

Biblical languages

Background information

The Bible is in two main parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament was written mostly in Hebrew. Hebrew looks like this:



It is read from right to left and originally it was written without vowels (a system of dots and dashes) which were added later.

www.ancientscripts.com/hebrew.html
Gives information on the Hebrew script

www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0101.htm
Hear the Old Testament read in Hebrew

The New Testament was written in Greek ('everyday' Greek called Koine Greek, not classical Greek). It was originally written without punctuation and without gaps between the words. Greek looks like this:



www.ancientscripts.com/greek.html Gives information on the Greek script

Translators had to learn the biblical languages in order to translate the Bible into languages people could understand. The motive behind doing this was a desire for people to read the Bible for themselves. This was considered important as Christians view the Bible as more than just a book. They believe its message is important and that God speaks through its words to guide and comfort, correct and inspire.

Before translation could start, the early manuscripts of the Bible had to be located. These were found in churches and monasteries, in libraries and in one case, in pots in caves.

There are thousands of early manuscripts of the Bible. Many are incomplete and some are damaged. They have to be pieced together and carefully checked. It's like doing a jigsaw with words.

Resources

www.bl.uk/sacred Turn the pages of ancient Bible manuscripts such as Codex Sinaiticus

www.biblepicturegallery.com/pictures/manuscripts.htm Pictures of different Biblical manuscripts