

## Be a Berean – Session 2

### Opening Prayer

Last week we got a glimpse into the Bereans that Luke wrote about in Acts 17. We learned that they were eager to hear what Paul and Silas were teaching and then they went about proving it from the OT scrolls which would have been in their synagogue. They eagerly examined the OT Scriptures when they received or heard the words of God spoken by Paul.

So how did the Bereans even get the OT Scriptures to examine?

How did the NT get written and compiled for the early church to read and examine?

What amazing things did God do to get the scriptures old and new to us?

My hope is that you will never look at that precious bible on your lap, in your hand, or in your hand, or on your table in the same way ever again. That you would truly understand the miracle that is God's Bible.

### What is in this Bible

#### ❖ Earliest Old Testament Texts

- Old testamental events were written down in Hebrew or portions in Aramaic over centuries on leather scrolls and other materials. (2000 BC – 500 BC)
- While the many books of the Bible were being produced since the days of Moses, the full canon of the Hebrew Scriptures, complete with the major and minor prophets, was compiled during the days of Ezra and Nehemiah (circa 515 BC - 458 BC). The Tenach was reproduced with great care by Hebrew copyists, who recognized that the words they painstakingly wrote out had been breathed by God.
  - In 285 BC, Ptolemy II Philadelphus funded the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek. He had established a library at Alexandria in Egypt and wanted to include a copy of the Jewish Scriptures. Greek was the language of the land, and most people - including the Jews - spoke Greek.
  - The Jewish people of Egypt used Hebrew primarily for ceremonial purposes. 70 scholars (or 72) were funded to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. Thus, the Greek work was given the name 'Septuagint' from the Greek word for 70. This translation is usually abbreviated with the Roman numeral LXX (70).
- We see that The Scriptures referenced in the time of Jesus and the Apostles was this Septuagint that was established about 285 BC.
  - These would have been the Scriptures that were in use at all the Jewish Synagogues and places of worship. These were the documents that the Bereans would have used and studied before, during, and after Paul's visit.

- These were the writings that Jesus referred to, and that all the apostles would have learned at an early age. These were the documents that the Bereans used for study and worship
- Jesus quoted these Scriptures often, and said in
  - *Luke 24:44-45 (NASB) “Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”<sup>45</sup> Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures”*

#### ❖ New Testament Texts

- The eyewitnesses of the risen Lord Jesus and their close associates wrote the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)
  - The history recorded in the book of Acts by Luke
  - The letters or epistles were written by Paul, Peter, Jude, James and John.
  - The apocalypse book of Revelation was written by John.
- Their combined writings quote from all but 8 of the Old Testament Scriptures [books]. Their writings became known as the New Covenant or New Testament – because the new covenant God made with people was promised in
  - *Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NASB) “Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,<sup>32</sup> not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.<sup>33</sup> “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.<sup>34</sup> They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”*
- The earliest translations were composed in Greek except for a few words and sentences, since it was the language of ordinary conversation in the Hellenistic world of that time.
  - They were designed to be sent out and reach as many people – both Jews and Gentiles, as possible. This was truly the work of the Holy Spirit.
- The difference between NT Greek and classical Greek used to be a cause of bewilderment to scholars, but the discovery, since the 1890s, of many thousands of papyrus documents in the sands of Egypt has shown that the language of the New Testament is the koine (“common”), that is the form of Greek generally spoken in the Mediterranean world in the first century.

- The NT books are collected and circulated throughout the known world by the time of Emperor Constantine, who legalized Christianity in AD 313.
  - A consensus had already emerged that 27 books could be traced to eyewitnesses and their close associates, which was confirmed by Athanasius, Jerome, Augustine, and three church councils.

## How God got the Bible to us after Jesus

❖ Timeline of the Bible – over all these years God was faithful, He did not let His Word in the written scripture form be forgotten or abused as the Word traveled through time to the current day.

- AD 382 – Jerome begins translating the Scriptures (Old and New) into Latin. This translation was called the Latin Vulgate, which was the official Bible for centuries with churches in fellowship with Rome.
- 500 – the Roman Empire declined causing migrations and new languages to emerge.
- 600 – 1300 – Several translations were written into the languages of their writer.
- 1382 – the first translation of the entire Bible from the Latin Vulgate into English was written and is called the Wycliffe Bible in honor of the priest and Oxford scholar John Wycliffe.
  - However, John was a critic of a number of church practices and policies, and his bible was banned and burned.
  - 44 years after Wycliffe’s death, his bones were exhumed and burned for heresy.
- 1408 a decree known as the “Constitutions of Oxford” was issued forbidding anyone to translate or read any part of the Bible in common English without permission of a bishop or provincial council.
  - Six years later a law was enacted that all persons who would read the Scriptures in their own language should “forfeit land, cattle, life, and goods from their heirs forever.”
  - Secretaries to Wycliff, Nicholas Hereford and John Purvey were imprisoned.
  - The public demand for the Bible continued, however, in spite of the severe penalties attached to its circulation.
- In the Mid-1400s, the world’s first printing press with moveable metal type is invented by Johann Gutenberg. This invention is perhaps the single most important event to influence the spread of the Bible.
  - The first book printed is Gutenberg Bible containing the Latin Vulgate version.
- William Tyndale. This great figure in the history of the English Bible was born about the year 1494 and spent ten years studying at Oxford and Cambridge.
  - Translating the New Testament from Greek, he could not get approval to publish it in England. He left for the Continent, but he was never able to return to England.
  - Tyndale seems to have visited Martin Luther at Wittenberg (translated the NT into German in 1522), and then went to Cologne, where he found a printer for his NT. A

priest discovered his plan, and Tyndale had to flee. In the city of Worms, he found another printer, and there in 1525, 3,000 copies of the first printed English NT were published.

- By 1530 six editions, numbering about 15,000 copies, were published. They were all smuggled into England—hidden in bales of cotton, sacks of flour, and bundles of flax.
- As soon as Tyndale’s NT reached England, there was a great demand for it: by the laity that they might read it, and by the ecclesiastical authorities that they might destroy it!
  - A decree was issued for its destruction. Bishops bought up whole editions to consign to the flames. As a result, only a few imperfect copies survive.
- Tyndale’s English NT began a new epoch in the history of the English Bible. It was not a translation from the Latin, as Wycliffe’s had been, but from the original Greek, the text published by Erasmus. With each successive edition, Tyndale made corrections and improvements.
  - So well did Tyndale do his work that the KJV reproduces about 90 percent of Tyndale in the NT. After the completion of the NT, Tyndale started to bring out a translation of the OT from the Hebrew text, but he lived only to complete the Pentateuch, Jonah, and probably the historical books from Joshua to 2 Chronicles.
- After ten years on the Continent, mostly in hiding, Tyndale was betrayed in Antwerp by an English Roman Catholic and was condemned to death for being a heretic. He was strangled and his body burned at the stake.
  - His last words were a prayer, “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.” But Tyndale had won his battle. Although his NT was burned in large quantities by the church, it contributed greatly toward creating an appetite for the Bible in English.
  - The government, moreover, began to see the wisdom and necessity of providing the Bible in English for common use.
  - The break with the papacy in 1534 helped greatly in this development.
- The Coverdale Bible was translated by Miles Coverdale and dedicated to Anne Boleyn, one of King Henry VIII’s wives in 1535. It was the first complete Bible printed in English.
  - So, within a year of Tyndale’s death, the entire Bible was translated, printed, and distributed, apparently with royal approval.
- The Geneva Bible came out in 1560. It enjoyed a long popularity, going thru 160 editions, 60 of them during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and continued to be printed even after the publication of the King James Version in 1611.
  - This is the Bible of Shakespeare and the one carried to America by the Pilgrims in 1620. The 1640 edition is the first English Bible to omit the Apocrypha found in the Vulgate.

- The King James or Authorized Version. King James I of England (who violently disliked the Geneva Bible) commissioned 54 scholars to undertake a new Bible Translation. Six teams of scholars (only 47 actually took part) worked for six years.
  - They were divided with 3 teams for the OT, 2 for the NT, and 1 for the Apocrypha. They were carefully monitored and as each group completed work, it was submitted to panels of 12 men for review. They used earlier English translations, Greek New Testaments based on Erasmus' text, and Hebrew and Aramaic texts to publish the new version in 1611.
  - In the course of time slight alterations were made, especially in spelling, to conform to changing usage, but these were all done piecemeal by private enterprise. Its excellence is shown by the fact that for almost three centuries it was virtually the only version used in the English-speaking Protestant world, for both public and private reading.
  
- ❖ Older Manuscripts were discovered between 1629 and 1947, when the Dead Sea Scrolls were found containing some of the oldest known copies of portions of the Old Testament made between 100BC and AD100.
  - Documents verifying the accuracy of the translations that were in print. The Holy Spirit was definitely supervising this discovery.

So, we see that over the centuries God has always been in the process of making His Word known to all people whether Gentiles or Jews. We saw bitterness, slaughter, betrayal of those translating God's Word into the common languages. We saw the blessed Bereans of each generation working to make God's complete Word and Truth known. And we see that God continues to work in the hearts of man year after year, proclaiming the Good News of His Son Jesus.

- ❖ Since 1947, many modern bibles can be found around the world. These include
  - Revisions of the King James Version
  - Modern and Contemporary language versions
  - Paraphrase versions, originally made for youth
  - Amplified versions, with added words to communicate insights
  - Literal Translation vs Paraphrase
    - Literal Translation – reproduces the original source languages into current language, word for word – ex. NKJV, NASB
    - Paraphrase or dynamically equivalent translations – aim at reproducing the meanings that is thought that the original readers would have understood – ex. NLT, NIV.
    - Some bible versions will contain a combination of literal and paraphrase as the translator does interpret the original languages – ex. Amplified, NEB
    - The Complete Jewish Bible CJB, uses translations and transliterations that are true to the Hebrew Texts.

## What's in the Bible

- ❖ The Old Testament (Tanakh) is divided into three parts
  - The Law (Torah), consisting of the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses
  - The Prophets, consisting of
    - the former: Joshua, Judges, the Books of Samuel, and the Books of Kings
    - the latter: the greater prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets.
  - The Hagiographa, or Holy Writings, including the rest of the books
    - The Psalms, Proverbs, and Job
    - Canticles (Song of Songs), Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther
    - Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1 & 2 Chronicles.
- ❖ Between the Old and the New Testament no addition was made to the revelation God had already given. The period of New Testament revelation, extending over a century, began with the appearance of John the Baptist.
- ❖ The New Testament ( new covenant: B'rit Hadashah) consists of
  - the historical books
    - the four Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
    - the Acts of the Apostles written by Luke.
  - the Epistles
    - written by Paul – Romans, the letters to the Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians, the letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.
    - those written by James, Peter, John, and Jude
    - the letter to the Hebrews
  - the book of prophecy – the Revelation written by John
- ❖ Nevertheless, the two parts of the Bible, the old and new, the Tanakh and the B'rit Hadashah, form one Bible. These two parts deal with parallel material in complementary ways from the beginning of history in Eden to the end of history in the New Jerusalem.
  - So, the New Testament apart from the Old is actually heretical, and the Old Testament apart from the New is incomplete – there are two testaments, one Bible
  - As Bereans – we must study both.

Complete Jewish Bible, personal notes added.

## How We Got the Bible – 10 Key Points – Handout

### Why Study the Bible

So now that we know how we received this wonderful gift of love called the Bible from our Heavenly Father. Why would we want to explore it and what can we hope to learn from studying His Word. The

answers are actually found in the Bible itself and show us that God knew we would have questions and He provided those answers ahead of time – actually before time itself even began. It's Amazing!

As we look at why to study the Bible you will see the scripture references. For your own benefit, take the time to read these chapters.

Be a Berean, check the noted scriptures out, and see if these statements align with God's word.

1. To know God as the great creator – **Genesis 1-3**
  - a. **Genesis 1:1** (NASB)<sup>1</sup> *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*
2. To enjoy and love God by meditating and rejoicing – **Psalm 119, 160-162; 1 Timothy 6**
3. To know God's Word by learning truth – **2 Timothy 3**
4. To understand the Word, Jesus is called the Word – **John 1, 10, 12, 14**
5. To learn direction in Life, what we are to do – **Psalm 119**
6. To find comfort and hope and encouragement – **Romans 15**
7. To let God expose our deepest thoughts and desires – **Hebrews 4**
8. To become pure and holy, as Jesus prayed for all believers – **John 17**
9. To obey the Great Commandment – the more we know God, the more we can love Him – **Mark 12; John 13**
10. Because in the Bible, God tells us to hear(read), to learn, and to obey(observe) His Word, and to teach our children – **Deut 4, 5**