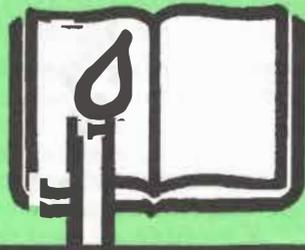


STUDIES IN THE BIBLE



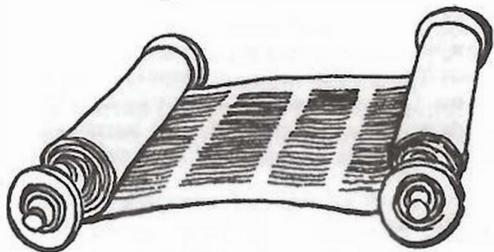
How We Got Our Bible

Lesson 1

You are about to begin a study of the world's most wonderful book. It has often been called "the book" and rightly so for it is in a class by itself. "Bible" means "book." Actually, it is a compilation of 66 books written by about 40 different authors scattered across many countries during a period of 1600 years. The story of how this remarkable book came into being with each part fitting perfectly into the others and with no real contradictions is most interesting. We must conclude it could have come only from God.

How The Bible Was Written

The Bible is divided into two great divisions known as the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is over three times as long as the New Testament and its writing was completed about 400 years before the birth of Christ. Originally the biblical books were hand written on animal skins (parchment) or on paper made from the papyrus plant. Printing was not yet invented, so every copy of an original had to be made by hand. Therefore, copies were rare and extremely valuable.



The 39 Old Testament books were written in Hebrew, except for small portions in the Aramaic language. The first five were written by Moses about 1500 years B.C. (before Christ.) During the next thousand years the remaining books were penned, and it appears that Ezra, the scribe, brought them all

together into a single book (Nehemiah 8:5) about 400 B.C. In the third century before Christ the first great translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek was made at Alexandria, Egypt. It was called the *Septuagint* (meaning seventy) because it was supposedly translated by seventy scholars. Christ often quoted this version or a Hebrew text similar to it.

The 27 New Testament books were written in Greek by eight men, several of them apostles of Christ, in the first century A.D. (since Christ.) The New Testament covers events occurring in that century, including the life of Christ and the establishment of his church. As is true of the Old Testament, all original copies have been lost or destroyed, and yet we have writings substantially as they were penned. Many copies have been preserved and are available for scholars to use in translating into other languages. The three most important are the Vatican Manuscript at the Vatican in Rome, written in the fourth century; the Alexandrian Manuscript in the British Museum in London, written in the fifth century; and the Sinaitic Manuscript, also in the

* Scripture quotations from the King James Version

British Museum, written in the fourth century. In addition there are hundreds of other copies of lesser importance which are of value to translators in making sure that we have the original New Testament writings.

The **Dead Sea Scrolls**, the first of which were discovered in 1947 in a cave near the Dead Sea and which date from the first or second century before Christ, have helped in recent translations of the Old Testament. They have also substantiated the accuracy of the manuscripts from which earlier translations were made so that we may be even more confident that we have the real message of the Old Testament writers.

There are two additional sources of information about the original New Testament books. One is the translations made soon after the New Testament was written. The most important, written in Latin, is called the **Vulgate** and was completed by Jerome in 405 A.D. We also have numerous Bible quotations from the writings of the early church fathers. By comparing the Greek manuscripts, the early translations, and the quotations of the church fathers, Bible scholars have been able to determine with great accuracy what the New Testament authors wrote. In fact, so sure are we that we have the Bible almost as it was given that we can positively say that no major Bible doctrine is in any way affected by minor errors of copying through the centuries.

The Bible In English



The first major English translation of the New Testament was completed by John Wyclif in 1382 after 22 years of hard work. In 1456 printing was invented by Johanne Gutenberg, making it possible to publish Bibles much faster and virtually eliminating typographical errors so common in hand copies. In fact, the first book printed by Gutenberg was a Latin Bible. The first printed English Bible was the New Testament as translated by William Tyndale in 1525. He was strongly opposed in this by the Catholic Church and he found it necessary to have his Bibles printed on the continent and smuggled into England. Most were publicly burned in London. He was betrayed, and burned at the stake for giving the Bible to the people. His final words were, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes."

The first complete English Bible was the work of Miles Coverdale. Other versions soon followed and by 1604 the King of England's eyes were opened. He authorized the translation of a new version, the work of 54 scholars. It was completed in 1611 and is known as the **King James Version** after the monarch who authorized it. Although it was translated over 350 years ago, it is still one of the most widely used English versions. In 1982 the **New King James** revision was published. It follows the same basic text as the King James, but updates much of the archaic speech to make it more readable.

The discovery of additional Bible manuscripts not available to King James translators and the inevitable change of the English language prompted the publication of other versions that would be more readable and accurate. An 1885 revision of the King James by 84 British and American scholars was called the **English Revised Version**, and was followed in 1901 by an American edition called the **American Standard**, a highly literal rendering of the scriptures. Other revisions of the King James and American Standard followed: the **Revised Standard Version** in 1952 and the **New American Standard** in 1970. These translations were intended to combine the finer characteristics of their predecessors with improved readability and increased accuracy based on recent manuscript findings.

The **New International Version** (1978) is comparable in its approach to translation with the **Revised Standard** and **New American Standard**, but unlike these is a completely new translation rather than a revision of its predecessors. The **New English Bible** and the **Good News Bible** (or **Today's English Version**) are typical of recent free translations that are less literal and concentrate on capturing the sense of the original. The **Living Bible** of Kenneth Taylor is a paraphrase rather than a translation and reworks the original in an effort to capture the intent of the original writers. The Roman Catholic Church has produced its own translations. The **Rheims-Douai Bible** appeared in 1582. It has been replaced by the **New American Bible** of 1970. Catholic versions include the same books found in other versions (sometimes under a different name) plus fourteen more in the Old Testament usually called the Apocrypha. This word means "hidden" and is applied to these books because of their doubtful origin. They are found only in the Greek, not the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament, and have been rejected by the Jews and most non-Catholics as not belonging in the Old Testament. However, their exclusion from the Old Testament does not materially affect any Bible doctrine.

The Bible In God's Word

The Bible claims to be inspired. Peter said, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (II Peter 1:21.) The Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost) so guided the writers of the Bible that they could not make mistakes. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." (I Cor. 2:13.) Because of this there are no real contradictions in the Bible. Those things which appear to be contradictions disappear under close investigation.

That the Bible is true may be shown by several of its characteristics. It is **scientifically accurate**, even though it is not a book of science. It is **historically accurate**. Every attempt to prove it historically wrong has failed. It is **prophetically correct** as is seen in many prophecies which have been fulfilled beyond question. It is **impartial**, presenting both good and bad of all men, not trying to gloss over the sins of any man who might be "a man after God's own heart." It presents the world's **highest standard of morality**. Finally, it has never been destroyed in spite of dozens of attempts to exterminate it.

"Seek and Ye Shall Find"

Circle the letter representing the correct answer:

- a b c 1. The number of books in the Bible: (a) 27; (b) 39; (c) 66.
- a b c 2. About how many men wrote the Bible: (a) 8; (b) 40; (c) 70.
- a b c 3. Bible means: (a) Book; (b) version; (c) manuscript.
- a b c 4. The Old Testament was written in: (a) Greek; (b) English; (c) Hebrew.
- a b c 5. The New Testament was written in: (a) Hebrew; (b) Greek; (c) Latin.
- a b c 6. The first great Old Testament translation was: (a) Septuagint; (b) Vulgate; (c) King James.
- a b c 7. The Sinaitic Manuscript is at: (a) British Museum; (b) Alexandria; (c) Vatican.
- a b c 8. First major English translation: (a) King James; (b) Gutenberg; (c) Wyclif's.
- a b c 9. The King James Version appeared in: (a) 1952; (b) 1611; (c) 1382.
- a b c 10. Apocrypha means: (a) book; (b) hidden; (c) parchment.

Complete the scripture quotations:

1. Neh. 8:5 — “And..... opened the book in the sight of all the; (for he was above all the people;) and when he it, all the people stood up.”
2. II Peter 1:21 — “Holy men of spake as they were moved by the Ghost.”
3. I Cor. 2:13 — “Which things also we speak, not in the which man’s..... teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”
4. II Tim. 3:16 — “All is given by of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for, for, for instruction in righteousness.”

Fill in the blanks:

1. The three most important New Testament manuscripts are....., and
2. Three of the many English translations which have been made are, and
3. The Rheims-Douai Catholic Version was issued in the year
4. The Scrolls were discovered in 1947.
5. Some books of the Bible were originally written on paper made from the plant.
6. The inventor of printing was
7. Wyclif completed his translation in the year
8. Copies of Tyndale’s translation were burned in the city of.....
9. The Bible is accurate, accurate, and correct.
10. The world’s highest standard of morality is presented in the

Name..... Grade.....

Address..... Date.....

City..... By.....
