

HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE #1

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God has always disclosed His will to man. Without divine revelation, man would not know right from wrong or what God's will is for our life.

This lesson begins a series of articles on how we got the Bible, a process which can be broken down into six areas of study: 1) Revelation, 2) Inspiration, 3) Confirmation, 4) Dissemination, 5) Preservation, 6) Translation. The purpose of this study is to fortify our faith and increase our knowledge of how we have come to have God's Word in English today.

Here are some questions these articles will examine in detail:

- Is the Bible inspired?
- What is the nature of inspiration?
- How do we know the Bible is inspired?
- Has God's Word been accurately preserved down through the centuries to the present time?
- Has the Bible been reliably translated into English?
- Are there spiritually fatal dangers in modern versions?
- Which is the best version today in English?

If we do not demonstrate and maintain *verbal preservation* and *verbal translation*, then the Bible is essentially meaningless to us today. Let me say at the outset of these articles that:

- I am not affirming the **King James Version** is an absolutely perfect translation. I recognize that on occasion we must check the original language with the KJV for clarity and completeness of meaning.
- I am not opposed to the idea of a present-day attempt to translate the Bible.
- I am not affirming the KJV translators were perfect or inspired men.
- I am not saying it is a sin to own or even read and check what other translations say.

My long held studied view is that the Bible has been *miraculously given, providentially preserved, and accurately translated* into English. These articles will demonstrate that the King

James Version is STILL THE BEST IN ENGLISH today. Therefore, in this series of articles all quotations will be from the KJV.

REVELATION

God has always disclosed His will to man. The New Testament word translated "revelation" (*apokalupsis*) means "to uncover, unveil" (Vine's). Without divine revelation, man would not know right from wrong or what God's will is for our life. There has never been a time that man has not had revelation from God. The following examples show that revelation from God is clear and understandable, and that God always holds man accountable to His word:

Adam and Eve. God created the original pair, placed them in the garden, gave them everything they needed, including divine law. "*And the Lord God commanded the man...*" (Gen. 2:16-17). This is primitive verbal revelation.

Cain and Abel. After the fall, God continued to give verbal revelation to man. The example of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:1-8 indicates that worship has always been regulated by God. The fact that Abel offered "by faith" (as Hebrews 11:4 states) indicates that divine revelation was present and available because one cannot have faith in the absence of God's Word (Rom. 10:17).

Enoch. In Genesis 5:19-24, we have the brief account of Enoch who walked with God. Remarkably, the book of Jude (v.14) notes that he was a prophet (an inspired spokesman for God) and was the seventh from Adam. Jude verse 15 further shows that his prophetic utterances included warnings of the great Judgment Day.

Noah. Second Peter 2:5 declares that Noah was a preacher of righteousness. No doubt the striving of the Holy Spirit through this inspired man was an exhibition of God's longsuffering while the ark was being prepared (Gen. 6:1-3; 1 Peter 3:18-22).

Patriarchs. Abraham knew and kept "the way of the Lord" (Gen. 18:19). He could not have

known and kept something that was not known and made available to him. Abraham was a “prophet” and so were the other patriarchs (Gen. 20:7; Psa. 105:15).

The Gentile World Before Christ. Romans 1:18-32 is a discussion of the Gentile world before Christ all the way back to creation. It is a clear indication that divine revelation has been available to man from the beginning. Please note these phrases: “the wrath of God is *revealed* from heaven” (v.18), “...hold (hold down or hinder) the *truth*” (v.18), “...God hath *showed it* unto them” (v.19), “...when they *knew* God” (v.21), “...who *changed the truth* of God into a lie” (v.25), “...who *knowing the judgment* (ordinance) of God” (v.32). These phrases denote the availability of verbal revelation all the way back to the creation of man. Note also the long list of sins itemized in Romans 1:29-32. Clearly the Gentile world before Christ was accountable to divine law that condemned all these sins. Remember the great Bible principle: “*for where no law is, there is no transgression*” (Rom. 4:15). This patriarchal system of revelation, which started at creation, continued up until the household of Cornelius at which time the Gentile world became amenable to the New Testament law of Christ (Acts 10, 11).

Mosaical Period. The first written covenant or law from God was given to Old Testament Israel through the lawgiver and mediator (Moses) at the time of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. (We recognize the book of Job was an inspired document predating the Mosaical dispensation.) This written revelation continued through the Old Testament period through various prophets (Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, etc). The Old Testament Hebrew canon was the Bible Jesus used and quoted as the written Word of God (Matt. 4:1-11; 5:17-18; Luke 24:44). This Old Testament system of revelation was binding only upon the nation of Israel from Mt. Sinai until Jesus died on the cross and repealed it in order to establish His New Testament (Rom. 7:4; 2 Cor. 3:1-18; Eph. 2:14-6; Col. 2:14-16; Gal. 3:16-28; Heb. 10:9-10).

New Testament Period. Today, all people (Jews and Gentiles) are amenable to the New Testament revelation of Christ (Matt. 28:18-20; Heb. 9:15-17). The New Testament of Christ was revealed through four apostles (Matthew, John,

Peter, Paul) and four prophets (Mark, Luke, James, Jude). “*How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ). Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit...*” (Eph. 3:3-5).

It’s important to remember that from the beginning, God has always revealed His will to man, but that the New Testament of Christ is the final, complete, and exclusive disclosure from God (Heb. 1:1-2; Jude 3; John 16:13). There is no further revelation from God after the close of the New Testament revelation. “*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed*” (Gal. 1:6-9). This passage strikes down any possibility or claim for latter-day or present-day revelation from God (e.g. the Pope, the cults, Pentecostal preachers, etc). It indicates the New Testament Gospel, delivered in the apostolic period and placed in permanent written form in the books of the New Testament, is the full, complete, and final word from God.

On the Judgment Day, all humanity will be judged by the Word of God (Rev. 20:11-15; John 12:48; Psa. 96:13). However, people will be judged by the system of revelation under which they lived. All who have lived on this side of the cross will be judged by the Gospel. Old Testament Israel will be judged by the Law of Moses. The Gentiles who were outside of Israel, going all the way back to creation, will be judged by the light and revelation of God they had from Him.

Paul declares, “*we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth...*” (Rom. 2:2).

[For the next few months, this series will continue the study of “How We Got The Bible.” Lessons will include: The Inspir-

ation of the Bible, the Confirmation of the Bible, the Dissemination of the Bible, the Preservation of the Bible and the Translation of the Bible. This is an interesting and needed study on the subject because we are dealing with the Eternal Word of God. —Editor]

How We Got The Bible #2

INSPIRATION

The second major point in this study is **Biblical inspiration**. God has not only revealed His will, but inspired those who spoke it and wrote it. Three primary passages relate directly to the Bible's claim for inspiration. Perhaps the most familiar is 2 Timothy 3:16-17: *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."*

The phrase "inspiration of God" in this verse combines the Greek word *theos* (God) and *pneo* (to breathe), thus declaring that all scripture is "the breath of God." Therefore, every word in the Bible has been in-breathed by God.

The second passage to consider here is 2 Peter 1:20-21: *"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation. 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."* The context is a reference to the Old Testament canon but would apply to the Bible as a whole (in principle). The same Holy Spirit that inspired the Old Testament inspired the New Testament Gospel (1 Peter 1:12). The word "moved" translates from a Greek word which means "to bear or carry along." We see in this claim that the Scripture is not the product of the mind of man, but holy men spoke and wrote words as they were guided by the Holy Spirit.

A third passage (sometimes overlooked in this connection) is 1 Corinthians 2:9-16. Without citing the whole passage, we make these notations. Some ten times in this reference, the word "things" appears in the KJV. The "things of God"

are placed in contrast with the "things of man." The phrase "things of God" refers to the mind of God. In verse 9 we cannot naturally know (eye, ear, heart) the things of God (the mind of God). Verse 10 states God has revealed these things, i.e. His mind. Verse 13 is arguably the clearest claim for verbal (words) inspiration in the entire Bible – *"words...which the Holy Ghost teacheth."* In verses 14-16 there is a contrast, not between a lost person and a saved person, but between an inspired man (spiritual) and an uninspired man (natural). A careful analysis here shows: 1) man cannot know the mind of God through natural means; 2) man can only know the mind of God, and therefore the will of God, by divine revelation; 3) God has given this revelation through Paul and the other inspired writers of the Bible; and 4) this revelation is verbal in nature – words which the Spirit teaches.

When one surveys the Bible, he sees prolific claims for revelation and inspiration throughout:

- The Old Testament claims for itself to be inspired of God (Exodus 24:4; Jer. 1:9; Neh. 9:20,30; 2 Sam. 23:2),
- The New Testament claims for itself to be inspired of God (1 Cor. 14:37; Gal. 1:10-12; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Peter 3:15-16),
- The New Testament claims for Old Testament (2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:15-17),
- The Old Testament pre-authenticated the New Testament (Jer. 31:31-34),
- Christ's claims for the Old Testament (John 5:39; Luke 24:44; Matt. 23:35 (note: Jesus viewed the Old Testament as the voice of God – Matt. 19:4-6),
- Christ pre-authenticated the New Testament (John 14:26; 16:13).

These points clearly indicate that no matter where you go in the Bible, it is overflowing with claims for its own inspiration.

To further develop this, it is important that we understand this claim for inspiration extends to the very "words" of the Bible. The Bible does not claim "concept" or "thought" inspiration; it claims **verbal inspiration (words)**. Let me itemize some examples to consider:

- "And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do" (Exod. 4:15);

- “I will write upon these tables the words” (Exod. 34:1);
- “Write thou these words” (Exod. 34:27);
- “These are the words which the Lord hath commanded” (Exod. 35:1);
- “Moses went out, and told the people the words of the Lord” (Num. 11:24);
- “These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel” (Deut. 1:1);
- “that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29);
- “he read all the words of the law” (Josh. 8:34);
- “Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground” (1 Sam. 3:19);
- “to perform the words of this covenant” (2 Kings 23:3);
- “they obeyed the words of the Lord” (2 Chron. 11:4);
- “he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant” (2 Chron. 34:30);
- “then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel” (Ezra 9:4);
- “I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12);
- “the words of the Lord are pure words” (Psalm 12:6);
- “the entrance of thy words giveth light” (Psalm 119:130);
- “I have put my words in thy mouth” (Isa. 1:16);
- “I have put my words in thy mouth” (Jer. 1:9);
- “Thou shalt speak my words unto them” (Ezek. 2:7);
- “My words shall not pass away” (Matt. 24:35);
- “they remembered his words” (Luke 24:8);
- “He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God” (John 3:34);
- “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63);
- “not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth” (1 Cor. 2:13);
- “nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:6);
- “Hold fast the form of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13);

- “be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets” (2 Peter 3:2).

The above citations are nowhere near all that could have been noted. A profitable study by using a concordance would be to note the term “words” and read all of the verses that emphasize verbal inspiration. This point is crucial as we go through this study because the Bible not only claims *verbal inspiration*, as we will later see, it claims *verbal preservation*, thus necessitating a verbal and formal translation.

There are various **false theories of inspiration**. We will briefly note them here:

- 1) *Literary Inspiration*. This is the notion that the Bible is only inspired in the same sense as Milton, Keats or Shakespeare were inspired. The Bible would be mere human genius and carry no authoritative weight.
- 2) *Mechanical Dictation*. Some have suggested that the Bible writers took dictation. This method does not take into account the individuality of the writers. The words of the Bible are inspired as we have demonstrated above; however, the Holy Spirit guided, carried along, superintended, the writers within the framework of their individual vocabulary and style.
- 3) *Universal Inspiration*. This is the claim that all Christians are inspired by God. This would exclude special chosen agents of revelation such as the apostles and prophets and would effectively remove the necessity of the Bible since every Christian could write his own Bible.
- 4) *Thought or Concept Inspiration*. Some maintain that God merely gave Bible writers an inspired thought and left them to choose words of their own discretion. The preface of the NIV (New International Version) advocates this theory of inspiration in their translation process, thus denying that the NIV is a verbal translation. A word is the sign of a thought or idea. How can we trust that the writers of the Bible selected the correct words without divine guidance?
- 5) *Partial Inspiration*. This idea says that portions of the Bible are from the mind of God but other parts are from man, therefore subject to errors and discrepancies. Again, the Bible claims plenary (full) inspiration which negates this theory.

None of these five points is the position the Bible takes for itself. The Bible, as we have previously stated, claims to be a verbally (all the words) and plenary (all the parts) written revelation from God.

Something else to consider on this major point of inspiration is the word “prophet.” In our modern vernacular, the word “prophet” is used to identify one who predicts the future; however, the Bible usage of the term “prophet” is broader in definition. The word “prophet” in the Bible is used to describe an inspired spokesman for God, whether the subject is the past, present, or future. Only a casual reading of the prophets (Isaiah through Malachi) will demonstrate that they constantly addressed contemporary matters, not just future events. If you cross examine Exodus 4:10-17 with Exodus 7:1, the Bible itself defines the word “prophet” as one who speaks the “words” of God, thus God’s mouthpiece. According to this biblical definition, the entire Bible is a verbally inspired utterance from God.

Note a few more verses on inspiration:

- “It shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak” (Matt. 10:19);
- “For it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost” (Mark 13:11);
- “The Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake” (Acts 1:16);
- “And began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4);
- “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2).

Inspiration is God communicating through men to men verbally.

The Bible not only claims to be inspired repeatedly, it possesses objective qualities and attributes which prove it to be what it claims to be:

- 1) predictive prophecies, dealing with Christ, His kingdom, the nation of Israel, and world dominions centuries in advance of their minute fulfillment;
- 2) scientific precision in a time that pre-dated the existence of the science under consideration;
- 3) supernatural unity which can only be explained if one Mind is guiding all the writers of the Bible.

These evidences and more demonstrate that the

Bible is of divine origin. The Catholic catechism, the Koran, the book of Mormon, etc. possess no such qualities. The Bible is in a category all by itself. It is the only book from heaven above.

By way of summary, so far we have seen that God has always revealed His will to man and held him accountable to it. This revelation has always been given through inspired words that man can hear, believe, and obey.

The next consideration in this series of articles will be CONFIRMATION. God not only 1) revealed His Word and 2) inspired it, He miraculously 3) authenticated it (confirmed it).

How We Got The Bible #3

CONFIRMATION

God not only *revealed* and *inspired* His Word, but He *authenticated* it with miraculous confirmation. Some try to make the Bible simply a book of wonders and miracles. Although there are many accounts of divine miraculous manifestations in the Bible, they essentially cluster around four critical and transitional periods of recorded Bible history: 1) the miracles connected to the Exodus; 2) during a period of apostasy in Israel – the miracles connected with the prophets Elijah and Elisha; 3) the miracles during Captivity (Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-nego) and 4) the miracles of Christ and the apostles.

When one considers the Bible covers many centuries of sacred history, it is clear that miracles are special, not general or common. They had a specific and divine purpose. The word translated “confirming” in Mark 16:20 means, “to make firm, establish, make secure... stable, fast, firm” (Vine’s). When God performs a miracle, He establishes His Word to be true.

There are many examples in the Bible of God providing His inspired spokesmen with miraculous credentials which would certify them to be the mouthpiece of God. One example is the mediator and lawgiver, Moses. The Lord commissioned Moses to go to pharaoh and demand that he release his people (the children of Israel) out of Egyptian bondage. Moses would not only have to convince pharaoh, but also the children

of Israel, that he was sent by God to deliver them. How would this be demonstrated and authenticated? The Lord spoke to Moses and said, *“and thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs”* (Exodus 4:17; signs are miracles, Num. 14:22; Deut. 11:3). As the events of the Exodus unfold, notice the repetition of the purpose of these signs: *“that thou mayest know there is none like unto the Lord our God”* (Exodus 8:10); *“to the end thou mayest know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth”* (Exodus 8:22); *“that thou mayest know how that the earth is the Lord’s”* (Exodus 9:29); *“what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye may know how that I am the Lord”* (Exodus 10:2). These statements clearly show they could “know” (not guess or speculate) that Moses represented the one true God and His word.

Another Old Testament example demonstrating the same principle is the great prophet Elijah. God sends Elijah to Zarephath to dwell there. He tells Elijah that He has commanded a widow woman there to sustain him. While abiding with the woman, her son falls sick and dies. Elijah prays to the Lord. The child is raised from the dead. At the end of this account, please note the recorded statement of the woman: *“And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth”* (1 Kings 17:24). Signs, wonders and miracles have always testified to the authenticity of God’s inspired spokesmen.

Moving to the New Testament, these same principles would apply to the wide range of miracles that Jesus the Son of God performed. The various miracles Jesus performed certified/verified His deity. Note here what the Lord Himself said about the purpose of His miracles: *“...whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house”* (Mark 2:9-11). Since only God can forgive sins, Jesus confirms His divine nature by a miracle, thus proving He has power (authority) to forgive sins. Consider also the correct conclusion Nicodemus draws from the

miraculous evidence presented by Jesus: *“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him”* (John 3:1-2).

The apostle Peter, in the first recorded Gospel sermon on the day the church began, recognizes the same evidence as Nicodemus concerning Jesus: *“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know”* (Acts 2:22).

In connection with Jesus, miraculous manifestation certified him as deity (John 20:30-31). However, the purpose of miracles with reference to the apostles and other inspired men of the New Testament was to provide them with credentials, confirming they were speaking God’s Word and not their own. We here itemize a few verses: *“And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, confirming the Word with signs following”* (Mark 16:20); *“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”* (Heb. 2:3-4); *“Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds”* (2 Cor. 12:12); *“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power”* (1 Cor. 2:4); *“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance”* (1 Thess. 1:5).

Many claim miraculous abilities today. However, all of these charlatans are in the same category. The Pope claims that he is the voice of God, Joseph Smith of Mormonism claimed additional revelation from God, and modern denominational preachers assert that God is speaking through them. These all come to us “in word only” and with no power at all. They contradict each other and the Bible. In spite of their erroneous and deceptive claims, no one

today can perform miracles like Jesus, the apostles, and the other inspired men of the New Testament. These gifts, having served their purpose to reveal and confirm the New Testament Gospel, ceased and passed away (Eph. 4:7-15; 1 Cor. 13:8-13). They are no longer needed. The inspired word has been confirmed.

I will elaborate on the canon (39 books) of the Old Testament and its confirmation under the topic of "Preservation" later in this series of articles. At this point, however, let us consider the canon (27 books) of the New Testament.

The idea that the canon of the New Testament was established over a lengthy period of time is a false concept and does not fit Bible claims for authentication. Further, the notion that some group of men (council) who lived after the apostolic period convened and determined which books should be included in the New Testament canon is also erroneous and not in harmony with the Bible position on canonicity. Even in the Lord's church, some have not held to the Bible view of canonicity. F. W. Mattox in his book on church history entitled *The Eternal Kingdom* (in the chapter on the canon of the New Testament), makes two or three statements that are simply not in harmony with New Testament affirmations. On pages 102-103 he writes, "There is no historical evidence in regard to the distribution of inspired letters...all the church could do was to apply tests to ascertain whether or not a letter was from God...the churches faced a real problem, however, in determining just what letters were inspired." These statements are incorrect. Through the years I have rarely heard this subject addressed from the pulpit or in classes. There is a great deal of misinformation or lack of information on the subject of canonicity among the Lord's people. If we are going to deal with unbelievers, we must arm ourselves with the truth on this matter of confirmation and canonicity (1 Peter 3:15).

There is inspired evidence concerning canonicity and the distribution of New Testament books. Consider the following Scriptures: "*And when this epistle is read among you (the church at Colosse), cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea*" (Col. 4:16); "*I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren*" (1 Thess. 5:27).

Further, the book of Revelation was specifically addressed to seven churches in Asia (Rev. 1:4). The book of Galatians was addressed to all the churches throughout the region (Gal. 1:2). These inspired books were to be distributed among all the churches everywhere. Paul made the point of inspiration very clear when he wrote: "*If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that **the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord***" (1 Cor. 14:37).

Upon careful study, the Bible position on canonicity (which books are Scripture) is clear. The books of the New Testament were authenticated by miraculous gifts of the first-century church. Congregations of the Lord's people possessed miraculous gifts distributed to them by the apostles (Acts 8:14-18; Rom. 1:11). These inspired men, possessing the gifts of "prophecy" and "discerning of spirits" (1 Cor. 12:8-10) were miraculously endowed to detect true/false prophets and true/false doctrine. Many passages indicate this. "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world*" (1 John 4:1). "*I know they works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars*" (Rev. 2:2). "*When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe*" (1 Thess. 2:13). "*Therefore brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. ... And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed*" (2 Thess. 2:15; 3:14). So, if a letter was received by a church of Christ, it could be immediately and miraculously authenticated. There would be no problem in doing this. There would be no waiting. There would be no subjective tests applied. It would be miraculously and immediately confirmed and accepted as Scripture. All twenty-seven books of the New Testament canon were revealed, inspired, and confirmed miraculously by the end of the apostolic period through four apostles (Matthew, John, Paul, Peter) and four prophets (Mark Luke, James,

Jude). Paul wrote, “How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ). Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Eph. 3:3-5).

The Bible is self-authenticating, based on the internal qualities it possesses – predictive prophecy, supernatural unity, scientific foreknowledge, etc. – and needs no further confirmation. These objective qualities establish it to be what it claims to be. We need to constantly emphasize that mere human productions (the **Koran**, the **Book of Mormon**, **Watchtower** writings, etc.) possess no such qualities and thus are not in the same category as the Bible.

God commands us to believe His Word but has always provided the conclusive proof and evidence needed to create and undergird the faith He requires.

In this series so far, on the question of How We Got the Bible, we have established: 1) God has always revealed His will in words that man can understand; 2) God has always inspired the words His prophets spoke and/or wrote; 3) God has always miraculously confirmed His will so as to remove all doubt concerning its divine origin.

In our next installment we will consider the universal dissemination of the New Testament message in the first century.

How We Got The Bible #4

DISSEMINATION

In this fourth installment of our series of articles, we will demonstrate how God not only *confirmed* His inspired word but saw to it that it was universally *disseminated* (spread everywhere). This being the case, by the end of the miraculous period, every church of Christ had a copy of the New Testament canon – all 27 books – in its entirety in written form.

Initially, and for a few years, the New Testament Gospel was revealed and made available through inspired or gifted men (apostles, prophets, evangelists, Eph. 3:3-5; 4:7-15). In the

absence of a complete written New Testament, it was essential for the Lord’s church to have inspired men making the truth available to each congregation. Since I take the early date for the writings of John, including the Book of Revelation, I maintain that the entire New Testament Gospel was placed in permanent written form, confirmed, and universally disseminated between A.D. 33 (church established, Acts 2) and A.D. 70 (the destruction of Jerusalem). However, even if one took the late date position on the Apostle John’s writings, we would still maintain a written authenticated New Testament canon by the end of the first century was available to all churches of Christ.

The inspired men produced the inspired book. What originally was in oral form would then be in written form. The wide array of miraculous gifts present during this time (A.D. 33-70), having served their purpose, ceased and passed away (1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:7-13). Let us remember that the Old Testament canon had already been revealed, confirmed, and preserved at this time. Remember that Jesus endorsed, as the Word of God, the entire Hebrew Old Testament text (not Septuagint, Matt. 4:4; 5:17-18; 23:35; Luke 24:44; Rom. 3:1-2). I will expand on this further in an upcoming article on *Biblical Preservation*.

The miraculous period from A.D. 33-70 therefore, can be divided into three parts as it pertains to the New Testament canon: *First period* – all New Testament truth was in oral form through inspired men (Acts 2:4); *Second period* – truth in both oral and written form while the New Testament was being written (2 Thess. 2:15); *Third period* – “all truth” in written form having been “once and for all delivered” (John 16:13; Jude 3).

The earliest portions penned were: 1) the letter sent to the Gentiles at the conclusion of the Jerusalem conference, kept intact by the inspired historian Luke in Acts 15; 2) the book of James; and 3) the book of First Thessalonians. These were written a number of years after the establishment of the church. This would mean the Lord’s church functioned and did the work of the Lord for several years without one line of a “written” New Testament. The church was able to “*continue stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine*” (Acts 2:42) because of the miraculously gifted

men present in the churches.

The *internal evidence* is clear and conclusive that the entire New Testament revealed, confirmed, proclaimed, and ultimately written was universally disseminated in the first century. In fact, my position is between A.D. 33 and A.D. 70. Here's the evidence:

1. Mark 16:20 – *“And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.”* Every where means every where!
2. Acts 2:5 – *“And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.”* This indicates the Jews who obeyed the Gospel on the day of Pentecost would have received spiritual gifts through the laying on of the hands of the apostles (Acts 8:14-18) and would have taken the inspired Gospel back with them to the various nations from which they came.
3. Romans 10:17-18 – *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.”* If you wanted to say that the Gospel was universally disseminated by the time Paul wrote Romans, how else would you have said it?
4. Romans 16:26 – *“But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.”* Again note the phrase “all nations.”
5. Colossians 1:5-6,23 – *“...The gospel which is come unto you, as it is in all the world...the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven....”* Paul declares universal dissemination (at least in oral form) even as he is writing this epistle.
6. And now for good measure, we note that even Jesus expressly said that His Gospel would be preached “in all the world” before the destruction of Jerusalem. Remember that Matthew 24:1-35 refers to the signs the Lord gave preceding the destruction of Jerusalem so that His disciples could escape. *“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come”* (Matt. 24:14) In this

context, clearly the “end” refers to Jerusalem’s destruction in A.D. 70.

7. Summary: “All nations,” “every creature,” “all the earth,” “ends of the world” – the internal evidence is conclusive in the fact that the Gospel was taken around the world by A.D. 70.

As we conclude this article, consider that Jesus said that He would send forth inspired men, but also inspired scribes – *“Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, wise men, and scribes...”* (Matt. 23:34). The scribes in this text are not Old Testament scribes for they are listed with gifted and inspired men that would be sent forth under the New Testament period which was at that time yet future. Both Paul and Peter had inspired scribes (Rom. 16:22; 1 Peter 5:12) to assist them. This would mean that the New Testament canon could be reproduced profusely and infallibly by these inspired scribes in written form.

By the end of the first century, all churches of Christ had all 27 books of the New Testament canon in perfect written form. Again, we emphasize that the New Testament canon was not voted on or developed years later by uninspired men on some council of men, but was revealed, written and confirmed by the miraculous gifts present in the first century church.

There yet remains two more articles in this series – *providential verbal preservation* and *verbal translation* before we get to our accurate and reliable **King James Version** of the Bible.

How We Got The Bible #5

PROVIDENTIAL PRESERVATION

So far in our study we have considered the **Revelation, Inspiration, Confirmation** and **Dissemination** of God’s Word. In this installment we will consider **Preservation**.

If God has the power to speak the universe into existence and verbally inspire all 66 books of the Bible, He certainly has the power (in His providential care) to preserve His words down through time. Preservation is essential for every generation to be able to obey God’s will. Jesus

said, *“It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”* (Matt 4:4). How can a person live by all the words of God if all of the words are not preserved? We emphasize again that *verbal (words) preservation* is just as essential as *verbal inspiration*. Otherwise, the Bible would be useless for us today.

The Bible is prolific in its claim and promise for verbal preservation. Consider the following points:

1) Old Testament claims. *“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”* (Psalm 12:6-7). *“The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law”* (Deut. 29:29). *“He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations”* (Psalm 105:8). *“For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven”* (Psalm 119:89). *“Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever”* (Psalm 119:111). *“Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever”* (Psalm 119:152). *“Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever”* (Psalm 119:160).

The Old Testament record from Genesis to Malachi bears out these claims of verbal preservation. God’s written law given at Mt. Sinai is recorded in the Pentateuch written by Moses. Just prior to his death, it is recorded concerning Moses and the charge he gave to the Levites to preserve the written law: *“And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee”* (Deut. 31:24-26). This law was preserved during the days of Joshua (Josh. 1:7-10; 8:32-34). This law was available during the days of the judges (Judges 1:20; 2:17; 3:4). This written law was still preserved in 1 Kings 2:3 and also during the days of Jehu in 2 Kings 10:31. Other references of this written law in 2

Kings are 14:6, 17:37, 21:8, 22:8,11, 23:24.

The record of 1 and 2 Chronicles demonstrates that the law had been preserved until that point in Old Testament history. Because of space, I will just give the references: 1 Chronicles 16:17,40, 22:12, 2 Chronicles 12:1, 17:9. After the captivity, the law was still intact and preserved (Ezra 3:2; 6:18; 7:6), and for good measure, the last thing you read in the Old Testament is *“Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with statutes and judgments”* (Malachi 4:4). Don’t forget that Moses to Malachi spans roughly a thousand years of verbal preservation. It should also be emphasized that neither Malachi nor any other prophet or king down through the centuries ever corrected or amended the Law of Moses.

2) Jesus affirmed Old Testament preservation. *“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled”* (Matt. 5:18). *“And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail”* (Luke 16:17). ‘Jots’ and ‘tittles’ were the smallest particles of the Hebrew alphabet and language. So, the Lord is saying that even the smallest parts of the Old Testament would be preserved. *“...The scripture cannot be broken”* (John 10:35). The word “broken” in this verse means “loosened, broken up, destroyed, dissolved, melted.” Clearly, Jesus taught verbal preservation. When Jesus cited the Old Testament He used the formula “it is written” numerous times. The verb tense for “written” in this formula in the Greek is in the ‘perfect tense’ which denotes action in the past with results continuing down to the present (*Interlinear Grammar of the Greek New Testament*). Every time Jesus used this statement, He was asserting Old Testament preservation. He never corrected Moses and the prophets but maintained verbal preservation, even down to the ‘jots’ and ‘tittles.’ (Note: In Matt. 5:21-48, Jesus is not saying that Moses is wrong when He uses the phrase *“ye have heard that it was said by them of old time...”* He was actually correcting Jewish misapplications and misinterpretations.)

3) New Testament claims. *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and*

abideth for ever. For all flesh [is] as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:23-25). “For the truth’s sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever” (2 John 2).

4) Jesus affirmed New Testament preservation. *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt. 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33). Further, Jesus said, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). Jesus says that His spoken words would be preserved all the way down to the Judgment Day. Clearly, the Lord is teaching that His words would be revealed and confirmed and verbally preserved and opened to judge the world on that last great day. Keep in mind when the Lord said this, the New Testament had not yet been written.*

5) Another point sometimes overlooked is the internal (scriptural) evidence that Jesus only used the Hebrew text safeguarded by divine providential preservation down through the centuries until His time. One verse already considered that I simply note here again is Matthew 5:18 where the terms “jot and tittle” are used by Jesus clearly showing that He was using the Hebrew text and not the Septuagint or some other text. Another passage that with clarity shows this is Matthew 23:35: *“That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.”* We need to remember that the Jewish arrangement of Old Testament books differs from our modern arrangement in English Bibles. The Hebrew Old Testament Jesus used started with Genesis and ended with Chronicles; so from Abel to the death of Zacharias shows conclusively that Jesus is talking about from the beginning to the end of the Hebrew Old Testament. Today, we would say from Genesis to Malachi.

Let me emphasize that our Old Testament today as far as the material is concerned is the exact Old Testament that Jesus had and quoted

from throughout His earthly ministry. The only difference would be arrangement and grouping. The Jews combined certain books. For example, 1 and 2 Samuel into one book, 1 and 2 Kings into one book, and 1 and 2 Chronicles into one book, etc.

A third verse to prove Jesus used the Hebrew Old Testament exclusively is Luke 24:44: *“These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”* The three divisions of the Hebrew Old Testament that Jesus used are: 1) the law, 2) the prophets, and 3) the writings (the Hagiographa). Jesus used the Psalms to represent this entire third category of the Jewish arrangement of Old Testament books (the writings). Once again, it is clearly seen by this text that Jesus is using exclusively the Hebrew Old Testament canon and not the Septuagint (which has an entirely different book order), some scribal tradition, or any other document.

Number six in this series will consider the **TRANSLATION** issue. The **King James Version** is based upon the *Hebrew Masoretic Text* and the traditional *Received Text*. Modern translations have changed the text base in both Old and New Testaments. More about this vital study next time.

How We Got The Bible #6

TRANSLATION

The number of people who would be able to read and speak fluently Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Greek is minute. Essentially, all people depend upon a translation to read and understand God’s Word. The fundamental point of all of the articles in this series is that the very *words* of the Bible are *inspired* and thus are *authoritative*. To have God’s Word today we must have: 1) Verbal Inspiration, 2) Verbal Preservation and 3) Verbal Translation. God miraculously gave and confirmed His words and God providentially preserved His *words*. Why would anyone, therefore, want to use any translation that is not a

FORMAL (parts of speech left intact) VERBAL (each word accurately translated) translation? This article in this series will maintain that the *King James Version* is superior to all other English translations. Here are the reasons we maintain and defend this position:

1. *The KJV is based on the correct text base for the Old Testament* – the traditional Masoretic Hebrew text, between 500-1000 A.D. – standardized by the Masoretes (whose job in life was to copy the Hebrew text with astonishingly strict rules – counting letters and words, etc.). Remember Jesus used the Hebrew Old Testament text, not the Septuagint or the Dead Sea Scrolls or other spurious sources (Luke 24:44; Matt. 23:35; 5:17-18; Rom. 3:1-2). These passages are internal inspired evidence, not conjecture from so-called textual critics. Remember Jesus never corrected the Hebrew text when He cited it.

2. *The KJV is based on the correct text base for the New Testament* – the traditional Greek text (or Received Text) underlies the New Testament in the King James Bible. Although there were 30 editions of the Received Text made over the years with slight inconsequential differences such as spelling, accents and breathing marks, word order, etc, they are essentially the same. KJV translators had all this evidence before them. In 1881, Westcott and Hort, two liberal and modernistic theologians of the Anglican church, rejected and decided to modify the traditional Greek New Testament text. They changed the Textus Receptus in over 5,600 places involving almost 10,000 words. This is why modern versions have those distressing marginal notes that cast doubt on the integrity of certain passages (as an example, the last twelve verses of Mark and the confession of the eunuch in Acts 8:37). Clearly, they had no regard for the verbal inspiration and preservation of the Bible, and yet, modern translations use a text type that is basically the same as the Westcott and Hort text for the New Testament – i.e. the Nestle-Aland Greek text or Critical Text. If you defend the critical text, you must abandon the belief in verbal preservation.

3. *The KJV is the result of the translating work of the greatest and most qualified linguists ever assembled, before or since.* The KJV translators are incomparable and unsurpassed even

today in linguistic scholarship. I simply do not have time or space to adequately give examples of their superior qualifications. This is a study within itself which I urge all of our readers to investigate. Sometimes I hear people say, even in the church, Bible translators today are more “scholarly” than the KJV translators. Anyone who would make such a statement speaks from ignorance on this matter and is probably just repeating what they have heard someone else say. Let me mention two out of multiple examples. Lancelot Andrews was conversant in fifteen languages. It would be interesting to look for some modern translator who was so qualified. John Bois, by the time he was six years old, could write Hebrew legibly and had read the Old Testament through in Hebrew. Some 54 translators started out the process (some died before the completion of the translation). This left 47 by the end. All of these men had similar remarkable qualifications and capabilities.

4. *The KJV used a verbal and formal equivalence method of translating.* By verbal, of course, we mean each word in the original was considered and translated as reliably and accurately as possible into English. By formal is meant that the part of speech was retained in the translating process as closely as possible (nouns translated as nouns, adjectives as adjectives, prepositions as prepositions, etc). Modern speech translations to one degree or another are based on the “dynamic equivalence” method of translation. Dynamic equivalency is best summarized in the preface of the NIV (New International Version). The preface says of its own translators: “They have striven for more than a word-for-word translation.” Later the preface says: “To achieve clarity the translators sometimes supplied words not in the original texts...” The word dynamic means “change” or “movement.” Do we want translators to change and move away from the very words of God, or do we want them to stay as close as possible to a verbal process? We certainly know how God feels about the matter. The Bible teaches that we are not to “add unto,” “take away from,” or “pervert” in any way His words (Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19; Prov. 30:5-6; Deut. 4:2; 12:32). Again, why would anyone who claims to respect the Bible use or promote in any way translations which are not verbal and formal in their translation technique?

5. *The KJV translation process was unique and meticulous.* Textual scholar D. A. Waite describes this process: “It was a team effort. So there were the seven original individual translations, one time as a group, five more times by the other groups. Then, at the end of the work, two men from each of the six groups got together and made a final revision as to what wording should stand. No less than fourteen different times the translation for each book was gone over... This is an unusual, and so far as we know, a never before and never afterward team technique that was used.” There are no inspired translators; however, when a translator brings the Hebrew or Greek word that has been in-breathed by God (2 Tim. 3:16) over into English accurately and reliably, it is just as much the Word of God in English as it is in the original language.

6. *There is fatal error in modern translations.* This is the type of error that has eternal consequences if taught and believed. Here is a sampling (many more could be noted) from some of the more prominent and well-known translations:

The **NIV** (New International Version) teaches the false doctrine of “faith only” in Romans 1:17. The Calvinistic doctrine of inherited sin is written right into the text (Psalm 51; Rom. 8). Man is not born with a sinful nature.

The **RSV** (Revised Standard Version) teaches the false doctrine of “faith only” (Rom. 11:20). The word “only” is not in the text at all in this passage, but was inserted by the RSV translators. It attacks the deity, sonship, and virgin birth of Christ. The translators changed “virgin” to “young woman” in Isaiah 7:14. They changed “only begotten” to “only son” in John 1:17, 3:16, etc. They changed Mary’s statement, “I know not a man” to “I have no husband.”

The **ESV** (English Standard Version), according to the preface, is adapted from the RSV. It is based on a faulty text type (Nestle-Aland). John 7:53-8:11 and Mark 16:9-20 are placed in brackets, casting doubt on the integrity of these passages. Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 change “fornication” to “sexual immorality” which is too broad and inclusive.

The **ASV** (American Standard Version), **NIV**, **NASV**, and **RSV** all omit “firstborn” in

Matthew 1:25 which refers to the virgin birth of Christ. They do this because they use the Critical Text instead of the traditional Received Text.

The **NASV** (New American Standard Version) uses the general terms “unchastity” and “immorality” instead of the specific word “fornication” in Matt. 5:32 and Matt. 19:9. By definition, this would allow divorce for other reasons than what the Lord said.

The **NKJV** (New King James Version) uses the general term “sexual immorality” in Matt. 5:32 and 19:9. This is still too general. Lasciviousness is sexual immorality, but not a scriptural reason for divorce.

The **ASV**, **NIV**, **NASV**, and **RSV** all omit the word “God” in First Timothy 3:16, again attacking the deity and virgin birth of Jesus. The Critical Text is used, not the Received Text.

Because they use the Critical Text, the **ASV**, **NIV**, **NASV**, and **RSV** all cast doubt upon the integrity of Mark 16:9-20 by setting this section apart with brackets or by some comments in the marginal notes.

CONCLUSION

The King James Bible is trustworthy, reliable, and accurate. It continues to be, in spite of its critics, the superior English translation for the above reasons and more. We recognize that on occasion we must go back to the original language for clarification and full meaning with difficult passages. Nevertheless, it is the best in English yet today.

Modern translations from the ASV forward are based on a faulty text type, significantly different from the text of the KJV, plus they use the deadly and dangerous dynamic equivalence technique in the translation process. We sometimes hear people say, “All translations have errors.” May I kindly point out that the issues with the King James Bible (archaic words, etc) are not in the same category as the error found in modern translations. An archaic word is not error – it’s old. The textual foundation and verbal accuracy of the KJV stands solid and stable.