

CHAPTER THREE

VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this chapter you will be able to:

- C Write the Key Verse from memory.
- C Name the three languages in which the Bible was written.
- C Define the word "version."
- C Explain the difference between a translation and a paraphrase version of the Bible.

KEY VERSE:

The Lord gave the Word: great was the company of those that published it.
(Psalm 68:11)

INTRODUCTION

This chapter identifies the original languages in which the Bible was written and explains how the Scriptures have been translated into other languages. You will learn the difference between a translation and a paraphrase version of the Bible. Examples from various versions of the Bible are provided.

THREE LANGUAGES

The Bible was originally written in three languages. Most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew except for parts of the books of Daniel and Nehemiah which were written in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Greek.

None of the original manuscripts of the Bible are now in existence. Some good manuscripts exist which are copies of the original. Versions are translations of these copies of the original manuscripts. From early times men saw the necessity of translating the Bible so everyone could read it in their own language.

No translation is exact because no two languages are exactly alike. Some words used in the Bible do not even exist in different languages. For example, there is a tribe of Indians in Ecuador, South America, called the Auca Indians. When missionaries first contacted

them, these Indians did not know how to read or write. There were no words in their language for "writing" or "book."

The Auca Indians did have a custom of carving identification marks on their property. Since there were no words in their language for scriptures, writing, or book, when the Bible was translated for them it was called "God's Carving." This identified it as something belonging to God. This is just one example of the difficulties in translating the Bible into various languages.

TRANSLATIONS AND PARAPHRASES

There are many different versions of the Bible. The word "version" means a Bible written in a language different from those in which God's Word was originally written. There are two main types of versions of the Bible: Translations and paraphrases.

TRANSLATION:

A translation is an effort to express what the Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic words actually say. It gives as nearly as possible a literal word by word translation. Extra words are inserted only when it is necessary in order for the reader to understand the meaning.

PARAPHRASE:

A paraphrase does not attempt to translate word for word. It translates thought by thought. A paraphrase is a restatement of the meaning of a passage. Paraphrase versions are easier to read and understand because they are written in modern vocabulary and grammar, but they are not an exact translation of God's Word.

The "For Further Study" section of this chapter provides examples from several English versions of the Bible for you to compare. These illustrate the differences in translation and paraphrase versions.

SELECTING A STUDY BIBLE

For purposes of this course and Bible study in general, we recommend use of the King James version of the Bible. There are several reasons for this:

FIRST:

The King James Bible is very accurate and a good translation for serious study. A paraphrase version does not contain the exact word-by-word translation of Scriptures.

SECOND:

There are more study tools available for the King James version. There are a large number of concordances, dictionaries, and commentaries written for the King James text.

THIRD:

The King James version is available in more languages than any other version. Since Harvestime International Institute courses are used throughout the world, we selected this version of the Bible because it is available in many languages. It is important to have a Bible in your native tongue because you think and understand best in your own language.

If you do not have a King James version of the Bible write to the American Bible Society at P.O. Box 5601, Grand Central Station, New York, New York 10164, U.S.A. They have a complete listing of all the languages in which the King James version of the Bible is available. If you find the King James Version is not available in your language or have difficulty in obtaining a Bible, write to the United Bible Societies, Bible House, P.O. Box 755, Stuttgart 1, Germany. They maintain a list of "Scriptures of the World" which identifies all the languages in the world in which at least one book of the Bible has been published.

If you read English but have a limited vocabulary, you may be interested in obtaining the "Bible in Basic English." This is the entire Old and New Testament written in English using only a basic 1,000 word vocabulary. Write to Cambridge University Press, New York, New York, U.S.A. for further information.

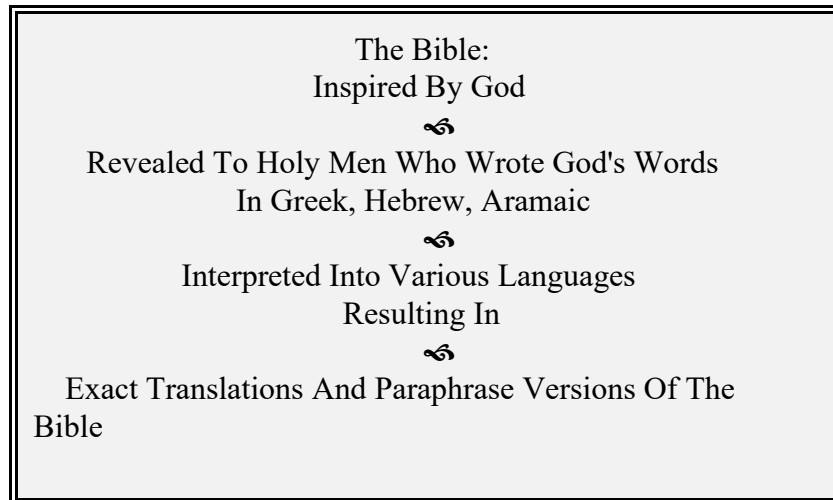
RED LETTER EDITIONS

Several versions of the Bible come in what are called "red letter editions." In red letter editions of the Bible the words of Jesus are printed in red. The rest of the text of the Bible is printed in black ink.

If a red letter edition of the King James version is available in your language, we suggest you obtain it. What Jesus taught is one of the major focuses of Harvestime International Institute training and a red-letter edition emphasizes His teachings.

A SUMMARY

The following chart summarizes how the various versions of the Bible developed:



FOR FURTHER STUDY

We have selected the text of John 3:16 to illustrate the difference between the different versions of the Bible. The versions listed are the most popular English versions of the Bible.

King James Version: For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

New King James Version: For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Revised Standard Version: For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

Living Bible: For God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son so that anyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

New American Standard Bible: For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

New English Bible: God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son, that everyone who has faith in Him may not die but have eternal life.

Amplified Version: For God so greatly loved and dearly prized the world that He (even) gave up His only-begotten (unique) Son, so that whoever believes in (trusts, clings to, relies on) Him shall not perish-come to destruction, be lost-but have eternal (everlasting) life.

Phillips: For God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him should not be lost, but should have eternal life.

Wurst: For in such a manner did God love the world, insomuch that His Son, the uniquely-begotten One, He gave, in order that everyone who places his trust in Him may not perish but may be having life eternal.

Moffat: For God loved the world so dearly that He gave up His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life instead of perishing.