



# Pinehurst Post

*We exist to love Jesus and live for Him.*

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*We envision a congregation whose love for Jesus and one another leaves a clear and compelling witness for Christ.*

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**Praise the Lord, all you nations;  
extol him, all you peoples. For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord.**

**Psalm 117**

## **Bible Trivia**

From what New Testament character do we derive the English word "maudlin"?

Answer from last month: Matthew is the New Testament Gospel containing the most quotes and references (90) from the Old Testament.



## **Serving God with Mammon by Ryan Reese**

For over a year now our nation's economy has been front and center in the public conscience. I don't have to tell you that for many Americans times are tough. Companies across the land are re-evaluating how they spend money, cutting costs wherever they can. Many of you have been affected by this economic downturn and are in the process of reworking your own personal budget. Whether you have lost your job or are simply making less money, you realize you cannot go on spending money in the same way you used to. You have to make adjustments.

The church is no different. The current trend shows that our giving of tithes and offerings has dropped by about 15% from its peak in January of 2008. At our current pace in giving, we project to receive over \$25,000 less than what we budgeted for

the fiscal year. Fortunately, we have a healthy amount of money in our reserves—so we are not immediately in hot water. But it is a basic economic fact that we cannot continue to spend more than we take in. We may get by for a few months, or maybe even a year—but it cannot continue indefinitely.

So what does all this mean? In the coming months we must rethink our church budget. We must figure out a way to cut \$25-30,000 out of last year's projected spending. Please don't hear doom and gloom in all this—I think this can be a *good* thing for our church. The budget crunch forces us to consider what is most important to our ministry, causing us to be better stewards of God's money. It is very easy for churches to get in ruts, doing

the same things year after year to the point where we forget why we are doing them. And upon re-evaluation, some of our expenditures and events may be accomplishing very little toward our God-given purpose of making disciples and adding salt and light to the community. So as we take in our belt as a church, help us think of ways to save money. Which items in our budget are essential? Are there any that could be done away with? How could we accomplish more with less? Speak with your pastors or church council members if you have ideas. We can make this work. I have no doubt that God will use this economic downturn to purify our hearts and the ministry of our church. We must do everything possible to ensure that the money we give to the Lord is best used for His glory. That's what stewardship is all about.

## **The Bible Transmitted by Brian Watson**

Many of you know that I have begun work on the Master of Divinity degree at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary's Pacific Northwest campus in Vancouver. I drive down to the campus on Mondays, when I take two classes. One of those classes is the "History of the English Bible." The class traces the history of the Bible from its transmission through early manuscripts to the English translations that we use today. The subject is a fascinating one that I had wanted to learn for quite some time. In this article, I will discuss how the books of the Bible have been transmitted

from the time of the author's writing – whether that author is Moses, David, or Paul – to modern times.

Perhaps you never wondered about the origin of the Bible that you own. Even if that is true, you probably guessed that this volume of 66 books, written over approximately 1,500 years by about 40 different authors, did not fall from the sky, bound in leather in one volume, with maps and a concordance in the back. The different books formed our biblical canon over the course of hundreds

of years, as the books were recognized as inspired Scripture and each book was passed down from one generation to another through hand-copied scrolls of leather. The printing press did not exist until the fifteenth century, so texts could only be transmitted in one of two ways: through oral tradition or through scribal tradition. Professional scribes made copies of copies (of copies, etc.) so that the text of the Bible would be disseminated and preserved.

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## The Bible Transmitted (continued from front)

At this point, it is important to remember that when the books of the Bible were written, starting with the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible, assumed to be written by Moses), the culture of preserving texts was quite different. Today, we not only have the printing press, but we also have computer files, and we tend to save and preserve everything, no matter how insignificant. The preservation of texts 2,000 or 3,500 years ago was quite different. In some cases, it took many years for a book of the Bible to be viewed as authoritative and inspired, and even then, it was difficult to preserve. Difficult, because the materials on which they were written were fragile and because of the upheaval, wars, and empire changes in Palestine and the Mediterranean over the centuries. When one considers these things, it is only by the hand of God that we have His Word today.

The Old Testament, originally written in Hebrew (with a few sections in Aramaic) came to us in three ways: through careful hand-copied manuscripts that are known as the Masoretic Text; through the early Greek translation of the text known as the Septuagint; and, more recently, through scrolls preserved in caves at Qumran (these scrolls are known as the Dead Sea Scrolls). The Septuagint dates to the third century B.C., while the earliest complete copies of the Masoretic Text we have date back to the eleventh century A.D. However,



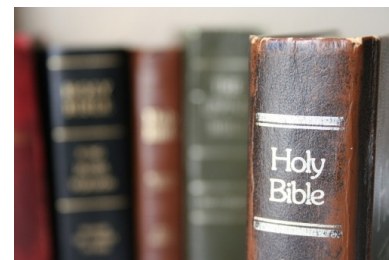
*Dead Sea Scrolls*

the Masoretes were meticulous in their preservation of the Hebrew text, with several methods of safeguarding against scribal errors. The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered between 1947 and 1956, date from 150 B.C. to 70 A.D. They shed light on the complete text of the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint.

Over 5,400 manuscripts attest to the Greek text of the New Testament. Not one manuscript is the same as another – and some contain less than the complete NT – but they are very close. The discrepancies between one manuscript and another are called variants and exist only because of scribal error (such as misspelling a word, omitting a word, or skipping a line in the text). Textual criticism is the science of reconciling these variants so that we become confident of restoring and reconstructing the true text. The original autographs of the NT were written on papyrus, an ancient form of paper made from reeds. Papyri were fragile and wore down quickly, so the original copies have been lost to history. The gospels and epistles were copied to vellum or parchment, a more durable material. The earliest and best manuscripts we have date back to the third and fourth centuries. However, we do have fragments of papyri that date to as early as the second century.

At this point, you may wonder about the distance in time between the writing of these books and the existing manuscript copies. In today's publishing culture, there is no lack of copies of more modern books, so that there is no gap between known copies and the date of the original text. Yet when we consider that these ancient manuscripts were produced by hand on fragile material, it is no wonder that older manuscripts did not last. If

we consider the quantity and quality of manuscripts that we do have, the Bible is clearly the best-attested ancient book in the world. Consider Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, two ancient Greek dramas. Homer composed these plays towards the end of the eighth century B.C., yet the oldest manuscript of the Iliad is from the tenth century A.D. and the



oldest manuscript of the Odyssey is from around the same time. The oldest papyrus fragments of the Odyssey date back to the third century B.C. (In other words, the manuscript evidence of these dramas was preserved between 500 and 1800 years after their original composition.) No one questions the authenticity of Homer's works while skeptics continually scrutinize and doubt the Bible's truthfulness. However, the Bible has much better manuscript evidence. For Christians, there is no need to doubt that we have received the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts of the Bible through the providential hand of the Lord.

For more information on this subject, I would suggest reading *How We Got the Bible* by Neil Lightfoot or *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* by F. F. Bruce.

In next month's article, I will examine the history of English Bible translations and discuss current translations.