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5 MINUTE LESSONS ON THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Facts About the English Bible

An “autograph” means the original manuscript written by the original author. For example, Paul’s letter to the Romans written and hand signed by Paul. The problem is that we don’t have any original manuscripts today, but we do have copies and copies of copies went everywhere throughout parts of the world.

Currently we have over 5,000 early Greek manuscript portions and over 20,000 early translations of the New Testament.

The original Greek is the best. And what is the original Greek? There are two basic Greek text families: the “Byzantine” or “Western” text and the “Alexandrian” or “Eastern” text. The Western text contains about 15% more material than the Eastern text. The Eastern text relies heavily on only a few manuscripts, the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. Most older translations have used the Byzantine or Western text in their translations, and most modern translations since the late 1800’s have used the Alexandrian or Eastern text (that’s when these texts were discovered). Personally, since the Western text has about 15% more material, I prefer to use the Western text, but it’s up to you to decide. A good way to determine if your Bible uses the Western or Eastern text is to check it with Acts 8:37. Generally a Bible that does not have this verse is using the Eastern text.

Some say, “I rely on the older manuscripts.” But consider what the late Edward W. Goodrick (a translator of the NIV) stated, “Nor should the textual critic go by the age of the manuscript alone as if the older would always be the better, for we don’t know how old the parent manuscript was when its offspring was born. A seventh century manuscript might have been copied from a sixth century manuscript, but a fifteenth century manuscript might have been copied from a third century manuscript.”

So much for that information! Back to the English translations.

John Wycliffe and his associates were the first to translate the entire Bible into English from Latin in 1384.

William Tyndale completed his translation from the Greek in 1525. It is estimated that one-third of the King James Version is worded as Tyndale and 90% of Tyndale’s work is reproduced in the King James Version. Most translations rely to some extent on Tyndale’s work. Tyndale was burned at the stake for his translation work.

William Tyndale completed his Bible translation in 1525 and smuggled 15,000 copies into England between 1525 and 1530. Church authorities confiscated and burned these copies and there are only parts of 3 editions remaining today.

People did not own Bibles in that day and it was only after the invention of the printing press that Bibles were available to the public. And that depended on who was in power on the political scene. How blessed we are of God to have Bibles today in our own hands that we can read and study.

The Geneva Bible (1560) was the Bible brought to America by the Pilgrims (who were seeking religious freedom). It was the popular Bible of the early Americans. It took almost 50 years for the King James Version to achieve a higher place than the popular Geneva Bible.

Are translations the Word of God? The King's speech before Parliament, when translated into French, Dutch, Italian, and Latin, is still the King's speech although it is not always translated with as good a style or as apt a phrase or exact a sense. There is no reason, therefore, why one should deny that a translation is the Word of God. (Is My Bible the Inspired Word of God? page 80)

The "Septuagint" is the Greek translation of the Old Testament. This translation became very popular among Jews in the first two centuries before Christ. Early Christians used it as their Bible. Yes, translations are the Word of God.

What if a translation differs from another? Realize that sometimes the meaning of a verse is difficult, two or more meanings of words or phrases may be possible in Greek.

Good translations should say the same thing in different styles. Good translations can be used as commentaries (bringing insights into a passage), communicating the same message in different words and styles. Why go to a commentary that states only a man's opinion? You can use Bible translations as your commentary and draw from hundreds or even thousands of the best scholars of the day.

Questions

1 What is the Bible that you rely on the most?

We want to hear from you!

We would love to hear your feedback on these lessons and how you use them in your own study or in discipling others. If you have any thoughts, stories, testimonies, comments, or questions we would love to hear them!

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Answer Key

7 What is the Bible that you rely on the most?

For me, I rely on the King James Bible that I grew up on, but I consult about 27 translations in my studies. They are a blessing that I use as my commentary. Is Jesus exalted, and does your heart burn within as He opens up to you the Scripture (Luke 24:32)?

“And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?”

- Luke 24:32