

SUMMARY: The Bible is a collection of histories, prophecies, and letters written over a 1400-year period. The Bible is the only place we find the word of God today. It gives us instructions from God and His expectations of us. The Bible demonstrates that it is the word of God through accurate historical records, scientific statements, lack of scientific errors, fulfilled prophecies, lack of unfulfilled prophecies, and wisdom demonstrated.

1. THE BIBLE, SUMMARY:

The Bible is a collection of histories, prophecies, letters, etc. which were written by inspired men without the chapters and verses with which we are familiar. The Bible shows a remarkable consistency, although written by several individuals over a 1400-year period. It has been translated into more than 1100 languages and dialects. Jesus wrote none of the New Testament, but the authors were witnesses or close contemporaries (Luke, likely a Gentile [1]). In most religions, the founder is also the primary writer of doctrine.

The Bible has been and is debated as to whether what we have is the inerrant word of God, or it was the inerrant word of God in the original autograph, or perhaps it is something else. There is not, and there likely will not ever be perfect clarity on that subject.

What is perfectly clear is:

- * There is a God (See section 1).
- * Jehovah is that God (See section 2)
- * The Old Testament shows remarkable consistency and accuracy; and provides at least 5 scientific prophecies to demonstrate something beyond human intelligence (See 5.2.1). There are at least 44 Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by Jesus (see lesson 5.4)
- * The New Testament shows remarkable consistency and accuracy; and provides at least 2 scientific prophecies to demonstrate something beyond human intelligence (See 5.2.1) and supersedes the Old Testament (Gal. 3:24).
- * There are at least 25K partial early manuscripts existing which show no variance in basic doctrines. There are numerous copying and translation errors.
- * God does not provide a Bible which is perfect and/or cannot be mistranslated today (consider the Queen James translation). We need to use the most faithful translation we have access to for study.
- * The truth of the Bible has been attacked in every generation, but still stands.
- * **The Bible is the only place we find the word of God today**, and

- * No one today has authority or intelligence to pick and choose which parts to believe.
- * We need to discern the difference between matters of salvation (Acts 2:38) and matters of discretion (choices for length of creation days, having Bible Classes, how many cups for communion), adding to the scriptures (make a matter of discretion a salvation issue, sin to drink wine (Note: There are 28 New Testament verses against drunkenness)), taking away from the scriptures (swearing, James 5:12), statements of doctrine from statements of history (John 9:31) - by following the scriptures.

So, if you are going to follow God today, you need to follow the New Testament and all that the New Testament teaches. Basically, we need to “Speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent” or the more contemporary “Just the Bible”.

2. THE CANON:

The “canon” is a listing of the books which are recognized as divinely inspired. Canonization is was a long process in which general agreement is reached, it cannot be realistically tied to a specific date or meeting.

A Muratorian Fragment was written around 170 AD which stated the belief in inspiration and preeminence of the four gospels.

Irenaeus (AD 130-202) was the first writer to treat the New Testament unreservedly as inspired Scripture. [3] p. 267

The earliest surviving codex (sheets in book form) which contains portions of all four gospels is from the third century, and it contains Acts as well. [3] p. 129

The terms Old and New Testament have been used since the close of the second century. The earliest use of the term “New Testament” was by Tertullian of Carthage who wrote in the period A.D. 196-212. [3] p. 180.

Not long after Constantine inaugurated his new capital at Constantinople (AD 330) he wrote to Eusebius, asking him to have fifty copies of the Christian scriptures prepared for use in churches in the city. In short, the same twenty-seven books as appear in our copies of the New Testament. [3] p. 203-204

Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, in about AD 367 is the first writer known to us who listed exactly the twenty-seven books which make up the books of the New Testament without any distinction among them. [3] p. 209

Augustine, like Jerome, inherited the canon of scripture as something ‘given’ when he was converted in AD 386. [3] p. 230

The Council of Hippo (AD 393) was probably the first church council to lay down the limits on the canon of scripture. [3] p. 232

In A.D. 400 the Jewish Talmud names the books of the Jewish Canon in approximately the order of Jewish Bibles today. The Jews and Protestants accept the same 39 books of the O.T. as Canon. “For instance, the words ‘He shall be a

Nazarene”, quoted in Matthew 2:23 as ‘what was spoken by the prophets’, stand in that form in no known prophetic book. [3] p. 51. This would indicate that Jesus recognized some writings which we do not have access today.

“That the New Testament consists of the twenty-seven books which have been recognized as belonging to it since the fourth century is not a value judgment, it is a statement of fact.” (F.F. Bruce) [3] p. 250

The chapters were added about 1228 by Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury.

The verses were added in 1551 by Robert Stevens, a Paris printer.

The first English Bible to be divided by chapters and verses was the Geneva edition of 1560.

Clearly, people at different times have had different access to the truth.

3. **WRITING MATERIALS:**

- * Early writing materials have been stone, clay, wood, and leather. Leather was likely the principal material for writing the Old Testament.
- * Papyrus was the most important material used in writing the New Testament. The pith of the stem of the Papyrus plant is pressed flat, laid in horizontal and vertical layers, pressed flat, and dried to become sheets. They were originally formed into rolls and then a later development was to be attached as sheets in a book form as a **codex**. The papyrus has the unique characteristic of not being durable so that no original autographs are preserved to be venerated rather than the message being venerated. Some partial copies have been found back to 120 A.D.
- * Vellum was the principal receptacle for the written word after the fourth century until the fifteenth century when it was replaced by paper and the printing. Vellum is an improved process for handling of animal skins.
- * Paper as we know it was invented in China in A.D. 105 and is defined in Webster’s Dictionary as “a felted sheet of usu. vegetable fibers laid down on a fine screen from a water suspension”.
- * The change having the most to do with getting the canon into the hands of the average man was the Gutenberg printing press in AD 1440.

4. **EARLY MANUSCRIPTS**

- * A manuscript is a copied document as contrasted with a printed and/or translated one. As the New Testament was almost totally written in Greek, the manuscripts would be in Greek.
- * Early Greek manuscripts would be invaluable in reliable translations today as they would be subject to only possible copying errors, not to repetitive translation errors.

- * More than 4500 (four thousand five hundred) partial Greek manuscripts are still in existence today which were written between 120 A.D. and the invention of the printing press. This amounts to a massive resource of Biblical truth.
- * No 100% complete Greek manuscript of our present canon has survived.

5. MAJOR EARLY MANUSCRIPTS

- * **VATICAN MANUSCRIPT:** Has been guarded in Rome for centuries, and only recently opened for the scholars of the world to view. It is the earliest dated manuscript and is from the fourth century. Although not complete, it is the most exact copy of the New Testament known.
- * **SINAITIC MANUSCRIPT:** Discovered by Constantine Tischendorf in 1844 in a St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai, about to be burned for heating. After 15 years and using the help of the Czar of Russia, it was obtained from the monastery for Russia, who in turn sold *it to the British Museum in 1933. It is dated in the middle of the fourth century. It contained all 27 books of the New Testament and part of the Old Testament.*
- * **ALEXANDRIAN MANUSCRIPT:** A fifth century manuscript given to Charles I of England in 1627. (Note: KJV version translated in 1611)
- * None of these three manuscripts were available for the translation of the King James Version.

6. EARLY NON-ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

- * **LATIN VULGATE:** In the earliest days of English Christianity, the only know Bible was the Latin Vulgate, made by Jerome between A.D. 383 and 405. Gutenberg printed the Gutenberg Bible in Latin Vulgate in 1454. The present Roman Catholic Bible is a retranslation of the Latin Vulgate translation, rather than going back to the earliest Greek available. More than 10,000 copies of the Latin Vulgate translation are still in existence.

7. ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS BEFORE THE KING JAMES VERSION

- * Caedmon, a monk at Whitby, produced in Old English a metrical version of some of the narratives of the old testament, in A.D. 670.
- * The first straight forward translation of any part of the Bible into the language of the people was the Psalter, made approximately A.D. 700 by Waldheim, the first bishop of Sherborne in Dorset.
- * King Alfred produced English versions of parts of the Old and New Testaments between 871 and 901 A.D.
- * For nearly 3 centuries after the Norman conquest in 1066, the uncertain conditions of the language prevented any real literary progress.* John Wycliffe produced the New Testament in English in 1380 and the Old Testament in 1382.

- * In 1408 the Church issued a decree forbidding anyone to read any part of the Bible in the vernacular without the approval of his bishop or of a provincial council.
- * In 1414 a law was enacted that “all persons who should read the Scriptures in the mother tongue should forfeit land, catel, life, and goods from their heyres for ever”.
- * William Tyndale printed 3000 copies of the first New Testament printed in English in 1525, with 15,000 copies by 1530. They were printed in Worms, Germany and smuggled into England and mostly burned. It was the first English translation from the original Greek rather than from Latin copies. He was strangled and his body burned at the stake.
- * Church of England formed in 1534 as King Henry VIII wanted an annulment. Preceding was done by the Catholic church, following by the Church of England.
- * Miles Coverdale printed the first complete Bible in English in 1535. In 1537, it was reprinted with the “King’s most gracious license”.
- * The Geneva Bible was printed in 1557 as the first Bible in Roman type and divided into verses. The version enjoyed a long popularity in its day, going thru at least 160 editions. It continued to be printed after the King James Version was released. It took the King James Version 50 years to displace the Geneva Bible as the most popular version.

8. KING JAMES VERSION

The King James Version was printed in 1611 and has been the dominantly accepted version for about 350 years. It was translated by 47 scholars over a 2-years and 9 month period without pay. The three major Greek manuscripts available today as listed in item no. 5 above were not available for the King James Translation. Some copies of the KJV list over 500 words in the back which have significantly changed meaning since the writing. Some examples are: allege-prove, ear-plow, scattered-tall, several-single, table-tablet, usury-interest, virtue-power, and wealth-good. A good test for the current relevance of the KJV is Romans 11:2 “Wot ye not”. If you don’t know what that means, you need a new version.

The Authorized version of the King James Version of 1611 was formally a revision of the last (1602) Bishop’s Bible; it included a version of the Apocrypha as a matter of course. In 1615 the Archbishop of Canterbury forbad the binding or selling of Bibles without the Apocrypha under penalty of a year’s imprisonment. Despite the penalty, from 1626 AV/KVJ Bible began to be produced without the Apocrypha. [3] p 108

The 14 **books of the Apocrypha** are 1 Esdras (Vulgate 3 Esdras), 2 Esdras (Vulgate 4 Esdras), Tobit, Judith (“Judeth” in Geneva), Rest of Esther (Vulgate Esther 10:4 – 16:24), Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus (also known as Sirach), Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremy (“Jeremiah” in Geneva) (all part of Vulgate Baruch), Song of the Three Children (Vulgate Daniel 3:24–90), Story of Susanna (Vulgate Daniel 13), The Idol Bel

and the Dragon (Vulgate Daniel 14), Prayer of Manasses (Daniel), 1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees. It is our understanding that there are no basic doctrinal conflicts in these books. They were written in the second century, so we would consider them to have no basis. The Roman Catholic Church accepts the books of the Apocrypha.

9. **SOME OF THE ENGLISH VERSIONS SINCE THE KING JAMES VERSION**

- * The English Revised Version was printed in 1881-1885 by 54 scholars.
- * The American Standard Version was published in 1901 as an improvement on the English Revised Version by the American scholars on the committee developing the ERV. Typically accepted to be the most accurate on a “word for word” basis, but difficult to read. (“High School” reading level)
- * The Revised Standard Version appeared in 1946 and 1952 by the International Council of Religious Education, being translated by 32 scholars.
- * The New American Standard – 1960. (10th grade reading level)
- * New English Bible - 1961
- * Living Bible – 1971 (Youth oriented Bible)
- * New International Version - 1973. (7.8th grade reading level, level recommended for web pages)
- * Contemporary English Bible – 1991. (4th grade reading level)
- * English Standard Version - 2001. (8th grade reading level)
- * The Message – 2002 (Uses contemporary slang from the US)

Note: The average American adult reads at a 7th to 9th grade level.

THE BIBLE

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The chart down the right side of this page is a general listing of the type of translation which was done. Word for Word would be the most literal and the best for in depth study, but will be harder to read. The Thought for Thought method attempts to paraphrase more to communicate the message in an easier to read style.

As you might expect, children's books are off the bottom of the page with an easy to read message at the sacrifice of actual accuracy. Actually reading the Greek would be off the top of the page.

More literal translations are better for determining truth, paraphrased or thought for thought translations will be easier to read and better for worship services. KJV is good for reading Psalms 23.

ERRORS IN THE BIBLE

The book Keeping Faith in an Age of Reason by Jason Lisle (\$16 online) lists 420 alleged Biblical contradictions and their explanations from being taken out of context to illogical reasoning. Starting on page 243 of the book, it lists the verses which have been questioned and the pages they are addressed on. This is a good resource to have available.

EVANGELISM ENCOUNTERS

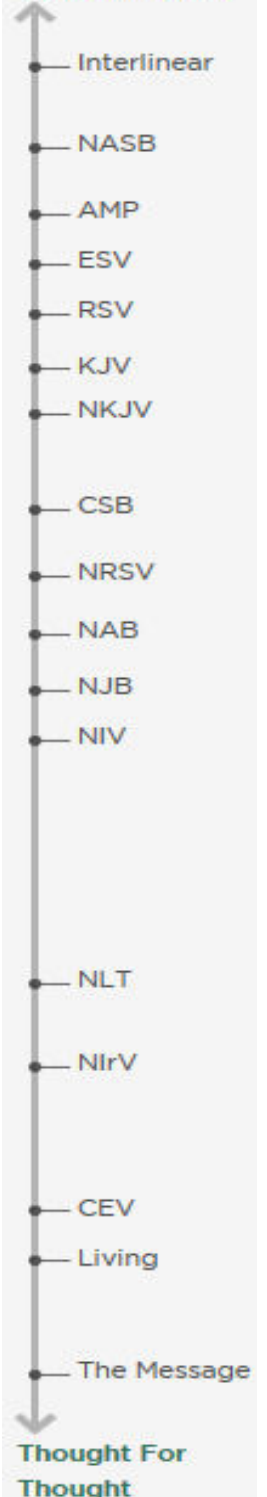
If you engage in an evangelism encounter, it is good to recognize that "truth" to most people depends upon their authority basis. If you believe the Bible is your authority, Acts 2:38 means one thing. If you think the Pope or the Southern Baptist Convention determines truth, then Acts 2:38 will mean something different to you. A serious religious discussion on Acts 2:38+ does not mean much and will likely not lead to agreement until you agree first on the authority basis.

The information for this lesson was collected from:

- [1] The New Testament Documents by F.F. Bruce, p. 80
- [2] How We Got the Bible, Neil R. Lightfoot, The Living Word, 1962.
- [3] The Canon of Scripture by F.F. Bruce
- [4] Pictorial Bible Dictionary, The Southwestern Company, 1966, pp 115-123

This continuum shows how different Bible translations fit into the word-for-word and thought-for-thought translation philosophies

Word For Word



THE BIBLE

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Accuracy is only part of the question in reading Bibles. If it is too difficult to read, people will not read it no matter how accurate it is. The ultimate in accuracy would be to read the original Hebrew or Greek for yourself. As that is not an option for most of us, we need to find a balance between translation and readability. The closer to word-for-word a Bible is, the less commentary is in the interpretation and so it is presumably more accurate.

What this typically means is that one type of interpretation should be used to determine basic truths, and another kind needs to be used to teach children. The average adult in the U.S. reads somewhere between the 7th and 8th grade level.

