

# The Bible Ark Bible Study Program

## Introduction – A Little Background on the Scofield Study Bible

### The Most Controversial Word of All

What is the most controversial piece of literature that has ever been published? The most obvious answer to this question is the Bible. I suppose that very few would disagree with this conclusion.

Yet of all the Bibles that have ever been published, which translation of the Bible is the most controversial? Again, I believe that the most obvious answer to that question would be the King James Bible. If there is an argument for a different translation, I have no idea what translation it could possibly be.

Now, let me ask you, of all the different manifestations of the King James Bible that are available, which King James Bible is more controversial than any of the others? Personally, from my narrow little perspective on the world, I would have to say that the Scofield Study Bible would be that one King James Bible that is the most controversial of them all. Moreover, I believe that there is plenty of evidence to support this position, but do not be alarmed. I am not going to try to convince you of that stance. I am simply stating what I think, and I know that I am not alone in my opinion. There are many that would say the same thing.

How interesting is it that of all the literature that has ever been printed in all the history of the world that Bible, the most controversial of all, has had the most impact of any other piece of literature, by any measure. It is the most published of all; it is the most read of all; it has been translated into more languages than any other; and it has endured in a far greater way than any other work of literature.

Again, of all the Bibles that have been published, the same thing can be said about the King James translation among all other translations.

And, of course, among King James Bibles the same thing could be said about the Scofield Study Bible.

That is no accident! I submit to you that the one reason for all of this is Jesus Christ. It is not the book itself that is controversial. It is one of whom the book is about, Jesus Christ.

The Bible is a book about Jesus. Therefore, it is the most controversial book.

One probably cannot say that the words of King James Bible sets forth Jesus Christ in an especially greater way than any other translation; however, when one considers the way that the King James Bible came into existence and the impact that it has had on not simply the English-speaking world, but all the world, I believe that the King James Bible does set forth Jesus Christ more so than any other translation.

Likewise, I believe that the argument can be made that the Scofield Study Bible does the same among other King James Bibles and other Reference Bibles.

When Jesus is lifted up and glorified in this fallen world, it creates controversy. Just as Jesus is quoted in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 10, verses 34, 35, and 36 saying,

*“<sup>34</sup>Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup>For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. <sup>36</sup>And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.”*

Similarly, in the Gospel of Luke chapter 12, verse 49, Jesus is quoted saying,

*“I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?”*

My dear friend, the Scofield Study Bible is a controversial book, and there is no shortage of criticism against it and against its author, C.I. Scofield.

If the Bible is so entirely controversial why does it still exist? Why is it still being read? Why does it continue to expand in its reach throughout the world? Why is it continuing to be translated into other languages, like no other book in existence? When there is so much opposition against it and so much hatred against its teachings, how does it continue to endure?

The answer to these questions is that the Bible truly is God's word, and God is greater than man. Despite all of man's wrath, God's Word prevails.

The same things can be said about the King James Bible. It is a translation that is more established than it ever has been. There is no other translation that has been able to take its place.

Equally, the same things can be said about the Scofield Study Bible. There are a lot of people that do not appreciate the Scofield Bible. In fact, there are a many that are outright antagonistic against it, yet it prevails. After over a hundred years, it still stands as the reference Bible of all reference Bibles.

What is it about the Scofield Study Bible that stirs up so much controversy? Why is this Bible attacked as no other Bible attacked? Why is the character of this Bible's editor slandered more so than any other Bible editor or translator?

## A Word About Dispensationalism

The answer to this question is little thing known to the world of theology as, “dispensationalism.”

Does this mean that there are no other criticisms against the Scofield Bible? Not at all! There are many! However, at the heart of nearly every argument against the Scofield Bible lies the issue of “dispensationalism.”

So what is “dispensationalism?”

It is actually a very basic concept, but the implications are far reaching and all encompassing. It is not a subject that we are ready to delve deeply into today. However, we are going to have plenty of opportunities to expand the discussion as we go through the Scofield Bible. It is also a topic that Dr. McGee discusses thoroughly. Therefore, I will give you a brief definition right now, and we will magnify on it in later studies.

Dispensationalism is the theological study and application of time frames in God plan and purpose. Adam and Eve, when they were in the Garden of Eden, was a dispensation. God dealt with and handled His relationship with Adam differently than He did after He drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden. It is

a dispensation of God in relation to the way that He forms His relationship with His creation and His created intelligences, with man. A dispensation is an economy, and it is typically set in the bounds of a particular covenant that God has established with a specific people group.

According to the notes in Scofield Bible, we are currently in the midst of the dispensation of “grace.” Jesus is calling out a people unto His name through the preaching of the Gospel of Grace.

According to the Scofield Bible, the next dispensation following “grace” is the dispensation of the “kingdom,” when Christ returns to the Earth and establishes the Kingdom of God here on Earth as it is in Heaven.

The idea of dispensations was not something C.I. Scofield cooked up on his own. Some would argue that it has been there all along, and that it began to be taught by the Old Testament prophets, then by Jesus Himself, by His apostles, and also by the early church fathers. Of course, it was never referred to as a “dispensation” until English-speaking theologians felt that it needed a more academic and specific term by which to refer to it. In the Bible it is sometimes referred to by the word “age,” the word “world,” or by the word “day.”

For instance, many of the Old Testament prophets use the term “that day” to express “the day of the Lord.” According to Dr. McGee, “the day of the Lord” (or “that day”) is a reference to what Jesus labelled “the Great Tribulation” (or more literally interpreted “the Tribulation, the Great One”). According to the Scofield Bible the end of the Great Tribulation marks the beginning of the dispensation of the Kingdom.

The understanding and teaching of prophecy was not a subject that received much attention after the early church fathers. It was not until the rise of the Evangelical Church in the late 1800’s that prophetic study and the teaching of prophecy became prevalent again. All that C.I. Scofield did was to take the current fundamental Christian understanding of dispensationalism and incorporate those concepts into his Bible. In so doing, he and his Bible became the target for all those that do not adhere to the theology of dispensationalism. The reason for this is that the publication of the Scofield Study Bible in 1909 was an immediate success. It was the first Oxford Press publication to reach one million copies in sales. By the end of World War II, it had sold over two million copies. For that time in history and a book of this type, that is unprecedented. Keep in mind that this is two million copies through the midst of two world wars and the great depression! The influence that the Scofield Bible has had on Christianity and the field of theology is immeasurable and incomparable by any other tool of Bible study, save the modern computer (such as, PCs, smartphones, tablets, and the like).

## A Little Background About Scofield and His Bible

I would love to give you a history lesson on Cyrus Ingerson Scofield as a person and the effort that brought into being the Scofield Study Bible, but in truth there are a lot of missing pieces to both of those stories. More importantly, there is no lack of controversy about either topic.

I have read a couple books on the making and the impact of the Scofield Bible, but neither one of them was especially useful. I learned some good information from both of them, but I could only wish that they were written with the same degree of scholarly attention that the Scofield Bible itself was written with. I have looked at other books on the subject, as well as books about Dr. Scofield, and the two books that I did take the time to read are about the only two that I would bother cracking open. Some

of the books that have been written are so obviously bias, it is a great wonder to me that anyone would bother reading them. The bottom line is that there is only so much we can understand about C.I. Scofield and his Bible, and it is not a very much. Most of the rest of what has been written is supposition or outright fabrication.

To me, it is completely unimportant. C.I. Scofield was a sinner that was redeemed in Jesus Christ, just like myself, just like Paul the Apostle. From what I see, it was God's pleasure to use him to publish an especially useful tool in our day and age for the study of the Bible. How else can the prominence of the Scofield Study Bible be explained? The Scofield Bible is no stranger to opposition, ridicule, and condemnation of the critic, yet it enjoys as much so if not a more solid position as the single most important reference Bible ever produced. Do we really need any more of an affirmation than the providence of God?

Therefore, what I would like to do it give you a very quick background on it right now, and then as we work our way through Scofield Bible in the weeks, months, and years to come we can take a closer look at where the ideas of the Scofield Bible originated from, why Scofield and his advisors chose to incorporate them into the notes, and perhaps a little background on Scofield as a person (as well as those men that he relied upon to produce the Scofield Bible).

C.I. Scofield as born in 1843, served as an underaged soldier in the Confederate Army during the civil war, and moved to St. Louis after the war, where he studied for and passed the bar exam. He practiced law in St. Louis for a few years and then moved into politics. He served as a member of the House of Representatives in the State of Kansas for two years, and then at the age of 29 he was appointed as the U. S. District Attorney for Kansas, the youngest in the country. In his first year as DA he resigned from the position "under a cloud of scandal," because of questionable financial transactions which were never substantiated.

Shortly after that he accepted Christ as his savior, and he began to work in the ministry. In less that ten years, he was licensed to practice as a minister in the St. Louis Association of Congregational Churches. He later left the Congregational Church and became a Southern Presbyterian, where he founded the Philadelphia School of the Bible in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (which is now Cairn University).

He was married shortly after the Civil war and had two daughters by his wife, who eventually divorced him after at least two attempts at divorce proceedings ten years apart. It was not Scofield's desire to separate in divorce. After his conversion, he did remarry and remained so until his death in 1921.

This is somewhat of a sketch of the man, and I have left out a lot of details. Yet there is not really a whole lot more that I could say without some speculation. Like I said, there is not much that is known about Scofield or the making of his Bible. All of the things that I just told you about are clouded with suspicion. When researching the background and history of Scofield the person, it is difficult to sort out the true history from the mountains of speculation that has been cast about in the last hundred years.

He began his work on the Scofield Study Bible in 1902 and it was published 1909. Over the course of the next seven years, he and his team worked on and published the 1917 revision. This is typically the version that is published as the Old Scofield Study Bible. It is possible to find copies of the 1909 version, but they are somewhat rare.

It is quite an interesting story, to hear about how the idea to create the Scofield Study Bible came into being. One that I would like to tell, but I do not have the time to give you that story today. Besides, I think it would be a story better told after we have had some time getting familiar with the book itself.

Dr. Scofield relied on a team of extremely capable Bible expositors, who were all very eager to work on the project. After the 1909 publication of the first version, nearly all of them continued to work with him to complete the 1917 revision. There are eight individuals listed in the credits; however, there were a few more that he consulted with that are not credited. Some of those consultations occurred prior to the 1902 when work on the book began. Some of the consultants were located in the United States and some of them were located in Europe. Scofield spent time in Europe, as well as the United States working with his consultants over the course of the seven-year project.

After his death, Oxford Publishing release the New Scofield Bible, published in 1967. Today, the New Scofield Bible has been translated into a few different languages, and it has been adapted to other Bible translations, such as the New International Version (NIV). The New Scofield Bible is often referred to as the third version, "The Scofield Study Bible version III."

Before we leave off for the weekend today, I would like to read you an excerpt about the Scofield Bible from a book by R. Todd Mangum and Mark S. Sweetnam. The title of the book is, "The Scofield Bible: Its History and Impact on the Evangelical Church." It was published in 2009 by Paternoster. This excerpt is from chapter 6 of the book.

#### "Scofield's Continuing Legacy

What is clear from the foregoing chapters of this book is that The Scofield Reference Bible has been an enormously influential text throughout its history. Soon after its publication, its sales were considerable and it was able to penetrate deeply into the evangelical community, its chief target audience. In doing so, it launched the distinctive and previously somewhat marginal theology contained in its notes to international prominence and helped to shape not only the twentieth-century church, but also twentieth-century society and politics. That was no mean achievement, and if the story of The Scofield Reference Bible finished there, it would still be a story worth telling.

But the story does not end there, and while The Scofield Reference Bible may no longer be selling in the prodigious numbers it once did, its influence – both direct and indirect – is still felt in contemporary evangelicalism. Scofield and his notes have shaped the doctrinal basis of large swathes of evangelicalism. But equally profound has been the way in which Scofield's way of approaching Scripture has shaped the contours of evangelical thought."

I cannot agree with Mark Sweetnam's assessment that the theology of the Scofield Bible was previously considered somewhat marginal, but that is probably not a very important point anyway. What is important is that while Mangum and Sweetnam were somewhat critical of the Scofield Bible in certain aspects, they both seemed to consider it an extremely important work that has had a lasting impact in the world.

## Closing Remarks

Please understand that this program, 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.

You can find out everything that you need to know about the Thru the Bible program by visiting the [ttb.org](http://ttb.org) Website. You can also download the Thru the Bible app to your smartphone. All of the TTB broadcasts are available free of charge from many different sources. You can access the broadcasts from the TTB Website, from the TTB app, and from many other sources, including Podcast, YouTube, or from terrestrial radio broadcasts. The TTB audio broadcast is available in over 120 languages, so if you speak a different language as your heart language, they probably have a broadcast of TTB in your mother tongue. Just go to [ttb.org](http://ttb.org) for more info.

Dale Trussell, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021