

YAHWEH'S

The
HOLY BIBLE

CONTAINING THE
Old and New Testaments

BOOK

by
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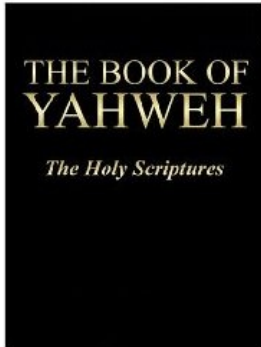
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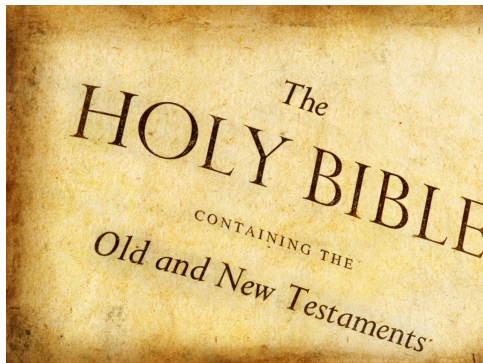
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Introduction



John Wimber, one of the founders of the Vineyard Movement, was not raised with a Christian influence in his life. He had never entered the doors of a church in his youth, never read a Bible, or heard one read. He was a keyboard player for a rock group in the early 1960s, when he was invited to attend a Bible study. He was so ignorant of Christianity that he has shared in his testimony about his incredulity when someone told him about the Bible. “God has a book out?”

I have been intrigued by the innocent and sincere surprise expressed by John Wimber at the discovery that God has given to mankind a book - His book. Those who have been raised in Christian homes, attended church services, or otherwise had some Christian influence growing up, often fail to comprehend the wonder of what God has done in providing for mankind a book. Think about it for a moment. The world is filled with books written by men, for men. Yet there is only one book written by God for men. The uniqueness and weightiness of this book is so extraordinary that men simply refer to it as “THE BOOK.” (The word Bible means “book.”) Some add to this description the word “Holy,” which means “sacred, set-apart, having a spiritually pure quality.”



There is truly no other book on earth like Yahweh’s book. It is THE Holy Book.

Another name given to this book which Yahweh has authored is the Scriptures. This too is often given the appellation “Holy.” The English word “Scriptures” comes from the Latin “scriptura” which means “writing.” Once again, we find that this is not just an ordinary writing. This book is referred to as THE Writings, THE Scriptures. This writing stands out among all other writings in the world. It alone is God’s tome, His authorship, the words of divinity recorded for mankind.

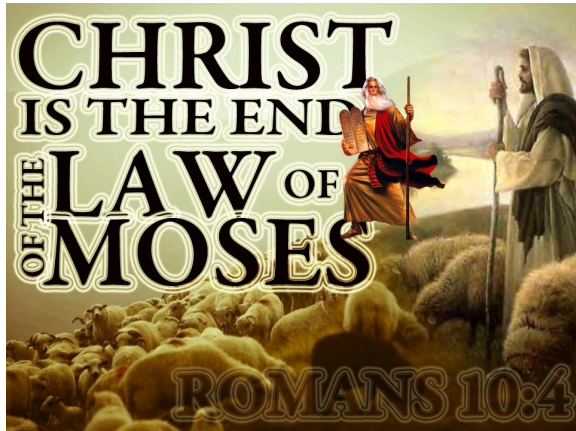
As a child I remember feeling something akin to the wonder expressed by John Wimber when he first was introduced to the Bible. When I was around ten years old I was given a small, brown, leather bound King James Bible. It had gold edges to the pages and a cloth book mark that was attached to the spine of the book. Opening the cover, there was a page to write your name. It said something like “This Bible belongs to _____.”

I remember my delight in being given this Bible as a child. I carried it with me every time we set out for church. The size of the book was diminutive, containing small print. It also contained marginal notes, and links to other Bible passages that were related. I treasured this Bible. It did not sit on a shelf collecting dust. I read it. I used it to conduct my own topical Bible studies. In my early teen years I was given a *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance to the Bible*, as well as a *Nave’s Topical Bible*, and a Bible dictionary. These books were my reference tools, but they were nothing without the Bible itself.

I remember the satisfaction I had as a youth carrying my Bible around. It was not a satisfaction that comes from showiness, for I was a very timid youth and it was only with great difficulty that I would tell a stranger that I was a Christian. Rather, my satisfaction came from the knowledge that I had God’s words in my possession. I could study these words to learn about God. I could find wisdom and understanding within the pages of this book. Wisdom and understanding were two things I zealously desired. Therefore, my Bible was exceedingly precious to me.

It has been more than four decades since I received my first Bible and I have remained an avid student of the Word of God. I have never lost my zeal to acquire wisdom and understanding, and I have discovered no other source equal to the Scriptures to fulfill my desire. I have learned much from the pages of scriptures in the past decades. I have also learned many things ABOUT this book. Most of my teachings focus on things I have learned from the content of the Bible as I have been instructed by the Holy Spirit. This writing series is different in that my goal is to set forth some of the things I have learned about this book that we call The Bible. It is an exemplary book; a remarkable book; a unique book. I hope that it might be to you as much of a treasure as it has been in my life.

The Two Covenants/Testaments



Moses and Yahshua - Two Covenants

The Christian Bible is divided into two sections. These sections are identified with two distinct covenants that Yahweh has made with mankind. These covenants are the old covenant of the Law delivered to Moses, and the new covenant of grace established through the blood of God's Son Yahshua. Most Bibles today use the word "Testament" instead of "Covenant" to describe the two divisions of the Scriptures. Both of these words are in various ways descriptive of the body of writings they pertain to, but they contain different shades of meaning. Discovering where the terms "New Covenant," and "New Testament" came from is helpful in order to understand how these terms differ.

The New Testament of the Bible was written in the Greek language. It has been translated into other languages, one of the earliest being Latin. In Luke's gospel, as well as the apostle Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth, we find a quotation of Christ where He utters the words "new covenant." These words were spoken during the last supper which Yahshua shared with His disciples prior to His crucifixion.

Luke 22:20

"This cup that is poured out for you is the *new covenant* in my blood."

I Corinthians 11:25

In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the *new covenant* in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The actual Greek language in which both Luke and Paul wrote uses the phrase "kaine diatheke." The Greek word *kaine* is defined as "new" while *diatheke* means "covenant." The word *diatheke* occurs 33 times in the New Testament. Following are some more examples.

II Corinthians 3:5-6

Our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a *new covenant*, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

II Corinthians 3:14-15

For to this day, when they read the *old covenant*, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away.

We see that the apostle Paul used the phrase “old covenant” to contrast the covenant of Law established under Moses with the “new covenant” established by Yahshua. In the Greek, the words “old covenant” appear as “palaia diatheke.” We see then that there is a solid justification for using the terms “Old Covenant” and “New Covenant” when referring to the two divisions of the holy Scriptures.

When the original Greek manuscripts which Paul and the gospel evangelists wrote were translated into Latin, these phrases became “Vetus Testamentum” and Novus Testamentum.” From there, somewhere around the year 1300 A.D. the Bible was again translated, this time from Latin to English. There were no ancient Greek manuscripts known, or available, to the English translators at the time. They had only Latin manuscripts, especially that which is called the Latin Vulgate, a translation attributed to Jerome who was commissioned by Pope Damasus I in 382 A.D. to create a revision of the Vetus Latina, which is an older Latin translation of the Bible. Thus, the first English translators were working from a translation of the Bible, rather than from the original manuscripts in their native languages. They were essentially translating a translation.

The Latin word Testamentum holds different meanings. One definition refers to a covenant, which is what the Greek word diatheke means. Another definition of Testamentum is “a will, or witness.” A will is also called a testament in English. A will provides a witness, or testimony, of a person’s final instructions to his heirs. When the Bible was first translated from Latin into English, the translators adopted the latter meaning, and adopted the English word Testament instead of the more accurate word Covenant.

There is some overlap between these English words, as one of the definitions of the word Testament is “covenant.” The word Testament, however, remains somewhat ambiguous, whereas the word Covenant conveys a greater clarity of meaning. To avoid confusion in the minds of the readers, I will be using the widely accepted word Testament when referring to the divisions of the Bible, rather than the word Covenant which I prefer. However, in this chapter I will use both terms in order to demonstrate the original use of the words.

Designating the two divisions of the Bible as the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is solidly supported in the Scriptures themselves. The apostle Paul gives further testimony in this matter.

Hebrews 8:8-9

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a *new covenant* with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.”

Paul is quoting the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah here (Jeremiah 31:31). We see that even the Old Testament writings made reference to a day when a New Covenant would be established between God and man. Paul additionally refers to the two covenants as the “first” and the “second” covenants.

Hebrews 8:7

For if that *first covenant* (word implied) had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a *second*.

From this citation we see that it was possible for the Bible divisions to have been designated the “First Covenant” and the “Second Covenant.” This, however, did not happen. The words “Old” and “New” are what have come down to us instead.

Hebrews 8:13

When He said, “A *new covenant*,” He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing *old* is ready to disappear.

In the verse above we see that the word “new” is attached to the word “covenant.” The parallel association is observed in the word “old” being used to describe the earlier covenant delivered to Moses.

It is the practice of some Christians to ONLY read the New Testament portions of Scriptures. They reason that this is the division of the Bible that applies to them for they are bound to God through the New Covenant, not the Old Covenant. Rejecting the Old Testament writings is misguided, however. Yahweh has preserved both divisions of the Scriptures for the body of Christ. Great wisdom and understanding are to be derived from both Testaments. Though Christ fulfilled the Old Covenant that He might establish the New, it would be folly to discard the history of Yahweh’s prior dealings with man. The New Testament flows out of the Old Testament. They both share the same divine authorship. All of the Scriptures are “Spirit-breathed.”

(**Note:** Some may object to the statement that the Old Covenant no longer has authority over those who are “in Christ.” It is beyond the scope of this book to address this matter. You will find the subject set forth with much clarity and a firm Scriptural foundation in the book *Laying Down the Law*.)

I have been as much a student of the Old Testament as I have of the New Testament. I perceive the voice of Yahweh speaking to me through both bodies of writing. I would not understand the New Testament nearly as well if I did not have the Old Testament to provide a foundation. Indeed, the New Testament quotes the Old Testament more than two hundred times, and makes allusions to the Old Testament in hundreds of more instances. Those who have calculated such things have stated that more than ten percent of the New Testament consists of direct quotations, or allusions, to the Old Testament.

Perhaps I should already have defined the word *covenant*. The English word *covenant* shares a similar root with the word *convene*, which is defined as “to come together.” A covenant is Yahweh’s means of bringing man back into relationship with Himself after a separation occurred due to sin. In both the Old and New Covenants, blood played a central role in bridging the separation that existed between man and his Creator. The Bible tells us that “the soul who sins must die” (Old Testament), and “the wages of sin is death” (New Testament).

Under the Old Covenant, Yahweh permitted another creature to die in the place of man, so that man might live. The blood of bulls, goats, sheep, and birds served as substitutions, paying the penalty for the sins of man. Yet, these offerings had to be made year after year.

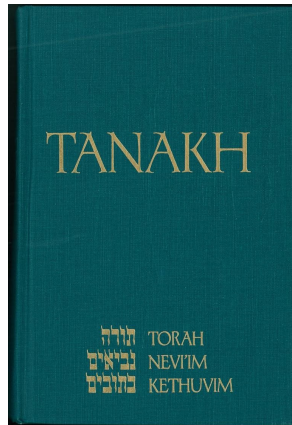
Under the New Covenant, Yahweh sent His Son to die in the place of man that mankind might live. Yahshua's sacrifice was perfect. It needed to be offered only once. All humanity's sins were borne on the cross by the Son of God. Christ brought God and man into oneness, no longer separated by sin. This is the meaning of atonement (at-onement). We could say that Christ "convened" a meeting between God and man. He did so by means of establishing a "covenant" through His blood.

(Note: The word "atonement" was created by William Tyndale when he translated the Bible into English around the year 1526. Tyndale recognized that there was no English word that fully described the act of Christ to reconcile God to man by paying the penalty of sin, while also providing a merciful covering for man that he might stand in the presence of God without shame. Tyndale coined the word "atonement" to describe the work of Christ in reuniting man to his Creator.)

The subject of covenants is so central to the Bible, that we find that its two divisions are properly referred to as the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. The Bible presents two primary covenants that Yahweh has made with mankind. These covenants are designed to bring God and man together. In this we can see the shared origin of the words "covenant" and "convene." Covenants bring disparate parties together, thereby convening them. In the case of the Biblical covenants, the two parties involved are God and man.

The Bible is an amazing book. It alone reveals the history of man and his Creator, the fall of man into sin, and separation from God. The Bible does not leave man in this forsaken condition, however. It reveals all that Yahweh has done to restore the breach that sin had created. We see the first Covenant that served as an interim measure until the fulness of time should arrive when Yahweh would send His Son into the earth. Thus, in the Bible, we have been provided with the supremely important testimony of God's two covenants with man.

The Tanakh



In the previous chapter it was observed that the Bible is a book of covenants. Though we read about multiple covenants established between God and man in the Bible, two of these covenants predominate; an older covenant established by Moses at Mount Sinai, and a new covenant established by Yahshua on Mount Calvary. F.F. Bruce, in his book *The Canon of Scripture*, affirms the covenantal aspect of the Bible.

In the earliest books of the Old Testament God makes a covenant with Noah and his descendants (Gen. 9:8-17), and again with Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 15:18; 17:1-4). The external token of the covenant with Noah was the rainbow; the external token of the covenant with Abraham was the rite of circumcision. Later, when Abraham's descendants (or at least one important group of them) had migrated to Egypt and were drafted into forced labour gangs there, God remembered his covenant with Abraham and brought about their deliverance.

*Having left Egypt under the leadership of Moses, they were constituted a nation in the wilderness of Sinai. Their national constitution took the form of a covenant into which the God of their fathers entered with them, making himself known to them by his name Yahweh. The terms of this covenant were very simple, 'I will be your God, and you shall be my people.' Yahweh undertook to make various kinds of provision for them; they undertook to worship him exclusively and to obey his commandments. These undertakings were recorded in a document called '**the book of the covenant**.' According to the narrative of Exodus 24:4-8,*

*"Moses wrote all the words of Yahweh. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to Yahweh. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took **the book of the covenant**, and he read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, 'All that Yahweh has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.' And Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people, and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant which Yahweh has made with you in accordance with all these words.'"*

This narrative is summarized in the New Testament, in Hebrews 9:18-20, where the covenant thus ratified is qualified as 'the first covenant.' This is because the writer to the Hebrews sets it in

contrast with the 'new covenant' promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Over six hundred years after the ratification of the covenant of Moses' day at the foot of Mount Sinai, the prophet Jeremiah announced that, in the days to come, the God of Israel would establish a new covenant with his people to replace that which he had made with the Exodus generation when he 'took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt' (Jer. 31:31-34). That ancient covenant made the divine will plain to them, but did not impart the power to carry it out; for lack of that power they broke the covenant. Under the new covenant, however, not only the desire but the power to do the will of God would be imparted to his people: his law would be put within them and written on their hearts. 'In speaking of a new covenant,' says the writer to the Hebrews, 'he treats the first as obsolete' (Hebrews 8:13). And he leaves no doubt that the new covenant has already been established, ratified not by the blood of sacrificed animals but by the blood of Christ, a sacrifice which effects not merely external purification from ritual defilement but the inward cleansing of the conscience from guilt.

This interpretation of the promise of the new covenant is fully in line with Jesus' own words. During the evening before his death, sitting with his disciples round the supper-table, he gave them bread and wine as memorials of himself. When he gave them the wine, according to Mark's record, he said, 'This is my blood of the covenant (my covenant blood), which is poured out for many' (Mark 14:24). The echo of Moses' words, 'Behold the blood of the covenant...', can scarcely be missed...

*Each of these covenants - the ancient covenant of Sinai and the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus - launched a great spiritual movement. Each of these movements gave rise to a special body of literature, and these bodies of literature came to be known in the Christian church as **'the books of the ancient covenant'** and **'the books of the new covenant.'** The former collection came into being over a period of a thousand years or more; the latter collection has a more inaugural character. Its various parts were written within a century from the establishment of the new covenant; they may be regarded as the foundation documents of Christianity. It was not until the end of the second century AD that the two collections began to be described, briefly, as the **Old Covenant** (or Testament) and the **New Covenant** (or Testament).*

[The Canon of Scripture, F.F. Bruce; Emphasis Added]

Many parallels can be observed between the covenant established by Moses and the covenant established by Yahshua. Even as Moses took the blood of the sacrifice and threw it upon the people, sealing the covenant in blood, we find a parallel event in the establishment of Christ's covenant.

Matthew 27:24-25

And when Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves." And all the people answered and said, **"His blood be on us and on our children!"**

Moses described the words that Yahweh has entrusted to him as "the book of the covenant." Today, we can aptly describe the Bible as "the book of the covenants." The Bible is divided into two sections of writings. It contains the books of the ancient covenant (The Old Testament), and the books of the new covenant (The New Testament).

In this chapter, I want to pay particular attention to the books of the ancient covenant, that which Christians today commonly call the Old Testament. These books were delivered to the descendants of Abraham, the Hebrew people. Many Christians are surprised to learn that the Scriptures used by the Hebrews in the time of Christ did not contain 39 books as are found in the Old Testament of our Bibles today. Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian writing in the first century A.D. stated that the Jews had only 22 books of sacred writings.

*For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, **but only twenty-two books**, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life.*

[Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*]

The Scriptures that Yahshua and His disciples used in their day included only 22 books. Christians should not be alarmed at this, however, for these 22 books contained all of the writings that comprise the Old Testament of their Bibles today. The books were merely arranged differently. This was no doubt in part due to the fact that writing at the time was done primarily on scrolls of animal skin, or papyrus. Many of the Old Testament books are small, and it would have been prohibitively expensive to create an individual scroll for each prophet's writing. Therefore, certain books were combined into a single scroll. Following is a listing of how the Jews of Yahshua's day divided their holy writings.

- **The Law:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy: 5 books
- **The Prophets:** Joshua, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah-Lamentations, Ezekiel, The book of the twelve (Hosea to Malachi): 7 books
- **The Writings:** Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth-Judges, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles: 10 books

You can see by this list, that many books that are listed separately in Bibles today were formerly combined. I and II Samuel were one book. I and II Kings were one book. I and II Chronicles were one book. Jeremiah and Lamentations were combined as one book. Ruth and Judges were one book. Ezra and Nehemiah were one book. Then there were the twelve books of the minor prophets (Hosea to Malachi) which were all combined into one book which was referred to as "The Twelve."

There were other reasons that the Jews numbered their holy writings as 22, besides cost and the convenience of combining multiple books on a single scroll. In a writing titled *The Book of Jubilees*, found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, some Jewish teachers set forth the theological underpinning for this number. They wrote:

God made 22 things on the six days of creation. These 22 events paralleled the 22 generations from Adam to Jacob, the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and the 22 books of the Holy Scripture.

Jewish scholar Sixtus Senensis, who lived in the 16th century, emphasized the importance of this matter.

As with the Hebrew there are twenty-two letters, in which all that can be said and written is comprehended, so there are twenty-two books in which are contained all that can be known and uttered of divine things.

It should be noted that modern copies of the Tanakh usually contain 24 books. This number has been arrived at by separating Jeremiah and Lamentations into two books, and dividing Ruth and Judges into separate books.

The Hebrews not only had a different number of books in their Scriptures, they also arranged their books differently than the order found in a modern Bible. The Jews organized their sacred writings as:

The Law - Torah

The Prophets - Neviim

The Writings - Kethuvim

The first letter of the words Torah, Neviim, and Kethuvim (TNK) are combined to form the word Tanakh, which is the name employed by the Jews to refer to the Old Testament.



The Hebrew Tanakh begins the same way as the Christian Old Testament, placing the five books of Moses at the front, and in chronological order. As we see in the anagram Tanakh, these five books are referred to as the Torah. The word Torah is often translated as “Law,” but it may more accurately be defined as “teaching,” or “instruction.” The word Torah is used inconsistently as a reference to divine writings. At times just the Law of Moses is referred to as the Torah. Sometimes the entire Hebrew Old Testament is referred to as the Torah. Its more specific application however, is when it is used in reference to the five books of Moses.

Christian scholars often prefer the Greek word Pentateuch over the word Torah. Pentateuch means “five books.” This term may have first been used in Alexandria, Egypt, among Hellenistic Jews (Jews who had embraced the Greek culture and language).

Another difference between the Hebrew Scriptures, and their Christian counterparts is observed in the names assigned to the books. The Jews do not refer to the books of Moses as Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Instead, they are called Bereshith (Bereshit), Shemoth (Shemot), Wayyiqra (Vayikra), Bemidbar, and Debarim (Devarim). Each of these book names in the Hebrew Scriptures are derived from the opening statement of their corresponding writings.

Genesis/Bereshith 1:1

In the beginning (bereshith) Elohim created the heavens and the earth.

The Hebrew word bereshith means “in the beginning.”

Exodus/Shemoth 1:1

And these are the *names* (shemoth) of the children of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each one with his household.

The Hebrew word shemoth means “names.”

Leviticus/Wayyiqra 1:1

And Yahweh spoke unto Moses, *and he called* (wayyiqra) to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying,

The Hebrew word wayyiqra means “and he called.”

Numbers/Bemidbar 1:1

And Yahweh spoke to Moses *in the Wilderness* (bemidbar) of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying,

The Hebrew word bemidbar means “in the wilderness.”

Deuteronomy/Debarim 1:1

These are the *words* (debarim) which Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness, in the desert plain opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel and Laban and Hazeroth and Dizahab.

The Hebrew word debarim means “words.”

If we were to literally carry the Hebrew names for these books into English, we would refer to the first five books of the Old Testament as:

In the Beginning

Names

And He Called

In the Wilderness

Words

The English word Genesis associated with the first book of the Bible means “Beginning.” We can therefore see some correspondence between the Hebrew and Christian naming conventions for the first book of the Bible. We see no correspondence between Names/Exodus, And He Called/Leviticus, In the Wilderness/Numbers, or Words/Deuteronomy. How then did our Bibles come to bear these book names?

The Christian names for these books are derived from the Greek Septuagint. The Septuagint was a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. A group of 72 Jewish scholars translated their

Hebrew Scriptures into Greek in the 2nd century B.C.. These Jewish scholars, working in Alexandria, Egypt where there was a large community of Jewish believers, chose names for the five books of Moses that reflected the theme of each book. In the Greek Septuagint, the first five books were titled as follows:

Genesis: "origin"

Exodos: "going out"

Leuitikos: "relating to the Levites"

Arithmoi: contains a record of the numbering of the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai and later on the plain of Moab.

Deuteronomion: "second law," refers to the fifth book's repetition of the commandments reviewed by Moses before his death.

It is easy to see in these Greek names how the English titles of the five books of Moses were arrived at in our Christian Bibles today.

The Tanakh follows the five books of Moses (the Torah) with the Neviim, or the Prophets. Included in these books are Ruth-Judges, Samuel (which includes I Samuel and II Samuel as a single book), and Kings (I and II Kings as one book). We may not think of these books as belonging to the prophets, though Samuel was certainly a prophet. Yet, the ancient Hebrews categorized them this way.

In modern versions of the Tanakh, the Neviim contains 8 books, often informally divided into two subdivisions; the Earlier Prophets, and the Later Prophets. The first four prophetic books lean more toward historical accounts, and the latter prophetic books are characterized by the declaration of numerous prophecies. Joshua, Judges-Ruth, Samuel, and Kings comprise the four early Prophetic books, while Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and The Twelve (the twelve minor prophets) comprise the latter group of four.

One may wonder why Kings is in the group known as Neviim, but Chronicles is not, for both of these books are very similar in content and cover the same time period. One of the widely accepted theories on this peculiarity is that Chronicles was adopted into the canon of Hebrew Scripture much later than the other books of the Prophets. Therefore, it was placed as the very last book of the Tanakh. This was evidently the arrangement of the books in Christ's day. F.F. Bruce provides the following argument in support of this view.

*There is evidence that Chronicles was the last book in the Hebrew Bible as Jesus knew it. When he said that the generation he addressed would be answerable for 'the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world,' he added, 'from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary' (Luke 11:50f.). Abel is the first martyr in the Bible (Gen. 4:8); Zechariah is most probably the son of Jehoiada, who was stoned to death 'in the court of Yahweh's house' because, speaking by the Spirit of God, he rebuked the king and people of Judah for transgressing the divine commandments (2 Chron. 24:20-22). Zechariah (c 800 BC) was not **chronologically** the last faithful prophet to die as a martyr; some two centuries later a prophet named Uriah was put to death in Jerusalem because his witness was unacceptable to king Jehoiakim*

(Jer. 26:20-23). But Zechariah is **canonically** the last faithful prophet to die as a martyr, because his death is recorded in Chronicles, the last book of the Hebrew Bible.

[*The Canon of Scripture*, F.F. Bruce]

That Chronicles was adopted into the canon of Hebrew Scripture last of all the books, explains why it appears at the end of the Tanakh where it is chronologically out of order, as well as providing some explanation of why it does not appear in the same group as Samuel and Kings.

Another oddity is that Daniel, who was surely one of the great prophets of the Old Testament, is not listed among the Neviim - the Prophets. Instead, the book of Daniel is found among the Kethubim - The writings. It would seem that Daniel has far more in common with writings such as Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah than with Psalms, Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes. Nevertheless, the ancient Hebrews placed Daniel among these latter books.

Some have observed a parallel between the divisions of the Tanakh and the New Testament. The New Testament begins with five historical books that correspond to the Pentateuch. These are the four gospels and the book of Acts. These are followed by the apostolic epistles which can be compared to the writings of the Old Testament prophets. Closing out the New Testament is the book of Revelation, which forms a parallel to The Writings. Indeed, there is great similarity between the book of Daniel in The Writings and the John's apocalyptic vision.

The number three is full of divine importance. It seems fitting that both the Old and New Testaments lend themselves so naturally to three divisions. E. W. Bullinger, in his insightful book *Number in Scripture*, shares the following about the number three.

THREE

In this number we have quite a new set of phenomena. We come to the first geometrical figure. Two straight lines cannot possibly enclose any space, or form a plane figure; neither can two plan surfaces form a solid. Three lines are necessary to form a plan figure; and three dimensions of length, breadth, and height, are necessary to form a solid. Hence three is the symbol of the cube--the simplest form of solid figure. As two is the symbol of the square, or plane contents (x2), so three is the symbol of the cube, or solid contents (x3).

Three, therefore, stands for that which is solid, real, substantial, complete, and entire.

All things that are specially complete are stamped with this number three.

God's attributes are three: omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence.

There are three great divisions completing time--past, present, and future.

Three persons, in grammar, express and include all the relationships of mankind.

Thought, word, and deed, complete the sum of human capability.

Three degrees of comparison complete our knowledge of qualities.

The simplest proposition requires three things to complete it; viz., the subject, the predicate, and the copula.

Three propositions are necessary to complete the simplest form of argument--the major premiss, the minor, and the conclusion.

Three kingdoms embrace our ideas of matter--mineral, vegetable, and animal.

When we turn to the Scriptures, this completion becomes Divine, and marks Divine completeness or perfection.

Three is the first of four perfect numbers (see p. 23).

Three denotes divine perfection;
Seven denotes spiritual perfection;
Ten denotes ordinal perfection; and
Twelve denotes governmental perfection.

Hence the number three points us to what is real, essential, perfect, substantial, complete, and Divine.

[Emphasis Added]

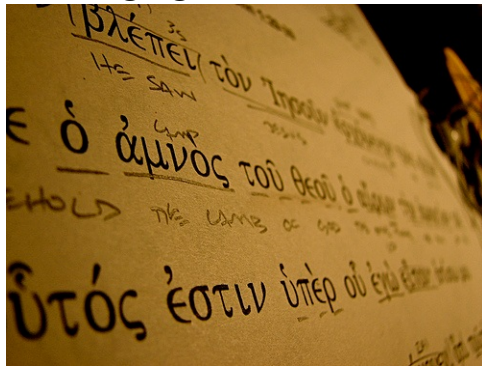
The Bible is a divine book. God is the author of the Scriptures. It is difficult to imagine a perfect, all-wise and all-powerful God delivering to mankind anything that was not perfect and complete. The Jews traditionally numbered the divine writings as 22 in total, while the Christian Bible contains 66 books (3 times 22).

Though the ancient Jews had reasons to defend their sacred books as 22 in total, the Christian Bible contains the same material divided into 39 books. Some Christians have remarked on the symmetry found in the Christian divisions of the Old Testament.

The Christian Old Testament (Perfect Symmetry)						
17 Books of History			5 Books of Wisdom and Poetry	17 Books of Prophecy		
5 Law (Torah)	12 Books of History			5 Major Prophets	12 Books of Prophecy	
	9 Pre-Exilic History	3 Post-Exilic			9 Pre-Exilic Prophecy	3 Post-Exilic

We see once more the stamp of the number three. There are 17 books of history, 5 books of wisdom, and 17 books of prophecy. Whether one embraces the Christian divisions of the writings of the Old Testament, or the Hebrew divisions of the Tanakh, it is a book of divine perfection.

The Languages of the Bible



A story is told about the first woman governor of the state of Texas, Miriam Amanda (Ma) Ferguson, who was elected to office in 1924. A debate was raging in Texas as to whether children immigrating from Mexico should receive public education courses in their native language of Spanish. Reports of the event state that Ma Ferguson brought a hasty end to the debate when she held up a Bible and declared, *"If the King's English was good enough for Jesus Christ, it's good enough for the children of Texas!"*

I have found that many Christians are confused about the languages that the people in the Bible spoke, as well as the languages in which the Scriptures were written. As a youth I was aware that the Bible was written in different languages. I had a Strong's Concordance that I began using before I was a teenager. At that age I sometimes had trouble remembering which Testament of the Bible was written in Hebrew and which one was written in Greek. Later I also learned that parts of the Bible were written in Aramaic. I had no idea what Aramaic was, or who spoke it, for churches do not typically teach such things to their members. The subject of Biblical languages is not difficult to understand. I believe following the history of God's people makes the subject of Bible languages easy to comprehend.

When Yahweh first created mankind, there was only one language. We are not told what language Adam and Eve spoke. I have heard some suggest that it was Hebrew, but I am not persuaded by the arguments. (You may understand my objections after reading more on the history of the Hebrew language.) For the first 1500 years of mankind's existence all humanity spoke the same language. It was after the flood of Noah that Yahweh confused the speech of man. After the flood men began to multiply. Yahweh had instructed them to scatter across the earth, but man disobeyed. They congregated at Babel where they attempted to build a great city and a tower to reach to the heavens.

Genesis 11:6-9

And Yahweh said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." So Yahweh scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there Yahweh confused the language of the whole earth; and from there Yahweh scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

From this time onward mankind was divided into people groups based upon the languages that they spoke. This was the beginning of the various “tongues and tribes and nations” of mankind.

To grasp well the history of Bible languages, a very good place to start is with Abram/Abraham. When Yahweh chose a specific people to be His unique possession in the earth, He began by calling forth one man to be the head and progenitor of this people. This man was Abraham.

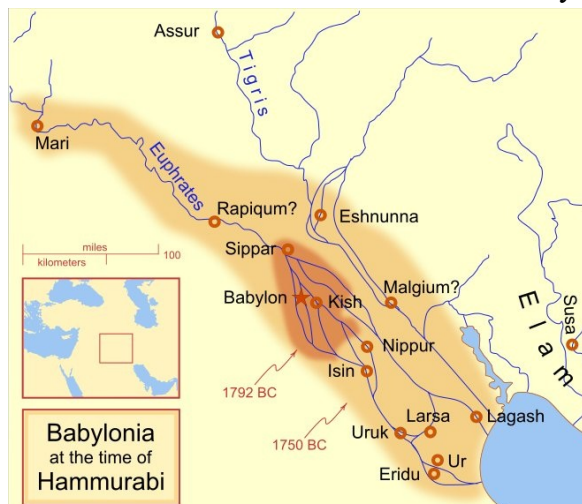
We know that Abraham’s descendants are identified as Hebrews. The Hebrews are a distinct race of people, all descending from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Yet many Christians are stumped when asked what people group Abraham belonged to before Yahweh called him. Abraham wasn’t always a Hebrew. He belonged to one of the major families of mankind. The Bible tells us plainly which one.

Deuteronomy 26:5

And you shall answer and say before Yahweh your God, “***My father was a wandering Aramean,*** and he went down to Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; but there he became a great, mighty and populous nation.”

Yes, Abraham was formerly an Aramean. He lived among the descendants of Aram. The language these people spoke was Aramaic. Aramaic is not one single language, but it is a family of languages. As often occurs, a people who speak one language become fragmented. In their isolation from other groups who speak the same language, differences begin to enter in. New words are adopted. Various expressions become unique to one people group. At times even the alphabet and spelling of words may change. If the differences in these related languages are relatively minor, they are referred to as dialects. However, if the changes are such that others who speak the original language can no longer understand the evolved speech of a group of people, the dialect may be referred to as a distinct language.

Hebrew, Syriac, and Phoenician are all Aramaic languages. Abraham was born around the year 2,000 B.C.. He lived for 175 years, which places him about a century before Hammurabi. As previously mentioned, Abraham was born into the people of Aram. The Arameans settled along the Euphrates River in an area that became known as Babylonia.



You will notice a city down toward the bottom of the map that is named Ur. The Bible declares Ur to be the ancestral home of Abraham.

Genesis 11:27-28

Now these are the records of the generations of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran became the father of Lot. And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans.

Because the Arameans were not the only family of people to dwell in this area, Aramaic was not the exclusive language spoken. Another common language in Babylonia in the time of Abraham and his forefathers was Akkadian. During a period of about a thousand years from the time of Abraham until the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods (934 B.C. - 539 B.C.), a great influx of Arameans came into this area. Consequently Aramaic became the common language of the land. It was during the Neo-Babylonian period around 600 B.C., that Judah was led away into Babylonian captivity. Daniel was carried into Babylon during this time, so it is not surprising that portions of the book of Daniel were written in Aramaic, rather than Hebrew. The book of Ezra was also written during the time of the Babylonian exile and the Jews return from Babylon. It too contains sections that were written in Aramaic. Of approximately 23,000 verses in the Old Testament, roughly 250 of them are written in Aramaic. The remainder are written in Hebrew.

If we follow the life of Abraham, we can readily identify the languages of the Old Testament. Abraham was an Aramean who spoke Aramaic. Abraham was directed by Yahweh to leave the land of his forefathers and travel to a far distant land. Over time, as Abraham's descendants dwelt in the land of Canaan where they were cut off from other speakers of Aramaic, their speech began to change. The influence of the Canaanite languages had an impact on the language of the Hebrew descendants of Abraham. As time passed the language spoken by the Hebrew people in Canaan became so distinct that Aramaic and Hebrew were considered separate languages.

We see evidence of the profound changes that occurred in the Hebrew's speech in an account found in the book of II Kings. About 1300 years after Abraham's descendants had been dwelling in Canaan, King Sennacherib of Assyria laid siege to Jerusalem in the days of King Hezekiah. Sennacherib's commander, the Rabshakeh, came out to speak to the Jews, taunting them. The Rabshakeh spoke openly in Hebrew, taunting the people of Jerusalem. One of Hezekiah's ministers urged the Rabshakeh to speak to Hezekiah's servants in Aramaic, for the common people of Judea no longer understood the language.























II Kings 18:26

Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, Shebna, and Joah said to the Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; and do not speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people who are on the wall."

The speech of Abraham's descendants was still considered an Aramaic language in Hezekiah's day, but we see that it had become so differentiated from the Aramaic of the land of Assyria and Babylon that most of the Hebrews could no longer understand Aramaic. A century after this, the Jews were taken captive into the land of Babylon. There they were once more subjected to the Aramaic

language. It became a matter of necessity for the Jews to speak Aramaic so that they could dwell in Babylon, conduct business, and converse with their Babylonian neighbors. Consequently, when the Jews returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile they were now speaking Aramaic. While in Babylon, the Jews also abandoned the Paleo Hebrew alphabet and adopted the Aramaic square script.

Paleo-Hebrew (Ugaritic) Script

	Aleph - Ox (A)		Lamed - Ox-goad (L)
	Beth - Tent (B,V)		Mem - Water (M)
	Gimel - Camel (G, GH)		Nun - Fish (N)
	Daleth - Door (D)		Samekh - Prop (S)
	Heh - Window (H)		Ayin - Eye (Aa)
	Vav - Stake (U,V,W)		Peh - Mouth (P, Ph)
	Zain - Sword (Z)		Tzaddi - Fishhook (Tz)
	Cheth - Window (Ch)		Qoph - Ear (Q)
	Teth - Serpent (T)		Resh - Head (R)
	Yod - Hand (I,Y,J)		Shin - Tooth (Sh)
	Kaph - Palm (K,Kh)		Tau - Cross (Th)

The alphabet above would have been familiar to the inhabitants of Canaan during the time Joshua led the Israelites in to conquer the land, circa 1,500 B.C..

Aramaic (Square) Script or Biblical Hebrew

	Aleph - Ox (A)		Lamed - Ox-goad (L)
	Beth - Tent (B,V)		Mem - Water (M)
	Gimel - Camel (G, GH)		Nun - Fish (N)
	Daleth - Door (D)		Samekh - Prop (S)
	Heh - Window (H)		Ayin - Eye (Aa)
	Vav - Stake (U,V,W)		Peh - Mouth (P, Ph)
	Zain - Sword (Z)		Tzaddi - Fishhook (Tz)
	Cheth - Fence (Ch)		Qoph - Ear (Q)
	Teth - Serpent (T)		Resh - Head (R)
	Yod - Hand (I,Y,J)		Shin - Tooth (Sh)
	Kaph - Palm (K,Kh)		Tau - Cross (Th)

The Alphabet above is what the Jewish people adopted while in Babylonian captivity around 600 B.C.. This shows how much a single language can change over the course of time. While the Jewish people were dwelling in Babylon, Aramaic became the every day language of the Hebrews in exile. Aramaic remained the common language of the Jews in what is referred to as “the Second Temple Period.” This time spanned between 539 B.C. when the Jews returned from Babylon, and 70 A.D. when the Temple was destroyed, along with Jerusalem, by the Roman General Titus. These years fully encompassed the life and ministry of Christ in Judea. That Christ and His disciples spoke

Aramaic is evident from the New Testament Scriptures. The following verses all include examples of Yahshua speaking in Aramaic.

Mark 5:41

And taking the child by the hand, He said to her, "***Talitha kum!***" (which translated means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!").

Mark 7:31-34

And again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis. And they brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they entreated Him to lay His hand upon him. And He took him aside from the multitude by himself, and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue with the saliva; and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He said to him, "***Ephphatha!***" that is, "Be opened!"

Mark 15:34

And at the ninth hour Yahshua cried out with a loud voice, "***Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?***" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Notwithstanding Ma Ferguson's claim that the Son of God spoke "the King's English," we observe that Christ was speaking a very different language. As one might anticipate, when the Jews returned to the land of Israel after their sojourning in Babylon, the Aramaic they spoke once again began to differentiate itself from that which was spoken elsewhere. Over time it once more became distinct so that in the time of Christ the speech of the Jews was again referred to as Hebrew. Many language scholars, however, believe it is more accurate to describe the language spoken by the Judeans of Christ's day as "the Aramaic vernacular (or dialect) of the Jews."

This brings us now to the third and final language of the Bible, Koine Greek. The word "Koine" means "common." In the time of Christ, Judea lay under the power of the Roman Empire. The Greek Empire preceded Rome, spreading across many of the same lands that Rome would eventually conquer. As the Greek Empire spread, the Greek language went with it. When Rome supplanted Greece, the Greek language had already become entrenched. It had become the lingua franca of the day. (Lingua franca is defined as "a language systematically used to make communication possible between people not sharing a mother tongue.") The Greek language tied together people groups from all around the Mediterranean. This included the Jewish people who continued speaking Hebrew/Aramaic, while also learning Greek.

Hebrew/Aramaic was the native language spoken by the Jewish people in the time of Christ. However, many Jews were polyglots, that is to say, they spoke multiple languages. By adopting Greek as a second language, or even a primary language, the various people groups of the Roman Empire were able to communicate with one another. Although no portion of the Bible was originally written in Latin, it too was a common language in Christ's day, and many Jews would have been familiar with it. Latin was the language of Italy where the city of Rome was located. Although Rome acquiesced by embracing Greek as the common language of the Empire, Latin remained the official language of Rome. This explains why Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea, chose Latin as one of

the languages to inscribe his message above the head of Christ.

John 19:19-20

And it was written, "YAHSHUA THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS." Therefore this inscription many of the Jews read, for the place where Yahshua was crucified was near the city; and **it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and in Greek.**



Inscription written first in Hebrew/Aramaic, Latin, then Greek.

Christ and His disciples undoubtedly spoke Aramaic with one another. There are many evidences of this found throughout the New Testament. Continuously, Aramaic words are inserted into the text of the New Testament. Following are a few examples of Aramaic words that are found in our Bibles today.

Abba - meaning "father."

Raca - meaning "empty head" or "fool."

Mammon - meaning "material wealth" or "greed."

Rabboni - meaning "master."

In the New Testament which was written in Koine Greek, the word for "Aramaic" is never used to describe the speech of the people of Israel. Instead, the Greek word "Hebraisti" is used to denote the language of the Jews in the time of Christ and the apostles. Nevertheless, some Bible translations render "Hebraisti" as *Aramaic* rather than *Hebrew*, for the language of the Jews was truly a dialect of Aramaic. Following is an example of the differences one might find in various Bibles.

John 19:16-17

And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the **Hebrew** Golgotha:

KJV

John 19:16-17

So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in **Aramaic** is called Golgotha.

English Standard Version

To summarize, the entire Bible was written by descendants of Abraham. Thus, the languages of

Abraham's descendants were employed to write the Scriptures. Abraham was an Aramean. He was born into a nation of people who spoke Aramaic. When Abraham was called to leave his father's house and travel to Canaan, he took the Aramaic language with him.

Over the course of centuries, isolated from their Aramean forebears, the language of the descendants of Abraham began to change until it was unrecognizable to those who spoke Aramean. The language the Hebrew people spoke was identified as their own language, being called Hebrew.

When the Jewish people were taken back to the land of their forebears, being led into captivity in Babylon, they were once more introduced to Aramaic. In Babylon the Jews adopted the Aramaic language and Alphabet, and upon their return to Judea they took Aramaic with them. Aramaic remained the language of the Jewish people until the time of Christ, though it once more began to differentiate from the Aramaic of other people groups. Thus, the language of the Jews in Christ's day is interchangeably called both Hebrew and Aramaic.

The vast majority of the Old Testament is written in Hebrew, with less than 2% of its text being written originally in Aramaic. When Jerusalem and Judea fell under the rule of Greece, and later of Rome, they were introduced to the Greek language. Many Jews were multi-lingual, speaking both their native Hebrew tongue as well as Greek. This proved very helpful when the disciples of Christ were commissioned to take the gospel to the nations. Since the Jews were familiar with Greek, and it was the lingua franca of the Roman Empire, the New Testament was written in Greek and spread rapidly.

We understand, therefore, that the Bible was NOT written in English. It was written in ancient languages known unto the descendants of Abraham, the wandering Aramean.

The Manuscripts of the Bible



Dead Sea Scrolls - Isaiah Scroll

The followers of Yahshua owe a great debt to the Hebrew people. The Bible exists because Yahweh inspired Hebrew men to record His words for mankind. Although the Bible has One primary Author, that being the Spirit of God, it has numerous human authors. We are told in the Scriptures that Yahweh's Spirit inspired holy men of old to record His words. These men were all Jews. The apostle Paul affirms this in his epistle to the Romans.

Romans 3:1-2

Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.

The word "oracle" may be unfamiliar to modern believers. In the day in which Paul wrote, the word "oracle" was well understood. Temples were built for the various Greek and Roman deities, serving as centers of worship for these pagan gods and goddesses. It was common to appoint an individual at these temples to hold a sacred role as the spokesperson, or mouthpiece, of the deity. People would come from far and wide to inquire of these individuals. They were even sought out by the rulers of nations who hoped to receive counsel from the gods. These temple servants who spoke for the deity were referred to as "oracles." Somewhat confusingly, the words they spoke were also referred to as "oracles."

Yahweh has appointed oracles to speak His words as well. We recognize these individuals today more readily as "prophets." Moses is declared to be a prophet. He is also said to have been entrusted with the oracles of God.

Acts 7:37-38

"This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, 'God shall raise up for you **a prophet** like me from your brethren.' This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and who was with our fathers; and **he received living oracles to pass on to you.**"

The manner in which Yahweh moved upon these men to proclaim His words is aptly defined by the word "inspiration." The apostle Paul attests to the Bible being written through means of men being *inspired* by the Spirit of God.

II Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness...

The word “inspiration” came into English via the Latin word *inspirare* which means “inflame; blow into.” This is an interesting derivation. One can imagine a man sitting by a small stack of kindling that is smoldering. In an attempt to get the material to combust, to erupt into flames, he would blow upon it. Suddenly flames would appear, light and heat would be produced, as the breath of man exhaled upon the material caused it to ignite. Even as the breath of man “inspires” a fire to burst forth, so too does the breath of Yahweh inflame the soul of man.

One can readily see the similarity between the words “spirit” and “inspiration.” Throughout the Bible words for breath and wind are commonly used to describe both the spirit of man and the Spirit of God. On the day of Pentecost in the book of Acts, there was a sound as of a mighty, rushing wind. Then tongues of fire appeared over the heads of the 120 individuals gathered in obedience to Yahshua’s command. These individuals were “inspired.” The Spirit came upon them and manifested as tongues of flame above their heads.

A prophet can aptly be described as a man set aflame by the Spirit of God. Jeremiah used a term related to fire to describe the sensation of containing the words of God within his being.

Jeremiah 20:9

But if I say, "I will not remember Him or speak anymore in His name," then in my heart ***it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones***; And I am weary of holding it in, and I cannot endure it.

I believe what Jeremiah described in these words was the common experience of many prophets. When the Holy Spirit moved upon them, the words of God would be like a fire within them seeking to erupt. The divine breath seeks a way to be expressed, to go forth as a purifying flame altering everything that it touches.

Isaiah 55:11

So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

When Yahweh set forth to deliver to mankind a book of divine authorship, He sent His Spirit upon appointed men who acted as conduits of His words. These “oracles,” or “prophets,” were borne along with the Spirit who entrusted to them the message of Yahweh.

II Peter 1:21

For no prophecy ever originated because some man willed it [to do so - it never came by human impulse], but men spoke from God who were borne along (moved and impelled) by the Holy Spirit. [Amplified Bible]

We can be sure when Moses set out in obedience to Yahweh to write the first five books of the Old Testament, that his writings were marked with the breath of God. These were divine writings, and

the message of Yahweh was communicated faithfully. This is true of all of the writings contained in the Bible and designated as holy Scriptures. The most recent of these anointed writings are nearly 2,000 years old, and the oldest of them are about 3,500 years removed from this present day. Understandably, none of the original autographs of these “holy prophets” (Luke 1:70) remain to this day. The animal skins, papyrus, or other material upon which the Scriptures were written were subject to decay, destruction, and loss.

The Hebrew people who were entrusted with the words of God placed great emphasis upon maintaining the holy writings. A group of men were assigned the task of safeguarding the divine words, of making new copies of the Scriptures when the existing ones began to show wear. These men were known as scribes.

The Bible itself does not set forth any instructions for scribes to follow, but the Jewish people developed elaborate instructions to guard against the encroachment of any aberration into the word of Yahweh. In the Talmud (writings of Jewish civil and religious law) we find some of the earliest recorded instructions to scribes.

*A synagogue scroll must be written on the skins of clean animals, prepared for the particular use of the synagogue of the Jew. These must be fastened together with strings taken from clean animals. Every skin must contain a certain number of columns, equal throughout the entire codex. The length of each column must not extend over less than forty-eight, or more than sixty lines; and the breadth must consist of thirty letters. The whole copy must first be lined; and if three words be written in it without a line, it is worthless. The ink should be black, neither red, green, nor any other colour and be prepared according to a definite recipe. An **authentic** copy must be the exemplar, from which the transcriber ought not in the least to deviate. No word or letter, not even a yod, must be written from memory, the scribe not having looked at the codex before him...*

Between every consonant the space of a hair or thread must intervene; between every word the breadth of a narrow consonant; between every new parashah, or section, the breadth of nine consonants; between every book, three lines. The fifth book of Moses must terminate exactly with a line; but the rest need not do so. Besides this, the copyist must sit in full Jewish dress, wash his whole body, not begin to write the name of God with a pen newly dipped in ink, and should a king address him while writing that name he must take no notice of him...

[Source: *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, Frederic Kenyon]

These words were recorded in the early centuries following the time of Christ. It can be assumed that similar instructions had been passed along orally for many centuries prior. Around 500 A.D. a group of scribes called the Masoretes (meaning “tradition”) arose. They are renowned for their attention to accuracy as well as for innovations to preserve the pronunciation of Hebrew words. Before you read the following quotation from the writing of Neil R. Lightfoot, let me define the words “codex” and “codices” for those to whom they may be unfamiliar. The earliest Biblical writings were recorded on scrolls. This began to change around the first century A.D. at the same time that the Christian church came into being. The Romans began to place their writings in book form. Such a book was called a “codex.” The plural of this word is “codices.” At first, the pages of these books were made from wood, and later from papyrus, vellum, or paper. The Latin word “codex” literally

means “trunk of a tree.”



Chinese Bamboo Book, or Codex

In Europe, the bark of the Beech tree was used for the pages of a codex. It is from the word “Beech” (German bok - pronounced “boke”) that we get our English word “book.”

The following excerpt describes the meticulous attention to detail employed by the Masoretes to ensure that the Hebrew Bible was copied with flawless precision.

The Masoretes, who go back to about A.D. 500, succeeded the earlier scribes. The Masoretes of Tiberias were the most important of the Masoretes, and the Ben Asher family of Tiberias, with whom several of the model codices are associated, are especially renowned.

The work of the Masoretes is truly significant. Their labors are spread out over a period of four or five centuries, and their contributions are many. They are perhaps best known for their system of vowels and accents which they devised for the Hebrew text. It will be remembered that all of the letters in the Hebrew alphabet are consonants. Thus the Old Testament was first written without vowels. Although this may seem strange to us, it was sufficient during the many centuries when Hebrew was a spoken language. When eventually Hebrew was no longer spoken, the danger was imminent that the proper pronunciation of the consonantal text might be lost. To meet the danger, the Masoretes, on the basis of their well-kept traditions, inserted vowel points above and below the lines of the text. It must be emphasized, however, that they did not bother the text itself; they only added a means by which to ensure the correct pronunciation of the text.

The Masoretes were not concerned with only such things as proper pronunciation. They also sought ways and methods by which to eliminate scribal slips of addition or omission. This they achieved through intricate procedures of counting. They numbered the verses, words, and letters of each book. They counted the number of times each letter was used in each book. They noted verses that contained all the letters of the alphabet, or a certain number of them. They calculated the middle letter, the middle word, and the middle verse of the Pentateuch; the middle verse of the Psalms, the middle verse of the entire Hebrew Bible, and so forth. In fact, they counted almost everything that could be counted. With these safeguards, and others, when a scribe finished making a copy of a book, he could then check the accuracy of his work before using it.

[Source: *How We Got the Bible*, Neil R. Lightfoot]

You may wonder why I would write about Scribes that created copies of the Hebrew Scriptures as recently as the tenth century A.D.. The reason is that these copies that the Masoretes made are the oldest existing copies of the Hebrew Scriptures known today. (The Dead Sea Scrolls are much older, but they contain primarily fragments of the Hebrew Bible.) There are actually much older copies of the Old Testament in languages other than Hebrew, such as the Greek Septuagint, but these are not valued as highly because they are a translation, and not the original language of the Old Testament.

You may well ask, “What happened to the older Hebrew manuscripts, for they first began to be recorded as far back as 1,500 B.C.?” This means that there are no existing manuscripts for the first 2,500 years of the Hebrew Scriptures. Neil R. Lightfoot provides the answer for us.

The Jewish scribes looked upon their copies of the Scriptures with an almost superstitious respect. This led them to give ceremonial burial to any of the texts that were damaged or defective. Their motive was to prevent the improper use of the material on which the sacred name of God had been inscribed. Before burial, however, faulty manuscripts were hidden away in a “ginizah” (from Aramaic genaz, to hide), a kind of storeroom for manuscripts that were unusable. But however noble the intentions, the replacement of older copies with newer ones, and the burial of those discarded, have deprived us of early Hebrew manuscripts.

[Source: Ibid]

The modern Hebrew Bible (Old Testament only) is based upon the Masoretic text of the Scriptures. Following is a list of five of the most important Hebrew manuscripts.

1. The Aleppo Codex. First in rank among the Hebrew manuscripts, the Aleppo Codex derives its name from the city in Syria where it had long been located. A beautifully written codex of the entire Hebrew Bible, it was finished sometime in the tenth century. Unfortunately, it is no longer complete; large sections of it were destroyed in Arab riots against the Jews...

Arab mobs, looting and burning and killing, destroyed all the synagogues in Aleppo, including the 1,500 year old Mustaribah Synagogue. Found in the ashes of this synagogue was the prized Aleppo Codex. A quarter of the manuscript had been destroyed - almost all of the Pentateuch and all of a number of other books as well. Smuggled out of Syria to Jerusalem, it is now being used as the base of a new critical edition of the Hebrew Bible to be published by Hebrew University.

2. The Leningrad Codex. Of equal rank with the Aleppo Codex is the Leningrad Codex. Now the oldest complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible, it was written in Cairo about the year 1010. It, too, is a beautiful manuscript, with pages ornately wrought.

The manuscript today is in the National Library of St. Petersburg, Russia. Although the city’s name is once again St. Petersburg, the manuscript is still known as the Leningrad Codex... It is the Leningrad Codex that mainly underlies most editions of the modern Hebrew Bible...

3. The Cairo Codex. This manuscript of the Former and Latter Prophets was written by Moses ben

Asher in 895. Subsequently, it came into the possession of a Jewish sect in Jerusalem known as Karaites. After being carried off by the Crusaders and later returned, it made its way to the Karaite community in Cairo, where it remains today.

4. The Leningrad Codex of the Prophets. Written in 916, this manuscript includes Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets.

5. British Library Codex of the Pentateuch. Containing most of the Pentateuch, this codex is an important witness to the text. An undated manuscript, which formerly was thought to be from the ninth century, is now dated a century later.

[Ibid]

Since we have no ancient manuscripts of the Bible in the Hebrew language, how do we know whether it has been copied accurately during the preceding two and a half millennia? There are actually a number of ways. Although the Dead Sea Scrolls do not contain the entirety of the Hebrew Bible, they do include large portions, including the entire book of Isaiah on a single scroll. The Dead Sea Scrolls were made by a sect of Jews called the Essenes who dwelt in the wilderness of Judea from the first century B.C. until the second century A.D.. This means their writings are nearly a thousand years older than the existing Hebrew Scriptures copied by the Masorete scribes. Among the Dead Sea scrolls is a copy of the book of Isaiah. When comparing the Isaiah scroll to the Masoretic text copied nearly a thousand years later, they have been found to be nearly identical. In a thousand years there was no significant change to the text. Comparison of the Masoretic text to other scrolls and fragments discovered with the Isaiah scroll reveal that there has been no substantial change to the text. This takes us much closer to the original writings, but we can go further back still if we look at the Old Testament in other languages.

In the second century B.C. the Greek ruler of Egypt, Ptolemy II, wanted to build a great library. There were many Jews dwelling in Alexandria, Egypt at the time. These Jews spoke Koine Greek, and were not fluent in Hebrew. Ptolemy sponsored a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, and 72 Jewish scholars were appointed to make the translation. The word “Septuagint” means “the seventy.” The Septuagint became a very important translation for the Jews, for many Jews no longer spoke Hebrew fluently.

There are diverse views among scholars regarding the differences/similarity between the Greek Septuagint and the Hebrew Masoretic Text. Some scholars focus on the similarities, for the same thoughts are conveyed in both Hebrew and Greek in the great majority of instances. This has led some scholars to suggest that the translators of the Septuagint must have worked from a Hebrew manuscript very similar to that of the Masoretes. Other scholars focus on the differences between the Greek and Hebrew Old Testaments, for the fact that there are differences cannot be denied. There are verses found in the Hebrew that are absent in the Greek Septuagint, and vice versa. The Septuagint also contained numerous apocryphal books, and some sections from apocryphal writings were added directly into the text of books such as Daniel. However, in the great many places where we find agreement between the old Greek texts and the Masoretic texts of the Scriptures, we are once more assured that the basic message of the Bible has remained consistent throughout its thousands of years of existence.

Keep in mind that the Old Testament was written over a span of about one thousand years. The last book, Malachi, was likely written somewhere between the years 445 and 420 B.C.. The Torah portion of the Septuagint was written in the 3rd century B.C., and other books were completed in the next two centuries. Therefore, the gap between the time the last book of the Old Testament was written, and the translation of the Hebrew scriptures into Greek was at most a few centuries. There are existing manuscripts containing some books of the Septuagint that date back as far as the 2nd century B.C..

The Latin Vulgate

Although the Latin Vulgate is a translation of the Bible into a secondary language, it is important due to its antiquity and the prominent role it has occupied in the church age. The word “vulgate” means “common.” This Latin translation was the standard Bible used in Europe for more than a thousand years.

In 382 A.D., Pope Damasus I commissioned Eusebius Hieronymus (also known as Jerome) to create a standardized Latin edition of the Bible. At the time many disparate Latin translations existed, and a need was perceived to bring some order and harmony to the Latin scriptures. Jerome began by producing a revised Latin version of the four gospels. This was completed in 384 A.D. shortly before the death of Pope Damasus I. Jerome then fell out of favor in Rome and departed to the Holy Land where he took up residence in Bethlehem. There, he obtained access to a copy of the Hexapla, a version of the Scriptures produced by Origen in about 150 A.D.. The Hexapla was an ancient form of what may be compared to a parallel Bible today. Origen’s Hexapla listed six translations of the Bible in parallel columns. This massive work spanned some 6,000 pages and was originally contained in 15 volumes. Included in the Hexapla was a Hebrew Bible (written in the Hebrew alphabet), as well as a Hebrew Bible transliterated in Greek letters, a copy of the Greek Septuagint, and three additional Greek versions of the Scriptures written respectively by Theodotion, Symmachus, and Aquila of Sinope. Using the Hexapla as his primary resource, Jerome was able to complete his Latin translation of the Old Testament.

By the 6th or 7th century, Jerome’s Latin translation of the Bible had become the standard throughout Europe, replacing the Old Latin (Vetus Latina) scriptures. In 1546 at the Council of Trent, the Roman Catholic Church officially assigned Jerome’s Latin scriptures the title “Vulgate,” making this the official Bible of Romanism. One rather serious shortcoming of this official sanction of the Roman Church is that when Catholic translations of the Bible were later made into English, they were translated from the Latin Vulgate, rather than from the original Hebrew and Greek. Thus, Catholic Bibles in English have actually been translations of a translation.

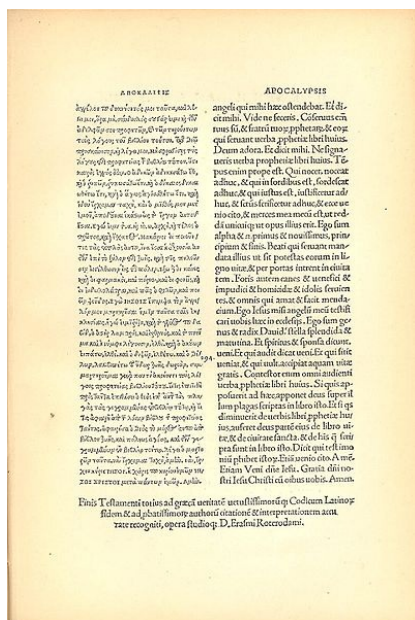
When Gutenberg invented the printing press, one of the first books to be printed was the Latin Vulgate, which was done in the year 1456.

The Textus Receptus

In 1516, Desiderius Erasmus sought to revise Jerome’s Latin Bible, improving upon it. Perhaps in order to demonstrate the superiority of his translation, Erasmus placed the Greek text of the

Scriptures in parallel with the Latin. The inclusion of a Greek text of the Bible proved to be quite valuable, causing Erasmus' Bible to be highly sought after. For many, the Greek portion of Erasmus' Bible became far more valuable than the Latin. Erasmus' Greek New Testament would eventually become known as the "Textus Receptus," meaning "Received Text," though Erasmus himself never referred to it as such. More will be mentioned about this in the next chapter.

Undoubtedly, the great prominence attained by Erasmus' Greek and Latin text was due to the fact that it was the first Greek New Testament to be **published** in Europe. Note the emphasis on the word "published." There were many extant Greek New Testaments at the time, but none had ever been published using the relatively new invention of the printing press. The printing press made books much more financially accessible to the general population. To have a book copied by a scribe was prohibitively expensive. A great many Bible scholars and students rejoiced to find a printed copy of the Greek New Testament that they could afford.



Erasmus' Textus Receptus (Latin and Greek Text Side by Side)

Erasmus' Greek New Testament has been criticized due to the fact that he had access to only six Greek manuscripts, none of them of great antiquity, and there was a portion of the New Testament missing from the manuscripts (specifically the last six verses of the book of Revelation). It is suggested by numerous scholars that Erasmus was under some pressure to quickly produce his Latin/Greek translation, which led to hasty, and somewhat sloppy work. Rather than seeking out a Greek manuscript with the missing verses from Revelation, Erasmus re-created the missing verses by translating backwards from Latin into the original Greek, a process whereby he was forced to guess what Greek words were originally used by the New Testament writers. There were also numerous spelling errors in his translation, and many other corrections that needed to be made. Erasmus would eventually publish five versions of his Greek New Testament, making corrections and improvements with each edition.

Erasmus' Greek New Testament proved to be highly sought after by European Christians who wanted to produce a Bible translation in their native languages. Martin Luther used Erasmus' Greek New Testament when creating his German translation of the Scriptures (Luther's New Testament was completed in 1522 and the Old Testament in 1534). William Tyndale used Erasmus' New Testament when creating his English Bible, as did the translators of the Geneva Bible and the King James Bible. In fact, from the 16th through the 19th centuries, most English Bibles used the Textus Receptus as the foundation for their translations. In the 19th century, older, and more reliable, Greek manuscripts began coming to light, leading to better Greek New Testaments. Westcott and Hort published their Greek New Testament in 1881 based largely upon the highly regarded *Codex Vaticanus*. The *Textus Receptus* has declined in favor among Bible scholars and translators as more ancient Greek manuscripts have come to light.

The Great Manuscripts

I will bring this chapter to a close by making mention of three of the oldest and most valuable (to scholars) Bible manuscripts extant today. All three of these manuscripts were discovered AFTER Erasmus published his Greek New Testament, and AFTER the King James Bible was published. These manuscripts, listed in the order of their importance, are as follows.



Page from the Codex Vaticanus

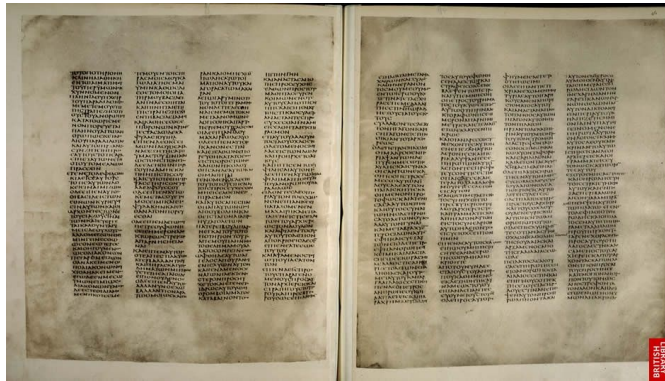
Codex Vaticanus

The Codex Vaticanus contains both the Old and New Testaments and is written in Greek. It derives its name based upon the place where it resides. Since the 15th century this manuscript has been located in the Vatican library. The codex became known to Western scholars due to a correspondence between Erasmus and the Vatican, but access to the manuscript was restricted until 1889-1890 when a complete photographic facsimile was produced. The Codex Vaticanus is regarded as the oldest and purest quality New Testament manuscript, and it is among the oldest Old Testament manuscripts in any language, though it is not in the original language of Hebrew.

The Codex Vaticanus is missing the following portions of Scripture:

Genesis 1:1-46:28
Psalms 106-138
Hebrews 9:14 to end of book.
I and II Timothy
Titus
Philemon
Revelation

The Codex Vaticanus has been dated to the first half of the 4th century A.D. (Prior to 350 A.D.). It differs significantly from both the *Latin Vulgate* and the *Textus Receptus*.



Codex Sinaiticus

Codex Sinaiticus

A close rival to Codex Vaticanus is Codex Sinaiticus. It is dated accurately to between the years 325 A.D. and 360 A.D.. The nearer date would make it slightly more recent than the Vatican manuscript. The Sinaiticus manuscript was discovered by Constantin Tischendorf at St. Catherine's Monastery near Mount Sinai. The discovery was made in the late 19th century. The manuscript is currently divided up between four locations, with the majority of it residing at the British Library. The story of the discovery of the manuscript, and Tischendorf's efforts to gain access to it, makes for exciting reading. Like Codex Vaticanus, it is written in Greek. The Codex Sinaiticus is especially valued because it contains the complete Greek New Testament.

Codex Alexandrinus

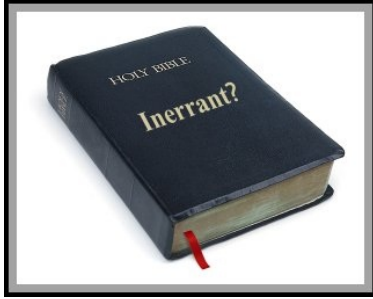
The Codex Alexandrinus is a 5th century Greek Bible. It contains the majority of the Septuagint and the New Testament. The manuscript resided for some time in Alexandria, Egypt, from whence its name is derived. It was later taken to Constantinople in the possession of the Eastern Orthodox Church. It was subsequently gifted to King Charles I of England (the son of King James VI of Scotland - King James I of England) in the 17th century. The manuscript now resides in the British Library along with Codex Sinaiticus. The manuscript came to England too late to be of use to the translators of the King James Bible.

Aside from the Bible manuscripts in their original Hebrew and Greek, and translations into other languages such as the Greek Septuagint and Latin Vulgate, there exist ancient manuscripts in Syriac, Coptic, Georgian and other languages. These are valuable to use to compare with the original

language manuscripts. There additionally exists a large assortment of writings by the early church fathers in which nearly every Bible passage is discussed. These writings include quotations of the various passages of Scripture, and are valuable to Bible scholars who are seeking to arrive at the original words of the Bible.

Although a great many variations exist between the best manuscripts of the Bible, the vast majority of the differences are nothing more than the spelling of specific words, alterations of word order, or other non-critical differences. There are no differences that would alter the basic doctrines of the faith relating to salvation in Christ. The Bible is by a wide margin supported by a greater number of ancient manuscripts than any other book in the world today.

The Myth of an Inerrant Text



Biblical inerrancy means different things to different people. To some it means that the Scriptures as originally written by men inspired of the Holy Spirit were a perfect representation of the words of God. For some, though not all people, Biblical inerrancy also means that the Bible in its original form was perfect in all of its statements, whether they relate to history, science, medicine, or any other field of human study. I am among those who believe the Bible is inerrant in its *original* manuscripts, and I clearly believe that Yahweh, being the Creator of all things, has a far better understanding of history, science, and medicine than any human. I am confident that no original writing that He inspired men to record contained error.

More extreme views of the Bible inerrancy doctrine declare that there are extant today specific versions of the Bible that are flawless, not having deviated through the years from the original autographs. Some people make similar claims of *translations* of the Bible that have been rendered into other languages. They insist that the Bible translators were divinely guided to a perfect and flawless expression of the thoughts and words of God as they labored to translate the Scriptures. One of the most recognized examples of this radical belief in an inerrant Bible is observed among those who assert, often with great prejudice and a very contentious spirit, that the King James Version is a perfect, and flawless, English translation of the Scriptures. Many who hold to such a view demonize all other English Bible translations, and at times suggest that a person is not truly saved, nor in right standing before God, if they are using any Bible other than the KJV Bible.

I recently came across the account set forth by Samuel Martin on his blog where he writes of his uncle Virgil in the 1950s offering reproof to Samuel's father for speaking about recent scholarly developments relating to the Dead Sea Scrolls and Bible translations such as the Revised Standard Version. According to Samuel Martin, Virgil was a Nazarene preacher, honest as the day is long, very sincere in his beliefs and loyal in his affiliations. He brought short the conversation by stating, "*If the King James Version was good enough for Jesus, it's good enough for me.*"

[Source: <http://samuelmartin.blogspot.com/2011/11/if-king-james-version-was-good-enough.html>]

This, of course, sounds much like the words attributed to Ma Ferguson of Texas who claimed that Jesus spoke the King's English. Such comments are not at all uncommon. There exists a large group of conservative, fundamentalist Christians who have been raised in denominational churches that equate the King James Bible with the words of Christ and the apostles. Not all are ignorant of the fact that Christ and his apostles did not speak English, but a great many have no knowledge of the history and process of Bible translation.

the Septuagint translation, placing each man in a separate room, and only then disclosed to them why they were summoned. Ptolemy is reported to have entered into each man's chamber and said: "Write for me the Torah of Moshe, your teacher." The Talmud relates that every one of the 72 Jewish men wrote out an exact copy of the Torah in the Greek language, word for word in agreement with each other for Yahweh guided them to produce a perfect translation.



Septuagint Symbol

Such an account lacks credibility. Yet men resort to such deceits in order to magnify a favored Bible translation, embellishing it with exaggerated claims of being perfect and without error. One can imagine many present day Christians entertaining similar fictions in their minds regarding the manner in which the King James Bible came into existence.

One of the reasons the Greek Septuagint had reached a place of ascendancy among Jews, and later among Messianic Christians, is that Greek was the most widely spoken language of the Roman Empire. Jews who emigrated outside of the land of Canaan frequently adopted the language of the land in which they were dwelling. The Hebrew language waned, with fewer people being able to speak or read the language. When Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire, many disciples of Christ arose who had never had any familiarity with Hebrew. It was quite reasonable that they would prefer a Greek translation of the Scriptures.

When in the year 382 A.D. Pope Damasus I delivered to Jerome the task of creating an updated Latin Version of the Bible, Jerome at first began to translate his Latin Bible from existing Greek manuscripts. He later reconsidered this decision, determining that it was far better to translate the Old Testament from the original Hebrew. It is hard to dispute such logic, for it is far better to translate from an original source language than to translate from a translation, as long as reliable original language manuscripts exist and the translator understands the language. Jerome was immediately taken to task for his decision to translate from the Hebrew, rather than from the Greek Septuagint. One of his critics was none other than St. Augustine. Following is a discourse between the two men as they carried forth a correspondence on this topic.

Jerome:

I have received letters so long and eagerly desired from my dear Desiderius ... entreating me to put our friends in possession of a translation of the Pentateuch from Hebrew into Latin. The work is certainly hazardous and it is exposed to the attacks of my calumniators, who maintain that it is through contempt of the Seventy that I have set to work to forge a new version to take the place of the old. They thus test ability as they do wine; whereas I have again and again declared that I dutifully offer, in the Tabernacle of God what I can, and have pointed out that the great gifts which one man brings are not marred by the inferior gifts of another. But I was stimulated to undertake the task by the zeal of Origen, who blended with the old edition Theodotion's translation and used

throughout the work as distinguishing marks the asterisk and the obelus, that is the star and the spit, the first of which makes what had previously been defective to beam with light, while the other transfixes and slaughters all that was superfluous.

But I was encouraged above all by the authoritative publications of the Evangelists and Apostles, in which we read much taken from the Old Testament which is not found in our manuscripts. For example, 'Out of Egypt have I called my Son': 'For he shall be called a Nazarene': and 'They shall look on him whom they pierced': and 'Rivers of living water shall flow out of his belly': and 'Things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, which God hath prepared for them that love him', and many other passages which lack their proper context. Let us ask our opponents then where these things are written, and when they are unable to tell, let us produce them from the Hebrew. The first passage is in Hosea, the second in Isaiah, the third in Zechariah, the fourth in Proverbs, the fifth also in Isaiah...

Are we condemning our predecessors? By no means; but following the zealous labors of those who have preceded us, we contribute such work as lies in our power in the name of the Lord. They translated before the Advent of Christ, and expressed in ambiguous terms that which they knew not. We after His Passion and Resurrection write not prophecy so much as history. For one style is suitable to what we hear, another to what we see. The better we understand a subject, the better we describe it. Harken then, my rival: listen, my calumniator; I do not condemn, I do not censure the Seventy, but I am bold enough to prefer the Apostles to them all. It is the Apostle through whose mouth I hear the voice of Christ, and I read that in the classification of spiritual gifts they are placed before prophets, while interpreters occupy almost the lowest place. Why are you tormented with jealousy? Why do you inflame the minds of the ignorant against me? Wherever in translation I seem to you to go wrong, ask the Hebrews, consult their teachers in different towns. The words which exist in their Scriptures concerning Christ, your copies do not contain.

[Source: Jerome's Apology, Book II, *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol 3.]

Augustine:

For my part, I would much rather that you would furnish us with a translation of the Greek version of the canonical Scriptures known as the work of the Seventy translators. For if your translation begins to be more generally read in many churches, it will be a grievous thing that, in the reading of Scripture, differences must arise between the Latin Churches and the Greek Churches, especially seeing that the discrepancy is easily condemned in a Latin version by the production of the original in Greek, which is a language very widely known; whereas, if any one has been disturbed by the occurrence of something to which he was not accustomed in the translation taken from the Hebrew, and alleges that the new translation is wrong, it will be found difficult, if not impossible, to get at the Hebrew documents by which the version to which exception is taken may be defended. And when they are obtained, who will submit, to have so many Latin and Greek authorities: pronounced to be in the wrong? Besides all this, Jews, if consulted as to the meaning of the Hebrew text, may give a different opinion from yours: in which case it will seem as if your presence were indispensable, as being the only one who could refute their view; and it would be a miracle if one could be found capable of acting as arbiter between you and them.

[Source: Augustine of Hippo's Letter LXXI, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Volume 1]

I will share a judgment on the correspondence that appears above. I believe that Jerome argues well from the perspective of one who is a lover of truth and who wants to produce an authentic and accurate translation of the Bible. Jerome is not concerned about the approval of men. He desires to be faithful to the testimony of the evangelists (those who wrote the Gospels) and the apostles. In many places the evangelists and apostles quoted Old Testament passages. Many of these Old Testament passages are not to be found in the Septuagint, or they are obscured by a poor translation, yet Jerome declared that they appeared in the Hebrew Scriptures that were extant at the time and present among all the Jews in their synagogues.



Saint Augustine - Catholic Theologian

On the other hand, Augustine is arguing from the perspective of one concerned with politics. He is concerned lest there be a division between Latin and Greek factions of the church. He argues that if the Latin Scriptures that Jerome is laboring to produce should deviate from the Greek Scriptures that “differences” will arise. Such an argument is unworthy of one who proclaims to be a follower of Christ. Truth, not politics, should be the guiding principle for the disciple of Christ. It matters not whether there be irreconcilable differences between the Septuagint and a new Bible translation, as long as the new translation is accurate to the original autographs of the prophets, and consistent with the inspired quotations of the Gospel writers and apostles.

Jerome mentions that he has been inspired by the zeal of Origen, one of the early church fathers and the creator of the Hexapla, the six translation Bible previously mentioned. Origen used a system of asterisks and obelisks to mark where the Greek translations deviated from the Hebrew. Origen marked with an obelisk and asterisk where words or sentences had been added or omitted in the Greek text. Some of the additions and omissions were deliberate, and done with evil intent. Jerome describes Theodotion, who produced one of the Greek translations, as “*a man who, **after** the passion of Christ, was a Jew and a blasphemer.*” That is to say, Theodotion denied that Yahshua was the Christ, the Son of God. Theodotion made deliberate alterations to the Greek Scriptures to obscure those passages in the Old Testament that would lend credence to the truth that Yahshua was indeed the Son of God and the Jew’s promised Messiah. These alterations had made their way into the Septuagint of Jerome and Augustine’s day. In a follow-up letter Jerome asks Augustine why, if he is so zealous for the Septuagint, does he not use the original version of that translation ascribed to

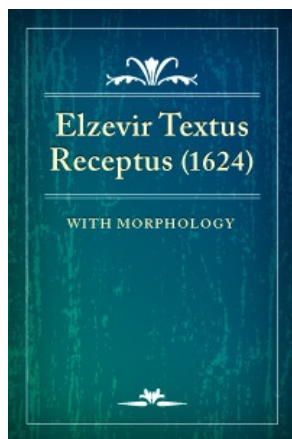
the seventy, rather than the altered and corrupted versions that were common at the time.

Jerome ascribes the introduction of errors into the Septuagint to Origen who merged Theodotion's version of the Greek Old Testament with the original Septuagint. Origen did, however, indicate where changes had been made to the Greek text. Where there was additional material added by Theodotion, he marked the content with an asterisk. Jerome then challenges Augustine to only accept those portions of the Septuagint where there are no asterisks, for then he would be true to the original Septuagint. He cautions Augustine, however, warning him that if he is faithful to the seventy that he will find himself at odds with all of the Bibles in use by the Christian churches of the day.

I am surprised that you do not read the books of the Seventy translators in the genuine form in which they were originally given to the world, but as they have been corrected, or rather corrupted, by Origen, with his obelisks and asterisks; and that you refuse to follow the translation, however feeble, which has been given by a Christian man, especially seeing that Origen borrowed the things which he has added from the edition of a man who, after the passion of Christ, was a Jew and a blasphemer. Do you wish to be a true admirer and partisan of the Seventy translators? Then do not read what you find under the asterisks; rather erase them from the volumes, that you may approve yourself indeed a follower of the ancients. If, however, you do this, you will be compelled to find fault with all the libraries of the Churches; for you will scarcely find more than one manuscript here and there which has not these interpolations.

[Source: Ibid]

This discourse between these two men reveals the disparity that existed in the Greek Bibles over 1,600 years ago, and the prejudice that existed among men such as Augustine who favored a specific translation. Augustine's bias in favor of the Septuagint was not based upon the merits of the translation, for it had been corrupted, and many variants existed. I believe Jerome's attitude is the proper one. He favored examining all the existing manuscripts, whether Hebrew, or Greek, while laboring to arrive as closely as possible to the original words of the prophets. Ironically, in time, the Roman Catholic Church would manifest the same bias in favor of Jerome's Latin translation as Augustine had demonstrated for the Greek Septuagint.



In the 16th century we see a similar manifestation of translation bias for a specific Bible as some began to inordinately venerate Erasmus' Latin/Greek Bible which came to be known as the *Textus Receptus*. Erasmus never boasted of having created a flawless Bible translation. As so often happens,

the error of claimed inerrancy originates with others who come afterwards. In this case, the claim of an inerrant text was motivated by the basest of motives, the love of money.

The sobriquet *Textus Receptus* was attached to Erasmus' Greek New Testament by a publisher to boost sales. Erasmus' title for his Greek and Latin New Testament was *Novum Instrumentum omne, diligenter ab Erasmo Rot. Recognitum et Emendatum* which roughly translates into English as "The New Testament, Diligently Revised and Improved by Erasmus of Rotterdam."

It wasn't until 1633, a century after Erasmus first published his Bible translation, and long after he had died, that the phrase *Textus Receptus* was used to describe this often altered Greek New Testament. The Elzevir publishers of the Dutch city of Leiden included a preface to the book which read, "***Textum*** ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus ***receptum***: in quo nihil immutatum aut corruptum damus," which translates into English as, "so you hold the text, now received by all, in which (is) nothing corrupt." Leave it to merchants to create a controversy that continues to this day. In a self-serving attempt to magnify the book they were offering for sale, the Elzevir publishers claimed that this Greek translation was inerrant, and that it was received by everyone.

It is misguided to claim that any Greek or English translation existent today is inerrant. Erasmus did not claim his Greek New Testament to be inerrant. Rather, he continued to make corrections to it throughout his life. Neither did the translators of the King James Bible profess that they had produced a flawless English Bible version. The KJV translators included a preface to the Bible that was titled "*The Translators to the Reader.*"

Truly (good Christian Reader) we never thought from the beginning, that we should need to make a new Translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one,... but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against; that hath been our endeavor, that our mark.

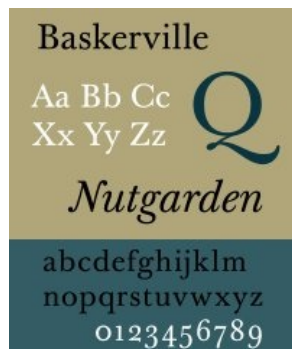
The entire preface can be found at the following link:

<http://www.ccel.org/bible/kjv/preface/pref10.htm>

Consider the language used by the translators. They said their aim was to make a "better" translation of the Scriptures. They did not say a "flawless," nor an "inerrant" translation, for perfection was beyond their grasp. They stated that they sought to produce a "good" Bible translation. Once again, the language employed falls short of the grandiose claims of many today who would, out of irrational bias, declare that in the KJV Bible is found a perfect and inerrant translation of the Word of God.

It is unreasoning and baseless to claim that either the *Textus Receptus*, or the KJV Bible, are inerrant. Not only did Erasmus publish five different versions of his Latin/Greek Scriptures, but other men altered them further. Robert Estienne, known as Stephanus, produced five different versions of Erasmus' Greek New Testament, making further changes to the text with each edition. Theodore Beza in turn took the third edition of Stephanus' text, editing it nine times between the years 1565 and 1604.

We find that a similar experience befell the King James Bible. The 1611 edition of the KJV Bible, the very first one to be published, is very different than the KJV Bible sold today. There have been numerous revisions to the KJV Bible. The version sold today is widely identified as the 1769 Baskerville Birmingham revision. This Bible, was originally printed in Birmingham, England by renowned printer John Baskerville. The Baskerville revision of the KJV Bible modernized the language. The 1611 Bible used spellings such as "Hierusalem," "Marie," "assone," "foorth," "shalbe," "fet," "creeple," "fift," "sixt," "ioy," "middles," and "charet," which you will no longer find in a KJV Bible, though they still are advertised as "1611 King James Bibles." Baskerville followed the revisions of F.S. Paris and H. Therold who produced an updated language version of the KJV in 1762. The Baskerville Birmingham Bible also introduced other changes of wording.



Font Developed By, and Named After, John Baskerville

It is well to comment somewhat on John Baskerville, the printer. Although a near genius at originating innovations in printing that led to vastly improved print quality, the man was all his life a professed atheist. In his later years he lived openly with the wife of another man (her husband had reportedly abandoned her), though Baskerville never married the woman. Baskerville was a member of the Lunar Society, a philosophical society attended by other "enlightenment" thinkers such as Erasmus Darwin, and Benjamin Franklin. He was very outspoken against those he considered to be religious bigots. That he would print a very successful revision of the King James Bible that has become the standard text for KJV Bibles today is not inexplicable, for the Bible has always been a best seller. Baskerville was, after all, a merchant seeking to turn a profit.

Although Baskerville was an atheist, and no friend of Christians, this does not necessarily mean that the KJV Bible is a wretched work (though it certainly contains errors and shortcomings). It does, however, destroy the argument that would suggest that the KJV Bible we have today was produced by a divine act of God as he moved upon Christian men resulting in an inerrant text of the Scriptures in the English language.

More will be shared on the subject of errors in the Biblical text in the next chapter. My point in this post is to reveal that claims of inerrant Bible translations are not a new phenomenon. Manuscript and translation bias has existed at least as far back as the time of the early church when Jewish myths about the translators of the Septuagint were passed around to bolster the reputation of this Greek Bible. The same type of bias was demonstrated by the Roman Catholic Church who favored Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible, and by Protestants in Europe from the 16th century forward who placed an inordinate veneration upon Erasmus' Textus Receptus. Today we find that there are

many Christians committing the same egregious error by suggesting that the KJV Bible is inerrant, or superior, to all other English language Bibles. The saying of Solomon is true:

Ecclesiastes 1:9

That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done.
So, there is nothing new under the sun.

Errors in the Bible



King James, the Most High and Mighty! Really?

I believe the Scriptures as originally written by men who were inspired of the Holy Spirit are free of error. However, we are thousands of years removed from the original autographs of these men, and if you are like me, the Bibles you read today have been translated into a language unknown to the Hebrew and Greek speaking writers. No matter how careful scribes are, or how much integrity men manifest in producing a Bible translation, errors are unavoidable. It is a sad reality, however, that not all who work on copying or translating Scriptures manifest integrity. In this fallen world we have sin and Satan to contend with. It should come as no surprise that Satan has paid special attention to introducing error into the pages of the Bibles that millions of people read.

II Corinthians 11:3-4

But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.

As much as Christians may protest, the fact remains that the very thing Paul warned against in the verses above has occurred. The serpent by his craftiness has led millions astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. One need only observe how the church has lost all practical knowledge of the feast days of Yahweh and have substituted the idolatrous celebrations of Christmas and Easter in their place. In this, they are no different than Jeroboam who erected an altar and golden calf in both Dan and Beersheba as a substitute for the true worship of Yahweh. One can also observe how many churches refer to Sunday as the "Sabbath Day." The Biblical Sabbath has always been the 7th day of the week. It begins at sundown on Friday and runs until sundown on Saturday. Sunday is the first day of the week, and it is never called the "Sabbath" in the pages of Scripture. Yet the substitution of dates and holy days is merely the tip of the iceberg. So extensive has been Satan's work in introducing falsehood and corruption to the church that there is hardly an area of doctrine or church life that has not suffered profound alteration. The apostle Paul prophesied the following regarding the state of the church in the last days in which we now live.

II Timothy 4:1, 3-4

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons... For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers

in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

As one surveys the landscape of Christendom today they will observe thousands of denominations and sects all having embraced discordant beliefs. That great error has permeated the body of Christ is hardly debatable. Millions imbibe the polluted waters of false doctrine weekly as they attend their myriad houses of worship. Seeing that Yahweh has not preserved the church without error, why would believers think that the Bible has escaped unscathed through the millennia? The Scriptures have been in the care of sinful men. They have been copied and translated by people who are subject to all the failings of the sinful flesh. The Bible has been distorted as translators and copyists have been motivated by politics, monetary considerations, sectarian beliefs, and various base impulses.

Does it trouble you to hear one of Christ's ministers declare that all existing Bible versions contain error today? If it does, perhaps your understanding of the environment that is most suitable for spiritual growth needs correcting. Spiritual beings need an adversarial environment to provide them an opportunity to struggle. It is the struggle that transforms fleshly beings into spiritual. Yahweh in His wisdom has allowed sin to be present in the church, and error to enter into the Scriptures, for He knows that the struggle of each individual to arrive at truth is essential to their attainment of spiritual maturity. Yahweh both tests and judges His children as He observes how they respond to the apostasy that exists in Christendom. Do they struggle against the darkness of error and sin? Or are they complacent, accepting as truth whatever other men and women tell them? In the kingdom of God, it is those who stir themselves up, and prepare themselves to do spiritual battle, who make the most progress. Complacency will consign an individual to become mired in the falsehoods and myths that thousands of years of sin and deceit have produced.

I would exhort Christians to view the presence of myriad and profound errors in the Bibles available to them today as an opportunity to exercise themselves spiritually. Do not think that Christianity cannot exist and flourish without a belief in an inerrant Bible translation today. The fact that the church is leavened with sin and error does not prevent you from walking as an overcomer in Christ. You simply need to rise up, exercise yourself unto godliness, and extricate yourself from the morass that Christendom has fallen into. The fact that all Bibles today contain error, much of it profound, does not prevent you from arriving at the knowledge of the truth. You have the Holy Spirit as your helper, and Yahweh will not withhold truth from those who prove themselves to be lovers of it.

Sir Frederic Kenyon, in his book *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, discusses some of the ways in which error has been introduced into the Scriptures.

Before the invention of the printing press... each separate copy of a book had to be written by hand; and the human hand and brain have not yet been created which could copy the whole of a long work absolutely without error. Often... copies were made hurriedly and without opportunity for minute revision. Mistakes were certain to creep in; and when once in existence they were certain to increase, as fresh copies were made from manuscripts already faulty. If the original manuscripts of the sacred books were still preserved, the errors of later copies would be to us now a matter of indifference; but since the original manuscripts perished long ago, we have to try to arrive at their contents by comparison of later copies, all of which are more or less faulty and all varying from one

another...

The Mistakes of Copyists

1. *Errors of Hand and Eye* - The mistakes of scribes are of many kinds and of varying importance. Sometimes the copyist confuses words of similar sound, as in the English we sometimes find our correspondents write **there** for **their** or **here** for **hear**. Sometimes he passes over a word by accident; and this is especially likely to happen when two adjoining words end with the same letters. Sometimes this cause of error operates more widely. Two successive lines of the manuscript from which he is copying end with the same or similar words; and the copyist's eye slips from the first to the second, and the intermediate line is omitted. Sometimes a whole verse, or longer passage, may be omitted owing to the identity of the first or last words with those of an adjoining passage. Sometimes, again, the manuscript from which he is copying has been furnished with short explanatory notes in the margin, and he fails to see where the text ends and the note begins, and so copies the note into the text itself.

2. *Errors of Mind* - ... Errors of the mind are more dangerous, because they are less easy to detect. The copyist's mind wanders a little from the book he is copying, and he writes down words that come mechanically into his head, just as we do nowadays if people talk while we are writing and distract our attention. Some words are familiar in certain phrases, and the familiar phrase runs off the pen of the copyist when the word should be written in some other combination. A form of this error is very common in the manuscripts of the Gospels. The same event is often narrated in two or more of them, in slightly different language; and the copyist, either consciously or unconsciously, alters the words of the one version to make them the same as the other... Thus in Matt. xi. 19 the Authorised version has "But wisdom is justified of her children," as in Luke vii. 35; but the Revised Version tells us that the original text had "works" instead of "children" here, the truth being that the copyists of all but the earliest extant manuscripts have altered it, so as to make it correspond with the account in St. Luke... In Matthew xxiii. 14 a whole verse has probably been inserted from the parallel passages in Mark and Luke, and so with Mark xv. 28. In Luke vi. 48 the concluding words of the parable of the house built on the rock, "because it had been well builded," have been altered in "many ancient authorities" in accordance with the more striking and familiar phrase in St. Matthew, "for it had been founded upon the rock." Errors like these increase in the later copies...

3. *Errors of Deliberate Alteration* - An untrue hand or eye, or an over-true memory may do much harm in a copyist; but worst and most dangerous of all is when the copyist begins to think for himself. The veneration in which the sacred books were held has generally protected them against intentional alteration, but not entirely so. The harmonisation of the Gospel narratives, described in the last paragraph, has certainly in some cases been intentional; and that, no doubt, without the smallest wish to deceive, but simply with the idea of supplementing the one narrative from its equally authentic companion. Sometimes the alterations are more extensive. The earliest Greek translation of the Old Testament contains several passages in the books of Esther and Daniel which are not found in the Hebrew. The long passages, Mark xvi. 9-20 and John vii. 53-viii. 11, which are absent from the oldest manuscripts of the New Testament, must have been either omitted in these, or inserted in others intentionally. If, as is more probably the case, they have been inserted in the later copies, this was no doubt done in order to supplement the Gospel from some other good source, and the narratives are almost certainly authentic, though they may not have been written by the

Evangelist in whose Gospel they now appear. There is, however, no reason at all to suppose that additions of this kind have been made in any except a very few cases.

[Source: *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, Sir Frederic Kenyon]

Sir Frederic Kenyon is a bit more optimistic in his view of the extent to which men have deliberately altered the Scriptures than I am. I have found the deliberate alteration of the Scriptures, often to accommodate the errant traditions and orthodoxy of the church, to be quite extensive. It is this latter type of corruption of the Biblical text, errors of deliberate alteration, that concern me the most. The Bible has suffered tremendous alteration in order to satisfy the traditions, beliefs, or agendas of various men. A poignant example of this is observed in the omission of the divine name from the Old Testament. As the title of this series suggests, the Bible is “Yahweh’s Book.” It is a book intended to reveal the Creator to mankind. 6,828 times in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit inspired the prophets to record the memorial name of God. Bible scholars refer to the name of God in the Old Testament as the “Tetragrammaton.” Tetragrammaton is a Greek word meaning “four letters.” In the Hebrew the letters used to spell the name of God are Yod He Vav (Waw) He. This is frequently represented as YHWH or YHVH in English.

𐤀 𐤁 𐤂 𐤃 Paleo Hebrew

𐤀 𐤁 𐤂 𐤃 Aramaic

יהוה Modern Hebrew

Tetragrammaton

Keep in mind that the Hebrew alphabet did not contain vowels. Ancient Hebrew was a consonantal alphabet. This has led to some debate about the proper pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton, with opinions including Jehovah, Yahweh, Yahveh, Yahuweh, and many other variants. Yahweh disclosed His name to Moses when Moses inquired as to whom he should say was sending him to Pharaoh and the Israelite elders.

Exodus 3:14-15

And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM” (Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh); and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM (Ehyeh) has sent me to you.'” And God, furthermore, said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, '**Yahweh**, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.”

The above passage is not the first occurrence of the Tetragrammaton in Scripture. It is first found in Genesis 2:4. “These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that **Yahweh** God (Elohim) made the earth and the heavens...” In fact, the name Yahweh was recorded more than 160 times in the Scriptures preceding Exodus 3:14-15. The name Yahweh should

be one of the most frequently occurring words in our English Bibles today. Yet, without exception, all of the most popular Bible versions have removed the memorial name of God from the Scriptures and have replaced it with a titular substitute. In most cases, Yahweh has been replaced with “God,” “Lord,” or “Lord God.” The words *Lord* and *God* are NOT names. They are nouns denoting one who is a ruler, and a deity. They are like the word “father.” I am a father, and at times my children may call me “father,” or “dad.” However, neither of these words are my name. They describe my position in the family, but my name is Joseph.

The replacement of the name of Yahweh with a title began with the ancient Hebrews. The Jewish people are renowned for adding to, and taking away from, the word of God. Christ chided them for this 2,000 years ago.

Matthew 15:6

“Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.”

Mark 7:13

“Making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. ***And many such things you do.***”

The Jewish religious leaders devised what are known as “fence laws.” These were regulations that they devised in order to insure that no man would accidentally transgress a commandment of Yahweh. For example, in the Old Testament Yahweh commanded that a man could not be beaten with more than forty stripes.

Deuteronomy 25:1-3

If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, then it shall be if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall then make him lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of stripes according to his guilt. ***He may beat him forty times but no more***, lest he beat him with many more stripes than these, and your brother be degraded in your eyes.

To avoid accidentally transgressing the commandment of Yahweh, the Jewish religious leaders established a law that said a man could only be beaten 39 times. This way they would not accidentally violate Yahweh’s commandment by striking the man one time too many. We see that this “fence law” was practiced in the day in which Paul lived.

II Corinthians 11:24

From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.

One of the more grievous fence laws that the Jews devised was a result of misinterpreting the third of the ten commandments.

Exodus 20:7

“You shall not take the name of Yahweh your God (Elohim) in vain, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.”

Young's Literal Translation of the Bible has rendered this verse in the following manner:

Exodus 20:7

“Thou dost not take up the name of Jehovah thy God for a vain thing, for Jehovah acquitteth not him who taketh up His name for a vain thing.”

The Amplified Bible provides this further insight.

Exodus 20:7

You shall not use or repeat the name of the Lord your God in vain [that is, lightly or frivolously, in false affirmations or profanely]; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

Apart from bizarrely omitting the actual name of Yahweh from the verse, the Amplified Bible does a good job of relating the sense of this commandment. Yahweh desires that His name be venerated. He wants it to be spoken in a manner that exercises integrity and truth. There are many ways in which a person may vainly utter the name of Yahweh. To make a promise in His name and not keep it is to utter His name in vain. To use His name in jesting, or in the act of cursing, is to use His name in vain. Yet, Yahweh never intended for His people to forbid the utterance of His name. The Holy Spirit surely would not have inspired holy men to record the name Yahweh more than 6,000 times in the Old Testament if He did not want it spoken.

The Jewish leaders, however, created a fence law to make sure that the name of Yahweh was never uttered in an unworthy manner. In essence, they forbid the speaking of the memorial name of God. The ancient Jews were unwilling to alter the Scriptures, so they left the Tetragrammaton in the text of the Old Testament, but they were instructed to speak the word Adonai, which is translated as “Lord.” This was considered less holy, and acceptable to be spoken. Whenever an individual reading the Scriptures in the Temple or the synagogues came across the name of God, they knew to substitute Adonai for Yahweh.

This alteration became further ingrained when the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek. In the Septuagint, there is no indication that Yahweh was ever in the text, for the translators rendered the Tetragrammaton as Kyrios, meaning “Lord.” Thus they followed the tradition of the Jews in substituting Lord for the memorial name of God. This same practice of omitting the name Yahweh became an established tradition due to long practice. The traditions of men have supplanted the divine inspiration of the Creator so that in every one of the most popular English translations sold today, you will no longer find the Tetragrammaton. Whether you read from the King James Version, the New International Version, the Revised Standard Version, the English Standard Version, the New American Standard Version, etc., you will find that the name of Yahweh that the Holy Spirit caused the prophets of old to record nearly 7,000 times has been eradicated from the pages of Scripture. It is hard to imagine a more profound alteration to the word of Yahweh.

The reason that there is so little protest among Christians today regarding this severe deviation from the original text of the Scriptures, is that the popular English Bibles are in accord with the current traditions of the churches. There are a great many Christians today who actually think “God” is the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They have heard this word uttered all their lives,

while never hearing a pastor or fellow Christian use the name of Yahweh. So widespread has this substitution of the divine name become, that a growing number of believers today will no longer spell out the word God. Instead, they write it with an underscore as G_d. In doing so they are perpetuating the tradition of the ancient Jews by creating their own fence law. Mistakenly thinking the noun “God” is holy, they will not even write it out, when in fact this is not the memorial name that Elohim disclosed to Moses.

If Satanic men with evil intent had sat down and said, “Let’s erase Yahweh’s name from the memory of His people by removing it from the Bible,” they could have done no worse than the Jewish religious leaders whose reasoning was corrupted through deceit. If you are reading one of the many Bible versions that have substituted titles for the memorial name of God, then you are reading from a text that has been deliberately altered to conform to the traditions and whims of man. Seeing that not even the name of Yahweh is safe in our Bibles, what else may have been tampered with? As it turns out, quite a bit.

Many corruptions have entered into the Scriptures to perpetuate the religious institutions and doctrines of man. We observe that the translators of the King James Bible received specific instruction to subordinate accuracy and integrity of translation to political and religious considerations. Following are two of the rules set down by King James for those men chosen to produce this Bible translation.

1. The ordinary Bible read in the Church, commonly called the Bishops Bible, to be followed, and as little altered as the truth of the original will permit.

3. The old Ecclesiastical Words to be kept, viz. the Word Church not to be translated Congregation etc.

It is rules such as these which suborn men, causing them to make unfaithful alterations to the Scriptures. One might well ask, “Why was it important for the translators of the King James Bible to use the word *Church* rather than *Congregation*?” The Tyndale Bible, the first to be printed in English, was produced in 1526 and used the word *Congregation* to translate the Greek word *Ekklesia*. This Greek word occurs 115 times in the New Testament. *Ekklesia* is a joining of the word “Ek” and “Kaleo.” “Ek” corresponds to our English word “out,” and “kaleo” to the word “call.” The *Ekklesia* were literally “the called out.”

In Greek society the word *Ekklesia* was used as a reference to summoning the army for assembly. A crier could go forth and call men to assemble for battle. The term also was employed to refer to other types of public gatherings for special civic purposes, such as to vote on laws. In the latter case only full citizens were invited to participate. Thus, whether it was a call for the army to assemble, or a call for a political assembly, only certain individuals were called out of their communities to assemble together.

Ekklesia is an appropriate Greek word to describe the gathering together of the body of Christ. Those who were disciples of Yahshua were spread throughout their communities. At certain times they would assemble together and the Spirit would minister in and through the various members of the

body of Christ. The Matthew's Bible of 1537 also used the word "congregation" to refer to the assembly of the body of Christ. The word "congregation" derives from the word "congregate," which means "to gather together."

It was the Geneva Bible of 1557 that first used the word "church" as a rendering of the Greek word Ekklesia. The Bishop's Bible of 1568 was a revision of the Geneva Bible, and it also used the word "Church." The word church comes down to us in English through the German word Kirk. Kirk in turn comes from the Medieval Greek Kurikon, or "Lord's House." Those who supported a hierarchical form of church government preferred the word church over congregation or assembly. It should be remembered that the King of England held the position of Supreme Governor of the Church of England. In the year 1536 The Act of Supremacy was passed, coinciding with the English monarchy's split from the church of Rome. In place of the Pope, the King of England was declared to be the head of the Church of England.

Thus the word "Church," or "Lord's House," bears a double meaning. Note again the inscription printed in the front of all of the King James' Bibles. "To the Most High and Mighty, Prince James, King of Britain, France, and Ireland... Defender of the Faith." The King wanted his citizens to bear in mind that he was the head and Supreme Governor of the Church of England, and the word "church" conveyed this idea much better than the more accurate translation of "congregation" or "assembly."

Another example of deliberate alteration of the text of the Scriptures is observed in the words "baptize" and "baptism" in our English Bibles. These words are translated from variants of the Greek word "baptisma." This Greek word means "immerse" and indicates a full immersion beneath the water. Baptism serves as a symbol of death to our old sinful life and our resurrection into our new life in Christ. As people are plunged beneath the water they are carrying out a ritual burial, and as they are brought back out of the water they are symbolizing that they have arisen to new life in Christ.

The Church of England, however, followed the Roman Catholic practice of sprinkling water on the forehead of the individual. It was decided, therefore, that the translators of the King James Bible could not translate the Greek word baptisma into English as immerse. This would upset the tradition of the Church of England. It would be a gross error, however, to render the word as "sprinkle," for this was clearly not the meaning of the Greek. The solution was to not translate the word at all, but rather to transliterate it. This means that the word was carried from Greek to English unchanged and without translation. This meant that the church could then define baptism to mean whatever they wanted it to mean. Instead of immersion, they could define baptism as sprinkling. It would have been difficult to define immersion as sprinkling.

Thus far we have observed how men have made deliberate alterations to the Scriptures, removing the name of Yahweh that occurs nearly 7,000 times; translating the Greek word ekklesia as church rather than congregation or assembly; and intentionally choosing not to translate the Greek word baptisma in order to accommodate their false traditions. All of these actions lead men and women away from the truth.

A further egregious alteration of the text of Scriptures is observed in the inaccurate rendering of the Greek word *aeon* and its various forms. The Greek word *aeon* means "an age of varying length." In the book *God's Plan of the Ages*, I have demonstrated how this word has been unfaithfully translated in a variety of inaccurate and often contradictory ways to support the false teaching of eternal torment. Following is an excerpt from that book.

God's plan of the ages has been transformed (by men in the church) into something that is a gross aberration from the original. Yahweh is shown to be angry forever, and His wrath to be eternal. Those cast into hell and the lake of fire are believed to never escape. The reconciliation of "all things" through Christ is denied by the church. The church does not perceive the end of Christ's reign to come when all things will be subjected to Him that God the Father might be "all in all."

The church fell into error centuries ago. Over time myths and fables have come to be regarded as sacred truth due to their long antiquity. When in more recent centuries men in the church have applied themselves to translate the Scriptures into English, the influence of the mythology of Rome held sway over their minds. The Bible translations adopted by the masses of Christendom have become impregnated with the myths of pagan people. Words were translated to convey that false belief that had been adopted as orthodox theology.

Nowhere do we see this more profoundly than in the confused and errant renderings of the Greek word *aion* and its variants. Consider the following examples showing the varied and inaccurate manner in which translators have rendered this word. All quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible.

Ephesians 2:7

That in the *ages* (*aions*) to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Colossians 1:26

Even the mystery which hath been hid from *ages* (*aions*) and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints...

Ephesians 2:2

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the *course* (*aion*) of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

Hebrews 1:2

Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the *worlds* (*aions*);

Hebrews 11:3

Through faith we understand that the *worlds* (*aions*) were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Galatians 1:4

Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil *world* (aion), according to the will of God and our Father:

Ephesians 6:12

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this *world* (aion), against spiritual wickedness in high places.

II Corinthians 4:4

In whom the god of this *world* (aion) hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

I Corinthians 2:6

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this *world* (aion), nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

Luke 16:8

And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this *world* (aion) are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

Mark 4:19

And the cares of this *world* (aion), and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

Mark 10:30

But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the *world* (aion) to come *eternal* (aionian) life.

Luke 20:35

But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that *world* (aion), and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage:

Hebrews 6:5

And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the *world* (aion) to come...

John 9:32

Since the *world* (aion) began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

These verses represent a fair sampling of the many ways in which the Greek word *aion* has been translated. In other places, the translators have rendered this same word as "*eternity*," "*for ever*," "*for ever and ever*," and "*everlasting*." Following are a few examples.

Ephesians 3:11

According to the *eternal* (aionian) purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord...

Hebrews 6:2

Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of *eternal* (aionian) judgment.

Revelation 19:2-3

For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up *for ever* (aions) and *ever* (aions).

Revelation 20:10

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night *for ever* (aions) and *ever* (aions).

Matthew 25:41

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into *everlasting* (aionian) fire, prepared for the devil and his angels...

Jude 6

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in *everlasting* (aionian) chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

It is evident that in each instance the translators interpreted this word to mean what they thought it should say according to the beliefs they had adopted. In the original KJV Bibles that were released in the 1600s, the translators included a list of restrictions that King James of England had placed upon them. One of these instructions was that the Bible could contain no translation that would upset the orthodoxy of the Church of England. The Anglican Church taught a doctrine of eternal damnation, therefore the scholars working on the King James Bible had to conform their translation to this belief.

It is apparent that the translators were very inconsistent in the interpretation of this word. If the word *aion* and its variants mean eternal, everlasting, or for ever, then the word should make sense when interpreted this way in the other Scriptures in which it is found. In this, it fails the test. Consider how nonsensical the following Scriptures would be.

Ephesians 2:7

That in the *eternities* (aions) to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Colossians 1:26

Even the mystery which hath been hid from *eternities* (aions) and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints...

Ephesians 2:2

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the *eternity* (aion) of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

Hebrews 1:2

Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the *eternities* (aions);

John 9:32

Since the *eternity* (aion) began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

It is quite obvious that the Greek word aion is not referring to eternity in these and many other verses. The Greek word aion refers to an age that has a beginning and an end. Its variants refer to ages, or as an adjective to that which is age-lasting, or age-abiding. J. Preston Eby in his writing *The Savior of the World*, shares the following:

And now in reviewing the Scriptures we have just quoted we note that this aion is something which has a king; it has princes; it is in darkness; it had a beginning; it has an ending; it is evil; it has wisdom; it has children who marry; it has cares. The aions we find were made by Christ, simply through His spoken Word, and we also find in Colossians 1:26 that the mystery of Christ in us, the hope of glory, has been hidden from these aions. Now, if AION means ETERNAL, consider how ridiculous the Word of God would be! The Holy Spirit would be found saying, "the mystery which has been hid from eternities;" "the mystery of Christ which in other eternities was not made known;" "in the eternities to come;" "You walked according to the eternity of this world;" "by whom also He made the eternities;" "the rulers of the darkness of this eternity;" "now once in the end of the eternities has He appeared;" "the harvest is the end of the eternity;" "since eternity began;" "in the eternities to come," etc. etc... Suffice it to say here that there have been "aions" in the past, there is this present "aion," and there are "aions" to come. And these all combined make up TIME, encompassing the whole of the progressive plan and program of God for the development of His creation.

[End Quote]

Laying aside the myths of Rome, let us now translate these passages consistently, using the word "age," or "ages" in these same Scriptures. At once, the confusion is resolved, and a consistent teaching regarding the ages of God comes into view.

Eph. 2:7 "in the *ages* (aions) to come."

Col. 1:26 "the mystery which has been hid from the *ages* (aions)."

Eph. 2:2 "you walked, according to the *age* (aion) of this world."

Heb. 1:2 "by whom also He made the *ages* (aions)."

Heb. 11:3 "the *ages* (aions) were formed by the Word of God."

Gal. 1:4 "deliver us from this present evil *age* (aion)."

Eph. 6:12 "the rulers of the darkness of this *age* (aion)."

II Cor. 4:4 "the god of this *age* (aion)."
 I Cor. 2:6 "the wisdom of this *age* (aion)."
 Lk. 16:8 "the children of this *age* (aion)."
 Mk. 4:19 "the cares of this *age* (aion)."
 Mk. 10:30 "the *age* (aion) to come."
 Lk. 20:35 "but they that shall be accounted worthy to obtain that *age* (aion)"
 Heb. 6:5 "and have tasted the powers of the *age* (aion) to come."
 John. 9:32 "since the *age* (aion) began."
 Eph. 3:11 "according to a plan of the *ages* (aions)."
 Heb. 6:2 "and of *age-abiding* (aionian) judgment."
 Rev. 19:3 "and her smoke rose up to the *ages* (aions) of the *ages* (aions)."
 Rev. 20:10 "tormented day and night to the *ages* (aions) of the *ages* (aions)."
 Mat. 25:41 "depart from me, ye cursed, into *age-abiding* (aionian) fire."
 Jude 6 "he hath reserved in *age-abiding* (aionian) chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

The Bible has much to say about the ages God has allotted to creation. Before Yahweh ever began to create He had established a master plan for the ages. All would culminate in a great final age of the ages when all would be reconciled to the Father, when sin and death would be no more.

Myths borrowed from pagan societies are no substitute for truth. Though it be a remnant who are able to endure sound doctrine in this hour, let them hold fast the truth by proclaiming the fullness of the reconciling work of Christ, the Savior of the world.

[End Excerpt]

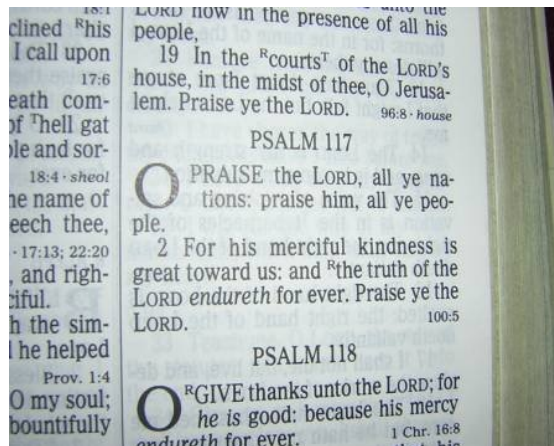
Brothers and sisters, the errors that have crept into your Bibles are myriad, and they are profound. I have set forth just a sampling of the many deliberate alterations of the text of Scriptures that have unfaithfully been foisted upon the body of Christ. How is a disciple of Yahshua to recover from so much error in the church and in the Scriptures? There is only one way. They must take upon themselves the task of laboring diligently as a seeker of truth. Yahweh has allowed truth to be obscured through the introduction of much leaven. In this way He can test and prove those who are sincere lovers of the truth. These ones will pursue truth until they find it. They will manifest that zealous questing for truth described by Solomon in the Proverbs.

Proverbs 2:1-5

My son, if you will receive my sayings, and treasure my commandments within you, make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding; For if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will discern the fear of Yahweh, and discover the knowledge of God.

Is it time for you to do a truth check-up? How diligent has your quest for truth been? How zealously have you labored to acquire understanding and to arrive at the true knowledge of God? Yahweh has permitted the Bible to be corrupted by error so that those who are passionate for truth and who would acquit themselves as overcomers, might prove themselves by exercising themselves with patience, longsuffering, and perseverance in a lifelong quest for the true knowledge of heaven.

Chapter and Verse



Psalm 117 - Middle Chapter of the Bible

I have observed that Christians are often provoked at the suggestion that their Bible contains errors. These same Christians are seldom offended to hear it said that there exists errors and false doctrines among the people who comprise the body of Christ. Most will heartily agree that Christians are subject to many fallacies, false beliefs, and sinful behavior. It is quite easy to see the error in someone else's church, though Christians often fail to discern the pervasiveness of error in their own.

If Yahweh's Holy Spirit indwells man, yet Christian men are leavened with sin and error, then it follows logically that the Bible which has been delivered to these same frail and faulty men to be safe-guarded, copied, translated, and interpreted to others, also contains leaven among the pure wheat of the Word of God. Men have not done such a stellar job in purifying themselves that they might be pure channels for the Spirit of Christ to flow through, nor have they done a very good job of preserving the original purity of the Scriptures as they were first delivered to holy men of old.

It must be stated, however, that as sinful men pose no threat to the ultimate triumph of Christ and His elect, so too a Bible that has been corrupted through years of human tampering presents no insurmountable obstacle to faith or the apprehension of truth. A sister in Christ, having read the previous chapter, wrote to me and declared that she felt that her faith was being upset by what was shared about the profuse and profound errors throughout the Scriptures. I believe her reaction is not uncommon. Many feel that their faith would be threatened if they cannot declare with confidence that the Bible they read is inerrant.

Fearing that faith is threatened by a flawed Biblical text today reveals a misunderstanding of the vital and central role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian. Many Christians have substituted the Bible for the role of the Holy Spirit. The Bible is not up to the task. A Christian's faith, walk, and spiritual understanding are firmly rooted and grounded in the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in their life. Consider the following words of Yahshua.

John 16:7-13

"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper

shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you... I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth..."

Note that Yahshua does not say that upon His departure He will send them a flawless text of the Scriptures. Neither does He suggest that the Bible will lead them into all truth. These activities belong to the Holy Spirit. As the prophets have testified, "and they all shall be taught of God." This truth the apostle John affirms.

I John 2:27

And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

Have you ever been sitting in a church service, or Bible study, and heard someone proclaim something that in your spirit you sensed was not right? You may not be immediately able to refute the error you have heard, but because you are sensitive to the voice of the Spirit as you listen to others speak, you have a sense of truth and error. You may be prompted to go home and look further into some claim that you heard spoken to see if there is validity to it.

As the Holy Spirit is able to make us sensitive to error in the spoken word, He is also capable of disclosing to us error in the written word. Even as a pastor, whose mind has been corrupted by false doctrines and errant beliefs, presents no insolvable roadblock to faith, so too we find that the errors present in our Bibles today may be overcome as we invite Yahweh to lead us into all truth, and to disclose to us error when we encounter it.

As I shared in the preceding chapter, the ultimate environment to stimulate spiritual growth is one in which believers are made to struggle. If truth came too easily to us, we would not learn needed spiritual disciplines, or develop the fruits of the Spirit. In the book of Proverbs, the sluggard and slothful man is condemned.

Proverbs 13:4

The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the soul of the diligent is made fat.

You may crave truth as a Christian, but Yahweh has so designed this present creation that it requires diligence to obtain it. If you do not exercise yourself unto godliness, if you fail to stir yourself up and study the word of God as "a workman that need not be ashamed," you will find that rising above the pervasive and cloying errors of an apostate church is a goal that remains just beyond your reach. Yahweh wants His people to manifest patience, perseverance, longsuffering, faithfulness, and every other good and noble trait as we walk with Christ and search for truth.

There is a very insightful expression stated by Solomon in the book of Proverbs.

Proverbs 15:19

The way of a sluggard is like a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a level highway.



Consider the metaphor employed here. To the sluggard everything appears too difficult. There seems to be insurmountable obstacles in his way. Therefore, he gives up, deeming it too difficult to make any progress. In contrast to this, the diligent and upright man who is willing to stir himself up to action, finds that the way is not only passable, but is indeed not the hedge of thorns that the sluggard has envisioned. Rather it is a highway capable of being traveled. Attitude makes a great difference.

Relating this to the church's quest for truth, we find that there are many who declare that it is too difficult to understand the Scriptures. The Bible is indeed a veiled book whose treasures must be mined. When you add to this the understanding that the Bibles we have available to us today all contain a myriad of errors, many of which are serious, some will simply throw up their hands in defeat. They complain that God has made it too difficult to arrive at truth, suggesting that if He truly wants them to receive truth He will have to make it easier to do so. God, however, will not make the apprehension of truth easier. He wants to prove those who are lovers of the truth. The slothful Christian cheats himself out of wisdom and understanding that can come only through much effort and patient pursuit.

Having shared this, I want to pass on to speak of other alterations that have made their way into our Bibles. Some alteration is the result of the innovations men have brought to the Scriptures. One of these innovations is the division of the Bible into chapters and verses. I will readily admit that the chapter and verse markings make it much easier to locate a specific passage of Scripture. The present divisions of chapter and verse found in most Bibles today were devised by numerous men over the course of a few centuries. Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury from the year 1207 until 1228, is credited with dividing the Bible into its present chapters. In 1448 a Jewish Rabbi by the name of Nathan divided the Old Testament into verses. In the year 1555 A.D., Robert Estienne, also known as Stephanus, divided the New Testament into verses. The first printed English Bibles predated Stephanus, so they did not contain numbered verses.



Tyndale Bible of 1526

Notice that in the image above, the Tyndale Bible is printed in paragraph format with a single column per page. When Christ, the apostles, and evangelists quoted from the Scriptures, they never gave chapter and verse references. At times they did not even name the book from which the quotation was taken.

Matthew 26:31

Then Yahshua said to them, “You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, *I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.*”

Where in the Bible does it state, “I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered”? The quotation is taken from Zechariah, chapter 13, and verse 7. If I merely told you that these words were in the Old Testament, or in the book of Zechariah, you would likely have a difficult time locating them. By dividing the books of the Bible into chapters and verses, we can more quickly locate a specific portion of Scripture.

Let us consider another example, this one taken from one of Paul’s writings.

Hebrews 5:5-6

So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

“You are my Son, today I have begotten you”;

as he says also in another place,

“You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.”

Like Christ, the apostle does not tell us where these Scriptures are found, not even naming the

prophet who recorded these words. (David was the prophet, and these quotations are found in Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:4.)

Although chapter and verse designations make it much easier to locate, or reference a Scripture, they have contributed to a serious problem among Christians today. That problem is taking a Scripture out of its proper context. Many Christians today are in the habit of quoting verses without consideration for the context in which they are found. How many times have you heard the following Scripture quoted?

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

This verse is a favorite of the name-it-and-claim-it prosperity crowd today. Do you want to purchase that new car? “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Do you want a down payment for a new home, or to be able to afford a week long holiday cruise? “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Do you want to quit wearing hand-me-down clothes, and purchase the latest designer fashions? You guessed it, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Divorced from the context in which this verse is found, it can be used to justify any desire of the soul, or carnal craving, imaginable. Things are quite different, however, when the verse is read in its proper context.

Philippians 4:11-13

Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Paul is confessing that through Christ he has learned to be content with whatever circumstance in which he finds himself. This is hardly the attitude of the prosperity preachers and their followers. If Paul was experiencing humble means, hunger, or suffering some need, he was just as content as when he was prospering, filled, and had an abundance.

Another Scripture I have often heard cited out of its proper context is the following.

Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Quite often people quote only the last portion of this verse, “There is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” This verse, quoted out of its context, is used frequently to defend the overthrow of a patriarchal system established by Yahweh among men and women. These words are quoted to justify the practice of appointing women as ministers in churches, or in declaring that a husband and wife are co-equal in authority before God. It is used to demand that all decisions should be made only when there is agreement between a husband and wife.

The apostle, however, is not speaking about authority, or governmental order, in this passage of Scripture. In fact, the subject of church or family order is never addressed in the book of Galatians. Paul does speak to the matter of husband/wife relationships, and the divine order established by Yahweh for male/female interactions, in a number of other passages, some of which are quite lengthy. Following are a few excerpts.

I Timothy 2:11-15

Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.

Ephesians 5:22-24

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

I Corinthians 14:34-37

Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says. And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church. Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only? If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.

But someone may say, “Yeah, well I choose to accept what is stated in Galatians 3:28, ‘there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’” That is well and good if a person looks at the context of these words in Galatians. Paul is speaking of a person’s spiritual inheritance in Christ. He is NOT delivering a teaching on governmental order in the church or among husbands and wives. One has to go all the way back to verse 8 of chapter 3 to see where Paul begins speaking about those who inherit the promises Yahweh spoke to Abraham.

There is a reason that Paul specifically mentions Greeks (Gentiles), slaves, and women in verse 28. Under the Mosaic Law foreigners could not inherit that which belonged to the people of Israel. Likewise, slaves could not inherit, nor women, but only males of the 12 tribes of Israel (the only exception being in a family where a man had no sons, but only daughters). The kingdom of God operates upon different principles of inheritance. Therefore, Paul says to the church, that in Christ all may inherit the promises of God. Foreigners to the race of Israel may inherit. Slaves may inherit. Women may inherit. “For you are all one in Christ Jesus.” That Paul is speaking of inheritance is further borne out by the verse that follows.

Galatians 3:29

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, *heirs* according to promise.

Notice clearly the word “heirs” in this verse. Paul is speaking of inheritance, not governmental order. Did slaves cease having to honor their masters because of what Paul wrote in Galatians 3:28? No!

Elsewhere we find slaves instructed to honor their masters.

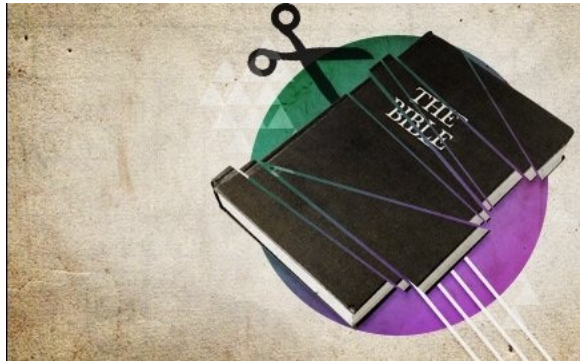
I Peter 2:18

Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.

Ephesians 6:5-8

Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

A slave could remain a slave and be an heir with Abraham through Christ. So too could a Gentile be an heir of the promises of Abraham. Likewise a woman can inherit the promises of God. Inheritance is a separate matter altogether from one's position and standing in this world.



Slicing Up the Bible

I have shared just two Scripture verses that are frequently cited out of their proper context to justify actions and attitudes that are contrary to the original meaning of the authors. The division of the Scriptures into chapter and verse has certainly contributed to this tendency to wrest some meaning from the text of the Bible that was not intended. When man innovates with that which Yahweh has created, whether it be in the natural or spiritual realm, he often creates problems that outweigh the perceived benefits.

The point at which some chapter and verse divisions were arrived at seems quite arbitrary. Frequently, a reader will find a chapter ending, and another beginning, without any change in the flow of thought from one to the other. The same is true of verse demarcations. Sometimes these arbitrary divisions lead to an errant understanding of the Scriptures. Consider the following example.

Mark 9:1

And He was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

Note that these words are spoken at the beginning of a new chapter. Because of this, many readers

have dissociated these words from that which preceded them. I have heard many spurious explanations of these words. The most common understanding seems to be that some to whom Christ was speaking would not experience a physical death until they saw His return in power and glory. Yet, all of those who heard Christ speak these words died and the Lord has not returned yet. This conundrum has led to many tortured explanations of how the words of Christ might have been fulfilled.

Some have suggested that these words of Christ were fulfilled when Peter, James, and John saw Christ appear in shining raiment during His transfiguration on the mount. They have been aided in arriving at such an interpretation because the very next words of Mark's gospel relate the transfiguration experience. Yet, Christ's transfiguration was not a fulfillment of His kingdom coming with power. The kingdom of this world has not yet become the kingdom of our Lord and Christ.

Others have suggested that perhaps these words of Christ were fulfilled at His resurrection, but once more we are met with the reality that the resurrection of Yahshua is not the same thing as His kingdom coming in with power. Some have even suggested that among those who heard Christ's words there were some who did not die a natural death, that they were possibly taken up into heaven like Elijah. We have no testimony of this occurring, however.

Some years ago a sister in Christ wrote to me and informed me of an online forum established by non-Christians that used this verse as evidence that the Bible was false, and Christianity a false religion. The forum hosts declared that since Christ spoke these words, and all those who heard His words died, and His kingdom has not yet been established, that Christ proclaimed error and was a false prophet. The sister did not know how to answer these charges.

Sadly, this misapprehension of the Scriptures is largely due to an arbitrary chapter and verse division. Christ's words can only be understood in light of what He said immediately before He uttered His statement in Mark 9:1.

Mark 8:34-9:1

And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ***For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?*** For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?... And He was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

Yahshua defines the death He is speaking about beginning with verse 34 of chapter 8. It is death to the soul of which He is speaking. This is the death that is figured by a man taking up the cross of Christ, the cross being an instrument of death. Repeatedly throughout the Gospels Christ speaks of the necessity of a man dying to the passions and desires of his soul. Christ declared that those who seek to save their life (psuche - soul) will lose it, but those who lose their life (psuche - soul) will save it. We must die to our own will and desires and accept the will of God for our lives if we are to enter into aionian life in Christ.

When we properly identify what death Christ is speaking about in this passage, we are able to discern that Yahshua is actually lamenting the fact that some of those to whom He was speaking would not taste THIS DEATH until they saw His kingdom coming in power. Then it will be too late. Those who heard the words of Christ, but failed to act upon them, will have forfeited their opportunity to share an inheritance with Him as co-heirs and rulers in His kingdom. These ones will be similar to the sleeping and foolish virgins who carried no oil for their lamps. When the Bridegroom appeared, they had no oil for their lamps. They had to hastily seek to acquire some, but the Bridegroom had entered His chamber and shut the door before they could return. There will be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth among many who refused to bear the cross.

There are numerous inexplicable divisions between chapters and verses. Acts chapter 7 tells the story of the stoning of Stephen. The chapter ends at an odd point, for the first verse of chapter 8 clearly belongs with the material in chapter 7.

Acts 8:1

And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death.

Logically, chapter divisions should be placed where the subject of the writing changes. Yet this is not the case. The only book of the Bible that has reasonable chapter divisions is the book of Psalms where each Psalm occupies its own chapter.

Consider that in Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth, he addresses approximately one dozen different topics. These topics are of varying length. Some topics cover as much as four chapters. In other chapters more than one topic is combined. Only chapters 5 and 15 of I Corinthians comprise a single and complete subject of discussion.

The Bible does no better with verse divisions. Consider the following examples of parallel passages which demonstrate how arbitrarily the division of verses were made.

II John 12-13

Having many things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that your joy may be made full. 13 The children of your chosen sister greet you.

III John 13-14

I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink; 14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

Why is "The children of your chosen sister greet you," a separate verse in II John, while "The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name," is joined with a clause from the preceding sentence in III John? In many places in Scripture, there is little rhyme or reason to the placement of chapter and verse divisions.

As helpful as the chapter and verse divisions are in the Bible, they must be recognized as an

innovation of man. Where man alters the divine word of God, he also opens the door for trouble to enter.

Naming (Mis)Conventions



A naming convention is a convention for naming things. The intent is to allow useful information to be deduced from the names based on regularities.

[Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naming_convention]

If there ever was a book that would benefit from following uniform rules for names, it is the Bible. The Bible is a book of types and anti-types, of shadows and substance. Names not only bear tremendous meaning in the Scriptures, but they serve as links whereby the natural and the spiritual material in its pages might be connected.

Tragically, there has been no book in history wherein names have been recorded more inconsistently, and rendered more arbitrarily, than the Bible. The mishmash of naming practices has led to the obscuring of many deep and wonderful spiritual truths. If I were to sum up the state of names in the most popular English Bibles, the word “confusion” would accurately describe it.

In an earlier chapter I mentioned the great disservice that copyists and Bible translators have done in removing the memorial name of God (Yahweh) from scriptures. The name Yahweh occurs 6,828 times in the Old Testament. The King James Bible renders the divine name as *Lord* in nearly every instance. Yet, even in this they were not completely consistent. In four occasions in the Old Testament, the King James Bible renders the tetragrammaton as “JEHOVAH.” These occurrences are found in Exodus 6:3, Psalm 83:18, Isaiah 12:2, and 26:4. I would like to examine the first occurrence where the name Jehovah occurs in the King James Bible.

Exodus 6:3

And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.

KJV

The word JEHOVAH is a translation of the four Hebrew letters Yod He Vav He. The name Jehovah has largely fallen out of favor with Bible scholars, as Yahweh is widely considered to be a better translation. What is being conveyed in the KJV rendering of Exodus 6:3 is that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knew the Creator as “God Almighty,” but they were not familiar with the name “JEHOVAH,” or other renderings of the tetragrammaton such as Yahweh. Is this is true statement? A good way to check would be to read the book of Genesis, for it is there that the lives of these three men are

recounted. The first encounter between Abraham (Abram) and Yahweh is recorded in the 12th chapter of Genesis.

Genesis 12:1

Now ***the Lord*** (Yahweh) had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

KJV

Genesis 12:4

So Abram departed, as ***the Lord*** (Yahweh) had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

KJV

Genesis 12:7-8

And ***the Lord*** (Yahweh) appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto ***the Lord*** (Yahweh), who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto ***the Lord*** (Yahweh), and called upon the name of ***the Lord*** (Yahweh).

KJV

In these four verses we find that the tetragrammaton occurs six times. In each instance the KJV Bible renders the divine name as “Lord,” but this is a substitution, rather than a translation. The Hebrew text actually includes the four letters of the tetragrammaton in each instance and Yahweh would be a more accurate translation of the memorial name of God.

What are we to make of the claim in Exodus 6:3 that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not know God Almighty by this name? We might reason that perhaps they did not know the name of Yahweh, but that Moses in writing the book of Genesis used this name because God had revealed it to him. This is a possibility, but it becomes untenable in light of a number of verses, such as Genesis 12:8 where we are told that Abraham “***builded an altar unto Yahweh, and called upon the name of Yahweh.***”

Still, some may argue that this is inconclusive. Maybe Moses was just using a figure of speech here, but Abraham did not actually know the name Yahweh. The matter could be settled if we could find any occurrence in Genesis where Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob used the name Yahweh when speaking to other men, or while in prayer to God. Examples of this are to be found.

Genesis 14:22-23

And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto ***the Lord*** (Yahweh), the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:

KJV

Here is a very clear testimony that Abraham knew God by the name Yahweh. We find that Abraham not only uses the name Yahweh here, but he describes Yahweh as “the most high God” (El Elyon).

There are many more clear examples of this type in Genesis. Consider the following.

Genesis 15:7-8

And he said unto him, I am *the Lord* (Yahweh) that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. And he said, *Lord God* (Yahweh Adonai), whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

KJV

This is quite remarkable. In these two verses we have Yahweh declaring His name to Abraham, and we have Abraham addressing God as “Yahweh Adonai.” The tetragrammaton is found in the Hebrew text in each occasion, and the KJV translators rendered it as “Lord.” Clearly Abraham knew the name of Yahweh! We observe in other Scripture verses that Isaac and Jacob also knew the name of Yahweh.

Genesis 27:20

And Isaac said unto his son (Jacob), How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because *the Lord* (Yahweh) thy God brought it to me.

KJV

How then do we reconcile the statement in Exodus 6:3 with the evidence in Genesis? Did the Holy Spirit err in inspiring men to record conflicting statements? It is far more reasonable to conclude that our English Bibles contain some type of error here. Such an idea is resisted by those who claim that the KJV Bible is inerrant. Nevertheless, the evidence of error is before us. The problem can be resolved by accepting the translation of Exodus 6:3 adopted by *The Scriptures*, a divine name Bible, published by the Institute for Scripture Research.

Shemoth 6:3

And I appeared to Abraham, to Yitshaq, and to Ya’aqob, as El Shaddai. And by My Name, *(Yahweh), was I not known to them?

*(Where I have placed the name Yahweh in parentheses, *The Scriptures* have the tetragrammaton spelled out in Hebrew letters.)

Ancient Hebrew did not include punctuation like that found in English today. Sentences did not end with question marks, periods, or exclamation points. The reader had to discern what form of statement was being made from the context. A declarative and an interrogative statement could be written identically. W.C. Kaiser, in his writing *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable and Relevant*, agrees that this verse should be rendered as a rhetorical question. This solves the apparent contradiction that arises from the King James rendering of this verse.

One might guess that English Bibles that make such a muddle out of the name of God, will do no better with names of lesser importance. That is sadly the case. The second name in importance in the Bible has to be that of the Son of God. The King James, and every other popular English Bible, renders the name of the Son of God as “Jesus.” This name is now so familiar to English speaking people, and especially to Christians, that adopting another, more accurate rendering, seems to be an

insurmountable problem.

Jesus is truly a terrible rendering of the name of the Son of God. It completely obscures the Hebraic roots of His name. The name Jesus also hides from view the type and antitype that exist between the Israelite leader named Joshua and the Son of God. These men shared the same name. The Hebrew name of these men transliterates into English as Yehoshua. Some prefer Yahshua, Yeshua, or some other variant. Whatever name is adopted, however, there is no reason to render the name of the Israelite leader who succeeded Moses, and the name of the Son of God, differently. They shared the same name. The translators of the KJV Bible were well aware of this. In the New Testament the successor to Moses is called Jesus instead of Joshua.

Acts 7:44-45

Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. Which also our fathers that came after brought in with **Jesus** into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David...

KJV

The Hebrew forefathers brought the tabernacle into the land of Canaan under the leadership of **Joshua**, who in this verse is called Jesus. It is very poor translation policy to call one man by two different names in the Old and New Testaments. The KJV also renders Joshua as Jesus in Hebrews 4:8. To make an even greater muddle, the KJV renders this same name as Jose in Luke 3:29. The NKJV, NIV, NASB, ESB, and other popular English Bible versions do no better. They all give different names to Joshua, the Israelite leader, and the Son of God.

Hebrews 4:8

For if **Joshua** had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that.

NAS

Hebrews 4:8-9

For if **Joshua** had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.

NKJV

Hebrews 4:8-9

For if **Joshua** had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.

ESV

Hebrews 4:8-9

For if **Joshua** had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day.

NIV

Hebrews 4:8-9

Now if **Joshua** had succeeded in giving them this rest, God would not have spoken about another day of rest still to come.

NLT

In the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament from which the translators worked, there is no difference between the name rendered as Joshua above, and the same name rendered as Jesus when it is used as a reference to the Son of God. The translators could have called the Son of God Joshua, or called the Israelite leader Jesus, or called them both Yehoshua. They should not have given them different names when in fact they bore the same name. Doing so hides from the eyes of the people of God the parallels contained between these two men's lives and ministries. Consider a small portion of the similarities between their lives below. For the sake of clarity I will refer to them as OT Yahshua and NT Yahshua.

Both Leaders of God's People

OT Yahshua: [Moses said] Yahweh was angry with me also on your account, saying, "Not even you shall enter there. Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall enter there; encourage him, for he will cause Israel to inherit it." (Deuteronomy 1:37-38)

NT Yahshua: "And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a Ruler, Who will shepherd My people Israel." (Matthew 2:6)

Both Called out of Egypt

OT Yahshua: "None of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land... except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have followed Yahweh fully." (Numbers 32:11-12)

NT Yahshua: Joseph arose and took the Child and His mother by night, and departed for Egypt; 15 and was there until the death of Herod, that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "Out of Egypt did I call My Son." (Matthew 2:14-15)

Both Filled with the Spirit

OT Yahshua: So Yahweh said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him." (Numbers 27:18)

NT Yahshua: "You know of Yahshua of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit..." (Acts 10:38)

Both Appoint Twelve Men

OT Yahshua: "So Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the sons of Israel, one man from each tribe." (Joshua 4:4).

NT Yahshua: "And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach..." (Mark 3:13-14)

Both Baptized in the Jordan River

OT Yahshua: Joshua said, "By this you shall know that the living God is among you... It shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of Yahweh, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off, and the waters which are

flowing down from above will stand in one heap." (Joshua 3:10-13)

NT Yahshua: "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan." (Mark 1:9)

Many more parallels could be mentioned. The Israelite leader of the Old Testament who is commonly known as Joshua led the natural descendants of Abraham into their inheritance. This serves as a type and shadow of the Son of God who bore the same name, for He leads the spiritual descendants of Abraham into their inheritance.

This confusion in the rendering of names is not limited to these examples. There is hardly a Biblical character whose name has not been rendered inconsistently in our English Bibles. Consider the case of Jacob. Jacob was the father of 12 sons who became the heads of the 12 tribes of Israel. In the New Testament there is a book of the Bible written by a Hebrew Christian named Jacob. His book intentionally draws comparisons that point back to Jacob and his sons. The book begins with the following words:

Jacob, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Yahshua Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, greetings.

Here is a father in the Christian church, an elder among the body of believers, writing as if to his 12 sons. This is an intentional allusion to Jacob of the Old Testament who also had 12 sons. Yet most believers never make the connection. Why? Because the most popular English Bibles have rendered the New Testament believer whose name was Jacob as James. The name of the book he wrote also bears the name James. People of God, this is Jacob's book! It is addressed to the 12 tribes.

Tell me which of your English Bible translations has a book in the New Testament bearing the name of Jacob? Why is it not there? Why render it as James, thereby obscuring the link between Old Testament and New, between type and anti-type? Why take the same name recorded in the Greek New Testament and render it in two very different ways? It was quite common for Jewish men to be named after the forefathers whose names are recorded in the Old Testament. The author of the book of James was not the only Jewish Christian who bore the name of Jacob. This was also the name of the brother of John who is similarly called James today.

Following this pattern of being named after Old Testament patriarchs we find that Simon Peter was Simeon, Judas was Judah, both being named after sons of Jacob. In these names as well, we find that the shadows of the Old Testament are fulfilled in the New, but the link is lost to most because the names have been altered. It was Judah, the son of Jacob, who suggested to his brothers that they sell Joseph into slavery for 20 pieces of silver. In the New Testament it was another man named Judah who sold the Son of God for 30 pieces of silver. Christians seldom make the connection because in the New Testament the name is written as Judas instead of Judah.

Genesis 37:26-28

And **Judah** said to his brothers, "What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; for he is our brother, our

own flesh..." So they pulled him up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver.

Matthew 26:14-15

Then one of the twelve, named **Judas** Iscariot, went to the chief priests, and said, "What are you willing to give me to deliver Him up to you?" And they weighed out to him thirty pieces of silver.

One of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament was Elijah. In the King James Bible, his name is written in two different ways.

I Kings 17:22

And the Lord heard the voice of **Elijah**...

KJV

Matthew 11:14

And if ye will receive it, this is **Elias**, which was for to come.

KJV

We observed earlier that the name of Joshua is in one place in the KJV Bible rendered as **Jose**. More confusing still, the name of Joseph is rendered as **Joses**. It gets worse yet, for the prophet Jeremiah has his name rendered three different ways in the KJV Bible. He is referred to as Jeremiah, Jeremias, and Jeremy. This is horrible confusion.

As a minister appointed by Christ to serve as a teacher to His body, my desire is to make plain the truths found in Scripture. Sadly, the translators of most English Bibles have not followed policies that serve the same end. On the contrary, they have obscured the truth by following arbitrary and inconsistent naming conventions.

There are some lesser known English translations of the Scriptures that follow consistent naming conventions. One of these Bibles is called *The Scriptures*. It is published by the Institute for Scripture Research, a ministry in South Africa. There are certain translation policies of *The Scriptures* that I do not like, but I do appreciate the fact that they have chosen to render the names of Hebrew men and women consistently in both the Old and New Testaments. Some of these names require an adjustment for Bible readers who are accustomed to reading popular English Bibles, but they preserve the link between individuals who bore the same name. Following are some examples of these names in *The Scriptures*.

Ya'aqob for Jacob

Yehudah for Judah and Jude and Judas

Mosheh for Moses

Shemu'el for Samuel

Yeshayahu for Isaiah

Yirmeyahu for Jeremiah

Yehezqel for Ezekiel

Obadyah for Obadiah

Nehemyah for Nehemiah
Mattithyahu for Matthew
Yohanan for John

With these renderings, the Hebrew character of these names are preserved. Additionally, one can easily see how the name “Yah” and the Hebrew word “El” were constituent parts of many individual’s names. Yah is an abbreviated form of Yahweh that occurs 49 times in the Old Testament, and a great many more times as a part of an individual’s name. The word “El” is translated into English as “God.”

The names of Biblical characters are pregnant with meaning, and for this reason they should be clarified rather than obscured. Surely Satan has worked hard to sow confusion into the pages of Scriptures that truth might be hidden from the eyes of Yahweh’s people. Following are some Bible names and their meanings.

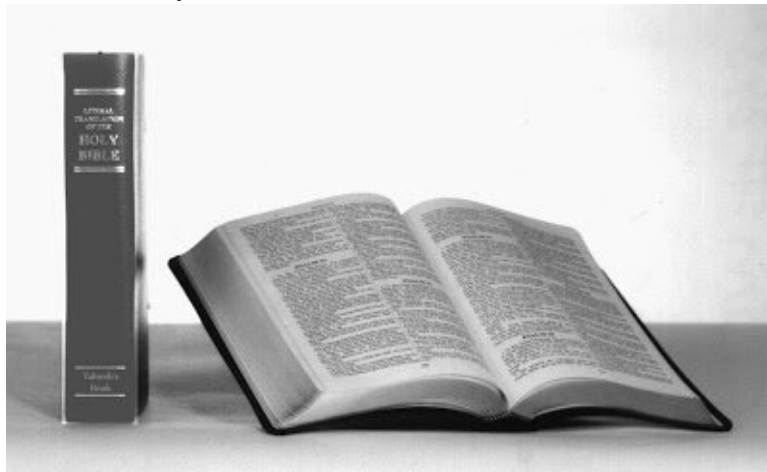
Nehemyah/Nehemiah: comforted by Yahweh
Yirmeyahu/Jeremiah: Yahweh has uplifted
Obadyah/Obadiah: Servant of Yahweh
Shemu’el/Samuel: El (God) has heard
Yehezqel/Ezekiel: El (God) strengthens

This small sampling of names reveals the great importance of Biblical names. The names of men and women oftentimes bore testimony of some aspect of God’s character, or of man’s relationship to his Creator. Many names were prophetic. Ancient cultures set great importance upon names. This is why we observe men like Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael being given new names by the King of Babylon when they were taken into captivity. Their Hebrew names were laid aside and new names honoring the gods of Babylon were assigned to them.

Daniel, whose name meant “(El) God is my judge,” had his name changed to Belteshazzar which means “Bel (Baal) is the keeper of secrets.” Hananiah, whose name meant “Yah has graciously given” had his name changed to Shadrach which is possibly derived from Shudur Aku meaning “command of Aku (the moon god).” Azariah, whose Hebrew name meant “helped of Yah” had his name changed to Abednego which means “servant of Nebo.” Mishael, whose Hebrew name meant “Who is like (El) God,” had his name changed to Meshach which means “who is what Aku is?” We see in these names that both the Hebrews and the Babylonians were fond of choosing names that honored their deity/deities.

The study of Biblical names can be highly rewarding. What is certain is that most of the English Bibles today have hindered, rather than helped, students of the Scriptures to discover the wealth of insight to be gleaned from Biblical names.

The Necessity of a Literal Translation



The extent to which the Bible contains spiritual parables has been little understood by Christians. This is true today even of seminary trained Bible scholars, and experts in the ancient Greek and Hebrew languages, men and women who are frequently employed in the work of Scripture translation. Because these individuals do not discern the multiple layers of revelation contained in the Scriptures, they do not perceive the damage they are doing when they paraphrase. When translators choose what they refer to as a “functionally equivalent” word or phrase, rather than being faithful to bring forth an “essentially literal” translation of the original Bible manuscript, they are stripping vast amounts of divine information from the text, information whose presence they have little suspected.

This matter is best expressed by use of an illustration. I have previously shared that Joshua, the man chosen by Yahweh to lead the Israelites into the land of their inheritance, is a type of the Son of God who bore the same name. Even as Joshua lead the Israelites into Canaan to take possession of their physical inheritance, the Son of God who bore the same name leads the saints to Zion to take possession of their spiritual inheritance. In the book *Christ in You - The Hope of Glory*, I have looked at a specific account from the life of Joshua, demonstrating that the details provided were chosen carefully by Yahweh to reveal a profound spiritual parable. Most Christians have been taught to only read such accounts as a narrative story of the history of God’s dealings with man. Readers may derive a moral application from the historic accounts of the Bible, but they seldom perceive that the passages contain veiled truths waiting to be discovered by those who are given spiritual insight.

Following is a partial excerpt from the aforementioned book in which I have demonstrated that every detail of the account of the crossing of the Jordan River is filled with divine revelation.

As Joshua (a type of Yahshua) led the people of God into their inheritance at the crossing of the Jordan River, we are given clear types of the first resurrection from the dead. The Promised Land serves as a type of the inheritance of the saints in Christ, which is their resurrected state in glory. Even as the Jordan had to be crossed, we have to cross over from death into life. Observe now the symbolism of this crossing.

Joshua 3:3-4

And they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of Yahweh your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before."

The ark of the covenant stands as a symbol of the presence of God in His glory... (This glory was revealed in the Son who was the incarnation of the Father.)

Joshua commanded the priests to carry the ark into the waters of the Jordan, and all who followed were strictly charged to remain at a distance of *about 2,000 cubits*. Every detail of the word of God is pregnant with meaning. Yahshua would be the first man to cross into the inheritance prepared for the sons of God. It would be "about 2,000" years before any others were to follow, entering into the same inheritance prepared for the saints in glory. The 2,000 cubits stand for 2,000 years. We should note, however, that it says "about 2,000," for no one knows the hour or the day. We are not told that it would be precisely 2,000 years from the time of Yahshua's resurrection to the time of the resurrection of His firstborn brothers. We are only told that it will be "*about 2,000*" years.

This is a marvelous testimony. Joshua is leading the people of God across the Jordan, signifying that we must all pass through the waters of death before entering into our spiritual inheritance. The ark, representing the presence of God revealed bodily in the person of the Messiah, went ahead of the people. They were told to remain at a distance of "about 2,000 cubits."

This distance was not arrived at arbitrarily. It was commanded by Yahweh who does all things with great deliberation and divine purpose. He could have told the people to stay back 1,000 cubits, or 5,000 cubits, but He did not. He could have commanded the people to surround the Ark as they did when they were camped in the wilderness. Doing so, however, would not have communicated the spiritual parable that Yahweh had purposed. The distance was set by Yahweh to prophesy of His Son being the first to cross through the waters of death and then to enter into His glorious inheritance. Yahshua would be the first to enter into ruling and reigning with the Father, but there would be a much more numerous company of overcoming sons who would one day join Him. These are those sons who attain to the first resurrection.

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

There is a distance in time between Christ's ascension to the throne, and those who attain to the first resurrection from the dead. The distance is "about 2,000" years, even as the ark and the Israelites were separated by "about 2,000 cubits." To understand more on this subject, I recommend the book from which the above excerpt was taken.

It is very important that our Bibles faithfully reproduce the words and details of the original manuscripts, for any alteration of the text will tend to obscure the spiritual insight contained therein.

Consider now, how the following Bible translations have rendered this passage from the book of Joshua.

Joshua 3:3-4

When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of ***about a thousand yards*** between you and the ark; do not go near it."

[New International Version]

Joshua 3:3-4

"When you see the Levitical priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, move out from your positions and follow them. Since you have never traveled this way before, they will guide you. Stay ***about a half mile*** behind them, keeping a clear distance between you and the Ark. Make sure you don't come any closer."

[New Living Translation]

Joshua 3:3-4

"When you see the Covenant-Chest of God, your God, carried by the Levitical priests, start moving. Follow it. Make sure you keep a proper distance between you and it, ***about half a mile*** — be sure now to keep your distance! — and you'll see clearly the route to take. You've never been on this road before."

[THE MESSAGE Bible]

Each of these versions cited are examples of a new breed of Bibles that are known as “dynamic equivalent translations.” The word “dynamic” signifies that which is living, and changing. The opposite of the word dynamic is static, which indicates that something is fixed and unchanging. There are many proponents of the dynamic equivalent model of Bible translation. Their main goal is to make the Bible “relevant” and “understandable” to the masses. Being ignorant of the depth of information Yahweh has encoded in every word of Scripture, these translators are effectually covering up, obscuring, and bringing wholesale alteration, to the spiritual mysteries Yahweh has hidden in His word.

Proverbs 25:2

It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.

The Bible contains tens of thousands of these types of symbolic details. A man could spend his entire life mining for hidden truth, seeking to unveil the mysteries of Yahweh’s word, and only skim the surface of all that lies therein.

Romans 11:33

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

Dynamic equivalent translations, although easier to read and understand, do not contain all the

information Yahweh chose to communicate through His holy prophets. They end up being like a Cliffs Notes version of the Bible. These translations are focused only on the surface account, giving no heed to that which lies beneath. Christianity today is very shallow in its comprehension of spiritual truth. Human reasoning and mental apprehension have largely replaced a focus upon divine inspiration. Most Christians see only that which human reasoning can disclose to them. The mysteries of God which can be grasped only through divine revelation and spiritual enlightenment remain hidden from their sight.

Returning to the two verses in the book of Joshua that we have looked at, we can see that the divine intent has been missed by these modern paraphrases. The words “about 1,000 yards,” and “about a half mile” do not contain the same information as the words “about 2,000 cubits.” Although these substitutions may be functionally equivalent on a surface level, denoting a similar distance of space, they are not equivalent at the many deeper levels in which Yahweh communicates truth selectively to those who are granted insight. Yahweh hides truth that His sons and daughters might search it out. However, in a dynamic equivalent translation, much of this hidden information is no longer present. These types of translations transform the Bible into something that appears good on the surface, but which has no depth underneath. That so many have cast off literal translations of the Bible to embrace paraphrastic translations is an indictment upon the shallow state of the body of Christ in this hour of apostasy.

The many books and writings I have made available to the body of Christ are filled with hundreds of examples of the parables hidden in Yahweh’s word. In my studies of the Scriptures, I have always relied upon a class of Bibles that are described as “essentially literal translations,” or “formal equivalency” translations, terms which are used interchangeably. These Bibles preserve the information contained in the original autographs of the Scriptures. An essentially literal Bible translation makes only those alterations to the text that are necessary to adapt the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures into a modern language. These changes are generally minor, consisting in the rearrangement of words, the addition of punctuation, and the addition of words that render the text more readable, such as inserting the definite article “the” before a noun. Many of these essentially literal translations indicate where such words have been added, often by printing the added word in italics.

Because essentially literal translations strive to reproduce the original text of the Hebrew and Greek Bibles faithfully, with a minimum of alteration, there is a high correspondence between them. Leland Ryken, in his book *The Word of God in English* demonstrates the correspondence between essentially literal translations by citing a portion of I Thessalonians 1:3. He begins by citing four essentially literal versions of the Bible.

"... your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ..." (KJV).

"...your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (RSV).

"...your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (NASB).

"...your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (ESV).

You will note that these four translations are nearly identical, for they have held to a philosophy of translation that encourages fidelity to the original manuscripts. In contrast, Leland Ryken includes the following four dynamic equivalent Bible renderings of the same text.

"...your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (NIV, TNIV).

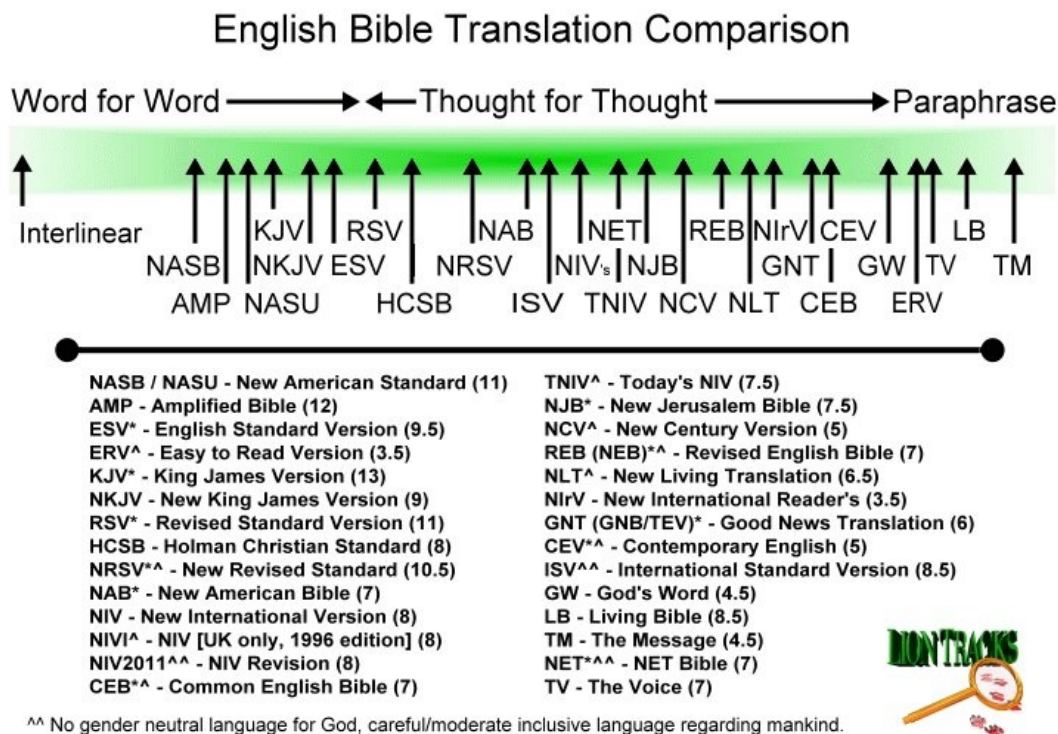
"...how you put your faith into practice, how your love made you work so hard, and how your hope in our Lord Jesus Christ is firm" (GNB).

"...your faithful work, your loving deeds, and your continual anticipation of the return of our Lord Jesus Christ" (NLT).

"...your faith and loving work and...your firm hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (CEV).

These four translations not only differ from the essentially literal Bible versions, but they vary widely from one another. Each of the dynamic equivalent translations insert explanatory words and phrases not found in the original manuscripts. Very often, these explanations are subjective, introducing error that leads the reader away from the actual thought of the author. The more loosely a translation treats faithfulness to the original text, the more divine information is lost, or obscured.

Following is a graphic listing many of the well known English translation Bibles, placing them on a scale from the most literal to those that take the most liberties with the text.



This graphic, created by Brent MacDonald, notes which Bibles have adopted gender neutral language, which Bibles include the Apocrypha, and the approximate reading grade level of the Bibles. The reading skill level varies from third or fourth grade for the *Easy to Read Version* and the *New International Readers Version*, to twelfth grade reading level for *The Amplified Bible*, and grade 13 for the KJV. This higher reading level for the *King James Bible* is largely due to its employment of archaic words that have fallen out of common usage.

(Note: I am personally hesitant to place *The Amplified Bible* so high on the scale of literal translations, for as its name implies, it “amplifies” the original text, adding many explanatory words to bring out the fuller meaning of the Scriptures. I do find *The Amplified Bible* to be a valuable resource, however, and I refer to it frequently.)

I have found the *New American Standard Bible* version to be a much better translation for study than the *New International Version*, or far looser translations such as *The Message*. Yet, even the NASB translators have failed to maintain fidelity to the original Hebrew and Greek in a great many instances. There are no “perfect” Bible translations today. I have not even found one that I would describe as “excellent.” There are some good Bible versions, but all of them contain errors, many of which are serious, and all have strayed from the original manuscripts in numerous places. Consider the following example from the *New American Standard Bible* which is rated as one of the more literal English Bibles.

Luke 24:13

And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about **seven miles** from Jerusalem.

NAS

The writers of the New Testament did not express distances in miles. In the verse above, the Greek manuscripts use the word “stadia,” a common measure in Roman times. Stadium is the singular form of this Roman word, and stadia is plural. The English equivalent of the Roman stadia is the furlong which equates to 606.14 feet, or 185 meters. The passage above from Luke’s gospel actually records that the distance between Emmaus and Jerusalem is about “60 stadia.”

I do not believe there is a number found anywhere in Scripture that does not bear some divine significance. It is therefore inadvisable for translators to alter the text of the Bible using modern measurements that will change the numbers Yahweh has inspired holy men to record. The NAS Bible states that the distance between Jerusalem and Emmaus is about “seven miles.” The number seven is nowhere to be found in the Greek manuscripts. The only number given is “hexekonta,” which translates as “sixty.” Only a translator who does not perceive that every detail of Scripture is significant would place so little emphasis upon rendering every word as literally and accurately as possible.

I am sympathetic to the fact that a literal translation is more difficult to understand, but it is the only form of translation that preserves the divine mysteries and manifold parables contained in holy writ. I believe a better translation policy would have rendered Luke 24:13 accurately as “sixty stadia” while adding a parenthetical comment stating that this distance equates to seven miles. Following is

another example of this type of translation error that is found in the New American Standard Bible.

Revelation 21:16-17

And the city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements.
NAS

Are we to believe that angels measure things in miles and yards? This is what this English Bible version would lead one to believe. To be quite accurate, there is no mention of miles or yards in the Greek text from which these words were translated. Neither will you find the numbers “fifteen hundred” or seventy-two” in these verses. The literal measurements given are “12,000 stadia” for the length, width, and height of the city, and “144 cubits” for the wall. Without question the numbers 12,000 and 144 were chosen by Yahweh for the design of the New Jerusalem because of their divine significance.

Consider now, how *The Amplified Bible* conveys this matter. It both preserves the literalness of the translation, as well as including parenthetical explanations.

Revelation 21:16-17

The city lies in a square, its length being the same as its width. And he measured the city with his reed--12,000 stadia (about 1,500 miles); its length and width and height are the same. He measured its wall also--144 cubits (about 72 yards) by a man's measure [of a cubit from his elbow to his third fingertip], which is [the measure] of the angel.

AMP

(I will insert what I intend to be a helpful note here. As I have been writing this series, some have noted that I have made mention of particular Bible translations as being above average in some aspect of their translation policy. For example, I have mentioned that *The Scriptures* published by the Institute for Scripture Research does an admirable job with its naming conventions. This is not a minor point, and it provides some reason to give attention to this Bible translation. At the same time, I commented that there are other translation policies adopted by *The Scriptures'* editors that I find to detract from its overall usefulness. The bias against certain words such as “holy,” and “Lord,” and the editorial explanations that state that Christians continue to be subject to the Law of Moses, are but a few examples of that which detracts from the overall value of this Bible translation.

Some may take my favorable mention of various translation policies of *The Amplified Bible* as another endorsement, and be inclined to run out and purchase this Bible version. You will no doubt find much benefit in adding this translation to your study resources, but it too has shortcomings. Not all parenthetical explanations are as objective as the ones found in the passage from Revelations above. It is no more than a statement of fact to say that 12,000 stadia equates to “(about 1,500 miles).” Nevertheless, a great many of the parenthetical explanations found in *The Amplified Bible* are subjective. Such is the case in the following Scripture.

Romans 6:14

For sin shall not [any longer] exert dominion over you, since now you are not under Law [as slaves], but under grace [as subjects of God's favor and mercy].

AMP

The words “as slaves” which are found in brackets are not found in the Greek text of the New Testament. These are explanatory words of the editors intended to amplify the meaning of the passage. These explanatory words can, and often do, change the entire meaning of a passage. They can also limit a reader to perceiving only one narrow understanding of a Scripture, rather than opening their spirit to multiple shades of meaning.

In Romans 6:14 the apostle Paul is stating without any equivocation that Christians are “not under Law.” He does not mean to state that they are still under Law, but not under Law as slaves. Because of the added words “as slaves,” some would understand this verse to mean that Paul is stating that Christians are not bound to a *slavish subservience* to the Law, but they still remain under the Law. The addition of various explanatory words placed in *The Amplified Bible* can lead the reader to erroneous conclusions.

* The subject of the Law, its role and duration, is an important one, but it is beyond the scope of this book to address it. I would refer any interested readers to the book *Laying Down the Law*.

Some of the bracketed and parenthetical comments found in *The Amplified Bible* are truly helpful, but they must all be tested carefully. Whenever men begin to expound upon the meaning of the Bible there is the possibility of error.

What I wish to convey is that whereas I find certain editorial and translation policies of individual Bible versions to be excellent, I have not found any Bible version to be free of error, or editorial bias. I believe there is value in studying from multiple translations of the Bible. I am not seeking to endorse any single Bible version as an exceptional resource to be studied exclusively.)

It now seems a good point for me to interject that although I find that dynamically equivalent translations degrade the overall value of the Bible by rendering void much of the divine information contained therein, I still believe this class of Bibles can be of benefit in certain situations. They may be helpful to a new believer, or to a child, who is at the elementary levels of spiritual or scholastic learning. They may also be of use to more advanced students of the Scriptures who wish to compare various translations to glean from different perspectives on the meaning of Bible passages. Dynamic equivalency Bible translations should not be relied upon exclusively, however, nor for too long, for to do so will hinder the apprehension of divine truth.

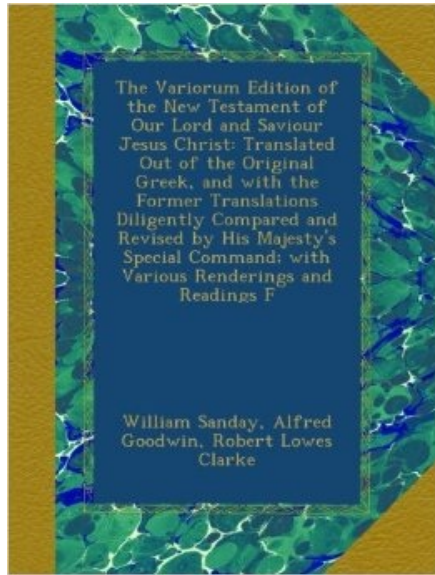
If you are beginning to perceive that there are a large number of problems in every English Bible existent today, and that none of them approach perfection, then this series is achieving one of its purposes. I desire that Christians would understand that even as the church is leavened with error, deception, and that which is false, yet the Holy Spirit is present to lead a remnant of God’s people to spiritual maturity, so too the failings of our English Bible translations can be overcome as we look to the Spirit of Christ as our tutor. Yahshua stated:

John 16:7-13

“It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you... I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.”

Yahweh did not promise that a flawless Bible translation would be preserved for His people to study anymore than He promised that the church would be pure and spotless and free of error in this age. What He did promise is that He would send us His Spirit to guide us into all truth. The Spirit is able to disclose to us truth and error, both in the church and in the Bible versions we read. We must apply ourselves in both cases to discerning between that which is true and that which is false. We must study, while always inviting the Spirit of Christ to open our eyes and our minds to discern both truth and error.

Variant Readings



Variorum New Testament

(The Variorum Edition of the New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: Translated Out of the Original Greek, and with the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised by His Majesty's Special Command: with Various Renderings and Readings)

The zealous student of the holy Scriptures who desires to arrive at the knowledge of the truth would be greatly assisted by being able to examine where the ancient manuscripts and various textual sources of the Bible differ from one another. By having this information readily available, the Bible student can meditate upon the variant readings of the most ancient Scriptural sources, and, with the illumination of the Holy Spirit, have some hope of arriving at the original author's meaning.

Adopting an essentially literal translation method does not guarantee a flawless Bible version that is faithful to the original Hebrew and Greek texts. Bible translators must choose what is the best, most authentic, and accurate rendering of the Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament. The majority of English Bible translations provide only one rendering of a word, phrase, or sentence. Yet, the source texts that they are working from may present more than one possible meaning. Because of the way in which ancient Hebrew was written, having no vowels, a large number of words had to be determined by the context in which they were found. To give an example in English, if we remove all vowels, then the letters "wrđ" have many possible interpretations. They could represent the following: word, ward, wired, weird, wearied, etc.. We would only know which is the proper word by the context in which it is found. In some cases, more than one possibility may make sense. Additionally, there are a significant number of Hebrew and Greek words that contain multiple meanings. The translators must determine which definition of a word is most appropriate in the context in which it is found. For example, consider the various meanings that the following short English phrase could convey.

The fan roared.



Fan/Fan

Many words in Hebrew and Greek carry multiple possible meanings, even as they do in English. It is the task of the Bible translator to determine which word best conveys the author's intent. In many instances Bible scholars have sincere differences of opinion on how a word should be translated, yet most readers of a particular Bible version would not know that there is any dispute about the meaning of a passage unless there is some marginal note explaining that a variant reading exists.

There are some Bible versions that provide such notes. One Bible that was created specifically to make the reader aware of many of the significant variant readings is called the *Variorum Bible*. It was produced in 1880. The *Variorum Bible* took the KJV Bible as its main text, noting wherever a variant reading existed. The *Variorum Bible* did not attempt to provide an exhaustive list of variant readings, rather it focused upon those textual differences that could alter the meaning of a passage. The KJV Bible used the *Textus Receptus* as its basis for translating the New Testament from Greek into English. The *Textus Receptus* was produced by Erasmus a century prior to the publication of the King James Bible. Erasmus had only five Greek manuscripts to work from, and none of them were complete, nor were they chosen for their accuracy. They were simply those manuscripts Erasmus could get his hands on at short notice. In the Preface to the *Variorum Bible*, we find the following statement.

(2) With regard to the Various Readings, it is necessary to remind the reader that the text from which the Authorised Version (KJV) of the New Testament is translated is substantially identical with that of the first edition of the Greek text published by Erasmus in 1510, an edition based upon not more than five MSS., and those chosen almost at random without any regard to their intrinsic value. The discovery of some of the most ancient and valuable MSS. of the New Testament, and the systematic use of others, both ancient and valuable, which, though known in Western Europe in the 16th century, were scarcely used, and, in general, a more comprehensive study of MSS. and ancient Versions, has shewn that this "Received Text," as it is called, labours under manifold corruptions.

Regarding the Hebrew Old Testament, the editors of the *Variorum Bible* include the following note:

The Hebrew text of the Old Testament stands upon a somewhat different footing. The form in which it appears in the printed Bibles is that in which it has been fixed by the Jews themselves for

centuries. But a close examination reveals the fact that, jealously guarded as it thus has been, there must have been an earlier period in its transmission, during which errors and alterations crept in. The existence of such errors may be easily shewn, without passing beyond the limits of the Hebrew text itself, by a comparison of the corresponding chapters in the Books of Samuel and Kings on the one hand, and in the Chronicles on the other. Of the MSS. which have as yet been examined, but few date back as far as the 10th century A.D., and these few contain only portions of the Bible. But the ancient Versions at once carry us back to a period from 500 to 1000 years anterior to this: they thus reflect, with more or less exactness, a text far older than that represented by the earliest Hebrew MSS. Certainly to classify and account for all the divergences which they exhibit is a problem of extreme complexity, and perhaps insoluble: but, if used with tact and sobriety, the ancient Versions afford invaluable aid in restoring order and sequence where the Hebrew, as we possess it, appears involved in much confusion.

Cases, however, occur in which a suspicion of corruption attaches to the text, which even a comparison of the Versions does not avail to remove. Here, then, nothing remains but to make a temperate use of critical emendation. However reluctant we may be to admit the principle of conjecture, an exceptional application of it is justified in the case of the Old Testament (1) by the long interval which elapsed between the composition of most of the books and the earliest date to which we can trace them, and (2) by the nature of the Hebrew characters, which, in every phase through which the alphabet has passed, are very liable to be confounded. Purely arbitrary emendations are, of course, inadmissible; but there are many passages which become at once intelligible on a slight alteration in the form of one or two of the letters. Changes of the vowel-points are also occasionally of service, but these do not in the same sense fall under the head of conjecture, for the vowel-points merely represent a valuable, but still post-Christian, exegetical tradition.

The editors of the *Variorum New Testament* utilized Westcott and Hort's Greek New Testament, which had not yet been published. The pre-publication manuscript was made available to them. This Greek New Testament utilized more ancient and more reliable manuscripts than Erasmus' Textus Receptus. Westcott and Hort's Greek New Testament is considered a much more accurate and valuable Greek translation than that which the KJV Bible translators used.

The editors of the *Variorum Bible* collated a great many writings from both modern and ancient Bible scholars. When citing a variant reading, they frequently mention some scholarly authority's thoughts on that particular rendering. The list of Bible scholars whose works they consulted is extensive, and is found in the introductory material at the front of the Bible.

These Bible scholars themselves made reference to a large number of sources in setting forth their comments on plausible variant readings of the Scriptures. Among these sources are the following:

- Papyri Manuscripts
- Uncials (Ancient manuscripts written in capital letters)
- Minuscules (Slightly less ancient manuscripts written with lower case letters)
- Lectionaries (Arrangements of the Bible created to be read in congregational meetings)
- Early Bible Translations (Latin Versions, Syriac Peshitta, Septuagint, Coptic translations from Egypt, etc.)

- Writings of the Early Church Fathers

The *Variorum Bible* is useful in learning about a great number of variant word renderings, but it does not contain all possible variants. The editors did not include variant renderings they deemed to be implausible, and undoubtedly a significant number of possible interpretations remained unknown to them. Following are a couple of examples of variant readings that I find interesting which are not mentioned in the *Variorum Bible*.

Crows and Camels

Most Christians are familiar with the story found in I Kings of Elijah being instructed to hide himself at the Brook Cherith during a time of famine. Yahweh promised to feed the prophet there. All of the popular English Bibles tell us that Yahweh used ravens to bring Elijah his daily food.

I Kings 17:4-6

And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ***ravens*** to feed thee there. So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the ***ravens*** brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.

KJV



Although this appears to be a miraculous account of Yahweh's provision for one of His servants, and the Bible contains numerous accounts of animals behaving in extraordinary ways at Yahweh's command, some have been troubled by the fact that the raven is an unclean bird.

Leviticus 11:13-15

These, moreover, you shall detest among the birds; they are abhorrent, not to be eaten: the eagle and the vulture and the buzzard, and the kite and the falcon in its kind, ***every raven in its kind...***

Although Elijah did not “eat” the ravens, one wonders why Yahweh would choose an unclean animal to deliver Elijah’s daily food. It is no different than if a herd of swine had daily brought his food. There is a variant reading to this passage, however, which resolves this apparent incongruity. The word for “raven” and the word for “Arab” are spelled similarly in Hebrew.

Some time back I did a study on the word “tent” in the Bible. I found that the Bedouin (Arab) tents were renowned for being black, made from black goatskins. The raven and the Arab both had an association with the color black. It was a prominent association, for even as a raven is recognized by its black feathers, a Bedouin of the desert is recognized by his black tent.



Bedouin Tents

Following is an entry for the word “Tent” in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.

TENT ('ohel; skene; 'ohel is a derivative of 'ahal, "to be clear," "to shine"; hence, 'ohel, "to be conspicuous from a distance"): In the great stretches of uncultivated lands in the interior of Syria or Arabia, which probably have much the same aspect today as in Abraham's time, it is an easy matter to espy an encampment of roving Bedouin, "a nation that dwelleth without care that have neither gates nor bars" (Jer 49:31). The peaks of their **black** (compare Song 1:5) *goats' hair tents* stand out in contrast against the lighter colors of the soil. There seems to be little doubt about the antiquity of the Arab tent, and one can rightly believe that-the dwelling- places of Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, and their descendants were made on the same pattern and of the same materials (Gen 4:20; 9:27; 12:8; 13:3; 18:6; 31:25,30; Ps 78:55; Heb 11:9, etc.).

See link:

http://www.bible-history.com/links.php?cat=39&sub=425&cat_name=Manners+%26+Customs&subcat_name=Tents

In the Song of Solomon the Shunamite compares herself to the black tents of the Arab Bedouins.

Song of Solomon 1:5

"I am black but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar..."

Keep in mind that the ancient Hebrew did not contain vowels. Words were written in consonants

only. The Hebrew word for raven is “oreb.” The Hebrew word for a Bedouin is “Arab.” They have the same consonants. What then is the proper interpretation? Most of the ancient manuscripts, including the Greek Septuagint, have understood the passage to be speaking of ravens. Yet there is plausible reason to conclude that “Arab” is the appropriate translation. Elijah was sent to a remote wilderness area with a water source. This would be a likely location for Bedouins to camp. Also, when the brook dried up, Yahweh sent Elijah to Zarephath in Sidon where He had prepared a widow woman to feed the prophet. There is a consistency in Yahweh choosing Arabs to feed the prophet, then choosing another foreigner, a Sidonian woman to feed him.

Yesterday a brother in Christ asked me for my thoughts regarding a specific Bible translation he had recently come across. When visiting the website of the organization that produced this version of the Scriptures, I noted that they listed a number of variant readings. They were comparing and contrasting their Bible version with the King James Bible. Following is one example that they listed.

(**Note:** I am not going to name this Bible translation at this time, but I intend to address it in a following chapter.)

Compare the next scripture;

King James;

Mat 19:23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

*24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a **camel** to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

(Variant Reading);

Mat 19:23 And Yahshua said to His disciples, Truly I say to you that a rich man will with great difficulty enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

*24 And again I say to you, It is easier for a **heavy rope** to pass through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of YAHWEH.*

In Aramaic as in Hebrew there are no vowels, simply markings under the words, which many times are not listed. The word for camel in Aramaic is gamla and would look like this "gml". The word for heavy rope is gamala and would also look like "gml" without the vowels. So when the translator translated this scripture from Aramaic to Greek, he simply made a mistake and put camel instead of heavy rope. This is a Jewish idiom. You cannot put a heavy rope through a needle, but if you take it apart strand by strand, then one strand can go through. Yahshua is using this idiom to show that a rich person would need to give up his possessions strand by strand or piece by piece to enter the Kingdom of Yahweh.

A translator's understanding (or lack thereof) of a particular phrase or expression may lead him to favor one reading over another. In the example above, it is possible that the translator did not understand what Christ was referring to when He spoke of a camel going through the eye of a needle. I think what comes most readily to the modern reader's mind when the eye of a needle is mentioned is a sewing needle. We know that camels cannot go through an eye of a sewing needle, yet Christ

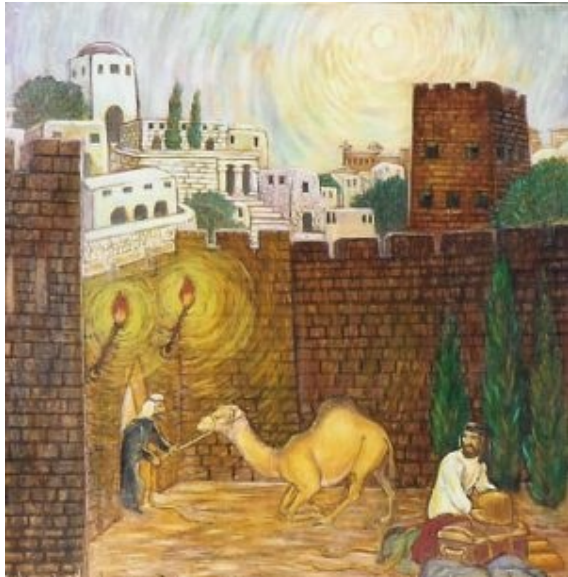
said that it was difficult, but not impossible, for a rich man to enter into heaven.

Matthew 19:25-26

And when the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?" And looking upon them Yahshua said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

If we try to envision a camel going through the eye of a sewing needle, the image is one of impossibility. Yet, when the eye of the needle is defined according to a more ancient understanding, the matter becomes comprehensible.

In the days of Christ cities were surrounded by walls for protection against invading enemies. Gates were set in the walls to allow people and materials to come and go. These gates were closed at night and in times of danger, but it was still necessary to allow a limited flow of people in and out. Therefore, built into the large gates was a small door which could be opened to let a man in or out. This small door was called "the eye of the needle."



Camels at the time were used for transport of goods. They would be piled high with merchandise and goods to be traded. If a man came to the gates after they had been closed and needed to enter, it was possible to go through and take his camel along, but it was very difficult. The master of the camel would have to take all the merchandise off of the camel, and the camel would have to go through the gate on his knees.

This is a picture of how a rich man must enter the kingdom of heaven. Getting on one's knees speaks of humility, and removing all the goods from the camel's back speaks of the necessity of Christians being unburdened from their possessions.

Matthew 19:21-22

Yahshua said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard this

statement, he went away grieved; for he was one who owned much property.

Although interpreting the word as “heavy rope” does no great harm to the meaning of the passage, we see that the more common translation of “camel” makes very good sense. In this writing I am not advocating for one reading over another. My goal is to demonstrate that there are a great many variations in the way Scriptures may be translated.

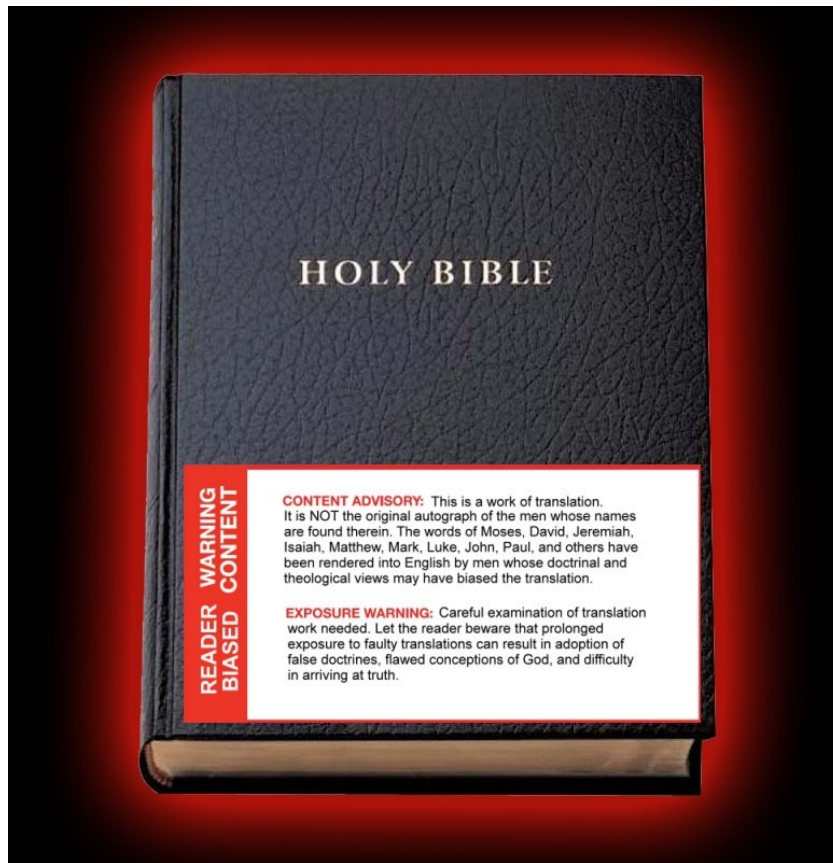
Being aware of the variants may help you to resolve a difficult passage that has troubled you. Awareness of the many variants further affirms the need for Christians to apply themselves to a study of the Scriptures. If you would arrive at truth, you must be a truth seeker. If you take a casual approach to the study of the Scriptures, relying on others to tell you what a passage means, or you have placed your trust in a specific Bible version to convey truth perfectly to you, you will certainly be hindered in the quest for truth. I would admonish all the saints to embrace the apostle Paul’s counsel to Timothy.

II Timothy 2:15

Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth.

[Amplified Bible]

Bible Bias



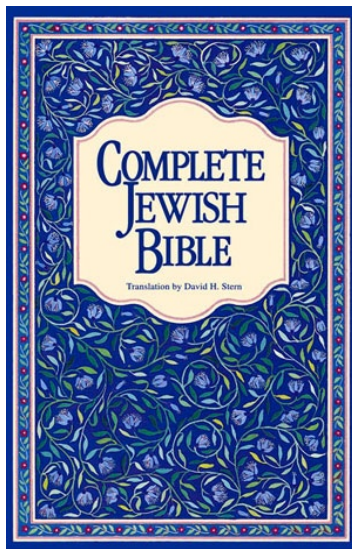
One of the disturbing facts relative to all existing Bible translations is that they are affected by the bias of the men and women who have labored to produce them. Not all such bias is the result of evil intent, or a lack of Christian character. To a large extent, translation bias is the result of men needing to make judgments about the original author's meaning. Quite logically, men will gravitate toward interpretations of words and phrases that they believe conform to truth. A serious problem is exposed as it is observed that a great many things men believe to be true are in fact false.

When a Bible translator overlays his beliefs upon the text he is rendering into another language, the result is that errors creep into the Scriptures. It is not possible to translate an ancient book such as the Bible into modern parlance without making a great many judgments about the meaning of the text. If the Bible scholar has a deep and accurate understanding of the subject matter he is translating, then he is greatly helped in arriving at a faithful reproduction of the original documents. If, however, the Bible scholar does not have a solid understanding of the truths and facts being conveyed, or worse yet, if his understanding is fraught with falsehood, error, and misconceptions, there is a high probability that the Bible version he produces will bear the imprint of his errant beliefs.

The naive reader of the Holy Scriptures often thinks nothing of the process that was undertaken to transmit the ancient Hebrew and Greek manuscripts into English. It has been previously noted that some have so little understanding of the original authorship of the Scriptures, and the work of translation, that they mistakenly believe that Christ and His apostles spoke the King's English. Not

perceiving the human factor in producing a Bible version in the English language, the ignorant are highly susceptible to being led astray. At the very least, those who fail to recognize the human factor in Bible translation will suffer from a lack of care in maintaining a critical eye that seeks to discern between the thought of the Bible's original authors and the errors introduced by copyists and translators.

Not all Bible bias is the result of good-hearted men failing to comprehend the original intent of the Scriptures. Some men have manifested less integrity in their labors. There are intentional deceivers, and there are men who in their pride believe they can improve upon the message of prophets, evangelists and apostles. I have encountered some truly egregious examples of men making wholesale alterations to the Scriptures in order to make them conform to their particular doctrinal beliefs. A recent example of this is observed in the *Complete Jewish Bible*, a translation produced by David Stern and published in 1989.



The description for this book states, “The only English translation that expresses the Bible's original and essential Jewishness from Genesis to Revelation. It reconnects Christians to their Jewish roots and Jews to their Messiah.” Such a statement sounds well and good, but along with the “essential Jewishness” that David Stern emphasizes in this translation, he also interjects his belief that Christians are subject to the Law of Moses. As I previously mentioned, this writing series cannot properly address the subject of the Law. I encourage all who have an interest in the purpose, scope, and duration of the Law to read the book *Laying Down the Law*.

David Stern admits in the introductory material at the front of his Bible version that he has made alterations to Paul's writings to make them more sensible and clear to Christians who are often confused when they read the apostle's words relating to the Law of Moses. What David Stern characterizes as confusion are Paul's many statements that affirm that the Law was given to mankind for a limited duration “until” the promised seed should come that Yahweh promised to Abraham, that seed being Yahshua. Paul in many of his writings, and with numerous arguments, testifies that the Law no longer has jurisdiction over those who are “in Christ.” Paul makes some very plain statements in this matter, such as the following.

Romans 7:4-6

Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God... But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

NAS

You cannot be any freer from something than to have died to that to which you were formerly bound. Paul is not preaching lawlessness here, for he plainly states that we were “released from th Law..., so that we “might be joined to another,” that is, to Christ. Christ becomes our Head, our Sovereign, our Shepherd to guide us in the path of righteousness that Yahweh would have us to walk. The Law contained only shadows of the will of God, but the Holy Spirit can disclose the substance of the Father’s will to those who are in Christ.

One of the ways David Stern hides the apostle Paul’s message of being loosed from the Law is by inconsistently translating the Greek word “nomos.” In Romans chapters 5 and 7, Mr. Stern renders this word as “Torah.” Yet, in chapter 6, sandwiched right between these other passages, he translates nomos as “legalism.” Why does he do this? It is because to render the word consistently as “Torah” would have led to the following translation.

Romans 6:14

For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under ***Torah***, but under grace.

To make the words of Paul conform to his own doctrinal beliefs, David Stern switches up the word here, rendering it as “legalism.” This is not all, however. In Paul’s epistle to the Galatian believers he uses the expression “ergon nomos” which is properly translated as “works of the Law.” Following is how this verse appears in the New American Standard Bible.

Galatians 2:16

Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the ***works of the Law*** but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the ***works of the Law***; since by the ***works of the Law*** shall no flesh be justified.

Mr. Stern renders “ergon nomos” as “*legalistic observance of Torah commands.*” He gets even more expansive, in his efforts to shape the readers understanding, in the next chapter as he renders the Greek phrase “hupo nomos” (“under Law”) with the thirteen word phrase, “*in subjection to the system which results from perverting the Torah into legalism.*”

Galatians 3:23

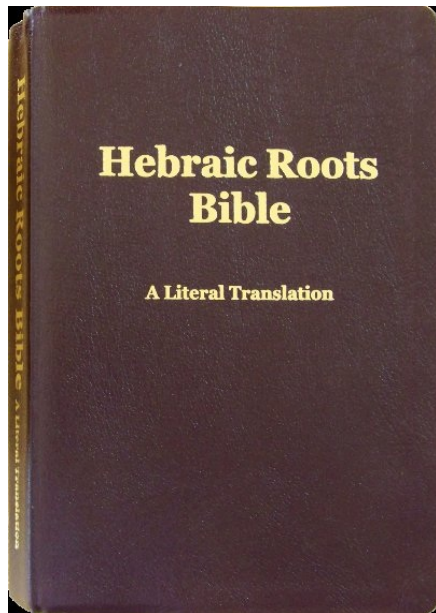
But before faith came, we were kept in custody ***under the law***, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.

NAS

These are egregious examples of altering the Scriptures to make them conform to one’s doctrinal bias. David Stern is unfaithfully altering the apostle’s words because to translate them accurately

leads men and women to conclusions that he does not support.

David Stern is not the only person to make such alterations to the Scriptures. I have found that those who hold to the belief that Christians are bound to the Law of Moses are particularly predisposed to playing very loose and free with the words of the apostle Paul. Recently a brother in Christ asked my opinion about the Hebraic Roots Bible.



I use the term “cult” very guardedly when referring to religious groups, for the word carries much stigma with it. Yet, the word seems befitting the group that produced this Bible translation. On their Q&A page, some of their aberrant beliefs are revealed. Following are two entries that are very troubling.

73. In this spiritual wilderness time period we are in how do we literally identify the real Laodicean members in YHWHs congregation?

*Clearly, we are in the Laodicean era of the end time congregation. Laodicean means ruled by the people. We see this attitude permeated in society with social uprisings over the last 3 to 4 years and we also see it in the congregation with many false brethren forsaking elders and leadership. The Laodicean claims he is “rich and made himself rich and is in need of nothing.” These Laodiceans think they have the proper doctrine even though it is false and heresy, and they are blinded to the truth by their pride. The bible states in Mathew 7 “you will know them by their fruits.” The laodicean is bearing no fruit for Yahweh’s kingdom. **Anyone denying the ordained elderhood set up by Yahweh and Yahshua and bringing their own heresies and will not repent but are held up in pride clearly are displaying a Laodicean attitude in which scripture tells us to leave such a one and mark him before the congregation** (Ro 16:17).*

These words reveal that this group believe there is a recognized “elderhood set up by Yahweh and Yahshua.” Of course, the leaders of this group believe they are that “elderhood.” This becomes all the more troubling in light of the following entry on the Q&A page.

69. Can you have the Holy Spirit in you without the laying on of hands?

Yahweh is not the author of confusion (I Cor 14:33), but He has a systematic way of transferring the Ruach HaChodesh (Holy Spirit) to others. He uses this as a safeguard so that his spirit will not be transferred to just anybody, but only to those that his true ministers have qualified to have truly repented of their sins and accepted the blood of Yahshua for the forgiveness of those sins. The more we know, the more accountability we have before YHWH (Lk 12:47-48). This is why YHWH does not call everyone today, and give a full knowledge of the truth, so that he can have mercy on their ignorance at a later judgment. Romans 11:32, "For YHWH hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he may have mercy upon them all." This is why the laying on of hands and transferring of the Holy Spirit can only be done by someone who has been ordained and given the authority from YHWH (Jn 20:21-23)...

Think about it. If any baptized member had the ability to transfer YHWH's spirit, what chaos it would have caused...

The laying on of hands is part of the baptism ceremony and one of the basic doctrines of the congregation in Heb 6:1-2. It can only be performed by a qualified Elder, who has been given the authority from YHWH, through ordination, and having hands laid on him.

Here is a group of men who claim that they alone have the power and authority to transfer Yahweh's Spirit to other men. This is gross error, and a manifestation of pride. Undoubtedly, such a doctrine serves as a means to control the members of the church. The elders need only declare someone disqualified on any basis they choose to charge the individual who disagrees with them of not being a partaker of the Spirit of Yahweh. After all, they alone are the sole arbiters of such matters.

In answering the e-mail from the brother in Christ who asked me for my thoughts on this Bible translation, I shared the following. (<http://www.coyhwh.com/en/bible.php>)

I have found the phrase "Hebraic Roots" to be used as a synonym for "Torah Observant." I have yet to find anyone who claims to be a Hebraic Roots adherent who is not teaching the saints that they must keep the Law of Moses. I would be surprised if this Bible translation does not include some biased translations of Paul's teachings that would render it more "Law friendly."

A second issue I have is with the statement below that is found on this same page.

This complete bible also has the New Testament based on the original Aramaic Peshitta text, the very language that our Savior spoke. The original New Testament was not written in Greek, but Aramaic.

I find difficulty with this statement for many reasons. First, the Peshitta was written in Syriac, a dialect of Aramaic that is distinct from Hebrew. It is somewhat disingenuous to refer to it as the *Aramaic Peshitta*. Most scholars refer to the Peshitta as the *Syriac Peshitta*. The reason for this is that Syriac and Hebrew, though both being dialects of Aramaic, are distinct from one another. It is therefore inaccurate to say that this is "the very language that our Savior spoke."

Thirdly, the statement that "*The original New Testament was not written in Greek, but Aramaic,*" is a belief held only by a small minority of Bible scholars, many of whom are members of groups described as Hebraic Roots, or Messianic congregations. Those who hold to this view are influenced by a bias toward Hebrew and against Greek. The existing evidence in ancient manuscripts does not support the belief that the New Testament was originally written in Aramaic. The oldest manuscripts of the New Testament, and the most complete, are written in Greek. The majority opinion among Bible scholars is that the Peshitta was translated from existing Greek manuscripts into the Syriac language. I think there should at the very least be some acknowledgment of the fact that the claim of the New Testament being written in Aramaic is highly contested. By failing to admit this, those who produced this *Hebraic Roots Bible* version are demonstrating their bias in the matter.

Fourthly, the Peshitta did not include the books 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. These were added centuries later because it was disputed by believers in Syria as to whether these writings ought to be included in the canon of Scripture. It is therefore disingenuous to write as if the Bible as we recognize it today was originally contained in the Peshitta.

As one examines the argument for an original Aramaic New Testament, there are serious obstacles. For one, much of the New Testament was written to Greek speaking Gentiles. Luke wrote both his gospel and the book of Acts, addressing them to Theophilus, which is clearly a Greek name meaning "lover of God." It is likely that Theophilus was not an individual, but a name Luke employed to denote that his writings were for all who were lovers of God. If Luke's audience had been Hebrew speaking people, it seems unlikely that he would have chosen this Greek name to open his writings. Then there are Paul's many epistles, comprising a majority of the books of the New Testament. Paul was sent to the Gentiles, not to the Jews.

Ephesians 3:8

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, ***to preach to the Gentiles*** the unfathomable riches of Christ.

Galatians 2:7-8

Seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel ***to the uncircumcised***, just as Peter had been to the circumcised (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also ***to the Gentiles***)...

Why would Paul write his epistles to the Greek speaking Gentiles in Aramaic?

After writing to this brother, I looked up some Scriptures in the *Hebraic Roots Bible* to see how they handled Paul's words relating to the Law. I had rightly surmised that they had made unfaithful alterations to the apostle's words.

Romans 7:4-6

4 So that, my brothers, you also were made dead to the (penalty of the) Law through the body of Messiah, for you to become another's, to the One raised from the dead, so that we may bear fruit to Elohim.

5 For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sin were working in our members through the Law

for the bearing of fruit unto death.

6 But now we have been set free from the penalty of the Torah, having died to that in which we were held, so as for us to serve in newness

[Hebraic Roots Bible]

Note that in verse 4 the editors of this Bible version have put the words (penalty of the) in parentheses, for these words do not appear in Paul's letter to the Romans. These are added to lead the reader to conclude that Paul had something different in mind here than he had elsewhere in this book when he wrote about the Law. Observe also that in verse 6 the phrase "penalty of the" appears again, but this time the editors failed to use parentheses to indicate that these words do not appear in the original manuscripts. The editors did the same thing in the following verse of Scripture.

Romans 6:15

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the *penalty of the* Torah, but under grace? Let it not be!

The italics are mine. They point out that the italicized words do not exist in the original manuscripts. The great inconsistency in translating the Greek word "nomos" (Law) is revealed in the following verses.

Romans 7:6-7

6 But now we have been set free from *the penalty of the Torah*, having died to that in which we were held, so as for us to serve in newness of spirit, and not in oldness of letter.

7 What shall we say then? Is *the instruction* sin? Let it not be! But I did not know sin except through *the Torah*; for also I did not know lust except the Torah said, "You shall not lust." (Ex. 20:17)

In these two verses the translators have rendered the same Greek word in three different ways:

the penalty of the Torah

the instruction

the Torah

This is an example of translation bias. It is the result of the translators overlaying their doctrinal beliefs on top of the Scriptures, resulting in a translation that is unfaithful to the original manuscripts. This is all the more serious because the group producing this Bible version has labeled it "A Literal Translation." There is no evidence of having followed a "literal" translation method in these examples. The writers are adding words to the text that are not present, and they are rendering words inconsistently in passages where Paul consistently used the same Greek word.

Similar examples of translation bias are found when looking at Paul's letter to the Galatians.

Galatians 2:16

16 knowing that a man is not justified by works of (Levitical) Law, but that it is through faith in Yahshua Messiah, we also believed into Messiah Yahshua, that we may be justified by faith in Messiah and not by works of (Levitical) Law, because all flesh will not be justified by works of Law.

(Psa. 123:2)
[Hebraic Roots Bible]

The word “Levitical” is inserted here to make it appear that Paul is speaking of something different than the entirety of the Law delivered to Moses for all the people of God. Some groups that advocate the continuance of the authority of the Law in the life of the Christian divide the Law into various divisions, such as the moral law, the law for the Levitical priesthood, and the Law of sacrifices. They then contend that Paul had only that portion of the Law relating to the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices in mind when he spoke of the Christian no longer being under the law. They declare that the moral Law continues to exert authority over the believer. Such a suggestion is readily refuted from a careful examination of Paul’s writings.

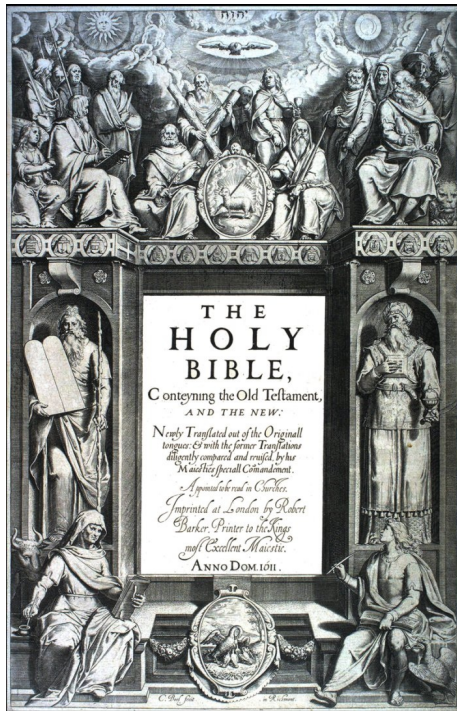
Romans 7:6-8

But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter. What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet."

The part of the Law that says, “Thou shalt not covet” is neither the Levitical law, nor the law of sacrifices. It is the moral portion of the law. Indeed, these words are found in the Ten Commandments. It is this moral Law of which Paul declares, “But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.”

Brothers and sisters, these Bible translations ought to come with warning labels such as I have shown in the image at the head of this writing. The naive reader, or the Christian who will not stir himself up to examine all things carefully, will easily be led astray to embrace false doctrine by being unaware of the translation bias that is present.

Translation bias is not a new phenomenon. It has been present for thousands of years. In an earlier post I mentioned a Greek version of the Bible created by Theodotion that Origen included in the Hexapla. Theodotion was a Hellenistic Jewish scholar. He produced a Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures around the year 150 A.D.. When Jerome, the translator of the Latin Vulgate, discoursed with Augustine about the Septuagint, he referred to Theodotion in very unflattering terms. Jerome stated, “*Origen borrowed the things which he has added from the edition of a man who, after the passion of Christ, was a Jew and a blasphemer.*” It is Theodotion whom Jerome describes as “a Jew and a blasphemer,” for Theodotion denied that Yahshua was the Messiah. Theodotion was also accused of translating the Hebrew into Greek in such a way as to obscure the prophecies of the Messiah that seemed most to speak of Yahshua as the promised one. That is serious, and reprehensible, translation bias.



King James Bible

Perhaps the most widely known example of translation bias is that observed in the writing of the *King James Bible*. In giving the English translators the charge to produce a new Bible translation, King James listed 15 rules that the translators were to follow. Following are the first four rules delivered to the translators, and printed in all of the early copies of the *King James Bible*.

1. *The ordinary Bible read in the church, commonly called the Bishops' Bible, to be followed, and as little altered as the truth of the original will permit.*
2. *The names of the prophets, and the holy writers, with the other names in the text, to be retained as near as may be, accordingly as they are vulgarly used.*
3. *The old ecclesiastical words to be kept, namely, as the word church not to be translated congregation &c.*
4. *When any word hath divers significations, that to be kept which hath been most commonly used by the most eminent Fathers, being agreeable to the propriety of the place, and the analogy of faith.*

None of these rules express a motive to create an excellent and accurate translation of Bible in English. Rather, each of these rules manifest the bias of man. King James wanted to preserve that which was familiar, and in harmony with the orthodox practice and teachings of the Anglican Church. Rather than following a well devised naming convention that could have brought order to the confusion found in the Bishop's Bible, the translators were told to keep that which was familiar and common (vulgar). The ecclesiastical (religious) words preferred by the Anglican church were also to be maintained. The Greek word "ekklesia" was to be translated as "church" rather than

“congregation.” The Greek word “baptizo” was not to be translated at all, for the word means “to fully submerge, or immerse” and the Anglican church practiced sprinkling. The word was transliterated instead of being translated. That is to say, it was carried over in its essentially Greek form rather than its proper meaning being given in English.

All of these rules put restrictions on the translators, hindering them from producing a Bible version that was integrally faithful to the existing Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. One of the more offensive examples of translation bias in the King James Bible is found in the following verse from the book of Acts.

Acts 12:4

And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

KJV

The Greek word being translated here is “Pascha,” which is properly translated as “Passover.” This Greek word occurs 29 times in the New Testament, and in 28 of its occurrences the KJV translators rendered it as “Passover.” There was no justifiable reason to translate the word “Pascha” as “Easter” here. Nevertheless, the Anglican Church held Easter as its highest holy day of the year, and it seemed expedient to have this holiday mentioned somewhere in the Bible, even if the translators had to insert the word where it did not belong. I do not know of another Bible version that has rendered the Greek word “Pascha” as “Easter.” Even the New King James Bible has corrected this verse to read “Passover.”

I could cite a great many more examples of translation bias, for there is not an English Bible version in existence that does not contain examples of this type of error. I do not suspect any malice, or evil intent, where most of this type of bias is found. It is the natural consequence of men translating according to their understanding and beliefs. Some translators have given a faithful rendering of a word into English even when they thought it was wrong or did not understand why a particular word was used, but the natural impulse of the human heart is to be faithful to what one believes.

It is needful for Christians to apply themselves to the study of the Scriptures, testing everything carefully. The prudent disciple of Christ will recognize the corrupting influence of man and apply themselves to dividing between that which is true and that which is false.

Priceless Quest



II Timothy 2:15

Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth.

[Amplified Bible]

If what has been shared in this teaching series has caused you to be daunted by all of the obstacles that hinder arriving at the true knowledge of the word of God, I have a word of exhortation for you. Yahweh never intended for spiritual truth to come easily to His people. It is well within Yahweh's ability to have preserved a flawless text of the Scriptures down to this day, but He chose not to do so. Instead, He has permitted His words to be obscured by thousands of years of creeping error, the result of the fallibility of copyists and the shortcomings of translators.

The fact that no perfect copy of the Bible exists, either in the original languages, or in translations to other tongues, requires that those who love truth must work to obtain it. Those who demonstrate the most diligence, as a workman that needs not be ashamed, will be rewarded with discoveries and revelations that men of lesser ambition only dream about.

In the writing *Divorced From Truth* I wrote about the excuses men often give regarding Bible study. What was shared is worth repeating.

It requires patient study to rightly divide the word of God. I know Christian men who have spent hundreds, and even thousands of dollars, upon some hobby. Men who are hunting, fishing, automobile, stereo, ham radio, sports, and bicycling enthusiasts have often spent a great deal of money, devoted great amounts of time, and educated themselves to become both knowledgeable and skillful in the area of their interest. Yet these same men will often argue that they are unable to apply the same attention to the study of Scriptures.

People of God, the truth is that men will pursue that which is important to them. Our actions reveal what is in our hearts. If a man will buy a fishing boat costing thousands of dollars, a truck to pull it with, equip it with rods and reels and bait and tackle, and spend the money for licenses and fuel; if he will read the fishing magazines, and study where the fish are, when they are feeding, what they

are biting; if he will find others with similar interests and spend hours conversing with them, learning new things, and increasing his knowledge and skill, but will not apply the same devotion to study of the Bible, it is not because he is incapable, or does not have the skills necessary. It is because he does not have the desire.

Christ did not go down to the local seminary, or university to choose His disciples. He chose fishermen, a tax collector, a political zealot, and other common men. These men traded a passion for other things for a passion for knowing God. This led them to apply themselves with great devotion to new interests. We read of these men:

Acts 6:4

But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

These men did not reason that they lacked the ability to study the word of God in order to teach it accurately. They did not say, "I am a fisherman, not a Bible scholar." They became Bible scholars, devoting themselves to its study and teaching, relying upon the Spirit of Christ to instruct them as they did so, and they were able to lay a foundation upon which the church of God could be firmly established.

There is no less need in this hour for men and women to manifest a similar devotion to Christ and to the study of His word.

[End Excerpt]

Solomon speaks in magnificent terms of the pursuit of wisdom and understanding. He uses analogies that evoke images of hunting for buried treasure, of passionately crying out to God to be granted that wisdom which an ardent soul fervently desires. Solomon demonstrates that the acquisition of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding are the most worthy of pursuits, and should involve a man's entire being.

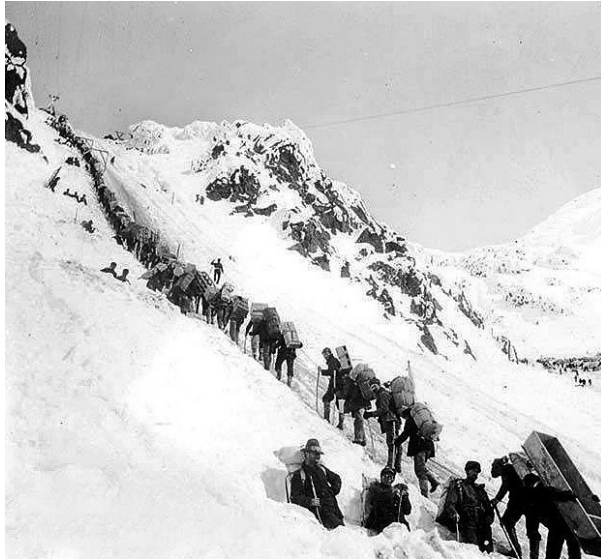
Proverbs 2:1-5

My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; Yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will understand the fear of Yahweh, and find the knowledge of God.

Do not these words reveal that the pursuit of the knowledge of God should be embraced with an unflinching resolve that will not be turned back?



In another writing I spoke of the effort men have expended in the pursuit of gold. The obstacles overcome, and the perseverance manifested by many men as they have sought that which is highly valued in this world is legendary. Of how much greater value are the secrets of the Almighty? Following is an excerpt from the book *The Divine Quest*.



Chilkoot Pass, 1898

Consider how much effort man has expended in his search for gold, this perishable metal that is precious to man. Wars have been fought over gold and entire nations have given themselves to the pursuit of it. Men have risked life and limb to recover gold that was lost in ancient shipwrecks. Men and women have cast all to the wind and embarked with great rigor and under the harshest of conditions when they have merely heard a rumor of gold.

There are many incredible tales of men who have sought for gold. Vast migrations of men have ensued when gold was discovered in some remote area. It is reported that in 1897-1898 that 20,000 to 30,000 men traversed the Chilkoot Pass on their way to the Yukon gold fields of Canada. A more remote area for prospecting can hardly be imagined. The Chilkoot Pass was itself over 500 miles from the gold fields, yet its rigors are typical of the hardships men and women endured in their search for this prized metal.

The Chilkoot Trail stretches for 33 miles from Dyea to Lake Bennett. The Trail was rough, steep, and snow covered. The destination was Lake Bennett where the prospectors would have to build a boat to travel 550 miles down river to Dawson and the gold fields. The Canadian government knew that many hardships lay ahead for the gold seekers, and they required each person to carry a ton of goods up the pass, enough to last them approximately one year. This had the benefit of saving many lives, but it was an arduous task.

On average a man could carry about seventy pounds worth of supplies on his back, and this required that he would have to make the journey up and down the pass about thirty times. It took an average of several months for each man to carry his quota up the mountainous terrain. With all the trips back

and forth along the trail, some men had to walk upwards of 2,000 miles, and half of this walk was with a heavy load on their back. All told, some gold seekers traveled nearly 5,000 miles from their homes to get to the gold fields.

The summit of the pass was reached with a final climb up 1,200 steps that were cut into the ice. These were called the “golden stairs.” The gold seeker had to leave his supplies at the top of the pass and mark his spot with a tall stake so that he could find it in the deep snow that was falling. Over seventy feet of snow was recorded in the years mentioned, and at one point the snow built up so deep along the trail that when a few warm days occurred in April a tremendous avalanche occurred that buried 63 people. As soon as the bodies were dug out and carried downhill, the trek began again.

All this time men and women were having to live in the most primitive of accommodations. They slept in tents in the frigid weather, and lived on the most basic of diets. Once the prospectors reached the lake with their supplies they had to build a boat which was a task most had never done before. Trees for miles around the lake were cut down, and each board had to be hand sawn using a whipsaw, a two man saw, and this was more back breaking labor. This was no small boat that had to be constructed, for it had to carry a ton of supplies. Many men worked in teams and were therefore transporting two tons of goods.

How were men able to bring themselves to endure such rigors? They had their eye on the prize set before them. They dreamed of gold and all that it could buy them. How much greater is the prize that lies ahead of the overcomer in Christ? It is of immeasurably greater value. Should we not be willing to endure some hardship as we pursue this faith which Yahweh so highly esteems? The apostle Paul stated that the suffering that is the portion of the saints in Christ is not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in the ages to come.

There were those among the gold seekers who traveled the Chilkoot Pass on the way to the Yukon who became millionaires. The satisfaction that was theirs upon receiving the prize they sought was made all the sweeter as they recounted the arduous path they trod to attain it. There were also many men and women who arrived at the Pass, and upon seeing the great difficulty of it, they turned back and returned home. Those who endured had a satisfaction that could not be bought. I can imagine them telling their children and grandchildren of the struggle, the suffering, and the final victory they achieved. Yet all this was merely in pursuit of the gold that perishes.

[End Excerpt]

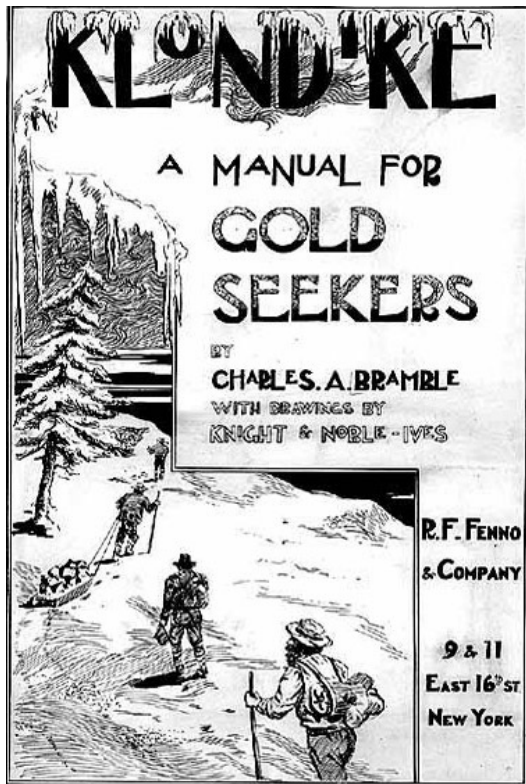
How much do you value truth? What estimate do you place upon the apprehension of the mysteries of God? What are you willing to expend in order to uncover the treasures of darkness and to obtain the hidden wealth of secret places?

Proverbs 25:2

It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.

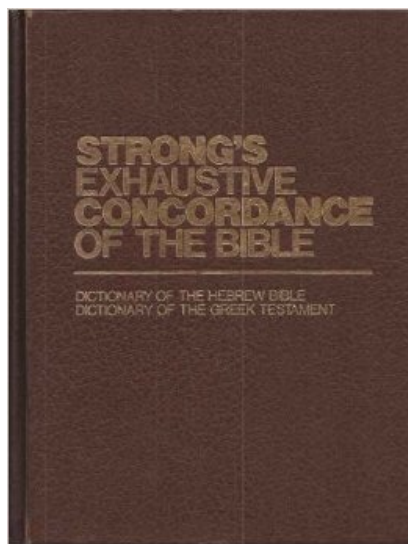
Isaiah 45:3

“I will give you the treasures of darkness, and hidden wealth of secret places...”



Guidebook for Klondike Gold Seekers

Even as men who seek for gold and hidden treasure have tools to use to aid in the acquisition of that which they seek, so too will the man or woman who seeks to uncover the mysteries of God hidden in His word be benefitted by making skillful use of the proper tools. In this age of computers and the Internet, there are a great many resources available to aid in the quest for learning. In my early years I did not have computer based tools available to me. The personal computer had not yet been developed. What I did have, I made ready use of.



Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible

One of the books that I often employed in my study of the Scriptures was *Strong's Concordance*. This hefty book lists every occurrence of every Hebrew and Greek word in the Bible. In its early days, it was keyed to the King James Version of the Bible. Now you can find a *Strong's Concordance* keyed to a much wider assortment of Bible translations, including the *New King James Bible*, *New American Standard Bible*, and the *New International Version*.

When a reader first opens a copy of *Strong's Concordance*, understanding how to use it may appear difficult, but it is actually quite simple with a little coaching. *Strong's Concordance* is divided into two main sections. The first section is the concordance. The second section consists of Hebrew and Greek dictionaries. Following is a page image from the concordance section.

Word	Scripture Reference	Strong's Number
SORCERERS	also called the wise men and the s.....	Ex 7:11 3784
	to your enchanters, nor to your s.....	Jer 27:9 3786
	and the astrologers, and the s.....	Dan 2:2 3784
	be a swift witness against the s.....	Mal 3:5 3784
	murderers, and whoremongers, and s.....	Rev 21:8 5332
	For without are dogs, and s.....	Rev 22:15 5333
SORCERESS	near hither, ye sons of the s.....	Is 57:3 6049
SORCERIES	for the multitude of thy s.....	Is 47:9 3785
	and with the multitude of thy s.....	Is 47:12 3785
	time he had bewitched them with s.....	Acts 8:11 3095
	of their murders, nor of their s.....	Rev 9:21 5331
	for by thy s were all nations.....	Rev 18:23 5331

Suppose you were reading through the King James Bible and you came across the word “sorcerers” in Revelation 21:8. If you wanted to know what word was used in the original Bible manuscripts you would look up the word in the concordance where all words found in the KJV Bible are listed alphabetically. Note in the expanded shot that there are six occurrences of the word “sorcerers” in the KJV Bible. They are listed in the order in which they appear. The concordance provides a snippet of each verse where the word is found, as well as the book, chapter, and verse reference.

To the far right is a number that identifies the word listing in the Hebrew or Greek dictionary at the back of the *Strong's Concordance*. The Bible student using this reference needs to be aware that the Hebrew and Greek dictionaries both start with the number 1 and advance from there. If for example you see the number 5332, as is observed next to the Revelation 21:8 reference above, you would need to determine if this word is in the Hebrew dictionary, or the Greek dictionary. As long as you understand that the Old Testament books were written in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek, and you know which books belong to each testament, you should have no problem.

As a child growing up I remember attending children's church where we were taught a song that recited all 66 books of Bible in the order in which they appear. Because I was taught this song, I can still recite the books of the Bible in order to this day. This made it quite easy for me to recognize which books belonged to the Old Testament, and which ones were in the New Testament. In children's church we frequently held Bible drills where the teacher would call out a Bible reference and the first child who could find the passage in their Bible would stand up and read it. I was very competitive as a child, and practiced looking up passages in the Bible. Some children had an advantage by having Bibles with tabs to indicate where the various books of the Bible were, but I

did not need them as I could find the books very quickly.

As a youth, I did occasionally get confused when doing Bible studies, and would look up a word number in the wrong dictionary in *Strong's Concordance*. This could lead to confusing results. For example, if I were to look up the number 5332 in the Hebrew Dictionary section of *Strong's Concordance* I would find the following listing:

OT:5332

netsach (nay'-tsakh); probably identical with OT:5331, through the idea of brilliancy of color; juice of the grape (as blood red):

KJV - blood, strength.

This definition has nothing to do with sorcery. In order to find the proper definition I would first have to recognize that the book of Revelation is in the New Testament. Since the New Testament was written in Greek, I should look for the number 5332 in the Greek dictionary, not in the Hebrew dictionary. Upon doing so, I would find the following entry.

NT:5332

pharmakeus (far-mak-yoos'); from pharmakon (a drug, i.e. spell-giving potion); a druggist ("pharmacist") or poisoner, i.e. (by extension) a magician:

KJV - sorcerer.

It is easy to see what a powerful Bible study tool this reference book can be. Much revelation can be gleaned from observing the Greek word that is translated into English as "sorcerers." It is the same word that the Greeks used to describe a pharmacist, or druggist. Hmmm..... Discoveries such as this can lead to much insight, both into ancient times, as well as the present.

It should be noted that EVERY word in the King James Bible is found in *Strong's Concordance*. That is why it is called an "Exhaustive" concordance. If you had a mind to do so, you could look up every occurrence of the English words "a," "the," "if," or "and." There are thousands of listings for each word which would make it quite tedious to look them all up.

A more practical use of Strong's Concordance might be to look up the original words translated as "God almighty" that are found in Genesis 48:3.

Genesis 48:3

And Jacob said unto Joseph, **God Almighty** appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me...

KJV

As a youth, this was the type of thing that captured my interest. I wanted to know the names of God and what they mean. By looking up the words "God," and "Almighty" in the concordance section of Strong's reference work, I would be informed that these are the Hebrew words 410 and 7706.

OT:410

'el (ale); shortened from OT:352; strength; as adjective, mighty; especially the Almighty (but used also of any deity):

KJV - God (god), goodly, great, idol, might (-y one), power, strong. Compare names in "-el."

OT:7706

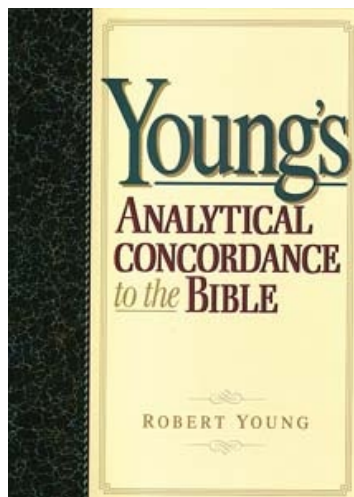
Shadday (shad-dah'-ee); from OT:7703; the Almighty:

KJV - Almighty.

You will note that in many occurrences, the KJV Bible translators rendered a single Hebrew or Greek word with a great variety of English words. The Hebrew word "el," aside from being translated as "God," was also translated as "god (lower case)," "goodly," "great," "idol," "might," "mighty one," "power," and "strong." The Hebrew word "Shadday," however, was translated with only one English word.

By looking up the words "God" and "Almighty" in *Strong's Concordance* I can see that Jacob told his son Joseph that "El Shadday" appeared to him. That discovery could form the basis for further study. I may want to look up every place that the Hebrew word "Shadday" appears to see if I can glean some further insight into its usage and meaning. What I would discover is that this word appears 48 times in the Old Testament, and in every instance it is used as a reference to Yahweh. No one else in the Bible is called "Shadday."

As wonderful as Strong's Concordance is, it can be somewhat lacking in the word definition department. The Bible student in many instances will wish that he had a more robust definition of a Hebrew or Greek word. To look for further insight a Bible student could look at *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible*.



Young's Concordance is very similar to Strong's, but his word definitions provide shades of meaning that at times vary from Strong's reference work. I was not aware of Young's Concordance when I was a youth, and never had access to one. I discovered it existed when I came across an old copy some years back. This book was published in 1879 by the same man who produced *Young's Literal Translation of the Bible*, itself a wonderful study resource. Young's concordance predates

Strong's which was first published in 1890.

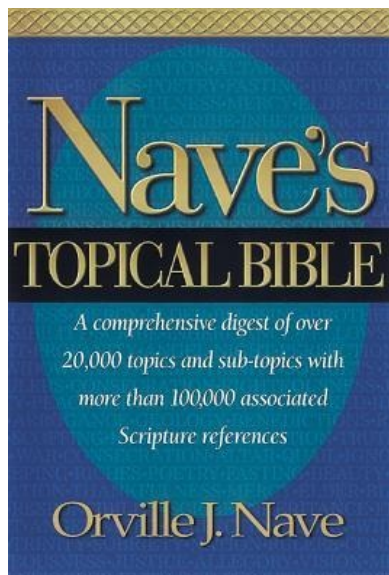
For even more expansive definitions of Hebrew and Greek words that appear in the Bible, a dedicated *Bible Dictionary* is helpful. There are a great many of these available. As a youth, the one I used was *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. This book was authored by William Edwy Vine and first published as a four volume set in 1940. The word "expository" means "to expound, or explain." Vine only produced a New Testament dictionary as he was a Greek scholar. Vine's Dictionary is sold today with both Old Testament and New Testament words, but the Old Testament definitions are the work of other men.

To get an idea of how much fuller the word definitions are in *Vine's Expository Dictionary*, following is the entry for the Greek word "pharmakia," which is translated into English as "sorcery."

Sorcery:

(Eng., "pharmacy," etc.) primarily signified "the use of medicine, drugs, spells;" then, "poisoning;" then, "sorcery," Galatians 5:20, RV, "sorcery" (AV, "witchcraft"), mentioned as one of "the works of the flesh." See also Revelation 9:21; 18:23. In the Septuagint., Exodus 7:11, 22; 8:7, 18; Isaiah 47:9, 12. In "sorcery," the use of drugs, whether simple or potent, was generally accompanied by incantations and appeals to occult powers, with the provision of various charms, amulets, etc., professedly designed to keep the applicant or patient from the attention and power of demons, but actually to impress the applicant with the mysterious resources and powers of the sorcerer.

An additional tool I used from the time of my teenage years was *Halley's Bible Handbook*. This book provides a wealth of historical and contextual information about the Bible. It is also highly illustrated, containing maps and color photos of various places and objects named in the Scriptures. Dr. Henry H. Halley was an author, minister, and Bible lecturer. He was first ordained to ministry in 1898 and had a penchant for memorizing passages of Scripture. Dr. Halley could recite from memory entire books of the Bible. He was often called upon to provide recitations. He would begin by sharing background information about a book of the Bible, and then proceed to recite the book from memory. This introductory information formed the basis for his Bible Handbook.

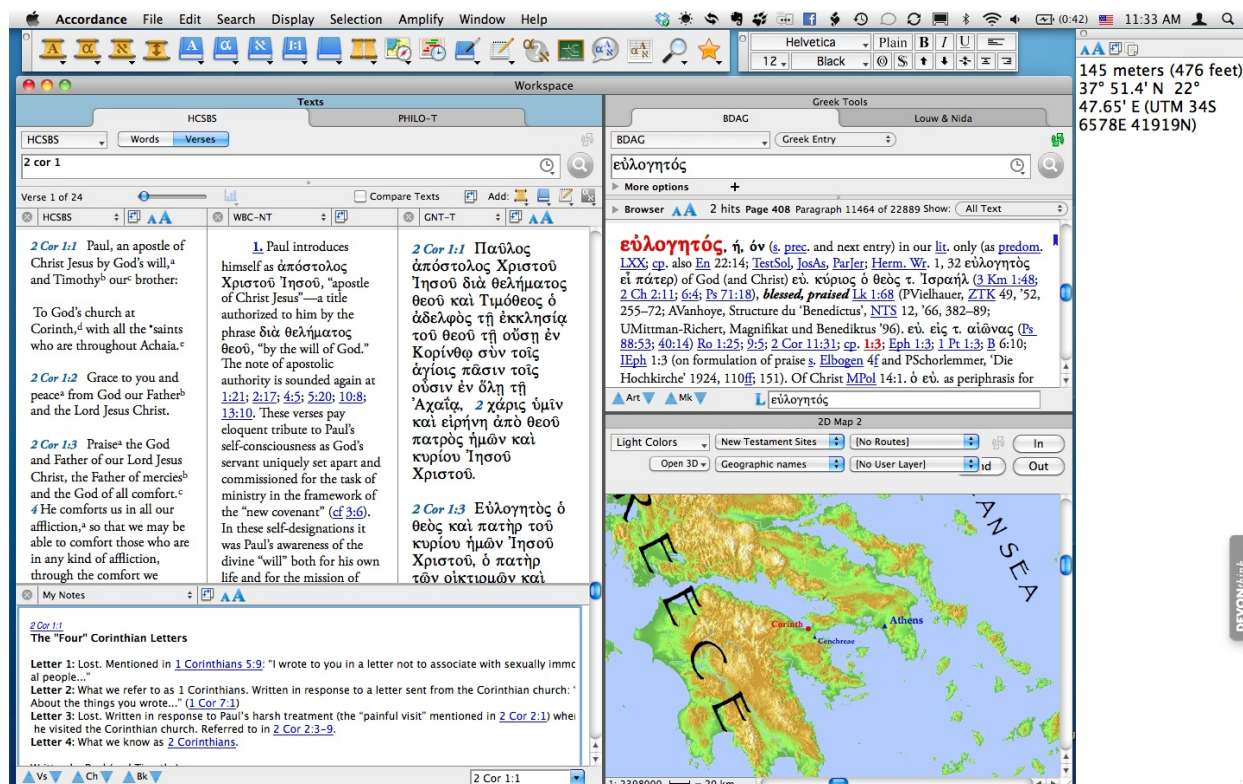


Another Bible study resource I found to be indispensable in my youth was *Nave's Topical Bible*. Orville James Nave lived from 1841-1917. He served as a chaplain in the United States Army for many years. He spent fourteen years seeking to classify everything found in the Bible. His book contains 20,000 topic headings that list everything from “salvation” to “ropes.” I prefer to do topical studies of the Bible, and found a work like this immensely helpful.

These resources are still available today as printed books. I recommend them highly to anyone wanting to study the Scriptures. Beyond these Bible study tools there exists a wealth of additional resource works.

It is no longer necessary for me to carry around a stack of massive books when I want to study the Scriptures. All of these resources, and many more, can be found in one place by purchasing Bible study software, or by downloading some of the excellent free resources available online. The subject of computer based Bible study will be addressed in the next chapter.

Knowledge Will Increase



Accordance Bible Software Screen Shot

(Image shows Accordance Bible study software with Bible passage, commentary, Greek New Testament, Brown Driver Briggs Lexicon, map, geographic coordinates, and personal notes panes open.)

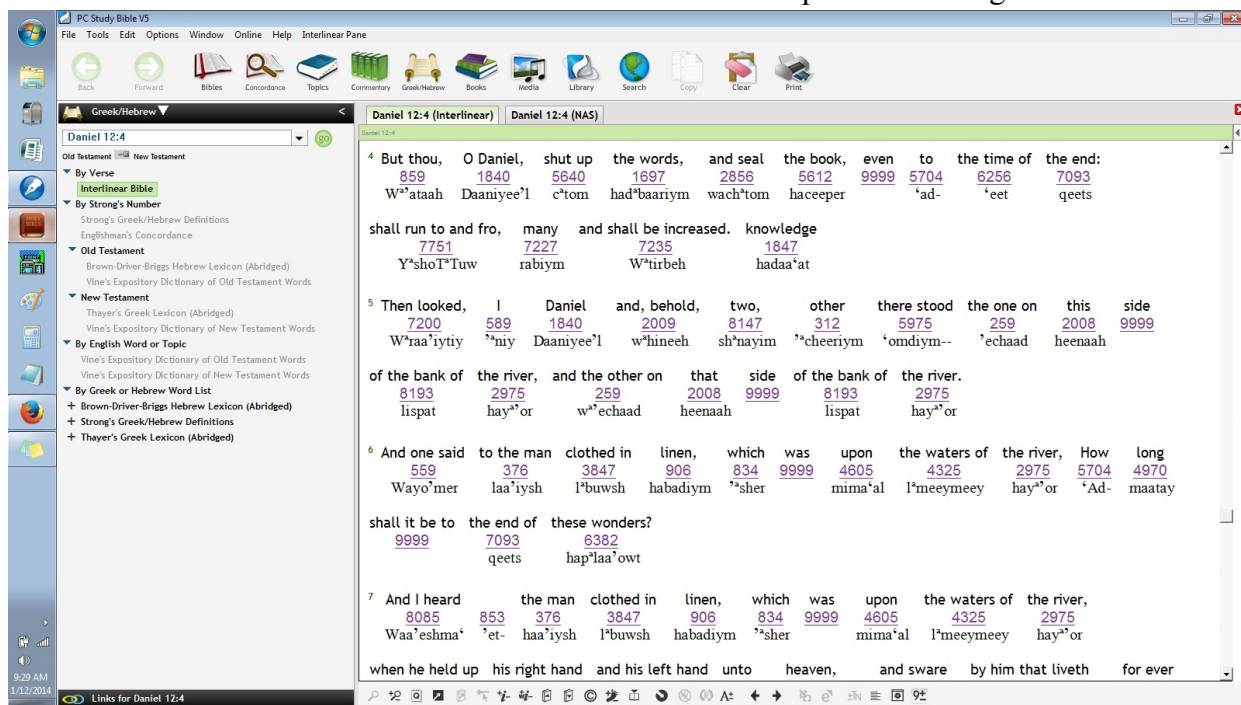
Daniel 12:4

“But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase.”

The introduction of the computer has revolutionized man’s pursuit of knowledge in all fields of study. This is as true of the study of the Scriptures, as it is of the fields of biology, physics, or mathematics. Computer based tools have been developed that would inspire awe in the passionate Bible student of past centuries. No longer do men and women need to travel the world to study in the great libraries of universities, or the museums of nations. Nor do they have to pore over faded manuscripts by the light of a candle, or lantern. Gone are the days when a Bible scholar such as Erasmus was fortunate to have access to only a handful of incomplete manuscripts to create a translation into another language. Computer based Bible study resources are readily available today that bring together vast volumes of literature, commentary, and reference material on the Scriptures. Such a collection, though common today, would have been the envy of many ancient ecclesiastical schools. Neither is this material so expensive as to be out of reach of the majority of people. There are excellent computer based resources that are freely distributed at no cost to the user.

My own study of the Scriptures took a leap forward when I acquired my first copy of the program PC Study Bible from Biblesoft back in the 1990s. I continue to use this program, having upgraded it when each new version has come out (the current version is PC Study Bible 5). Not only did this computer based Bible software make it much easier for me to locate passages of Scripture by searching on a word or two, to find passages on a specific topic, and to access Strong's Greek and Hebrew definitions more easily, but it brought to me study resources I did not previously possess.

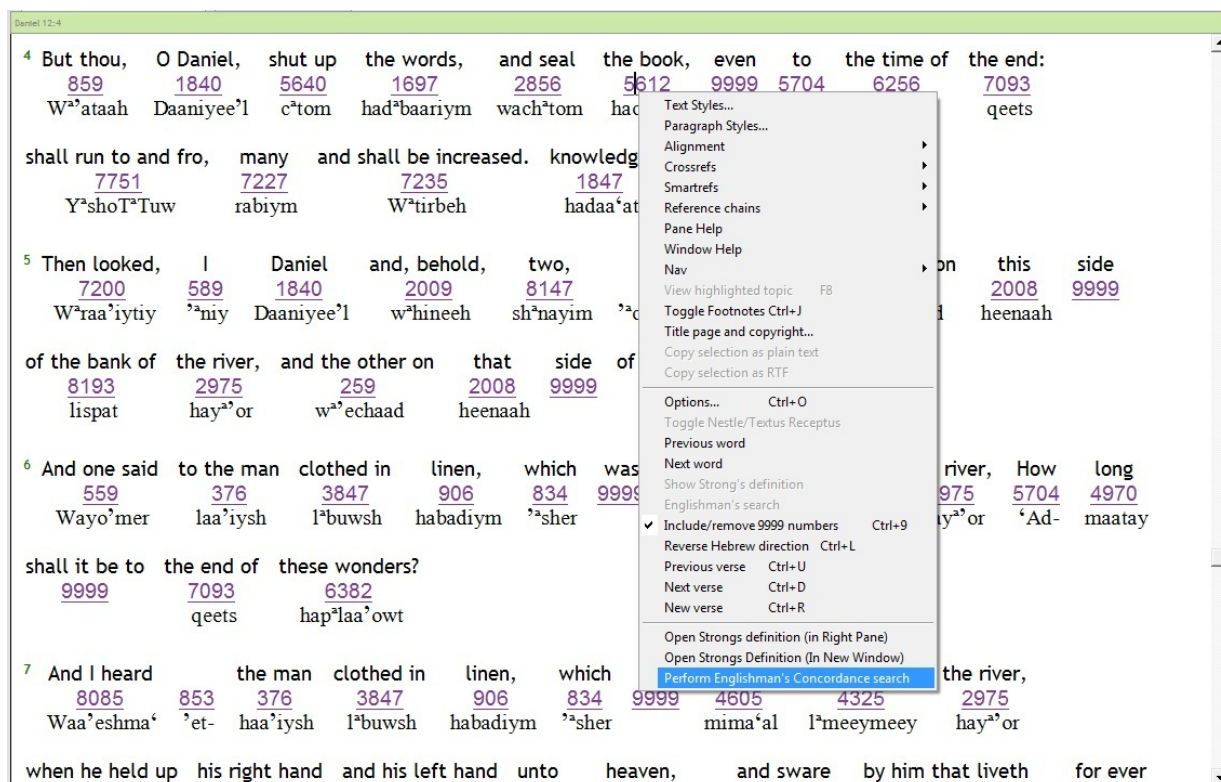
One of the tools that has most transformed my personal study of the Scriptures is the Interlinear Bible on computer. Now, when I am studying a passage of Scripture, I can quickly switch to the Interlinear view and see what Hebrew and Greek words correspond to the English text.



PC Study Bible 5 with Interlinear Bible Pane Opened

In the screen shot above I have opened the Interlinear Bible to display the Scripture from Daniel 12:4 that is cited at the beginning of this post. You will note that the English text is displayed. Underneath each English word is the Strong's Concordance number. Below the Strong's number is a transliteration of the Hebrew or Greek word into English. With this view opened, I can click on any of the Strong's numbers and the entry for that word will be opened in another pane.

Also, by right clicking any of the Strong's numbers, a pop-up menu appears that provides me with a number of other tools. Among the most useful of these tools, and the one I use most often in my studies, is the Englishman's Concordance Search. By choosing this option I can see a list of every place in the Bible where a specific Hebrew or Greek word occurs. This is a valuable tool, for it permits me to see whether the word in question has other shades of meaning, and whether the Bible translators rendered it consistently into English.



Interlinear View Showing Pop-Up Menu Options

There are times when the Strong's dictionary definition of a word contains some error, or is deficient in not showing the full range of meaning of a specific Hebrew or Greek word. This makes it necessary for the student of the Scriptures to look at all of the occurrences of a Hebrew or Greek word in order to establish its meaning from the context in which it appears. For example, yesterday a brother in Christ e-mailed me regarding the Strong's definition for the Greek word "aionios" found in Jude 1:7.

Jude 7

Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of ***eternal*** fire.

KJV

In the original Greek, the word translated as "eternal" in the KJV Bible is "aionios." Following is Strong's definition.

NT:166

aionios (ahee-o'-nee-os); from NT:165; perpetual (also used of past time, or past and future as well):

KJV - eternal, for ever, everlasting, world (began).

Readers who are familiar with my book *God's Plan of the Ages* will realize that I teach that this is

an errant translation of this Greek word. If I relied solely upon the Strong's definition of this word, I would be hindered from arriving at the truth. There are other resources available, however. I mentioned in the previous chapter that, prior to James Strong producing his concordance, Robert Young published *Young's Analytical Concordance of the Bible*. Young provides a very different definition for this Greek word. Following is his concise entry.

aionios, Age lasting

The discerning student will recognize at once that not only are Strong's and Young's definitions different, they are contradictory. Something cannot be "perpetual," which is to say "never ending," and also be "age lasting." An age has a definite beginning and an end. Robert Young also produced a Literal Bible translation. Following is the verse as it appears in his Bible version.

Jude 7

as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them, in like manner to these, having given themselves to whoredom, and gone after other flesh, have been set before — an example, of fire **age-during**, justice suffering.
[Young's Literal Translation]

Everywhere throughout Young's Literal Translation, Robert Young has consistently rendered the Greek word "aion" and its variant forms as indicating an age. The Bible student is therefore left with a quandary. Is James Strong's definition correct, or is Robert Young's definition correct, or are both wrong? Not being a Greek scholar, how would a Christian test the matter? One way to do so is to look at every place in the Bible where the word "aion" and its variants occur, and see what is revealed. It should become apparent from the context in which the word is found whether one, or both, of these definitions are inaccurate. I examined the Scriptures to see where this word occurred, listing the results of my study in the book *God's Plan of the Ages*. Consider how nonsensical the following Scriptures would be if we use Strong's definition of aion to mean "a period of time without end," or "eternal."

Ephesians 2:7

That in the **eternities** (aions) to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Colossians 1:26

Even the mystery which hath been hid from **eternities** (aions) and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints...

Ephesians 2:2

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the **eternity** (aion) of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

Hebrews 1:2

Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the **eternities** (aions)...

John 9:32

Since the *eternity* (aion) began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

If, however, we use Robert Young's definition of aion as denoting an "age" then the verses above become intelligible.

This reveals an issue that Bible students need to bear in mind. Even as men have introduced errors into the Scriptures over the millennia, they have also introduced errors into their commentaries and Bible study resources. In my reply to the brother who wrote to me yesterday, I shared the following comment.

I would make mention of the fact that Mr. Strong was a Methodist minister. No doubt, had he embraced, and taught, the doctrine of the reconciliation of all men, he would not have remained a Methodist minister very long. I am not suggesting that Mr. Strong compromised truth to maintain his standing with the Methodists. What I would suggest, however, is that Mr. Strong was influenced by, and aligned with, Methodist doctrine, and this doctrine rejected the reconciliation of the creation back to God the Father. Denominationalism is a great snare. It leads to factions, and causes men to be fitted with blinders, unable to receive any teaching or doctrine outside of that which is endorsed by their particular sect of Christianity. Paul condemned such divisions in the church in his first letter to the Corinthians.

To be clear, James Strong did concede that some forms of the word "aion" do mean an age. In fact, the root word of aionios, and all similar variants is the Greek word "aion." Mr. Strong has given us this definition of the word.

NT:165

*aion (ahee-ohn'); from the same as NT:104; **properly, an age**; by extension, perpetuity (also past); by implication, the world; specially (Jewish) a Messianic period (present or future): KJV - age, course, eternal, (for) ever (-more), [n-] ever, (beginning of the, while the) world (began, without end).*

So even James Strong declared that the *proper* meaning of the Greek word aion is "an age." Nevertheless, he was not consistent in acknowledging this fact when providing definitions for the variant forms of this word.

One of the immense benefits of having Bible study tools readily available on the individual level is that the student of the Scriptures is set free from denominational and doctrinal bias. Rather than having to attend seminary, or Bible college, and have a professor tell them how the Bible should be rightly interpreted, the man or woman who yearns for spiritual truth is able to investigate matters themselves.

In addition to the tools already listed that are part of the PC Study Bible software program, I have a number of different Bible dictionaries to choose from. It can prove profitable to check the entries in these dictionaries to ascertain the meaning of a word. Following are some examples.

Age

an indefinite period (Ephesians 2:7 Ephesians 3:5,21; Colossians 1:26)...

(Easton's Bible Dictionary)

AGE

A period of time characterized by a certain stage of development of God's grand scheme of redemption (aion) (Ephesians 2:7; 3:5).

(Fausset's Bible Dictionary)

AGE

we have the plural as the translation of aion, properly "duration," "the course or flow of time," "an age or period of the world..."

(International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia)

AGE

An era or specified period of time during which certain related events come to pass. As used in the New Testament, age generally refers to the present era, as opposed to the future age. According to the apostle Paul, Satan is "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4). But the age to come will belong to Jesus Christ and His rule of justice and righteousness (Hebrews 6:5).

(Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

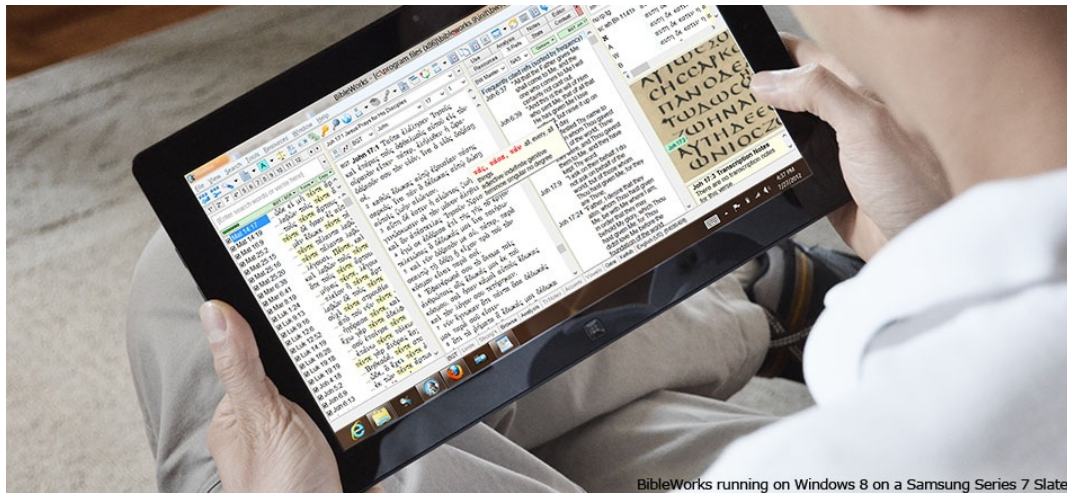
Although one of the common features of Bible study software are the commentaries, and PC Study Bible comes with a number of them, I rarely refer to them in the course of my research. In general I have not found them helpful. They rarely contain deeper spiritual insights into the word, and are far more likely to contain personal opinion and denominational bias than some of the other Bible study tools.

Maps, and photographs of places and objects named in the Bible are a common feature of many Bible study programs. Additionally, one may find a large number of other features that vary from one software suite to another. A final tool I will make mention of that has been of great help to me is *The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*. Whenever I have a verse from the Bible pulled up, I can click on the link for *The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* and I will be shown a list of phrases from the verse along with numerous references to other Bible passages that are related in topic. This provides a quick method to find other passages of Scripture on a specific subject.

Although I use PC Study Bible as my software of choice, it is not necessarily the best program available. Other programs may be more suitable to an individual depending on their specific needs and their budget. Two highly regarded programs are Accordance, which was originally developed for the Apple Macintosh, and Bibleworks which was developed for Microsoft operating systems. Accordance has recently come out with a native version of their software that runs on Windows, and BibleWorks can be run on Macintosh computers by using an emulator. Both are reportedly excellent products offering full-featured suites that are priced around \$350 dollars. The price will be higher or lower depending upon which level of the product one chooses.

One of the recent additions to BibleWorks 9 is their BibleWorks Manuscript Project. Following is

a press release on this offering.



BibleWorks 9 on Tablet Computer

BibleWorks 9 Exegetical Software Offers Breakthrough Resources

NORFOLK, Va June 28 - *Bible students, teachers, pastors and scholars are in for a treat with the launch of BibleWorks 9. It introduced one of the most comprehensive resources for studying the original texts of the Greek New Testament -- the BibleWorks Manuscript Project.*

The first installment of the BibleWorks Manuscript Project contains new e-transcriptions and complete image sets of seven of the most widely studied Greek New Testament manuscripts -- Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, Bezae, Washingtonianus, Boernerianus and GA1141. The images of these ancient copies of the New Testament are also hot-linked -- allowing users to quickly find specific verses -- giving unprecedented access to the early text. The morphological tagging of manuscripts is an ongoing project and updates will be provided to users as they become available.

BibleWorks 9 also includes several important Greek e-texts and revisions – all enhanced for computer analysis. They include the Robinson-Pierpont Byzantine text with Robinson 2010 morphology; Westcott-Hort with diacritics, variant readings and morphology; Scriveners with diacritics, variant readings and morphology, Trinitarian Bible Society Greek New Testament, and the Tregelles New Testament. With a click of the mouse button, BibleWorks users can quickly highlight differences between Greek texts in the main window.

“BibleWorks 9 takes a giant leap forward in terms of opening up the world of textual variants and text criticism,” said Dr. David deSilva, the Trustees' Distinguished Professor of New Testament and Greek at Ashland Theological Seminary. “Even more exciting, the transcribed texts of the major uncial witnesses can be selected as display versions. I can read the critical text, Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, and others side-by-side, such that the historic witnesses come alive as real texts, and not just as symbols at the bottom of the page of the print edition of the critical text.”

BibleWorks has also added the exhaustive New Testament Critical Apparatus from the Center for New Testament Textual Studies (CNTTS). In BibleWorks, when studying any New Testament Greek

text in the main window, the information from the Critical Apparatus updates allows users to see minor and major differences between hundreds of manuscripts dating from the 2nd through 15th centuries. Plus, in the BibleWorks version, every manuscript is categorized in easy-to-read matrixes by Aland categories and time periods.

[End Excerpt]

Not every student of the Bible would make use of this exceptional feature of BibleWorks 9, but for those doing exegetical studies, or developing new Bible translations, such a tool is a remarkable development. Of course, any student of the Scriptures may make use of this tool. If they wanted to compare variants in the ancient manuscripts of the Bible there is no better tool I am aware of to do so. Following is a video illustrating some of the features of this program.

<http://youtu.be/hCFZdSGzlus>

You can also view features of Accordance Bible software in the following video.

<http://youtu.be/tV9AqD0A4kE>

The Bible study software that will work best for you will depend on your specific needs. You should clearly identify what you want to do with the software, and make your purchase choice accordingly. There are many Bible Study software programs available. The following is not an exhaustive list, but it does include the best known titles.

Computer Based Bible Study Software

Accordance

<http://www.accordancebible.com/index.php>

BibleWorks

<http://www.bibleworks.com/>

e-Bible by Thomas Nelson

<http://www.thomasnelson.com/reference/bible-software/essential-bible-study-library.html>

Logos Bible Software

<https://www.logos.com/>

PC Study Bible

<http://store.biblesoft.com/>

Quickverse

<https://www.wordsearchbible.com/qv10>

SwordSearcher

<http://www.swordsearcher.com/>

Wordsearch

<https://www.wordsearchbible.com/ws10>

Free Bible Study Software

BibleAnalyzer

<http://www.bibleanalyzer.com/>

e-sword (Windows)

<http://www.e-sword.net/>

Interlinear Scripture Analyzer

<http://www.scripture4all.org>

PocketBible

http://www.laridian.com/content/platform_win.asp

The Sword Project for Windows

<http://www.crosswire.org/sword/software/biblecs/>

Free Internet Bible Study Resources

Bible Gateway

<http://www.biblegateway.com/>

Blue Letter Bible

<http://www.blueletterbible.org/>

StudyLight

<http://www.studylight.org/>

Unbound Bible

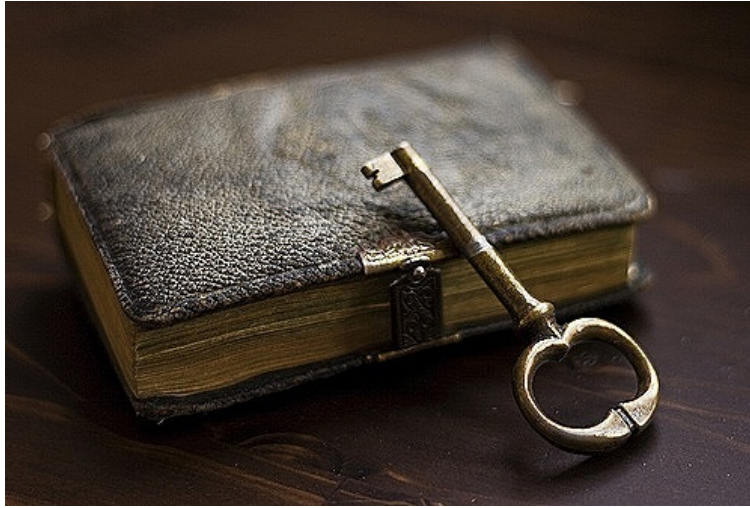
<http://unbound.biola.edu/>

Most of the software programs listed above have additional resources (Bible versions, commentaries, etc.) that can be added to them at cost. This is true even of the free programs listed above. Although the core program and a substantial set of resources are included with the free programs, many Bible and reference work publishers will not allow their books to be distributed free of charge. Therefore, this additional material may be acquired for a fee determined by the publisher and the software distributor.

Additionally, it should be noted that many of the programs listed have versions of their software available to run on multiple platforms including Windows, iOS (Macintosh, iPad, iPhone), Android, and Linux. Not all software vendors support all of these platforms. To find if your device has a program available, check with the software developer.

We live in an hour when knowledge of all kinds is increasing, and is being made readily available to the individual. When it comes to having access to a wealth of Biblical translations and study tools, this generation is truly rich. How much value you place on the knowledge of God and His holy word will determine the amount of time you invest in the quest for truth.

Unlocking the Bible



Divine truth is exceedingly precious. In the same way that man places his treasures under lock and key, so does Yahweh. The treasures of the kingdom of God are not carnal things like silver, gold, and precious gems. In the treasury of heaven are hidden divine mysteries and the knowledge of the Holy One. Yahweh does not permit anyone to stroll into His treasure house and freely take what they will. The entrance into the storehouse of wisdom, knowledge, and divine secrets is a guarded one.

Having read the previous two chapters, it would be a mistake to conclude that all that is needed to obtain spiritual wisdom and the understanding of divine mysteries are the Scriptures and various tools to aid in their study. If that were true, Bible Colleges and Seminaries would be able to offer a money-back guarantee that all students who pass through their doors will leave possessing the great truths, and divine treasures, of the kingdom of God. The evidence proves such a thought to be a lie. There is great apostasy among the institutions of Biblical learning. Men who spend years learning about Biblical exegesis (critical explanation) and Scriptural hermeneutics (the science of interpretation) often come away doubting even the divinity of Christ, the virgin birth, the resurrection of the Son of God from the dead, and other seminal truths of the faith. How can this be?

Yahweh has linked together obedience to His will and access to His storehouse of truth. Just as there are laws that govern nature, such as the law of gravity, there are inviolable laws in the kingdom of God. One of these laws is expressed in the following words of the Messiah.

Luke 8:18

"So take care ***how you listen***; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him."

If God has given you truth and you have obeyed the truth, conforming your life to the light you have received, Yahweh will grant you access to more truth. However, if you have disobeyed the truth then further truth will be withheld from you. In fact, those who are hearers, but not doers, of the word of God will find that even that which they once possessed will be taken from them.

Have you ever observed the life of a carnal believer who is living an unholy life, justifying his/her

actions despite what they know to be the will of God? Have you never observed such an one come to a point in their life where they deny the truth they once possessed, even turning away from their profession of being a Christian? Those who are given the light of truth, but choose to walk in disobedience will find that their understanding will become darkened. The knowledge of God will be restricted. They will never advance past elementary truths, and they will be in danger of losing those as well.

The Bible reveals that spiritual truth comes from the Father. To some men truth is withheld, while to others free access is granted. Those who are outside the kingdom of God, strangers to the Holy Spirit of promise, are unable to understand, or receive, spiritual truth.

I Corinthians 2:12-14

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, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

Being born of the Spirit of God is a prerequisite for receiving the thoughts of God. Yet, spiritual birth alone is insufficient to guarantee that the Christian will be granted access to divine truth. If a Christian walks like a natural man, they will be treated like a natural man. The mysteries of God will remain mysteries to them. Carnal Christians often behave as scoffers when divine truth is spoken to them.

In the book of Isaiah, the prophet declared to the people of Israel that Yahweh had removed from them discernment and wisdom because they were walking in sin and had embraced idolatry.

Isaiah 29:10-14

For Yahweh has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep, He has shut your eyes, the prophets; And He has covered your heads, the seers. And the entire vision shall be to you like the words of a sealed book, which when they give it to the one who is literate, saying, "Please read this," he will say, "I cannot, for it is sealed." Then the book will be given to the one who is illiterate, saying, "Please read this." And he will say, "I cannot read." Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote, therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelous; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be concealed."

Yahweh will do the same thing to Christians who do not surrender their lives to follow the path He has chosen for their perfecting. There are myriads of Christians who seek to serve both God and mammon. Having come to confess faith in Christ, there is little fundamental change in the course of their lives. They continue to pursue the desires of their soul. They work where they choose, live where they choose, date or marry whomever they please, pursue worldly entertainment as they did before coming to Christ, spend money on whatever their soul desires. They then wonder why the Bible remains such a closed book to them.



Worse yet, many who have rejected Christ's invitation to "take up YOUR cross and follow Me," gravitate to preachers and churches that teach falsehood, where there is no mention of the cost of discipleship. They are self-deceived, believing that the no-cost Christianity, and materialistic doctrine of personal fulfillment and prosperity they are hearing are "the deep things of God." These are blind followers of blind leaders.

Matthew 15:14

"And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."

It is both just and wise for Yahweh to withhold truth from those who are unfaithful. Yahweh will always bring to a Christian some test of truth to see whether they will obey, accepting the consequences no matter how costly. For some, the test may be something as simple as separating themselves from cultural holidays that are pagan in origin. Year after year the Spirit of Christ has directed me to teach publicly about the idolatrous origins of Christmas and the traditions that are associated with it. It is quite costly for a Christian to separate themselves from idolatry when it is something their soul loves. It is all the more difficult when one recognizes that a spouse, children, or other family members, friends, work associates, or fellow Christians will object, sometimes vehemently. Following Christ in the way of truth often leads to separation from those close to our hearts.

Luke 14:25-27

Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

Matthew 10:34-38

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. He who loves

father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.”

I have people write to me frequently who declare the Bible to be a closed book to them. They relate to me how they can read Scriptures and not get anything out of them. Some sit down to study the Scriptures and cannot even recall the passage they just read. In such cases I never ask the person if they are using the best Bible study tools. The issue is not one of access to the right information. It is a matter of having a veil over one’s understanding, placed there because of some failure to obey the truth that God has already given to them.

Many Christians would vociferously deny that there is any link between participating in Christmas festivities and their ability to glean truth from the Scriptures. Yet, if God has called you to separate yourself from that which is unclean, and you refuse to do so, He is both just and wise to withhold from you further truth.

Many men and women have married a person that the Holy Spirit told them not to marry. Some have adopted a lifestyle that is sinful. It is reported that a large percentage of Christian men are viewing pornography regularly on the Internet, or on television. When Christians walk as natural men, engaging willfully in sinful behavior, Yahweh will treat them as natural men. Access to His most holy things will be restricted from them.

Jeremiah 29:13-14

“And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found by you,” declares Yahweh, “and I will restore your fortunes...”

Yahweh never intended all mankind to be granted understanding of His word. We see this clearly in the ministry of Christ. Yahshua knew who the Father had given to Him to be His disciples, and who had not. Though all the Jews were religious and claimed to be followers of Yahweh, the Son of God made a clear demarcation between His disciples and the rest of the Jews.

Matthew 13:10-11

And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” And He answered and said to them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.”

Christ spoke all things to the multitudes in parables. Similarly, the Bible has been given to the masses of humanity, but it is a veiled book. During the years of His ministry Yahshua would take His disciples apart to some private place and explain to them the meaning of the parables. The masses of people who heard the parables got no such explanation.

Mark 4:33-34

And with many such parables He was speaking the word to them as they were able to hear it; and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.

A critical matter is revealed when one understands the criteria for being a disciple. Yahshua spelled out the qualifications for being His disciple so that no one would be in doubt.

Luke 14:26-27

“If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”

Luke 14:33

So then, any of you who does not forsake (renounce, surrender claim to, give up, say good-bye to) all that he has cannot be My disciple.

[Amplified Bible]

Being a disciple is a costly proposition. A man or woman must yield the control of their life to Christ. They must agree to go where He says go, and to do what He says do. They cannot claim anything in this world as their own. All they possess, their very life, must be placed in the hands of God for Him to determine what to do with it.

It was men and women who had embraced the cost of discipleship that He took aside to explain to them the mysteries of His kingdom. It is such men and women who continue to be granted access to God’s most holy things today.



It has ever been a remnant who have heeded the invitation to “Come, take up your cross, and follow Me.” These are accounted as true disciples. To such ones the Bible is a rich banquet. They are given permission to eat from a table of truth and divine mysteries that is restricted to others.

Hebrews 13:9-10

Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were thus occupied were not benefitted. We have

an altar, from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.

Note how the apostle compares doctrines to food. He then states that the altar of divine truth is restricted. “Those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat” from this altar. This is a parable, for the tabernacle is a symbol for man’s body.

I Corinthians 6:19

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit...

Those who “serve the tabernacle” are those who serve the flesh. If you would dine on the truths of Yahweh’s kingdom, if you would be a partaker of His holy things, you must crucify the flesh with its passions and desires. You must accept the invitation of Christ and follow in His steps.

The pride of man would entertain the thought that anyone can be a possessor of divine truth. It is nothing more than humanism to believe that all one needs is a Bible, some tools and some training, and they can plumb the depths of the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Yahweh’s kingdom does not function along such lines. Yahweh grants wisdom and understanding to whom He pleases, and He withholds the same from those He has determined should not have access to His divine mysteries.

If you love truth you will show your love by your willingness to suffer for it. If you are faithful with the little you have been given, Yahweh will give you more.

Use It or Lose It!



In 2013 the American Bible Society commissioned the Barna Group to conduct a survey. The focus of the survey was American's attitudes and actions relating to the Bible. The results were published under the title *The State of the Bible, 2013*. The report reveals a tremendous disparity between what people say, and what they actually do, when it comes to the Bible. For example, although 88% of American adults reported that their household contained a Bible, and on average there were 4.4 Bibles per household, only half of those surveyed were characterized as Bible readers. This designation was itself rather generous considering that among the 50% of American adults characterized as Bible readers, 9% said they read the bible no more than 3 to 4 times a year, and an additional 7% read it on average once a month.

The Barna Group survey reported that 47% of Americans **STRONGLY AGREE** that the Bible contains **EVERYTHING** a person needs to know to live a meaningful life. Additionally, more than half of adults (56%) believe the Bible has *too little* influence in U.S. society today. Nevertheless, only 13% of those surveyed said they read the Bible daily. Another 20% stated that they are weekly Bible readers.

It may sound impressive to hear that a full third of American adults read their Bibles either daily, or weekly, but it should be kept in mind that among religiously minded people there is a tendency to dramatically overstate their actual participation in spiritual activity. As a case in point, among those deemed to be "Bible readers," the survey reported that 13% could not identify the Bible version they read and 39% (more than a third) of those who identified themselves as practicing Protestants could not name the first five books of the Bible. The survey also reported that 58% of Americans wrongly thought that John the Baptist was one of the twelve apostles. (Protestants did no better than Catholics on this question.) These facts reveal a very low level of familiarity with the Scriptures among a significant number of people identified as Bible readers.

Not surprisingly, the survey reported that the number one frustration relating to the Bible was not having enough time to read it. The complete survey can be viewed at the following link.

<http://www.americanbible.org/uploads/content/State%20of%20the%20Bible%20Report%202013.pdf>

As I reflected upon the results of this survey I was reminded of the following words of Christ.

Matthew 6:21

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

If you want to know the true value a person places upon something, do not listen to their claims, instead observe their actions. The person making the loudest and boldest declaration of their love and reverence for the Bible may in fact spend very little time reading and meditating upon the Scriptures. Yahweh sees beyond the boasting of man’s speech. As the saying goes, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.” Intentions are not actions.

When Christ addressed the churches of Asia Minor in the opening chapters of Revelation, He began His comments with the repeated statement, “I know your deeds.”

Revelation 2:1-2

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write... “I know your deeds...”

Revelation 2:18-19

"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write... “I know your deeds...”

Revelation 3:1

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write... “I know your deeds...”

Revelation 3:7-8

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write... “I know your deeds.”

Revelation 3:14-15

And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write... “I know your deeds...”

To the church in America Yahshua will judge no differently. He will not judge the church in America, or any other nation, on its confession. He will judge them on their deeds. When Yahshua reveals that which His people deemed to be valuable, He will look at where they focused their time and attention.

Some years back an e-mail began circulating that posed the question, “What if we began to treat our Bibles the way we treat our cell phones?” This was followed by additional questions.

- What if we carried it with us everywhere?
- What if we turned back to get it if we forgot it?
- What if we checked it for messages throughout the day?
- What if we used it in case of an emergency?
- What if we spent an hour or more using it each day?

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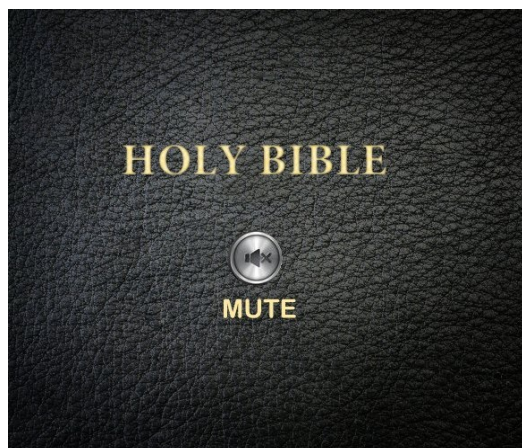
Like the cell phone, the Bible is a communication device. It is called “the word of God” for good reason. The Bible is one of the chief instruments Yahweh uses to speak to His people. Much is revealed as a person compares their behavior regarding their cell phone and that regarding their Bible.

Recognizing that a cell phone allows an individual to stay in communication with other people, and the Bible assists them in staying in touch with God, which one do you grab before you go out the door in the morning? If you have previously experienced God speaking to you through the pages of Scriptures, would you not want to check the Bible often to see if Yahweh has some new message for you? Are not Yahweh’s messages more important than those received from friends, family, and other people?

When was the last time you turned back to get your Bible when you realized you did not have it with you? Have you ever turned back to get your cell phone when you realized you did not have it on your person? If you encountered an emergency situation, would you be more likely to call out to God first, or reach for your phone and call somebody to help you?

When was the last time you received a word from the Father as you read the Bible? When was the last time you received new revelation when meditating upon a passage of Scripture? When did you last sense your heavenly Father speaking as the Bible was opened before you? Is it possible that there is a correlation between the time you spend in the word of God and the frequency with which you hear His voice?

Have you ever heard God speak something to you that you did not want to hear, or hear Him give you some direction you did not want to obey, so you tuned Him out? Do you avoid reading the Bible because it might lead to conviction that God wants to change things in your life? I admit that I am at times prone to silencing my phone when someone calls me and I do not want to talk to them at the moment. Have you considered that an absence of Bible reading is man’s way of silencing God’s voice? It is like setting your cell phone to mute.



There can be no more effective way to mute the voice of the Holy Spirit in the Bible than to not read it. Leave the Bible on the shelf to collect dust and it will speak to no one.

One attribute of those whom the Father has used in spiritually powerful ways is that they meditated regularly on the words of God recorded in Scripture.

Psalms 119:24, 99

Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors... I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation.

The apostle Paul gave the following wise encouragement and counsel to Timothy.

II Timothy 3:14-17

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Yahshua. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work

Paul himself remained an avid student of the Scriptures until the end of his life. In the same letter, Paul instructed Timothy to bring him the Scriptures he had left in Troas.

II Timothy 4:13

When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments.

Seeing that the Bible holds so much potential for advancement to spiritual maturity and understanding of the ways of God, should Christians not clamor out for it as if it were a great and valued treasure? A recent phenomenon has been observed as people line up outside of stores selling the latest iPhone or Android based smart phone. Some camp out for days in anticipation of a new model phone being released. What if people showed the same enthusiasm for purchasing a new Bible? What if crowds clamored with outstretched hands, pleading to be given a copy of the word of God?



I began this teaching series by sharing about my delight and excitement at having received my first Bible in my youth. That little, brown, leather bound KJV Bible was treasured by me. I always knew where it was at. I carried it with me more than any other possession I owned at the time. I read it often and considered myself fortunate to have received such a valuable and useful gift.

When in recent years I was twice put in jail my great desire was to have a copy of the Scriptures to read as I spent 20 hours a day in a cell. When the Father led me through many distressing experiences, fears, and trials, beginning in 1999 and continuing for a period of years, my prize possession was my Bible. In it I sought comfort, encouragement, strength, wisdom, and direction. Through many wilderness journeys I have kept Yahweh's Book close at hand. It is the nearest tangible connection I have to the One who created me. It is a book I have loved and treasured from my youth and I continue to treasure it to this day. It is my prayer that you might as well.



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