

Week 1 & Week 2:

*How did we get the Bible and how do
we know we can trust it?*

Hebrews 11:1 (ESV)

“¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”



Top 10 Best Selling Bible Translations (2022)

10. The Message
9. New American Standard Bible
8. New International Readers Version
7. Reina Valera
6. New King James Version
5. Christian Standard Bible
4. King James Version
3. New Living Translation
2. English Standard Version
1. New International Version



None of those translations are ‘word for word’

- Our Bible translations are generally either ‘word for word’ or ‘thought for thought’
- AKA ‘formal equivalence’ or ‘dynamic equivalence’
- However, ‘word for word’ is not accurate



Genesis 12:1 (Interlinear/Word For Word)

And he is saying Yahweh to Abram go you for
you from land of you and from kindred of you
and from house of father of you to the land
which I shall show you



Genesis 12:1 (Interlinear/Word For Word)

ANDHEISSAYINGYAHWEHTOABRAMGOYOU
FORYOUFROMLANDOFYOUANDFROMKIND
REDOFYOUANDFROMHOUSEOFFATHEROF
YOUTOTHELANDWHICHISHALLSHOWYOU



Colossians 1:1 (ESV)

PAUL AN APOSTLE OF CHRIST JESUS BY THE
WILL OF GOD AND TIMOTHY OUR BROTHER
AND THE SAINTS AND FAITHFUL BROTHERS IN
CHRIST AT COLOSSAE



Translation always involves interpretation

- **Numbers 23:22 (KJV)** God hath brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.
- **Numbers 23:22 (ESV)** God brings them out of Egypt and is for them like the horns of the wild Ox.



- “I’m possibly about to open up a can of worms, but why do modern translations leave out Matthew 17:21?” (*Bowley, M. 2023*)



Matthew 17:21

- **KJV** – Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting
- **NKJV** – However this kind does not go out, but by prayer and fasting



Matthew 17:21

- **ESV** –
- **NIV** –



Mark 9:29

- **KJV** – And he said unto them, “This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.”
- **NKJV** – So he said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”



Mark 9:29

- **ESV** – And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.”
- **NIV** – He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.”



- *Harmonization* – when the gospel copyists (for better or worse) amend a manuscript to create harmony amongst the gospel writers



- “But the Mark verse is missing the part about fasting. It only talks about prayer” (*Bowley, M. 2023*)



- The Greek word used here is 'proseuche'
- The same word is used in Luke 6:12



- So, the kind of prayer that for example starts at 10am and ends at 4pm...and then you realise you've not eaten anything in between



- One thing to refer back to over the coming weeks is that The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) were always intended to speak *‘one truth’ through four accounts*
- “The Gospel according to...”



English Revised Version
New Living Translation
Great Bible
Wycliffe Bible
Revised Standard Version
Tyndale Bible
New International Version
English Standard Version
Geneva Bible
Authorized/King James Version
New American Standard Bible



1. Wycliffe Bible (1382) *based on Latin Vulgate*
2. Tyndale Bible (1526) *based on Greek & Hebrew*
3. Great Bible (1539) *authorized by Henry VIII*
4. Geneva Bible (1560) *1st to use paragraphs, chapter & verse & used by Shakespeare in later plays...basis for Textus Receptus*
5. Authorized/King James Version (1611)
6. English Revised Version (1885)
7. Revised Standard Version (1952)
8. New American Standard Bible (1971)
9. New International Version (1978)
10. New Living Translation (1996)
11. English Standard Version (2001)



- The ESV is derived from the KJV, but differs in a number of places...why?



KJV & Modern Translations

- One important note is that many of the texts used in modern translations were discovered *after* the KJV was published in 1611



- We don't have any original New Testament manuscripts (autographs)
- What is one of the main reasons why?
- Early New Testament – Mainly written on Papyrus (pre-cursor to paper)

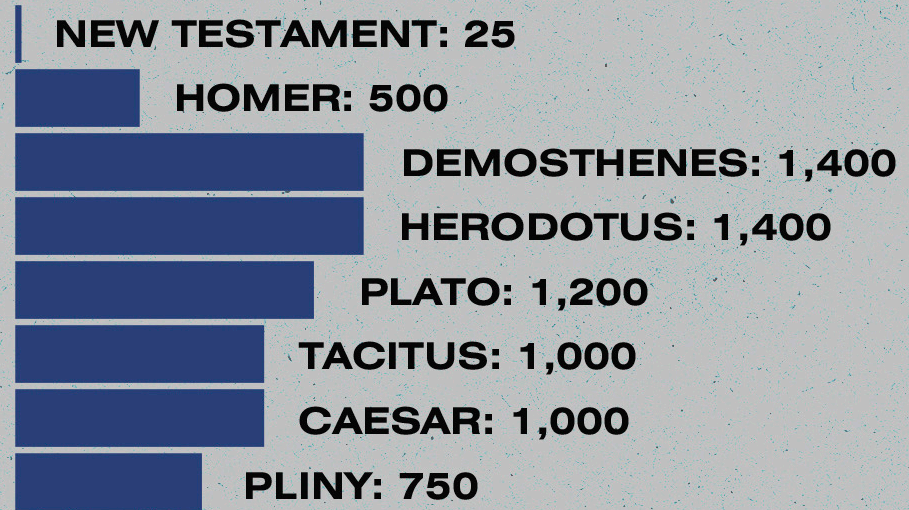


- We only have copies, of copies, of copies but the Bible (and in particular the New Testament) is by far the most well documented work in antiquity



Reliability of the New Testament compared to other ancient documents

Time gap (*in years*) between
original and first surviving copies



Reliability of the New Testament compared to other ancient documents

Number of manuscript copies

NEW TESTAMENT: 5,686

HOMER: 643

DEMOSTHENES: 200

HERODOTUS: 8

PLATO: 7

TACITUS: 20

CAESAR: 10

PLINY: 7



Uncials & Minuscules

- Until c. AD 10 scripts were all capital letters with no punctuation, and then later minuscules added smaller letters, spacing, punctuation etc
- Codex Sinaiticus is the most well-known uncial, written in the 4th century



Modern Translations – New Testament

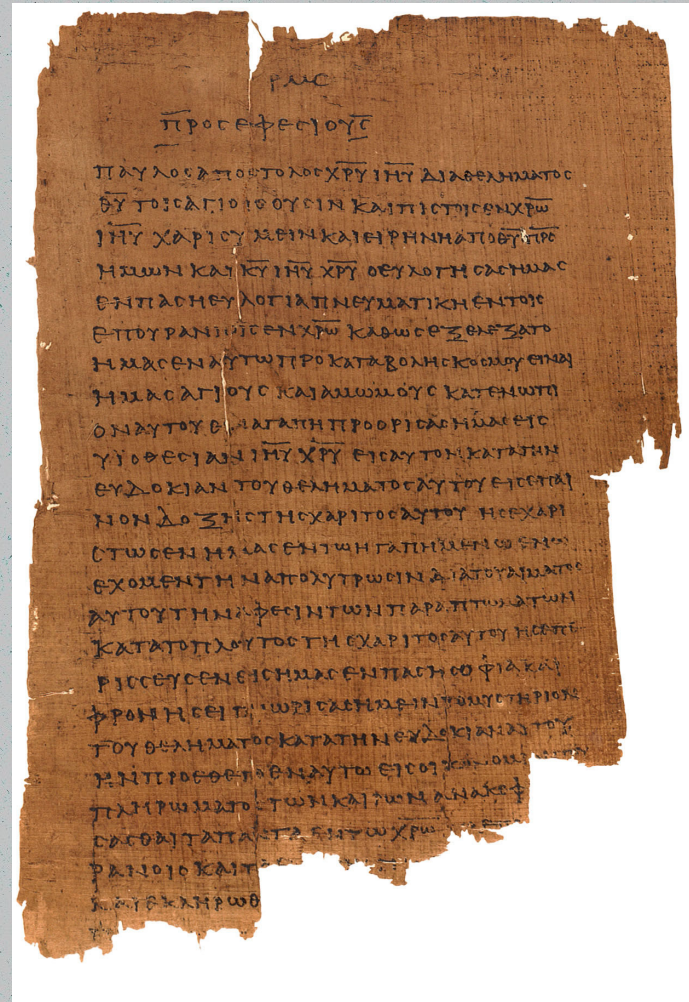
- Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus and Codex Alexandrinus are the main texts for the New Testament



The Lindisfarne Gospels



P46 (Papyrus no.46)



- *Who wrote Hebrews?*



- P46 contains:
- Romans*
- 1 and 2 Corinthians
- Ephesians
- Galatians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- And...
- ***Hebrews***



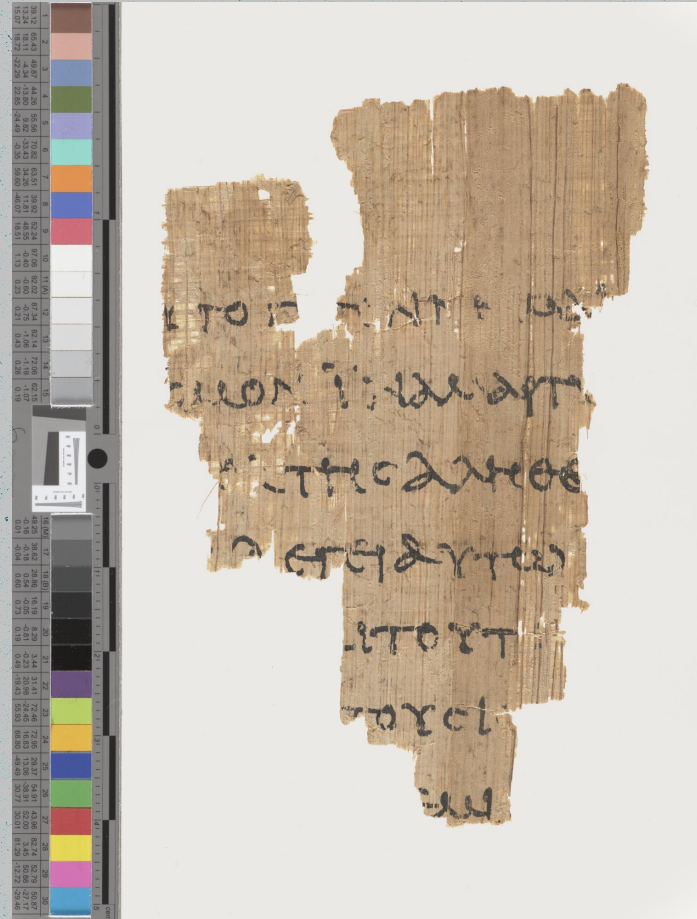
- *The point isn't whether Paul wrote Hebrews, it's that from very early on Paul's letters were bound, distributed and read as the authoritative word of God to the church*



P52

John's gospel fragment
early 2nd century –

In comparison to modern translations there are two different words and two different spellings



Myth – “They couldn’t agree on how many OT books”

- Some books were combined, such as 1 and 2 Kings, Ezra and Nehemiah, Jeremiah and Lamentations
- So, our 39 books can also be called 22
- Judges/Ruth & Jeremiah/Lamentations were separated at times when 24 books numbered



Original Languages

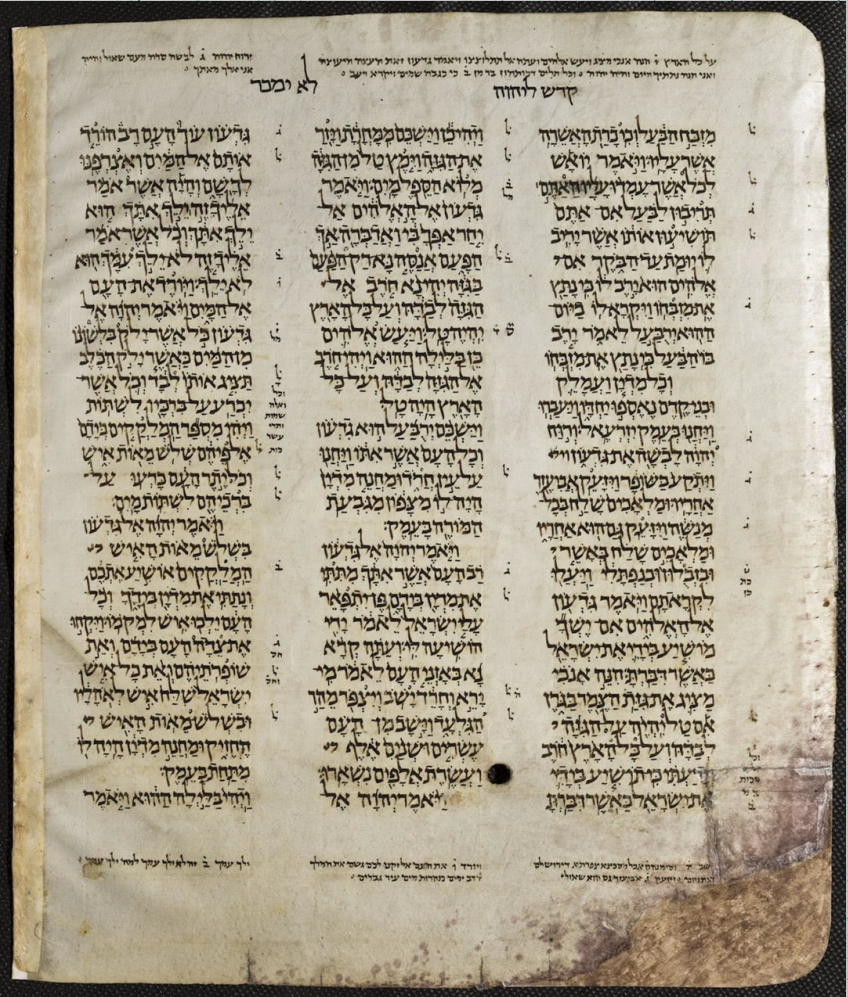
- Old Testament – Hebrew and Aramaic
- New Testament - Greek



- *All modern translations of the Bible are translated from a combination of:*
- Hebrew – English
- Hebrew – Greek – English
- Hebrew – Greek – Latin – English
- Hebrew – Latin - English
- Greek - English



The Masoretic Text



The Masoretic Text

- The basis of modern Old Testament translation (i.e. ESV, NIV etc uses these)
- Written around the 6th-10th century A.D.
- The Masoretes added vowels to the Hebrew manuscripts



The precision of the Masoretes

- The scribes counted the verses, words and letters of each book
- Counted the number of times each letter was used in each book
- Noted verses that contained all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, or specific numbers of them



The precision of the Masoretes

- They calculated the middle letter, middle word and middle verse of the Pentateuch
- The middle verse of the Psalms
- The middle verse of the entire Bible
- So, when a scribe finished making the copy it could be checked for its accuracy



The precision of the Masoretes

- Inaccurate copies were ceremonially buried due to the extreme respect given to the accuracy of the words of God
- This is one of the reasons that there aren't many early manuscripts of the OT



The Masoretic Text

- ***Isn't AD 10 a little late to be trusting the accuracy of these manuscripts for our Old Testament?***



The Dead Sea Scrolls

- Discovered in caves in Qumran in 1948
- Dated back as far as 250 BC
- Contain many Old Testament texts including most of Isaiah, Psalms, Deuteronomy, Exodus etc



The Dead Sea Scrolls

- Isaiah in the DSS is *almost identical* to the Masoretic text
- Daniel 2:4 changes language from Hebrew to Aramaic and then back to Hebrew in chapter 7 in the DSS
- *This is exactly the same as the Masoretic Text 1000 years later*



How did the copyists maintain such accuracy over 1000 years?

From the regulations of the Talmud (Jewish civil religious law) for copies of the Pentateuch...



“Between every consonant the space of a hair or thread must intervene;

Between every word the breadth of a narrow consonant;

Between every new parashah or section, the breadth of nine consonants

Between every book, three lines;

The fifth book of Moses must terminate exactly with a line; but the rest need not do so.



Besides this, the copyist must sit in full Jewish dress, wash his whole body, not begin to write the name of God with a pen newly dipped in ink and should a king address him while writing that name he must take no notice of him...

The rolls in which these regulations are not observed are condemned to be buried in the ground or burned”



But the Bible has textual variations – How Many?

- **Perhaps as many as 400,000 in the NT!**
- “There are more variations than there are words in the New Testament” (Bart Ehrman)



Don't Panic...

- *Bart Ehrman wrote a book called "Misquoting Jesus"*
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Don't Panic...

- *Mark Herman wrote the book "Misquoting Jesus"*



Don't Panic...

- *Textual variants can actually be a good thing*



Example

- *c. AD 650 the third caliph Uthman heard of textual variants in the Quran being read in Iraq*
- *So, he ordered an 'official' version copied and all other versions and other Islamic books to be burnt*



Example

- *What's the main problem created by this?*
- *There are no textual variants, but also no way to trace the accuracy of the original version*



Example

- *The Bible doesn't suffer from this issue and the variations in the text can help the accuracy of the original to be traced*
- *This is very similar to how detectives work out the reliability of eyewitness testimony*



Back to the New Testament...

- *Here is the maths:*
- 400,000 variants
- 5,700 NT texts
- 1,200,000 pages of text
- Every single variation over 1500 years



Back to the New Testament...

- 99% of the variations are irrelevant to the Greek text
- Allowing for spelling differences 2.9% are *meaningful* variations (e.g. the Lord or the Lord Jesus)



New Testament Variations

- None of these impact the truth claims of the Bible
- Bart Ehrman says this in the appendix to his book *Misquoting Jesus*



To err is human...

- Revelation 1:5
- ‘washed us from our sins’ = *lousanti*
- ‘freed us from our sins’ = *lusanti*
- These two words sound the same



To err is human...

- 1 Thessalonians 2:7
- ‘we were babes among you’ = *nepioi*
- ‘we were gentle among you’ = *epioi*



To err is human...

- The invention of the printing press largely settled textual variants
- However, in a 1631 printing, dubbed ‘The Wicked Bible’ Exodus 20 reads “Thou *shalt* commit adultery”



The Wicked Bible...

...Heagur thy lawier and thy
thy dayes may bee long vpon the
LORD thy God giue thee.

13 Thou shalt not kill.

14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

15 Thou shalt not steal.

16 Thou shalt not beare false wit-
ness against thy neighbour.

17 Thou shalt not couer thy neigh-
bour's sinne, neither shalt thou
beare witness against thy neighbour
the righteous.

18 Thou shalt not couer thy neighbour's
sinne, neither shalt thou beare witness
against thy neighbour the righteous,
nor his maid-servant, nor
his wife, nor any thing that is thy neigh-
bour's.

19 And all this people saw the
lightenings, and the noyse of

Next Week:

How did the Bible as we know it become the Bible? (The canon)

*Textual issues – disputed books –
apocrypha – gnostic gospels*

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*“The church does not control the canon,
but the canon controls the church”*
– **Neil Lightfoot**



Reading List

- Lightfoot, N. (2010) *'How We Got the Bible'*. Baker Books
- Meade, D and Gurry, P. (2022) *'Scribes & Scripture'*. Crossway
- Bruce, F.F. Packer, J. Comfort, P. & Henrey, C. (2020) *The Origin of the Bible'*. Tyndale
- Bruce, F.F. (1988) *'The Canon of Scripture'*. IVP
- Bruce, F.F. (2009) *'The New Testament Documents – Are They Reliable?'*. IVP
- Norton, D. (2011) *'The King James Bible – A Short History From Tyndale to Today'*. Cambridge
- Warfield, B. (1948) *'The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible'*. R&R
- Kruger, M. (2012) *'Canon Revisited'*. Crossway
- White, J. (2004) *'Scripture Alone'*. Bethany House
- White, J. (2009) *'The King James Only Controversy'*. Bethany House
- Blomberg, C. (2014) *'Can We Still Believe the Bible?'*. Brazos Press



Appendix 1 - The Old Testament

- Moses is the first author attributed to writing around 1500 BC
- Gradually assembled into an accepted collection around the time of Ezra (c. 400 BC)
- Josephus (1st century historian) said no books added after Malachi



The Old Testament

- We can generally summarise the writing of Josephus, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria and the New Testament as proving the canon of the Old Testament



How did early Christians know whether a book belonged in the Old Testament?

- They asked whether the Jews accepted and read the book in their synagogues.
- Romans 3:2 “the oracles were entrusted to the Jews.”



Modern Translations – Old Testament

- Rely largely on the Masoretic Text, Dead Sea Scrolls, Greek Septuagint and Latin Vulgate for the Old Testament (with some input from the Samaritan Pentateuch and other scrolls)



Appendix 2 - Greek Septuagint (LXX)

- As Greek became more popular, the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek by 72 scholars
- The LXX was the only translation for the early church
- It was often quoted by the New Testament writers



Greek Septuagint (LXX)

- It also gave us the names Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy via the Latin Vulgate
- The LXX differs from the Hebrew Bible in a number of places, including extra verses in Esther etc



Jeremiah 31 (ESV)

³¹ Behold the days are coming declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, *though I was their husband*, declares the Lord



Hebrews 8 (ESV) Quoting Jeremiah 31

⁸ Behold the days are coming declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,⁹ not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, *and so I showed no concern for them*, declares the Lord.



LXX & Hebrew Bible

- The LXX has the same order of books that we have in our Old Testament
- The Hebrew Bible was divided into the Law, Prophets and Writings, starting with Genesis and ending with 2 Chronicles



Latin Vulgate

- Jerome in the 4th century translated the Bible into Latin, basing the OT more on Hebrew than the Greek Septuagint
- This was the pre-cursor for the KJV of Erasmus, Stephanus and Beza

