

HOW DID WE GET THE BIBLE?

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Where did the Bible come from? Who authored it? How did we get it? Is it complete?

Many sincerely wonder: Do we have the entire Bible? Some feel that we cannot know. Is there any way to prove this? The answer to both questions is “yes!”

Consider for a moment. Are *you* able to preserve important financial papers that you need to keep? Can *families* preserve treasured photographs, protected in an album? Are *companies* able to preserve records vital to their existence? Can the *National Archives* protect important documents and artifacts from America’s history? Is the *Internet* capable of preserving virtually EVERYTHING?

The answer to all these questions is “Of course!”

If God can create the universe—and all life within it—surely He can preserve His Word. Yet, most seem to think that God is less capable of preserving what is vital to Him than human beings are! The design and development of the Bible is a fascinating story. This series will explore in essential detail the *canonization*—the binding and confirming—of those books that God intended to preserve for all time as His Word—Scripture.

The Development of the Old Testament

The Jews preserved the Hebrew Scriptures. **Romans 3:1-2** tells us: “What advantage then has the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.”

The oracles of God consist of the Sacred Scriptures and the Sacred Calendar. To find the source of the *true* Scriptures, we must look to the Jews, whose leaders were commissioned to preserve and protect them.

How certain can we be that God is able to preserve His Word for us today—nearly 2,000 years after the final canonization of the New Testament? Christ answers this in **Matthew 24:35**: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.”

Notice another statement by Christ that expands on this principle: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. 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. 5:17-18**).

The term, “the law or the prophets,” is a short term for the Hebrew Sacred Scriptures, as we will see shortly. Christ did not come to destroy the Scriptures, or nullify the Law of God, but to fulfill them—the prophecies of His human existence and sacrifice.

Notice the following verse, which indicates that Christ realized that the Jews possessed the proper Scriptures, prophesying a specific fulfillment: “But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?...But all this was done, that the scriptures of

the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled” (**Matt. 26:54, 56**).

Acts 17:10-11 shows *where* the brethren looked in order to find the true Scriptures: “And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming there went *into the synagogue of the Jews*. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and *searched the scriptures daily*, whether those things were so.”

Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman, was always familiar with the true Scriptures: “And that from a child you have known the *holy scriptures*, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (**II Tim. 3:15-16**).

Many other verses could be cited to reinforce this point, but the trend is clear. Every synagogue possessed exact replicas or copies of the texts found in the Temple. Even the term “holy scriptures” literally meant “Sacred Scriptures.” Sacred refers to the Holy Place of the Temple. The term “holy scriptures” is actually translated “Temple Scriptures” in the Englishman’s Bible. Again, *all* the sets of Scriptures in the synagogues were replicas of the texts found in the Temple.

The Arrangement of the Books

The King James Version and virtually all other more modern translations list 39 individual books in the Old Testament. These books *do* represent the entirety of the Old Testament. But the one problem with these books is the order in which they are found.

Since these books comprise the official Hebrew canonized Scriptures, this is where we should look to establish the correct order. First, notice that Christ told His disciples, after His Resurrection, that Bible verses foretold of His life and mission: “And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke 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. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures” (**Luke 24:44-45**).

As Luke wrote of this account, he was specifying which Scriptures—the Hebrew canonized Scriptures—Christ pointed out as His inspired Word. They foretold of His life and fulfillment of many prophecies concerning Him.

Luke was specifying this information to the gentile readers of his Greek manuscripts.

The Hebrew canonized Scriptures are emphasized here in contrast to such counterfeit documents as the Septuagint, written in the Greek language. (More will be covered about the Septuagint later.) Accurate and valid copies of the Hebrew Scriptures translated into the Greek language *did* exist in the first century.

Notice that Christ himself identified the Hebrew Scriptures by the following terms: (1) The Law of Moses, (2) the Prophets, and (3) the Psalms.

These are the three major divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures—the Old Testament. They were arranged according to the recorded words of Jesus Christ in **Luke 24:44-45**.

Note what Flavius Josephus states in regard to the number of books in the Hebrew Scriptures: “For we [the Jews] have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing and contradicting one another, but only 22 books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine” (*Against Apion, Book I, Section VIII*).

The following scholars associated with the Catholic movement also publicly acknowledged that there were 22 books to the Hebrew Scriptures: Origen (A.D. 210), Athanasius (365), Cyril of Jerusalem (386), and Jerome (410).

We first list the books of the Law, also known as the Torah or Pentateuch:

- **The Law of Moses:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Note that in this first section of the Law, the order is not changed. The radical changes appear in the second (the Prophets) and third sections (the Psalms or Writings).

Now, we list the original order of the Prophets. Note how the books are divided and sub-divided:

- **The Former Prophets:** Joshua-Judges (combined into one) and Samuel-Kings (combined into one).

- **The Latter Prophets:** Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and “The Twelve” prophets (one book)—Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

Finally, the third division, known as the Psalms, is also known as the Writings, and is divided into three parts:

- **The Former Poetic Books:** Psalms, Proverbs and Job.
- **The Megilloth or Festival Books:** Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther.
- **The Latter Restoration Books:**

Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah (combined into one) and Chronicles (combined into one).

This original order is completely chronological. This will be more thoroughly appreciated once we study the canonization and other historical aspects.

The Significance of the Numbers

There is another aspect of the significance of the number 22. Sextus Senensis, a Jewish scholar, A.D. 1520, is credited with the following statement: “As with the Hebrews there are 22 letters, in which ALL that can be said and written are

comprehended, so there are 22 books in which are contained ALL there can be known and uttered of divine things” (*Introduction to the Old Testament*, Green, p. 87).

With the significance of the 22 books or scrolls of the Hebrew Scriptures and the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, a type of an alphabetical “acrostic” most likely paralleled those 22 books. An acrostic exists when 22 verses each begin with a word spelled with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and each letter (beginning with the first) continues in order all through the alphabet in sequence. In other words, the first letter of the alphabet corresponds with the first letter of the first verse. Then the second letter of the alphabet corresponds with the first letter of the second verse, and so on. The parts of an acrostic can be single verses each, or sets of verses, or possibly chapters or even books.

An example of a complete acrostic is **Psalms 119**. Here, eight verses are grouped together into 22 sets of verses. The first letter of all eight verses of each set is the same letter of the alphabet. Thus the first eight verses begin with the first letter, the next eight verses all begin with the second letter of the alphabet, and so on. Not only is this poetic chapter a perfect and complete acrostic, the syllables of each verse have to perfectly match each other, because it was set to music.

Psalms 119 covers the subject of the Law of God being perfect and complete. Thus, a perfect and complete acrostic is used to emphasize that completeness. Every single verse of this chapter in the original Hebrew mentions the Law of God, using terms such as law, precepts, judgments, statutes, commandments, etc. The eight verses per meter, times the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, equals 176. There are precisely 176 verses in **Psalms 119**.

Together, **Psalms 111** and **112** form a complete acrostic showing that God will completely redeem His people. Both chapters contain 10 verses each, but the 10th verse of both chapters contains two sections.

The way our Bibles are divided into chapters and verses does not always properly coincide with the method or intent with which these were written. **Proverbs 31:10-31** contains 22 verses forming another complete and perfect acrostic. These verses describe a complete and perfect woman. Another complete acrostic is found in the book of Lamentations, which emphasizes the complete destruction upon all Israel.

A broken acrostic runs through **Psalms 9** and **10**. Here, seven letters seem to be purposely left out. This is said to represent the broken condition that will occur on earth during the time frame that **Psalms 9** and **10** portray in the prophetic sense.

During Christ’s time (as documented by Josephus and various others), the Hebrew Scriptures consisted of 22 books. As a point of interest, when one adds the 22 books of these Scriptures to the 27 books of the New Testament, a total of 49 books results. To the Jews, the number of 49 (seven times seven) represents absolute completion.

(Also, if every one of the Old Testament books are counted individually—and the Psalms are counted as five because of their natural division—the Old Testament total is

43 books. Adding this to the New Testament total of 27 yields the number 70, which is ten times God's number of completion or perfection.)

By the second century, many Jews became somewhat envious of the significance of "their" Scriptures being combined with the New Testament to give a total of 49 books. At that time, the Jews adjusted the order of the Hebrew Scriptures to increase the number to 24. This was done by dividing Joshua-Judges into two books and by dividing Samuel-Kings into two books, giving a new total of 24 books (see *The Design and Development of the Holy Scriptures* [Outline], E.L. Martin, pp. 9, 12).

This slight rearrangement by the Jews gave a different number, but the books within a division were never moved to another division.

Before and during this time, the Jews had complete disgust for the Egyptian Septuagint Version, which totally reshuffled the books of the second and third divisions (the Prophets and the Writings).

As mentioned before, this is where the Catholics inherited their erroneous order of the Old Testament and passed it on to us today in the same distorted order, through the King James Version and most all other versions available today.

Some have observed that many Hebrew Bibles bear the label TANAK (or often TANAKH) on the front cover and have asked what this means. This name is actually derived from the three parts of the Hebrew Scriptures:

TORAH is the name given to the division on the Law of God—first 5 books.

NEBEE-EEM is the name for the Prophets division.

KETHUVEEN is the Writings division.

By taking the initial letters of the three titles (T,N,K) they form the word TANAK. The Bible of the Jews was named for these three major divisions. This shows their acceptance of the true divisions, as opposed to various corrupted versions like the Septuagint.

History of Old Testament Canonization

Moses compiled and wrote all 5 books of the Law (Pentateuch) during the 40 years in the wilderness. He used pre-Flood documents and other sources to compile the book of Genesis.

Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus were written during the very first years in the wilderness. Numbers was written as the continuous record of the journey through the wilderness. Of course, at the outset, Moses never anticipated that the journey would last 40 years. The book of Deuteronomy was written during the very last months at the end of the journey.

Just before his death, Moses presented to the priesthood of Israel the five books he had compiled and written (**Deut. 31:9**). These original Scriptures were stored in the Ark of the Covenant. Under authority of the high priest, scribes made copies of these scrolls.

All the kings of Israel were required to copy the entire Pentateuch, or five books of the Law. This precept was added by Samuel and observed by David, Solomon, and later by most of the kings of Judah.

Next, the Book of Joshua/Judges was written by Samuel. This book was classified with the prophets mainly because it was written by a prophet—Samuel. The work was primarily historic, but laid the groundwork for the following books of Samuel/Kings and the Latter Prophets. Samuel established the prophetic order with his “company of the prophets” throughout Israel (**I Sam. 10:5, 10; 19:20**).

Some of the historic facts from the book of Joshua were most likely compiled from sources generated by Joshua and some of the loyal servants of God that followed after him. By the same token, much of the detailed information of the history of the earlier kings of Israel and Judah was most likely recorded by Elijah and later compiled and written by Isaiah for the section of Kings in the Book of Samuel/Kings. After all, who was more qualified to write of the experiences of Elijah than Elijah himself?

Elijah carried on with the Prophetic Order of schools in Israel that Samuel had inaugurated over 200 years earlier (**II Kgs. 2:3, 5; 4:38**). (One of the purposes of these schools must have been to document historic events and transcribe previous records to be compiled at some later time into canonized manuscripts. Elisha and others associated with these schools for the prophets certainly contributed to the historic records after the time of Elijah.)

Obviously, the books of the major and minor prophets were written by the authors to whom the books are attributed. These prophets wrote and sealed their own works, to be added to the Scriptures during subsequent times of canonization.

King David wrote and canonized much of the Psalms. David had assembled all the building materials together (his son, Solomon, would build the Temple after his death). David established the 24 (two week) courses for the priests and for the Levites and singers, as well. He wrote two of the five books. These first two books consisted of the first 72 chapters of Psalms, the official Psalms used for the Temple service by the singers.

The Psalms dedicated to Asaph and to Korah were also written by David and dedicated to these outstanding singers. These Psalms would include most of Book 3. Other contributors to the book of Psalms included Moses (author of **Psalms 90** and a number of the following Psalms in book 4). More of David’s Psalms appear in book 5 along with some the Psalms of degrees written by Hezekiah.

Solomon compiled and wrote the Proverbs after the time of David. Agur of **Proverbs 30** and Lemuel of **Proverbs 31** both refer to Solomon. Lemuel means “the king who rejected God.” **I Kings 11:1-8** shows that Solomon later did just that.

Though Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon were written by Solomon, these books, along with other writings, were not canonized until the time of Ezra, as we will soon examine.

The Role of Hezekiah

During the time of Hezekiah, king of Judah, and Isaiah the prophet (this was during Isaiah's younger years), the threat of attack and captivity by Assyria was very real. Hezekiah and Isaiah proceeded to canonize certain books for the remnants of Israel and Judah to look to for proper guidance, in case all religious services were suspended by an Assyrian invasion and captivity.

At this time, Israel had already been recently taken into captivity. Much of Judah had later been taken into captivity by the Assyrians (**II Kgs. 18:13**). These Jews were taken to Eastern Europe where many still live to this day. Only the Jews of Jerusalem were spared along with other Jews who were able to find refuge behind Jerusalem's walls. Jerusalem was spared due to God's favor toward King Hezekiah (**II Kgs. 18:5-7**).

Each of the 15 Psalms of degrees (chapters 120-134) coincides with one of the 15 steps leading to the Temple. The singers would advance one step daily with each of the Psalms of degrees at a designated time of the year in their worship service. Of these Psalms, five were attributed to David, another to Solomon, and scholars attribute the other nine to Hezekiah, who also canonized much of the Psalms. **Isaiah 38:9-21** shows an extensive psalm by Hezekiah. Certainly he was gifted and qualified enough to compose some of the Psalms.

Hezekiah established a "tri-grammaton" symbol, which indicated that a book of the Scriptures was officially bound or confirmed—canonized. This was continually used to seal canonized books after his time.

Later during the time of King Josiah, Judah was under threat of invasion and captivity as had occurred during the time of Hezekiah about 85 years earlier. Josiah was assisted and advised by certain servants of God, including Jeremiah. This somewhat paralleled the time of Hezekiah, in which he was assisted and advised by Isaiah.

Another similarity was that both Hezekiah and Josiah had been preceded by very wicked fathers. When both ascended to the throne, they re-established the true worship of God in Judah and both reopened and restored the Temple that had been closed and defiled by their evil fathers.

During Josiah's time, the threat came from Babylon. Yet, Josiah besought God and peace was promised to Judah as long as he lived (**II Chron. 34:27-28**). He was much beloved of God for his righteous zeal (**II Kgs. 23:25**). During this time, additional scripture was canonized primarily by Jeremiah. This canonization involved most of the minor prophets.

Jeremiah wrote the book of Lamentations after Josiah was killed in battle—much to the dismay of Jeremiah and all Judah. Lamentations is indeed prophetic of what the modern descendants of Israel are yet to suffer, although written in the shadows of the imminent

invasion by Babylon. The book of Jeremiah was not completed until well after the fall of Jerusalem.

During the captivity of Judah in Babylon, Daniel was in an exalted position of power and had authority to preserve Hebrew Scriptures as they were taken to Babylon.

Most likely, there were a number of copies in addition to the Temple Scriptures. The various references that Daniel made to the Scriptures were authentic, as he had access to them and carefully examined them (**Dan. 9:2, 11**).

Ezra was the priest and scribe who gathered all the books and made the final canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Some of the historical background of that time will be covered shortly, but first we should focus upon some of the editing that Ezra and others made to clarify certain portions of Scripture.

Ezra inserted some editorial notes to clarify to the Jews of his time the current names of certain towns mentioned in the Law. Some of the editorial notes attributed to Ezra are **Genesis 14:7, 17; 23:2, 19; 36:31-39**.

Moses also inserted some editorial remarks. Some of them attributed to him are **Genesis 2:13-14; 12:8**. (This was the location where Bethel was yet to be settled.)

Samuel added some important parts to the Law. In **I Samuel 10:25**, which states, "Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the LORD," the term "a book" should be "the book." This indicates that Samuel wrote in a book that already existed. The only book that was laid up before the LORD at that time was the law of Moses.

Deuteronomy 17:14-20 is the part that Samuel added, dealing with instructions concerning a king over Israel. Ezra later inserted editorial comments in **Deuteronomy 34:5-6**, and **10** pertaining to Moses after the time of his death.

As stated above, Ezra was responsible for the final canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures. It was understood in the first century that the prophetic spirit in that era had ended with Ezra.

Ezra came to Jerusalem and Judea after the Babylonian captivity, where 50,000 Jews had returned to rebuild Jerusalem and other cities. The Temple had been rebuilt by about 515 B.C. Most of these returning exiles were not zealous to obey God. Many had intermarried with the surrounding idolatrous gentiles. In about 457 B.C., God sent Ezra to rectify the situation.

Ezra 7:10 summarizes: "For Ezra had prepared his heart to *seek* the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments."

Ezra came with 2,000 priests, Levites, and servants of the Temple to restore the worship of God. This process of turning the Jews back to God took about 13 years.

Nehemiah, who was sent to be governor over Judea, assisted Ezra in restoring the true worship in Judea. Ezra and Nehemiah summoned all the Jewish leaders together to sign a special covenant that they would henceforth obey the laws of God (**Neh. 10:28-39**). However, the high priest Eliashib was not present at this gathering.

This meeting established the governing assembly in Judea known as the Great Assembly. It was headed by Ezra, Nehemiah and all the principle priests and elders of Judea. This 120-member assembly also convened to establish which books were to be canonized. They assisted Ezra in his responsibility of final canonization during the years that followed. After Ezra's death, the high priest was to preside over the Great Assembly.

Eliashib, who never met with the assembly, disagreed with Ezra and the assembly. Eliashib had other allegiances (**Neh. 13:4-7**). His grandson, Manasseh, was married to a Samaritan princess. This represented a political-religious alliance between the top families of Samaria and Judea.

Manasseh was excommunicated from Judea. He relocated to Samaria, where Samballat (his wife's father) made him high priest of the Samaritans. One of the points of the above-mentioned covenant was for those who married gentile wives to put them away.

Manasseh refused to give up his Samaritan wife. This event was the real beginning of the Samaritan form of religion, and the beginning of reasons for later antagonism that developed between Samaritans and Jews. Manasseh had a temple built on Mt. Gerizim (a counterfeit of the Temple on Mt. Zion). He also rejected all the Hebrew Scriptures except the Pentateuch—the five books of the Law.

Ezra and the Great Assembly later divided the Hebrew Scriptures into the 3 major divisions and 22 individual books. Ezra changed the Jewish script to square script, as had been used in Babylon, in order for Jews to recognize Samaritan schemes to pass their counterfeit writings as canonized Scripture. The Temple Scriptures and eventually all copies of it were changed to square script.

Since the Samaritans had also corrupted the Sacred Calendar, Ezra changed the names of the months to the names of those the Jews learned in Babylon. Thus, Abib became Nisan, Zif became Iyar, etc. The Babylonian names for the months of the calendar have been retained to this day.

Chronicles was written by Ezra. Isaiah had long since written the Book of the Kingdoms (Samuel/Kings). The outlook of the book of Chronicles was from a priestly perspective. Ezra emphasizes throughout this book that Jerusalem has always been the headquarters of God's government. This was emphasized to show that the Samaritans were falsely claiming they were the center of God's religion.

Ezra references 15 secular sources to validate his claim, while the Book of the Kingdoms gave hardly any outside secular sources. Ezra, along with Nehemiah, took careful measures to counter the deceitful tactics of the Samaritans by canonizing the Hebrew Scriptures (source of the Old Testament). Likewise, the Samaritans'

descendants, under Simon Magus, counterfeited the New Testament, forcing the apostles to canonize it.

How do we know that we have the same Hebrew Scriptures that Ezra canonized? After the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70, preservation became the responsibility of Jewish religious leaders instead of the state. Several Jewish sects made sure that the others did not change the text.

In the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., some of the Jews tried to replace the official text with illegitimate ones. To stop this effort, the officials restored the old authoritative manuscripts handed down since pre-Roman days. These were made the standard text—the Massoretic Text. This is the same one followed today and is the same set of scriptures that Ezra canonized.

The Development of the New Testament

The fourth gospel (John's) was written after the other three gospels. The others were left in the same order since Peter's canonization. John's gospel was unique from the others, just as Luke's was unique from those that preceded his. John had been away from the area of Judea and the Mediterranean region for about 50 years. He and the other surviving original apostles had been dispatched to the areas of the 12 tribes of Israel where God had called many into His Church.

By the time of A.D. 90, John was the only surviving apostle of the original 12. God had preserved his life for a special mission. Neither Peter nor John himself, nor the others, originally understood why John would live longer or what his mission would be (see **John 21:21-23**).

John's final mission was multifaceted. First of all, he wrote his gospel. In spite of the observations of Eusebius and other historians, John most likely wrote his gospel when he was in the region of France for about 50 years, well before the 90s A.D. (Read our book *Where Is the True Church? – and Its Incredible History!*)

The tone of John's gospel reflects careful forethought and peaceful introspection. It was carefully written over a period of time, most likely well before returning to the turbulent region of Judea.

John went to the area of Ephesus, in Asia Minor, after he returned to Judea and found the Temple and Jerusalem long since destroyed. Certainly, John must have been well aware of the Jewish war that had occurred about 20 years before his return to the area.

The Church of Ephesus was the headquarters during the era that bore the very same name. From here, John wrote his general letters to the churches. The tone of these letters reflected a great amount of turbulence mixed with urgency, due to the apostasy, as well as persecution.

Shortly after John arrived and settled at Ephesus, Emperor Domitian began the second imperial persecution (the first was carried out by Nero). John was imprisoned on the isle

of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, where he received the Revelation and the command to write it down. Christ probably allowed John to be imprisoned to give him the solitude and precious time necessary to carefully document the Revelation of Jesus Christ. This was to be the final book of the New Testament and the entire Bible.

When John was released from prison, he went back to Ephesus. Here he worked closely with an apostle named Philip (one of the original deacons) and Polycarp. With the help of Philip, he trained and advised Polycarp and others who would oversee the initial stage of the Smyrna era.

After completing his own writings, John may have revised some of them with editorial comments. But his final important mission was the final canonization of the New Testament. His canonization, like Ezra's, was extremely vital for the preservation of the true Scriptures. Just as Ezra had to canonize the true Scriptures in order to set them apart from Samaritan counterfeits, John had to take measures to protect the true Scriptures from counterfeit writings by the followers of Simon Magus and others of similar persuasion.

Upon his binding and sealing of the New Testament Scriptures, Christ commissioned them to be preserved by an unexpected group. The Church of God, systematically persecuted and hunted down over the centuries, was in no position to preserve these Scriptures.

God used the Greeks to preserve these Scriptures. Unlike the Church of God, the Greeks were not persecuted, but were free to remain in their homeland. Their mission would be to treasure, preserve and copy the New Testament word for word and letter by letter—through the long, dark night of the Middle Ages.

It was not essential for these people to believe or even understand the central message in order to preserve them. God did indeed preserve these Scriptures through the Greek people.

The Arrangement of the New Testament

We have already mentioned that the order of the gospels is the same as presented in modern Bibles. The book of Acts follows next. Then we come to a section that has been dislocated from its original position—the seven general epistles: James, I Peter, II Peter, I John, II John, III John and Jude.

The counterfeit church in the east, in Greece, insisted that the General Epistles appear before Paul's letters. The universal church in the west, headed by Rome, insisted that Paul's letters come first, especially the book of Romans. They opposed anything that was labeled as Jewish or "Judaizing practices." Thus, the objection of the Greek eastern church was overruled in favor of the west, and the general epistles were moved.

Here are some other reasons the general epistles belong before Paul's letters:

- They were intended for the general Church of God and were not addressed to any specific congregations as were Paul's.
- They mainly contain general information.
- God always sent his servants to the Jews first (**Rom. 1:16; 2:9-10**). This included Paul.
- All the authors of the general epistles preceded Paul in the order of time.
- General epistles do give some necessary background to better understand Paul's letters.

Then Paul's letters are supposed to follow the general letters as established in the original canonization and confirmed by the Greeks, who were to preserve the N.T. Scriptures. Paul's letters generally contain stronger meat and more specific instructions. The pastoral epistles of Timothy, Titus and Philemon are even stronger. Hebrews, written by Paul, was originally rejected by the Catholics because it sounded "too Jewish."

Now we summarize the order of the New Testament, containing 27 books in 4 major sections:

- **Gospels and Acts:** Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts.
- **General Epistles:** James, I Peter, II Peter, I John, II John, III John and Jude.
- **Letters to Specific Churches from Paul:** Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Thessalonians and II Thessalonians.
- **General Letter of Paul:** Hebrews.
- **Pastoral Letters of Paul:** I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus and Philemon.
- **Other Writings of John:** Revelation.

(Paul wrote the following books while in prison: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon.)

As stated before, when one adds the 22 books of the O.T. to the 27 books of the N.T., a total of 49 books results—representing absolute completion. Out of envy, the Jews of the second century altered the number of their books to 24 (as explained earlier) in order to erase this significance.

But the true Scriptures remain intact even though the order of the O.T. has been rearranged primarily by the Roman Catholic Church, following the order of the corrupt Septuagint version. Then they simply rearranged the N.T., as well.

The Church of God can maintain purity of doctrine since God has guaranteed that all the Scripture has been preserved. This is most foundational and vital for those who seek God's truth!

The Apocrypha and Other Illegitimate Documents

The Roman Catholics contend that they are the exclusive preservers of the Bible with the authority to determine which books should be in the O.T. or N.T., and the order in which they are to be placed. They also acknowledge that they have exercised due authority by adding the seven books of the Apocrypha and portions of three others to the O.T.

Some Catholic translations contain the following books, called the Apocrypha: Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, and I and II Maccabees.

Besides these books, one portion is inserted in the middle of **Daniel 3** entitled, "Song of the Three Holy Children." At the end of Daniel is an added chapter (13) called "Susana and the Elders." Then is chapter 14, called "Bel and the Dragon."

The word *Apocrypha* comes from the Greek and means "hidden" or "secret in origin." In English, synonyms for *apocryphal* include words such as "unauthentic" and "ungenuine." The very name of these books verifies their lack of authenticity!

The Apocryphal writings come from a mysterious beginning with a secret origin. With this in mind, notice the following comments in regard to the sharp contrast between the canonized Scriptures and apocryphal writings:

"Christianity as it springs from its Founder had no secret or esoteric teaching. It was essentially the revelation or manifestation of the truth of God." The Apocryphal writings are further defined as "inconsistent elements existing side by side with the essential truths of Christianity" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th edit., Vol. 2, p. 176).

Actually, there are *hundreds* of other apocryphal writings, such as the "Gospel According to the Egyptians," "Gospel of the Birth of Mary," "The Apocalypse of the Virgin," and on and on.

Most all the oldest known versions of apocryphal writing differ from each other. It is very rare to find any two that are identical.

Between 200 B.C. and A.D. 100, many apocryphal writings appeared among the Essene Jews. One of the most notorious of these spurious documents was the book of Enoch.

It should be noted that **Jude 14** does *not* mention this book, but rather is quoting an oral prophecy by Enoch handed down by God's servants from before the time of Noah.

The document called the book of Enoch made an attempt to discredit God's Sacred Calendar in the first century. It was summarily rejected by Jude and all the other apostles.

Another interesting fact pertaining to the book of Enoch is that *even the Catholics reject it!* In spite of such a questionable track record, some continue to wonder whether such apocryphal works might be inspired, as were the canonized Scriptures. The best

solution to this issue is to ask: Did Christ and the apostles ever recognize them or quote from any books of the Apocrypha? Did they ever show any approval of them?

To answer this, there are 263 direct quotations of the O.T. found in the N.T. Beside this, there are 370 statements found in the N.T. which are references to passages in the O.T. In both the O.T. and N.T., there are *no quotes* and *no allusions* to any of the writings of the Apocrypha!

It is well documented that Essene Jews originated many apocryphal writings. It would be beneficial to learn more about the nature of the beliefs of these Jews.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* informs us: “The Essenes were an exclusive society, distinguished from the rest of the Jewish nation in Palestine by an organization peculiar to themselves...They had fixed rules...and regulations for the conduct of their daily life even in its minutest details.

“Their membership could only be recruited from the outside world, as marriage and...[all association] with women were absolutely renounced...the tenets of the society were kept a profound secret, it is perfectly clear from the concurrent testimony of Philo and Josephus that they cultivated a kind of speculation, which not only accounts for their spiritual asceticism, but indicates a *great deviation from the normal development of Judaism*, and a *profound sympathy with Greek philosophy, and probably also with Oriental ideas* [emphasis ours]” (11th edit., Vol. 9, p. 779).

It is also interesting that this same article continues on the subject of the Essenes: “Their office-bearers were elected” (Ibid, p. 780).

Remember that **I Timothy 4:1-3** categorizes forbidding to marry with doctrines of demons. The Essenes resorted to the fabrication of fictitious documents to justify the many doctrines of demons they adopted.

The Record of History

The Apocrypha is traced from the Vulgate of the Roman Catholic Church after the fifth century. From there, it was traced back to the Septuagint and on to Alexandrian influences—originating from a mixture of hybrid sources such as Samaritan and Essene writings.

The more devout Jews of the Dispersion accepted no other canon than the very Scriptures accepted by the Jews of Jerusalem and Judea. The following quote illustrates the exalted position of the canonized Scriptures even outside the area of Judea.

Philo, the Jewish philosopher of Alexandria (Egypt) explained why he “makes no quotations from the Apocrypha, and he gives not the slightest ground for the supposition that the Jews of Alexandria of his time were disposed to accept any of the books of the Apocrypha in their Canon of ‘Holy Scripture’” (*Philo in Holy Scripture*, Ryle, p. 33).

The law portion of the Greek Septuagint version of Alexandria (Egypt) was translated from the Samaritan Pentateuch rather than the official Jewish Version. This can be categorically proven by the existence of 2,000 places where the Septuagint disagrees with the official Jewish Version, but agrees perfectly with the Samaritan Pentateuch.

The Jews used in translating the Septuagint were “Samaritan Jews.” As late as the early A.D. 300s, the Apocrypha was not yet added to the Septuagint. These apocryphal writings were later added to Septuagint version, which was already corrupted before these unwarranted additions.

In the fourth century (300s A.D.), at the Council of Laodicea, the Apocrypha was still excluded from the Scriptures (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th edit., Vol. 16, p. 189).

In the year A.D. 384, renowned Roman Catholic scholar, Jerome, began translating the Latin Vulgate. He made his translation directly from the Hebrew (Ibid, Vol. 3, p. 881). This translation from the Hebrew excluded the Apocrypha, as Jerome had rejected it as being false.

Shortly afterward, at the Council of Carthage, Augustine, the Canaanite Bishop from Hippo, North Africa, led the way for the approval of the seven Apocryphal books. This was the first official “acceptance” of these questionable writings still rejected by many Roman Catholic scholars.

It was not until the Council of Trent (1563) that the Roman Catholics declared the Apocrypha to be “equal” with any of the books of the Bible. The Catholics intended to alienate the Protestants with this ruling and did so by declaring anyone who rejected the Apocrypha to be “anathema of Christ.”

Lost Books of the Bible?

There are a few other books that some have questioned as being “lost books of the Bible” simply because they are quoted once or twice. Remember that, in **Acts 17:28**, Paul quoted heathen poets.

Certainly, no one claims that heathen poets were a missing part of the scriptures, but the logic that some employ is equally without basis. Paul quoted certain religionists who condemned Cretians as always being liars in **Titus 1:12-13**. This does not mean he sanctioned that statement along with anything else they may have said as worthy of being canonized.

The following are some of the so-called “lost books” of the Old Testament: Book of the Wars of the Lord (**Num. 21:14**), the Book of Jasher (**Josh. 10:13; II Sam. 1:18**), the Book of the Acts of Solomon (**I Kgs. 11:41**), the Book of Nathan the Prophet (**I Chron. 29:29**), the Book of Gad the Seer (**I Chron. 29:29**), the Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite (**II Chron. 9:29**), and the Visions of Iddo the Seer (**II Chron. 9:29**).

Note that the last 4 books listed were quoted in the books that Ezra canonized. Why did he not add these books to the canon? The answer is that God did not authorize him to do so.

When writers compile information in order to complete part of a bigger picture, every source that contributes any given part of the big picture may not be relevant in its entirety. Even though the sources may be completely reliable and accurate, they may not be a part of the bigger picture that God is guiding the writer or prophet to communicate.

During the time that Samuel conducted his “company of the prophets,” part of their duties would have had to include the recording of events and compiling of accounts from sources written previously.

Many isolated accounts were combined into a unified bigger picture in documenting the flow of historical events. This would have applied to Elijah as he conducted the schools of the prophets at a later point in time. God allowed such servants not only to document the history in general, but many accounts in which God dealt with individuals, kings and entire nations.

When servants such as Isaiah or Ezra later canonized the accounts into larger works, they mainly compiled other existing works into a larger unified flow of history. So these servants and prophets actually built upon the labor of previous servants.

Some of the books listed above could have been drafts that God inspired for later servants to contribute to the bigger picture. This being the case, God would only cause the *final* product to be canonized, not every draft in the stages of development.

Those who question the ability of God to preserve the Hebrew Scriptures or the Greek New Testament fail to realize that this is something that He has carefully engineered and brought to pass.

Only those who stand in awe of God’s power to preserve His Word will avoid being washed away in a sea of doubt.

After having proven all things (**I Thes. 5:21**), including God’s ability to preserve the *complete* Bible, we are able to confidently trust God when He makes an unequivocal promise.

Almighty God plainly states, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away” (**Matt. 24:35**). Mankind must—and someday *will*—learn to take God at His word, and believe Him!