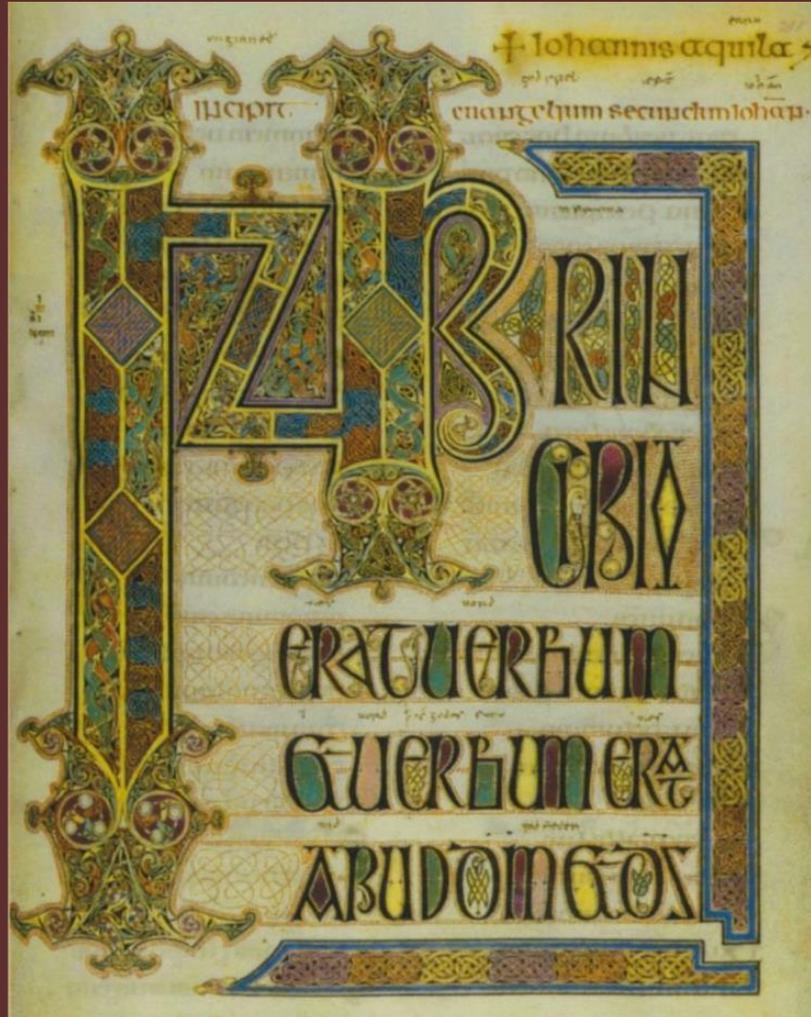


# THE TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration



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# Getting the Big Picture of the Bible

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Sunday School Class

*Frontispiece of the Gospel of John in a the famous medieval Latin manuscript, in which the opening words ("In principio erat verbum..." are spelled out with intricate design*

Which Bible is  
*the* Bible??



# Considerations: Language

- Original languages (Greek or Hebrew)
  - Argument: Unless you can read those ancient languages, you cannot read *the* Bible
  - Islam holds that the Koran is only the Koran in Arabic and NOT in translation
- KJV 1611 Only
  - Argument: Only an archaic form of the language preserves the Bible correctly
  - What about those who speak other languages or those who came before the KJV?
- Modern languages only
  - Argument: Only the most readable, modern translation contains the Bible
  - What about the faithful of all the ages before who didn't speak our languages?
  - Were their Bibles also the Bible?

# Considerations: Method of Translation

- With any translation, there is always some level of interpretation.
- Literal v paraphrase translations
- Sometimes it is difficult to translate certain concepts or idioms from Biblical languages to other languages and cultures.
  - Lamb
  - Snow
  - Kidneys vs heart

# Challenge

- When presented with all these different “versions” of the Bible, and being pressed to ascertain which one is *the* Bible, the challenge can change our understanding of Biblical inspiration.
- If the words themselves (down to the level of each individual word) are inspired, then we must all learn Hebrew and Greek and throw away our modern translations. (Obviously we’re not doing that!)
- Theology of the incarnation: Jesus comes to us in human flesh
- Incarnation of Scripture: the Holy Spirit brings the Word of Scripture alive in each new language and in each new era of the church
- Thus, are the words themselves inspired or is the message of the Bible inspired?

# Textual Transmission & Textual Criticism

# The Printing Press

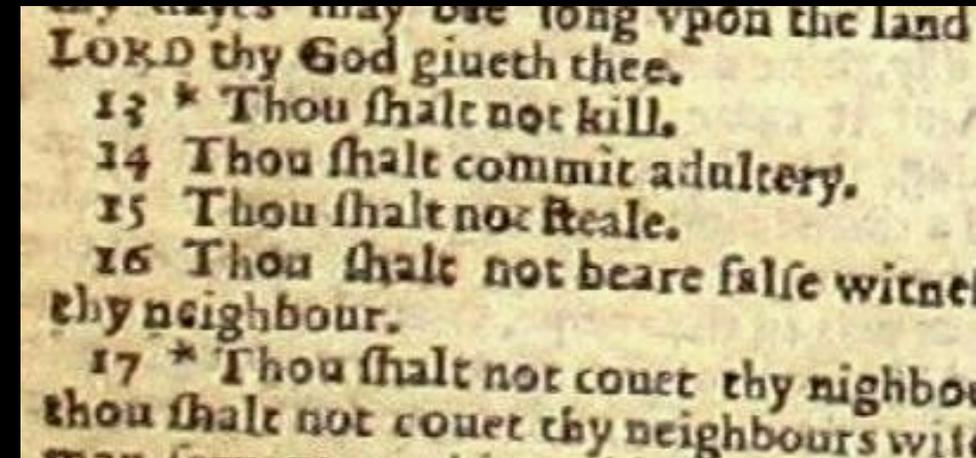
Revolutionized the dissemination of all printed materials, especially the Bible.

Rather than writing things by hand, printed materials could be massed produced. This cut down on errors, but by no means eliminated them!

"Judas Bible", from 1613: This Bible has Judas, not Jesus, saying "Sit ye here while I go yonder and pray."  
(Matthew 26:36)

"Sin On Bible", from 1716: Jeremiah 31:34 reads "sin on more" rather than "sin no more".

"Wicked Bible", "Adulterous Bible" or "Sinner's Bible", from 1631: Barker and Lucas: Omits an important "not" from Exodus 20:14, making the seventh commandment read "Thou shalt commit adultery." The printers were fined £300 and most of the copies were recalled immediately. Only 11 copies are known to exist today.



# Before the Printing Press...

- The books of the Bible were copied (and translated) by hand.
- We have several thousand ancient copies of the books of the Bible and upon comparison, they are not all exactly the same. Therefore, scholars must engage in textual criticism.
- In general: TC is the study of the copies of any written document whose original (=the autograph) is unknown or non-existent, for the primary purpose of determining the exact wording of the original.
- For the New Testament: The study of the handwritten copies of the NT whose original (=the autograph) is unknown or non-existent, for the primary purpose of determining the exact wording of the original.
  - The autographs no longer exist.
  - There are differences among the copies.
  - If we still had the autographs, TC would not be necessary.
  - If the copies were exactly alike, TC would not be possible.

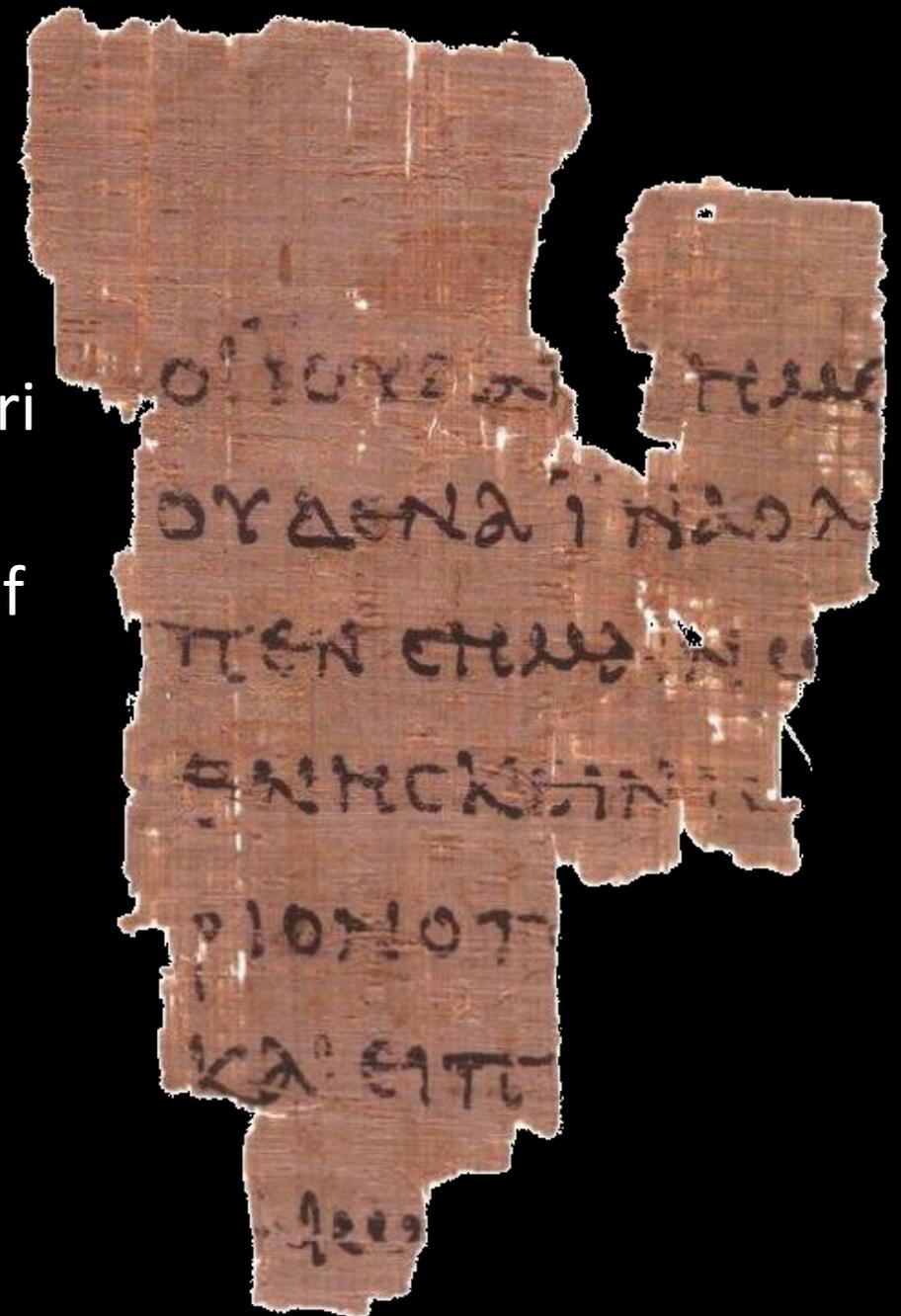
# Greek NT Manuscripts Summarized

(Metzger, as of 2003)

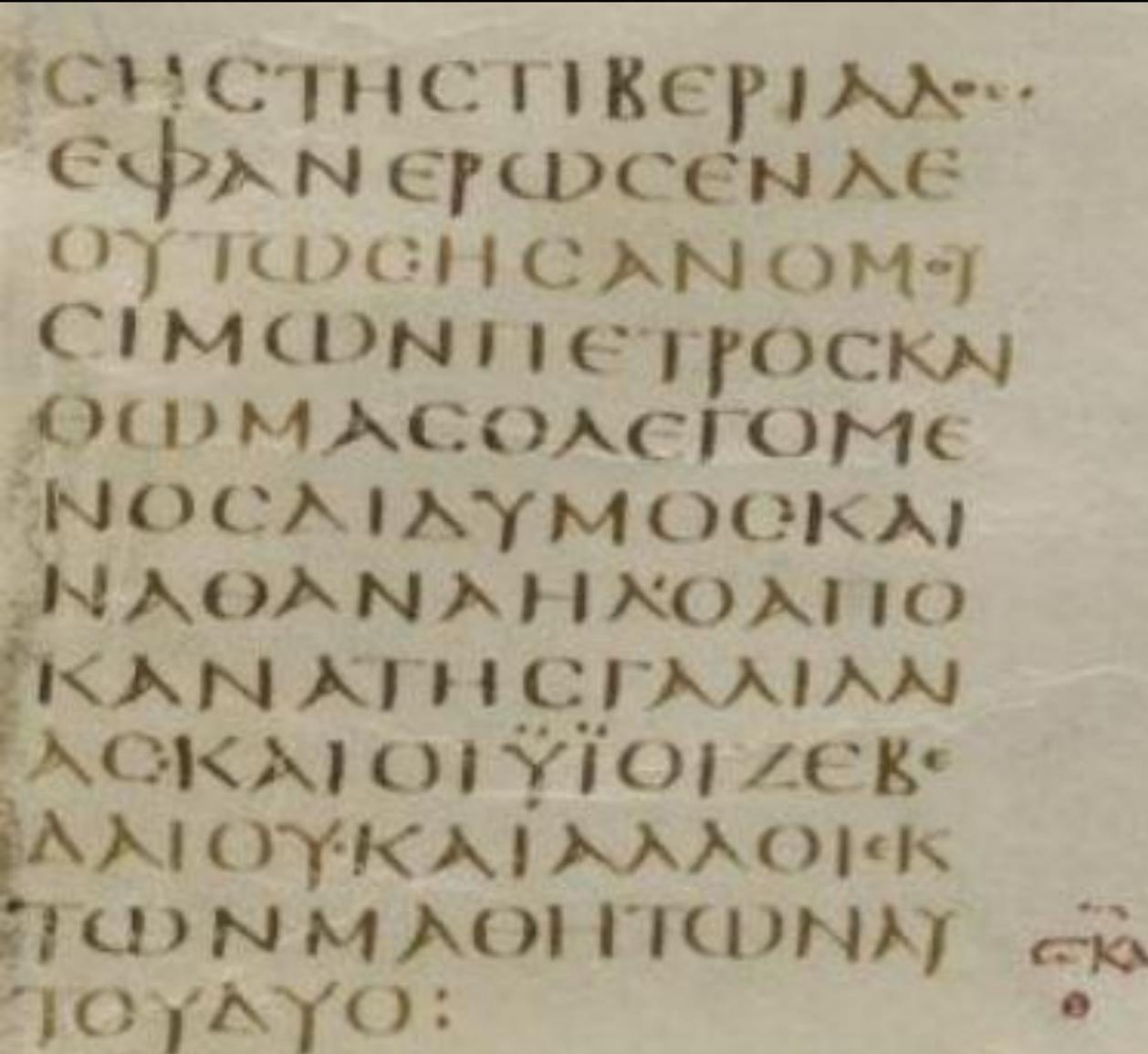
• Papyri	116
• Majuscule MSS	310
• Minuscule MSS	2877
• Lectionary MSS	<u>2432</u>
TOTAL	5735

# Papyri

- The oldest textual evidence also happens to be the most fragile, which is why most of the papyri are relatively fragmentary
- P<sup>52</sup> (at right), which contains a few fragments of John's Gospel, is the oldest copy of any portion of the NT known to be in existence today.
- Found in a provincial Egyptian town along the Nile and dated to the first half of the second century (100-150 AD), P<sup>52</sup> proves that John's Gospel was widely distributed. (As John is thought to have been composed in Ephesus in Asia Minor)



# Majuscule MSS



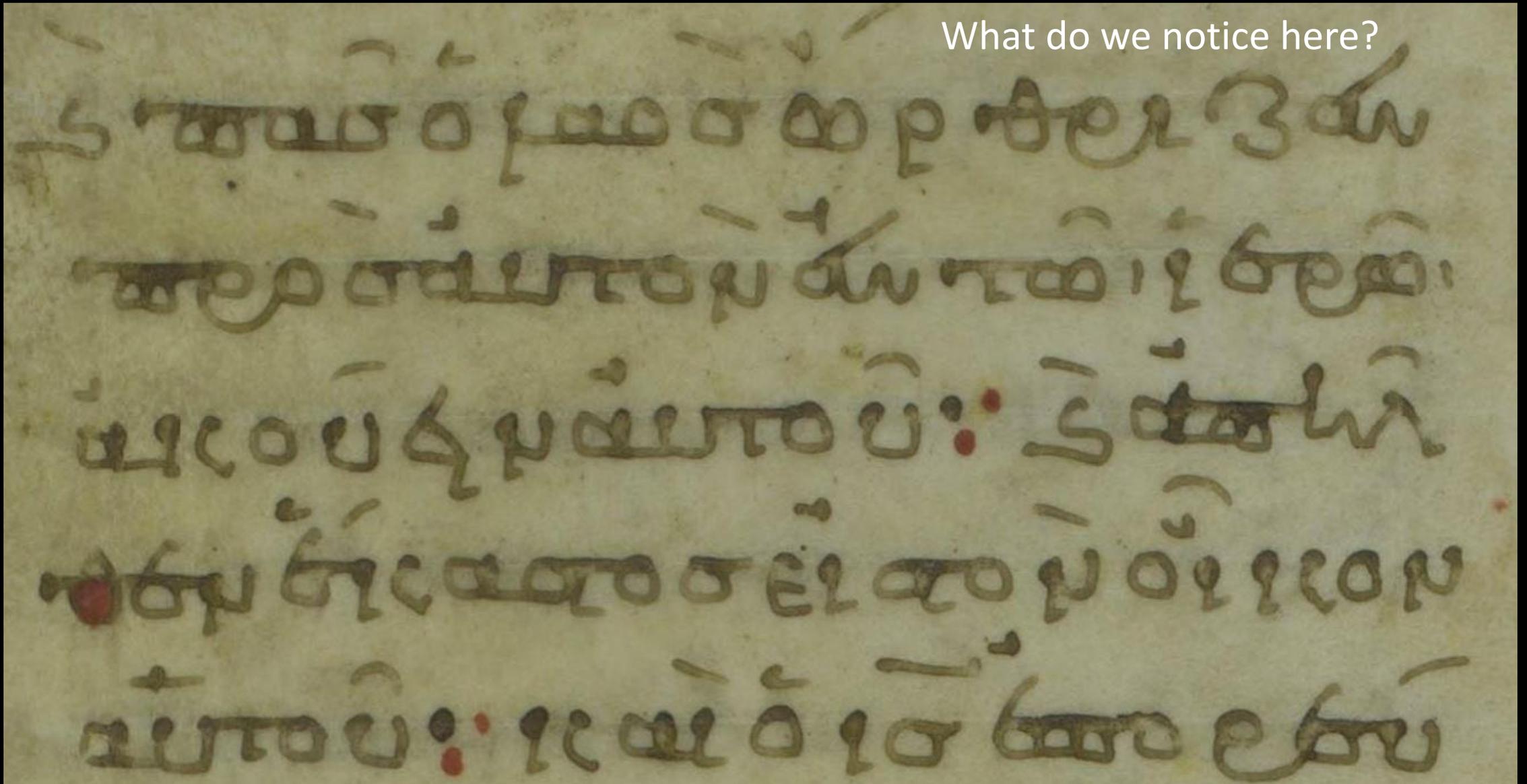
- Codex Sinaiticus (א) is the only known complete copy of the NT in majuscule script.
- Only discovered mid-19<sup>th</sup> c.
- Also contains the Epistle of Barnabas and the *Shepherd* of Hermas.
- What do we notice?

# Minuscule MSS

- When literary works were copied almost exclusively in the majuscule script, [persons of limited means] were obliged to get along without many books. Thus, the miniscule hand was an important factor in the dissemination of culture in general and of the Scripture in particular. (Metzger, 21)
- Family 13 (AKA the Ferrar group) is noteworthy because these manuscripts have the *pericope de adultera* (normally Johannine) embedded in the Gospel of Luke!

# Ferrar Group: MSS 788—Minuscules

What do we notice here?



# Ferrar Group: MSS 788—Minuscules

καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς ὥρθη ῥιζεν  
πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ  
ἀκούειν αὐτοῦ \* Καὶ ἐπορευ-  
ύθη ἕκαστος εἰς τὸν οἶκον  
αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁ ις ἐπορεύει...

Ferrar Group: MSS 788—Minuscules

Luke 21:38

καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς ὠρθηριζεν

πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ

ἀκούειν αὐτοῦ \* John 7:53 Καὶ ἐπορευ-

ύθη ἕκαστος εἰς τὸν οἶκον

αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁ ις ἐπορεύει...

# Methods of Copying

- By ear and hand (earliest period—scriptoria)
  - Sitting in the workroom of a scriptorium, several trained scribes, Christian and non-Christian, each equipped with parchment, pens, and ink, would write a copy of the book being reproduced as the reader, or lector, slowly read aloud the text of the exemplar. (Metzger, *Text*, 25)
  - Homonyms or difficult words were especially problematic and caused transmission issues
- By eye and hand (Byzantine period—monasteries)
- The act of copying involves four fundamental operations:
  1. Reading to oneself (probably half-aloud) a line to be copied
  2. Retaining this material in one's memory
  3. Dictating this material to oneself
  4. The movement of the hand in executing the copy
- Prior to the invention of the fountain pen, it would have been necessary for the scribe to “re-ink” the pen by dipping it into an ink well. The constant necessity to do so which copying documents provided the occasion for scribal distraction at the level of eye, memory, judgment, and pen. (Metzger, 27)



Rom 5:1 in Codex Sinaiticus  
εχωμεν: 'let us have peace'  
εχομεν: 'we have peace'

# Reinking visible in Mark 3 of MSS 69

τύρον καὶ σίδερα πλήθος πολὺ. ἀκούσας οὖτα  
ἔποιον ἤλεον πρὸς αὐτόν. καὶ ἡ περὶ τοῦ μαθητῆ  
αὐτοῦ Ἰβραηὶμ ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ πρὸς μαρτυρῆσάντων αὐτῷ διατόγῃ

# Weighing the Discrepancies: The Nature of Textual Variants

<b>Viable but not meaningful</b>	<b>Meaningful but not viable</b>
Neither meaningful nor viable	Meaningful and viable

- meaningful = change the meaning of the text
- viable = have a sufficient pedigree to potentially represent the wording of the original
- Over 99% are in the first three categories

# Viable but not meaningful

- Differences in spelling
  - John in Greek is spelled two ways: Ioannes or Ioanes
- Word order differences: How many ways are there to say “John loves Mary” in Greek? (and there are more!)

1. Ἰωάννης ἀγαπᾷ Μαρίαν
2. Ἰωάννης ἀγαπᾷ τὴν Μαρίαν
3. ὁ Ἰωάννης ἀγαπᾷ Μαρίαν
4. ὁ Ἰωάννης ἀγαπᾷ τὴν Μαρίαν
5. Μαρίαν Ἰωάννης ἀγαπᾷ
6. τὴν Μαρίαν Ἰωάννης ἀγαπᾷ
7. Μαρίαν ὁ Ἰωάννης ἀγαπᾷ
8. τὴν Μαρίαν ὁ Ἰωάννης ἀγαπᾷ

Meaningful but not viable

(poor change of being authentic or reflecting original)

- We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Onion...

- 1 Thessalonians 2:7 (NRSV)

“though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle\*\* among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children.”

\*\*Other ancient authorities read *infants*

- ‘little children’ vs. ‘gentle’: nepioi vs. epioi (νήπιοι vs. ἥπιοι)

# Meaningful and viable

- Romans 8.2: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.”
  - Most MSS have ‘me’ instead of ‘you’ here.
  - Some have ‘us’ instead of ‘you.’
- Philippians 1.14: “and most of the brothers and sisters... now more than ever dare to speak the word \*\* fearlessly.”
  - Several MSS add ‘of God’ after the word.
  - Others add ‘of the Lord’ after the word.
- Because they are viable and meaningful, scholars must decide which is likely closer to the original reading and good study Bibles should indicate these types of variants in footnotes or margins.

# Challenges Inherent to the Hebrew Bible (OT)

- The Hebrew language is written without vowels. For native speakers, this is no problem, but knowledge of Hebrew waned and people started not to be able to read the HB.
- In order to preserve the text and ensure its readability by future generations, the Masoretes added vowel points based on their understanding of the text; however, later Rabbis and scholars contend that some of these vowels may have been incorrect.

# Challenges Inherent to the Greek Bible (NT)

- Scriptio Continua (Metzger, 22)
  - In Mark 10:40 according to most editors, Jesus says, “but it is for those for whom it has been prepared” (ἀλλ’ οἷς ἡτοίμασται). This can also be read ἀλλοις ἡτοίμασται, which means “it has been prepared for others.
- Lack of punctuation—when does a quotation start and end?
  - Consider John chapter 3:10ff. Jesus answers Nicodemus, but with no end quotes, there is ambiguity about where Jesus stops speaking at the Gospel writer starts with commentary. Some interpreters hold that Jesus stops speaking in v 15 (i.e. John 3:16 is not spoken by Jesus), while others contend that Jesus continues speaking through v 21.

# Unintentional Errors: Six Categories

1. Sight
2. Hearing
3. Memory
4. Judgment
5. Fatigue
6. Carelessness

## Errors of Sight: Three Basic Types

- Confusion of Letters
- Homoioteleuton (similar endings)
- Metathesis (transposition)

# Unintentional Errors: Errors of Sight

- Confusion of Letters
  - 1 Timothy 3:16
  - **θς** (Θεός) ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί
  - **ος** εφανερωθη εν σαρκι
  - 'God' or 'who' was revealed in the flesh



# Unintentional Errors: Errors of Sight

Haplography-the inadvertent omission of a repeated letter or letters in writing)

In the Byzantine MSS of 1 John 2.23:

- “everyone who denies the Son neither has the Father;~~the one who confesses the Son also~~ has the Father.”
- Byzantine Text: “everyone who denies the Son neither has the Father.”

Dittography- a mistaken repetition of a letter, word, or phrase by a copyist

# Intentional Errors

- “Odd though it may seem, scribes who thought were more dangerous than those who wished to be faithful in copying what lay before them. Many of the alterations which may be classified as intentional were no doubt introduced in good faith by copyists who believed that they were correcting an error or infelicity of language which had previously crept into the sacred text and needed to be rectified.”

Bruce Metzger, Text of the New Testament

# Intentional Errors

## 1. Spelling/Grammar Changes

- Tendency to change the grammar to conform to better Greek

## 2. Harmonizations

## 3. Correcting Apparent Discrepancies

- Mark 1.2–3 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way, the voice of one shouting in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make his paths straight.’” Some scribes change it to, “As it is written in the prophets...” The Marcan quotation is a composite quote from Malachi and Isaiah
- In Mark 2:26, Jesus says that Abiathar was high priest, during a time when (according to 1 Sam 21) Ahimelech was actually the high priest. Some copyists delete this phrase completely because they wanted to prevent the reader from concluding that Jesus had made a mistake. (Metzger, 294)

# Intentional Errors

## 4. Conflations

## 5. Explanatory Glosses

- In John 5, there is a man who is sick and Jesus comes to him to heal his infirmity. The location is at the Pool of Siloam.
- It is believed that everyone would have known where the Pool was and exactly what the tradition was that about being healed there. But as the gospel spread, some locals didn't know or the tradition became lost. So, later copyists inserted an explanatory gloss to give context and meaning to the story.
- Other ancient authorities add, wholly or in part, waiting for the stirring of the water; 4 for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred up the water; whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was made well from whatever disease that person had.

# Intentional Errors

## 6. Doctrinally Motivated Changes

- The oldest form of Luke 2:33 refers to Joseph as Jesus' "father", but most Greek manuscripts change the text in various ways to remove this troublesome line.

## 7. Addition of Enriching Material

# The most problematic passages

- *Pericope de adultera* (John 7:53-8:11)
- The multiple endings of Mark
  - Since Mark was not responsible for the composition of the last 12 verses of the generally current form of his Gospel and since they undoubtedly were attached to the Gospel before the Church recognized the fourfold Gospels as canonical, it follows that the New Testament contains not four but five evangelical accounts of events subsequent to the Resurrection of Christ. (Metzger, 327)
- LXX Jeremiah & Joshua very different from M
- 1 Samuel 10:27

# 1 Samuel 10:27 (NRSV)

- But some worthless fellows said, “How can this man save us?” They despised him and brought him no present. But he held his peace.
- Now Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had been grievously oppressing the Gadites and the Reubenites. He would gouge out the right eye of each of them and would not grant Israel a deliverer. No one was left of the Israelites across the Jordan whose right eye Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had not gouged out. But there were seven thousand men who had escaped from the Ammonites and had entered Jabesh-gilead
- **Footnotes:** Q Ms Compare Josephus, *Antiquities* VI.v.1 (68–71): MT lacks *Now Nahash . . . entered Jabesh-gilead.*

# Takeaways from week 4

- All translations include some interpretation (it can't be helped!), that's why having a good study Bible or using multiple translations can be helpful
- Through the process of TC, as more manuscripts are discovered, we actually are getting closer to the autographs (or originals)
- Those viable variants do not jeopardize any essential doctrine of the faith
- Particularly by understanding the history of textual transmission, we can better understand the interpretation of Scripture. That is, "variant readings are not merely chaff to be discarded... they are instead valuable evidence for the history of the early Christian movement." (Metzger, 281)
- However, we may have to reconsider our understanding of the inspiration of Scripture given the multiplicity of voices attesting to scriptural variants
- Which Bible is *the* Bible? All of them.
- The exact words don't matter as much as the message and overall meaning. The Spirit is still speaking and still inspiring us to faith.

# Takeaways from week 1

## Going from the MACRO to the MICRO

All (Religious) Literature from the Ancient Near East

All (Religious) Literature contemporaneous with Hebrew Bible & New Testament Scripture (Apoc & Pseud)

Literature considered canonical/  
authoritative by Protestants today

Genres/ Themes/ Eras

Individual Books

Narrative Arcs

Phrases

Words

# Shiv'im Panim I'Torah The Torah has 70 Faces

שבעים פנים לתורה

- "There are seventy faces to the Torah: Turn it around and around, for everything is in it" (Bamidbar Rabba 13:15).
- With every turn of the gem, we will have another opportunity to ask questions and to learn more about our holy book.
- This should encourage us that there is ALWAYS more that we can learn about the Bible.



# Takeaways from week 2: Three Buckets

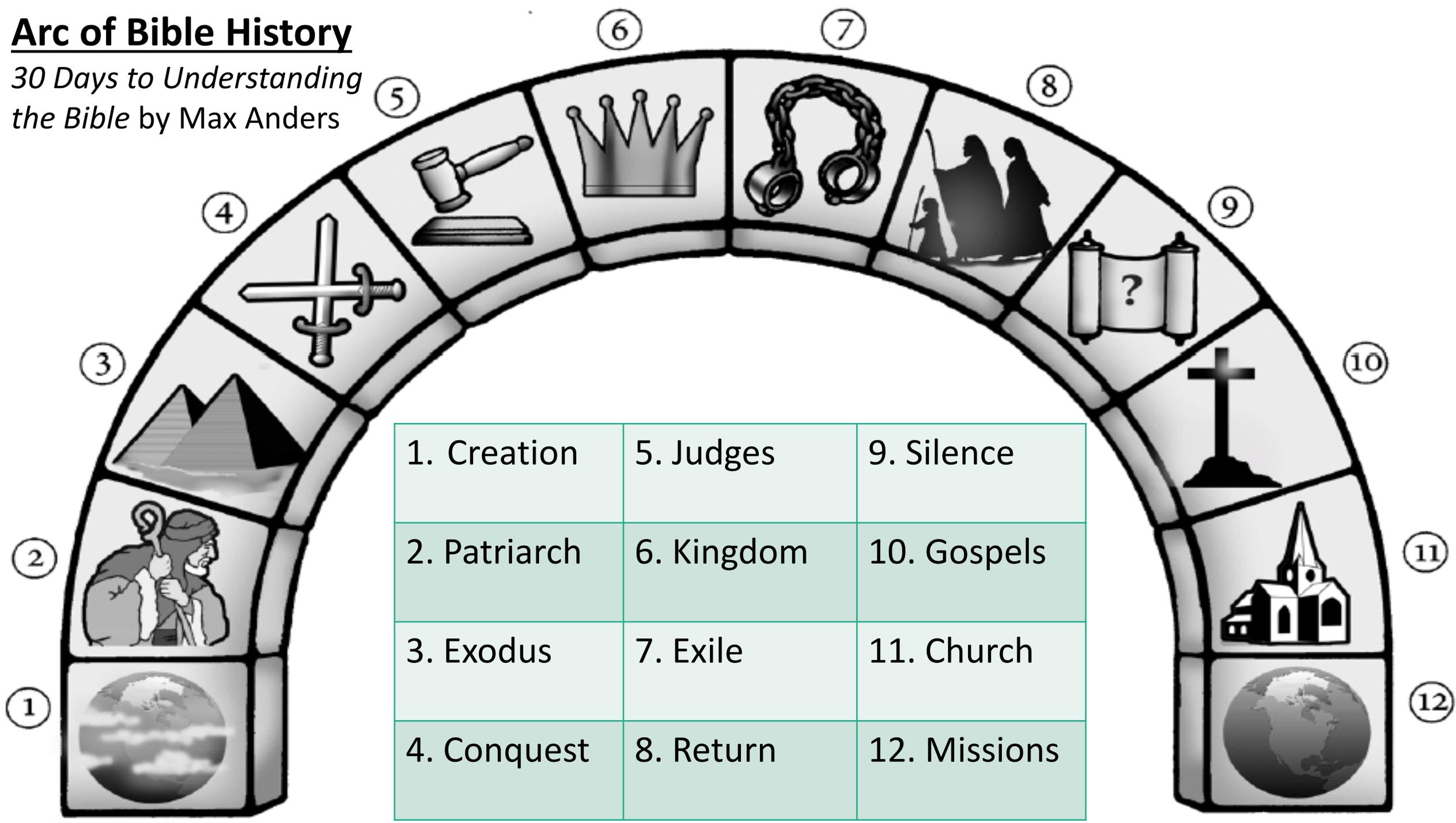
Pastor Adam Hamilton suggests that scriptures fall into one of three buckets and this system can be helpful in understanding the Bible. Those three “buckets” into which scriptures fall are:

1. Scriptures that express God’s heart, character and timeless will for human beings.
2. Scriptures that expressed God’s will in a particular time, but are no longer binding.
3. Scriptures that never fully expressed the heart, character or will of God.



# Arc of Bible History

30 Days to Understanding  
the Bible by Max Anders



1. Creation	5. Judges	9. Silence
2. Patriarch	6. Kingdom	10. Gospels
3. Exodus	7. Exile	11. Church
4. Conquest	8. Return	12. Missions

# Takeaways from week 3

- “We don’t read the Bible literally... “We read it literately.” (Bell, 80)
- There are literary features throughout the scriptures of which we must be aware that can have huge implications on interpretations.
- The Bible, being a compendium of books written over many centuries, doesn’t provide a unified theological witness. Instead, some theologies developed over time.
- We stand in the stream of along standing tradition of the faithful who have been trying to figure it out.
- As we talked about last week, it’s a big job to try to figure out the universe and the existential questions of reality. Some questions will never fully be answered and that’s okay.
- Rather than losing hope, we should be encouraged by the basic truth that God is with us and we’re on the way.

# Who to worship? How many Gods?

