

# THE TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

## “He explained the things concerning Himself”

### Key question

How did our Bible come to us?

### Key text

Luke24:27

“And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

### A. THE PRE-SCRIPTURE PERIOD

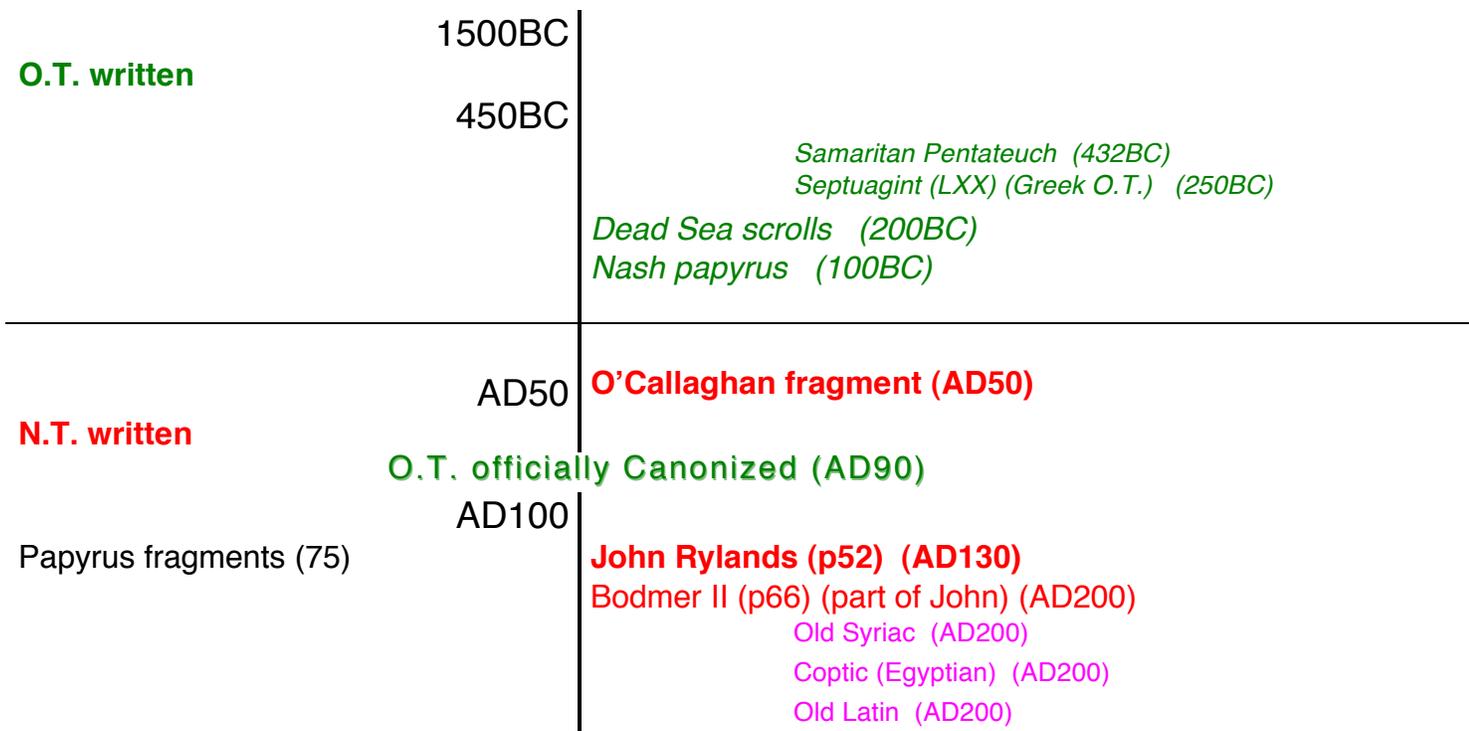
1. **KERYGMA** (oral tradition) NOTE: Early sermons in Acts emphasized 6 points:
  - a. The age of fulfillment has come.
  - b. This has taken place in Jesus Christ.
  - c. Christ is exalted to the right hand of God.
  - d. The Holy Spirit is a sign of this.
  - e. The return of Christ will end this age.
  - f. All people are to repent and believe.
2. **TESTIMONIA** (written accounts)
  - a. Old Testament
    1. The **Hebrew** Text. - The need for a standardized Hebrew Bible led the Massorettes (AD500-1000 and who were descendents of the scribes of Jesus day) to develop the Massoretic Text (MT) dating from about 920AD. They introduced the vowel pointing system that we have today and also the text that represents the best Hebrew tradition of the OT. It is the text that the Jewish community uses today.
    2. The **Septuagint** (LXX) a Greek translation of the Hebrew Text made in Alexandria Egypt about 200BC. Tradition (the letter of Aristeas) tells the story of 72 Hebrew scribes making the translation in 72 days, The LXX is often quoted by NT writers and frequently differs from the original Hebrew Text. The order and number of books in the LXX differs from the original Hebrew. The Protestant Bible follows the ordering of the LXX's books and the content of the Hebrew Bible (which excludes the apocrypha).

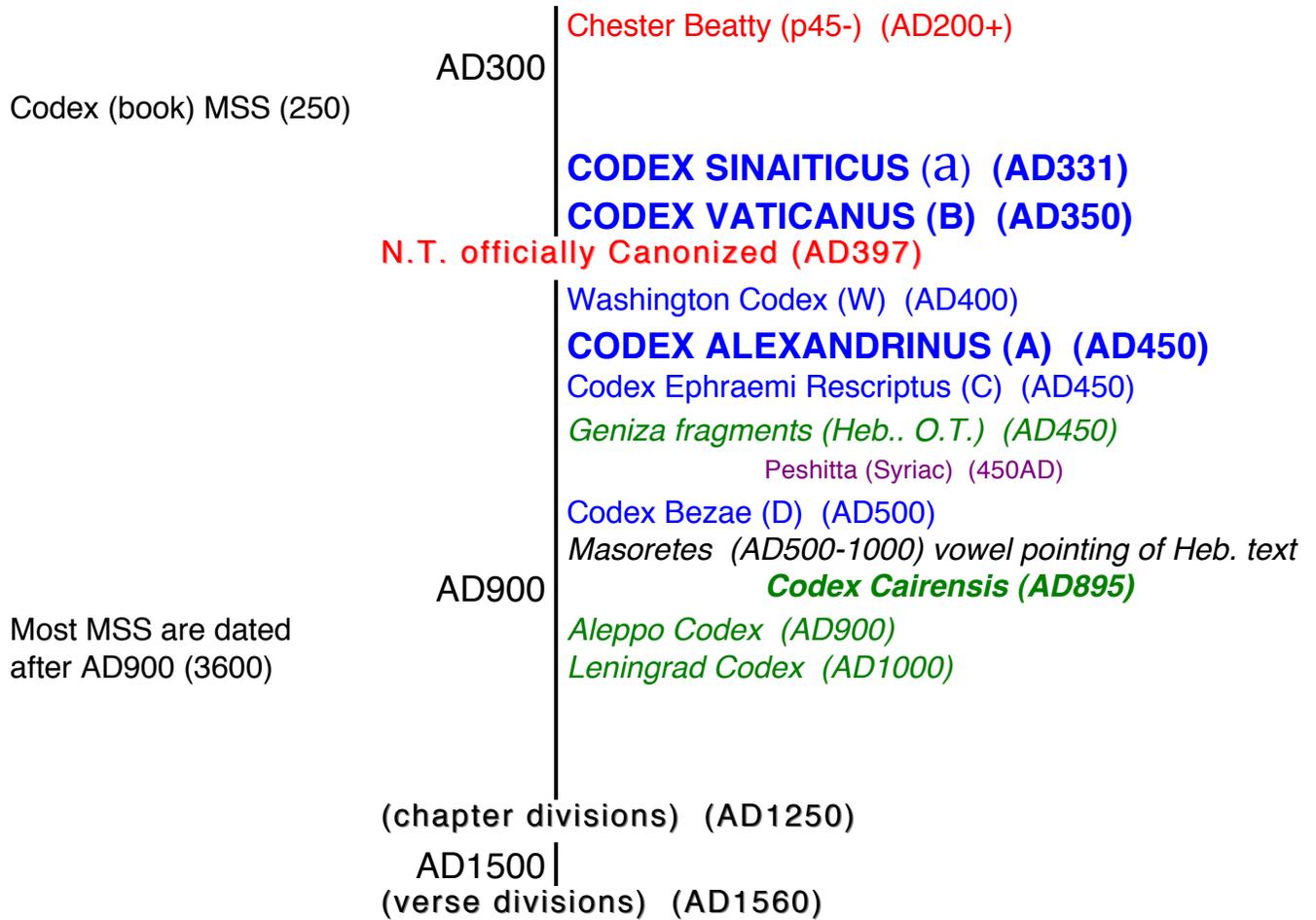
- 3. The threefold catalog of sacred writings (OT) is found prior to 150B.C. but was not formally canonized until AD90 at Jamnia. This may have been in response to the growing presence of Christian Scriptures and the destruction of the Temple.
- b. Other sources – unknown to us today.
- 3. **LOGIA (Q)** (sayings of Jesus)
  - a. It is assumed that popular sayings (proverbs, stories, etc.) of Jesus were circulated among the churches before the text of the Gospels was written.
  - b. Acts 20:35 “---remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’”
  - c. “Q” is a hypothetical source for which there is no historical support. We have no way of knowing if such a collection of sayings ever existed.

**B. THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS (autographa)**

- 1. The earliest copies go back to the 1st. century but most of the 5700 Greek manuscripts that we have are dated after the 4th century. About 10% of these manuscripts come from the first millennium. Through the first three centuries we have nearly fifty manuscripts in Greek alone.
  - a. Note that by comparison, next to the New Testament, the greatest amount of ancient manuscript testimony is of Homer’s *Iliad*, which was the bible of the ancient Greeks. There are fewer than 650 Greek manuscripts of the *Iliad* today.
  - b. The oldest fragment of the N.T. is a part if the gospel of John and is dated about AD130.
  - c. All told, there are more than one million quotations of the New Testament in the writings of the early church Fathers. This is enough to replicate the bulk of the New Testament.

**THE MOST IMPORTANT MANUSCRIPTS OF THE BIBLE**





**Code:**

**Green = OT, Red = NT**

*Italics* = Old Testament documents;

Offset to right = Translations of Greek or Hebrew texts;

**Blue** = most significant manuscripts;

**Caps** = Primary manuscript source for our Bible.

- **Codex Sinaiticus** - this 4th cent. copy of the Bible was found by Tischendorf in 1844 and 1859 at the Monastery of St Catharine on Mt. Sinai. It contains all the New Testament and most of the Old Testament, and parts of the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas. It is in the British Museum, London.
  - **Codex Vaticanus** - this fine vellum document contains the whole Bible except for Gen.1-46, Psalms 106-138, and Hebrews 9:14 to the end of the New Testament. It is the oldest and best extant Septuagint manuscript. It was known to be in the Vatican library as early as 1481.
  - **Codex Alexandrinus** - Only 10 leaves are missing from the Old Testament and 30 are missing from the New in this manuscript used by Erasmus for the first printed Greek New Testament in 1516. It is now in the British Museum.
2. Many of the Apostles' letters were circulated as authoritative documents (Eph.1:1, I Thess.5:27, II Pet.3:15-16)
- a. Col.4:16 "And when this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of Laodicea."

- b. We have no original documents because:
  1. They were heavily used and wore out.
  2. They were subject to confiscation and destroyed by those who wanted to persecute the church.

### C. **THE EARLY PERIOD (AD50-AD170)**

1. **The principle of canonization is seen in the New Testament.**
  - a. The fact that Jesus accepted the Hebrew Scriptures as authoritative was enough evidence for his followers to also receive the O.T. canon.
  - b. Eph.2:20 “*built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets*” (Whom Christ had promised to guide unto “*all the trust*” - Jn.16:13)
  - c. Acts 2:42 “*the apostles teaching*” was important for the early church.
  - d. Jn.20:30 “*many other signs therefore Jesus also performed ... which are not written in this book*” - indicates a selective process on the part of John.
  - e. Col.4:16 “*When this letter is read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea*” - indicates that some documents had a broad distribution.
  - f. II Pet.3:15-16 indicates that Paul’s letters were viewed as authoritative with “*the rest of Scripture*”.
2. **Forces that led to the formation of the Canon (an authoritative collection of documents).**
  - a. The existence of the Old Testament canon.
    - The Hebrew canon was (for the most part) complete and generally accepted before the time of Jesus but was officially ratified at the council of Jamnia 90CE.
    - The Massorites 700-900CE consolidated the Hebrew text used today and added vowel pointing to solidify common pronunciation of the language of the O.T.
    - The Leningrad Codex (L) 1000CE is the Massoretic Text (MT) that is the basis for Kittel & Kahle’s *Biblia Hebraica* (BHK) used by students today.
  - b. The intrinsic value of the message the documents carried.
  - c. Need for public worship and reading.
  - d. Controversial documents and teachings. Marcion (130) rejected any notion of Hebrew tradition (OT) and Jesus’ suffering and humanity. In reaction to his popular heresy the church moved toward a recognized canon.
  - e. Persecution.
3. **Hindrances to speedy formation of the canon:**
  - a. Poor communication.
  - b. A preference for oral testimony – Jesus commanded his followers to preach (not to write).
  - c. The presence of the Apostles.
  - d. Expectations of Christ’s early return.
4. **The criteria for recognition or the “earmarks of inspiration”** Note: Canonicity is the recognition of books that are authoritative because God inspired them.
  - a. Did the writing convey the **teaching of Jesus** (whose words were authoritative)?

- b. Was it written by a **man of God with first hand knowledge (eye witness)** - usually an apostle, prophet, or close associate?
- c. Was it **orthodox**? Did it speak the truth (as already established)?
- d. Did the writings come with **power** (effect on people’s lives)?
- e. Was it **accepted by God’s people** in each of the geographical centers of the church? (Rome; Byzantium; Antioch; Caesarea; Alexandria)
- f. The Roman Catholic views the Canon contrasted with the Protestant view.

The Roman Catholic view	The Protestant view
The church is Determiner of Canon	The church is Discoverer of Canon
The church is Mother of Canon	The church is Child of Canon
The church is Magistrate of Canon	The church is Minister of Canon
The church is Regulator of Canon	The church is Recognizer of Canon
The church is Judge of Canon	The church is witness of Canon
The church is Master of Canon	The church is Servant of Canon

5. **THE UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTED BOOKS** (homologoumena)

- a. The first known instance in which apostolic writings were accorded scriptural stature occurred in the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. when the gnostic teacher Basilides appealed to the Gospels of Mathew, Luke, and John, as well as to certain Pauline epistles, as “proof-texts” for his arguments.
- b. About the same time, church leaders began to cite the Gospels and epistles alongside Hebrew Scriptures when trying to settle internal disputes.
- c. 20 of the present 27 were so accepted quite early (within a 100 years after they were written).
- d. Our present New Testament canon was fixed in principle by 150AD with only one book not being mentioned.

6. **THE DISPUTED BOOKS** (antilegomena)

- a. **HEBREWS** - uncertainty of authorship.
- b. **JAMES** - seemed to be in conflict with Galatians & Romans
- c. **II PETER** - seemed to be so different from I Peter that Peter could not have written it.
- d. **II & III JOHN** - their private nature and limited circulation put them in question.
- e. **JUDE** - suspect because it quotes from no canonical sources (Enoch 1:9 in vs. 14-15).
- f. **REVELATION** - its teaching of the millennium was the point of controversy.

7. **THE REJECTED BOOKS** (pseudepigrapha or “false writings”)

- a. By the 9th century there were about 280 such books identified.
  - 1. There is much talk these days about lost books of the Bible. The “lost books” were never lost. They were known by the Jews in Old Testament times and the Christians of the New Testament times and were never considered scripture. They weren’t lost nor were they removed. They were never in the Bible in the first place.

2. The additional books were not included in the Bible for several reasons. They lacked apostolic or prophetic authorship, they did not claim to be the Word of God; they contain unbiblical concepts such as prayer for the dead in 2 Macc. 12:45-46; or have some serious historical inaccuracies.
3. Nevertheless, the Roman Catholic church has added certain books to the canon of scripture. In 1546, largely due in response to the Reformation, the Roman Catholic church authorized several more books as scripture known as the apocrypha.

b. GOSPELS

1. **THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS** (collection of 114 sayings attributed to Jesus) It has a strong Gnostic flavor and was written to justify a sect. Didymus JudasThomas (the twin) may have been Jesus' half brother (Mk.6:3). This Gospel has been popularized recently as a new discovery although scholars have known of it for some time.
2. **THE INFANCY GOSPEL OF THOMAS** (stories of Jesus youth beginning at age five)
3. **THE GOSPEL OF PETER** (Jesus felt no pain when crucified and Mary remained a virgin)
4. **PROTEVANGELIUM OF JAMES** (devotion to Mary)
5. **THE GOSPEL OF THE HEBREWS** (Gnostic reference to the Holy Spirit as our mother)
6. **THE GOSPEL OF THE EGYPTIANS** (Gnostic)
7. **THE GOSPEL OF THE NAZARAEANS** (like the Synoptics)
8. **THE GOSPEL OF PHILIP** (Gnostic)
9. **THE BOOK OF THOMAS THE ATHLETE** (Gnostic)
10. **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATHIAS** (Gnostic)
11. **THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS** (Gnostic) This document is mentioned by Irenaeus (C.E. 180) and Epiphanius (C.E. 315-403). A copy of this book was recently discovered confirming what was known before only through secondary sources which referred to this Gospel. It tells the story of how Judas worked with Jesus to set up Jesus crucifixion. The story (like other Gnostic gospels) was rejected by the orthodox church.
12. **EPISTLE OF AN APOSTLE** (dialogue between Christ and the disciples after the resurrection)
13. **APOCRYPHON OF JOHN** (dialogue between the disciples and the Revealer)
14. **THE GOSPEL OF TRUTH** (Gnostic)
15. **THE GOSPEL OF THE EDIONITES** (Jesus was not God until His baptism)

c. ACTS

1. **ACTS OF JOHN**
2. **ACTS OF PETER**
3. **ACTS OF PAUL** (Here Paul is described as a short, bald man with a large nose and bowlegged.)
4. **ACTS OF ANDREW**
5. **ACTS OF THOMAS**
6. **THE CONTINUATION OF THE EARLY ACTS OF APOSTLES**
7. **LATER ACTS OF OTHER APOSTLES**

d. EPISTLES

1. **THE KERYGMA PETROU**
2. **THE KERYGMATA PETROU**
3. **THE EPISTLE TO THE LAODICEANS**
4. **THE APOCRYPHAL CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN SENECA AND PAUL**
5. **THE PSEUDO-TITUS EPISTLE**

e. **APOCALYPSES**

1. **THE ASCENSION OF ISAIAH**
2. **APOCALYPSE OF PETER**
3. **THE FIFTH AND SIXTH BOOKS OF ESRA**
4. **CHRISTIAN SIBYLLINES**
5. **THE BOOK OF ELCHASAI**
6. **APOCALYPSE OF PAUL**
7. **APOCALYPSE OF THOMAS**
8. **BOOK OF ENOCH** – This text composed of five books that perhaps date from the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. (the oldest copies we have are from the 16<sup>th</sup> cent.) depict details of Adam, Eve, and Noah. It was never widely accepted but was a part of the Ethiopian cannon. It was probably rejected because of its late date of origin and content. It was quoted in Jude 14 and by some of the early church fathers.

8. **BOOKS ACCEPTED BY SOME** (apocrypha)

- a. The word apocrypha means hidden. It is used in a general sense to describe a list of books written by Jews between 300 and 100 B.C. More specifically, it is used of the 7 additional books accepted by the Catholic church as being inspired.
- b. Many of these books were included in the Greek Septuagint (LXX) but not included in the Hebrew Bible.
- c. **THE BOOKS**
  1. **EPISTLE OF PSEUDO-BARNABAS** (similar to Hebrews but more mystical)
  2. **EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS** (quotes from Hebrews)
  3. **SECOND EPISTLE OF CLEMENT** (placed after Revelation)
  4. **SHEPHERD** (like “Pilgrim’s Progress”)
  5. **DIDACHE** (2nd century Christian theology)
  6. **ACTS OF PAUL & THECLA**
  7. **EPISTLE TO THE LAODICEANS**
  8. **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE HEBREWS**
  9. **EPISTLE OF POLYCARP TO THE PHILIPPIANS**
  10. **THE SEVEN EPISTLES OF IGNATIUS**
- d. Why they were not included.
  1. None of them enjoyed any more than a temporary or local recognition.
  2. Most of them never did have anything more than a semi canonical status.
  3. No major canon or church council included them.
  4. What acceptance they did have was often because they were attached as references in canonical books.

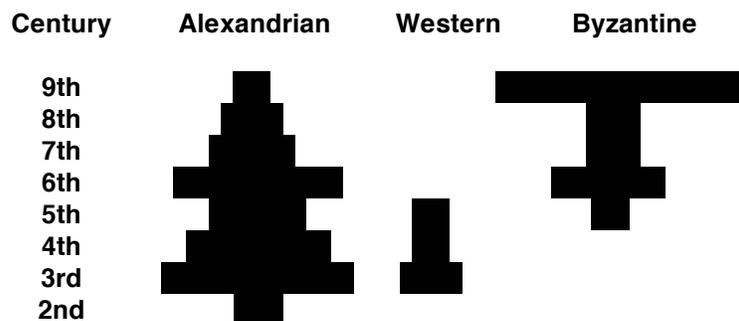
• **The reliability of the New Testament manuscripts.**

<b>Author / Book</b>	<b>Date written</b>	<b>Earliest copies</b>	<b>Time gap</b>	<b>No. of copies</b>	<b>Percent accuracy</b>
Hindu, <i>Mahabharata</i>	13 <sup>th</sup> cent.B.C.				90
Homer, <i>Iliad</i>	800 B.C.			643	95
Herodotus, <i>History</i>	480-425	A.D. 900	1,350 yrs.	8	?

	B.C.				
Thucydides, <i>History</i>	460-400 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,300 yrs.	8	?
Plato	400 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,300 yrs.	7	?
Demosthenes	300 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1,400 yrs.	200	?
Caesar, <i>Gallic Wars</i>	100-44 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,000 yrs.	10	?
Livy, <i>History of Rome</i>	59 B.C. – A.D. 17	4 <sup>th</sup> cent. (mostly 10 <sup>th</sup> cent.)	400 yrs. 1,000 yrs.	1 partial 19 copies	?
Tacitus, <i>Annals</i>	A.D. 100	A.D. 1,100	1,000 yrs.	20	?
Pliny Secundus, <i>Natural History</i>	A.D. 61-113	850	750 yrs.	7	?
<b><i>New Testament</i></b>	<b>A.D. 50-100</b>	<b>114 (fragments)</b>	<b>50 yrs.</b>		
		<b>200 (books)</b>	<b>100 yrs.</b>		
		<b>250 (most of N.T.)</b>	<b>150 yrs.</b>		
		<b>325 (complete N.T.)</b>	<b>225 yrs.</b>	<b>5,366</b>	<b>99</b>

**E. THE LATER PERIOD (AD1500 - AD1900)**

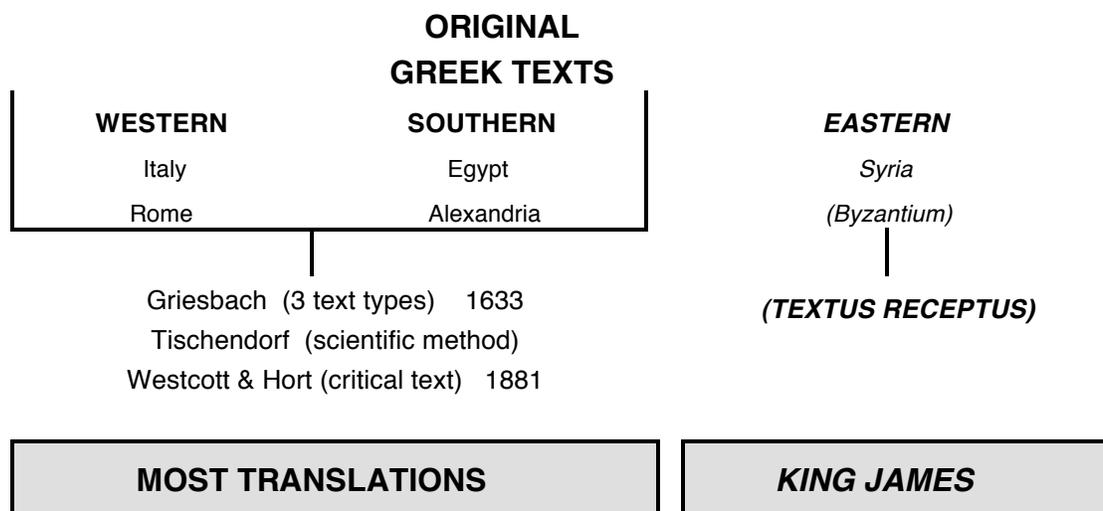
1. There are two types of Greek text that are used as the basis of the English New Testament.
  - a. The majority text or **Textus Receptus** was used for the King James or Authorized version.
  - b. The **Critical Text** or Westcott & Hort text, was used in nearly all other translations. When Westcott and Hort developed their theory of textual criticism, only one papyrus manuscript was known to them. Since that time almost 100 have been discovered. More than fifty of these came from before the middle of the fourth century. Yet not one belongs to the majority text. The Westcott-Hort theory, with its many flaws (which all textual critics today acknowledge), was apparently still right on its basic tenet: the Byzantine text type - or majority text - did not exist in the first three centuries. The evidence can be visualized as follows, with the width of the horizontal bars indicating the relative number of extant manuscripts from each century.



Note:

- The **Alexandrian text** came from the area around Alexandria, Egypt. Because of the dry climate these are among the oldest texts that we have. Codex Sinaiticus (a), Codex Vaticanus (B), and Alexandrinus (A) are examples.

- The **Western text** circulated in Italy, Gaul (France), and North Africa. It frequently used paraphrases. Codex Bezae (D) is an example.
  - The **Byzantine text** (which was the sole basis for the Textus Receptus) was the dominant text in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. Most Greek manuscripts of the New Testament are Byzantine texts. This is why it is called the “majority text.” These texts however were not as old as other texts.
- c. “The proportion of words virtually accepted on all hands as raised above doubt is very great; not less, on a rough computation, than 7/8 of the whole. The remaining 1/8, therefore, formed in great part by changes of order and other comparative trivialities, constitutes the whole area of criticism. The words in our opinion still subject to doubt only make up about 1/60 of the whole N.T. Substantial variation is but a small fraction of the whole residuary variation, and can hardly form more than 1/1000 part of the entire text.” (F.J.A. Hort, *The N.T. in the Original Text*)
- d. Some examples:
1. **Mark 16:9-20** does not appear in the best 4th century MSS but only in 5th century documents.
  2. **Jn.7:53-8:11** does not appear in the best MSS of John but probably does represent an accurate oral tradition.
  3. **I Jn.5:7** in the King James Version includes material that has no MSS authority earlier than the 16th Cent.. “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.” (Note also Jn.1:18, I Tim.2:7, Acts 8:37, Mk.9:44,46, 11:26)
2. Their story is best told with a chart.



**F. What are we to make of the Da Vinci Code?**

**1. The Serpent and the Code**

- a. In Genesis 3 we find Satan tempting Eve with the following lies.
  - Your understanding of the story of God and his Word is a cover for the truth that leaves you hopeless and on your own.
  - The truth has been hidden from you and is exposed by my insights.
- b. Dan Brown’s novel the *Da Vinci Code* follows the same story line.

## 2. **Breaking *The Da Vinci Code*** By Collin Hansen (Christian History & Biography Nov.7, 2003)

Perhaps you've heard of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*. This fictional thriller has captured the coveted number one sales ranking at Amazon.com, camped out for 32 weeks on the *New York Times* Best-Seller List, and inspired a one-hour ABC News special. Along the way, it has sparked debates about the legitimacy of Western and Christian history.

While the ABC News feature focused on Brown's fascination with an alleged marriage between Jesus and Mary Magdalene, *The Da Vinci Code* contains many more (equally dubious) claims about Christianity's historic origins and theological development. The central claim Brown's novel makes about Christianity is that "almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is *false*." Why? Because of a single meeting of bishops in 325, at the city of Nicea in modern-day Turkey. There, argues Brown, church leaders who wanted to consolidate their power base (he calls this, anachronistically, "the Vatican" or "the Roman Catholic church") created a divine Christ and an infallible Scripture—both of them novelties that had never before existed among Christians.

### Watershed at Nicea

Brown is right about one thing (and not much more). In the course of Christian history, few events loom larger than the Council of Nicea in 325. When the newly converted Roman Emperor Constantine called bishops from around the world to present-day Turkey, the church had reached a theological crossroads.

Led by an Alexandrian theologian named Arius, one school of thought argued that Jesus had undoubtedly been a remarkable leader, but he was not God in flesh. Arius proved an expert logician and master of extracting biblical proof texts that seemingly illustrated differences between Jesus and God, such as John 14:28: "the Father is greater than I." In essence, Arius argued that Jesus of Nazareth could not possibly share God the Father's unique divinity.

In *The Da Vinci Code*, Brown apparently adopts Arius as his representative for all pre-Nicene Christianity. Referring to the Council of Nicea, Brown claims that "until *that* moment in history, Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet ... a great and powerful man, but a *man* nonetheless."

In reality, early Christians overwhelmingly worshipped Jesus Christ as their risen Savior and Lord. Before the church adopted comprehensive doctrinal creeds, early Christian leaders developed a set of instructional summaries of belief, termed the "Rule" or "Canon" of Faith, which affirmed this truth. To take one example, the canon of prominent second-century bishop Irenaeus took its cue from 1 Corinthians 8:6: "Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ."

The term used here—Lord, *Kyrios*—deserves a bit more attention. *Kyrios* was used by the Greeks to denote divinity (though sometimes also, it is true, as a simple honorific). In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the *Septuagint*, pre-dating Christ), this term became the preferred substitution for "Jahweh," the holy name of God. The Romans also used it to denote the divinity of their emperor, and the first-century Jewish writer Josephus tells us that the Jews refused to use it of the emperor for precisely this reason: only God himself was *kyrios*.

The Christians took over this usage of *kyrios* and applied it to Jesus, from the earliest days of the church. They did so not only in Scripture itself (which Brown argues was doctored after Nicea), but in the earliest extra-canonical Christian book, the *Didache*, which scholars agree

was written no later than the late 100s. In this book, the earliest Aramaic-speaking Christians refer to Jesus as Lord.

In addition, pre-Nicene Christians acknowledged Jesus's divinity by petitioning God the Father in Christ's name. Church leaders, including Justin Martyr, a second-century luminary and the first great church apologist, baptized in the name of the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—thereby acknowledging the equality of the one Lord's three distinct persons.

The Council of Nicea did not entirely end the controversy over Arius's teachings, nor did the gathering impose a foreign doctrine of Christ's divinity on the church. The participating bishops merely affirmed the historic and standard Christian beliefs, erecting a united front against future efforts to dilute Christ's gift of salvation.

### **"Fax from Heaven"?**

With the Bible playing a central role in Christianity, the question of Scripture's historic validity bears tremendous implications. Brown claims that Constantine commissioned and bankrolled a staff to manipulate existing texts and thereby divinize the human Christ.

Yet for a number of reasons, Brown's speculations fall flat. Brown correctly points out that "the Bible did not arrive by fax from heaven." Indeed, the Bible's composition and consolidation may appear a bit too human for the comfort of some Christians. But Brown overlooks the fact that the human process of canonization had progressed for centuries before Nicea, resulting in a nearly complete canon of Scripture before Nicea or even Constantine's legalization of Christianity in 313.

Ironically, the process of collecting and consolidating Scripture was launched when a rival sect produced its own quasi-biblical canon. Around 140 a Gnostic leader named Marcion began spreading a theory that the New and Old Testaments didn't share the same God. Marcion argued that the Old Testament's God represented law and wrath while the New Testament's God, represented by Christ, exemplified love. As a result Marcion rejected the Old Testament and the most overtly Jewish New Testament writings, including Matthew, Mark, Acts, and Hebrews. He manipulated other books to downplay their Jewish tendencies. Though in 144 the church in Rome declared his views heretical, Marcion's teaching sparked a new cult. Challenged by Marcion's threat, church leaders began to consider earnestly their own views on a definitive list of Scriptural books including both the Old and New Testaments.

Another rival theology nudged the church toward consolidating the New Testament. During the mid- to late-second century, a man from Asia Minor named Montanus boasted of receiving a revelation from God about an impending apocalypse. The four Gospels and Paul's epistles achieved wide circulation and largely unquestioned authority within the early church but hadn't yet been collected in a single authoritative book. Montanus saw in this fact an opportunity to spread his message, by claiming authoritative status for his new revelation. Church leaders met the challenge around 190 and circulated a definitive list of apostolic writings that is today called the Muratorian Canon, after its modern discoverer. The Muratorian Canon bears striking resemblance to today's New Testament but includes two books, Revelation of Peter and Wisdom of Solomon, which were later excluded from the canon.

By the time of Nicea, church leaders debated the legitimacy of only a few books that we accept today, chief among them Hebrews and Revelation, because their authorship remained in doubt. In fact, authorship was the most important consideration for those who worked to solidify the canon. Early church leaders considered letters and eyewitness accounts

authoritative and binding only if they were written by an apostle or close disciple of an apostle. This way they could be assured of the documents' reliability. As pastors and preachers, they also observed which books did in fact build up the church—a good sign, they felt, that such books were inspired Scripture. The results speak for themselves: the books of today's Bible have allowed Christianity to spread, flourish, and endure worldwide.

Though unoriginal in its allegations, *The Da Vinci Code* proves that some misguided theories never entirely fade away. They just reappear periodically in a different disguise. Brown's claims resemble those of Arius and his numerous heirs throughout history, who have contradicted the united testimony of the apostles and the early church they built. Those witnesses have always attested that Jesus Christ was and remains God himself. It didn't take an ancient council to make this true. And the pseudohistorical claims of a modern novel can't make it false.

### 3. The following facts should be noted with respect to the *The Da Vinci Code*.

- The Dead Sea Scrolls were not early “Christian” documents - but were rather copies of Old Testament books by a Jewish fringe group. They were found in 1947 (not the 1950's).
- The Nag Hammadi documents do not tell the Grail story at all; nor do they emphasize Jesus' human traits.
- Jesus' life was not “recorded by thousands of followers across the land.” He did not have thousands of followers, let alone literate ones.
- It is not true that eighty Gospels “were considered for the New Testament.”
- We have no idea about the lineage of Mary Magdalene; nothing connects her with the “house of Benjamin.”
- Not all of the Jewish men in the first century were married, but rather many chose to remain celibate.
- Gnostic gospels were late documents, which didn't have an enormous impact on Christian thought.
- The role of women in the early church was distinct from the cultural norms.
- Constantine didn't choose the four canonical gospels from a vast number of competing “gospels”.
- There is not a strand of historical evidence suggesting Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene.
- Nor did the church suppress “gospels” that told of a secret marriage.
- Jesus was considered divine from the earliest stages of Christianity - far earlier than the fourth century.
- There are not thousands or even hundreds or even dozens of documents, which suggest the New Testament isn't historically reliable. Those documents simply don't exist.
- The New Testament documents, which do exist, have withstood intense scholarly scrutiny. The “Q” document is not a surviving source being hid by the Vatican, nor is it a book allegedly written by Jesus himself. It is a hypothetical document that scholars posit as having been available to Matthew and Luke – principally a collection of the sayings of Jesus.

### G. The ordering of Biblical books.

<b>HEBREW OLD TESTAMENT ARRANGEMENT &amp; CLASSIFICATION</b>	<b>PROTESTANT OLD TESTAMENT ARRANGEMENT &amp; CLASSIFICATION</b>	<b>CATHOLIC OLD TESTAMENT ARRANGEMENT &amp; CLASSIFICATION</b>
<p>LAW (Torah)</p> <p>Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy</p>	<p>Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy</p> <p>LAW (Pentateuch)</p>	<p>Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy</p>
<p>PROPHETS (Nebhiim)</p> <p>Joshua Judges I Samuel II Samuel I Kings II Kings Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel Hosea Joel Amos</p> <p>Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk</p> <p>Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi</p>	<p>Joshua Judges Ruth I Samuel II Samuel I Kings II Kings I Chronicles II Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Esther</p> <p>HISTORY</p> <p>Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon</p> <p>POETRY and WISDOM</p> <p>Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel</p>	<p>Joshua Judges Ruth I Kings II Kings III Kings IV Kings I Paralipomenon II Paralipomenon Esdras-Nehemias <i>Tobias</i> <i>Judith</i> Esther</p> <p>Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Canticle of Canticles <i>Wisdom of Solomon</i> <i>Ecclesiasticus</i></p> <p>Isaias Jeremias Lamentations <i>Baruch</i> Ezechiel</p>
<p>THE WRITINGS (Kethubhim)</p> <p>Psalms Job Proverbs Ruth Song of Solomon Ecclesiastes Lamentations Esther Daniel Ezra Nehemiah I Chronicles II Chronicles</p>	<p>Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi</p> <p>MINOR PROPHETS</p>	<p>Daniel <i>Osee</i> Joel Amos Abdias Jonas Micheas Nahum Habacuc Sophonias Aggeus Zecharias Malachias <i>I Machabees</i> <i>II Machabees</i></p>

**Note the following concerning the books listed under the Hebrew OT:**

1. The books of “Former Prophets” are historical in content, and yet are classified under “Prophets.” The reason for this may be that their authors had the official status of a prophet, or, as F.F. Bruce holds, they reported events “to illustrate the great principles on which the prophets insisted.”
2. Each of the five “rolls” was read at an annual Jewish feast of commemoration, in this chronological order: Song of Songs at Passover (first month); Ruth at Feast of Weeks (Harvest) (third month); Lamentations at the anniversary of the destruction of Jerusalem (fifth month); Ecclesiastes at Tabernacles (seventh month); and Esther at Purim (twelfth month).
3. Chronicles appears last in the Hebrew Bible. This is why Jesus used the expression “from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah” (Luke 11:51) to sum up all the martyrs whose blood had been shed in OT times. Abel was the first and Zechariah was the last martyr appearing in this order of the Hebrew Bible.
4. The three fold division of the Hebrew Canon may be hinted at in Lk.24:44 where Jesus refers to “the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms”. The Prologue to Ecclesiasticus (132 B.C.) references a three-fold division.

**Note the following facts concerning the books listed under the Protestant OT:**

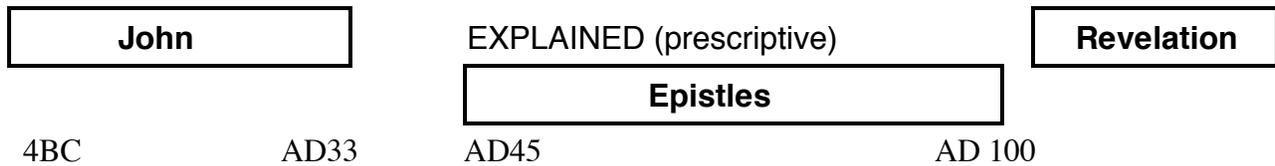
1. The first seventeen books chronologically record selected highlights of man’s history from creation to the marriage of Abraham (Gen. 1-11), and from the birth of the nation of Israel to its return to Canaan after the Babylonian Captivity (Gen. 12-Nehemiah). The section called History may be subdivided into these three groups:
  - a) Period of confederacy among the tribes: Joshua, Judges, Ruth
  - b) Rise and fall of the monarchy: I Samuel through 2 Chronicles
  - c) Captivity and return: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
2. The books of Law are so designated because of the prominence of God’s Law in the experience of Israel during those centuries. (The name *Pentateuch* comes from the Greek, meaning “five-fold vessel.” The name *Torah* is the Hebrew word for “Law.”)
3. The five books of Poetry are mainly reflections, hymns, dialogues, and maxims, directed to the reader’s inner life. They are classified as poetry because this is the prominent literary style of the books.
4. The distinction between major and minor books of prophecy is based only on length. Lamentations is in the major group because it could be considered as an appendix to Jeremiah.
5. All of the prophets ministered in the period of about 900 to 44 B.C. Most of their messages were directed to either Israel (Northern Kingdom) or Judah (Southern Kingdom), or to both. Chronologically, Malachi is the last OT voice to speak.

The historical scope of the New Testament

The Gospel

REVEALED  
(transitional)

<b>Matthew</b>	
<b>Mark</b>	APPLIED (descriptive)
<b>Luke</b>	<b>Acts</b>



The outline of the book of Acts

<b>“Jerusalem”</b> 1-7	<b>“Judea &amp; Samaria”</b> 8-12	<b>“The uttermost parts of the earth”</b> 13-28
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The relationship of Paul’s Epistles to Acts chapter 13-28

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Mission</b> 13-14	<b>Counsel</b> 15	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Mission</b> 16-18	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Imprisonment</b> 19-21	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Imprisonment</b> 22-28
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- |                  |                                 |                    |                           |
|------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Galatians</b> | <b>I &amp; II Thessalonians</b> | <b>Ephesians</b>   | <b>I &amp; II Timothy</b> |
|                  | <b>I &amp; II Corinthians</b>   | <b>Colossians</b>  | <b>Titus</b>              |
|                  | <b>Romans</b>                   | <b>Philemon</b>    |                           |
|                  |                                 | <b>Philippians</b> |                           |

H. **Which Translation Is Best?** (Daniel Wallace)

1. Some general comments:
  - a. First, you might think there is *no* hope of ever knowing what the Word of God really says. There are so many translations that read so differently! How can anyone who does not know Greek or Hebrew really know what the Bible says? I am personally convinced that the Holy Spirit is sovereign over even the worst translations. Even in extremely biased or sectarian translations are best, all the major doctrines can be found. And if you know which translations are best, then you will be much better off!
  - b. Second, one of the best safeguards you can follow is to stay away from the sectarian translations or those done by an individual. The New World Translation, by the Jehovah’s Witnesses, is the best known sectarian translation. Translations by individuals include Moffatt’s, Weymouth’s, J. B. Phillips, The Living Bible, Kenneth Wuest’s Expanded Translation, and the Berkley *New Testament*. To be sure, there is much merit in each of these--especially the last four. But the idiosyncrasies and theological biases of a translation are far more apparent when one man produces it.
  - c. Third, to the question “Which translation is best?” there can be no singular answer. I suggest that every Christian who is serious about studying the Bible own at least *two* translations. He should have *at least* one dynamic equivalence translation (or phrase-for-phrase) and one formal equivalence translation (that is, word-for-word translation). In fact, it would be good to have *two* dynamic equivalence translations--because in this type of translation, the translator is also the interpreter. If his interpretation is correct, it can only *clarify* the meaning of the text; if it is incorrect, then it only clarifies the interpretation of the translator!

## 2. Now, for the translations.

### **King James Version**

The King James Bible has with good reason been termed, “the noblest monument of English prose” (RSV preface). Above all its rivals, the King James Version has had the greatest impact in shaping the English language. It is a literary masterpiece. But, lest anyone wishes to revere it because it was “good enough for St. Paul,” or some such nonsense, we must remember that the King James Bible of today is not the King James of 1611. It has undergone three revisions, incorporating more than 100,000 changes! Further, there are over 300 words in the King James that no longer mean what they meant in 1611. If one wishes to use a Bible that follows the same Greek and Hebrew texts as the King James, I recommend the *New King James Version*.

### **Revised Standard Version**

The RSV was completed in 1952 and was intended to be, in part, a revision of the King James. Of course, it used the ancient MSS of the NT, resulting in the omission of several verses and words. But the wording was still archaic. The RSV attempts to be a word-for-word translation where possible. The NRSV follows the same principle of translation, though has now become more “gender-inclusive” in its approach. At times this is very helpful; at other times, it is misleading.

### **New American Standard**

The NASB is something of an evangelical counterpart to the RSV. It, too, was intended to be something of a revision of the King James. There are three major differences between the RSV and the NASB: first, the NASB is less archaic in its wording. Second, its translators were more conservative theologically than the RSV translators. Third, because of the translators’ desire to adhere as closely to the wording of the original, often this translation is stilted and wooden. Still, the NASB is probably the best *word-for-word* translation available today.

### **New English Bible**

The NEB was completed in 1971, after a quarter of a century of labor. It marks a new milestone in translation: it is not a revision, but a brand new translation. It is a phrase-for-phrase translation. Unfortunately, sometimes the biases of the translators creep into the text. The REB (Revised English Bible) follows the same pattern: excellent English, though not always faithful to the Greek and Hebrew.

### **New International Version**

The NIV was published in 1978. It may be considered a counterpart to the NEB. It is more a phrase-for-phrase translation than a word-for-word translation, and the scholars were generally more conservative than those who worked on the NEB. I personally consider it the best phrase-for-phrase translation available today. However, its major flaw is in its simplicity of language. The editors wanted to make sure it was easy to read. In achieving this goal, they often sacrificed accuracy (in particular, in the NT, sentences are shortened, subordination of thought is lost, conjunctions are deleted).