

What Is the Best Version of the Bible?

The Furious and Raging Battle over the Bible!

Which Bible translation is the best? Is it a good thing we have so many different translations? How did we get the Bible, and how was it preserved? Are modern translations reliable?

Scholars have long poo-pooed the veracity and accuracy of the Bible. Many have doubted the reliability of the Septuagint. Yet, Jesus and the apostles quoted from it the vast majority of the time! Why? And why did the Jews, who originally translated the LXX, abolish and banish it during the second century, and replaced it with new Greek translations?

Here is shocking, incredible new evidence on the true origin of the Scriptures, how we got the Bible, and its canonization, preservation, and authenticity!

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Attacks on the Bible and the basis of Christianity are commonplace in the modern world of unbelief and agnosticism. Whole Bible stories have been relegated to myth and legend. The Bible today is under siege, and is attacked from everywhere, it seems. The media, the academic world, college professors, novels such as *The DaVinci Code* which purport to be based on facts, doubts about the historical accounts of the Scriptures have seized the minds of a whole generation which now doubts the historical reliability and authenticity of the Scriptures.

Even a Jewish rabbi, Dr. Michael Chandler, professor of Astrotheology, claims, “Why all the fuss over Sodom and Gomorrah? It’s a mythological, moralistic story. The cities never existed.”

An American Bible scholar, Dr. Rocco A. Errico, professor of Aramaic studies in southern California, asserted, “No knowledgeable person believes in the account of the tower of Babel as historical fact.” He adds, “No scholar, no historian, takes any of these stories as historical facts.”

Declared Dr. Gerald Larue, emeritus professor of biblical history at UCLA, “All the shouting and trumpet blowing in the world would not cause fifteen-foot walls to collapse. The whole Joshua/Jericho account is just a religious legend.”

Atheist George H. Smith challenges, “Christian theism must be rejected by any person with even a shred of respect for reason.” Atheist Richard Dawkins claims, “The virgin birth, the Resurrection, the raising of Lazarus, even the Old Testament miracles, are all freely used for religious propaganda, and they are very effective with an audience of unsophisticates and children.”

The battle over the Bible is real – and the battle lines have clearly been drawn.

What about the New Testament?

Some critics charge that the New Testament writings cannot be inspired because of what they call “contradictions” in the text. On close examination, however, many of their so-called “contradictions” are not contradictions at all. Matthew, Mark and Luke reported the life of Christ as they either witnessed it, or based on sources which they deemed accurate and trustworthy.

Some of the minor differences in the accounts of the words of Jesus may be due to the fact that the gospel writers were writing the "gist" of what Jesus said – a summary of sorts – and did not intend to give every word He spoke in every parable or discourse. Also, Jesus may have repeated some of His parables or stories several different times, and altering them a little each time, depending on the audience. Ministers often do the same thing, today, when they give the “same sermon” to different congregations, making little alterations each time.

However, the trustworthiness of the gospels and epistles of the New Testament should be deemed very high, as the agreement between the many Greek copies is extremely high. Most differences are relatively minor, such as spellings of words, punctuation, variants in names, etc.

Says Graham Stanton in *Gospel Truth? New Light on Jesus and the Gospels*, “There is no shortage of manuscripts of the Gospels: their sheer numbers is something of an embarrassment” (p.47). Unlike other ancient writings, such as the works of Josephus, or the Jewish philosopher Philo, or the Greek historian Herodotus, of which there are limited manuscripts that have come down to us, the plethora of New Testament writings is testimony to how highly they were regarded in early times by the Church.

Stanton points out that the discovery of fragments of papyri containing portions of the Gospels which pre-date the great fourth-century uncial manuscripts, “even though they are fragmentary, they confirm the general reliability of the great fourth-century uncials which contain the full text of the Gospels” (p.48).

Eusebius, the church historian who lived in the fourth century, quotes Papias

concerning the Gospel of Mark, generally considered as the first of the accounts of the life of Christ to have been written. We read in his *Church History*:

“And this is what the Elder said, 'Mark, who became Peter's interpreter, wrote accurately, but not in order, as many of the things said and done by the Lord as he had noted. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterwards, as I said, he followed Peter who adapted his teaching to the needs (of his hearers) but not as a complete work of the Lord's sayings. So Mark made no mistake in writing some things just as he had noted them. For he was careful of one thing, to leave nothing he had heard out and to say nothing falsely” (Eusebius' *Church History*, 3:39:15).

Matthew and Luke, however, contain about 230 sayings of Jesus which are not recorded in the book of Mark. Where did these sayings come from? The traditional view of course is that Matthew himself was a disciple of Christ, and so his writings could well be from his own memory of the events. Luke, however, admits he was not an original follower of Christ, but reported on his life based on the many authorities and leaders who told him the events he recorded.

Strangely, for over a century the sayings of Jesus not found in Mark's gospel have been referred to by the term “Q.” In 1861 the German scholar H. J. Holzmann claimed that Matthew and Luke used two main sources for their gospel accounts – the gospel of Mark, and a collection of the saying of Jesus, which came to be called *Quelle* (source). In 1890 this was abbreviated to “Q” for short.

The “Q” hypothesis has been the basis for nearly all serious study of the origin of the gospel accounts since that time. Scholars today argue over which words quoted in the gospels really were uttered by Jesus, and which were added later as if they were His words, based on traditions in the Church. Such arguments seem singularly nonsensical, however, since all the arguments of all the unbelieving men in the world cannot invalidate Scripture. The early Church accepted all the gospels as being written by the apostles. Nothing that was not written during the first century, and by one of apostolic rank in the Church, was ever accepted as “Scripture.”

In a letter written in 96 A.D. to the church in Corinth, Clement, who was then bishop of Rome, wrote that both “Scripture” and “the words of the Lord Jesus” were of equal value (see I Clement 13:1; 46:2, 7). In the epistle of Barnabas, also written before the end of the first century, the author quotes the phrase “many are called but few are chosen” from Matthew 22:14, and introduces the quotation with the remark, “as it stands written,” showing he used the New Testament gospels as “Scripture.”

Most important, however, the apostle Peter, in his second epistle, refers to the writings of the apostle Paul – who was certainly the most controversial apostle of the early church – as being in the category of “Scripture.” He declared, “Paul, also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in *all his epistles*, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, *as they do also the OTHER SCRIPTURES*, unto their

own destruction” (II Pet.3:15-16).

History tells us that the main lines of the New Testament canon were settled by A.D. 200. The decision of which books belonged in the New Testament was based on the criteria that the document in question had to have been written in the first century, it had to have the imprimatur of an apostle or disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it had to have been in general circulation among the churches.

The first list of these accepted books, that has come down to us, was written up in 367 A.D., and exactly corresponds to our present day New Testament!

The Bibliographical Test

In a fascinating study entitled, “Is Christianity True?”, author Eric Snow, writes, “The military historian, C. Sanders, devised a three part test when investigating any historical document to determine whether it was reliable. One of these tests is the bibliographical test, which judges an ancient historical document to be more reliable if many copies of the manuscript exist. A second test maintains the smaller the time gap between the first copy of the document and the first surviving copy, the more reliable it is because there is less time for scribal errors to creep into the preserved text. By these two standards the NT is the best attested ancient historical writing in existence. Some 24,633 known copies (including fragments, etc.) exist of it, 5,309 of these being in Greek. By contrast, the document with the next highest number of copies, outside the Hebrew Old Testament [OTJ (which has over 1700 copies), is Homer’s Iliad, with 643. Other historical writings by prominent ancient historians have far fewer copies: Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War, 8; Herodotus, The Histories, 8; Julius Caesar, Gallic Wars, 10.

“Furthermore, the time gap between the earliest preserved copies and the autograph, or first manuscript, is much smaller for the NT than these works. For the NT, the gap is about 90 years or less, since most of it was first written before 70 A.D. Scholar, John A. T. Robertson, in ‘Redating the New Testament’, has maintained that every NT book was written before 70 A.D., including John and Revelation. Dates that place the writing of the NT in the second century have been generally discredited by scholars in recent decades. A fragment of John, dated to 125 A.D., is traditionally cited as the earliest copy known of any part of the NT. However, nine fragments of the NT were found in 1972 in a cave by the Dead Sea. Among these fragments, part of Mark was dated to around 50 A.D., Luke 57 A.D., and Acts from 66 A.D. The earliest major manuscripts, such as Vaticanus and Sinaiticus are dated to 325-350 A.D. and 350 A.D. respectively.”

Snow continues, “By contrast, the time gap is much larger for the pagan works mentioned above. For Homer, the gap is 500 years (900 B.C. for the original writing, 400 B.C. for the first copy). For Caesar, it’s 900-1000 years, Herodotus, 1300 years and Thucydides, 1300 years. Hence, the NT can be objectively judged more reliable than these pagan historical works both by having a much smaller time gap between when it

was written and the first preserved copies, and in the number of ancient handwritten copies.”

Textual Criticism

Snow points out that skeptics can throw out some frightening figures, and say “There are 200,000 variations in the NT,” and create doubts in the minds of many Christians. However, the principles of the science of textual criticism show us that we can have certainty that the scribes preserved the NT accurately. Most of variations between the manuscripts can be ruled out using this test. Most of these “200,000 variations” are very minor in nature – such as spelling mistakes, homophones (such as in English, “two,” “too,” “to”), words accidentally repeated twice by scribes, etc. For example, if the same word is misspelled 3,000 times, that counts for 3,000 variations.

Says Snow, “Scholar, Ezra Abbott, maintained 19/20ths of NT variations have so little support that they can be automatically ruled out. Scholars Geisler and Nix, building upon the work of F. J. A. Hort, said only about 1/8 have weight, with 1/60 being “substantial variations.” Furthermore, the number of variations is high precisely because so many ancient manuscripts of the NT exist, allowing for more mistakes. This also allows a greater ability to detect and eliminate those mistakes, unlike the case for Caesar’s ‘Gallic Wars’ with its mere 10 copies. Scholar Philip Schaff said only 400 of all the 150,000 variations he knew to exist caused doubt on textual meaning, with 50 being of great significance. Even then, he said no variation altered ‘an article of faith or a precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other and undoubted passages, or by the whole tenor of scripture teaching.’”

The Canon of the New Testament

The New Testament canon (selection of and order of the books) is another area of controversy. How can we know which ancient books should have been included? What was the criteria? What authority made the decisions and why?

Historically, the canon of the New Testament, as we have it today, is absolutely accurate and was the accepted canon of books *used in the early centuries of the church*. In the days of Jesus Christ, there was a body of literature called “The Scriptures” which was commonly regarded by the Jews as having come from God. They called it the Word of God, and Christ Himself acknowledged it (John 10:35; 5:39). As the first century writings of the apostles appeared, they were added to these Jewish Scriptures and held in the same sacred regard throughout the new scattered churches. By widespread and common acceptance, they came to be regarded as inspired Scripture as well. They were put together into a “canon,” or list of original and authorized list of books, by the apostle Paul, and finally by the apostle John, that last remaining apostle who died about 90 A.D. Any writings by any Christians after that date were automatically excluded.

While the apostles were yet living, they had begun under their own supervision collecting their writings to be made use of by the churches. Paul claimed his teaching was inspired by God (I Cor.2:7-13; 14:37; I Thess.2:13). Peter accepted Paul’s writings

as inspired “Scripture” (II Pet.3:15-16). John also claimed the book of Revelation was “revealed” to him by Christ (Rev.1:1-2). These writings were intended to be read in the churches (Col.4:16; I Thess.5:27; II Thess.2:15), including after their “departure” (II Pet.1:15; 3:1-2). Paul quoted as “Scripture”, the declaration, “The laborer is worthy of his hire” (I Tim.5:18), a statement found only in Matthew 10:10 and Luke 10:7, thus categorizing those two gospels as inspired Scripture.

In the fourth century and thereabouts, various Gnostic sects arose, claiming other “inspired” books and made up their own “list” or “canon” of inspired writings, their own “New Testaments,” as it were. As a result, at that time, to maintain order and to refute the Gnostic canons, the visible Church had to make up its own official “canon” of Scriptures. It was based on all the commonly accepted New Testament books which were then in use by the Christian churches throughout the Mediterranean region. It was because of these spurious “canons” coming on the scene, devised by heretics like Marcion (circa A.D. 140), and others, which compelled the Church at that time to designate and put its stamp of approval upon all those New Testament books which were already in common use in the Churches.

The canonization of the New Testament, itself, was no Catholic “conspiracy.” This was a simple step of prudence – to make a final stamp of approval and authenticity upon those books already in common usage at that time. A formal decree recognizing the Christian canon was not made until 405 A.D. – long after Constantine’s time.

For more discussion and insight, I refer you to *Halley’s Pocket Bible Handbook*, and various Bible Dictionaries, and F. F. Bruce’s books, *The Books and the Parchments: How We Got Our English Bible*, and *The Canon of Scripture*.

Christians should have no doubts on the canon of the NT, meaning which books should be in it and which ones shouldn’t be. The quality of the apocryphal (so-called “missing”) books, such as “The Gospel of Peter,” “The Gospel of Thomas,” and “The Shepherd of Hermas,” is so much lower and/or their teachings at such variance with the canonical books that they can be eliminated from consideration easily. As M. R. James commented in *The Apocryphal New Testament*: “There is no question of anyone’s having excluded them from the New Testament: They have done that for themselves.” In evident reaction against the heretic Marcion’s (c. 140 A.D.) attempt to edit the canon, lists of the canonical books were made in the late second century onwards. These lists, which even from the beginning, contain most of the books we find in the NT today, were made by the author of the Muratorian fragment (170 A.D.), Irenaeus (180 A.D.), and Clement (190 A.D.).

Furthermore, despite its claims to the contrary, the Roman Catholic Church did not choose the canon, and then impose it from the top down. The Sunday-observing Church before the time of emperor Constantine and the Edict of Milan (313 A.D.) was not a tightly controlled, highly organized, monolithic group, and had suffered terrible persecution itself during the rule of Diocletian and earlier emperors. The canon came from the traditional practices of average members and elders, from the bottom up. As scholar Kurt Aland noted: “It goes without saying that the Church, understood as the

entire body of believers, created the canon . . . it was not the reverse – it was not imposed from the top, be it by bishops or synods.”

The Magdalen Fragment

Scholars have long denied the veracity of the New Testament Scriptures, claiming that the earliest gospels were not eye-witness accounts of Christ and His life, but were written some one hundred years afterward, or about the middle of the second century, and were based on hearsay, myth, fable, and oral stories which had been passed down. Thus many scholars have regarded the very words of Christ, as recorded in the gospels, as "suspect."

Astonishing as it may seem, however, bits of papyrus in an Oxford University library puts the lie to the cherished theories of unbelieving, skeptical scholars! Three scraps of text of the gospel of Matthew, inscribed in Greek, have traditionally been believed to have been written in the late second century. But German papyrus expert Carsten Thiede has published a paper arguing that these fragments kept at Oxford's Magdalen College *could be an EYE WITNESS ACCOUNT of the life of Jesus!*

The London Times reported that the evidence on an early form of writing paper was a potentially "important breakthrough in biblical scholarship, on a level with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947" (*Los Angeles Times*, Dec.25, 1994, "Gospel Fragments in Britain May Be Contemporary Account of Life of Jesus Christ, p.A42).

Some scholars have questioned the accuracy of the New Testament as historical, believing that the earliest texts were written long after the actual events described. However, if Thiede has correctly dated the fragments, they would be evidence that the Matthew Gospel was written only a generation after the crucifixion, or even earlier! Says William Tuohy of the *Los Angeles Times*, "Parts of the New Testament may have been written by men *who actually knew Christ*, rather than authors recounting a 2nd-Century version of an oral tradition."

The Magdalen fragments have been at the Oxford college since 1901. Little work has been done on them since 1953 when they were last edited by biblical scholars. But earlier this year, Thiede visited Oxford and inspected the papyrus. He concluded,

"The Magdalen fragment now appears to belong to a style of handwriting that was current in the 1st Century A.D., and that slowly petered out around the mid-1st Century. Even a hesitant approach to questions of dating would therefore seem to justify a date in the 1st Century, about 100 years earlier than previously thought."

The lines on the fragments are from Matthew 26 and include the oldest written reference to Mary Magdalene and the betrayal of Christ by Judas.

This new discovery by Professor Carsten Thiede, a papyrus expert, will provoke controversy among scholars, if not even dismay and consternation on the part of disbelievers and skeptics. His discovery, if true, is strong evidence that the gospel

accounts regarding the life of Jesus Christ are accurate, and reliable historical documents. Of course, true Christians have believed this all along. One wonders, however, how Jewish rabbis who have never given serious thought to the Messianic claims of Christ, will view the evidence, as it impacts on Judaism.

The Jews and the Septuagint

The Jews of course have never accepted the New Testament as either historically reliable or as Scripture, although the apostle Peter regarded it as such (II Pet.3:14-16). But the Jews, as we saw in last month's *Prophecy Flash*, also rejected the Septuagint, because of its clear power in endorsing the Messianic claims of Jesus.

Scholars now know that the Septuagint represents a powerful pre-Masoretic version of the Old Testament text. The early Christians quoted it repeatedly in their controversies with the Jews over the Messiahship of Christ. These facts must not be glossed over, or set aside, or ignored, as if of no importance. The very claims of Christ's being the Messiah may well be at stake!

There is much more to this story than meets the eye, at first glance! It should rock the world of biblical scholarship like a "bombshell." Consider! If Jesus and the apostles clearly used quotations from the Septuagint, or a Hebrew original text upon which it must have been based – this is an ASTOUNDING fact of far reaching implications. Such a "PRE-MASORETIC HEBREW TEXT" is thereby attested to as having been AUTHORITATIVE!

But why is it we don't have a copy of it, today? Why is it that the Jewish rabbis did not preserve this text, along with the "Masoretic text"?

Why, indeed!

Far from down-grading the importance and value of the Septuagint, therefore, this fact alone establishes its incredible usefulness and importance to the modern Christian who sincerely desires to follow Christ! Let's look into this matter, once and for all.

Ulterior Motives to Suppress Evidence

Says *The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, in answer to this remarkable question:

"After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the LXX lost favor among the Jews, partly because of the successful use made of it by the Christians in establishing the claims of Jesus . . ." (p.972).

Unger's Bible Dictionary asserts that the Jewish leaders of the second century of the present era deliberately rejected the Septuagint, and removed it from Jewish synagogues, and translated a NEW "Greek" version of the Old Testament. Why? Such a

arduous undertaking would hardly be worth the effort unless there were some very compelling cause or motivation to do it. Consider for a moment. The Septuagint had served the Jewish community well for 350-400 years. It was well accepted over the whole world. So why try to introduce a NEW translation, and BANISH the old one, all of a sudden? Says Unger:

"From the place of its origin in Egypt, the Septuagint spread to all parts of the Hellenistic-Jewish world. Centers like Antioch, Alexandria and Caesarea developed different textual traditions. Since the Septuagint became the Old Testament of the Christians, who employed it in their arguments with the Jews, a need arose for a NEW RENDERING of the Old Testament in Greek, which would be true to the Hebrew. This was accomplished by AQUILA'S RIVAL JEWISH VERSION MADE AROUND 130 A.D." (p.1148).

In other words, a NEW Hebrew-into-Greek translation was made by the Jewish rabbis during the time of Rabbi Akiba, circa 130 A.D. Akiba was the leading Jewish rabbi in Judaea at the time, and the one who dubbed the Jewish partisan terrorist Bar Kochba as the "Messiah", thus finalizing the Jewish rejection of Jesus Christ/Yeshuah Moshiach as the true Messiah!

The Jewish rabbis of the first and second centuries were having "fits" in fighting the clear expositions of the apostles and early Christians, who were using the plain statements in the Septuagint to prove that Jesus is the Christ. They therefore rejected the Septuagint version and created a new translation to suit their own religious purposes. Says Unger, further:

"The importance of the Septuagint from every angle can scarcely be overestimated. This can be asserted despite its deficiencies and limitations. Religiously and spiritually the Septuagint gave the great revealed truths concerning creation, redemption, sin and salvation to the world. It released these from the narrow isolation of the Hebrew language and people and gave them to the Graeco-Roman world through the divinely prepared instrument of the Greek language, the lingua franca of the Graeco-Roman world (300 B.C. to A.D. 300). The Septuagint was a definite factor in the preparation for the coming of Christianity and the New Testament revelation. . . .

"The Septuagint was the Bible of early Christianity before the New Testament was written.

After the New Testament Scriptures came on the scene, they were added to the Septuagint to form the completed Scriptures of Christianity.

"Besides this momentous ministry, the Septuagint met the religious and liturgical needs of Jews living in Alexandria, Egypt. This was the center of culture and learning of ancient Judaism. It also met the needs of Jewish proselytes in the Graeco-Roman world. . . .Historically as well as religiously and spiritually, the Septuagint is of immense importance. As the first translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into a foreign language, the Septuagint gained great fame" (p.1149).

However, Unger points out, the fact that early Christians used and quoted the Septuagint widely in controversies with the Jews led to increased resentment and hostility from the Jews, who had up to that time accepted and used the Septuagint. He continues:

"By the beginning of the second century, A.D., reaction against the Septuagint took place in Jewish circles. By this time Christians had come to venerate the Septuagint as inspired and authoritative, *and used it in controversy with Jews to prove the Messiahship of Jesus*. By this time many mistakes had crept into the Septuagint and the Jews were particularly annoyed by the use made of it by Christians. *Resulting HOSTILITY by Jewish scholars toward the Septuagint led to Aquila's rival Jewish version*. This extremely literal Greek translation of the second-century Hebrew text, made about A.D. 130, became a substitute for the Septuagint for Jews who spoke Greek. *Aquila was trained under Rabbi Akiba and perfected in Jewish tradition*. He stuck very closely to the literal Hebrew text and for that reason his version is of critical importance" (p.1149).

The Great Division and Gulf

Conservative scholar F.F. Bruce in his very helpful book *The Canon of Scripture* points out that the Septuagint scriptures were used even in some of the synagogues in Judaea itself. He writes, "But even in Palestine, and not least in Jerusalem itself, there were many Greek-speaking Jews, Hellenists, and there were synagogues where they might go to hear the scriptures read and the prayers recited in Greek. Such was the Synagogue of the Freedmen where Stephen held debate in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9)" (p.49). Says Bruce:

"However much the wording of Stephen's defense in Acts 7 may owe to the narrator, the consistency with which its biblical quotations and allusions are based on the Septuagint is true to life. Since Stephen was a Hellenist, the Septuagint was the edition of the scriptures which he would naturally use" (p.49).

Throughout the Roman Empire, the Septuagint was in use in JEWISH synagogues during the apostolic period. Bruce continues:

"When Paul at Thessalonica visited the synagogue on three successive sabbaths and 'argued with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead' (Acts 17:2f.), IT WAS ON THE SEPTUAGINT THAT HE BASED HIS ARGUMENTS" (*ibid.*).

Notice! The New Testament itself therefore bears witness, in Acts 17:2, that it was "FROM THE SCRIPTURES" that Paul reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue -- and the Scriptures he was using at the time was the SEPTUAGINT! Therefore, the version of the Septuagint which was extant in Paul's day, and used in the synagogues, were regarded by the writers of the New Testament, who wrote under divine inspiration, as "SCRIPTURE"! Obviously, the Jews would not have been using a "fraudulent" or "corrupt" version of the Scriptures in their synagogues -- nor would the apostolic writers have resorted to "forgeries" or "fraudulent" documents to "PROVE" that Jesus was the Christ!

Here, then, is proof positive from the New Testament itself that the Septuagint, used during the days of the apostles, was regarded and accepted as DIVINELY INSPIRED SCRIPTURE! How clear!

Says Bruce:

"Greek Judaism,' it has been said, 'with the Septuagint had ploughed the furrows for the gospel seed in the Western world'; but it was the Christian preachers who sowed the seed. So thoroughly, indeed, did Christians APPROPRIATE THE SEPTUAGINT AS THEIR VERSION OF THE SCRIPTURES *THAT THE JEWS BECAME INCREASINGLY DISENCHANTED WITH IT*. The time came when one rabbi compared 'the accursed day on which the seventy elders wrote the Law in Greek for the king' *TO THE DAY ON WHICH ISRAEL MADE THE GOLDEN CALF*. New Greek versions were made for JEWISH use -- in particular, the very literal rendering of Aquila and a more idiomatic rendering by Theodotion" (*The Canon of Scripture*, p.50).

Notice the vehemence of the Jewish attitude expressed in this matter. Obviously, the hatred of some Jewish rabbis for Christianity was profound -- they compared the translation of the Septuagint, quoted often by Paul and other early leaders of the Church, to the *infamous day of national humiliation when the golden calf was made and worshipped, when Moses was still on Mount Sinai, receiving the Laws of God!*

Even though the Septuagint had been used in Jewish synagogues for over three centuries, and greatly loved, it was only the fact that Christians used it to prove Jesus was the Christ that impelled another translation into the Greek during the time of rabbi Akiba! Why had the Jews come to hate the Septuagint so much, so suddenly?

The POWER of the Septuagint

Why, indeed! Scholar F. F. Bruce shows us why the Jewish rabbis who rejected the Messianic evidence that Jesus was and is the Christ felt they also had to reject the Septuagint. Notice:

"There are several places in which the Septuagint translators used a form of words which (without their being able to foresee it, naturally) lent itself to the purposes of New Testament writers better than the Hebrew text would have done. Thus, Matthew can quote as a prophecy of the virginal conception of Christ the Septuagint version of Isaiah 7:14, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son . . .' (Matt.1:23), where the Greek word *parthenos* means specifically 'virgin,' as the Hebrew *almah* need not. (Aquila, who provided a new Greek version of the Old Testament for Jewish use to replace the Septuagint, took care to employ the less specific Greek word *neanis*, 'girl' or 'young woman,' to blunt the point of a Christian 'argument from prophecy.')" (*The Canon of Scripture*, p.53).

Notice! These powerful Scriptural proofs that lent themselves to demonstrating the Messiahship of Christ were too much for the rabbis to handle. It frustrated them no end -- so they decided to get rid of the Septuagint, even as they had gotten "rid" of the Messiah Himself!

Justin Martyr, circa 160 A.D., evidently regarded the Septuagint as the only reliable text of the Old Testament. Says F. F. Bruce, "Where it differs from the Hebrew text, as read and interpreted by the Jews, the Jews (he says) have *corrupted the text so as to obscure the scriptures' plain prophetic testimony to Jesus as the Christ*. He tells how the compositions of the prophets were read in the weekly meetings of Christians along with the memoirs of the apostles; the memoirs of the apostles indicated the lines along which the prophets' words were to be understood" (Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, p.70).

Quite simply, although the Jews and Christians read from the same Scriptures, they could not agree upon the interpretation of those Scriptures as they pertained to the Messiah, or the Messianic claims of Christ. Paul alluded to this fact when he wrote, "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were *blinded*. (according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day" (Rom.11:7-8). Paul added: "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness?" (Rom.11:11-12).

As time passed, however, the distance between the visible Church and the remnant of the Jews in dispersion became greater and greater. The gap widened; the gulf that separated their interpretations of the Old Testament Scriptures increased in width and depth. Says Bruce:

"The accepted Christian tradition became more sharply anti-Judaic, and the Jewish tradition in turn became increasingly careful to EXCLUDE renderings or interpretations, PREVIOUSLY QUITE ACCEPTABLE, *which now proved to lend themselves all too readily to a Christian purpose*. So, in spite of the shared heritage of the holy book, the two opposed traditions HARDENED. Only in more recent times, with the acceptance on both sides of the principles of grammatico-historical exegesis, have the hard outlines softened, so that today Jews and Christians of varying traditions can collaborate happily in the common task of biblical interpretation" (p.66-67).

The "Servant Songs" of Isaiah

One of the greatest issues which divide Christians and Jews in biblical interpretation, however, which remains to this day, are what scholars today call the "Servant Songs" found in the book of Isaiah (Isaiah 40-54). In particular, the fourth Servant Song -- Isaiah 52:13-Isaiah 53:12 -- has been identified by Christians, and even by Christ, as portraying Jesus Himself. This was the very Scripture which Philip explained to the Ethiopian eunuch, who was puzzled about it! We read in the book of Acts:

"And behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem to worship [he was obviously a "Falasha Jew"], was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Isaiah the prophet. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Isaiah, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

"And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and BEGAN AT THE SAME SCRIPTURE, and

preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:27-35).

The awesome power of this Scripture, Isaiah 53, undoubtedly has led MANY Jews, as well as Gentiles, to see the truth of the Messiahship of Jesus Christ. No one else in all human history even comes close to fulfilling the majesty and detail of this Scripture. The ministry, death and crucifixion of Christ as portrayed 700 years earlier by the prophet Isaiah is powerful evidence, together with many other Scriptures, that Jesus was and is indeed the One and Only Messiah! This identification of the "suffering Servant" in Isaiah with Christ has been standard in the Church, down through history.

But, says, F. F. Bruce:

"One would not expect it to be standard in the synagogue: indeed, the synagogue seems to have REACTED VIGOROUSLY AGAINST IT. At one time an acceptable Jewish interpretation identified some at least of the Servant references with the expected Messiah, and this could well have been in line with the prophet's intention. But, because the church adopted this interpretation (with the corollary that the Messiah was Jesus), the messianic interpretation of the Servant Songs FELL OUT OF FAVOR with the synagogue" (Bruce, p.295).

F.F. Bruce continues in a footnote:

"According to H. Loewe, it was sensitiveness to the Christian application of Is. 52:13---53:12 that was responsible for the NON-INCLUSION of this passage in the regular synagogue readings of the Prophets, *although the passages immediately preceding and following are included* (C.G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology*[London, 1938], pp.544). In general it may be said that the combination of the Old Testament with the New (first as oral teaching and ultimately as a literary canon) made all the difference between the church's understanding of the Old Testament and the synagogue's" (*ibid.*).

As this passage in Isaiah is still left out of the regular synagogue readings of the Scriptures, to this very day, we must conclude that "blindness" is STILL in part happened to the children of Israel, as the apostle Paul wrote some 1934 years ago, in A.D. 60!

The Incredible Testimony of Justin Martyr

Justin was a Gentile, born in Samaria near Jacob's well, and lived approximately A.D. 110 to 165, when he was martyred by decapitation at Rome, like the apostle Paul. In his "Dialogue with Trypho," a learned Jew, he makes some remarkable statements which need to be analyzed, as they pertain to the Septuagint and the alleged "missing verses" not found in the Jewish Masoretic text. Remember, the Jewish rabbis had by this time rejected the Septuagint from the synagogues, and had replaced it with their own new Greek translation of the Old Testament Scriptures. But, Justin says in his dialogue, they had left off many of the Scriptural verses which had previously been used to prove Jesus was the Christ!

Justin, speaking to Trypho, declares:

"But I am far from putting reliance in your teachers, who refuse to admit that the

interpretation made by the seventy elders who were with Ptolemy [king] of the Egyptians is a correct one; and they attempt to FRAME ANOTHER. And I wish you to observe, that they have ALTOGETHER TAKEN AWAY MANY SCRIPTURES from the translations effected by those seventy elders who were with Ptolemy, and by which this very man who was crucified is PROVED to have been set forth expressly as God, and man, and as being crucified, and as dying; but since I am aware that this is DENIED by all of your nation, I do not address myself to these points, but I proceed to carry on my discussions by means of those passages which are still admitted by you. For you assent to those which I have brought before your attention except that you contradict the statement, "**Behold, the virgin shall conceive,**" and say it ought to be read, "Behold, the young woman shall conceive." And I promised to prove that the prophecy referred, not, as you were taught, to Hezekiah, but to this Christ of mine: and now I shall go to the proof.'

"Here Trypho remarked, 'We ask you first of all to tell us some of the Scriptures which you allege have been completely canceled.'

"And I said, 'I shall do as you please. From the statements, then, which Esdras made in reference to the law of the passover, *they have taken away the following:*

"And Esdras [Ezra] said to the people, This passover is our Saviour and our refuge. And if you have understood, and your heart has taken it in, that we shall humble Him on a standard, and thereafter hope in Him, then this place shall not be forsaken for ever, says the Lord of hosts. But if you will not believe Him, and will not listen to His declaration, you shall be a laughingstock to the nations." *And from the sayings of Jeremiah they have cut out the following: "I [was] like a lamb that is brought to the slaughter: they devised a device against me, saying, Come, let us lay on wood on His bread, and let us blot Him out from the land of the living; and His name shall no more be remembered."*

And since this passage from the sayings of Jeremiah is still written in some copies [of the Scriptures] IN THE SYNAGOGUES OF THE JEWS (for it is only a short time since they were cut out), and since from these words it is demonstrated that the Jews deliberated about the Christ Himself, to crucify and put Him to death, He Himself is both declared to be led as a sheep to the slaughter, as was predicted by Isaiah, and is here represented as a harmless lamb; but being in a difficulty about them, they give themselves over to blasphemy. And again, from the sayings of the same Jeremiah these have been cut out: "'The Lord God remembered His dead people of Israel who lay in the graves; and He descended to preach to them His own salvation."

"And from the ninety-fifth (ninety-sixth) Psalm they have taken away this short saying of the words of David: "**From the wood.**" For when the passage said, "Tell ye among the nations, the Lord hath reigned *from the wood,*" they have left, "Tell ye among the nations, The Lord hath reigned." Now no one of your people has ever been said to have reigned as God and Lord among the nations, with the exception of Him only who was crucified, of whom also the Holy Spirit affirms in the same Psalm that He was raised again, and freed from [the grave], declaring that there is none like Him among the gods of the nations; for they are idols of demons. But I shall repeat the whole Psalm to you, that you may perceive what has been said. It is thus: "Sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, and bless His name; show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all people. For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all the gods. For all the gods of the nations are demons but the Lord made the heavens. Confession and beauty are in His presence; holiness and magnificence are in His sanctuary. Bring to the Lord, O ye countries of the nations, bring to the Lord glory and honour, bring to the Lord glory in His name. Take sacrifices, and go into His courts; worship the Lord in His holy temple. Let the whole earth be moved before Him; tell ye

among the nations, the Lord hath reigned. For He hath established the world, which shall not be moved; He shall judge the nations with equity. Let the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad; let the sea and its fulness shake. Let the fields and all therein be joyful. Let all the trees of the wood be glad before the Lord: for He comes, for He comes to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth."

"Here Trypho remarked, 'Whether [or not] the rulers of the people have *erased* any portion of the Scriptures, as you affirm, God knows; *but it seems incredible.*'

"'Assuredly,' said I, 'it does seem incredible. *For it is **MORE HORRIBLE THAN THE CALF WHICH THEY MADE**, when satisfied with manna on the earth; or than the sacrifice of children to demons; or than the slaying of the prophets.* But,' said I, 'you appear not to have heard the Scriptures which I said they had **STOLEN AWAY**. For such as have been quoted are more than enough to prove the points in dispute, besides those which are still retained by us, and shall yet be brought forward' (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol.1, "Dialogue with Trypho, LXXI-LXXIII).

I have quoted this long passage from Justin Martyr, from his "Dialogue with Trypho," because it not only verifies the fact that the Rabbis of that time were not only endorsing a new rival translation of the Old Testament Scriptures into Greek, but that they had deliberately CUT OUT certain passages which had been in the original Hebrew Scriptures, and which had been translated into the Septuagint in the centuries before Christ.

"More Horrible Than the Calf"

This may seem shocking to those of us who have believed for years that the Masoretic Text is the one and only true text of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and that the Jewish rabbis have preserved it faultlessly – but let's reconsider this question. Does it not make sense that any people who would crucify the very "Word of God," the Logos, in the flesh, would also "cut up" the written Word of God, which bears testimony to Him? We have perfect testimony that this was done. We have the witness, not only of Justin Martyr, but of the incredible evidence of the New Testament Scriptures themselves, which in many places QUOTE PASSAGES from the Old Testament which are NOT FOUND IN THE MASORETIC TEXT!!! But in the vast majority of cases, they *are* found in the Septuagint, and in some cases in the Aramaic!

This proves that when it comes to the Son of God, who called Himself the "Son of Man," that the Jewish rabbis of the first two centuries were less than honest – less than candid -- and they did violence not only to the Son of God Himself, the Logos, but also to the WRITTEN Word of God, when certain prophecies CLEARLY pointed to Christ as the Messiah!

With this in mind, then, we need to understand that this "hatchet" job on the missing verses of the Old Testament will not go unpunished, overlooked, or forgotten by God. As the apostle Paul wrote, "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto THEM were committed the ORACLES OF GOD. *For what if some did not believe?* Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? GOD FORBID! Yea, let God be true, but

every man a LIAR; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged" (Rom.3:1-4).

"Every Man a Liar"

We have normally emphasized the first part of this passage, to prove that the Jews, and the rabbis of Judaism, were entrusted with the preservation of the oracles -- the Words -- of God. And on the whole, we know from history that they did a remarkable and extraordinary job -- even counting the vowels, letters, and numbering them so as to insure accuracy of the text. The care and deliberate concern the scribes exercised in copying the Scriptures faithfully is well known.

However, this fact does not necessarily mean that during the turbulent period of the first and second century, A.D., when Judaism was facing its greatest crisis ever, in the form of the threat posed to it by the Messiahship of Christ -- Yeshua the Nazarene -- that the very rulers who condemned the Messiah to death and their successors then deliberately sought to cover up their horrible deed, and deliberately purged the Old Testament Scriptures of any and all plain references which tended to support the claims of Christians that Jesus was the Christ! That they did this very thing stands exposed -- otherwise, why did they expunge the very existence of the Septuagint from Jewish synagogues throughout the whole world, where it had been revered and accepted for centuries prior to Christ's coming? Consider the enormity of this crime. Because of their trepidation and fear of the new faith, their alarm at its success, they did the unprecedented thing and **BANISHED THE VERY BIBLE THEN IN VOGUE IN ALL GREEK-SPEAKING SYNAGOGUES AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA!** They replaced it with another "new" and supposedly more "accurate" translation.

Their wickedness stands exposed for all the world to see, however, because there is **NO DOUBT** that almost all quotes from the Old Testament in the New Testament come from the **SEPTUAGINT**, or from a Hebrew text upon which it was based! The authenticity of that text -- which is demonstrated and proved conclusively by its approval and acceptance by the Messiah, Christ Jesus Himself, and the apostles -- cannot be in doubt. Since Jesus Himself sanctioned it, and it differs from the "Masoretic text," there can only be one explanation for its non-existence, today: The Jews, in desperation and fear for their religion, declared the Septuagint "corrupt," and replaced it in all the synagogues where it had held sway for over three centuries. They no longer copied it and preserved it, allowing it to disappear, and be replaced by a less "controversial" text.

It is for this reason, that after the time of Christ and the apostles, the Septuagint, over the succeeding years, languished, and in following generations more variations and errors crept in, resulting in the need by the time of Origen in 240 A.D. to transcribe the text and emend it in his famous Hexapla, to clean it up and resolve the difficulties which had arisen due to neglect.

Why should it seem so remarkable, then, that the rabbis rejected the Septuagint, and spurned the original Hebrew text upon which it was based? Did they not reject the

Messiah Himself – the Word of God who was "made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14)? Did not Paul say in the very passage we just quoted in Romans 3:4, where he admitted that the oracles of God were entrusted to the Jews, that "let GOD be true, *but every man a LIAR*"?

It is certainly a blasphemous deed to pervert, alter, tamper with, and "edit" the very Word of God – but no more blasphemous than to reject the Messiah and spill the blood of the Saviour of the world – God in the flesh!

These "edited" passages, which Justin Martyr plainly says were a part of the Scriptures, in his day, certainly do prove the Messiahship of Christ! Did he invent them out of his own fervent imagination and fantasy? Or was he simply telling Trypho the truth? More and more, the evidence tends to support the allegations of Justin – to the everlasting shame and discredit of those wicked priests and rabbis who would resort to every trick and artifice and sham in order to deny the Christ and mislead the wonderful Jewish people!

A growing body of evidence suggests strongly that not only a few copyists' errors have crept into the transmission of the text, here and there, during its sojourn here on earth, but that also there was a concerted plot – a high level conspiracy – by second century rabbis to efface the Scriptural evidence and to "edit" Scripture to "protect" the Jewish people from the overwhelming evidence in the Old Testament that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was – and is – the Messiah!

This plot was Satan's attempt to work through the rabbis of that time to "bury" Christianity, and to safeguard the Jewish religion based on "the tradition of the elders." They claimed to follow Abraham and his covenant, but Jesus said to them, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham" (John 8:39-40).

They claimed to follow Moses, and the Torah, but they had strayed far afield from the precepts of Moses. Jesus Himself said of them, "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even MOSES, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:45-47). On another occasion, Jesus said of them: "Did not Moses give you the law, and yet *none of you keepeth the law*? Why go ye about to kill me?" (John 7:19).

The Plot and Conspiracy Against the Bible

After Jesus arose from the dead, fulfilling the "sign" that He said He would fulfill – being in the grave three days, just as Jonah was in the fish's belly for three days (Matt.12:40) – the Jewish leaders were besides themselves with anger and venom. Matthew tells us in his gospel, "Now when they [the disciples] were going, behold, some of the watch [those soldiers the Pharisees and Sadducees had appointed to watch over

Jesus' grave to make certain that His disciples didn't steal His body] came into the city, and shewed unto the CHIEF PRIESTS *ALL THE THINGS THAT WERE DONE*" (Matt.28:11). Thus the Jewish leaders KNEW beyond doubt that Jesus had risen from the grave!

But did they repent, when they saw this "sign" of Jonah fulfilled in Christ, just as He had foretold? Matthew continues:

"And when they were assembled with the ELDERS [the rabbis and religious leaders], and had taken COUNSEL, they gave LARGE MONEY [a huge bribe] unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: *and this saying is COMMONLY REPORTED AMONG THE JEWS UNTO THIS DAY*" (Matt.28:12-15).

Notice! The leaders among the Jews *actually KNEW* that Christ arose from the dead – but they *refused to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, anyway! Or, knowing that He was the promised Messiah, they still deliberately REJECTED Him, even after His resurrection!*

What colossal wickedness! What stupendous evil! No wonder, looking into the character of these leading religious rabbis amongst the Jews, Jesus had said of them: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" (Matt.23:13, 14, 15). "Woe unto you, ye blind guides" (v.16, 24). No wonder He said of them, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matt.23:33).

The gospel of Matthew is believed to have been written about the middle of the first century A.D., or between 45-50 A.D. When it was written, this false report on the body of Jesus being stolen by His disciples was still being circulated amongst the Jewish population!

But Justin Martyr, in his "Dialogue with Trypho," shows this story was still being maliciously spread by Jesus' detractors long afterward. In his "Dialogue with Trypho," the Jew, he reports just how antagonistic the Jewish leaders were to the Messiahship of Christ. He declares:

"And though all the men of your nation knew the incidents in the life of Jonah, and though Christ said amongst you that He would give the sign of Jonah, exhorting you before God as did the Ninevites, in order that your nation and city might not be taken and destroyed, as they have been destroyed; yet you not only have not repented, after you learned that He rose from the dead, but, as I said before, *you have sent chosen and ordained men throughout all the world to proclaim that a godless and lawless heresy had sprung from one Jesus, a Galilean deceiver, whom we crucified, but his disciples stole him by night from the tomb, where he was laid when unfastened from the cross, and now deceive men by asserting that he has risen from the dead and ascended to heaven.* Moreover, you accuse Him of having taught those godless, lawless, and unholy doctrines which you mention to the condemnation of those who confess Him to be Christ, and a Teacher from and Son of God. Besides this, even when your city is captured, and your land ravaged, you do not repent, but *dare to utter imprecations on Him and all who believe in Him.* Yet we do not hate you or those who, by your means, have

CONCEIVED SUCH PREJUDICES AGAINST US; but we pray that even now all of you may repent and obtain mercy from God, the compassionate and long suffering Father of all" (ANF, "Dialogue with Trypho," CVIII).

Thus the Jewish religious leaders of the first and second century deliberately spread false reports, and conspired to suppress and destroy the new Messianic faith in Jesus Christ.

They scoured the world to attempt to thwart the faith. They even rejected the hallowed and sacred text of the Scriptures, the Septuagint, which had been used in the synagogues for 415 years, and destroyed it from the synagogues, because of its testimony and prophecies which pointed to Jesus as the clear and obvious Messiah!

"The Stone the Builders Rejected"

Nevertheless, the time is coming -- soon -- when all these evil deeds will be exposed. The apostle Paul declared: "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after" (I Tim.5:24). Jesus Christ foretold, "Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known" (Matt.10:26).

In a dramatic prophecy at the birth of Christ, the aged Simeon, a just and devout man who was waiting for the coming of the Messiah, took the young child up in his arms and blessed God, and said:

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the FALL and RISING AGAIN of many in Israel; and for a SIGN which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:25-35).

Jesus Christ was indeed the "stone which the builders refused" (Psalm 118:22). He is the One of whom Isaiah prophesied:

"Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a STONE, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the REFUGE OF LIES, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place" (Isaiah 28:16-17).

The time is coming soon when all the hidden secrets shall be revealed – the Word of the Lord has spoken it. The time is soon coming when ALL THINGS shall be restored to their original form and shape – including the Holy Scriptures of God!

On that first day of Shavuot (Pentecost), in A.D. 30, when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples at Jerusalem, the apostle Peter announced to the assembled pious Jews

worshipping in Jerusalem, at the Temple, that Jesus was the promised Messiah, fulfilling the many prophecies of the Scriptures. He said:

"For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. . . Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, THAT HIS SOUL WAS NOT LEFT IN HELL, NEITHER DID HIS FLESH SEE CORRUPTION. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

"For DAVID IS NOT ASCENDED into the heavens: but he saith himself, the LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. THEREFORE LET ALL THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL KNOW ASSUREDLY, that God hath made that same JESUS, *whom ye have crucified, BOTH LORD AND MESSIAH*" (Acts 2:25-36).

On the following day, after Peter and John had healed a man lame from birth by the power of the Spirit of God, he addressed the amazed, awe-struck, assembled Jews, and said to them:

"Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath GLORIFIED HIS SON JESUS; WHOM YE DELIVERED UP, AND DENIED in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But YE DENIED THE HOLY ONE AND THE JUST, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and KILLED THE PRINCE OF PEACE, *whom GOD hath RAISED from the DEAD*; whereof we are WITNESSES. And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

"And now, brethren, I wot that through IGNORANCE ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

"REPENT YE THEREFORE, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the TIMES OF REFRESHING SHALL COME from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive UNTIL THE TIMES OF RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A PROPHET SHALL THE LORD YOUR GOD RAISE UP UNTO YOU of your brethren, LIKE UNTO ME; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. *And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will NOT hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.*

"Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in THY SEED shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3:12-26).

Jesus Christ is the Messiah! He is coming SOON to restore the Kingdom of God to this earth, to punish the wicked, and to RESTORE ALL THINGS -- including the *Holy Scriptures* -- to their original PERFECTION!

The Original Bible

If you see claims that such an such a translation is the "Original Bible," do not believe it!

The only way to "JUDGE" a translation is by comparing it with the known Greek and Hebrew manuscripts we have available, and to compare the works of scholars, and to keep up with the latest research and linguistic and archaeological research.

God promised His Word would endure forever! However, that does not mean that any particular translation is perfect!

But make no mistake! The truth endures forever. Even if some men from time to time pervert, distort, or "edit" the word of God in a wrong manner, God will bring them to judgment – and He will restore the TRUTH completely! At that time, we won't have to depend on Biblical scholars who attempt to restore the original text, or their conclusions based on what evidence they are able to uncover from various sources, caves around the Dead Sea, or hidden in obscure monasteries.

The Word of God will endure forever. Any mistakes or errors made by men, in its transmission over the centuries and millennia, will be corrected.

Until that time, the value of constructive and conservative Biblical textual "criticism" must be carefully judged and evaluated according to the best research, knowledge available, and understanding. Although the Masoretic text is no doubt very valuable and useful, and may in most cases be very accurate and represents the Word of God, for the Old Testament, it is not perfect, and appears to have itself been the object of mishandling in its transmission by the Jewish rabbis in the first and second centuries of the present era.

These facts, however, should in no way cause us to not regard the Scriptures as the Word of God – for they are. They are "God-breathed" (II Tim.3:16). Even so, God has allowed men certain leeway in preserving the Scriptures – and He has allowed certain errors to have crept into the texts of both Old and New Testaments. The very fact that God warned men not to "add to" nor to "subtract from" His Word proves, in a way, that He knew in advance that some men would do that very thing – and He therefore pronounced a divine CURSE on those who would do so! He declared, "Ye shall not add

unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God" (see Deut.4:2).

In the New Testament book of Revelation the apostle John gives us the same warning. He declared, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life . . ." (Rev.22:18-19).

Which Canon Is "Inspired"?
Which Translation is Best?

Since there were evidently several different texts in existence during the time of Christ and the apostles, did they pinpoint and select a particular text as being the ONLY truly divinely inspired one? We have no proof of that. In fact, just the opposite -- the evidence is that they quoted from several different texts, and sometimes even from textual material found in ancient Jewish commentaries, called the Targums, such as the Onkelos Targum. Says F.F. Bruce:

"But which form of the Old Testament was recognized as canonical, or at least authoritative, by our Lord and his apostles, or by the New Testament writers in general? No one form.

"One might expect that writers in Greek would use an accessible Greek version of the ancient scriptures, that is to say, the Septuagint. The New Testament writers did this TO A VERY CONSIDERABLE EXTENT. Luke and the writer to the Hebrews in their biblical citations and allusions adhere quite closely to the Septuagint wording. But other New Testament writers exercise greater freedom.

"In Matthew 12:18-21 there is a quotation from Isaiah 42:1-4 in a Greek form which is markedly different from the Septuagint. . . . A New Testament writer may quote the Old Testament in a form closer to the Hebrew construction; he may even quote it in a form paralleled neither in the Septuagint nor in the traditional Hebrew text, but in an Aramaic paraphrase or targum. . . . It looks at times as if the New Testament writers enjoyed liberty to select a form of Old Testament text which promoted their immediate purpose in quoting it: certainly they did not regard ANY ONE FORM OF TEXT as sacrosanct.

"In this they have provided a helpful precedent for us when we are told (especially on theological, not critical, grounds) that one form of New Testament text is uniquely authoritative" (*The Canon of Scripture*, p.285).

Clearly, God has preserved His Word. But He has used MANY texts and versions to accomplish this task -- and He has allowed, if not "inspired," MANY different translations of His Word into the English language! We cannot say that any one modern English translation is "perfect" -- for none are.

Based on the evidence available to us, however, the BEST overall English translation of the Bible is the King James Version. Also, the New King James Version is very good. Other newer versions may be read, however, and much may be learned from them. I enjoy the New Revised Standard Version. The Moffat Translation is also very

good, overall, although he rearranges certain chapters according to what he thought they should be.

The spade of archaeology and the research of scholars continually adds to our knowledge of both the Scriptures, the meaning of ancient Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic words, and the ancient society in which the Scriptures were written. Therefore, more modern translations often have good footnotes and marginal comments to add to our knowledge. The New International Version is very good in this respect.

Even so, however, I prefer the King James with its words added to the text in italics, to show they were added for clarification purposes. Sometimes they were added incorrectly, showing the bias or misunderstanding of the scholars, however.

The point is, for anyone to really KNOW God's Word, today, they must study and research and keep on learning, questioning, and prodding themselves to keep on growing in Biblical knowledge. No translation is perfect. Therefore, we must judge the contents of any Scripture BY HOW IT RELATES TO OTHER CLEAR SCRIPTURES on a particular subject – and study the originals,, in Hebrew and Greek, using Bible concordances, dictionaries, and lexicons, to increase our understanding.

Therefore, we can rest assured, that as the apostle Peter wrote:

"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURETH FOR EVER. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (I Peter 1:24-25).

Praise God, for the good news of that ineffable Gospel -- and the GOOD NEWS that Jesus Christ, Yeshua the Messiah, is coming SOON! May God speed that glorious, wonderful Day!

Baruch attah Adonai, Elohenu va vahenu, Melech ha olam!

"Blessed be the Lord, our God and our Father, Ruler of the Universe!"