

How We Got the Bible

Lesson 4 - Important New Testament Manuscripts

Teachers Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. Aim: To tell about some other manuscripts that are very valuable in obtaining the text of the New Testament.
2. Manuscripts of the New Testament are scattered all over the world.
3. It is thrilling to see with your own eyes one of those manuscripts that is a not too distant copy of the original autographs of part of the New Testament.
4. Many of these manuscripts are in Europe and Asia.
5. But there are several found here in America in some of the large university libraries.
 - a. Harvard, Princeton, Duke and Chicago have some good manuscripts of the Bible.
 - b. The Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. also has a very valuable manuscript.
 - c. You can ask the curator or director of these institutions to get a look at these documents.
6. You may ask, "What do a few old manuscripts have to do with my life today?"
 - a. Why should we even study about something like these old documents?
 - b. If you are concerned about the integrity of the Bible then the study of these manuscripts is very important.
 - c. When men discover manuscripts that are much older than anything found before and the text is basically the same as the text of the Bible we have, then we are assured that the text has not been changed or altered.
 - d. We can have confidence in what God tells us in the Bible is accurate.

Discussion

I. The three great uncial manuscripts

- A. Vaticanus (B)
- B. Sinaiticus (a)
- C. Alexandrinus (A)
- D. There are other manuscripts that are also valuable in the study of the text of the New Testament. Without these others the scholars could not properly evaluate these 3 uncials.

II. Two Fifth Century Uncials

- A. Codex of Ephraem [C]
 - 1. The shortage of writing materials during the Middle Ages
 - a. Older manuscripts were reused
 - b. Old text washed or scraped off
 - c. New text written on the cleaned surface
 - d. Called a palimpsest or rescript (rewritten)
 - 2. Reading the older text "underneath" the newer text is no easy task.
 - a. Chemical reagents applied
 - b. Ultraviolet lights
 - c. Computer-enhanced images
 - 3. The newer text of codex Ephraem
 - a. 38 sermons by Ephraem of Syria (4th cent. church father) were copied over the erased text
 - b. Copy made in the 12th century

4. The older text
 - a. A 5th century Greek manuscript
 - b. Much of the O.T. is missing
 - c. There are only 209 leaves, of which 145 belong to the New Testament.
 - d. The 145 leaves of the NT contain text from every book except 2 Thess. and 2 John
 - e. The codex, of good vellum, measures 12 1/4 inches by 9 inches; there is but one column to a page
5. Transcribing the text
 - a. From the 1500s to the 1800s there were only partial and imperfect attempts to transcribe
 - b. In 1840 the young Tischendorf, at the age of 25, began the task
 - c. Using chemical reagents to bring out the old ink, excellent eyesight and unrelenting perseverance, he completed the NT portions in 1843 and the O.T. portions in 1845
6. It is an important manuscript but the quality of its text does not measure up to the high-standard of the other 3 uncials.

B. The Codex Bezae (D)

1. A 6th century manuscript
2. Named for Theodore Beza, Protestant reformer
 - a. Possessed the document for over twenty years
 - b. Presented it to Cambridge University Library in 1581
 - c. In England

3. The description of the manuscript
 - a. Content (with gaps): the Four Gospels, Acts, a fragment of 3 John in Latin
 - b. 406 leaves, 10 by 8 inches, of thin vellum bound in two volumes
 - c. A bilingual manuscript: Greek on the left (sometimes page and sometimes side of page) and Latin on the right
 - d. Lines are written according to sense
 - e. Gospels appear in the Western order: Matthew, John, Luke and Mark
4. Viewed with suspicion because of its unique readings
 - a. "And he said, 'You do not know of what spirit you are' " (added to Luke 9:55)
 - b. "He placed over the tomb a stone which twenty men could scarcely roll" (added to Luke 23:53)
 - c. When Peter came out of the prison with the angel, "they descended the seven steps" (Acts 12:10)
 - d. The added statement ending the book of Acts: "that this is Jesus the Son of God, through whom the whole world will be judged" (Acts 28:31)
5. One of the earliest examples of a group of texts identified as "Western," characterized by:
 - a. Fondness of paraphrase
 - b. Textual expansions
 - c. Striking omissions

6. Its value:
 - a. Its exceedingly more agreements with the Vatican and Sinaitic Manuscripts confirm our confidence in the restoration of the original New Testament
 - b. It helps in making the text certain.

III. Other Valuable uncials

A. Codex Claromontanus (Dp or D2)

1. Content: Paul's letters and the book of Hebrews (_p = Pauline letters)
2. A 6th cent. manuscript from Clermont, France
3. 533 leaves of thin vellum
4. Bilingual: Greek and Latin
5. Western text type
6. Located at the National Library, Paris

B. Codex Laudianus (Ea)

1. Dated the end of the 6th cent.
2. Named for Archbishop Laud, who presented the manuscript to Bodleian Library at Oxford, England in 1636
3. Content: Acts (_a = Acts)
4. Bilingual: Greek and Latin
5. Western text type
6. Earliest manuscript example of the eunuch's confession (Acts 8:37)

C. Codex Regius (L)

1. An 8th cent. manuscript of the Gospels
2. Located in National Library in Paris
3. Alexandrian text type (similar to the Vatican and Sinaitic Manuscripts)
4. Contains both the traditional ending of Mark and the shorter ending

D. The Freer Washington Manuscripts

1. Obtained by Mr. Charles L. Freer of Detroit
2. Codex I
 - a. 5th cent.
 - b. A collection of Paul's letters from 1 Corinthians to Hebrews (placed after 2 Thessalonians)
 - c. Alexandrian text type
 - d. Less than half has survived
3. Codex W
 - a. Copy of the Four Gospels
 - b. 4th-5th cent.
 - c. Text type mixed
 - d. Located in Freer Gallery of Art, the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C.
4. Visit to Smithsonian in summer of 1999
 - a. Asked to see the Washington Codex - Set appointment
 - b. Down in basement - climate controlled room - cabinet - containers of clear plastic
 - c. We were allowed to look at them in person and photograph

IV. Minuscule manuscripts

A. Introduction

1. Approximately 2,800 cursives
2. Dating from the 9th through the 16th centuries
3. Represent primarily the Byzantine text type

B. More important minuscules

1. Minuscules 1 and 2
 - a. Gospels manuscripts
 - b. 12th cent.
 - c. Located in Basle, Switzerland
 - d. Erasmus mainly used minuscule 2, a Byzantine-type text, for editing the first Greek New Testament
2. Minuscule 13
 - a. 12th or 13th cent.
 - b. Located in Paris
 - c. The first of a dozen manuscripts known as "Family 13"
 - d. Unique for containing the story of the woman taken in adultery after Luke 21:38
3. Minuscule 33
 - a. "The Queen of the Cursives" because of its remarkable similarity to Vaticanus
 - b. 9th cent.
 - c. The Gospels, Acts, and Epistles

4. Minuscule 61
 - a. 15th-16th cent.
 - b. Noted for first Greek manuscript to contain the Three Heavenly Witnesses passage (1 John 5:7-8)

5. Minuscule 565
 - a. 9th cent.
 - b. Gospels
 - c. St. Petersburg, Russia
 - d. An example of many manuscripts written on purple vellum with gold or silver ink

6. Minuscule 1739
 - a. 10th cent.
 - b. Acts and the letters
 - c. Located at one of the monasteries on Mount Athos, Greece
 - d. Text similar to the Vatican Manuscripts

V. Lectionaries

- A. Scripture passages selected for public reading in worship services
- B. Approximately 2,200 lectionaries extant in both uncial and cursive
- C. Most contain the Gospels, some of Acts or the letters
- D. Papyri-to be considered later

VI. Special manuscripts - Deluxe editions of the Scriptures produced, inscribed with silver or gold on purple vellum

A. Codex Amiatinus (late 7th cent.)

1. The oldest extant copy of the Latin Vulgate
 - a. Copied in Wearmouth and Jarrow Monasteries, founded by Benedict Biscop, in NE England shortly after 680 under the direction of a monk named Ceolfrid
 - b. Ceolfrid died in route to presenting the codex to Rome
 - c. Ended up in the monastery of Monte Amiata
2. A huge volume, 75 pounds with 1,040 leaves
3. Currently located in the Laurentian Library at Florence

B. The Lindisfarne Gospels (late 7th cent.)

1. Produced "for God and St. Cuthbert" at the monastery on the island of Lindisfarne, NE of England
2. Because of Viking raids in the 9th cent., the monks fled Lindisfarne with the Gospels document
3. Eventually acquired by Sir Robert Cotton and passed on to the British Museum
4. Excellent copy of the Latin Vulgate
5. About 250 years later, an Anglo-Saxon translation added between the lines; thus, the oldest extant version of the Gospels in English
6. Beautifully illustrated

C. The Book of Kells ©. A.D. 800)

1. The most dazzling of all the ancient copies of the Bible
2. Text is Jerome's Latin Vulgate
3. 680 pages in 4 volumes
4. Virtually every pages is decorated or illustrated:
 - a. Visually helps the readers work through such a large manuscript
 - b. Provide pictures of the text for the illiterate
 - c. Shows the great care and respect for the Word of God

Conclusion

1. Questions for review
2. What two uncials are added to the list of important uncials, Vaticanus, Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus?
3. What is a palimpsest manuscript?
4. Why is the first known as the Codex of Ephraem?
5. How is Tischendorf associated with Codex of Ephraem?
6. Why is Codex Bezae different from many other manuscripts?
7. What is a minuscule?
8. What is a lectionary?
9. What are the three groups of New Testament manuscripts?