

How We Got the Bible

Lesson 1 - The Making of Ancient Books Teacher's Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. Aim: To learn how the books were made in the beginning and appreciate them.
2. We have a book called the Bible.
3. How did we get it? Can we be sure it is from God?
4. We "got" the Bible from God who directed His messengers to record His will
 - a. 2 Tim. 3:16-17 "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 perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."
 - b. 2 Pet. 1:20-21 NKJV "knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."
 - c. God always has used people to accomplish His will
5. We will examine the evidence that shows that **You Can TRUST** Your Bible.
6. We are separated from the original writings of the Bible or the Autographs in two ways:
 - a. Time - bridge the gap of time by transmission or the manuscripts
 - b. Language - bridge the gap of language with translations or versions
7. We will study about:
 - a. How and when did the Books of the Bible have their origin ?
 - b. How have these books been preserved?
 - c. When and by whom were they translated and made accessible to us ?
 - d. What has been the effect of recent discoveries on these books ?
 - e. What about those extra books called the Apocrypha? Which books belong in the Bible?

Discussion

I. THE MAKING OF ANCIENT BOOKS - the Development of writing.

A. Early writing

1. The Bible is not the oldest book in the world
2. We do not know when writing began; however what we do know is significant for studying the Bible

B. Development of writing

1. Cuneiform writing - Sumerians - Stylus used to make impressions
2. Egyptian hieroglyphs on temples, monuments and tombs (3000 B.C.)
3. The first alphabet developed in Syria-Palestine (1750 B.C.)
4. The Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions (1500 B.C.)
5. Letters in Palestine (1400 B.C.)
6. Writing skills were developed by the time Moses wrote the Pentateuch(c.1500 B.C)

II. Writing materials used

A. Stone

1. "Then the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them." Ex. 24:12
2. The Stele of Hammurabi, king of Babylon (1750 B.C.) codified the rights of the oppressed to receive justice [Stele - stone slab]
 - a. Hammurabi ruled Babylon for about 43 years
 - b. It is a diorite stele - with a bas relief
 - c. P. 139 of Ancient Near East by Pritchard
3. The Gezer Calendar (925 B.C.) - poem about agricultural activities - white limestone - early Hebrew alphabetic script

4. The Siloam Inscription (750 B.C.) - King Hezekiah had a tunnel constructed to bring water into Jerusalem - 2 Kings 20:20 2 Chron. 32:30
5. The Moabite Stone (9th cent. B.C.)
 - a. Found in area east of the Dead Sea - 34 lines of Canaanite script
 - b. 2 Kings 3:4-27 - erected by King Mesha of Moab
 - c. Only inscription outside of Palestine that mentions YHWH Israel's God
6. Ten Commandments
 - a. "And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." Ex. 31:18
 - b. "And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest." Ex. 34:1 - also v. 28
 - c. Deut. 10:1-5
7. Rosetta Stone - discovered in 1799 - translated about 1822
8. Memorial stones of the Jordan River crossing
 - a. Deut. 27:2-3 NKJV "And it shall be, on the day when you cross over the Jordan to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, that you shall set up for yourselves large stones, and whitewash them with lime. 3 "You shall write on them all the words of this law, when you have crossed over, that you may enter the land which the LORD your God is giving you, 'a land flowing with milk and honey,' just as the LORD God of your fathers promised you."
 - b. Josh. 8:30-32

B. Clay

1. Ezekiel commanded to sketch a plan of Jerusalem on a brick - Ezek. 4:1-2 "You also, son of man, take a **clay tablet** and lay it before you, and portray on it a city, Jerusalem. 2 "Lay siege against it, build a siege wall against it, and heap up a mound against it; set camps against it also, and place battering rams against it all around."
2. Nature of the texts
 - a. Moist clay made into tablets, written on, then sun-dried or oven-baked
 - b. Often written in cuneiform, wedge-shaped letters
3. Use of clay texts
 - a. Historical texts, often barrel-shaped, were placed in a cornerstone of a building
 - b. The king's name inscribed on clay nails
 - c. Long literary texts continued from tablet to tablet, forming "books"
 - d. Tablets often kept in special archive rooms or in baskets, boxes or clay jars (Jer. 32:14)
4. Examples
 - a. Elba (Syria) library-16,000 tablets dating back to 2400 B.C.
 - b. Tell-el-Amarna (Egypt; 1350 B.C.)-Official documents between the pharaohs and the rulers in Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, etc.
 - c. Clay tablets on the chronicles of the kings of Assyria
 - (1) Sargon II on the conquest of Samaria (721 B.C.)
 - (2) Sennacherib on the siege of Jerusalem during the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah (701 B.C.)
 - d. Ashurbanipal, the biblical Osnapper (Ezra 4:10) boasted of learning "the entire art of writing on clay tablets". In this library they have the famous poem called the Epic of Gilgamesh
 - e. The writings of Nebuchadnezzar relate his building programs (Dan 4:28-30)

C. Wood and wax

1. His name is John - Luke 1:57-64 - Zechariah, father of John, wrote on a tablet

"Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. 58 When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her. 59 So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. 60 His mother answered and said, "No; he shall be called John." 61 But they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name." 62 So they made signs to his father--what he would have him called. 63 And he **asked for a writing tablet**, and wrote, saying, "His name is John." So they all marveled."
2. Specific Old Testament references to writing on wood and sticks
 - a. Num. 17:2-3 NKJV "Speak to the children of Israel, and get from them a rod from each father's house, all their leaders according to their fathers' houses--twelve rods. Write each man's name on his rod. 3 "And you shall write Aaron's name on the rod of Levi. For there shall be one rod for the head of each father's house."
 - b. Ezek. 37:16-17
3. Greeks and Romans used a whitened board for public notices, called an "album" from the Latin word for "white" (albus); probably such a board was used for the inscription nailed to Jesus' cross
4. Wooden tablets were often inlaid with wax (a renewable surface)
 - a. Used by the Assyrians, popular with the Romans
 - b. Tablets were used singly or fastened together and turned like pages
 - c. Romans called such a group of tablets a "codex" (pl. "codices"); the term later employed for a book with many sheets

5. Isa. 30:8 and Hab. 2:2 possibly refer to wood tablets

D. **Metal**

1. A gold plate made for the Israelite high priest and engraved, "Holy to the LORD" (Exod. 28:36) "You shall also make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet: HOLINESS TO THE LORD."
2. Many cuneiform writings on gold, silver, copper and bronze or on tablets covered with such metals
3. Many official Roman documents inscribed on bronze tablets, e.g., treaties and decrees, "diplomas" granted Roman soldiers special privileges and citizenship at the time of their discharge
4. The oldest example of Scripture: an amulet of two small silver scrolls inscribed with the priestly blessing of Num. 6:24-26 (6th cent. B.C.) Song # 710

E. **Ostraca** - from Greek Ostrakon - a piece of pottery, a shell or a shard of pottery

1. Broken pottery became the scrap "paper" of the ancient world
2. Narmer, first pharaoh of Egypt (3100 B.C.)
3. Pekah, king of Israel during Isaiah's prophecy (735 B.C.)
4. 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet (1100 B.C.)
5. New Testament ostraca - longest is Luke 22:40-71 - ten numbered pieces
6. The Samaria ostraca describe goods received by Jeroboam II, king of Israel (750 B.C.)
7. The Lachish ostraca contain correspondence of an officer at Lachish and a subordinate regarding the Babylonian attack on the little kingdom of Judah; one letter begins, "May YHWH cause my lord to hear tidings of peace"
8. Many short passages of the New Testament inscribed on ostraca

9. The people of Athens "ostracized" the banished by writing their names on ostraca

F. Papyrus

1. Clay and other writing materials limited the size (weight) of documents; papyrus revolutionized writing
2. Known in the days of Job (Job 8:11; Job 9:26; cf. Isa 18:2)
3. From Egypt (3000 B.C.)
4. Used for many things: fuel, food, furniture, bowls, baskets, sandals, clothing, robe
5. Pliny, ancient Roman historian and governor
 - a. "Civilization depends on the use of papyrus"
 - b. On the making of papyrus writing material
 - (1) Papyrus strips laid horizontally on vertical strips
 - (2) Writing side smoothed and dried
 - (3) Wooden roller attached to inside - Title on strip on outside
 - (4) Protective case, usually of wood
6. The material used for the autographs of the New Testament and their early copies
 - a. Papyrus was in general use during the time of the N.T. writings
 - b. It was used throughout Greece and Rome
 - c. 2 John 12 NKJV "Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with **paper and ink**; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full."
 - d. Papyrus is the origin of our English word "Paper"
 - e. "Papyrology" is the science that deals especially with writings on papyrus
 - f. The Greek word "chartes" is a roll of papyrus in Latin it is "charta" and in English it is "chart" and Card.

7. Papyrus and the Bible

- a. Greek word for papyrus, "biblos"
- b. Greek word for a papyrus scroll or book, "biblion" (Rev. 5:1);
- c. The word "biblia" is plural for Papyrus rolls and meant the books
- d. Thus, Bible is "The Book" of Sacred Scripture
- e. It is connected with the word "papyrus"

G. Leather and parchment

1. Politics of writing

- a. King Eumenes of Pergamum (197-158 B.C.) began a rival library to that of King Ptolemy of Alexandria
- b. When Egypt cut off papyrus supplies to Eumenes, he "developed" parchment
- c. Note: the antiquity of leather
 - (1) Leather documents in Egypt as early as 2500 B.C.
 - (2) Eumenes nonetheless refined its use
- d. Word "parchment" from the Greek word "pergamene," meaning "from Pergamum"
- e. Parchment was a very important

2. Leather and parchment compared

- a. Both dehaired and soaked in lime water
- b. Leather tanned with chemical reagents; parchment stretched and dried
- c. Parchment normally from the skins of smaller animals
 - (1) Sheep, goats, calves
 - (2) "Vellum" primarily refers to calfskin, however, it is used synonymously with parchment

d. In biblical use

- (1) No direct Old Testament reference to writing on leather
- (2) Most of manuscripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls written on leather
- (3) Jewish Talmud required that the Torah be copied on animal skins
- (4) Paul's request for "the parchments" (2 Tim. 4:13) may have been portions of the Old Testament

e. Parchment replaced papyrus

- (1) Much more durable
- (2) Became the medium for copying the Bible from the fourth century onward

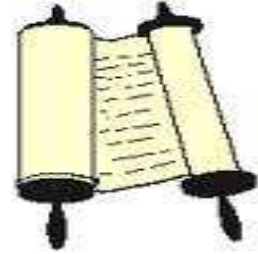
Conclusion

1. We have a book of books
2. Writing was practiced hundreds of years before the time of Moses
3. People wrote on many kinds of materials depending on where they lived and their time in history.
4. Leather was one of the important writing materials for the Old Testament.
5. In New Testament times Papyrus was in general use.
6. By the fourth century Parchment had replaced papyrus and the manuscripts that have survived are written on vellum or parchment.

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Lessons

1. The Making of Ancient Books
2. The Birth of the Bible
3. Manuscripts of the New Testament
4. Important New Testament Manuscripts
5. Ancient Versions of the New Testament
6. The Text of the New Testament
7. Restoring the New Testament Text
8. The Text of the Old Testament
9. The Canon of the Scriptures
10. The Apocryphal Books
11. History of the English Bible
12. Recent Translations of the English Bible
13. "My Words Will Not Pass Away"



Sources Consulted

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2. Rocky Whitely Oldham Lane church of Christ Abilene, TX

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