



The Origin of the Bible

Part 2a ~ Transmission of the Old Testament



Why Study the Origin of the Bible?

1. Almost everything we know about the Bible we have heard in a sermon.
2. Few of us have looked behind the doctrines and common sayings of our upbringing to wrestle with how this book came to be in our hands.
3. Doubt abounds regarding the authority and accuracy of scripture, and its role in our life.
4. Many people discount the Bible, without investigating whether their skepticism is warranted.





Series Outline

Accuracy of the Transmission (Lower Textual Criticism)

Old Testament

New Testament

Inspiration (Scripture as God-Breathed)

Old Testament & New Testament Canon

Inerrancy and Infallibility

Translation of Scripture





Terms

Canon – Greek: “kanon” – meaning a standard for measure

Scroll







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Codex (pl. codices)





Terms

Canon ~ Greek: “kanon” ~ meaning a standard for measure

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Codex (pl. codices)

Septuagint

Apocrypha ~ Greek word meaning “hidden things”

Pentateuch ~ Greek for “five books” of the law; (Hebrew, “Torah” meaning “teaching, instruction, or law”).





Adopting The Old Testament Canon

Establishing the Authority of the Old Testament:

1. The parameters of the Old Testament were known to Jesus and the early Apostles.

~ and ~

2. Jesus and the Apostles viewed the Old Testament as authoritative.





Adopting The Old Testament Canon

Establishing the Authority of the Old Testament:

1. The parameters of the Old Testament were known to Jesus and the early Apostles.
 - Hebrew Bible was likely solidified by this time
 - 24 books, arranged in 3 divisions
 - The Law (Torah, or Pentateuch)
 - The Prophets (Nevi'im - Major and Minor)
 - The Writings (Ketuvim - Psalms, Proverbs, etc.)
 - Jesus and the Apostles appealed often to the "Law and the Prophets"





Adopting The Old Testament Canon

Establishing the Authority of the Old Testament:

1. The parameters of the Old Testament were known to Jesus and the early Apostles.
 - Josephus confirms the contents (and divisions) of the Hebrew canon
 - Possible question about whether Esther, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes are included at this time.
 - Rabbinical discussions at Jamnia (Jabneh) c. 70 CE
 - Discovery at Qumran (Dead Sea Scrolls)





Adopting The Old Testament Canon

Establishing the Authority of the Old Testament:

1. The parameters of the Old Testament were known to Jesus and the early Apostles.
- The Septuagint (Greek translation of Hebrew Bible)
a.k.a. "LXX" or "70" (c. 250 – 150 BCE)

The Law
History
Poetry / Wisdom
Major Prophets
Minor Prophets

1 Esdras, Judith, Tobit,
Esther (expanded), Wisdom,
Ecclesiasticus, Daniel (expanded)
1 & 2 Maccabees
(plus 3 & 4)





Adopting The Old Testament Canon

Establishing the Authority of the Old Testament:

2. Jesus and the Apostles viewed the Old Testament as authoritative.
 - Jesus repeatedly cited to the (Old Testament) scriptures, and held them to be authoritative.
 - The Apostles likewise appealed to the scriptures and expressly approved of them.





Transmission of the Old Testament

Hebrew:

The Masoratic Text ~ Medieval (c. 500 ~ 900 BCE)

Basis for the Hebrew Bible / Prototype for Old Testament Textual Criticism

Dead Sea Scrolls (c. 250 BCE ff.) ~ Qumran & Murabba'at

Other Fragments: (Nash Papyrus, Cairo Geniza, Samaritan Pent.)

Other Languages:

Septuagint (Greek) ~ (c. 250 ~ 150 BCE)

Aramaic Targums ~ interpretive in nature

Syriac Versions ~ dating difficult to determine

Latin Versions ~ i.e., Jerome's Vulgate

(390 ~ 405 CE)

Quotes from Early Church Fathers





Transmission Methodology

1. Dating the Manuscript
2. Refining Our Understanding of the Original Language
3. Identifying Scribal Errors:
 - Unintentional Errors:
 - similar consonants / transposition of two consonants;
 - incorrect division of words
 - confusion over sound (when copied from oral reader)
 - omissions of a letter or word, or even a whole phrase
 - repetition of a word or phrase
 - use of incorrect vowels (when vowels were added)
 - Intentional Errors:
 - harmonization
 - “improvement” of difficult text
 - objectionable texts deleted or replaced
 - use of synonyms
 - conflation (including both variant texts)





Transmission Methodology

Guiding Principals:

1. The Masoretic texts are the starting place.
2. The Septuagint is heavily relied upon; other texts less so.
3. The reading that best explains the origin of other variants is preferable.
4. The shorter reading is preferable.
5. The more difficult the reading the more likely it is to be the original one.
6. Readings that are not harmonized with other texts are preferred.
7. When all else fails, the textual critic must resort to “conjectural emendation” ~ that is, they must make an “educated guess.”



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