



By Dr. Richard Youngblood

Question: Why are some of the verses in the King James Bible left out of the newer translations of the Bible?

The history of the Bible through more than 3000 years is an amazing story. It begins with some 40 men whom God called to be his prophets and write down his message under the supervision of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21). The only writing material available at the time was refined animal skins, and these scrolls deteriorated with handling over time. Since the printing press was not invented until centuries after the last book of the Bible had been completed, much needed copies of these ancient manuscripts had to be made by hand.

As they made these copies, ancient scribes gave great attention to detail in order to assure that their copies were as accurate as possible. They even counted the words and letters in each book and manuscript. Unfortunately, examination of the thousands of manuscripts now available reveals that they made mistakes like skipping over words, writing some lines twice or sometimes erroneously copying things like marginal notes into the text. By the time scholars had begun to translate these Hebrew and Greek books into other languages like English, a majority of the most ancient manuscripts had been lost or hidden away. Recognizing the need to get back to the most ancient manuscripts possible in order to determine an accurate wording of the Bible, archeologists and scholars began searching for scrolls where the biblical writers had lived.

Perhaps the best known translation is the King James Bible which was completed in 1611 by forty-eight of the greatest biblical scholars in the English speaking world at that time. For nearly 400 years the KJV was the best-selling and most beloved Bible in the English language. However, during those 400 years, the way we speak and write English changed; and the meaning of many words changed drastically, making the KJV difficult to understand by younger generations that did not grow up with it. In the 1970's the New King James Version updated these words to make it easier to read. However, this did not solve the problem of an inaccurate text.

In 1611, the KJV translators had available to them only about twenty-five manuscripts. One of these dated from the sixth century, but most of them dated from the 10th to 12th Centuries. In the late 1800's and early 1900's an explosion of discoveries of ancient biblical manuscripts began, especially the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls between 1947 and 1956. We now have available more than 5000 full and partial biblical manuscripts with one fragment dating about 100 years after the original autograph copies had been completed. Four of these manuscripts are full length Bibles dating from the third to fifth centuries. The KJV translators did not have any of these important materials.

By studying these earlier manuscripts, scholars have a clearer knowledge of the original wording of the books of the Bible. This has meant that we now know that some of the words found in the KJV were not part of the Bible from the beginning. With the massive number of ancient manuscripts now available, scholars assure us that only a very small percentage of the words of our Bible remains in doubt; and the majority of these passages are of very little if any significance to the eternal message of the Bible. The KJV translators did an excellent job with what materials they had, but we have reason to have greater confidence in the text available today. This is why some verses that are in the King James Version and New King James Version are left out of the newer translations of the Bible.

[Send questions or comments to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12th, Murray, KY 42071 or phone 270-753-1881. This article is reproduced on the web: www.nchrist.org] 2010/11/12