

Our Bible

KJV

1611

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The Promise of His Word

By Evangelist Van Billingsley

“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” -- Isaiah 40:8

For one jot or one tittle to pass away for any period of time would be to fade

or wither. As the people of God we are promised the Word of God and communication and access to God. We'll examine what this preservation means for “Our Bible” in this article. Thank God for His unfailing Promises!

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In another article (*Where are Today's Fundamentalist?*) we dealt with Fundamentalism in our day. I suggested three controversial areas which distinguish most of today's true Fundamental Baptists from the modernists, liberals and new evangelicals around us. I also pointed out that most of those among us, in the crumbling ranks of Fundamentalism, are holding strong to one or maybe two of those issues while departing from the remainder. This fits well with our “Pick and choose” and “Do what works for you” society.

For those who did not read the previous article, or perhaps time has robbed you of the details, I'll summarize the point by saying that while our predecessors of a century ago stood strong against the liberal views of theistic evolution, denying the miracles and the

Virgin Birth, we face new challenges of worldliness in the church and in the lives of the people. Yes, many of the issues are the same, but there are new tactics of Satan and new methods to conform the believer to the world. The three areas I see as prominent for our generation are Bible translations, Music and dress standards.

At this time I have no plans to deal with each of these in articles, but the Lord has placed the issue of Bible translations on my heart, and He has led me to give a brief discussion on this issue of the King James versus modern translations.

In my freshman year of college I remember a fellow student complaining of a rumor that a certain Greek teacher may not really be KJV only. (Beware of rumors, especially among college students!) I'll never forget this student saying with conviction, and with a raised

voice, "My Grand Paw preached from the King James and it's good enough for me!" Well, that sounds good and it gets some shouts of "Amen" at the camp meetings, but let's face it; there's more to it than that! In fact, we're getting far enough along in time now that the youngsters can make that same statement about the NIV. We need to know and be able to teach others why the book we hold in our hands is the Word of God and why the modern perversions are just that, perverted translations of corrupt text.

I have been through college courses, sat through many lectures and special sermons and read books on this subject, all of which dealt with many aspects of this issue including higher criticism of manuscripts, methods of translation, and historical facts. Space will allow only a minor discussion of one aspect of this issue. It is not within our scope to write about "Codex this and Codex that..." and all the councils and manuscripts involved, nor to compare direct translation, thought translation and paraphrasing. A simple history of how God's Word came to us and scripture that applies concerning God's promise about His Word should be enough evidence to give us a firm stand on our English Bible we know as the Authorized King James Version.

"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." (Psalm 119:89)

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever." (Isaiah 40:8)

"But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." (1 Peter 1:25)

"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter 1:21)

I expect the reader to know of the various languages the books of the bible were originally written in and to understand that a translation is necessary to give us an English Bible. Most readers should also be aware that these texts were passed down from generation to generation through many centuries before the invention of the printing press and durable paper. This being the case, God's Word had to be hand written on various ancient types of paper or parchment. These copies would disappear over time from use, insects, weathering, etc. During a visit to Washington, DC a few years ago I viewed the original "Declaration of Independence" in the National Archives. Being just over two centuries old, produced with relatively modern paper and ink, and stored in a highly controlled building and case with strict enforcement of no flash photography this document has faded to the point of almost a blank sheet of paper. Considering the condition the scrolls and manuscripts of the Bible faced many centuries ago, we can understand why constant copying by scribes were required to keep just a few copies available to God's people and why

very ancient or original manuscripts do not exist.

We know that many times while these scribes were copying text, they would make mistakes. Often they would catch the mistake and correct it or discard that portion and recopy it. Other times mistakes would be discovered by readers later on who may mark them or set that copy aside from regular use. A common mistake would be to skip a section or a line or two. We've all done this while writing ourselves. With this understanding we know why there are variations in ancient manuscripts, many would have been to the point that those copies were never actually used.

Through the centuries this vast collection of surviving copies of scripture became known as "The Majority Text." One very popular and accepted text in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was known as the "Textus Receptus" or the "Received Text" which was a Greek New Testament compiled from the "Majority Text" family of Manuscripts. It was from this family of manuscripts that a large team of scholars commissioned by the king of England translated our English Bible named in honor of this king, King James. Upon completion, the translators wrote the following in the Epistle Dedicatory addressed to the king; "...that out of the Original Sacred Tongues, together with comparing of the labors, both in our own, and other foreign Languages, of many worthy men who

went before us, there should be one more exact Translation of the holy Scriptures into the English Tongue."

In the years since the King James Version was produced, many ancient manuscripts have been discovered in many obscure and tucked away places. A great many of these copies belong to the family of text known as the "Alexandrian Text." Since these manuscripts were put away and out of circulation, they obviously have outlived many generations of copies that were in use during that time making them older than the surviving manuscripts that were heavily used. Virtually all of the scholars who are behind the modern translations jump to the assumption that since these texts are the oldest copies now available, they must be the most accurate, but is this true?

These manuscripts from the "Alexandrian Text" are frequently shorter, missing words, lines and entire sections when compared to the multitude of manuscripts in the "Majority Text." Remember, the "Majority Text" is the family of manuscripts that have been passed down through the centuries and used by Christians throughout the history of the church. These modern scholars suggest that the "extra" portions not found in the older "Alexandrian Text" must have been added by scribes while copying and the older texts revealed the authentic portions. This asserts that Christians were left without the true Word of God for more than fifteen centuries,

and now can only hope to figure out piece by piece what might actually be the Word of God. There is no way that scribes would have “accidentally” made up lines and even paragraphs while copying, so these additions must be assumed intentional.

There is another scenario, which I think is the obvious truth. Why were the older manuscripts put away at a time when scripture copies were so scarce and required such hard labor to produce? Why were they not used for the purpose they were created? I find no scriptural foundation that God would have allowed His Word to pass away for centuries and use His divine direction to hide away the true copies so they could be repaired centuries later. I am convinced that these older manuscripts were set aside because of their errors and omissions, which are the natural errors one would make while copying by hand.

Between these two scenarios, not only is the latter the only one that makes sense, but it is the only one in keeping with the promises of God’s Word. If God’s promises to preserve His Word are true, then the unbroken line of manuscripts found in the “Majority Text” must be the

accurate and true text. To deny this is to deny the promises of God’s Word! The King James is the only English translation in use today which is based upon the true text, therefore it is the only English Bible today that is the Word of God. All others are perversions translated from corrupt texts.

As for other criticisms of our King James Bible, I can’t resist the old adage, “It’s not what they don’t understand that bothers them, it’s what they do understand.” The Old English style not only gives it its beauty and literary value, but it also gives it the technical accuracy often needed in understanding passages. The “Thees” and “Thous” and other Old English words follow much stricter rules than their Modern English counterparts. It’s for similar reasons our modern legal documents are worded much the same way using words like “Whereas” and “Hereunto.”

Not only is the King James Bible the only true English Bible available today, there would be no reason to replace it even if it could be done so from the proper text and correct translation methods. The KJV I hold in my hand is the Word of God!

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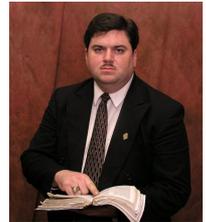
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