

# CONCERNING THE WAY

November 1, 2007



## LESSON 3: BIBLIOLOGY – PART 1

### Introduction

Welcome to the next lesson in our study! We're going to talk about the Bible - well, we always talk about the Bible, but for the next few weeks we're going to investigate where it came from (origins), how it got to us (transmission), evidence for its accuracy (infallibility), and methods of interpretation (hermeneutics). We'll also look at some of the popular criticisms and see if they're valid or not.

We started out by looking at world views, and how theism made a lot of sense, and then we looked at the evidence for the existence of God, and found that there really is a lot of compelling evidence. So, if there is a great First Cause in the universe, doesn't it make logical sense that He would want to get in touch with us? If this First Cause created us, wouldn't He have wanted to tell us what He expects of us? Well, that's what the Bible claims to be, a collection of books which tell us what He wants us to know about Him, and His plan for this world.

The sight of a Bible brings up a host of feelings and reactions. Some say it is a book of myths and fables. Others will say it is a book of half-truths and cultural prejudices, the sight of a bible can cause anger or arrest in some countries. The Bible is the most published book in the history of the world, and it's been said that it's the most popular book no one ever reads.

The Bible claims to be the inspired word of God, God's message to humanity. The words in the Bible have shaped the world we live in today. Nevertheless, the Bible also raises many questions. Some commonly raised issues are; how can a book written by man be God's Word? What Bible is the right one?

Who decided what books make up the Bible? What books are excluded from the Bible? Why are there Old and New Testaments? These questions among others are often unanswered for many. Confusion on these matters causes many to dismiss the Bible as merely a book of men. The books in the Bible claim to be the revelation of God's word spoken through the prophets, relevant for all who live. The Bible is dismissed by many people because they have not evaluated its evidence and history. There are many mistruths and false assumptions floating around today. Come with me as we explore why this book is still so relevant, so important to each of our lives.

### Fast Facts on the uniqueness of the Bible:

- A collection of 66 books, which is called the canon of scriptures, containing a variety of genres: history, poetry, prophecy, wisdom literature, letters, and apocalyptic writings.
- Written by 40 different authors. These authors came from a variety of backgrounds: shepherds, fishermen, doctors, kings, prophets, and others. Most of these authors never knew one another personally.
- Written over a period of 1500 years. Again, many of these authors never knew or collaborated with one another in writing these books
- Written in 3 different languages - the ancient languages of Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic.
  - The Old Testament is written in two languages; Hebrew and Aramaic.
  - The New Testament is written in Koine Greek.
- Written on 3 different continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe
- All these books share:
  - A common storyline - The creation, fall, and redemption of God's people
  - A common theme - God's universal love for all of humanity
  - A common message- salvation is freely available to all who ask, through the work of Christ
- Though many have tried to find them, these books contain no historical errors or contradictions. Over and over apparent errors or contradictions have proven to be false when archeological finds confirm the accuracy of what the Bible says. (Examples in accompanying document)

**How were books in the Old Testament affirmed to be God’s word?**

From the time of the exodus out of Egypt, God told Israel that he was going to communicate with them through prophets - people who would speak for God and represent Him to the people. This was in response to the request from Israel who was afraid when God spoke to them directly from Mt. Sinai, the people pleaded for Moses to speak for God to them rather than God speaking to them directly, so they wouldn’t die. God was pleased with their request. (Exodus 20:18-21, Deuteronomy 18:17-19).

The words spoken have particular meaning according to these verses. God’s representative, the prophet, would speak for God and Israel must listen. There are three important points here.

1. God’s words would come from his (prophet’s) mouth.
2. Those who reject God’s word, through the prophet, will be responsible.
3. The prophet will speak in God’s Name.

The position of Prophet came with power because the individual spoke for God. This was and is a tempting proposition for many seeking power. There were many false prophets in Old Testament times. Moses gave two tests for those who would proclaim themselves prophet.

1. Signs but contradictory message (Deuteronomy 13:1-4)

The first test of any prophet is does his message conform to what has already been revealed? A sign or wonder, a super-natural event, by itself does not mean the message is God’s message. The sign or wonder could be a test from God. The message must conform to earlier revelations.

2. False Message spoken in God.s Name (Deuteronomy 18:20-21)

The second test is one of logic and God.s nature. If the message is from God then it will happen, if the message does not happen then the speaker is a *false prophet* and must be put to death. Israel was not to fear false prophets. Using this test, we can demonstrate who the false prophets are. We can examine the Quran by Mohammed, The book of Mormon by Joseph Smith, Jehovah Witnesses and other group claiming divine representation.

Before the printing press, the transmission of the text was done entirely by hand, which is called a “Manuscript”. The transmission of the Hebrew Canon can be organized into six time-periods.

Old Testament Textual Transmission	
BEFORE 300 BC	<p><i>“From the hand of the prophet to the parchment God’s word was written as revealed. When the words of the prophet passed the tests of a prophet, his writings were added to the Canon, as inspired writings. His words would become scripture, revealed writings. With time, the autograph would wear out. Copies would be made of the autograph for distribution and teaching. In time, the copies of the autographs, manuscripts, would also wear out, these manuscripts were sacred, and were placed in cemeteries or burned. The original writings of the prophet would be passed down from generation to generation. A major function of the scribe was to make copies of manuscripts.”</i> (A General Introduction to the Bible, Geisler, Norman, Glossary, Moody Press, 1986)</p> <p><b>One of the main arguments against the historicity of the Bible used to be that writing was unknown in Moses’ day, so he could not have written the Pentateuch (the first 5 books of the Old Testament). Archeology has revealed that writing did exist in ancient times. Libraries of thousands of stone tablets have been found that date back to the time of Moses. Also, more evidence comes in almost daily of an advanced state of technology in very ancient times, long before the time of Moses.</b></p> <p>The Babylonians conquered Jerusalem three times in 18 years, 605, 597 and 587 BC. Finally, in 587 BC the city of Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed. This would create two centers of manuscript transmission, Babylon and Egypt.</p>

	<p><b>Egypt</b>                  Jeremiah was taken captive to Egypt by Jews refusing to submit to Babylonian captivity. Egypt became a center for Jewish writing and transmission following the destruction of Jerusalem. This exodus from Jerusalem is described in Jeremiah, chapters 41-44. After the conquest of Persia, by Alexander the Great 330 BC, Alexandria Egypt, became a major center for Biblical manuscript transmission. From Alexandria, the Septuagint would be created for Greek speaking Jews.</p>
	<p><b>Babylon</b>                  Daniel and Ezekiel were forced to make their home in Babylon in 605 and 597 BC, respectfully. When the Persians defeated the Babylonians, the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem. Babylon remained a center for Jewish writing and scriptural transmission. Aramaic became the dominate language of the land, and most Jews spoke and wrote Aramaic. During the 4th century BC, the Aramaic or "Square script" replaced the Phoenician or (Paleo-Hebrew) script as the standard alphabet in Palestine. Aramaic was the common language in use during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.</p> <p>This period of transmission involved individual scrolls. They were made of leather or papyrus. The standard size was 10 inches by 30 feet. Long enough to accommodate the text of Isaiah, Old Testament books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles were all considered single books by the Jews.</p>
<p>300 BC TO 135 AD</p>	<p>The victory of the Macabees over the Selucidis who tried to destroy the manuscripts preserved the documents for future transmission. First Maccabees records the attempt by Antiochus to destroy the scriptures. <i>The books of the law which they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire. Where the book of the covenant was found in the possession of anyone, or if any one adhered to the law, the decree of the king condemned him to death. 1 Maccabees 1:56-57</i></p> <p>A library in Jerusalem established by Judas Maccabeus as mentioned above was continued after the tradition of Nehemiah. During this period of time the party of the Pharisees would form, from them would come the movement known as <i>Rabbinical Judaism</i>. The presence of Jewish populations in Babylon (Descendents of Captivity), Palestine (Jews who returned) and Alexandria (Jews who settled in Egypt) caused three distinct points of canon transmission during this time. The Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD caused the focus of worship to be centered on learning and scripture reading rather than Temple worship. The Council of Jamnia (90 A.D.) affirmed the existing Jewish canon. In 135 AD the bar Kochba rebellion led to the scattering of Jews from Jerusalem by the Romans. Babylon and Alexandria remained centers for scripture transmission. This would begin the era of Rabbinical Judaism.</p> <p><i>The Alexandrian Recension</i>1. These Hebrew manuscripts were the basis of the Septuagint in Alexandria Egypt. (The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible)</p> <p><i>The Palestine/Babylonian Recension</i> These Hebrew manuscripts were the basis of the Masoretic text6. The basis of most Old Testament translations today. This could be traced to Ezra and Nehemiah period of activity. By 135 AD. The two variations in text type were replaced with a single standard. This would later form into the Masoretic text.</p>
<p>135 TO 500 A.D.</p>	<p>This can be called the age of the Talmud. These heirs of the Pharisaical Judaism played a central role in the New Testament. After the destruction of the Temple and the dispersion of Jews from Palestine, Jewish spiritual life focused on scripture and synagogue. The Hebrew text was probably broken down into verses at this time as well as paragraphs. Chapter divisions would come later and would be of Christian origin in the time of Salomon ben Ishmael (1330 AD). Liturgical divisions were made in the Torah. In Babylon, the Torah would be read once a year in synagogues. So the Torah was divided into 54 "Parashoth". In Palestine the Torah was read every 3 years and was divided into 452 "Sedarim".</p>

<p>500 TO 1000 A.D</p>	<p>This transmission time is the Masoretic Tradition period with activity being carried out in Palestine and Babylon. These scribes meticulously copied and codified the scriptures. With the triumph of Christianity in Palestine large numbers of textual scholars emigrated to Babylon in the 2nd century AD. The conquest of Islam in Palestine in 638 AD led to a revival Jewish textual work on the western shore of Galilee in the town of Tiberias. Jewish scribal scholars migrated back from the Babylonian regions. It would be the work of these Tiberian Masorets that would be reflected in the future copies of the Old Testament. There were two schools of the Masorets The Western (Tiberian tradition) and the Eastern (Babylonian tradition). The contribution of the Tiberian Masorettes was immense. They created an overall system to ensure the accurate understanding of the Old Testament text.</p>
<p>1000 AD TO 1450 AD</p>	<p>Following 1000 AD the text was fixed with the work of the Masorettes. There are more then 3000 extant Hebrew manuscripts that reflect the Tiberian tradition and were written in the 12 century and later. The close of this period is marked by the invention of the printing press. The Masoretic tradition was transmitted with very little change to the medieval Jewish manuscripts.</p>
<p>1450 AD TO PRESENT</p>	<p>The Printed Hebrew Bible was the last phase of the Jewish transmission of text. The first complete printed Hebrew Bible was printed in Soncino 1488. By the 16th century printed bibles replaced manuscripts in most of Europe. A major development was the First Rabbinic Bible edited by Felix Pratensis and published by Daniel Bromberg in (1516-17). Even greater was the 2nd Rabbinic Bible that was edited by Jacob ben Hayyim and printed by Daniel Bromberg (1524-1525 AD). The 2nd edition came complete with notes, Aramaic Targums and Jewish commentaries by outstanding rabbis. It became known as the "Received Edition". The 2nd edition became the basis of the Kittel Bible.</p>
<p>THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS</p>	<p>Because of the Jewish practice of copying the manuscript and burying or burning the source manuscript that became unusable with age. Very few manuscripts survived earlier then the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls changed everything. Portions or entire manuscripts of every book of the Hebrew canon were found except for the book of Esther. Many being 1000 years older then existing manuscripts. The transmission of the Hebrew canon could finally be tested. Quoting from Gleason Archer book "Survey of the Old Testament",</p> <p><i>"Even though the two copies of Isaiah discovered in Qumran Cave 1 near the Dead Sea in 1947 were a thousand years earlier then the oldest dated manuscript previously known (980 AD), they proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more then 95% of the text. The 5 percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling. They do not affect the message of revelation in the slightest."</i></p>

## External Witnesses to the Old Testament

### What Old Testament did Jesus use?

- Since Christianity is based on the identity of Jesus, the Old Testament Jesus used is the Old Testament his church should use. There is internal evidence that reveal the Old Testament used by Jesus is composed of the same books used in the Jewish Bible today. This would exclude seven books known as the Apocrypha to Protestants and Jews and the Deuterocanonical books to the Catholics.
- Luke 24:44 - Jesus makes reference to a three part division of scripture; this division is the current structure of the Jewish Bible. Psalms is the first and longest book of the third section of the Jewish Bible.
- Luke 11:51, Matthew 23:35 - From the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah. With these words Jesus confirms his witness to the extent of the Old Testament canon. Abel was the first martyr recorded in Scripture (Genesis 4:8) and Zechariah the last martyr to be named in the Hebrew Old Testament order. Zechariah was stoned while prophesying to the people .in the court of the house of the Lord (2 Chronicles 24:21). Genesis was the first book in the Hebrew canon and 2 Chronicles the last. Jesus was basically saying .Genesis to Chronicles,. or according to our order Genesis to Malachi thereby confirming the divine authority and inspiration of the entire Hebrew canon.
- John 10:31-36; Luke 24:44 - Jesus disagreed with the oral tradition of the Pharisees (Mark 7, Matthew 15), not with their concept of the Hebrew canon. .There is no evidence whatever of any dispute between Him and he Jews as to the canonicity of any Old Testament book.
- **Sirach (130 B.C.)** Sirach, who wrote and lived in Jerusalem, makes mention of most famous men of the Old Testament. He makes explicit mention of the Twelve Prophets. (Minor Prophets) This would indicate that the whole or at least the most of the OT was known to him and already in his day the “Minor Prophets” were regarded as a special group by themselves. In his prologue he three times refers to the tripartite division of the OT. Example: “Whereas many great teachings have been given to us through the law and the prophets and the others that followed them.” Sirach 19:20-24
- **Philo** - Just after Christ (about A.D. 40), Philo witnessed to a threefold classification, making reference to the Law, the Prophets (or Prophecies), as well as hymns and the others which foster and perfect knowledge and piety.
- **Josephus** - About 90 AD, the Jewish historian spoke about the closing of the Hebrew “canon”. He wrote in Contra Apionem that since Artaxerxes age the succession of prophets had ceased, showing in his day the “Canon” was closed.
  - He had the actual Temple scrolls in his possession as a gift from Titus. We would conclude from these facts that Josephus should be considered more authoritative than the Talmud regarding the first century view of the canon.
  - Josephus had the same canon we do.
    - He says there were 22 books in the canon of the Old Testament (see "Against

Apion" 1:8, where he mentions 5 books of Moses, 13 Prophets, and 4 Writings).

- This corresponds to our 39 books. Following typical Jewish tradition, he recognized Jer. and Lam. as one book, as he also did Judges & Ruth, I Sam. & II Sam., I Kings & II Kings, I Chron. & II Chron., and Ezra and Esther. The 12 Minor Prophets were also recognized as one book, called "The Book of the Twelve."

- He included Daniel in the Prophets instead of in the Writings, which refutes an important part of the proof used to support the three-part theory, and the late-dating of Daniel.
- Josephus also indicates that there was unbroken succession of prophets from Moses to Malachi, and that the histories written since Malachi were not inspired, because there had been no succession of prophets since the time of Malachi. This reflects the consensus in Israel that the Apocryphal books were not canonical.

➤ **The Talmud** - Written between 350-425 for the Jerusalem Talmud and about 500 AD for the Babylonian Talmud specifically states the books of the Apocrypha, including Sirach, are non-canonical. Tosefta Yadaim 3:5, Seder Olam Rabba 30 states, "Until then (the coming of Alexander the Great and the end of the empire of the Persians) the prophets prophesied through the Holy Spirit. From then on, incline thine ear and hear the words of the wise." Tos. Sotah 13:2 baraita in Bab.Yoma 9b, Bab. Sotah 48b and Bab.Sanhedrin 11a: "With the death of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi the latter prophets, the Holy Spirit ceased out of Israel."

### ➤ **Dead Sea Scroll Evidence**

- The Manual of Discipline & Zadokite Fragments quote from Isaiah, Deut., Numbers, Leviticus, and Proverbs with the formula "It is written."
- Zadokite uses the formula "God said" for Isaiah, Malachi, Amos, Zechariah, Hosea, Deut., Numbers and Micah.
- The Commentary on Habakkuk indicates that it was considered to be inspired.
- The apocryphal books are quoted also, but never with one of the above formulae.
- Conclusion: This evidence disproves the liberal theory that the canon was solidified in a series of three steps: the Pentateuch accepted as scripture by 400 BC, the Prophets by 200 BC, and the Writings not accepted until the Council of Jamnia, in 90 AD. The Dead Sea Scrolls quote from all three divisions as scripture and refer to all three as "the Law and the Prophets" or "Moses and the Prophets."

### ➤ **Additional Evidence**

- Solomon, Samuel, Daniel, Isaiah and Ezekiel all had dreams and visions which squares with God's description of a prophet (Deut. 13:1; Num. 12:6-8).
- The New Testament quotes the Old Testament over 600 times (all of the Old Testament books are quoted except Ezra, Neh., Esther, Eccles., and Song of Solomon). Acts 2:30 and Mt. 24:15 identify David and Daniel as prophets.
- Therefore, only Ezra, Neh., and Esther are unproven if we accept that Eccles. and Song of Solomon were written by Solomon.
- Melito, Origen and Jerome agreed with the Jewish canon. Only Augustine and his councils accepted apocryphal books.

## Actual Criteria for Inclusion in the Canon

1. The test used to determine whether a book was part of the canon of the Old Testament was inspired authorship.
2. An inspired prophet could be identified using the tests for prophets in Deut. 13:1-5; 18:14-22.
3. Relevant Scripture
  - Moses wrote the Pentateuch (Ex. 17:14; 24:4-7; 34:27; Deut. 31:9,22,24; Ezra 7:6; Ps. 103:7; Josh. 8:31, 23:6; I Kings 2:3).
  - Some prophets clearly state that they were ordered to write (Jer. 30:2; Ezek. 43:11; Is. 8:1).
  - Each of the 12 Minor Prophets call themselves prophets.
  - The historical books were written by prophets (I Chron. 29:29; II Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; 20:34; 32:32; 33:19).
  - Daniel accepted the book of Jeremiah as scripture, even though they were contemporary. (Dan. 9:2).
  - Joshua received Moses' writing as scripture even though the ink was still wet. (Josh. 1:7,8).
  - Isaiah and Micah accepted each other's writings as scripture contemporaneously (Is. 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-4).

## Archeology and the Bible - Randall Price <http://www.worldofthebible.com>

At the beginning of the Easter week Jesus rode a donkey down from the Mount of Olives toward the great rock-built walls of the city of Jerusalem. His journey that day had been long ago predicted by the prophet Zechariah who had told the Jewish People to expect their Messiah to come to them in this humble way (Zechariah 9:9). While crowds of palm-waving Jews rejoiced at His "triumphal entry," the religious establishment demanded that he silence these newfound disciples. But Jesus responded, "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!" (Luke 19:40). Jesus' words perhaps referenced the huge stone blocks that surrounded Him at every turn in the Holy City. Today, even though disciples multiplied by millions still rejoice over Him, the stones have also added their voice. In fact, the very stones of which Jesus spoke today have been unearthed at the foot of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Fulfilling Jesus own prophecy that they would fall (Luke 19:43-44), they still cry out to our age that the triumph of that first Easter continues still. Such stones are part of the historic witness of archaeology, a science that has come to the service of Scripture at a time when other sciences have sought to subvert it.

We live in an exciting time! New discoveries are being unearthed throughout the world often faster than our newspapers can report them. They open a new window on the ancient world that permits us to view the stories of the Bible with an accuracy never known before. The first generation of Jewish-Christians who were bequeathed the Gospels no doubt had such a first-hand experience of the history and places they describe. Until the advent of archaeology, Christians were left to reconstruct the world of the Bible and the drama of the events of Easter

as best they could. Masterpieces of religious art from previous centuries pictured the crucifixion, entombment and resurrection of Christ with the only reference point they had - their own world. Even if they included Oriental models, the look was still more that of seventeenth-century turbaned Turks rather than first-century Jews and Romans. While not detracting from the drama, and certainly with every good intention toward history, such scenes nevertheless portrayed an unrealistic image that was more faith than fact. Today, archaeology has restored much of the first-century world, enabling us to experience the reality of Easter in a way not available to previous centuries of Christians.

In the late 18th century, no one could have dreamed what wonders archaeology was to reveal. The world of the past was itself a dream, forgotten except for the Bible's parade of ancient names and places. However, the Bible stood as the only surviving testimony to itself. The reader was the blessed by its truths, yet often left baffled by the sites and subjects it recorded. Archaeology has reclaimed mankind's lost heritage, chasing away the spiders of time whose webs of ruin have hidden our past from us. It has resurrected the faded glory of forgotten eras so that future generations can approach their faith with greater facts than any other in history. In many cases it has also chased away skeptical views of the Bible introduced to our Christian culture by the invasion of biblical higher criticism over a century ago. No longer can the Bible be thought to have been the late product of fanciful Hebrew editors seeking to create a religious history for a race without origins. Rather, as Professor William Foxwell Albright, the renown Dean of American biblical archaeology professed decades ago: "Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition of the value of the Bible as a source of history." As a result, archaeology has been of special importance to those who seek to capture the original context of scripture. In this regard, Joseph Callaway once observed: "The real business of archaeology is to establish factual benchmarks in the world of the Bible to guide interpreters."

## Purposes of Archeology

- Confirming the Word of the Bible - Archaeology provides us new assurance from the stones to accompany the assurance we already have from the Spirit.
- Correcting our wording of the Bible - archaeological literary treasures have given us a far greater collection of biblical manuscripts than that possessed by the Church in previous centuries and have enabled scholars to make better translations from the ancient languages, thus improving our own English language versions of the Bible.
- Clarifying the World of the Bible - the better we are able to understand the original meaning of the message, as first communicated in the ancient world of the Bible, the better we will be able to apply its timeless truths to our lives in the modern world.
  - archaeological details assists us in our reconstructing the original context of the Bible so that the theological truth it contains will not be misinterpreted and misapplied.
- Complimenting the Witness of the Bible - Archaeology through its revelation of the context and culture of the lands and civilizations in which the biblical drama was enacted, adds a complementary witness as fills out the outline drawn by the biblical authors verifying that the particulars they present they faithful to the facts
  - the discoveries of the religious literatures of the Sumerians, Egyptians, Hittites, Assyrians, Babylonians and Canaanites have all highlighted the originality and theological distinctiveness of the Bible.