Manuscript Evidence – Week 6

The Witnesses

(Notes taken from: *Understandable History of the Bible*, Chapter 6 – The Witnesses, Dr. Sam Gipp, Fourth Edition, 2019)

1) Introduction
   a) The Originals
      i) It would be beneficial if we could produce the originals
      ii) That Is not possible
      iii) The scribes were known to destroy the worn-out manuscripts
      iv) The early church fathers valued the words of the originals more than the paper and ink they were written on
   b) Disagreement in the Lines
      i) Two Families – Antioch, Syria or Alexandria, Egypt
      ii) Biblical Attitudes – Drastically different in these two locations
      iii) Spiritual Considerations – In addition to historical considerations when looking at manuscript evidence, we must consider the spiritual undertone
      iv) God is active in both inspiration and preservation
2) The Terms
   a) Editor – The person who compiles various texts together and makes a completed Bible
      i) Need to determine the canon – what is scripture and what is not
      ii) Needs to weigh the various manuscript evidence and determine the correct reading
      iii) If translation is involved in editing, then needs to determine the best words that apply to the context in order to achieve the most accurate translation.
   b) Text
      i) What the editor produces when assembling a completed book, testament or whole Bible
      ii) Can involve making a text in the original language or a new language (i.e. translation)
      iii) A text testifies to the respective locality it is primarily taken from (Alexandria or Antioch)
   c) Manuscripts
      i) Anything that has some portion of scripture on it.
      ii) Can originate from any time period and exist in many writing styles or forms
      iii) Types of Manuscript Evidence
         (1) Sermons – Can contain scripture references
         (2) Lectionaries – Similar to the back of our hymnals today that contain portions of scripture
         (3) Bible Commentaries – Can quote portions of scripture and often comment on critical verses that may be altered.
         (4) Cursives – Printed or long handwritten in koine Greek
         (5) Majuscules – Block capital letters in classic Greek
         (6) Minuscules – Written lower case letters
         (7) Fragment – A scrape of material with only a few words from a verse preserved on it
         (8) Original – Written by the original author of the book
         (9) Copy – A copy or a copy of a copy of a copy of the original…
         (10) Extant – Still in existence
         (11) Witness – A particular manuscript

3) Groups of Manuscripts
   a) Copies
      i) Minuscules
         (1) Basic Information
            (a) Most numerous of extant copies
            (b) Lower case letters
            (c) Hand printed rather than written in long hand like a cursive
            (d) Printed on papyrus
         (2) Material - Papyrus
            (a) Similar to modern news print but made form stalks of reeds
            (b) Sewn together to make long scrolls
            (c) Bound into a book form to make what is called a codex
         (3) Writing Style
            (a) Limited materials dictated style
            (b) Words were written without spaces between words or sentences to save papyrus
            (c) Since there was no capitalization, the reader would need to figure out where words start and stop
            (d) Some words were abbreviated such as God – gd, Son -sn, Father, etc.
            (e) Example: "nomanhathseengdatanytimetheonlybegottensnwhichisinthe…" – Jn 1:18
            (f) Latter manuscripts would separate the words eventually
         (4) Naming Convention
            (a) Since minuscules were written on papyrus, they are named by beginning with the letter "p" followed by a number for the given manuscript
            (b) For example, p31, p694, p42, etc.
         (5) Language
            (a) Minuscules were written in Koine Greek
            (b) Koine Greek was the common language of the day
      ii) Majuscules or Uncials
         (1) Basic Information
            (a) Less numerous than minuscules
            (b) Written in upper case or capital letters
            (c) Majuscules
               (i) Utilizes more square letters
               (ii) Did not appear until the 4th century
            (d) Uncials
               (i) Uses a more rounded letter
               (ii) Used by the scholars of the day
               (iii) Not the common man's Bible
         (2) Material - Vellum
            (a) Made from young calf skins
            (b) Durable
            (c) More expensive than papyrus
            (d) Early vellum – thinner and whiter
            (e) Later vellum – thicker and courser

         (f) Could be sewn together to make scrolls or codices

   (3) Writing Style

         (a) Utilized capital letters

         (b) Did not have spaces between words to save space and vellum

         (c) Example: "NOMANHATHSEENGDATANYTIMETHEONLYBEGOTTENSNWHICHISIN…" – Jn 1:18

   (4) Naming Convention

         (a) Uncials are usually designated by a leading "0" in front of a number.

         (b) For example, 01, 012, 0134, etc.

         (c) They could also be named using a capital letter from the English, Greek or Hebrew alphabet in front of a number such as A24, T34, β34, γ59, etc.

   (5) Language

         (a) Written in Classic Greek

         (b) This was the language of the scholars and not the common man

         (c) We would refer to this formal way of writing today as "legalese".

iii) Cursives

   (1) Basic Information

         (a) Written later in time than minuscules

         (b) Written in longhand or cursive

         (c) The vast majority of manuscript witnesses are cursives

         (d) Started around 9th century

   (2) Material

         (a) Papyrus

         (b) Other cheap materials

   (3) Writing Style

         (a) More flowing than earlier printed manuscripts

         (b) Less formal

   (4) Naming Convention

         (a) Designated by just a number

         (b) Example, 243, 594, 2, 304, etc.

   (5) Time Frame

         (a) Started around the 9th century for Bible usage

         (b) Continued up until the time of the printing press

         (c) Cursive was in existence before the time of Christ, though not many documents still exist

iv) Lectionaries

   (1) Basic Information

         (a) Like responsive readings in back of hymn books today

         (b) Came into existence due to a shortage of copies of Scriptures

         (c) Key passages were put into the hands of the people this way

         (d) Used for preaching or things that were common

         (e) More common books of the Bible would be used as lectionaries such as John, etc.

         (f) Used to teach major Bible doctrines

   (2) Material

(a) Papyrus
(b) Cheap papers
(3) Writing Style
(a) Various
(4) Naming Convention
(a) Utilizes the letter "I" followed by a number
(b) Example I 34, I 695, I 54, etc.
(5) Usage
(a) Because they were often used to teach critical doctrines of key passages, these witnesses are a key piece of testimony in manuscript evidence
(b) Often the corrupt Bibles will attack critical verses
(c) Lectionaries can be used to correct corrupt Bible passages
b) The Versions
  i) Basic Information
    (1) Ancient versions of the Bible into other languages can help us interpret passages
    (2) Greek was translated into many other languages by the early church fathers to spread the gospel
    (3) Some of these are older than the oldest Greek manuscripts
  ii) Early Versions
    (1) Old Latin (2nd Century – 157 AD)
    (2) Peshitto Syrian (2nd Century)
    (3) Coptic (3rd Century)
    (4) Bohairic
    (5) Ethiopian (7th Century)
    (6) Armenian (4th Century)
    (7) Slavonic
    (8) Gothic (4th Century)
  iii) Later Versions
    (1) French
      (a) Peter de Vaux, 1160
      (b) Raoul, 1380
      (c) Olivetan, 1535
      (d) Louvain, 1550
    (2) Italian, 1471
    (3) Spanish, (16th Century)
    (4) German
      (a) Nuremberg, 1447
      (b) Luther's, 1531
    (5) Flemish, 1548
    (6) Danish, 1550
    (7) Bohemian, 1539
    (8) Polish, 1390
    (9) Slovenian, (ancient Russian), 1581
  iv) Purpose

     (1) Helped to confirm or deny reading from other manuscripts in the original language

     (2) Useful in propagating the gospel in different languages

     (3) Translations in most languages after 1880-1900 were based on corrupt texts with a few exceptions

   v) Naming Convention

     (1) They would often be labeled by an abbreviation of the language plus a superscript to indicate the writer.

     (2) Example – Peshitto Syrian would be "sy^p" or the less reliable Siniatic Syrian would be "sy^s"

 c) The Church Fathers

   i) Basic Introduction

     (1) Lead the Christians of the first few centuries

     (2) Have remnants of early sermons, books and commentaries by these men.

     (3) The notes of the early church fathers in the 2nd century would carry more weight than a later copy of scripture

   ii) Naming Convention

     (1) Use the first two to three letters of the last name of the author

     (2) Example – Chrysostom would become "Chr", Origen would become "Or"

   iii) Examples as Manuscript Evidence Usage

     (1) Trinity – I John 5:7

       (a) Vaticanus - Not Found in this 4th Century manuscript

       (b) Taitian's Diateserian – A harmony of the gospels written around 150 AD.

       (c) Tiatian's Diaterserian refers back to I John 5:7 and predates Vaticanus by 250 years.

       (d) Here a Bible commentary is more authoritative than an actual manuscript and shows you must example all evidence, regardless of its type

   iv) Heresy

     (1) These writings of the early church fathers could provide insight into much disputed passages

     (2) The early church had heretics and false teachers

     (3) The Apostles had issues as evidenced by the New Testament, especially the book of Acts.

     (4) These church fathers would iron out issues much like they were handled in the Bible

     (5) These disputes would be documented, much like they were in the Bible

     (6) This helps to understand critical passages that are often attacked by corrupt Bibles

4) The Canon

 a) Basic Introduction

   i) God supernaturally moved men to write the Bible.

   ii) God supernaturally preserved his Word.

   iii) God also needs to supernatural intervene to determine the canon

     (1) Canon – The genuine books of the Holy Scriptures, called the sacred canon, or general rule of moral and religious duty given by inspiration – Websters 1828.

 b) What is the Canon

     (1) Canonical

       (a) The canon of the Bible consists of only those books inspired by God

            (b) These are the 66 books we have today

        (2) Extra-Canonical

            (a) Many people would write about events in the life of Christ but were not inspired

            (b) They were likely true but still were not inspired

        (3) Pseudepigrapha

            (a) Spurious writings

            (b) Falsely claim authorship by someone other than the actual author

            (c) Fraudulently presented works as though written by one of the apostles or early church fathers

        (4) Early Church History and the Canon

            (a) Early church fathers meet around the third century to sort out what was canonical

            (b) They eliminated books such as The Gospel of Peter and The Epistle of Barnabas and verified the authenticity of the books we now have.

            (c) The Bible began to be translated into other languages about this time.

            (d) Persecution of the church by the Roman Church scattered the church during this time and many of God's people were slaughtered

            (e) Many copies of the Word of God were also destroyed during these persecutions

            (f) This continued through the dark ages up until the time of the reformation

5) The Editors

  a) The Editor

    i) The editor is someone who reviews the available witnesses and defines the pure text of the scripture

    ii) This was an immense undertaking because there could be contradictory testimonies and thousands of witnesses of scripture to examine

    iii) This would be necessary to reassemble the true New Testament from the puzzle pieces of the manuscripts

  b) Defining the Text

    i) Assembling the Puzzle – The Key Factors

        (1) The original picture had been reproduced hundreds of times

        (2) This allows a piece to be authenticated by how many copies have a certain piece

        (3) If you know the place where the authenticate pieces originated from, you can discount pieces from other locations

        (4) Knowledge of what would be in the picture would help as well including the deity of Christ, the blood atonement, the virgin birth, etc.

    ii) Grouping the Texts

        (1) We need to divide the texts up as an editor so we can analyze them.

        (2) The scribe that would copiy one of these groups would not have copied another group.

        (3) Gospels

            (a) These four books are referred to as "the Evangelist".

            (b) They will be designated by an "e"

            (c) These texts may be part of a verse, verse, chapter, book, part of a book or all four gospels

        (4) Acts

            (a) The Book of Acts

        (b) This is any text that cover any part of Acts from parts of a verse to the whole book

        (c) They will be designated by the letter "a"

    (5) Pauline Epistles

        (a) Each would be designated by the letter "p"

    (6) Catholic Epistles

        (a) Catholic means "universal" here and has nothing to do with the Catholic Church.

        (b) Rome stole the name later

        (c) These are what we would call the General Epistles today.

        (d) These manuscripts would be marked with a letter "c"

    (7) Revelation

        (a) This is the Book of Revelation

        (b) These manuscripts would be marked with the letter "r"

    (8) Collating Process of the Editor

        (a) Assemble all extant witnesses

        (b) Group them in subgroups within the groups

        (c) Organize further if necessary

iii) The Process of Editing

    (1) Assemble all the extant witnesses for each group / sub-group

    (2) Compare readings and establish what is the reliable text

    (3) Determine authenticity of some passages if they could be questionable

    (4) Study the oldest reading (not oldest manuscript) and confirm or deny the authenticity of disputed passages

    (5) In addition to looking at Greek texts, the editor would also look at other versions including Syrian and Old Latin, etc.

        (a) Some translators say a version cannot carry as much authority as a copy in the original language

        (b) This is not true because sometimes the version is older than the original language copy

    (6) The editor would also want to look at lectionaries, sermons and commentaries, especially for doctrinally disputed passages

    (7) The editor will also want to consult the early church father's writings

    (8) Finally the editor would compare the texts and then come up with his own text that corrects any errors and reconciles the texts

iv) Examples of Editing

    (1) And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. Luke 24:51

    (2) The question from examining the manuscripts is whether , "and carried up into heaven" is part of the verse

    (3) The witnesses B, C, E, F, G, H, L, S, T, V, Y, Z, Delta, Theta, Psi, Omega, p75 and all remaining witnesses contain these words

    (4) Only Siniaticus, D, 52, and a 5th century manuscript remove this part of the verse

    (5) Based on the evidence, it would logically make sense this passage would be part of the verse

    (6) This is a slow, painstaking process but shows how it is handled properly

c) Desiderius Erasmus – Example of a Good Editor
  i) Life History
    (1) Lived from 1466-1536
    (2) Born in Rotterdam England
    (3) Both of his parents died when he was young, and he was sent off by his uncle to become a Catholic Priest
    (4) He chose to be an Augustinian Priest because the Augustinians were known to have the finest libraries in Europe
    (5) He never functioned as a priest and ate meat on Fridays
    (6) The Catholic Church had his body but not his mind
    (7) He was a verbal opponent of the excesses of the Church and wrote a tract called "Against the Barbarians' over the overt wickedness in the Church
    (8) He was a constant critic of Pope Julius and the papal monarchy
  ii) His Work of the Bible
    (1) Background
      (a) He was called a "Humanist" because he sought to elevate the lowly position of the common man in medieval times
      (b) The only Bible available in Europe, at this time, was the Roman Catholic version of the Alexandrian text
      (c) The true text had been ravaged by years of persecution
      (d) Erasmus wanted to provide the common people with a copy of the true scriptures
      (e) He stated "Do you think that the Scriptures are fit only for the perfumed?" and "I venture to think that anyone who reads my translation at home will profit thereby."
    (2) His Greek Text
      (a) Collected all available witnesses
      (b) Carefully examined them for reliability
      (c) Completed his text in 1516
      (d) He published five editions with the last being in 1535
      (e) He refused to incorporate the official Jerome's Vulgate readings in his text
      (f) With his publication of this text, Europeans now had access to the true text of the scriptures
      (g) After his death, his text was revised by Robert Stephanus (four editions) and Theodore Beza (ten editions).
      (h) It was Beza's fifth edition that was used to translate the KJV
      (i) Erasmus' text was so accepted, it was used by the Elzevir brothers in 1624 and 1633.
      (j) This final edition from the Elzevir brothers of 1633 became the Textus Receptus
d) Eberhard Nestle - Example of a Bad Editor
  i) Lived from 1851 to 1913
  ii) A German biblical scholar
  iii) Published a handbook of textual criticism
  iv) Studied Hebrew and Greek at the University of Tubingen
  v) Published his first Greek text in 1898
  vi) This text has now gone through 27 editions, each one changed in some way
  vii) The NASV is an English translation of the 23rd edition

viii) The NIV is an English translation of the 26th edition

ix) His text is based on the minority text of Siniaticus, Vaticanus and other texts of Alexandrian origin

x) This shows that Eberhard Nestle did not follow proper procedures when editing his text

xi) This poor scholarship has continued on in the 27th edition to this day

e) Majority Text

   i) Names for the Majority Text

      (1) Antiochian Text

      (2) Byzantine Text

      (3) Imperial Text

      (4) Traditional Text

      (5) Textus Receptus

      (6) Received Text

      (7) Universal Text

   ii) The correct text will always be found in the majority of manuscripts throughout history

   iii) The Original Vulgate

      (1) True text translated in Latin in 157 AD

      (2) Became the standard Bible of European Christianity

      (3) Used by the Waldenses, Gauls, Celts, Albigenses and countless others

f) Minority Text

   i) Jerome's Latin Vulgate

      (1) The Roman Catholic Church was desperate to replace the true text of the Original Vulgate

      (2) Jerome made a corrupt "Vulgate" of his own for the Catholic Church based on the Alexandrian text around 380 AD

      (3) This corrupt book was rejected by true Christians until 1280 AD, when the Catholic Church tried to convince people this was the common people's Bible based on the name "Vulgate" which means common

   ii) The Witness from Egypt - Sinaticus

      (1) Based on a handful of uncial manuscripts from the 4th and 5th century

      (2) A very beautiful book in the form of a vellum codex

      (3) 147 ½ leaves

      (4) 15" x 13 ½"

      (5) Four Columns

      (6) 48 lines per page

      (7) Contains the "Shepherd of Hermas", the "Epistle of Barnabas" and "Diadche"

      (8) This Bible was housed in the desert and almost no one used it, so it was well preserved and lasted for centuries

   iii) The Witness from Rome – Vaticanus

      (1) In the Vatican library

      (2) Referred to as "B"

      (3) Not sure when it was placed in the Vatican library, but was made known to the outside in 1841

      (4) Form of a book written on vellum

              (5) 759 pages

              (6) 10" x 10 ½"

              (7) 3 columns

              (8) 41 lines per page

              (9) Omits many portions of scripture vital to Christian doctrine including Gen 1:1 through 46:28, Psalms 106-138, Matt 16:2-3, Rom 16:24, the Pauline Pastoral Epistles, Revelation and everything after Heb 9:14

              (10)Of poor literary quality with double words or phrases in succession

              (11)Not a reliable witness

        iv) The Witness from Alexandria – The Local Text

              (1) All of the false manuscripts originated from one locality, Alexandria Egypt

              (2) Eusebius made 50 copies of the Local Text for Emperor Constantine that were spread around and started the mess

              (3) The Local Text Theory

                  (a) Kurt Aland: "proposes that the text of p75 and B represent a revision of a local text of Egypt which was enforced as the dominant text in that particular ecclesiastical province." – Fuller, David, Which Bible? (Grand Rapids International Publications, Grand Rapids, 1970, First Edition), p. 13

                  (b) Mr. Aland refers to this common "local text" of Egypt for these manuscripts

                  (c) He indicates that these manuscripts come from what is the Alexandrian text

                  (d) Sinaticus also claims its roots back to this common Alexandrian text as well

              (4) What really happened

                  (a) A pure copy of the Universal Text was carried down into Egypt

                  (b) It was recopied by men in Alexandria who did not revere it as the Word of God.

                  (c) This text was examined through the critical eye of Greek philosophy and Egyptian morals by the scholars.

                  (d) These men saw nothing wrong with putting their own opinion into this book

                  (e) The text was local to the educational center in Alexandria Egypt

                  (f) It went no farther than the Vatican and was used by the Roman Catholic Church to try to stop true Christianity

6) Summary

    a) Examining manuscript evidence properly is critical to construct a quality text in the original language or in a translation

    b) All types of manuscript evidence are important from small fragments of scripture to complete Bibles, as well as lectionaries, commentaries, early writings, and sermons.

    c) The oldest writing, not the oldest manuscript is often the most thing to consider when looking at the age of a piece of manuscript evidence

    d) Doctrinal debates at the time of the writings are also critical to interpreting verses and the potential for removing of verses or parts of verses. Often false doctrine is the main reason for removing parts of verses or changing them.