

"Contend Earnestly For the Faith" Part 16: *The Development of the New Testament Canon (cont.)*

Tuesday Night Bible Study, August 15, 2006

"...contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." – Jude 3

--RECAP SELECT POINTS FROM PART 15:

--collection and circulation of the New Testament books among the first generation church:

--when a church received an apostolic writing, they would make a copy for their collection of New Testament Scripture (along side the Old Testament) that was read on a regular basis and then send the original on to other churches for them to make a copy; through this process, the body of New Testament Scripture at each church gradually expanded.

--by the end of the first century all 27 New Testament books had been written and circulated. Over the next 300 years the church went through the process of developing a formal list – the "canon" – of the 27 books of the New Testament.

--c. 150 AD: by this time all 27 books of the New Testament (except 3 John) were referenced in the writings of the early church fathers

*--Not only did the early Fathers cite all twenty-seven books of the New Testament, they also quoted virtually all of the verses in all of these twenty-seven books. **Five Fathers alone from Irenaeus to Eusebius possess almost 36,000 quotations from the New Testament.** Sir David Dalrymple claimed to have found among the quotations of the second and third centuries "the entire New Testament, except eleven verses." **We know of no other book from the ancient world which exists en toto by way of thousands of individual and selected quotations of it.** It is an amazing fact that the New Testament could be reconstructed simply from quotations made within two hundred years of its composition. (From God To Us, pg. 157)*

--c. 200 AD: the *Old Latin* translation of the ancient Western world

--contained all books of the Bible except Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, which were likely written to churches in the East and therefore took longer to be recognized by the West (From God To Us, pg 110)

--c. 400 AD: the *Old Syriac* translation of the ancient Eastern world

--contained all books of the Bible except 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Revelation, (opposite of books excluded from the Old Latin translation), which were written to churches in the West and therefore took longer to be recognized by the East

--several church councils of the early church listed all 27 books of the New Testament in the official canon of Scripture...

--393 AD: council of Hippo

--397 AD council of Carthage 1

--419 AD: council of Carthage 2

--LINEAGE OF ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS:

--c. 150 AD: Old Latin translation

--details listed in preceding section

-- 400: Latin Vulgate by St. Jerome

--Jerome was commissioned by the Roman Catholic Church to revise the Old Latin translation

--Jerome's revision, the *Latin Vulgate*, served as the dominant translation used by the Roman Catholic church over the next 1500 years

--during the middle ages the Roman Catholic Church added the Apocrypha to Jerome's translation

-- 1380: first English translation by John Wycliffe

--Wycliffe was called "the Morning Star of the Reformation", as he rebelled against the Roman Catholic churches control of the Scriptures in keeping them bound to the Latin language. Wycliffe blazed the first trail for people in England to read the Scriptures in their common language.

-- 1454: Gutenberg press invented

- 1526: English translation of William Tyndale
 - Tyndale provided the first English translation based on original Greek manuscripts rather than the Latin Vulgate
 - the Roman Catholic church eventually charged Tyndale with heresy for translating the Bible into English and executed him by burning him at the stake.
- 1609: Roman Catholic Rheims-Douay English Bible
 - the Catholic church reluctantly translated the Latin Vulgate into English in order to compete with Tyndale's translation that was used by Protestants
- 1611: King James Translation
 - revision of Tyndale's translation
- 1898: English Revised Bible
 - revision of the King James version
- 1952: Revised Standard Version
 - English translation based on expanded group of Greek manuscripts
- 1970: Catholic "New American Bible"
 - first Catholic English Bible translated from Greek and Hebrew manuscripts rather than the Latin Vulgate
 - in 1943 Pope Pius XII published an encyclical stating that Catholic translations of the Bible could be based on Hebrew and Greek manuscripts rather than being based only on the Latin Vulgate only

--the latest Protestant translations (NIV, NASB, NKJV, etc) are all based on the latest manuscript discoveries and various schools of thought in how to best translate the original Greek into English

--after the first translation of the Bible into English, improved translations were continually developed for various reasons:

- newly discovered Greek manuscripts and organization of existing Greek manuscripts
- improved scholarship of the Greek and Hebrew languages – both of which are very complicated! (Tyndale performed his translation work shortly after the first Hebrew & Greek grammar and lexicon books were available)
- improved working conditions and coordination among scholars (contemporary translations are produced by large teams of scholars working in ideal conditions using modern technology, opposed to the initial translation work... for example, Tyndale worked alone under candle light in hiding while fearing for his life as the Roman Catholic Church sought to kill him because of his translation of the Bible into English)
- changes in the English language; for example, when the King James Bible was first published, it sounded contemporary but today it sounds outdated
- different types of translations for different reading levels: word-for-word translations v. dynamic equivalence translations

--in essence, each succeeding generation of scholars only added inconsequential adjustments and further confirmation to the authenticity of the 66 books of the Bible

--after evaluating all 5,664 Greek New Testament manuscripts available today, only 40 out of the 20,000 lines of the New Testament are in question; thus the New Testament is 99.8% pure with no doctrinal issues depending on the remaining 0.2%

--main passages in question:

- Mark 16:9-20: Mark's account of the Great Commission (even if this passage was not in the original, the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20 is undisputed)
- John 7:53-8:11: the account of the Pharisees that brought an adulterous woman to Christ when Christ replied, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."
- 1 John 5:7: "For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one." (the Trinity is repeatedly affirmed throughout the New Testament)

--the Old Testament is even more pure with the additional confirmation of meticulous Jewish scribes

--rather than making significant changes to the text of the Bible, scholars throughout the ages significantly changed the interpretation of the Bible, and much of this change resulted from people walking in the flesh rather than the Holy Spirit

--a classic example would be the changes made by the Roman Catholic church in order to control people; it has been said that the Roman Catholic Church emerged as *the ghost of the Roman empire in the garb of Christianity*

--the battle cry of the Protestant Reformation was *sola Scriptura* – "the Scripture Alone". They sought to strip away all the unbiblical tradition that the Roman Catholic church added to the Bible. Translating the Bible into common languages so everyone could read it was a strategic step.

–THE TRANSLATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

--even if the entire world throughout all history only spoke 1 language (thus eliminating the need for the translation of the Bible), everyone would miss the true meaning of the Bible without the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit makes perfect the imperfect process of translating the Bible into new languages!

-1 Corinthians 1:18-2:12: "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ... 21 **For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.** 22 For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ... 30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God — and righteousness and sanctification and redemption — 31 that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD." 2:1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. 4 **And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.** 6 ... But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." 10 But **God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.** For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ... 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God."

--God could have bypassed language all together and somehow revealed His Word to the entire world instantaneously rather than working through the human process of translating and slowly spreading His Word throughout millenia... **but this human process is leading to a day when God will indeed bypass language!**

--Revelation 1:7-8: "**Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him,** even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

--Jesus Christ is the essence of the Word...

--Jesus summarized the message of Scripture in three in three concepts: "Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And you are witnesses of these things. 49 Behold, I send the Promise of My Father [the Holy Spirit] upon you..." (Luke 24:46-49)

--we are saved by Christ to follow Christ and become more like Christ

--remission of sins through Jesus Christ

--repentance... turning to follow Jesus Christ

--the Holy Spirit through whom we have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and become more like Jesus Christ

--parallel between stages of Christ's ministry and the central themes of Scripture:

--remission of sins during His ministry on earth

--the Holy Spirit... Christ returned to heaven to send the Holy Spirit to us

--repentance... Christ is on His way back... what does He want us to do? What will He see us doing when He returns... Jesus spoke from heaven, "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." (Revelation 22:12-13)