

CANONISATION

The word canon comes from the Greek word *kanon*, meaning "measuring rod".

The word was used by a third century Christian named Origen to denote the collection of divinely inspired books as a "rule of faith or standard by which we measure and evaluate".

An OT or NT book became part of the canon upon being recognised as having been inspired of God and written by a prophet or an apostle.

It is believed that the OT canon was officially recognised by a Jewish council of 120 men formed around the time of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

Jewish historian Josephus (AD 37 – AD 100) mentions 22 books which were accepted by this council as divine.

When we consider the 800 OT references quoted in the NT by Jesus Christ and the apostles, a tremendous level of confidence can be placed on these ancient manuscripts.

DID YOU KNOW?

The English word Bible is a transliteration of the Greek word *biblia* (meaning "books"), and manuscript is derived from the Latin word *manus* (meaning "hand") and *scriptum* (meaning "written").



It is believed that hundreds of writings were in circulation in the first century, and so it was essential for early Christians to exercise discernment to differentiate between the divinely inspired writings of God and those of other origins and purposes.

For example, during early church history, the apostle Paul warned many of the churches about false apostles, teachers and doctrines (e.g. 2 Corinthians 11:13; Ephesians 4:24-35; 1 Tim 4:1-3).

In contrast, Peter makes mention of Paul's writings in his second epistle (2 Peter 3:14-18), giving confidence to all from the very start.

Similarly, Paul quotes Luke's Gospel as Scripture (1 Timothy 5:18). In almost all cases, the writings which were divinely inspired could be easily confirmed by their consistency with the oral ministry of the apostles and with other writings.

What is perhaps the most compelling evidence of the preserving hand of God on this sacred text is that all of the churches in existence today, whether "orthodox" or not, whether denominational or non-denominational, whether catholic or protestant, every Christian agrees to the same list of 27 books and the same order!

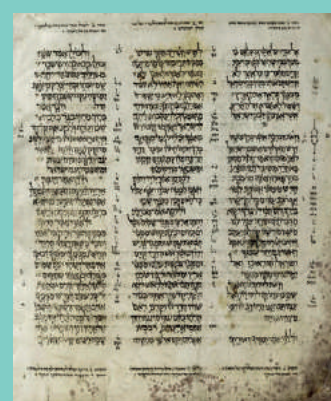
ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS

In the old days, each writing had to be hand-copied if it was to be duplicated, distributed, or when the original scrolls were falling into disrepair or illegibility.

For this purpose, scribes undertook the tedious task of copying the scriptures by hand. Jeremiah mentions the work of the scribe in Jeremiah 8:8 as "the pen of the scribes".

Here, the word "write" means to *announce*, to *count* or to *score* with a mark as a tally.

They earned this title as they counted each "let and title" to ensure that not a single letter or word was missing or out of place.



A page of Deuteronomy from Aleppo Codex

OLDEST COPIES OF THE AUTHORITATIVE TEXT FOR THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON

For the OT, it is believed that all of the original writings were in the ancient Hebrew language. Notwithstanding the changes to the ancient Hebrew language over the 1000-year history of the OT, around 500 BC, minor but notable changes to the copies of the Hebrew Scriptures began to emerge. These changes included the use of Aramaic in certain portions of the original text (e.g. a place name in Genesis 31:47; a sentence in Jeremiah 10:11, and lengthy sections including Daniel 2:4b-7:28, Ezra 4:8-6:18 and 7:12-26).

Such changes had arisen soon after the scribes began to use Aramaic, which they had learned during their seventy-year captivity in Babylon, from around 606 BC to 538 BC. It is not that the scribes changed the language of the OT Scriptures, rather, they borrowed Aramaic types and characters which were very similar to the Hebrew characters to express their own Hebrew language. A similar example of this can be seen in the use of many French words in our modern English language, such as camouflage and reservoir.

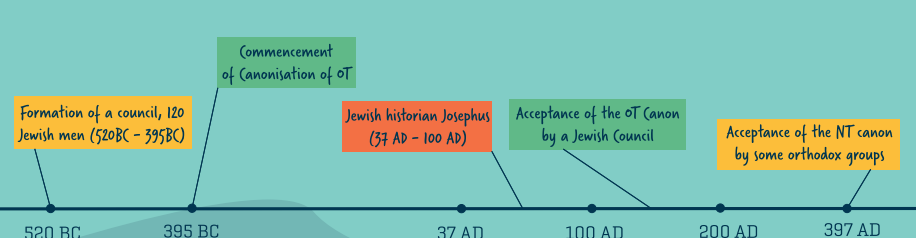
Arabic manuscript Aleppo Codex and Leningrad Codex

Coptic manuscript in Egypt

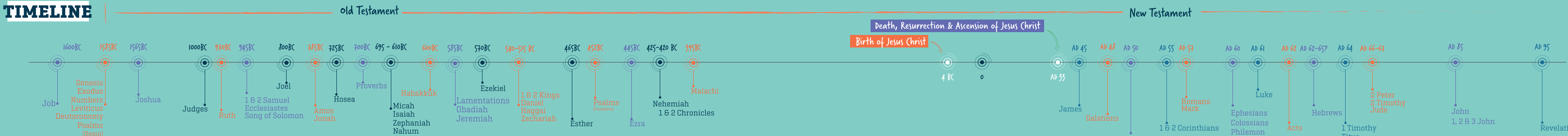
Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae

Latin Vulgate in Latin

CANONISATION TIMELINE



TIMELINE

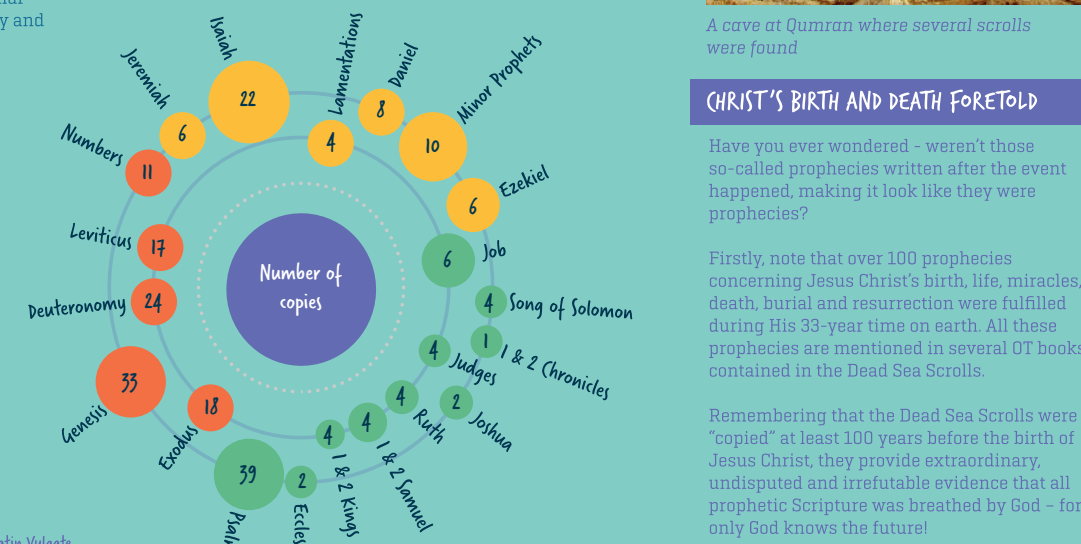


DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Between 1946 and 1956, over 970 manuscripts were discovered from the Qumran caves (located on the western side of the Dead Sea in the eastern Judaeian Desert). These manuscripts include 290 complete and partial copies from every single book of the OT except Esther, and date from around 2nd century BC.

With these findings, scholars have discovered that the Hebrew manuscript copies of the most authoritative Hebrew text used by the translators of the King James Version in 1611 were virtually identical to these ancient Dead Sea Scrolls. In later ages (as early as 100 BC - 100 AD), parchment (goatskin, sheepskin or goat skin) or vellum (Latin for "made from calf") became more popular alternatives for their durability and length of life.

COPIES OF OT SCRIPTURES FOUND AT QUMRAN CAVES



A cave of Qumran where several scrolls were found

CHRIST'S BIRTH AND DEATH FORETOLD

Have you ever wondered – weren't those so-called prophecies written after the event happened, making it look like they were prophecies?

Firstly, note that over 100 prophecies concerning Jesus Christ's birth, life, miracles, death, burial and resurrection were fulfilled during His 33-year time on earth. All these prophecies are mentioned in several OT books contained in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Remembering that the Dead Sea Scrolls were "copies" at least 100 years before the birth of Jesus Christ, they provide extraordinary, undisputed and irrefutable evidence that all prophetic Scripture was breathed by God – for only God knows the future!

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

Translations of portions of the Bible into English can be traced as far back as the 7th century when Old English (or Anglo-Saxon) was commonly spoken throughout England and southern Scotland.

WYCLIFFE

The first complete translation of the Bible into English was undertaken in 1382 by John Wycliffe – a professor at Oxford University and one of the earliest and best known reformers. For his translation, he took directly from the Latin Vulgate text and translated it into Middle English.

TYNDALE

William Tyndale, a remarkably gifted and highly intelligent inquisit, was the first to translate the Bible into English directly from Hebrew and Greek manuscripts.

His NT translation was complete in 1526 and by 1535, he had translated around half of the OT (the Pentateuch, Jonah, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles). Following tremendous opposition (during the reign of Henry VIII), his work was seen as being in direct conflict with the laws of England.

Judged as a heretic and strong opponent to the Roman Catholic Church (and the English laws which protected it), Tyndale was hanged and burnt at the stake in 1536.

COVERDALE

Miles Coverdale was the next to produce a complete Modern English translation of both OT and NT. The Coverdale Bible was complete in 1535 and was largely based upon Tyndale's English translation.

For the OT books which Tyndale was unable to complete, Luther's German translation and the Latin Vulgate were used.

Translations after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls

Modern version (1952 - present)

Dead Sea scrolls found during 1946 to 1956, in Qumran caves

Early copies

Original Manuscript (2nd to 3rd AD)

Antient Copies

Vulgate

Matthew

King James

Geneva

Catholic

Protestant

Anglican

Episcopal

Presbyterian

Methodist

Baptist

Quaker

Unitarian

Universalist

Swedenborgian

Christian Science

Mormon

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Millennialist

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