

# How the Bible Came to be

## Memory Verse

The grass withers. The flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

Isaiah 40:8, 1 Peter 1:24-25

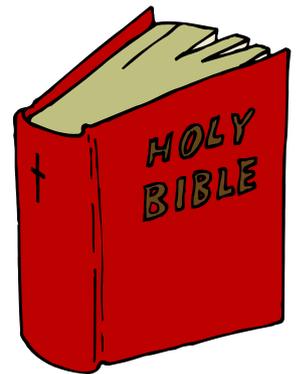
This sheet is produced by Cornerstones Publishing as an Introduction to our theme.

This month we will be exploring the story of how the Bible as we know it came into being. It begins with a people who are bound together by the conviction that God is a part of and actively working in their history. A nomad people, they would tell their faith stories of how God protected them and acted on their behalf. As their history progressed, more stories were told. Finally, about the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC, when David came to the throne, he had the holy history put into written form. Four hundred years later, when the people found themselves in exile, they recorded that experience and eventually returned to their native land with their faith story intact. These stories, which we read in the Christian Old Testament, were written in Hebrew, and confirmed with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947.

The New Testament was written primarily in the first century. The earliest of these writings were the "epistles", the letters to the various churches that had been founded. The epistles deal with issues facing the fledgling churches and set a theological foundation for the church. The early Christians had been expecting an imminent return of Jesus Christ; when that did not happen, the Gospel writers undertook the task of recording the life and ministry of Jesus' life and the early church movement. The New Testament was written in Greek, which was the common language of the time in which it was written.

As the centuries progressed, it was necessary to preserve the written Word of God. Monks were entrusted with the responsibility to hand-copy the scriptures so that the word of God would endure beyond the papyrus it was written upon. The monks added illuminations and used calligraphy as an expression of their faith.

By the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the church had become headquartered in Rome, which was then the center of the civilized world. During that time, the authoritative Latin Vulgate translation was penned under the direction of St. Jerome. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, with the invention of the moveable type printing press, the Bible had become available to the common people in their own language.



The Bible continues to be translated into new languages every day – over 1,218 at last count! New paraphrases and versions with supplementary text are continually being published in the English language, in a continuing attempt to better convey the nuances of the original language and to keep the Bible "user-friendly" for a diverse population.