

The King James Version Controversy

There are those Christians who not only prefer the King James Bible to other versions, but they believe that the text used to translate the KJV was supernaturally preserved and inspired by God. This is to say that the other translations or Bible versions were not. Others are more radical and suggest that the English translation of the KJV was inspired and even "re-inspired" by God when it was translated. Again, this makes the KJV in their mind the "only" God-appointed version. Unfortunately, some of these supporters of the KJV have made it their mission to criticize all other Bible versions in an attempt to get everyone to read "only" the KJV. There is no historical, factual, spiritual basis for making the KJV the "only" God-appointed English version of the Bible.

A Conspiracy Theory

Much of this KJV controversy centers around the theory that there has been a conspiracy through the years, initiated by Satan, to replace the KJV with "watered down" and corrupted versions of the Bible so that Christians will miss out on God's true message. Those who have promoted this theory have misrepresented those Bible scholars and translators who worked on other Bible translations or attempted to discredit those who are associated with publishing another translations. "Christians are to be lovers of truth, and as such, should hold to the highest standards thereof. Misrepresenting others - even those we strongly feel are in error - is not an option for one who follows Jesus." If you objectively study the compiling and translation of the Bible in the various translations, you will discover that there is no conspiracy to corrupt God's word. This is not to say that all translations are perfect or without their differences when it comes to interpreting words. However, the wonderful truth of God's word is speaking into the lives of people whether they use the KJV, the NIV, the NKJV, the NASB, the RSV, the NLB, or many of the other versions. God is faithful to His word!

Disputes In Translation

Disagreements can come in two areas because of the complexity of the language: 1) disagreements over what was originally written and 2) disagreements over how to translate what was originally written. However, no fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith is based upon a disputed text. Of the approximately 10,000 differences found in the N.T., only about 400 affected the meaning of the passage and only 50 of those were of any importance. Not one of those disputed passages affected a principle of faith or obedience because comparing manuscript texts have enabled Bible scholars to correct errors and obtain the intended meaning.

Important Words - Missing!

One of the most frequent accusations against modern translations is that they leave out important words, such as "Lord", "blood", "begotten", etc. Remember, the KJV came from the Byzantine text-type manuscripts, which were later manuscripts. Through the years, these manuscripts had been added to by scribes (people who copied manuscripts). The scribes would add words or phrases that had been used in other places in scripture. Scribes also added words to support and protect certain church teachings, such as the deity of Christ. Because the earlier manuscripts did not contain these additions, the modern translations are accused of not only leaving words out, but of conspiring to leave out important words. However, in the few places in scripture where these words are left out of the text, they can be found in other parallel scriptures or in the same text. If there was a conspiracy to take out the important words like Lord, blood, or begotten, why didn't they take out all those words in every place where they are found in the modern translations? The fact is, the earlier manuscripts did not contain some of these words or phrases, thus they were left out in an attempt to be more accurate. The goal of accurate translation is, "What did the original author write?"

Standards of Translation

"The KJV must stand up to the exact same standards as any other translation. It cannot be made the standard by which all others are judged; it must take its place as one translation among many, so that it can be tested just as the NIV or NASB or RSV." It is both unbiblical and spiritually careless for certain Christians to set themselves in the seat of judgment by declaring the KJV as the only God-appointed version for English speaking people. The proof for this claim is not to be found in the manuscripts or in the methods of translation. Those who have translated the modern Bible versions used the same argument as those who translated the KJV - make a Bible translation that is accurate and readable in the common language of the day. That is what modern translations of the Bible have attempted to do.

Don't Throw Your Translation Away

All the translations named in this tract can be effectively used by God to speak to you and correctly guide you to God's truth.

THE BIBLE AND BIBLE VERSIONS

The Bible: God's Inspired Word For You.

How We Got The Bible.

Is the KJV the "Only" God-appointed Version?

Why Are There Differences In Bible Versions?

KNOW THE TRUTH



"...AND THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE!"

Pastor Lynn Kern

The Purpose of This Tract

In the Christian community there are issues which arise that cause controversy and conflict among Christians. One such issue concerns the King James Version, which some have claimed to be the "only" correct and God-appointed version of the English Bible. In attempting to briefly deal with this claim, it is hoped that you, the reader, will have the opportunity to: 1) gain a greater appreciation for God and His word (the Bible); 2) become more knowledgeable of how we got the Bible; 3) have a better understanding of the controversy over the King James Version and the modern Bible translations; and 4) be confident in using other Bible translations without feeling like they are corrupt. For an in-depth study of this subject, with an objective approach, read "The King James Only Controversy" written by James R. White. (All non-biblical quotes in this tract come from this book.)

What the Bible Says About Itself

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (II Timothy 3:16,17)

"But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (II Peter 1:20,21)

The Bible

The Bible is God's textbook for your Christian life. God breathed His knowledge, thoughts, principles, and plans into the minds of approximately forty writers, in sixty-six books. God, the Holy Spirit, inspired and guided men as they wrote the scriptures. He made sure that God's words and thoughts were correctly understood and written, in spite of the different styles, cultural backgrounds, and personalities of the writers. These scriptures give you a description of who God is, a written account of God's plan of salvation for mankind from the beginning of creation, and His message of love revealed through His Son, Jesus Christ. The Bible is a remarkable, supernaturally inspired message from God to you.

The Holy Spirit and the Bible

The Holy Spirit not only inspired the Bible, but He also uses the Bible to speak God's truths to you. *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."* (John 14:26) *"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God."*

(I Corinthians 2:12) The Holy Spirit is actively revealing, interpreting, and applying God's word in your Christian life as you read the Bible. Though the ministry of the Holy Spirit is not limited to speaking to us only through the Bible, as the above scriptures suggest, it is most often through the Bible that He will want to establish the foundation for your Christian life. Are you reading your Bible and giving the Holy Spirit that opportunity to speak to you?

Bible Availability

You have the wonderful privilege and opportunity to have the Bible available to you. But that has not been true of the vast majority of people in human history since the Bible was written. Christians in the early church had access to some of the writings of the Old Testament and they were often read aloud in church services. New Testament writings were being written, copied, and past around to the various churches. By the second century, the four Gospels, Acts, and Paul's thirteen letters were beginning to be compiled and accepted as inspired writings. Though there were copies of many portions of the New Testament in circulation, churches and individuals only had "bits and pieces." Until the first printings of the Bible, Christians had little or no access to their own copy of the scriptures. Though scriptures were read in public worship services, only a few people could afford to purchase manuscripts or printed Bibles so as to read the scriptures. Parts of the Bible in English were translated as early as 731 A.D, but the first complete Bible to appear was the Wycliffe Bible in 1384. After the Reformation in the 1500's, there was a desire to translate the Bible into the national languages so that it could be understood by the common people. Since that time, there have been many English translations and modern versions which have attempted to make the Bible more accurate to the language of the day.

The Old Testament Manuscripts

The Old Testament scriptures were written on papyrus, copied and preserved in ancient writings called manuscripts. The O.T. manuscripts came as a result of the ancient Hebrew literature, which regarded them as sacred and set apart from other literature. The O.T. books were written over a period of 1000 years. Because Hebrew was not well known outside the Jewish world, there was greater control over what was written and how it was past down. There is no early evidence as to how the books came to be, except that they were fully developed by the second century, B.C. As a result of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, most, if not all of the books of the O.T. were substantially supported to be authentic and accurate.

The New Testament Manuscripts

The New Testament manuscripts were more affected by differences in culture and language because the message of the N.T. spread to the world. The N.T. was written primarily in the common Greek language on papyrus and later on parchment (made from animal skins). People from various walks of life, with or without training, made copies of portions of the N.T. for their own spiritual training and for others. This led to manuscripts being found in different parts of the early church world and having differences according to culture, language, or human error. Because thousands of manuscripts have been found, comparing the manuscript texts have enabled scholars to correct errors and obtain the original meanings.

Types of Manuscripts

Manuscripts for the N.T. have been divided up into "text-types" or families, depending upon where they were found. There are four basic text-types: 1) the Alexandrian, found in most papyri; 2) the Western, found in Greek, Latin, and other languages; 3) the Byzantine, found in the majority of later manuscripts; and 4) the Casaearean. The Alexandrian is a more concise text that comes from earlier manuscripts and suggests a more accurate text. Most of the modern translations come from the Alexandrian text-type. On the other hand, the Byzantine text-type has been taken from later manuscripts in which additions were made through the years in order to incorporate words or phrases from other texts and to include key words to protect important Bible doctrines. The Byzantine text is the one used to translate the KJV, which accounts for there being a fuller text, more words added than that of the modern versions.

God's Faithfulness

God has been faithful to His people. In spite of the fact that many Christians and churches did not have access to God's word in its entire form as we do today, God was faithful to instruct and expand upon the written truth through the Holy Spirit. Again, in John 14:26 and I Corinthians 2:12, God's promise is that the Holy Spirit will lead His people into the truth and reveal to them the things they need to know. God has been faithful to guard His written word down through the years, using His people to compile and translate it so that the Bible has been preserved complete and accurate. Also, God was faithful to lead His people to recognize which books were inspired and which were not, so that the Bible could be put together as the complete, inspired word of God.