

Understanding Bible Translations

October 2, 1994

- **2 Timothy 3:16-4:5**

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

- **Inerrancy Of The Autographs**

Clearly, the Bible claims a divine authority. We either believe this or we don't. We cannot support that *some* of the Bible is inspired because then some is and some isn't and we haven't been left with instructions. The reason for this is that the Word of God was not intended to be a document upon which we cast our judgment. Rather, it is a document which stands in judgment upon us. We do not have any of the original manuscripts today but because we believe the Bible's claims to authority, therefore the original manuscripts as inspired by God were perfect and authoritative in all that they address and, they address everything.

- **Preservation of Scripture**

It was God's intention to speak to His people. As we have recently studied, God has spoken to us through the Prophets and the Apostles and through His Son Jesus Christ. Although no scripture was written specifically *to* us, all scripture was written *for* us. God has ensured that His word is preserved and transcends generations. The preponderance of manuscripts testify to the high degree of accuracy that we have in our modern translations. Compared to any other ancient manuscript, (e.g. Iliad, Julius Caesar, Josephus, Tacitus) it is remarkable how accurate the Biblical manuscripts are.

- **Extant Manuscripts and Fragments**

- Classes of Manuscripts

Although there are numerous ways to categorize the types of documents that exist, a commonly used method for separating them is as follows:

- ***Pseudepigrapha***

This is the collection of primarily Old Testament documents that have been deemed to be spurious and not part of the canon. This collection of documents includes the Apocrypha. The Apocrypha is a collection of 18 books which were included in the Septuagint but not in the Hebrew Scriptures. Protestants have denied them a place in the canon because their authenticity and inspiration are suspect. The Roman Catholic Church has endorsed 11 of the books however. The books are called: Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Song of Three Jews, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, 1,2,3,4 Maccabees, 1,2, Esdras, Prayer of Manasseh, Psalm 151.

- ***Homologoumena***

The word refers to the collection of New Testament documents which have always been considered part of the canon and their presence in the canon has never been disputed.

- ***Antilegomena***

This refers to those New Testament documents that there has historically been some debate as to whether they should be included in the canon but now have. These documents include 2 Peter, James, Jude, Hebrews, 2 & 3 John, Revelation.

- **Types of Manuscripts**

- **Uncials vs. Minuscule**

An uncial is a document with an ancient form of writing which could be compared to our capital letters. Minuscules are documents with a more rounded and flowing writing similar to our cursive. Evaluating these two attributes is one way to determine the age of a document.

- **Scrolls vs. Codices**

Most ancient manuscripts were in the form of a scroll however after the time of Christ, many manuscripts were bound at the spine like today's books. A manuscript bound this way is called a codex.

- **Subjects of Manuscripts**

- Old Testament
- The Masoretic Text

The Masoretes were a group of ascetic Jews who broke off from most of society so as to study the Scriptures. The most reliable copy we have dates to the sixth century A.D. and is typically regarded as reliable.

- The Septuagint (LXX)

After Alexander the Great conquered most of the Mediterranean empire in the fourth B.C. the Romans took over the empire. However, the affects of Alexander were long-lasting because his strategy was to infuse the Greek culture into non-Greek speaking nations which would make his dominance of them much easier. The process was called Hellenism. Eventually a generation of Hellenistic Jews needed a Greek copy of their Scriptures. This is what lead to the Septuagint. It is considered to be an excellent work which was frequently quoted by Paul.

- The Dead Sea Scrolls

In 1947 when a young Arab boy (Muhammad adh-Dhib) was pursuing a lost goat in the caves at Qumran just south of Jericho and west of the Dead Sea he discovered some clay jars containing some leather scrolls. Between that time and 1956, eleven caves containing scrolls and fragments were excavated. In these caves the Essenes, a Jewish religious sect dating from the time of Christ, had housed their library. Altogether the thousands of manuscript fragments constituted the remains of some six hundred manuscripts. The most notable find was an entire copy of Isaiah dating to the third century B.C.

- New Testament
- Byzantine Texts
- Entire Bible

Majority Text

Over 5000 Greek manuscripts

Over 8000 Latin manuscripts

Textus Receptus

Jerome's Vulgate

Minority Text

Codex Vaticanus - Fourth Century

Codex Sinaiticus Fifth Century

Alexandrian Texts

- Translation Philosophies
- Formal Equivalence
- Dynamic Equivalence

A Summary of Modern Translations

Translation Name	Trans. Date	Translation Language/Amount	Translation Philosophy	Manuscript	Comments
Septuagint (LXX)	285 B.C.	Greek/Old Testament	??	??	Seventy scholars in Alexandria, Egypt
Jerome's Vulgate	382 A.D.	Latin/Bible	??	Origen's Hexapla	St. Jerome
King James Version (KJV)	1611	English/Bible	Formal Equivalence	Textus Receptus	47 men from three different colleges
American Standard Version (ASV)	1881-1885	English/Bible	??	Minority Text	
The Revised Standard Version (RSV)	1952	English/Bible	??	Minority Text	
The New World Translation	1961	English/Bible	Dynamic Equivalence	Minority Text	Jehovah's Witnesses, translators unknown
The Living Bible (LB)	1962	English/Bible	Paraphrase	Minority Text	
The Jerusalem Bible (JB)	1966	English/Bible	??	Minority Text	
The Good News Bible	1966	English/Bible	Paraphrase	Minority Text	
The New English Bible (NEB)	1970	English/Bible	??	Minority Text	
The New American Standard Bible	1970	English/Bible	Formal Equivalence	Minority Text	

(NASB)			Equivalence		
The New International Version (NIV)	1973	English/Bible	Dynamic Equivalence	Minority Text	
The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)	1973	English/Bible	??	Minority Text	
The New King James Version (NKJV)	1975	English/Bible	Formal Equivalence	Majority Text	