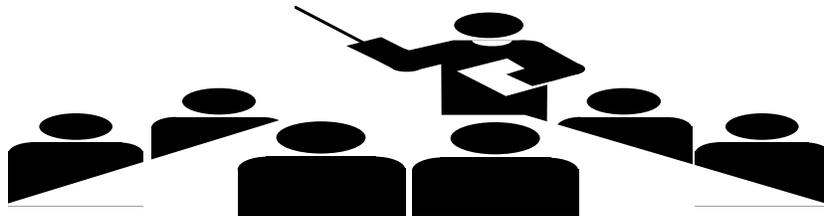


BIBLE STUDY SERIES



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Understanding the Bible

Understanding the Bible

Rev. Dr. Darryl B. Starnes, Sr., Instructor

MAIN TEXT: *The Holy Bible*

TEXTBOOK: *Getting Inside the Bible* by Herbert H. Lambert
The Bethany Press, 1976

ADDITIONAL SOURCE: *How to Study the Bible* by Olin T. Binkley
Convention Press, 1969

COURSE OUTLINE

I. Understanding how the Bible came to us

- A. Composition (Revelation, Inspiration, Illumination
(II Peter 1: 21; II Timothy 3: 16)
- B. Collection
 - 1. Old Testament (The Law, The Prophets, The Writings)
 - 2. New Testament (The Gospels, 23 letters or books)
- C. Selection
 - 1. Old Testament (Completed by 90AD Council of Jamnia Easter)
 - 2. New Testament (Completed by Athanasius Letter)
- D. Union – Early Christians combined both Testaments to form one book.

II. Understanding its translation to English (see chart)

III. Understanding what the Bible says about itself

- A. The scriptures provide hope. (Romans 15: 4)
- B. The scriptures make us wise unto salvation. (2 Timothy 3: 15)
- C. The scriptures are God-inspired. (2 Timothy 3: 16)
- D. The scriptures are useful for teaching, correction, etc. (2 Timothy 3: 16)
- E. The scriptures foster spiritual growth & faith development. (2 Timothy 3: 16 & I Peter 2:2)
- F. The scriptures protect us from error. (Mark 12: 24)
- G. The scriptures help us see our motivations. (Hebrews 4: 12)
- H. The scriptures are our source for truth & beliefs. (Acts 17: 11)
- I. The scriptures testify of Christ. (Luke 24: 27 & John 5: 39)

IV. Understanding the tools for Bible Study

- A. A good translation. (RSV, KJV, NASV, NIV, NEB, etc).
- B. A Concordance.
- C. A Bible dictionary – words and terminology.
- D. A commentary – difficult passages; historical information.
- E. A Bible atlas – geography.
- F. Bible handbooks.

V. Understanding the qualifications for Bible Study

- A. A Disciplined Mind. (2 Timothy 2: 15)
- B. Christian Fellowship. (Acts 2: 42)
- C. Guidance of the Holy Spirit. (I John 2: 27)
- D. An attitude of meekness and obedience. (James 1: 21-25)

VI. Understanding some approaches to the Study of the Bible

- A. Through the Bible
- B. Key words
- C. Outstanding Personalities
- D. Central themes
- E. Books of the Bible
- F. Golden chapters

VII. Understanding how to rightly divide the word of truth

- A. What do I need to know about this section? (back-ground)
- B. What does the passage say? (observation of contents-facts-information)
- C. What does the passage mean? (interpretation of its truth)
 - 1. View each passage in relation to other passages and to the Bible as a whole (text, context, greater context).
 - 2. View each passage in the light of what you know about how it came to be written and what to originally meant.
 - 3. Allow the passage to speak to us instead of trying to make it say what we want it to say.
 - 4. Be aware of our bias regarding the passage.
- D. What does the passage mean to me? (significance and illumination)
- E. What am I going to do in light of this truth? (application, reformation and transformation)
 - 1. Sins to be confessed and forsaken.
 - 2. Attitudes to be changed.
 - 3. Behavior to be modified.
 - 4. Ideas and beliefs to be reconsidered.

THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE

AMERICAN STANDARD VERSION
REVISED VERSION
DOUAY
KING JAMES
BISHOPS
GENEVA
GREAT
MATTHEWS
COVERDALE
TYNDALE
WYCLIFFE
VULGATE
ANCIENT VERSION
ANCIENT COPIES
MOST ANCIENT COPIES
ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS

In the above drawing is shown the gradual development of the English Bible as well as the foundations upon which each successive version rests. We are living in an age of printing. It is hard for us to realize that when the books of the Bible were originally written, there was no printing press to multiply the copies. Each copy must be made slowly and laboriously by hand. Under these conditions it was inevitable that many ancient books should be lost. This largely accounts for the fact that all the original manuscripts of the Bible have perished. The question arises, what have we then as the literary foundation of our Bible?

- (1) We have the most ancient copies made from the original manuscripts. We mention three principal ones.
 - (a) Codex Sinaiticus, originally a codex of the Greek Bible belonging to the fourth century. Purchased from the Soviet Republic of Russia in 1933 by Great Britain and is now in the British Museum.
 - (b) Codex Alexandrius, probably written in the fifth century, now in the British Museum. It contains the whole Greek Bible with the exception of forty lost leaves.
 - (c) Codex Vaticanus, in the Vatican library at Rome, originally contained the whole Bible but parts are lost. It was probably written about the 4th Century.

(2) **THE ANCIENT VERSIONS.**

- (a) The Septuagint Version. The Translation of the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, made at Alexandria about 285 B. C.
- (b) The Samaritan Pentateuch, not strictly speaking a version, but the Hebrew text perpetuated in Samaritan characters.
- (c) Peshito or Syriac. The whole Bible, date uncertain (first or second century?) apparently a translation into common language of certain portions of Syria.
- (d) The Vulgate. The entire Bible translated into Latin language by Jerome at Bethlehem. Complete about 400 A. D. For a thousand years this was the standard Bible in the Catholic Church.

(3) **ENGLISH VERSIONS**

During the dark ages very little Bible translation was attempted. There were a few minor translations made of portions of the Bible. The Word of God was locked up in the tongue which was unknown to be common people. 1320-1384. John Wycliffe, a great English scholar and Bible student, conceived the plan of translating the whole Bible into common English. He first translated the New Testament about 1380. Exactly how much more he did before his death is uncertain. His friends completed the work after his death. By consulting the drawing it will be seen that his work rests upon the Latin Vulgate.

William Tyndale was the next in order of the great English Translators. He was an early and courageous reformer and we determined that the English common people should have the Bible in their own tongue. Persecution made it impossible for him to do his work in England, so he crossed over to the Continent where his New Testament translation was issued in 1525 and the Pentateuch in 1530. By referring to the drawing it will be seen that this Version does not rest entirely upon the Latin Vulgate as did Wycliffe's. Tyndale was a ripe Greek scholar and had access to the Greek text of Erasmus and other helps which Wycliffe did not possess. Moreover he had a fine command of accurate English which left its impress upon all later versions. He was martyred before he completed the Old Testament but it is generally thought that he left the material which appeared later in the Matthew' Version.

Miles Coverdale. A friend of Tyndale, prepared and published a Bible dedicated to Henry the VIII in 1535. Coverdale's New Testament is largely based on Tyndale's. He explicitly disclaimed originality but used the Latin, and other versions as helps as well as Tyndale's Version.

Matthews' Bible. 1537. About the same time as the second edition of the Coverdale Bible another translation appeared. Its authorship is somewhat uncertain, but although it bears the name of Matthews it is generally credited to John Rogers a friend and companion of Tyndale. This scholar it is thought, had come into the possession of Tyndale's unpublished translation of the historical books of the Bible. It contains Tyndale's translations in their latest forms but also gives evidence of Coverdale's work.

The Great Bible. 1539. It will be noted by consulting the drawing, that this translation is based upon the Matthews, Coverdale and Tyndale Bibles. The first edition was prepared by Miles Coverdale and was ordered to be set up in every parish church. It was a large-sized volume chained to the reading desk in the churches, where the people flocked to hear the reading of the Word of God.

The Geneva Bible. 1560. This translation was made at Geneva BY SCHOLARS WHO FLED FROM England during the persecution by Queen Mary. It was a revision of the Great Bible collated with other English translations. A very scholarly version, handy in size and for many years a popular Bible in England.

The Bishop's Bible. 1568. Prepared under the direction of the Archbishop of Canterbury during the reign of Elizabeth. Mainly a revision of the Great Bible although somewhat dependent upon the Geneva Version, used chiefly by the clergy, not popular with the common people.

The Douay Bible. A Roman Catholic Version made from the Latin Vulgate. The New Testament published at Rheims, 1582. The Old Testament at Douay, 1609-10. It contains controversial notes. It is the generally accepted English Version of the Roman Church.

The King James or Authorized Version. 1611. The translation now generally used by the English-speaking people. Made by forty-seven scholars under the authorization of King James I of England.

The Bishop's Bible was the basis of the new version, but the Hebrew and Greek texts were studied and other English translations consulted with the view of obtaining the best results. It has held the first place throughout the English-speaking world for over three centuries.

The Revised Version. 1881-1884. Made by a company of English and American Scholars. It will be noted by glancing at the drawing that the Revised Version, while it was supposed to be a revision of the Authorized Version, has one distinct advantage over all its predecessors. It reaches and touches the most ancient copies of the original scriptures. Some of these ancient codices were not available at the time of the translation of the Authorized Version.

The American Standard Version. 1900-1901. This version incorporates into the text, the readings preferred by the American members of the Revision Committee of 1881-5.

QUOTATIONS:

Many Christians expect the world to respect a book they neglect.

A book which will lift men up to God must have come down from God.

Study the Bible to be wise, believe it to be safe, practice it to be holy.

Go to your Bible regularly, open it prayerfully, read it expectantly, and live it joyfully.

There are a number of splendid translations of the Bible. However, the most effective is its translation into the lives of people.

You can't understand all you read in the Bible, but you can obey what you do understand.

The Bible finds us where we are, and with our permission, will take us where we ought to go.

Many piano people would rather study the Bible, than practice what it teaches.

The three greatest sins of today are indifference to, neglect of and disrespect for the word of God.