

The King James Bible

The King James Bible was the mainstay of English-speaking Christianity for nearly 400 years. It was published in 1611, the same time in history when Shakespeare was writing his plays. Still today it remains a popular and often-quoted version of the Bible.

What led to this translation?

Here's a brief account of English religious history leading up to King James:

- ◆ Henry VIII, a contemporary of Martin Luther, broke from the Roman Catholic Church over a marriage dispute. He wanted the Pope's approval for a divorce from Catherine of Spain, who only bore one surviving heir, a daughter (Mary). Rome refused to grant his request and excommunicated him. Henry VIII responded by having Parliament declare him to be the supreme head of the church. This was the beginning of the Church of England, which became a mixture of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.
- ◆ Edward VI, son of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour, became king and moved England closer to Protestantism. A Book of Common Prayer was required to be used by all clergy.
- ◆ Mary, daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine, became queen and tried to push England back toward Roman Catholicism. Leaders of rebellions and heretics were put to death, and Mary became known as "Bloody Mary."
- ◆ Elizabeth, daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, became queen and ruled for a long time (1558 to 1603). She wanted unity in England and wanted the church arranged to satisfy as many people as possible. She was officially called supreme governor, including over a national church. A government act of uniformity determined the worship life of the church, and articles of faith were issued which all priests and ministers were supposed to subscribe to.
- ◆ In spite of the development of the Church of England, there remained some Roman Catholics who resisted the Church of England. On the other hand, Puritanism grew as others wanted to "purify" the Church of England from any trace of Roman Catholicism. In addition, there were independent separatists who wanted to establish churches and worship completely outside of the Church of England.
- ◆ James I became king in 1604 and ruled until 1625. He continued with the Church of England as it had developed under Elizabeth. At the beginning of James' reign, the Puritans requested changes in the Church of England. They also requested a fresh translation of the Bible.

Here's a summary of English Bibles leading up to the King James Version:

- ◆ William Tyndale published his New Testament from Greek in 1526. He translated some of the Old Testament from the Hebrew and would probably have published a whole Bible if he had not been arrested and executed in the mid 1530's.
- ◆ Myles Coverdale used Latin and German translations as well as Tyndale's English translation to publish a complete English Bible in 1535.

Bible Translations

- ◆ A Bible called Matthew's Bible was published in 1537. It too contained much of the work of Tyndale in both the Old and New Testaments.
- ◆ The Geneva Bible was published in 1560. The New Testament was translated by William Whittingham, who was a Protestant exile in Geneva during the reign of Mary. This Bible contributed two features to the later King James Bible: verse divisions and the use of italics for explanatory words and phrases. The notes in this Bible had a strong Puritan edge to them.
- ◆ The Bishops' Bible was a translating project begun in the 1560's. It was based on an earlier Bible called the Great Bible from the late 1530's. Anglican bishops did the revising, and the Bible was intended to be used in public worship.
- ◆ So by 1600 England had a Bible which was primarily used in the home (Geneva Bible) and another which was used primarily in worship (Bishops' Bible). The two did not always agree. A fresh translation was called for from the original Greek and Hebrew which would use the best of the existing translations and which could be used both at church and in the home.

Here's how the King James Version came together:

- ◆ In response to the Puritans' request, King James assembled a team of 54 scholars. They were divided into teams who worked separately and then came together again. At least 15 rules were written up for the translators to observe. A committee of 12 then reviewed the whole translation, and 2 men did final preparations for the printing.
- ◆ The work started in 1607 and finished in 1611.
- ◆ It was later called the "Authorized Version," but there is no record that says the king officially approved it.
- ◆ It was printed in a Roman font which was conveniently readable by the public.
- ◆ It had a fine English style of words and phrases as well as a pleasing rhythm and cadence.
- ◆ It contains the books called the Apocrypha, just as Luther's Bible did in 1534.
- ◆ There were printings in 1611, 1613, 1617, with as many as 5,000 copies printed in each run. (How many have been printed since?!)
- ◆ The translators' notes to the reader, which preface the work, are interesting to read. They give a history of translations going back to the Septuagint; a history of the background to the 1611 Bible; reasons why the translators did what they did in their work; and an answer to any potential critics, including supporters of the Pope as well as Puritans.

Let's look at three sections from the original 1611 King James Bible.*

What do you observe in them?

* Sources for this Bible study include:

A History of Christianity by Kenneth Scott Latourette. Fourth printing in September 2000 by Prince Press.

The Holy Bible, 1611 Edition by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 2003.

The Holy Bible printed and published by Cambridge University Press.



THE FIRST BOOKE OF MOSES, called GENESIS.

CHAP. I.

1 The creation of Heauen and Earth, 3 of the light, 6 of the firmament, 9 of the earth separated from the waters, 11 and made fruitfull, 14 of the Sunne, Moone, and Starres, 20 of fish and fowle, 24 of beasts and cattell, 26 of Man in the Image of God. 29 Also the appointment of food.



N *the beginning God created the Heauen, and the Earth.

2 And the earth was without forme, and voyd, and darkenesse was vpon the face of the deepe: and the Spirit of God mooued vpon the face of the waters.

3 And God said, * Let there be light: and there was light.

4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God diuided † the light from the darknesse.

5 And God called the light, Day, and the darknesse he called Night: † and the euening and the morning were the first day.

6 ¶ And God said, * Let there be a † firmament in the midst of the waters: and let it diuide the waters from the waters.

7 And God made the firmament; and diuided the waters, which were vnder the firmament, from the waters, which were aboute the firmament: and it was so.

8 And God called the * firmament, Heauen: and the euening and the morning were the second day.

9 ¶ And God said, * Let the waters vnder the heauen be gathered together vnto one place, and let the dry land appeare: and it was so.

10 And God called the drie land, Earth, and the gathering together of the waters called hee, Seas: and God saw that it was good.

11 And God said, Let the Earth bring forth † grasse, the herbe yeelding seed, and the fruit tree, yeelding fruit after his kinde, whose seed is in it selfe, vpon the earth: and it was so.

12 And the earth brought forth grasse, and herbe yeelding seed after his kinde, and the tree yeelding fruit, whose seed was in it selfe, after his kinde: and God saw that it was good.

13 And the euening and the morning were the third day.

14 ¶ And God said, Let there bee * lights in the firmament of the heauen, to diuide † the day from the night: and let them be for signes and for seasons, and for dayes and yeeres.

15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heauen, to giue light vpon the earth: and it was so.

16 And God made two great lights: the greater light † to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the starres also.

17 And God set them in the firmament of the heauen, to giue light vpon the earth:

18 And to * rule ouer the day, and ouer

* Ier. 51. 16.

* Psal. 33. 7. and 136. 5. iob. 38. 8.

† Heb. tender grasse.

* Deut. 4. 19 psal. 136. 7. † Hebr. betwene the day and betwene the night.

† Hebr. for the rule of the day, &c.

* Ier. 31. 35

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The creation of man.

Genesis.

The first Sabbath

ouer the night, and to diuide the light from the darknesse: and God saw that it was good

19 And the euening and the morning were the fourth day.

20 And God said, * Let the waters bring forth abundantly the || mouing creature that hath + life, and foule that may flie about the earth in the + open firmament of heauen.

21 And God created great whales, and euery liuing creature that mouth, which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kinde, and euery winged foule after his kinde: and God saw that it was good.

22 And God blessed them, saying, * Be fruitfull, and multiply, and fill the waters in the Seas, and let foule multiply in the earth.

23 And the euening and the morning were the fift day.

24 ¶ And God said, Let the earth bring forth the liuing creature after his kinde, cattell, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kinde: and it was so.

25 And God made the beast of the earth after his kinde, and cattell after their kinde, and euery thing that creepeth vpon the earth, after his kinde: and God saw that it was good.

26 ¶ And God said, * Let vs make man in our Image, after our likenesse: and let them haue dominion ouer the fish of the sea, and ouer the foule of the aire, and ouer the cattell, and ouer all the earth, and ouer euery creeping thing that creepeth vpon the earth.

27 So God created man in his owne Image, in the Image of God created hee him; * male and female created hee them.

28 And God blessed them, and God said vnto them, * Be fruitfull, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and haue dominion ouer the fish of the sea, and ouer the foule of the aire, and ouer euery liuing thing that + mooueth vpon the earth.

29 ¶ And God said, Behold, I haue giuen you euery herbe + bearing seede, which is vpon the face of all the earth, and euery tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yeelding seed, * to you it shall be for meat:

30 And to euery beast of the earth, and to euery foule of the aire, and to euery thing that creepeth vpon the earth,

wherein there is + life, I haue giuen euery greene herbe for meat: and it was so.

31 And * God saw euery thing that hee had made: and behold, it was very good. And the euening and the morning were the sixth day.

CHAP. II.

1 The first Sabbath. 4 The maner of the creation. 8 The planting of the garden of Eden, 10 and the riuer thereof. 17 The tree of knowledge onely forbidden. 19. 20 The naming of the creatures. 21 The making of woman, and institution of Marriage.

AN Hus the heauens and the earth were finished, and all the hoste of them.

2 * And on the seuenth day God ended his worke, which hee had made: And he rested on the seuenth day from all his worke, which he had made.

3 And God blessed the seuenth day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his worke, which God + created and made.

4 ¶ These are the generations of the heauens, & of the earth, when they were created; in the day that the LORD God made the earth, and the heauens,

5 And euery plant of the field, before it was in the earth, and euery herbe of the field, before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to raine vpon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.

6 || But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

7 And the LORD God formed man + * of the dust of the ground, & breathed into his nostrils the breath of life: and * man became a liuing soule.

8 ¶ And the LORD God planted a garden Eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

9 And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow euery tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food: the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and euill.

10 And a riuer went out of Eden to water the garden, and from thence it was parted, and became into foure heads.

11 The name of the first is * Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Hauilah, where there is gold.

12 And

* 4. Esdr. 6. 47.
† Or, creeping.
† Heb. soule.
† Heb. face of the firmament of heauen.

* Chap. 8. 17. and 9. 1.

* Chap. 5. 1. and 9. 6.
1. corin. 11.
7. ephes. 4.
14. col. 3. 10.

* Matth. 19. 4. wisd. 2. 23.

* Chap. 9. 1.

† Heb. creepeth.

† Heb. seed.

* Chap. 9. 3.

Marriage

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† Heb. ea-
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† Heb. dy-
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* Eccus.
17. 5.
† Heb. as
before hem.

† Heb.
and so on.

† Or, the
man.

† Heb. cal-
led.

† Or, it
was not
yet from
the
ground.

† Heb. dust
of the ground.
† Heb. dust.
† Heb. dust.

† Heb. dust.
† Heb. dust.

1. Corin.
11. 8.
† Matt. 19.
6. mar. 10.
† 1. corin.
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* Eccus.
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* Eccus.
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* Eccus.
17. 5.



THE BOOKE OF Pfalmes.

PSALME I.

1 The happinesse of the godly. 4 The vnhappinesse of the vngodly.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsell of the vngodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornerfull.

2 But his delight is in the Law of the LORD, and in his Law doeth he meditate day and night.

3 And he shalbe like a tree planted by the riuers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season, his leafe also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth, shall prosper.

4 The vngodly are not so: but are like the chaffe, which the winde driueth away.

5 Therefore the vngodly shall not stand in the iudgement, nor sinners in the Congregation of the righteous.

6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the vngodly shall perish.

PSAL. II.

1 The kingdome of Christ. 10 Kings are exhorted to accept it.

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vaine thing?

2 The Kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsell together, against the LORD, and against his Anoynted, saying,

3 Let vs breake their bandes asunder, and cast away their cords from vs.

4 Hee that sitteth in the heauens shal laugh: the LORD shall haue them in derision.

5 Then shall hee speake vnto them in his wrath, and vexe them in his sore displeasure.

6 Yet haue I set my King vpon my holy hill of Sion.

7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said vnto mee, Thou art my sonne, this day haue I begotten thee.

8 Aske of me, and I shall giue thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the vtermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

9 Thou shalt breake them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potters vessell.

10 Bee wise now therefore, O yee Kings: be instructed ye Iudges of the earth.

11 Serue the LORD with feare, and reioyce with trembling.

12 Kisse the Sonne lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

PSAL. III.

The securitie of Gods protection.

A Psalme of Dauid when he fled from Absalom his sonne.

LORD, how are they increased that trouble mee? many are they that rise vp against me.

2 Many there bee which say of my soule, There is no helpe for him in God. Selah.

* Prou. 1. 26.

Or, trouble

Hebr. anointed.

Hebr. vpon Sion, the hill of my Holinesse.

* Acts. 13. 33. heb. 1. 5.

Or, for a decree.

* Psal. 72. 8.

* Apoc. 2. 27. and 19. 15.

* Prou. 16. 20.

isa. 30. 18.

iete. 17. 7.

rom. 9. 33. and 10. 11.

1. pet. 2. 6.

* 2. Sam. 15. 15.

3 But

47 And
sion of sinnes should be preached in his
Name, among all nations, beginning

55 And were continually in the Tem-
ple, praising and blessing God. Amen.



¶ The Gospel according to S. Iohn.

CHAP. I.

1 The Diuinitie, Humanitie, and Office of Ie-
sus Christ. 15 The testimonie of Iohn. 39
The calling of Andrew, Peter, &c.



IN the beginning was
the Word, & the Word
was with God, and
the Word was God.

2 * The same was
in the beginning with
God.

3 * All things were made by him,
and without him was not any thing
made that was made.

4 In him was life, and the life was
the light of men.

5 And the light shineth in darknesse,
and the darknesse comprehended it not.

6 ¶ * There was a man sent from
God, whose name was Iohn.

7 The same came for a witnesse, to
beare witnesse of the light, that all men
through him might beleue.

8 Hee was not that light, but *was*
sent to beare witnesse of that light.

9 That was the true light, which
lighteth euery man that commeth into
the world.

10 Hee was in the world, and *the
world was made by him, and the
world knew him not.

11 Hee came vnto his owne, and his
owne receiued him not.

12 But as many as receiued him, to
them gaue hee || power to become the
sonnes of God, *euē* to them that beleue
on his Name :

|| Or, the
right or pri-
uiledge.

13 Which were borne, not of blood,
nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will
of man, but of God.

14 * And the Word was made flesh,
and dwelt among vs (& we beheld his
glory, the glory as of the onely begotten
of the Father) full of grace and trueth.

* Mat. 1. 16

15 ¶ Iohn bare witnesse of him, and
cried, saying, This was he of whom I
spake, He that commeth after me, is pre-
ferred before me, for he was before me.

16 And of his *fulnesse haue all wee
receiued, and grace for grace.

* Col. 1. 1

17 For the Law was giuen by Mo-
ses, but grace and trueth came by Ie-
sus Christ.

18 * No man hath seene God at any
time : the onely begotten Sonne, which
is in the bosome of the Father, he hath
declared him.

* 1. Iohn
12. 1. tim
6. 16.

19 ¶ And this is the record of Iohn,
when the Iewes sent Priests and Le-
uites from Hierusalem, to aske him,
Who art thou ?

20 And he confessed, and denied not:
but confessed, I am not the Christ.

21 And