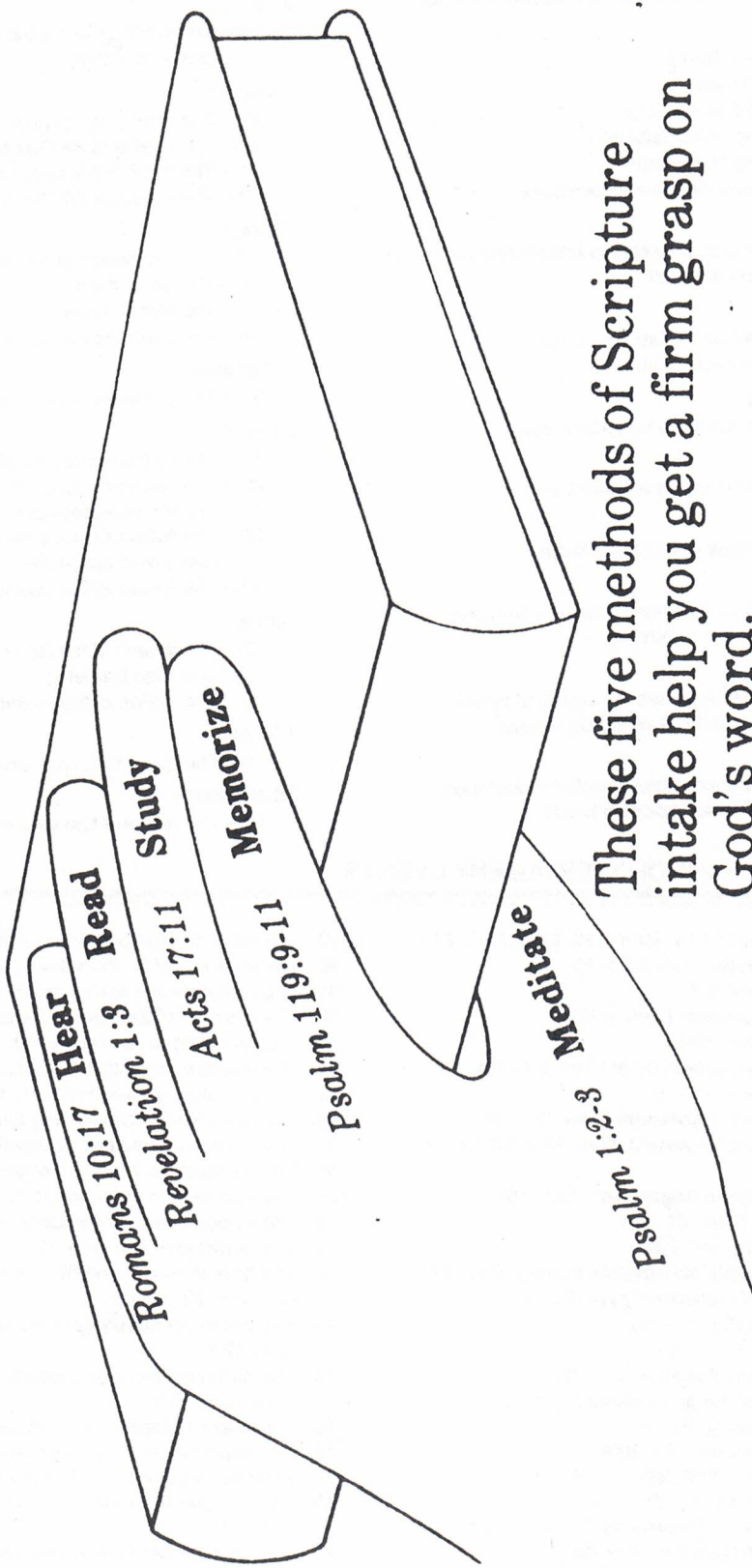


GETTING A GRASP ON GOD'S WORD



These five methods of Scripture intake help you get a firm grasp on God's word.

The Old Testament has 929 chapters. The following forty-eight chapters have been selected because of their historical, prophetic, theological, or practical significance.

GENESIS

- 1—Creation of all things
- 3—Fall of man
- 6—The universal **flood**
- 11—The Tower of **Babel**
- 12—The call of **Abraham**
- 15—The confirmation of the **Abrahamic Covenant**

EXODUS

- 3—The call of **Moses**
- 12—The **Passover**
- 14—The **Red Sea** crossing
- 16—The giving of the **Sabbath**
- 20—The giving of the **Law**
- 40—The completion of the **tabernacle**

LEVITICUS

- 8—The anointing of **Aaron** as Israel's first high priest
- 23—The **feasts** of Israel

NUMBERS

- 14—The **rebellion** at Kadesh-barnea
- 21—The serpent of **brass**

DEUTERONOMY

- 28—**Israel's future** predicted by Moses

JOSHUA

- 4—Israel enters the **Promised Land**

RUTH

- 4—The marriage of Boaz and **Ruth**

1 SAMUEL

- 9—The anointing of **Saul** as Israel's first king
- 16—The anointing of **David**

2 SAMUEL

- 6—**Jerusalem** becomes the capital of Israel
- 7—The giving of the **Davidic Covenant**

1 KINGS

- 8—The dedication of the **Temple** by **Solomon**
- 12—The **divided kingdom** of Israel

2 KINGS

- 17—The **capture** of the northern kingdom by Assyria
- 19—The **saving** of Jerusalem by the death angel
- 24—The **capture** of the southern kingdom by Babylon

EZRA

- 1—The decree of Cyrus and the **return** to Jerusalem

JOB

- 1—The confrontations between **God and Satan**
(see also Job 2)

PSALMS

- 22—The Psalm of **Calvary**
- 23—The Psalm of the **Good Shepherd**
- 51—The great confession of **sin** chapter
- 119—The Psalm of the **Word of God**

ISAIAH

- 7—The **prophecy** of the virgin birth
- 14—The fall of **Satan**
- 35—The **Millennium**
- 53—The sufferings of **Christ**

JEREMIAH

- 31—The **promise** of the new covenant to Israel

EZEKIEL

- 10—The **departure** of the glory cloud from Israel
- 28—The prehistorical life of **Satan**
- 37—The dry bone **vision** of Israel's restoration
- 38—The **future** Russian invasion into Palestine
(see also Ezekiel 39)
- 40—The **future millennial temple**

DANIEL

- 2—The **dream** of the future Gentile world powers
(see also Daniel 7)
- 9—The **vision** of the seventy weeks

JONAH

- 2—The **great fish** and Jonah

ZECHARIAH

- 14—The **Second Coming** of Christ

THE MOST IMPORTANT OLD TESTAMENT EVENTS

1. Creation of **Adam** and **Eve** (Gen. 1:26, 27; 2:7, 21, 22)
2. Institution of **marriage** (Gen. 2:23-25)
3. **Fall** of man (Genesis 3:6)
4. Promise of the **Redeemer** (Gen. 3:15)
5. Universal **flood** (Gen. 6-8)
6. Institution of human **government** (Gen. 9:1-19)
7. Tower of **Babel** (Gen. 11:1-9)
8. Conversion and call of **Abraham** (Gen. 12:1-3)
9. Giving of Abrahamic **Covenant** (Gen. 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21)
10. Abraham's marriage to **Hagar** (Gen. 16:1-16)
11. The birth of **Isaac** (Gen. 21:1-8)
12. The flight of **Jacob** (Gen. 28)
13. The selling of **Joseph** into Egyptian slavery (Gen. 37)
14. The enslavement of **Israel** in **Egypt** (Ex. 1)
15. The call of **Moses** (Ex. 3:1-10)
16. The ten **plagues** (Ex. 7-12)
17. The institution of the **Passover** (Ex. 12)
18. The appearance of the **glory cloud** (Ex. 13:21, 22)
19. The **Red Sea** crossing (Ex. 14)
20. The giving of the **manna** (Ex. 16:4)
21. The institution of the **Sabbath** (Ex. 16:29)
22. The giving of the **Law** (Ex. 20:1-17)
23. The completion of the **tabernacle** (Ex. 40:33, 34)
24. The anointing of **Aaron** (Lev. 8:1-12)
25. The **unbelief** at Kadesh-barnea (Num. 14)
26. The death of **Moses** (Deut. 34:5-8)
27. The **Jordan River** crossing into Palestine (Josh. 3)
28. The victory over **Jericho** (Josh. 6)
29. The death of **Joshua** (Josh. 24:29)
30. The marriage of **Ruth** to Boaz (Ruth 4)
31. The capture of the **ark** by the Philistines (1 Sam. 4)
32. The rejection of **Samuel** by Israel (1 Sam. 8:1-9)
33. The anointing of **Saul** (1 Sam. 9, 10)
34. The rejection of **Saul** (1 Sam. 15:23)
35. The anointing of **David** (1 Sam. 16:13)
36. The capture of **Jerusalem** by David (2 Sam. 5:9)
37. The recovery of the **ark** by David (2 Sam. 6:15, 16)
38. The giving of the Davidic **Covenant** (2 Sam. 7:8-17)
39. The anointing of **Solomon** (1 Ki. 1:39)
40. The completion of **Solomon's Temple** (1 Ki. 6:38)
41. The Israeli **civil war** (1 Ki. 12)
42. The deliverance of **Joash** from murderous Queen Athaliah (2 Chron. 22:10-12)
43. The **Assyrian captivity** of the northern kingdom (2 Ki. 17:6)
44. The **deliverance** of **Jerusalem** from the Assyrians (2 Ki. 19:32-35)
45. The death of **Josiah** (2 Ki. 23:29, 30)
46. The departure of the **glory cloud** (Ezek. 10:18)
47. The **destruction** of the **Temple** of Solomon (2 Ki. 25:8, 9)
48. The **Babylonian captivity** of the southern kingdom (2 Ki. 25:11)
49. The return under **Cyrus'** decree (Ezra 1)
50. The completion of the new Temple under **Zerubbabel** (Ezra 3)
51. The salvation of the Jews by **Esther** (Est. 4-7)

Old Testament Weights and Measures

MEASURE	SYSTEM EQUIVALENT	METRIC	ENGLISH
Gerah	—	.6 g.	.022 oz.
Bekah	10 gerahs	6 g.	.22 oz.
Shekel	2 bekahs	11 g.	.4 oz.
Mina	50 shekels	500 g.	1.1 lb.
Talent	60 minas	30 kg.	66 lbs.
Royal shekel	—	13 g.	.5 oz.
Heavy talent	120 minas	60 kg.	135 lbs.

W L E E I N G G H T T H S S

MEASURE	SYSTEM EQUIVALENT	METRIC	ENGLISH
Digit (width of finger)	—	19 mm.	3/4 in.
Handbreadth (width of hand at base)	4 digits	76 mm.	3 in.
Span (outstretched hand)	3 handbreadths	230 mm.	9 in.
Cubit (elbow to fingertip)	2 spans	445 mm.	17.5 in.
Long cubit	2 spans & 1 handbreadth	520 mm.	20.4 in.
Reed	6 cubits	2670 mm.	105 in.
Gomedh	2/3 cubit	300 mm.	12 in.

MEASURE	SYSTEM EQUIVALENT	METRIC	ENGLISH
Log	—	.3 lit.	2/3 pts.
Kab	4 logs	1.2 lit.	2-2/3 pts.
Hin	3 kabs	3.6 lit.	1 gal.
Bath	6 hins	22 lit.	6 gals.
Homer	10 baths	220 lit.	60 gals.

L I Q U I D

MEASURE	SYSTEM EQUIVALENT	METRIC	ENGLISH
Log	—	.3 lit.	.32 qts.
Kab	4 logs	1.2 lit.	1.3 qts.
Omer	7 logs	2.2 lit.	2.3 qts.
Seah	6 kabs	7.3 lit.	1 pk.
Ephah	3 seahs	22 lit.	3/4 bu.
Lethech	5 ephahs	110 lit.	3 bu. & 3 pks.
Homer	2 lethechs	220 lit.	7-1/2 bu.

Name Above All Names

In GENESIS Jesus is the Ram at Abraham's altar
In EXODUS He's the Passover Lamb
In LEVITICUS He's the High Priest
In NUMBERS He's the Cloud by day and pillar of fire by night
In DEUTERONOMY He's the City of our refuge
In JOSHUA He's the Scarlet Thread out Rahab's window
In JUDGES He is our Judge
In RUTH He is our Kinsman Redeemer
In 1st and 2nd SAMUEL He's our Trusted Prophet
And in KINGS and CHRONICLES He's our Reigning King
In EZRA He is our Faithful Scribe
In NEHEMIAH He's the Rebuilder of everything that is broken
And in ESTHER He is the Mordecai sitting faithful at the gate
In JOB He's our Redeemer that ever liveth
In PSALMS He is my Shepherd and I shall not want
In PROVERBS and ECCLESIASTES He's our Wisdom
And in the SONG OF SOLOMON He's the Beautiful Bridegroom
In ISAIAH He's the Suffering Servant
In JEREMIAH and LAMENTATIONS it is Jesus that is the Weeping Prophet
In EZEKIEL He's the Wonderful Four-Faced Man
And in DANIEL He is the Fourth Man in the midst of a fiery furnace
In HOSEA He is my Love that is forever faithful
In JOEL He baptizes us with the Holy Spirit
In AMOS He's our Burden Bearer
In OBADIAH our Savior
And in JONAH He is the Great Foreign Missionary that takes the
Word of God into all of the world
You go on and you see in MICAH He is the Messenger with beautiful feet
In NAHUM He is the Avenger
In HABAKKUK He is the Watchman that is ever praying for revival
In ZEPHANIAH He is the Lord mighty to save
In HAGGAI He is the Restorer of our lost heritage
In ZECHARIAH He is our Fountain
And in MALACHI He is the Son of Righteousness with healing in His wings
In MATTHEW Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God
In MARK He is the Miracle Worker
In LUKE He's the Son of Man
And in JOHN He is the Door by which every one of us must enter
In ACTS He is the Shining Light that appears to Saul on the road to Damascus
In ROMANS He is our Justifier
In 1st CORINTHIANS our Resurrection
In 2nd CORINTHIANS our Sin Bearer
In GALATIANS He redeems us from the law
In EPHESIANS He is our Unsearchable Riches
In PHILIPPIANS He supplies our every need
And in COLOSSIANS He's the Fullness of the Godhead Bodily
In 1st and 2nd THESSALONIANS He is our Soon Coming King
In 1st and 2nd TIMOTHY He is the Mediator between God and man
In TITUS He is our Blessed Hope
In PHILEMON He is a Friend that sticks closer than a brother
And in HEBREWS He's the Blood of the everlasting covenant
In JAMES it is the Lord that heals the sick
In 1st and 2nd PETER He is the Chief Shepherd
In 1st, 2nd and 3rd JOHN it is Jesus who has the tenderness of love
In JUDE He is the Lord coming with 10,000 saints
And in REVELATION, lift up your eyes, Church, for your redemption draweth nigh.
He is King of kings and Lord of lords!

What's in the Bible?

THE OLD TESTAMENT. A testament or covenant is an agreement between two parties that defines their relationship. The Old Testament is the record of God's dealings with Israel under the old covenant. The new covenant supercedes the old in many respects, but the old remains the foundation of the new. You can't properly understand who God is and what Christ accomplished without understanding the Old Testament. We generally have divided the books of the Old Testament according to the traditional Jewish divisions.

The Law/Teaching of Moses
(books that define God's covenant relationship with Israel as King and Father)

Genesis (the name means "beginning") tells us how the relationship between God and man got started. It introduces God as the Creator, a basic key to who He is. It also shows us the beginnings of man and woman, of sin and death, and of God's plan to redeem humans from the catastrophe caused by sin. Genesis traces the story of God's chosen family—the descendants of Abraham through Jacob-Israel—from their origins to their descent to Egypt. Every key theme of the Bible is rooted in Genesis.

Genesis is a *narrative* book; it consists mainly of factual stories that were told about real people. Their temptations, family traits, and actions exemplify what people are like, how God deals with them, and how we should or shouldn't act in similar circumstances.

Taken from
A Comp the Life
to
Christian
KC. Hinkley
compiled by
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Exodus ("departure") tells how God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt and covenanted with the people to be their God if they would be His loyal subjects. This story reveals God's love and power, and it helps us understand how God delivered us from slavery to sin. Exodus contains the first installment of the laws the King gave His subjects so that they would be a just, compassionate, and ordered society. These laws contain valuable principles of love and justice for us. The instructions for building the Tabernacle (God's royal tent for living in Israel's midst) teach us about how to worship a Holy God and hint at what Christ was going to do.

Leviticus instructs the priests (from the tribe of Levi) on how to perform each kind of sacrifice for God. The regulations graphically portray what Christ accomplished when He sacrificed Himself to bring us back into relationship with the Holy God. Other laws of cleanness and moral purity help us grasp what radical holiness implies.

Numbers shows Israel on the brink of inheriting all that God had to offer them, but forfeiting that inheritance through faithlessness. A whole generation wanders and dies in the desert between Egypt and the Promised Land, yet God displays His faithful love by sustaining the people so that the next generation can receive the inheritance. Numbers is a portrait of God responding to human sin with His perfect balance of justice and love.

Deuteronomy is Moses' last words to Israel before his death. It is a moving call to faithfulness and a summary of the old covenant—how God's people were expected to treat God and other people. Deuteronomy is one of the books Jesus quotes most often in the gospels because He carries many of its principles over into the new covenant.

The Former Prophets
(books that evaluate Israel's history in light of the covenant)

Joshua tells how God fulfilled His promise to give Canaan to Israel. It is full of lessons for us about obedience, holiness, unity, courage, and God's ability to accomplish what He promises. Joshua illustrates concepts like inheritance and rest that recur in the New Testament.

Judges recounts how after Joshua's death, Israel lacked good leadership, so "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (17:6, kJV). The result was a cycle of moral decay, political chaos, oppression by enemies, then cries for help and deliverance. We see that the Lord will not tolerate sin, even in His children, but that He is always willing to deliver His children when they truly repent, humble themselves, and obey Him. We also see that chaos is inevitable when man is left to himself.

Ruth is part of the Writings in the Jewish divisions, but Christian Bibles place it with Judges because it fits there in history. It is a beautiful story of love and loyalty in the midst of the faithless era of the Judges. It shows how simple people can accomplish great things for God by living faithfully, how God cares about even our everyday griefs and joys, and how He chose a penniless foreign widow to become the ancestress of King David and Christ.

1 & 2 Samuel trace Israel's history from the low point at the end of Judges to the pinnacle of David's triumph to the tragedy of his later years because of his failures as a man and a father. We learn why God gave Israel a king and what kind of man God wanted to lead His people. David, the man who fore-

shadowed Christ as King, is highlighted in all his strengths and failings. He shows us how to be a man after God's heart.

1 & 2 Kings evaluate each of David's successors and the nation as a whole on the basis of how faithful they are to the covenant with God. The split and collapse of Israel and Judah because of idolatry and immorality illustrate that the nation's welfare depended on faithfulness to the covenant; and that leaders are evaluated not by worldly success, but by how well they represent God's purity and holiness to the world. Yet God protects the royal line of David not because of man's virtue, but because He is faithful to His promise to send a descendant of David to be the Christ.

The Writings

(books of stories, drama, and poetry that God gave Israel)

1 & 2 Chronicles recount the reigns of David, Solomon, and the kings of Judah until its destruction. These books focus on the importance of worshipping God and living faithfully to His Word. First and Second Chronicles portray Judah's good kings as foreshadows of the Messiah.

Ezra and Nehemiah tell how God restored the exiled Jews to the Promised Land and enabled them to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple despite all obstacles. These books are a tribute to God's amazing faithfulness and the courage of a few committed believers.

Esther shows how God saved His people from yet another threat of destruction by placing a woman and her uncle in crucial positions. Their courage and faithfulness are more examples for us.

Job is a drama about the suffering of a man who loves and obeys God. It deals with questions we may ask: Why does God let suffering happen? Is God really as loving and just and powerful as the Bible says? Will people trust and serve God when there seems to be nothing in it for them?

Psalms is 150 songs of praise and petition to God. The psalmists express to God their feelings from the depths of despair to the heights of exultation. Their words comfort, strengthen, enlighten, and lift us to worship in every circumstance.

Proverbs teaches us how to obtain wisdom, insight, and a morally disciplined life. The various proverbs address the nitty-gritty of business, relationships, entertainment, and even eating habits.

Ecclesiastes is a journal of one man's search for happiness, in all the wrong places, and his conclusions.

The Song of Songs celebrates the beauty, power, and preciousness of human love in a committed marriage relationship. It also portrays the passionate love between God and His people.

The Latter Prophets

(books by prophets evaluating their present situations and foreseeing the future in light of the covenant)

The prophets describe graphically how God feels and what He does when we ignore Him. They also promise what He does (ultimately through Christ) when we turn to Him humbly.

Isaiah is the prophet most often quoted in the New Testament. Through him God unveils the whole

scope of His plan to judge Israel for its sin yet ultimately to save the whole world. Isaiah prophesies Jesus Christ's character and mission with precision.

Jeremiah calls Judah to repentance in order to stay the coming judgment of destruction. He also reveals his intimate wrestlings with God. Jeremiah promises that although judgment must follow sin, a faithful remnant will be delivered by the Messiah under a new covenant.

Lamentations is a series of five poetic laments over the fall of Jerusalem. (The Jews consider it one of the Writings, but Christians include it with the Prophets.) The author, Jeremiah, weeps over his destroyed city. Yet he recognizes that God has treated Jerusalem as her wickedness deserved. Jeremiah also knows that because God is the Lord of hope, love, faithfulness, and salvation, He will respond when His people repent.

Ezekiel explains God's ways to a stiff-necked people, encourages grieving exiles that God has not forgotten them, and gives a glimpse of the coming Messiah, the Holy Spirit, the forgiveness of sins, and the Kingdom of God. Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel is a model of one who intercedes on behalf of his people.

Daniel is part of the Writings in the Jewish divisions, but it recounts the life and visions of a prophet. Daniel's career in a pagan government is a model for Christians in a secular world. His visions declare God's sovereignty and His ultimate triumph over His enemies.

Hosea rebukes God's people for committing adultery against their Husband through the worship of wealth, sex, and power.

Joel foresees terrible judgment upon God's complacent people, yet restoration and abundance when the punished repent.

Amos, too, promises judgment for a materialistic, unjust nation.

Obadiah proclaims judgment for God's enemies.

Jonah is the unwilling evangelist. His life shows that the calling of God's people is to bring the unbelieving nations, whom God also loves, into His fold.

Micah speaks of more destruction and hope.

Nahum announces the destruction of the evil empire arrayed against God.

Habakkuk is a dialogue between the prophet and God. Habakkuk objects to the way God allows wickedness, God replies, and Habakkuk responds with renewed faith.

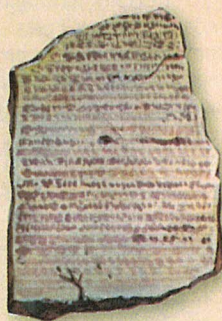
Zephaniah portrays the horrors of judgment and the hope of restoration.

Haggai promises that if the people put God first they will be blessed, but if they don't then they will be cursed. Haggai gives a glimpse of the Messiah.

Zechariah motivates the people to rebuild God's Temple and trust totally in Him. Zechariah foresees Christ's lowliness, humanity, rejection, crucifixion, priesthood, kingship, glory, and reign. God's sovereignty throughout history is emphasized.

Malachi speaks to people who doubt God's love because He seems inactive. He gives them reasons for faith and warns against losing hope.

Old Testament Written (approx. 1500-400 BC)



stone

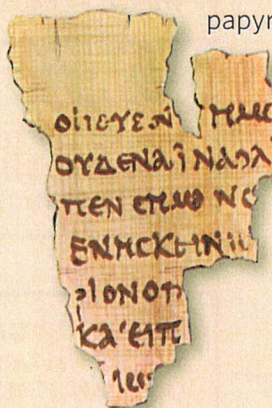


clay



leather

New Testament Written (approx. AD 45-100)



papyrus

The oldest New Testament fragment (from John 18) that we have today was copied in Greek on a papyrus codex around AD 110-130.

Bible Copied on Papyrus



Scrolls of leather, and later of papyrus, were used to make copies of the Scriptures.

A papyrus codex is a bound volume made from sheets folded and sewn together, sometimes with a cover. They were used more than scrolls after AD 1-100.



Bible Copied on Fine Animal Skins



Fine quality animal skins from calves or antelope (vellum) and sheep or goats (parchment) were used for over 1,000 years to make copies of the Bible approximately AD 300-1400.

Two of the oldest vellum copies (AD 325-350) that exist today are the Vatican Codex and the Sinaitic Codex.

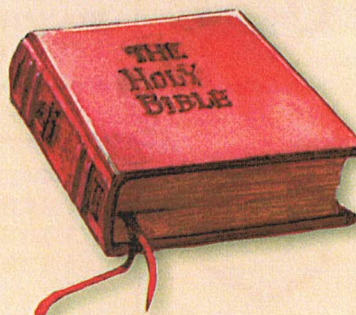
Bible Printed by Printing Press after 1455

Wycliffe Bibles were inscribed by hand on vellum in the 1300s-1400s. Some copies took ten months to two years to produce and cost a year's wage.



The Bible was the first book to be printed with Gutenberg's printing press in 1455.

The Bible, God's Word to the World



The Bible is now printed on paper in many languages. It is also available in many digital formats.

BIBLICAL LITERARY GENRES

HISTORY



HISTORY BOOKS ARE MEANT TO DESCRIBE HISTORICAL EVENTS AS THEY HAPPENED IN THE PAST. THEY CAN ALSO INSTRUCT AND WARN. EXAMPLES INCLUDE GENESIS, RUTH, AND ACTS.

LAW



LAW BOOKS TELL HOW GOD INTENDS THE ANCIENT NATION OF ISRAEL TO FUNCTION RELIGIOUSLY, POLITICALLY, AND SOCIALLY. EXAMPLES INCLUDE LEVITICUS AND DEUTERONOMY.

WISDOM



WISDOM BOOKS ARE COLLECTIONS OF APHORISMS AND WISE SAYINGS MEANT TO GUIDE THE RELATIONSHIP TO GOD AND TO ONE ANOTHER. EXAMPLES INCLUDE JOB, PROVERBS, AND ECCLESIASTES.

POETRY



POETRY BOOKS ARE POETIC FORMS OF PRAISE TO GOD OR GRATITUDE FOR HIS GIFTS TO HUMANITY. EXAMPLES INCLUDE PSALMS, SONG OF SOLOMON, AND LAMENTATIONS.

PROPHECY



PROPHETIC BOOKS CONTAIN PREDICTIONS OF FUTURE EVENTS, WARNINGS, AND PREACHING THAT CALLS PEOPLE TO REPENTANCE AND OBEDIENCE. THEY ARE AT TIMES BOTH HOPEFUL AND DREADFUL PREDICTING GOD'S BLESSING AND WOE. EXAMPLES INCLUDE ISAIAH, JEREMIAH, AND MALACHI.

GOSPELS



GOSPELS ARE SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF JESUS. THERE ARE FOUR OF THEM, EACH WRITTEN BY A DIFFERENT AUTHOR AND FOR A DIFFERENT PURPOSE: MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, AND JOHN.

EPISTLES



EPISTLES ARE LETTERS THAT USUALLY HAVE A SECTION DEDICATED TO TEACHING TRUTH ABOUT GOD AND A SECTION DEDICATED TO TELLING PEOPLE HOW TO LIVE IN LIGHT OF THAT TRUTH. EXAMPLES INCLUDE ROMANS, TITUS, EPHESIANS, GALATIANS, 1 THESSALONIANS, AND 1 PETER.

APOCALYPSE



APOCALYPTIC WRITINGS ARE A SPECIFIC FORM OF PROPHECY PREDICTING DISASTER AND DESTRUCTION. IMAGARY AND SYMBOLISM ARE THE PRIMARY DEVICES USED TO COMMUNICATE THEIR TRUTH. EXAMPLES INCLUDE DANIEL AND REVELATION.

WHY TRUST THE BIBLE?

Can the Bible Be Trusted?

Before the invention of the printing press, scribes copied the Scriptures by hand for more than one thousand years—

- ◆ without eyeglasses
- ◆ by the light of candles

- ◆ using quill pens and ground charcoal mixed with gum and water to scratch the sacred words of Scripture on rough papyrus and vellum

What if these scribes got it wrong?

Some recent bestselling books—such as Bart Ehrman's *Misquoting Jesus*—argue that the scribes *did* get it wrong. Here's a summary of recent claims about the surviving manuscripts of the Bible: "Not only do we not have the originals [of the biblical manuscripts], we don't have the first copies of the originals. We have only error-ridden copies, and the vast majority of these are centuries removed from the originals and different from them in thousands of ways. Mistakes multiply and get repeated; sometimes they get corrected and sometimes they get compounded. And so it goes. For centuries. In some places, we simply cannot be sure that we have reconstructed the text accurately. It's a bit hard to know what the words of the Bible mean if we don't even know what the words are."¹

Thousands of people read and believe these attacks on the Bible. Still, millions of people continue to trust the Bible as an authoritative, written record that conveys consistent and reliable truth about God. So which is it?

Does the Bible still convey the truths that the original authors intended? Or were the ancient texts changed with such reckless abandon that contemporary biblical scholars are left with manuscripts so "error-ridden" they can't even be certain what the texts originally meant?

With these questions in mind, let's look at the history of the biblical texts to see what the historical record actually tells us!

Here's what we'll find:

- ◆ The Bible can be trusted.
- ◆ We can know what the Bible says.

- ◆ We can be confident that our Bible today is faithful to the original manuscripts, despite differences that exist in ancient copies.

GOSPEL	DATE (APPROXIMATE)	SOURCE
MARK	AD 65	Peter, written by Mark
MATTHEW	AD 75	Matthew
LUKE	AD 75	Luke, a companion of Paul
JOHN	AD 90	John

How Were the Stories Passed Down?

■ What the skeptics claim:

"[The Gospels] were written thirty-five to sixty-five years after Jesus' death, . . . not by people who were eyewitnesses, but by people living later."²

■ What history actually tells us:

Yes and no. While it's true that the Gospels were probably written between thirty-five and sixty-five years after the death of Jesus, historical evidence strongly suggests that the sources of the New Testament Gospels were eyewitnesses of the events of Jesus' life. Mark's Gospel emerged around AD 65; the Gospels According to Matthew and Luke began to circulate a decade or so later. John's Gospel seems to have been penned around AD 90. Even with these dates, it is at least *possible* that the sources of these books were eyewitnesses of Jesus. The emergence of Mark's Gospel only thirty years or so after Jesus' death makes it unreasonable to deny that the Gospels, at the very least, *could* have been written by eyewitnesses.³

What matters most, though, isn't *when* the Gospels were written. *What matters most is whether the Gospels accurately represent eyewitness accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus.* According to ancient recollections from such early Christian leaders as Papias of Hierapolis, Polycarp of Smyrna, and Irenaeus of Lyons, each of the four New Testament Gospels represents eyewitness testimony about Jesus Christ. According to these recollections—recollections that bear every mark of originating in the first century AD—

- The anecdotes recorded in the Gospel According to Mark are the testimony of Peter, preserved in written form by his translator Mark.
- Luke's Gospel integrates written and oral sources gathered from eyewitnesses by Paul's personal physician, Luke.
- The materials that are unique to the Gospel According to Matthew came from Matthew, a tax collector who deserted a profitable profession to follow Jesus.
- The accounts in the Gospel According to John find their source in the apostle John.⁴

■ What the skeptics claim:

"Stories based on eyewitness accounts are not necessarily reliable, and the same is true a hundredfold for accounts that . . . have been in oral circulation long after the fact."⁵

■ What history actually tells us:

In a culture that passed on information orally—such as the biblical world—it was possible for oral histories to remain reliable for remarkably long periods of time. People in today's world—surrounded by high levels of literacy and easy access to writing materials—are accustomed to recording important information in *written form*. But, especially among the ancient Jews, important teachings were told and retold in rhythmic, repetitive patterns so that students could memorize key truths.⁶ These teachings were known as *oral histories*. In these forms, it was possible for teachings and accounts of historical events to remain amazingly consistent from one generation to the next.⁷ Much of the Old Testament and some portions of the New Testament—for example, the eyewitness accounts mentioned in Luke 1:2—may have been passed down as reliable oral histories before they were written.

■ What the skeptics claim:

Stories in the New Testament "were changed with what would strike us today as reckless abandon. They were modified, amplified, and embellished. And sometimes they were made up."⁸

■ What history actually tells us:

The New Testament accounts of Jesus were not made up or changed with "reckless abandon." Consistent oral histories about the life of Jesus and the early church emerged among eyewitnesses shortly after the events occurred; these oral histories remained consistent as they spread across the Roman Empire.

As an example, let's take a look at one of these segments of oral history, recorded in written form in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7.⁹ How do we know that these words from the apostle Paul represent part of the oral tradition about Jesus? Paul introduced this summation with two Greek words—*paradidomi* ("handed over" or "delivered") and *paralambano* ("received")—that indicated it was oral tradition. Ancient readers understood these two words, when used together, to imply that the writer was citing oral history.¹⁰

A quick examination of these verses demonstrates how quickly oral histories emerged among the eyewitnesses of Jesus and how consistent these traditions remained. Even though Paul wrote in Greek, he called the apostle Peter by his Aramaic name, "Cephas." Then, there's the repeated phrase "and that." The phrase rendered "and that" is the Greek translation of an Aramaic method for joining clauses.¹¹ Based on the grammatical patterns in these verses, it's clear that this oral history originally circulated in Aramaic. And where did people speak Aramaic? In Galilee and Judea, the places where Jesus walked and talked, died and rose from the dead! And when could Paul have received an oral history of the death and resurrection of Jesus in Aramaic? The point at which Paul seems to have learned this version of the historical account was around AD 35 when he visited Jerusalem and heard the story of Jesus from an eyewitness (Galatians 1:18). For Paul to have received a consistent oral history in Aramaic at this time, scholars estimate that this account—a tradition that clearly affirms the essential facts of Jesus' resurrection—first surfaced near Jerusalem shortly after Jesus was crucified.¹²

From this bit of oral history, it's clear that the earliest Christians did *not* recklessly alter their traditions. Otherwise, how could Paul—writing three years after he first visited Corinth—have said to the Corinthians immediately before he quoted this oral history, "I am reminding you, brothers, about the good proclamation that I proclaimed to you," suggesting that Paul proclaimed similar words in each place that he visited? (1 Corinthians 15:1). Clearly, this example from the oral accounts of Jesus' life was *not* "made up" long after the events or "changed with . . . reckless abandon," as the skeptics claim. To the contrary, this oral tradition about Jesus emerged soon after his resurrection and remained relatively unchanged as it spread across the Roman Empire.

■ What the skeptics claim:

"There is not a sentence concerning Jesus in the entire New Testament composed by anyone who had ever met the unwilling King of the Jews."¹³ "Jesus' own followers . . . were mainly lower-class peasants—fishermen and artisans, for example—and . . . they spoke Aramaic rather than Greek. . . . In the end, it seems unlikely that the uneducated, lower-class, illiterate disciples of Jesus played the decisive role in the literary compositions that have come down through history under their names."¹⁴



(Courtesy of CSNTM.org)

In ancient epistles, the author's name appeared at the beginning of the letter, as in this copy of Paul's letter to the Romans. In some ancient historical writings—such as the Gospels—the author's name was sometimes omitted.

The word "canon" comes from the Greek word *kanon*, which meant "measuring stick." In the fourth century AD, the writings that Christians accepted as authoritative began to be known as a "canon" because these witnesses measured the church's faithfulness to Jesus Christ. Christians embrace the Jewish canon—the books known to us as "the Old Testament"—because they believed that the God of the Jewish Scriptures was also the Father of Jesus Christ. Each writing in the New Testament was expected to be connected to an eyewitness of the risen Lord, to be recognized in churches throughout the known world, and not to contradict other writings about Jesus.

■ What history actually tells us:

Not all of Jesus' first followers were illiterate; even if some followers *were* illiterate, professional scribes—people who were capable of turning oral histories into polished Greek—were readily available even to working-class persons.

In the book that bears the name “Matthew,” the apostle Matthew is presented as a tax collector (Matthew 10:3). It's unlikely that any early Christian would have fabricated this bit of vocational trivia. Since Roman governors expected tax collectors to stockpile personal wealth by cheating people, tax collectors rarely made it to the top of anyone's list of most-loved citizens. But there was one skill that tax collectors *did* possess. *They could read and write.* Tax collectors carried *pinakes*, hinged wooden tablets with beeswax coating on each panel.¹⁵ Tax collectors etched notes in the wax using styluses; these notes could be translated later and rewritten on papyrus.¹⁶ Papyri from Egypt prove that tax collectors also wrote receipts for citizens in their villages.¹⁷ So, a tax collector such as Matthew could *not* have been illiterate. The daily tasks of a Galilean tax collector required him to copy and record information in multiple languages.

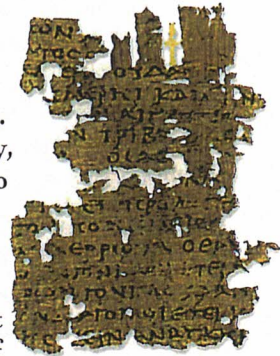


This painting from the ruins of Pompeii shows how widely wax tablets and styluses were used to record thoughts in written form.

What about another character whose name is ascribed to a Gospel, the companion of Paul named “Luke”? Compared to other people in the New Testament, Luke is a quite obscure character. He's mentioned only three times in letters attributed to Paul (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 1:24; 2 Timothy 4:11). Considering how many of Paul's partners enjoy far greater prominence in the New Testament—Timothy, for example, or Barnabas or Silas—it's difficult to explain why anyone would ascribe the third Gospel to Luke...unless, of course, Luke actually *was* responsible for the book that bears his name.

According to Colossians 4:14, Luke was Paul's “beloved physician.” Ancient physicians seem to have possessed, at least, the capacity to read the summaries of medical knowledge that flourished in the first century. Papyri from Egypt prove that many physicians also wrote reports for law-enforcement officials regarding suspicious injuries, as well as statements for slave-masters certifying the health of slaves.¹⁸ So, it's unlikely that Luke was completely “illiterate.” What's more, many physicians could pull together various eyewitness accounts into coherent reports, just as the preface of Luke's Gospel suggests that the author has done (Luke 1:1-4).

That leaves Mark and John. Though it is by no means certain, these men *may* have been illiterate. Still, in the first century AD, professional scribes were readily available to render messages from other languages, including Aramaic, into polished Greek. Complex legal titles, epistles to family members, and simple commercial receipts all required secretarial skills—and provided livelihoods for a multitude of scribes.¹⁹ Even though Paul was completely capable of writing in Greek (Galatians 6:11; Philemon 1:19-21), scribes penned Paul's letters for him (Romans 16:22; see also 1 Peter 5:12).²⁰ It's entirely possible that Mark and John employed professional scribes to render their oral accounts of Jesus' life into Greek documents. If so, they would still have been the *sources* of these Gospels.²¹



(Courtesy of the Schøyen Collection, Oslo and London)

This summary from a medical manual, copied shortly before the time of Jesus, demonstrates some level of literacy among first-century physicians such as Luke.

How Can We Know that the Bible was Copied Accurately?

■ What the skeptics claim:

“The [Old Testament] is filled with lots of textual problems—as we have come to realize, for example, with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.”²²

■ What history actually tells us:

In truth, the Dead Sea Scrolls proved the precise opposite. The Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrated how carefully the Old Testament had been copied through the centuries. Around AD 900—nearly a millennium after the time of Jesus—groups of Jewish scribes known as Masoretes began to copy the Old Testament texts according to strict guidelines. The Masoretes maintained nearly perfect accuracy in their copies. Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, these Masoretic texts were the oldest available manuscripts of the Old Testament. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were unearthed in the mid-twentieth century, scholars compared the text of Isaiah from the Dead Sea Scrolls with the text of Isaiah preserved by the Masoretes. What these scholars discovered was that—even though more than 1,000 years separated the Dead Sea Scrolls from the Masoretic texts—the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Masoretic texts agreed word-for-word more than 95% of the time!²³ The remaining differences stemmed primarily from minor spelling variations. Even the scrolls that differ a bit more than the Isaiah scrolls—for example, the copies of 1 and 2 Samuel and Deuteronomy—do not differ in any way that affects any crucial Jewish or Christian belief.



(Courtesy of CSNTM.org)

John Rylands Papyrus 52 records portions of John 18. The writing style and material suggest that this fragment was copied around AD 110.

■ What the skeptics claim:

“There are more differences among our manuscripts than there are words in the New Testament.... We have only error-ridden copies, and the vast majority of these are centuries removed from the originals and different from them...in thousands of ways.”²⁴

■ What history actually tells us:

More than ninety-nine percent of the variants in the New Testament are not even noticeable when the text is translated; of the remaining differences, *none* affects any vital aspect of Christian faith.²⁵

Scholars have 5,700 or so ancient biblical manuscripts available to them. Although many of these manuscripts include the entire New Testament, most are partial copies, found in fragmented form in the sands of Egypt or in the monasteries of Europe and western Asia. All totaled, these manuscripts include more than two million pages of text. In these two-million-plus pages of biblical text, there are between 200,000 and 400,000 variations in wording or spelling. In a complete Greek New Testament, there are approximately 138,000 words. So, yes, there *are* more differences among the total manuscripts than there are words in one complete Greek New Testament. What the skeptics don't clearly communicate to their readers, though, is *the sheer insignificance of these variants*.

Most of these 400,000 variations stem from differences in spelling, word order, or the relationships between nouns and definite articles—slight variants that are easily recognizable. After minor spelling errors and slight variations in word order are factored out, there is more than 99% agreement between all of the known manuscripts of the Bible! Of the remaining variants, none affects any crucial element of the Christian faith.

■ What the skeptics claim:

“Scribes who were not altogether satisfied with what the New Testament books said modified their words to make them ... more vigorously oppose heretics, women, Jews, and pagans.”²⁶

■ What history actually tells us:

With more than 5,700 manuscripts and fragments of the New Testament available to us, it would be impossible for anyone to have modified major portions the New Testament without their changes being quite easily noticed. In the few cases when changes *were* attempted, the original text can—in all but the tiniest handful of instances—be easily restored by examining the most ancient New Testament manuscripts.²⁷

Some scribes after the New Testament era may have altered texts that placed women in prominent positions. For example, in Romans 16:7, someone named Junia—a name that appears to be feminine—is said to be “significant among the apostles,” but a later scribe seems to have turned “Junia” into “Junias,” a man’s name.²⁸ In the most ancient manuscripts of Acts 18:26, a woman named Priscilla is the primary teacher of Apollos. Centuries later, a copyist switched the order of names, placing the name of Priscilla’s husband first. These kinds of changes are, however, obvious and easy to identify.

Sir Frederic Kenyon, former director of the British Museum, commented concerning the Gospel: “The interval between the dates of the original composition and the earliest extant evidence [is] so small as to be negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed.”³⁷

(Courtesy of the Schøyen Collection, Oslo and London)



WORKS OF PLATO

- Written around 400 BC
- Only seven copies have survived
- The earliest surviving manuscript was copied between AD 800 and 900—more than 1,200 years after the original documents were written

NEW TESTAMENT

- Written between AD 60 and 100
- More than 5,700 portions have survived
- Complete manuscripts of the New Testament have survived from the late third or early fourth centuries—less than three centuries after the original documents were written
- Hundreds of fragments and manuscripts have survived from the second, third, and fourth centuries

Even in the very few cases that remain uncertain, the problem is not with the texts themselves. The difficulty is with the choices of individuals to twist biblical texts to sanction negative attitudes toward women, Jews, or non-believers. In any case, the claim that the Bible as we have it today has been modified for the purpose of opposing women, Jews, and pagans has no substantive foundation in the actual texts.

■ What the skeptics claim:

“Many of our cherished biblical stories and widely held beliefs concerning the divinity of Jesus, the Trinity, and the divine origins of the Bible itself stem from both intentional and accidental alterations by scribes.”²⁹

■ What history actually tells us:

This claim is simply not true. Firm belief in the divinity of the Jesus, the threefold nature of God, and the divine origins of the Bible emerged among Christians before the New Testament was even completed. None of these beliefs depends on disputed or altered passages in the Bible. It is true that one verse that mentions the Trinity was not originally present in the biblical text: The last half of 1 John 5:7—a text that, in some later manuscripts, reads, “There are three that testify in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are one”—doesn’t appear in the most ancient New Testament manuscripts. But the doctrine of the Trinity does not depend on this verse. God’s nature as three-yet-one is affirmed just as clearly in Matthew 28:19, where Jesus commanded his followers to baptize in the *name* (singular) of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Similarly, the most ancient copies of 1 Timothy 3:16 declare, “Great is the mystery of godliness; he was manifested in the flesh,” while a few later texts read, “*God* was manifested in the flesh.” But, again, the doctrine of the deity of Jesus does *not* depend on this text; the deity of Jesus is clearly affirmed in several undisputed texts, including John 20:28, where Thomas recognized Jesus as Lord and God. No essential Christian belief is affected by any variant in the biblical manuscripts.

Who Chose the Books in My Bible?

■ What the skeptics claim:

“Many Christians today may think that the canon of the New Testament simply appeared on the scene one day, soon after the death of Jesus, but nothing could be farther from the truth. As it turns out, we are able to pinpoint the first time that any Christian of record listed the twenty-seven books of our New Testament as *the* books of the New Testament—neither more nor fewer. . . . In the year 367, Athanasius wrote his annual pastoral letter to the Egyptian churches under his jurisdiction, and in it he . . . lists our twenty-seven books, excluding all others.”³⁰

■ What history actually tells us:

This statement leaves out several key facts about the selection of the New Testament books. It is true that Athanasius was the first author to list the exact same twenty-seven books that we find in the New Testament today. Yet, from the beginning, Christians unanimously accepted the four Gospels, Acts, Paul’s letters, and the first epistle of John. Although disputes about a few New Testament books lasted into the fourth century, widespread agreement about which writings were authoritative existed among Christians from the first century onward. The primary standard for deciding which books were authoritative emerged long before the fourth century—and the standard *wasn’t* the word of a powerful bishop. Hints of this standard can, in fact, be found in Christian writings of the first century AD. The basic idea was this: *Testimony that could be connected to eyewitnesses of the risen Lord was uniquely authoritative among early Christians.*³¹ From the beginning, authoritative testimony about Jesus Christ had to have its source in eyewitnesses of the risen Lord. Even while the New Testament books were being written, the words of people who saw and followed the risen Lord carried special weight in the churches (see Acts 1:21-26; 15:6–16:5; 1 Corinthians 4–5; 9:1-12; Galatians 1:1-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26-27). The logic of this standard was simple: The people most likely to know the truth about Jesus were eyewitnesses who had encountered Jesus personally or their close associates.

Although debates continued into the fourth century about a few writings—including the letters of Peter, John’s second and third letters, and the letters of James and Jude—Christians universally agreed at least as early as the second century on the authority of no fewer than nineteen of the books in the New Testament—and these are the writings that reflect some of the most essential truths about Jesus. Even if this score or so of books had been the only documents that represented eyewitness testimony about Jesus, every vital truth of Christian faith would remain completely intact. What directed this process was the conviction that these writings must be rooted in reliable, eyewitness testimony about Jesus Christ.

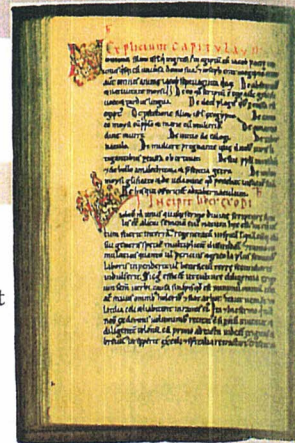
When deciding which Old Testament writings to accept, Christians embraced the same listing of books as the Jewish people. When the Septuagint—a popular Greek-language version of the Jewish holy writings—was translated around 200 BC, the translators had included some Jewish writings which never appeared in the Hebrew Scriptures and which Jewish rabbis rejected around AD 90 at the Council of Jamnia (Yavneh). The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches recognize these additional books from the Septuagint as authoritative; these writings appear in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Bibles as “deuterocanonical” or “apocryphal” books.

■ What the skeptics claim:

Among the earliest Christians, “there was no agreed-upon canon—and no agreed-upon theology. Instead, there was a wide range of diversity: diverse groups asserting diverse theologies based on diverse written texts, all claiming to be written by apostles of Jesus.”³²

■ What history actually tells us:

Among the people who walked and talked with Jesus, a consensus emerged very early regarding both the identity of Jesus and all but a few biblical books. It’s true that there *were* several divergent sets of beliefs that circulated within the earliest churches. It’s also true that debates about a few biblical books lasted beyond the first and second centuries. Yet the persons who actually walked and talked with Jesus agreed about the nature of Jesus even before the New Testament was completed. Consensus about all but a few New Testament books was reached by the mid-second century, probably earlier. According to the records found in the New Testament—the only writings about Jesus that were written early enough to be connected to eyewitnesses of Jesus—Jesus was human and yet divine, he was the messianic king predicted in the Hebrew Scriptures, he was physically raised from the dead, and it is only by trusting in him that anyone can enjoy the life that God created humanity to live, both now and in eternity (see Jn. 20:28-31; 1 Cor. 15:1-7; 1 Jn. 2:22; 4:1-3). According to the eyewitnesses of Jesus, to deny such truths as these was to exclude oneself from fellowship with Jesus Christ and with his followers (see 1 Jn. 4:1-6).



(Courtesy of the Schøyen Collection, Oslo and London)
The sermons of the third-century theologian Origen of Alexandria clearly recognized the authority of the New Testament writings.

How Reliable is My Bible?

■ What the skeptics claim:

“Not only do we not have the originals [of the biblical manuscripts], we don’t have the first copies of the originals. . . . What we have are copies made later—much later.”³³

■ What history actually tells us:

Although the original manuscripts from the biblical authors *have* been lost—probably forever—the copies that we possess today reliably reflect the inspired message of the original authors. Ancient people saw no reason to revere original manuscripts from important people, and—once documents became too worn to read easily—they did not retain the original manuscripts.³⁴ Instead, they made reliable copies and burned or buried the originals. Occasionally, the ink was scraped from the original, and the parchment was reused.

Despite the critics’ claims, it *is* possible that we possess first-generation copies of the original New Testament manuscripts. In AD 200, churches in Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, Ephesus, and Rome still possessed original manuscripts from the apostolic authors.³⁵ Many portions of the New Testament that were copied between AD 100 and 200 have been found in Egypt; it is entirely possible that scribes copied at least a few of these documents from the original manuscripts.

What matters most, however, is not the *age* of the existing manuscripts but their *reliability*. When the manuscripts are compared, they completely agree with one another more than 99% of the time. Of the differences that remain, *not even one difference* decisively affects any aspect of Christian faith.



(Courtesy of CSNTM.org)
This painting of the apostle John appears at the beginning of John’s Gospel in a thirteenth-century manuscript.

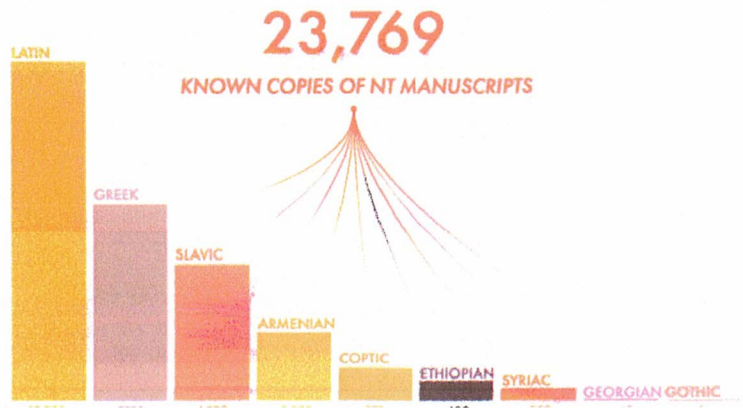
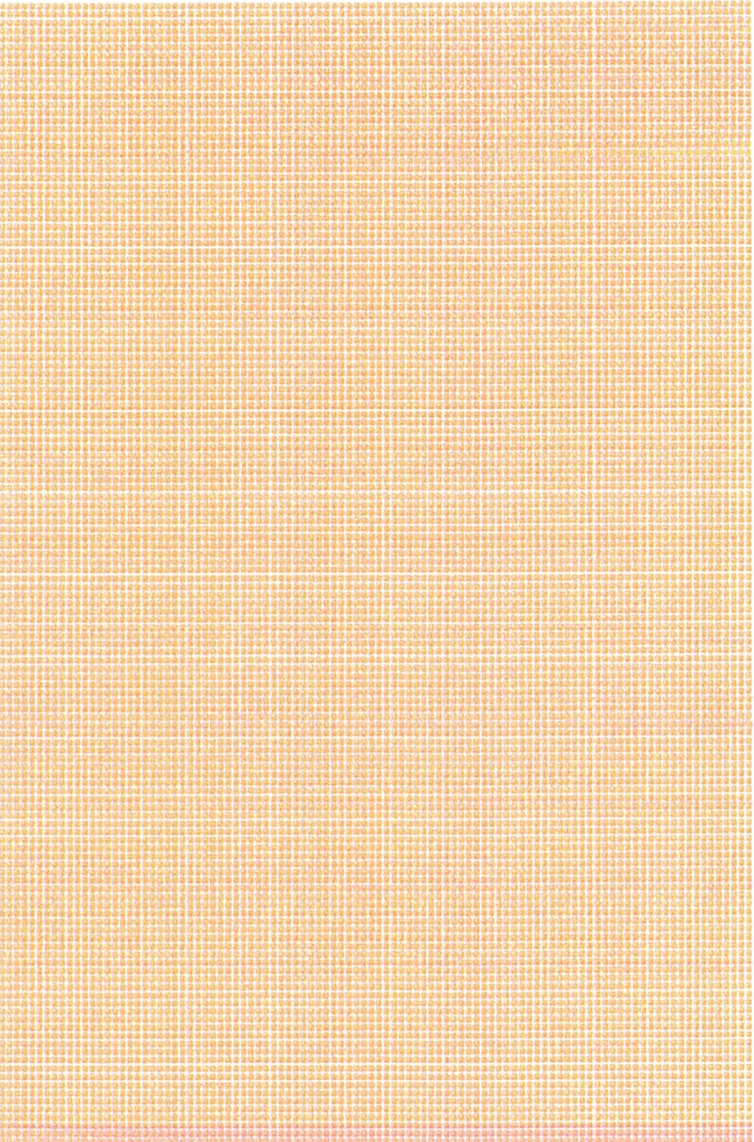
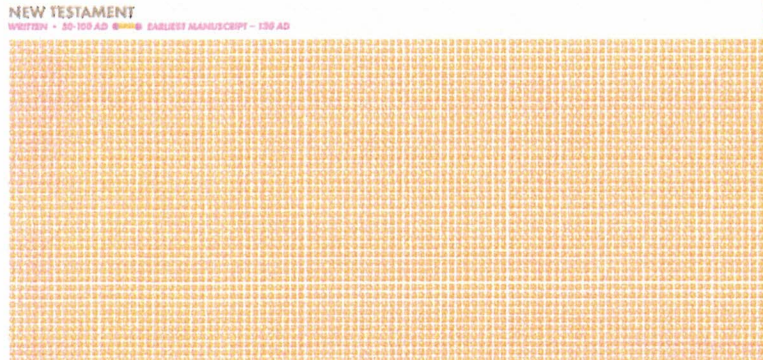
A Final Word

So will there be more sensational new findings about the Gospels—findings that supposedly demonstrate that these writings don’t contain the gospel truth after all? Of course! The Holy Bible has withstood thousands of attempts to destroy its truth and to discredit its authority, and yet no one has succeeded. The truth and the authority of the Scriptures stand strong, regardless of every attempt to render them ineffective. So can the Bible be trusted? In a word, *yes*.

THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TEST

HAS THE BIBLE REALLY BEEN PRESERVED FOR US TODAY?

When we examine the number and quality of manuscripts available, and the gap of time between the original and the earliest existing copies, there is overwhelming evidence that the text of the New Testament we have today is the same as the original. If an individual rejects the transmissional reliability of the New Testament throughout history then they must consider other works throughout history to also be unreliable.



HOW TO HEAR

If you were given the description of a picture utilizing only your sense of hearing, you would retain less than 1 out of every 10 words used to describe the picture.

Allowing you to see the picture in conjunction with hearing the description would enable you to retain in excess of 70% of the description.

Allowing you to hear, see and apply the instruction of the picture would give you over 90% retention.

You retain less than _____ of what you only hear.

You retain more than _____ of what you hear & see.

You retain more than _____ of what you hear, see & apply.

1. Why is it Important to Hear?

A. To _____

B. To _____

C. Matter of _____ and _____

D. _____

E. _____

F. _____

G. _____

2. Preparation to Hear

A. Sufficient _____

B. Proper _____

C. Place emphasis on relationship with _____

D. Eliminate all possible _____

E. Bring listening _____: pencil, paper, _____

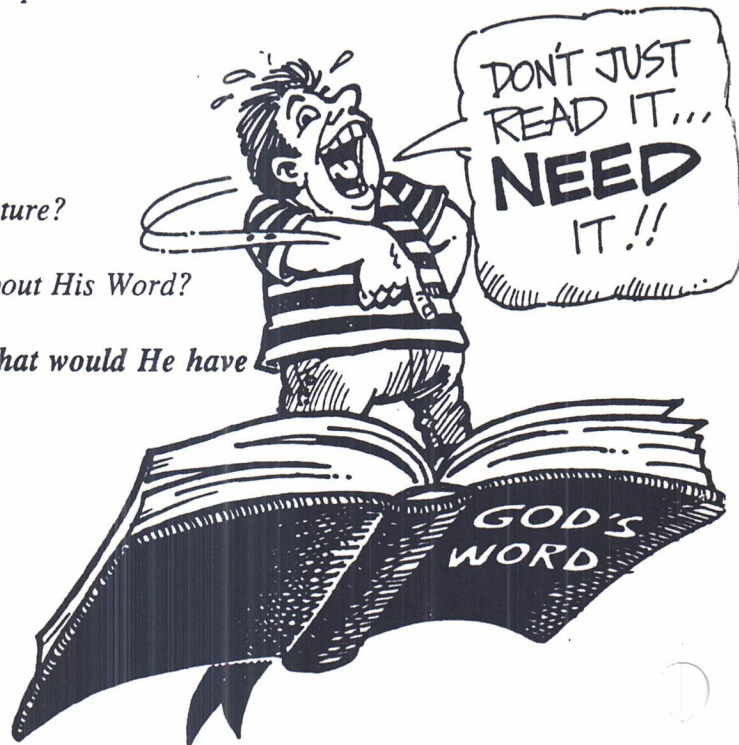
Getting to Know the Master

The purpose of Bible study is to know God!

KNOWING GOD LEADS TO LOVING GOD
LOVING GOD LEADS TO OBEYING GOD
OBEYING GOD LEADS TO ABIDING (REMAINING) IN HIM
ABIDING IN HIM LEADS TO BEARING FRUIT FOR HIM

Questions to ask when studying God's Word:

1. *What does this passage tell me about God's character and personality?*
2. *What are the key verses?*
3. *What are the key phrases?*
4. *What are the key words?*
5. *Are there any commands to obey?*
6. *Are there any promises that God makes to His people?*
7. *Are there any examples I can learn from?*
8. *What is God saying to me through His Word?*
9. *What title would you give to this portion of Scripture?*
10. *What does God want me to share with others about His Word?*
11. *If God had written this passage only for you, what would He have underlined?*



AMENT ODAY ATE?

1 The manuscript must be written on the skins of clean animals.

2 It must be fastened together with strings of clean animals.

3 The number of columns through the entire manuscript must be equal.

4 The length of each column must not be less than 48 or greater than 60 lines.

5 The ink must be black and mixed according to a specific recipe.

6 The original used to make the copy must be authentic.

USED DIFFERENT METHODS TO ENSURE THAT THEY WERE COPYING AS PRECISELY AS POSSIBLE. WHILE SOME PRACTICES AND RITUALS HAVE BEEN EMBELLISHED, UNDOUBTEDLY THERE WERE SOME THAT PRACTICED ANY NUMBER OR VERSION OF THESE METHODS. THE DATE OF THESE PRESCRIPTIONS IS UNKNOWN BUT ITS ROOTS DATE TO THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD.

12 A space the width of nine consonants must come between each section.

13 No word may touch another word.

14 A space of a hair or thread must be between each consonant.

15 No word or letter could ever be written from memory, the scribe must always look first at the original before writing his copy.

16 The scribe had to say each word aloud as he wrote it.

17 The scribe must be dressed in full scribal dress.

18 Before the name of God YHWH was written, the scribe would wash his entire body.

19 When finished, the scribe would find the middle letter and compare it to the middle letter of the original.

20 If a sheet had one mistake, the entire sheet was thrown out. If a sheet was found to have three mistakes the entire manuscript was thrown out.

21 Statistics counting each word and letter were kept. If the counts did not match from the copy to the original, the entire manuscript was thrown out.

▶ THE BIG IDEA IS THAT THE SCRIBES TOOK THEIR JOBS VERY SERIOUSLY AND ESPECIALLY TREATED THE TASK OF COPYING SCRIPTURE WITH THE UTMOST REVERENCE.