

What Makes Bible Study Possible.

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Ancient Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic were all written with no capitalization, no word spacing, no punctuation, no chapters and Hebrew is written from right to left and had no vowels. [Mounce]

John 1:1-5 NKJV - "1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."

The original Greek

ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδ' ἕξ ὃ ἐγένετο ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν

What the English translation would look like in ancient Greek style

inthebeginningwasthewordandthewordwaswithgodandthewordwasgodhewaswithgodinthebeginningthroughhimallthingsweremadewithouthimnothingwasmadethathasbeenmadeinhimwaslifeandthatlifewasthelightofmenthelightshinesint hedarknessbutthedarknesshasnotunderstoodit
(John 1:1-5)

What the English translation would look like in ancient Hebrew style

grhtgnnnngbhtndghtwswhdgswdrwhtdndghthwswdrwhtdndrwhtswgnnnngbhtn
mfthglhtswfilthtdnfilswmhndmnbshtthtdmswgnhtnmhthtwdmrwgnhtllmhh
tdtsrdntnshssnkrdhttbssnkrdhtnsnhsthglttn

The process of translating Scripture into English and adding word spacing, punctuation and capitalization was a giant step in making the Bible accessible to the everyday person.

- William Tyndale was a Biblical scholar and linguist. He made the first English translation from the original Greek & Hebrew in the early 1500's. He was subsequently convicted of heresy and executed because of his translation of the Bible to English.

- Prior to his death he smuggled 1800 copies of his translation into England and for the first time the English people were able to read and hear the Scriptures in their own language.
- His translation was very heavily relied upon by the 47 scholars that subsequently produced the King James Bible. Approximately 70-85% of their work is based on Tyndale's translation.
- Tyndale's execution sounds extreme, but there was a genuine fear that if the common people, who were largely uneducated, could readily read Scripture they would not be able to understand what they read and all sorts of misinterpretations and heresies would result. To own or read in public such translations was considered heresy punishable by death. (Foxe and Tyndale)
- Chapters were inserted in 1209 by the Bishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton.
- The Old Testament was divided into verses by a Jewish rabbi by the name of Nathan in A.D. 1448 ["Who divided..."]
- NT Verse numbers were inserted in 1551 by Robert Stephanus Estienne, a printer. "According to his son, the verse divisions that his father created do not do service to the sense of the text. Stephanus did not use any consistent method. While riding horseback from Paris to Lyons, he versified the entire New Testament within Langton's chapter divisions." [Who is...].
- James Strong was an American academic, biblical scholar, lexicographer, Methodist theologian and professor. James Strong is best known for establishing word numbers in 1890. He identified each unique Greek or Hebrew word and assigned a number to it. This made it possible to easily find related Scripture passages across the entire Bible. [Strong]
- Section Descriptions vary from translation to translation

All of these additions to the Bible were done simply to make study of the Scriptures easier.

- They were inserted without concern for grammatical or sentence construction.
- So verse & chapter breaks frequently occur illogically as regards grammar and sentence and paragraph structure.
- As a result, verse breaks often occur in the middle of sentences and chapters interrupt stories and themes.
- Verse references are of no more use than a house address - it can help you locate a specific house but tells you nothing about the house or the people that live there. Similarly a dot on a map may tell you where Athens, TN is but it

likewise will tell you nothing about the city, its people or what you will find when you get there.

- What is most important to remember when studying Scripture is that chapters, verses and section descriptions ARE NOT DIVINELY INSPIRED.
- While useful if they are given too much importance they can also hinder understanding.

What Makes Bible Study Challenging

1. **Translation/Interpretation** – We must always remember that the Scripture we read is a translation or interpretation of what was written in the original Greek and Hebrew.

- a. There is a false assumption that for every foreign word there is the same word in English that conveys the same meaning – this is simply not true.
- b. For example the Spanish word mañana is typically translated tomorrow but in many Latin cultures the word mañana is generally understood to mean “not today.”
- c. Biblical translators and interpreters work diligently to maintain the integrity of the original language as they move from ancient Greek and Hebrew into English.
- d. That is why large numbers of scholars work together to generate the best possible translations. They work as a single body treating the Bible as the singular work of God and thus unifying the message in English just as it was unified in the original language.

2. **The way the Bible is organized** – it is not organized as we might expect.

a. **The OT** is organized as follows:

- i. The Law: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers & Deuteronomy
- ii. Historical: Joshua – Esther

The Law and Historical books are in chronological order but the remaining books are not.

- iii. Poetry: Job – Song of Solomon
 - iv. The Prophets: The writings of the prophets are not organized chronologically. The prophets are first divided between the “Major” prophets [Isaiah – Daniel] and “Minor” prophets [Hosea – Malachi]. Then each group is listed from longest to shortest.
- b. **The NT** is organized as follows:

- i. Gospels : Matthew – John [They were placed in order of which they were written: i.e. Matthew Mark Luke and John. There is much debate, however, regarding the possibility that Mark predates Matthew.]
 - ii. History: Acts
 - iii. Paul's Letters are first are the letters written to various churches [Romans – Colossians] the the personal letters [1Timothy – Philemon]. Then they are listed longest – shortest, not chronological.
 - iv. The General Letters follow Paul's letters: [Hebrews – Jude] Again they are listed longest – shortest, not chronologically.
 - v. Prophecy: Revelations is the final book of the Bible.
3. **Passage of time** – the sheer passage of time affects our ability to understand – it can be a little like a teenager today looking at a dial phone – in the same way trying to look back over 1000's of years and understanding what was done and why presents challenges.
4. **Cultural differences** – We are dealing with drastically different cultures
5. **Not giving it time** – Real Bible study requires commitment, diligence, and perseverance. Don't give up.
6. **Our worldview** – We must move from seeing things as the world would show them to us and begin to see things differently from a new vantage point – our goal is to learn to see the world as God sees it. We must move from a secular worldview to a Biblical view of the world. And if we renew our mind as Romans 12:2 tells us to do more and more our view and understanding of the world will change.
7. **Difficult passages** – 2 Peter 3:15-18 NKJV – "15 ...our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable [people] twist to their own destruction, as [they do] also the rest of the Scriptures. 17 You therefore, beloved, since you know [this] beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him [be] the glory both now and forever. Amen."
8. **Sin** – Our sin separates us from God and blinds us to spiritual reality—making reading and understanding the Bible more difficult. [Hallorin] Before you begin to study, pray, confess and give thanks.
9. **Spiritual Truth** – 1 Corinthians 2:12-16 NIV – "12 What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may

understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. 14 The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. **Studying the Bible can be a little like trying to learn a new language - because we are trying to learn a new language, the language of the Spirit.**

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