

- The Name of God:
 - “YHWH was written as Yahweh but pronounced with the vowels from the word Adonai (“Lord”)
 - The name would not be spoken (due to a holy reverence and not wanting to violate the 3rd Commandment) and instead Adonai would be spoken.
 - LXX translators used “Kurios” (Greek for “Lord”) in translating YHWH, but some Greek manuscripts (from BC) did not translate the word but used Hebrew Script.
 - Some Dead Sea Scrolls Hebrew Manuscripts used Paleo-Hebrew script (no longer in use) instead of block script to discourage readers from actually saying the name out loud.
 - A few Greek manuscripts (1 DSS, and a church father) have “*Iao*” and other forms were used “*Iaoue*” or “*Iabe*”.
 - Even today translations often do not spell out Yahweh as God’s name; opting usually to use small capital letters: LORD or GOD.
- Christian scribes
 - Early scribes (of papyrus manuscripts) were less professional – but there is a range of skill. By mid-to late 3rd century there are examples of MSS made by professional Christian scribes (P75).
 - Just because scribes were not professional didn’t mean they were bad. Poor copying is easily spotted and corrected by later readers (often scribes themselves).
 - The earliest full copies of the NT are beautiful (and careful) works from competent scribes. We have examples of manuscripts almost 1,000 years later that agree overwhelmingly in numerous details (even in the formatting) – testifying to a high degree of scribal carefulness in the intervening years.

A Look Ahead at Next Week

- We discuss textual variants and how we confidently identify the Text.

Goal: Grow in our understanding of the doctrine of Scripture, be equipped to answer objections, and to better learn how to read and understand the Bible.

Sources: Quotes indicated “SS” are from John D. Meade and Peter J. Gurry, *Scribes & Scripture: The Amazing Story of How We Got the Bible* (Crossway, 2022).

Scripture: Theology, Text & Transmission

Class 9: Copying & Preserving the Scriptures

Review

The last 8 weeks we studied “**what** Scripture is” (the written record of the speech of the living God), and “**how** Scripture is” (clear, inerrant, sufficient and effective). We looked at this from a theological standpoint and emphasized how we follow Jesus’ example in how he viewed Scripture.

The next several weeks we will discuss why our English Bibles are a faithful copy of Scripture – or, “how we got our Bible.” We will cover:

- Why we can have confidence in the Text of Scripture
- Why we can have confidence in the Canon of Scripture
- How we should view different translations of the Bible

How could this study be relevant? Why is this important?

- Contemporary ideas about the Bible allege we don’t have access to its words and describe it as an example of the “telephone game”.
- A common objection to Christianity stems from seeing the selection of the books in the canon as an ecclesiastical conspiracy and power play.

I. Scripture was Copied & Preserved down through the Ages

A. The innovation of writing

- The world of the Bible was predominantly “oral” – it was a conscious decision to write things down. (We take this for granted in our culture.) “...Papias (ca. AD 130) esteems oral sayings of the apostles above what he reads in books, ‘for I did not think that information from books would profit me as much as information from a living and abiding voice.’” ~ SS 28
- This oral culture was nevertheless accurate in transmitting information (research has demonstrated this). This strengthens the weight of the Gospels’ testimony which was written down in the lifetime of many eyewitnesses to the events recorded.

1) Writing Materials

- Stone, pottery, clay, wax tablets – but more important to the Bible also on papyrus, parchment, vellum and paper. (And even silver.)
- Papyrus was made from a reed cut and dried in a criss-cross pattern
- Job 19:23-24; Psalm 45:1; Isa. 8:1; 2 Tim. 4:13
- Jesus wrote: John 8:6 (alludes to Exodus 31:18)

2) Book forms

- Scroll – Luke 4:16-20 (Jesus rolled the book back up); Rev. 5:1 (unusual in that writing on front and back of scroll – alludes to Ezek. 2:10 and may refer to a title deed in Roman culture being written on front and back)
- Codex – developed from sewing wax tablets together. Could be made from papyrus or parchment/vellum (and much later, paper)
 - This new tech. became the hallmark of Christian Bibles
 - all but a few MSS are in Codex form
 - Jews resisted using Codex for centuries

“...the codex [may have been] a way for Christians to distinguish their sacred texts from profane ones... [or] it better accommodated collections of the four Gospels or Paul’s letters... [or] it was more portable for Christian missionaries; or... it was simply more economical and convenient.” ~ SS 33

B. Christian innovations using the Codex format

- Codex format enabled Origen’s *Hexapala* (AD 235) –6 column OT:

Hebrew Text	Hebrew in Greek Letters	Aquila’s Greek Tr.	Symmachus’ Greek Tr.	Septuagint (LXX) Greek Tr.	Theodotion’s Greek Tr.
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- Eusebian Canons were an early “harmony of the Gospels.”
 - The Gospels were split into paragraphs which are numbered
 - Tables at the front of a copy of the 4 Gospels list 10 groupings (or canons) of ways these paragraphs are related: (4) Gospels; (3) Matthew-Mark-Luke; Matthew-Luke-John; Matthew-Mark-John; (2) Matthew-Luke; Matthew-Mark; Matthew-John; Mark-Luke; Luke-John; (1) Gospel only.
 - the system was so ingenious that it is still used in scholarly Greek NT texts today
- Different Scripts used:

- Majuscule (Greek upper-case writing) (4th Cent. BC – 9th Cent. AD)
 - Text is uniform and has few spaces.
 - Manuscripts written this way are called Uncials.
- Miniscule (Greek lower-case, “cursive” writing) –9th Cent. & later
 - Text is smoother to read; invented in a Christian monastery
 - Manuscripts written this way are called Miniscules.

C. Scribes

- Professional scribes developed as a class devoted to learning how to read/write and then practicing their art.
- The Bible is aware of the role of Scribes and reveals their influence on some passages even.
 - Ezra was the preeminent Bible scribe – Ezra 7:5-6, 10
 - In the ancient world – sacred texts were stored in the Temple – and we see this with the book of the covenant (10 commandments) stored in the ark. Josephus records the Romans carried off a copy of the Law plundered from the Temple in AD 70.
 - Other Bible scribes: Deut. 17:18 (King to act as a scribe); 2 Sam. 8:17; 1 Kings 4:3; Ps. 45:1; Prov. 25:1.
 - Presence of scribal updates to the text: recording the death of Moses (Dt. 29:28; 34:6, 10); Gen. 14:14 (cf. Judg. 18:29; also Deut. 34:1).

These can be called “inspired editorial updates” (following Michael Grisanti “The Place of Textual Updating in an Inerrant View of Scripture”).

D. The Carefulness of Later Jewish & Christian Scribes

- Masorettes (6th – 10th Cent. AD) were famous for their stringent rules for copying Scripture
- A Talmudic text (AD 450-550) has a Rabbi telling a scribe “Be meticulous in your vocation because your vocation is a task of heaven; should you by chance omit or add one letter you would thereby destroy all the universe.” ~ quoted in SS 44
- The care of the Masorettes led them to invent/adapt a system of vowel points to preserve the traditional “reading” (*qere*) of the “written” text (*kethib*) – sometimes noted in the margin when the reading deviated from what was scrupulously preserved in the text.
 - Hebrew manuscripts did not originally contain vowels (and modern Hebrew is often written without them as well).