

RIVERVIEW CHURCH

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A LONG ROAD.

BY NOEL HEIKKINEN

After sharing a message at Riverview on the origins of the Bible, I got quite a few requests for the manuscript. This paper is essentially an adaptation of that message. As you read it, understand that it was written to be delivered as spoken word and then converted into this format. You can download a copy of the message at rivchurch.com. I have included a limited bibliography to aid you in additional study as well as sources for much of the content. I have not included many specific sources for the dated information in this paper because the dates are widely documented in many books and internet sites. Hopefully this paper will help you get a good grasp on how we ended up with a copy of God's word in a language that we can read and understand.

The Bible gets a lot of crap these days. Some people see it as a book of good stories; some see it as history textbook; and with The DaVinci Code being so popular, a lot of people have really whack ideas about it. If you have been around Riverview for very long, you know that we place a pretty high value on the Word. Often, we quote long sections and as often as possible we read portions of it instead of using our own words. We do that because this book carries so much more authority than any human being.

Time after time, people come up to us and say, "It's like you were talking right to me." I hate to break it to you - we never write a message picking anyone out in advance. When it seems like I, or one of the other pastors, are speaking right to you, you are running smack dab into the Bible. And for those of you who are Christ-followers, you have the Holy Spirit living inside of you interpreting the Word as well.

My job? It is simply to

WORK HARD SO GOD CAN APPROVE YOU. BE A GOOD WORKER, ONE WHO DOES NOT NEED TO BE ASHAMED AND WHO CORRECTLY EXPLAINS THE WORD OF TRUTH.

2 TIMOTHY 2:15

My job is to work hard to correctly explain what I find in this volume. This volume is a compilation of 66 books: 39 in a section called the Old Testament (which was written before Christ was born) and 27 in a section called the New Testament (which was written after Christ's death, burial, and resurrection). It was written in three languages over a period of more than a thousand years by more than 40 authors on three continents. Authors include adopted Egyptian nobility (Moses), a shepherd (David), a Babylonian official (Daniel), a tax collector (Matthew), a doctor (Luke), a philosopher/rabbi/tentmaker (Paul), and a fisherman (Peter). And even with all the diversity, there is this astonishing consistency of message. Have you ever thought about how amazing that is? 40 authors, over 1500 years, in agreement? Have you ever tried to get four people to agree on what restaurant to go to? For crying out loud, we can't get consistency on lunch but the Bible has it on all the major issues of life.



Contained in these pages are geological surveys, architectural specs, travel journals, genealogies, population stats, inventories, poetry, erotic poetry, and scads of legal documents, not to mention stories upon stories upon stories. And the paradox is that even with this diversity, Christians say it was authored by God. So how is it that this book, with such a wide variety of human authors, can also be written by God, who is outside of the bounds of time?

This is only part of the question because to me there is a greater mystery. God was not only involved in the authorship of the Bible, but he is intimately involved every step of the way, from the first pen stroke to us thinking through a passage in our heads.

Now, in order to look at this paradox, we are going to plow through roughly 3,500 years of history. You should know that I was a history major at MSU and flirted with the idea of being a history professor. You are stuck with that part of me right now. We are going to look at each step in the process of the development of the Word and God's involvement in each step.

THE FIRST STEP TO US RECEIVING THE WORD IS “INSPIRATION.”ⁱ

Lewis Sperry Chafer defined inspiration this way:

“Inspiration may be defined as God so supernaturally directing the writers of Scripture that without waiving their human intelligence, their individuality, their literary style, their personal feelings, or any other human factor, His own complete coherent message to man was recorded in perfect accuracy, the very words of Scripture bearing the authority of divine authorship.”ⁱⁱ

Peter said:

FOR NO PROPHECY WAS EVER PRODUCED BY THE WILL OF MAN, BUT MEN SPOKE FROM GOD AS THEY WERE CARRIED ALONG BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

2 PETER 1:21

The first recorded instance of God's Word being written down was when God wrote the Ten Commandments on a couple of pieces of rock and gave them to a guy named Moses. Most Biblical scholars believe this occurred between 1,400 and 1,500 BC (almost 3,500 years ago). From that point forward, God “inspired” men to do the writing. And we see their personalities in what they write; we see their education in the words they use; we see their perspectives in the way they tell stories. And each was “carried along” by the Holy Spirit as they wrote.

The earliest scripture is called the “Pentateuch,” which is the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. (Although there are many who believe the Book of Job may actually be the oldest book in the Bible). The Pentateuch was written by Moses and compiled and edited by an anonymous editor. When all five books of the Pentateuch are together in one scroll, it is called a “Torah.” The Torah was quickly accepted as Scripture and a copy of it was even carried around in the Ark of the Covenant.

In addition to the Torah, the Old Testament contains books of history, prophecy, and poetry that were written over a period of roughly a thousand years.

AFTER THE “INSPIRATION” OF SCRIPTURE COMES THE NEXT STEP, WHICH IS THE “TRANSMISSION” OF SCRIPTURE.

Transmission is the careful copying of an original text so that other people can read it. A lot of people get hung up here: how could the manuscripts be transmitted without error? That's where God has been involved again. He has promised that his Word will always “be.”



Psalms 119 is an amazing chapter dealing with, among other things, the power of the Word in our lives. A verse in this chapter says this:

FOREVER, O LORD, YOUR WORD IS FIRMLY FIXED IN THE HEAVENS.

PSALMS 119:89

The word in this verse for “forever” is one of my favorite Hebrew words. It’s “Olam”(MDlwøø), and it means “beyond the horizon in every direction.”ⁱⁱⁱ God’s word has always been and always will be. Jesus is the personification of this Word and his written word is his message to us. Over the centuries, he has protected it in some extraordinary ways.

For instance, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and these writings were passed down from generation to generation for thousands of years on scrolls. These scrolls were made of animal skin, usually sheep. A Torah, if completely unrolled, is over 150 feet long! And considering most sheep are only about two to three feet long, it would take an entire flock of sheep to make just one Torah.

The Jewish scribes who made these scrolls were anal. If they made even the slightest mistake in copying, such as allowing two letters of a word to touch, they destroyed that entire sheepskin and the skin before it because it had touched the one containing a mistake. That would be like me telling the PowerPoint people to burn the computer every time they made a typo. Luckily, they never do, so they are safe.

By approximately 500 BC, the 39 Books that make up the Old Testament were complete. Now in that 500 year period, some more books were written, called “The Apocrypha,” which Jewish historians of Jesus’ day did not believe was scripture. After 500 BC, there was prophetic silence until the time of Christ.

After Jesus’ resurrection, it was an exciting time to be part of the church. There was this wholesale belief that Jesus would return any second. The Christians of that day were committed to living life the way Jesus would have them do it and they were concerned with passing this good news to the ends of the earth. In order to make this happen, many of the original friends of Jesus began to write stuff down.

Four of Jesus’ closest friends wrote the stories of his time on earth and we call these stories the Gospels. The best way to understand this is like the evening news. Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote accounts that come from the varying local perspectives of TV10, Channel 6, and ABC53. John wrote a bigger national perspective like CNN. Then, there is a book called Acts that details the history of the local church. There are 13 books written by Paul addressing specific issues the local churches were dealing with, as well as the doctrinal framework of the early church. There are eight other letters by other authors that are also written to local churches and groups of churches, and finally a crazy book about the end of the world written by one of Jesus’ closest friends, John.

The books in the Bible weren’t written in the order we have them; instead, they are grouped according to content. In fact, there were a lot of other guys (Barnabas, Clement, and others) who wrote books that were widely circulated in the early church as well. I love what a guy named Berkhof wrote about this time in history:

“For them Christianity was not in the first place a knowledge to be acquired, but the principle of a new obedience to God.”^v

These guys weren’t all worried about writing something that would “make the cut into the Bible.” They were writing to help the local church live out the life that Jesus had given them. At the same time, some of these texts were immediately recognized as something much, much more. At one point, Paul quotes Luke:



FOR THE SCRIPTURE SAYS, “YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE AN OX WHEN IT TREADS OUT THE GRAIN,” AND “THE LABORER DESERVES HIS WAGES.”

1 TIMOTHY 5:18

He quotes Luke and calls his writings scripture. Then, Peter does the same thing with Paul:

SOME OF [PAUL’S] COMMENTS ARE HARD TO UNDERSTAND, AND THOSE WHO ARE IGNORANT AND UNSTABLE HAVE TWISTED HIS LETTERS AROUND TO MEAN SOMETHING QUITE DIFFERENT FROM WHAT HE MEANT, JUST AS THEY DO THE OTHER PARTS OF SCRIPTURE —AND THE RESULT IS DISASTER FOR THEM.

2 PETER 3:16

The early church immediately began to recognize that the words of these men - those who had walked with Jesus, as well as Paul, who had a crazy face to face encounter with him after his ascension - carried big time weight.

But then, these men began to die off and there began to be some internal and external pressures on the church. On the outside there was increasing persecution, and on the inside came a wide variety of crazy teaching. There were some guys who were humanizing Jesus and rejecting Paul’s apostleship; there were others who rejected Jesus’ divinity; there were some others who tried to mix in some Asian philosophies; and yet others who portrayed the God of the Old Testament as a different and inferior God to the New Testament God. For the first time, there was the need for a standard: a compiled collection of doctrine and eye-witness accounts of Jesus’ life here on earth.

A guy named Origen was one of the earliest Bible commentators and compilers. In the early 200’s, he categorized all the books that had been written into three categories: those acknowledged by all the churches as scripture; those acknowledged by some churches as scripture; and those everyone knew were crap. In the mid-300s, the Roman Emperor Constantine became a Christian and ordered 50 copies of the New Testament. Most people agree that the 27 books we have in our New Testament were what he got. In fact, a guy named Athanasius wrote in 367:

Again it is not tedious to speak of the [books] of the New Testament. These are the four Gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Afterwards, the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles...of James, one; of Peter, two; of John, three; after these, one of Jude. In addition there are fourteen Epistles of Paul, written in this order. The first, to the Romans; then two to the Corinthians; after these, to the Galatians; next, to the Ephesians; then to the Philippians; then to the Colossians; after these, two to the Thessalonians, and that to the Hebrews; and again, two to Timothy; one to Titus; and lastly, that to Philemon. And besides, the Revelation of John.

Interestingly enough, there was a little tiff happening between the church in the east and the church in the west. It was like the rap wars: east coast vs. west coast. They were both trying to figure out this “what is scripture” issue. Athanasius, who was from the east side, had come to his conclusion, while Jerome, from the west side, came up with the same 27 books.



AND THIS IS WHERE WE LAND ON THE THIRD STEP FOR THE FIRST TIME: “TRANSLATION.”

Translation is an important step. I would guess that no one reading this is fluent in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, and so if we are to read the word of God, we need to have it translated into our language.

In 382 AD, Jerome translated the New Testament from Greek into Latin. He was asked to include the Apocrypha, the document the Jewish historians of Jesus’ day did not regard as scripture. He did not want to do this, because he thought it would confuse things. But, he was finally pressured into it, and so he put notes in the margins saying he did not believe the Apocrypha to be scripture but more general Jewish historical writings. The Apocrypha was kept as part of virtually every Bible for centuries, but it was more like the maps in the back of your Bible: it was not considered to be scripture, but more of an additional resource.

In 397 and then again in 418, councils met to go through the pile of books and see what they agreed to be scripture. Both times they landed (again) on the same 27 books we have. The criteria they laid out was pretty rigid:

- There had to be consensus with all of them (through the Holy Spirit) that the
- Book was scripture.
- They had to be eye-witness accounts, especially from those who had been apostles.
- They had to be widely accepted for centuries in churches.
- They had to have consistent content.
- They had to have spiritual and moral impact on those that read them.
- They had to have proof of the earliest church accepting them as scripture.

By 500 AD the Bible had been translated into over 500 languages. Just one century later, by 600 AD, it had been restricted to only one language: the Latin version that Jerome had translated. The only organized and recognized church at that time in history was the Catholic Church, and they made it illegal for the Bible to be translated into any language other than Latin. Those in possession of non-Latin Bibles were executed. Now please don’t take this as “Catholic Bashing,” it’s just a matter of history. Historians agree that the Bible was restricted by the Catholic Church to Latin and most agree it was because only the priests were educated to understand Latin. This gave the church ultimate power because nobody could question their “Biblical” teachings. And that is why the next 800 years were known as “The Dark Ages.”

The first hand-written English Bible was produced in the 1380’s by an Oxford professor by the name of John Wycliffe, who was well-known throughout Europe for his opposition to the teaching of the organized Church. He believed it contradicted the Bible and so he produced dozens of copies of English Bibles. They were translated from the Latin version, which was the only source text he had. One of Wycliffe’s followers, John Hus, actively promoted Wycliffe’s ideas after his death. Primarily, he taught that people should be able to read the Bible in their own language. Hus was burned at the stake in 1415, with Wycliffe’s Bibles used as kindling for the fire.

In the 1450’s, a guy named Johann Gutenberg invented the printing press and the first book to ever be printed was the Latin Bible Jerome from the west side had translated. In the 1490’s another Oxford professor, and the king’s doctor, Thomas Linacre, decided to learn Greek. After reading the Gospels in Greek and comparing it to the Latin version, he wrote in his diary,

“Either this (the original Greek) is not the Gospel...or we are not Christians.”

The Latin had become so corrupt that it no longer even preserved the message of the Gospel, and yet the Church still threatened to kill



anyone who read the scripture in any language other than Latin.

In 1496, John Colet, another Oxford professor and the son of the Mayor of London, started reading the New Testament in Greek and translating it into English for his students at Oxford. This gathering grew so large they had to move it to Saint Paul's Cathedral in London. The people were so hungry to hear the Word of God in a language they could understand that there were often 20,000 people packed in the church and at least that many outside trying to get in.

Inspired by these guys, a scholar named Erasmus wanted to fix the corrupt Latin Bible, so in 1516 he published a Greek-Latin Parallel New Testament. The Latin part was not the corrupt version, but his own directly from the Greek. This guy showed how important it was to go back and use the original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts to maintain accuracy.

In 1517, a guy named Martin Luther nailed 95 beefs he had with the Catholic Church onto the church door in a town called Wittenberg. This led to him going on trial. When he was asked to denounce his conclusions at the trial, he said:

“Since, then, Your Majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless Scripture and plain reason convict me (I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other) my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise so help me God. Amen.”^{vi}

He then went on to be the first man to print the Bible in German in the 1530's. In 1525, a guy named William Tyndale was the first man to ever print the New Testament in the English language. This guy was brilliant. He was so fluent in eight languages that most people couldn't tell which one was his native tongue. One day he showed up on Luther's doorstep in Germany and within a year had translated the New Testament into English.

His bibles were burned as soon as the church could get their hands on them, but copies trickled through and someone actually snuck one into the bedroom of King Henry VIII. The church burned hundreds of New Testaments but because of the printing press there were always more there to replace them. Tyndale was hunted for 11 years by bounty hunters charged with killing him on sight.

In 1535, Myles Coverdale printed the first complete Bible in the English language. At this point, the floodgates were open and for the first time in a thousand years people had the Bible in their own language.

In 1546, at the council of Trent, the Catholic Church for the first time took the Apocrypha from the additional resource section of the Bible and said that it was “Scripture.” That's why the Catholic Bible contains books that we don't have.

There were many, many more men and women who gave their lives so that you could hold a copy of the Bible that you can read and understand. In order to make it easier to study, the chapter and verse divisions you have in your Bible were added in the 1500's.

In the 1600's, under the direction of the Anglican Church in England, a new version was created. It was called the King James Version, because King James I authorized it to be made. I think one of the most ironic things to happen in the history of the Bible is happening now (500 years after the fight to get the Bible in English...where a primary argument was that it is important to examine the original Greek and Hebrew and that the Latin version was only a translation of the original). Now, we have those who claim that the King James is the only true text. Those who advocate that position are merely reproducing the arrogance from 500 years ago!

Now here's an interesting bit of trivia. The first Bible printed in America was done in the native Algonquin Indian Language by John



Eliot in 1663. The first English Bible wasn't printed in America until 1782. And that brings us to today.

And now, on my bookshelf, I have more than 25 different translations of the Bible. Each of these translations has strengths and weaknesses. For instance, one is in Swahili, and I don't know Swahili: that's a big weakness. The first three steps of the Bible getting to you are pretty well complete: Revelation Transmission, and Translation.

Now, I want to take another look at Transmission. A lot of people question if the manuscripts we have now can really be reliable after thousands of years! That is a valid question. Look at this quick comparison with other famous pieces of ancient literature that are often studied right here, at our local Michigan State University.

I'm just going to take three.^{vii}

AUTHOR	DATE WRITTEN	OLDEST COPY	TIME SPAN BETWEEN AUTHORSHIP AND COPY	NUMBER OF COPIES	ACCURACY
Plato	380 BC	900 AD	1300 Years	7	Cannot Determine (Not Enough Copies)
Aristotle	350 BC	1100 AD	1400 Years	5	Cannot Determine (Not Enough Copies)
Homer	850 BC	Unknown	Unknown	643	95%
New Testament	60 AD	130 AD	70 – 100 Years	14,000	99.5%

There is no other ancient text with greater historical proof than the Bible, period. If someone tells you the Bible is too old to be reliable, tell them they must apply the same standard to Plato, Aristotle, and Homer, not to mention every other ancient philosopher. To dismiss the Bible because of how old it is is pure unadulterated hypocrisy. It is more reliable than any ancient text.

Here, in 21st Century America, we have more translations of the Bible than we know what to do with. And if you are not satisfied with these translations, you have an advantage no one in history has ever had! You have access to a wealth of resources at your fingertips to help you. If you wish to go back into the original languages and see how the translations have been done, you can do so for free! You can continue this translation step and you don't have to be a scholar.

If you go to StudyLight.org, you can read the Bible in its original language, complete with definitions of each word and pronunciation guides. If you don't like any English translation that is out there, you can make your own!

NOW, HERE'S WHERE THIS PROCESS HITS US: INTERPRETATION.

Interpretation is where we read the Bible in a language we understand and we determine what the verses mean. But, how do we know what the Bible means to say? How do we do that? That is the million dollar question. My friend John once offered some great advice in a paper he wrote. He said we have to have humility toward three people.

First, we must have humility toward God. Ultimately, he wrote the Bible. But many of us come to the Bible and we place authority in the wrong place. We put ourselves as the ultimate authority over what we read. And when we come across something we don't like we try to find a way to explain it away. Mark Driscoll says,

"It's not that we don't understand the Bible. It's that we don't like what we understand so we assume it must be speaking metaphorically."

There are times where the Bible will smack the face of what you believe or feel and those moments will be the test of where the



authority lies. You must start with humility toward God.

Then, you must be humble toward the authors of each book. What do I mean by that? Have you ever received an email from someone and something they said seemed hurtful? If you're like me, you stew for days and finally confront them to find out you misunderstood. Written communication is so hard because you can't see the person's face. You can't read what they are feeling toward you, and this is even with someone you know! Now throw it into the perspective of a 3,000 year gap in a different culture where there were no microwave burritos!

It is going to take tremendous humility on your part to read the text and try to understand where the author is coming from. A lot of it is just common sense. For instance, many authors use literary devices. If I said, "I am so hungry, I could eat a horse," would you run out and prepare one for me and get all offended when I could only eat one leg? Obviously, I don't mean I could really eat a horse. When you read the Bible, you have to ask yourself, "What is the author trying to communicate?"

Some of the Bible is written to specific groups of people as well. For instance, in the past I've spoken about God's desire to wipe out the Ninevites^{viii} because they were wicked. Well, we are wicked too. Should we freak out when we read that because we think he is about to rain down fire on our heads? No! But we can learn that there are consequences to being wicked and that when we repent, God will forgive.

There is also sarcasm in the Bible. For instance, this verse:

BUT IF I, BROTHERS, STILL PREACH CIRCUMCISION, WHY AM I STILL BEING PERSECUTED? IN THAT CASE THE OFFENSE OF THE CROSS HAS BEEN REMOVED. I WISH THOSE WHO UNSETTLE YOU WOULD EMASCULATE THEMSELVES!

GALATIANS 5:11-12

Does that mean if someone preaches circumcision, we should run out and make them emasculate themselves? Obviously not.

That's why I don't like the term "literal" interpretation. I like the word "normal." If the passage is meant to be sarcastic, interpret it that way. If it is meant to be a prophesy, interpret it that way. If it is meant to be a command, interpret it that way. Look at the verses around the verse you are reading and the chapters around the verses and the book as a whole. If you do that, you will get the point.

Here's where we have to remember the final humility. We must be humble toward other Christians who read the same Bible we ourselves do and come up with other interpretations. We need to stand firm on our convictions, but not be jerks.

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR US TO INTERPRET THE BIBLE CORRECTLY BECAUSE THE FINAL STEP IS "APPLICATION," AND THAT'S WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD.

Reading the Bible and studying it means nothing without application. Jesus said to the religious dudes of his day:



“YOU SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES BECAUSE YOU BELIEVE THEY GIVE YOU ETERNAL LIFE. BUT THE SCRIPTURES POINT TO ME! YET YOU REFUSE TO COME TO ME SO THAT I CAN GIVE YOU THIS ETERNAL LIFE.”

JOHN 5:39-40

They got the interpretation wrong and they got the application wrong.

People often ask us why we do topical sermons at Riverview. One of the reasons is that we think the Bible has specific things to say to each of us in our particular stage of life. So we look to the Bible and connect the pieces to where we live our lives every day.

Whether you are just starting with the Bible or you have been reading it for years, you can be assured that God has been in control of his word. He has been watching over it the whole time and he will continue to do so as you pick it up to read it and apply it to your life today.

TIMELINE OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE:

- Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy = Moses - 1400 B.C.
- Joshua = Joshua - 1350 B.C.
- Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel = Samuel / Nathan / Gad - 1000 - 900 B.C.
- 1 Kings, 2 Kings = Jeremiah - 600 B.C.
- 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah = Ezra - 450 B.C.
- Esther = Mordecai - 400 B.C.
- Job = Moses - 1400 B.C.
- Psalms = several different authors, mostly David - 1000 - 400 B.C.
- Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon = Solomon - 900 B.C.
- Isaiah = Isaiah - 700 B.C.
- Jeremiah, Lamentations = Jeremiah - 600 B.C.
- Ezekiel = Ezekiel - 550 B.C.
- Daniel = Daniel - 550 B.C.
- Hosea = Hosea - 750 B.C.
- Joel = Joel - 850 B.C.
- Amos = Amos - 750 B.C.
- Obadiah = Obadiah - 600 B.C.
- Jonah = Jonah - 700 B.C.
- Micah = Micah - 700 B.C.
- Nahum = Nahum - 650 B.C.
- Habakkuk = Habakkuk - 600 B.C.
- Zephaniah = Zephaniah - 650 B.C.
- Haggai = Haggai - 520 B.C.
- Zechariah = Zechariah - 500 B.C.
- Malachi = Malachi - 430 B.C.
- Matthew = Matthew - 55 A.D.
- Mark = John Mark - 50 A.D.
- Luke = Luke - 60 A.D.
- John = John - 90 A.D.
- Acts = Luke - 65 A.D.



- Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon = Paul - 50-70 A.D.
- Hebrews = unknown, best guesses are Paul, Luke, Barnabas, or Apollos - 65 A.D.
- James = James - 45 A.D.
- 1 Peter, 2 Peter = Peter - 60 A.D.
- 1 John, 2 John, 3 John = John - 90 A.D.
- Jude = Jude - 60 A.D.
- Revelation = John - 90 A.D.

PARTIAL TIMELINE OF BIBLE TRANSLATION HISTORY^{IX}

1,400 BC: The first written Word of God: the Ten Commandments given to Moses

500 BC: Completion of all original Hebrew manuscripts, which make up the 39 books of the Old Testament

200 BC: Completion of the septuagint Greek manuscripts, which contain the 39 Old Testament books and 14 Apocrypha books

100s AD: Completion of all original Greek manuscripts, which make up the 27 books of the New Testament

315 AD: Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria, identifies the 27 books of the New Testament

382 AD: Jerome's Latin Vulgate manuscripts produced, (including the Apocrypha with Jerome's notes that he did not see them as scripture)

397 & 418 AD: Councils confirm New Testament Canon

500 AD: Scriptures have been translated into over 500 languages

600 AD: Latin was the only language allowed for Scripture

1384 AD: Wycliffe is the first person to produce a (hand-written) English manuscript of the Bible

1455 AD: Gutenberg invents the printing press; the first book ever printed is Gutenberg's

Bible in Latin 1496 AD: Colet translates Bible into English at Oxford and teaches at St. Paul's Cathedral

1516 AD: Erasmus produces a Greek/Latin Parallel New Testament

1522 AD: Martin Luther's German New Testament

1526 AD: William Tyndale's New Testament; The first New Testament printed in English

1535 AD: Myles Coverdale's Bible; The First Complete Bible printed in English

1546 AD: Council of Trent adds Apocrypha to Catholic Bible as Scripture

1560 AD: The Geneva Bible Printed; the first Bible to add numbered verses to each chapter

1611 AD: The King James Bible printed (including the Apocrypha)

1663 AD: Algonquin Indian Language Bible printed in America by John Eliot

1782 AD: Robert Aitken's Bible; the first English Bible (KJV) printed in America

1885 AD: Apocrypha was officially removed from King James Version

1971 AD: The "New American Standard Bible" (NASB) is published as a "Modern and Accurate Word for Word English Translation" of the Bible

1973 AD: The "New International Version" (NIV) is published as a "Modern and Accurate Phrase for Phrase English Translation" of the Bible

2002 AD: The English Standard Version (ESV) is published as a translation to bridge the gap between the accuracy of the NASB and the readability of the NIV

END NOTES:



- I - While many authors and Bible commentators have detailed these steps, I took the specific 5 step terminology I use in this paper from “The New Testament: Why to trust it, How to read it, and tips for studying it” by Mark Driscoll at Mars Hill Church (<http://www.marshillchurch.org>)
- II - Lewis Sperry Chafer, “Systematic Theology”
- III - I adapted this definition from Rob Bell at Mars Hill Bible Church (<http://www.mhbcmi.org>)^{iv} Louis Berkhof, “History of the Christian Church,” p 39
- V - Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, “Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (2nd series)” p 552
- VI - Roland H. Bainton, “Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther,” p 144
- VII - Ken Boa “I’m glad you asked,” p 78
- VIII - Jonah
- VIII - Adapted from <http://www.greatsite.com/timeline-english-bible-history/>

ADDITIONAL SOURCE:

C.L. Wynn, “Route 66” at Riverview Church <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/xn-canon.html>

