

How we got the BIBLE

featuring Dr. Paul L. Maier

BIBLE STUDY
DISCUSSION GUIDE

How We Got The Bible featuring Dr. Paul L. Maier

The story of the Bible has been called “The Greatest Story Ever Told.” But did you ever wonder where the Bible came from? Who wrote it? Why did they write it? Who decided which books to include? In this study, Dr. Paul Maier travels to The Bible Museum in Goodyear, Arizona, to take a look at *How We Got the Bible*.

Getting The Most From This Discussion Guide

This is an interactive study guide. We designed it to be flexible so you can fit it to your own group and personal use. It includes boxes (like the one below), which include extra information and links to Internet sites where you can browse and dig as deep as you want.

Digging Deeper: The Dead Sea Scrolls

Suggested Links: [www...](#)

Group Discussion: Please feel free to move at your own pace through this study and take as much time as you need for each lesson. You are welcome to dig in as deep as you want, but you might find it helpful to skip over these boxes and use just the Bible passages and discussion questions.

Individual Study: If you want to dig deeper and all you have is a paper copy of this study guide, it’s not going to be very interactive. So here is a step-by-step guide to finding and using the Internet links:

Log on to www.lhmmen.com.

Click on “Bible Studies” in the left column.

Choose this study from the page by clicking the underlined title (located to the right of the study’s graphic).

On the bottom of this page, click “download videos & materials.”

Enter your e-mail address and password (and register, if necessary).

Find this study guide, then click the “download now” button.

In the File Download box, click the “save” button.

Save it to your desktop.

Click on the file to open it.

Now you can use the online discussion guide to its fullest. Click the hyperlinks (underlined words or phrases) that interest you and start digging.

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Terms You Will Hear In This Study:

Autographs - the original writings from the hands of the prophets and apostles and their scribes.

Codex - small booklets made up of parchment sheets folded inside each other.

Manuscripts - handwritten copies written on papyrus, parchment, or vellum.

Papyrus - writing material made from papyrus plants, which grew along rivers.

Parchment - writing material made from the hides of animals, usually calves, goats, or sheep.

Scriptorium - a room dedicated to the copying of manuscripts.

Scroll - connected sheets of papyrus rolled onto wooden rollers and usually read one column at a time.

Septuagint - the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament.

Vellum - parchment made from the skin of calves.

Vulgate - the Latin translation of the Bible, which was used in the Western part of the Church.

Lesson 1: The World's Most Important Book

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, the incredible variety and complexity of this world reveals Your wisdom and power, but sometimes it makes us feel small and insignificant. Thank You for revealing Yourself to us through the people You chose to hear and record Your word. As I begin this study about the Bible, lead me to know if I can rely on it as Your word or not. I pray in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Watch The Video: Lesson 1

Where Do You Stand On The Bible?

The oldest books in the Bible were written nearly 3,500 years ago. So it isn't surprising some people think the Bible is an outdated book written for a primitive, ancient culture that is unlike our own. Others think it has some value, but you have to work your way through all the superstitions, myths, and legends before you find it. How do you view the Bible?

- Do you think the Bible is relevant to life in the 21st century? Why or why not?
- How familiar are you with the Bible? How much of it have you read? How much do you understand?
- What do you think the Bible is all about? What do you think it tries to teach us?

Some people disregard and reject the Bible because they feel certain its repeated copying over hundreds of years has corrupted it. Others don't believe it's possible to know whether its words are authentic to the original writings or not.

- If the Bible we read today is different from the original words in which it was written would that make any difference to you? Why or why not?

The Muslim Objection To The Bible:

In his day, Muhammad claimed the Old and New Testaments were authentic. After his death, Muslims came to the conclusion that Christians and Jews corrupted the Bible. This study will help answer those charges. For more information about Islam, see the **Men's NetWork** Bible studies "The Challenge of Islam" **Part One: What is Islam?** and **Part Two: Defending the Christian Faith.**

More than 40 people wrote the books contained in the Bible over a span of 1,500 years.

- Do you think the Bible would have been more credible if it only used a few writers over a shorter period of time? Why or why not?
- What is the strength of having so many different writers recording God's words over such a long period of time?

Read Psalm 119:89-105.

⁸⁹ Forever, O LORD, Your Word
is firmly fixed in the heavens.

⁹⁰ Your faithfulness endures to all generations;
You have established the earth, and it stands fast.

⁹¹ By Your appointment they stand this day,
for all things are Your servants.

⁹² If Your Law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my affliction.

⁹³ I will never forget Your precepts,
for by them You have given me life.

⁹⁴ I am Yours; save me,
for I have sought Your precepts.

⁹⁵ The wicked lie in wait to destroy me,
but I consider Your testimonies.

⁹⁶ I have seen a limit to all perfection,
but Your commandment is exceedingly broad.

⁹⁷ Oh how I love Your Law!
It is my meditation all the day.

⁹⁸ Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is ever with me.

⁹⁹ I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for Your testimonies are my meditation.

¹⁰⁰ I understand more than the aged,
for I keep Your precepts.

¹⁰¹ I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep Your Word.

¹⁰² I do not turn aside from Your rules,
for You have taught me.

¹⁰³ How sweet are Your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!

¹⁰⁴ Through Your precepts I get understanding;
therefore I hate every false way.

¹⁰⁵ Your Word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.

Verses 89 and 90 say that God's Word stands firm and lasts forever. Ancient kings believed they were gods so their laws and decrees could never be repealed or changed. But sooner or later they all discovered that a changeable man has no business making unchangeable laws. (See how a reluctant king had to put Daniel in the lion's den) **Daniel 6:3-16**.

- How can God's Word remain firm and unchanging even when our words, thoughts, and perspectives change by the day?

God does not change in Himself and He is not affected by the changes of this world.

- If the Bible is the message from an unchangeable God, what does that say about its relevance to our lives even when parts of it were written more than 3,000 years ago?
- With all the changes in our lives and our world, what does it mean to know that God's words and promises are unchangeable?

Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for so stirring the hearts and minds of those who wrote, copied, and passed on Your Word that they did so with complete respect, reverence, and care for You and for Your words. Thank You for sharing Your unchanging words with us. I pray in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Original Autographs: How Were The Books Of The Bible First Written?

The earliest books of the Bible (including Genesis-Deuteronomy, the five books of Moses) were written on papyrus made from plants growing along the Nile River. Papyrus could be formed into long sheets and rolled up onto scrolls. Writing could only be done on one side of the papyrus.

- Video demonstration: [How papyrus is made](#)

Later books (including many in the New Testament) were written on animal skins called parchment or vellum. **2 Timothy 4:13**

Writers could use both sides of parchment and vellum. These sheets were folded into a small booklet called a "codex." In the days when the New Testament was being written the largest codex could hold the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

- Video demonstration - [dirty jobs: Making Vellum & Parchment](#)

Other Information:

- [The Difference between Paper, Parchment & Vellum](#)
- [How the Sumerians started writing](#)
- [Writing before the alphabet](#)
- [Was the alphabet invented on Mt. Sinai?](#)
- [How the Christian church kept literacy alive in the Middle Ages](#)
- [Where were the copies made? Scriptoria](#)

Facts And Figures: The Bible contains 66 books; 1189 chapters; 31,173 verses; about 774,000 words; and over 3.5 million letters.

- Why do you think the scribes bothered to count these things so carefully? (See the Digging Deeper box on the Sopherim in Lesson 3.)
- How could knowing the middle chapter and the number of words and letters in each chapter have helped scribes and copyists ensure the accuracy of their copies?

Digging Deeper: Bible Images

This site (<http://www.bibles-online.net/>) includes scanned images of old Bibles for you to peruse.

Chapter And Verse: The entire Bible was first divided into chapters in 1228. Old Testament chapters were divided into verses in 1488, and New Testament chapters into verses in 1551. Since these divisions were not included in the original autographs and copies, they are not considered inspired by God. Nonetheless, they are useful because they enable readers to locate and discuss the same passage with each other.

- When might we find these divisions a hindrance rather than a help?

Lesson 2: Can We Be Confident In The Bible?

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Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, so many people in so many places cast doubts on the Bible. They question who Jesus really was and what He really taught. When I am shaken by their words, reveal to me the truth about Your Son and Your Word. I pray in Jesus' Name. Amen.

- Did you see the movie *The Da Vinci Code*? What does it say about the Bible?
- What part of this film, if any, challenged your faith?
- Do you think it would be persuasive to people who don't know the Bible? Why or why not?

Watch The Video: Lesson 2

The Bible Under Attack

Modern attacks on the Bible began over 200 years ago and have increased in intensity over the years. Many people have been swept up by these attacks.

- Do you know anyone who denies Jesus was actually an historical person? Why do they deny Him?
- What is the danger of denying that God actually gets involved in human history?
- What comfort is there in knowing that God actually stepped into this life as a human in the person of Jesus Christ?

Read 2 Peter 1:1-21.

- ¹ Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:
- ² May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.
- ³ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence,
- ⁴ by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.
- ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge,
- ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness,
- ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

- ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- ⁹ For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.
- ¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.
- ¹¹ For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- ¹² Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.
- ¹³ I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder,
- ¹⁴ since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.
- ¹⁵ And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.
- ¹⁶ We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.
- ¹⁷ For He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.”
- ¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with Him on the sacred mountain.
- ¹⁹ And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.
- ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation.
- ²⁰ For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Peter makes it clear that none of the writers of the Bible made up the things they wrote, nor did they add their own interpretation of the things they saw and heard from God. But no one comes to the Bible without presuppositions—ideas about how the world works, whether God really exists, and what kind of book the Bible is.

- Why do you think someone would accuse the Bible's writers of inventing clever stories?
- What are some of the presuppositions people have when they criticize the Bible?
- How can you approach and witness to someone who has these false presuppositions?
- How do your presuppositions about the world's origins, the flood story, the divinity and humanity of Jesus, and His role as the world's Savior color the way you look at the Bible?

In the video, Dr. Maier pointed out that computers work whether we believe they can or not. It's something like the bumper sticker: "Gravity isn't just a Good Idea. It's the Law!" Jesus Christ truly died and rose again even if there is not a single person who believes it happened. Even the unbelief of the whole world won't make a single fact become untrue.

- What's wrong with the thought that it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere?
- How might you try to persuade someone that his false presuppositions cannot change God's truth?
- How can you talk to someone who does not believe in absolutes?

Closing Prayer: Gracious God, Your Word stands true whether I believe it or not. Open my mind to see and know Your unchanging truth, and to believe it firmly all through my life. Open the minds of my family and friends as well so they may know the truth that will set them free. I ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Digging Deeper: Divine Inspiration

The report on the Inspiration of Scripture from the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR): [click here](#)

Dig Deeper: The Effect Of False Presuppositions

- Bruno Bauer's impact on [Socialism's Rejection of Christianity](#)
- The impact the 18th-century German attack on the Bible had on [Islamic Apologetics](#)
- [Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Authenticity of Scripture](#)

Digging Deeper: Errors In *The Da Vinci Code*

"When someone presupposes that the miraculous is impossible, all evidence is dismissed and denied in the first place" (Dr. Paul Maier).

- Visit [Deciphering the Errors in *The Da Vinci Code*](#)
- Why does *The Da Vinci Code* have the appearance of being intelligent when it is clearly anti-intellectual in failing to weigh the evidence?

Other Sites:

- A discussion of the truth or falsehood of 11 statements from Dan Brown's book, *The Da Vinci Code*: [click here](#)
- Four videos in which Dr. Paul Maier and others discuss *The Da Vinci Code*:
 1. How reliable is the account of Emperor Constantine in *The Da Vinci Code*? [click here](#)
 2. Who decided what books became part of the New Testament? [click here](#)
 3. What does history reveal about the claims of *The Da Vinci Code*? [click here](#)
 4. What are the major errors in *The Da Vinci Code*? [click here](#)

Digging Deeper: How Do They View The Bible?

Mormons believe the Bible is the Word of God “as far as it is translated correctly.” Read article 8 of the [Articles of Faith](#)

Jeff Lindsay, a Mormon, writes, “According to the Eighth Article of Faith, written by Joseph Smith to summarize LDS doctrine, Latter-day Saints “believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly.” Though we revere the Bible as the word of God, there is no doubt that human errors are possible in the translations we have today. In some cases, differing translations directly contradict each other. Since none of the original manuscripts are available, it is also possible that some parts of the original text may have been lost or otherwise altered, though the good agreement between the available ancient manuscripts suggests that most of the early manuscripts we have are generally reliable. Still, the Bibles we have today are the result of many human interventions with room for error. Thus, relying on any text “as far as it is translated [and transmitted] correctly” is a reasonable approach. But the Bible remains inspired, holy, and highly reliable, in spite of some minor problems. On the other hand, the original compilation, transmission and translation of the Book of Mormon was a process entirely under the direction of inspired prophets of God, not of committees of men over the ages. While the translation process was divinely inspired, there is still the possibility of human errors in the text due to factors such as printing errors, typos on the original engravings on gold plates, spelling and grammatical difficulties during the translation, etc., some of which have resulted in the need for updated versions and truly minor changes in the [Book of Mormon](#).” Also look at [jefflindsay.com](#).

Jehovah's Witnesses

- This group appears to accept the Bible. Consider [Jehovah's Witness beliefs](#) and [The Bible- a Book from God](#)
- The translators of *The New World Translation*, the Jehovah's Witnesses own Bible, were under-qualified: [click here](#)

Lesson 3: Silencing The Old Testament Critics

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Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for saving all people through Your Son Jesus Christ. Teach me how the Old Testament points us to Jesus so I can learn to read and appreciate it as I should. I pray in Jesus' Name. Amen.

The Old Testament

- What is the message of the Old Testament?

Watch The Video: Lesson 3

The message of the Old Testament could be summed up in the words of John the Baptist in the New Testament: "Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). The Old Testament is all about humanity's sins and God's promise to send His Son as Savior.

One example is how the Lord confronted King David after he committed adultery with Bathsheba. David set Uriah, her husband, on the front line to be killed in battle, and then took her to be his own wife.

Read 2 Samuel 12:1-13.

- ¹ The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor.
- ² The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle,
- ³ but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.
- ⁴ Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him."
- ⁵ David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die!
- ⁶ He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."
- ⁷ Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul.
- ⁸ I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more.
- ⁹ Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.
- ¹⁰ Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised Me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.'

- ¹¹ “This is what the LORD says: ‘Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight.
- ¹² You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.’ “
- ¹³ Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.”
- Nathan replied, “The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.”

Many think of the Old Testament as predominantly Law rather than Gospel. Maybe that’s because the peoples’ sins and God’s judgments sometimes stand out more clearly than God’s grace—His help in their troubles and His promise of forgiveness when they repent.

Sin, Judgment, And Grace In The Bible

STORY	SIN	GOD’S JUDGMENT	GOD’S GRACE
Adam & Eve:	eat forbidden fruit	driven from paradise	promised a Savior
Cain & Abel:	Cain murders Abel	cursed to wander the earth	gives him a mark to protect him
Noah:	man rejects God	flood destroys all life	tells Noah to build an ark
Tower/Babel:	men build tower to resist being scattered	languages confused; people scattered	God picks one of these (Abraham) to bless all nations

- What other examples can you recall?

Even with God’s grace we often suffer consequences for our bad decisions, for the bad decisions of others, and simply because we live in a world tainted by sin.

- What are some consequences you have faced due to sin?
- How have you seen God’s grace in the midst of those consequences?

Digging Deeper: Why Do Bad Things Happen?
 Download Lutheran Hour Ministries booklet: [click here](#)

The Significance Of The Dead Sea Scrolls

Many scholars doubted the accuracy of the Masoretic text, the oldest known manuscript (hand-written) copy of the Old Testament (1006 AD), until the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947. These manuscripts, predating the Masoretic text by twelve hundred years, confirmed how little the biblical text actually changed over time before the Masoretic text.

- How do you account for the fact so few errors showed up in the Masoretic text?
- How do the Dead Sea Scrolls affect your confidence in the accuracy of the Bible?
- How could you use the Dead Sea Scrolls when you witness to someone who believes the Bible has been corrupted by copying errors (Muslims, Mormons, etc.)?

Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for leading the Jewish scribes to give such care and attention to the faithful copying of Your Word. Give me such care and attention as I read, learn, and discuss Your Word so that my faith may be strengthened and that I may share Your truth with those people You bring into my life. I pray in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Digging Deeper - The Sopherim

How were the scribes able to safeguard their copying from typical transmission errors? The Sopherim ("counters of letters") were scribes who numbered the words and letters in each Old Testament book. They left lists with these statistics at the end of each book to insure the accuracy of future copies. The Sopherim began with Ezra the priest and completed their counting of letters in the first century BC. [click here](#)

Digging Deeper: The Dead Sea Scrolls

- An examination of the Essenes who are believed to have written the Dead Sea Scrolls: [click here](#)
- A fragment of John's Gospel found in the John Rylands' collection: [click here](#)
- Evidence for Daniel being written before 155 BC: [click here](#)
- A convincing argument that Daniel is prophetic and not historic: [click here](#)
- Using DNA to ensure the proper placement of scroll fragments: [click here](#)
- The Synchrotron - a new tool to read damaged, fragile manuscripts- without ever opening the cover: [click here](#)
 - The Synchrotron in use: [click here](#)

Lesson 4: Did The Church Make Jesus Divine?

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Opening Prayer: Holy Father, many people say Jesus was only human, He wasn't God, and He never wanted people to think He was God. They claim the Christian Church is responsible for making Jesus the Son of God. Teach me the truth so I may believe, think, and speak of Jesus properly. I ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Did Jesus Claim To Be Divine?

Muslims and many Christian scholars and writers assert Jesus never spoke of Himself as God's Son and never wanted us to think of Him that way either. They claim that centuries later the Christian Church twisted His teachings and created a new and alien religion which taught Jesus was God's Son who died and rose again.

- How compelling do you find these claims to be?
- Do they make you question who Jesus really is?

Watch The Video: Lesson 4

During Jesus' earthly life, many people had their own ideas about who He was.

Read Matthew 16:13-20. (See also Mark 8:27-30 and Luke 9:18-20.)

- ¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"
- ¹⁴ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."
- ¹⁵ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"
- ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
- ¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by My Father in heaven.
- ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.
- ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."
- ²⁰ Then He warned His disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Christ.
- If Muslims and Christian scholars and writers were correct, how would Jesus have answered Peter's assertion in verse 16?
 - How does His answer in verse 17 show they are incorrect?

If we switch a few words in verse 18 from English back into Greek we read, "And I tell you that you are *petros*, and on this *petra* I will build My Church." *Petros* is a Greek masculine noun meaning rock or boulder. The feminine form *petra* means mountain. This switch in gender and term shows the importance of the confession that Jesus is God's Son. He won't build His Church on a rock or boulder, but on a mountain—the confession that He is the Christ, the Son of God. This clear profession from Jesus' own lips is the exact opposite of the claim of Muslims, many Christian scholars, and authors like Dan Brown, who wrote *The Da Vinci Code*.

We find even clearer testimony from Jesus' own lips that He is God's Son in another passage.

Read John 10:24-38.

- ²⁴ The Jews gathered around Him, saying, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."
²⁵ Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in My Father's Name speak for Me,
²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not My sheep.
²⁷ My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me.
²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand.
²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand.
³⁰ I and the Father are one."
³¹ Again the Jews picked up stones to stone Him,
³² but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone Me?"
³³ "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."
³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'?"
³⁵ If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken—
³⁶ what about the one whom the Father set apart as His very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse Me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'?"
³⁷ Do not believe Me unless I do what my Father does.
³⁸ But if I do it, even though you do not believe Me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father."

Jesus clearly claims to be the Son of God in this passage. In fact, His claim is so clear the crowds are ready to stone Him to death, and it is this claim that led the Jewish High Court to condemn Jesus and take Him to Pilate.

(See [Matthew 26:62-66](#), [Mark 14:60-64](#), [Luke 22:66-71](#) and [John 19:1-8](#).)

- What does it say when Jesus' enemies had Him crucified for claiming to be God's Son?

Closing Prayer: Holy Lord, thank You for revealing Jesus Christ to be Your only Son, our Savior. Empower me to boldly share the good news of Jesus' salvation with others, and help me know how to answer those who doubt the words of the Bible. I pray in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Digging Deeper: Oldest New Testament Manuscripts

The oldest New Testament manuscripts we have are from the 4th century A.D.

- Codex Sinaiticus: [click here](#)
- Codex Vaticanus - Catholic Encyclopedia article: [click here](#)
- Codex Alexandrinus: [click here](#)
 - Catholic Encyclopedia article: [click here](#)
- Partial New Testament papyri which predate these three: [click here](#)
- The history of modern Greek editions: [click here](#)

A history of human writing: [click here](#)

A thorough discussion of the evolution of uncial text in Greek: [click here](#)

Digging Deeper: Dating The Gospels

Consider this appeal to an earlier date for the **Gospels from William R. Bragstad**

Digging Deeper: Textual Criticism

Since we do not have the original autographs written by the prophets and apostles, textual criticism provides a way for us to evaluate differences among the manuscript copies to determine the actual text of the original autographs.

- This Web site describes how there came to be differences and variations between the hand-copied manuscripts: [click here](#)
- A simple description of **textual criticism**
- Dr. Raymond F. Surburg describes the good textual criticism Dr. Maier spoke of in the video: **The Historical-Grammatical Method**
- Textual Criticism considers the end of the Gospel of Mark: [click here](#)
- Textual Criticism considers the account of the adulterous woman in John 8: [click here](#)

Lesson 5: The High Price Of An English Bible

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Opening Prayer: Holy Father, when faithful men and women sought to bring us the Bible in English they faced incredible obstacles. Give me a respect and admiration for the steep price these men, women, and children were willing to pay. Through Your Holy Spirit, create in me a lasting desire to read my Bible daily. I pray in Jesus' Name. Amen.

- What kinds of information would you consider important enough for you to risk imprisonment or even death?

Watch The Video: Lesson 5

The leaders of the Western Church (the popes of Rome) kept a stranglehold on the Bible by insisting that only their Latin translation, the Vulgate, was authoritative. That was a huge problem because by the Middle Ages most people were illiterate and very few understood Latin.

- What is the risk when individual Christians (lay or clergy) interpret Scripture in isolation?
- What are the advantages when the Church interprets the Scripture collectively?

The battle to reclaim the true interpretation of God's Word was led by scholars like Wycliffe, Hus, Erasmus, Luther, and Tyndale because they learned to read the original Greek and Hebrew of the Bible.

- The seminaries of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod require their pastoral students to learn Greek and Hebrew, and many struggle greatly with it. Do you think this is a good requirement for future pastors? Why or why not?
- What value would it offer the Christian Church if other Christians besides clergy learned biblical languages?

Learn Greek And Hebrew At Home:

- [Pre-seminary online Greek Course](#) from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.
- [iTunes U](#) Greek and Hebrew classes at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.

Read Jeremiah 36:1-4; 11-32.

- ¹ In the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD:
- ² “Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the other nations from the time I began speaking to you in the reign of Josiah till now.
- ³ Perhaps when the people of Judah hear about every disaster I plan to inflict on them, each of them will turn from his wicked way; then I will forgive their wickedness and their sin.”
- ⁴ So Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and while Jeremiah dictated all the words the LORD had spoken to him, Baruch wrote them on the scroll.
- ¹¹ When Micaiah son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, heard all the words of the LORD from the scroll,
- ¹² he went down to the secretary’s room in the royal palace, where all the officials were sitting: Elishama the secretary, Delaiah son of Shemaiah, Elnathan son of Acbor, Gemariah son of Shaphan, Zedekiah son of Hananiah, and all the other officials.
- ¹³ After Micaiah told them everything he had heard Baruch read to the people from the scroll,
- ¹⁴ all the officials sent Jehudi son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, to say to Baruch, “Bring the scroll from which you have read to the people and come.” So Baruch son of Neriah went to them with the scroll in his hand.
- ¹⁵ They said to him, “Sit down, please, and read it to us.” So Baruch read it to them.
- ¹⁶ When they heard all these words, they looked at each other in fear and said to Baruch, “We must report all these words to the king.”
- ¹⁷ Then they asked Baruch, “Tell us, how did you come to write all this? Did Jeremiah dictate it?”
- ¹⁸ “Yes,” Baruch replied, “he dictated all these words to me, and I wrote them in ink on the scroll.”
- ¹⁹ Then the officials said to Baruch, “You and Jeremiah, go and hide. Don’t let anyone know where you are.”
- ²⁰ After they put the scroll in the room of Elishama the secretary, they went to the king in the courtyard and reported everything to him.
- ²¹ The king sent Jehudi to get the scroll, and Jehudi brought it from the room of Elishama the secretary and read it to the king and all the officials standing beside him.
- ²² It was the ninth month and the king was sitting in the winter apartment, with a fire burning in the firepot in front of him.

- ²³ Whenever Jehudi had read three or four columns of the scroll, the king cut them off with a scribe's knife and threw them into the firepot, until the entire scroll was burned in the fire.
- ²⁴ The king and all his attendants who heard all these words showed no fear, nor did they tear their clothes.
- ²⁵ Even though Elnathan, Delaiah and Gemariah urged the king not to burn the scroll, he would not listen to them.
- ²⁶ Instead, the king commanded Jerahmeel, a son of the king, Seraiah son of Azriel and Shelemiah son of Abdeel to arrest Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet. But the LORD had hidden them.
- ²⁷ After the king burned the scroll containing the words that Baruch had written at Jeremiah's dictation, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:
- ²⁸ "Take another scroll and write on it all the words that were on the first scroll, which Jehoiakim king of Judah burned up.
- ²⁹ Also tell Jehoiakim king of Judah, "This is what the LORD says: You burned that scroll and said, "Why did you write on it that the king of Babylon would certainly come and destroy this land and cut off both men and animals from it?"
- ³⁰ Therefore, this is what the LORD says about Jehoiakim king of Judah: He will have no one to sit on the throne of David; his body will be thrown out and exposed to the heat by day and the frost by night.
- ³¹ I will punish him and his children and his attendants for their wickedness; I will bring on them and those living in Jerusalem and the people of Judah every disaster I pronounced against them, because they have not listened.' "
- ³² So Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to the scribe Baruch son of Neriah, and as Jeremiah dictated, Baruch wrote on it all the words of the scroll that Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire. And many similar words were added to them.

God used His words on Jeremiah's scroll and He also used the king's own officials to encourage Jehoiakim to take His warnings seriously. The king could have refused to have the scroll brought and read. But he made a strong statement by hearing it, then burning it piece by piece—and increased both his guilt and God's judgment in the process. It's all too easy for us to do the same.

- What different ways do we show disregard or even contempt for God's Word?

Just like Judah's king burned the scroll of Jeremiah, King Henry VIII of England burned Tyndale's English translations of the Bible.

- How does it affect you to see the dedication of scribes like Baruch and printers like Tyndale who risked their lives, as well as their money, time, and trouble to make new copies to replace those that were burned?
- How dedicated are you to knowing and preserving God's Word in your mind? In your family?

In a stunning twist God used this same King Henry VIII to bring the English Bible forward. When the king wanted to divorce one of his wives, the Pope refused. So King Henry VIII broke off from the Roman Catholic Church and started his own—the Anglican (English) Church. As a way of snubbing the pope, he authorized the Bible to be written in English.

- What encouragement do you find in this fascinating turn of events?
- Do you still view the Bible the same way you did before this study began? If not, what has changed?

Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your message of life and salvation in the Holy Bible. Forgive me for taking it for granted and stir me to honor the sacrifices of prophets, apostles, scribes, and copyists and, especially the sacrifice of Your dear Son Jesus Christ, by reading my Bible daily. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit to understand Your Word and to grow in faith. I pray in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Digging Deeper: The English Bible

The first handwritten English Bible (by John Wycliff from 1382-1384) had to be smuggled throughout Europe. When William Tyndale made the first printed English Bible in 1525 he was captured, strangled, and burned at the stake.

- Why do you think people were threatened by the prospect of the Bible being translated into English?
- **The Story of John Wycliffe**
 - **more in-depth link**
- **The Story of John Huss**
 - **more in-depth link**
- **The Story of Desiderius Erasmus**
- **The Story of William Tyndale**
- **The Origin of the English Bible**
- **The History of the King James Bible**

For Further Consideration:

- **The history of the Bible museum**
- **Dr. Paul Maier's homepage**

Be sure to sign up for the **Men's NetWork** weekly e-mail newsletter.

You can do this by going to

www.lhmmen.com/subscribeblog.asp. Simply take 60 seconds, fill in the boxes, and every week you'll receive the latest about what's going on at the **Men's NetWork**—and at men's groups operating around the country.

Anything you want to say?

Topics such as those addressed in this Bible study are discussed daily on the **Men's NetWork** Forum at **www.lhmmen.com/foruminfo.asp**.

Check it out, sign up, and join in.

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About Dr. Paul L. Maier:

Dr. Paul L. Maier is a prolific author, biblical scholar, and dedicated Christian. His popular and scholarly writings now circulate worldwide in more than 7 million copies in 17 different languages and include his best-selling book, *A Skeleton in God's Closet*. A distinguished professor of history at Western Michigan University, his interests are the ancient Near East, ancient Greece and Rome, Christianity and the Roman Empire, and the Reformation Era. He also serves as third vice president for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.



The **Men's NetWork** is a Christ-centered, Scripture-guided, service-oriented fellowship committed to equipping and motivating men to greater levels of leadership and service as they become stronger disciples of Jesus Christ. At our Web site, www.lhmmen.com, we offer video Bible studies, ministry tools to deepen men's faith, practical and easy-to-use resources for hands-on service projects, and other useful information for men's groups.



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