

**FOUNDATION OF FAITH!  
THE BIBLE  
OLD TESTAMENT TEXT**

This morning in our series Foundation of Faith we will continue to look at the Bible and specifically we will be looking at the Old Testament Text. The reason this is so important is because many feel that over the years we have lost what the original writers have said. They feel that others have put their own thoughts, their own ideas into the text. And even some, trying to copy the text honestly and correctly messed up and thus, there are many mistranslations as they copied the texts.

The thought process is like this. Imagine if we got together with 10 people and began telling them a story. But instead of telling the whole group the story, I whispered it to 1 person. And this story was not long, only about 15 to 20 sentences. And that 1 person was to tell that story to the next person, and-so-on, till all 10 people heard the story. Then, if I asked each person to repeat the story they heard, you would most likely hear vastly different stories, at least different than the one that was told to that first person. You see, things can easily get distorted as the story is passed on. Names, events can all change, and the story can become distorted and inaccurate in a very short period of time.

Think about how that works with the prayer chain and the reason I tell people to write down what was said instead of trying to remember it from memory. The story may go something like this when it starts out. Steve is having abdominal pain and is going to the hospital; they think he needs an appendectomy, so please pray for him. By the time the last person gets the message, it goes something like this. Steve is having pain in his abdomen and is having a hysterectomy! Close but I don't think Steve would appreciate the doctors trying to do a hysterectomy on him!

And thus, when it comes to the Scriptures many feel that is what has happened. As it gets passed down, copy after copy there are many mistakes that are made and even some who have added to the Scriptures what they want them to say or think they should say. And thus, it is not accurate and we can't trust it anymore.

First of all if that is what you think you are greatly mistaken. Please understand this and don't listen to what unbelievers are trying to tell you in regards to how the text was transmitted and copied over the years. You need to look at the facts of how this was done. You see, the scribes were not allowed to copy sentence for sentence or even word for word. They had to copy *LETTER for LETTER*. After a page was copied and checked by another, still a third person would check to see what the middle word was on the page. Then, when the whole book was finished, another would count the phrases. Do you see the great lengths they went to in order to keep the text pure, to keep it accurate!

And these are just a few examples of the great detail that went into ensuring the accuracy of the Scriptures. There were many more steps taken in the process. All of this could be characterized as a:

“fence to the Scriptures (Massorah [The word Massorah is from the root masar, to deliver something into the hand of another, so as to commit it to his trust. Hence the name is given to the small writing referred to, because it contains information necessary to those into whose trust the Sacred Text was committed, so that they might transcribe it, and hand it down correctly.]) because it locked all words and letters in their places. . . . It records the number of times the several letters occur in the various books of the Bible; the number of words, and the middle word; the number of verses, and the middle verse; the number of expressions and combinations of words, etc. . . . All this . . . for the set purpose of safeguarding the Sacred Text, and preventing the loss or misplacement of a single letter or word.” (Bullinger’s Companion Bible).

Because of all that they did, these men had no worry whatsoever that there might have been an error. For that reason, they felt no more need to keep their older copies than a data processing manager feels a need to keep his older printouts when he knows his current hard copies are accurate.

And thus, as we can see, we can trust the Old Testament text and I will not leave it at that. We will be going over many other reasons to show that the text we have before us, specifically this morning the Old Testament is very accurate. Why is this so important to us today? Let me explain it like this.

The Wall Street Journal reported that nearly one thousand different cookbooks are published each year in America, many of them glossy, full-color, and very expensive. But at the same time, fewer and fewer people are cooking, and increasing numbers are eating in restaurants. The reporter for the Journal interviewed one lady, a portfolio manager in New York; she has acquired sixteen cookbooks in the last four years and subscribes to two cooking magazines. But the last time she prepared a sit-down meal was four years ago, “and,” she said, “It didn’t turn out.”

There are more Bible translations, study aids, and devotional books now than ever. Christian publishing is a big business in America. But for all that, people are reading and studying the Bible less and less.

- Robert J. Morgan, Nelson’s Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations & Quotes, p. 63

Take a look at your library at home, how many Bibles do you have? How many commentaries on the Bible do you have? How many books about the Bible do you have? How many Bible programs do you have for your computer, your phone, your iPad and-so-on? We have volumes of material about the Bible as well as several different Bibles probably in our homes and yet, how often are we reading our Bible? How often are we studying the Word of God? That is one of the reasons we are spending so much time in this section on the Bible.

You see, I not only want you to believe that the Bible is the Word of God, that it is accurate in its transmission over the years, but I want you to see it as valuable to your Christian life and that you have a desire, a passion to read it, to study it, to apply it to your life. If that is what you gain from this study, then I have done what I needed to do. You see, this book is more valuable than any other book out there be it a cookbook, sport book, fictional or non-fictional book and-so-on. In fact, it is God's Word spoken to us, His Creation! Over 2,600 times in the Old Testament we see the phrase "And God said" or its equivalent and thus, that tells me that it is God who is speaking to us and we need to listen. This book, the Bible should be treasured by us and many times it is not. Listen to this story and you will see what I mean. We are told,

Alexander Duff, the first foreign missionary of the Church of Scotland, got off to a rough start. He was young, only twenty-three, and bright and innovative. But on his way to India in 1829 with his new wife, he was shipwrecked – not once but twice! The most serious wreck occurred when his ship, the Lady Holland, was within a few miles of India.

At ten o'clock P.M., Duff was half-undressed when a shock and shudder ran through the vessel. He rushed to the deck where the captain met him with terrifying words, "Oh, she's gone! She's gone!" [Not words you want to hear from the captain!] The ship split apart, but a portion clung precariously to a reef. Through the night the passengers huddled in terror in the surviving portion, expecting every moment to be swept away. They were saved the next day, but their clothes and prized possessions were lost, including Duff's entire library of eight hundred volumes.

Later, standing on the shore and looking sadly toward the reef, Duff saw a small package bobbing atop the water. He watched and waited as it floated close enough for him to wade out and retrieve. It was his Bible. Of all his precious books, it alone survived. His heart soared, for he took it as a sign from the Lord that this one book alone was worth more than all the others put together.

He assembled his fellow survivors and read Psalm 107, the Traveler's Psalm. Soon, using the same Bible, he began his first calls with a little group of five boys under a banyan tree. Within a week the class had grown to three hundred, and it soon became a school that evangelized and educated the higher classes in India, producing a qualified generation of leaders for the nation's young church.

- Robert J. Morgan, Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations & Quotes, p. 53

That is what Peter tells us in II Peter 1:2-4, **“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”** God has given to us all we need to grow in Him and it is all found in His Word and then applying that to our lives, walking by faith! And the only way you are going to do that is if you truly believe God's Word is living, it is powerful, it is able to change your life!

That is my prayer for you this morning. That you would see that this book, the Bible is more important than any other book that is out there and you would love it, cherish it, read it and study it so that you may grow in the knowledge of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ!

Now let's take a minute and see what we have before us because it is amazing and when you listen to this it is easy to come to the conclusion that the Bible can't be accurate, there is no way. You see, the Bible was composed over a 1,500 year time span, from around 1400 B. C. to 90 A. D. Thus, the rational goes, in that period of time there must have been numerous mistakes made in the transmittal of this book. Many additions, subtractions to what we call the Bible had to be made with all the copying that was done during that period of time. Not true as we have already talked about on how the Scriptures were transcribed or copied and also as we shall see this morning!

And think about this for a minute because it blows me away. There were over 40 different authors that penned the 66 books we call the Bible and they came from a variety of walks of life. We see kings, peasants, fishermen, poets, statesman, scholars, and-so-on. And not only did over 40 authors pen the Bible, but it was written on 3 different continents: Asia (Ezekiel in Babylon), Africa (Moses in the deserts of Sinai), and Europe (Paul wrote his letters to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, II Timothy and Philemon while in Rome). It was also written in 3 different languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

Now in knowing all that, all the different authors, the timeframe it was written in, the different areas it was written in you would think that this book would be just a bunch of different and often times conflicting information. Think about that for a minute. If you were to gather 10 people from different walks of life and told them to write a story about one topic you would probably have 10 different stories on that topic. And that is only one topic. The Bible covers many different topics, very controversial topics and yet it does not contradict itself at all. You see, as we read this book we see one unfolding story of God's love for man and His plan to redeem man back from his dead spiritual condition. It is as Geisler and Nix put it, "The 'Paradise Lost' of Genesis becomes the 'Paradise Regained' of Revelation. Whereas the gate to the tree of life is closed in Genesis, it is opened forevermore in Revelation." That is the story of God redeeming sinful man, His great love for us and it flows from Genesis through the Book of Revelation!

As we get started this morning on the reliability of the Old Testament text, listen to what David said in Psalm 119:33-40, **"Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, And I shall keep it to the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; Indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, For I delight in it. Incline my heart to Your testimonies, And not to covetousness. Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, And revive me in Your way. Establish Your word to Your servant, Who is devoted to fearing You. Turn away my reproach which I dread, For Your judgments are good. Behold, I long for Your precepts; Revive me in Your righteousness."**

Here we see the Psalmist, David and he is declaring his love, his steadfast love of the Lord and His Word. He speaks of his refusal to waste his time, his energy on things that are worthless. The Psalmist desires that which will build him up, not tear him down, and thus, he clings to the Word of God. He had a hunger to know God and that hunger could only be quenched by the Word of God. I think we have lost that today. We have lost that hunger to know God through His Word and we are now all about feelings. We want to feel God and feelings can be deceptive and that is very dangerous. Our feelings must be based upon the Word of God and if they are not, then they are wrong, you can't trust them. You see, we can only know God by His Word.

Now you may agree with me on this or not and if you don't, at least hear me out. You would not believe the number of phone calls I get for Bible studies for youth, for adults, for small groups and-so-on. And here's the thing, many times they are not Bible studies at all because the Word of God is placed behind all the talk, all the feelings and the worldly things and then the Word of God is placed in to justify what they are saying. That is worthless. Why can't we have a Bible study that is studying the Word of God? We can and yet people don't want it and instead of going after things that will build them up they go to things that will waste their time and won't help them to grow in the Lord!

Remember what Paul said in Colossians 2:8-10 as he warned the church in Colosse and he is warning us, **“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”**

Please understand that this is a very stern warning by Paul to the believers in Colosse. Paul wants them to be aware, to pay attention because the world's philosophies are deceptive and they want to take you away from Christ, they will rip you off! The Greek word for "**philosophy**" is PHILOSOPHIA (fil-os-of-ee'-ah) and it comes from two Greek words; PHILEO, which means, "to love" and SOPHIA, which means, "wisdom." So the word means the love of wisdom! Now here is the problem, you cannot find truth regarding life apart from Christ!

I know, some of you disagree with me, but hear me out. Look at the philosophies of the world over the years and how they change, how they contradict each other. Do they sometimes get it right? Yes, that is possible but why grope for answers to life's problems, to life's questions when God has the answer for you. Os Guinness puts it this way in regards to the futile effort of man and his search for the truths of life. He says,

Contemporary man, with his self-drawn picture of society as the "closed room" with No Exit, is caught metaphysically and sociologically. In the darkness of the room evidently without windows, perhaps without doors, he gropes round and round the edges. Can one hope that someone will dare to wonder whether there is any light other than the feeble sparks of his own making? Or will he stubbornly persist in treading the barren circle of poor premises?

- Os Guinness, The Dust of Death, p. 148

That truly is man, groping for a way out of his life's situation and apart from God, he will never find it. And that is the amazing thing. Look over the years, in fact just over the past few weeks and look at all the new ideas to help man to live. And those ideas are constantly changing because what worked last week might not work this week. It is just a guess and if it works, great. But why mess with that when you can go to the Creator of heaven and earth, the Creator of you and me and He can help because He created us. He knows what we need better than we do. Now we might not always like it, but that does not change the fact that what God has said in His Word is what is best for our lives. In Joshua 1:8 we are told, **“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”**

Folk's, God told Joshua that if you want the victory, then know My Word, make it part of your daily life. Mediate upon it, extract all the spiritual nutrients you can from it to help you stay spiritually healthy and then walk in them, **“For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”** Joshua 1:8.

Now what does it mean to meditate upon God's Word. Please understand that this words does not mean turning off your brain or emptying your mind, but thinking upon God's Word, praying about it, going over and over it in your mind so it becomes part of your life and just extracting all you can from it. One person put it like this, "Mediating on the Word of God is to your Spirit, what digestion is to your body." Let God's Word be nourishing to your spirit as you allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you and open up God's Word to you! Stand strong in God's Word, don't deviate from it and see the victory that God will bring into your life! God's Word is vital to our spiritual life, may we truly understand that!

Back in Colossians as Paul is speaking of this false teaching and he is telling us that this false teaching is according to the basic principles of the world, elementary knowledge like the ABC's and not according to Christ. In fact, Paul put it this way in Colossians 2:20, "**Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations.**" Don't become a prisoner to the basic principles of this world because we have died to those things in Christ!

Here's the thing, if your car is broken down you don't get out your Bible but you take it to a mechanic or you get a book on auto repair. If you hurt your leg, sprained your ankle you may go to the doctor or read up on what you can do for it in a medical book. That doesn't mean we can't pray that God would fix the car or heal the ankle, but most of the time we must get it fixed. The Bible is not a book on science even though when it speaks of scientific things it is 100% correct. Now, if you have a problem with your heart and soul, what do you do? You go to a therapist, a psychologist, you get books on how to overcome and-so-on, right? Wrong!

That is what the church is doing today but it is not what we should be doing. Think about this. That means that for almost 2,000 years the church has been unhealthy because they did not have these psychological principles to govern their life? How wrong that is and the church is worse off today because we are not trusting in the Lord and His Word but in people!

You see, when you have a problem with your heart and soul you bring it to Jesus, you get into the Word of God because the Word of God deals with life's issues; with ourselves, with our fellow man, and with God. The world's philosophies won't help you here, but they will hurt you!

Listen to what Chuck Swindoll tells us regarding the philosophies of the world.  
He says:

World philosophies have been summarized in this manner: Greece said, “Be wise, know yourself.” Rome said, “Be strong, discipline yourself.” Religion says, “Be holy, conform yourself.” Epicureanism says, “Be sensuous, enjoy yourself.” Education says, “Be resourceful, expand yourself.” Materialism says, “Be satisfied, please yourself.” Psychology says, “Be confident, fulfill yourself.” Pride says, “Be superior, promote yourself.” Asceticism says, “Be inferior, suppress yourself.” Humanism says, “Be capable, believe in yourself.” Philanthropy says, “Be generous, give yourself.” Legalism says, “Be pious, limit yourself.”

Isn't it interesting how all the philosophies end with the same word, and how each one seems to differ from the philosophy of Jesus Christ: “Be a servant, think of others.”

- Chuck Swindoll

Notice what Paul is saying here. Paul is saying that those outside of Christ are not complete! That may be offensive to some of you but that is what Paul has said through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit! You see, ever since the fall of man, we are born into this world in a state of incompleteness, spiritually speaking because our fellowship with God is broken because of sin. Morally speaking because we do our own thing, we don't follow the will of God. And mentally speaking because we don't know the ultimate truth of God.

But once we are saved we are complete spiritually, our fellowship with God has been restored. We are complete morally in the sense that we have God's will to guide us. We are complete mentally because we have the truths of God in our lives. We have the mind of Christ. That is what God wants to do in our lives through His Word if we would only let Him! And if we do then we will be complete in Him!

The bottom line is this. Don't fall prey to the empty philosophies of the world, the traditions of men, but look to the Lord to guide us in all our ways. May we have a hunger to know God through His Word as David did!

So what do we know about the authenticity, the accuracy of the Old Testament text? Well, let's begin in the book of Genesis, and listen to what Professor Albright has to say regarding the table of nations found in Genesis chapter 10. He says that, "It stands absolutely alone in ancient literature without a remote parallel even among the Greeks. . . . 'The Table of Nations' remains an astonishingly accurate document. . . . (it) shows such remarkably 'modern' understanding of the ethnic and linguistic situation in the modern world, in spite of all its complexity, that scholars never fail to be impressed with the author's knowledge of the subject." We should not be surprised, the author is God!

Now why in the world would I start out with the book of Genesis? Because if the book of Genesis is not historically trustworthy, if it were not true, then simple logic would tell us that the rest of the Bible is not true also.

Higher critics tell us that Genesis could not have been written by Moses, for writing was not yet established yet. Thus, this information, especially the first 11 chapters of Genesis, was derived from myths and the ancient Babylonians. But, Ralph Linton, an evolutionary anthropologist admits, "Writing appears almost simultaneously some 5000 - 6000 years ago in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Indus Valley." Notice, he is not trying to support the Bible, he is an evolutionist and thus does not believe in the six literal days of Creation and yet, he is substantiating for us that there was writing in the time of Moses. That means that Moses could have easily written the book of Genesis, as well as the rest of the Pentateuch.

Now I like to go to an even higher source to substantiate that Moses wrote the first 5 books of the Bible. You see, Jesus tells us that Moses not only wrote Genesis, but the Law of Moses, the Torah in the Hebrew, which consisted of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, which we call the Pentateuch.

In Luke chapter 24, Jesus said, "**And beginning at *Moses* and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. . . . These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the *Law of Moses* and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.**" Luke 24:27, 44.

Again, just because we have not found outside sources, other than the Bible, to substantiate this man doesn't mean we won't, but even if we can't find the name "Moses" in any historical record outside of the Bible, understand how old these records would have to be, and I think it would be easy to understand why we can't find any outside record. You see, time has a way of destroying the record, but that does not negate the words found in the Bible, not one bit. And as we will see over the next few weeks, we have found many of the names of the people of the Bible and places that the Bible speaks of. On the other hand, the Book of Mormon can make no such claim!

I like the way that Nelson Gluek puts it; he is one of the leading Palestinian archaeologists of our times. He said, "As a matter of fact, however, it may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has every controverted Biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or in exact detail historical statements in the Bible."

As for those who believe the oldest parts of the Bible were written during Israel's captivity in Babylon, I have some bad news for you. Back in 1979 Israeli archaeologist Gabriel Barkay found two tiny silver scrolls inside a tomb in Jerusalem. There were dated around 600 B. C., shortly before the destruction of Solomon's Temple and the deportation of the Southern Kingdom of Judah to Babylon. As they carefully unrolled the scrolls at a museum in Israel, they found a benediction from the book of Numbers etched into their surface. Thus, parts of the Old Testament were written and copied long before their exile in Babylon.

In 1990 Frank Yurco, an Egyptologist at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, discovered these writings on a stele, which is an upright stone slab or pillar engraved with an inscription or design. On this stele there is a description of a military victory by the Pharaoh Merneptah. It reads, "Israel is laid waste." This stele is dated 1207 B. C. and it tells us that the Israelites were a distinct population more than 3,000 years ago, and not just because the Bible tells us so! And also note that it is not the land of Palestine, but Israel. How sad it is to see maps in our Bible speak of the land of Israel as Palestine and even many commentators speak of the land being Palestine. It is Israel!

In 1993 Avraham Biran of Hebrew College - Jewish Institute of Religion and Joseph Naveh of the Hebrew University, announced they had found an inscription bearing the phrases "House of David" and "King of Israel." Interestingly enough the writing was dated to the 9th century B. C., only a century after David's reign. Thus, it is hard to defend the skeptic's claim that king David never existed, for here is proof! And we will deal more with these issues when we look at the archeological evidence for the Bible in a few weeks.

Now some may argue that even though some of the history of the Bible may be correct, its transmission over the years has changed the truth that has occurred over the years. It has been embellished, things added and things taken away from the original text. Thus, to come to the conclusion of the higher critics, the stories we have in our Bible today are completely different than what actually took place. They understand that passing a story on from one person to another can easily change the story, let alone passing these stories over thousands of years.

Now that may be true of my brothers and me when we get together for Christmas or some other family party. We tell the same stories but they are embellished just a little each time. But just because we do that does not mean that the writers and scribes did that with the Scriptures. They held them in such high esteem they would not think of adding to or taking away from the Scriptures.

And think about this for a minute. Remember what Peter tells us in II Peter 1:19-21, **“And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”**

You see, prophecy is not just speaking of some future event; it is also speaking forth the words of God. And Peter is saying that God’s Word is surer than what he saw with his own eyes. If you read that chapter you will find that Peter is speaking of what he saw on the mount of Transfiguration, the Glory of the Lord. In other words, he trusted more in God’s Word than what he saw with his own eyes. Why did he feel that way? It is very simple; it is because God’s Word was not written by man, but the Holy Spirit. You see, man was only the instrument in which God used to pen these words. Think of writing a letter, the pen did not write it, you did, but the pen was the instrument that was used to pen those words. God used holy men, as instruments, to pen His Words.

Secondly, like I have said, we have to understand how meticulous the writers were in copying the various Old Testament Scriptures. Listen to what the First-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus recorded regarding the reverence they had for the Scriptures. He said, “We have given practical proof of our reverence of our own Scriptures. For, although such long ages have now passed, no one has ventured either to add, or to remove, or to alter a syllable; and it is an instinct with every Jew, from the day of his birth, to regard them as the decrees of God, to abide by them, and if need be, cheerfully die for them. Time and time again ere (before) now the sight has been witnessed of prisoners enduring tortures and death in every form in the theaters, rather than utter a single word against the laws and the allied (associated) documents.”

Thus, throughout the centuries the Jewish scribes took great care in copying the Scriptures, for they believed they were copying God’s Word. Because of that, William F. Albright, dean of American archaeologists, said, “We may rest assured that the consonantal text of the Hebrew Bible . . . has been preserved with an accuracy perhaps unparalleled in any other New Eastern literature.”

Now the oldest complete manuscript of the Old Testament we had came from 916 A. D. That is some 1400 years after it was written, and many argued that it had to be unreliable since all that time has passed from the original writings to the manuscript of 916 A. D. That was until 1947 when the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered.

The Dead Sea Scrolls is the term that is used of the manuscripts that were discovered in 1947 in caves some 500 yards from the Dead Sea, in the area known as Qumran, along the Northwestern shore of the Dead Sea.

The story goes that back in 1947 a shepherd boy was herding his goats when one of them got lost in this area. And this Arab shepherd boy named Mohammed was looking for this stray goat in the Judean wilderness when he tossed a rock into the air. When the rock landed it fell into a cave and broke some pottery that was in this cave. In hearing the breaking of the pottery, it raised his curiosity and he went into this cave, which is now called cave number 1, and to his surprise he found jars filled with ancient scrolls, which lead to the search for other caves that nearly lasted a decade, once word got out. And during that time they found 11 caves producing over 800 scrolls and scroll fragments written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, covering a time period of almost 1000 years.

As they examined the Dead Sea Scrolls they broke them down into three chief categories. They are as follows,

- 1. BIBLICAL** - All the books of the Bible, the Old Testament, are represented in these finds, except one. The only book that was not found was the book of Esther.
- 2. APOCRYPHAL OR PSEUDO EPIGRAPHICAL** - These books are omitted from various canons of the Bible, for they are not inspired books but do contain some historical information.
- 3. SECTARIAN** - These scrolls relate to various ordinances that this community adhered to. Also, we find Biblical commentaries, apocalyptic visions, and liturgical works.

Now as they analyzed these scrolls, by using carbon dating methods, it showed that most of them were written between 100 B. C. and 68 A. D. But who were these people who lived out in the desert, away from civilization, and kept such accurate records of the Words of God, writing commentaries on the various books of the Old Testament, and adhered to a strict code of living?



#### **Cave Number 4**

This most famous of the Dead Sea Scroll caves is also the most significant in terms of finds. More than 15,000 fragments from over 200 books were found in this cave, nearly all by Bedouin thieves. 122 biblical scrolls (or fragments) were found in this cave. From all 11 Qumran caves, every Old Testament book is represented except Esther. The largest cache of scroll fragments was found in 1954 here in Cave number 4. Cave number 1 is where the scroll of Isaiah was found.

It is believed that the people that wrote these scrolls were the Essenes, who were a separatist Jewish sect of the Second Temple period. They, in a sense, were religious zealots who withdrew from the corruption of the Greco-Roman culture, and the worldliness that crept into the priesthood. Thus, they separated themselves in the wilderness of Judea, in the area of the Dead Sea, known as Qumran, keeping themselves pure and awaiting the coming of the Messiah. Some believe that John the Baptist lived out in this area. Now they lived in this area known as Qumran from around 150 B. C. to 68 A. D., 2 years before the Romans burned down the Temple and destroyed the city of Jerusalem, causing many to flee for their lives.

Why are the Dead Sea Scrolls so important to us? Yes, we have found every book of the Old Testament there except for Esther but one of the most important finds was discovered in cave number 1, where two scrolls of Isaiah were found, one damaged, but the other one was complete, along with other scrolls. This 24 foot leather scroll of Isaiah could tell us the accuracy of the text transmission over a 1000 year period. You see, this scroll of Isaiah dates back to 100 years before Christ and the next closest text we have dates all the way back to 916 A. D.!

The fascinating thing about this is you can go to Israel today, and visit the museum called the Shrine of the Book, which holds this priceless Biblical manuscript, and if you were able to read Hebrew, you would discover your New King James Bible's reading of Isaiah is almost identical to this text that is over 2000 years old! There is no major difference between the two. Imagine that, the book of Isaiah has 66 chapters, 1292 verses, 37,044 words, and the integrity of the text has held up all these years for over 1000 years between those two manuscripts.

According to Norman Geisler and William Nix, in their book *A General Introduction to the Bible*, they said, “Of the 166 words in Isaiah 53, there are only seventeen letters in question. Ten of those letters are simply a matter of spelling, which does not affect the sense. Four more letters are minor stylistic changes, such as conjunctions. The remaining three letters comprise the word ‘light’ which is added in verse 11, and does not affect the meaning greatly . . . ***Thus, in one chapter of 166 words, there is only one word (three letters) in question after a thousand years of transmission - and this word does not significantly change the meaning of the passage.***”

After comparing the entire Isaiah manuscript from the Dead Sea Scrolls with the present Hebrew text of Isaiah, Old Testament scholar Gleason L. Archer concluded that the Dead Sea Scrolls “Prove to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. The 5 percent variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling.” Not bad when you consider they did not have computers, spell-checking, and-so-on, as we have today.

If you had any doubt of the accuracy of the Old Testament, then the Dead Sea Scrolls should help clear that matter up right away. Yes, we don’t have any of the original manuscripts of the Old or the New Testament, but looking at the various texts it shows how accurately they were copied and passed on. As the renowned archaeologist William F. Albright has said, “There can be no doubt that Archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament tradition.”

Thus, we should be in awe of the Word of God. We should cling to it, believe it, and apply it to our lives, just as the Psalmist did. He cried out to God to teach him the truth's of His Word, to open his eyes and his heart to the things of God, and not just to cling to worthless things. To see the rich and deep treasures that God has in His Word for him and for us!

How much time do we spend in front of the television set? How much time do we spend playing sports or reading books or magazines? How much time do we spend shopping? How much time do we spend on the computer? Now don't get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with any of these things unless we let them steal our time away from God. You see, when compared with these activities, how much time do you spend in the Word of God? Ask God to revive your hunger for His Word, to help you to believe and apply His truth to your life.

The archaeologist, John Elder, offers a fitting conclusion to the issue of the Old Testament's reliability. He said, "It is not too much to say that it was the rise of the science of archeology that broke the deadlock between historians and the orthodox Christian. Little by little, one city after another, one civilization after another, one culture after another, whose memories were enshrined only in the Bible, were restored to their proper places in ancient history by the studies of archaeologists. . . . The over-all result is indisputable. Forgotten cities have been found, the handiwork of vanished peoples has reappeared, contemporary records of Biblical events have been unearthed and the uniqueness of Biblical revelation has been emphasized by contrast and comparison to the newly understood religions of ancient peoples. *Nowhere has archaeological discovery refuted the Bible as history.*"

Thus, not only are the places, persons, and events listed during the different periods of the Old Testament history matched up to the facts and evidence from history and archaeology, but the transmission has been accurate, and Jesus put His stamp of approval by quoting from the Old Testament. As the Psalmist said, **“Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides. They continue this day according to Your ordinances, For all are Your servants. Unless Your law had been my delight, I would then have perished in my affliction. I will never forget Your precepts, For by them You have given me life.”** Psalm 119:89-93.

Why are Christians ashamed of the Word of God, the Bible? It is because they are listening to the Bible critics who put down the Word of God, who mock the Word of God instead of searching it out to see if what God has said is true. You see, who are you going to trust, God or man? Man has failed many, many times and will continue to fail but God will never fail me. And think about this, there is no other book like the Bible around today, ***NONE!***

Listen to what Professor Monier Williams, the former Boden professor of Sanskrit, who spent 42 years studying Eastern books, has to say regarding the Bible. He wrote,

“Pile them, if you will, on the left side of your study table, but place your own Holy Bible on the right side, all by itself, all alone, and with a wide gap between them. For there is a gulf between it and the so-called sacred books of the East which severs the one from the other utterly, hopelessly and forever.” In other words, after 42 years of studying Eastern books, they don’t belong in the same place as the Bible!

Let me give you an example to show you what I mean. Look at the Hindu Bible and see what fantastic nonsense is spoken and yet, the Bible is not at all like the Hindu Bible. It reads, "The moon is 50,000 leagues higher than the sun, and shines by its own light. Night is caused by the sun setting behind a huge mountain several thousand feet high located in the center of the earth. This world is flat and triangular and is composed of seven stages, one of honey, another of sugar, a third of butter and another of wine. And the whole mass is borne on the heads of countless elephants which, in shaking, produce earthquakes."

Well thank God we understand where earthquakes come from now! How foolish, even saying the earth is flat and triangular while the Bible clearly teaches the earth is round and it hangs on nothing, not even elephants! That is the sacred writing of the Hindus. Do you want to believe what it is telling you? If you do see me after study this morning and we will talk, and maybe we will travel to the seven stages of the earth, the honey stage or sugar stage. Sounds like Willey Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, it is a story and it is not true. But the Bible is true, we can trust it for when it speaks of science it is 100% accurate and the Old Testament Text has been copied very carefully throughout the years and thus, we can also trust it!

James Orr, speaking of the Moslem, Zoroastrian and Buddhist Scriptures, said this, "It is the simple fact that there is nothing that can be properly called history in these other sacred books of the world. They are, as every student of them knows, for the most part, jumbles of heterogeneous [assorted] material loosely placed together without order, continuity or unity of any kind."

And yet, when you come to the Bible you can easily see that it is unique. And you understand that when you come to the Bible you find one unfolding story of God's love for sinful man. We see creation and everything was very good. We see sin enter the world and man's separation from God because of his sin. We see God establish the Jewish people who would point people to the way to God and that was going to be and is through the Messiah, through Jesus Christ. We see God become man to dwell among us, the fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophets spoke of. And we have seen how the fulfillment of just 8 of those prophecies in one man is beyond any mathematical probability in previous studies and Jesus fulfilled over 300 of them. We see that He paid in full the penalty for our sins. We see that God will deal with the ungodly and will rule and reign for 1,000 years from Jerusalem, from the throne of David as He promised in the Old Testament. And then we see the creation of a new heavens and a new earth.

Remember what Geisler and Nix wrote, "The 'Paradise Lost' of Genesis becomes the 'Paradise Regained' of Revelation. Whereas the gate to the tree of life is closed in Genesis, it is opened forevermore in Revelation." That is what we find as we read through the Scriptures!

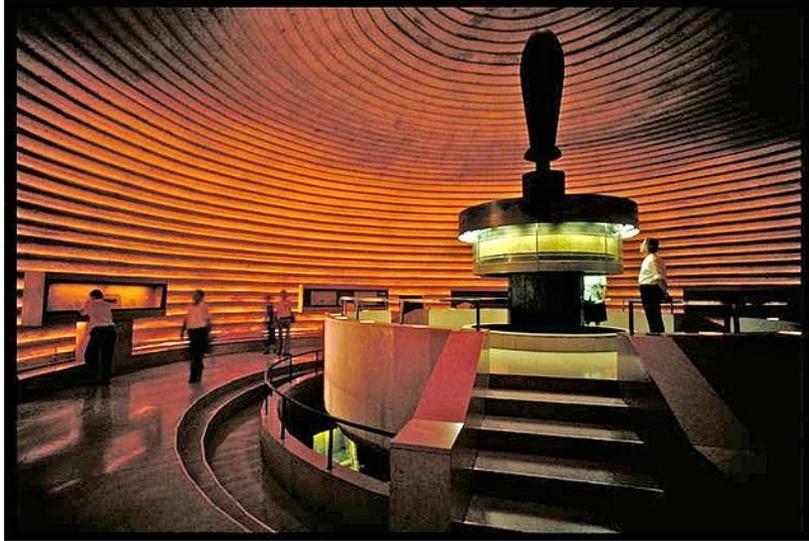
Let me close this morning with these words from Sir Frederic Kenyon. He wrote, "The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries." Do you believe that? I hope so! I pray that you have a love for God and His Word and that you have a hunger to know Him more and more through His Word!

Remember as we started out this morning what David said in Psalm 119, **“Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, And I shall keep it to the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; Indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, For I delight in it. Incline my heart to Your testimonies, And not to covetousness. Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, And revive me in Your way. Establish Your word to Your servant, Who is devoted to fearing You. Turn away my reproach which I dread, For Your judgments are good. Behold, I long for Your precepts; Revive me in Your righteousness.”** Psalm 119:33-40. May we have that kind of love for God and His Word!

### **The Shrine of the Book/Isaiah Scroll Pictures**



Scroll of Isaiah found in Cave number 1



Scroll of Isaiah in background



The Shrine of the Book

