

The Concordance: Product of the Reformation for the 1980s

We talk a great deal about the Bible; but are we its diligent students? The reading of scripture is more than the exercise of a traditional habit. It leads us to salvation and teaches us how to walk before God. We need to study God's Word, not only for our own personal spiritual growth, but also for the growth and reformation of the church. We hear complaints about Biblical sermons; so readily they are called dry, dull or not comforting enough. But personal Bible study by the members of the congregation will not only make Biblical preaching rewarding for everyone, it will also drive a pastor to dig deeper into the mine of truth, the Word of God.

The study of scripture takes time and effort. We often tend to read the easy passages rather than the prophets or the epistles of Paul. But all of scripture should be mastered. "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16f N.I.V.).

The serious student of the Bible has a number of tools. Included among these tools are a few basic books which he should acquire and learn how to use. These books include various translations of the Bible, Bible dictionaries, maps, books giving information on Biblical backgrounds and a concordance. A concordance is the most basic text a Bible student needs in his search for a deeper understanding of God's Word.

What is a concordance? A concordance is a book which lists every word in the Bible in alphabetical order, except for prepositions and pronouns and the like, with a reference to the place where each may be found. Many times we can call to mind a Biblical phrase, text of passage, but we can't remember the chapter and verse. We may think of a text we want to use for an essay and we can't recall in which book of the Bible it is found or how it is used. Here a concordance comes in handy.

A concordance allows the reader to discover easily, a given word in a certain verse of scripture and to find every reference in scripture where the word occurs. For example, someone may want to know the location of the text about loving your enemies. Under the word "enemy" in the concordance is printed: "Matt. 5:44 - Love your enemies, bless them that curse you." It also becomes apparent from the reference that the word enemy is used over 380 times in the Bible, and the concordance lists chapter and verse in each case.

A concordance is useful when you want to study a theme. For example, look up in the concordance the word "salvation," and note all the references where the word occurs. And to make the study complete, observe the scripture references that have to do with the verb form of the word. In this case, look up "save," "saved," "saves," and any of its other forms. The study of the various usages of these words will give the full orbed Biblical teaching on salvation.

To give another illustration: You may want to study the meaning of "vine." What did Jesus mean when he said, "I am the vine"? Look up the word "vine" and notice all the places, beginning with Genesis and on through the Bible to the end of the New Testament, where it appears. So, a careful use of a concordance can give quite an exact meaning of a given word or theme even though you may not know the original Biblical languages.

Where did the first concordance originate? The concordance as we have it today is basically the result of the Reformation. As long as the Bible was rarely studied, even by the members of the clergy, concordances were neither needed nor produced. It is the principle of the Reformation, the appeal to the Bible for authority for faith and practice, and the Reformation's wide-spread conviction of verbal inspiration of the Bible, that lead to the construction and perfection of the concordance.

The first concordance was one on "morals" and was compiled by Anthony of Padua (1195-1231). Cardinal Hugo, a Dominican monk, who died about 1262, compiled the first complete Biblical concordance. The first Hebrew concordance was produced by - Rabbi Mordecai Nathan. He finished it in 1448, after ten years of hard work by himself and some assistants.

Abraham Trommius (1633 - 1739), a Dutch pastor and scholar, in 1672, completed and published a concordance called *De Nederduytsche Concordantie* of the "Nieuw Testament" which was begun by his father-in-law. In 1685, he published the *Nedertantsche Concordantie* of all the books of the "Oude Testament," Volume I and in 1691, Volume II. It took Rev. Trommius twenty-eight years to complete this painstaking and precise work. After this monumental task, he published his Greek Concordance of the Septuagint. Rev. Trommius must have been a man of infinite patience!

The first English concordance of the entire Bible was drawn up by John Marbeck in 1550. This work doesn't refer to texts, but only to chapters. Marbeck doesn't appear to have been influenced by Robert Stephens' (1545) division of the Bible into verses, thus preparing the way for more exact reference in concordance. Several English concordances of greater or lesser value were superseded by the now famous Alexander Cruden's *Complete Concordance to the Old and New Testaments*. The first edition was published in 1737. It won for Cruden special honour at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

Two further editions of the *Concordance* appeared in Cruden's lifetime, in 1761 and 1769 respectively. Since that time, numerous editions have been published. It is still a standard work. It contains upwards of 220,000 references. The text quoted throughout is that of the King James' Version. In the appendix there is a list of "Proper Names" seldom mentioned in scripture and not included in the body of the *Concordance*. It is small enough to be carried if you want to take it with you to a Bible study session and it is exhaustive enough to give the student the necessary information concerning the English text.

Robert Young's (1822-88) *Analytical Concordance to the Bible* is also a fine work. It was first published in 1879 and has gone through many editions. This work lists the English words according to their Hebrew and Greek equivalents. A new work of this nature is the 1976 *Modern Concordance to the New Testament*. This work is supposed to be joined soon to its Old Testament counterpart. It is compiled by Sister Jeanne d'Arc and is published by Doubleday. It contains listings under 341 themes, tells which Greek word has been used, and serves the King James, Revised Standard Version, Jerusalem Bible, New American Bible, New English Bible, and The Living Bible.

Another new work is *Nelson's Complete Concordance of the New American Bible*, edited by Fr. Stephen Hartdegen, O.F.M. It was published in 1977. It has entries from the whole Bible, in alphabetical order.

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance lists the words as they appear in the King James Version.

Another useful concordance is the *Harper's Topical Concordance* by Charles R. Joy, Harper and Brothers. It lists verses under topics, thus helping one to find a particular verse under a topic. Many verses, for example, do not contain the word "honesty," yet they deal with the subject. In this concordance, verses such as Deuteronomy 25:13 would be listed under "Honesty."

Which concordance to recommend? Of course, you can buy a Bible that already contains an abridged concordance. But I suggest that you use Cruden's. It is relatively inexpensive and excellent for the average Bible student.

Study the Word! The Bible is a blessing only when it is used. "Blessed is the one who reads of the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near" (Rev. 1:3 N.I.V.).

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