**The Origin of the Bible, No. 1 – BD38-01**

Any discussion that you may have of spiritual things will eventually get around to the question of the authority for the views that you hold—the justification for what you believe. Now this authority may reside in human reason. You believe certain things relative to God, to sin, or to eternity because reason concludes for you that this is the way it is. Or it may be as the doctrines of Christianity are, that is, based upon an authority in the form of the written revelation of the Word of God.

Now it would be a great mistake for you this morning to think that the Bible is a book that floated down from heaven one Christmas day, all wrapped up in Christmas wrappings, and was presented to us as the voice of God. Yet this book is vital to our lives now and we stake our eternal future upon what it says.

So it is only natural that as we view this book as the Word of God, as a book from God, that we should ask ourselves, “Where did it come from? How is it that I sit here this morning with an English Bible that I seldom give any thought at all to, where it came from, or how do I know that this is God speaking and not some human invention? How do I know that this book is different from the Karan? How do I know that this book is different from the writings of the mystics of the East, or the Book of Mormon, and son on?”

Well the Bible is viewed by Christians as a book from God carrying authority. When the Bible has spoken on any subject, that’s the final word on the issue. Are we justified in taking that position? Now the liberals do not want to accept what the Bible teaches so they reject the authority of the Bible. Sooner or later, if you ever talk to people who are of liberal persuasion, they will get around to challenging what you say on the basis of the Bible, and the way they will challenge it will be to tell you that the Bible is full of mistakes. And any book that is full of mistakes is not a book that you can take and be making positive declarations concerning human relationships. So the liberals defend their view by the fact that it is a purely man-made book.

So we are going in this next segment of our basic Bible doctrine series to take up the question of the origin of the Bible and specifically the origin of the English Bible. Obviously we are telling you constantly in this ministry that what is contained in that book has the final answers to all the problems of life; that your very existence, your very functioning as a human being is dependent upon your constantly taking in the propositions that are declared in that book, the written Bible.

So how did we get this book? Is this God’s revelation to mankind? How was it done? How did God prevent these human writers from errors of all kinds? What we are saying to you about the Scripture is that we believe it is inerrant. The word “inerrant” means that there is absolutely no mistake in the original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. Now even many conservative Christians in the neo-evangelical camp today have reservations about that. Even they are willing to say that the Bible is inspired, but they hedge on saying that the Bible is inerrant. That is a grave mistake because it is the first step toward liberalism. Liberalism makes no apologies about saying that the Bible was not written without mistakes, but it is full of mistakes.

Now incidentally, when you do ask these people, “Please give me the mistake?” And this is of course what you should do. You should say, “Well, let me deal with the mistakes one by one, and will you give them to me?” You will find that their recourse will be, “Well, I took a course in college and the professor told me about these mistakes in the Bible. But they won’t say, “Well, you know, over here, here’s this geographic mistake. Here’s this line of kings—this is wrong. Here’s this statement on this historical matter here—we have other records so we know this historically wrong.” They don’t give you anything like that, because there are no errors like that in the Bible. And these “mistakes” are just because some professor said it.

I remember when I was a boy, I think it was Look magazine at the time that came out with an article written by a Methodist minister’s son. The headline was “There are 50,000 mistakes in the Bible.” And this was very startling. Well as you read the article, you discovered that what he was saying was that of all the manuscripts and records we have of the copies of the original Scriptures, there were 50,000 variants. Well, he could have made a much better article because the truth of the matter is there are something like 150,000 variants, in the copies. So by certain procedures we have to determine back to what Paul originally wrote; to what John originally wrote; and, what some copyist somewhere along the line made a mistake in his copying, and we have ways of doing that. But they don’t come out and tell you, “Here is a matter of error of this thing and this thing.”

In any case, we hold that the Bible is inerrant. Now how did we get the original Greek and Hebrew writings so that we could translate the Bible into the English version that you hold in your hands? I think it’s necessary for you to have some idea of what the scholars deal with; some idea of what’s behind that English Bible, whatever translation or variation that you may have this morning. How has God given us a written Revelation? You need this background so that you can deal with the smart-alecks and the smug liberals and the pompous characters who treat the Bible as nothing to even be considered.

Perhaps you’ve noticed on some of these pop programs when matters of morality are discussed on one subject or another that they will talk about everything under the sun. They will quote every opinion imaginable, and nobody will bring in the Bible. Nobody will get around to saying, “Well, here’s what the Bible says about that, and here’s the final authority, and that’s the word on it.” The reason for that is that there is this attitude that the Bible has already been dealt with, it has already been explained, and it has already been disposed of, so we don’t have to take that into account when we deal with the major issues relative to society today.

Well, is the Bible still infallible today? Do we have, after centuries of copies and of translations, what God actually told those original authors? Well, we should begin first of all with the practice of writing. Writing is the art of recording thoughts and deeds, and then taking those thoughts to express them in some permanent record. Writing has to do with symbols. A letter is a symbol of a sound. A word is a symbol of an idea. A sentence is a symbol of a thought.

Now there are certain stages historically through which writing has progressed. It began as pictograms. These were simply crude pictures which represented an object. Last summer on our trip camp in the Painted Desert area, we stopped with our seniors and our high school kids, and we were able to look at some rock pictograms hundreds of years old that the Indians had carved there that nobody to this day can read and know what they mean. These were crude pictures that had specific meanings. This was one of the first forms of human communication.

The second is called the ideogram, or an idea-gram. These are picture symbols in which an idea is represented, such as in Chinese. For example, you’ll have something like this in Chinese: You’ll have a symbol of a house, and a symbol of two women, and that stands for jealousy. Some people write like that in Chinese. Now that’s an ideogram, these two women facing it off. You see how they are facing off and that’s jealousy—two women under one roof.

Then we have another one: phonograms. Phonograms are symbols representing sounds. These we break up into various types of phonograms. The first one is a word. A word phonogram represents the entire word. Thousands of these symbols would be required to represent language in this category.

Then we have syllable phonograms. This represents simply a syllable. For example, this is in the ancient cuneiform form. These symbols represented syllables. You would only have to have maybe four or five hundred symbols to communication in that way.

Finally, the one we’re most familiar with is the letter phonogram. This is a symbol that represents one sound, as in English. You only have to have maybe 25 or 30 symbols in order to communicate through the letter type of phonogram.

Now all the books of the Bible were written in the phonogram type of language with the letter type of structure. The Greek, the Hebrew, and the Aramaic, in which the Scriptures were written, use this type of communication. This is what we call the alphabet. The alphabet of course comes from “alpha” and “beta,” the first two letter of the Greek alphabet. The earliest known alphabet is the Phoenician alphabet. It had 22 symbols out of which evolved the Hebrew, the Greek, the Latin, the German, and so on, the various languages including English. You can usually open a dictionary to the word “alphabet,” and they will list the Phoenician characters and symbols, and they will show you how these gradually evolved into the Hebrew, the Greek, the Latin, the German, and so on.

Now how old is writing? Any record of thought in some fixed form, in some substance, is called a “book.” No matter if it’s on a rock, it’s considered a book. A book is as old as writing itself. When Abram left Babylonia in 2,000 B. C., he left a land that was full of clay tablets—millions of clay tablets, some of them going back as far as 4,000 B. C., on which was this cuneiform, this web-shaped type of writing, pressed into soft clay and then baked hard. These records reveal a highly developed civilization. So communication through books is an old, old art.

There was a time when the higher critics used to scoff that Moses could have written the first five books of the Bible. Their scoffing was based upon the fact that when Moses lived, around 2,000 B. C., there was no such thing as writing. People couldn’t communicate. Well, since then archaeology has demonstrated they were doing it in 4,000 B. C., so the critics don’t talk about that any more.

Moses, when he was in Egypt, as a student looked back upon records there that went back to 4,000 B. C. in the form of the hieroglyphics, on monuments, on temples, on obelisks, and on tombs. Egypt, like Babylon, was full of libraries and full of literary works. So writing was a developed art by the time the first Bible author came along, namely Moses.

Now what did they write on? Well, there were a variety of writing materials, the first probably was clay. Clay was molded into some slab form, sometimes in a cone shape, and sometimes in several-sided cylinders. On the soft clay, a stylus, which had a wedge-shaped point, was taken and they would press into the clay in various designs. This was called cuneiform and it marked a system of syllables that were converted into meaning, ideas, and so on. We have records up into the millions of these tablets. This was a means of communication. Business work was done on this. Kings received reports from their agents. These were filed in a regular filing system. These, after they were made, of course, would be baked so they would be hard, so it was a permanent record.

Another thing people wrote upon was stone. Among these you have the various walls, the prepared slabs, the statues, sides of houses, the pillars, the obelisks, the buildings, and so on, including the Ten Commandments which were written upon stone. We have some very valuable writings. For example, the Behistun rock in Persia which gave us the key to being able to interpret cuneiform writing. We have the Rosetta Stone which Napoleon’s men found in Egypt which was the key to reading Egyptian hieroglyphics.

People also wrote on metals. There were a variety of metals. Lead was very common. It was easy to engrave on lead. This was a common material for writing on. Actually, the Bible, in Job 19:24, refers to writing on lead. They also used bronze which was in the form of sacred public tablets which were portable records, kept of matters that they wanted to transport. Also, coins which were made of bronze had inscriptions on them. They used gold, both in tablet form and in the form of money. The miter of the Hebrew high priest was made of gold and had engraving on it. They used silver in the form of tablets. Also precious stones were written on, on the shoulder pieces and the breastplates of the Hebrew high priests—the stones had engravings on them. Ivory tablets, bones, and horns of animals were all used.

One of the most popular, of course, was wood. If you’re on any construction job, you will notice how the carpenters to this day have a way of picking up a little slab of wood and making notations on it or drawing up a list of materials he’s going to need. Well, people used to use the bark of trees, or they would make actual slabs out of the wood itself, the trunk of the tree. On this they would write. The Anglo-Saxon word for “bark” is “bok” from which we get the English word “book.” So the book actually came from the idea of bark, writing on wood.

Also, when people wanted just a temporary record they would use wax. They would have a little tray with raised sides, sort of like an old-fashioned school slate. They would pour a layer of wax and then they would engrave and write on the wax for something that they didn’t want as a permanent record, but simply as a temporary record.

The Romans, the Etruscans, and the Egyptians all wrote on linen and other materials.

Papyrus was one of the most prominent and one of the favorite. It was made of the pith of the stalk of the papyrus plant which grew in abundance along the Nile River. They would open this stalk, cut it into strips, and then put a layer of these strips of the pith of the papyrus together. Then they would put a sticky water substance, and then put another layer at right angles, and then press the thing together, and it would come out hard. Then they would smooth it off and it would make a beautiful sheet of paper. Most of the New Testament were probably written on papyrus. This was used even in Egypt as far back as 2,700 B. C. They would take the sheets of the papyrus and join them together, and this is how they made the rolls—the scrolls that they would wrap up.

Also, they wrote on leather. Leather was of two types. One was called vellum which was the fine-grained skin of calves and of antelopes. It was written on both sides. Then another type of leather was parchment which was made of the skin of sheep and goats, usually written on just one side. From about the fourth century A. D. on, vellum began replacing papyrus as the permanent writing materials. So if you were to go to some of the museums, like a British museum, and say, “I’d like to see one of the oldest copies we have of the New Testament.” You would find that these oldest copies of the Bible are written on parchment, on vellum, rather than on papyrus, because our copies don’t go back much farther than that.

In time, of course, paper came along. Paper was invented in China in the 2nd century, B. C. It was introduced into Arabia in the 8th century, A. D. It was brought to Europe about the 10th century, and by the 13th century it was in common use throughout Europe. With the invention of the printing press in 1450, they found that paper was the ideal material to use. From then on parchment and vellum fell rapidly into disuse and paper took over.

Of course they had to have an ink to write these books of the Bible. The word “ink” in Greek means “black.” It’s made from a mixture of soot, or what we could call lampblack, diluted with water and a gum-like substance. They also had ways of coloring their inks. Black was basic, but they also had inks in red, green, blue, and yellow. They were of very durable quality as is evident by the fact that these manuscripts that we have, from which we reconstruct the original Greek and Hebrew documents, are hundreds and hundreds of years old, and some of them are very clear—very easy to read. Now that’s saying something for what they produced in the way of ink, and there’s a question as to whether some of our inks would stand up that well.

Now the pens themselves were made from a reed called a calamus which was a hollow reed intended to hold ink. A person simply took one of these reeds and had a knife. He cut the tip off at a slant and put a slit in such as our pens have, and then dipped it in ink, and it would hold in the hollow of that reed a quantity of ink, and they would write with that. Now periodically the point would get soggy and bad, and they would have to cut it off and re-fix it. For that reason every scribe had to carry with him what was called a “pen knife,” which is where we get the word today—a knife for chopping the points of your pens and shaping them up for writing. This is how the men who wrote our Bible had to sit down originally and write it (or their secretaries).

Now we have manuscripts of the Scriptures, and there are certain words that I want to explain to you. So as you read, perhaps, sometimes about the background of the Bible, or some clever liberal that you’re talking to pops a word at you, you will not look at him blankly, but you will be a firm, intelligent, informed, hard-core fundamentalist that’s going to give him all kinds of trouble.

Now, first of all there is the word “manuscript.” What do we mean by “manuscript?” Well, a manuscript is a literary composition written by hand, as opposed to something that’s printed. We use a symbol for manuscript as a fast abbreviation: “ms.” The plural is “mss” (manuscripts). The original manuscripts means those that people like Paul or John actually wrote, or their secretaries wrote by their dictation. These were the ones that these Bible writers themselves wrote—the very first copy that was sent to a church. We have no original manuscripts. These are called the “autographs,” the ones that the original authors wrote themselves. There are no autographs of Scripture in existence to our knowledge today. All that we have left are copies of the originals.

Now the Bible manuscript copies came in several types. One type was called the “uncial.” The uncial was a type of manuscript which was written with all capital letters and no spaces… It looked like this: “FORGODSOLOVEDTHEWORLD.” Now if you knew English you could probably read this. You would say, “Oh, I see what that means. That means, ‘For God so loved the world.’” And they would go line after line after line. They were writing on parchment or vellum—rare and valuable materials. You didn’t just go down to the stationary store and say, “Give me another package,” and drop a quarter on the counter. Therefore, when they had something ready to write on, they really wrote on it. They didn’t waste any space. They went without spacing and without paragraphs, one up against another in all capital letters. Those are uncials.

The oldest manuscripts that we have run from the fourth through the tenth century, A. D., and they are in the uncial type. This is one way that they can date manuscripts because later (there was a little overlapping in the 9th century), but from the 10th century on they had another type of manuscript called the “menisco.” It was written in the small letters, and sometimes connected together in such a way that we would call it cursive. We join one letter to another and we call it cursive writing. That isn’t the kind of writing your children do in school. You may call it cursive when you look at it …, but this is writing where one letter is connected to the other. Or they’re just all small letters, and the whole manuscript was just filled with small letters. Now we know that these are later manuscripts from about the 10th to the 15th centuries they copied in just the little letters.

Now you may find another word “codex.” “Codex” simply means book. In time, instead of rolling these copies in scrolls, they began making them in sheets in the form of a book as we have it today. This is called a “codex.” The word “translation” means to take from one language to another, and what you end up with is called a “version.” You have, for example, this morning in your hands the King James Version. That simply means the King James translation of the Scripture, or the American Standard Version or whatever it may be. It’s a type, a certain category, a classification, of translation.

The phrase “literal translation” means a translation that gives the exact meaning. It may not necessarily make good sense in English, but it gives the exact meaning of the words as they line up in the original languages. A “revised version” is a translation which is taken and then reworked, or improved, but you’re still working with the original translation.

Then there is a “paraphrase.” A paraphrase is a free translation (and I mean very free) with the idea of conveying the thought. You should be very careful about paraphrases. Paraphrases are bad business. There are some Christians who get the idea that if they can find themselves some “living paraphrase,” they’ve come closer to God than they’re ever going to get. You ought to look at a paraphrase about maybe once every four years or so, to see that it’s still there, but that’s about it. Don’t fall into the habit of sitting down to read the Word of God and you take out a paraphrase. The only time you want to look at a paraphrase is after you’ve read the Word of God and you’ve studied it and you’ve understood. Then you get over and say, “I wonder what this says,” because a paraphrase is a commentary. The man who made the paraphrase is, in effect, giving you a commentary on the text. He’s telling you what he thinks this means. You must treat it as a commentary, and it may be very valuable as such, but it is not the Word of God.

Then we have another term that you’ve run into: “Amplified Version.” There are some translations called “amplified.” These are better in that they are translations of the original, and then in parentheses they add words to amplify, to explain further, what this word means in Greek because there are tenses and certain moods and certain ideas you can’t get across just by placing an English word there—you have to have extra words. So these amplified versions attempt to do that.

Another word is “ostraca.” “Ostraca” has to do with pottery—little broken pieces of pottery. Thousands of these pieces of ostraca have been uncovered, and these have been invaluable to us in understanding and giving us guidance for the grammar and the meaning of the words and the interpretation of the New Testament. The ostraca were the scraps of paper upon which people in the ancient world would write. They would pick up this piece of broken pottery and they would write a message on it.

My number two son, Steve, when he was in Egypt this summer on the archaeological dig with John Hopkins University, said that he was down in the pit working one day and he needed a measuring stick. So the professor on the job picked up a piece of ostraca and he wrote on it to a man on the other side of the dig, “Please send your measuring stick over to Steve,” signed, “Al.” They gave it to a runner and he ran over to the other side. Well, Steve grabbed that and included it in the find which are being taken back to Wheaton College but they have to go through the Cairo museum first. And some official at the Cairo museum is going to waste his time looking at this junk piece of potter that says, “Please send your measuring stick over to Steve,” signed, “Al,” before it can eventually get back to him here in the United States.

Buy you know, somebody thousands of years (from now) could tell a great deal about that. He could tell what people’s names were. He could tell how they determined distances—they had measuring sticks. He could tell whether they were courteous and all kinds of things. He could tell about sentence structure. He could tell about the English language. Now if he had thousands with notes written on them, and I mean business notes and records and everything under the sun, you can image what a valuable find this was. These have given us great insights concerning the language in which the Bible was written.

Now I hope you are aware of the fact that I am simply telling you what happened. But in the process of this, be aware of the fact that the providential might hand of God was behind all these things. In fact, I’m going to tell you some things (such) that you’re going to be on the edge of your seat I panic as to what could have happened to the Word of God at certain points of history. But you can relax because while some fantastic losses were imminent, God stepped in, and in an unbelievable way, the Word was preserved.

We have another source of information about the Word of God. We’re talking about how we get the original records. One other source are called lectionaries. Lectionaries are portions of Scripture which were copied into church services. A man would set up a church service and he would have an order of service. In that service he would want to read a certain scripture so he would take one of these ancient original manuscripts and he would copy the Scripture out. Now we don’t have that thing that he copied from. That long since is gone. But his copy in his lectionary for that service—that we have. So in effect we have a piece of the Word of God that we can use again to compare to compare to compare, to shake it down to the original writings of the apostles. These are of course very very valuable. Some lectionaries, as a matter of fact, are older than some of our best manuscripts that we have today.

One other are the papyri fragments made of the papyrus leaves. They go back to about 200 A.D., very old. Portions of the Bible and general writings of social and business nature—these also are very valuable to give us an understanding of the Koine Greek language.

Now what do we actually have to operate from relative to the Word of God? Here are the manuscripts, these New Testament manuscripts that we work from. Most of these that I’m going to mention we have found since the King James translation was made. The King James translation was made from a Greek text called the Textus Receptus which meant it was the received text. It was not a heretical text. Some of the finest manuscripts had not been discovered in 1611 when that translation was made and when that text was put together earlier by a man named Erasmus. One of the finest, and the only manuscript we have that has the whole Greek New Testament in it. It doesn’t have all of the Old Testament. The Old Testament was in that Septuagint, the Old Testament Hebrew translated into Greek. The Septuagint version is the Old Testament, but we have the New Testament complete and that’s called the “Codex Sinaiticus.” “Codex Sinaiticus” is dated back to 340 A.D. … It was the first in the series and it is large clear uncial type with capital letters. It is a very good manuscript made on vellum out of antelope skin. It was found in 1844 by Dr. Constantine Tischendorf who was a German biblical professor at the University of Leibzig. He had devoted his life to searching, to researching for ancient Greek Bible manuscripts.

One summer he is visiting in the monastery of St. Catherine which was built on top of Mount Sinai in Palestine. The convent was run by a group of Russian monks. He is walking down the hall one day and he sees a basket. In this basket he notices leaf upon leaf and page upon page of vellum—parchment. He goes over and he picks up a copy of the thing and his eyes about pop out of his head because he realizes he’s looking at a copy of the Septuagint version of the Bible—the Old Testament in Greek. He recognizes it, because he is a scholar, as being older than anything he had dealt with before. Two basketfuls had already been burned because that’s what the stuff was out there for. It was out there to start the fires in the monastery.

So he collected this and spoke to the monks who were so ignorant that they didn’t know the value of what they had there. He got, I think, something like 40 or 42 pages that they gave him. Then they told him that they had more from that volume and they showed him additional pages. Then he hit the ceiling. About this time the monks notice that this guy was getting awfully excited. As dumb as they were, the put two and two together and realized that they must have something very valuable, knowing who Tischendorf was. So they wouldn’t let him take any more with him but he was able to take back to Germany these 40 to 42 pages that he found originally.

He went back in 1853 and did more research but found nothing. Then in 1859 he was given permission on the authority of the Russian government (the Czar) and he went back again to research in this monastery for ancient manuscripts and he found nothing. About the time he was ready to leave he was talking to one of the stewards. The steward happened to say to him, “I also have a copy of the Septuagint.” He said, “You do? I’d like to see that.” So he took him up to his room and the steward took out this large volume wrapped in red cloth and opened it up, and then Tischendorf really hit the ceiling. Right before his eyes was a complete copy of the Greek New Testament dating back from 330 A. D. The best they had had up to that time was 10th century A. D.

Well, it became the property of the Russian government. In about 1936 the Communists, having been fully established in Russia, sold this manuscript, Codex Sinaiticus, to the British museum and that’s where you’ll have to go to see it today. They sold it for about a half-million dollars and you can imagine what that would be today.

A second great manuscript was Codex Vaticanus. Codex Vaticanus dates to about 350 A. D., not quite as old as Sinaiticus. It is given the code symbol for the Greek letter “D.” It was known to exist in 1841 in the Vatican library in Rome, but for some reason the Popes would not let scholars look at it. In 1809 Napoleon, in his conquest, captured the Pope and the Papal States in Italy, and he decided to transfer them all to France. Along with them came the library. It was in France, while cataloging and researching the Pope’s library, that they discovered this manuscript again in existence. But by the time they got permission to be able to study, Napoleon had been defeated, in 1815, and the pope picked up his manuscripts and went back to Rome. Again the thing lay in obscurity.

In 1845 a British scholar named Tragalus was finally given permission to study this manuscript for a certain number of hours of the day, but under certain stringent rules. He was told that all the while he was in that room with that manuscript, Codex Vaticanus, he would be under guard. There would be a guard watching him. He was not to take out a piece of paper. He was not to take out a pen. He was not to write anything down. He was simply to look, and scarcely to touch.

Well what the Pope didn’t know was that Tragalus had a great mind. So Tragalus said, “OK.” He went in there and he took these pages and he just sat and looked at them, and he memorized them. He had something like a photographic memory. Then he would thank the guard and beat it up to his room and write the thing out. He copied the whole thing. He stayed at it day after day after day, and he got a copy by memory of Codex Vaticanus.

Well finally when it was out in time, Pope Pius IX, finally in 1857, published this manuscript photographically so that it became available to scholars, but it too was a very very great find—not complete in all segments, but and early manuscript.

A third very valuable one from which we work is Codex Alexandrinus. This dates about 450 A. D. It’s called “alpha,” its code name. It was presented to the Patriarch of Alexandria in the year 1078. In 1621 a man named Cyril Lucar took it to Constantinople when he became Patriarch of Constantinople. It seems he felt it would somehow be a good fortune piece for him to have this manuscript. But for some reason in 1624 it was given to the English ambassador to Turkey, Sir Thomas Roe. It was given to him to present to James I who was the king who authorized the translation of our masterful King James translation of the Bible. However, it was sent to England and James died before it arrived, so it was presented to Charles I in 1627. It did come too late to be used as reference material for the King James translation.

Another important manuscript is called the “Ephraemi.” This has another word, “Rescriptus.” (So it is called) “Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus. This goes back to about 450 A. D. Its code letter is “C.” There was a Catholic priest called Father Ephraim who was a noted theological writer from Syria. He lived about the fourth century. He wrote out some of his sermons. Someone took this biblical manuscript, now called Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus, in the 12th century and because they needed some writing material, in order to copy down some of these sermons of Father Ephraim, they sat down with this manuscript and, believe it or not, they scraped it and erased it. Again the monks were so ignorant that they didn’t realize what they were doing. Then *between* the scrapings they wrote out the sermons of Father Ephraim.

Well this manuscript, because it has been scraped or erased is called a polemist and that means “rubbed out.” It is called Rescriptus because it was written over. “Rescriptus” means “written over.” “Polemist” means “rubbed out.” Between the lines of the original scripture, the sermon was written. Well it was brought to Italy in 1553 and it came into the possession of the notorious Catherine de’ Medici, whose family for three hundred years was the history of Italy, from popes to poisoning people through a ring that they could drop poison into their wine as they passed it around to the guests. A “beautiful family.”

Well they married Catherine off to Henry IV of France. When she moved to France she took her library with her. She enjoyed the sermons of Father Ephraim. So she took this manuscript with this sermon on it with her. After her death the manuscript was placed in the National Library of Paris. There near the end of the 17th century, some student is doing some research work and he thinks he sees something underneath the surface writing of this sermon that he is reading. Investigation sure enough proves that this is a polemist and a rescriptus, a rubbed out and written over again manuscript. In 1834 chemistry had developed to the point where they were able to apply chemical action to this manuscript and pretty well restore it. In 1840 Tischendorf was privileged to work on it and he did a great job of restoring this manuscript and actually transcribing what was on it.

Then we have certain others. Codex Bezae has the letter “D.” Codex Claromontanus with the letter “D2”. Both of them come from about 550 A. D. Washingtonensis comes from about the fourth or fifth century, code letter “W.” This one belongs to the government of the United States and is in the library in Washington D. C.

Now the papyri are another source of information on the Scriptures. I want to touch on those yet this morning. The papyri came to us in a very wonderful fashion. There was a place called Oxyrhynchus in Egypt, and doctors Grenfell and Hunt of Oxford in 1900 were excavating burial places near Oxyrhynchus. In the process they found a cemetery of sacred crocodiles. Inadvertently one of the workmen broke open one of the crocodiles and out poured pages and pages of papyri writings. These were filled with all kinds of documents. Some of them were literary and some of them business, but among them were some Scriptures. These papyri went from the 1st century, B. C. to the 10th century, A. D. Some of these fragments were older than these manuscripts we deal with. They again threw a great deal of light upon what the common New Testament language was in the days of the apostles, that is, the Koine Greek.

Another very valuable papyri find was the Chester Beatty papyri. In 1931 Chester Beatty of London purchased in Egypt twelve portions of a papyri codex manuscript. This included three portions of the New Testament and eight portions of the Old Testament. They go back to about the 2nd or 3rd centuries, A. D. Again, these are earlier copies than any of our best manuscripts that I have been listing for you. Some of these that we have actually go back to the time of as much as 35 to 40 years. We have a portion of John, five verses of John, on one of these papyri that go back to 35 to 40 years after John wrote it. So we have an extremely old piece of information here.

I think before we are through you will have an understanding of what the scholars work with. You’ll have an understanding that this is a lot more certain than it may seem. The liberals like to say to you, “Well, what can you know? You’ve got all these copies but who knows what it means?” You’d be surprised at how many fundamental Christian college students have told me that. “You know all these copies, all these differences, 150,000 variants. How can we tell? Who can know what is actually the Word of God?” But you need to understand this. You need to know how firmly through all the maneuverings of human history the hand of God was there. So when Paul says, “Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift,” meaning the Lord Jesus Christ, you can also thank him for His written gift without which you would not know a thing about that Christ.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971