

Authority of the Bible, Manuscripts, and Bible Translations

Authority of the Bible

We accept the authority of the Bible as it was originally written and we understand them to be the holy scriptures. We have no originals; we have only copies. The Bible is a culturally immersed book and needs to be understood within the culture and within its original intended meaning. It is an ancient document and applying a modern understanding will not provide us with an accurate understanding of the Bible. It is God's word to the extent that we understand it properly.

For example, some of the Roman Jews didn't want to take the chance of participating in pagan practice by eating meat (Romans 14). A lot of the meat came from pagan temples. Taking the scriptures in Romans 14 out of this context as some do has resulted in some terrible false doctrine. For more understanding on what we believe on this issue and how the Bible can be understood correctly, see our belief on, [Understanding the Bible Correctly](#).

The Bible contains many different types of genre. There are stories and historical information. There are lessons be learned from both wrong behavior and right behavior. There are instructions, songs, godly proverbs, prophecy, and doctrine. These each need to be understood within their proper usage. For example, we wouldn't make some songs of praise doctrine because it most likely has to do with a single incident or the nature of who God is. Some songs have to do with God's nature and the praise has to do with who He is.

Manuscripts

First of all as we said, we have no original manuscripts of the Bible, only copies of manuscripts. The Bible translator needs to know what manuscripts look like, what manuscripts are available and where, and how to determine their age and what is a better manuscript. For example, a text from 1,000 AD may look more like a text from 200 BC than a text from 500 AD. So, the text from 1,000 AD was probably copied from an older manuscript than the one from 500 AD.

There are both Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Old Testament portion. The Septuagint was translated by 70 rabbis into Greek in the 2nd century BC and can provide insight into the meaning of the Hebrew manuscripts as well as the Greek used for the New Testament.

There are mostly Greek manuscripts of the New Testament portion and a number of the books of the New Testament portion have also been found written in Hebrew. The New Testament text has been put together solely from Greek manuscripts to this point. Recent scholarship has proven that many of the Hebrew manuscripts of the New Testament portion are legitimate Hebrew copies of manuscripts may provide us with a better rendering for future texts that we use for future translations. We accept the authority of both the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible as they were originally written and understood.

The [Novum Testamentum Graece](#) (is a book containing the Greek text from which translations are made) shows thousands of deviations between the Greek manuscripts. Translators will put together its best guess on what the original manuscript may have said based on the many manuscripts available and the quality of the manuscripts. They will then choose the best wording for the Greek text.

For example, a head rabbinical teacher and translator of the Tanakh (Old Testament portion) said that you can put 50 manuscripts together to come up with the best Hebrew Tanakh and they end up with the Aleppo Codex. This is how we know that the Aleppo Codex manuscript may be the most accurate manuscript of the Tanakh available (and why it is in a nuclear safe vault in Israel).

We would probably then check the final text used for our translations with the Aleppo Codex and give greater weight to the Aleppo Codex when developing a text to translate from than what we would give to other manuscripts. One can also apply various techniques in developing a text using the Greek manuscripts. For example, if most of the manuscripts say one thing, but there are only a couple of deviations from other manuscripts, we might go along with the most frequent text. There could be exceptions to this of course when we find that the deviation proves to be more accurate.

Translations of the Bible

There are word for word translations like the King James Version (KJV) and the New King James Version (NKJV) and a few others. Word for word translations often make good study Bibles. There are also translations that replace the language of the text based on what someone determines it may be saying like the New International Version (NIV) or the Complete Jewish Bible (CJB). The quality of the translation depends on the scholarship of the translators. Finally, there are versions of the Bible that translate the Bible with their own personal understanding that looks nothing like the original text. A lot of people like them for their simplicity. "The Message" is one of those. It is not the best choice of Bible for the serious Bible student.

The word for word translations are good study Bibles. They can lead to a better possible understanding of the original intent of the books of the Bible through the use of the many tools available like concordances, interlinears of the Greek and Hebrew, Hebrew and Greek dictionaries, Bible commentaries, annotated Bibles, works for the Septuagint, biblical customs, lexicons, the Novum Testamentum Graece (is a book containing the Greek text from which translations are made), Hebrew manuscripts, commentaries on the original text, and books with varying opinions on the meaning of some specific areas of the original text.

The CJB tries to understand what is written within a Jewish or Israelite context. All the writers of the Bible were Jewish including Luke (Lukah was his Hebrew name). A good study Bible is the NKJV with the Strong's definitions. One can easily look up any Greek or Hebrew word. The translators for the NIV did well even though they tend to make some poor interpretations at times.

What's most important is the understanding of the New Testament portion needs to be placed in its Jewish context. Yeshua (Jesus) was Jewish and so were the writers of the New Testament portion and all the early believers in the Messiah Yeshua. Without this context we cannot understand the Bible properly. The Jewish issue isn't often explained by the writer of the New Testament. One can study the Greek forever, but unless we understand the Jewish biblical context, we will never understand the scriptures the way they intended to be understood. Also, since Yeshua was Jewish and all the original believers in the Yeshua, saying that we must think of them as Hebraic instead of Jewish is an incorrect concept and can be confusing. Their society and the background of the New Testament writings was Jewish.

The Complete Jewish Bible changes people's names and places into Hebrew names. So, it can be difficult to read at times, but since the Bible was written by Israelites and Jews, it makes sense to place the Bible within its proper understanding. Other than the difficulties reading it at times, it is a great Bible and renders many passages in the correct context and therefore its proper understanding. It is worth getting used to using.

The CJB sees glaring misinterpretations of the Greek and supplies the correct understanding at times. A Jewish understanding comes from the culture and people of that time and makes the understanding accurate based on what was going on at the time the scriptures were written. This can be incredibly helpful in understanding the New Testament portion.