

Lesson #1

WHICH BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD?



Introduction

“Pastor, why are they changing God’s Word?” Have you heard this question? Have you asked it as you’ve heard about the new 2011 revision of the NIV Bible? Have you wondered it as you’ve seen more new translations hit the shelves at your local bookstore than

you can keep track of? How can all these translations be so different and yet be God’s Word? Can we even be sure we know what God’s Word says anymore?

On the other hand, it has also been stated: The KJV is the Word of God! Can a translation claim to be God’s Word? Is one translation God’s Word to the exclusion of others? Do you have to be able to read Greek or Hebrew or Aramaic to be able to know what God’s Word really says?

Activity

Let’s try something: Form groups of four people. Have one person in the group write a sentence on a blank piece of paper. Now read what you have written to someone else in your group. Now have someone else in your group write down what you said on the blank below:

Now have another person in your group tear up the piece of paper on which your original sentence had been written down.

Evaluate as a group: Do you still have the word of the original person? Did the person who heard the sentence read to them hear the word of the person who made up the original sentence? Is the word written on the blank on this sheet still the word of the original person even though the original was destroyed?

Study

This little exercise helps us to wrestle with some of the issues involved when we ask the question, “What is the Word of God?”

We believe that the Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God. That means that we believe that the words themselves, not just general ideas are the true Word of God. Look up these passages and explain why we would say this.

2 Timothy 3:16 -

2 Peter 1:20-21 -

John 10:35 -

Galatians 3:16 -

This leads us to the teaching we call the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration. It means we have a very high regard for the Scriptures—every word. It is right and proper that we treat the Bible with respect, as the very Word of God. The question is, “Which Bible?”

If only the original words and syllables which the prophets, psalmists, kings, and apostles wrote comprise the Bible, then we are in trouble. We have none of these originals. They are all either lost or destroyed. We have only copies of the originals.

Consider even this account of Scripture which tells us what happened to some of the “Bible” which Jeremiah had written at the Lord’s command. What was destroyed? What was not?

Jeremiah 36:20-32

Still, look at what Scripture says about God’s Word:

Isaiah 40:8 (1 Peter 1:23-25) -

Psalms 119:89 -

Matthew 24:35 -

So are the words and syllables on the paper the Word of God? What is it that lasts forever?



If this were not true, then we could not translate the Bible and everyone would have to learn Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek in order to hear the Word of God so that they could believe (Romans 10:17). But consider this passage from Scripture:

Acts 2:4-11

What was being spoken by the disciples? (See v. 11) With what word forms and grammar was it being spoken? Were the people hearing God's Word?



Carrying out the Great Commission (Mt 28:19, Mark 16:15) would be impossible if the letters and syllables of the Greek or Hebrew or Aramaic were essentially the Word of God. Why?

Yet, the language and the letters and characters of the original Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic are extremely important. (Note that we have already seen that even the very words and forms were important to Jesus and Paul as they conveyed Scripture truth.) Consider also the following passages. What do they say about the forms and words of the original Scriptures?

Matthew 5:18 -

Deuteronomy 4:2 (12:32) -

Revelation 22:18 -

Therefore, we may say that a translation is *God's Word* to the degree that it carefully reproduces the meaning of the original words. Yet this is never on a par with the original languages (due to the difficulty of translating and carrying a meaning into another language to the same degree as it is conveyed in the original). This will be the topic of our next study.

For further study: You may want to do further study on your own regarding the topics that are taken up in these four lessons. We suggest that you look up the Web site of the Translation Evaluation Committee (TEC) at the following address: www.wels.net/translation. There are links to articles and comparisons that can give you much more information located on this page.