

How did we get our Bible?

The foundation of Christianity is the Bible. If the Bible is not the Word of God, then everything that we believe is a fairy tale. If we don't have the very words of God, then let's close the churches, call back the missionaries, and eat drink and be merry. Christianity is a lie and a fraud if the Bible is not the perfect Word of God.

The Bible claims many times that it is a Divine Book, inspired and transmitted by God to man. The phrase, "Thus saith the Lord" is found 415 times in the Bible. The sole authority of the Bible as the Christian's guide book for life is based upon the premise that the Bible is divinely inspired. As such, it must be perfect and infallible, for it comes from a perfect and infallible God, a God who does not make mistakes.

However, one of the main criticisms of the Bible is that it has been corrupted. The Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses argue that our Bible is not the perfect Word of God. Liberal "theologians" and textual critics contend that the Bible has been changed over the years, and that it is filled with errors of copying and translation. Is that really true?

How do we know that the Bible we have today is the perfect, complete, inerrant & infallible Word of God?

Has the Bible been changed & corrupted over the last 3,500 years?

Can I be sure that there are no mistakes in my Bible?

What about those intellectuals who say that we can only trust the original manuscripts, and not copies or translations?

Are there any books missing from my Bible?

Is the canon of Scripture closed? Has God finished with the work of special revelation?

To answer such important questions, we must go to the Bible, and find out what God's Word says about itself. Firstly it is clear that the Word of God is eternal: it always was, and it always will be:

Psalms 119:89 "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven."

The question then begs to be asked, "**How did we get our Bible?**" How did the words of God get from Heaven to ancient mankind, and then from ancient mankind to you and me in the year 2003?

Let me answer these questions and explain how we got our Bible:

Step # 1 - Inspiration

Bible critics contend that "The Bible was written by men." The answer to that statement is obvious: The Bible **was** written by men. But, the Bible was **inspired** by God:

2 Timothy 3:16 "All scripture is given by **inspiration** of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:"

The Words of God do me no good if they stay in Heaven! I **must** have the Words of God if I am to be saved and live as I ought. So, how did the Bible get from Heaven to earth? **By inspiration.**

What is inspiration? What do I mean when I say that the Bible was written by man, but inspired by God? Well, the term "inspired" literally means "God-breathed." Simply put, God spoke through His servants to the rest of mankind—the words of those servants were not their words, but the very words of God.

2 Peter 1:19-21 "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: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 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.**"

Inspiration may be broken up into five basic steps:

- a) The Words of God have always been.
- b) Man must have those words.
- c) There needed to be some way for the Words of God to get from Heaven to man.
- d) God chose men and made them holy.
- e) God gave His Words to mankind through those chosen men.

For example, what did Samuel mean when he said, "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue?" God did not give His thoughts to Samuel, and then trust Samuel to put those thoughts into words. God used Samuel as a vehicle, moved and directed by the Holy Ghost, to deliver the exact words of God to the people.

So, the first step in getting the Bible to Mark Tossell in 2003 was **inspiration**. This produced perfect original manuscripts in the languages of Hebrew, Chaldee and Greek, written between roughly 1,500 BC and 100 AD.

Step # 2 – Duplication

Sometimes a pseudo-intellectual will make a statement something like, "The King James Version says _____, but in the originals we see that it should read as _____." They love to sound scholarly by referring to the originals. And, they have the ears of many simple Christians who don't know any better.

Question: Does anyone in the world have any original manuscripts in their possession?

Answer: **No.** They are all gone. All we have is copies of the originals.

Diligent men over the last 3,500 years have carefully copied the writings of Scripture so that we could have the words of God today. For example, when the Hebrew scribes would copy the Old Testament Scriptures, they used a special system of cross-checking to make absolutely sure that no errors were made in copying the text. Every letter of the Hebrew alphabet has a numerical value assigned to it. When they finished copying a line of text, the scribes would count the numerical value of all the Hebrew letters used on that line, and add up those values. If the total value for a line of copied text was different to the original, there was obviously a mistake in copying, so they would throw the new manuscript away and start another copy from scratch.

Over 5,100 Greek copies of the New Testament exist today, ranging in size from fragments containing two or three verses to nearly entire Bibles. Their ages vary from the second to the sixteenth century. These copies were written on two types of material: papyrus and parchment. Papyrus was a vegetable product fashioned from bark, and parchment came from the scraped skins of sheep, goats, and other such animals.

Just as our Bibles wear out through frequent study and usage, any high-quality, accurate manuscript was soon thumbed to pieces. Because of this fact, only a fraction of the 5,000 surviving manuscripts are very old. These very old manuscripts owe their survival to a lack of acceptance and use by the Christians. This is easily proven by examining their obvious errors and disagreement with each other. For example, two of the oldest manuscripts in existence, the Chester Beatty and Bodmer papyri, have 73 disagreements with each other in just 70 verses!

On the other hand, there exists a large degree of accuracy and conformity among the larger body of well-used later copies. Approximately 90% of all existing manuscripts agree with one another in such a way that they form their own unique text, the Received Text, thus called the Majority Text. It is this larger body of accurate and uniform manuscripts that form the

Received Text (the Textus Receptus) from which the King James Version, or Authorised Version, was translated in 1611.

You might ask, "What about the Greek text from which the modern versions are translated?" This text is largely based upon two ancient manuscripts, Codex B and Codex Aleph (Vaticanus and Sinaiticus). What do we know about these two manuscripts?

The 8,000 changes in B and the 9,000 changes in Aleph are not the same changes.

Together they differ from the Received Text in about 13,000 places. Together they omit 4,000 words, add 2,000, and modify 2,000.

They disagree with each other a dozen times on every page.

Colwell says they disagree 70% of the time and in almost every verse of the Gospels.

It is easier to find two consecutive verses in which these manuscripts differ than two in which they agree.

What kind of perverted "scholars" would promote such rubbish? Enter Westcott and Hort. Let me quote Mr. Hort:

"Evangelicals seem to be perverted rather than untrue."

"The book that has most engaged me is Darwin. My feeling is strong that the theory is unanswerable."

"I have been persuaded for many years that Mary-worship and Jesus-worship have very much in common."

"The popular doctrine of substitution (Christ died for us) is an immoral...counterfeit."

Westcott said, "No one now, I suppose, holds that the first three chapters of Genesis give a literal history."

Notice the sad admission found in the preface to the NIV: "No other piece of ancient literature has such an abundance of manuscript witnesses as does the New Testament. Where existing manuscripts differ, the translators made their choice of readings according to accepted principles of New Testament textual criticism. Footnotes call attention to places where there was **uncertainty** about what the **original text** was." The translators of the NIV were not even sure that the text they were translating into English was the right text!

Returning to the second step in how we got our Bible, the process of duplication, we must realise that no one in the world has access to any original manuscripts of Scripture—all we can refer to are copies of the originals, created by the process of faithful duplication.

Question: Are copies of original manuscripts considered Scripture? Can we look to these copies as the infallible words of God?

Answer: **Yes.**

David had only copies, and he regarded them as the Words of God.

Solomon had only copies, and he regarded them as the Words of God.

Jesus had only copies, and he regarded them as the Words of God.

Paul had only copies, and he regarded them as the Words of God.

Step # 3 – Canonisation.

Out of all the religious writings used by Hebrews and Christians, how did we end up with 39 OT books and 27 NT books? Through the process of **canonisation**. Canonisation is the process whereby the Hebrews and the early churches sifted through all the many Gospels, epistles, prophetic writings, etc, and decided which were qualified to be included in the Bible—or, in what is called the **canon** of Scripture. It is the process whereby God guided His people to choose the sixty-six inspired books that we have in our Bible today.

The standard, or Masoretic, text of the Old Testament contains twenty-four books, beginning with Genesis and concluding with 2 Chronicles. The arrangement is such that there are only twenty-four books instead of thirty-nine as in the Protestant Old Testament, but the subject

matter is exactly the same. In other words, the Old Testament canon of our Bible is identical with that of the ancient Jews; the only difference is in the order and division of the books.

Throughout the first four centuries after Christ, the books of our NT were chosen and approved by the apostles, church fathers, and NT early churches.

What about additional books? What about the many other Gospels and epistles? What about the books of the Apocrypha, for example?

Firstly, it is clear that God guided these men to choose the books that He wanted in His Word. We do believe, after all, that God is in control of the process of assembling His Word. God used Bible-believing, soul-winning, Christ-honouring pastors and Christians to choose the sixty-six books that God had already chosen for inclusion in the Bible. **This we accept by faith.**

Secondly, **those books that were rejected were done so because they were obviously not qualified to be a part of Scripture.**

For example, consider the **Apocrypha**. The 14 Old Testament apocryphal books have an unquestioned historical and literary value but have been rejected as inspired for the following reasons:

- They abound in historical and geographical inaccuracies.
- They teach doctrines that are false and foster practices that contradict inspired Scripture.
- They contain literary types, subject matter and styling out of keeping with inspired Scripture.
- They lack the distinctive elements that give genuine Scripture its divine character.

Let us look at the example of the Apocryphal book of Tobit: This is a tale of a pious Naphtalite named Tobit, who has a son named Tobias. The father loses his eyesight. The son is dispatched to obtain payment of a debt in Media. On the way an angel guides him to Ecbatana, where he makes a romantic marriage with a widow who still remained a virgin despite the fact that she had been married to seven husbands, all of whom had been killed by a demon named Asmodeus on their marriage day. Encouraged by the angel to become the eighth husband, Tobias escapes death by burning the inner parts of a fish, the smoke of which exorcises the evil spirit. Thereupon he cures his father's blindness by anointing the sightless eyes with the gall of the fish that had already proved so powerful! No wonder this book was rejected from the canon.

Question: Is the canon of Scripture closed? Is my Bible complete?

Answer: **Yes.**

The Bible that we have today is the complete and finished Word of God. It is all that we require to be saved, and to become the mature and profitable Christians that God intends for us to become. We do not need any further revelation from God, nor will we receive any. We have the perfect and complete Word of God today in the King James Bible.

2 Timothy 3:16, 17 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

1 Corinthians 13:10 "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

Step # 4 – Translation

Due to the obvious fact that very few people today can read and write in the original languages of the Bible (Hebrew, Chaldee and Koine Greek), the Bible needed to be translated in order for it to be useful to the common man. So, Bibles today are **translations** of **copies** of inspired **originals**.

What steps led to the translation of the King James Version?

Septuagint (Old Testament to Greek)	260 BC
Corrupt Latin Vulgate (Catholic)	400 AD
Wycliffe Bible	1380 AD
Tyndale Bible	1525 AD
Coverdale Bible	1535 AD
Geneva Bible	1560 AD
King James Version	1611 AD

Who gave us “the old black book?” Who translated the King James Version? 47 godly scholars were charged in 1607 with the responsibility of translating the Authorised Version. What were these men like? How do they compare to the scholars of today who have translated modern versions? Let us consider a few examples of these translators:

John Bois: By the age of 6 he could read and write in Hebrew, and at age 15 he corresponded with his superiors in Greek while a student at Cambridge. He later became a professor of Greek at Cambridge, with students attending his voluntary lectures as early as 4:00 am. It was said of him that, “He was so familiar with the Greek New Testament that he could, at any time, turn to any word that it contained.”

Lancelot Andrews: This chairman of the New Testament Committee was conversant in 15 languages.

Miles Smith: Known as a walking library.

Andrew Downes: Described by Milton as the most learned man in England.

These men were not a bunch of dry and dusty theologians and scholars – they were accomplished preachers and balanced Christians. Consider Richard Brett. Although proficient in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Chaldee, Arabic, and several Ethiopic tongues, it was said of him that “he was a most vigilant pastor, a diligent preacher of God’s Word, a liberal benefactor to the poor, a faithful friend, and a good neighbour.”

Now, modern teachers and preachers are in the bad habit of correcting the King James Version, saying that it was wrongly translated, and is full of errors. This is not a recent development, as you will see from the following illustration.

“An interesting story is found in Walton’s biography of Bishop Sanderson illustrating the truth of the old proverb, “a little learning is a dangerous thing.” Dr. Kilbye, an excellent Hebrew scholar and Professor of this language in the university, also expert in Greek and chosen as one of the translators (of the King James Version), went on a visit with Sanderson, and at church on Sunday they heard a young preacher waste a great amount of the time allotted for his sermon in criticizing several words in the then recent translation. He carefully showed how one particular word should have been translated in a different way. Later that evening the preacher and the learned strangers were invited together to a meal, and Dr. Kilbye took the opportunity to tell the preacher that he could have used his time more profitably. The Doctor then explained that the translators had very carefully considered the “**three** reasons” given by the preacher, but they had found another **thirteen** more weighty reasons for the rendering complained of by the young critic.”

So, do we have the original Scriptures in our hands today? No. What do we have, then? We have a translation of copies of the originals.

Question: Can a translation of copies of the originals still be considered as infallible Scripture?

Answer: **Yes.** Consider Luke 4:1-13:

“And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him, saying, **It is written**, *That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.* And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed

unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: **for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.** And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, **It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.** And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.”

Three times Jesus said, “It is written.” Three times He quoted Scripture. When Jesus did so, He quoted a **copy** of the original Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus then **translated** that Hebrew Scripture into the language that He commonly spoke, most likely Aramaic. When Luke wrote those Aramaic words in his Gospel, he **translated** them into *Koine* Greek. Are these Greek words considered infallible Scripture? **Yes. So, a translation of copies of the originals can still be considered as infallible Scripture.**

God not only promised to give His words to mankind, He also promised to preserve those words for every generation. If all we have today are a bunch of imperfect translations of copies that are filled with mistakes, then God has **not** kept His promise. My God is **not** a liar!

Isaiah 40:8 “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but **the word of our God shall stand for ever.**”

Psalms 117:2 “For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and **the truth of the LORD endureth for ever.** Praise ye the LORD.”

Matthew 24:35 “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but **my words shall not pass away.**”

1 Peter 1:23 “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, **which liveth and abideth for ever.**”

I believe that the King James Version I hold in my hands contains the very words of God, and is perfect and flawless. It is God’s infallible Word for our day in the English language. Why? Because God **promised** to preserve His Word to **every** generation:

Psalms 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.**”

The question is not one of “double inspiration” but of **preservation** to every generation according to the promise of God. Why is this so important? Because we must have a Bible today that contains every word of God, or else we cannot be what God wants us to be.

Deuteronomy 8:3 “...that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by **every word** that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.”

Matthew 4:4 “But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every word** that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

If the King James Version does not contain the very word of God, then I must find the Bible that does, because **I cannot live without every word of God.**

Our problem is that we have in our churches unwise pastors and teachers who correct the Bible with their mediocre knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, thus undermining their people’s faith in the Word of God. These pseudo-scholars say, “Well, I believe that the Bible is inspired and perfect only in the originals.” **How ridiculous.** There are **no** originals! All we have is copies, and translations of those copies.

Question: “What if there is no perfect translation today, and you can only get the true meaning of Scripture by studying the Hebrew and Greek?”

Answer: Well, if you have to be a Hebrew and Greek scholar to understand the Bible, then we become like the Catholics who need the priest to explain it to them, or the Jehovah's Witnesses who cannot study the Bible without the help of the Watchtower, because we are not expert enough in Hebrew and Greek to understand it for ourselves. That would give a lot of power to a very select group of people, and it would take away our privilege to study and understand Scripture on our own. The truth is that you and I need only two things to understand the Bible:

- 1) You need to **study**. "Study to show thyself approved unto God...rightly dividing the Word of truth."
- 2) You need the **Spirit**. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth..."

Step # 5 – Propagation

Let us review what we have learned so far. How did the Bible get from Heaven to you and me in 2003?

Inspiration
Duplication
Canonisation
Preservation

So, we have concluded that there is a perfect Bible in the world today—the preserved King James Version. However, it is no good having a perfect Bible if it stays in the warehouse of the publishers! Inspiration and preservation are no good without propagation. The Bible would have helped no one if there were not faithful Christians over the centuries who propagated and spread the Words of the living God. How has the Bible been spread across the world?

Handwritten copies
Printing
Evangelism
Church planting
Foreign missions
Tract distribution, etc.

As a powerful illustration of the great sacrifice that had gone into propagating the Scriptures, let us briefly consider John Wycliffe. Wycliffe was a powerful preacher and author who gave much of his life to translating the Bible into the English language during the late 1300's. Notice his dedication to the Word of God.

"If God's Word is the life of the world, and every word of God is the life of the human soul, how may any Antichrist, for dread of God, take it away from us that be Christian men, and thus to suffer the people to die for hunger in heresy and blasphemy of men's laws, that corrupteth and slayeth the soul."

Because printing had yet to be discovered, the manuscript had to be copied by hand necessitating an exorbitant price tag. It required about 10 months of steady work by an experienced copyist. The rental fee for only an hour with so costly a treasure was "an entire load of hay," while McClure tells us that a purchase price neared "four marks and forty pence," the equivalent of a clergyman's entire year's salary!

Wycliffe and his godly followers, the Lollards (ancestors of modern Baptists) were fiercely persecuted for their faith, their resistance to the Church of Rome, and for their love of studying and spreading the Bible. The Lollard Christians were indeed dedicated to the Bible, far more dedicated than the lukewarm, carnal Christians of the 21st century:

"So scanty was the supply of Bibles at this time, that but few of those who craved its teaching could hope to possess the sacred volume. But this lack was partly made up by

the earnestness of those whose interest was awakened in the Bible. If only a single copy was owned in a neighborhood, these hard-working laborers and artisans would be found together, after a weary day of toil, reading in turn, and listening to the words of life; and so sweet was the refreshment to their spirits, that sometimes the morning light surprised them with its call to a new day of labor, before they thought of sleep."

Notice the wrath of the government toward this group of fervent Christians:

"Our sovereign lord the King, . . . by the assent of the estates and other discreet men . . . assembled in Parliament, has granted, established and ordained that no one within the ... realm or any other dominions subject to his royal Majesty presume to preach openly or secretly without first seeking and obtaining the license of the local diocesan...and that henceforth no one either openly or secretly shall preach, hold, teach or instruct, or produce or write any book, contrary to the Catholic faith or the determination of holy Church, nor shall any of the [Lollard] sect hold conventicles (unorganized gatherings for worship) anywhere or in any way keep or maintain schools for its wicked doctrines and opinions; and also that henceforth no one shall in any way favor anybody who thus preaches, conducts such or conventicles, keeps or maintains such schools, produces or writes such books, or in any such manner teaches, informs or excites the people ...And if any person within the said kingdom and dominions is convicted by sentence before the local diocesan or his commissioners of the said wicked preachings, doctrines, opinions, schools and heretical and erroneous instruction . . . then the sheriff of the county...shall, after such sentences are proclaimed, receive those persons ... **and shall cause them to be burned before the people in a prominent place**, in order that such punishment may strike fear into the minds of others, to the end that no wicked doctrines and heretical and erroneous opinions (against the Catholic faith, the Christian law, and the determination of holy Church), nor their authors and favorers, be sustained ... or in any way tolerated."

Foxe adds thus:

"The Lollards were tracked to the lonely, unfrequented places where they met, often under shadow of night, to worship God. Neighbor was made to spy upon neighbor; husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, were beguiled or forced to bear witness against each other. The Lollards' prison again echoed with the clanking of chains; the rack and the stake once more claimed their victims."

Convicting enough for today's lukewarm Christians, one of the common charges brought against these godly believers was not only their **possession** of a Wycliffe Bible but their ability to **repeat from it by heart**.

Among the many burning victims were:

John Badby, a tailor, 1410.

Two London merchants, Richard Turning and John Claydon at Smithfield, 1415.

William Taylor in 1423.

William White, 1428.

Richard Hoveden, 1430.

Thomas Bagley, 1431.

Richard Wyche in 1440.

Joan Broughton became the first woman to burn at the stake in England, perishing at Smithfield with her daughter, Lady Young, beside her.

The history of the real English Bible is a history unlike that of the NIV and other generic counterfeits; it is a history that is bathed in blood. Foxe continues:

One Christopher Shoemaker, who was burned alive at Newbury, was accused of having gone to the house of John Say, and "read to him, out of a book, the words which Christ spake to his disciples . . ." In 1519 seven martyrs were burned in one fire at Coventry, "for having taught their children and servants the Lord's prayer and the ten commandments in English . . ." Jenkin Butler accused his own brother of reading to him a certain book of

Scripture, and persuading him to hearken unto the same. John Barret, goldsmith, of London, was arrested for having recited to his wife and maid-servant "the Epistle of St. James, without a book ... Thomas Phillip and Lawrence Taylor were arrested for "reading the Epistle to the Romans and the first chapter of St. Luke in English."

Thank God for those faithful Christians who laboured, sacrificed, suffered, and even died so that we could have a Bible. Thank God for those brave souls who were willing to shed their blood so that we might have a copy of the Holy Scriptures in our own language.

Conclusion:

How did we get our Bible?

- 1) Inspiration.**
- 2) Duplication.**
- 3) Canonisation.**
- 4) Translation.**
- 5) Propagation.**

Thank God for an inspired & preserved Bible! However, what good does it do us to have a perfect Bible if we don't read and study it, and what good will it do others if we don't spread it?

Will you make time every day to read, study, meditate upon, and memorise the precious words of God?

Will you be faithful to a church that preaches the words of God?

Will you continue the great work of propagating the Word of God?

Will be faithful to soul winning, discipleship, church building, and foreign missions?

God has given you a copy of His very words, preserved for over 3,000 years in spite of Satan's attempts to destroy them. **The question is, what will you do with it?**

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