# Church of God
Sunday School

THE BIBLE — HOW DID WE GET IT?
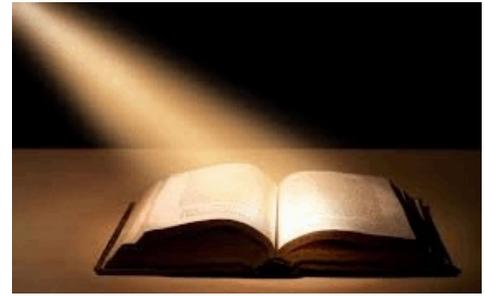
DAILY READINGS:

- ❏ **Monday:** The Law is to be read to the people (Deuteronomy 31:9-13).
- ❏ **Tuesday:** Joshua is told to meditate on and to observe the Law (Joshua 1:5-9).
- ❏ **Wednesday:** Ezra teaches God's laws to Israel (Ezra 7:6-10).
- ❏ **Thursday:** Jesus brings understanding concerning the Scriptures (Luke 24:44-45).
- ❏ **Friday:** Old Testament Scriptures are called the "word of God" (Luke 4:4; 5:1; 11:28).
- ❏ **Saturday:** Epistles were meant to be shared among the congregations (Colossians 4:16).

MEMORY VERSE: *"This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD."*
—Psalm 102:18

The Old Testament

Have you ever wondered how the many parts of the Bible (books of law, history, and prophecy; psalms, gospels, and letters) all became the Bible you now read? Over a period of more than 1500 years, at least 40 different authors wrote words inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16). It was God who told each one what to write down and how to preserve His words for "the generation to come" (Psalm 102:18).

> **The original Greek tells us "inspiration of God" means** God-breathed **(2 Timothy 3:16).**

After Moses wrote the Law (Deuteronomy 31:9), a copy of it was kept in "the side of the ark of the covenant" (Deuteronomy 31:26). God wanted His words read to the people so they would not forget. Every seven years, the words of this Law were to be read to all of Israel "that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 31:10-12). Over time, God continued to inspire spiritual leaders to record events in Israel's history, words of praise and wisdom, and many prophecies. All these writings were carefully copied by scribes (ancient Jewish record-keepers) when the original copies wore out.

Around 450 B.C. Jewish tradition says that Ezra (priest and scribe) and many others began to organize all these writings into what Jesus called "the scriptures." Jesus classified them as the Law of Moses, the books of the prophets,

and the psalms (Luke 24:44). In many places in the New Testament, we can read that these books were called the "word of God." In A.D. 90 the historian Josephus wrote that after the time of Malachi, no other material was added to the Old Testament.
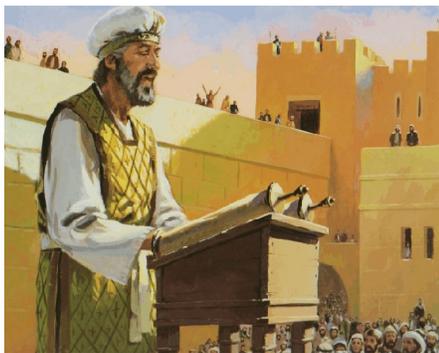
About the 3rd century B.C. the books of the Old Testament were translated from the original language (Hebrew and some Aramaic) to the more common language of that time (Greek). This ancient version was called *The Septuagint,* meaning "translation of the seventy," as it is said that 70 scholars began this translation. Traditionally, it is thought the king of Egypt asked for this translation so it could be added to the famous Library of Alexandria. At the time there were said to have been over 1 million Jews in Alexandria who spoke very little of the Hebrew language. Thus, there was a need to have the Scriptures in the language of the people. This version was commonly used during the time of Jesus and the Apostles.

The New Testament

Just as the first Old Testament book to be written was not Genesis (it was Job), so it is in the New Testament. The first book written was not Matthew's Gospel. Although the books and letters of the New Testament were not dated, it is commonly believed that Paul's letters were written first. These letters were passed from church to church (Colossians 4:16) and were read in addition to the Old Testament Scriptures during worship service (1 Thessalonians 5:27). They were recognized by God's people as writings that were inspired by God.

In the years following Jesus' return to Heaven, much of what Jesus did and said was spread by word of mouth. In time a need arose for accurate, written records. No doubt, Luke was referring to this when he gave his reason for writing the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:1-4). Two authors of the Gospels (Matthew and John) were disciples who were eyewitnesses to what they wrote. The other two authors (Mark and Luke) worked closely with eyewitnesses. During this time the General Epistles were also being written. John's books were written last, and the last book of the Bible (chronologically) is 3 John.

The Canon of the Bible

The word *canon* literally means "measuring rod." You might hear this word used in regard to the list of books included in the Bible. During the times of the Old Testament and New Testament, many books were written, some of which might have *seemed* like they should have been included. How did God's people know the difference? Their "measuring rod" was to see if the writings were inspired of God by understanding who the authors were and if their writings contradicted other accepted books of the Bible. (The books that were not included have proven historical errors, were never quoted by Jesus and the Apostles, and some even teach ungodly principles.) From the beginning of time, God carefully planned that His Word would be preserved for you and me! God knew exactly which books should be included, for it was He who was the One who gave inspiration for their writing.

The Need for Translations

Could you read your Bible if it were written in Hebrew or Greek? Most of us could not. Yet, it is vital that every one of us be able to read the Bible for ourselves! For a thousand years, the standard Bible was in the Latin language after the entire Bible was translated into *The Vulgate* version. In time, many people considered Latin to be a "dead language," as it was no longer the language of the people. Only the educated could read it. The common people could not read the Latin Bible for themselves. Also, it was very rare for people to have their own copy of the Bible. Let us look at some of the many brave men whose efforts brought about our English Bibles. (Reformers, such as Martin Luther, worked to translate the Bible into other languages as well.)

John Wycliffe (1320-1384) was 20 years old when he found an entire copy of the Bible in the University of Erfurt's library (in Germany). He said, "O God, could I but have one of the books, I would ask no other treasure." In 1380 Wycliffe translated the New Testament into the English language. His enemies claimed that "he was introducing among the multitude a book reserved exclusively for the use of priests." (God's Word is for the multitudes, not just for a few priests.) Forty-four years after Wycliffe died, the Pope was so angry by what Wycliffe had accomplished, he ordered his bones be dug up and burned.
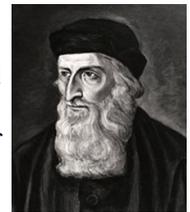
Wycliffe

Tyndale

William Tyndale (1494-1536) was another reformer who was convinced people should be able to read the Bible for themselves. When faced with opposition from the Catholic Church, Tyndale said, "I defy the Pope, and all his laws; and if God spares my life, I will cause the boy that drives the plow to know more of the Scriptures than the Pope himself!" Tyndale's translation of the Bible (from ancient copies of Hebrew and Greek into English) could not be done in England because of intense opposition. He fled to Germany and is believed to have worked with Martin Luther while working on the English translations. Eventually, Tyndale was betrayed, arrested, and put to death at the stake. His last words were, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes!" (Wycliffe and Tyndale quotes from *GreatSite.com*.)

After Tyndale's death, in England the English Bible was declared illegal. However, God heard Tyndale's prayer! A few years after his death, King Henry VIII began to allow the Bible to be printed in English. Queen Elizabeth also allowed English Bibles to be printed. Then, in 1611 the King James Authorized Bible was printed. This Bible, commissioned by King James I, was the most commonly used English Bible for over 300 years!

Do you have a greater appreciation for your own Bible? God did an awesome job preserving these wonderful words of life so that you might be saved, encouraged, and strengthened in your daily walk with Him!

Bible Quiz
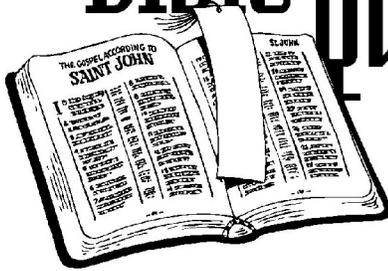
1. Where did Moses command the Levites to keep a copy of the Law? ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

2. After the victory at Ai, what did Joshua do "in the presence of the children of Israel" (Joshua 8:30-34)? ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

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   ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

3. Look up the word "translation" in a dictionary. What does it mean? ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

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4. Why did the Bible need to be translated? ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

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5. Which translation was commonly used during the time of Jesus' ministry? ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

6. What determined which books were included in the Bible? ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

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7. Which book of the Bible was written first? ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ Last? ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

8. Before the invention of the printing press, how were copies of the Bible made? ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

⎯⎯

9. Why were Wycliffe's bones dug up and burned? ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

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10. What ultimate price did Tyndale pay for translating the Bible into English? ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

11. Why were so many of the popes and priests of the Roman Catholic Church against Bibles being in the language of the common people? ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

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# Compare and Discuss the Need for Translations
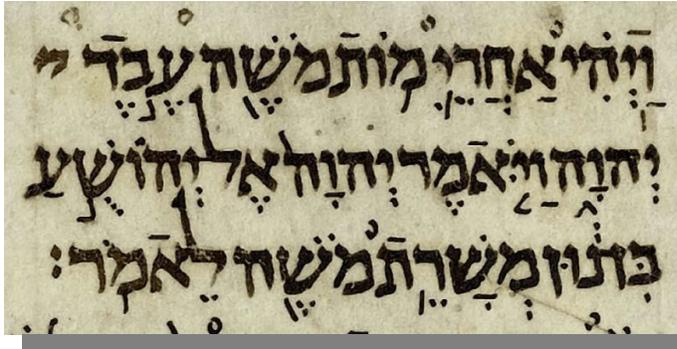
Old Testament in Hebrew
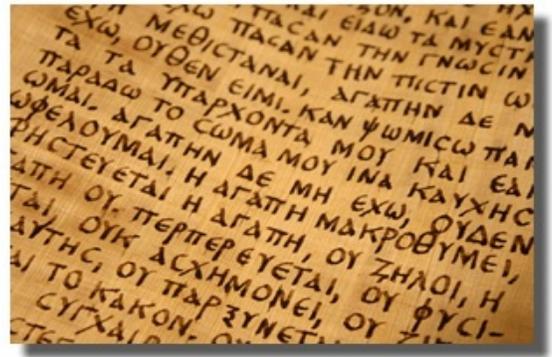
New Testament in Greek

The Bible in Latin
(Beginning of 1st Peter)
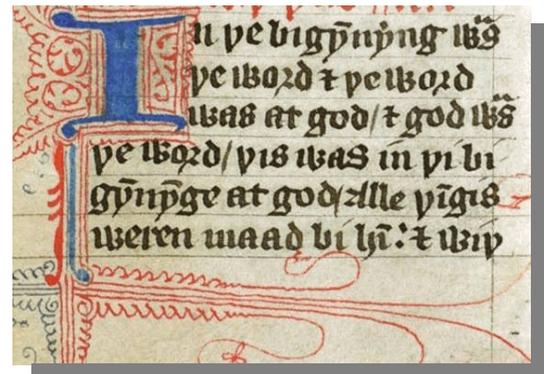
John Wycliffe's Bible (English)
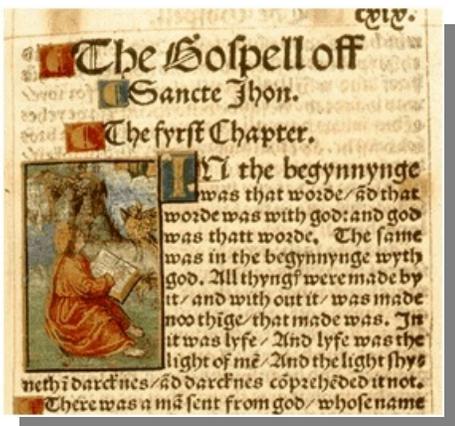
William Tyndale's Bible (English)
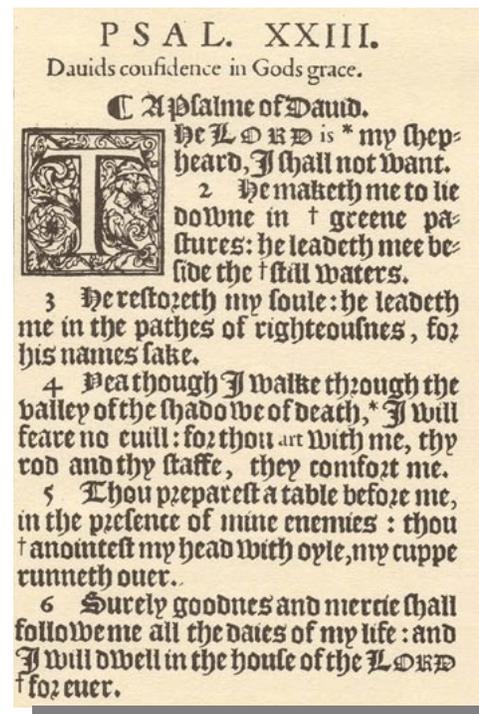
1611 King James Bible (English)