

## PURPOSE AND HISTORY OF THE BIBLE

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20. The people of God are directed to the Scriptures as their safeguard against the influence of false teachers and the delusive power of spirits of darkness. Satan employs every possible device to prevent men from obtaining a knowledge of the Bible; for its plain utterances reveal his deceptions. At every revival of God's work the prince of evil is aroused to more intense activity; he is now putting forth his utmost efforts for a final struggle against Christ and His followers. The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested. Those who endeavor to obey all the commandments of God will be opposed and derided. They can stand only in God. In order to endure the trial before them, they must understand the will of God as revealed in His word; they can honor Him only as they have a right conception of His character, government, and purposes, and act in accordance with them. None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict.

To every soul will come the searching test: Shall I obey God rather than men? The decisive hour is even now at hand. Are our feet planted on the rock of God's immutable word? Are we prepared to stand firm in defense of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus? Before His crucifixion the Saviour explained to His disciples that He was to be put to death and to rise again from the tomb, and angels were present to impress His words on minds and hearts. But the disciples were looking for temporal deliverance from the Roman yoke, and they could not tolerate the thought that He in whom all their hopes centered should suffer an ignominious death. The words which they needed to remember were banished from their minds; and when the time of trial came, it found them unprepared. The death of Jesus as fully destroyed their hopes as if He had not forewarned them. So in the prophecies the future is opened before us as plainly as it was opened to the disciples by the words of Christ. The events connected with the close of probation and the work of preparation for the time of trouble, are clearly presented. But multitudes have no more understanding of these important truths than if they had never been revealed. Satan watches to catch away every impression that would make them wise unto salvation, and the time of trouble will find them unready.

When God sends to men warnings so important that they are represented as proclaimed by holy angels flying in the midst of heaven, He requires every person endowed with reasoning powers to heed the message. The fearful judgments denounced against the worship of the beast and his image (Revelation 14:9-11), should lead all to a diligent study of the prophecies to learn what the mark of the beast is, and how they are to avoid receiving it. But the masses of the people turn away their ears from hearing the truth and are turned unto fables. The apostle Paul declared, looking down to the last days: "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine." 2 Timothy 4:3. That time has fully come. The multitudes do not want Bible truth, because it interferes with the desires of the sinful, world-loving heart; and Satan supplies the deceptions which they love. But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority--not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before

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accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain "Thus saith the Lord" in its support. Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will. When Christ came to speak the words of life, the common people heard Him gladly; and many, even of the priests and rulers, believed on Him. But the chief of the priesthood and the leading men of the nation were determined to condemn and repudiate His teachings. Though they were baffled in all their efforts to find accusations against Him, though they could not but feel the influence of the divine power and wisdom attending His words, yet they incased themselves in prejudice; they rejected the clearest evidence of His Messiahship, lest they should be forced to become His disciples. These opponents of Jesus were men whom the people had been taught from infancy to reverence, to whose authority they had been accustomed implicitly to bow. "How is it," they asked, "that our rulers and learned scribes do not believe on Jesus? Would not these pious men receive Him if He were the Christ?" It was the influence of such teachers that led the Jewish nation to reject their Redeemer.

The spirit which actuated those priests and rulers is still manifested by many who make a high profession of piety. They refuse to examine the testimony of the Scriptures concerning the special truths for this time. They point to their own numbers, wealth, and popularity, and look with contempt upon the advocates of truth as few, poor, and unpopular, having a faith that separates them from the world. Christ foresaw that the undue assumption of authority indulged by the scribes and Pharisees would not cease with the dispersion of the Jews. He had a prophetic view of the work of exalting human authority to rule the conscience, which has been so terrible a curse to the church in all ages. And His fearful denunciations of the scribes and Pharisees, and His warnings to the people not to follow these blind leaders, were placed on record as an admonition to future generations.

The Roman Church reserves to the clergy the right to interpret the Scriptures. On the ground that ecclesiastics alone are competent to explain God's word, it is withheld from the common people. Though the Reformation gave the Scriptures to all, yet the selfsame principle which was maintained by Rome prevents multitudes in Protestant churches from searching the Bible for themselves. They are taught to accept its teachings as interpreted by the church; and there are thousands who dare receive nothing, however plainly revealed in Scripture, that is contrary to their creed or the established teaching of their church. Notwithstanding the Bible is full of warnings against false teachers, many are ready thus to commit the keeping of their souls to the clergy. There are today thousands of professors of religion who can give no other reason for points of faith which they hold than that they were so instructed by their religious leaders. They pass by the Saviour's teachings almost unnoticed, and place implicit confidence in the words of the ministers. But are ministers infallible? How can we trust our souls to their guidance unless we know from God's word that they are light bearers? A lack of moral courage to step aside from the beaten track of the world leads many to follow in the steps of learned men; and by their reluctance to investigate for themselves, they are becoming hopelessly fastened in the

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chains of error. They see that the truth for this time is plainly brought to view in the Bible; and they feel the power of the Holy Spirit attending its proclamation; yet they allow the opposition of the clergy to turn them from the light. Though reason and conscience are convinced, these deluded souls dare not think differently from the minister; and their individual judgment, their eternal interests, are sacrificed to the unbelief, the pride and prejudice, of another. Many are the ways by which Satan works through human influence to bind his captives. He secures multitudes to himself by attaching them by the silken cords of affection to those who are enemies of the cross of Christ. Whatever this attachment may be, parental, filial, conjugal, or social, the effect is the same; the opposers of truth exert their power to control the conscience, and the souls held under their sway have not sufficient courage or independence to obey their own convictions of duty.

The truth and the glory of God are inseparable; it is impossible for us, with the Bible within our reach, to honor God by erroneous opinions. Many claim that it matters not what one believes, if his life is only right. But the life is molded by the faith. If light and truth is within our reach, and we neglect to improve the privilege of hearing and seeing it, we virtually reject it; we are choosing darkness rather than light. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Proverbs 16:25. Ignorance is no excuse for error or sin, when there is every opportunity to know the will of God. A man is traveling and comes to a place where there are several roads and a guideboard indicating where each one leads. If he disregards the guideboard, and takes whichever road seems to him to be right, he may be ever so sincere, but will in all probability find himself on the wrong road. God has given us His word that we may become acquainted with its teachings and know for ourselves what He requires of us. When the lawyer came to Jesus with the inquiry, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" the Saviour referred him to the Scriptures, saying: "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" Ignorance will not excuse young or old, nor release them from the punishment due for the transgression of God's law; because there is in their hands a faithful presentation of that law and of its principles and claims. It is not enough to have good intentions; it is not enough to do what a man thinks is right or what the minister tells him is right. His soul's salvation is at stake, and he should search the Scriptures for himself. However strong may be his convictions, however confident he may be that the minister knows what is truth, this is not his foundation. He has a chart pointing out every waymark on the heavenward journey, and he ought not to guess at anything.

It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help we are to form our opinions for ourselves as we are to answer for ourselves before God. The truths most plainly revealed in the Bible have been involved in doubt and darkness by learned men, who, with a pretense of great wisdom, teach that the Scriptures have a mystical, a secret, spiritual meaning not apparent in the language employed. These men are false teachers. It was to such a class that Jesus declared: "Ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God." Mark 12:24. The language of the Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning, unless a symbol or figure is employed. Christ has given the promise: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." John 7:17. If men would but take the Bible as it reads, if there were no false teachers to mislead and confuse their minds, a work would be accomplished

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that would make angels glad and that would bring into the fold of Christ thousands upon thousands who are now wandering in error. We should exert all the powers of the mind in the study of the Scriptures and should task the understanding to comprehend, as far as mortals can, the deep things of God; yet we must not forget that the docility and submission of a child is the true spirit of the learner. Scriptural difficulties can never be mastered by the same methods that are employed in grappling with philosophical problems. We should not engage in the study of the Bible with that self-reliance with which so many enter the domains of science, but with a prayerful dependence upon God and a sincere desire to learn His will. We must come with a humble and teachable spirit to obtain knowledge from the great I AM. Otherwise, evil angels will so blind our minds and harden our hearts that we shall not be impressed by the truth. Many a portion of Scripture which learned men pronounce a mystery, or pass over as unimportant, is full of comfort and instruction to him who has been taught in the school of Christ. One reason why many theologians have no clearer understanding of God's word is, they close their eyes to truths which they do not wish to practice. As understanding of Bible truth depends not so much on the power of intellect brought to the search as on the singleness of purpose, the earnest longing after righteousness.

The Bible should never be studied without prayer. The Holy Spirit alone can cause us to feel the importance of those things easy to be understood, or prevent us from wresting truths difficult of comprehension. It is the office of heavenly angels to prepare the heart so to comprehend God's word that we shall be charmed with its beauty, admonished by its warnings, or animated and strengthened by its promises. We should make the psalmist's petition our own: "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." Psalm 119:18. Temptations often appear irresistible because, through neglect of prayer and the study of the Bible, the tempted one cannot readily remember God's promises and meet Satan with the Scripture weapons. But angels are round about those who are willing to be taught in divine things; and in the time of great necessity they will bring to their remembrance the very truths which are needed. Thus "when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." Isaiah 59:19. Jesus promised His disciples: "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." John 14:26. But the teachings of Christ must previously have been stored in the mind in order for the Spirit of God to bring them to our remembrance in the time of peril. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart," said David, "that I might not sin against Thee." Psalm 119:11.

All who value their eternal interests should be on their guard against the inroads of skepticism. The very pillars of truth will be assailed. It is impossible to keep beyond the reach of the sarcasms and sophisms, the insidious and pestilent teachings, of modern infidelity. Satan adapts his temptations to all classes. He assails the illiterate with a jest or sneer, while he meets the educated with scientific objections and philosophical reasoning, alike calculated to excite distrust or contempt of the Scriptures. Even youth of little experience presume to insinuate doubts concerning the fundamental principles of Christianity. And this youthful infidelity, shallow as it is, has its influence. Many are thus led to jest at the faith of their fathers and to do despite to the Spirit of grace. Hebrews 10:29. Many a life that promised to be an honor to God and a blessing to the world has been blighted by the foul breath of infidelity. All who trust to the boastful decisions of human reason and imagine that they can explain divine mysteries and arrive at truth

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unaided by the wisdom of God are entangled in the snare of Satan. We are living in the most solemn period of this world's history. The destiny of earth's teeming multitudes is about to be decided. Our own future well-being and also the salvation of other souls depend upon the course which we now pursue. We need to be guided by the Spirit of truth. Every follower of Christ should earnestly inquire: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" We need to humble ourselves before the Lord, with fasting and prayer, and to meditate much upon His word, especially upon the scenes of the judgment. We should now seek a deep and living experience in the things of God. We have not a moment to lose. Events of vital importance are taking place around us; we are on Satan's enchanted ground. Sleep not, sentinels of God; the foe is lurking near, ready at any moment, should you become lax and drowsy, to spring upon you and make you his prey.

Many are deceived as to their true condition before God. They congratulate themselves upon the wrong acts which they do not commit, and forget to enumerate the good and noble deeds which God requires of them, but which they have neglected to perform. It is not enough that they are trees in the garden of God. They are to answer His expectation by bearing fruit. He holds them accountable for their failure to accomplish all the good which they could have done, through His grace strengthening them. In the books of heaven they are registered as cumberers of the ground. Yet the case of even this class is not utterly hopeless. With those who have slighted God's mercy and abused His grace, the heart of long-suffering love yet pleads. "Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, . . . redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:14-16. When the testing time shall come, those who have made God's word their rule of life will be revealed. In summer there is no noticeable difference between evergreens and other trees; but when the blasts of winter come, the evergreens remain unchanged, while other trees are stripped of their foliage. So the falsehearted professor may not now be distinguished from the real Christian, but the time is just upon us when the difference will be apparent. Let opposition arise, let bigotry and intolerance again bear sway, let persecution be kindled, and the halfhearted and hypocritical will waver and yield the faith; but the true Christian will stand firm as a rock, his faith stronger, his hope brighter, than in days of prosperity. Says the psalmist: "Thy testimonies are my meditation." "Through Thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way." Psalm 119:99, 104.

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom." "He shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Proverbs 3:13; Jeremiah 17:8.

### FURTHER STUDY MATERIAL

Why should we have some understanding of how the Bible came to us? Young children often think that milk comes in cartons from the grocery store. As they grow up they learn that milk comes from cows on the farm. Likewise many Christians have become so used to having Bibles

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that they have bought at a book store that they have almost no knowledge of where the present English translations of the Bible came from.

- A. Understanding how the Bible came to us gives us a confident foundation for our faith in the reliability the Bible. Evidence presented in a criminal case must be shown to have been protected by a proper chain of custody from being tampered with.
- B. We will be able to answer to critics when they claim that the New Testament contains 200,000 errors.
- C. We will have some understanding of why the newer translations such as the NIV and NASV differ from the King James Versions at various points.

### Important terms to remember:

Skeptics often claim that the Bible has been changed. However, it is important to define the terms that apply to the source of our English Bible.

- **Autographs:** The original texts were written either by the author's own hand or by a scribe under their personal supervision.
- **Manuscripts:** Until Gutenberg first printed the Latin Bible in 1456, all Bibles were *hand copied* onto papyrus, parchment, and paper.
- **Translations:** When the Bible is translated into a different language it is usually translated from the original Hebrew and Greek. However some translations in the past were derived from an earlier translation. For example the first English translation by John Wycliffe in 1380 was prepared from the Latin Vulgate.

### Old Testament

The Bible comes from two main sources - Old and New Testaments - written in different languages. The Old Testament was written primarily in Hebrew, with some books written in Aramaic. The following are brief snap shots of the beginning and ending of the Old Testament and the reasons for the first two translations of the Old Testament from Hebrew into **Aramaic** and **Greek**

- 1875 B.C. Abraham was called by God to the land of Canaan.
- 1450 B.C. The exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt.

### Autographs

There are no known autographs of any books of the Old Testament. Below is a list of the languages in which the Old Testament books were written.

- 1450-1400 B.C. The traditional date for Moses' writing of Genesis-Deuteronomy written in **Hebrew**.

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- 586 B.C. Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. The Jews were taken into captivity to Babylon. They remained in Babylon under the Medo-Persian Empire and there began to speak *Aramaic*.
- 555-545 B.C. The Book of Daniel Chapters. 2:4 to 7:28 were written in *Aramaic*.
- 425 B.C. Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, was written in *Hebrew*.
- 400 B.C. Ezra Chapters. 4:8 to 6:18; and 7:12-26 were written in *Aramaic*.

### Manuscripts

The following is a list of the oldest Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament *that are still in existence*.

- **The Dead Sea Scrolls:** date from 200 B.C. - 70 A.D. and contain the entire book of Isaiah and portions of every other Old Testament book but Esther.
- **Geniza Fragments:** portions the Old Testament in Hebrew and Aramaic, discovered in 1947 in an old synagogue in Cairo, Egypt, which date from about 400 A.D.
- **Ben Asher Manuscripts:** five or six generations of this family made copies of the Old Testament using the Masoretic Hebrew text, from 700-950 A.D. The following are examples of the Hebrew Masoretic text-type.
  - **Aleppo Codex:** contains the complete Old Testament and is dated around 950 A.D. Unfortunately over one quarter of this Codex was destroyed in anti-Jewish riots in 1947.
  - **Codex Leningradensis:** The complete Old Testament in Hebrew copied by the last member of the Ben Asher family in A.D. 1008.

### Translations

The Old Testament was *translated* very early into *Aramaic* and *Greek*.

- 400 B.C. The Old Testament began to be translated into Aramaic. This translation is called the *Aramaic Targums*. This translation helped the Jewish people, who began to speak Aramaic from the time of their captivity in Babylon, to understand the Old Testament in the language that they commonly spoke. In the first century Palestine of Jesus' day, *Aramaic* was still the commonly spoken language. For example *maranatha*: "Our Lord has come," 1 Corinthians 16:22 is an example of an Aramaic word that is used in the New Testament.
- 250 B.C. The Old Testament was translated into Greek. This translation is known as the *Septuagint*. It is sometimes designated "*LXX*" (which is Roman numeral for "70") because it was believed that 70 to 72 translators worked to translate the Hebrew Old Testament in Greek. The Septuagint was often used by New Testament writers when they quoted from the Old Testament. The *LXX* was translation of the Old Testament that was used by the early Church.

1. The following is a list of the oldest Greek *LXX* translations of the Old Testament *that are still in existence*.

- **Chester Beatty Papyri:** Contains nine Old Testament Books in the Greek Septuagint and dates between 100-400 A.D.

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- *Codex Vaticanus* and *Codex Sinaiticus* each contain almost the entire Old Testament of the Greek Septuagint and they both date around 350 A.D.

### The New Testament

#### Autographs

45- 95 A.D. The New Testament was written in Greek. The Pauline Epistles, the Gospel of Mark, the Gospel of Luke, and the book of Acts are all dated from 45-63 A.D. The Gospel of John and the Revelation may have been written as late as 95 A.D.

#### Manuscripts

There are over 5,600 early *Greek Manuscripts* of the New Testament *that are still in existence*. The oldest manuscripts were written on *papyrus* and the later manuscripts were written on leather called *parchment*.

- 125 A.D. The New Testament manuscript which dates most closely to the original autograph was copied around 125 A.D, within 35 years of the original. It is designated "*p 52*" and contains a small portion of John 18. (The "*p*" stands for papyrus.)
- 200 A.D. *Bodmer p 66* a papyrus manuscript which contains a large part of the Gospel of John.
- 200 A.D. *Chester Beatty Biblical papyrus p 46* contains the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews.
- 225 A.D. *Bodmer Papyrus p 75* contains the Gospels of Luke and John.
- 250-300 A.D. *Chester Beatty Biblical papyrus p 45* contains portions of the four Gospels and Acts.
- 350 A.D. *Codex Sinaiticus* contains the entire New Testament and almost the entire Old Testament in Greek. It was discovered by a German scholar Tisendorf in 1856 at an Orthodox monastery at Mt. Sinai.
- 350 A.D. *Codex Vaticanus*: {B} is an almost complete New Testament. It was cataloged as being in the Vatican Library since 1475.

#### Translations

*Early translations* of the New Testament can give important insight into the underlying Greek manuscripts from which they were translated.

- 180 A.D. Early translations of the New Testament from Greek into Latin, Syriac, and Coptic versions began about 180 A.D.
- 195 A.D. The name of the first translation of the Old and New Testaments *into Latin* was termed *Old Latin*, both Testaments having been translated from the Greek. Parts of the *Old Latin* were found in quotes by the church father Tertullian, who lived around 160-220 A.D. in north Africa and wrote treatises on theology.
- 300 A.D. *The Old Syriac* was a translation of the New Testament from the Greek into Syriac.



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- 300 A.D. *The Coptic Versions*: Coptic was spoken in four dialects in Egypt. The Bible was translated into each of these four dialects.
- 380 A.D. *The Latin Vulgate* was translated by St. Jerome. He translated into Latin the Old Testament from the Hebrew and the New Testament from Greek. The Latin Vulgate became the Bible of the Western Church until the Protestant Reformation in the 1500's. It continues to be the authoritative translation of the Roman Catholic Church to this day. The Protestant Reformation saw an increase in translations of the Bible into the common languages of the people.
- Other early translations of the Bible were in Armenian, Georgian, and Ethiopic, Slavic, and Gothic.
- 1380 A.D. The *first English translation* of the Bible was by John Wycliffe. He translated the Bible into English from the Latin Vulgate. This was a translation from a translation and not a translation from the original Hebrew and Greek. Wycliffe was forced to translate from the Latin Vulgate because he did not know Hebrew or Greek.

### The Advent of Printing

*Printing greatly aided the transmission of the biblical texts.*

- 1456 A.D. *Gutenberg* produced the first printed Bible in Latin. Printing revolutionized the way books were made. From now on books could be published in great numbers and at a lower cost.
- 1514 A.D. The Greek New Testament was printed for the first time by *Erasmus*. He based his Greek New Testament from only five Greek manuscripts, the oldest of which dated only as far back as the twelfth century. With minor revisions, Erasmus' Greek New Testament came to be known as the *Textus Receptus* or the "*received texts*."
- 1522 A. D. *Polyglot Bible* was published. The Old Testament was in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin and the New Testament in Latin and Greek. Erasmus used the Polyglot to revise later editions of his New Testament. *Tyndale* made use of the Polyglot in his translation on the Old Testament into English which he did not complete because he was martyred in 1534.
- 1611 A.D. The *King James Version* into English from the original Hebrew and Greek. The King James translators of the New Testament used the *Textus Receptus* as the basis for their translations.
- 1968 A.D. The *United Bible Societies 4th Edition of the Greek New Testament*. This Greek New Testament made use of the *oldest* Greek manuscripts which date from 175 A.D. This was the *Greek* New Testament text from which the NASV and the NIV were translated.
- 1971 A.D. The *New American Standard Version* (NASV) was published. It makes use of the wealth of much older Hebrew and Greek manuscripts now available that weren't available at the time of the translation of the KJV. Its wording and sentence structure closely follow the Greek in more of a word for word style.
- 1983 A.D. The *New International Version* (NIV) was published. It also made use of the oldest manuscript evidence. It is more of a "thought-for-thought" translation and reads more easily than the NASV.
- As an example of the contrast between word-for-word and thought-for-thought translations, notice below the translation of the Greek word "hagios-holy"  
 NASV Hebrews 9:25. "...the high priest enters **the holy place** year by year with blood not his own."

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**NIV Hebrews 9:25.** "...the high priest enters **the Most Holy Place** every year with blood that is not his own."

- The NIV supplies "understood" information about the Day of Atonement, namely that the high priest's duties took place in the compartment of the temple known specifically as the **Most Holy Place**. Note that the NASV simply says "holy place" reflecting the more literal translation of "hagios."

### The Integrity of the Manuscript Evidence

As with any ancient book transmitted through a number of handwritten manuscripts, the question naturally arises as to how confident can we be that we have anything resembling the **autograph**. Let us now look at what evidences we have for the integrity of the New Testament manuscripts. Let us look at the number of manuscripts and how close they date to the autographs of the Bible as compared with other ancient writings of similar age.

- A. Tacitus, the Roman historian, wrote his *Annals of Imperial Rome* in about A.D. 116. Only **one manuscript** of his work remains. It was copied about 850 A.D.
- B. Josephus, a Jewish historian, wrote *The Jewish War* shortly after 70 A.D. There are nine manuscripts in Greek which date from 1000-1200 A.D. and one Latin translation from around 400 A.D.
- C. Homer's *Iliad* was written around 800 B.C. It was as important to ancient Greeks as the Bible was to the Hebrews. There are over 650 manuscripts remaining but they date from 200 to 300 A.D. which is **over a thousand years after the Iliad was written**.
- D. The Old Testament autographs were written 1450 - 400 B. C.
  1. The Dead Sea Scrolls date between 200 B.C. to 70 A. D and date within 300 years from when the last book of the Old Testament was written.
  2. Two almost complete Greek LXX translations of the Old Testament date about 350 A. D.
  3. The oldest complete Hebrew Old Testament dates about 950 A. D.
  4. Genesis-Deuteronomy were written over 1200 years before the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Codex Vaticanus is an almost complete Greek translation of the Old Testament dating around 350 A.D. The Aleppo Codex is the oldest complete Old Testament manuscript in Hebrew and was copied around 950 A.D. The Dead Sea Scrolls date from within 200-300 years from the last book of the Old Testament. However since the five books of Moses were written about 1450-1400 B.C. the Dead Sea Scrolls still come almost 1200 years after the first books of the Old Testament were written.

- E. The New Testament autographs were written between 45-95 A. D.
  1. There are 5,664 Greek manuscripts some dating as early as 125 A. D. and an complete New Testament that dates from 350 A. D.
  2. 8,000 to 10,000 Latin Vulgate manuscripts.
  3. 8,000 manuscripts in Ethiopic, Coptic, Slavic, Syriac, and Armenian.
  4. In addition, the complete New Testament could be reproduced from the quotes that were made from it by the early church fathers in their letters and sermons.

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### Authorship and dating of the New Testament books

Skeptics and liberal Christian scholars both seek to date the New Testament books as late first century or early second century writings. They contend that these books were not written by eyewitnesses but rather by second or third hand sources. This allowed for the development of what they view as myths concerning Jesus. For example, they would deny that Jesus actually foretold the destruction of Jerusalem. Rather they would contend that later Christian writers "put these words into his mouth."

- A. Many of the New Testament books claim to be written by eyewitnesses.
  - 1. The Gospel of John claims to be written by the disciple of the Lord. Recent archeological research has confirmed both the existence of the Pool of Bethesda and that it had five porticoes as described in [John 5:2](#). This correct reference to an incidental detail lends credibility to the claim that the Gospel of John was written by John who as an eyewitness knew Jerusalem before it was destroyed in 70 A. D.
  - 2. Paul signed his epistles with his own hand. He was writing to churches who knew him. These churches were able to authenticate that these epistles had come from his hands ([Galatians 6:11](#)). Clement an associate of Paul's wrote to the Corinthian Church in 97 A. D. urging them to heed the epistle that Paul had sent them.
- B. The following facts strongly suggest that both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts were written prior to 65 A.D. This lends credibility to the author's (Luke) claim to be an eyewitness to Paul's missionary journeys. This would date Mark prior to 65 A.D. and the Pauline epistles between 49-63 A.D.
  - 1. Acts records the beginning history of the church with persecutions and martyrdoms being mentioned repeatedly. Three men; Peter, Paul, and James the brother of Jesus all play leading roles throughout the book. They were all martyred by 67 A.D., but their martyrdoms are not recorded in Acts.
  - 2. The church in Jerusalem played a central role in the Book of Acts, but the destruction of the city in 70 A.D. was not mentioned. The Jewish historian Josephus cited the siege and destruction of Jerusalem as befalling the Jews because of their unjust killing of James the brother of Jesus.
  - 3. The Book of Acts ends with Paul in Rome under house arrest in 62 A.D. In 64 A.D., Nero blamed and persecuted the Christians for the fire that burned down the city of Rome. Paul himself was martyred by 65 A.D. in Rome. Again, neither the terrible persecution of the Christians in Rome nor Paul's martyrdom are mentioned.

Conclusion: These books, Luke-Acts, were written while Luke was an eyewitness to many of the events, and had opportunity to research portions that he was not an eyewitness to.

### The church fathers bear witness to even earlier New Testament manuscripts

The earliest manuscripts we have of major portions of the New Testament are *p 45, p 46, p66, and p 75*, and they date from *175-250 A. D.* The early church fathers (97-180 A.D.) bear witness to even earlier New Testament manuscripts by quoting from all but one of the New Testament books. They are also in the position to authenticate those books, written by the apostles or their

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close associates, from later books such as the gospel of Thomas that claimed to have been written by the apostles, but were not.

- A. Clement (30-100 A.D.) wrote an epistle to the Corinthian Church around 97 A.D. He reminded them to heed the epistle that Paul had written to them years before. Recall that ***Clement had labored with Paul*** (Philippians 4:3). He quoted from the following New Testament books: Luke, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Titus, 1 and 2 Peter, Hebrews, and James.
- B. The apostolic fathers Ignatius (30-107 A.D.), Polycarp (65-155 A.D.), and Papias (70-155 A.D.) cite verses from every New Testament book except 2 and 3 John. They thereby authenticated nearly the entire New Testament. ***Both Ignatius and Polycarp were disciples of the apostle John.***
- C. Justin Martyr, (110-165 A.D.), cited verses from the following 13 books of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, 2 Thessalonians, Hebrews, 1 and 2 Peter, and Revelation.
- D. Irenaeus, (120-202 A.D.), wrote a five volume work ***Against Heresies*** in which,
  1. He quoted from every book of the New Testament but 3 John.
  2. He quoted from the New Testament books over 1,200 times.

### How was the New Testament canon determined?

The Early church had three criteria for determining what books were to be included or excluded from the ***Canon of the New Testament***.

1. First, the books must have ***apostolic authority***-- that is, they must have been written either by the *apostles themselves*, who were eyewitnesses to what they wrote about, or by *associates of the apostles*.
2. Second, there was the criterion of ***conformity to what was called the "rule of faith."*** In other words, was the document congruent with the basic Christian tradition that the church recognized as normative.
3. Third, there was the criterion of whether a document had enjoyed ***continuous acceptance and usage*** by the church at large.