

ISSUE

19.6

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

February 5,
2017

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter

Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Steve Dixon

Ryan Ferguson

Arend Gressley

Ben Hight

Blake McAlister

Brady McAlister

Walker McAnear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Rusty Scott

Justin Smiley

Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope



Words on Stone and Parchment

How the Bible Came to Us (3)

By Kyle Pope

Imagine teaching a class of little children to write for the very first time. You would start with the alphabet, but imagine having to teach them 15,000 characters! As difficult as that might seem it helps us appreciate the remarkable timing of when God chose to begin the process of revealing His written word to mankind.

In the earliest stages of God's dealings with man He spoke directly to the heads of families (see Gen.



3:9; 4:6; 7:1; 13:14; 31:3; Exod. 4:4). For centuries there is no record of any written revelation of God's will. From what we know about the earliest forms of writing there may have been a very good reason for this.

The First Writing Systems

The earliest form of writing was *ideographic* pictures and symbols representing

ideas. Many of us have seen beautiful Egyptian *hieroglyphic* inscriptions with complex pictures and symbols. In Mesopotamia a similar system called *cuneiform* was used made from wedge-shaped symbols pressed into clay. The problem with picture writing was it required the writer to have artistic ability and know a large number of symbols. Some years ago Chinese, a modern ideographic script, had to reduce the number of characters it used from 15,000 to 5000! Such systems made it hard for common people to learn to read and write. Often the only people who were literate were professional scribes who kept records for kings and the wealthy.

The ancient world knew nothing of the conveniences we take for granted. There were no smart phones, laptops, or computers. All writing was carved into stone or clay, or marked onto surfaces that could absorb pigment. The Bible speaks of tablets of clay (Ezek. 4:1), but the first written revelation of God's word (as far as we know) was on stone tablets. The Bible tells us God told Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them" (Exod. 24:12).





Proto-Sinaitic inscription from Serabit el-Khadim in the Sinai Peninsula.

The First Alphabet

It used to be that critics of the Bible argued that this claim that God gave the law to Moses was not even possible because it was believed that at the time of Moses alphabetic writing did not exist. In the winter of 1904-1905 this argument was disproved. In the Sinai Peninsula, near the area where the Bible says God gave the Law to Moses archaeologist Flinders Petrie discovered inscriptions in a script now believed to be the first alphabetic writing ever known. This script, known as *Proto-Sinaitic* used a simple system of symbols that corresponds to the Hebrew alphabet used to write the Old Testament. An alphabet made it possible for the average person to learn these simple symbols corresponding to spoken language. At this key

moment in human history God chose to begin the process of revealing His written word to man, making it accessible to all.

Unfortunately, God did not preserve His word through the centuries on stone. Most of God's revealed word was written on dried animal skins stitched together and rolled into scrolls. The Law of Moses would be preserved in this form. Jeremiah was



told, “Take a scroll of a book and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel, against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah even to this day” (Jer. 36:2). What we call a *book*

did not exist until the time of the New Testament or afterwards when single pages of *parchment* (dried animal skins) or *papyrus* (a dried plant flattened and glued together) were bound together in what was called a *codex*. Thousands of copies of handwritten texts of biblical books written on scrolls or pages from codices (the plural of *codex*) have survived through the centuries. It was with these tools that God revealed and preserved the Bible as we have it today. In our next study we will look at three steps involved in the revelation of God’s word in the Old Testament.



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Welcome Visitors

**We are so glad that you joined us today.
Please come again.**

● **Let us know if you have any questions.**