

The Bible Ark Bible Study Program

Introduction – The Written Word of God and the King James Bible

A Few Corrections

My friend, I made a couple of statements in yesterday's program that I need to come back to and address. In my haste to publish the study I was not quite as thorough in my fact checking as I should have been.

The first item concerns a statement that I made about Lee Strobel. I said that he was a lawyer. Please forgive me, but it has been, at least, fifteen years since I last read his book, "The Case for Christ." Mr. Strobel was not a lawyer. He was an investigative journalist that used to cover high profile court cases, an important detail that I seemed to have forgotten. Nonetheless, when he wrote his book, he was very familiar with court proceedings, the treatment of evidence, and interrogative interviewing techniques, much the same as a practicing lawyer. Therefore, he used his understanding of (as well as his experience with) court proceedings and investigative methodology in his approach as he attempted to disprove the Bible, in very much the same way as a lawyer would.

The second item that I need to address is one of the statements that I made about the early manuscripts. I stated that, "... the New Testament manuscripts actually validate the Old Testament manuscripts that have been recovered from those same first, second, and third century archaeological finds." This statement certainly gives the impression that there were plenty of Old Testament manuscripts that were discovered in the first, second, and third centuries along with certain New Testament manuscripts that were also discovered in those centuries. I apologize for giving that impression. There are actually very few Old Testament manuscripts that have been found that date back to the first, second, and third centuries. There are a few, but only a few. Most of the oldest Old Testament manuscripts that have been found are not quite that old, more like seventh century and newer. Of course, one notable exception are the Dead Sea Scrolls. Some of those artifacts date back as far as 300 BC.

As a third item, I should also mention that, in addition to the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Catholic Church also typically regards the Apocrypha as the inspire Word of God.

The Early Bible in Other Languages

In yesterday's program, all of the manuscripts that I was speaking about were either New Testament Greek manuscripts or Old Testament Hebrew manuscripts. I made no mention about manuscripts in other languages. It would probably be good to point out the fact that, in addition to the 5,000 plus ancient Greek manuscripts, there are another 5,000 plus ancient manuscripts of the New Testament in other languages. This is, of course, is very important; because, it illustrates how pervasive and miraculous the spread Word of God was in the early church era. Keep in mind that these are only the surviving artifacts amidst some of the most severe persecution of the church and of the Jews.

When one learns of and considers how extreme the persecution of Christians and Jews were during these times and how zealously the enemy burned manuscripts and murdered church leaders, it is an absolute wonder that there is but a small handful of surviving manuscripts. Yet there are thousands of

them in existence! There are multitudes of manuscripts in the languages of Latin, Coptic, Syriac & Aramaic, Armenian, Gothic, Georgian, and the language of Ge'ez (known as Classical Ethiopic), just to name a few. There were even early translations into Arabic and Middle Persian; however, there are very few surviving examples, which indicates how vehemently Christians and Jews were persecuted by the early Muslim extremists.

These are all things that happened before the sixth century. In addition to all these ancient manuscripts, there are more than 86,000 recorded Bible quotations by those men that are regarded as the fathers of the Christian church. These are all statements that were usually written in Greek, Latin or Syriac, that quoted or alluded to text of New Testament scriptures in copies of their own work, or cited so by others. All but a few of these men lived between the second and seventh centuries. I would love to tell you about some of the more important early manuscripts (such as the Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, and Vaticanus Codex's, as well as, the Chester Beatty Papyrus's) from the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, but I think we will have to save those for another time.

By the time we get to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the number of languages that the Bible was being translated into is beyond reckoning. Then in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries there was a huge surge of Bible translations being produced, with many languages enjoying multiple versions. Furthermore, there was no language where there were more Bible translations being produced than in the English language during (and since) that time.

Early English Translations

According to Unger's Bible Handbook there were eight different versions of the English Bible that were written before the King James. However, there were sporadic partial Anglo-Saxon translations (or adaptations) that were written before the first complete English translations were produced. I am not going to go through that entire list of partial or complete translations, but we will talk about a few of them as we get further into the history of the King James Bible.

This surge of translations in the English language can be tied back to the influence and affect that Martin Luther had on the church and the subsequent Protestant Reformation. As Reformation spread across Europe, it led to England's break from Romanism during the reign of Henry the 8th. Following Henry the 8th, there was a continuing struggle of power in England between Protestantism and Romanism for the better part of the sixteenth century, which set the stage for the writing of the King James Bible that began in 1604.

Excerpt from "In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How it Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture"

Now that we are finally start talking about the King James Bible itself, I would very much like to read you an excerpt from a book about the making of the King James. The title of the book is, "In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How it Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture." The book was written by Alister McGrath, who is currently an acclaimed professor and fellow of the Harris Manchester College at the University of Oxford, and he is also Professor of Divinity at Gresham College. His book, "In the Beginning," was published in 2001 by Anchor Books, a division of Random House Incorporated. The excerpt that I will be reading to you is the better part of the introduction to his book. I think that it does an excellent job of presenting a proper understanding of the importance of the King

James Bible and the impact that it has had on the world. I would very much like for you to hear what Professor McGrath has to say. This is excellent.

“The two greatest influences on the shaping of the English language are the works of William Shakespeare and the English translation of the Bible that appeared in 1611. The King James Bible – named for the British king who ordered the production of a fresh translation in 1604 – is both a religious and a literary classic. Literary scholars have heaped praise upon it. Nineteenth-century writers and literary critics acclaimed it as the “noblest monument of English prose.” In a series of lectures at Cambridge University during the First World War, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch declared that the King James Bible was “the very greatest” literary achievement in the English language. It was the accepted wisdom of the age.

The King James Bible was a landmark in the history of the English language, and an inspiration to poets, dramatist, artists, and politicians. The influence of this work has been incalculable. Many families could afford only one book – a Bible, in whose pages parents recorded the births of their children, and found solace at their deaths. Countless youngsters learned to read by mouthing the words they found in the only book that their family possessed – the King James Bible. Many learned biblical passages by heart, and found that their written and spoken English was shaped by the language and the imagery of this Bible. Without the King James Bible, there would have been no *Paradise Lost*, no *Pilgrim’s Progress*, no Handel’s *Messiah*, no Negro spirituals, and no Gettysburg Address. These, and innumerable other works, were inspired by the language of this Bible. Without this Bible the English-speaking world would have been immeasurably impoverished. The King James Bible played no small part in shaping English literary nationalism, by asserting the supremacy of the English language as a means of conveying religious truths.

Yet the Bible is far more than a work of literature. For Christians – the world’s largest religious grouping – the Bible tells the story of the creation of the world by God, and its redemption through Jesus Christ. The Bible speaks words of hope in the face of suffering and death. It tells of a New Jerusalem, in which pain, sorrow, and death are things of the past. Until the Bible was translated, many English-speaking Christians had to rely on their clergy to tell them about such things. The King James Bible allowed them to read them for themselves, and shaped the contours of English-speaking Christianity in a period of unprecedented expansion and growth, as the great missionary undertaking of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries got under way. The ideas, language, and images of the churches of Africa and Australasia were deeply shaped by an English translation of the Bible that had been prepared centuries earlier.

The importance of the Bible went far beyond personal religious devotion and faith. It was central to the life of Western European society in a way that we cannot begin to imagine today. The story is often told of the great economic historian Jack Fisher, who was being pestered by a student for a reading list on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century economic history. Exasperated, Fisher finally gave his definitive answer: “If you really want to understand this period, go away and read the Bible.” Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Bible was seen as a social, economic, and political text. Those seeking to overthrow the English monarchy and those wanting to retain it both sought support from the same Bible. The Bible came to be seen as the foundation of every aspect of English culture, linking monarch and church, time and eternity.

The lives of countless man and women since then have been changed and molded by the King James Bible. Refugees from England, fleeing religious persecution in the seventeenth century, brought copies with them. I would be their encouragement on the long and dangerous voyage to the Americas, and their guide as they settled in the New World. Prisoners in English jails found solace in reciting biblical verses that they had learned by heart, in the words chosen by the translators assembled by King James. The King James Bible became part of the everyday world of generations of English-speaking peoples, spread across the world. It can be argued that, until the end of the First World War, the King James Bible was seen, not simply as the most important English translation of the Bible, but as one of the finest literary works in the English language. It did not follow literary trends; it established them.

So how did this remarkable translation come to be written?"

Well, my friend that is an answer that we will have to be to explore tomorrow, for our time is up today.

Closing Remarks

As I have stated before, the Bible Ark, is meant to be a complement to the Thru the Bible Bible Study program, by Dr. J. Vernon McGee. It is in not meant to be a replacement.

My hope and my prayer is that you will sit down with me with your Bible open and that you will read the Bible with me as I speak. Then go listen to the Thru the Bible broadcast. If you follow that method, you will grow in your understanding of the Word of God in ways you never imagined possible.

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Dale Trussell, April 6th, 2021