How We Got the Bible

Lesson 1 - Introduction

**What is the Bible?**

* God’s Word, 66 books, over 40 different authors written by the Holy Spirit through pens of men.
* “God-breathed” revelation to mankind 2 Timothy 3:16-17
* People ask major questions about the Bible such as . . .
	+ Is it true or not?
	+ Is it trustworthy or not?
* We should begin by asking the question . . .

**What does the Bible say about itself?**

* Why start with this question?
	+ In order to accurately judge whether something is good, bad, or neutral, you have to know something about its contents.
	+ The Bible contains stories and instruction. It is simply the honest thing to do that we should listen to the story.
		- Illustration: “Johnny deserves to be in trouble!”
		- Listen to the story! Who did what? Who said what? Who should be in trouble and why?

**Reading the Bible in English Will Tell You Something!**

* The English shows us that the Bible is not an English book!

Examples:

* John 1:38 - . . . “What seek ye? They said unto him, “Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master).”

We know Jesus did not say the English phrase, “What seek ye?”

How do we know? What was the reply?

* John 1:41 – . . . “ ‘We have found the Messiah,’ which is, being interpreted, the Christ.” This verse goes a step further. Christ is not an English word. It is a transliteration of the Greek “Xristos.”
* Xristos actually has meaning – “anointed one/Messiah”
	+ You need to study Hebrew culture and the OT to find out what that means.
	+ John 19:20 – the KJV writes regarding the inscription above Jesus head, “and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.
	+ Vs. 21, The Jews said to Pilate, “write not, ‘The King of the Jews;’ but write, ‘He said I am King of the Jews.’”
		- It is clear that this conversation did not occur in English.
	+ When reading the Bible, we understand that what we’re reading is a translation and representation of whatever was originally written or said. This provokes the question . . .

**Is translation itself trustworthy?**

* The Bible also helps us with our understanding on this point – even beginning with an English translation.

**A Lesson from the Jot and Tittle – Matthew 5:18**

* **Jot = “yod” ~ the smallest letter in Hebrew**
* **Tittle = “hook/marking” ~ a small marking that changes letters!**



* + Did God break his promise? These letters are not in any English Bibles.
	+ Ink and letters are not meaning. Ink and letters are the vessels of meaning.

**Translation is trustworthy – God used it for the Bible itself!**

* + Genesis – We don’t know what language Adam and Eve spoke.
		- We believe Moses wrote the Pentateuch (PENTA – 5 books – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). Moses did not, however, record his death (probably recorded by Joshua or another scribe as the Holy Spirit led).
		- While Moses spoke Hebrew, all languages were confounded at the Tower of Babel, so we can't be certain what language was spoken before that time. However, we do have a Hebrew translation of whatever was said: The Septuagint (LXX: The abbreviation gets its name from the Roman numerals meaning 70. There is a fanciful story that 70 translators worked on this translation in separate locals and were in perfect agreement.).
		- The Septuagint was the Greek translation of the Hebrew/Aramaic Old Testament.
		- The Septuagint “is traditionally dated to the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt (285-246 BC).” [A Brief History of the Septuagint - Associates for Biblical Research (biblearchaeology.org)](https://biblearchaeology.org/research/new-testament-era/4022-a-brief-history-of-the-septuagint)
		- Jesus’ words translated and preserved in Greek (Jesus probably spoke Aramaic) are often direct quotes from the LXX. The LXX is the OT Bible that Greek speaking people had access to during the time of Christ. Let’s compare the NT and OT verses in Greek and Hebrew, translating each verse into English.
* Greek Mark 7:6-8 “Καλῶς ἐπροφήτευσεν Ἠσαΐας περὶ ὑμῶν τῶν ὑποκριτῶν, ὡς γέγραπται ὅτι Οὗτος ὁ λαὸς τοῖς χείλεσίν με τιμᾷ, ἡ δὲ καρδία αὐτῶν πόρρω ἀπέχει ἀπʼ ἐμοῦ·
* “Word-for-Word” English - Good he prophesied Isaiah concerning you the hypocrites, as it is written that, This the people the lips me honor, but the hearts of them far away be distant from me.
* LXX Isaiah 29:13 “13 καὶ εἶπεν Κύριος Ἐγγίζει μοι ὁ λαὸς οὗτος ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐν τοῖς χείλεσιν αὐτῶν τιμῶσίν με, ἡ δὲ καρδία αὐτῶν πόρρω ἀπέχει ἀπʼ ἐμοῦ·
* “Word for Word” English – And he said Lord, “Draw near to me the people this in the mouths of them, and in the lips of them honor me, but the hearts of them far away are distant from me.”
* Hebrew Isaiah 29:13 “. . . הָעָ֣ם הַזֶּ֔ה בְּפִ֤יו וּבִשְׂפָתָיו֙ כִּבְּד֔וּנִי וְלִבּ֖וֹ רִחַ֣ק מִמֶּ֑נִּי
* (From me) (Far) (And as to its heart) (it honors me) (And/but with its lips) (with its mouth) (the this) (the people) \*\* 🡨 start\*\*

**In the beginning . . .**

* **Genesis 1:1**
* In Hebrew  **בְּרֵאשִׁ֖ית בָּרָ֣א אֱלֹהִ֑ים אֵ֥ת הַשָּׁמַ֖יִם וְאֵ֥ת הָאָֽרֶץ׃**
	+ (the earth) (🡨 and) (the heavens) (🡨) (God) (He created) (in beginning)
* Greek LXX - ΕΝ ΑΡΧΗ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν.
	+ (in beginning) (he made) [ (subject) the God ] (the heaven) (and the earth)
* “EN ARXE” – are the same Greek words that begin John 1:1 “In the beginning . . .”
* Hebrew reads right to left, and is in different word order than Greek, which reads left to right. Both languages have different word orders and structures from each other and from English.
* Spanish - En el principio creó Dios **los cielos**\* y la tierra.[[1]](#footnote-1)
	+ in the beginning (he created) God the heavens and the earth
* English KJV – In the beginning God created **the heaven\*** and the earth.
* **\*The heaven or heavens?** Good question! In short – it doesn’t matter. The implication is whatever is not the earth. The reason for some differing translation is because of the word SHAMAYM ( **הַשָּׁמַ֖יִם**). The “YM” (**יִם**) ending in Hebrew is what makes something plural. SHAMAYM is also used when we’re obviously talking about the singular sky (Psalm 79:2 – “The fowls of SHAMAYM.” The sky or the skies? Both work.

These languages are different, but no significant meaning has been altered. Translation works even though there maybe nuances from language to language and even within the same language!

**WORD FOR WORD TRANSLATION IS IMPOSSIBLE**

So, what did Jesus mean by every “yod and tittle?” Read the context. Matthew 5:17-20 – Jesus came to fulfill the law. Jesus expects obedience (vv. 21 and continuing). If Jesus meant, “Don’t change any letters!” then translation is sinful and Jesus himself would be sinful along with Paul and all the NT writers who quoted from the Septuagint (LXX)! Jesus was not fulfilling letters (think about that—can you fulfill the letter *Q*?), Jesus was fulfilling meaning.

**Two translation-related conclusions based on Matthew 5:18:**

1. **Good translations must faithfully point back to the original source**.
2. **God’s commands can be followed in any language and culture**,

because the law is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It is through **faith** in the Messiah, and through the **grace** of God, that leads to a righteousness (**Christ’s** righteousness!) that exceeds even that of scribes and Pharisees.

 Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. The word of God transcends any one language (As shown by Moses’, Jesus’, and the apostles’ use of multiple translations!); thus, multiple translations contain nuances but are good and useful in the spread of “every jot and tittle” of God’s Word.

1. There is not a single conservative Spanish translation in existence that uses the singular form, “el cielo.” Did God not preserve his word to Spanish speaking people? Of course not. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)