

LESSON-14

THE BIBLE -Its Translations

References : 2 Timo. 2 : 1-19, 3 : 14 - 17

Memory verse : 1 Peter. 1 : 24-25

Objective: To know that all who worked against the Bible perished like flower of the grass and that overcoming all kinds of oppositions, the Bible emerged victorious.

Introduction: Many attempts were made to destroy the Bible and keep it closed for the common people. Nevertheless, all such evil efforts of Satan turned futile. It has been translated into as many as 1800 languages and widely circulated all over the world. There is no other book in the world which is translated into so many languages and so widely circulated as the Bible.

THE AUTHOUISED VERSION OF KING JAMES (1611)

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth in England, from 1558 to 1603 many versions of the Bible were published. This resulted in the reformation views becoming popular. After the death of Queen Elizabeth, James I became the king. Soon after his accession to the throne king James undertook to revise the Bishop's Bible which was commonly used in worship services. King James selected and appointed 54 scholars who were well versed in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Those fifty four scholars were divided into six groups; three groups for Old Testament and three groups for New Testament. Two groups each worked in three centres, namely Oxford, Cambridge and Westminster. Three groups held combined discussions from time to time. After examining the original manuscripts and the preceding translations carefully, the new translation was completed in three years. In the next nine months, it

was printed out. This version published under the authority and supervision of King James in 1611, is known as the **King James Version (KJV)** or the **Authorised Version**. It was the time when the influence of the English people was increasing all over the world. So this new translation reached almost every part of the world in fifty years! For more than three and a half centuries, it has been the Authorised Version of the English speaking people. Until 1881 it was not even revised.

THE REVISED VERSION 1881-1885

By the passing of about 270 years, the English language underwent a lot of changes. Some words used in the K.J.V. became obsolete and were no longer understood by the new generation. So there came a demand for a new revised translation. Many ancient manuscripts were also discovered in the middle of the 19th century. The Bible scholars achieved more mastery over the Hebrew in which the old Testament was written. All these factors contributed to and accounted for a revised version.

The task of revision was undertaken by the Church of England in 1870. This revision work was carried out by 51 English and 21 American scholars. Thus the revision of the Old Testament was completed in 1881 and of the New Testament in 1885. The Revised Version became so popular that three crores of its copies were sold in the first year.

THE AMERICAN STANDARD VERSION :

As a matter of fact, the American English is different from the original English. In order to cater to the interest of American people, the scholars from America who were associated in the work of Revised Version brought out a new American version in 1901. This is known as the American Standard Version.

REVISED STANDARD VERSION -1952

The Revised Standard Version of the Bible is a revision of the American Standard Version. Though the Bible has thus been updated with respect to language and usage, its contents and essentials have not been changed.

A FLOOD OF BIBLE TRANSLATIONS:

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed a remarkable

growth of Christian Church in Asian and African continents. Its reasons are mainly two:

1. The English Bible found access to all parts of the world.
2. The arrival of missionaries from Europe and America.

When people from various cultures and languages were attracted to the Bible, it became necessary to translate the Bible into other vernaculars. But there were many obstacles to this task: opposition from the local people, unfavourable climate, backwardness of the languages, financial difficulties etc. But overcoming all such hurdles, Bible has been translated either partly or fully into 1800 languages. The entire Bible has been translated into 200 Languages. The Bible Society which undertakes Bible translation, printing and publishing was first formed in 1804 in London. In affiliation to it, many Bible Societies are functioning in different countries. A Group of translators known as Wycliffe Bible Translators are labouring untiringly to translate the Bible into as many languages as possible. The efforts of translation are advancing with invention of scripts, making of grammars and dictionaries and establishment of schools.

In this context, the history of the missionary heroes who suffered severe hardships to produce the Bible in the languages of Burma and China, is noteworthy.

ADONIRAM JUDSON (BURMA):

Adoniram Judson was the missionary whom God used to present the Bible in the Burmese language. He was born in 1788 in England. In 1812 he married Ann. Before too long, They started out to India. They learned the Burmese language in the ship and landed in Burma. In the most adverse circumstances, Judson propagated the Gospel and set his mind on Bible translation. In those days, war broke out between Burma and Britain and Judson was imprisoned. He suffered untold tortures for about 20 months. Meanwhile, his wife had managed to get the needed stationaries for translation job like paper etc. to him in the Jail through a pillow. He completed the translation in the jail. Released after the war, Judson published the Burmese Bible in 1835. It took six years to complete the printing by a manual printing press. Subsequently, he revised the Bible in 1840. Later, his wife and children became sick because of the unfavorable climate and died. Nevertheless, he continued

his work. At last, Judson died in a ship during a voyage in 1850. Judson's work brought forth long standing results in Burma.

ROBERT MORRISON (CHINA):

It was Robert Morrison who first translated the Bible into Chinese language. It was published in 1819. That first translation was not easily understandable for the common people.

BROTHER SHERRY:

After Morrison, a Jewish Christian named Bro. Sherry reached China for mission work. He was affected by paralysis while carrying out the gospel work very zealously. By Paralysis, Sherry lost his independent mobility and so resorted to wheel-chair for emergency movement. Only his right hand was somewhat free from handicap. In spite of all such handicaps, he decided to put the Bible into simple Chinese language. He typed out the entire manuscripts with his only finger and completed the translation in 21 Years. Then it was printed out. This Bible is known as '**Single finger Bible**'. How great was his dedication to the Word of God! In the next lesson we shall learn about the Bible translation into Indian languages. What a glorious book is the Bible which has stood the test of time and troubles!

EXERCISE - 14

Answer the following question:

1. Into how many languages, has the Bible been translated?
2. How many scholars did king James appoint to revise the Bishops Bible?
3. How many years did it take for the translation?
4. When was the king James Version published?
5. Who undertook the task of revising the King James Version? When?
6. Who carried out the revision work?
7. When was the revision completed?
8. Why did the 18th and 19th centuries witness a remarkable growth of Christian Church in Asian and African continents?

9. When and where was the Bible Society formed?
10. What are the Wycliffe group of Bible Translators aiming at?
11. Who published the Burmese Bible and when?
12. Who at first, translated the Bible into Chinese language?
13. What is the Single finger Bible?

Chronology of the Bible Versions

1.	Septuagint	-	B. C.	250-150
2.	Latin Vulgate	-	A.D.	410
3.	The Wycliffe Bible	-	A.D.	1382
4.	Tyndale Bible	-	"	1525
5.	Miles Coverdale	-	"	1535
6.	Matthew's Bible	-	"	1537
7.	Geneva Bible	-	"	1560
8.	Bishop's Bible	-	"	1568
9.	King James Version	-		1611
10.	American Standard Version	-		1855
11.	American Standard Version	-		1901
12.	Revised Standard Version	-		1952

