

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE BIBLE

- Written over a period of 1600 years (1500 BC – AD 100)
- Written on three continents (Africa, Asia, Europe)
- Written in three different source languages (Hebrew, Aramaic & Greek)
- Written on various materials (stone, clay, papyrus, parchment, leather)

Thus, the Bible is the most documented collection of writings in the world, with tens of thousands of very ancient copies & partial copies which can be compared with one another, so that we can be relatively certain that our modern Bible accurately represents the original texts.

- Written by at least 40 different authors, of widely variant backgrounds (rich & poor; educated & not; popular & unpopular), using their own vocabularies & grammatical styles, in various emotional states
- Written about some of the most controversial topics known to humanity

Yet, there are no true contradictions indicated within the original text of the Bible.

THE LATIN VULGATE

- During the late 2nd Century, the Bishop of Rome pushed for the use of Latin within the official writings of the “western” churches, including in worship.
- Toward the end of the 4th Century, another Bishop of Rome commissioned Jerome to make an updated Latin version, which became the authorized version of the RCC for the next 1000 years.

VERNACULAR (LOCAL LANGUAGE) TRANSLATIONS

- In the late 12th Century, Peter Waldo produced a French language Bible to use in preaching. The Bishop of Rome banned such unauthorized translations.
- In the late 14th Century, John Wycliffe produced an English language Bible to promote study by everyone. During the half century after his death his work in this area was condemned by the Bishops of Rome and his remains were eventually dug up & burned.
- The invention of the printing press in the 15th Century made production of Bibles much easier.
- In the 16th Century, Protestantism generated many vernacular translations. English was no exception:
 - 1526 - Tyndale’s New Testament was printed; he was executed in 1536
 - 1535 - Coverdale’s Bible was printed, using Tyndale’s work
 - 1537 - Rogers printed his pseudonymous “Matthew’s” Bible, using Tyndale’s work
 - 1539 - Coverdale printed an oversized “Great Bible” for authorized use in English churches
 - 1560 - Protestant exiles from the Catholic persecutions of “Bloody Mary” printed the Geneva Bible
 - 1568 – The Bishop’s Bible became the 2nd Authorized Version of the Church of England
 - 1611 – The King James Bible became the 3rd Authorized Version of the Church of England
 - 1782 – Congress directed Robert Aitken to print American English Bibles for use in schools
 - From just after the Civil War until now there have been many English Bibles produced

Let's talk about English Language Bibles:

- **Paraphrases** are very loose “rewordings” of the Bible, usually by an individual – for example, Taylor’s The Living Bible and Peterson’s The Message. I really can’t recommend them at all. I even think they can be dangerous to understanding God’s Word.
- **Dynamic Equivalence Versions** are attempts to represent the original text’s concept in a more modern equivalent English wording – for example, the NIV and the NASB(95). I understand the sentiment, but recommend caution in using them, primarily because they can often obscure inspired plays on words or damage/destroy very precise grammatical points.
- **Formal Equivalence Translations** try to give the exact English equivalent of the original language text; in the best cases, right down to precise grammatical structure – for example, the KJV, the NASB(77) and the ESV. These are sometimes a little tougher to understand because of differences between the Bible culture & our own, as well as a loss in our own mastery of the finer points of the English language. However, by & large, you can be much more confident you’re seeing the Word of God in a form closest to the original when using these translations.

Bible Study via the Historical-Grammatical Approach

- **BE INTENTIONAL IN YOUR BIBLE STUDY (2 Timothy 2:15).**
- **KNOW THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT.**¹
 - To whom were the inspired words originally written?
 - By whom (the human author) was it written?
 - When was it written?
 - Where was it written?
 - Why was it written?
- **STRIVE TO UNDERSTAND THE INTENDED MEANING.**
 - Build your Bible vocabulary.
 - There are many tools available to help you learn the original language vocabulary.
 - Strong’s Concordance is built upon the KJV.
 - Young’s Concordance is built upon the NASB.
 - See how the same word (or related words) are used elsewhere.
 - Is it used by the same author in the same Bible book?
 - Is it used by the same author in another Bible book?
 - Is it used by another Bible author around the same time?
 - Is it used by non-Biblical authors around the same time?
 - Pay attention to grammatical structure.
 - How does it fit into the context of this particular Bible book?
 - How does it fit into the context of the Bible as a whole?
 - Is the author issuing a command, making a statement, asking a question or something else?
 - Is the author making use of some figure of speech?
 - Is the author quoting from elsewhere in the Bible?
 - Is the author quoting from outside the Bible?
 - **APPLY THE PASSAGE APPROPRIATELY.**
 - Don’t start with a preconceived, modern application in mind & then “cherry pick” Bible passages to support this.
 - Be very cautious about overlaying your modern mindset upon any Biblical passage.
 - Try your best to compare “apples to apples” & “oranges to oranges” when applying any Biblical passage to any modern situation.

¹ Internal Evidence & Primary Historical Resources (such as Josephus) can help with this.