

Getting to Know Your Bible

Lesson 5

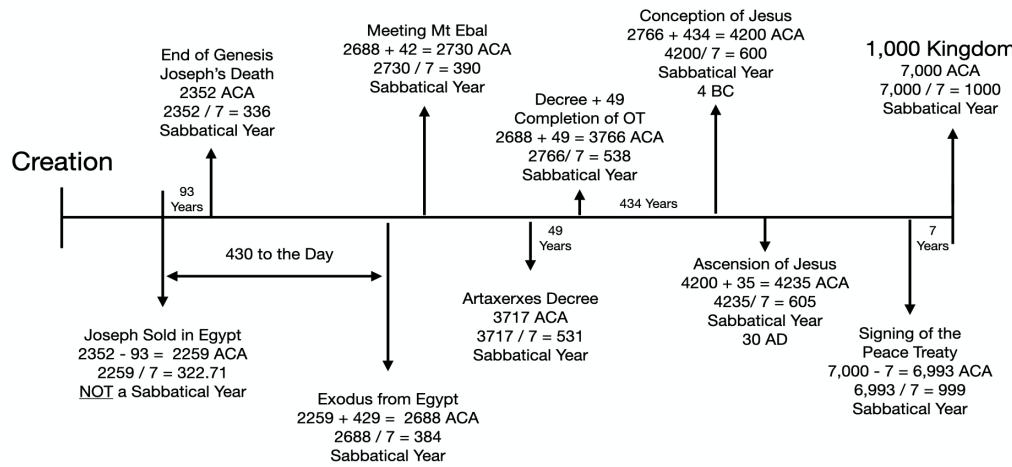
The Development and Protection of the New Testament

The Markings in the Bible

Quick Review of Lesson 4

17. Every seventh year is to be a Sabbatical Year of rest for the physical land of the Promised Land, the forgiveness of debts, and the hearing of the Law read by the priests to everyone living in the Promised Land.
18. Slavery of any kind was strictly forbidden in the Promised Land, among Israel and all the people of Israel.
19. A poor person could sell his property gifted to his family by Joshua when the Promised Land was acquired for the purchasers to provide for the poor man's family; he was never to be treated as a slave. Instead, he was to be treated as a hired hand. However, no matter when the land was sold, in the year of Jubilee, the land reverts debt-free to the original owner's family every fifty years. The longest the contract could be is forty-nine years. If the land is purchased in the forty-ninth year, no matter what was paid for the land, it will revert to the original owner in the fiftieth year. If it was sold multiple times to different purchasers, in the fiftieth year, the year of Jubilee, it returned to the original owner's family.
20. Even though the LORD did not give the Sabbatical Year instruction to Israel until the first year of the Exodus, the LORD held to and will continue to hold to the Sabbatical Year of rest and freedom from the beginning of creation until the coming of the New Jerusalem to earth after the LORD returns to reign on earth for 1,000 years.

SABBATICAL YEARS



21. Within 25 years after the completion of the book of Malachi, the entire Hebrew Bible was translated into Aramaic by the priests of Israel. By 250 BC, the priests had translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek. At the time of Jesus' life on earth, the Aramaic translation had been available to the Jews for about 380 years, and the Greek translation had been available for about 250 years. Jesus used both along with the original Hebrew.

NOW FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

When we come to the NEW TESTAMENT – the protectors of the Scripture will change to the Apostles and leaders of the Church who were disciples and pastors trained by the Apostles.

HERE IS A VERY SHORT – TO THE POINT - SYNOPSIS

According to the Bible and Church History records:

1. Acts 11 tells us that the people of the Church in Israel began to scatter because of Stephen's persecution. These people made their way to Antioch (Acts 11). It was from Antioch that the first missionary journeys of Paul were sent to the Gentile world (Acts 13). But in Acts 15, the whole of the Apostles, still alive, and all the pastors, met in the Jerusalem Church where James, the half-brother of Jesus, was the pastor. It was AD 50, and it was called the first council of the Church. In the meeting,

the decision was made for the requirements of the Gentiles to become members of the Church. James wrote a letter with the decision. The letter was delivered to the Antioch Church by Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15). The Church's headquarters was located in Jerusalem, and the earliest of the New Testament books were held there. (James and Galatians – AD 49; 1st & 2nd Thessalonians – AD 50-51; 1st Corinthians AD 54; 2nd Corinthians and Romans – AD 55)

2. However, after AD 55, Paul visited Jerusalem to report to James concerning the missionary efforts blessed by the Church in Antioch. Paul was arrested in the Temple. Because he was a Roman citizen, he appealed to stand before Caesar in Rome, where he was ultimately sent (Acts 21–27). After Paul's arrest, it is clear that the Church in Antioch was the new place for official meetings. James never left Jerusalem. He remained there in Jerusalem as pastor until he died in AD 62. James had remained extremely Jewish in his faith even though he was a devout believer in his half-brother, Jesus. He was well respected by all the seven sects of Judaism (Essenes, Galileans, Hemerobaptists, Masbotheans, Samaritans, Sadducees, and Pharisees). Nevertheless, the Church in Israel had scattered, and the Antioch Church had become the unofficial headquarters of the whole Church as Apostles began to die as martyrs. The rest of the New Testament original writings ended up at Antioch – but with one catch. All of the New Testament books were copied by each congregation as the booklets were shared from Church to Church. It soon came to be that the original manuscripts did not need to be circulated. Nevertheless, they were held in Antioch. Lest we forget, the last book of the New Testament, the Revelation, was sent to seven churches. The original would have been copied in each location. John, the sole surviving Apostle, wrote the Revelation. According to Church history, he had appointed all the pastors in each of the seven Churches mentioned in the Revelation.
3. Then, in AD 380, the official head Church was relocated to Rome. The leaders of the Church decided at a conference that one Church needed to be the location of all theological questions. The Church in the city of Rome was selected. All manuscripts were sent there for use and protection. The great library of the Church in Rome was established.
4. However, the oldest New Testament fragments of all the books held in our museums date to AD 100, about four years after John wrote the Revelation. The Codex Sinaiticus is the only complete copy in our possession, and it dates from AD 330 – 350. The Apostles and the pastors protected the New Testament books, which were ultimately used to translate into our English language, as well as other languages.

We will have to leave it at that for now. It would take us weeks to tell just the tip of the iceberg of that story! But, with all that said, the Jewish priests protected the OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS; the Church ministers protected the NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS. No other books in the history of the world have been held so closely and so well protected through the ages.

As we move forward to study the MARKINGS IN THE BIBLE, we will be looking at the New American Standard Bible as an example. Permission has been granted by the LOCKMAN FOUNDATION to reprint the material from the NASB.

When you purchase a new Bible for your use, you need to follow the steps we are about to review to know how to use your new Bible, how the committee put it together, and what all the unique markings in the text mean; you do that by reading the material about the version or translation found in the front of your Bible.

The **New American Standard Bible** (NASB or NASV) provides a preface, principles of translation, and an explanation of the general format. The **King James Version** (KJV) offers a letter to King James of England. The **New International Version** (NIV) provides a translator's preface. The **Amplified Bible** (AMP) offers a preface, publisher's forward, and an explanation of arbitrary punctuations. Finally, the **English Standard Version** (ESV) offers a preface and an explanation of features included in the edition. From those five examples, each version titles the forward material differently. Still, within the forward material, all the same,

basic information provided will greatly help you get to know your Bible. Because we have permission to use the NASB, we will use it as our example of how to get to know your Bible, and we will start with the Preface to the New American Standard Bible. The Preface is simply the history behind the creation of the NASB. Regardless of which version or translation you use, you need to know its history. We will read the Preface without stopping for comments or examples until the end.

Preface

TO THE NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE

In the history of English Bible translations, the King James Version is the most prestigious. This time-honored version of 1611, itself a revision of the Bishops' Bible of 1568, became the basis for the English Revised Version appearing in 1881 (New Testament) and 1885 (Old Testament). The American counterpart of this last work was published in 1901 as the American Standard Version. The ASV, a product of both British and American scholarship, has been highly regarded for its scholarship and accuracy. Recognizing the values of the American Standard Version, the Lockman Foundation felt an urgency to preserve these and other lasting values of the ASV by incorporating recent discoveries of Hebrew and Greek textual sources and by rendering it into more current English. Therefore, in 1959 a new translation project was launched, based on the time-honored principles of translation of the ASV and KJV. The result is the New American Standard Bible.

Translation work for the NASB was begun in 1959. In the preparation of this work numerous other translations have been consulted along with the linguistic tools and literature of biblical scholarship. Decisions about English renderings were made by consensus of a team composed of educators and pastors. Subsequently, review and evaluation by other Hebrew and Greek scholars outside the Editorial Board were sought and carefully considered.

The Editorial Board has continued to function since publication of the complete Bible in 1971. This edition of the NASB represents revisions and refinements recommended over the last several years as well as thorough research based on modern English usage.

What is the value of this Preface? It tells us that the NASB was not an original translation of the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Instead, it is a revision of previous revisions of English Bibles. We also discovered that the NASB committee is still working to refine the text in light of "modern English usage," which means attention to words used in previous revisions that no longer have the correct definitions and need to be replaced with modern words that reflect the meaning in the original text.

Moving now to the forward section called "**Principles of Translation**," we will discover many important reasons why the NASB says what it says. As stated above, one of the major values of the preface was to tell us about the refinement in "modern English usage." The "**Principles of Translation**" begins with that same value and unpacks it for us.

Principles of Translation

MODERN ENGLISH USAGE: The attempt has been made to render the grammar and terminology in contemporary English. When it was felt that the word-for-word literalness was unacceptable to the modern reader, a change was made in the direction of a more current English idiom. In the instances where this has been done, the more literal rendering has been indicated in the notes. There are a few exceptions to this procedure. In particular, frequently "And" is not translated at the beginning of sentences because of differences in style between ancient and modern writing. Punctuation is a relatively modern invention, and ancient writers often linked most of their sentences with "and" or other connectives. Also, the Hebrew idiom "answered and said" is sometimes reduced

to "answered" or "said" as demanded by the context. For current English the idiom "it came about that" has not been translated in the New Testament except when a major transition is needed.

What do we discover from the explanation about the Modern English Usage?

1. The committee was keen on this version being correct in contemporary English "grammar and terminology." The grammar had to be easily understood by today's reader. The "terminology" or word choices had to be modern words that reflected the original intent of the storylines in the text.
2. The committee attempted to create a "word-for-word" version of the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. This does not mean that the words in each sentence are in the same order as found in the original three languages. Placing the English words in the exact order is impossible. Here is the reason why. In English, the action verb follows the noun (Jesus wept). But in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, the action verb precedes the noun (Wept Jesus).
3. In some cases, a "word-for-word" version would not translate correctly into English; therefore, the committee used a current English idiom instead, not the "word-for-word" words. An "idiom" is a phrase whose meaning is not obvious from looking at the individual words. In addition, idioms are often specific to a region or population of people, a small portion of the whole population of English-speaking people. Thus, we have the reason the preface of the NASB tells us that a British committee revised the King James for the English Revised Version, and an American committee was used for the American Standard Version. Why? Britain and America both speak English, but words and phrases in both countries often have different meanings. For example, in our NASB, Galatians 5:4 says, *"You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace."* However, a literal translation of the same verse from Greek says, *"You are severed from Christ whoever in the Law are being justified from grace you have fallen away."* Thus, the idiom "fallen from grace" (which means to lose one's reputation, status, or rank) was used in the English version instead of the words *"from grace you have fallen away."* This phrase has caused great consternation in the faith because people have taken it to mean that a person can lose their salvation. The idiom does not work well here. Why? The word "law" in the sentence should give you a clue that causes you to back up and say, "Wait a minute! Who is Paul speaking to? What is he saying? What is he not saying?" In verses 2-3, Paul says, *"Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.³ And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law."* In verses 2 – 3, Paul speaks to the Christians in Galatia, who have been circumcised and are trusting in that circumcision for salvation. Who was circumcised in that day? Jews, not Gentiles. So, Paul is speaking to Jewish believers, trying to keep the Law. In this case, it will be the religious laws found in Leviticus, not the civil laws found in the same book. The death of Christ ended the religious laws of Leviticus, which pertained to sacrifices for sin. It did not end the civil laws that pertained to moral life. Paul says to the Jews that if they want to keep the religious laws and put their trust there, then the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ cannot help them. Therefore, those people have fallen far away from the grace of Christ because they are holding to the things Christ came to fulfill, the grace that leads to salvation apart from the fulfilled religious Law. It does not mean they have lost their salvation. It means they never had salvation.
4. Finally, the committee shortened some Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek idioms to single words or left them out completely to make the English grammar and terminology fit English understanding. In addition, this change eliminated repetitive words in the text where periods and question marks could suffice.

We must go on to learn about alternative readings and other committee formatting, but that will have to wait for our next lesson in Getting to Know Your Bible.