

## **Set for the Defense of the Word of God**

### **(Lesson One, Evidences for the Authenticity and Accuracy of the Bible)**

*(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources)*

- A. *1Peter 3:15* - all Christians are commanded to be ready to make a defense for the reason of their hope in Christ.
1. Defense is from apologia, which means "a speech in defense of what one has done, or of truth which one believes."
  2. Peter uses the word in the context of an informal inquiry by a friend.
    - a. What of someone asking "Why do you believe the Bible?"
    - b. Are you ready to give reasons why you accept the Bible as the inspired word of God?
- B. In this series of lessons on How We Got the Bible, we will examine some of the evidence that exists for placing one's faith in Holy Writ.
1. To strengthen our faith in the Word.
  2. To help prepare an answer for our faith - *1Peter 3:15*.
- C. The Christian faith is an intelligent, rational faith
1. God expects us to use our minds - *Matt. 22:36-40; John 8:32*
    - a. My heart cannot rejoice in what my mind rejects.
    - b. A weak faith may be the result of the heart trying to believe something the mind cannot accept.
    - c. "We cannot pander to a man's intellectual arrogance, but we must cater to his intellectual integrity." (Paul Little).
- D. Can we offer 100% proof?
1. No, that's what faith is for.
  2. Yet, you make 100% commitments with less than 100% proof.
    - a. Flying on an airplane. You do not have 100% assurance that you will arrive, but you are convinced by the statistical evidence that you will, so you get on board. At that point, you are 100% committed whether or not you are 100% convinced.
  3. So the question becomes: is there enough evidence to warrant a 100% commitment to the will of God?
    - a. Enough evidence exists for the authenticity of the Bible to make unbelief appear irrational.
- E. Why do some remain unconvinced?
1. Too often we place all of the responsibility on the unbeliever, when it is possible that we have mishandled the defense of the truth.
  2. G. K. Chesterton wrote that my opponent may get the best of me in an argument because I mishandled the truth, but that does not change the essential nature of truth.
  3. However, the opponent remains unconvinced. Therefore, I must learn to handle the truth with great facility.
- F. Too often, we offer up as evidence things that do not constitute proof.
1. We are trying to convince our questioner - *1Peter 3:15*.
  2. "I feel" is not valid proof. Song: "You ask me how I know He lives; He lives within my heart"

- a. Feelings are subjective; they depend on experience and emotional makeup.
- b. Feelings are malleable - they can be adjusted by circumstances
- c. Feelings are ephemeral - they can change without notice or apparent reason
- 3. Other forms of invalid reasoning:
  - a. Burden of proof fallacy - "Prove He doesn't exist."
  - b. Reasoning from consequences - If God hasn't spoken, then how can we know what is right?"
- G. If it is your goal to give an answer to those who ask regarding the faith in you, then be prepared to give a convincing answer.
  - 1. In this series, we will examine proofs that will stand reviews by science, literature, history, and logic.
  - 2. "I already believe the Bible." How will that convince your questioner?
  - 3. That's your job! - *1Peter 3:15*
- H. We will look at all manner of proofs.
  - 1. Internal - in the text
  - 2. External - historical, archaeological, logical

**Set for the Defense of the Word of God: When  
(Lesson Two, Evidence for the Early Existence of the New Testament)**

Introduction:

- A. The New Testament presents itself as a historical record of events that occurred during the First Century A.D.
- B. How reliable is it? How do we determine the reliability of any ancient document that professes to record events of history?
- C. To establish the reliability of ANY historical document, one of the first questions to be raised is: "How soon after the events took place were they recorded?"
- D. Applied to the New Testament, this involves trying to determine what evidence there is for the early existence of the New Testament.

**I. EVIDENCE FOR EARLY EXISTENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IS CRUCIAL**

- A. If some event is recorded long after it occurred:
  - 1. It is not likely to have been written by "eyewitnesses"
  - 2. It is not likely to have been written when "other eyewitnesses" were around to confirm or dispute its accuracy
  - 3. Its credibility would be weakened; example, which would be a more credible source for information about an event that occurred during The Civil War
    - a. A present day writer depending totally on second-hand sources?
    - b. Or diaries and letters written by eyewitnesses of the event?
- B. During the last century, some scholars asserted that the Gospels and the book of Acts did not exist before 130 A.D.

1. This would mean the Gospels and Acts were not written by eyewitnesses
2. Rather, it was written by frauds who represented themselves as eyewitnesses
  - a. For the author of Acts claims to have been present during some of the events described in that book - "we" in *Acts 16:11-12*
  - b. The author of the Second Peter claims to have been an eyewitness of the Transfiguration - *2Peter 1:16-18*
  - c. Written by eyewitnesses and others who lived during those times, or a book written by liars in a effort to deceive. These are the only choices. This is why it is important to establish the early existence of the N.T.

## II. EVIDENCE FOR THE EARLY EXISTENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

### A. Internal Evidence

1. The ending of the Book of Acts
  - a. Acts ends abruptly with Paul in prison, awaiting trial - *28:30-31*
  - b. About 62-63 A.D., meaning that Acts and Luke were written within thirty years of ministry and death of Jesus
2. No mention of the destruction of Jerusalem In 70 A.D.
  - a. Matthew, Mark, and Luke record Jesus' prophecy that the temple and city would be destroyed in that generation
    - 1) *Mark 13:1-4, 14, 30; Luke 21:5-9, 20-24, 32*
  - b. History records that in 70 A.D. Jerusalem with its temple was destroyed, exactly as Jesus foretold
  - c. Yet not a single book of the New Testament refers to this event as having happened
    - 1) Would be unlikely if they had been written after 70 A.D.
    - 2) That event helps to verify Jesus' claim to be the Son of God, and it is hard to imagine that any writer after 70 A.D. would not mention the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy
  - d. This has prompted some scholars to conclude that all of the books of the New Testament were written prior to 70 A.D.

### B. Papyri Fragments

1. Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri (dated 200-250 A.D.)
  - a. Made public in 1931
  - b. Contains the Gospels, Acts, Paul's Epistles, and Revelation
2. Payprus Bodmer II (dated 200 A.D.)
  - a. Discovery announced in 1956
  - b. Contains 14 chapters of John and portions of the last 7 chapters
3. Early Christian Papyri (dated 150 A.D.)
  - a. Made public in 1935
  - b. Written by someone who had the 4 gospels and knew them well
4. John Rylands MSS (dated 130 A.D.)
  - a. This is oldest fragment of the N.T.

- b. "Because of its early date and location (Egypt), some distance from the traditional place of composition (ASIA MINOR), this portion of the Gospel of John tends to confirm the traditional date of the composition of the gospel." (General Introduction to the Bible, Geisler & Nix)

### C. Patristic Writings

1. Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians (dated 120 A.D.)
  - a. A personal acquaintance of John, the apostle
  - b. He quotes from the Synoptic Gospels, Acts, Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Hebrews, 1 Peter, and 1 John
2. Letters of Ignatius (dated 115 A.D.)
  - a. Written to several churches in Asia Minor
  - b. He quotes from Matthew, John, Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus
3. Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians (dated 95 A.D.)
  - a. This letter was written for the church to respect the elders
  - b. He quotes from the Synoptic Gospels, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Titus, Hebrews, and 1 Peter
  - c. One cannot quote from a book that has yet to be written.

## III. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS EVIDENCE

- A. The New Testament was in existence and well known by the end of the first century A.D.
  1. As stated by Nelson Glueck, former president of the Jewish Theological Seminary in the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, and renowned Jewish archaeologist: "In my opinion, every book of the New Testament was written between the forties and eighties of the First Century A.D."
  2. "We can already say emphatically that there is no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after 80 A.D." (W. F. Albright, Biblical archaeologist)
- B. Thus the New Testament passes the "acid test" for the authenticity of any document of antiquity
  1. It was written in the same generation in which the events took place
  2. It was circulated among the very people about whom these documents spoke while they were still alive to deny them
  3. The fact that the first generation preserved the New Testament for posterity shows their regard for the genuineness of its contents

### Conclusion:

- A. But this is only the first test any historical document must pass
- B. So what if it was written early
  1. How do we know that what we read today is an accurate representation of the original manuscripts actually penned by the authors?
  2. How can we be sure that in the passing of time the content of the original did not become corrupted through mistakes in copying?

**Set for the Defense of the Word of God: Where  
(Lesson Three, Archaeological Support For The New Testament)**

Introduction:

- A. The New Testament was written in the same generation in which the events took place. It was circulated among the very people about whom these documents spoke, while they were still alive to confirm or deny it
- B. Were the authors accurate in their description of the events that took place?
- C. This is where the science of archaeology can be very helpful in determining the historical reliability of the New Testament:
- D. If the archaeologists prove that the New Testament is filled with errors concerning people, places, and events, then the New Testament could not be trusted as an accurate record of the life of Jesus and the early church.
- E. Not too long ago, some discounted the Biblical record because it frequently referred to things not mentioned by any source outside the Bible
- F. But discoveries by archaeologists in recent years have vindicated the New Testament and silenced the skeptics
  - 1. German liberal school of higher textual criticism assumes mistakes in the Bible when it mentions that which has yet to be found by archaeology. Likewise with Biblical Archaeological Review

**I. A CENSUS AND QUIRINIUS GOVERNOR AT JESUS' BIRTH? *Luke 2:1-3***

- A. It was once argued that Luke was in error.
  - 1. In other words, that there was no such census
  - 2. Also, that Quirinius was not governor of Syria at that time
  - 3. And that people did not have to return to their ancestral home
- B. But archaeological discoveries have proven otherwise.
  - 1. We now know that the Romans had a regular enrollment of taxpayers, and held censuses every 14 years (begun by Augustus Caesar)
  - 2. An inscription found in Antioch tells of Quirinius being governor of Syria around 7 B.C. (evidently he was governor twice)
  - 3. A papyrus found in Egypt says concerning the conducting of a census: "Because of the approaching census it is necessary that all those residing for any cause away from their home should at once prepare to return to their own governments in order that they may complete the family registration of the enrollment."

**II. LYSANIAS? - *Luke 3:1***

- A. The only Lysanias known to ancient historians
  - 1. Was one who was killed in 36 B.C.
  - 2. This caused some to question Luke's reliability
- B. However, an inscription was found near Damascus that speaks of "Freedman of Lysanias the tetrarch" and is dated between 14 and 29 A.D.

**III. "THE PAVEMENT" (GABBATHA)? - *John 19:13***

- A. For years no record existed of a court called "the pavement" or "gabbatha"

1. This led many to say "It's a myth" and, "See, the Bible is not historical"
- B. William F. Albright in "The Archaeology of Palestine" shows otherwise.
  1. This court was the court of the Tower of Antonia and was destroyed in 66-70 A.D. during the siege of Jerusalem. It was left buried when the city was rebuilt in the time of Hadrian, and was not rediscovered until recently.

#### IV. ICONIUM A CITY OF PHYRIGIA? - Acts 14:6

- A. Archaeologists at first believed Luke's implication to be wrong.
  1. That Lystra and Derbe were in Lycaonia and Iconium was not
  2. They based their belief on the writings of Romans such as Cicero, who indicated that Iconium was in Lycaonia
  3. Thus, archaeologists said the book of Acts was unreliable
- B. But In 1910, Sir William Ramsay Found A Monument Which showed that Iconium was a Phrygian city

#### V. "POLITARCHS"? - Acts 17:6

- A. Concerning the term "rulers of the city" (Greek "politarchs")
  1. Since the term is not found in the classical literature of the Greeks, it was assumed that Luke was wrong to refer to such an office
- B. However, some 19 inscriptions have now been found that make use of this title, and five of these are in reference to Thessalonica

#### Conclusion:

- A. Skeptics conclude that simply because the Bible speaks of something they have yet to discover, it must be inaccurate. This speaks more to the arrogance of the archaeologist and the inadequacies of his science than it does of the Bible.
- B. Just how accurate is the New Testament in its historical description? "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference." -- Nelson Glueck (noted Jewish archaeologist)
- C. Of special interest is the testimony of Sir William Ramsay
  1. Concerning his background:
    - a. He was trained in a German historical school in the 1850s
    - b. He was taught that Acts was a product of the mid-2nd century
    - c. He was firmly convinced of this and started out his career in archaeology to prove it
  2. However, he was compelled to a complete reversal of his beliefs due to the overwhelming evidence uncovered in his research
  3. His conclusion: "Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, he is possessed of the true historic sense, in short, this author should be placed along with the greatest of historians."

**Set for the Defense of the Word of God: Who  
(Lesson Three, Part Two, Manuscript Attestation For The New Testament)**

Introduction:

- A. What have we established thus far in this series of lessons?
  - 1. That the New Testament was written during the generation in which the events occurred
  - 2. That its reliability as a historical document continues to be confirmed by the field of archaeology
- B. Another question remains in order to establish beyond a reasonable doubt the historical reliability of the New Testament: "What assurance is there, that what we have today in the form of the New Testament, is that which was penned by its original authors?"
- C. Since we don't have the original manuscripts penned by the authors, how do we know that there hasn't been significant changes or errors made in the process of copying over the years, or that there hasn't been collusion among those who possessed the early copies of the originals?

**I. THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TEST**

- A. This test is applied to all ancient historical documents.
  - 1. Such as:
    - a. Julius Caesar's "Gallic War"
    - b. "Histories" of Tacitus
    - c. "Annals" of Tacitus
    - d. The New Testament
  - 2. In an effort to establish the likelihood that what copies we have:
    - a. Are faithful representatives of the originals,
    - b. And have come to us free of changes, errors, or collusion
- B. Questions raised in this test
  - 1. "How many copies of the document in question are available?"
    - a. In order to compare them with one another, the more, the better
  - 2. "Where were the copies found?"
    - a. If they all came from one place, collusion is possible, but if they are from places far removed by time and location, collusion is unlikely
  - 3. "How much time passed between the original and the earliest copies?"
    - a. If the earliest copies we have were written hundreds of years after the original, a lot of changes could have been made and we would not know it
    - b. But a short interval of time would increase our assurance in the reliability of the copies
  - 4. "What variances exist between the copies?"
    - a. If copies of a document are filled with significant differences, then it would not be possible to know what the original author wrote.
    - b. But if the variances are few and minor, then the process of copying over the years has been faithful to the original

## II. THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TEST FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT

- A. How many copies of New Testament manuscripts are available?
1. Over 4,000 Greek manuscripts; 13,000 copies of portions of the New Testament in Greek
  2. Compare this with other ancient historical writings:
    - a. Caesar's "Gallic Wars" - only 10 Greek manuscripts
    - b. "Annals" of Tacitus - 2
    - c. Livy - 20; Plato - 7; Sophocles - 100
- B. Where were these copies found?
1. Various places: Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Greece, Italy
  2. Such varied locations would make collusion very difficult
- C. What length of time passed between the original and the earliest copies?
1. Several papyri fragments have been dated to within 50-100 years
  2. We have several nearly complete New Testament Greek Manuscripts which were copied within 300-400 years, for example:
    - a. Codex Sinaiticus, found near Mt. Sinai
    - b. Codex Alexandrinus, found near Alexandria in Egypt
    - c. Codex Vaticanus, located at the Vatican in Rome
  3. But compare this with manuscripts of various classical histories:
    - a. "Histories of Thucydides" - earliest copy is 1300 years removed from the original
    - b. "Histories of Herodotus" - earliest copy is 1350 years removed from the original
    - c. Caesar's "Gallic War" - 950 years
    - d. Roman History of Livy - 350 years (earliest copy is a fragment)
    - e. "Histories" of Tacitus - 750 years
    - f. "Annals" of Tacitus - 950 years (there are only two manuscripts)
- D. What variances exist between the copies of the New Testament?
1. It is true that there are some variations between the many thousands of manuscripts available
    - a. But the vast majority are very minor (spelling, differences in phraseology, etc.; modern translations often note the differences in footnotes)
    - b. Only 0.5% is in question (compared to 5% for the Iliad)
  2. Even then, it can be stated: "No fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith rests on a disputed reading. It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible is certain: especially is this the case with the New Testament." (Sir Frederick Kenyon, authority in the field of New Testament textual criticism)

### Conclusion:

- A. In regard to the "Bibliographical Test" in attesting the manuscript evidence for the New Testament, it not only passes with flying colors, it does better than any other historical document come down to us from antiquity!
- B. Why then would anyone question the New Testament record concerning Jesus?

1. It is because reference is made to miracles, such as the resurrection of Jesus from the dead

C. "The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical authors, the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning. And if the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be as beyond all doubt." (F. F. Bruce)

D. "After trying to shatter the historicity and validity of the Scriptures, I came to the conclusion that they are historically trustworthy. If one discards the Bible as being unreliable, then he must discard almost all literature of antiquity. One problem I constantly face is the desire on the part of many to apply one standard or test to secular literature and another to the Bible. One needs to apply the same test, whether the literature under investigation is secular or religious. Having done this, I believe one can hold the Scriptures in his hand and say, 'The Bible is trustworthy, and historically reliable.'" (Josh McDowell)

### **Set for the Defense of the Word of God: (Lesson Four, What If They Lied?)**

Introduction:

- A. The following facts are in evidence:
  1. Jesus actually lived
  2. The New Testament is a reliable historical document
    - a. It was circulated soon after the events took place
    - b. Archaeology confirms the New Testament record
    - c. What we have today is what was written by the original authors
- B. But concerning the miracles of Jesus and His resurrection?
  1. Archaeology cannot confirm or deny the truthfulness of such things
  2. What if the New Testament writers lied?
- C. These are the only alternatives: That the New Testament is either the truth or is a carefully orchestrated lie

#### **I. THERE ARE ONLY TWO ALTERNATIVES**

- A. The writers of the New Testament leave us no other alternative
  1. Either Jesus rose from the dead, or Paul and other eyewitnesses are false witnesses - *1Cor. 15:14-15*
  2. Peter states that either the transfiguration and other events occurred as described by the eyewitnesses, or they are cunningly devised fables - *2Peter 1:16-18*
- B. We cannot say they might have been sincerely deceived
  1. Especially in reference to the resurrection of Jesus
    - a. They claim that they ate and drank with Him afterwards - *Acts 10:39-41*
    - b. They claim that they saw and touched Him - *1John 1:1-4*
    - c. They claimed multitudes saw the resurrected Christ at a time when those multitudes were alive and could have refuted their testimony - *1Cor. 15:4-8*

## II. THE IMPLICATIONS IF THE NEW TESTAMENT IS NOT TRUE

- A. The New Testament is a carefully orchestrated lie
  - 1. Consider the great accuracy they used in describing events, places, and people - *Luke 2:1-5*
  - 2. If the record of miracles and the resurrection is false, then they very carefully intertwined fact and fiction. Is it reasonable to believe that?
- B. The authors suffered extreme hardship for what they knew was a lie
  - 1. Many people will lie if they can get something out of it, such as money, power, influence
  - 2. But what did the apostles get out of it? - *1Cor. 4:9-13*
  - 3. What did Paul get for holding to his testimony? - *2Cor. 11:24-29*
  - 4. How do we know they really suffered this hardship?
    - a. The fact that the letters of the New Testament were even saved
    - b. For example, consider the letters 1 & 2 Corinthians
      - 1) These letters are filled with rebuke of the Corinthians
      - 2) The Corinthians would have every reason not to save these letters that exposed their faults
      - 3) The Corinthians had first hand knowledge as to whether the apostle Paul really suffered the hardship
      - 4) If they knew the accounts of such hardship to be false, they would have quickly destroyed these letters written by a liar who embarrassingly wrote about their problems
- C. The authors who were martyred knew they were dying for a lie
  - 1. History and tradition record that:
    - a. James was stoned to death
    - b. Paul was beheaded
    - c. Peter was crucified
  - 2. If the New Testament is a lie, they went to their deaths knowing they were dying for a lie
    - a. Is it rational to believe that?
- D. In suffering and dying for a lie, they went against everything both Jesus and they taught
  - 1. *Matt. 5:37; Eph. 4:25; 1Peter 2:1*
  - 2. Does it make sense to believe that?
- E. In fact, the book with the world's highest standard and loftiest goals was composed by liars, frauds, and deceivers - *2Tim. 3:16-17; James 1:22-25*
  - 1. What book presents higher standards of love and morality than the NT?
  - 2. For example, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (*Matt. 5-7*) and Paul's discourse on love (*1Cor. 13*)
  - 3. Is this rational?

### Conclusion:

- A. This is what you MUST believe if you do not believe the New Testament when it speaks of the miracles and resurrection of Jesus Christ:
  - 1. It is a carefully orchestrated lie
  - 2. The authors suffered extreme hardship for what they KNEW was a lie

3. Those authors who were martyred KNEW they were dying for a lie
4. In suffering and dying for a lie, they went against everything Jesus and they taught
5. And somehow, these liars, frauds, and deceivers came up with a book containing the world's highest standard of morality and loftiest goals

**Set for the Defense of the Word of God:  
(Lesson Five, Providence in Preservation and Translation)**

**I. CONTINUITY**

- A. A book that was written:
  1. Over a long period of time. About 1600 years; 55 generations
  2. By approximately 40 authors from every walk of life
    - a. Moses, political leader trained in the universities of Egypt
    - b. Peter, fisherman
    - c. Amos, herdsman
    - d. Joshua, military general
    - e. Nehemiah, cup bearer to the king of Persia
    - f. Daniel, prime minister in the courts of Babylon
    - g. Luke, physician
    - h. Solomon, philosopher king
    - i. Matthew, tax collector
    - j. Paul, rabbinically trained assassin and tentmaker.
  3. In different places
    - a. Moses in the wilderness
    - b. Jeremiah in a dungeon
    - c. Daniel on a hillside, and in a palace
    - d. Paul inside prison walls
    - e. Luke while traveling
    - f. John in exile on the isle of Patmos
    - g. Others in the rigors of a military campaign
  4. At different times
    - a. David in time of war
    - b. Solomon in time of peace
  5. In differing moods
    - a. Some writing from the heights of joy (Song of Solomon)
    - b. Others from the depths of sorrow and despair (Jeremiah)
  6. On three continents: Asia, Africa, Europe
  7. In three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek
  8. With subject matter involving hundreds of controversial topics, such as:
    - a. The origin of man and the universe
    - b. The nature of God
    - c. The nature of man, sin, and man's redemption
- B. Yet there is perfect harmony and continuity
  1. For example:
    - a. The Paradise Lost of the book of Genesis becomes the Paradise

Regained of Revelation.

- b. "Whereas the gate to the Tree of Life is closed in Genesis, it is opened forevermore in Revelation." (Geisler and Nix)
  - c. Moses wrote Genesis in 1,445 BC, and John wrote Revelation in 66 AD, as span of 1,511 years.
2. Contrast the continuity of the Bible with the writings of men
- a. Imagine what we would have if you took just ten authors:
    - 1) From one walk of life, one generation, one place, one time, one mood, one continent, one language
    - 2) Speaking on just one controversial subject
  - b. We would have a conglomeration of conflicting ideas, not harmony.

### C. The Point?

- 1. If a book can be written using 40 different authors writing over 1600 years and writing in perfect harmony with one another, then such a book can be preserved for 2000 years and be translated into language understandable by contemporary men, then it is like no other book that has ever been written, a book that defies the laws of nature and humanity.
- 2. In other words, the writing of this book is a greater miracle than the preservation of it. The writing of the Bible is a matter of Divine inspiration, a miracle; the preservation and translation of the Bible is a matter of Divine providence, an expression of God's order. But then, we should not be surprised, for God always creates by miracle and sustains by law.

## II. TRANSLATION AND CIRCULATION

### A. The translation of the Bible is not a new thing.

- 1. One of the first major books ever translated
  - a. Septuagint version of the OT; quoted by Christ and apostles
  - b. Translated into Greek in 250 B.C.
- 2. Between 1950-1960, 3000 Bible translators were at work: "By the end of 1993, the whole Bible had been translated into 337 major languages; 2,062 languages and dialects have translations of at least one book of the Bible." (Guinness Book of World Records, 1998)

### B. The circulation of the Bible

- 1. As of 1804 - 409 million copies
- 2. As of 1932 - one and a third billion copies: "The world's best-selling and most widely distributed book is the Bible, with an estimated 2.5 billion copies sold, 1815-1975." (Guinness Book of World Records)

### C. The Point?

- 1. No other book has ever achieved this universal circulation. This speaks to the many texts that state that the word of God will go to the ends of the earth.
- 2. God has seen to it that His Word has been preached to the entire world.
- 3. *Acts 8:26-29, 10:9-16, 28-29, 33, 16:9-10; Rom. 15:19-21; Col. 1:23*

4. In spite of current efforts to suppress public mention of the word of God, and in spite of contemporary wisdom that insists the Bible is but outdated cultural myths, it remains the best-selling book of all time.
5. I don't believe that is a coincidence. Implication? A book with such universal distribution for so long a period of time will undergo no perceptible change over time and translation. Again the hand of Providence.

### III. ENDURANCE

#### A. Its survival through time

1. Though written on material that perishes, having to be copied and recopied for hundreds of years by hand, did not change in style, content, or context.
2. Compared with other ancient writings, the manuscript evidence of the Bible is greater than any ten pieces of classical literature combined.
3. More than enough copies of manuscripts exist to ensure that we are reading the words of the original authors.

#### B. Its survival through attempts to destroy it

1. Many have tried to burn it, ban it, and otherwise outlaw it
  - a. From the days of Roman emperors
  - b. To the present Communist-dominated countries
2. Two illustrations of its survival through persecution:
  - a. In 303 A.D., the Roman emperor Diocletian issued an edict to stop Christians from worshipping, and to destroy their scriptures. Only 25 years later the Roman emperor Constantine called for 50 copies of the Bible to be prepared at the expense of the government.
  - b. Voltaire, French atheist who died in 1778, predicted that Christianity would be swept from existence and pass into history within 100 years of his time. 50 years after his death, the Geneva Bible Society used his own printing press and house to produce stacks of Bibles.
3. How true is the statement - *1Peter 1:25*

#### C. Its survival through criticism

1. "Infidels for 1800 years have been refuting and overthrowing this book, and yet it stands today as solid as a rock. Its circulation increases, and it is more loved and cherished and read today than ever before. Infidels, with all their assaults make about as much impression on this book as a man with a tack hammer on the pyramids of Egypt." (H. L. Hastings)
2. "No other book has been so chopped, knifed, sifted, scrutinized, and vilified. What book on philosophy or religion or psychology has been subject to such a mass attack as the Bible? With such venom and skepticism? With such thoroughness and erudition? Upon every chapter, line and tenet? And yet, the Bible is still loved by millions, read by millions, and studied by millions." (Bernard Ramm)

#### D. The Point?

1. Critics can make or break a book, play, or movie in one brief byline in the newspaper. In the book burnings of communist China and Nazi Germany, volumes of remarkable works and forgotten lore were destroyed and their wonder lost forever. Time has swept from existence all but a few plays and philosophical essays by the classical Greeks who were the founders of our western civilization. But neither time, nor enemies, nor critics have made the slightest difference in the penning, printing, publication, and preservation of the Bible.
2. Why is this book unique? No other book has been protected by the Providential hand of God. He wants you to know His will, and He is going to let nothing keep His word from getting into the hands of anyone who wants it.

### IV. INFLUENCE

#### A. Upon the literature of the world

1. "If every Bible in any considerable city were destroyed, the book could be restored in all its essential parts from the quotations on the shelves of the city public library" (The Greatest English Classic)
2. No one can truly be called "educated" who is ignorant of the Bible, for they would be ignorant of what has influenced so many great writers.

#### B. Upon the world itself

1. Our judicial system is based on many of the principles found in the Bible
2. Our standards of morality owe much to the Judeo-Christian ethic
3. Even within the ancient characters of the Chinese language, are references to the Genesis story of Adam and Eve, Garden, and Flood
4. The history of the world for the past 2000 years has been shaped for the most part by the use and/or misuse of the scriptures.

#### C. The Point?

1. No other ancient book has one tenth of proofs of authenticity as the Bible.
2. No other book has one tenth of the circulation of the Bible.
3. No other book has had one tenth of the influence as the Bible.
4. The Bible is fully unique among all books.
5. The providential hand of God is visible throughout the process of writing, distributing, preserving and translating the Bible from the first century to the present.

### **Set for the Defense of the Word of God: (Lessons Six and Seven, Canon and Versions)**

#### Introduction:

##### A. Two questions remain:

1. Can we know that the books we have now are the ones God wants us to have?
2. Can we trust the American translation of the original texts?

- B. If I can answer those two questions in the affirmative, then I have one question for you: Why don't you believe it?

## I. THE CANON OF THE BIBLE

A. Canon (English) from Kanon (Greek) from qaneh (Hebrew) meaning a reed or a cane used as a measuring rod.

1. In order for a book to meet the measure of the canon of scripture, it must be proven that it is inspired.

a. *2Tim. 3:16; Rom. 15:4; 2Peter 1:19-21*

2. It had to have been written during the age of inspiration.

a. Prophesied periods without inspiration:

1) *1Sam. 3:1; Amos 8:11-12; Lam. 2:9; Micah 3:6*

b. Prophesied end of inspiration

1) *Zech. 12-13; 1Cor. 13:8-13*

3. It must not contradict any other book of scripture.

a. *Deut. 13:1-5, 18:20-22; Gal. 1:6-9; 1John 4:1-3*

4. It must be approved by inspired persons.

a. *Luke 24:44; 1Cor. 14:37*

b. Quoted by Jesus and apostles and called holy scriptures

B. What about the apocryphal books and patristic writings?

1. 15 books of the apocrypha (9 approved by Catholicism) were written between 200 BC and 400 AD.

1 & 2 Esdras

Tobit

Judith

Additions to the Book of Esther

Wisdom of Solomon

Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Jesus son of Sirach)

Baruch

The Letter of Jeremiah

Susanna

Prayer of Azariah & the Song of 3 Young Men

Bel and the Dragon

Prayer of Manasseh

1 & 2 Book of Maccabees

2. They do not pass the test of holy writ.

a. Never included in the Hebrew nor Septuagint scriptures

b. Never recognized by Jesus or any apostle

c. Never accepted by the Jews, and not accepted by Christians

until April 8, 1546, the 4th Council of Trent of the Catholic Church

d. Do not exhibit the intrinsic quality of inspired text

e. Contain historical errors

f. Contain myths and legends for teaching purposes

g. Contradicts canonical scripture

h. The apocrypha (secret or concealed) books have been shrouded with uncertainty since their writing.

i. Rejected by all early scholars (Josephus, Tertullian, Jerome, Origen, Philo, Clement, et al)

3. Likewise with patristic writings ("apostolic fathers")

a. They did not acknowledge their own writings as inspired.

b. Neither does any respected scholar who has read them.

4. These are obviously dissimilar to canonical scripture.

C. How do we know the books we have are authorized?

1. They were circulated and read as authoritative from the time they were written

2. *2Peter 3:15* - Paul got his information as a gift
    - a. *Vs 16* - Peter and others read his epistles
    - b. Altering those epistles is self-destructive
    - c. "Rest of the scriptures" implies a recognized body of authorized writing
  3. *1Cor. 14:37* - His letter to Corinth was authoritative
  4. *Luke 1:1-4* - Luke, who had perfect knowledge, was writing so that others could have the same.
    - a. He acknowledges that others were doing the same
  5. Paul quotes *Matt. 10:10* & *Luke 10:7* in *1Tim. 5:18*, and calls it scripture.
  6. *Col. 4:16* - Paul ordered them to read his epistle in other churches
- D. They were circulated and read after the first century.
1. Copies of NT books in a compilation were found as early as the second century AD; copies of the OT books in a compilation were found as early as 250 BC in the Septuagint.
  2. Tatian, pupil of Justin Martyr, made a harmony of the four gospel accounts, Revelation, Acts, 6 epistles of Paul, Hebrews, and 1John in 165 AD.
  3. In 397, the council of Carthage finally acknowledged that these 27 books and no other should be read as Holy Scripture in assemblies.
  4. The fledgling Catholic Church was a bit behind the times. Disciples had been reading and circulating these books for 327 years.
  5. *"As to the New Testament books, not long after they were written, they were being read regularly in the church assemblies. They were held in high esteem by early Christians. The words of Jesus and his apostles were no less authoritative than the Old Testament. In this way the New Testament canon gradually took shape. By the close of the second century its essentials had been largely determined, and by the next century or two the New Testament books as they are known today constituted the supreme authority for the primitive church. In conclusion, it is important to emphasize that no church council made the canon of Scripture. No church by its decrees gave to or pronounced on the books of the Bible their infallibility. The Bible owes its authority to no individual or group. The church does not control the canon, but the canon controls the church. Although divine authority was attributed to the New Testament books by the later church, this authority was not derived from the church but was inherent in the books themselves. As a child identifies its mother, the later church identified the books which it regarded as having unique authority."* (How We Got the Bible, Neil R. Lightfoot, p. 161.)
  6. *"Our New Testament Scriptures are a divine production. They exist by the action of God. They are not here simply because early Christians desired to preserve their faith. They are here because God ordered and directed the development of the New Testament Scriptures. The evidence discussed showing their use in subsequent years is proof of their existence and substantiates the argumentation used in this presentation. The fact that a human council in 397 A.D. decreed them to be Scripture does not take away from what they were. It rather upholds and sustains them*

*for what they really are, the Word of God.*" (The Development of the New Testament, Arthur M. Ogden, p. 97)

## II. THE WORK OF THE TRANSLATORS

### A. *Display and review charts of translation*

500 BC: Completion of Hebrew Manuscripts comprising 39 Books of O.T.

200 BC: Completion of Septuagint Greek Manuscripts of 39 OT books

70 AD: Completion of Greek Manuscripts comprising 27 Books of N.T.

390 AD: Jerome's Latin Vulgate Manuscripts Produced.

600 AD: Latin was the Only Language Allowed for Scripture.

995 AD: Anglo-Saxon Translations of The New Testament Produced.

1384 AD: Wycliffe is the First Person to Produce a (Hand-Written)manuscript copy of the Bible in English.

1455 AD: Gutenberg Invents the Printing Press. The First Book Ever Printed is Gutenberg's Bible in Latin.

1522 AD: Martin Luther's German New Testament.

1526 AD: William Tyndale's New Testament; The First New Testament to be Printed in the English Language.

1535 AD: Myles Coverdale Bible; The First Complete Bible to be printed in the English Language.

1537 AD: Matthews Bible; The Second Complete Bible to be Printed in English. Done by John "Thomas Matthew" Rogers.

1539 AD: The "Great Bible" Printed; The First English Language Bible to be Authorized for Public Use.

1560 AD: The Geneva Bible Printed; The First English Language Bible to Add Numbered Verses to Each Chapter.

1568 AD: The Bishops Bible Printed.

1609 AD: The Douay Old Testament is added to the Rheimes New Testament (of 1582) Making the First Complete English Catholic Bible; Translated from the Latin Vulgate (75 Books).

1611 AD: The King James Bible Printed.

1613, 1629, 1638, 1762, 1769 AD: KJV revised

1782 AD: Robert Aitken's Bible; 1st English Bible to be Printed in America

1885 AD: The "Revised Version" Bible; The First Major English Revision of the Bible.

1901 AD: The "American Standard Version"; The First Major American Revision of the Bible.

1971 AD: "New American Standard Bible" (NASB) is Published as a "Modern and Accurate Word for Word English Translation"

1973 AD: "New International Version" (NIV) is Published as a "Modern and Accurate Phrase for Phrase English Translation"

1982 AD: "New King James Version" (NKJV) is Published as a "Modern English Version Maintaining the Original Style of the KJV"

1. The Bible has been in the hands of Christians since it was written.
2. By the year 500, it had been translated into a number of languages.
3. In 600, the Catholic church decreed Latin the only language for it.
4. 400 years later, it was translated into Anglo-Saxon (Old English)

## B. What about my Bible?

1. "I want to read the scriptures in the good Old English that Peter, Paul, James and John wrote it in.
2. See *chart on Lord's prayer translations*

(koine Greek)

Πατερ ημων ο εν τοις ουρανοις  
αγιασθητω το ονομα σου

(10th century Anglo Saxon)

Uren Fader dhic art in hoefnas  
Sic gehalyed dhin noma

(1611 King James Bible)

Our Fadir that art in heuenes  
Halewid be thi name

(1901 American Standard Version)

Our Father who art in heaven  
Hallowed be thy name

## 3. The King James Bible:

a. *"King James determined to sponsor a new translation 'to be read in Churches.' In 1604, He appointed 54 scholars to translate according to strict rules of accuracy and objectivity. These scholars were divided into 6 groups. Each man made his own translation of the portion assigned him, and then passed it on to be reviewed by each member of his group. When one group finished a book, a copy was sent to each of the other 5 groups for independent criticism. Thus each book went through the hands of all the men. The entire version, thus amended, was then placed before a committee of six to iron out any differences of opinion and put on finishing touches. The KJ Bible thus changed the whole pattern of Bible translation, moving far beyond the "one man" or "one church" editions to become the product of the finest Hebrew and Greek scholars the English-speaking peoples then knew. Miles Smith, one of the translators, wrote a "Preface" to the KJ versions, explaining the WHY and HOW of this masterpiece. Called "The Translators To The Reader," this should be required reading for every serious Bible scholar. For a time it was put at its proper place -- at the beginning of the KJ version -- but has now been removed, for various reasons, and few Bible readers seem to know of its existence. Revised Versions will continue to be needed, but only fools ridicule the majestic KJ Bible."* (Story of the Text, Robert Turner, p. 5)

b. What you hold as the KJV has been revised dozens of times.

c. Has texts not in original manuscripts

1) Luke 17:36; John 5:4; 1John 5:7

d. Transliterated baptizo instead of translating it immerse.

e. Translated Passover as Easter in Acts 12:4

## C. How can I trust it to be faithful to what the Lord wanted?

1. Three methods of translation:

- a. Formal Equivalence - word for word, revising sentence structure for readability; conservative, preserves original structure
    - 1) Large number of scholars
    - 2) Large number of reliable manuscripts
    - 3) Large number of reviews and revisions
    - 4) Agenda is purity of scholarship
  - b. Dynamic Equivalence - Thought for thought, revising wording to meet contemporary thought processes; subjective
    - 1) Limited number of scholars
    - 2) Manuscripts seldom used; previous translations relied on
    - 3) Limited review due to publication pressure
    - 4) Agenda: well intentioned manipulation of values & beliefs
  - c. Paraphrase - Principle for principle, highly subjective paraphrasing to meet popular religio-political agendas
    - 1) Usually only one or just a few scholars
    - 2) Variant manuscripts used to support agenda
    - 3) Little or no review
    - 4) Agenda: religious change
2. The King James Bible is an example of Formal Equivalence
- a. Many scholars, many manuscripts, many years of review, pure text was the only agenda
  - b. ASV, NKJV, ESV, and NASB likewise
- D. Which one can I trust? Most accurate?
1. American Standard Version is the hands down the most accurate.
    - a. Sentence structure is not smooth like the KJV
  2. New King James Version is a close second
    - a. Eliminated the remaining mistakes in the KJV
    - b. Is accurate and readable in contemporary American.
  3. King James Version is a close third
    - a. Most popular of formal equivalence translations because it has that old time majestic religious flavor.
  4. The English Standard Version (ESV - 2001) is fourth
    - a. The ESV is an “essentially literal” translation with emphasis is on “word-for-word” correspondence, at the same time taking into account differences current literary English and the original languages.
    - b. Highly accurate in the Old Testament; however the ESV lightly blurs some of the polar language in the New Testament, and has a strongly Calvinist translation of Rev. 13:8, and other texts that can be seen as mildly Calvinistic.
  5. The New American Standard is in a distant fifth place.
    - a. While accurate, the NASB holds forth a number of examples of dynamic equivalence (phrase for phrase) translation
- E. All others cannot be relied on to faithfully present the scriptures.
1. The Revised Standard Version was translated by nine men, eight of whom publicly declared their liberal biases against the scriptures.

2. New International Version is a dynamic equivalence translation.
  - a. Premillennialist and Calvinist
  - b. Untrustworthy and denominational
3. Remember that all headings, footnotes, cross references, chapter and verse divisions, helps, and comments are uninspired additions

### III. THREE IMMUTABLE LAWS OF HERMENEUTICS

- A. Every scripture has a context
  1. What is the meaning of the context?
  2. How much does it include?
  3. *"It shall greatly help you to understand scripture, if you mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, and to whom, with what words at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goeth before and what followeth."* (John Wycliffe)
  4. How does the context show that Acts 16:31 and Gal. 3:26 do not refer to "faith only"?
- B. Every word has a purpose.
  1. In all three Bible periods of history, there have been warnings against changing a single word of scripture.
    - a. Patriarchal - The serpent added the word "not" to God's first prohibition and led Eve into sin - Gen. 3:4
    - b. Mosaical - Deut. 4:2; Psalm 119:60; Prov. 30:5-6
    - c. Christian - Matt. 4:4; Rev. 22:18-19
  2. How does Heb. 5:14 explain the author's use of the word "perfect"?
  3. What light does it throw on Heb. 6:1?
  4. Does Mark 10:24 explain 10:23?
  5. Is the purpose of Luke 18:1 to prove that men must beg God in order to be heard?
  6. Was Paul's purpose in 1Cor. 1:14 to minimize baptism? (1:13, 15).
  7. Ecc. 3:18-21 has been used to prove that at death man ceases to exist,
    - a. Ecc. 12:7 shows that death does not mean cessation of existence.
    - b. Ecc. 1:2-3 does not prove that nothing is of value.
    - c. Ecc. 3:22 says labor is good.
  8. Is the author's purpose in 1Thes. 4:16 to show that the Christians are raised from the dead before unbelievers are raised?
  9. How does Peter explain the purpose of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the household of Cornelius - Acts 15:8-9?
  10. What did Peter use the case to prove?
    - a. Acts 10:46-48, 11:1-18, 15:1, 5, 7-11, 19
    - b. Was this case ever used to prove that anyone else should thus receive the Holy Spirit?
  11. This point also illustrates how we may narrow down our search for the meaning of a passage, by eliminating possible explanations.
  12. Did the Spirit come on Cornelius to save him? - Acts 11:14, 15:11
    - a. To give him faith? - Acts 15:7

- b. To purify his heart? - Acts 15:9
- C. Every passage is consistent with all scripture
1. To take a passage of scripture and give to it an interpretation which contradicts some very clear teaching of the Bible is to fail to realize that one passage must harmonize with another.
    - a. Any interpretation or understanding that contradicts any other passage of scripture must be considered suspect.
  2. How did this lead the disciples to misunderstand some things about the Messiah? - Luke 24:25-27
  3. If Eph. 2:8 only was considered, universal salvation would be true.
  4. How do we know that 1John 3:6-9 cannot teach that a Christian cannot do any wrong? - 1John 1:8-10; 2:1-2; 3:15; 5:16, 17
  5. How do we know that 1Cor. 15:29 does not teach baptism by proxy?
    - a. Mark 16:16; Rom. 10:9

Conclusion:

A. *"Ours is the privilege to study this remarkable story. It is the history of the most important book in the world. For those who have passed it on from generation to generation, for the legacy of their undying devotion, we owe an incalculable debt. "Every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" is important (Matt. 4:4). This is why we study about it, and why this book is written. In the end, it is comforting and reassuring to know that Jesus' words will not pass away. This promise has been tested by centuries and has not failed. "The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord abides forever" (1 Peter 1:24-25)." (Lightfoot, p. 208)*

B. *"Sir Walter Scott, upon his deathbed, asked his attendant to bring him "the book." When asked, "What book?" he replied, "The Book, the Bible! There is only one Book." This, from a man of letters, poses the question: If the Bible is "the only Book" by which to die, is it not truly the one Book by which to live?*

*We close this series on the text with this anonymous eulogy of the Bible: "Many years ago I entered the wonderful temple of God's revelation. I entered the portico of Genesis, and walked down through the Old Testament Art Gallery where the pictures of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David and Daniel hung on the wall.*

*"I entered the Music Room of the Psalms where the Spirit swept the keyboard of inspiration and brought forth the dirge-like wail of the weeping prophet, Jeremiah; to the grand, impassioned strains of Isaiah; until it seemed that every reed and harp in God's organ of nature responded to the tuneful touch of David, the sweet singer of Israel. I entered the chapel of Ecclesiastes where the voice of the Preacher was heard; and passed into the conservatory of Sharon where the lily of the valley's sweet-scented spices filled and perfumed my life. I entered the business room of the Proverbs, and passed into the observatory room of the Prophets where I saw many telescopes of various sizes, some pointing to far off events, but all concentrated upon the Bright Morning Star, which was soon to rise over the moon-lit hills of Judea, for our salvation.*

*"I entered the audience room of the King of Kings and was enlightened from the standpoint of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; entered the Acts of the Apostles where the Holy Spirit was doing His office work in the forming of the church; passed into the Correspondence Room where sat Paul, Peter, James, Jude and John penning their*

*epistles. I stepped into the Throne of Revelation, where all towered into glittering peaks. I got a vision of the King seated upon His throne in all His glory, and I cried:*

*"All Hail the power of Jesus' Name*

*Let angels prostrate fall;*

*Bring forth the royal diadem*

*And crown Him Lord of All."*

*Truly, THERE IS ONLY ONE BOOK!!* (Turner, p. 12)

**IV. TRANSLATION ACCURACIES** With the aid of the printing press, and with Tyndale's work as a foundation, other English translations quickly followed.

A. Miles Coverdale Bible (1535-36). While Tyndale was in prison awaiting judgment and death, the Miles Coverdale Bible was circulated in England without official hindrance. The King of England's attitude was changing towards English translations. Coverdale was neither a Greek nor Hebrew scholar, but he was a very capable editor who gathered the very best materials available at the time. His Old Testament work was based on the Zurich Bible, Luther's German translation, the Latin Vulgate, and Tyndale's work on the Pentateuch. His New Testament translation was founded upon Tyndale's version and Luther's German translation. This was the first complete printed Bible in the English language, and it was immensely popular. Isn't it ironic, that less than a year after Tyndale's martyrdom, the entire Bible was distributed, in the English language, without royal opposition?

B. John Rogers--Matthews Bible (1537). John Rogers, a graduate of Oxford in 1525, was a friend of both Tyndale and Coverdale. In fact, Tyndale turned over his unpublished translation of Joshua to II Chronicles. to Rogers, who then revised and completed the work. His version, published under the pseudonym Thomas Matthew, was granted permission by the King to be bought and read in England. Henry VIII, who apparently made no effort to save Tyndale's life, had now granted royal authorization to two Bibles, Coverdale's and Roger's, in English.

C. The Great Bible (1539). This was really a revision of Matthew's Bible and the Tyndale New Testament. It was completed under the direction of Oliver Cromwell. The name "Great Bible" came from its size: When opened it measured 18" by 14". When the Great Bible was placed in the churches throughout England, the preachers began to complain that the people were not listening to them. At the services the people would crowd around the Bible, read and discuss it, while the preacher was trying to deliver his sermon!

D. The Geneva Bible (1560). When Mary Tudor came to the throne of England in 1553, England again fell into the hands and power of Roman Catholicism. John Rogers and hundreds of others were burned at the stake. Because of this persecution, many Bible scholars fled to Geneva, which was friendly to their cause. The Geneva Bible was a very successful revision of the the Great Bible printed to the size of a hand Bible today. Its compactness and superior translation made it the most popular Bible among English-speaking Protestants for many years. It is often called the breeches Bible because of its wording in

Gen. 3:7:" Adam and Eve "sewed figge tree leeves together, and made themselves breeches."

E. The Bishop's Bible (1568). The popularity of the Geneva Bible did not please high church officials. So they authorized this new revision of the Great Bible to compete with it. The Bishop's Bible was not widely accepted.

F. The Douay Version (1609-10). This Catholic Bible is a translated from the Latin.

G. The King James Translation (1611). In January of 1604 King James I summoned a conference to consider complaints lodged by the Puritans against the high church of England. At this gathering Dr. John Reynolds of Oxford raised the possibility of a new translation. The King apparently welcomed this suggestion and was soon working out the necessary arrangements. The actual work was completed by 47 scholars (though 54 were originally appointed) at Oxford, Cambridge, and Westminster. The completed translation was published in 1611, and for the next 50 years or so it gained ground on the popular Geneva version. Eventually it became the Bible of the people, and for the next two centuries it maintained a supremacy so great that many regarded it as the final word in English translations.

1. The King James Bible has with good reason been termed, "the noblest monument of English prose" (RSV preface). Above all its rivals, the King James Version has had the greatest impact in shaping the English language. It is a literary masterpiece. But, lest anyone wishes to revere it because it was "good enough for St. Paul," we must remember that the King James Bible of today is not the King James of 1611. It has undergone three revisions, incorporating more than 100,000 changes! Further, there are over 300 words in the King James that no longer mean what they meant in 1611. If one wishes to use a Bible that follows the same Greek and Hebrew texts as the King James, use the New King James Version. The KJV was translated from the original languages by committee. Unexcelled in literary quality, although now archaic. Does not reflect the best text base on recent scholarship (some editions give explanatory notes on the text). Translated in 1611 by 47 scholars using the Byzantine family of manuscripts, Textus Receptus. Its Elizabethan style Old English is difficult for modern readers, especially youth. This is still a good translation for those who can deal with the language.

H. The English Revised Version (1881). Eventually scholars recognized a need for a new translation which would update the language of the King James. Also, scholars now had a greater knowledge and understanding of ancient languages, and many Hebrew and Greek manuscripts had been discovered in the intervening years. Two committees of 27 members each (one committee for the Old Testament and one for the New testament) were formed, and work began. The New Testament committee met in sessions on 407 days over a period of eleven years and their completed work was published on May 17, 1881. The Old Testament group met on 792 days over a period of fifteen years. The entire Bible, known as the English Revised Version, was published on May 19, 1885.

Its reception was unprecedented. Over 2,000,000 copies were sold in London alone.

I. The American Standard Version (1901). The American Standard Version (ASV) is in substance the English Revised Version with changes made to reflect American idioms, spellings, and word order. The American committee, which had worked with the English Revision committee, also re-paragraphed the text and added a cross references. It is fair to say that this translation embodied the best biblical scholars of Great Britain and America at the time.

J. The Revised Standard Version (1946-1952). The New Testament of this translation was published in 1946 and the Old Testament in 1952. Originally the RSV started out as a revision of the ASV, but the International Council of Religious Education doing the work quickly decided to begin an entirely new translation. The RSV is among the first Bibles to be translated by a sizable group of scholars who believed the doctrine that God inspired the thoughts of the original writers but not their actual words (See 1Cor. 2:13).

K. The New American Standard Version (1971). One of the most recent translations made by scholars who still believed in the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. Considered by many to be among the most technically accuratere, readable translations. The Lockman Foundation which produced it sought to update, clarify, and revise the ASV. Instead of the paragraphs used in the ASV, the New American Standard Bible (NASB) prints each verse as a separate unit.

L. The Living Bible (1974). This version is primarily the work of one man, Kenneth N. Taylor. He set out to paraphrase the ASV in words that his children could understand. It is not a translation in the true sense of the word. The current Bible entitled The Book is essentially the Living Bible.

M. Today's English Version (1976). Primarily the work of Mr. Robert G. Bratcher, this version was originally intended to meet the needs of people whose primary language was not English. It uses very up-to-date language and often includes modern pop art illustrations. It is often referred to as The Good News Bible. Accuracy is sacrificed for readability in this translation, and it often departs radically from the precise meaning of the Hebrew and Greek texts.

N. New International Version (1978). The New York Bible Society sponsored this translation. Its use of modern English makes it very easy to read. The NIV by most accounts is now the most widely purchased version, but it is not the most accurate. Like many of the more modern translations, it is primarily the work of those who have attempted to determine the meaning of the text and then present that meaning in modern English rather than seeking a basic translation of the original words and phrases. As a result, the translators' theology has crept into the NIV and has marred what would otherwise be an excellent work.

O. New King James Version (1982). Thomas Nelson Bible Publishers and the International Trust for Bible Studies co-sponsored this update of the King James Version. The publishers assembled 130 scholars to work on the project with the objective of making the KJV more accurate and readable and yet maintaining the grace and beauty of the original language. Today the NKJV remains in the top 5 best selling Bible in the US. This is a revision of the King James version, updated to modern English with minor translation corrections and retention of traditional

phraseology. This is a very good version. Though his name is never found in printed copies of this version (at his insistence), Batsell Barrett Baxter was heavily involved as the general editor of the NKJV.

P. Today's English Version (TEV) or Good News Bible (GNB) From the original. NT by one man, approved by committee. It is aimed particularly at those for whom English is a second language and those with little formal education. Achieves its goal and is very readable, good format. Translates dynamics well but not dependable for deeper study if used by itself. Can sometimes be offensive.

Q. New English Bible (NEB) From the original by interdenominational British committee. Exciting literary style, very readable but with distinct British flavor and idiom. Excellent for non-churched. Departures from the original text and too much liberty in certain renderings make it undependable as a study Bible.

R. J.B. Phillips Translation (Phillips) From the original but definitely a paraphrase by J.B. Phillips, a competent Greek scholar. More than any other, makes the Bible "live" for educated or literary people, although in British expression. Does not read like a translation.

S. Living Bible (LB) LB is a paraphrase done by one man, Kenneth Taylor, by paraphrasing the American Revised Version. It is not a translation as such, but is built on an existing version. Definitely not to be relied on for interpretations or study. It is very easy to read. Kenneth Taylor provides his own warning about the use of paraphrases in the preface. This is not a genuine translation, but is a type of phrase-by-phrase commentary that was originally intended to help the author's own children understand the scriptures. It is useful for inspiration and commentary, but for serious Bible study it should only be used in conjunction with a legitimate translation.

T. New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) A revision of the Revised Standard Version, it is generally literal and very accurate. The NRSV follows the same principle of translation as the RSV, though has now become more "gender-inclusive" in its approach. At times this is very helpful; at other times, it is misleading.

U. God's Word Translation (GW) Published in 1995 by the God's Word to the Nations Bible Society as a "closest natural equivalent" translation. Its layout is eye-appealing and helpful for outlining. It uses gender-neutral language. Avoids the use of theological terms, which are difficult to understand. Perhaps the best use of the dynamic equivalent format.

V. New Century Version (NCV) - The NCV is designed to be easy to read. It includes glossaries explaining specific Biblical terminology. The NCV is linked strongly to the International Children's Version and was translated by members of the church of Christ. Other versions done by this same group include the Version for the Deaf and the Easy-to-Read Version.

W. Contemporary English Version (CEV) The CEV is designed to be easily readable and understandable by modern readers. The language is contemporary English and it follows the dynamic equivalence method. This version was designed to be read aloud to listeners and appeals more to the ear than to the eye.

X. The Message (M) The Message is a paraphrase done by Eugene Peterson. Unlike Kenneth Taylor of the Living Bible, Eugene Peterson knows Biblical languages and translated from them rather than working from another English version. This version is still very free and often misses the meaning of the text.

Y. The English Standard Version (ESV) The ESV was completed in 2001. The words and phrases themselves grow out of the legacy of versions such as Tyndale, King James, and the Revised Standard. The ESV is an “essentially literal” translation that seeks as far as possible to capture the precise words of the original text and the personal style of each Biblical writer. As such, its emphasis is on “word-for-word” correspondence, at the same time taking into account differences of grammar, syntax, and idiom between current literary English and the original languages. The ESV uses as its textual base the Masoretic text found in Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia and the 4th edition of the UBS Greek text. Footnotes include textual variants and difficulties.

The author gratefully acknowledges the following sources:

- How We Got the Bible by Neil R. Lightfoot
- The Development of the New Testament by Arthur Ogden
- The Text of the New Testament by Bruce M. Metzger
- Story of the Text by Robert Turner
- The Translation of the Bible Into English by Kathleen Campbell
- Outlines of Christian Apologetics by Mark Copeland
- Introduction to Christian Evidences by Ferrell Jenkins
- Evidence that Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell