

**History and Authenticity of the Bible**  
**Lesson 5**  
**Dead Sea Scrolls & Aramaic Targums**

By  
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“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” Lord, I thank You for each of these students and I pray that you would put within them constantly a hunger for Your word, a desire to know You, to delight in the word day and night. And God we pray Your blessing, as we once again examine the wonderful factors relating to the reliability and inspiration of Your word. May our hearts grow deeper in appreciation for this wonderful, complete and final revelation from God in this form. We thank You. Your word is forever settled in the heavens and You have exalted it above Your own name, so we come to honor it. But most of all, Lord, we come to worship You. We thank You for all You have done for us. Minister to every student’s need; for those that are sick or ill, that You would strengthen them Father. Touch their bodies. Some of us are emotionally stressed and we need peace from You, and priority and wisdom. We thank You that You give that. We submit this time unto Your hands. In the wonderful name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

We are talking about revelation, how God speaks to us. And we, of course, have told you how to know if a person is speaking from God’s revelation or not. If it doesn’t happen, then God did not tell them it would. If the gospel that is preached is not the gospel of Jesus Christ found in the Bible, then God did not speak to them.

On a tour of the Mormon temple we were told some things that were definitely *not* the gospel of Jesus Christ as found in the Bible. We were told that it is found in the

“complete” Bible. So the very issue about how many books are in our Bible—an issue of canonicity—we are going to study in this course. This is a very, very important matter.

We were handed a leather-bound-gift edition of the Bible. On the front it said: *Old Testament, New Testament, Book of Mormon, Doctrines and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price.*

When I opened it to look into it, there was no Old or New Testament. So I handed mine back to the bishop, who gave us these nice gift editions. I said, “Excuse me, there is something wrong with mine.”

He said, “Really? We haven’t had a misprint in years.”

I said, “Oh no, no. Mine’s definitely got a problem in it.”

He opened it up and hunted through it and he said, “I don’t see what the problem is.”

I said, “Well the problem is that you left the Bible out of it.”

“No, it is here.”

I said, “No. The Old and New Testament that is advertised in the front, you don’t have it.”

“Well, we assume everybody has those.”

“Oh really, then why would that be? Why would everybody have that, and not yours?”

He said, “The gospel that we are giving to you was revealed by an angelic messenger to his servant, Joseph Smith.”

I said, “Doesn’t it bother you that Galatians 1, in the New Testament says that ‘if an angel comes and preaches any other gospel, let him be accursed’?”

He said, “Well, that is dealing with whether or not it is additional to God’s revelation.”

I said, “Oh, then we’ve got to figure out whether or not the Old and New Testament is a complete and final revelation from God?” And his answer to me was scary. He said, “The majority of Christians believe in progressive revelation.” And he walked away.

You know, the sad thing is that he was correct. That is the sad thing that Christians haven’t come yet to understand that there is a complete and final, written revelation of God. And we are going to deal with that as well.

And we also have to question “If what they say does not agree with the Bible, then God did not speak to them.” It is fairly obvious. And if they add any additional truth, then God did not speak to them. And that is an issue that we’ve got to get into and you will know probably more than you even want to know about it.

Now, we talked a little bit about the result. I concluded the last time we were together, with the illustration about preaching to my grandbaby. Remember that? Because Paul said, “From a child, [the word is *brephos* in Greek, a baby in the womb, or one just born] thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation.” Can you think of a more wonderful result?

I asked this Mormon bishop, “You know, one of the tests of God’s word is that people come to know the Lord through it. Do people come to know the Lord through reading Nephi, in the Book of Mormon? The point is that God’s word will produce salvation. Has anybody been saved reading Doctrines and Covenants?”

“Well, it depends upon their obedience to what is said in that.”

Hey, let me tell you something. There is something really terrific about the Old and New Testament. It can cause the new birth. It is a remarkable Book! You see, one of the results of God's written revelation is that it brings salvation to people. That is so important to understand.

Also, from [Hebrews 5:11-14](#), we learn that there is the wonderful result of discerning right from wrong. And that is so important. The effectiveness of prayer is found in [John 15:7](#), "If My words abide in you [Jesus said], you can ask whatever you want and it will be done." Why? Because your whole prayer life is going to be controlled by the word of God, not by your whimsical feelings about things. [1 John 5:14-15](#) says, "This is the confidence we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us. And we know that if He hears us, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." Very important.

In terms of enablement for victorious living, do you know anything else in all of literature that can produce this? "Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against Thee" ([Psalm 119:11](#)). I don't know, I've read a lot of books in my life and they don't do it. The Bible does. It is very interesting. I've read Tolstoy. Wonderful! Interesting! Will Durant—some classics—it is very interesting, but they don't help me to get victory over sin. But this Book will change your life. The Bible says, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby, if so be that you have tasted that the Lord He is gracious" ([1 Peter 2:2-3](#)).

There are some wonderful promises in God's word. Even in [John 15:3](#), Jesus said: "Now ye are clean." It means to wash with water. "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." There is no book like this. No wonder the devil wants to

find your interest elsewhere. He does not want you to read this Book or learn this Book. This Book is the key to walking with the Lord.

And I love [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#), which I would like you to turn there, please. Two verses that you will probably see again. That is what you call a “major hint.” [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#).

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.

These two verses you ought to know when it comes to describing the Bible and its impact upon life. We call it the equipment of the believer for every good work, but there is a lot in these two verses. It says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” What does the New International say? “All Scripture is God-breathed.” That is good.

Now in the Greek there are only three words. You want to understand what we are doing in this course, we are trying to give you an apologetic understanding of the Bible, so that you have a defense, you have an answer for the reason and the hope that is in you. First thing you have to know is that there are only three Greek words in that opening sentence. We have the Greek word “all” or “every.” It can be either one: every, or all. We have the Greek word for Scripture, which is *graphe*. We get “graphic arts” in English from that term. It means writings or that which is written. So you see words that are in English. We have “lithography,” and lots of words that are connected with *graphe*. But *graphe* is referring to writings, so “every” or “all writings.”

Now the next one is a compound word. It includes the word *God* and it includes the word *to breathe*. So it translates (as some of the English translations do correctly) “God-breathed, “every writing God-breathed.”

There are some obvious things about that sentence that are very, very important. First of all, there is no description in that sentence as to what is included in “the writings.” “All writings.” Now, whatever it is, it is a done product. But yet when Paul wrote 2 Timothy (which was the last of his epistles) there were still some writings of John to come. But he says, “all Scripture.” Whatever it is, the total of it is “God-breathed.” So we’ve got to find out what that total is. We are going to have to find out what it is. That is a very critical statement: “every writing, God-breathed.” And it is very, very important to know what you are talking about when you say “every writing.”

A second thing that we need to understand about that term is that only the writing is inspired, not the writers. That is probably one of the greatest misunderstandings people have. They say to you, “Well, they were just men.” And I always say, “Yes, you are correct.”

Well? So what? What’s that got to do with it? Do you understand, you make them say apologetically what it is they are after. And of course, they will come out with “Men make mistakes.” Oh, that is very interesting. See, God did not want to leave it up to guys to give their own views and make those kind of mistakes. So He has an interesting process by which He guarantees the accuracy and reliability of what they wrote. Would you like to know how He did that? So sometimes in an apologetic way, you just kind of break it down step by step.

“Every writing is God-breathed” means the writers are not inspired, the writing is inspired. You see if you are not careful, then Shakespeare could produce Scripture. They say, “Well he was inspired.” But they mean inspiration in a human sense, not what God means. God is referring to the accuracy of what is written, not whether it was – “Whoa! It gave me the vibes when I read that.” No, although, the Scripture will move your heart. It is a very interesting subject.

In [2 Timothy 3:16](#) it says it is not only God-breathed, but it says it is two things. In the Greek text, it is organized every writing is two things: God-breathed and profitable. Now we are talking about the results here of God’s revelation, so what is the profitableness of the word of God? What does it accomplish? What is it good for? And according to this text, it is good for four things that every one of us needs. Now the ultimate purpose is stated in verse 17, “that the man of God”—the believer. God’s word does not do this for the unbeliever; rather it leads him to salvation. But for the believer, the man of God, “that he be perfect.” Now that does not mean sinless—“that he be complete.”

The next statement is “thoroughly furnished.” What we have here is a play on words. It is a double impact: equipped, thoroughly equipped, or completely equipped, “unto all good works.” In other words, there is nothing that you and I are involved with that is described as “good works before God” that would be outside the realm of Bible-equipping. Whatever God wants you to get involved with in your life regarding good works, the Bible is the key to equip you to do that.

Now in order for that to occur, the result of this wonderful Book is in four areas that will, in fact, equip you. What are those four areas? One, found in verse 16 is

“doctrine” or “teaching.” What we are to believe about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, is found where?—in the Bible. Some schools believe that they should teach us the opinions of men and the Bible is a reference source. No, we believe that all doctrine is Bible doctrine. If it’s not a Bible doctrine, then it is not a doctrine that we teach. It is just as simple as that. So, when you look at it, this Bible will teach you all there is to believe in the Christian life.

Do you realize how important this verse is? What is it saying? A lot of people don’t carry it out or think it through as to what the impact is. The impact is pretty fantastic! Whatever it is that God wants you and me to believe, is found within the context of whatever is “all Scripture.” It is God-breathed and it is profitable for doctrine. It is right here in the Book.

Number two, it is profitable for “reproof.” Now, a lot of people believe that God has given them the gift of reproof. They take great pleasure in coming up to you and reminding you of how you are not acting the way you should. But it is the Scripture that does the best reproof.

Now “correction” has two sides of one issue really. The one is *confronting* the person and the other is *building* that person. You know, “there is a time to tear down,” says [Ecclesiastes 3:3](#), “and there is a time to build up.” There is a time to say, “You are wrong brother and here is the reason; the Bible says so.” And there is a conviction issue there, a reproof and a rebuking. But there is also a correction. You know, sometimes we don’t want to help the people to learn how to walk. We don’t want to really build them back up. We just leave them dead and wounded by our remark. But the Bible does both.

The Bible never rebukes you without showing you how you can correct the situation.

That is very important to understand about God's word.

It also is instruction in righteousness. Everything you need to know to do right and to reflect God's character in this world, is all found in God's word. It will "lead you in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake" ([Psalm 23:3](#)).

So you see, everything I need to be completely equipped in this world to do whatever is good in the sight of the Lord, all these good works, I will find it all in the Bible. And you ask me, "Is it important that we know what the Bible is?" Oh yeah. The Bible is the whole ballgame. It is everything. You see, when everything else fails in your ministry or whatever you are doing for the Lord, you can come back to some very simple things. Just trust the Bible and the Holy Spirit and you will be fine.

"Well, don't I need to know the computer?"

No, you don't. Will it be helpful? Yes. It can help you to learn God's word, but knowing how to use a computer will not make you a more effective servant of the Lord. Is the computer or the knowledge of it necessary for the good works that God has for me to do in this world? The answer is "absolutely not."

Over the years, I have found there are so many Christian parachurch organizations designed to show you and me why the Bible is not sufficient—why we need their program. Now, they would be very upset to hear me say that, but somebody needs to speak the truth. Every week there are mailers telling me how I could be more effective if I would buy this thing and that thing and get their stuff. We have been doing a colossal job of undermining the confidence which the Bible itself says we should have in that Book and that we don't need anything else. If you go out of this school believing that you

do not need anything else but the Holy Spirit and the word of God, you will be just fine. God will use you super abundantly. One of the interesting paradoxes is the more things you substitute for that, the greater will be your problem in being effective for the Lord.

You need the Lord and His word and you don't *need* anything else to be effective for the Lord. And may God drill that into your heart so that you never forget it. No matter where you go or what place of service you have, I trust you'll never forget that all you need is the word of God.

There is a pastor friend of mine who loves the overhead and transparencies. I know what that's about. I used to teach using an overhead all the time. He was just panicked and said, "We don't have an overhead. You know the meeting is about ready to start and I do not know what happened to it. I said, "Boy, this is a crisis! Now all we have to do is trust the Lord and the Bible. What are we going to do?" He looked up at me with kind of a little smile. He was a good brother. He says, "I guess I was a little stressed out over the overhead." I said "We don't need the overhead. It's a nice tool, but we don't need it."

Do you understand? I'm trying to tell you this verse, [2 Timothy 3:16](#), is a key verse in understanding the importance of the Bible in our life. You cannot make it without the Bible, in my opinion.

Okay now, we come to a whole brand new area. We have just been talking about the importance of this study and we are now coming to a section called "The Information about the Bible." Now the Old Testament was completed a minimum of 150 years before Christ. It was already compiled and in use in Greek, so we know that it was done. We also know, obviously, that the New Testament was not written until the first century AD.

We also know conclusively from the early church leaders that the New Testament, as we know it, was completed before the first century ended. Even though there were other books claiming to be gospels that should be added, and we will get into the problem of that.

So let's start with our Old Testament. Now I am thankful because we teach through the entire Bible in a systematic way. We don't leave the Old Testament out. But a survey done several years ago of American Christians in major Bible-believing denominations showed that there was total ignorance of the Old Testament and very little preaching of it; that Bible-teaching pastors basically dealt with a few passages in the writings like the Psalms and Proverbs and so forth. Usually they did the first eleven chapters of Genesis, but rarely went to anything else. The Old Testament is not a handy reference book for New Testament thought; the Old Testament is God's word.

People say to me, "Without the New Testament you couldn't understand it." I've got books that say, "Without the New Testament you can't understand the Old." Poor Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, Daniel. They all could never understand anything. But boy, we got it now, don't we? Look, there is another way of looking at this if you want to know the truth. You cannot understand the New Testament without understanding the Old. It's not the other way around. The New Testament quotes voluminously from the Old Testament. In the book of Revelation alone I counted more than 400. I saw a book recently that said there were 700 quotations. But anyway, I found over 400 quotations in the book of Revelation alone. It quotes continuously. Even the Bibles that indicate the quotations don't get them all. And the more you know about the Old Testament the more you read in the New Testament and you see it is just quoting verbatim.

I was reading in James chapter 3 concerning the tongue and bridling the tongue and how great a matter a little fire kindleth ([James 3:5](#)). I went back and read Psalm 39 again. Sure enough, those two things are the same. The New Testament writer, James who was Jewish, was reflecting what King David said in [Psalm 39:1](#), where he tells me to bridle or muzzle my tongue so that I do not sin with my tongue. You know and all of a sudden we see that bridle issue, a horse with a bit in the mouth in [James 3:5](#). This is coming out of the Old Testament and over and over again, you will see that the New Testament begins to take on a clear picture for you when you know the Old Testament.

What about the Old Testament? Well, as I said, first of all, it is God's word. In terms of writing, a lot of critics of the Bible get all upset because they say there is no evidence of alphabetical writing until 1800 BC. Well, there is a lot of truth to that. But you see, I do not believe the Bible started to be written until 1400 B.C. So, we have 400 years to play with. It is all right. No problem. Also the earliest kind of writing, people, did not divide words. That is why when we see some Old Testament text or in old Hebrew, it is just all run together. So it takes a very astute mind, especially someone who knows Hebrew to know where you break up the letters, because they are just run straight together.

Now in the Old Testament we have another language besides Hebrew. It is very much like Hebrew. It's called Aramaic. So let's make sure all of us in this class know what we are talking about. There are Aramaic words in the Old Testament. There are some pretty lengthy sections in both the book of Ezra, as well as in Daniel there is a very long one from chapter 2:4 to 7:28. It's all in Aramaic. Now it's a derivative of Hebrew. It is a Semitic language, it's like Hebrew.

In Daniel's account there are Persian and Greek words also in the Old Testament. Our knowledge of this becomes more prevalent when we see what archaeology brings to pass. But we believe that some of the instruments mentioned in the book of Daniel are actually Greek origin and some of the words are definitely Persian. And that should be expected also since part of the history of the Old Testament is under the Persian domination, especially the return from the Babylonian captivity.

For that matter, we may also have Egyptian and Assyrian, and Babylonian words. Is Rameses, *Ra Ahmasees*, is that a Hebrew word or is that Egyptian? Well, it's Egyptian. And Rameses, these cities the children of Israel were building in slavery, are they Hebrew cities or are they Egyptian names? They are Egyptian names. As a matter of fact, Moses' name—is it Hebrew or is it Egyptian? Well, he was existing at the time we had pharaohs named Thutmose, I, II, and III. So you see Moses means “to draw.” It was a very common name in the Egyptian language at the time. And when Pharaoh's daughter took him out of the river, the Nile River was the top god of the Egyptian pantheon. So she was trying to sell the fact that this little baby is from the god, the Nile River. Is it a Hebrew word? Well, it becomes a Hebrew word. The truth of the matter is that many words have derivation in other languages. It does not do anything to the accuracy of the Old Testament; in fact, it confirms the beauty and accuracy of it.

Now before we talk about the Dead Sea Scrolls and people will bring this up to you, especially if they know a little bit. They have been to a liberal college somewhere and they picked up a little bit. Now they will say things like, “Well we didn't even have an Old Testament text until 900 A.D.” Wrong. Though let's talk about what we had from 900 A.D. It is true that the earliest copy of the Old Testament before the Dead Sea scrolls

is about 900 A.D. It's a group called "Masorites." On page three, you see the word Masoretic and we have given you the definition. What does Masoretic mean?—tradition. But literally the root behind the word tradition or Massorete is one who puts a hedge around the Scripture to protect it. The Masoretes what they did is they produced vowel markings that they knew in the Hebrew language in terms of pronunciation. They produced vowel marking for Hebrew letters because Hebrew is the language of only twenty-two consonants. There are no vowels in Hebrew. So they put vowels in for correct pronunciation to protect the Bible from being incorrectly pronounced.

Well, the Jews really cared. They had a dedication to the preservation of the text that has been unheard of in any history following it. And by the way, if God is calling you to the mission field maybe something we are saying today is far more important than you realize. We need to have a compassion, a care, a willingness to learn and to listen and to try our best. They always, I've found in every culture, respect you for trying. And maybe you didn't say it right, but the fact that you keep trying is very, very attractive to somebody. You want them to hear your gospel, then spend a little time with it.

This is very important that the Masoretes, these godly men, were trying to put a hedge around the Scriptures so that they would not lose the pronunciation in Hebrew. Now they know how to pronounce the words with their consonants. And they have sounds that come out in those consonants that sound like our vowels. So all they did was put vowels on the Hebrew text. And that's the earliest known text we had until the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1947, but not really available to the public until the late 1950s and early 1960s.

We were told many, many times that there was no proof that the prophecies concerning the first coming of Christ were truly prophecies. But when the Dead Sea scrolls were finally translated, we saw every book of the Old Testament—except one, Esther—had some fragment in it or whatever. Including some of them with the whole scroll, like Isaiah, the entire book, all sixty-six chapters. The whole scroll is now in the Shrine of the Book Museum in Jerusalem. The whole intellectual world was stunned by it.

Do you know that they are continuing to put out books about the Dead Sea Scrolls? And it is interesting to me that the Qumran community, which was like an ascetic, monastic community, that they wrote in many, many other areas. They have fanciful writings like medieval literature. They have a manual of discipline, which was a teacher of righteousness, and some people think that maybe it is Christ. But that was an effort to prove that it was after Jesus, but it was not after Jesus. They know it wasn't because of the writing material alone and the discovery of it has proven that beyond a shadow of a doubt. It was before the first century, we know. And here that same Dead Sea Scrolls has revealed passage after passage after passage that predicts things about the first coming of Jesus.

So now we have a powerful argument about fulfilled prophecy concerning the first coming of Christ. It can't happen by any other way but by divine direction. It couldn't have happened. But it is very important to understand these Masoretic texts because they were putting vowel markings on the Hebrew.

We mentioned the vowel markings, but will you notice that in this Masoretic text you have what is called "marginal notes." You know, you do that in your Bible. You

write something out in the margin. And these marginal notes also deal with the tradition of transcribing the text. Now I wish we had that for all the Greek manuscripts. Look at that very carefully the next time you run into somebody attacking the accuracy of the text. The scribes changed the text in only eleven places, according to one tradition and only eighteen, according to another. And get this, in all eighteen places, the only changes at all were all dealing with extreme anthropomorphism—that God has feathers or wings or whatever and they thought needed explanation; so they wrote in a marginal note to the text as to what they thought it meant. When I read that, and I see all the variation among the Greek text, I just sit there and say, “This is absolutely unbelievable!” In a day before printing presses, or printers and all of that, when it is only transcribed by hand, unbelievable!

Anthropomorphism. *Anthropos* is man. *Morphism* is the exact nature of something. Morphology is the study of the exact essence of it which, by the way, goes into DNA. But anthropomorphism is dealing with the exact nature of man-like expressions. Like “the arm of the Lord”...does He really have an arm? “The eyes of the Lord”...does He really have eyes? “Under His wings”...you know, the point is they are using expressions. We would say “picturesque speech” to point out a tremendous truth about the character of God.

Now another interesting thing about the Masoretic text, this is the only Hebrew Bible we had before the Dead Sea Scrolls. There are summary notes at the end of every book. This was to guarantee the accuracy of transcribing it. They reveal the number of verses, the number of words and the number of consonants in that book. Why did they do that? So they could check it for its accuracy. And if one man said there were 10,212

consonants and another man said there were 10,213, they would count again. Now you understand why we don't have to take a back seat to anybody. Don't hang your head in any discussion about the authority and accuracy of the Bible when you are speaking about the Old Testament. There is no book in all of history, including after printing and publishing of today that has any way of being in the same category of discussion with the accuracy of the Old Testament. Phenomenal! It is just remarkable! Every time I think about it I think how God not only preserved these, but protected them in every way. I think it is a wonderful thing.

We also have, "Ancient Versions." You will want to know, what is a version of the Bible? Because sometimes they say on their Bible, this is a version—New International Version. No it is not a version of the Bible. The word version means another language, another language. King James, New American, New International, Living Bible, they are all English. The version is English. The variations of course, are there. Ancient versions of the Old Testament mean translating the Hebrew into other languages.

We have, first of all, Aramaic. The one I told you about. Aramaic was the court language of Babylon. It was also spoken during the Persian reign. It's a derivation of Hebrew. It's a Semitic language. And we have what's called Aramaic targums. You have heard that name before. You say, what in the world is a targum? It's simply the word for translation. That's all it is. But in a Hebrew mind, a translation, a targum, can also be an interpretation. A book that's on the Bible, we call a commentary. So if you can keep that in your mind, the Aramaic targums are like commentaries. But they're trying to translate the Bible by giving you the meaning of it.

Well, we are doing that today. When people ask me: “Do you think the New International is the most accurate translation of the original language? What do you think is a good translation?” Well, what is the difference between those two? The principle behind New International is what we call “dynamic thought equivalent.” That is a phrase that’s equivalent to the Hebrew or the Greek that would be more readily recognizable in English would be used rather than a word-for-word translation. Now being a teacher type, I prefer that which gives me a word-for-word translation and let me decide. But they were trusting these scholars. They certainly know what they’re doing. However sometimes they have bias on a passage. But anyway they try to give the thought. It’s called “dynamic equivalent translation.”

Now Jews believe that there is nothing wrong with this. And that surprises a lot of people because they are such sticklers for the original Hebrew. You know, they don’t vary there at all. You better see what that word is. But the moment you go to another language, or you are talking to the people, they see no problem whatever in being free. And their idea is that they are teaching people about what is meant. You can understand that. We do the same thing with commentaries. But sometimes with a little knowledge we become bombastic like we know everything. This whole area is filled with scholarship far beyond what this course will ever expose to you. Just understand there are some basic things we ought to know.

And it is a targum from which we get a lot of our biblical ideas. In fact, many people believe that Paul and Peter referred to the targums that were well known among the Jews, rather than to the Old Testament text to reflect some opinions of interpretations. Now that’s another subject.

The synagogues, which by the way grew up after the destruction of the temple in 586 B.C., and really they grew up *primarily* after the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. because there was a reconstructed attempt, as you know. But a synagogue is simply a word meaning “to gather together.” The Jewish people gathered. Now a synagogue translated orally what do we call that? Preaching—a sermon. They translated orally into Aramaic and so that is like our paraphrasing. Like the Living Bible. What is the Living Bible? It is Ken Taylor, a father, teaching his children the Bible and putting it on their level. And he did it of himself. He doesn’t claim to be a scholar. He had scholars check it. So there is nothing heretical in it, but it is a paraphrase. And by the way, sometimes he really hits it better than the others do. Sometimes in his effort to explain it to his children, he comes out with the correct Hebrew. And it is, you know, beautiful. If you have ever read the Living Bible, it has a lot of beauty to it.

The Jews conducted business in Aramaic. It was a trade language. Now, class, I’m going to tell you something here that you probably will not read in any book at all. It has been standard teaching up until this time that Jesus and the disciples spoke Aramaic in the land of Israel. First of all, there are Aramaic words in the New Testament. When Jesus said, “*Talitha cumi*” ([Mark 5:41](#)). When He said, “*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*,” that is Aramaic. “My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?” ([Mark 15:34](#)). *Maranatha*—there are lots of things like that. So there are Aramaic expressions: “*Talitha Cumi* - little daughter arise.” They are close to Hebrew words, but they are Aramaic, so they say so that is the reason they are in there is because Aramaic was spoken in the land of Israel.

There have been some archaeological views of first-century Israel before the destruction of the temple that have proven that the Jews who were loyal Jews, not Hellenistic, but loyal to the Hebrew tradition, spoke Hebrew and did it deliberately. So in the marketplace they would speak Aramaic, the trade language. In some cases Greek, but that was usually foreigners. But there were what was called “Hellenistic Jews” in the early church. They had adapted the Greek language, culture and all, to get along with their conquerors, basically. But there were other Jews, zealots or others, who wanted nothing to do with this. They were going to speak true Hebrew. Remember in [Philippians 3:5](#), Paul said he was a “Hebrew of the Hebrews.” Every Jew reading that knows exactly what he meant. Paul didn’t go along with the Hellenistic trends of his day. He excelled in Judaism above anyone else. And he spoke pure Hebrew.

So more and more we begin to take another look at the whole issue as to whether or not Aramaic was the language of Palestine, or I prefer Israel. Israel is bi-lingual, okay, definitely bi-lingual, and probably more than that. Most of the people had a few Greek words to communicate with all the Hellenism going on. And they also spoke Aramaic, which was the trade language, which had come from Babylonian and Persian sources. And then the Orthodox of course spoke Hebrew and trained their children to speak Hebrew.

Some people believe and it is still going around today that the New Testament was originally written in Aramaic and so Greek is a version rather than the original. That original Aramaic is called the *Peshetta*. But that was the problem. See it is a little problem for us to go back 2000 years to figure out what was really going on. But the scholarship that we have tells us that because they spoke Aramaic, they naturally had to

communicate. We know Jesus spoke it. We know Paul used it. Aramaic was used clear until the time of Mohammed when Arabic and Islamic teaching came in. And you say, “Well what is the difference in Aramaic?” The problem is that there is a strong tendency against anthropomorphism—as we were saying a moment ago—man-like descriptions of God.

Let me show you an example in Aramaic. First, you know how Jews are very careful about the name of God? For instance in an English book today, if a Jew is writing it, he will put G–D. You say, “Why doesn’t he put the “O” there?” They do not believe that it is right for us finite creatures to write the name of God. So that is what they do. Well, in Aramaic they used the “word of God” 179 times in the Old Testament in place of the word “God.” Literally, because they are trying to protect God’s character, they did it sincerely but if you are going to translate off an Aramaic targum the word, “word” is not in the text. But it is in the Aramaic translation of the Old Testament Hebrew for God or *Elohim*.

Now they also substituted the word *Shekinah*. *Sheka* is the word “to dwell.” It refers to the dwelling. We speak of the *Shekinah* presence of God in the holy of holies. When a cloud came down, the glory of the Lord filled the house. That is *Shekinah*. So instead of writing God and putting *Elohim* into Aramaic they put *Shekinah*. They also did it with the word “glory.” They substituted “glory” for God. So that is a part of the problem with Aramaic. Also it is highly interpretive and strong on paraphrasing. And we just have a little word of caution. We would use extreme caution. But you are probably not going to read Aramaic. There are a lot of translations now into English. And I have seen in bookstores a whole set of books called, *Aramaic Targums Translated into*

*English.* Now people are buying them to use as commentaries and in a sense they are commentaries by Jewish writers on the Old Testament.

Now you know what the targums are. It literally means translation, but could be interpretive or a passage like we would paraphrase. And those are very popular among Jewish people. So for our communications sake, let's at least learn these basics. Okay?

Take a break and we'll go to the Greek next.