



History of the Bible

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “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.”

The bible that we use today has a long and storied history and started to be presented in writing by the Lord around 1500 B.C. through Moses. The bibles that each of us use today did not exist in their current form until many years after the first century and are based on a translations assembled through the work of several men. In this lesson, we want to consider the origin of the bible from the time of Moses though the time when they were translated into the English versions we use today.

Assignment: Go to our web site (biblequestions.org) and read the article entitled “How the Bible Came to be” (by clicking on the letter “B” from the home page and then scrolling down to the section entitled “Bible Origins”) and then answer the following questions.

**DID YOU
KNOW?**

There are over 5,300 manuscripts that contain either a large portion or a fragment of scripture

1. Prior to the commands of the Lord being written, how did he communicate with man? _____

2. Who was the first author of scripture? List two passages that confirm him as the writer: _____

3. How long did it take to write the 27 books of the New Testament? _____

4. What was given to protect the early Christians from error until the New Testament was written?

5. How do we know that we have been given the fully revealed word of God? List two passages that prove this to be true _____

It is important to understand that the translations that we use today did not exist in the first century and were compiled by men from various manuscripts. It is also important to realize that these translations are not inspired. As a result, there have been some translations that have been purposely changed by men, such as the New World translation, which was changed by the Jehovah’s Witnesses to match their false doctrine and have led some astray. So how do we know if the translation we use has been reliably translated? Most of the common translations, such as the King James, English Standard Version, New American Standard, etc. are based on old manuscripts, which were compared and evaluated carefully so we can be sure that they contain the fully revealed word of God. The reliability of the New Testament has been proven through several old

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manuscripts such as the Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, the Dead Sea Scrolls, etc. which has allowed scholars to confirm that what we have today is accurate and reliable.

Assignment: Go to our web site (biblequestions.org) and read the article entitled “The Texts of the Bible” (by clicking on the letter “B” from the home page and then scrolling down to the section entitled “Bible Origins”) and then answer the following questions.

6. What are the three major languages involved originally in the translation of the text of the Bible?

7. Until the age of printing, how were the Hebrews scriptures handed down?

8. When was the Hebrew text translated into Greek? What was it called?

9. Thought question: Approximately 70 scholars took part in the translation of the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible). What would be the advantages of having so many people work on the translation?

10. What language did Jesus speak? What language was the New Testament written in?

11. The English language today is constantly changing. Koine Greek is a frozen language. What does the term “frozen language” mean and what are the advantages of the bible being written in this language?

12. What other writings were used as a valuable source to confirm the accuracy of the manuscripts?

In 1382, John Wycliffe translated the entire Bible from Latin into English. While it was nice to have an English version of the bible, William Tyndale felt it was important to provide an English translation from the original Hebrew and Greek instead of Latin and he was able to complete a translation in 1525. Eventually the modern translations that we use today were completed, such as the King James-1611 (which was a revision of the Bishops Bible translation), American Standard Version-1901, New King James Version-1982, English Standard Version-2001, etc.). A careful study of any translation will often raise questions about whether all of the passages were translated correctly. The influence of the translators also becomes evident, such as the use of the word “Easter” in the KJV based on the influence of Catholicism and the Calvinistic influence in the NIV based on the beliefs of those translators. The key is that when you look at the complete bible as a whole, even with a few passages we may have a question about, the overall pattern of truth and plan of salvation is clear and ultimately these few passages have little effect on the fully revealed word.

For example, some translations omit Mark 16:9-20 because it is not included in all of the manuscripts. Based on what is being taught in these passages, the same principles can be found in many other passages and therefore the truth of God’s word still stands strong.