

THE BIBLE

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1. Overview / Purpose

If someone asked you to explain to them what the Bible is, how much would you be able to tell them? What if they asked you to go beyond “it’s God’s word” and the two testaments, or where the writings came from and how they were chosen to be included? How would you answer if you were asked about why we believe that the Bible today accurately reflects the original authors’ writings or why some of the extra-biblical writings of antiquity weren’t included?

These may or may not be questions that you’ve asked or wrestled with but plenty of others have. It shouldn’t surprise you that there are solid answers to every one of them. In this class, in the spirit of 1 Peter 3:15 (“ ... Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you,” NRSV) we are going to talk about the foundation and formation of the Bible, and dig into some of the wonderful scholarship that has been poured into studying our Holy Scripture.

2. What is the Bible

Since the purpose of this class is to give a broad overview of the Bible and not a rigorous apologetic (defense) of it, we are going to begin by letting it speak for itself. First and foremost, the Bible is “inspired by God ... useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16, NRSV). Contained within it we find the Gospel (more on just what that is a bit later), which is “God’s saving power for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith” (Romans 1:16-17, NRSV). Clearly what’s in the Bible is important to us.

The Bible itself is a book of books, divided into two testaments (or covenants). Together they form the written account of God’s interaction with – and undying, relentless love for – humanity. Far from existing as two distinct volumes, the Old and New Testaments form a complimentary pair with the Old Testament pointing forward to Christ and the New Testament pointing back to Him (see Luke 24:27 with Jesus on the road to Emmaus). We saw earlier what importance Paul (the author of 1 Timothy and Romans) placed on the Bible. Peter says of Paul’s letters “there are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist[e] to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures” (2 Peter 3:16, NRSV), placing them on the same level as the Old Testament, which were the recognized Scriptures of the first century. The Episcopal church holds this view of the Bible:

“The 39 Articles, a 1536 foundational document of Anglican theology, relates that “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation.” The Scriptures, comprised of the Old and New Testament, as well as some apocryphal texts, were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible is of extraordinary importance to Episcopal worship; during a Sunday morning service, the congregation will usually hear at least three readings from Scripture, and much of the liturgy from The Book of Common Prayer is based explicitly on the Biblical texts. According to the Catechism, “We understand the meaning of the Bible by the help of the Holy Spirit, who guides the Church in the true interpretation of the Scriptures” (p. 853-4)”¹

¹ <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/what-we-believe/bible/>

Paul admonished Timothy to “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15, NRSV). As God’s people, as followers of Christ, the importance of the Bible simply can’t be overstated.

3. How is the Bible Organized – Old Testament

The 39 books of our Old Testament are essentially the same as those of the Hebrew Bible² – the Scriptures written and passed on through history by God’s people Israel. When we see the writers of the New Testament refer to “the Scriptures” it’s the Hebrew Bible to which they are referring. The Old Testament is organized into 4 “sections” as follows:

The Pentateuch (Torah³)

THE BOOKS OF THE PENTATEUCH				
Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy

The Pentateuch begins in the Old Testament with God creating all that exists *ex nihilo* (from nothing), including mankind, made in God’s image. Sin enters God’s perfect world and God immediately promises redemption (Genesis 3:15). The effects of sin are visceral (Cain & Abel, the flood, the tower of Babel to name but a few early examples). With the call of Abraham God begins the calling of his chosen people through Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and eventually Moses, called to lead the Israelites out of bondage in Pharaoh’s Egypt toward their promised land.

Determining dates of authorship of these books with certainty is extremely difficult and not at all a settled matter. Some believe that they are post-exilic (written after 586 BC when the Babylonians sacked Judah). We know that writing on various materials was around long before Moses (the traditionally-understood author) was alive. Literary features and some customs and accounts found in Genesis share commonalities (and dissimilarities) with other writings from the ancient Near East. In the end we can’t forget the fact that these writings were held as authoritative Holy Scripture by God’s chosen people regardless of their dates of authorship.

Some of the important events found in the Pentateuch are:

The Abrahamic covenant	Genesis 15
Joseph and Pharaoh	Genesis 37, 39 - 50
The Plagues	Exodus 7 - 12
The Parting of the Red Sea	Exodus 15
The Ten Commandments	Exodus 20

² The content is the same, but the Hebrew Bible combines some of them where the Old Testament does not.

³ In the Hebrew Bible the first 5 books together are called the Torah, often translated as “law” but better thought of as “instruction” or “teaching.”

Historical Books

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS			
Joshua	1 Samuel	2 Kings	Ezra
Judges	2 Samuel	1 Chronicles	Nehemiah
Ruth	1 Kings	2 Chronicles	Esther

The historical books continue the account of Israel's history, beginning with their entry into Canaan and ending with their return to Judah during the reign of King Cyrus of Persia. After being ruled by the judges for a time following Joshua's death, Israel rejected God and begged Samuel to find them a king so they could be like the nations around them (1 Samuel 8:19-20). So began the succession of Israelite kings. Saul was anointed first, followed by David, Solomon, and a litany of successors. Jehoiakim was the last, his reign ending in its third year with Babylon's siege of Judah, the destruction of the temple, and Israel's exile from their land.

The aspect of Israel's history most instructive for us is perhaps God's pursuit of His people. There is a constant pattern of rebellion, judgment, remorse, and promise of deliverance. Where one generation if Israel obeyed God, the next forgot or didn't acknowledge Him and "did evil in the LORD's sight" (Judges 2:10-11, for example). Every rebellion was met with judgment, but also with love and promise. And God never waived on His original promise of redemption. Read through 1 & 2 Kings and 1 & 2 Chronicles and count the number of times an Israelite king did what was evil in the sight of God. Still God offered forgiveness and redemption.

Some of the important events found in the historical books are:

Davidic Covenant	2 Samuel 7
Solomon Asks for Wisdom	1 Kings 3
Building of the Temple	1 Kings 6
Kingdom of Israel Divided	1 Kings 12
Return from Exile	Ezra 1
Rebuilding of the Temple	Ezra 3 - 6

Wisdom Poetry Books

THE POETRY BOOKS				
Job	Psalms	Proverbs	Ecclesiastes	Song of Solomon

The books of wisdom and Hebrew poetry are lush in what they have to tell us about God and about ourselves – who we are and who God is. Job "wrestles with the suffering of a righteous individual alongside the affirmation that God is just and good"⁴ and sovereign. The psalms offer poetry and hymns of praise, thanksgiving, lament, desperation, and wonder to God. In the proverbs we find practical instruction for living wisely, grounded in God. The teacher in Ecclesiastes shows us our duty to "fear God, and keep His commandments" (Ecclesiastes 12:13), for to do otherwise is vanity. And Song of Solomon shows us poetically what true, righteous love looks like.

⁴ Sproul, R.C., ed. 2015. *The Reformation Study Bible : English Standard Version*. Orlando, Fla.: Reformation Trust. p. 755

Some noteworthy passages in the wisdom and Hebrew poetry books are:

God Answers Job	Job 38-40
God Mindful of Man	Psalms 8
“Create in Me a Clean Heart ...”	Psalms 51
“Trust in the LORD ...”	Proverbs 3
Joy & Adversity	Ecclesiastes 7

The Prophets

THE PROPHETIC BOOKS			
Isaiah	Hosea	Micah	Zechariah
Jeremiah	Joel	Nahum	Malachai
Lamentations	Amos	Habakkuk	
Ezekiel	Obadiah	Zephaniah	
Daniel	Jonah	Haggai	

The final “section” in our Old Testament consists of the prophetic books. The prophets were the intermediaries between God and man. The prophets spoken word “was the essential – if not the only – feature of their vocation and work.”⁵ They were the ones who “[transmitted] the words of God to people and [interceded] with God on their behalf.”⁶ The prophetic ministry as a whole seems to have been founded in the Mosaic covenant (Genesis 19-24) with Moses and Aaron at Mt. Sinai. Through Moses and Aaron God told the Israelites of His commands, rewards, and penalties. God continued to speak through His chosen prophets throughout the remainder of the Old Testament period.

Old Testament prophecy may be grouped into three distinct eras⁷:

Pre-Classical (Pre-8th Century BC):

This period covers the early monarchy in Israel and includes the prophets Samuel, Nathan, and Elijah. It’s included in the books Joshua – 2 Kings.

Classical (8th - 7th Century BC):

The focus of this period boils down to two catastrophic events – the fall of Israel to the Assyrians and the fall of Judah to the Babylonians. The prophets of this era include Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and probably Joel.

Exilic & Post Exilic (6th – 4th Century BC):

These prophets “spoke God’s word to the people during the dark years of Babylonian exile” and Judah’s restoration in Palestine⁸. They include Daniel, Ezekiel, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachai, and probably Obadiah and Joel.

⁵ Mays, James Luther, and Paul J. Achtemeier. 1987. *Interpreting the Prophets*. Fortress Press. P. 27

⁶ Sproul, R.C., ed. 2015. *The Reformation Study Bible : English Standard Version*. Orlando, Fla.: Reformation Trust. p. 1110

⁷ Sproul, R.C., ed. 2015. *The Reformation Study Bible : English Standard Version*. Orlando, Fla.: Reformation Trust. p. 1110

⁸ Sproul, R.C., ed. 2015. *The Reformation Study Bible : English Standard Version*. Orlando, Fla.: Reformation Trust. p. 1110

At times the prophets foretold God's wrath and punishment, and God's coming redemption. They also addressed societal problems caused by Israel's (and Judah's) turning away from God. A result of God's people forgetting their identity in God, they allowed lust, greed, and false gods to enter and influence their lives. God spoke through His prophets to convict His people and have them repent (see Amos).

4. How is the Bible Organized – New Testament

The Gospels

THE GOSPELS			
Matthew	Mark	Luke	John

The Old Testament ends with Judah's exile having ended (although their country is still occupied) and the rebuilding of the temple. God's redemptive plan hadn't yet been fully realized, though, and it seemed like things were getting back to "normal." That all changed with the gospels, which pick up around 400 years after the end of the Old Testament. What do the gospels tell us? The author of the Gospel of John puts it very plainly – they tell us that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing [we] may have life in His name" (John 20:31). The gospels give us the unveiling of God's plan for redemption. Christ Jesus, true God and true man, would suffer, die, and rise again to atone for our sin so that through Him we may be justified before God. The entire Old Testament looks forward to Jesus, and the remainder of the New Testament looks back to Him. In the gospels we learn of Jesus, our savior and the center of our entire Scriptures.

Some noteworthy passages in the gospels are:

Jesus' Lineage	Matthew 1
Jesus' Birth	Luke 2
Jesus' Divinity	John 1:1 John 5:18 John 8:58

The Acts of the Apostles

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES
Acts

The book of Acts follows the gospels in the New Testament. As its title "The Acts of the Apostles" suggests this book, a continuation of the gospel of Luke (both were written by Luke), begins shortly after Jesus' resurrection. We're told of Jesus' ascension, and with the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost the formation and growth of the church, even with its struggles against the Jewish powers and pagan society so opposed to it. In Acts we meet Saul, one of the most prolific and brutal persecutors of the young Christian church, who encounters the risen Christ on the road to Damascus and through God's grace becomes an ardent Christian missionary and prolific writer under his new identity as Paul. While the title "The Acts of the Apostles" is certainly accurate, the presence and

work of the Holy Spirit must not be overlooked. Evidence of the Holy Spirit's direction fills the pages of this book to the point that it could well be called "The Acts of the Holy Spirit."

Some noteworthy passages in Acts are:

Peter's Sermon	Acts 2
"No other name under Heaven"	Acts 4
Saul's Conversion	Acts 9
Paul in Athens	Acts 17

The Epistles

THE EPISTLES:			
Romans	Colossians	Philemon	2 John
1 Corinthians	1 Thessalonians	Hebrews	3 John
2 Corinthians	2 Thessalonians	James	Jude
Galatians	1 Timothy	1 Peter	
Ephesians	2 Timothy	2 Peter	
Philippians	Titus	1 John	

The largest "section of the New Testament is made up of the epistles, or pastoral letters. As the Christian church grew (which we saw in Acts), so did the need for the founders (the Apostles) to communicate with the various individual congregations, other church leaders, and their Jewish brothers and sisters. The majority of these letters were written by Paul (formerly Saul) but we also have writings of Peter, James, and others. The letters were "a means of Apostolic presence and instruction ... when the Apostle himself could not be present."⁹ Often (but not always) the letters were written for specific reasons or to solve certain problems. Paul for example, chastised the "foolish Galatians" (Galatians 3:1) for "deserting the one who called [them] in the grace of Christ" to follow another teaching (Galatians 1:6). On the other hand, he called the church in Thessalonica "imitators of [the Apostles] and Christ ... an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia" (1 Thessalonians 1:6-7). Peter and James wrote to the Jewish exiles of the Dispersion (1 Peter 1:1; James 1:1). Each epistle points back to Christ Jesus and His atoning death and resurrection.

Some noteworthy passages in the epistles are:

Salvation by Grace Alone	Ephesians 2
The Gospel "Defined"	1 Corinthians 15
The Power of the Gospel	Romans 1
Seek Christ & Things Above	Colossians 3

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The New Testament (and the Biblical canon) closes with "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," often referred to as simply "Revelation." This letter was written to "the seven churches that are in Asia"

⁹ Sproul, R.C., ed. 2015. *The Reformation Study Bible : English Standard Version*. Orlando, Fla.: Reformation Trust. p. 1971

(Rev 1:4), with “Asia” meaning western Turkey. The author identifies himself as “John” and is traditionally understood to be either the apostle John or John of Patmos. Either way, it’s clear that there was a level of familiarity between the author and the churches. John wrote to the churches during a period of persecution, possibly before the destruction of the temple in AD 70 but before the end of Roman emperor Domitian’s reign late in the first century. John wrote to both rebuke the churches (under pressure to change their message about Christ Jesus) and to give them assurance that Christ was with them. Regardless of present events, “their victory had been secured through the blood of [Christ],” satan would be defeated, and “Christ’s people would enjoy everlasting peace in His presence.”¹⁰

A word about genre is very important here. This letter falls into two categories of genre – apocalyptic and prophetic. We’ve had a brief look at prophetic writings above. “Apocalyptic” refers to final or last things – end times. Both genres tend to be symbolic, presenting numbers, metaphors, and visions of creatures and events that are very difficult to decipher, such as:

- Four living creatures, full of eyes, with faces like a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle (Rev 4)
- Locusts with human faces (Rev 9)
- The number of the beast (Rev 13)

As enticing as a good mystery is, we have to be careful to not let the visions and metaphors drive our understanding of this letter. Our interpretation needs to be grounded in what is plain and clear:

- God will be victorious over sin, death, and the power of satan
- God will “wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore” (Rev 21:4)
- “No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.” (Rev 22:3-5)

The entire letter points to this outcome – this is the lens through which we need to read it.

5. How did we get the Bible?

Canon

The word “canon” as we use it in the church derives from words in Hebrew and Greek for “reed” or “cane,” which at times were used for measuring. In this context the word canon “came to mean a standard or rule.”¹¹ Applied to the Bible, canon refers to “the list of books which are received as Holy Scripture.”¹² These are the books that are recognized as authoritative in speaking God’s word to us. Note the word “recognized” as opposed to “decreed” or “chosen.” The inclusion of these books in our Bible was very deliberate, but not in the way that you might think. The Biblical canon, both Old Testament and New Testament, was a “divine work by which the words of God were through the mystery of inspiration inscripturated.”¹³ In other words it has been the work of the Holy Spirit

¹⁰ Sproul, R.C., ed. 2015. *The Reformation Study Bible : English Standard Version*. Orlando, Fla.: Reformation Trust. p. XXXX

¹¹ Lightfoot, Neil R. 2003. *How We Got the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Pub. Group. p. 152.

¹² Lightfoot, Neil R. 2003. *How We Got the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Pub. Group. p. 152.

¹³ Bruce, F. F. *The Canon of Scripture*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988. p. 23.

to inspire the author's writings and the church's receiving, sharing, and use of them. This didn't happen in a vacuum, though. In His mercy and wisdom God gives us a good look into the process.

Old Testament

By the time the first century began the Hebrew Bible was already formed. In fact, "good evidence exists in the New Testament which shows that by the time of Jesus the canon of the Old [Testament] had been fixed."¹⁴ In the New Testament the Hebrew Bible is quoted extensively and referred to as "Holy Scripture" (Rom 1:2), "Scripture" (John 7:38; 2 Tim 3:15; Acts 8:32), and "the Scriptures" (John 5:39; Acts 17:11; Matt 21:42). Christ Himself "regularly appealed to the Hebrew Scriptures to validate His mission, His words, and His actions."¹⁵ Here it's important to understand that the "Scriptures" cited and appealed to by Jesus and the New Testament writers "were not an amorphous collection", for they "knew which writings they had in mind and could distinguish them from other writings."¹⁶ On the road to Emmaus Jesus tells of the "Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44), recalling the three part structure of the Hebrew Bible, as being written about Him. By this point the canon of the Old Testament had been closed and was recognized by the Jewish first century New Testament authors and by Christ Jesus himself.

New Testament

The practice of writing and preserving God's word was not foreign to the Jewish Christians of the first century. As the church grew its founding fathers needed to record the events they witnessed. The resulting writings were copied and distributed among the Christian community. As they were, certain of the writings were accepted into the canon of the New Testament. This didn't happen by random or subjective choice on the part of the church, but each writing was chosen through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and "based on the authority of Christ as personally mediated through the apostles."¹⁷

Technological and geographical limitations meant that dissemination of the newly written materials wasn't instantaneous. Still, recovered fragments show that by the second century the majority of the New Testament canon was recognized, and completed in the third century. In the second century Justin Martyr wrote of Christian worship assemblies that included reading of the apostles testimony. Valentinus (d 160), though arguing for a gnostic interpretation, recognized the four gospels, Paul, Hebrews, and Revelation. The Muratorian fragment of the late second century lists all but four of the books in today's New Testament. Origin, writing in the third century listed all 27 books as being authoritative for the church, as did Athanasius in AD 367.

Decreed or Recognized?

Detractors of the Bible sometimes argue that the Bible (and Christianity) would look very different if its compilers had "picked" different books to be included. The assumption that usually drives this criticism is that at some point in the fourth century the Roman Emperor Constantine decreed what the content of the Bible would be. Having spent some time considering how the Old and New Testaments were formed we can reject that idea completely. Certain writings excluded for sure but **not** by imperial fiat. The Biblical canon is the result of the Spirit-led recognition of which books were

¹⁴ Lightfoot, Neil R. 2003. *How We Got the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Pub. Group. p. 153.

¹⁵ Bruce, F. F. *The Canon of Scripture*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988. p. 26-27.

¹⁶ Bruce, F. F. *The Canon of Scripture*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988. p. 28-29.

¹⁷ Lightfoot, Neil R. 2003. *How We Got the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Pub. Group. p. 156.

authoritative by people remarkably close to the events described in them. There was nothing arbitrary or capricious about this process.

Extra-Biblical Writings

What about the writings that didn't "make it" into the Bible? In general there are two sets of writings to consider – the Old Testament Apocrypha¹⁸ and the gnostic gospels (or New Testament Apocrypha). The Old Testament Apocrypha is a group of books written in the 400 or so years between the last Old Testament writing and the beginning of the New Testament. While these books were never officially included in the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures, various councils listed them as being useful and offering some historical information. In 1546 the Catholic Council of Trent decreed that these books be included in the canon of Holy Scripture. There are, however, some very good reasons for their exclusion from the Bible:

1. They were never included in the Hebrew canon, even as late as the Jewish Council of Jamnia in the late 1st century. In other words, they were never accepted as Holy Scripture by the people by and for whom they were written.
2. Neither Philo nor Josephus (both 1st century Jewish historians) expanded the Hebrew Scripture canon beyond the books we have in our Old Testament today.
3. The apocryphal book 1 Maccabees mentions in 3 places that the prophetic era had ended. It was recognized that during this period God had stopped speaking through His prophets in the way He had done before.
4. Neither Jesus, the apostles, nor any New Testament author directly quoted an apocryphal book. In the New Testament, quotations from the Old Testament are preceded by phrases like "it is written," or "Scripture says." Such phrases are never used with respect to apocryphal books.
5. In Luke 24 Luke draws a connection between "the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms" and "the scriptures" (Luke 24:44-45). Jesus Himself excluded the Apocrypha.

Some post 1st century authors tried to emulate the books found in the Bible by writing in similar styles and by using pseudonyms based on apostolic and Biblical names. Although some date to the late 1st century, most originated in the 2nd century and later. A quick look into a few of them makes reasons for their exclusion from the New Testament canon obvious:

Infancy Gospel of Thomas: A child running in the street bumped into young Jesus' shoulder. Jesus got angry and killed the child.

Gospel of Peter: Following Jesus' resurrection 3 men emerged from Jesus' tomb, followed by a talking cross.

Acts of Paul: A talking lion asks Paul to be baptized, and Paul baptizes it.

These are some of the extreme examples. Most of the other writings don't contain such fantastic stories and do have some information that may be useful and accurate. What they all have in common, though, is a lack of apostolic or eyewitness connection, and that they were universally NOT used by the early church. They were passed over by the people closest to the events and the lineage of apostolic testimony and authority.

¹⁸ "Apocrypha means hidden or secretive.

6. Is the Bible what it was?

Biblical Texts

The copying and transmission of our Biblical texts wasn't done randomly or haphazardly. Even prior to the earliest Old Testament writings the preservation of treaties, agreements, ... had become important. In the earliest Jewish communities "there arose schools of professional scribes, ... men who were trained in the art of writing, who were specialists in the law, and who were the supreme guardians of the text."¹⁹ We see these scribes in 1 Kings 4, 1 Chronicles 2, Ezra 7, Matthew 13, and Mark 2 for example. Preserving the word of God wasn't a mere profession - it was a passion, a meticulous but extremely important undertaking. From the beginning the scribes honed their craft, but none more than the late fifth century Massoretes. They "standardized and sharpened" the scribal practice to the place where they "knew how many words and letters belonged in the books of their Bible."²⁰

Errors and Additions?

What about the claim that copyists have made huge numbers of mistakes – so many that our current texts are vastly different from their originals? Here we need to be very careful with definitions. There certainly are some variations between manuscripts. Sometimes the word order changed, sometimes a copyist added wording to clarify a point, sometimes a word was inadvertently changed to a similar word, etc. Do these render the modern texts useless? Of course not!! First, Greek is an inflected language. That means that word forms are used to a higher degree than word order for determining the meaning of a sentence. So, a sentence written in two different ways in Greek would be translated to the same sentence in the target language. There is no change in meaning.

As for other variations like editorial additions, word changes, ..., the craft of textual criticism was developed as a way to get to the original texts. Textual criticism is "the analysis of various copies, fragments, versions, and translations of a text with the goal of recovering the wording of the original manuscript."²¹ Textual criticism allows us to compare copies of the texts, understand how they changed over time, and know how the original text read. The texts that make up our Bible, particularly the New Testament texts, have gone through **extensive** textual critical study. The result? Where a part of a text has multiple possible readings, "every possible option simply reinforces truths that are already clearly present [and uncontested] and in the New Testament as a whole."²² Further, "there is no point at which any of the possible options would require readers to rethink an essential belief about Jesus or to doubt the historical integrity of the New Testament."²³ Rest assured that the Bible as we have it today gives us the same message from God that the original texts did.

¹⁹ Lightfoot, Neil R. 2003. *How We Got the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Pub. Group. p. 131

²⁰ Jones, Timothy Paul. 2015. *How We Got the Bible*. Rose Publishing.

²¹ Jones, Timothy Paul. 2015. *How We Got the Bible*. Rose Publishing.

²² Jones, Timothy Paul. 2007. *Misquoting Truth*. InterVarsity Press. p 55

²³ Jones, Timothy Paul. 2007. *Misquoting Truth*. InterVarsity Press. p 55

7. Translations – what’s the difference?

While a deep dive into Biblical translations is beyond the scope of this class we do need to consider some of the challenges Biblical translators face, and how they have dealt with them to arrive at the (many) translations we have today. Neither the Hebrew nor Greek found in the early manuscripts of the Scriptural writings used punctuation, and the Hebrew didn’t even contain vowels. With that as a start, translators have had to put into other languages the genres, idioms, styles, ... written into the original texts. To solve this problem translators developed a range of translation types that range from translating words (word-for-word) to translating ideas (thought-for-thought). The picture below shows where some of the more popular translations fall within this range. In general it will be better to choose a translation more toward the word-for-word end than toward the thought-for-thought end, but you should be encouraged to look at a number of different translations, consider the underlying philosophy of their translators, and see how they differ.



Source: <https://www.biblegateway.com/learn/bible-101/about-the-bible/bible-versions-guide/>