

The History of Scripture

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[0 : 00] I trust everyone is doing well this morning. We're going to continue our little mini-series through looking at the Bible, understanding the Bible, this morning.

And today's topic is looking at the history of Scripture. Last week, you'll remember, we started to look at the history of God's revelation. We talked about general revelation, special revelation, and we surveyed through the Bible as to how God spoke.

And I think the key outcome that we arrived at is the simple truth that God wants to be known. He wants us to know him. He wants his creation to know him. Now, today we turn our attention to the Bible itself and the history of Scripture.

So we'll take a little look at its languages, look at its history. And the aim is just to understand what we have a little better. So the history of Scripture, session two of five.

I will confess that this is not, I mean, this isn't an easy series, right? I mean, I'm not, I am by no means an expert in these things. It's just something that I'm interested in and I've spent some time recently looking into and it was on my heart to, we need, we should talk about this.

[1 : 18] We should talk about this. I have no doubt that there will be questions that come out of today's talk that will be beyond me to understand and answer competently. But I would love it to have that conversation.

I'd love to start a discussion about these things because it can only help. With that, I think I might just have a word of prayer and then we'll get going.

Lord, I do want to thank you for this opportunity. I do thank you, Lord God, for your word. And we thank you again that you want to be known. You want us to understand it, to understand what we have in our hands.

And I guess most importantly, hear your voice through it. The purpose is to know you, not just know about you, but to know you and have a relationship with you. And it's incredible that that is your desire and your purpose.

And so I pray this morning as we look at these things that you would help us to just remember that, keep that in the forefront of our minds. This is about you and you wanting us to know you.

[2 : 19] So help us, Lord, I pray anything that's wrong, Lord, you would cause me to forget it. Anything that's valuable and helpful, Lord, help me to emphasize it. Be glorified, I pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Okay, so session two of five, the history of scripture. I think I said last week that it might only be four.

No, no, it's definitely going to be five. Maybe six. Probably five. So the outline for today is this. Three parts that we're going to try and cover today, which are the compilation of scripture.

How were they written? How did the books that we have today come into being? Were they dictated by God? Or some other means?

So how did they come into being? The second point is going to be the languages of scripture. And we'll look at, as far as we can, the languages that were originally used in the writing of scripture.

[3 : 23] And then thirdly, I want to talk about the preservation of scripture. How did God oversee the text to safeguard it? Can we really trust that it's still accurate after thousands of years?

And we'll take a brief look at some of the key Old and New Testament documents that still exist today. That's kind of going to lead into next week where we'll start talking about how do we take this volume of manuscripts and create a single cohesive, trustworthy translation.

It's not easy. That is what we call textual criticism. And I'm going to spend a chunk of next week talking about that. But before we do that, I wanted to just remind ourselves, what is the Bible?

Well, let's reintroduce ourselves to the Bible. You may know that the word Bible comes from a Greek word, byblos, and just means the book. Wow. Wow. And actually, it is a book of books.

I don't know if you've ever seen something like this before, but it's a picture of the Bible as a library, or a bookshelf in this case, where you've got the top two shelves there are the Old Testament, and you've got the different groupings of the law and the history and the poetry.

[4 : 40] And then the bottom shelf is the New Testament with the different texts there. And that really is what the Bible is. It is a collection. It is a book of books. It's 66, in fact. 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 in the New.

Just a few facts there that we'll quickly run through. The Bible consists of various genres. You've got narrative history. Examples of that would be books like Ruth, books like Esther, the Gospels as well.

They are books that go through history. Then you've got poetry, which would obviously include the Psalms. But also you find poetry within other books. So, for example, we've been looking at 1 Samuel.

The majority is narrative. But at the beginning we had Hannah's Prayer, and that was a poem. And then sub-genres of poetry would include things like prophecy, some of the wisdom literature as well.

You then have interesting things like reference materials. You've got tables of nations. You've got groups and lists of genealogies and names. You've got memoranda, such as the letter that Cyrus wrote at the start of Ezra is included.

[5 : 52] The letter is included verbatim. And a number of correspondences are included in that book. Then you've got other letters, like the epistles in the New Testament are key examples.

And then finally you've got the apocalyptic genre, which I can't even really explain it. But it's books like Revelation and some of the prophets as well are apocalyptic in genre.

But with all of that, if you think about it, the Old Testament has got 30 authors. There are about 30 different authors. Some books are anonymous, so we don't know.

Some of the psalms are anonymous, so we don't know. But 30 authors-ish. Moses, David are prominent. You've got the different prophets. You've got Solomon, etc.

And Moses is probably the most ancient writer. It is possible that the book of Job is older. I don't know. And so Moses is what? 14, 1500 BC?

[6 : 51] And then you've got the most recent book in the Old Testament is Malachi, 400 BC. That's over a thousand years in which the Old Testament was composed.

In contrast to that, we have the New Testament, which was written in one generation, probably from around 45 to 95 AD. We don't know exactly when John the Apostle wrote.

He was very old by the end, and he did live a long time. But all within one lifetime, and all written contemporaneous with the generation who saw the risen Christ.

So 40 authors, different languages, different countries, different cultures, over more than a millennium, different genres, different languages again.

And it is a complete unified book, a complete package, free of contradiction, free of error, united in its overall message about Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who himself said in John 5, 39, these scriptures testify about me.

[7 : 59] And I just thought, man, can you imagine a project that would take 1500 years? No, more than that. Yeah, no, 1500 years, at least.

And you wouldn't have a project team in one place. No, no, you would distribute the work across the whole globe, or certainly the known world at the time.

Only God could do this. Only God, who is not constrained by things like time and space, could accomplish the Bible. It defies any naturalistic explanation.

And actually, in session four, I'm going to show you some mind-blowing proofs that the Bible is divine in origin. But for now, we can just stand back in awe as to what we have.

So, let's get into it then. It's the compilation of scripture. Let's talk about how it came to being. Now, last week, I laid a bit of a foundation about God's revelation, and I showed you a whole ton of verses where it said that Moses wrote down.

[9 : 04] Moses wrote it down. One thing I wanted to add to that that God showed me this week, just as I was reading, was this verse from Joshua 24. Actually, I won't read it, it just didn't trust me. You can see the highlighted part there.

Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God. So, Joshua himself felt the commission and the call, I need to continue the Torah, the work that Moses began.

And I thought that was interesting, that continuity. Anyway, that's just for free. Today, we're going to talk about the compilation of scripture. Now, we would say, we say that the Bible is inspired, or that the biblical authors were inspired.

And that comes from this verse here in 2 Timothy 3.16. It says, all scripture is inspired by God, and is beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness.

And that word there, inspired, it's a very interesting word that could be more literally translated as God breathed, breathed out by God.

[10 : 14] Okay, cool. How do we understand that? Does that help? Well, when you look at the Bible, when you read the books and the text, it quickly becomes evident that the character and the voice and the tone and the style of the author is preserved.

Right? You can, you've probably noticed when you read the books, if you had two chapters in front of you, one was from the Gospel of John and one was from the Gospel of Matthew, most of us would probably be able to pick out which is which, because John had a very distinct style.

Or John's epistles as well. Very, very distinct. And then when you read the epistles, it's not quite so straightforward, but you can see Paul had a distinct style that was different from Peter's and it was different from James's.

The vocabulary and expressive style is different. Hebrews, or rather the language of Hebrew, I find a bit trickier to sort of see that distinction, but it's still there. You can read a Davidic psalm.

Well, I've noticed when we've been going through the psalms, and I was like, yeah, that one sounds like an Asaph, a psalm of Asaph. And you can't really sort of pin down why, but the point is the character of the author is preserved.

[11 : 27] And so we can't say then that these are dictated by God. Well, we shouldn't say that. Even though we do read in many places, the Lord spoke, this is what the Lord says, we do have the very words of God there.

A lot of the scripture is still the word of God, but it's not dictated. It's in the style of the author. But at the same time, as Paul says in Romans 3, verse 2, it is all the actual words of God.

It's amazing to hold those two things together, isn't it? It's the actual word of God throughout, obviously Paul talking of the Old Testament, the actual word of God, and yet in the style and the vocabulary of the author.

What else can we see? This scripture here, 2 Peter 1, verse 20 to 21. Peter says, And if you were to read around that, maybe from verse 16, you'd see Peter declaring that it's so sure, it's more sure than the supernatural experience he had of witnessing the transfigured Christ.

It's more sure than that. It's sure. It is the word of God, reliable, and it was never made because a human decided to. It was because the Holy Spirit moved. The Holy Spirit moved.

[13 : 04] So that is what God breathed means. That is what inspired means. It means that the Holy Spirit moved the men, the authors, to guide, to lead, to direct.

You could also check 1 Peter 1, verse 11, where it speaks of the Spirit of Christ being in the prophets. Now, and then another thing for your awareness, in Jeremiah chapter 20, verse 9, you've got the prophet Jeremiah speaking, and he's despairing of having to keep telling the words of God, only to have them spurned.

And he's like, I tried to stop speaking, but the word of God became a burning fire, and he had to declare it. He had to write it down. So that's one example.

And then you've got a guy like Luke. And when you read the introduction to the book of Luke, or the book of Acts, and we'll read the intro to Luke later, he clearly says he's writing as an academic.

He composed an account, and he was carefully working it through, finding the sources, and using the gifts and the wisdom that God had given him. So that's the summary.

[14 : 18] Inspiration of Scripture. How did it come into being? It came into being because God moved the authors, using the gifts and the talents that he'd given them, the Holy Spirit in them, stirring them up, to write in their style and in their own way, and the result, miraculously, is the very word of God.

And again, in session four, I'll show you some miracles in the text that prove it could not have been just the work of men, as if we needed more of that. So, now we turn to think about the sources.

What were the sources? Did they just make it up off the top of their heads? Did they look at historical texts? I've already told you that Luke tells us that he used sources.

Now, from the internal evidence, we can infer that many of the books did indeed have their own sources, and then they went through a compilation or an editorial process.

So, for example, if you were to look in Samuel, or 2 Samuel and the book of Joshua, they both refer to the book of Yashar, or Jashar, or the book of the upright.

[15 : 36] And actually, we'll study 2 Samuel chapter 1 in a couple of weeks, and we'll see that reference. This is written in the book of Yashar, the book of the upright. The books of 1st and 2nd Kings, 1st and 2nd Chronicles, they keep referring to other works.

Just an example is here from 1st Kings 11, 41. It says simply this, that now the rest of the Acts of Solomon, and whatever he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the Acts of Solomon?

Hey, there was a book called the Acts of Solomon. I don't think we have that book anymore, but evidently it was a source to the author of 1st Kings. Other examples, just for your notes, would be 1st Kings 14, 19, where it talks about the book of the Chronicles of the King of Israel.

So, again, also lost to history. That isn't the book of Chronicles, I hasten to add. That is a book that has evidently been lost. Nehemiah, here in chapter 7, verse 5, he refers to a reference book of the exiles, who came up from Babylon.

He says, then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials, and the other people to be enrolled by genealogies, and then I found the book of the genealogy of those who came up first, in which I found the following record.

[16 : 56] And then we have one of those chapters that we all groan when we come to in our annual Bible reading plans, because it's names and numbers. I'm like, oh, but it is a reference, and it inspires Scripture, it's valuable, but it's come from another source, says Nehemiah.

It came from the book of the genealogy of those who came up first. Interesting. And then the other thing you'll see as you go through Scripture is that you will find little editorial comments, like, this has been true to this day.

An example would be Joseph in Genesis 47, 26. Joseph put in place a tax on the fields in Egypt, and the writer, probably Moses, says, and this is still in place to this day.

So, and that proves that the document of Genesis was not written at the time it happened, it was written after the fact. And again, we accept it was written by Moses.

So, I hope that shows that. So, what can we say about the original compilations? Well, not a lot. I wanted to share a couple things. When you read the book of Genesis, for example, then you'll come across a phrase like, these are the generations of Noah, or, these are the generations of Shem.

[18 : 16] And in fact, Genesis 5, verse 1 says, this is the book of the generations of Adam. and it's quite conceivable, I think, that the original works that Moses wrote would have been separate papyri or even separate tablets of stone or clay.

you know, Genesis is a long book, right? 50 chapters. And so, due to the constraints of space, most likely, originally, there would have been distinct books. this is the book of the generations of Noah, this is the one of that.

So, we don't know definitely what the divisions were, but almost certainly they were multiple volumes and they could have been the division markers. So, that said, I do need to take a moment to rebut something.

Who's heard of the documentary hypothesis? Ali has. One person. Okay, this is for you, love. There is an erroneous theory that the books of Moses were a late compilation from four or more sources.

Those sources are commonly known as J, E, D, and P. And, the theory is based on, well, I was going to say two things. It's based on literary analysis and lack of faith in God, which is probably true.

[19 : 38] But, it is based on analysis. You know, I've shown you some reasons why we can accept that there were sources and that Moses penned possibly distinct but works that were later edited into one.

But, it's based on looking at things like, in Genesis 1, God is referred to as Elohim, which is God. But, then in Genesis 2, he's referred to as Yahweh Elohim.

Oh, two different, it must be two different people. That's the limit of the scholarship, I think. But, it's actually based on a faulty assumption that sophisticated writing didn't yet exist in the days of Moses.

I'm going to prove to you in a little while that that's not true. Actually, Moses, Acts 7, 22, says that Moses was, quote, educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was proficient in words, logos, and action.

Moses was proficient in logos. Not logos Bible software, but logos as in words, languages. Of course he could write.

[20 : 49] Come on, guys. Anyway, this is a basic view of what the theory suggests, that you had oral tradition up until around 900, then you had the J source, which was written, then you had the E and the P and the D and yada yada yada.

And again, I'm okay that there were sources that were drawn from, but we have to maintain that Moses compiled Genesis and the whole of the Torah. Why? Because of this.

Jesus says in John 5, 46, if you believe to Moses, then you would believe me, for he wrote about me. It doesn't say if you believed J or D or P.

It says Moses. You will find the name of Moses 79 times in the New Testament, and there are plenty of quotes ascribed to him, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy.

Moses said, Moses said, it's Moses. Jesus himself said in Luke 24, 44, he said this, these are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all the things that are written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

[22 : 03] Again, if we believe Jesus Christ is Lord, we must also believe that Moses wrote the Torah. They come as a package deal, and I think that's quite typical of God to arrange things like that.

We don't have the option of partial belief. We believe it, or we have to reject it, and I choose to reject it. wrong. Oh, and again, you can do a similar thing with another nonsense, which is called the deuterio-Isaiah theory, and that's the idea that there were two Isaiahs, or rather two authors who contributed to the book we call Isaiah, one who wrote chapters 1 through 39, and then the other who wrote 40 through 66.

I won't waste any more time talking about it, because, as usual, the Lord our God anticipated this error and gave us these verses. John 12, 38-41, this happened so that the word of Isaiah the prophet, which he spoke, would be fulfilled.

Lord, who has believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For this reason, they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, same Isaiah, he has blinded their eyes, and he hardened their hearts, so that they will not see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and so I will not heal them.

These things Isaiah said, because he saw his glory, and he spoke about him. So one of those quotes is from chapter 53, and the other quote is from Isaiah chapter 6, and they are both ascribed to one Isaiah.

[23 : 40] So, cool, thank you God, that saves us all a lot of research, and thinking, and oh, maybe, documentary hypothesis, we can put it in the bin, Deuterio-Isaiah theory, put it in the bin, not based on scholarship, they're based upon pride, rebellion, unbelief.

Much like evolution in that regard. So, interesting. Now let's turn our attention to the New Testament, then. How was that compiled? Again, I said that, I mentioned Luke already, I'm just wondering how much of this to read.

If you read the first four verses, then you'll see how he says that many have undertaken to compile an account, and he says that having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, he's going to write it out for you, Theophilus, in an orderly sequence.

That's his plan, that's what he's saying he's going to do. Luke is a true scholar. Luke, of course, did not number amongst the twelve apostles. Actually, his name only shows up three times in the writings of Paul, where we learn that he was a doctor, we learn that he was very close to Paul, a trusted friend and confidant, and Luke was with Paul to the end.

But he wasn't an eyewitness. He used sources, and he interviewed people who had seen Jesus. And then if you read the book of Matthew, the gospel of Matthew, you'll find, or we will find in a few chapters time, that it includes a private conversation between Pilate and his wife.

[25 : 17] How did Matthew, he probably spoke to one or both of those people as part of his compilation of the work. How else could he have got it? Oh, he could have been given it by the Holy Spirit.

Yes, that's true, but given the way that Luke worked, it seems certain, very likely to me, that this would have been part of the part of research.

John 19, there's a private conversation between Jesus and Pilate in the Praetorium. Who wrote that down? Well, the Apostle John did. How did he get it? Did he speak to Jesus?

Did he speak to Pilate? So, examples of research that was done, sources such as interviews and conversations. And actually, the entire gospel of Mark is generally accepted to have been sourced from Peter.

And again, the key difference, though, is that everything in the New Testament was completed in one generation. That's why Paul is able to say this in 1 Corinthians 15.6.

[26 : 21] He can say, after that, speaking of Jesus, he appeared to more than 500 brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep.

So he can say, when I'm writing this, most of the people who saw the risen Lord are still living. You can check it out with them. So, excellent. So, summing up this section then, the compilation of Scripture.

We've seen how the text of the Bible is described as inspired by God, which means that God moved among the authors. Mostly men, it's possible that there were some women involved in writing books like Ruth and Esther, we don't know.

But certainly God was moving through these individuals. We've seen how in many cases the authors drew from other sources to compile their works, but we can reject as unbiblical any view that tries to say that it wasn't Moses who wrote the Torah or it wasn't Isaiah and so forth.

And then, thirdly, the New Testament validates the authorship of the Old Testament. It's a package deal. Okay, moving on to the second section of our talk today, the languages of Scripture.

[27 : 44] So God's handed down to us this library of books, and they are primarily written in the languages of Hebrew and Koine Greek. And there, just for fun, there's a slide showing you some Hebrew and Koine Greek.

I wanted to just show you one thing. One of my sources up front was this book here. This is a book called The Ancient Hebrew Language and Alphabet by Jeff A.

Benner, which I stumbled across in my own library. I do not remember obtaining that book. But it was fascinating, absolutely fascinating. His website is ancient-hebrew.org.

I commend that to you if you want to look at any of his works. Another useful website that I've jotted down on that slide is hebrew4christians.com. That was the website I used many years ago when I first got interested in Hebrew and started learning the letters, how to pronounce them, how to get my head around the vowels, which I never really did.

So two sources just for your notes if you're interested. So what can we say about the languages of Scripture? Well, first of all, this, language has existed from the beginning.

[28 : 52] 100% definitely spoken, spoken language, appears in Genesis chapter 1 by God himself, definitely from the beginning. But also written form was not far behind.

You could argue that the first example of written language was when God himself wrote a mark on the forehead of Cain to denote him as, or protected, so that he wouldn't be killed.

Now, it is common to argue that written language came later, and actually I think that was part of the motivation for the documentary hypothesis. They didn't have writing in the days of Moses.

Wrong. They did. Now, this morning I was in two months to take this slide out, but in the end I decided I would keep it in. This is allegedly pre-flood writing.

Pre-flood writing. According to Haley's Bible Handbook, there is a tradition among Arabs and Jews that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, the one who walked with God, that he invented writing, and that he actually buried some clay tablets prior to the flood to preserve them.

[30 : 00] And one of the kings of Nineveh, one Ashurbanipal, that's probably not correct, Ashurbanipal, say it fast, say it loud, Ashurbanipal apparently claimed to enjoy reading inscriptions from the time before the flood.

Wow, really? I have no idea. I don't know if this is true or not. That tablet there, courtesy Ashmolean Museum, I need to go up to that museum and see if it's still there.

But I do know this, what I found this morning is that I bought a more recent version, or the latest edition of Haley's Bible Handbook, it's not there anymore. I was like, oh, this is the 1965 edition.

So I don't know, it may be that they have been discredited. But here is something that we can definitely stand by, hence the colour photography. You've got on the left, you've got the, I don't know if that's weld or veld, but you've got this prism.

Again, it's in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, still need to get up there. And this lists the records of Sumerian kings. There's thousands of lines of text on there, certainly hundreds, there's thousands on the code.

[31 : 17] many, many writings, and it's lists of Sumerian kings, including ten who, guess what, their reigns lasted for hundreds of years.

They lived before the flood. So this prism was probably written just prior to the time of Abraham. That is what is believed. So that's some 1800, 1900 BC, something like that.

And then you've got the code of Humerabi, again likely contemporaneous with Abraham, certainly well before Moses. Now this is fascinating.

This is a legal document with over 4,000 lines of text carved onto this stele of basalt, basalt stele.

This is not in the Ashmolean Museum. This one is in the Louvre in Paris. My point with all of that is writing has definitely been around for a long time.

[32 : 16] Definitely it predated Abraham. Actually Abraham, the evidence is that there were libraries in existence at the time of Abraham. Now, we know, don't we, from Genesis 11 verse 1 that the earth used the same language and the same words originally.

There was one language and then anyone who's been to Sunday school knows the story of the Tower of Babel where God came down to confuse the language. Now, based on the fact that the names prior to Babel make sense in Hebrew, Adam means man, Noah means comfort.

We can infer that the original language was Hebrew or an ancient version of Hebrew, which is amazing, isn't it, to think that the first language, the language that God spoke when he created the world, the universe, was Hebrew.

And one interesting perspective I got from Ben's book was that the three major ancient languages are Egyptian hieroglyphic, Paleo-Hebrew, and Sumerian, three pictorial languages that all sound very different.

And he speculates that they were probably the ones spoken by Shem, Ham, and Japheth when they were distributed. Or rather, I should say, they're the people who descended from them, because obviously they were not there at the time of Babel.

[33 : 43] Interesting, who knows? So let's focus on Hebrew for a bit then. Now, Hebrew has gone through some changes. I'm going to show you a chart that you definitely won't be able to read now. There it is. If you want to see it for yourself, again, it's on Jeff Benner's website, the link is there, and I'll send you the notes afterwards.

But what this is showing you in those columns is early, middle, late, Hebrew, and then going on to show you how those letters were developed further, all the way into the Latin alphabet that we have today.

Amazing. Check it out at home if you share my enthusiasm for such things. What you'll see is that the original Hebrew of the Old Testament looks very different to the Hebrew that we have today.

And the Hebrew that we've been looking at in our Psalm reading of Psalm 119, those are the current modern scripts. The original, I should have got the original, shouldn't I, Ray? Sorry about that.

Ah, fail. The original, they are there and they are readily available for us to review. The letters that we use today are from the Aramean script, or if you prefer, Aramaic.

[34 : 51] Aramaic is a language very closely related to Hebrew. They look similar, there are differences in grammar, there are differences in pronunciation, but they have many shared semantic roots.

Now, we know from the New Testament that Jesus spoke Aramaic, in fact he's quoted, isn't he, in Mark 5, 41, Mark 7, 34, any time you see Abba father, Abba is the Aramaic for father.

The Hebrew word for comparison is just Ab, or Av, right? That is right, good, I'm getting a nod. Aramaic. Now, so how did the shift happen?

So we think that the shift happened around the 6th century BC during the Babylonian captivity. This is the time of Daniel of course, and you may know this, that the half of the book of Daniel is actually written in Aramaic.

And if you look at Daniel chapter 2 verse 4, and you look at your footnote there, it will say from now on it's written in Aramaic, all the way I think until the end of chapter 6 or 7, I forget which.

[36 : 03] And there's also a portion of Aramaic in Ezra, I mentioned that official letter, some of the official memoranda that are there, they are in Aramaic. And so the evidence is that around that time the Jews adopted the Aramaic script for writing Hebrew, and it may even be that Daniel himself had something to do with it, who knows?

Now another thing about Hebrew that you may know is that Hebrew is written without vowels, or I should say that it is a, all of the letters are consonants.

Now you may think that this would make the text difficult to understand, but in reality you find even most English can be read and understood without vowels. Interesting, isn't it?

In the early Middle Ages there was a community of Jewish scribes and scholars called the Masorites, Masorites, and they introduced a system to standardise pronunciation and to write the vowels, and it was a system of dots and dashes called Nikudot, that's the plural, Nikud is the singular, and if you're interested in that, again, Hebrew4Christians.com is your friend, that was where I learned all about them.

But actually, fluent Hebrew speakers don't need the vowels, you won't see them on street signs in Israel, you won't see any of those Nikudot.

[37 : 28] But prior to the introduction of these vowels, some of the pronunciation was fluid. How was the vowel to be pronounced? It's fluid, which is incidentally why nobody knows how to pronounce the name of God, Yahweh.

We are implying there an A sound and an E sound, maybe, don't know, because that word of course was never pronounced. Anyway, that's probably enough Hebrew.

Although next week I will talk a bit about how we translate Hebrew because it's tricky. Hebrew is not only different in terms of its language, it's different in just the way it thinks about concepts, which makes it very tricky to understand.

But that's next week. Oh, Koine Greek. There it is again, just for fun. So Koine Greek or Common Greek, Koine just means common.

and that makes it distinct from the classical Greek of the philosophers of the day. It's the Common Greek, it's the language of the commoner. I don't know, I want to give it like a common accent now, but no, I won't do that, I'll move on.

[38 : 39] Koine Greek, but hang on, didn't you say that the disciples and Jesus spoke Aramaic? So why do we have Greek manuscripts? Well, here's what we know. Early church fathers, including one Papias, who wrote between 60 and 130 AD, he wrote that Matthew wrote down the sayings of Jesus in Hebrew.

Now, it's debated if the sayings of Jesus means the whole of his gospel or just some of the quotes, but that is something that was very early observed, actually, probably even contemporaneously with Matthew, or maybe just a couple of decades.

And then you've got Clement of Alexandria, now he wrote in around 200 AD, so a little later, but he said that Paul wrote Hebrews in Hebrew, and then Luke translated it into Greek.

Is that true? I have no idea, it's debatable, but what we have today is Greek. Why is it Greek? Well, simply because Koine Greek was the common tongue.

Aramaic was prominent in the region of Judea, but commonly across the Roman Empire was two languages, actually. I stole this from Wikipedia.

[39 : 54] The red is where Latin was primary, the blue on the east is where Koine Greek was predominantly spoken. And that just happens to be the area in which the apostles ministered, doesn't it?

If you mentally superimpose on that image, the missionary journey to Paul, you know he went up the eastern coast of Named, he went over to Corinth there in Greece, it's all blue because they spoke Greek, Koine Greek.

So God in his providence ordained that the New Testament scriptures should be in Greek to reach those nations that he was primarily reaching in those first few centuries.

But what if they were originally written in Hebrew? Have we lost something because of the translations? No, no, no. We can confidently assert that the original language for the inspired New Testament is Greek, and I have a fun proof of that.

Stay tuned for session five. I just want to keep you coming back in spite of the fact that I continually go over my allotted time. Okay, third and final section, and this is a shorter one you'll be relieved to know, the preservation of scripture.

[41 : 13] So we have very ancient texts, right? The New Testament is the newest, and that is getting on for 2,000 years old, and the oldest parts of the Old Testament are more like 3,500 years old.

How do they still exist? How on earth can we really believe that what we have is the real deal? Now, look, obviously we know that there was job description called the scribe, and we keep reading about those in the New Testaments, don't we?

The scribes. The thing is, is leather and papyri has a habit of wearing out, and so they had to keep replacing documents, and once the scrolls had started to show signs of wear, then they would copy them, and then they would very reverently bury them in what's called a genezah, the Hebrew word, genezah, and that means a hiding place, and so that was where the worn-out scrolls would be buried, and of course finding a genezah is wonderful, because you find ancient scrolls.

The Cairo genezah is a prominent example of that. That was found in 1890 or so, and it had 300,000 textual fragments, and a portion of nearly every book of the Bible was found in there.

those copies were from the 9th to the 13th century AD, so they're Middle Ages copies. Cairo, genezah is an example. So the copying had to be done by hand, professionally, by the scribes.

[42 : 50] They were highly skilled, highly disciplined, and what they would do is they had processes to follow. They would never ever write from memory. It was always read the letter, pronounce the letter, write the letter, read the letter, pronounce the letter, write the letter, letter by letter by letter, and then when they were done they would count the letters in the line, they would count the number of words in the line, they would count the number of lines on the page, they would check that the middle letter matched the source, and all of these checks were done to try to preserve the originals as well as they could.

So how did they do marks out of ten? Well, let's consider just three key Old Testament texts that we use.

The Masoretic text, the Masoretic text, this, I've already mentioned the Masoretes or Masorites, this is the authoritative Hebrew version of the Old Testament today, copied and maintained by the Masoretes as mentioned previously.

this is a lovely picture of the Leningrad Codex, or the carpet page, which just means the gloriously decorated front cover.

The Leningrad Codex, the oldest complete copy of the Masoretic text, dates to 1008 AD, very, very precious document, and one of the primary sources of our English Old Testaments today.

[44 : 24] Another significant copy of the Masoretic text is called the Aleppo Codex, it's older at 930 AD, but sadly incomplete, it was actually damaged in 1947, there was a fire, there were some riots, and it was partially lost, sad times.

So that's the Masoretic text, we've got the Septuagint, which I've referred to many times in previous sermons, so this is the Koine Greek, translation of the Old Testament, this was started around the 3rd century with the Torah, sorry, 3rd century BC, 3rd century BC, which is when the Torah was done, and then most of the rest of the Old Testament was completed by the 2nd century BC, and it was commissioned so that these scriptures would be available in the common tongue.

Now, this makes the Septuagint, its age, makes the Septuagint very significant, because it is older than Jesus Christ, it predates the advent of Jesus Christ, and so then when you look at the prophecies in the Septuagint, they are proof, they are proofs, that we can show that they were written before Jesus Christ.

You look at Isaiah 53, you look at Psalm 22, and these amazing descriptions of the cross, or any of the prophecies that talk about the birth, and all these things, all genuine, without a doubt.

And also it's significant because the quotations that we find of the Old Testament in the New are almost without exception from the Septuagint.

[46 : 10] So, very much worth the study today. And then thirdly, we've got this wonderful finding, the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in caves near the Dead Sea, around about 1950, and there was this decade or so of discovery where they kept finding new caves and new stores.

I was wondering if this was an example of a genazer, or a genazer, rather. It's not, actually. The leading theory is that these were hidden, it wasn't sort of holy rubbish, it was documents they wanted to preserve, most likely hidden before the first Jewish-Roman War, which was 66 BC.

So these were books they wanted to preserve, not books they wanted to reverently prepare for burial. And the Dead Sea Scrolls are the oldest surviving manuscripts we have of entire books of the Old Testament.

And that's what makes the Dead Sea Scrolls so valuable to us today is because they're a thousand years older than the Masoretic. A thousand years older than the Masoretic text.

And yet they are very, I mean, there are minor variations, but mostly it is spelling, it is grammar, or it is word order.

[47 : 36] Nothing that would impact major historical events or doctrine. Very, very, very accurate. A thousand years. brilliant. And when they found these scrolls, and particularly the great Isaiah scroll, are we going to find Isaiah 53?

Because non-Christian Jews had long argued that Isaiah 53 was a Christian addition to the Septuagint. Wasn't there, wasn't there, they said.

Why did they say that? Because they didn't want it to be in there. because it says, it says this, right? Isaiah 53, verse 5 and 6, he was pierced for our offenses, he was crushed for our wrongdoings, the punishment for our well-being was laid upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

All of us, like sheep, have gone astray, each one has turned to his own way, but the Lord had caused the wrongdoing of us all to fall on him. That sounds like Jesus.

And it is, of course, pierced for our offenses. Punishment laid on him. There's no doubt about it, there's no other sensible interpretation, so of course, anyone who didn't want to believe would like to say, it must be a Christian edition.

[49 : 00] I'm scrolling the great Isaiah scroll written in Hebrew, not Greek, predating Isaiah 53. There it is, brilliant, and it showed the accuracy of the Masoretic text.

So, did the scribes do a good job of preserving the Old Testament through the millennia? Absolutely, yes, they did. Was it 100% perfect?

No, it wasn't perfect, but there are no discrepancies that have any material impact on the faith or the history that the Bible presents. I've got a little bit to say about the New Testament if you indulge me for another couple of minutes, and then we'll close, I promise.

So, the New Testament was written again within a few decades of Christ. Now, the originals are assumed to be lost, but hey, maybe in another cave somewhere we'll find them.

So, what do we have today? Well, we have the oldest things we have looked like this. This is the St. John fragment. This is one of the oldest fragments we have. It's a tiny piece of John 18 from the early 2nd century, so, think 112, sorry, 110 AD, something like that, written on both sides, which evidences that it was probably part of a codex, which is just a book with leaves.

[50 : 26] We've got around 115 papyrus fragments like this, of this kind of age. some of them are more extensive than this one, but this is one of the oldest and therefore one of the most precious.

The oldest complete we have is called the Codex Sinaiticus. You can read it for yourself, again, if you're a geek like me. There's the web address and there's the little image at the top that I couldn't resist including.

This dates to around 350 AD and in there you have the entire New Testament and most of the Septuagint Old Testament all in Greek.

Again, mostly preserved through the ages via hand copying until the invention of the printing press. That's all we had, guys. And so again, all diligence was applied, the role, the job of scribe existed and there was, but again, copyist errors would have come in and so as with the Old Testament, there is a need for review and diligent study to try to piece together based on what we have, what the original would have said.

And that, my friends, is what we will talk about next week. How do we pick through all that we have and try and come up with a confident Bible?

[51 : 46] So, we've talked about the nature of the Bible and this incredible library that God has produced for us. We've talked about the inspiration of Scripture and how God breathed the Word through people using their gifts and the skills that he had given them.

He did not dictate it and yet it is the Word of God. We've talked about the languages that God used in Scripture. God could have written it in other languages. He could have invented other languages. He chose ancient Hebrew and he chose Koine Greek.

And that is important and we'll look at a bit more of what that means for us as interpreters next week. And we'll also look at the extant texts and fragments and how do we piece it all like a jigsaw into one?

I'm sure we can do all that in 45 minutes, if not 55. Awesome book. And I wanted to end with just this one quote. A Bible teacher by the name of Chuck Missler had this quote that he would always say, I think every time I heard him speak, he would say that the Bible is 66 books, 40 authors, and yet it is an integrated message system.

And what he meant by that is even though it is written over a thousand years with different cultures and authors, it is a miraculous book because it is so tightly integrated without error, without contradiction.

[53 : 06] Moses was educated in Egypt for 40 years and none of the nonsense, none of the nonsense medicines or ideas from Egypt made it into the Torah. Amazing, amazing, because God oversaw it.

Anyway, I must stop. Lord, thank you for your word. Thank you for these things, Lord. I pray this has been helpful in helping us to understand what we have. Lord, we thank you for your word. It's just awesome.

I do pray, God, that you would help us all to be diligent students of your word. I pray, Lord God, that we would just develop a love for your scriptures, a love for what you have written for us and that it would guide our lives.

It would be a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.