

**Mount Olive Baptist Church**  
**Bible Study Series: *How We Got the Bible***  
**Session 3 – “The Birth of the Bible”**

## **Introduction**

This chapter invites us to slow down and appreciate something we often take for granted—the Bible itself. Before we argue theology, quote verses, or stand on promises, **Chapter 2** calls us to look at how God chose to reveal Himself across time. The Bible did not appear fully formed in one moment; it was born through history, shaped through human hands, and safeguarded by divine purpose.

## **I. The Bible as a Collection, Not a Single Book**

### **Key Teaching**

- The word *Bible* comes from the Greek *biblia*, meaning “**the books.**”
- Scripture developed gradually, across centuries, cultures, and circumstances.
- The Bible is more than an ordinary anthology; it is a treasure house of sacred writings.

## **II. From Scroll to Codex: How the Bible Was Physically Formed**

### **A. The Scroll (Early Form)**

#### **Materials Used:**

- Papyrus (plant-based writing surface)
- Leather/parchment

#### **Characteristics:**

- Sheets glued end to end
- Written in columns
- Usually written on one side
- Limited length (30–35 feet)

### **B. The Codex (Book Form)**

#### **What Is a Codex?**

- A bound book with pages (the modern book form)
- Originally a Roman writing tablet

#### **Why the Codex Mattered:**

- Easier to read
- Easier to carry
- Could write on both sides

- Allowed multiple books to be bound together

### **Key Historical Insight**

- Christians were among the first widespread users of the codex
- By A.D. 90, the codex was already in common Christian use
- Most of the earliest New Testament manuscripts are codices

## **III. The Early Growth of Scripture: From Oral to Written**

### **A. God's Word Was First Spoken**

- God initially communicated orally (Adam, Noah, Abraham)
- Oral tradition preserved God's acts and promises

### **B. The Need for a Written Record**

- To preserve revelation for future generations
- To ensure accuracy, continuity, and covenant memory

## **IV. Moses and the Beginning of Written Scripture**

**Moses as the First Biblical Writer - Approx. 1500 B.C.**

### **Six writings attributed to Moses:**

1. Memorial concerning Amalek (Exod. 17:14)
2. Covenant words at Sinai (Exod. 24:4)
3. The Ten Commandments (Exod. 34:27–28)
4. Wilderness journeys (Num. 33:2)
5. The Book of the Law (Deut. 31:9, 24)
6. The Song of Moses (Deut. 31:22; 32:1–43)

### **Jewish Tradition**

- Moses regarded as the author of the **Pentateuch** (Genesis–Deuteronomy)

## **V. Formation of the Old Testament Canon**

### **Key Developments**

- Joshua and later prophets continued the writing tradition
- Scriptures were consulted, preserved, and revered
- By the time of Ezra (c. 400 B.C.), the OT was largely recognized

### **Jewish Testimony**

- Josephus stated no books were added after Malachi

## **VI. Formation of the New Testament**

## Timeline

- Written between **A.D. 50–100**

## Nature of the Writings

- Letters to churches and individuals
- Regarded early as authoritative
- Read publicly in worship

## Development

- Letters circulated among churches (Col. 4:16)
- Gospels written as eyewitnesses diminished
- Acts recorded the life of the early church

## VII. The Shape of the Bible We Have Today

### Old Testament (English Arrangement) (See Attachment)

1. Law (Genesis–Deuteronomy)
2. History (Joshua–Esther)
3. Poetry/Wisdom (Job–Song of Solomon)
4. Major Prophets (Isaiah–Daniel)
5. Minor Prophets (Hosea–Malachi)

### Hebrew Bible Arrangement

- Law
- Prophets
- Writings

### New Testament Structure (See Attachment)

1. Gospels (Matthew - John)
2. History (Acts)
3. Pauline Epistles (Romans–Philemon)
4. General Epistles (Hebrews–Jude)
5. Prophecy (Revelation)

## VIII. The Languages of the Bible

### Three Original Languages

1. **Hebrew** – Most of the Old Testament
  - Written right to left
  - Originally without vowels
2. **Aramaic** – Common language after the exile
  - Portions of Daniel and Ezra
  - Language spoken by Jesus

**Examples:**

- *Talitha cumi* (Mark 5:41)
  - *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani* (Mark 15:34)
3. **Greek (Koine)** – Language of the New Testament
- Common, everyday Greek
  - Enabled worldwide spread of the gospel

**IX. In Praise of Ancient Scribes****Who Were the Scribes?**

- Highly trained professionals
- Copied Scripture with care and precision
- Used reed pens, ink, rulers, and parchment

**Their Contribution**

- Preserved Scripture before printing presses
- Ensured accuracy across generations

**Food for Thought**

The Bible did not survive because it was easy to preserve— It survived because God was committed to being known.

What if our faith deepened not just because we read the Bible, but because we understood what it took for the Bible to reach us?

**Discussion Questions**

1. Why is it important to understand the Bible as a process, not a single event?
2. How does the transition from scroll to codex show God working through culture?
3. What encourages you most about how Scripture was preserved?
4. How should knowing this history affect how we read and honor the Bible today?