

“The Incorruptible Seed”
I Peter 1:23

Introduction: What is the Bible? The word Bible comes from a Greek word meaning “book”. Properly, the Bible is referred to as the Holy Bible because it is God’s holy book. Why did God give us the Bible? God gave us the Bible to show us our sin, point us toward repentance, offer us salvation, and to give us a guide to live our Christian life. How did God give us the Bible?

1. Through Inspiration II Peter 1:21- *“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.”*
 - a. God inspired the Bible, that is He directed the thoughts of men such as Moses, David, and Paul and guided their writing. The word inspire means God-breathed. These men were not unconscious instruments, but were living, thinking men whom the Spirit directed.
 - b. God chose forty men that were kings, priests, prophets, shepherds, farmers, and fishermen to write what He had to say. This was over a period of 1,600 years. These writers were separated by a distance of some 1,500 miles.
 - c. Although written at different times by diverse men, it bears witness to one God, it tells one story, it unfolds one truth, it speaks of one redemption, and it has one theme—the person and work of Jesus Christ.
2. Through Canonization
 - a. After all of the individual books of the Bible were written, people began questioning which books truly belonged in the Bible. Therefore, to resolve this problem, religious councils met and fixed the number of books in the Bible.
 - b. Finally, in AD 90, the rabbis came together at the Council of Jamnia. At this time, they agreed that the Old Testament canon included 24 books. We use these 24 books today, although some of the books have been divided therefore increasing the total number of books to 39. For instance, the book of Samuel was divided into I and II Samuel. The Book of the Twelve was divided into twelve individual books that make up the Minor Prophets.
 - c. The New Testament canon was established in AD 397 at the Council of Carthage. This council decreed that the New Testament canon included the 27 books we have today.
3. Through Preservation 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.”*
 - a. The first five books of the Bible are over 3,500 years old. For thousands of years the Bible has been copied, both by hand and by printing presses. However, God has promised that He would preserve His Word.
 - b. Those who were given the notable task of copying the Scripture were called scribes. Each scribe had to follow the strictest guidelines. Any Biblical manuscript that contained three mistakes on a single page or was worn out from use were to be ceremonially burned.
 - c. Consider the rules Jewish scribes followed in copying the Old Testament:
 - (1) The parchment had to be made from the skin of a ceremonially clean animal and be prepared by a Jew only, and the skins were to be fastened together by strings taken from clean animals.

- (2) Each column could have no fewer than 48 and no more than 60 lines.
 - (3) The ink had to be black, and it was to be prepared according to a special recipe.
 - (4) No word or letter could be written from memory; the scribe had to have an authentic copy before him and was to read and pronounce aloud each word before writing it.
 - (5) The scribe was to reverently wipe his pen each time before writing the word for God (Elohim) and was to wash his whole body before writing the name Jehovah (LORD), lest God's name be contaminated.
 - (6) Rules were given concerning the spaces between letters, words, sections, the use of the pen, and the color of the parchment.
 - (7) The revision (the correction of any errors) of a manuscript was to be made within thirty days after the work was finished; otherwise, the manuscript was worthless. One mistake on a sheet disqualified the entire sheet. If three mistakes were found on any page, the entire manuscript was to be condemned.
 - (8) Every word and every letter was to be counted, and if a letter was omitted, or if an extra letter was inserted, or if two letters touched one another, the manuscript was to be condemned and destroyed at once.
4. Through Translation
- a. The Bible was mainly written in two languages: Hebrew and Greek. Since not everyone in the world speaks one of these languages, the Bible has been translated into a multitude of languages.
 - b. The major languages of the world have been:
 - (1) Hebrew
 - (2) Greek- From 300 B.C. to 300 A.D., everyone spoke Greek. It was the trade language.
 - (3) Latin- Around 300 A.D., this new world language developed.
 - (4) English- Around 1500 A.D.
 - c. God has also used His men to translate the Bible into other languages.
 - (1) William Carey (Born: August 17, 1761—Died: June 9, 1834)
 - (a) "The versions of the Sacred Scriptures, in the preparation of which he took an active and laborious part, include the Sanscrit, Hindu, Brijbbhassa, Mahratta, Bengali, Oriya, Telinga, Karnata, Maldivian, Gurajattee, Bulooshe, Pushtoo, Punjabi, Kashmeer, Assam, Burman, Pall, or Magudha, Tamul, Cingalese, Armenian, Malay, Hindostani; and Persian." (Cathcart)
 - (b) "In six of these tongues the whole Scriptures have been translated and circulated; the New Testament has appeared in 23 languages, besides various dialects in which smaller portions of the sacred text have been printed." (Cathcart)
 - (c) "...before Carey's death 212,000 copies of the Scriptures were issued from Serampore in 40 different languages, the tongues of 330,000,000 of the human family." (Cathcart)
 - (d) "In thirty years Carey and his brethren rendered the Word of God accessible to one-third of the world." (Cathcart)
 - (2) Adoniram Judson (Born: August 9, 1788—Died: April 12, 1850)
 - (a) "For many years Dr. Judson devoted a part of his time to the translation of the Scriptures into the Burmese language, and the compilation of a Burmese dictionary." (Cathcart)
 - (b) On the last day of January, 1834, the closing page of the now wholly translated Bible was written by Dr. Judson." (Cathcart)

- d. Some have questioned if God’s words can be translated and maintain their inspiration. However, Joseph’s Egyptian statements were translated into the Hebrew and inspired. Genesis 42:23

Body: Now, let us take a look of how we got the Word of God from heaven into English.

I. The Old Testament

- A. The Old Testament was written over a period of approximately 1,150 years.
- B. The original writings were known as “autographs”. The autographs were written on papyrus. Papyrus is parchments made of plants and animal skins. Due to the aging process, there are no autographs left today.
- C. The Old Testament was primarily written in Hebrew and the Jewish scribes were its guardians. For over 3,000 years (1600 BC to AD 1450), the scribes copied the Old Testament by hand.
- D. Between AD 500-1000, the Old Testament was copied by scribes known as the “Masoretes”. The word “Masorete” comes from the word “masora” meaning “tradition”.
- E. When it comes to the Masoretic Text, two texts exist which claim to be Masoretic:
 - 1. The Ben Chayyim Masoretic Text
 - a. In 1516, a man by the name of Daniel Bomberg took the reliable Masoretic manuscripts, compiled them, and published a Hebrew text of the Old Testament referred to as the First Rabbinic Bible.
 - b. The First Rabbinic Bible was followed in 1524-25 by a second edition completed by a Jewish rabbi named Jacob Ben Chayyim. This work, known as the Ben Chayyim Masoretic Text, the Daniel Bomberg edition, or the Second Great Rabbinic Bible, is the Hebrew text from which the Old Testament of the King James Version was translated.
 - c. For over 400 years, the Ben Chayyim Masoretic Text has been the true text of the Hebrew Old Testament. The majority of Masoretic Text manuscripts support it, and it alone can attest to being the faithful text of the Old Testament.
 - 2. The Ben Asher Masoretic Text
 - a. Sometime in the early 900’s (AD), a Jewish scribe—Aaron Ben Moses Ben Asher—produced an Old Testament text from a handful of manuscripts which did not represent the traditional Masoretic Text.
 - b. The Ben Asher Masoretic Text has been used to form present-day Hebrew texts, two examples being Rudolf Kittel’s Biblia Hebraica (1937) and the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (1967-77). Both of these editions of the Hebrew Old Testament have made over 20,000 changes to the traditional Masoretic Text. Most modern versions use one of the editions of Biblia Hebraica for the Old Testament of their Bibles.

II. The New Testament

- A. The New Testament was completed by AD 95.
- B. It was written largely in Greek on papyrus, an early form of paper. To make this paper, the papyrus plant was sliced into thin strips, pressed together, and then dried.

Papyrus furnished a smooth writing surface and proved to be easier to use than stones or clay. Although it was easy to write on, it became very brittle and fragile with age. This is the basic reason why no autographs of the New Testament have survived.

- C. The New Testament was copied by hand by the early church. In the first few centuries (AD), two major copying centers were producing manuscripts of the Bible. The copies coming from these two locations were very different and formed two streams of Bibles.
- D. Just as water from many places runs into a stream, manuscripts and Bibles make up a stream. The two streams are as follows:
 - 1. The Traditional Text—The Correct Stream
 - a. The first stream flows from Antioch, Syria.
 - b. Other names for the Traditional Text include: Antiochan Text, Byzantine Text, Imperial Text, Majority Text, Reformation Text, Syrian Text, and Universal Text. Over 5,500 manuscripts and the broad evidence of history support the Traditional Text.
 - c. After Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, Antioch became the center for Christian evangelism. With a vital emphasis on a historical-literal interpretation of Scripture, Antioch also naturally became a center for the preservation of the Bible.
 - d. Scripture was copied, distributed and viewed as God’s perfect Word. By the end of the first century, over 100,000 Christians were living in Antioch.
 - e. The Antiochan approach to Scripture was also the approach taken by the Waldensians, Christians who lived in the Vaudois Valley in northern Italy. As early as AD 157, they had produced their Old Itala Bible (the original Vulgate) from the available Traditional Text manuscripts. Because of their regard for God’s Word, they were persecuted severely by the Church of Rome.
 - 2. The Alexandrian Text—The Corrupted Stream
 - a. The second stream flows from Alexandria, Egypt.
 - b. It is corrupt because much false doctrine crept into its manuscripts, causing multiplied verses to be rewritten and many others to be deleted.

III. Erasmus Greek New Testament (1516)

- A. Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) compiled Traditional Text manuscripts and produced a Greek New Testament in 1516. His goal was that everyone would be able to read the Bible, from the farmer in the field to the weaver at the loom.
- B. After his death, Erasmus’ text was revised by men like Robert Stephanus (4 editions) and Theodore Beza (10 editions). It was Beza’s fifth edition (1598) that was to be the basis for our English King James Bible.
- C. The Elzivir brothers edited Erasmus’ New Testament and published three editions. Written in the preface of the 1633 edition was the following statement: “You have, therefore, the text now received by all, in which we give nothing changed or corrupt.” From then on, all editions of this text became known as the Received Text, or the Textus Receptus.
- D. Erasmus’ work was monumental in that it made the Greek text available in Europe. The Textus Receptus helped to ignite a spiritual explosion. In less than 100 years, it

had been translated into over 16 languages. It served as the basis for the New Testaments of a number of reliable English Bibles, the best being the King James Version.

IV. The Development of the Word of God into the English Language

A. Why so long with no English Bible?

1. For over a thousand years, no good Bible in English existed, and the Roman Catholic Church desired it to be this way, believing that their power rested in the people's ignorance.
2. The Roman Catholic Church even passed a law in 1229 AD forbidding anyone but the priests to read the Bible.
3. In 1380, John Wycliffe issued the first English translation of the Bible. Textually it was translated from Jerome's Latin Vulgate and not the pure Greek. Although this translation was monumental in that it attempted to put the Bible into the English language, it was not pure because of the text it came from.
4. The English translations that would follow Wycliffe's forced the Roman Catholic Church to approve an English translation of the Bible, the Douay-Rheims Version (1582). If the people were going to have the Bible in English, the Roman Catholic Church seems to have wanted to assure that it was a corrupted one.
5. Another idea to consider is that the English language had not developed yet and was still unstable. It was not until around 1600 that English, as we speak it today, was solidified. The development of the English language was as follows:
 - a. Old English—Approximately 900 AD
 - (1) The invaders' Germanic language displaced the indigenous Brythonic languages in most of the areas of Great Britain that were later to become England. The original Celtic languages remained in parts of Scotland, Wales and Cornwall (where Cornish was spoken into the 19th century). The Germanic dialects combined to form what is now called Old English.
 - (2) Old English did not sound or look like the Standard English of today.
 - (3) The Old English period formally ended sometime after the Norman Conquest (starting in 1066 AD), when the language was influenced to an even greater extent by the Norman-French speaking Normans.
 - (4) Example of Old English: Hwæt! Wē Gār-Dena in geārdagum, þēodcyninga, þrym gefrūnon, hū ðā æþelingas ellen fremedon. Oft Scyld Scēfing sceaþena þrēatum, monegum mægþum, meodosetla oftēah, egsode eorlas. Syððan ærest wearð fēasceaft funden, hē þæs frōfre gebād, wēox under wolcnum, weorðmyndum þāh oðþæt him æghwylc þāra ymbsittendra ofer hronrāde hýran scolde, gomban gyldan. Þæt wæs gōd cyning!
 - b. Middle English—Approximately 14th Century
 - (1) Example: From The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer, 14th century
 - (2) Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote The droghte of March hath perced to the roote And bathed every veyne in swich licour, Of which vertu engendred is the flour
 - c. Early Modern English—Approximately 17th Century
 - (1) Example: From Paradise Lost by John Milton, 1667

(2) Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste Brought death into the world, and all our woe, With loss of Eden, till one greater Man Restore us, and regain the blissful seat, Sing, Heavenly Muse, that on the secret top

d. Modern English—Approximately 19th Century

(1) Example: Taken from *Oliver Twist*, 1838, by Charles Dickens

(2) The evening arrived: the boys took their places; the master in his cook's uniform stationed himself at the copper; his pauper assistants ranged themselves behind him; the gruel was served out, and a long grace was said over the short commons...

B. Why so many English Bibles?

1. When England—under King Henry VIII—broke away from the Roman Catholic Church (1534), the way for English Bibles was finally paved.
2. These new English Bibles came directly from the Traditional Text line and were good Bibles, some better than others, with the King James Version being the best.
3. The early English versions are seen for what they were, forerunners of the perfect Word of God, the King James Bible. Hence, the pre-King James English translations can be viewed as friends, but not the inerrant Word of God.
4. We must keep in mind that the early English translations were unstable because they were written at a time when the English language was unstable and changing radically. The English language was going through a shift in pronunciation; grammar was also changing due to influence from other languages; and sentence structure was also changing.
5. The English language has remained stable since the publication of the King James Version in 1611.
6. Also keep in mind that the early English translations were a “one man” or “one group” translation. Tyndale, Coverdale, Matthew’s, and Taverner’s were a “one man” translation. Then there was the “one group” translations. The Great Bible and the Bishop’s Bible were done for the Church of England. The Geneva Bible was the property of the Puritans.
7. The King James Bible translators were a mixed group from both the Anglican (Church of England) Church and the Puritans. The presence of the Anglicans prevented the new translation from being just a warmed over Geneva and the presence of the Puritans prevented it from being another Bishop’s Bible with a different name.
8. While the early English translations were historic in attempting to give the English speaking world the Bible, none of these early versions were perfect. The King James Bible is superior to every one of them.

V. Tyndale’s Bible (1525)

- A. William Tyndale (1494-1536) translated the New Testament from the *Textus Receptus* in 1525. The Tyndale Bible (which was only the New Testament) became the first English Bible to be printed on a press.
- B. Because England was still under Roman Catholic rule, Bible translation was illegal. Therefore, Tyndale moved to Germany to print his Bibles and smuggled them back into England in sacks of corn and flour and bales of hay (some 3,000).

- C. Later, Tyndale returned to England, and in 1535 was arrested, and later strangled and burned at the stake (1536).
 - D. His final words were, “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.”
- Between 1535 and 1568 (33 years), a total of six English Bibles were published, each based on the Textus Receptus or another Bible which was based on the Textus Receptus.
- VI. Coverdale’s Bible (1535)
- A. Miles Coverdale (circa 1488-1569) was the first to print a complete English Bible (Old Testament and New Testament).
 - B. He relied on Tyndale for the New Testament.
- VII. Matthew’s Bible (1537)
- A. When Tyndale was arrested in 1535, he managed to pass the manuscripts of his unpublished Old Testament to his friend John Rogers (circa 1500-1555).
 - B. Rogers published a new Bible using the pseudonym Thomas Matthew, hence Matthew’s Bible. Sixty-five percent of Rogers’ Bible comes from Tyndale with the remaining 35% borrowed from Coverdale.
 - C. In 1535, during the reign of “Bloody Mary”, Rogers was placed under house arrest and later burned at the stake. Witnessing his death, were his wife and eleven children.
- VIII. Taverner’s Bible (1539)
- A. The Taverner’s Bible was a business venture by publisher Thomas Bertlelet. Because he needed a Bible that wasn’t exactly like Rogers’, he used a manuscript produced by Richard Taverner.
 - B. Taverner’s work was mostly a revision of the Matthew’s Bible.
- IX. Great Bible (1539)
- A. The Coverdale Bible and Matthew’s Bible—both endorsed by King Henry VIII—circulated in England, each with different terminology and phrasing.
 - B. Bishop’s in England felt the people needed one Bible. Instead of making the difficult choice between the Coverdale Bible and the Matthew’s Bible, a new translation was approved.
 - C. Miles Coverdale became the editor and used the Matthew’s Bible as the basis for the new version instead of his own.
- X. Geneva Bible (1557)
- A. Under the reign of “Bloody Mary”, a number of men fled from England to Geneva, Switzerland.
 - B. Among this number of refugees were William Whittingham, Miles Coverdale, and John Knox, who began at once to work on a new translation, which would become known as the Geneva Bible.
 - C. We will look at the Geneva Bible at another time in greater detail. In short, the Geneva Bible is a Presbyterian Bible.

- XI. Bishop's Bible (1568)
- A. In many ways, the Bishop's Bible was nothing more than a revision of the Great Bible, which was a revision of the Matthew's Bible, which was 65% Tyndale.
 - B. Translated by several bishops of the Church of England, the Bishop's Bible was intended to replace the Geneva Bible.
- XII. King James Version (1611)
- A. Now that the English language was at its highest peak, God would begin to translate His words into the English language.
 - B. In 1604, a Puritan scholar named Dr. John Reynolds suggested to King James I of England that a new translation of the Bible was needed.
 - C. King James met in Hampton Court (containing 1,000 rooms) on January 14, 16, and 18 in the year 1604. He compiled 54 translators and began the translation in the year 1604. Seven translators died by 1607, but the work continued.
 - D. The translators of the King James Bible had a better grasp and understanding of the original languages (Hebrew and Greek), enabling them to produce a Bible that was a faithful and more accurate translation of the very words inspired by the Holy Ghost.
 - E. The translators divided into six companies in three locations: Westminster, Oxford, and Cambridge. They examined each part 14 times.
 - F. King James was hated by the Vatican. Therefore, the Jesuit Robert Catesby got together a band of friends to kill King James and the Parliament. It was known as the "Gunpowder Plot".
 - G. Finally, in 1611 AD we had the perfect Words of God translated into the English language.

Conclusion: Since 1880, over 200 English versions of the Bible have been published. However, all of these are corrupt. They attack the deity of Jesus Christ and his blood atonement.