

THE PEDIGREE OF THE BIBLE

Introduction:

1. We believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, to be the verbally inspired, inerrant, infallible, eternal Word of the Living God. It does not contain the Word of God, but rather it is the very Word of God.
We believe it to be the sole and final authority for all faith and practice of a Christian, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions shall be tried.
 - a. **II Timothy 3:16** *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”*
 - b. **II Peter 1:21** *“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”*
2. Since we already looked at the Divine origin of the Scriptures, we won't go over that again today.
 - a. Today, I want to take a brief look at the way the scriptures were handed down to us today and show you that there is good reason to be very confident that the Bible we hold in our hands is a reliable copy of the scriptures as they were written by “holy men of God” who wrote as they were led by the Holy Ghost.

I. The Original Languages of the Scriptures.

(Much of the following is drawn from Rober Sargent's book “English bible Manuscript Evidence.”)

The Bible was written by over 40 human authors across a period of some 1,600 years. The languages that the writers used varied depending on the time and location of the writing.

A. The Old Testament

1. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, with some small portions also being written in Aramaic (Chaldee). The Aramaic portions are Jeremiah 10:11; Daniel 2:4-7:28; and Ezra 4:8-6:12, 7:12-26.
 - a. “Philologists (those who study historical and comparative linguistics) see the full development of Hebrew by the time of the Exodus, having developed for 500 years under the influences of the Akkadian, Aramaic, Canaanite, and Egyptian languages.”
(Robert Sargent)
 - b. “Higher Criticism attacks the Bible on the basis of a supposedly late date for alphabetic writing. It is claimed Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because writing (as we know it) wasn't invented yet.
 - i. Archaeologists have since proven these attacks to be unfounded. It is evident man was able to write when he was able to speak – from the beginning.

2. The Hebrew alphabet consists of 22 letters which are all consonants. There are no vowels, but a system of markings (known as “vowel points”) is used today.
- B. The New Testament
1. The New Testament was written in Koiné Greek with certain phrases in Latin and Aramaic.
 - a. “Unlike Hebrew, Greek is an intellectual language... It was more a language of the mind than of the heart... Greek possessed technical precision of expression not to be found in Hebrew”¹
 - b. “Greek was a **providential** language. When the “*fulness of time was come*” (Gal 4:4) it was a universal language, thereby enabling the widespread preaching of the Gospel and the recording of the New Testament scriptures.”²
 2. The original N.T. scriptures were written in Koiné Greek, not modern Greek.
 - a. The Greek language has a long history and is usually divided into several classification, as this diagram shows:
 - b. Due to the Byzantine influence, there are differences in spelling, grammar, and pronunciation between modern Greek and Koiné Greek.

II. The Canonization of the Scriptures

- A. Who decides what books the Bible contains?
1. At the time of the writing of the scriptures there were plenty of other documents being written, including helpful religious commentary and theological studies.
 - a. So, how do we know which writings were genuine scripture?
 - b. The process of canonization sought to answer that question.
 2. The word “Canon” comes from the Greek word “*kanon*” which means “a rule”.
 - a. It refers to a standard or measurement (by which something can be tested).
 - i. “Canonization is the process of determining which writings “measured up” as genuine scripture.”³
 - ii. It is important to understand that canonization didn’t make a book authoritative. Canonization was a process through which men sought to determine which writings had been given by God and, therefore, were already authoritative.

¹ English Bible Manuscript Evidence, Robert J. Sargent, Pg 51

² English Bible Manuscript Evidence, Robert J. Sargent, Pg 51

³ English Bible Manuscript Evidence, Robert J. Sargent, Pg 67

- b. There were generally 4 tests applied to determine the authenticity of a book.
 - i. Was the writer God's appointed man?
 - O.T. | Was the writer a prophet of God?
 - N.T. | Was the writer an apostle or prophet?
 - EG... The "Shepherd of Hamas" was rejected by most Christians on the grounds that it was written after the death of the Apostle John, meaning it could not have been authorised by the apostles.
 - ii. Is the content historically, doctrinally, and theologically accurate?
 - Is it historically accurate?
 - Are they spiritually "life-giving"?
 - Are they edifying?
 - Do they stand apart from others in spiritual content?
 -
 - iii. Was the book accepted historically as authoritative?
 - Was there an acceptance of the book by God's people at the time it was written?
 - Was it well received, collected, read, and revered?
 - Some writings were quickly rejected as authoritative scripture because the early Christians believed them to have been written by a known heretic.
 - iv. Does the book bear the marks of Divine inspiration and authority?
 - Are its contents authentic?
 - Is it in harmony with other scripture?
God will never contradict himself. If there is a contradiction with known scripture, then it is not of God.
 - Is it free of fables or factual errors.
Many religious writings contain fables that were commonly believed at the time but turned out to be false.
- c. We don't have time to go into all the details of the books that were excluded from the canon, but they are the books that didn't meet the standard.
 - i. The result is that the canon of scripture contains 66 books in total:
 - **39** Old Testament books
 - **27** New Testament Books

III. The Preservation of the Scriptures

- A. The doctrine of the preservation of scripture

1. The doctrine of Divine Inspiration of the scriptures really doesn't do anything for us if we don't believe that the scriptures have been divinely preserved by God.
 - a. "Did God supernaturally give us His pure Word – then allow it to be distorted, changed, or lost over the centuries? Can we be 100% certain that we actually have God's Word? "Yea, hath God said?"⁴
 - i. We briefly considered the question of preservation last week, but the question at the heart of the discussion is, "Does it really matter what the Bible says God said if the Bible has not been preserved by God, uncorrupted until today?"
 - ii. The logical answer would be, No. What the Bible says only matters if it is true. But if it hasn't been preserved by God then it becomes a guessing game as to what we ought to do with the Bible and how we ought to interpret it.
 - b. We believe that the Bible has not been "lucky" to survive but has been divinely preserved by God so that his message to man would remain clear.
 - i. **Psalm 119:89** *"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven."*
 - ii. **Psalm 12:6-7** *"The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever."*
 - iii. **Matthew 24:35** *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."*
 - iv. **2 Peter 1:19** *"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:"*
2. The Preservation of the Old Testament
 - a. The Masoretic Hebrew Text
 - i. "The Masoretes were Jewish scholars and scribes whose life's work involved the transmission of the pure Hebrew Old Testament text. Their name comes from the word "mesorah" which means "tradition." They were centered in Tiberias (Galilee), Jerusalem, and Babylonia. The Masoretic era extended from 600 to 1000 A.D.⁵"
 - ii. "The Masoretes were responsible for vocalizing, standardizing, and propagating the pure Hebrew text. This

⁴ English Bible Manuscript Evidence, Robert J. Sargent, Pg 67

⁵ English Bible Manuscript Evidence, Robert J. Sargent, Pg 102

text had remained in its original (consonantal) format until the first century A.D. (i.e., without word breaks and any indications of vowel sounds). Its correct understanding was known through the oral tradition, centered around the second temple in Jerusalem and passed down the generations.”

- iii. “Following the destruction of the temple (70 A.D.) and the diaspora, the Jews feared the correct reading of the Hebrew text would be lost. In 90 A.D., Jewish scholars met in Jamnia to discuss, among other things, the preservation of the Hebrew text. Rather than change the sacred text, it was decided to incorporate the oral tradition into it. This was done using vowel points (matres lectiones) and other formatting means.”⁶
 - b. The Masoretes were very careful in their work of copying the scriptures. They followed a strict set of rules recorded in the Talmud and added a few of their own rules to be safe.
 - i. They numbered the verses, words, and letters of each book so that not a single letter would be left out of the manuscript.
 - ii. “They counted the number of times each letter of the alphabet occurred in each verse and listed all the verses which contained all the letters of the alphabet. They also determined the middle word and the middle letter of each book as a cross-check.”⁷
 - iii. Because the Masoretes destroyed worn out or faulty manuscripts, very few of these old manuscripts have survived until today.
- 3. The textual support for the Old Testament
 - a. The Old Testament Autographs:
 - i. The original manuscripts were written by Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, the prophets, Ezra the scribe, etc... These were written between 1,500 and 400 B.C.
 - ii. None of the original manuscripts are known to exist today, but we believe that reliable copies have been transmitted to us.
 - b. The Samaritan Pentateuch:
 - i. The original copies likely date to around 450 B.C.
 - ii. The Samaritan Pentateuch provides us with an early textual witness to the, Jewish, Hebrew scriptures, however, the

⁶ English Bible Manuscript Evidence, Robert J. Sargent, Pg 102

⁷ English Bible Manuscript Evidence, Robert J. Sargent, Pg 102

Samaritan Pentateuch differs from the Jewish Scriptures, as do the Samaritan religious traditions.

- iii. Where differences are found, we prefer with Hebrew tradition over the Samaritan.
- c. The Dead Sea Scrolls:
 - i. “The Dead Sea Scrolls represent the greatest manuscript discovery of the 20th century. They are so named because they were found in the eleven caves located near the village of Qumran,... in Israel’s West Bank overlooking the Dead Sea 1,300 feet below sea level. The scrolls consist of about 850 documents, Biblical and non-Biblical.”⁸
 - ii. “The discovery includes portions of every old Testament book except Esther, together with other writings...”⁹
 - Among them are 19 copies of Isaiah, 25 copies of Deuteronomy, and 30 copies of the Psalms.
 - The “Isaiah A” document is the oldest known complete copy of any book of the Bible.
 - iii. The Dead Sea Scrolls are believed to have belonged to the Essene community. They were heretics who were known to have a community in that area. It is believed the documents were hidden in the caves ahead of the advancing Roman army (c.68 A.D.)
 - iv. The dates for these documents vary, as with nay library, but Carbon dating, paleography, orthography, and archaeological discoveries at nearby Murabba’at place the writings generally between 200B.C. and 70 A.D.
 - That means we have copies of certain scriptures that would have been in circulation during the time of Christ.
 - v. The Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrate that the Hebrew Scriptures existed centuries before the Masoretic codices, and many of those manuscripts show remarkable agreement with the later Masoretic tradition.
 - They provide ancient evidence that substantially confirms the antiquity and stability of the Hebrew textual tradition ultimately represented by the Masoretic Text.
- d. The Targums
 - i. Date between 200 and 700 A.D.
 - ii. The Targums are Aramaic translations/paraphrastic renderings of portions of the Hebrew Scriptures.

⁸ English Bible Manuscript Evidence, Robert J. Sargent, Pg 104

⁹ English Bible Manuscript Evidence, Robert J. Sargent, Pg 104

- A Targum is **a translation/interpretation**, not the Hebrew manuscript itself.
- iii. They became especially important because many Jews eventually spoke Aramaic rather than Hebrew.
- iv. Targums are secondary witnesses to the Hebrew text, not replacements for the Hebrew Masoretic tradition.
 - They provide support for the reliability of the manuscripts we possess today.
- e. The Midrash & Talmud
 - i. The Midrash is a series of commentaries rather than a copy of the scriptures.
 - ii. The Talmud is a massive collection of Jewish legal discussion, interpretation, and tradition surrounding the Mishnah and related material.
 - Together they provide support for the early writings, as they are commentary on what were already accepted scriptural manuscripts.
- f. The Cairo Geniza Fragments
 - i. The bulk of these fragments date to between 500 & 800 A.D. although some have been dated as early as 904 A.D..
 - ii. A *geniza* was essentially a storage place for old manuscripts that people didn't want to simply throw away.
 - The Cairo Geniza has been an enormous archaeological treasure house of Jewish manuscripts.
 - iii. It gives us:
 - Hebrew biblical fragments
 - Masoretic material
 - Ancient Jewish writings
 - Evidence of scribal practices
 - And it provides additional evidence for the development and transmission of the Masoretic tradition.
- g. The Cairo Codex
 - i. Date: A.D. 895
 - ii. It is an early Tiberian Masoretic manuscript containing the Prophets and associated with Moses ben Asher. It is an important witness to the developing Masoretic tradition.
- h. The Aleppo Codex
 - i. This was the only manuscript to contain the entire Old Testament, though it is now incomplete, having been partially destroyed when the synagogue in Aleppo, Syria, was attacked by an angry mob of Arabs.

- ii. The surviving parts were rescued and later smuggled to Israel via Turkey, apparently, inside a washing machine.
- i. The Second Rabbinic Bible
 - i. Date: A.D. 1524-1525
 - ii. It was printed in Venice by Daniel Bomberg and edited by Jacob ben Chayyim. It contained the Hebrew text together with Masoretic material and rabbinic commentary.
 - iii. This is the printed Hebrew text associated with the Hebrew tradition used by the English translators of the Reformation era, including the KJV translators.
- j. The Authorised King James Bible
 - i. Obviously, the Authorized King James Bible is not an original manuscript but is an English translation of earlier manuscripts.
 - ii. The purpose of showing you all those manuscripts we've covered is, so you understand that the scriptures we have today were carefully copied and preserved through many different means so we can be confident in the accuracy of what we possess today.
- k. Next week I hope to be able to get into the details of the translation of the KJV itself and see how God had his Word translated into English at just the right time in history, as the English language was on its way to becoming what it is today, the global language of trade and the most spoken language in the world.
 - i. About 1.5 billion people speak English
or
Between 18% and 19%
Between 18% and 19% of the world's population.

Conclusion

1. The Bible is the inerrant, inspired, infallible, and eternal Word of God.
The Bible does not just contain God's Word but IS God's Word.
2. The Bible has been divinely preserved by God in such a way that we can be confident that the scriptures we read today are still God's Word to man, and without error.
3. God used his people, primarily Jews, to preserve the Old Testament scriptures even until today.