

Give Me the Bible

Lesson 3

HOW DID WE GET THE BIBLE?

“The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah” (Isa. 11:9)

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Give Me the Bible.

1. Revelation – What is the Bible? The Bible is God’s revelation (Lesson 1).
2. Inspiration – Can I trust the Bible? Yes, the Bible can be trusted (Lesson 2).
3. Formation – How did we get the Bible?

B. The “Chain” Links from God to Man.

1. Revelation – uncovering the word.
2. Inspiration – protecting the word.
3. Documentation – writing the word.
4. Formation – collecting the word.
5. Preservation – copying the word.
6. Translation – translating the word.
7. Application – obeying the word.
8. Propagation – sharing the word.
9. **Note:** This material originally appeared in a series of 6 lessons. All of the material is included in this outline. However, we will simply be hitting the highlights of each point. The full, 6-lesson series can be found in the “Sermons 2014” section of my website: TheGoodTeacher.com.

II. FROM GOD TO MAN.

A. Revelation (Review Lesson 1).

B. Inspiration (Review Lesson 2).

C. Documentation.

1. “Scripture” (Gr. *graphia*) is what is written; a written document. God’s word was not limited to oral revelation. God’s word was also written in documents. Using a Bible concordance, notice how many times the following words appear in the OT and NT: “write,” “writing,” “written,” “wrote,” “scripture(s),” and “book(s).”
2. Writing in the OT.
 - a) Moses wrote God’s word in a book (Ex. 17:14; 24:4, 7; 34:1, 27; Num. 33:2; Deut. 28:58, 61; 29:20-27; 30:10; 31:9-13, 19, 22, 24-26; 31:24, 26). There are many references in the OT to the “book of the Law” or the “book of Moses” (Deut. 28:61; 29:21; 30:10; 31:26; Josh. 1:8; 8:31, 34; 22:11; 23:6; 2 K. 14:6; 2 Chron. 17:9; 34:14; Ezra 6:18; Neh. 8:1, 3, 18; 9:3; 13:1; Mk. 12:26; Gal. 3:10). Joshua wrote God’s word in a book (Josh. 24:26). Early prophets like Samuel, Nathan, and Gad wrote God’s word in a book (1 Sam. 10:25; 1 Chron. 29:29;

2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; 20:34; 26:22; 32:32; 33:18ff). David (2 Sam. 23:1-2; Psa. 72:20), Solomon (Prov. 25:1), and Hezekiah (Isa. 38:9) wrote God's word in a book (Lk. 20:42; Acts 1:20). Latter prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel wrote God's word in a book (2 Chron. 21:12; 26:22; Isa. 30:8; Jer. 25:13; 29:1; 30:2; 36:2, 17, 28; 51:60-64; Ezek. 43:11; Dan. 7:1; 12:1-4; Nah. 1:1; Hab. 2:2; Lk. 4:17; Jn. 1:45; Ac. 7:42).

3. Writing in the NT.

a) Luke wrote God's word (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). John wrote God's word (Jn. 20:30-31; 21:24-25). Paul wrote God's word (1 Cor. 4:14; 14:27; 2 Cor. 1:13; 2:9; 9:1; 13:2, 10; Gal. 1:20; Phil. 3:1; 1 Thess. 4:9; 5:1; 2 Thess. 3:17; 1 Tim. 3:14; 2 Pet. 3:15-16). Peter wrote God's word (2 Pet. 3:1). John wrote God's word (1 Jn. 1:4; 2:1; 2 Jn. 12; 3 Jn. 13). Jude wrote God's word (Jude 3). John is told to write the revelation in a book (Rev. 1:11, 19; 2:1; 22:9-10, 18-19).

4. The results of documentation.

- a) God's word was recorded for others to read at the time (2 Chron. 21:12; Jer. 29:1; 36:1-8; 51:60ff) and for future generations to know (Ex. 17:14; Deut. 31:9-13, 24-26; Isa. 30:8).
- b) God's word was recorded to have a written standard or pattern to return to; for example, the pattern for the temple for Solomon (1 Chron. 28:11-12, 19; 2 Chron. 35:4) and the pattern for restoration for Josiah (2 K. 22:8; 2 Chron. 34:14-15). See also 2 Thessalonians 2:15 and 2 Timothy 1:13.
- c) The books of God's word will be opened to judge all mankind in the last day (Rev. 20:12-15).

D. Formation.

1. Why does the Bible contain the (66) books that it does? What/who determined the selection of the books? Why were other books rejected? Does the Bible contain any book that it should not? Are any books missing?
2. The books of the Bible were collected to form a "canon" of scripture; "canon" (from the Greek *kanon*) means a reed (cane) that was used as a ruler for measuring; then, a standard or rule of measurement (2 Cor. 10:13, 15, 16; Gal. 6:16; Phil. 3:16). The "canon" of the Bible is the list of divinely inspired, authoritative books that are God's word (39 OT books, 27 NT books).
3. The question of the canon has long been debated from the early centuries A.D.; different people have formed different lists of what is regarded as a genuine, authoritative book of the Bible. Even the 1st century Samaritans rejected all of the OT except the first five books.
4. What makes a book, a book of the Bible? How was a book accepted as biblical? Its age? Its information? Its acceptability? Inherent authority via divine revelation and inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21) is what makes a book, a book of the Bible? Was/is this book the actual revelation of God? Was/is this book inspired? (See Lesson 1 of this series.)
5. The OT Canon.
- a) The 39 OT books were written by several men over a period of 1,000 years (c. 1400 – 400 B.C.). There are references in the OT to the "book(s)" of God's word (Neh. 8:1ff; Isa. 34:16; Dan. 9:2). All 39 books of the OT were translated from Hebrew to Greek in the Septuagint (c. 280 B.C.) Jesus used the same three-fold division of the OT as the OT Jews (Luke 24:44).

- b) Jesus references, in an indirect way, the first and last books of the OT canon as the OT Jews reckoned it (Mt. 23:35; Lk. 11:51; from Abel [Gen. 4:3ff] to Zachariah [2 Chron. 24:19ff]).
 - c) Philo (c. A.D. 30) makes reference to the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible; Josephus (c. A.D. 80-90) makes reference to the “22” books of the OT. The Jewish council of Jamnia (c. A.D. 90) recognized all 39 books of the OT as canonical (they simply stated what was already understood and accepted).
 - d) There are other religious writings from the OT period that are not a part of the canon; these are known as the “apocrypha” (hidden) books (Gr. *apokryphos* = Mk. 4:22; Lk. 8:17; Col. 2:3). These books were accepted by some Jews at Alexandria and included in the Septuagint.
 - e) The OT Apocrypha are included in Catholic Bibles (interspersed) because of the early view of Augustine and later the Council of Trent (1546); also found in some early editions of the KJV (kept separate) and some later Protestant bibles (NRSV, etc.).
 - f) These books were not accepted by OT Jews, Jesus and his apostles, Jewish writers (Philo, Josephus, etc.), or “Christian” writers (Origin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Athanasius, Rufinus, etc.).
 - g) These books often contain historical, chronological, and geographic errors; as well as internal/external contradictions.
 - h) These books were recognized among the Greeks and later appended to the Septuagint, but with no fixed canon; continual uncertainty. They are given a “semi-canonical” status by the Church of England (to be read for example, but not for doctrine). They were pronounced fully authoritative for the Catholic Church at the Council of Trent (1546).
6. The NT Canon.
- a) The 27 NT books were written by several men over a period of 50 years (c. A.D. 45 – 95). Books were written with inherent authority (1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Thess. 2:13; 5:27; Rev. 1:3). Books were circulated (Col. 4:16; Rev. 1:11). Paul quotes from Luke 10:7 (see Deut. 25:4) in 1 Tim. 5:18 and calls it “scripture”. Paul wrote epistles that were grouped with the “other scriptures” (2 Pet. 3:15-16).
 - b) In A.D. 95, Clement of Rome wrote an uninspired letter to the Christians in Corinth and made reference to the inspired scriptures (he referenced Matthew, Luke, Hebrews, Romans, Corinthians, 1 Timothy, Titus, 1 Peter and Ephesians).
 - c) Two related question: Do we have all that was written by inspired writers? No (Lk. 1:1-2; Col. 4:16). How did NT Christians govern themselves properly before all 27 books were collected? They had the spiritual gifts of wisdom, faith, knowledge, prophecy, and discerning of spirits (1 Cor. 12:8-10).
 - d) The Catholic Church claims to have given us the Bible as we know it today. However, no one man, group of men, or later “Church Council” made a book authoritative by placing it in a list; no one by decree gave to or pronounced a book as divinely inspired; the Bible owes its authority to no one individual or group; individuals only identified the books that were already authoritative at the time.
 - e) A book is divinely inspired and authoritative the moment it is written; authority and acceptance are two separate things. Councils (Damascus in 382; Laodicia in 343; Hippo in 393; Carthage in 397; Rome in 405) and letters

(Athanasius in 367) only *stated* what was already understood and accepted; they accepted the *inherent* authority of a book.

- f) Why were there discussions at this time about which books are God's word or not? Some men, after the 1st century, were claiming divine inspiration and latter-day revelation. Some men, after the 1st century, were teaching heretical views about Christ and other erroneous doctrines. And, the edict of Diocletian (A.D. 303) demanded that all religious books of Christianity be destroyed.
 - g) What were the questions asked at this time? Is the book apostolic, authoritative (1 Cor. 14:37)? Is the book inspired (2 Pet. 1:20-21)? Is the book authentic, truthful (Jn. 14:26; 16:13)? Is the book life-changing (Heb. 4:12)? Is the book received among faithful Christians (Col. 4:16)?
 - h) There are other religious writings from the first few centuries A.D. that are not a part of the NT canon; these are known as the "apocrypha" (hidden, secret) books. We are hearing more and more today about "the lost books of the Bible" or the "lost gospels" (see the Dan Brown *Da Vinci Code* book and movie).
 - i) It should come as no surprise that there are false religious writings circulating in the first few centuries A.D.; Paul warned that false teachers would come with their "fables" (1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; Tit. 1:14). Peter spoke of "destructive heresies" that would come (2 Pet. 2:1) and John spoke of "false prophets" that would go out into the world (1 Jn. 4:1).
7. The results of formation.
- a) The 39 books of the OT canon provide examples for learning (Jn. 5:39; 1 Cor. 10:11-12; Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:15; 4:13).
 - b) The 27 books of the NT canon are the only pattern of sound words (2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Tim. 1:13).
 - c) We are to "contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered" (Jude 3).
 - d) These "books" will be opened at the judgment. We will be judged from them, and from them only (Rev. 20:11-15).

E. Preservation.

- 1. We do not have any original books of the Bible (autographs); what we have are accurate and reliable copies (manuscripts) of each of the 66 books. We live in an age of archaeological discoveries which have given us many manuscript copies of God's word.
- 2. God's word is preserved.
 - a) The king copied it (Deut. 17:18). Joshua copied it (Josh. 8:32). Scribes copied it (Ezra 7:6, 10). We are told about the scribe's pen (Judg. 5:14; Jer. 8:8; Psa. 45:1; Isa. 8:1) and the scribe's inkhorn (Ezek. 9:2-3).
 - b) The writing materials in Bible times were the stone tablet (Ex. 31:1, 18; 34:1, 28; 32:16; Deut. 10:2, 4; 27:2-3, 8), the clay tablet (Isa. 8:1; Jer. 17:1; Ezek. 4:1; Lk. 1:63), the wood tablet (Isa. 30:8; Hab. 2:2), the leather scroll (Jer. 36:23), the papyrus scroll (Jer. 36:2; Ezek. 2:9; Rev. 5:1), the vellum/parchment scroll (2 Tim. 4:13), the paper scroll, and other materials (wax, metals, pottery, linen, etc., see 3 Jn. 13).
 - c) Men like Moses were educated in reading and writing (Acts 7:22) and all copies were made carefully by hand from the time of Moses to the printing press in A.D. 1456.

3. The OT text preserved.
 - a) The OT text in biblical times was formed by Jewish scribes (see Lk. 4:16-20). The OT text used today is the Massoretic Text; it was formed by Jewish scribes near Tiberias (Massorettes, massorah = tradition) living A.D. 500 to 900; they were known for their (1) meticulous care in copying, counting verses, words, and letters; and (2) vowel pointing in the text.
 - b) The Cairo Codex contains the Former and Latter Prophets and dates to c. A.D. 895. The Leningrad Codex of the Prophets dates to c. A.D. 916. The Aleppo Codex dates to c. A.D. 950. The British Museum Codex of the Pentateuch dates to c. A.D. 1000. The Leningrad Codex of the entire OT dates to c. A.D. 1008.
 - c) Why so few OT manuscripts? Ancient Jewish scribes buried a manuscript when it got old or worn? They wanted to prevent an improper use of any material that had God's name on it.
 - d) The Dead Sea scrolls, found by a Bedouin shepherd boy in 1948, a few miles south of Jericho, contain portions of the OT text (Genesis, Deuteronomy, Psalms, Isaiah), portions of the Apocrypha, as well as non-biblical writings; dating from 100 B.C. to A.D. 68. The nearby Qumran community had a building for their scribes to copy scripture.
4. The NT text preserved.
 - a) We have today about 5,700 manuscripts of the NT text (in whole or in part). The NT is the best attested book from the ancient world.
 - b) About 90 papyri mss. have been found, dating from c. A.D. 150 - 350 (papyrus, paper). About 375 uncial mss. have been found, dating from c. A.D. 300 - 800 (large block letters, all caps, no spaces or punctuation). About 2,800 minuscule (cursive) mss. have been found, dating from c. A.D. 800 - 1400 (small, longhand script).
 - c) About 30 ostraca (pottery) have been found.
 - d) The three most important uncials dating from c. A.D. 300 - 450 are: the Vaticanus (Codex B), the Sinaiticus (Codex Aleph), the Codex Alexandrinus (Codex A).
 - e) About 2,200 lectionaries have been found (selected passages designed to be read in a public service).
 - f) A number of versions have been found (translations from Greek to another language): Syriac versions (Old Syriac, The Peshitta), Latin versions (Old Latin, Latin Vulgate), and other versions (Egyptian, Armenian, etc.)
 - g) Many quotations of scripture come from the early "Church Fathers": 2nd century (Justin Martyr, Tatian, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria), 3rd century (Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian), and 4th century (Eusebius, Jerome).
 - h) What about manuscript variants (some call "errors")?
 - (1) There are variants caused by the eye: (1) no spaces between words, (2) abbreviated words, or (3) two lines beginning or ending with the same word. There are variants caused by the ear: (1) words sounding alike but with different spellings and meanings, and (2) vowels and diphthongs were pronounced alike.
 - (2) Are the OT variants major? No! For example, there are only 13 variants between the Isaiah scroll (c. 150 B.C.), found at the Dead Sea in 1947, and the Isaiah scroll of the Masoretes (c. A.D. 900).

- (3) Are the NT variants major? No! There are trivial variants which are of no consequence to the text (omission or addition of words like “and,” “the,” “for”; different spellings of the same word). There are substantial variants which are of no consequence to the text (Mk. 16:9-20; Lk. 6:5; Jn. 5:4; 7:53-8:11; Acts 8:37; 1 Jn. 5:7).

5. The results of preservation.

- a) God made sure that his word, once spoken and written, was transmitted and preserved for all time; God’s word will not pass away (Mt. 5:18; 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:24-25 [Isa. 40:8]).
- b) God’s providence ensures the preservation of his word; the preservation of his word ensures the presentation of his word (Jer. 36:27-32; 2 K. 22:8).

F. Translation.

1. The OT was originally written in Hebrew with some portions in Aramaic (Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26; Dan. 2:4b-7:28). The NT was originally written in Koine Greek. Translation from one language to another is necessary unless we learn the original language.
2. The practice of “translation” is found in some places in the NT (Mk. 5:41; 15:22, 34; Jn. 1:38, 41; Acts 4:36; 1 Cor. 14:26-28; Heb. 7:2). A Bible “version” is a particular “translation”.
3. Early translations.
- a) The Greek Septuagint (c. 280 B.C.) was used by Jesus (Mk. 7:6-7; Isa. 29:13), the apostles, and NT writers (Ac. 8:32-33). Approximately 2/3 of the OT quotations in the NT are from the LXX (over 300 times).
- b) Other early translations included: Aramaic Targums (400’s B.C.), the Samaritan Pentateuch (400’s B.C.), the Samaritan Targums (100’s A.D.), other Greek translations by Aquila, Theodotian, and Symmachus (100’s A.D.), the old Latin Versions (100’s – 200’s A.D.), the Old Syriac and the Peshitta (200’s A.D.), the Egyptian or Coptic (200’s A.D.), the Ethiopic (400’s A.D.), the Gothic (400’s-500’s A.D.), the Latin Vulgate (Common, c. 405 A.D.; Jerome attempted to be very accurate in his translation and was highly criticized for making changes to the Old Latin Versions), the Armenian (400’s A.D.), the Georgian (400’s A.D.), the Slavonic (800’s A.D.), the Arabic (700’s A.D.), and the Slavonic (800’s A.D.)
4. The Bible in English.
- a) The “Dark Ages” produced factors leading to the translation of God’s word into English.
- (1) Oppression: the oppressive control of the Catholic Church; reading / learning was discouraged (see Lk. 11:52).
- (2) Scarcity of Bibles: expensive, some chained to the pulpit.
- (3) Latin language: the church service was in Latin.
- b) The “Renaissance” produced factors leading to the translation of God’s word into English.
- c) Printing: the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg (1456 A.D.).
- d) Education: the rise of “Christian Humanism” and classical learning (1500’s A.D.).
- e) Reformation: the rise of protestants (1500’s A.D.).

- f) Bibles in English.
- (1) The Anglo-Saxon Bible of Aldhelm and Bede (735 A.D.).
 - (2) The Anglo-Saxon Gospels of Aldred (950 A.D.).
 - (3) The English Bible of John Wycliff (1382 A.D.; his followers were called “Lollards” (mutterers); his body was exhumed, burned, and ashes spread by order of Pope Martin V in 1428).
 - (4) The William Tyndale Bible (1526) – learned Greek at Cambridge and moved to Germany to translate the NT into English; arrested, strangled, and burned at the stake in 1536.
 - (5) The Coverdale Bible (1535) – Miles Coverdale worked with Tyndale to translate the OT into English; it was a translation of a translation (Latin and German texts).
 - (6) The Matthew’s Bible (1537) – a revision of the Tyndale/Coverdale Bible by John Rogers (Thomas Matthew, later revised by Richard Taverner in 1539); burned at the stake by Mary I in 1556 for his work in translating the Bible into English.
 - (7) The Great Bible (1539) – Miles Coverdale revised the Matthew’s Bible, but this time using the Hebrew OT text.
 - (8) The Geneva Bible (1560) – Puritans who fled England to Geneva during the reign of Mary I, a Catholic (“Bloody Mary” outlawed the reading of the Bible in English); William Whittingham, John Calvin’s brother-in-law revised the Great Bible with Calvin’s notes.
 - (9) The Bishop’s Bible (1568) – unhappy with Calvin’s notes, Queen Elizabeth I ordered a revision of the Geneva Bible.
 - (10) The Douay-Rheims (1582, 1609) – a translation into English of a translation (Latin Vulgate) for Catholics.
 - (11) The King James Bible (1611) – 47 scholars from Oxford, Cambridge, and Westminster were assigned by King James I to produce a version; a translation of the earlier English translations (80-90% of the wording was taken from Tyndale).
 - (12) English Revised Version (1881-1885), American Standard Version (1901), Revised Standard Version (1946-1952), New American Standard (1963, 1971), New International Version (1973), New King James (1982), and English Standard Version (2001).
 - (13) There have been more than 500 versions of the NT in English (over 160 versions since 1900)! Today, there have been translations into more than 1000 dialects!
5. The results of translation.
- a) Great sacrifices were made to transmit God’s word into the language of the people (Jer. 36:23ff). God wants his word to be read and understood everywhere (Neh. 8:1-8; Eph. 3:4; 5:15). God’s word continues to go “into all the world” via translations (Mt. 28:19).
 - b) Our Bible in English was born, not just from a language need, but from a desire to follow the Bible alone without the Catholic Church – “Sola Scriptura” (2 Tim. 3:15-17).
 - c) The practice of translation generally was one of literal, word-for-word transmission (Rom. 4:3); loose paraphrases were not produced until the mid 1900’s A.D.

- d) The practice of placing man-made comments in the margin at this time was highly scrutinized after the appearance of the Geneva Bible (Mt. 15:3-6); today it is an common and accepted practice to have man-made notes in the margin.
- e) The greatest gift you can give is a Bible in someone's own language!

G. Application.

1. What good is it for God to REVEAL his word (Heb. 1:1-2) if it is not applied?
2. What good is it for God to INSPIRE his word (2 Tim. 3:16) if it is not applied?
3. What good is it for God to DOCUMENT his word (Isa. 30:8) if it is not applied?
4. What good is it for God to FORM (canon) his word (2 Pet. 3:15-16) if it is not applied?
5. What good is it for God to PRESERVE his word (Deut. 17:18) if it is not applied?
6. What good is if for men to TRANSLATE God's word (Acts 8:32-33) if it is not applied?
7. The results of application.
 - a) Jesus spoke about hearing and doing (Mt. 7:24-27). Paul spoke about hearing and doing (Rom. 2:13). James spoke about hearing and doing (Jas. 1:22-25).
 - b) We are blessed only when we apply God's word (Jas. 1:25-27; Rev. 1:1-3; 22:7).

H. Propagation.

1. The "chain" of God's word is not complete with the "link" of application. Propagation, spreading God's word to others, is the final "link". We are to apply God's word to ourselves and then share it with others (2 Tim. 2:2).
2. Share the Bible...
 - a) Through your own example (2 Cor. 3:1-3; Phil. 1:20).
 - b) To your own family (Deut. 6:6-9; 11:18-21; 2 Tim. 3:15).
 - c) Through personal evangelism (Lk. 8:11; Acts 8:4; 11:19).
 - d) Through teaching others in the local church (Acts 13:1; Tit. 2:4; Heb. 5:12).
 - e) Through preaching (1 Thess. 1:8; 2 Thess. 3:1; 2 Tim. 4:2, 5), being an elder (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:9), or supporting preachers (Gal. 6:6; 3 Jn. 6-8).
 - f) Personally or by donating so that Bibles can be given away.
3. The results of propagation.
 - a) "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah" (Isa. 11:9).
 - b) "Which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world bearing fruit and increasing" (Col. 1:6)... "Which was preached in all creation under heaven" (Col. 1:23).

III. CONCLUSION.

- A. You Did Not Have to Do the Great Work of Documenting, Collecting, Copying, or Translating God's Word.
- B. All You Are Asked to Do is Read It, Apply It, and Share It – "Seek out the book of the Lord and read" (Isaiah 34:16).