scribe’s knife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the scroll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. ... Now ... the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, ‘Take yet another scroll, and write on it all the former words that were on the first scroll which Jehoiakim the king of Judah has burned.’”*

Jeremiah 36:1–3, 21–23, 27–28

All down through the ages there have been men whose hearts have been hardened, who have sold their souls to the devil, who have sought to destroy the Word of God. However, as this chapter reveals, the promise of God stands sure:

*“All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and it’s flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever.”* 1 Peter 1:24–25

We will now investigate how the Bible came to be written, and how it was passed down through the ages. We will discover that the history of the Bible, like its contents, involves a few mysteries of its own.

### **The History of Writing**

Critics of the Bible claim that Moses could not have written the Torah (first five Old Testament books), because writing was either unknown, or there were no writing materials. It is worthwhile, then, to understand the history of writing.

It is now known that the ancient Sumerians developed the cuneiform (wedge shaped), and the Egyptians developed the hieroglyphic method of writing around 3500 B.C. Scholars debate which was first. The Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh was written in Akkadian around 2500 B.C. The Phoenician alphabet, which is the forerunner of our own, was developed around 1050 B.C.

It is worth noting that manuscripts among the Dead Sea scrolls declare that writing has existed from the beginning, The Book of Enoch claiming to have been written by the seventh descendant from Adam, which is verified by Jude (v. 14). Furthermore, it is worth noting that our word

“alphabet” comes from the Hebrew Alpha – Bet, the first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Only someone very ignorant of history would declare that writing did not exist in the time of Moses, who was “*Learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds*” (Acts 7:22).

### **Writing Materials**

Along with the various scripts used for writing, the materials have developed down through the ages. Job, who lived around 2000 B.C., records several different writing materials.

*“Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book! That they were engraved in a rock, with an iron pen and lead, forever!”* Job 19:23–24

Note: Much of the following is taken from *How We Got the Bible*, Neil R. Lightfoot, Baker Books, 1963.

1. Stone.  
Inscriptions found in Egypt and Mesopotamia carved in stone go back before 3000 B.C. The code of Hamurabi, from close to the time of Abraham, have 250 laws carved into stone. Archeologists have also discovered the Gezer calendar, going back to the time of Solomon (925 B.C.), and the Siloam inscription of King Hezekiah (700 B.C.), telling of the completion of the water tunnel he had dug (2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chron. 32:30).
2. Clay.  
This form was used by Ezekiel (Ezek. 4:1). The message was inscribed while the clay was soft, then allowed to harden. In Ebla, Syria over 2,400 clay tablets have been discovered, dating back as far as 2400 B.C.
3. Wood and wax.  
Often, tablets of wood were covered with wax, which was then written on. Both the Assyrians and the ancient Romans used these materials.
4. Metals.  
Often plates of gold, silver, copper, or other soft metal was used for sheets to write on. An iron stylus, or pen, was used to make the writing.
5. Papyrus.  
This plant grew along the marshy rivers, like the Nile. This was the material for the ark in which the infant Moses was placed (Exod. 2:3). When these reeds were split and flattened, they were laid in a criss-cross fashion over each other. Then weight was applied, so that the “glued” sheets could be used to write on. Ancient scrolls were made of many of these sheets glued end to end to make one long continuous sheet. We get our word “paper” from Papyrus. The Greeks called Papyrus *Biblos*, and scrolls were called *Biblion*, from which we get our word “Bible.”

6. Leather/parchment.

The skins of animals, preferably young lambs, goats, or calves, were stretched and tanned, making a smooth and light writing material. This was called “vellum” or “parchment.” Remember that Paul especially instructs his disciple Timothy to bring him *“the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments”* (2 Tim. 4:13). What was the difference between “books” and “parchments?” The parchments would have been older texts on the skins of animals, while the books would have been in the form of the codex.

7. The Codex.

The ancient Jews kept the Old Testament Scriptures in scrolls made either of papyrus or parchment. These were often 10 to 12 inches wide, and as much as 30 to 35 feet long. They were heavy and cumbersome. This gave rise to the invention by some unnamed genius of the codex. Either Papyrus or Parchment was cut into “sheets” which were laid on top of each other, “stapled” in the middle, and folded. This made the earliest form of our “notebook,” the codex. Some suggest that the codex was actually invented by early Christians, so that they could copy and distribute the Scriptures in a handy book form.

8. The Tools of the Scribe.

When David said, *“My tongue is the pen of a ready writer”* (Psalm 45:1b), he was alluding to the scribe who was always equipped and ready for his work. The tools of the trade for the scribe, which he was to always have at hand, included:

- a. The scribe’s pen, made either from sharpened reed or feather, with a slit to form the nib for the ink.
- b. A ruler for making lines (a cane, or canon).
- c. An inkwell, with ink made from soot mixed with water and gum. One of our readers, reminded me of Ezekiel 9:2–3, 11, where the vision is of a scribe with an inkhorn.
- d. A sponge for making erasures or wiping off the pen.
- e. A small knife, to sharpen the pen and cut the papyrus into sheets. It is from this we get the idea of the pen knife (see Jer. 36:23).
- f. A piece of pumice used to smooth the pen edge or writing surface.

The life of a scribe was not easy, as he volunteered his time in copying the Scriptures, and had to support himself and his family by other means.

### The Mystery of the Scribes

Although Moses was himself a scribe, the earliest mention of them as a special class of artisans is from sometime in the era of the Judges.

*“And the families of the scribes who dwelt at Jabez were the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and the Suchathites. These were the Kenites who came from Hamath, the father of the house of Rechab.”* 1 Chronicles 2:55

This village of Jabez was apparently established for the copying, studying, and teaching of the word of God that existed at that time. Interestingly, these first scribes were not Jewish. They were from the related tribe of the Kenites, mentioned in Genesis 15:19 as living in the land at the time of Abraham. Moses' father-in-law was a Midianite/Kenite (Exod. 2:16–18:1; Jude 1:16). The Kenites joined themselves to the tribe of Judah, through Caleb (1 Chron. 2:42–55), and entered into union with Israel by faith. They maintained a unique lifestyle, described as, “the love of tent life, hospitality, the use of goats milk whey, the employment of women in men’s work, so that the sexes had free intercourse and yet the female part of the tent was inviolable.” (*Fausset’s Bible Dictionary*, Kenites, pg. 413).

In the verse quoted above we find three very interesting connections:

1. A Dedicated Village.

A village of scribes dedicated to the perpetuation and proclamation of the Word of God. These scribes were Gentiles who dedicated their lives to the Word of God. Jewish tradition says that this village was just outside of Bethlehem.

2. A Devoted Man.

The name of the village is taken from the Jabez of 1 Chronicles 4:9–10, and can be seen as the direct result of his prayer for divine blessing and influence. His request for enlarged borders should be seen from a spiritual rather than a physical perspective (Psalm 18:19; 31:8; 118:5; especially Isa. 54:1–3). It was his spiritual vision that set him apart and made him more honorable than his brothers. As an added twist, ancient Jewish Rabbi’s said that Jabez was also known as Othniel, Caleb’s nephew and Israel’s first judge (Josh. 15:17; Jude 1:12–13; 3:7–11). He may have been the first Warrior/Scholar/Scribe.

3. A Destined Family.

The same text that links Jabez with the scribes mentions “*Hamath, the father of the house of Rechab.*” Rechab became the father of Jehonadab (2 Kings 10:15), whose descendants remained humble shepherds down to the days of Jeremiah (Jer. 35:1–11, 18–19), and were likely the ancestors of the shepherds who came to see the infant Christ (Jer. 35:19; Luke 2:8–20).

Just as Elijah had established the school of the prophets, starting with Elisha, so Jabez began the school of the Scribes. In time this task seems to have passed to the priests of Israel. One of the greatest of these was Ezra, who shows the characteristics of the faithful scribe:

*“For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach the statutes and ordinances in Israel ... Ezra the priest, the scribe expert in the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of His statutes to Israel.”*

Ezra 7:10, 11

It was Ezra who first instituted the practice of teaching through translators (Neh. 8:4–8) from the original Hebrew into the Aramaic they had learned while in Babylon. Here, we begin to see the need for the translation of the Bible into the common tongue of the people.

In the course of time, as the priesthood of Israel became corrupt and unbelieving, the work of the scribes was narrowed from the whole tribe of Levi to the family of Zadok (1 Kings 1:5–8), due to the loyalty of Zadok to King David as he lay dying, when his son Adonijah tried to usurp the throne from Solomon. Thus, in the same way the lineage of the Messiah went from the whole tribe of Judah down to the family of David (compare Gen. 49:8–12 and 2 Sam. 7:12–16), so the lineage of the priest/scribes passed from the tribe of Levi to the house of Zadok. In his prophecy of the Millennial Temple, the prophet Ezekiel speaks of the Zadokian priesthood.

*“The sanctuary of the LORD shall be in the center. It shall be for the priests of the sons of Zadok, who are sanctified, who have kept My charge, who did not go astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray.”*

Ezekiel 48:10–11

This prophecy appears to anticipate the corruption and unbelief of the priesthood during the time of Christ, of which Caiaphas and Annas were the leaders (Luke 3:2). During this time, Rome found that it could bribe, and thus control, the religious leaders of Israel. As this spiritual rot took hold of the official priesthood, faithful priests of the line of Zadok took copies of the scrolls of the Old Testament, as well as many other ancient writings of the Jews, and fled to Qumran, as early as the second century B.C. Here they started the Essene community, and it is here that many of those scrolls, now known as the Dead Sea scrolls were found.

The Essene community had strict rules for their followers: all possessions were shared, meals were simple and basic, they rose before daylight for prayers, practiced strict Sabbath observance, daily ritual washings, and looked for the Coming of the Messiah, who they believed was near. They avoided Jerusalem and its spiritual corruption, celebrating the feasts in their communities. They were known for generous hospitality, for interests in medicines and healing, and for caring for the poor, the sick, and the elderly. Their writings declared that they were a community designed to “prepare the way of the Lord.” This phrase comes from the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3 which Matthew applies to John the Baptist (Matt. 3:3). It seems likely that John the Baptist lived among them, for the Scripture says of him from a young age, *“So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel”* (Luke 1:80). It is most likely that the texts we know as the Dead Sea scrolls were used to instruct John.

Of special interest is that the Essenes believed that, not only was the coming of the Messiah near, but that when He came, the prophet mentioned by Isaiah would anoint Him as the final successor and High Priest of the order of Melchizedek. This may be what Jesus meant, when John balked at baptizing Him, and He said, *“Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness”* (Matt. 3:15). In the book of Hebrews, Paul links Jesus’ baptism with His inauguration as the Melchizedekan High Priest.

*“And no man takes this honor [priesthood] to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him, ‘You are My Son, today I have Begotten you ... You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’”*

Hebrews 5:4–6

*“When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”*

Matthew 3:16–17 (Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; John 1:32–34)

The priestly order of Melchizedek, as illustrated in Genesis 14:18–20 and Hebrews 5–7, combines the roles of prophet, priest, and king. Only the resurrected Christ could hold this position permanently, for He is risen forevermore (Psalm 110:4).

This has been a long diversion, but it is all linked to how we got our Bible, and how we know it is the true Word of God. We will come back to the Dead Sea scrolls later.

### **Amazing Discoveries in Archeology**

Archeology has always been the friend of the Bible. Every year that passes sees new discoveries in the field of biblical history, and none have ever been found to bring any doubt to the veracity of the Bible record. We will mention only a few of the amazing discoveries bearing on the text of Scripture.

### **Languages**

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, with certain portions, such as Daniel 2:4–7:28, and Ezra 4:8–6:18 and 7:12–26, written in Aramaic, the language of the Exile. Later, around 280–250 B.C. the Septuagint, or Greek, version was completed.

The New Testament was written entirely in Greek. Originally, when the Greek was being translated into English, many scholars thought that this was a “Holy Spirit” language. In time, it was discovered, by findings of personal letters, official documents, and other fragments, that this was the koine, or “common” language of the day. Language scholars such as Adolph Deissmann brought clarity to the vocabulary, grammar, and syntax of the Koine Greek.

The earliest New Testament documents now in our possession were written in an Uncial script (all capital letters) with no division between words. The later manuscripts were in a miniscule script, small letters often in a cursive form.

### **Discoveries**

In 1799, while Napoleon’s army was in Egypt, a captain discovered a black slab of basalt, containing a decree of the Ptolemy regime from 196 B.C. The writing was in Hieroglyphic, Demotic, and Greek. By using the Hellenistic Greek script, scholars were able to decipher, for the first time, the other two scripts. This is the earliest known form of an interlinear script, from which our Hebrew-English and Greek-English interlinear Bible have come.



### **Codex Sinaiticus**

Count Konstantin von Tischendorf discovered this text by accident when he went to visit the monastery of St. Catherine, located at the foot of the traditional Mount Sinai. In the room he was given during his visit he found a large wastebasket filled with ancient vellum scripts. These were provided to be used for the fireplace to heat his small room. He was horrified to find 129 pages of what we know today as one of the three oldest New Testament manuscripts that have survived. Today this text is in the British Museum.

### **Codex Vaticanus**

This text was in the Vatican library since about 1448, but was seized by Napoleon's forces, along with fifty wagons of the Vatican library. These manuscripts were returned to the Vatican after the fall of Napoleon in 1815, and were closely guarded from public perusal. Much later, Tischendorf applied for permission to study the manuscripts, and was given permission, provided that he made no copies. He was allowed to view the manuscripts for six hours each day, and was searched on entering and leaving the room. However, the wily Tischendorf, skilled in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, simply memorized what he read each day, then re-wrote it in his room that night. Over a period of three months he had memorized and written the entire Codex Vaticanus. This text dates back to the mid-third century.

### **Codex Alexandrinus**

This manuscript dates from around 450 A.D., and was written in Alexandria, Egypt. In 1621 it became the property of the patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church, in Constantinople. It was later given as a gift to the British Ambassador, Thomas Roe, around 1627, shortly after the translation of the King James Bible.

Many scholars have held up these most ancient copies of the New Testament as the most accurate versions of our Bible. However, further study shows that each of them had been corrupted by the Gnostic factions of Alexandria, Egypt. According to Dr. Ken Johnson, in his book *Ancient Word of God*, the great Church Historian, Philip Schaff found that these documents do not even agree among themselves! He found a total of 8,972 differences in these texts.

### **The Ephraemi Rescriptus**

This manuscript was discovered quite by "accident," or shall we say, divine providence. Father Ephraem, a Syrian theologian and preacher, liked to write his sermons out. However, writing materials were in scarce supply. He took vellum manuscripts from a Syrian monastery, erased what was written, and wrote on them his sermons. A student was reading over his sermons one day, when the light fell just right on the page to reveal indentions from earlier writing. Ultimately, this ancient text was restored to reveal the New Testament text, which is now in the National Library of Paris.

### **The Oxyrhynchos Manuscripts**

Around the year 1900, two Oxford University professors, Dr. Grenfell and Dr. Hunt, went to Oxyrhynchos, Egypt. They were looking for anything ancient that might be of value. In one of the tombs, they were amazed to find thousands of stuffed and mummified Crocodiles. Disappointed with the find, and thinking somewhere deeper in the tomb they might find something worthwhile, they began throwing the stuffed Crocs aside, when one broke open. Inside they found that the Crocs had been stuffed with Papyri. Eventually, an entire library of ancient texts were discovered. Some of these were ancient copies of the New Testament, dating back to within the lifetime of the authors of the New Testament!

### **The Chester Beatty Papyri**

With the increasing interest in ancient texts, many of the Arab people of the Middle East began to seek out, and to sell, any old manuscript that could be found. In 1931 a millionaire named Chester Beatty made a tour of Palestine and Egypt. He purchased, at an exorbitant price, many documents, which being studied by scholars turned out to contain some missing sections of Codex Sinaiticus, portions of Paul's epistles, and the four Gospels. These are now the possession of the University of Pennsylvania.

### **The Dead Sea Scrolls**

By another providential "accident," one of the greatest finds of modern history, in so far as ancient texts are concerned, had to do with a wayward goat. In 1948, a Bedouin boy, seeking the stray goat, came to a cave in the vicinity of the ancient Qumran community. He tossed a rock into the cave, in hopes of scaring out the goat, when he heard a shattering of pottery. This ultimately led to the discovery, in eleven different caves, of what we know as the Dead Sea Scrolls. The greatest find of all was the complete book of Isaiah, dating from the second century B.C. To understand the value of this, the oldest previously known copy of Isaiah dated from the ninth century A.D. This scroll (in a copy form) is now displayed in the Yad Vashem museum in Jerusalem.

While many of the 19<sup>th</sup> century "higher critics" had doubted the ancient date of writing for the book of Isaiah, we now had a copy from 150 to 200 years before Christ, of the most evangelical prophetic book of the Old Testament. Amazingly, or perhaps not surprisingly, the two texts of Isaiah had very few differences, most relating to spelling changes naturally taking place over a thousand years in any language.

### **Early Letters and Christian Writings**

Thousands of letters written by Christians to friends and family have been discovered over the years. In these letters, verses are often quoted for the encouragement and comfort of the recipients. From these letters, the majority of the New Testament text can be found. We have more textual evidence, by far, for the Old and New Testament text, than for any other ancient documents.

### **Criteria for Canonicity**

Remember that by the New Testament era, the canonicity of the Old Testament Scriptures was already established. This had been accomplished prior to the writing of the Septuagint around 250 B.C.

The same standards used for determining the true text of the Old Testament were used in establishing the inspired New Testament writings. Following are some of the criteria that were used. The text must be/show:

1. Written by a proven prophet/apostle, or by one under their direction (ie., Luke, Mark).
2. The wide acceptance of the work by the Churches. Though there were some disputes over books like Hebrews, Second Peter, James, Second and Third John, and Revelation, these were eventually resolved, based on both internal and external evidence.
3. Consistency with the rest of the Scriptures (the principle of non-contradiction).
4. Recognition by the early (apostolic) church fathers. We have over 80,000 quotes by these early pastors/teachers.
5. Evidence of inspiration in spiritual insight, or in prophetic utterance.
6. Evidence of divine power, life-changing effect of the Scriptures.
7. The Muratorian Fragment, discovered in the library in Milan in 1740, was found to date from the second century. It showed a catalogue of New Testament books (excluding some, see item 2 above), and giving standards by which books should be accepted as Scripture.

### **CLASS FOUR**

We now move into our final study of how, by the grace of God, we have the Bible, the inspired word of God, in our own language.

#### **A Brief History of the English Bible**

Translation of the Scriptures into common languages is not a new thing. As early as 132 to 200 A.D., the Antioch church was sending out missionaries to many countries, and they were translating the Word of God into other languages.

The history of the Bible translation into English is a long and fascinating story. Time and space permits only a brief look at some of the highlights.

#### **Caedmon**

As early as the mid-600's, a stable boy turned troubadour/singer, began translating Bible stories into songs in the Anglo-Saxon language. People eagerly flocked to hear these songs, for the first time hearing the Gospel truth in their own tongue.

### **Aldhelm (639–709)**

Aldhelm was a Latin scholar and poet. Challenged by the success of Caedmon he translated the entire book of Psalms, which was copied and distributed in limited hand-written editions.

### **Bede (673–735)**

Known in English history as “The Venerable Bede,” he was the most famous scholar of the Anglo-Saxon era. He knew of the works of both Caedmon and Aldhelm, and determined that he would translate a Gospel, finally settling on the Gospel of John. He was ailing and near death, and with his last breath he dictated the last verse of John to his scribe, sang a hymn of praise, and breathed his last.

### **King Alfred (871–899)**

Alfred either translated, or had the work done, of much of the Bible. He had the Scriptures widely distributed and urged his subjects to learn to read and write, so that they could learn God’s word. He wrote, “I, Alfred, by God’s grace, dignified with the title of king, have perceived and often learnt from the reading of sacred books, that we, whom God hath given so much worldly honour, have particular need to humble and subdue your minds to the divine law .... that all the freeborn youth of (my) kingdom should employ themselves on nothing till they could first read well the English Scriptures.”

### **Wycliffe (1330–1384)**

The invasion of England by the Normans (Norsemen) in 1066, plus the growing power of the Roman church, had a dampening effect on the reading and preaching of the Word of God. By the twelfth century, (Catholic) church authorities forbade the translation of the Bible into the common tongue. Furthermore, the Anglo-Saxon tongue had blended with the Norman, to form a new form of English.

Then, along came John Wycliffe, a scholar and teacher from Oxford. He strongly resisted the Pope and led a spiritual revival. In 1380 he translated the New Testament from the Latin Vulgate. He staunchly believed that Jesus Christ, through His Word, was the final authority over the Church, and not the pope or any church hierarchy. In reality, it was Wycliff, along with the Czech theologian, John Huss, who were the true forerunners of the Reformation, one hundred years before either Luther or Calvin.

### **Tyndale (1494–1536)**

During the nearly two succeeding centuries, the English language continued to undergo great changes, calling for a new translation of the Bible. At this time, God raised up William Tyndale, who was truly a genius in regard to languages. He mastered eight languages: Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, Spanish, German, in addition to his native English. He has been called the “Architect of the English Language,” and is the true father of the English Bible.

Tyndale suffered great persecution for his desire to translate the Bible in the more modern English language. He fled England for Germany, where he was able to translate the Bible from the Greek New Testament of Erasmus. His work was the first to be published on the Gutenberg printing press. Several hundred copies of this work were smuggled, at great risk, back into England in 1526.

Tyndale once said to an opponent of his work, “If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause that a boy that driveth the plow shall know more of the Scripture than thou doest.” Prior to his arrest, he recounted some of his persecutions, “My pains ... my poverty ... my exile out of my natural country, and bitter absence from my friends ... my hunger, my thirst, my cold, the great danger wherewith I am everywhere compassed, and ... innumerable other hard and sharp fightings which I endure ...”

The monarch Charles V, in response to Tyndale’s work, had him arrested in Antwerp and confined to prison in 1535. He was tried and convicted of heresy, and, in October of 1536, was condemned to be burned at the stake, where his last words were, “Lord, open the eyes of the King of England.”

### **Tyndale’s Light Begins to Spread**

The dying prayer of Tyndale was heard by God. Soon, Henry VIII authorized the Church of England to produce the Coverdale Bible. This work was done by Myles Coverdale, based on Tyndale’s translation. Then came The Matthew Bible, the work of a friend of Tyndale by the name of John Rogers, but who used the name Thomas Matthew (possibly to avoid persecution). This was the first English Bible authorized by the King for sale in England. Later revisions of this Bible were the Great Bible, So called because of its size, the Bishops Bible, then the Geneva Bible, in 1560, which was the most popular of all. This was the Bible used by Shakespeare, and was taken to Jamestown settlement in Virginia, and to Plymouth on the Mayflower. Finally, we come to the King James Bible.

### **The Story of the King James Bible**

In England, King James I was on the throne, and the Protestant theology was dominant. While in Scotland, however, Queen Mary favored Romanism, in spite of the fact that the Scots, under the reformation influence of John Knox, had embraced Calvinism. In 1603 the Puritan preachers of England came together to write a petition for a new translation. This was called the “Millenary Petition,” because of the thousand signatures it bore. Dr. John Reynolds, a leader of the Puritans, made a request to the King for a new translation of the Bible at the Hampton Court Conference on January 14, 1604. The result was that James commissioned some fifty men, skilled in Hebrew and Greek, to produce a new English translation.

They used the Hebrew Masoretic text for the Old Testament, and the *Textus Receptus of Erasmus* for the New Testament. In three years, the work was done that became known to us as the “1611 Edition,” The King James—or authorized—Bible. When the finished product was made available, the Catholics said it favored Protestantism, the Arminians said it favored Calvinism, the Calvinists said it favored Arminianism, and the Puritans said that it favored “high

Church” policy. In my mind, these objections prove how good the translation really was! This is still the most popular translation of the Bible in the English-speaking world. King James, sick of the religious bickering, simply declared that this was the translation, take it or leave it.

While the first edition of the KJV Bible had over 400 spelling errors, updated and corrected versions continued to be printed up to 1769, with no other English translations coming on the scene.

### **Other Modern Translations**

From 1769 to 1890, nineteen new English translations were made. From 1901 until 1999 ninety-eight new English versions came out. Then from 2000 until 2011 eighty-three new versions were produced! Many of these over 200 different versions are intentionally slanted to favor one theological view or another. For a full review of these issues, I recommend Dr. Ken Johnson’s book, *Ancient Word of God*, which is available on Amazon.

### **Conclusion**

As we come to the end of this study, it is my prayer that we all will stand in awe of the miracle of having the Bible, the inspired Word of God, in our language. Many have paid a terrible price that it should be so. Not only should we have a reverence for the Bible, but we should take heed to what it tells us about itself:

*“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from The mouth of God.”* Matthew 4:4

*“I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.”*  
Job 23:12b

*“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path ... Revive me, O Lord, according to Your word.”* Psalm 119:105, 107b

And so we close, as we began, with a quote from the Gideon Bible:

“The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you.

“It is the traveler’s map, the pilgrim’s staff, the pilot’s compass, the soldier’s sword, and the Christians charter. Here Paradise is restored, Heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good the design, and the glory of God its end.

“It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.”

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