How We Got the Bible

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# “My Words Will Not Pas Away”

## Introduction

Tracing the Bible down through the centuries presents the human side of how we got the Bible. From a different standpoint, the story of how we go the Bible begins and ends with God. God is Light, the Source of how we got the Bible leads us to the throne of God.

In Mark 13:31 Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” Here Jesus makes two claims. First, he claims that his words are divine: the world will pass away but his words will not. Therefore, his words are not from the world. Second, because his words are divine, Jesus claims that his words will stand forever.

## “My Word”

The claim made by Jesus for his words, that they are divine, is the claim that the Bible as a whole makes for itself. In 2 Tim. 3:16-17, the Apostle Paul wrote, “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.” The word *Scripture* is referring to the canonical writings of the Old Testament. It was Paul’s belief that the Old Testament writings had come from God, that they were literally God-breathed.

Read: 2 Peter 1:19-21

The reading affirms that the Old Testament is of divine origin.

What about the divine inspiration of the New Testament?

* Matt. 5:27-48 – We find that the Lord often contrasted his teaching with Moses’ law leaving us an unavoidable impression that a person greater than Moses had come.
* Matt. 16:19, 18:18, John 20:21-23 – The chosen Apostles were endowed with authority that whatever they required on earth became a requirement in heaven.
* 1 Cor. 14:37, 1 Thess. 2:13 – What the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinth was expected to be “a command of the Lord.”

The claims of the Bible plus the contents of the Bible equal a convincing case for the Bible as the inspired Word of God.

## “Will Not Pass Away”

Jesus promised that his words would not pass away. Viewing the situation in the twenty-first century, many evidences can be observed which show that the Lord is preserving his Word.

1. The quantity of materials available on the Bible text.
   1. 20,000 textual documents
   2. 5,300 alone are manuscripts of the New Testament
   3. In contrast to Greek Roman writings:
      1. Thucydides written in 400 B.C. based on 8 manuscripts
      2. Tacitus written in 100 A.D. based on 2 manuscripts
2. The quality of materials available on the Bible text. Information on the Bible text is not only abundant but reliable.
   1. Both the Vatican and Sinaitic Manuscripts are only about 2 centuries removed from the close of the apostolic age.
   2. In contrast to the Greek Roman writings:
      1. The 2 manuscript of Tacitus’ work are of late day one from the 9th century and the other from the 11th.
      2. None of the manuscripts of Thucydides, except for fragments, date any earlier and are 1,300 years later than the date of their original composition, yet they are accepted.

The New Testament text rests on manuscripts that are very near to the date of their original composition whereas these examples do not.

## Summary of Chapters

Chapter 1 – For the history of the Bible the most important writing materials are leather, papyrus, and parchment or vellum. Leather was principally used in the Old Testament period, while the New Testament books were undoubtedly first penned on papyrus. About the fourth century A.D. papyrus was replaced by parchment, with the result that practically all the New Testament manuscripts today are inscribed on vellum or parchment.

Chapter 2 – Our Bible is an amazing collection of books. The various books of the Bible often have been differently but logically arranged. The Bible was originally written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The New Testament was written in Greek, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, with some section in Aramaic.

Chapter 3 – Manuscripts of the New Testament are of two classes: uncials and cursives or minuscules. Minuscules are those written in small letters, while uncials are those found in large, capital letters. Of the two, the uncials are earlier and are the more important as authorities on the New Testament text. The three famous uncials are the Vatican, the Sinaitic, and the Alexandrian Manuscripts.

Chapter 4 – Among the famous uncials the Sinaitic Manuscript deserves special attention. Found by Constantin Tischendorf, it remains of the great interest because of its exciting discovery and publication.

Chapter 5 – Two other important uncial Manuscripts are Codex Ephraem and Codex Bezae. Generally speaking, New Testament manuscripts may be divided into three types of text: Alexandrian, Western, and Byzantine.

Chapter 6 – Ancient version of the New Testament add welcomed information on the text. Three version are very early and are especially noteworthy: the Syriac, the Latin, and the Coptic (Egyptian). It was Jerome who gave us the Latin Vulgate, which became the standard Bible in Western Europe, and from it the earliest English translations were made.

Chapter 7 – Among the many Latin manuscripts that have survived, three stand out above all others. Codex Amiatinus is a huge Latin Bible that has an excellent text of the Vulgate. The Lindisfarne Gospels and the Book of Kells are wondrous manuscripts that are often described as the most beautiful books in the world.

Chapter 8 – It was inevitable that transcription mistakes would appear in the production of copies. The task of textual criticism is to detect these mistakes and mark them off from the pure text. With a wealth of information at hand and following rather exact principles, the textual critic is able to do this with a high degree of precision.

Chapter 9 – Textual variants are of different types and degrees of importance. Most variants are obvious slips made by the scribe and present no problem. Others are of no consequences to our present text because they are not found in the most reliable manuscripts. Some represent substantial variation, but in this number no unique Biblical teaching or divine command is involved.

Chapter 10 – Our present New Testament text is a restored or reconstructed Greek text. Westcott and Hort, drawing on the work of their predecessors, are largely responsible for this reconstruction.

Chapter 11 – The sands of Egypt have revealed a number of Biblical papyri, some of which predate the Vatican and Sinaitic Manuscripts by 150 years. Because of their early dates, these papyri are extremely valuable and contribute significantly to the solid foundation on which our modern text is based.

Chapter 12 – The work of the Massoretes and other early Jewish scribes has resulted in a carefully copied edition of the Old Testament text. The recently discovered Dead Sea Scrolls, especially the two Isaiah scrolls, give unquestioned support to the reliability of our accepted Old Testament text.

Chapter 13 – Ancient version of the Old Testament play an important role as witnesses to the text. The Septuagint, the Aramaic Targums, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac, and Jerome’s Latin Vulgate remain of great value.

Chapter 14 – The term canon applies to those books that are included in the Bibles as authoritative Scripture. Separate books became a part of the canon gradually. Much clear-cut and indisputable evidence exist as to which books were and were not counted as Scripture.

Chapter 15 – The “Apocrypha” usually refers to a group of about fifteen books not included in our Old Testament. The Apocrypha represents different type so literature: (1) historical, (2) legendary, (3) prophetic, and (4) ethical/devotional. Many sound reasons can be given for not including these books in our Bibles, the chief reason being that they have never been accepted in the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament.

Chapter 16 – William Tyndale is the true father of the English Bible. He was the first to translate the New Testament in English based on Greek text. He himself suffered martyrdom, but his ambition to put the Bible in the hands of the people lived on, eventually resulting in the appearance of the illustrious King James Version.

Chapter 17 – Increasing knowledge of the Bible text and related matters made it necessary to revise the King James translation. The main revisions are the American Standard, the Revised Standard, and the New Revised Standard Version. Each of these translations has its faults, but each also has its great advantages. Other translations have made their appearance, including the well-accepted New International Version. Besides their readability, the most important advantage of recent translation is that they are based on early manuscripts and this stand closer to the original inspired message.

## Conclusion

In the end, it is comforting and reassuring to know that Jesus’ words will not pass away. This promise has been tested by centuries and has not failed. “The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord abides forever” (1 Peter 1:24-25)