

HOW THE BIBLE CAME TO US

The Bible is like a small library that contains many books written by many authors. The word "Bible" comes from the Greek word *biblia*, meaning "books." It took more than 1,100 years for all of these books to be written down, and it was many more years before the list of books now known as the Bible came together in one large book.

Passing Stories Along

Before anything in the Bible was written down, people told stories about God and God's relationship with the people we now read about in the Bible. This stage of passing on stories by word of mouth is known as the "oral tradition." This stage of relating stories by word of mouth lasted for many years as families passed along the stories of their ancestors to each new generation. In the case of the Jewish Scriptures (Old Testament), some stories were told for centuries before they were written down in a final form.

Writing Down the Bible Stories

Eventually, as human societies in the Near East began to develop forms of writing that were easy to learn and use (around 1800 B.C.), people began to write down the stories, songs (Psalms), and prophecies that would one day become a part of the Bible. These were written on papyrus, a paper-like material made from reeds, or on vellum, which was made from dried animal skins. But all the books found in the Old Testament were not written down at one time. This process took centuries. While some books were being written and collected, others were still being passed on in storytelling fashion. Since these stories were sometimes written in a piecemeal fashion, and since sometimes more than one version of a story was collected, parts of the Bible can be confusing to modern readers. For example, compare Genesis 1:1-24 to Genesis 2:5-3:24, and 1 Sam 16:14-23 and 1 Sam 17:55-58.

The very first manuscripts of the books that make up the Old and New Testaments have never been found, and most likely wore out from continued use or were destroyed centuries ago. However, copies of these manuscripts were made by hand and became valued possessions of synagogues, churches, and monasteries. Before these copies wore out new copies were made, and then eventually copies were made from these copies—and so on, from one generation to the next. Some very old copies of both the Old and New Testament writings have been preserved, and they are now stored in museums and libraries around the world in places like Jerusalem, London, Paris, Dublin, New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Greece, Italy, Russia, and Sinai.

Once the stories of the Bible began to be written down, it became necessary to make new copies before the old ones wore out from repeated use and became unreadable. Sometimes several scribes made copies while another scribe read the text aloud.

Collecting the Jewish Scriptures

It is not possible to know exactly when all the books of the Jewish Scriptures were finally collected. Some of the writings in the Jewish Scriptures may go back as far as 1100 B.C., but the process of bringing the books together probably didn't begin until around 400 B.C. This collecting of books continued while new books were being written as late as the second century B.C. The process of deciding which books would be part of the official Jewish Scriptures went on until almost A.D. 100. This work was often done by Jewish rabbis (teachers).

Preparing the Bible for a Changing World

It was during this time that the Jewish Scriptures were translated into Greek. This translation is called the "*Septuagint*", which means "seventy", and is often identified by the Roman numeral for seventy (LXX). The legend of how the Septuagint came to be, and how it got its name is told in a document called the "*Letter of Aristeas*". The legend says that seventy-two scholars began translating the Jewish Scriptures from Hebrew, all at the same time. The "Letter" goes on to say that they all finished at the same time, in seventy-two days, and that all seventy-two scholars discovered that their translations were exactly the same! All the seventy-some numbers in this story gave the translation its name. This Greek version of the Bible was used by Jewish people scattered throughout the Roman world, because most of them spoke Greek instead of Hebrew. The oldest copies of the Septuagint date from the second century B.C., more than one hundred years before Jesus was born. The Septuagint was also the main version of the Jewish Scriptures used by early Christians.

It is not exactly clear how it was decided which books should be considered holy enough to be included in the Jewish Scriptures. We do know that around A.D. 100, a group of Jewish scholars were meeting at Jamnia, a center of Jewish learning west of Jerusalem. During this time, the scholars were debating which books should be in the Jewish Scriptures. Probably these scholars' discussions were a large part of the Jewish community's decision that thirty-nine books should be on the holy list (canon). Seven books, sometimes called the Deuterocanonical books (meaning second list), were not included on the list. Today, most Protestant churches follow the original list of thirty-nine books and call it the Old Testament. The Roman Catholic, Anglican (Episcopal), and Eastern Orthodox churches include the Deuterocanonical books in their Old Testament. For more about this see the article called [What Books Belong to the Bible?](#)

The Stories of Christ and His First Followers

Jesus and most of his followers were Jewish, and so they used and quoted the Jewish Scriptures. After Jesus died and was raised to life around A.D. 30, the stories about Jesus, as well as his sayings, were passed on by word of mouth. It wasn't until about A.D. 65 that these stories and sayings began to be gathered and written down in books known as the Gospels, which make up about half of what Christians call the New Testament. The earliest writings of the New Testament, however, are probably some of the letters that the apostle Paul wrote to groups of Jesus' followers who were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. The first of these letters, probably 1 Thessalonians, may have been written as early as A.D. 50. Other New Testament writings were written in the late first century or early second century A.D.

The New Testament books were written in Greek, an international language during this period of the Roman Empire. They were often passed on and read as single books or letters. For nearly three hundred years A.D. 100-400, the early church leaders and councils argued about which New Testament writings should be considered holy and treated with the same respect given to the Jewish Scriptures. In A.D. 367, the bishop of Alexandria named Athanasius wrote a letter that listed the twenty-seven books he said Christians should consider authoritative. His list was accepted by most of the Christian churches, and the writings he named are the same twenty-seven books that today we call the New Testament.

Translating the Bible

When the New Testament books were written, the Greek language was understood all over the Mediterranean world. But by the late second century A.D., local languages were becoming popular again, especially in local churches. Translations of the Bible were then made into Latin, the language of Rome; Coptic, a language of Egypt; and Syriac, a language of Syria. In A.D. 383, Pope Damasus I assigned a scholar priest named Jerome to create an official translation of the Bible into Latin. It took Jerome about twenty-seven years to translate the whole Bible. His translation came to be known as the Vulgate and served as the standard version of the Bible in Western Europe for the next thousand years. By the Middle Ages, only scholars could read and understand Latin. But by the time Johannes Guttenberg invented the modern printing press (around 1456), the use of vernacular (local or national) languages was becoming acceptable and widespread in official, educational, and religious settings. And as more people began to learn to read, there was a new demand for the Bible in vernacular

languages. And so translators like Martin Luther, William Tyndale, Cassiodoro de Reina, and Giovanni Diodati began to translate the Bible into the languages that people spoke in their everyday lives.

The process of Bible translating continues today, and it has been helped by some recent discoveries. For example, many ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament have been found in the last 150 years. In 1947, some very old manuscripts of the Jewish Scriptures were found in caves at Qumran, Murabba'at, and other locations just west of the Dead Sea in Israel, and have become known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. These manuscripts, which date from between the third century B.C. and the first century A.D., have helped modern scholars to better understand the wording of certain texts and to make decisions about how to best translate specific verses or words.

The Bible is a very old book that has come to us because many men and women have worked hard copying and studying manuscripts, examining important artifacts and ancient ruins, and translating ancient texts into modern languages. Their dedication has helped keep the story of God's people alive.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

What is the Bible?

The Bible is the account of God's action in the world and his purpose with all creation. The writing of the Bible took place over sixteen centuries and is the work of over forty human authors. It is a quite amazing collection of 66 books with very different styles all containing the message God desired us to have.

This compilation of booklets contains an astonishing variety of literary styles. It provides many stories about the lives of good and bad people, about battles and journeys, about the life of Jesus along with letters written to groups of Christians that met in homes. It comes to us in narratives and dialogues, in proverbs and parables, in songs and allegories, in history and prophecy.

The accounts in the Bible were not generally written down as they occurred. Rather they were told over and over again and handed down through the years before someone finally wrote them down. Yet the same themes may be found throughout the book.

So along with the diversity there is also a remarkable unity. So what is the Bible? Well, in addition to all the above, the Bible is this:

- It is a guide for living life to the full. It gives us a road map for the perilous journey of life. Or to put it another way, on our voyage through life's ocean, we find our anchor right here.
- It is a storehouse of wonderful stories for children and grownups. Remember Noah and the ark? Joseph's coat of many colors? Daniel in the lion's den? Jonah and the fish? The parables of Jesus? In these stories we recognize the triumphs and failures of ordinary people - and we may even see ourselves!
- It is a refuge in trouble. People in pain, in suffering, in prison, in mourning, tell how they turned to the Bible and found strength there in their desperate hours.
- It is a treasury of insight as to who we are. We are not meaningless robots, but we are magnificent creatures of a God who loves us and gives us a purpose and a destiny.
- It is a sourcebook for everyday living. We find standards for our conduct, guidelines for knowing right from wrong, principles to help us in a confused society where so often "anything goes."

When was the Bible written?

The Bible was not written in one specific year or in a single location. The Bible is a collection of writings, and the earliest ones were set down nearly 3500 years ago. So let's start at the beginning of this fascinating story.

The first five books of the Bible are attributed to Moses and are commonly called the Pentateuch (literally "five scrolls").

Moses lived between 1500 and 1300 BC, though he recounts events in the first eleven chapters of the Bible that occurred long before his time (such as the creation and the flood).

These earliest accounts were handed on from generation to generation in songs, narratives, and poetry.

In those early societies there was no writing as yet and people passed on these oral accounts with great detail and accuracy.

The earliest writing began when symbols were scratched or pressed on clay tablets. The Egyptians refined this technique and developed an early form of writing known as hieroglyphics. The Bible tells us that Moses was "educated in all the learning of the Egyptians", so he would have been familiar with the major writing systems of his time. We also read that God gave Moses "two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God"(Exodus 31:18). All this leads to the conclusion that the earliest writings in the Bible were set down around 1400 BC.

The writings of the thirty or so other contributors to the Old Testament span a thousand years! They recount the times and messages from Moses' successor, Joshua, to the last of the Old Testament prophets, Malachi, who wrote his little tract around 450 BC.

Then there is a 500-year period when no writings were contributed to the Bible. This is the period between the testaments, when Alexander the Great conquered much of the world and when the Greek language was introduced to the Hebrews. Indeed, they began to use Greek so much that the Hebrew language was replaced by Greek and by another language, Aramaic, which was spoken all over that area of the world at that time.

The New Testament was written during a much shorter period, i.e. during the last half of the first century AD.

- It was the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, which ignited the flame that produced the New Testament, as the new faith swept across the Near East and then westward to Greece and on to Rome.
- Half of the New Testament books were contributed by one man, the Apostle Paul, in the epistles he sent to groups of new Christians and to his assistants Timothy and Titus.
- The Bible closes with a majestic book of visions and dramatic views of the future. It was penned by the aged Apostle John around 95 AD and describes the new heaven and the new earth when God's kingdom will embrace the universe and all rebellion and death will be a thing of the past.

In looking at all these dates, the important thing to remember is that when the Bible was written is not as important as what was written. However, the when is important also as we sense how God's presence persisted through the centuries and gave us "in the fullness of time" the full-orbed revelation of salvation and hope through his son Jesus Christ.

Who wrote the Bible?

Many people contributed to the writing of the Bible. Actually the Bible is a collection of writings from about forty contributors, thirty in the Old Testament and ten in the New Testament. For example, the Psalms are a collection of the works of several

authors, of whom David, the "sweet singer of Israel", is the best known. But psalms were also written by Moses, by Asaph, by a man named Ethan, and by the sons of Korah.

The accounts which have been preserved in the **Old Testament** date from the earliest times and were both written down and transmitted orally. As time passed they were collected together and received by the Hebrews as coming to them by God's mandate. The prophets transmit God's message to humans, while many of the Psalms articulate cries of people to God. Yet these psalms are also preserved in the Bible as part of God's message to mankind.

The **New Testament** stories and teachings were widely circulated among the early Christian churches. The letters of Paul to the Christians in several cities were likely the earliest writings now found in the New Testament. But many other letters and epistles were circulated as well. Gradually it became clear to the early churches which writings were truly inspired and which were spurious or simply edifying messages from pious authors.

It is truly amazing that all forty of these authors, spread out over 1600 years, have such a unified message in spite of their great diversity in language, culture and time. There is a reason for that! The reason is that these forty or so writers are all secondary authors. There is actually only one primary author, the one who inspired all the human authors, the eternal God.

Christians believe that the Bible came to us from God himself, who used all these human authors to give us his message, through the presence and inspiration of his Spirit. He did not simply give dictation to these authors, because we observe their unique personalities and varying styles of writing shining through. But God's message, God's authorship, is always there, providing in the end through all the years, exactly what he wanted us to have. In this way the Bible is our own ageless treasure.

How were the books of the Bible chosen?

The 39 books of the Old Testament form the Bible of Judaism, while the Christian Bible includes those books and also the 27 books of the New Testament. This list of books included in the Bible is known as the canon. That is, the canon refers to the books regarded as inspired by God and authoritative for faith and life. No church created the canon, but the churches and councils gradually accepted the list of books recognized by believers everywhere as inspired.

It was actually not until 367 AD that the church father Athanasius first provided the complete listing of the 66 books belonging to the canon.

- He distinguished those from other books that were widely circulated and he noted that those 66 books were the ones, and the only ones, universally accepted.
- The point is that the formation of the canon did not come all at once like a thunderbolt, but was the product of centuries of reflection.

Let's look first at the Old Testament. Obviously the first five books (sometimes called the Torah or the Pentateuch) were the first to be accepted as canonical. We're not sure when this occurred, but it was probably during the fifth century before Christ. Of course, the Hebrews had the "Law" for many centuries already, but they certainly did not pay very good attention to it. It was probably the work of the prophets Ezra and Nehemiah that restored it to general use and fixed it once for all as authoritative.

How about the rest of the Old Testament? The prophets' writings were also not brought together in a single form until about 200 BC. The remaining Old Testament books were adopted as canonical even later. The Old Testament list was probably not finally fixed much before the birth of Christ. The Jewish people were widely scattered by this time and they really needed to know which books were the authoritative Word of God because so many other writings claiming divine authority were floating around. With the fixing of the canon they became a people of one Book, and this Book kept them together.

Nor is there a single date when we can say that the canon of the New Testament was decided. In the first and second centuries after Christ, many, many writings and epistles were circulating among the Christians. Some of the churches were using books and letters in their services that were definitely spurious. Gradually the need to have a definite list of the inspired Scriptures became apparent. Heretical movements were rising, each one choosing its own selected Scriptures, including such documents as the Gospel of Thomas, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Apocalypse of Peter, and the Epistle of Barnabas.

Gradually it became clear which works were truly genuine and which mixed truth with fantasy. By the end of the fourth century the canon was definitively settled and accepted. In this process Christians recognize the providence of God in providing us with his written revelation of himself and his purpose with the universe.

Questions still arise now and then about the canon. Some wonder why just these 66 booklets were chosen. Why not 65 or 67? Why was the sometimes puzzling booklet of Jude included to the exclusion of other edifying scriptures? To these questions we reply that these books are the ones that God himself has chosen to preserve for us, and he has not told us exactly why. Together they form an immeasurable treasure, and in them we find God's matchless gift to his people. Here we are moved simply to trust in his providence as he led his people through the years and gave us the most honored and powerful and comforting volume in the history of humanity, the book known as the Bible.

And in his providence he has provided this treasure for you as well. Take up its ancient words and mandates and live by them! As you steep yourself in its pages, your heart will find peace at last.

THE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE INTO ENGLISH

The Gospel of Christ and, in general, the Holy Bible are written with the inspiration of God. The Prophets and the Apostles have recorded in written form a portion of the oral teaching of the Old Testament in Hebrew and Aramaic as well as the New Testament in Greek. These are the original languages of the Holy Bible from which all the translations have been derived. God's inspiration is confined to the original languages and utterances, not the many translations. There are 1,300 languages and dialects into which the Holy Bible, in its entirety or in portions, has been translated. This does not mean that the translations do not convey the meaning of the Bible for spiritual uprightness of the readers in their own language. On the contrary the Bible should be spread and preached to "all nations". The missionaries in foreign lands learn the language or the dialect of the new area into which they bring the Bible and other religious teachings. For example, the missionaries from Constantinople, Saints Cyril and Methodios, sent to Christianize the Slavic peoples in the 9th century, first translated the Bible and the ritual books into the language of the people.

The translation of the Bible into the English language coincided with the invention of the printing press and the period of Reformation (15th -16th centuries). Before this time the use of Bible in the West was forbidden in any language other than Latin. The Latin translation, from the original Hebrew and Greek, was made by St. Jerome in the fourth century. It became the authoritative Bible for the Western Church and was known as the Vulgate. The reading of the Bible, even in the Latin, was forbidden the lay people without permission. This denial by the authorities of the Western Church was one of the main reasons for the Protestant Reformation. Therefore, the first act of the first reformer, Martin Luther, was the translation of the Bible into German in 1522, which translation was the main factor in the establishment of the German language. Before the Reformation and the printing press, various parts of the Bible had been translated into English from the Latin Vulgate.

The Western Church was very strict in the use of Latin not only for the Bible, but also for the ritual worship of the Church, which was incomprehensible to the people. It should be noted that before the Reformation there was no complete translation of the Bible in English. The only translation in English from the Latin and not the original Greek language, covering only the New Testament and some parts of the Old, was that attributed to John Wycliffe of England. Despite the fact it was made with the knowledge of the authorities of the Church, its use was forbidden without special permission, according to the decision of the Synod of Oxford of 1407. The first translation of the Bible into English from the original languages, Hebrew and Greek, and the first which was printed was that of William Tyndale in c.1523. Before this translation

the only printings of the Bible were the Vulgate (first printing, 1456), the Hebrew text of the Old Testament (1488), the text of the New Testament Greek by Erasmus (1516), with four revisions through 1535 and the literal translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Latin (1528). The translation of the New Testament into English from the original Greek text depended on the initiative of Tyndale (c. 1523), without the sponsorship or permission of the Bishop of London. Tyndale was denounced and forced to flee to Germany, where he probably met Martin Luther. Tyndale started to print the New Testament in English in Cologne, but was again forced to flee to another city, Worms.

In Worms he finally completed the printing of the English translation of the New Testament, in its entirety. This translation was reprinted many times in Holland. Copies of this translation reached England, where it aroused the anger of his enemies. Nevertheless, Tyndale continued his work and undertook to translate and print the books of the Old Testament. He first printed the five Books of Moses, the Pentateuch, in Antwerp in 1529-30. Over the next few years he printed the other books of the Old Testament. Tyndale later printed the New Testament and the Pentateuch together with marginal notes reflecting the Protestant views. This further incensed his enemies, who had him condemned as a heretic. He was burned at the stake in Holland in 1536. Tyndale's translation especially that of the New Testament from the original Greek, marked the beginning of many other English translations from the original Greek, using Tyndale's translation as a guide. Unfortunately, the original Greek New Testament edited by Erasmus in 1516, which was used by Tyndale for his English translation, contained many mistakes. Still, Tyndale's English translation of the Bible was a pioneer work and an independent effort. Much of his translation is used in the King James Version of 1611.

TYNDALE'S TRANSLATION AND THE KING JAMES VERSION

Tyndale's English translation of the entire Bible was the basis for the many other English translations that followed. The subsequent English versions are Coverdale's Bible, 1535; Thomas Mathew's Bible, 1537; the Great Bible, 1539; the Geneva Bible, 1560, and the Bishop's Bible, 1568. Also the Rheims-Duae's in 1582 was translated from the Latin Vulgate. Within approximately 50 years from the time of Tyndale's first printed translations the above six translations were made. It must be noted, however, that none of these English translations was accepted as an authorized English version, because of general dissatisfaction with them and the many mistakes found in them. Therefore, after 30 years another attempt to translate the Bible anew into English was made by a conference in England, where a new version of the Bible was suggested to King James. King James was convinced of the need of a new English translation of the Bible. He appointed 54 scholars to undertake the task. These scholars used the Bishop's Bible of 1568 as a basis, but earlier English versions were also, taken into consideration, especially Tyndale's.

These 54 scholars, appointed to translate a new, original English version, failed because they used the earlier English translation which had many mistakes. Thus theirs was a new revision not a new translation. Regardless, this new version was received with great enthusiasm and happiness, and within a generation it displaced all other English translations. This new version became known as the King James Version, or the Authorized Version. This King James Version was printed in 1611, and has become the familiar form of the Bible for many English-speaking generations. The King James Version was the only version, that bore the royal authority and was "appointed to be read in churches." It is characterized as "the noblest monument of English prose.", The King James Version has played a prominent role in forming the personal character of the church and institutions of the English-speaking people.

Yet, even this King James Version was not well-received nor free of criticism by some. Nevertheless, it has prevailed through the centuries and is still held in great esteem today, both by preachers and lay people, despite its defects, which were, noted more clearly in the mid-nineteenth century, and more so today. The Greek and Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible possessed today were unknown to the 54 scholars of the King James Version. The manuscripts of the Bible which were found later pointed out more clearly the serious defects of the King James Version. This fact convinced the Church of England in 1870 to make a revision of the King James translation. This revision was published in 1881 (N.T.), 1885 (O.T.) and was known as the English Revised, Version of the Bible, which included the Apocrypha printed in 1895,. However, to its detriment, this committee of revisers included only Anglican scholars. This version was not accepted by the vast majority of local churches and people, who, cherished the King James Version.

FINDINGS OF ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS OF ORIGINAL LANGUAGES

The Greek text of the New Testament used for the King James Version was that of Beza in 1589. Beza had two Greek manuscripts of great value of the fifth and sixth centuries, but he did not use them, because they were different from the Greek text made by Erasmus (1516-1535). The manuscripts used by Erasmus were from the tenth century on, and he made little use of them. The discovery of many ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, especially after 1931, provided the committee of scholars with important new sources, including the information which recent discoveries have provided for a better understanding of the vocabulary and idioms of the Greek New Testament language. Since 1870, when the official undertaking of the revision of the King James Version took place, an enormous number of papyri have been unearthed in Egypt, containing private letters, official reports, petitions, business accounts and various other records of the activities of the first centuries. These findings were thoroughly studied by Adolf Deissmann, and his results were published in 1895. His study proved that many of the Greek words of the New Testament were used in the everyday life of the people of the first centuries and were not special words which belonged to what was considered Biblical Greek. These discoveries provided the committee of scholars of the Revised Standard Version with valuable material not available to previous translators. Another factor promoting the decision to revise the King James Version was that its archaic form of expression of English was not clearly understood by contemporary people. The use of such words as "thou", "thee", "thy" and "thine" and the verb endings, "est", "edst", "eth" and "th", made it difficult for most people to understand it. More than 300 words in the King James Version are misleading in light of today's understanding. This was one of the reasons that led the Council to revise the King James Version. It must be noted that the Revised Standard Version is not a new translation, nor is it a paraphrase of the English language; it is a revision of the King James Version.

THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION

The dissatisfaction with the new English Revised Version led scholars in America to once again attempt to issue another English translation based on this English Revised Version. The American scholars, who cooperated with the English revisers, made amendments into the English Revised Version and published it in 1901., calling it the American Standard Version. Numerous other new English translations were published over the years. Among, those worthy of mention are: The New Testament by R. F. Weymouth, 1902; The New Testament, 1913, and The Old Testament, 1924, by J. Moffatt (complete Bible revised in 1935); The American Translation of the New Testament, by E. G. Goodspeed, 1923; the Old Testament by J. M. Powis Smith, 1935, the Apocrypha by Goodspeed, 1938; The Westminster Version of the Holy Scriptures by the Catholic Church, 1935; a Revised Catholic Version by R. A. Knox (New Testament, 1945, Old Testament, 1949), and The Basic English by S. H. Hooke (N. T.) 1945, O.T., 1949), and The New Translation of the Bible in Modern English, by the Church of Scotland (including only Protestant churches), 1947.

Between 1881 and 1901, when the English Revised Version (1881) and the American Standard Version (1901), there was an unhappy lack of agreement on an English translation acceptable to all. Therefore, the task of a new English translation was again undertaken by the International Council of Religious Education in 1937. This Council appointed a committee of scholars to study The American Standard Version for further revision. The committee studied this question for two years and concluded that there was need for a thorough revision of the American Version of 1901, using the Tyndale Version as well as the King James Version in light of today's knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek texts and their meaning, and also using present understanding of the English language. The Council thereupon authorized an English revision of the Bible.

A committee of 32 scholars was appointed to make the new revision in cooperation with an advisory board of 50 representatives of all the denominations which had agreed to its need. The committee was then divided into two groups, one for the Old Testament and the other for the New. Each group submitted its work for the scrutiny of the other, with each change being made by two-thirds vote of the entire committee. The work of the committee covered approximately 10 years. The new revision was unanimously adopted by the advisory board and participating Protestant denominations. The result of this great effort is the Revised Standard Version of the Bible (RSV). The New Testament was first printed in 1946. The complete Bible, Old and New Testaments, was authorized by vote of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America in 1951.

THE NEED OF A COMMON ENGLISH VERSION

There is a tendency today by churches, Bible societies and scholars to adopt one English translation of the Bible as a common, authoritative one. For the first time even the Roman Catholic Church adopted the Revised Standard Version in 1966 to be used with the addition of the "Apocrypha" (books of the Old Testament designated by the Church "as worthy to be read", which are incorporated in the Hebrew text in the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate). When the Catholic Church adopted the Revised Standard Version, it received permission from the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America, who holds the copyrights of this Version, to include its own explanatory notes in an appendix.

THE BIBLE: THE REVEALED WORD OF GOD

The Bible, the inspired word of God, is a living monument in that it goes above and beyond being just an historical document or just a classic piece of literature. It is the Revelation of God Himself and His Will. The Bible is a divine account of God's Design for the salvation of man; it is an account of the Incarnation of the Logos in the Person of Jesus Christ Who became flesh and dwelt among man. It was written to be read with reverence and faith. The Revelation and Message of the Bible should not be hidden or altered by words and phrases that have lost or changed their meaning over the years. The Bible was given to man so he might know the True God and His Revealed Truths, for without the Bible Christ would be unknown to man. God speaks to man through the Bible. Therefore, the written word in its original context is indispensable for belief in Christ and for living His Commandments. The important words of the Holy Bible are:

"written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name", John 20:31.

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

The New International Version (NIV) is a translation made by more than one hundred scholars working from the best available Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. It was conceived in 1965 when, after several years of study by committees from the Christian Reformed Church and the National Association of Evangelicals, a trans-denominational and international group of scholars met at Palos Heights, Illinois, and agreed on the need for a new translation in contemporary English. Their conclusion was endorsed by a large number of church leaders who met in Chicago in 1966. Responsibility for the version was delegated to a self-governing body of fifteen Biblical scholars, the Committee on Bible Translation, and in 1967, the New York Bible Society (now International Bible Society) generously undertook the financial sponsorship of the project.

The translation of each book was assigned to a team of scholars, and the work was thoroughly reviewed and revised at various stages by three separate committees. The Committee submitted the developing version to stylistic consultants who made invaluable suggestions. Samples of the translation were tested for clarity and ease of reading by various groups of people. In short, perhaps no other translation has been made by a more thorough process of review and revision.

The Committee held to certain goals for the NIV: that it be an Accurate, Beautiful, Clear, and Dignified translation suitable for public and private reading, teaching, preaching, memorizing, and liturgical use. The translators were united in their commitment to the authority and infallibility of the Bible as God's Word in written form. They agreed that faithful communication of the meaning of the original writers demands frequent modifications in sentence structure (resulting in a "thought-for-thought" translation) and constant regard for the contextual meanings of words.

In 1973 the New Testament was published. The Committee carefully reviewed suggestions for revisions and adopted a number of them, which they incorporated into the first printing of the entire Bible in 1978. Additional changes were made in 1983.

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THE NEW AMERICAN STANDARD

While preserving the literal accuracy of the 1901 ASV, the NASB has sought to render grammar and terminology in contemporary English. Special attention has been given to the rendering of verb tenses to give the English reader a rendering as close as possible to the sense of the original Greek and Hebrew texts. In 1995, the text of the NASB was updated for greater understanding and smoother reading. The New American Standard Bible present on the Bible Gateway matches the 1995 printing.

THE NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE UPDATE - 1995

Easier to read:

- Passages with Old English "thee's" and "thou's" etc. have been updated to modern English.
- Words and Phrases that could be misunderstood due to changes in their meaning during the past 20 years have been updated to current English.
- Verses with difficult word order or vocabulary have been retranslated into smoother English.
- Sentences beginning with "And" have often been retranslated for better English, in recognition of differences in style between the ancient languages and modern English. The original Greek and Hebrew did not have punctuation as is found in English, and in many cases modern English punctuation serves as a substitute for "And" in the original. In some other cases, "and" is translated by a different word such as "then" or "but" as called for by the context, when the word in the original language allows such translation.

More accurate than ever:

- Recent research on the oldest and best Greek manuscripts of the New Testament has been reviewed, and some passages have been updated for even greater fidelity to the original manuscripts.
- Parallel passages have been compared and reviewed.
- Verbs that have a wide range of meaning have been retranslated in some passages to better account for their use in the context.

And still the NASB:

- The NASB update is not a change-for-the-sake-of-change translation. The original NASB stands the test of time, and change has been kept to a minimum in recognition of the standard that has been set by the New American Standard Bible.
- The NASB update continues the NASB's tradition of literal translation of the original Greek and Hebrew without compromise. Changes in the text have been kept within the strict parameters set forth by the Lockman Foundation's Fourfold Aim.
- The translators and consultants who have contributed to the NASB update are conservative Bible scholars who have doctorates in Biblical languages, theology, or other advanced degrees. They represent a variety of denominational backgrounds.

Continuing a tradition:

The original NASB has earned the reputation of being the most accurate English Bible translation. The NASB update carries on the NASB tradition of being a true Bible translation, revealing what the original manuscripts actually say--not merely what the translator believes they mean.

BACKGROUND OF THE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (NIV) BIBLE

More than 100 scholars from six English-speaking countries, as well as editors and English stylists, worked on the NIV. The scholars represented more than 20 denominations.

In the 17th century, King James translators worked from the Erasmus Greek text of the New Testament. Erasmus had six Greek manuscripts from which to work. NIV translators work from more than 5,000 complete or partial manuscripts and papyri.

It took 10 years to complete the NIV translation. The process started in 1968 and finished in 1978. This does not include more than 10 years of planning before 1968.

The system for editing each book is one of the distinctive features of the NIV. The procedure was as follows:

- Initial Translation Team
- Intermediate Editorial Committee
- General Editorial Committee
- Stylist and Critics
- Executive Committee (or Committee on Bible Translation)
- Final Stylistic Review
- Executive Committee's Final Reading

The NIV was created and is maintained with the mandate to accurately and faithfully translate the original Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic biblical texts into clearly understandable English.

The NIV is the most widely accepted contemporary Bible translation today. More people today buy the NIV Bible than any other English-language translation.

The *New International Version* is a completely new translation of the Holy Bible made by over a hundred scholars working directly from the best available Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts. It had its beginning in 1965 when, after several years of exploratory study by committees from the Christian Reformed Church and the National Associations of Evangelicals, a group of scholars met at Palos Heights, Illinois, and concurred in the need for a new translation of the Bible in contemporary English. This group, though not made up of official church representatives, was transdenominational. Its conclusion was endorsed by a large number of leaders from many denominations who met in Chicago in 1966.

Responsibility for the new version was delegated by the Palos Heights group to a self-governing body of fifteen, the Committee on Bible Translation, composed for the most part of biblical scholars from colleges, universities and seminaries. In 1967 the New York Bible Society (now the International Bible Society) generously undertook the financial sponsorship for the project - sponsorship that made it possible to enlist the help of many distinguished scholars. The fact that participants from the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand worked together gave the project its international scope. That they were from many denominations - including Anglican, Assemblies of God, Baptist, Brethren, Christian Reformed, Church of Christ, Evangelical Free, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Nazarene, Presbyterian, Wesleyan and other churches - helped to safeguard the translation from sectarian bias.

How it was made helps to give the *New International Version* its distinctiveness. The translation of each book was assigned to a team of scholars. Next, one of the Intermediate Editorial Committees revised the initial translation, with constant reference to the Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek. Their work then went on to one of the General Editorial committees, which checked it in detail and made another thorough version. This revision in turn was carefully reviewed by the Committee on Bible Translation, which made further changes and then released the final version for publication. In this way the entire Bible underwent three revisions, during each of which the translation was examined for its faithfulness to the original languages and for its English style.

All of this involved many thousands of hours of research and discussion regarding the meaning of the texts and the precise way of putting them into English. It may well be that no other translation has been made by a more thorough process of review and revision from committee to committee than this one.

From the beginning of the project, the Committee on Bible Translation held to certain goals for the *New International Version*: that it would be an accurate translation and one that would have clarity and literary quality and so prove suitable for public and private reading, teaching, preaching, memorizing and liturgical use. The Committee also sought to preserve some measure of continuity with the long tradition of translating the Scriptures into English.

In working toward these goals, the translators were united in their commitment to the authority and infallibility of the Bible as God's Word in written form. They believe that it contains the divine answer to the deepest needs of humanity, that it sheds unique light on our path in a dark world, and that it sets forth the way to our eternal well-being.

The first concern of the translators has been the accuracy of the translation and its fidelity to the thought of the biblical writers. They have weighed the significance of the lexical and grammatical details of the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts. At the same time, they have striven for more than a word-for-word translation. Because thought patterns and syntax differ from language to language, faithful communication of the meaning of the writers of the Bible demands frequent modifications in sentence structures and constant regard for the contextual meaning of words.

A sensitive feeling for the style does not always accompany scholarship. Accordingly, the Committee on Bible Translation submitted the developing version to a number of stylistic consultants. Two of them read every book of both Old and New Testaments twice - once before and once after the last major revision - and made invaluable suggestions. Samples of the translations were tested for clarity and ease of reading by various kinds of people - young and old, highly educated and less well educated, ministers and laymen.

Concern for clear and natural English - that the *New International Version* should be idiomatic but not idiosyncratic, contemporary but not dated - motivated the translators and consultants. At the same time, they tried to reflect the differing styles of the biblical writer. In view of the international use of English, the translators sought to avoid obvious Americanisms on the one hand and obvious Anglicisms on the other. A British edition reflects the comparatively few differences of significant idiom and of spelling.

As for the traditional pronouns "thou," "thee" and "thine" in references to the Deity, the translators judged that to use the archaisms (along with old verb forms such as "doest," "wouldest" and "hadst") would violate accuracy in translation. Neither Hebrew, Aramaic nor Greek uses special pronouns for the persons of the Godhead. A present-day translation is not enhanced by forms that in the time of the King James Version were used in everyday speech, whether referring to God or man.

For the Old Testament the standard Hebrew text, the Masoretic Text as published in the latest editions of *Biblia Hebraica*, was used throughout. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain material bearing on an earlier stage of Hebrew text. They were consulted, as were the Samaritan Pentateuch and the ancient scribal traditions relating to textual changes. Sometimes a variant Hebrew reading in the margin of the Masoretic Text was followed instead of the text itself. Such instances, being variant within the Masoretic tradition, are not specified by footnotes. In rare cases, words in the consonantal text were divided differently from the way they appear in the Masoretic Text. Footnotes indicate this. The translators also consulted the more important early versions - the Septuagint; Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion; the Vulgate; the Syriac Peshitta; the Targums; and for the Psalms the *Juxta Hebraica* of Jerome. Readings from these versions were occasionally followed where the Masoretic Text seemed doubtful and where accepted principles of textual criticism showed that one or more of these textual witnesses appeared to provide the correct reading. Such instances are footnoted. Sometimes vowel letters and vowel signs did not, in the judgment of the translators, represent the correct vowels for the original consonantal text. Accordingly some words were read with a different set of vowels. These instances are usually not indicated by footnotes.

The Greek text used in translating the New Testament was an eclectic one. No other piece of ancient literature has such an abundance of manuscript witnesses as does the New Testament. Where existing manuscripts differ, the translators made their choice of readings according to accepted principles of New Testaments textual criticism. Footnotes call attention to places where there was uncertainty about what the original text was. The best current printed texts of the Greek New Testaments were used.

There is a sense in which the work of translation is never wholly finished. This applies to all great literature and uniquely so to the Bible. In 1973 the New Testament in the *New International Version* was published. Since then, suggestions for corrections and revisions have been received from various sources. The Committee on Bible Translation carefully considered the suggestions and adopted a number of them. These are incorporated in the first printing of the entire Bible.

As in other ancient documents, the precise meaning of the biblical texts is something uncertain. This is more often the case with the Hebrew and Aramaic texts than with the Greek text. Although archaeological and linguistic discoveries in this century aid in understanding difficult passages, some uncertainties remain. The more significant of these have been called to the reader's attention in the footnotes.

In regard to the divine name *YHWH*, commonly referred to as the *Tetragrammaton*, the translators adopted the device used in most English versions of rendering that name as "Lord" in capital letters to distinguish it from *Adonai*, another Hebrew word rendered "Lord," for which small letters are used. Wherever the two names stand together in the Old Testament as a compound name of God, they are rendered "Sovereign Lord."

Because for most readers today the phrase "the Lord of hosts" and "God of hosts" have little meaning, this version renders them "the Lord Almighty" and "God Almighty." These renderings convey the sense of the Hebrew, namely, "he who is sovereign over all the 'hosts' (powers) in heaven and on earth, especially over the 'hosts' (armies) of Israel." For readers unacquainted with Hebrew this does not make clear the distinction between *Sabaoth* ("hosts" or "Almighty") and *Shaddai* (which can also be translated "Almighty"), but the latter occurs infrequently and is always footnoted. When *Adonai* and *YHWH Sabaoth* occur together, they are rendered "the Lord, the Lord Almighty."

As for other proper nouns, the familiar spellings of the King James Version are generally retained. Names traditionally spelled with "ch," except where it is final, are usually spelled in this translation with "k" or "c," since the biblical languages do not have the sound that "ch" frequently indicates in English - for example, in *chant*. For well-known name such as Zechariah, however, the traditional spelling has been retained. Variation in the spelling of names in the original languages has usually not been indicated. Where a person or place has two or more different names in the Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek texts, the more familiar one has generally been used, with footnotes where needed.

To achieve clarity the translators sometimes supplied words not in the original texts but required by the context. If there was uncertainty about such material, it is enclosed in brackets. Also for the sake of clarity or style, nouns, including some proper nouns, are sometimes substituted for pronouns, and vice versa. And though the Hebrew writers often shifted back and forth between first, second and third

personal pronouns without change of antecedent, this translation often makes them uniform, in accordance with English style and without the use of footnotes.

Poetical passages are printed as poetry, that is, with indentation of lines and with separate stanzas. These are generally designed to reflect the structure of Hebrew poetry. The poetry is normally characterized by parallelism in balanced lines. Most of the poetry in the Bible is in the Old Testament, and scholars differ regarding the scansion of Hebrew lines. The translators determined the stanza divisions for the most part by analysis of the subject matter. The stanzas therefore serve as poetic paragraphs.

As an aid to the reader, italicized sectional headings are inserted in most of the books. They are not to be regarded as part of the NIV text, are not for oral reading, and are not intended to dictate the interpretation of the sections they head.

The footnotes in this version are of several kinds, most of which need no explanation. Those giving alternative translations begin with "Or" and generally introduce the alternative with the last word preceding it in the text, except when it is a single-word alternative; in poetry quoted in a footnote a slant mark indicates a line division. Footnotes introduced by "Or" do not have uniform significance. In some cases two possible translations were considered to have about equal validity. In other cases, though the translators were convinced that the translation in the text was correct, they judged that another interpretation was possible and of sufficient importance to be represented in a footnote.

In the New Testament, footnotes that refer to uncertainty regarding the original text are introduced by "Some manuscripts" or similar expressions. In the Old Testament, evidence for the reading chosen is given first and evidence for the alternative is added after a semicolon (for example: Septuagint; Hebrew *father*). In such notes the term "Hebrew" refers to the Masoretic Text.

It should be noted that minerals, flora and fauna, architectural details, articles of clothing and jewelry, musical instruments and other articles cannot always be identified with precision. Also measures of capacity in the biblical period are particularly uncertain (see the table of weights and measures following the text).

Like all translations of the Bible, made as they are by imperfect man, this one undoubtedly falls short of its goals. Yet we are grateful to God for the extent to which he has enabled us to realize these goals and for the strength he has given us and our colleagues to complete our task. We offer this version of the Bible to him in whose name and for whose glory it has been made. We pray that it will lead many into a better understanding of the Holy Scriptures and fuller knowledge of Jesus Christ the incarnate Word, of whom the Scriptures so faithfully testify.

A (Very) Brief Intro to Bible Translation

Translation is the process of communicating a message into a language that is different from the one in which the message was originally written. The message may be in a song, a poem, a story, directions, a telephone message, or a sermon. But if a person is not able to understand that message because it is written or told in an unfamiliar language, the message must be translated. This is especially important when it is the message of the Bible that is to be communicated.

The Bible is made up of several individual books that were written and told long ago in various languages quite unfamiliar to us today. None of these books was originally written in English (or Spanish or most other languages used throughout the world today). They were written in ancient Hebrew and Aramaic (for the Old Testament or Hebrew Scriptures) and in Greek (for the New Testament). Without Bible translation, people today would have to learn these three languages in order to read and understand the words of the Bible!

The work of translating the Bible began around 250 B.C. when a group of Jewish scholars translated the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures) into Greek because many Jewish people were living in places where Greek was the everyday language. Since that first Bible translation, the words of both the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures) and the New Testament have been translated into hundreds of languages. These languages include ancient languages (like Coptic, Arabic, Latin, and Syriac), as well as more recent, modern languages (like Portuguese, Russian, Navajo, Danish, Spanish, and English). The purpose behind all these Bible translations is exactly the same: to put the words of the Bible into a language that people will understand.

One of the most important Bible translators was the Englishman William Tyndale (1484-1536), often called "The Father of the English Bible." Tyndale wanted to make the Scriptures understandable to all people. But due to the political and religious tensions that existed throughout Europe during the Reformation (14th-17th centuries), he was unable to get permission to do his translation in England. So he went to Germany, where he published his New Testament in February 1526. Though he experienced a great deal of opposition, he continued his work of translating the Old Testament from Hebrew, and he published the first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis through Deuteronomy) in 1530.

Tyndale's work and influence is most readily seen in what is surely the most significant English Bible translation ever done, the King James Version of the Bible, published in 1611. The King James Version (also called the Authorized Version) was prepared at the request of King James I of England at a time when several Church-sponsored versions of the English Bible were in use. Although there was resistance to the King James Version at first (since many people felt a loyalty to their own Church's translation), it eventually won wide acceptance and became the standard English version of the Bible in the English-speaking world for three centuries. It remains one of the most widely-used English translations of the Bible today.

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF POPULAR BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Quite honestly, there are just too many Bible translations available today to describe them here. Below, however, are several descriptions to help orient you to the many that are available. These selections represent the two primary approaches to translation (formal equivalent and functional equivalent), as well as both older and more recent translations.

Contemporary English Version (CEV) The CEV is a meaning-based (or functional equivalent) translation done in a contemporary style using common language. It was designed to be understood when read and heard out loud, not just when it is read silently. It is one of the best Bibles for children and youth, as well as for new Bible readers who are not familiar with traditional Bible and church words.

Good News Translation (GNT) The GNT (also known as *Today's English Version* or *Good News Bible*) was one of the first meaning-based (or functional equivalent) translations of the Bible into English. It was originally published in 1976, then it was revised in 1992. The GNT presents the message of the Bible in a level of English that is common to most of the English-speaking world. The GNT is still used widely in youth Bible study groups and in less formal worship services.

King James Version (KJV) The KJV (also known as the *Authorized Version*) is a word-for-word translation (or formal equivalent) originally published in 1611 at the request of King James I of England. It was frequently reprinted and its spelling updated, and most copies today are slightly adapted from a 1769 edition. The translators mostly aimed at making a clear and accurate translation from the original languages. So many people have used the KJV over the centuries that it has become the single most important book in shaping the modern English language. Many of the best and most ancient Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of Bible books have been discovered since 1850, and so the KJV could not make use of them. The KJV is still the most widely owned and used English translation in the USA.

New American Bible (NAB) The NAB was originally published in 1970 as a meaning-based translation intended primarily for Roman Catholic readers. The New Testament was revised in 1986, shifting more toward a word-for-word or formal translation. The NAB is useful for individual study and public worship, especially among American Catholics.

New American Standard Bible (NASB) The NASB, first published in the 1960's, is an excellent example of a formal translation of the Bible in English. It is probably the most "word-for-word" type translation available today. Because of this, the NASB is a good version to use in Bible study where one is concerned with the form of the original Hebrew and Greek. The most recent edition of the NASB was published in 1995.

New International Version (NIV) The NIV was a completely new translation, but it was strongly influenced by the King James tradition. The full Bible was published in 1978 and revised in 1984. A blend of form-based and meaning-based translation types, the NIV is one of the most popular English Bibles in use today. It is equally useful for individual study and public worship, especially among more traditional and conservative denominations.

New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) The NJB is a 1985 revision of the older Jerusalem Bible (JB). The JB was translated from the original languages, but it developed out of a popular French translation done in Jerusalem, which is why it was called the Jerusalem Bible. The NJB, like the JB before it, is known for its literary qualities. While the JB tended to more meaning-based (or functional equivalent), the NJB has moved toward more of a word-based (or formal equivalent) translation.

New Living Translation (NLT) The NLT is a meaning-based revision of the *Living Bible* (LB) that tries to keep its sound and feel. The *Living Bible* was a popular 1971 paraphrase of the 1901 *American Standard Version*. (A paraphrase is different from a translation. For a paraphrase, authors take an English text and put it into their own words, that is, the way they would say it themselves. A paraphrase does not begin with the Hebrew and Greek texts as a translation does.) The NLT revision involved comparing the LB to the original-language texts, and then making changes so that the NLT is now a true translation. The NLT is a good translation to use with youth and adults who have difficulty with the traditional language of a formal equivalent translation.

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) The NRSV is a 1989 revision of the *Revised Standard Version* (1952). The NRSV is now the latest authorized translation in the King James tradition. It aims at being readable, but it also tries to keep the words and phrases from the KJV that are familiar. It is a blend of meaning-based and form-based translation types. The NRSV has become a standard translation for serious Bible study, especially in seminaries and colleges.

Revised English Bible (REB) The REB is a revision of the earlier *New English Bible* (NEB), which had a considerable British flavor. The REB removed much of this distinctiveness and aimed to be more familiar to an American audience. The REB is a meaning-based translation (or functional equivalent) but has retained much of the traditional language and style. This makes it a popular English translation for public reading of Scripture.

Version Reina-Valera (VRV) This widely used revision of the Bible, prepared by a group of Latin-American Scholars, is a revision of the sixteen-century translation made by Casiodoro de Reina and revised by Cipriano de Valera in 1602. There have been many other revisions to the VRV including the one of 1862, 1909, and most recently, the 1995 revision. Originally translated from the Hebrew texts and the Greek manuscripts of both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, it maintains fidelity to these texts and to the elevated linguistic and literacy style of its original translation while evolving with the changes in Spanish language. This has made this revision a classic and most acclaimed Bible among millions of people in Spanish speaking countries around the world.

Version Popular (VP) Originally published in its entirety in 1979 by the United Bible Society, the Version Popular is an interconfessional effort to communicate the word of God at a literary level understood by the Spanish speaking population at large. Its main translating principle for achieving a faithful sense of the Hebrew and Greek texts is to render the Hebrew and Greek texts in commonly used expressions and literacy forms. This methodology is known in translation science as functional equivalence. This version has been widely accepted by Christian communities and is officially recommended by the Latin-American Episcopal Council (CELAM).

VERSION COMPARISON: I SAMUEL 16.1-5

KING JAMES VERSION (KJV)

1And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

2And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD.

3And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee.

4And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably?

5And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (NIV)

SAMUEL ANOINTS DAVID

1 The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king."

2 But Samuel said, "How can I go? Saul will hear about it and kill me."

The LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' 3 Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate."

4 Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, "Do you come in peace?"

5 Samuel replied, "Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me." Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

NEW AMERICAN STANDARD (NAS)

SAMUEL GOES TO BETHLEHEM

1 Now the LORD said to Samuel, "^(A)How long will you grieve over Saul, since ^(B)I have rejected him from being king over Israel? ^(C)Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to ^(D)Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have ^(E)selected a king for Myself among his sons."

2 But Samuel said, "How can I go? When Saul hears of it, he will kill me." And the LORD said, "^(F)Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'"

3 "You shall invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and ^(G)I will show you what you shall do; and ^(H)you shall anoint for Me the one whom I designate to you."

4 So Samuel did what the LORD said, and came to ^(I)Bethlehem. And the elders of the city came trembling to meet him and said, "^(J)Do you come in peace?"

5 He said, "In peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. ^(K)Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." He also consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

AMPLIFIED (AMP)

1 THE LORD said to Samuel, How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided for Myself a king among his sons.

2 Samuel said, How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me. And the Lord said, Take a heifer with you and say, I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.

3 And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for Me the one I name to you.

4 And Samuel did what the Lord said, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming and said, Have you come peaceably?

5 And he said, Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice. And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and called them to the sacrifice.

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION (CEV)

THE LORD CHOOSES DAVID TO BE KING

1 One day he said, "Samuel, I've rejected Saul, and I refuse to let him be king any longer. Stop feeling sad about him. Put some olive oil ^(a) in a small container ^(b) and go visit a man named Jesse, who lives in Bethlehem. I've chosen one of his sons to be my king."

2 Samuel answered, "If I do that, Saul will find out and have me killed."

"Take a calf with you," the LORD replied. "Tell everyone that you've come to offer it as a sacrifice to me, then invite Jesse to the sacrifice. ⁴When I show you which one of his sons I have chosen, pour the olive oil on his head." ⁴Samuel did what the LORD told him and went to Bethlehem. The town leaders went to meet him, but they were terribly afraid and asked, "Is this a friendly visit?"

"Yes, it is!" Samuel answered. "I've come to offer a sacrifice to the LORD. Get yourselves ready ⁵to take part in the sacrifice and come with me." Samuel also invited Jesse and his sons to come to the sacrifice, and he got them ready to take part. ⁶When Jesse and his sons arrived, Samuel noticed Jesse's oldest son, Eliab. "He has to be the one the LORD has chosen," Samuel said to himself.

⁷But the LORD told him, "Samuel, don't thi

NEW KING JAMES VERSION (NKJV)

DAVID ANOINTED KING

¹ Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons."

² And Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears *it*, he will kill me."

But the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' ³ Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do: you shall anoint for Me the one I name to you."

⁴ So Samuel did what the LORD said, and went to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, "Do you come peaceably?"

⁵ And he said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice." Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice.

THE MESSAGE

GOD LOOKS INTO THE HEART

¹ GOD addressed Samuel: "So, how long are you going to mope over Saul? You know I've rejected him as king over Israel. Fill your flask with anointing oil and get going. I'm sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I've spotted the very king I want among his sons."

²⁻³ "I can't do that," said Samuel. "Saul will hear about it and kill me."

GOD said, "Take a heifer with you and announce, 'I've come to lead you in worship of GOD, with this heifer as a sacrifice.' Make sure Jesse gets invited. I'll let you know what to do next. I'll point out the one you are to anoint."

⁴ Samuel did what GOD told him. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the town fathers greeted him, but apprehensively. "Is there something wrong?"

⁵ "Nothing's wrong. I've come to sacrifice this heifer and lead you in the worship of GOD. Prepare yourselves, be consecrated, and join me in worship." He made sure Jesse and his sons were also consecrated and called to worship.