

THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE
An Overview of the History & Composition of the Bible
sermon by Jon Jacobs, January 2008

Introduction:

The Bible consists of sixty-six different books. Thirty-nine of them make up the Old Testament. Twenty-seven of them make up the New Testament. We want to deal with how these specific sixty-six books came to be our Bible. What is the history of the composition of Scripture? We are talking about the Canon of Scripture. In theology, the word “Canon” is used to refer to this body, this corpus of sacred writing that becomes our Bible. The word “*Canon*” simply comes from the word that means “rule or measure.” The idea is that we understand that these sixty-six books are God’s rule. They are that which rule our lives. We measure all things according to the substance of just these sixty-six books.

I. The Old Testament Canon

We want to begin by considering the Old Testament Canon, that is, those thirty-nine books which make up the Old Testament. Shortly after Jesus had been crucified and resurrected, He showed himself to the apostles. We find an interesting statement from the lips of our Lord. In Luke 24:26-27, He says, “*Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, he explained to them the things concerning himself and all the scriptures,*” that is, all the *Hagiographa* (the writings). What we find in verse twenty-seven is the Jewish understanding of the Old Testament. That is, that the Jewish people broke the Old Testament into 3 sections: 1) The books of Moses (the Law), 2) the Prophets, and 3) the *Hagiographa*. If you look at verse forty-four of the same chapter, again you will see Jesus reiterate this point: “*Now he said to them, these are my words I spoke to you while I was still with you. That all things which were written about me in the law [books of Moses] and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.*” So the Jewish community at the time of Jesus and even today, the people at large understood that the Old Testament really had three sections to it.

The three sections of the Old Testament were, first of all, the books of Moses, or the Law. Those are the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Secondly, the second part of that body, that corpus of books, was what they considered to be the prophets, which comprised itself of all the major prophets (with the exception of Daniel), the 12 minor prophets, and it also included the books of Joshua, Judges, I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings and II Kings. The third section of the Old Testament in the Jewish mind was the writings, which always began with the Psalms and included Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Dan, Ezra, Nehemiah, I Chronicles and II Chronicles. This was the Jewish understanding of what the Old Testament consisted of.

The Apocrypha

As time went on, after the Old Testament was written, four hundred years before the birth of Christ, there were other books that were written that have been historically,

and in some circumstances erroneously, added to the corpus of the Old Testament. We call these books “The Apocrypha.” The Apocrypha consists of fourteen books. These books were written during the “Inter-Testamental” period between the close of the Old Testament (Malachi), and the beginning of the New Testament era. These books were written during the four hundred years of silence. These fourteen books were written during that period. They were rejected by the Jews as sacred. They were later also rejected by the Reformers and subsequently rejected by evangelical Orthodox Christians. However, they were included in the 1611 version of the King James Bible and are still included in the Catholic Canon of Scripture.

Original Languages

The Old Testament was written in two languages. The vast majority was written in ancient Hebrew. There are a few portions that were written in Aramaic: Ezra 4:6-8; Ezra 7:12-26; Daniel 2:4-7 and verse 28; and Jeremiah 10:11. The use of Aramaic in the Old Testament is the result of the Jewish exile during the rise of the Babylonian empire on into the Persian Empire.

Original Documents

There is a term I want to introduce to you which is “*autographs*.” When we talk about the Canon of Scripture, we refer to the concept of “*autographs*.” An *autograph* refers to the original document that was written by the author of that book. So, for example, the original autograph of the book of Revelation would have been written by John on the island of Patmos. The original autograph of Genesis would have been written by Moses in the second half of the wilderness journey. What you need to know is that there are no extant autographs. We do not possess any of the original autographs of any Old Testament or New Testament book. What we do have are documents which are copies of the original autographs. This is important. We have to understand that when we talk about the Word of God as absolute, authoritative truth, we have to understand that the original autograph was without error and without flaw. That is not to say that we agree that all copies and translations are without error or without flaw. For instance the Jehovah’s Witnesses translation, called the *New World Translation*, published in 1950, has been called into question for the biased use of dynamic equivalence as opposed to honest interpretation.

Replacing Older Copies

Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, there were older New Testament manuscripts than there were Old Testament copies. The reason is that the religious leaders of Israel through the years not only followed the Old Testament, but also were committed to the Mishnah. The Mishnah contained the rabbinical teachings and comments on the Old Testament. One of the things the Mishnah did was that it taught that the scribes of Israel were to destroy a copy when it had been replaced by a newer copy. The idea was that the replaced copy of the Old Testament or an Old Testament book was not to somehow find itself in some improper usage. They were protecting those copies of sacred scripture from some sort of unholy handling whether by neglect or falling into inappropriate hands. The reason we don’t have very old copies of the Old Testament is because the Jewish scribes of Israel destroyed the copy that they were

replacing with a new copy. Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the extant Old Testament manuscripts weren't very old.

The Accuracy of the Old Testament

How did we end up with the Old Testament? What do we weigh it against? Where did it come from? Let me give you a few ideas. Number one, we do have some ancient Old Testament manuscripts that date back to about A.D. 500. So, we have manuscripts that today are 1500 years old. We can compare these Hebrew texts. We can have some fairly accurate understanding of what the Old Testament looked like in Hebrew just after the time of Christ. Secondly, we have what is called the Septuagint (LXX). The Septuagint is the Old Testament translated into Greek. There are some ancient copies of the Septuagint. In fact, history tells us that the effort to translate the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek was a project begun by the Egyptian Pharaoh Ptolemy. He collected seventy-two Hebrew scholars (that is where the LXX comes from, the Roman Numerals for seventy) and commissioned them with the task. Ptolemy charged the Jewish scholars to translate the Hebrew Old Testament into common Greek. This effort was completed around A.D. 200. So the ancient Hebrew manuscripts take us back to five hundred years after Christ, but the Greek-translated Septuagint takes us back to two hundred years after Christ. They pre-date the oldest Hebrew by nearly three hundred years. In addition, we have Targums. Targums also date to about A.D. 200 or 300. They are portions of Old Testament that were translated into Aramaic. You understand that the Egyptians and the Arabs of that world didn't necessarily commit themselves to the teaching of the Mishnah, *i.e.* to destroy copies; therefore, we have older Greek copies and older Aramaic copies than we do Hebrew copies. We can look and compare the Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew copies and know that our current English Old Testament is very accurate.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

Then an amazing discovery took place between 1947 and 1956: the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the caves around Qumran in Ancient Israel along the Dead Sea. Apparently an ancient Essene community, at some point in their history, hid their sacred library in caves. They hid them away for safe keeping, fearing that the Romans would invade and destroy their libraries. In 1947, a Bedouin boy, who was herding his sheep, was missing one of them. He threw a rock into one of these caves and heard something break. He went into that cave and discovered some vessels with ancient parchments. He took them to the markets in Jerusalem. They were found by collectors and it launched a huge expedition of the area, which gave birth to the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Dead Sea Scrolls are amazing for several reasons. First of all, they predate the oldest Hebrew manuscripts up to that point. They pre-date the Septuagint. They pre-date the Targums by three hundred, four hundred, and in some cases, five hundred years. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, we have fragments of every book in the Old Testament, with the exception of the books of Esther and Nehemiah. The largest scroll that was discovered is the entire manuscript of the book of Isaiah. That manuscript is dated 300 B.C. The oldest Hebrew which was once A.D. 500 has now been predated by eight hundred years of history. We have a scroll of Isaiah in the Dead Sea Scroll discoveries which dates back

even before the time of Christ. You know what we discover? As we compare eight hundred years of extant copies, we discover the amazing accuracy and preservation of the Hebrew text. There is very little vacillation in terms of the writing. The scribes of Israel did an incredible job of writing verbatim as they replaced an older copy with a newer copy. The Dead Sea Scrolls allow us to know that the Old Testament that we have believed to be the Word of God is amazingly preserved during this 800 year period. There is very little change.

Another thing that the Dead Sea Scrolls affirm is the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus. If the oldest manuscripts you have are subsequent to the life of Jesus, the accusation is that the Messianic prophecies were added to corroborate the miracles. In other words, the Old Testament Messianic prophecies weren't really prophecies at all. What the Dead Sea Scrolls did was to say, "No, these prophecies were in existence before Jesus was ever born." These prophecies are indeed original to the Old Testament text.

There is very little vacillation amongst the Hebrew people concerning what books actually comprise sacred Scripture. There is a notable council that takes place among Jewish rabbis in A.D. 70, the Council of Jamnia. Jewish scholars, among other things, agreed upon and affirmed the Old Testament canon. So, the Old Testament was preserved meticulously.

II. The New Testament Canon

We are going to move from the Old Testament to the New Testament. I am going to give you a quick blow-by-blow of how we ended up with the New Testament.

Initially An Oral Record

Jesus has lived his life. He has been crucified, resurrected and ascended to heaven. Initially, just after our Lord's life, the Gospel record was recounted by the mouths of the Apostles. That is to say that the substance of the New Testament was an oral record. The Apostles taught about His words and works. They talked about His healings, the Sermon on the Mount, the Olivet discourse, the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. They shared what they had been taught and what they had witnessed. Jesus had told them that He would send the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit would bring to remembrance all that He had taught them (John 14:26). Here were these men who, by the Holy Spirit, were supernaturally, divinely enabled to remember, to repeat, and to teach the words and works of Jesus. As time went on, these apostolic eyewitnesses began to die off. Many of them were martyred. There arose a need for a written record.

The Earliest Written Records

The first written record of the Gospel that we find comes from Mark in the middle of the First Century, around A.D. 50. Mark begins to record what he has learned about the words and works of Jesus at the feet of the Apostle Peter. The Gospel of Mark begins to be circulated somewhere between A.D. 60 and 70.

Shortly thereafter, Luke also writes a record of the words and works of Jesus Christ. We believe that this has to do with his association or relationship with the Apostle Paul. Paul would have gathered a first-hand account from the original Apostles, and as an Apostle himself, Paul would have been endowed with a supernatural ability to know and communicate the revelation of Jesus Christ. Luke's Gospel record is a compilation of all that Paul had gathered and had been shown by the Lord.

The next one that appears on the scene is Matthew's record. He begins to write all that he had witnessed and been told by Jesus. Matthew writes to multiple Jewish communities. There is an extreme Jewish flavor to Matthew's Gospel that somewhat distinguishes it from the other gospels. Matthew really deals with Jesus as the Jewish Messiah and the rightful king of Israel.

Finally, the fourth and final Gospel is John's. John writes his Gospel from the city of Ephesus. You will remember that when we studied Revelation, John was in his late nineties. John was exiled to the island of Patmos because of his proclamation of the Gospel and his testimony. There is some evidence that somehow John is brought back from Patmos to live out his days in Ephesus. It is there in his final days that he writes the Gospel of John. By A.D. 100, the four Gospels have been written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. All of them somewhat related, but at the same time in distinct parts of the world and with distinct purposes, they all sense the need, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to give a written record of the words, works and life of Jesus, His crucifixion and resurrection.

Simultaneously, the Apostle Paul is writing his Epistles. Paul's Epistles are a direct result of his missionary journeys. Paul is writing letters explaining theology and doctrine to the various churches he has associated with. Those letters are initially received by the recipient church (*i.e.* the city of Ephesus). The church of Ephesus received the letter, *i.e.* the book of Ephesians, and later copied it and circulated it among other churches. This practice became wide spread. The Pauline Epistles were collected by all the Christian churches in the region and area. In fact, we can go back to A.D. 95, to a letter that is written by a man named Clement of Rome, who refers to Paul's letter to the Corinthians. So, by A.D. 95, we are seeing Paul quoted by Christian leaders as an authority to the church. The earliest collection of Pauline Epistle consisted of all the Pauline Epistles we have in our New Testament today, with the exception of I Timothy, II Timothy and Titus.

The Church Embraces 14 New Testament Records

The four Gospel accounts, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, along with Paul's letters are seen by the church as authoritative. There is no sort of political juggernaut concerning whether these are authentic or whether these are recognized as holy, sacred and authoritative. The church immediately embraces Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and ten of Paul's Epistles.

Initially, what the church really had was two Canons, two collections. It had the Gospel Canon and the Pauline Canon. One was sort of the historical record of the Savior and the other, the Pauline Epistles, was seen as the theological treatment.

The Book of Acts is Accepted

Shortly after the Second Century began, Luke added an important bridge, which is the book of Acts. By and large, Acts is accepted by the church as authoritative, resting on the back of Luke's authority to write his Gospel.

That is what you end up with. The church has a written record and it is being studied. Early church worship included the reading of a Gospel narrative, the reading of an Old Testament narrative, and the reading of an Epistle narrative.

Marcion the Heretic

All of that was going along and there wasn't much of a debate about the Canon of Scripture until a man named Marcion appeared on the historical scene. He is referred to in history as *Marcion the Heretic*. Just a little bit about Marcion. Marcion rejected the Old Testament. He saw the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament as different. He saw the God of the Old Testament as angry, capricious, reactive and ignorant. He saw the God of the New Testament as a God of love. As a result, Marcion rejected the Old Testament. Marcion believed that the Apostle Paul was the only one who understood the New Testament message. He believed Matthew, Mark, Luke and John had somehow been contaminated by their Judaism and Old Testament exposure. He rejected the Old Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. He did accept some small sections of Luke's Gospel. He embraced the ten Epistles of Paul. Marcion created his own Canon of Scripture which included an abridged copy of Luke and ten of Paul's thirteen Epistles. By the way, he was a pretty formative, influential heretic at that time. He said that this was the only body of sacred literature. Marcion caused the church to react concerning the Canon of Scripture. The church did react and respond.

Here is how the church responded. It affirmed the following:

- 1) The Old Testament is authoritative.
- 2) The New Testament and Old Testament corroborate one another. The New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Testament.
- 3) All four Gospels are authoritative.
- 4) All thirteen Epistles of Paul are authoritative.
- 5) The book of Acts is also part of the Canon of Scripture.

The Muratorian Canon

In the 1700's, a Latin fragment was discovered by an Italian man named Muratori. This Latin fragment, discovered in the Ambrose library, is believed to be a copy of a Greek work which is dated around A.D. 170. The fragment lists the books that were considered to be Scripture. Those books that the fragment considered Scripture are called the *Muratorian Canon*. The list consists of the four Gospels, the book of Acts and the thirteen Epistles of the Apostle Paul. Very early on (around A.D. 170) the church embraced the idea of a Canon of sacred writings.

The Canon is Attacked

One of the ways that the Canon of Scripture was attacked is that people with spurious religious ideas began to write letters, epistles, and tried to pass them off to the church as being part of the Canon of Scripture. The Gnostics took their beliefs and fused them with Christianity. They wrote epistles and tried to pass them off to the church, espousing Gnostic systems of belief. The church became bombarded with these letters purported to be Scripture. Marcion and the Gnostics caused the church to respond to the attacks that were laid against the Canon of Scripture

For instance, Irenaeus rejected all the spurious letters. He accepted the four Gospels, the book of Acts and the thirteen Epistles of Paul. He included the books of I Peter, I John and Revelation. He rejected the letter that was circulating around the church called the "Shepherd of Hermes."

Another man named Origen, in A.D. 230 rejected all the spurious books. To Irenaeus' list, he added the books of Hebrews, II Peter, II and III John, James and Jude. He also included the book called the Didache, which means "*the teaching*", and he also included the Shepherd of Hermes.

Eusebius Distinguishes Between Various Degrees of Sacred Writings

Interestingly enough, this really shapes up in the early 300's under a man named Eusebius. He does something unique. He divided these books into four categories. The first he called the *Homologomena*, which are the books that are to be considered authentic, dependable and sure. In this list, under the Homologomena, he included twenty-two of the twenty-seven books of our New Testament. The second group he called the *Antilegomena*, which included the ones which are probably Canon, but were slightly doubtful. In that collection, he put James, Jude, II John, III John and II Peter. The third and fourth sections are very important. They are spurious books, meaning they are undoubtedly not Scripture. In the third section, the Didache was removed from the lists of Irenaeus and Origen and placed as a spurious book. The Shepherd of Hermes was placed as a spurious book along with the Epistle of Barnabas and the Epistle of Clement. The final category is what he called the Heretical books. These were to be avoided and destroyed by Christians. In this group, very early on, were the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Peter, the Acts of Andrew, and the Acts of John.

Athanasius' Easter Letter

Let me tell you a story. Early on in church history, one of the debates was about when Christians celebrate Easter. Because there were some who suggested that when Christians celebrate Easter, it should line up with the actual date that Jesus resurrected. There were some who argued that it is not about a calendar date, but it has to do with the Jewish Passover. So, there was a great debate as to when the church was to celebrate Easter. Early on, the church fathers determined that the Bishop of Alexandria would determine when the church at large, in that part of the world, would celebrate the resurrection of our Savior.

It became the Bishop of the city of Alexandria's responsibility to write what was called an *Easter Letter*. This Easter Letter would specify the date and time that the church was to celebrate Easter. It just so happened that one of the great figures in history, Athanasius, was the Bishop in Alexandria, northern Africa. In his Easter Letter in A.D. 367, for the first time, the Canon of the New Testament is stated as being the accepted Orthodox Canon of Scripture for Christians. In A.D. 367, in Athanasius' Easter Letter, the exact same list of New Testament books that we have today is contained for the first time in writing. So, very early on, not even four hundred years after Christ, the church had collected and recognized the New Testament Canon.

Two Late-Fourth-Century Synods

As time goes on, a couple of important synods take place. The twenty-seven New Testament books are recognized in A.D. 393 at the Synod of Hippo and also in A.D. 397 at the Synod of Carthage. By the way, Augustine was present at both of these synods. So, before A.D. 400, the Bible, as we know it, was recognized by the church.

Who Made the NT Books Authoritative?

Now, an important distinction is this: the church did not make those books authoritative. The church recognized that they were authoritative. The church did not give power and authority to these books. The church, by prayer, recognized and acknowledge that they were authoritative, holy, sacred writings. The Catholic Church does not believe that. The Catholic Church believes that the church sanctioned these books as being authoritative Scripture. As Evangelicals, we would say that the Word of God was authoritative whether the church recognized it or not. So, there is a distinction. There is a little bit of history on the New Testament Canon and how it came to pass.

Selecting a Translation of the Bible

Now, when you select a translation of the Bible or you pick a particular Bible, do you buy it because you like the color of the cover? Do you buy it because you like the wide margins? Or the size of the print? All those are great and wonderful things, but listen to me carefully. What really needs to be considered, think about this, is what ancient text is being translated and what was the translation and the translation process? What am I reading? Is this a paraphrase Bible? Is this from the Textus Receptus? What is this? What is this Bible? I am going to take a complicated subject from my viewpoint and tell you what I have come to believe.

Text Types

There are slight differences between all the ancient manuscripts of the New Testament. There are differences. You need to know that. Critics are certain about 98.33% of these texts. They are certain that this is a copy of the original autograph on the vast majority of the New Testament. There is a remainder of 1.67% that affects the various translations available today. Within the vast body of ancient manuscripts, those differences break down basically into four types. That is, let's say if we had a tray of coins, they would not be identical. No two coins would be identical. We would gather all the pennies together. There might be wheat head pennies. We would gather all the nickels together and there might be buffalo head. They are not identical, but they are all nickels. It's the same with dimes and quarters. If we could take that idea and take all the ancient manuscripts, they fall into four categories or what we call, *text types*. They are what we call: 1) Alexandrian Text Type, 2) Byzantine Text Type, 3) Caesarean Text Type, and 4) Western Text Type. Now, I am going to narrow this down and make it simpler for you. Really, the two text types that are of most concern, the two most critical for our consideration are the first two, the Alexandrian Text Type and the Byzantine Text Type.

The Alexandrian Text Type is often referred to as the *Critical Text*. The Byzantine Text Type is referred to as the *Majority Text*. When it comes to these two text types, the reason that these are so critical is this: the Byzantine Text Type of the New Testament represents the majority of all the ancient manuscripts. The majority of them fall into this Byzantine Text Type. But, the oldest of these text types, although fewer in number, is the Alexandrian Text Type. So, one of the questions on the front end is this: if we are going to lean in one direction or another, do we feel more confident with the newer majority or with the older minority?

I use this illustration: As a child, have you ever sat in a circle where one person opens this page and it has some rhyme on it and he has to close the page and say it to his buddy in his ear? That buddy says it to somebody else and that buddy says it until it eventually comes around the circle to the last person. He says it out loud and what do you have? You have something that doesn't even resemble the original message, right? I believe that time, transmission and copy create change and error.

You also need to know that where these Byzantine Text Types land in history, where these Byzantine Text Types date, is the fourth and fifth century. Has anybody ever seen fourth and fifth century Byzantine art? There was a tendency at the time towards great, though sincere, religious embellishment. So, there are occasions, when you compare the newer majority to the fewer minority, that you will find well-intended, well-meaning words in the majority that you don't find in the minority. For instance, the majority may say, "*and the Lord Jesus*" and the minority may say, "*and Jesus*." Now, is Jesus the Lord? Yes. Do we dispute that? Do we have a problem with the word? The question isn't whether we doubt His lordship. The question is whether the word *Lord* appeared in the original manuscript. So, you would have some people who look at this majority text and say the minority is taking lordship away. That is the kind of argument that I've heard many, many times.

The Byzantine Text Type (a.k.a. Textus Receptus)

The Byzantine Text, as history goes on, becomes what is called the Received Text or the *Textus Receptus*. Erasmus was a humanist scholar who was best known for his literary contest with Luther over “the bondage of the will”. Erasmus was an influential figure. He set out and created what is called the Received Text or Textus Receptus. Certainly he was a scholar. He created the Received Text or Textus Receptus using only six Greek manuscripts, all of which were Byzantine Text Type. He went about to make this Received Text using only six of the 5400+ ancient manuscripts available. All six were of the newer and majority, Byzantine Text Type. As you look at Erasmus and his Textus Receptus, scholars have made some important observations. There are in fact over 1800 actual differences between Erasmus’ New Testament Textus Receptus and the Byzantine Text. That is to say in 1838 various places within the Textus Receptus, Erasmus took liberties and departed from the actual ancient manuscripts. In some places, these differences in the Textus Receptus align with absolutely none of the ancient manuscripts. Not majority text, not minority text, not Alexandrian, not Byzantine, not Western, not Caesarean, none of them. He just concocted it. There are some places in his Textus Receptus where he chose to leave his Greek manuscripts altogether and because of his familiarity with Latin over Greek, actually chose to use the Latin Vulgate. My point is that when the Textus Receptus was created, it was created from a meager collection of ancient manuscripts. The oldest manuscripts were not represented. Even in the process of creating the Textus Receptus, he departed from the manuscripts altogether in multiple places, nearly two thousand times. There are places where there is no indication that his wording, word choices or sentence structure came from any ancient manuscripts at all.

Historical Evidence Against the Byzantine Text Type

There is also some historical evidence against the Byzantine Text Type and Textus Receptus. For instance, there is no evidence of the Byzantine Text Type in the earliest centuries of Christianity. The evidence is that for the first several hundred years of Christianity, the Alexandrian (Critical Text) was actually the majority text. That is, when we find a manuscript that predates the fourth century, it is Alexandrian, not Byzantine.

The Alexandrian (Critical Text) dominates the earliest centuries of Christianity. In the thousands of quotations of Scripture before A.D. 400, none of them reflect a Byzantine Text Type. In the nearly eight thousand manuscript translations in the Latin Vulgate, none of them reflect the Byzantine Text Type. None of the oldest translations give evidence of Byzantine Text Type. Here are some of them: the Old Latin translation from the second century, or the *Coptic Translations*, are all Alexandrian. The Syriac Translations are all Alexandrian. There are 86,000 quotations of the New Testament in the writings of the early church fathers pre-fourth-century. None of these quotations reflect the Byzantine Text Type. One scholar writes, “the earliest witnesses as to the wording of the Scripture, give witness against the existence of the Byzantine Text in the early church, not evidence for it. In fact, the first historical figure to utilize a clearly Byzantine Text was Asterius, a heretic from the fourth century.” The first person ever to

use the Byzantine Text Type exclusively was a heretic from the fourth century, four hundred years after Christ. After the fourth century, the Alexandrian Text Type disappeared, and the Byzantine Text Type gained popular support and approval by the masses.

The King James Version

Now, why does this all matter? This Received Text or Textus Receptus would become the basis for the King James Version. The King of England called a council of biblical scholars who came together and they translated the Textus Receptus into English to create an English Bible. They only used the Textus Receptus with no knowledge of other manuscripts or text types. I am not degrading your King James Bible. But, I think it is fair and accurate to say that when you study the King James Bible, you are studying the English translation of the Textus Receptus, written by Erasmus. That is what it is, with no consideration to the oldest manuscripts. Another thought is that, I would think, if you gathered together a group of scholars to translate ancient texts, and you wanted an authoritative, accurate translation, you would gather together Bible-believing Evangelical Christians. That was not the case with the creation of the 1611 King James.

The New American Standard Version

I have been asked many times which translation I use. I use a New American Standard. Why do I use a New American Standard? It's real simple. Born-again Evangelical scholars were involved. Top scholars of the time were involved in the translation into English. Secondly, they used all available manuscripts. They weighed them against each other. They tried to determine what was the intent and substance of the original autographs.