

How we got the Old Testament

Introduction

Why is the Bible so important to the Christian faith?

Christianity is based solely on the Bible, to the extent that anything brought into the practice of Christianity from outside the Bible is false. All that we know about God is via the Bible.

Even though Paul tells us that we have no excuse for not believing: *For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen*, (Romans 1:20), but we need the Bible to tell us **about** God.

The Bible is unique in all literature. About 40 writers including kings, farmers, prophets, fishermen, a tax collector, a doctor, a Rabbi, a cupbearer, a military General, and others, wrote it over a period of 1,600 years. It was written on three continents (Asia, Africa and Europe) and in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek)—but it is one coherent story from start to finish with salvation through faith in Jesus Christ as its theme.

Moses would have written the first five books of the Bible while he was in the Sinai desert which is regarded as being part of Africa, see:

wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Africa, retrieved June 18, 2011.

It starts with the omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent Supernatural Being who created everything and desired to have a relationship with the pinnacle of His creation: mankind. The relationship was based on the condition that if mankind obeyed God and worshipped Him only, He would bless them. This formed the foundation of the old covenant or Old Testament.

Mankind failed to keep his part of the agreement and rejected God and worshipped idols. God still wanted to have the relationship but sin caused a separation that man could not overcome.

God, in an act of unfathomable grace, sent His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (God the Son), who was and is sinless, to take the penalty for the sins of everybody upon Himself, and to pay that penalty, which is death. This He did on the cross of Calvary, so that all who put their faith in Him could have that original relationship, that Adam and Eve experienced, with God restored, and be with Him for all eternity. This redemptive action of God is known as the new covenant or New Testament.

Among the world's major religions, only Christianity has the doctrine of eternal salvation by grace—that is, God's unmerited mercy, freely extended to sinners, made possible by Christ's atoning work on the cross. Grace sets Christianity apart from the man-made religions, which invariably teach salvation by works.

Robert Chapman (1803–1902) of Devon, England, has blessed and encouraged many with his description of the Bible:

This Book contains: The mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you. It's the traveller's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christian's charter. Here paradise is restored, Heaven opened, and the gates of Hell disclosed.

Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the Judgment and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, rewards the greatest labor, and condemns all who trifle with its contents.

Christians believe that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God.

The Bible tells us that this is the case: 2 Timothy 3:16, *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

So the Bible is the standard for which error can be exposed eg Book of Mormon, the Jehovah Witness Bible etc.

The Bible is by far the most widely-read and most published book of all time. In the last 50 years alone, it is estimated that over 3.9 billion copies of the Bible have been **printed**.

In comparison, the next most published book is *Quotations from the Works of Moa Tse-tung* at around 800 million.

Gary bates and Lita Cosner, *How did we get our Bible*, Creation Ministries, 2013.

Bible sales have grown at an almost exponential rate. For example, the Guinness eBook of Records states that 2,500,000,000 (2.5 billion) Bibles have been **sold** since 1815, and the Bible has been translated into 2,233 languages.

- guardian.co.uk/books/2008/jun/18/harrypotter.news, retrieved April 11, 2011

The Old Testament

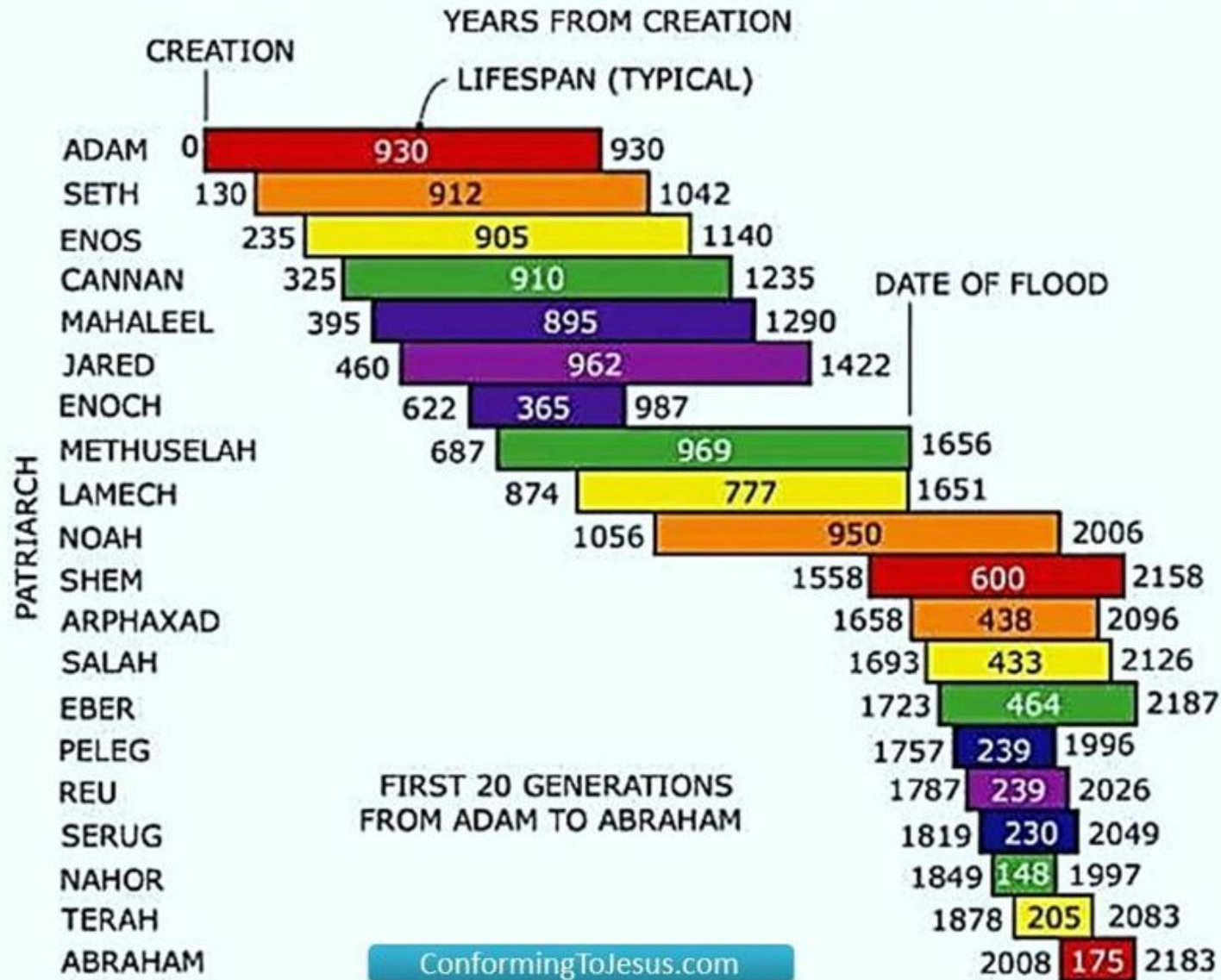
It was important for the Hebrews to record their history meticulously and accurately for several reasons:

- God had promised to send a Messiah to reverse the judgement He placed on mankind (Genesis 3:15) and they wanted to track from where this man would come.
- The Children of Israel were descendants of the sons of Jacob (God had changed his name to Israel) to which tribe they belonged was important to them for inheritance rights among others.
- God gave Moses instructions on how they should live; the Ten Commandments, the Civil laws and the Ceremonial laws. These needed to be recorded for future generations.

Moses would have received either direct inspiration from God as to the events which happened before his life and/or this information would have been handed down from his ancestors, e.g. Adam was still alive during the life of Noah's father Lamech.

Since Moses was raised in Pharaoh's household and was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, he would have written as instructed by God and most likely on clay tablets which were commonly used at the time. Later, these and subsequent writings were written on scrolls and kept in the Temple. Most importantly, the scriptures were **written**.

LIFESPANS OF THE BIBLICAL PATRIARCHS



The Bible was written mostly as the events occurred

This makes the Bible different to other religious books, particularly the Koran.

Moses, who the Bible states, wrote its first five books, was repeatedly instructed by God to **write** what God had told him (Exodus 17:14, 24:4, 34:27).

At the very start of Genesis there is a reference to it being **written** (Genesis 5:1).

There are repeated references throughout the Bible to the fact that it was a **written record** (Deuteronomy 31:9, 31:24-26; Joshua 1:7-8, 8:31-34, 22:5; 2 Chronicles 34:14, Mark 7:10, 12:24; Luke 24:44; John 1:17, 5:46, 7:23; Romans 10:5).

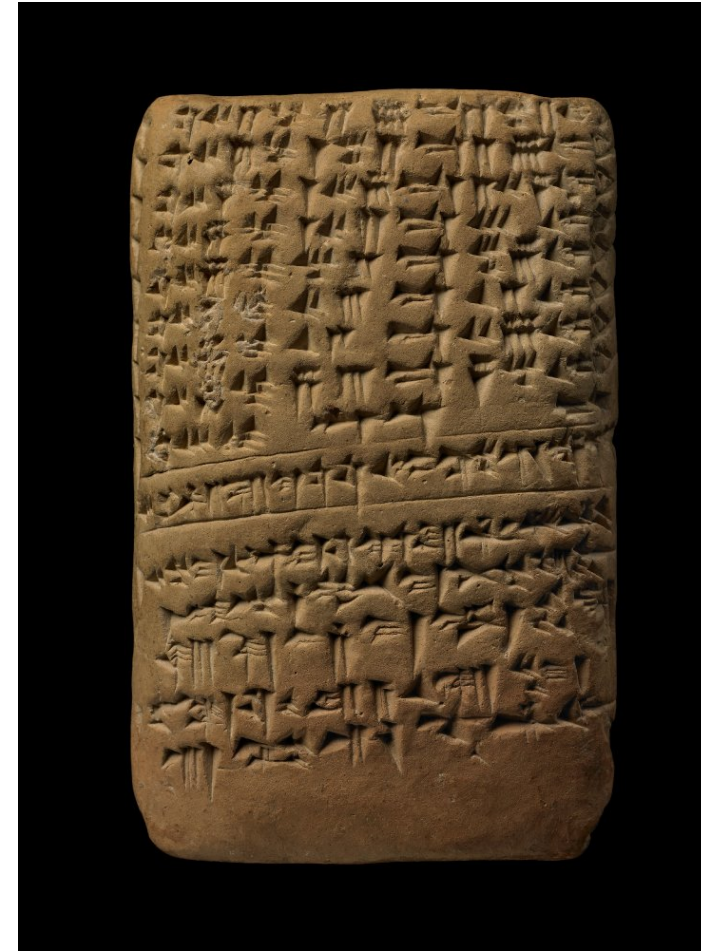
How were the Hebrew writings originally recorded?

An ancient clay tablet containing early writing which could have been the way Moses recorded.

Moses brought the Ten Commandments down from Mount Sinai on two tablets of **stone**, written by the figure of God (Exodus 31:18).

We are told that Moses was thoroughly educated in Egypt and he would have been familiar with the Egyptian writing using a stylus and making an impression in wet clay which was then baked for preservation.

Clay was the preferred material upon which the wedge-shaped symbols were impressed as the main form of communication in the ancient world . Ancient libraries have been discovered containing many thousands of clay tablets. The image shown is from Babylon.



However, we are told that scrolls were used even in the time of Moses (wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of Scrolls).

Exodus 17:14 records God telling Moses to “write on a scroll”
So by the time of the Exodus, scrolls were in use.

The book of Jeremiah contains many references to writing on a scroll. On one occasion, king Jehoiakim did not like what Jeremiah wrote so he had it burnt. (chapter 36). Jeremiah’s scribe was Baruch.

Translations from the original into other languages

The Bible was originally written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. From these languages it has been translated into over 2,000 languages and dialects.

The aim of the translators is to remain faithful to the original meaning of the text while at the same time use language that sounds as clear and as natural to the modern reader as the Hebrew or Greek did to the original reader.

Ron Rhodes, *The Complete Guide to Bible Translation*, Harvest House Publishers, 2009, page 17.

Some of the difficulties in translating into other languages.

1. Languages are constantly changing. The Hebrew Moses spoke is different to the Hebrew that is spoken today.

The Greek which the New Testament was written is koine Greek, vastly different to today's Greek.

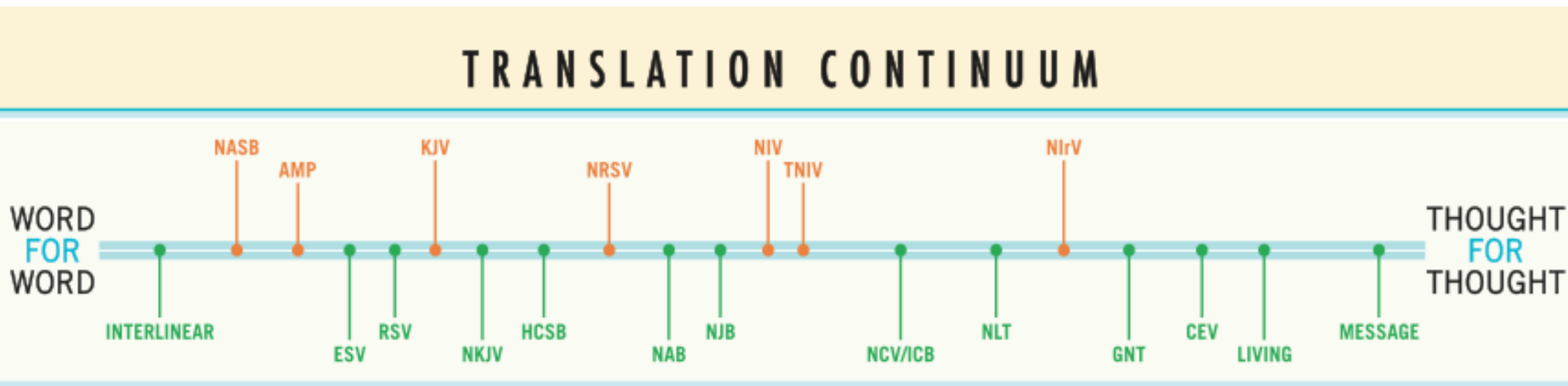
Aramaic is a dead language and almost extinct.

2. The language which the Bible is being translated into is changing as well. Simply Google “King James Bible 1611, Genesis chapter 1” and you will find how much English has changed. Even our 1769 KJV contains words and phrases that are not used now.

3. No two languages can be changed into the other directly.

Although it seems that a word for word translation would be the most accurate, but languages contain idioms or figures of speech such as if a job is easy we might say, “it’s a piece of cake” or “it’s raining cats and dogs” In these cases, a phrase by phrase translation would render a more accurate meaning.

In one part of the Old Testament, the Hebrew literally reads “God’s nostrils enlarged” this was translated to read in English “God became angry.”



This continuum shows how different Bible translations fit into the word-for-word and thought-for-thought translation philosophies.

Liberal theologians claim that the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible), Joshua and Judges were written by the Jews during their exile in Babylon. And that they created the stories to explain their predicament.

However, there are reasons why this was not so.

- As shown before, Moses actually wrote as he was directed by **God** (Exodus 17:14; 24:4; 34:1; 34:27; Numbers 33:2; Deuteronomy 31:9, 22, 24)
- **The Old Testament confirms that Moses was the author** (Joshua 1:7-8; 8:32-34; Judges 3:4; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; 21:8; 2 Chronicles 25:4; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 8:1; 13:1; Daniel 9:11-13).

- The New Testament confirms that Moses was the author (John 1:17; Acts 6:14; 13:39; 15:5; 1 Corinthians 9:9; 2 Corinthians 3:15; Hebrews 10:28).
- Finally Jesus Himself cited Moses as the author (Matthew 8:4; 19:7-8; Mark 7:10; 12:26; Luke 24:27, 44; John 7:19).
- Jesus stressed the seriousness of denying the authorship of Moses with His words recorded in John 5:46-47:

⁴⁶ For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me.

⁴⁷ But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

Under King Josiah, the high priest Hilkiah found the Book of the Law in the Temple (2 Kings 22:1-13). Again, liberal scholars claim that it was only part of Deuteronomy which had only recently been written. Such a position cannot stand the test of literacy and historical accuracy. Josiah's reaction to the reading of the book and the nature of his later reforms (23:4-20; 2 Chronicles 35:1-19) suggest that a copy of the whole pentateuch had been found.

This being the case, the whole pentateuch was compiled and in use for one hundred years plus by the time of Josiah.

King James Study Bible, Nelson 135BG, page 650.

There are three words of which, you will need to know their meaning and significance. They will be on the examination paper.

The Septuagint
The Masoretic text
The Apocrypha

The Jews had two copies of their Bible running in parallel;

The Masoretic text in Hebrew and the Septuagint in Greek

The Septuagint

The Jews who were taken into exile in Babylon let Hebrew slip as their language and took on the language of the Babylonians; Aramaic, which was a Semitic language as well. They both originated from Noah's son Shem.

The Jews who migrated to Egypt and Alexandria in particular, allowed Greek to replace Hebrew and this caused a problem because the people could not read their scriptures (Old Testament). So they had it translated into Greek commencing about 250 BC. This version of the Old Testament became known as the Septuagint or LXX, the Greek word for seventy.

The Septuagint contained seven Apocryphal books interspersed with canonical books.

In New Testament times, the world language was Greek and the writers cited the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew Old Testament. Archer and Chirichigno list 340 places where the New Testament cites the Septuagint but there are only 33 places where it cites from the Masoretic Text (G. Archer and G. C. Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament: A Complete Survey*, 25-32).

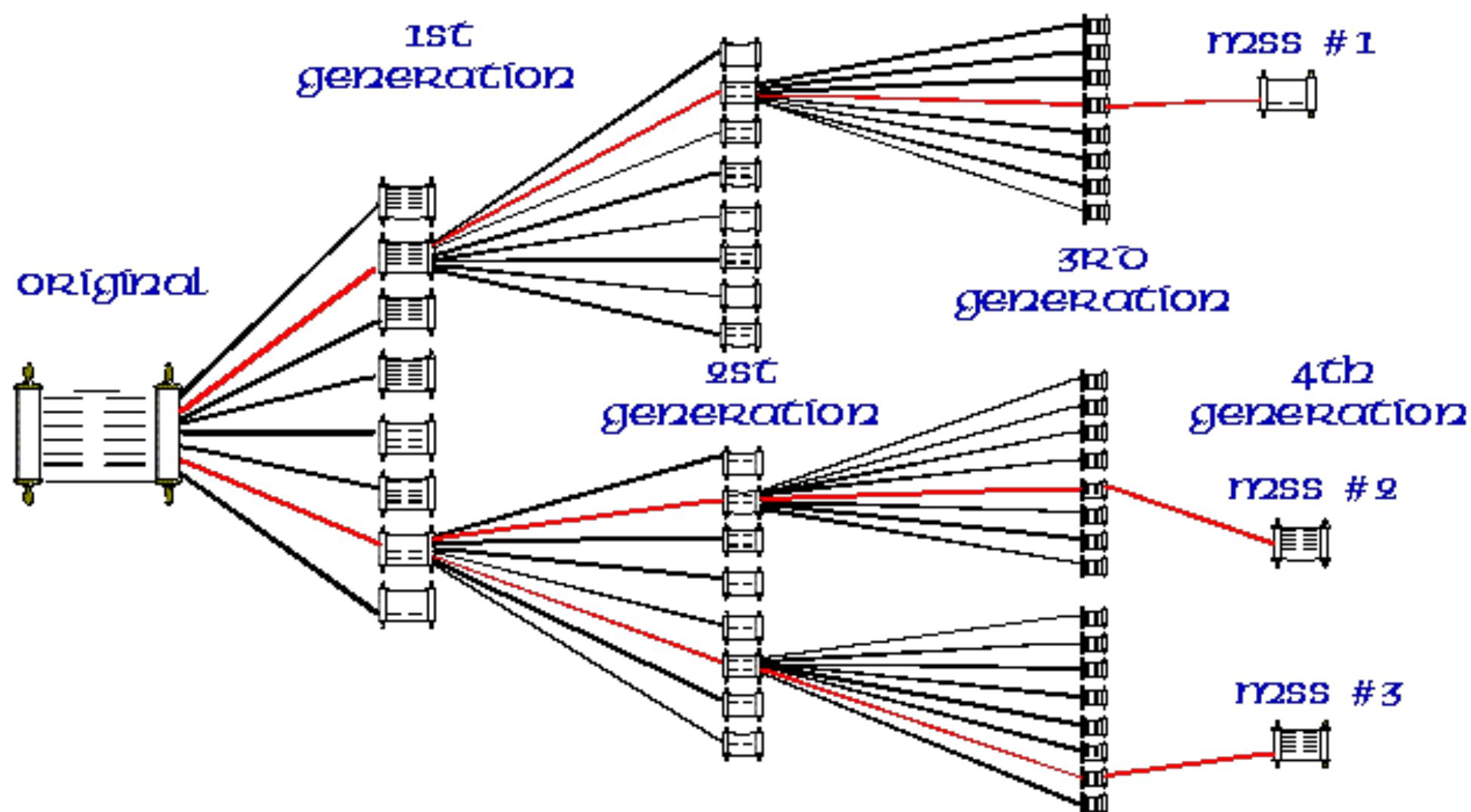
Jesus quoted from the Septuagint. One clear example is recorded in Mark 7:6–7, Jesus quotes the LXX of Isaiah 29:13.

Introduction
to the
Septuagint
(LXX)

The Masoretic text

During the sixth century BC, the Jewish state was scattered with most people going into exile in Babylon, some remained in Judea and others went to Egypt. As a result, up to five textual “families” began to develop and these varied slightly from each other. The differences increased over the centuries as the Hebrew language evolved with respect to spelling, grammar and sentence construction although there was no change in content or doctrine. By the **first century AD**, Jewish scholars became concerned about the state of their scriptures with numerous text types circulating, so they decided to use them to form **one basic standard text family**. These scholars and their text was the forerunner to the Masoretic family of texts of AD 500-1440.

This is shown pictorially on the next slide.



This work by Jewish scribes in the first century to standardise their text, did not appear to have produced a “Master Copy” if they did, one does not exist today.

Differing copies which grew out of the standardisation process which contained hundreds of internal variants, became the forerunners to the Masoretic Texts we have today, which were produced by a series of Jewish scribes and scholars known as the Masoretes from AD 500-1400, but mainly between 500-1,000.

All though Masoretic-type text as a whole are highly a reliable witness to the autographs, they do not perfectly replicate the originals. They are included in Christian Bibles as the Old Testament.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

In the year 1947, shepherds were minding sheep in the desert area around Qumran on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea, when one of the sheep went into a cave. Instead of climbing up and going in, one of the shepherds threw a stone to frighten the animal out, but the stone hit something, and instead of a thud noise, it went ‘clunk’—the sound of pottery breaking. So he climbed in to investigate. This is the most common version of their discovery, others exist.

What the shepherd discovered that day was one of the greatest biblical archeological treasure troves ever, which have become known as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

During the years following their discovery in 1947, between 825 and 870 documents were brought to light from eleven caves. They cover all of the books of the Hebrew Bible except for the books of Esther and Nehemiah. The scrolls were written during the period 250 BC to AD 70. The only scrolls dated as being written in the first century are the Temple Scrolls, Genesis Apocryphon and Thanksgiving Hymns; all of the biblical writings discovered significantly pre-date Christ.

Interestingly, the most complete book is that of Isaiah, which has been accurately dated by paleography to between 125–100 BC, with the Psalms coming close behind. And of course, Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 are there with the exact wording, apart from a few very minor exceptions, of the modern Hebrew Bible.

The Ancient Hebrew Research Center compared Isaiah chapter 53 with that from the Masoretic text with the Dead Sea Scrolls (100 BC) and the Masoretic text (AD 1,000). Of the 166 Hebrew words that comprise the chapter, only 17 letters differ—10 letters are spelling differences, 4 are stylistic changes, and 3 letters are added for ‘light’ in verse 11.

As we have seen, there has been many copies of copies and the Masoretic text is not one but many containing slight variations. However, the Dead Sea scrolls have shown that the differences are minimal and they can be relied upon as accurate to the autograph.

- ancient-hebrew.org/31_isaiah53.html, retrieved April 10, 2011.
- [apologeticspress](http://apologeticspress.com), retrieved July 12, 2008.

The copying process of the Hebrew scribes

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nsd8eBRiLzI>



The Apocrypha

There are many books in existence today that have not been included in the canon of scripture (canon coming from the Greek meaning “rule” or “measuring stick”); these are called apocryphal books. The name comes from the Greek which means “hidden things”. They were written during the Old Testament period, the 400 years between the testaments and during the second century AD and after. They are referenced in both the Old and New Testaments. For example, Numbers 21:14 refers to the *Book of the Wars*, 1 Kings 14:19 the *Annals of the Kings of Israel*, 1 Kings 14:29 the *Annals of the Kings of Judah*, 2 Chronicles 20:34, the *Annals of Jehu*.

These books are internally inconsistent; in some areas they contradict scripture and were never referred to by Jesus or other writers of New Testament scripture, except one and that is Jude who in verses 14 and 15 quotes from the *Book of Enoch* 1:9. Jude cites it to make a point about the pre-flood conditions. For more about this, see my blog:
adefenceofthebible.com/2017/11/30/the-people-in-the-days-of-noah.

The term “The Apocrypha” is usually confined to the non-canonical books which were written in the inter-testament period such as 1 and 2 Maccabees, Tobias, Judith etc. There are fifteen of these included in the Catholic and orthodox Bibles and in fact they were included in the 1611 edition of the KJV but they were excluded from the 1629 edition and onwards and of course, the 1769 edition that we have today, does not contain the apocrypha. Some of what the Apocrypha says is true and correct, but at the same time, much of it is false and historically inaccurate. If you read these books, you have to treat them as interesting but fallible historical documents, not as the inspired, authoritative Word of God. They can be purchased in book shops today.

The following YouTube video by Mike Winger give and outline of how we got the old Testament.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8vd2QXHc2I>

Pay particular attention to how the books came into the Bible, particularly the early books.

The Apocrypha and there is more on the important part the Septuagint played in the New Testament.

