

# HOW DID WE GET THE BIBLE?

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Ask any young child how we got the Bible, and the answers you receive may range from the corner bookstore to an angel from heaven. But, interestingly, many adults still are somewhat unsure as to exactly how we came to possess God's Word. The answer, unfortunately, does not magically appear with age. Consider for just a moment if a friend or coworker were to ask you to describe how we got the Bible. What would your answer be?

## OLD TESTAMENT

It was almost 3,500 years ago when Moses wrote the first books of the Old Testament. While we still have his words with us today, those original documents have long since been destroyed. So how do we know what we have today is what Moses penned many years ago.

The answer lies in how those words arrived in our hands. In ancient times, there were diligent Jewish scribes who spent their entire careers copying material. These individuals were very meticulous in regard to providing an exact duplicate of the original document. One group of scribes, known as the Masoretes, set its standards much higher than all the other scribes. The Masoretes counted every single letter, word, and verse of the Old Testament in order to preserve its accuracy.

An obvious question then becomes: If these men spent their entire lives doing little more than making thousands of copies of the Old Testament, then why do we not have innumerable copies still in existence? The fact is, only scarce copies from these ancient scribes are still in existence today. But the reason so few remain has to do with the people responsible for making the copies. They took great pride in their ability to copy without error, so that anytime a copy began to fade or show signs of wear, the scribes would either burn it or bury it in the ground. They did not want anyone obtaining a poor copy that could be misread or recopied incorrectly. After all, it was God's Word that they were responsible for accurately passing on to posterity.

So how, then, can we be sure today, when we read accounts such as those of the Noahic Flood or Moses parting the Red Sea, that such events were recorded accurately? Consider the evidence. In 1948, an Arab boy was looking for a lost goat. As most children would, this young boy entertained himself by throwing rocks as he walked. He threw one of those rocks into a small cave, and heard the sound of pottery breaking. Scampering up the hill and into the cave, the boy found some leather scrolls with ancient writing on them. Amazingly, he had stumbled across what is known today as the



Dead Sea scrolls. Inside the cave were hundreds of scrolls, most likely written by a group of people known as the Essenes.

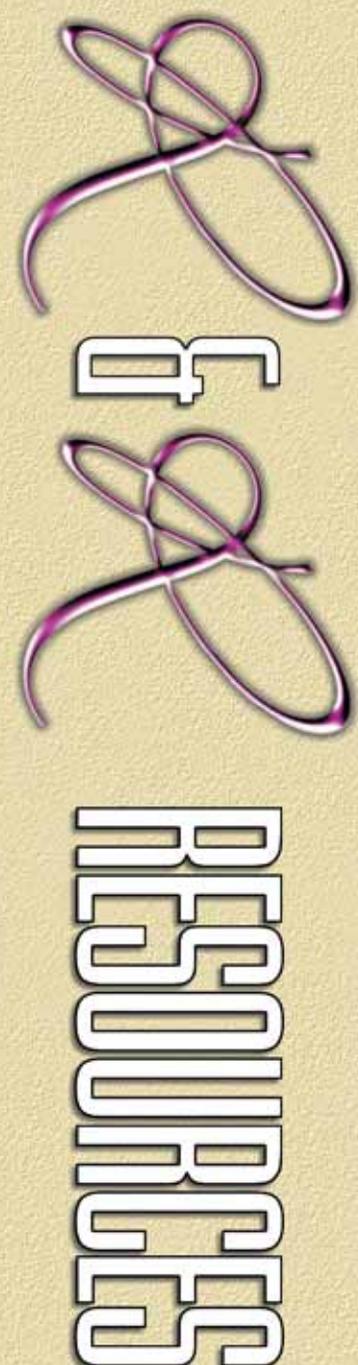
Among the important discoveries from the caves were copies of several books of the Old Testament. These copies were produced from about 200 B.C. to A.D. 100, making them almost 900 years older than the oldest available copies of Old Testament books. Keep in mind, the Dead Sea scrolls were found in 1948, and the King James Bible was translated into English in 1611.

One scroll found in the Dead Sea caves was of particular importance. It was a scroll of the book of Isaiah—from which only a few words were missing! What was amazing about this scroll was that, when it was compared to the text of Isaiah produced 900 years after it, the two matched almost word for word! Thus, we can be confident that the Old Testament we hold in our hands today is worded exactly as the original writers wrote it.

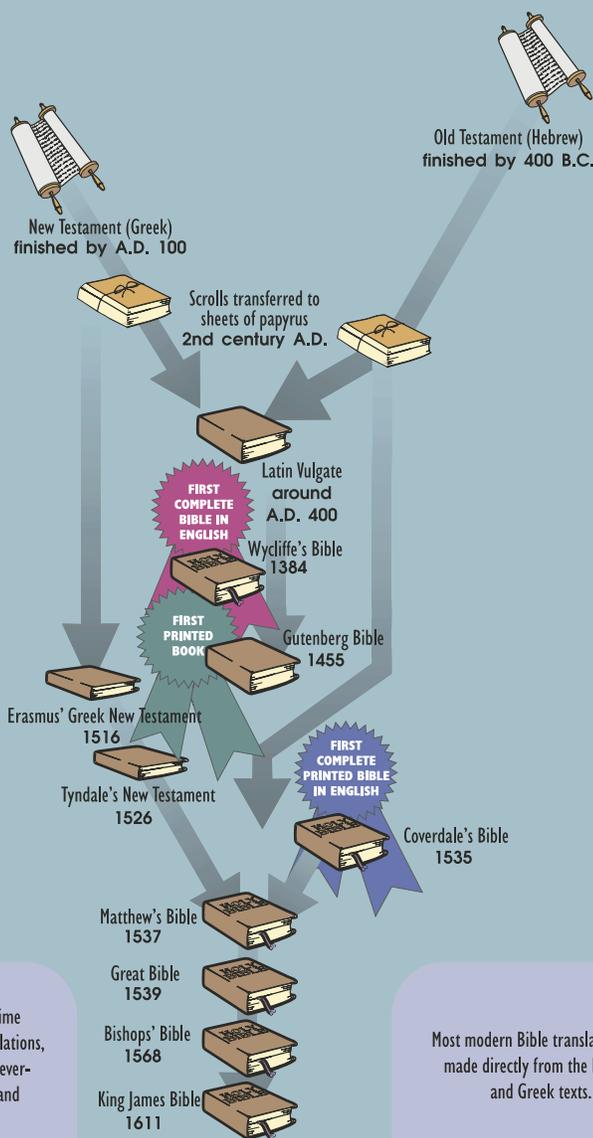
## NEW TESTAMENT

But what about the New Testament? How can we feel confident that Bibles being printed in 2003 still contain the words that God inspired approximately 2,000 years ago?

How Does the New Testament Measure up to Other Ancient Books?			
Title of Ancient Book	Date It was Written	Date of Earliest Manuscript	Number of Manuscripts
Homer's <i>Illiad</i>	700 B.C.	Unknown	643
<i>History of Herodotus</i>	425 B.C.	A.D. 900	8
Josephus' <i>Jewish Wars</i>	A.D. 70	A.D. 400	9
<i>Histories of Tacitus</i>	A.D. 100	A.D. 900	2
New Testament	A.D. 35-100	A.D. 125	5,366



# HOW WE GOT OUR ENGLISH BIBLE



Most English Bibles of this time were revisions of previous translations, but were checked against an ever-improving supply of Greek and Hebrew texts.

Most modern Bible translations are made directly from the Hebrew and Greek texts.

The New Testament was written between approximately A.D. 35 and A.D. 100. Among the books in the New Testament are letters that were sent to congregations of the Lord's church from the apostle Paul. Those letters were priceless to those who received them. Because of that, copies sometimes were made.

Unlike the scribes who copied the Old Testament, people who copied the New Testament books did not see the need to bury or burn old, worn-out copies of the Scriptures. As a result, we still possess literally thousands of manuscripts of the New Testament (see the chart on previous page). (A manuscript is a hand-written copy of a document that was copied in its original language.) Since the New Testament originally was produced in Greek, the manuscripts also are written in Greek. Over 5,300 old manuscripts exist of various portions of the New Testament.

The total number of manuscripts is amazing, especially when compared to other ancient books. For example, Homer's *Iliad* is one of the most famous ancient books in history. But there are less than 700 copies of his book.

Also, consider that many of the New Testament manuscripts were produced just decades after the apostles died. One manuscript, the *John Ryland's Papyrus*, has portions of the gospel of John written on it. It was discovered in Egypt, and dates back to A.D. 130—just a few years after the New Testament was completed.

You may rest assured: the Bible you hold in your hand today is the inspired Word of God.

## WAYS TO HELP APOLOGETICS PRESS IN 2004

Her name is Ellen Furlow, but to most of us here at Apologetics Press, she is simply Miss Ellen. Miss Ellen has always loved the work of Apologetics Press, and years ago she sought out ways she could help. While she is unable to write books, Miss Ellen has a tremendous knack for cooking. And so, on a regular basis, she stops by our office to deliver a plate of gooey chocolate-chip cookies or a warm pound cake. (We have set state records in our office on the quickest consumption of pound cake!)

We often have individuals ask how they can help the work at Apologetics Press. While not everyone can deliver warm pound cakes to our door (fortunately—our waist-

lines would soon balloon outwards), there are other ways that individuals can help.

Below are some things we hope you will strongly consider as Apologetics Press pushes forward in 2004:

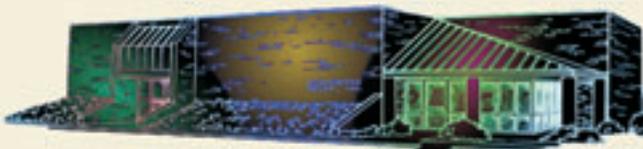
- Pray for the work, and offer words of encouragement.
- Tell friends and neighbors about A.P.
- Visit our Web site ([www.ApologeticsPress.org](http://www.ApologeticsPress.org)) each week; we add new articles every Monday—and we even offer a reminder service.
- Include the work of Apologetics Press in your will.

- Order *Reason & Revelation* or *Discovery* (our kids magazine) for family members and friends.

- Share our journals, books, audio tapes, video tapes, tracts, etc. with others.

- Consider using our books in a Bible class.
- Give a year-end, tax-deductible donation to help pay for future books.
- Link to our Web site .
- Consider becoming a monthly donor.
- Ask your congregation to consider hosting a creation/evolution seminar with an A.P. speaker.
- Give a monetary donation in memory of a loved one.
- Purchase items from our Web store or through our catalog.
- Buy gift certificates for friends.

The ways you can help are limited only by your imagination. In 2004, we look forward to our most productive year ever, as we strive to defend New Testament Christianity. Thanks in advance for your help!



**Q** Did the Midianites or the Ishmaelites sell Joseph to Potiphar (Genesis 37:36; 39:1)?

**A** After a thorough study of the Scriptures, one easily can see that the names “Ishmaelites” and “Midianites” are used interchangeably. The book of Judges records that after Gideon and his 300 mighty men defeated their enemy,

The men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from **the hand of Midian...**” Then Gideon said to them, “I would like to make a request of you, that each of you would give me the earrings from his plunder.” For they [those whom Gideon and his men had just conquered—EL] had gold earrings, because **they were Ishmaelites.** ...Now the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was one thousand seven hundred shekels of gold, besides the crescent ornaments, pendants, and purple robes which were on **the kings of Midian** (Judges 8:22,24,26, emp. added).

After Gideon had delivered the Israelites from the hand of Midian, he requested the

golden earrings that the Israelites had plundered. Plundered from whom? From those whom Gideon and the Israelites had just conquered. And who were they? Like Moses, in his inspired historical narrative concerning Joseph, the inspired writer of Judges referred to the people of Midian as Ishmaelites.

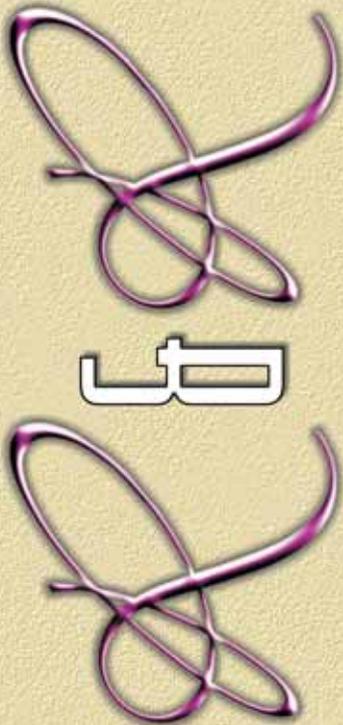
The Midianites and Ishmaelites mentioned in Genesis chapters 37 and 39 were the same group of traders. This is not a contradiction. In ancient times, these tribes often were confounded, probably for two reasons: (1) both groups were descendants of Abraham (Genesis 16:15; 25:2); and (2) and both were similar in their mode of life and in their constant change of abode. Strangers hardly could distinguish them, especially when they appeared not as tribes, but as Arabian merchants, such as they are described in Genesis 37 and 39 (Keil and Delitzsch, 1996).

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Keil, C.F. and F. Delitzsch (1996), *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament* (Electronic Database: BibleSoft), new updated edition.

Eric Lyons

RESOURCES



IN THE NEWS

They only have one goal left. That single goal is to teach your children and grandchildren that **religion** is merely a product of evolution—a manmade creation that humans ignorantly sustain today. In short, evolutionists suggest that they have a materialistic answer for everything. As E.O. Wilson noted: “The final decisive edge enjoyed by scientific naturalism will come from its capacity to explain traditional religion, its chief competitor, as a wholly material phenomenon. Theology is not likely to survive as an independent intellectual discipline” (1995, p. 192).

Think about it. Evolutionists offer a hypothesis of why we walk on two legs, why we crawled out of the ocean to become land-dwelling creatures, why we lost so much hair, why we have such large brain—and now they are focusing on the last icon that stands in the way of a completely materialistic/atheistic society: how to explain away God.

We need to make young people aware that evolutionist have dug in their heels and refuse to give way—even if the evidence points in another direction. As Scott C. Todd admitted: “Even if all the data point to an intelligent designer, such an hypothesis is excluded from science because it is not naturalistic” (1999, 401:423). Richard Lewontin lamented: “**We cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door**” (1997, p. 31, emp. added).

Try as they will, evolutionists never will be able to explain away religion or an Almighty Creator! But they are extremely effective at confusing young people. And what many do not understand is that evolutionists today are not taking aim at the cross and Jesus Christ. They are smart enough to know that such tactics would cause an uprising among faithful Christians all across this nation. Instead, they are focusing on the foundation in which that cross resides. Little by little they are undermining everything that the New Testament teaches, and yet they are doing it in such a way that Christians today do not even realize it until it is too late. The next time you hear the “latest and greatest” theory from science, ask yourself how it fits in with God’s Word—including Genesis 1.

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 Wilson, Edward O. (1995), *On Human Nature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

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