

The King James Bible vs. The Authorized King James Bible: A Distinction Without a Difference?

For centuries, the names "King James Bible" (KJV) and "Authorized King James Bible" (or "Authorized Version") have been used interchangeably, and for good reason: they refer to the same historic translation of the scriptures into English, completed in 1611 under the commission of King James I of England. In essence, there is no fundamental difference between the two. The variation in terminology is primarily a matter of historical context and emphasis.

The term "Authorized Version" (AV) reflects the historical reality that this translation was "appointed to be read in Churches." While there is no surviving official decree of "authorization" from the King himself, its creation was a royally sponsored project intended to provide a standard English Bible for the Church of England. This effectively replaced earlier translations like the Bishops' Bible and the Geneva Bible for ecclesiastical use. Thus, "Authorized Version" speaks to its official standing and purpose.

The more common modern appellation, "King James Bible" (KJV) or "King James Version," places emphasis on the monarch who initiated and sponsored the translation project. This naming convention gained popularity over time, particularly in the United States, and serves as a straightforward way to identify this specific and highly influential translation.

Why One Term Over the Other?

The choice between these terms today is largely a matter of preference and tradition, though some nuances can influence a person's decision:

- **Historical and Formal Context:** In academic and historical discussions, particularly in the United Kingdom, "Authorized Version" is often the preferred term as it more accurately reflects the translation's historical status.
- **Common Usage:** In everyday conversation and in many church settings, especially in North America, "King James Bible" or "KJV" is the far more prevalent and readily understood term.
- **Specificity of Editions:** While "KJV" and "AV" refer to the same translation, it's important to note that the text of the 1611 original has undergone several revisions. The most significant of these were in 1629, 1638, and most notably, the 1769 edition by Benjamin Blayney at Oxford. This 1769 revision standardized spelling, punctuation, and corrected printing errors that had accumulated over the centuries. Most modern printings of the King James Bible are based on this 1769 edition, not the original 1611 text.

In rare instances, some might use "Authorized King James Version" to refer to a specific printing or edition, such as the "Pure Cambridge Edition," which is a particular text of the KJV that has been promoted by some groups as being the most accurate and unadulterated version. However, for the vast majority of readers and publishers, this level of specificity is not intended when using the term.

In conclusion, a person choosing to say "King James Bible" is simply using the more common and widely recognized name. Someone opting for "Authorized King James Bible" or "Authorized Version" might be doing so to be more historically precise or to reflect a more formal or traditional context. For

all practical purposes, however, both names point to the same revered and historically significant English translation of the Bible.

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