

BIB105 Biblical Hermeneutics

Unit 1b How Did We Get the Bible?

Presented by the



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Hello. Today we're going to work through the instructions on how did we get the Bible? And this is just a brief overview of the inspiration of Scripture, and then that led up to the translations that we use today. So let's get started. First of all, the thing that we need to establish is that the divine author is God. The author of all Scripture, actually. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is very clear about this. All Scripture is inspired by God. And all means all. There is no other way to really look at that. In verse 16, the Greek term *theopneustos* means God breathed. It has the idea of sails of a ship being pushed along by the wind. And that's the imagery, how the human authors were inspired by God. But ultimately, we have to come to the understanding that God is the one who inspired everything that we have in our Scriptures today. And when I use the word Scriptures, we're referencing the entire Old Testament and New Testament letters, and this was obviously what Paul was referencing here in 2 Timothy 3.

So let's talk about the human authors a little bit. 2 Peter 1, we see that above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding or from human initiative. No. Those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit and they spoke from God. So not everything written by the authors were considered to be inspired by God. Like for example, the apostle Paul we know had multiple letters written to the church in Corinth, but only two of them were considered to be inspired. And the apostles seem to have an understanding of which ones were inspired and which ones weren't.

So the natural question that comes from this: From the divine author, God, coming through human authors, over 40 different human authors throughout the Scriptures, so how accurate then is the Bible? Is it completely without error? And I want to delve into this a little bit. We're not going to get too exhausted in the topic, but Matthew 5:18, Jesus declares that every detail of the Old Testament law will be fulfilled even to the smallest strokes of the pen. Is he saying here that every single letter that's copied is accurate? And we're going to look at that. No, but what he's saying is the big picture of the law and the prophecies and the requirements of the law will be fulfilled to every single detail.

So if you go to Blue Letter Bible, the website, under study resources and articles and books, there's a section called difficult Scripture sections. And this is a really helpful article on how to handle these discrepancies. To put it in simple terms, there are answers for each of these discrepancies and none of the problematic verses affect or change any major doctrine or message of the Scriptures. There are theologians and those who have studied these things and say the Bible ranges from 97% to 98% accuracy to the original documents. And those errors that do exist, "errors" are merely spelling differences. Like for example, in England, if you use the word color, it's colour. But in America, it's color. Well, that would be considered one of the discrepancies. But it doesn't change the ultimate meaning of the passage. And obviously, no major doctrines are affected with these discrepancies.

So let's look at the Biblical canon. The term canon is not the weapon that's fired off of a pirate's ship. It's a translation of the Greek word that originally referred to what's known as a measuring rod. So by the 4th century, the 66 books of the Bible were referred to as the canon of Scripture. So any other books outside of these 66 need to be measured by these 66. This is the ruler of what is considered divinely inspired Scripture. So the entire canon, we have the 39 books which are in the Old Testament, and then we also have the 27 books which are in the New Testament. Depending on your denominational background, some churches do include the apocryphal in some of their Scriptures. And so let's look at the Apocrypha briefly.

What is the Apocrypha? The Apocrypha is Jewish historical and theological works written from 200 BC to about 100 years after the birth of Christ. These works were occasionally read in the synagogues during

this timeframe. They were not considered equal to the biblical canon of the Old Testament. That actually occurred later because they were useful. And actually, Jesus references a story. If you remember that he tells the story of the tower that fell and a number of people died, that's actually a reference to the Apocrypha and some of the historical works. And there's some good history within these writings, very interesting stories that fill that time period, what we would call the 400 silent years between the Old Testament and the New Testament. But definitely not considered Scripture and were mistakenly considered as Scripture about 400 AD and afterwards when the Latin vulgate was put together.

So, translations of the Bible. Translations come from a single individual, a translator, or a translation committee. And in 400 AD, Jerome. You see a picture there, one of the historical sketches of Jerome working on his translation known as the Vulgate, which was merely a word for common. And this was used in the church for a good thousand years before we started to get some of the modern language translations which we'll talk about briefly here in a moment. So very helpful. Jerome did a good work as far as getting things into a language that was a little more common now. Unfortunately, illiteracy was very common, and so it kind of became known as a language for those that were well-educated. Let's put it that way. And so there seemed to be a gap that started to develop over that thousand-year period between those who had access to understanding the Scriptures and those who didn't.

So some brief survey of English translations. When did those start to come about? Well, in about 1380, John Wycliffe translated the New Testament from Latin word for word into English. Now, this is the key. This is kind of a second degree of separation. Wycliffe did not translate from the original Greek. So you have the original Greek which was what the apostles and the New Testament authors wrote in. That was translated into Latin by Jerome, and then we see Wycliffe here in 1380 translating the New Testament from the Latin into the English. So although an excellent, groundbreaking work, what Wycliffe did, took many, many hours and really opened up a huge Pandora's Box, if you will, in a good way, of getting God's word into the language of the people in the areas that they were working in. And so again, this was revolutionary.

In 1526, we see William Tyndale who took on the task and followed up with what Wycliffe did, and he decided to produce an English New Testament from the original Greek. And so this is a more accurate rendition of the New Testament. Unfortunately, he would later be martyred for this work because as the Bible began to be translated into the language of the people, more of the common folk had access to understanding the Scriptures and the teachings of it, and no longer could you have some rogue religious leaders imposing their knowledge and some twisted versions of what the Scriptures say to make money and to manipulate people. So this was again a huge part of the reformation process was getting the Scriptures into the language of the people. And then in 1535, Miles Coverdale completed a translation of the entire Bible into English. So he took what Tyndale did and then added the Old Testament to it.

So there's some approaches to translation, and I think it's very important to understand because if you were to go to a Christian bookstore today or you can go online and try to figure out what type of Bible you want to get, there are many different translations. And so how do you know which one to get? Well, first thing you have to understand is there's a more formal approach to a more functional approach. And so the word for word is looking at the original languages, like the Hebrew and Greek, and making a direct translation word for word into the language of modern day. The problem with this, though, is the grammatical structure of Hebrew and Greek is not the same as modern languages today. And so

sometimes these translations, although very close to the original, can be a little choppy sometimes in the structure to read. And sometimes for those that are just learning English, maybe have English as a second language, it can be very difficult to try to understand.

And then we go from the word for word, which you see here on the left, New American Standard is there on the left side, the NASB, and you work your way all the way across to what's known as a thought for thought. And so this is a more functional approach, trying to express the meaning of the original text in today's language. But sometimes it moves a little too far away from the source language, and so you can run the risk of distorting the true meaning of the text. And so you have to navigate which version you're looking for, which translation you're looking for, what are you using it for. And again, this is just kind of a recap of our word for word and thought for thought.

So when you're choosing a translation, choose a translation that you understand. First and foremost, it's very important that you are able to understand what you're reading. So find a version based on your language skills, no matter where you are, especially in the realm of speaking English and looking at the different English translations. Find one that's easier for you to understand. And I would also encourage you to give preference to a translation committee rather than one individual. With a committee, you have more heads around the table that are able to go back and forth and interact as it relates to different words and how they're translated and meanings. And so sometimes you get a far better end product with a translation committee.

And then ultimately, what is your purpose? Who is your audience? I would maybe go for more of a thought for thought translation if you're working with young children in a Sunday school class. But if you're getting into more academic areas with college level Bible study tools, you may want to do more word for word approach, which again will be more accurate as it relates to the originals. So that concludes our brief overview of inspiration to translation.