

A Time Line of Key Events in the History of the Bible

How We Got the BIBLE



*All scripture is given by inspiration of God,
and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof,
for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
That the man of God may be perfect,
thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17 THE HOLY BIBLE, KJV



ROSE
PUBLISHING

How We Got the Bible

Ten Key Points

- 1** The Bible is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).
- 2** The Bible is made up of 66 different books that were written over 1600 years (from approximately 1500 BC to AD 100) by more than 40 kings, prophets, leaders, and followers of Jesus. The Old Testament has 39 books (written approximately 1500-400 BC). The New Testament has 27 books (written approximately AD 45-100). The Hebrew Bible has the same text as the English Bible's Old Testament, but divides and arranges it differently.
- 3** The Old Testament was written mainly in Hebrew, with some Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Greek.
- 4** The books of the Bible were collected and arranged and recognized as inspired sacred authority by councils of rabbis and councils of church leaders based on careful guidelines.
- 5** Before the printing press was invented, the Bible was copied by hand. The Bible was copied very accurately, in many cases by special scribes who developed intricate methods of counting words and letters to insure that no errors had been made.
- 6** The Bible was the first book ever printed on the printing press with moveable type (Gutenberg Press, 1455, Latin Bible).
- 7** There is much evidence that the Bible we have today is remarkably true to the original writings. Of the thousands of copies made by hand before 1500, more than 5,300 Greek manuscripts from the New Testament alone still exist today. The text of the Bible is better preserved than the writings of Plato or Aristotle.
- 8** The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls confirmed the astonishing reliability of some of the copies of the Old Testament made over the years. Although some spelling variations exist, no variation affects basic Bible doctrines.
- 9** As the Bible was carried to other countries, it was translated into the common language of the people by scholars who wanted others to know God's Word. Today there are still 2,000 groups with no Bible in their own language.
- 10** By AD 200, the Bible was translated into seven languages; by 500, 13 languages; by 900, 17 languages; by 1400, 28 languages; by 1800, 57 languages; by 1900, 537 languages; by 1980, 1,100 languages; by 2006, 2,426 languages have some portions of the Scripture.

Source: *The World Christian Encyclopedia*; Wycliffe, International.

Old Testament Written (approx. 1500-400 BC)



stone



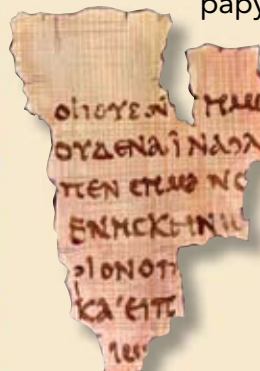
clay



leather

New Testament Written (approx. AD 45-100)

papyrus



The oldest New Testament fragment (from John 18) that we have today was copied in Greek on a papyrus codex around AD 110-130.

Bible Copied on Papyrus



Scrolls of leather, and later of papyrus, were used to make copies of the Scriptures.

A papyrus codex is a bound volume made from sheets folded and sewn together, sometimes with a cover. They were used more than scrolls after

AD 1-100.



Bible Copied on Fine Animal Skins



Fine quality animal skins from calves or antelope (vellum) and sheep or goats (parchment) were used for over 1000 years to make copies of the Bible approximately AD 300-1400.

Two of the oldest vellum copies (AD 325-350) that exist today are the Vatican Codex and the Sinaitic Codex.

Bible Printed by Printing Press after 1455

Wycliffe Bibles were inscribed by hand on vellum in the 1300s-1400s. Some copies took ten months to two years to produce and cost a year's wage.



The Bible was the first book to be printed with Gutenberg's printing press in 1455.

The Bible, God's Word to the World



The Bible is now printed on paper in many versions and languages. It is also on recordings and the Internet.

2000 BC

Old Testament events are written down in Hebrew (portions in Aramaic) over centuries. In Exodus, the Lord tells Moses to write in a book. Other Old Testament writers, inspired by God, include leaders, kings and prophets. Together, these writings on leather scrolls and other materials are called the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament.



500 BC

Ezra, a priest and scribe, collects and arranges some of the books of the Hebrew Bible—the Old Testament—about 450 BC, according to Jewish tradition.



The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament). It is translated in 250-100 BC by Jewish scholars in Alexandria, Egypt. (The word *Septuagint* means seventy, referring to the tradition that 70 or 72 men translated it. It is often abbreviated LXX, the Roman numeral for seventy.)

200 BC

The books are arranged by subject: historical, poetic, and prophetic. It includes the Apocrypha (meaning “hidden”), referring to seven books that were included in the Hebrew Bible until AD 90 when they were removed by Jewish elders.



A Scribe

Papyrus, a plant, is cut into strips and pressed into sheets of writing material and can be made into a scroll or a codex. The New Testament books were probably first written on papyrus scrolls. Later Christians begin to copy them on sheets of papyrus which are bound and placed between two pieces of wood for covers. This form of early book is known as a codex.



Papyrus

Time of Jesus

4 BC-AD 33?

Jesus quotes the Old Testament (Scriptures) often. He says that He did not come to destroy the Scriptures, but to fulfill them. He says to his disciples, "These are the words which I spake unto you, . . . that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." Luke 24:44-45

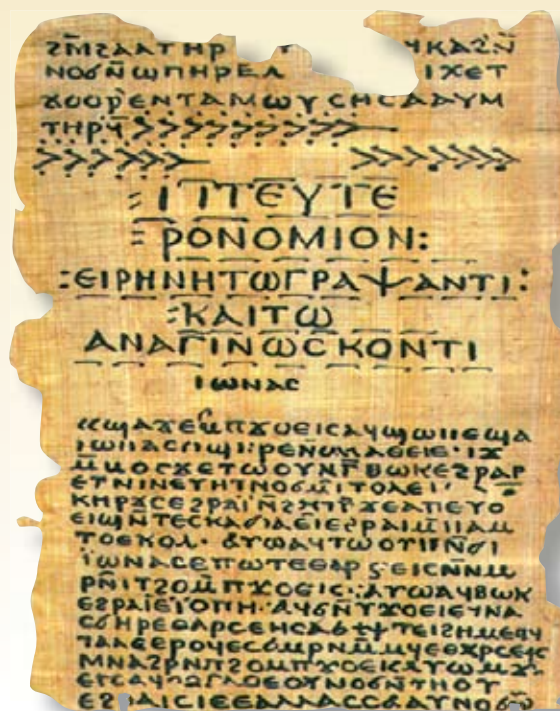
AD 100

AD 200

Followers of Jesus

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, James, Peter, and Jude write the Gospels, history, letters to other Christians, and the Revelation between AD 45 and 100. The writers quote from all but eight of the Old Testament books. These writings in Greek are copied and circulated so that by about 150 there is wide enough use of them to speak of the “New Testament” (“New Covenant”). The new covenant God made with people was promised in Jer. 31:31-34 and referred to by Jesus (Lk. 22:20) and Paul (1 Cor. 11:25) and in the letter to the Hebrews.

Early Coptic Translation



Old Testament Apocrypha

Evidence derived from first century AD writers Philo and Josephus indicates that the Hebrew canon did not include the Apocrypha.



Earliest Translations

200-300 Latin, Coptic (Egypt), and Syriac (Syria).



Church Fathers

accept the writings of the Gospels and Paul’s letters as *canonical* (from a Greek word referring to the *rule* of faith and truth). Origen lists 21 approved New Testament books. Eusebius lists 22 accepted books.

AD 300

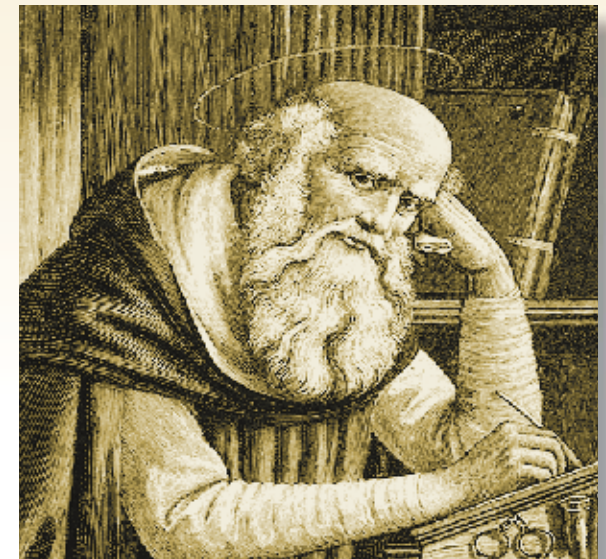


*Saint Matthew
Lindisfarne Gospels
Approximately 900*

The New Testament books are collected and circulated throughout the Mediterranean about the time of Constantine, the Roman emperor who legalizes Christianity in 313. By 400 the standard of 27 New Testament books is accepted in the East and West as confirmed by Athanasius, Jerome, Augustine and three church councils. The 27 books of the New Testament were formally confirmed as canonical by the Synod of Carthage in 397, thus recognizing three centuries of use by followers of Christ.

Jerome starts translating the Scriptures into Latin in 410 and finishes 25 years later. This translation, called the Latin Vulgate, remains the basic Bible for many centuries.

Jerome



AD 500

Roman Empire declines. Germanic migrations (378-600) cause new languages to emerge.



The Masoretes are special Jewish scribes entrusted with the sacred task of making copies of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) approximately 500-900. They develop a meticulous system of counting the number of words in each book of the Bible to make sure they have copied it accurately. Any scroll found to have an error is buried according to Jewish law.

AD 600

Christianity reaches Britain before 300, but Anglo-Saxon pagans drive Christian Britons into Wales (450-600). In 596, Augustine of Canterbury begins evangelization again.



Caedmon, an illiterate monk, retells portions of Scripture in Anglo-Saxon (Old English) poetry and song (676).



Aldhelm of Sherborne, 709, is said to have translated the Psalms.



Bede

Bede, a monk and scholar, makes an Old English (Anglo-Saxon) translation of portions of Scripture. On his deathbed in 735, he finishes translating the Book of John.

AD 1300

Alfred The Great, King of Wessex (871-901) translates portions of Exodus, Psalms, and Acts.



Aldred, Bishop of Durham, inserts a translation in the Northumbrian dialect between the lines of the Lindisfarne Gospels (950).



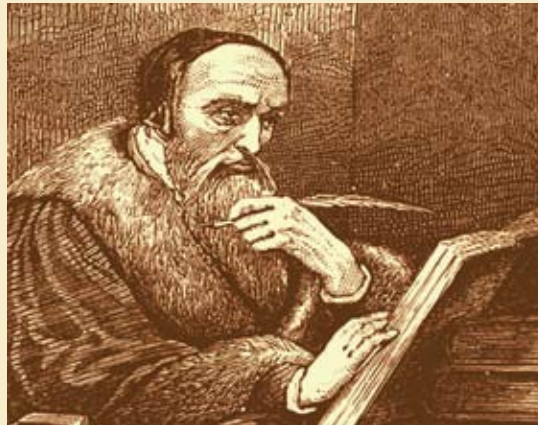
Aelfric (955-1020) translates portions of the Old Testament.

Normans conquer England (1066) and make French the official language. No English translation work produced until the 1300s.



Middle English emerges, popularized by works such as the *Canterbury Tales* and Richard Rolle's *Psalter* (1340).

John Wycliffe



First English Bible is translated from Latin in 1382 and is called the Wycliffe Bible in honor of priest and Oxford scholar John Wycliffe. During his lifetime, Wycliffe had wanted common people to have the Bible. He also criticized a number of church practices and policies. His followers, derisively called Lollards (meaning “mumblers”), included his criticisms in the preface to the Wycliffe Bible. This Bible is banned and burned. Forty years after Wycliffe's death, his bones are exhumed and burned for heresy.

AD 1500

In 1408, in England, it becomes illegal to translate or read the Bible in common English without permission of a bishop.

World's first printing press with moveable metal type is invented in 1455 in Germany by Johann Gutenberg. This invention is perhaps the single most important event to influence the spread of the Bible.

The Gutenberg Bible is the first book ever printed. This Latin Vulgate version is often illuminated by artists who hand paint letters and ornaments on each page.



Gutenberg Bible Page

Erasmus, a priest and Greek scholar, publishes a new Greek edition and a more accurate Latin translation of the New Testament in 1516. His goal is that everyone be able to read the Bible, from the farmer in the field to the weaver at the loom. Erasmus' Greek text forms the basis of the "*textus receptus*" and is used later by Martin Luther, William Tyndale, and the King James translators.



Erasmus

Martin Luther
translates the New
Testament into German
in 1522.

William Tyndale,
priest and Oxford scholar,
translates the New
Testament from Greek
(1525), but cannot get
approval to publish it
in England. He moves
to Germany and prints
Bibles, smuggling them
into England in sacks of
corn and flour. In 1535 he
publishes part of the Old
Testament translated from
Hebrew. In 1536, Tyndale
is strangled and burned at
the stake. His final words
are “Lord, open the King
of England’s eyes.”



Tyndale is called the
“Father of the English
Bible” because his
translation forms the
basis of the King James
Version. Much of the
style and vocabulary we
know as “biblical English”
is traceable to his work.



William Tyndale

AD 1555

England's Queen Mary
bans Protestant translations of the English Bible. John Rogers and Thomas Cranmer are burned at the stake. Later some 300 men, women and children are also burned.



The Geneva Bible

Exiles from England flee to Geneva, Switzerland, and in 1560 print the Geneva Bible, a complete revision of the Great Bible with the Old Testament translated from Hebrew. The Geneva Bible contains theological notes from Protestant scholars John

Calvin, Beza, Knox, and Whittingham. It is the first Bible to use Roman type instead of black letter. This is the Bible of Shakespeare and the one carried to America by the Pilgrims in 1620. The 1640 edition is the first English Bible to omit the Apocrypha.



Queen Mary

Bishops Bible

A new translation begins under Queen Elizabeth in 1568. It is translated by several bishops of the Church of England in answer to the Geneva Bible.



Rheims-Douai Bible

was translated into English from the Latin Vulgate by Catholic scholar Gregory Martin, while in exile in France (New Testament in 1582/ Old Testament in 1609). It becomes the standard translation for the Catholic church.

AD 1600



King James Bible
Page from 1611 version



King James Version or Authorized Version

King James I of England commissions 54 scholars to undertake a new Bible translation. Over the next six years, six teams of scholars using the Bishops Bible and Tyndale's Bible, as well as available Greek and Hebrew manuscripts, complete the new version in 1611. The King James Version (also called the "Authorized Version," even though King James never gave the finished version his royal approval) is revised several times.

(The edition used today was revised in 1769.) It is the most popular Bible for more than 300 years.



King James

AD 1800

Older Manuscripts Discovered!

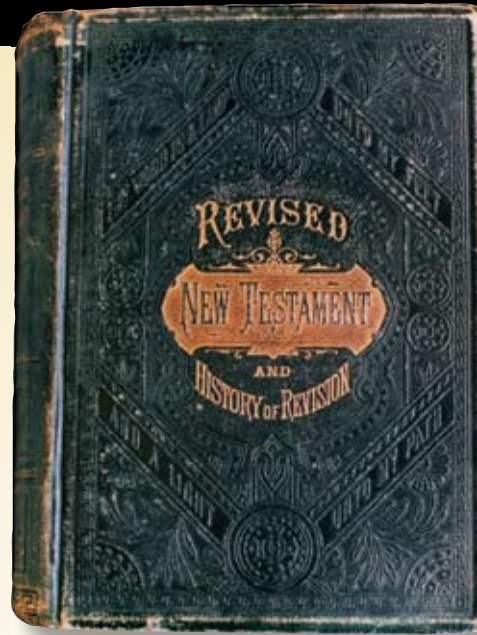
Between 1629 and 1947, several of the earliest known copies of the Bible are found.



Codex Alexandrinus, a copy of the New Testament from 400 approx., perhaps the best copy of the book of Revelation, is made available to western scholars in 1629.



Codex Sinaiticus (earliest complete copy of the New Testament, copied in 350 approx.) is found in St. Catherine's Monastery near Mt. Sinai.



The Revised Version

The Revised Version (1885) In 1870, scholars in England decide to revise the King James Version to reflect the

findings from the manuscripts discovered during the two previous centuries. Their goal is to use better Hebrew and Greek texts and to retranslate words based on new linguistic information about ancient Hebrew.



Codex Vaticanus (earliest and probably best copy known of the New Testament from 350 approx.) is released to scholars in 1889 by the Vatican Library.

AD 1900

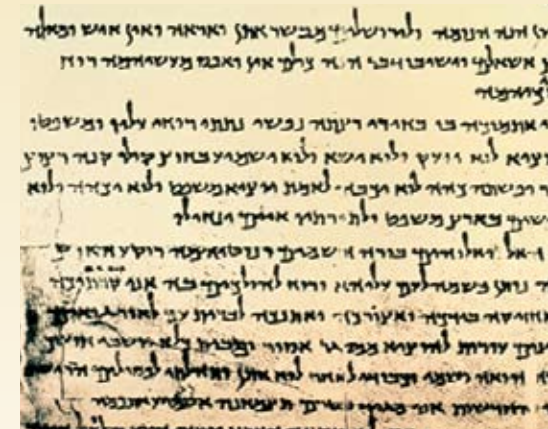
The Dead Sea Scrolls, found in a cave in 1947 by a shepherd, contain the oldest known copies of portions of the Old Testament. These copies were made between 100 BC and AD 100.



A Qumran Cave near the Dead Sea

A Scroll of Isaiah that is part of the Dead Sea Scrolls is the oldest complete manuscript of any book of the Bible (copied around 100). The copies of Isaiah discovered in the Qumran caves prove to be remarkably close to the standard Hebrew Bible, varying slightly in the spelling of some names. They give overwhelming confirmation of the reliability of the Masoretic copies.

During the 1900s more than a hundred New Testament manuscripts are found in Egypt.



Scroll of Isaiah

A Ugaritic Grammar is published in the 1960s. Ugaritic is an ancient language similar to Hebrew and helps scholars understand Hebrew vocabulary and poetry.

AD 1900

Modern Translations

The knowledge from newly discovered manuscripts has led to hundreds of new translations.

1885

The English Revised Version

A British revision of the King James Version.

1901

American Standard Version (ASV)

Revision of the King James Version in American English.

1926

Moffatt Bible

A very popular modern-language version.

1931

Smith-Goodspeed, An American Translation

Modern American English.

1952

The Revised Standard Version (RSV)

A revision of the ASV. New Testament revised 1971.

1958

J.B. Phillips' New Testament in Modern English

A paraphrase, originally made for youth.

1965

The Amplified Bible

Uses word-for-word ASV with added words to communicate insights on original texts.

1966

Jerusalem Bible

Translation by Catholic scholars in Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem Bible, 1985.

1970

New English Bible

"Timeless" modern English. Revised in 1989.

1970

New American Bible

(NAB) Official version of the Catholic Church. Revised New Testament in 1986.

1971

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

Literal word-for-word translation. Updated in 1995.

1971

The Living Bible

Popular paraphrase.

1976

The Good News Bible (Today's English Version) (TEV)

Vernacular English translation.

1978

New International Version (NIV)

Dignified, readable.

1982

New King James Version (NKJV)

Modernization of the KJV using the same manuscripts.

AD 2000

1987

New Century Version (NCV) Puts biblical concepts into natural terms.

1989

Jewish New Testament

English translation using traditional Jewish expressions.

1989

New Revised Standard Version

“Gender neutral” revision of the RSV.

1991

Contemporary English Version

“Natural, uncomplicated” English.

1995

God’s Word

Contemporary English.

1996

New Living Translation (NLT)

A revision of The Living Bible to make it a translation.

1996

New International Reader’s Version (NIRV)

A simplified version of the NIV with a 3rd- or 4th-grade reading level.

2001

English Standard Version (ESV) Literal update of the RSV.

2002

The Message (MSG)

A paraphrase from the original languages.

2004

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought.

2005

Today's New International Version (TNIV)

Modernization of the New International Version.

2005

New English Translation (NET)

Available only on the Internet, with extensive translator’s notes.

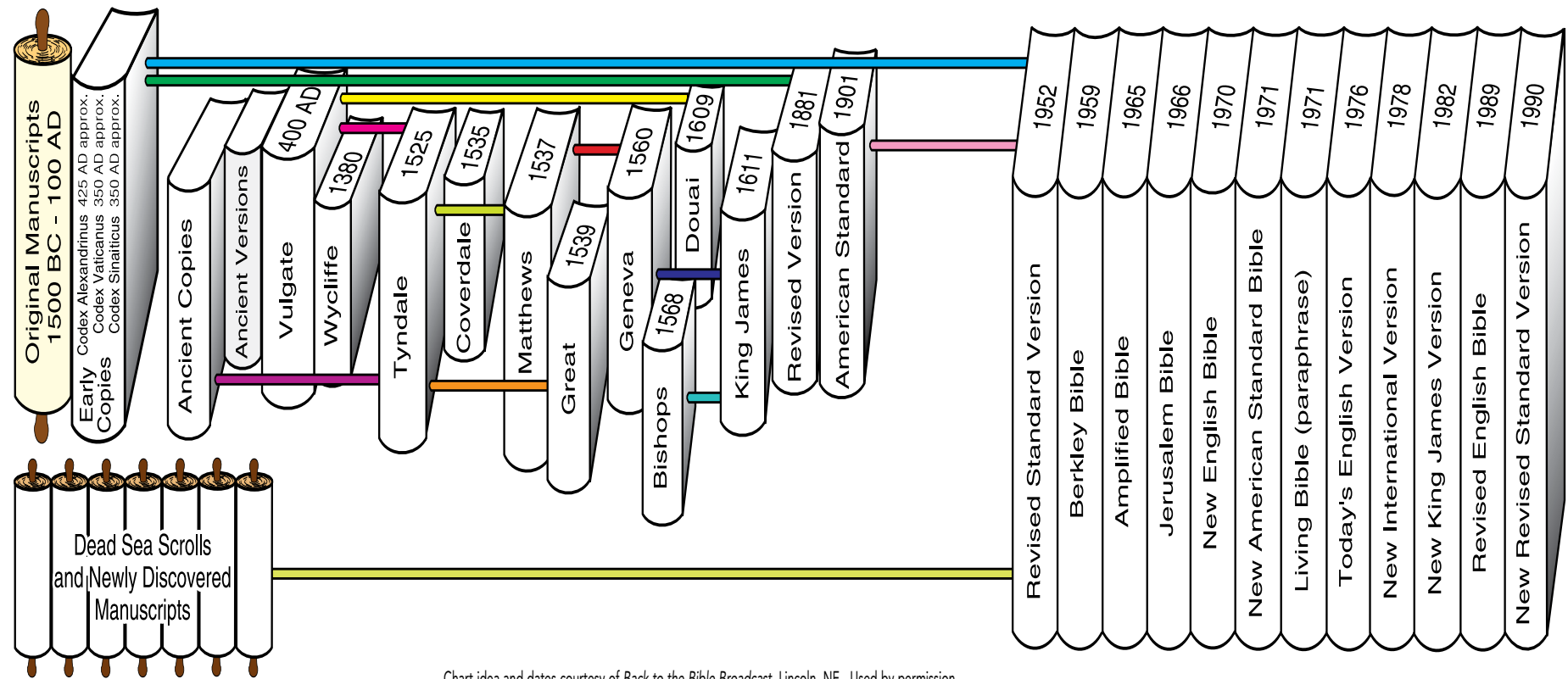


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