

Why we read from the

King James Bible

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The King James Version of the Bible

You probably have noticed, or will notice, that the particular version of the Bible we read from, preach from, and have available to you in the pew is the King James Version. This is the English translation of the Bible the Protestant Reformed Churches use during the worship services, in the catechism classes, and in Bible studies. This version may have some disadvantages since it is written in the Old English language and, for that reason, has some outdated words and phrases in it, but we still consider it a good and accurate translation of the Bible.

The King James Version, or the Authorized Version, was written in 1611 by order of King James I of England. Since the Bible was originally written in the Hebrew and Greek languages, it was necessary for the men who did the translating to be scholars in these languages. For that reason King James appointed 47 Bible scholars, all of whom were fluent in these languages. These men also compared their translation with other great scholars who had translated the Bible into English before them. You may recognize the names of Wycliffe, Coverdale, and Tyndale.

It was obvious that the translators of the King James Version were highly spiritual men who had a deep respect for the Word of God. We read in the preface to the KJV, "And what a marvel? The original thereof being from heaven, and not earth; the author being God, not man: the enditer [the one who prompted it], the Holy Spirit, not the wit of the Apostles or Prophets; the Pen-

men, such as were sanctified from the womb, and endowed with a principle portion of God's Spirit; the matter, verity, piety, purity, uprightness; the form, God's word, God's testimony, God's oracles, the word of Truth, the word of salvation . . ." The work they did in translating this version of the Bible was careful work which took several years.



Why we use the King James Version

Until the 1960s and the sudden increase of modern paraphrases of the Bible, the KJV was the principle and most widely distributed version of the Bible available. Even today it still ranks first among translations sold. But, sad to say, it is now only one among a whole host of different English versions of the Bible and has, as a result, become lost to many. What Bishop Bancroft of London expressed when he was commanded to oversee the translation of the King James Version has become true: "If every man's humor should be followed, there would be no end of translating." Today many different versions of the Bible are available, few of which are accurate translations of the original languages. They

vary so much it is difficult to follow along in one version while another is being read. God's people begin to wonder if there really is a version available anymore that they can truly call God's Word.

It is for that reason that our churches have continued the use of the King James Version. It is not as though we would consider a modern translation of the Bible wrong. Neither do we believe that it is wrong when someone uses another translation in his personal studies, as long it is an accurate and faithful version. But the vast majority of the translations that have been published today are not faithful to the original and, therefore, contain many inaccuracies. Some versions even advance doctrinal errors. This cannot be said of the King James Version.

There are two reasons we believe the King James Version is faithful and accurate. First, it is based upon what is known as the Received Text. The Received Text is based on hundreds of manuscripts that were "received" or approved by the church for centuries. Yet, with the exception of three or four modern versions of the Bible, all modern translations of the Bible are mostly based upon 10 to 20 percent of these manuscripts that omit or change thousands of words in the Bible. This is one reason we believe the King James Version is faithful and accurate. It is based on the majority of the old Hebrew and Greek manuscripts.

The second reason we continue the use of the King James Version is that the translators of this version were committed to "verbal inspiration". This terminology simply means that God moved holy men to record word for word in the Bible exactly what He had chosen to make known to us. Because the translators of the KJV believed

in verbal inspiration, they were careful in their attempt to make, as much as possible, an accurate translation of all the words found in the original languages.

The vast majority of modern versions are translated by men who believe that God only inspired the thoughts of men but not the words they wrote. In other words, they believe that men recorded in their own words their inspired thoughts. For that reason, these translators have no problem adding or subtracting words from the Bible, or worse, rewording an entire phrase or sentence to express what they think the writers of the Bible meant. This has resulted in many inaccuracies, omissions, and even doctrinal errors in the translation. Since our churches maintain the truth of verbal inspiration, we believe the King James Version truly remains a faithful version of the Bible.

Using the King James Version

We well understand that for a person who has always used a version in modern English it may seem strange to hear the Bible read in Old English. Since we use this version in every aspect of our church life, it has become second nature to us. This is not true, we realize, of most of our visitors. But if you persevere with us, it really does not take long to catch on to the meaning of the Old English words and phrases. Despite this obvious difficulty, we are assured that the King James Version expresses accurately the Word of God.

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